

LIVING HERITAGE SERIES



# STORYTELLING

*Sharing Experiences from the Field*

Eivind Falk and Bak Gyuri **Editors-in-Chief**



# STORYTELLING

*Sharing Experiences from the Field*

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# Preface

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**Kim Jisung**  
Director-General  
*International Information and Networking Centre for  
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under the auspices of UNESCO (ICHCAP)*

Some may question why we have to talk about storytelling, or whether storytelling is deserving enough for its own volume. For those in doubt about the influence of storytelling on culture and the core of humanity, I recommend that you take a closer look at this publication.

According to research, humans acclimate toward patterned behavior or habits because doing so requires less energy. This is why people tend to choose a familiar option rather than a newly introduced one. For example, we tend to have “our” place such as at a restaurant, café, or pub. When we visit these places, we tend to order the same menu items. We do this by nature; we are drawn to stability because it comforts us. Sure, we may opt for the bolognese instead of the carbonara on occasion, but we are in a familiar place with familiar faces, and thus we are at ease.

Storytelling takes advantage of the human psyche in that it provides common and memorable themes that, over time, create a familiarity—a sameness that a community understands and internalizes. Storytelling allows us to reminisce about the past. Through storytelling, we can live in the same period as the characters and share their memories and experience. It should not be surprising to know that shared communal histories started through storytelling. By transmitting stories, younger generations learned from their elders. It was a way of transferring and archiving traditional knowledge. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to say that culture developed from storytelling because culture thrives from accumulated history.

Since culture evolves through storytelling, it is in itself a living heritage. Storytelling is not just about oral traditions and expressions as a vehicle of intangible cultural heritage; it is also about transmitting knowledge



and practices concerning nature and the universe. In other words, storytelling becomes a living heritage as well as a medium used to practice and safeguard other heritage elements. In fact, all five ICH domains are intertwined with storytelling.

Thus, it is essential to talk about the unlimited applicability and potential of developing storytelling. Storytelling can exist beyond an oral tradition by physically manifesting through performances and exhibitions, including text and video. Abundant content has already been developed from storytelling. The strength of storytelling comes from its potential power to add value. This is also a desirable purpose of this publication.

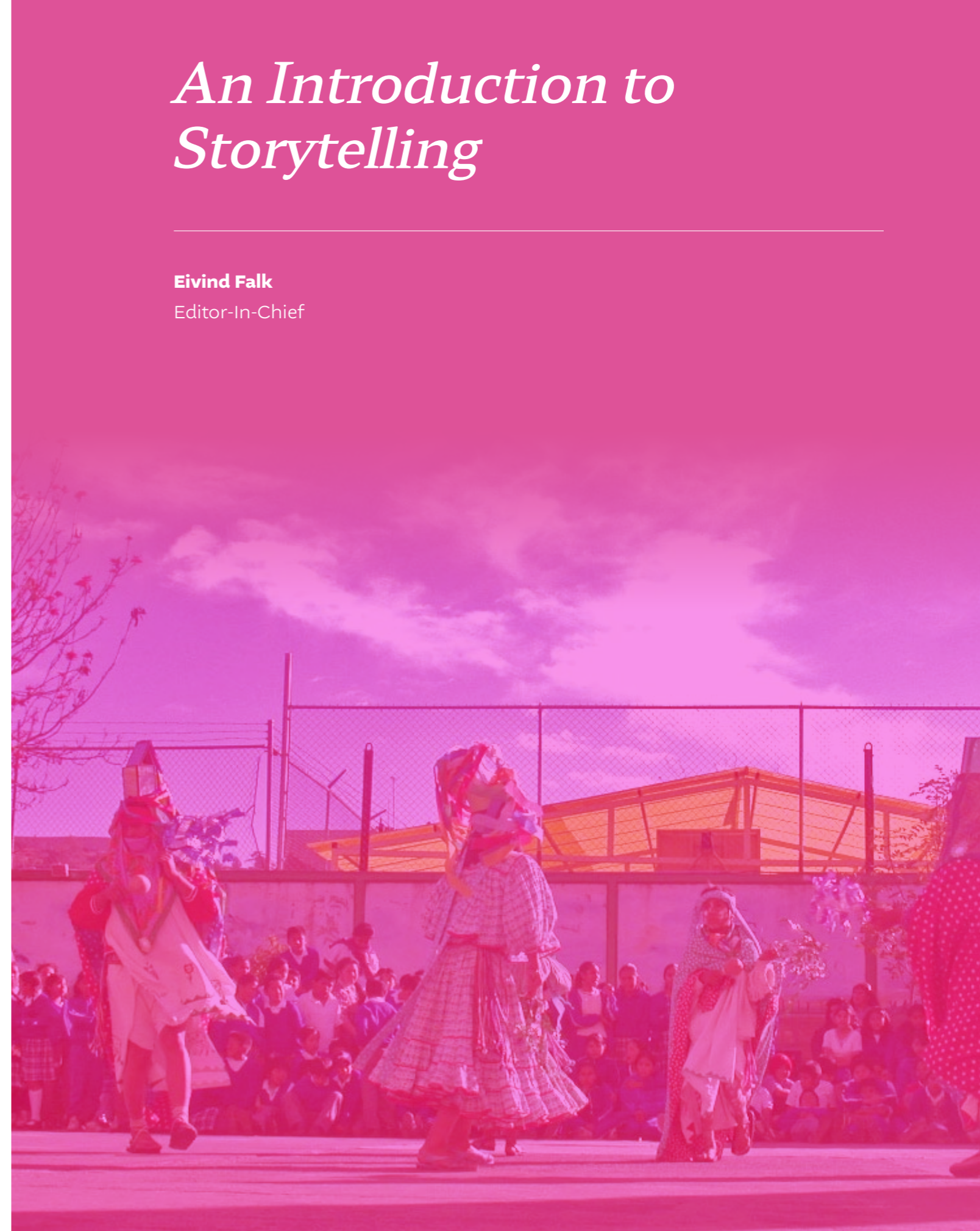
In this sense, I introduce *Storytelling: An Infinite Source for Future Content*. This publication results from a collaboration between ICHCAP and ICH NGO Forum #HeritageAlive. The abundant treasures in this volume come to us thanks to the twelve authors, the Editorial Board, and Mr. Eivind Falk. A publication ceremony will take place in December 2023 at the Eighteenth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Kasane, Botswana.

Since storytelling has the charm of attracting people to the story, I hope readers can also feel the same. The chapters are about NGOs' and experts' experiences in the field while working on storytelling-related projects. Through storytelling activities, you can explore the achievements in safeguarding living heritage. I hope the twelve articles about storytelling bring you comfort, even if for only a moment.

# *An Introduction to Storytelling*

**Eivind Falk**

Editor-In-Chief



## An Introduction to Storytelling

**Eivind Falk**  
Editor-In-Chief

My family has a small mountain farm far up in the Norwegian mountains, by a lake called Olevann. The storytelling tradition is still alive there, and a part of our history and identity. When I'm out on the water in a boat and fishing with my children or grandchildren, I often tell some of the stories that belong to the mountain farm and the area, and which I have been handed down. In this way, the stories are passed on to a new generation. This connects us today, and with previous generations. Some of the stories are quite sad, but at the same time an important reminder to be careful in the mountains:

*A young mother was out picking berries with her little son by Olevann, just behind the massive mountain. The mother had been inattentive for a moment, and suddenly her boy was gone. She searched and looked for him for a long time but could not find him anywhere. She strongly believed he had been lured into the mountain by the trolls. After searching after the boy for three days she sent for the one of the church bells from Hegge stave church further down in the valley. Church bells are said to have a strong magical power superior over the trolls. The bell was brought up in the mountains, and she began to ring to force the trolls to open the mountain and let the poor boy out. After the mother had been ringing the bells for three days, the spell was broken, the mountain finally opened, and the boy was on his way out. Unfortunately, in this crucial moment the rope in which the bell hung snapped, and the church bell fell on the ground. When the ringing stopped, the magic was broken, and the mountain closed so that the boy never came out again. Today, the bells still hang in the Hegge stave church, and one has a notch from the time it fell by Olevann.*

Both the children and I love these storytelling moments, and some of the stories I must have told a hundred times, at least: In the boat and when we are gathering around the fireplace at night. Storytelling

connects generations, families, friends, creates curiosity, and stimulates creativity, in the spirit of the 2003 Convention. Storytelling is more than just the stories, it brings us together, creates links between us, stimulates our fantasy and develops our skills. In this publication we will look at how one can contribute to the safeguarding of our storytelling traditions, and what we can learn from NGOs and experts' experiences from around the world.

As storytelling has been, and still is, such an important and fascinating part of our lives, storytelling, stories and fairytales has been an object for research, interpretation and safeguarding from a long way back in time. A hundred and fifty years ago, two Norwegian collectors of fairytales, Jørgen Moe and Peter Christen Asbjørnsen, travelled around Norway and wrote down stories. They sat at fireplaces in farmhouses and wrote down fairytales and legends that had been handed over orally from generation to generation. Moe was a priest, and he removed obscene and offending language in the fairytales they collected. On the other side, Asbjørnsen was a skilled writer and rewrote the stories to fit into a format suitable for publishing. They published the collection of fairytales in 1841, and it was a great success (Asbjørnsen and Moe, [1841] 2016). Even the better known Brothers Grimm in Germany applauded. Asbjørnsen and Moe's fairytales became a national treasure and has been read for Norwegian children ever since. The fairytales they collected were also made into small films that became very popular. Although this collection and preservation of the stories probably saved some stories from getting lost, there is one problem concerning storytelling as living heritage: the element was frozen and fixed in only one version, when before there was room for several versions, and each storyteller often added his or her personal touch to the central framework narrative. The interaction around the fireplace disappeared, and a new generation watched the fairytales on TV.

In his article, Okello Quinto points out the role of fireplaces and their crucial function for transmission of living storytelling traditions and for education. Fireplaces or campfires are indeed important for connecting generations and communities and for bringing us together. This is not only important in Uganda but all over the world. Gathering around the fireplace in the night, sharing stories has been done all over the world for thousands of years. What happens when we suddenly remove fireplaces from our lives? As Quinto observes:

*Another fact in this community is that due to the rapid disappearance of fireplaces that were once regarded as classroom areas for informal education where parents or*

*guardians transferred cultural knowledge transfer of culture has reduced.*

In Bochra Laghssais article, she has replaced the fireplace with a café, the Café Clock. The Café has a similar function as Quinto's fireplace. It is connecting people, and they share their stories. Bochra Laghssais explains how she remembers that just a few years back, female storytellers were found in every home. They were mothers, sisters, aunts, and grandmothers. The stories of her own grandmother inspired Bochra Laghssais to become a storyteller. While male storytelling traditionally is found in public squares in most of Moroccan cities, women's storytelling is told at home. The article explains how the work by NGOs such as Project Soar has made public spaces for storytelling accessible to women and girls.

Storytelling can take us everywhere; it can provide us with wings or put us on a ship. Charlotte Courtois and the NGO Konstelacio combine music and storytelling as a part their project "The Fabulous Journey of Arwenn," where they take children around the world. This is a musical tale to arouse in the youngest a curiosity for traditional music from here and elsewhere, and to raise awareness of intercultural dialogue. Courtois underlines the importance and power of storytelling: "Naturally and almost unconsciously, storytelling has always been at the heart of our educational workshops."

When safeguarding storytelling, it is a huge risk of decontextualization. As Asbjørnsen and Moe did in 1841, one can easily write down the stories and print them in a book, and this has been done in a large scale all over the world with the best intentions. But does that really help us to safeguard the tradition of storytelling? Will it take the element's social and cultural function into consideration, or will this measure only kill or freeze the element?

It is important to remember that "storytelling" is a compound of two words—story and telling. The stories can easily be written, but what about the telling? Telling is something we do, and it takes more than one person for this activity because the storyteller needs someone to listen and to interact with. As they say, "it takes two to tango".

By developing self-sustaining curricula and training programs, The NGO, A.R.T, enables refugee communities to engage their children and adults in visual, performing, and creative arts drawn from their own cultures. In her article Sara Green illustrates the importance and function of storytelling in communities where one has lost everything and maybe lives in camps. For refugees, ICH and storytelling will be of particular

importance, as a part of our identity that cannot be taken away from us.

The article from Argentina and CIOFF challenge us. The authors claim that during the pandemic, storytelling through social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, became a way of maintaining closeness, strengthening ties and renewing cultural commitment in the midst of an uncertain time. Can social media fill the role of people coming together? Can the screens replace Quinto's campfire? Article 2 of the 2003-Convention it says:

*This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. (UNESCO, 2003)*

Is the example from Argentina still storytelling in an ICH context? Has it changed into something totally different or just been recreated and adopted by communities to a modern world? Would it pass the Evaluation Body as a Good Safeguarding Practice? Nevertheless, I do believe that the article demonstrates the strong will and need in people to connect and share stories, even during the most challenging conditions.

The rich experiences shared in this publication illustrate the desire by NGOs, communities, bearers, and practitioners to safeguard storytelling traditions. I wish to thank all the authors for sharing these valuable experiences. I hope the readers will be inspired to safeguard their own traditional storytelling traditions and sit down with children and grandchildren to connect a new generation with the wonderful world of storytelling. May Charlotte Courtois' ship take us on a journey around the world, and to a nice place where we can make a campfire and listen to Quinto's stories.

As for the previous publications we received a large number of contributions with different approaches to storytelling from all around the world. Unfortunately, the publication has limited room, so we had to make the tough decision for twelve articles. I would like to thank the Editorial Board that worked hard preparing the articles for this publication. Their contribution has been crucial to the result. Let me also direct a special thanks to ICHCAP and Ms. Hyeonju Song. Their dedication of resources to this project was necessary for making this book. This is a brilliant example of how NGOs and Centres can join forces to reach new goals.

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## Résumé

## Une introduction à la narration

**Eivind Falk**

Rédacteur en chef

Ma famille a une petite ferme de montagne, loin dans les montagnes norvégiennes, au bord d'un lac appelé Olevann. La tradition de la narration y est toujours vivante et fait partie tant de notre histoire que de notre identité. Aussi, lorsque je suis sur l'eau dans un bateau et que je pêche avec mes enfants ou mes petits-enfants, je leur raconte souvent certaines de ces histoires de la ferme de montagne et à la région, et qui m'ont été transmises. De cette façon, les histoires sont transmises à une nouvelle génération. Cela relie nous, génération actuelle, aux générations précédentes et futures. Certaines des histoires sont assez tristes, mais sont en même temps un rappel important à la prudence dans les montagnes. En voici une illustration :

*Une jeune mère cueillait des baies avec son petit fils près d'Olevann, juste derrière la montagne massive. La mère ayant été inattentive un instant, son garçon disparut soudain. Elle le chercha et chercha des heures et des heures durant, mais ne le trouva nulle part. Elle croyait fermement qu'il avait été attiré dans la montagne par les trolls. Après avoir cherché le garçon pendant trois jours, elle envoya chercher plus bas dans la vallée, l'une des cloches de l'Eglise de Hegge Stave. Il est dit que les cloches d'Eglise ont un fort pouvoir magique sur les trolls. La cloche fut amenée dans les montagnes, et elle commença à sonner pour forcer les trolls à ouvrir la montagne et à laisser sortir le pauvre garçon. Après que la mère eut fait sonner les cloches pendant trois jours, le sort fut rompu, la montagne s'ouvrit enfin et le garçon fut sur le point de sortir. Malheureusement, à ce moment crucial, la corde à laquelle la cloche était suspendue s'est rompue et la cloche de l'Eglise tomba par terre. Le tintement s'étant arrêté, la magie s'est rompue et la montagne s'est refermée, de sorte que le garçon n'en ressortit plus jamais. Aujourd'hui encore, les cloches sont toujours accrochées dans l'Eglise de Hegg Stage, et l'une d'elles a une encoche datant de sa chute à Olevann.*



Les enfants et moi apprécions beaucoup ces moments de narration et ces histoires que j'ai dû raconter au moins cent fois, dans le bateau ou lorsque nous nous rassemblons autour de la cheminée dans la nuit. La narration relie les générations, les familles, les amis, suscite la curiosité et stimule la créativité conformément à l'esprit de la convention de 2003. La narration va au-delà des histoires. Elle nous rassemble, crée des liens entre nous, stimule nos fantasmes et développe nos compétences. Dans cette publication, nous examinerons comment on peut contribuer à la sauvegarde de nos traditions de narration et ce que nous pouvons apprendre des expériences des ONG et des experts du monde entier.

La narration a été et demeure une partie si importante et fascinante de nos vies qu'elle, les histoires et les contes de fées, a fait l'objet de recherche, d'interprétation et de sauvegarde depuis des lustres. Il y a cent cinquante ans de cela, deux collectionneurs norvégiens de contes de fées, Jørgen Moe et Peter Christen Asbjørnsen, ont parcouru la Norvège et écrit des histoires. Ils s'asseyaient devant des cheminées dans des fermes et écrivaient des contes de fées et des légendes qui avaient été transmis oralement de génération en génération. Moe étant prêtre, il a supprimé le langage jugé obscène et offensant dans les contes de fées qu'il a recueillis. De son côté, Asbjørnsen était un écrivain talentueux qui a su réécrire les histoires pour les adapter à la publication. Ils publièrent ainsi en 1841, le recueil de contes de fées<sup>01</sup>, qui fut un grand succès. Même les frères Grimm les plus connus en Allemagne l'ont acclamé. Les contes de fées d'Asbjørnsen et Moe sont devenus un trésor national et sont lus pour les enfants norvégiens depuis lors. Ces contes ont également été adaptés au cinéma, en de petits films qui sont devenus très populaires. Bien que cette collecte et la préservation des histoires aient probablement empêché certaines histoires de se perdre, il y a un problème concernant la narration en tant que patrimoine vivant : l'élément a été figé et fixé dans une seule version, alors qu'auparavant il y avait de la place pour plusieurs versions, et chaque conteur ajoutait souvent sa touche personnelle au récit du cadre central. L'interaction autour de la cheminée a disparu et une nouvelle génération a regardé les contes de fées à la télévision.

Dans un article, Okello Quinto souligne le rôle des cheminées et leur fonction cruciale pour la transmission des traditions vivantes de la narration et pour l'éducation. Les arbres à palabre et feux de bois sont en effet importants pour lier les générations et les communautés et nous rassembler. Ce n'est pas seulement important en Ouganda, mais partout dans le monde. Se rassembler la nuit autour de la cheminée et partager des histoires se fait partout dans le monde depuis des milliers d'années.

01.  
P. Chr. Asbjørnsen og  
Jørgen Moe (1841)  
Norske folkeeventyr

Que se passe-t-il lorsque nous retirons soudainement ces foyers de nos vies ? Quinto s'en préoccupe :

*Un autre fait dans cette communauté est qu'en raison de la disparition rapide des feux de bois qui étaient considérés comme des salles de classe pour l'éducation informelle, les connaissances culturelles transmises par les parents ou les tuteurs ne sont plus de commun accord (Quinto, 2023).*

Dans un article, Bochra Laghsais remplace la cheminée par un café, le Café Clock. Le café a ici une fonction similaire à celle de la cheminée de Quinto c'est-à-dire connecter les gens lors du partage de leurs histoires. Bochra Laghsais explique comment elle se souvient, il y a quelques années à peine, on trouvait des conteuses dans chaque foyer. Elles étaient mères, sœurs, tantes et grands-mères. Ce sont du reste les histoires de sa propre grand-mère ont inspiré Bochra Laghsais à devenir conteuse. Alors que les contes masculins se trouvent traditionnellement sur les places publiques dans la plupart des villes marocaines, les contes des femmes sont contés à la maison. L'article explique comment le travail d'ONG telles que Project Soar a rendu les espaces publics de narration accessibles aux femmes et aux filles.

La narration peut nous emmener partout. Il peut nous donner des ailes ou nous mettre sur un navire. Charlotte Courtois et l'ONG Konstelacio combinent musique et contes dans le cadre de leur projet « The Fabulous Journey of Arwenn », pour faire voyager à travers le monde, les enfants leur auditoire. The Fabulous Journey of Arwenn est en effet un conte musical pour éveiller chez les plus jeunes une curiosité pour les musiques traditionnelles d'ici et d'ailleurs et sensibiliser au dialogue interculturel. Courtois souligne l'importance et le pouvoir de la narration qui : « Naturellement et presque inconsciemment, a toujours été au cœur de nos ateliers pédagogiques ».

Lors de la sauvegarde de la narration, l'on court un risque énorme de décontextualisation. Comme Asbjørnsen et Moe l'ont fait en 1841, on peut facilement écrire les histoires et les imprimer dans un livre, et cela a été fait à grande échelle dans le monde entier avec les meilleures intentions. Mais cela nous aide-t-il vraiment à sauvegarder la tradition de la narration ? Prend-t-elle suffisamment en compte la fonction sociale et culturelle des éléments, ou cette mesure ne fera-t-elle que tuer ou fixer l'élément ?

Il est important de se rappeler que « raconter des histoires » est un composé de deux principaux mots : histoire et narration. Les histoires peuvent facilement être écrites, mais qu'en est-il de la narration ?

Raconter est quelque chose que nous faisons, et il faut plus d'une personne pour cette activité parce que le conteur a besoin de quelqu'un pour écouter et interagir avec lui. Ne dit-on pas qu'« il faut être deux pour danser le tango » ?

En développant des programmes d'études et des programmes de formation autonomes, L'ONG A.R.T permet aux communautés de réfugiés d'engager leurs enfants et leurs adultes dans les arts visuels, les arts de la scène et les arts créatifs tirés de leurs propres cultures. Dans un article, Sara Green illustre l'importance et la fonction de la narration dans les communautés qui ont tout perdu et/où qui vivent dans des camps. Pour les réfugiés, le PCI et la narration revêtiront une importance particulière, en tant que partie de notre identité qui ne peut pas nous être enlevée.

L'article de l'Argentine et du CIOFF nous interpelle. Les auteurs affirment que pendant la pandémie, la narration par le biais des médias sociaux, tels que Facebook et Instagram, est devenue un moyen pour maintenir la proximité, de renforcer les liens et de renouveler l'engagement culturel en cette période d'incertitude. Les médias sociaux peuvent-ils jouer le rôle des personnes qui se rassemblent ? Les écrans peuvent-ils remplacer le feu de bois de Quinto ? L'article 2 de la Convention de 2003 rappelle que :

« *Ce patrimoine culturel immatériel, transmis de génération en génération, est constamment recréé par les communautés et les groupes en réponse à leur environnement, à leur interaction avec la nature et à leur histoire, et leur procure un sentiment d'identité et de continuité, promouvant ainsi le respect de la diversité culturelle et la créativité humaine* » (UNESCO 2003)

L'exemple de l'Argentine est-il toujours la narration dans un contexte du PCI ? A-t-il changé en quelque chose de totalement différent ou a-t-il simplement été recréé et adapté par les communautés dans un monde moderne ? Serait-il accepté par l'Organe d'évaluation en tant que bonne pratique de sauvegarde ? Néanmoins, je crois que l'article démontre la forte volonté et le besoin de se connecter et de partager des histoires, même dans les conditions les plus difficiles.

Les riches expériences partagées dans cette publication illustrent le désir des ONG, des communautés, des détenteurs et des praticiens de sauvegarder les traditions de narration. Je tiens à remercier tous les auteurs d'avoir acceptés partager ces précieuses expériences. J'espère que les lecteurs seront inspirés à sauvegarder leurs propres traditions traditionnelles de narration et à s'asseoir avec les enfants et les petits-

enfants pour connecter une nouvelle génération au monde merveilleux de la narration. Que le bateau de Charlotte Courtois nous emmène dans un voyage autour du monde et dans un endroit agréable où nous pouvons faire un feu de bois et écouter les histoires de Quinto.

Comme pour les publications précédentes, nous avons reçu un grand nombre de contributions avec différentes approches de la narration du monde entier. Malheureusement, le nombre d'articles étant limité, nous avons donc dû prendre la difficile décision de n'en retenir que douze. Je tiens à remercier le comité de rédaction qui a travaillé d'arrache-pied pour préparer les articles de cette édition. Leur contribution a été cruciale pour le présent résultat. Permettez-moi également de remercier tout particulièrement l'ICHCAP et Mme Hyeonju Song. Leur dévouement à ce projet a été immense pour la parution de ce livre. C'est un excellent exemple de la façon dont les ONG et les Centres de catégorie 2 peuvent unir leurs forces pour atteindre de nouveaux objectifs.

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*Norske folkeeventyr*, Cappelen Damm, Oslo

# *Alakondre Tori : Compiling Traditional Surinamese Storytelling Practices in a Toolkit for Cultural Education*

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# 1. Alakondre Tori : Compiling Traditional Surinamese Storytelling Practices in a Toolkit for Cultural Education

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## Introduction

Most great stories contain a storyline of the good conquering the evil, or the villain being defeated by the hero. In this article, we want to address the relevance of storytelling in the emergence and continuation of Surinamese culture.

Professor Alex van Stipriaan (1993) describes in his book *Surinaams contrast* the social, cultural, and economic events that have contributed to the formation of Suriname. He speaks of a fundamental change in the Caribbean scenery after the invasion by European conquerors.

The autochthone Amerindians, the official inhabitants of that geographical location, were banished and new societies consisting of Europeans, enslaved Africans and Asians were established. Through the horrific transatlantic slavery events, Suriname evolved into a country with a unique mixture of ethnic groups with a rich history of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Each ethnic group captured and transmitted historical events, life lessons, and myths through oral stories over many generations.

The value of oral stories is explained in the book *Reading Across Borders* (Stone-Mediatore, 2003) in which feminist writers Hannah Arendt, Paul Ricoeur, David Carr, and Seyla Benhabib describe how we experience events in terms of beginnings and endings, how we meaningfully communicate life events by recounting patterns of actors

and actions, and how we consider the significance of possible actions by imagining them within narratives. As Ricoeur puts it, narratives articulate the “potential meanings” in life experiences while life experiences provide the impetus to narrate (quoted in Stone-Mediatore, 2003: 74–6).

Looking at the relation between culture and practices of storytelling, we want to refer to the following definition, “Culture is the sum of all inheritance of a society, consisting of norms and values, rules and regulations, customs and obligations, beliefs and traditions of the group to whom the individual belongs” (Vannisselroy and van de Meulengraaf, 1988). In many cultures, storytelling serves as a vehicle through which cultural elements are developed, preserved, and transmitted from generation to generation. It is from this point of view that we could not resist writing an article about the project This Is Me with My Own Culture. Rachel Gefferie, a current member of the UNESCO-accredited NGO Organisatie voor Gemeenschapswerk (Cultural and Community Organization) NAKS was the project coordinator for at least four years. This project captured the essence of oral stories and its distinct value in preserving the Surinamese culture.

## How It Started

At the beginning of 2007, the project This Is Me with My Own Culture was initiated by Stichting Projecten Protestants Christelijk Onderwijs (Projects for Protestants Christian Education) foundation in Suriname. The program was financed by the Organization of American States (OAS) and was simultaneously executed in Trinidad and Tobago as well as in Guyana.

The aim of the project was to educate primary school students interactively about the diversity in cultural expressions, experiences, and customs of the different ethnic groups in Suriname. Primary schools were selected based on the majority of ethnic groups represented at that school level. Six public schools were chosen.

- Sint Bernardus School representing the Amerindian culture
- Sohansing School representing Hindustani culture
- J.T.H. Wenzel School representing Javanese culture
- Sint Elisabeth School II representing Chinese culture
- H.P.G. Latour School representing Maroon culture
- R.A. Tammenga School representing Creole culture



The target group consisted of students in the age range of four to eight years attending kindergarten through the third grade. A seventh culture was added to represent Suriname as one country holding multiple ethnic groups.

## The Act of Learning through Storytelling

Storytelling was at the core of this project. Depending on the ethnic group, the fundamental knowledge of the culture was shared through a playful and interactive methodology. Teaching toolkits were designed based on the culture, each consisting of material objects relevant to that specific ethnic group. Material objects such as traditional clothing, musical instruments, traditional jewelry, traditional crockery, spices and herbs, and audio recordings of traditional songs were part of the toolkit. These objects were to be used by the teacher as tools for visualization to engage students in experiencing the culture. Each object reflected those in each story and for each culture. The success of the project heavily relied on the skills and knowledge of the teachers. Workshops were organized in collaboration with cultural experts to help enhance teachers' ability to transmit the stories. Storytelling is not just about reading a narrative; it is about engaging the audience in the whole experience. Drama, singing, and dancing therefore was an integral part of equipping the teachers with proper storytelling technics.



Practicing different moves to go with the telling of the story © NAKS's division Difrenti Siri



School children learning to make figures from clay to include in their story ©NAKS Suriname

## Storytelling Technics Integrated into the Curriculum

Integrating the project into the existing curriculum was important. Subjects with the potential of accommodating storytelling were identified. An example of such a subject is class discussion (*klassengesprek*). During this subject, kindergarten students are encouraged to share their own experiences or listen to a story told by the teacher and then reflect on it. Through the story, they learn about life, morals, norms, and values. In third grade, the reading, history, and geography subjects proved perfect opportunities to tell a story relevant to the customs of a specific ethnic group. Geography allowed for sharing of oral stories regarding the habitat of the Maroons and the Amerindians. Subjects such as handicrafts, sports, music, and drawing became high in demand among students.

## Examples of Stories per Ethnic Group

Here are a few examples of the stories that were used throughout the project to transfer knowledge about a particular ethnic group:

### ***The Wayang Stories Significant for the Javanese Culture***

Wayang stories are an ancient form of storytelling inherited by Javanese immigrants who came to Suriname in 1890 (Helman, 1977)<sup>01</sup>. It is a mini theatre performance in which puppets are associated with specific character elements representing various legendary figures from the ancient Javanese culture which is rooted in Java (Van Kempen, 2002). Different colored fabrics are used to express emotion and songs to

01. Albert Helman (1977) describes the different ethnic groups in Suriname with their traditions, their geographic locations, and their history.

build momentum, and puppet maneuvering is part of the storytelling technique. The purpose of the *wayang* stories is to educate the community about becoming a person of virtue in society.

### ***The Ramlila Stories Significant for the Hindustani Culture***

*Ramlila* stories represent another ancient form of storytelling that originates from Indian suburbs. It is a public theatre performance primarily for entertainment, but more specifically to nurture the community with good morals and wisdom to conquer challenges and trials in life. These performances tell the *Ramayana* epic, which signifies the rivalry between two gods, Rama and Rawana. It is the story of good conquering evil. In this epic, the expressions and appearances of the characters are creatively employed to engage with the public in characteristics that are praised or condemned in the community.

### ***Stories and Storytelling Technics Preserved through the Transatlantic Slavery Trade***

The descendants of enslaved Africans inherited a rich culture of oral stories, most capturing their struggles during slavery. One example of these oral stories is the Anansi stories; Anansi, meaning “spider,” is a folktale character in stories related to Akan, a god of wisdom, knowledge, and trickery. Anansi stories are told as a form of entertainment, but they also unify and educate the community. The hero in these stories is a spider, and the moral of these tales is that wisdom and intelligence are not signified by the appearance of a person. Courage and perseverance are obtained through one’s ability to deal with life challenges by employing resources available within one’s immediate surroundings.



Performing storytelling accompanied with dance and music  
© NAKS’s division  
Difrenti Siri

### ***Amerindian Craft Made for the Sole Purpose of Storytelling***

In his book, *Sirito—50 Surinaamse Vertellingen* (1993) the Dutch historian and literacy expert Dr. Michiel van Kempen and Jan Bongers, captured oral stories of Amerindian communities in Suriname. Frederik Paul and Arthur Philip Penard wrote *De Menschetende Aanbidders der Zonneslang* (1907) which gives accounts of Amerindian myths and legendary events. *Maluwana* stories are the most popular among the Terano and Wayana Amerindian tribes. A *maluwana* is a wooden plate decorated with engraved mythical figures. The plate is attached to the top ceiling of the communal house in the village named *tukuispan*. Through the mythical figures, stories are shared with the community to install the norms and values in the community and to continue ancient traditions of transmitting the knowledge, experiences, and wisdom of the spiritual world.

### **Safeguarding Continuity through Reinventing the Storytelling Aspect of the Program**

The project had a high success rate. Within each school, a total of seven videos were published, seven teacher’s handbooks were distributed, and each school library owned seven complete toolkits with basic attributes to be used in transmitting knowledge about that specific ethnic group. Despite these successes, at the end of the pilot phase, the project was not continued by the Foundation.

Fortunately, one library teacher took it on her own to continue the project. Her name is Ingrid Read, and she is also a member of NAKS as well as a renowned librarian in her community. From the beginning, Read was passionate about the project and saw opportunities to further its development. She managed to make her own toolkits, teach her interns the different storytelling technics and develop new and innovative ideas to implement these methodologies in extra-curricular activities. With her supervision, one of her interns graduated from the teachers’ academy and obtained a good grade for her thesis about the power of storytelling within the education system.

Read is from Amerindian descent, and she made it her life’s work to transmit the knowledge and cultural heritage of her ancestors to the rest of Surinamese society. Recently, she partnered with NAKS, and together, they have worked on integrating storytelling as an activity in the annual program of NAKS’s division Difrenti Siri. This division focuses on educating, nurturing, and guiding children between 6 and 13 years



to learn the different aspects of Afro-Surinamese culture and apply these in their daily lives. Together with members of Diferenti Siri, interactive storytelling toolkits will be designed, and through traditional storytelling practices and sharing oral stories, cultural knowledge will be instilled in these pupils. The aim is to make this project part of the Alakondre series unique to NAKS. The Alakondre series initiate projects that represent a fusion of cultural elements of the different ethnicities in Suriname. There is already the Alakondre Dron Ensemble, which represents the fusion of different drums of the ethnic groups in Suriname. As well, the Alakondre Dance ensemble represents the fusion of the different traditional dance styles in Suriname. Together with Read, NAKS developed the Alakondre Tori storytelling toolbox, which contains a collection of different storytelling practices and oral stories of the ethnic groups in Suriname.



**Excited children after an educational field trip to collect stories © NAKS's division Diferenti Siri**

Ingrid Read has been appointed Project Coordinator and works closely with the NAKS-EU-FRIE Documentation Center which specializes in recording and archiving intangible cultural heritage elements. The staff of the NAKS-EU-FRIE documentation center was trained in collecting oral stories from the field, transferring them into innovative and interactive stories, and recording the stories for continuation. This phase of the project is paramount as it will help contribute towards safeguarding storytelling as one of the endangered intangible cultural elements of Suriname.

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## Résumé

## **Alakondre Tori : Compilation des pratiques de narration traditionnelles surinamaises dans une boîte à outils pour l'éducation culturelle**

**Siegmien Staphorst**  
NAKS Suriname

**Rachel Gefferie**  
NAKS Suriname

**Ingrid Read**  
NAKS Suriname

Le Suriname, étant un creuset unique de différents groupes ethniques, compte une riche histoire de pratiques de narration qui s'exprime à travers des récits oraux, des histoires de vie et des mythes fascinants. Chacune de ces formes de narration abrite l'histoire de communautés locales enracinées dans l'histoire coloniale du Suriname. Les communautés ont continué à préserver leurs histoires, à intégrer la morale qui y est intégrée aux pratiques de leur vie quotidienne et à assurer la continuité de ces histoires en les transmettant à la génération suivante. Naks, dans son rôle d'ONG accréditée par l'UNESCO, agit comme le pilier de la préservation, de la sauvegarde et de l'archivage du patrimoine culturel immatériel des communautés du Suriname, en particulier de la communauté afro-surinamaïse. Cette dernière communauté représente les descendants des Africains réduits en esclavage qui se divisent en Marrons et en Créoles. Naks est convaincu que la construction d'une nation forte commence par la réalisation d'une base fondamentale de respect et d'acceptation mutuels entre les membres des groupes ethniques du pays. L'art de conter est au cœur de l'installation de la morale, des normes et des valeurs dans une communauté. Si dès le plus jeune âge les enfants apprennent à adopter et à intégrer ces valeurs dans leur vie quotidienne, les aspirations d'une nation forte peuvent être réalisées. Par le biais du programme « Alakondre Tori toolkit », Naks s'efforce d'introduire la valeur du conte auprès des enfants, dans l'espoir que, de manière ludique, ils

acquerront des compétences socioculturelles qui contribueront à leur développement en tant que fiers citoyens du Suriname. Cet article donne un aperçu des événements qui ont conduit à l'exécution du programme par Naks et sa division « Diferenti Siri », responsable du programme. Le personnel de cette division travaille en étroite collaboration avec les experts culturels et les porteurs du savoir pour mettre en œuvre les différentes techniques de narration par communauté. Les enfants apprennent les histoires, apprennent à maîtriser les pratiques du conte et apprennent à reproduire et à documenter certaines pratiques narratives menacées. En tant que tel, Naks s'efforce d'établir un processus de sauvegarde continu d'échange et d'apprentissage entre l'ancienne génération et la jeune génération sur le conte en tant que forme de patrimoine culturel immatériel (PCI). Simultanément, les activités menées avec les enfants servent de méthodologie pour collecter des données sur le terrain, traiter ces données sous différentes formes d'archivage, et ainsi sécuriser la pérennité de cet élément du PCI.



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**Rachel Gefferie** is a postgraduate researcher in social anthropology at the University of Kent, UK. Rachel was born and raised in Suriname, South America, where she obtained broad experience as a social worker and community development worker. Rachel is a member of NAKS in Suriname and is part of the UNESCO ICH unit that coordinates research programs, data-collection activities, and life-history recordings with the aim of safeguarding Afro-Surinamese ICH elements.

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**Siegmien Staphorst** is the current chair of NAKS in Suriname and was the first female minister in the nation. In her role as minister and chair of the NGO, she has implemented several successful and sustainable community development projects, namely in the interior and countryside of Suriname. Her influence in the field of socio-cultural development cannot be overlooked. Her involvement in transmitting, preserving, and safeguarding Afro-Surinamese ICH elements is of particular importance. She has facilitated the promotion and supported the raising of awareness of Afro-Surinamese literature, arts, and theater performances in Suriname and abroad.

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**Ingrid Read** is an experienced librarian with a great passion for safeguarding the ICH of Indigenous people in Suriname. In her role as a librarian, she has initiated and coordinated various socio-cultural programs to transfer knowledge, skills, and the history of Indigenous culture in Suriname. Ingrid worked closely with Rachel Gefferie on the project This Is Me with My Own Culture and was comprehensively trained to become a knowledgeable trainer for this project. Currently, she is participating in the Alakondre Tori Toolkit program as a trainer to transfer knowledge and different storytelling techniques to the staff of the Naks Difrenti Siri division.

# *Female Storytelling in Morocco: An Autobiographical Experience*

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**Bohra Laghssais**

Project Soar Morocco



## 2. Female Storytelling in Morocco: An Autobiographical Experience

**Bochra Laghssais**  
Project Soar Morocco

### Introduction

This article documents my personal journey as a female storyteller in Marrakech, doing a profession that is traditionally reserved for men. Hailing from an Amazigh family, my earlier exposure to storytelling was via my grandmother. As an indigenous group, storytelling has been a way we carry and transmit our collective history. Later, when I moved to Marrakech, my experience with storytelling evolved by being professionally trained to be a storyteller by the master of storytelling, Hajj Ahmed Ezzarghani, in Café Clock Marrakech, where I performed storytelling under his guidance. Café Clock plays an important role in safeguarding Moroccan storytelling heritage through its cultural activities and storytelling programs. Thanks to work in the field of girls' education by NGOs such as Project Soar, such opportunities are now also accessible to women and girls. In addition, this article also talks about how storytelling is used as a means of peace-building and conflict transformation by creating a space for mediation, reconciliation, and inspiration.

Historically within Morocco, patriarchy takes its form within and is thus tightly coupled to the different spaces in which life takes place. In general, it can be asserted that the "public sphere is constructed as not only male but authority-laden and what is the private sphere is not only female but non-authoritative" (Sadiqi, 2017: 47). Up to only very recently, female storytellers were relegated to the private sphere where mothers, sisters, aunts, and grandmothers told stories while their male counterparts enjoyed a more public storytelling role being able to perform their art outside of the home, such as in public squares

in towns and cities. One example of this can be found at Jemaa el-Fna Square in Marrakech, where people for centuries have gathered to watch the *l'halqa* performed by male storytellers. These storytellers would sometimes perform stories that lasted for hours to entertain their crowds.

The perceptions of women in traditional roles as a good mother and housewife who is expected to bring up children and attend to her household chores are changing as women are gaining more access to more public spaces and changing the narrative. A noticeable change in the mentality is visible because of the influence of globalization and access to education for women and girls, which have, in turn, impacted Gender power dynamics within Morocco. Entities such as Project Soar, which is an NGO that advocates for girls' education within Morocco, play an important role in these developments. During a stroll in Jemaa el-Fna today, you will have more female participation in the public sphere. Storytelling has moved into spaces like cafes, for example, Café Clock Marrakech, where I worked, where stories are performed in both English and Moroccan Arabic Darija for international and national audiences.

### First Exposure to Storytelling

The Amazigh culture in North Africa, where I hail from, has historically transmitted its knowledge and history through generations via arts such as storytelling, carpet weaving, pottery, tattoos, poetry, music, and more. Women play an important role in this transmission and in preserving the culture's historical record. Due to the oral nature of the

Amazigh civilization, storytelling can be identified as a fundamental tool for recording our history. From an early age, I grew up hearing stories about Amazigh kings and queens from my grandmother, who used to tell my siblings and me stories before bed. Besides entertainment, these stories also served the purpose of transmitting the morals, values, and wisdom of our ancestors to us.

My grandmother used to tell me tales such as "Hedgehog and the Jackal," known across Amazigh culture as "Bumḥmed d wušen," which is about a hedgehog and a jackal who work the fields together. As they were plowing, the hedgehog was treacherous to the jackal and would from time to time, disappear

Photo of storyteller  
Bochra Laghssais in  
Marrakech, Morocco,  
2021 © Bochra  
Laghssais





to eat from their lunch of fermented butter, each time providing excuses to the jackal for not working his share. They continue until the harvest when the jackal is betrayed by the hedgehog on the harvest's yield.

Representation of animals as an analogy in Amazigh culture commonly conveys messages about trust, betrayal and friendship, treachery, courage, and loyalty. This goes back to the times when my ancestors were nomads of the Ait Atta tribe before they settled into a sedentary lifestyle. As nomads, they traveled across the southeast region of Morocco known as Drâa-Tafilalet. During that time, they took their flocks to the fields for grazing, which gave them much time to think and reflect upon life and observe nature. These thoughts and reflections were used as inspiration for weaving their stories with moral values, which were then passed down to us.

### Becoming a Professional Storyteller

My storytelling training began back in 2014 when a friend introduced me, after my arrival in Marrakech to pursue my bachelor's degree, to Café-Clock, which is a cross-cultural café. It is here where I met Hajj Ahmed Ezzarghani, a master of storytelling, who welcomed me to learn from him as his apprentice.

It was here that I learned storytelling goes beyond a mere narration of a story and is all about the performance. Attire, movements, and tone of voice all come together in the final act to bring across the narrative in an engaging way. Hajj Ezzarghani always emphasized that mastery of all of these elements is what makes a great storyteller.

As we received guests from both the national and international levels, storytelling in the café served a dual purpose of entertainment for the locals but also provided understanding and context of Moroccan culture to international guests. As the stories portray values and knowledge as understood by Moroccans, this can be categorized as an effort to decolonize our history and culture, where within the literature, most information available is from an outside perspective. We always received many questions about the stories, our culture, history, and Marrakech itself after each performance.

One of the biggest challenges I faced at the beginning while working at Café-Clock was the translation of stories from Darija (Moroccan Arabic) to English for the international crowds. Despite speaking English fluently and studying English literature for my bachelor's degree at the

Photo of Storyteller  
Bochra Laghssais  
performing storytelling  
at Café Clock  
Marrakech, 2016  
©Bochra Laghssais



time, translation between these languages, especially for stories, can be difficult as a lot of analogies are used within the stories, which are hard to understand without the cultural context in which they exist. Whenever I ran into such difficulties, I consulted with Hajj Ezzarghani, who could always help me find the right words to provide an understandable meaning for our international guests.

### Storytelling for Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation

As people generally find it easy to relate to stories, personal stories, and storytelling can be seen as valuable tools towards peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Because stories carry the voices and feelings of people, storytelling helps to increase empathy towards one another and create a safe space for mutual understanding and healing. According to Coburn:

*The skills of storytelling are easy to learn. In fact, many storytellers emphasize that we are all natural storytellers. Storytelling does not require expensive equipment, extensive training, or a special environment. The beauty of stories lies in their effectiveness at conveying meaning for all people, empowering those who have little access to resources, as storytelling is participatory and inclusive. (Coburn, 2011: 1-2)*

Personal stories, in particular, help listeners engage on an emotional level with the storyteller and vice versa and help generate awareness, empathy, and understanding of different cultures and backgrounds.



Michelle Obama, in her documentary entitled *Becoming*, highlighted the fact that telling personal stories is a powerful practice that shows the strength of an individual. Strength in facing adversities and transforming conflict positively. This personal story is unique for every individual, and people can engage easily with these types of stories as they incorporate the subjective experience of the storyteller rather than a static representation of a person.

One of the roles peacemakers fulfill is moving from a reality of conflict and violence towards what was coined by John Paul Lederach (2005) as *the space of moral imagination*. Storytelling and moral imagination can help peacebuilders to work more effectively in the turmoil of conflict situations. In the process of learning, unlearning, and re-learning required for conflict transformation, active listening is a key factor in facilitating this process.

Storytelling, during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, which imposed strict physical distancing rules and curfews around the globe making physical events challenging, has adapted and moved into the virtual domain with new initiatives which have used online platforms to connect people from all over the world. One such project in which I am participating in is the *World Storytelling Café* initiative which emerged to enable people to share their passion for storytelling and alleviate and ease the life of people during the lockdowns and working-from-home periods instated around the world. People from all around the world are brought together to share stories amongst each other with the goal of learning about cultures, spreading wisdom, and building peace. By collectively exploring the diverse narratives represented within the stories, new ideas and inspiration for conflict transformation, mediation, and reconciliation can be fostered through initiatives such as this one.



**Photo of storyteller  
Bochra Laghssais with  
Master of Storyteller  
master of storytelling  
Hajj Ahmed Ezzarghani  
in Café Clock  
Marrakech, 2016  
© Bochra Laghssais**

## Conclusion

Knowing that generations of women before me fought to make it happen, I feel truly empowered as the female storyteller I am today to perform this ancient and sacred art in public. My gratefulness towards my grandmother, who sparked my curiosity and fueled my imagination from an early age, knows no boundaries. Additionally, I feel blessed that Hajj Ezzarghani took me under his wing and taught me to perform publicly as part of the first generation of female public storytellers within Marrakech. His wisdom, kindness, open-heartedness, patience, and advice helped me not only to become a storyteller but also helped me grow personally and professionally. I am also grateful for the work of Café Clock in safeguarding Moroccan storytelling heritage. NGOs such as Project Soar have contributed to changing gender dynamics within Morocco through the empowerment of girls and changing the way society looks upon a woman having such a public role. From my experience as a professional storyteller and a peace studies scholar, I have learned that storytelling is a powerful means for peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Sharing cultural stories can generate understanding and appreciation for each other's culture and cultural values. Sharing personal stories is a powerful tool for generating mutual respect, understanding, and recognition, enabling new horizons of peace cultures.

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## Le conte au féminin au Maroc : Une expérience autobiographique

**Bohra Laghssais**  
Projet Soar Maroc

Cet article documente mon parcours personnel de conteuse à Marrakech, exerçant un métier traditionnellement réservé aux hommes. Issu d'une famille amazighe, mon premier contact avec l'art de conter s'est fait par l'intermédiaire de ma grand-mère. En tant que groupe autochtone, ce type de récit a été un moyen de porter et de transmettre notre histoire collective. Plus tard, lorsque j'ai déménagé à Marrakech, mon expérience du conte a évolué à travers une formation professionnelle pour devenir conteuse dispensée par le maître conteur Hajj Ahmed Ezzarghani au Café Clock Marrakech, où j'ai agi comme conteuse sous sa direction. Ce Café joue un rôle important dans la sauvegarde du patrimoine conté marocain à travers ses activités culturelles et ses programmes liés au conte. Grâce au travail dans le domaine de l'éducation des filles par des ONG telles que Project Soar, ces opportunités sont désormais également accessibles aux femmes et aux filles. En outre, cet article explique également comment l'art de conter est utilisé comme moyen de consolidation de la paix et de transformation des conflits en créant un espace de médiation, de réconciliation et d'inspiration.

**Bohra Laghssais** is a 26-year-old Amazigh Moroccan storyteller. She worked as storyteller in Café Clock, a cultural café in Marrakech. She advocates for girls' education and empowerment and worked as coordinator and mentor for Project Soar Morocco, a nonprofit organization advocating for girls' education in Morocco. Currently, she is a third-year Ph.D. researcher in International Peace, Conflict and Development Studies at Jaume I University, Spain. She conducted a pre-doctoral research stay at Leiden University, the Netherlands, from September to November 2021. Her areas of interest are peace studies, gender studies, and feminism, as well as the development and education of girls and women. She won the Prize of Research and Gender in 2020 "IV Premio de Investigación y Género" awarded by the equality unit at Jaume I University in collaboration with the Isonomia Foundation. Some of her latest articles, all published in 2021, are: "Voces desde el margen: luchas de mujeres Amazigh entre necesidades y derechos en Marruecos"; "Manifestation of empowerment in Mernissi's *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*"; and with Irene Comins Mingol: "¿Vulnerabilidad o agencia? Resistencias y empoderamientos de las mujeres indígenas en Marruecos"; "Beyond vulnerability and adversities: Amazigh women's agency and empowerment in Morocco."

# *Next to the Old Art of Storytelling, a New One Is Born*

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**Jurgita Bugailiškienė**

Panevėžys County Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė Public Library

**Asta Sarapienė**

Panevėžys County Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė Public Library



03



### 3. Next to the Old Art of Storytelling, a New One Is Born

**Jurgita Bugailiškienė**

Panevėžys County Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė Public Library

**Asta Sarapienė**

Panevėžys County Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė Public Library

#### Introduction

In Lithuania, in recent decades, storytelling has been nurtured by folklore enthusiasts and individual storytellers at various traditional cultural events.

For a long time, storytelling has been little known to the public and was usually considered only as part of folk storytellers' performances sharing tales and stories in various dialects.

Now the situation in the country is changing as more and more NGOs, state institutions, and individual storytellers are involved in a wider scope of storytelling projects and activities, including various social and cultural aspects of today's life. Not only specialized festivals and initiatives



Storytellers and curators Daiva Ivanauskaitė and Milda Varnauskaitė introducing one of Citytelling Festival's events, Kaunas 2022. © Linas Žemgulis

are focused on storytelling. Some other thematic initiatives also tend to include storytelling as a tool or method used to develop creative competencies in attractive, interactive ways.

In this article, some Lithuanian storytelling initiative examples are revealed. They cover the period from 1990 to today.

#### Folkloric Storytelling

The Lithuanian National Culture Centre was the key organization that promoted the living heritage of storytelling by organizing various traditional cultural events, contests, and festivals. Among them are the contest for Lithuanian children folk performers Tramtatulis and the competition for adult storytellers called Žodzis Žodžj Gena,<sup>01</sup> and others.

Telling stories, tales, and legends became an integral part of the program of the Lithuanian Song and Dance Celebrations.<sup>02</sup> "For us, the story is an important detail of the folklore mosaic, an integral part of the whole of traditional culture," says Vida Šatkauskienė, Deputy Director for Traditional Cultural Activities of Lithuanian National Culture Centre.

The Tramtatulis competition for children started in Kaunas in 2001; now, it covers the whole country. The competition of folk storytelling expanded from solo performers to groups of singers and musicians. Usually, folk storytellers used to learn the story by heart and share tales and stories in dialects from particular areas of Lithuania. Former beginners of storytelling in youth competitions are now competing in adult events. Children have gone through all age groups in the competition.

The competition for adults, Žodzis Žodžj Gena, has been organized by the Lithuanian National Culture Centre and Druskininkai Culture Centre since 2011. The competition panel selects the best storytellers who interpret the narrative folklore in its whole variety of genres and dialects. It includes stories transmitted by older people, tradition-bearers, families, and communities or stories learned from books, recordings, folklore group leaders, and cultural workers. Since the start of the competition, about 350 storytellers have appeared on the stage. Lina Balčiūnienė, ethnographer of Druskininkai Culture Centre and one of the organizers of the competition, remembered when in 2021, a fairytale was revived in a very particular Šišioniškiai dialect at risk of disappearing (currently only about eighty people speak it in Lithuania). She followed by saying

- 01.** Meaning "Word after Word's Driving"
- 02.** Baltic Song and Dance Celebration was inscribed in 2008 on the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. It represents large-scale festivals that take place every fifth year in Estonia and Latvia and every fourth year in Lithuania. Their repertoires reflect the wide range of musical traditions in the Baltic States, from the most ancient folk songs to contemporary compositions.



that such storytelling competitions are a “contagious” practice; other towns (e.g., Varėna) have recently started to organize such competitions at a local level.

Some folk storytellers periodically perform on stages in traditional cultural events and storytelling festivals. The performances usually include storytellers dressed in national costumes.

Old stories and folklore are constantly collected by specialists of the Lithuanian National Culture Centre in expeditions throughout the country. These stories and folklore are stored in archives and re-presented to the public in various forms—they can inspire storytelling beginners.



**Storyteller Domantas Taukinaitis (4 years old), the laureate of competition for children and schoolchildren “Tramtatulis,” performs in the Lithuanian Song and Dance Celebration, the Folklore Day program, 2009.**  
© Juozas Sirusas

## Storytelling for the Needs of Contemporary Society

Recently, more and more cultural, scientific, and educational institutions, NGOs, and communities have been discovering the value of storytelling to listeners, communities, and institutions. Storytelling is recognized as a tool for education, reading, language learning, vocabulary development, and comprehension, as well as a tool for social change while working with communities (integration and therapy) for regional development (tourism and sales) and for entertainment (storytelling performances) (Haven and Ducey, 2007).

Lithuanian storyteller Daiva Ivanauskaitė, a pioneer of the revival and development of contemporary storytelling in Lithuania, works at the Village Storytelling Centre in Glasgow (Scotland). She has noticed that storytelling is especially relevant to contemporary people immersed in technology, social networks, and virtual reality. A new wave of oral

**03.** Išklausk in Lithuanian means “listen”. The Festival “Išklausk” has been organized by the Baltic Storytelling Centre ([www.facebook.com/balticstorytelling](http://www.facebook.com/balticstorytelling)), an NGO, since 2018

**04.** SEKAS in Lithuanian has varied meanings: 1. success and 2. storytelling. From 2017 to 2018, the Festival SEKAS ([www.facebook.com/compasakojimofestivalisSEKAS](http://www.facebook.com/compasakojimofestivalisSEKAS)) was organized by World Community of Anykščiai, an NGO, recently Panevėžys Library undertook organizing the Festival.

**05.** The Story Sharing Café ([www.storysharinguniversum.fi](http://www.storysharinguniversum.fi)) was created as an integration and communication tool in Finland. A method of social gathering helps immigrants, asylum seekers, and Finns meet and share stories together. It is implemented by the Theatre House Universum in Helsinki, Finland.

storytelling arose as a response to deepening isolation and loneliness. According to her, storytelling is an invitation to take a break from the barrage of content, meet real people and exchange stories.

Storyteller Milda Varnauskaitė, who graduated from the Mezrab Storytelling School in Amsterdam, is currently living in Lithuania and collaborating with Vilnius University and the National Museum of Lithuania. She considers storytelling as a way to transmit values, and she highlights the positive changes in Lithuanian storytelling. Storytelling has been included in the Kaunas—European Capital of Culture 2022 program—and it has been discussed at international conferences and events held in Kaunas, Vilnius, and Panevėžys in 2022. Storytelling evenings took place at Vilnius University, a network of storytelling libraries was created, and various activities for children and youth focused on history, and cultural heritage learning were implemented by the guides of the Lithuanian National Museum through storytelling programs. Festivals like Išklausk<sup>03</sup> and SEKAS<sup>04</sup> are organized periodically.

NGOs, communities, and individual storytellers take part in international, national, and local projects and learn applied storytelling and the art of storytelling practices from other storytellers. Cultural, scientific, and educational institutions, NGOs, and communities are re-discovering informal storytelling, community storytelling, and professional storytelling (Haven and Ducey, 2007) and integrating these practices and skills into new initiatives for the needs of contemporary society.

## Applied Storytelling—Storytelling in Libraries

The Panevėžys County Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė Public Library (henceforth the Panevėžys Library) applies various storytelling methods, creating non-formal educational storytelling classes for different audiences and storytelling tours. The library uses the benefits of spontaneous story-making and storytelling in the library’s informal communities (e.g., the Youth Storytelling Club and the Seniors Club). The Story Sharing Café<sup>05</sup> method is practiced during various events in the library (e.g., helping the audience experience cultural heritage).

Jurgita Bugailiškienė, Director of the Panevėžys Library and member of the Lithuanian Librarians Association, an NGO, is convinced that storytelling is a way for libraries to connect with local communities. Story-based, non-formal educational activities engage, open the imagination, and create a safe space for self-expression. By listening to stories, audiences learn and get to know literature, the world, and themselves.

At the same time, libraries improve in approaching their readers. Since 2019, six storytelling projects have been implemented by this library.

During the project, *Creating a Model of Storytelling Art and Method for Lithuanian Libraries (2020–2022)*, librarians improved their competencies required for storytelling. The training program was based on the Competence Model for Oral Storytelling (Gerard, 2019). After the training, forty librarians from twenty-five regional libraries created five new educational storytelling classes based on literature and folklore. In 2022, more than one thousand children, young people, adults, and seniors participated in these storytelling classes in different libraries in the region. Due to this project, a community of librarians using storytelling in non-formal education has emerged, and a network of regional storytelling libraries has been created.

Panevėžys continues to organize the international storytelling festival SEKAS, which has been held in the town of Anykščiai since 2017 by the World Community of Anykštėnai. This NGO unites people who originated from the Anykščiai region.

For the purpose of sharing its experience, the Panevėžys Library published a methodological manual, *“How to Tell Stories. A Beginner’s Guide,”* in 2021. It contains knowledge gained over the years as well as findings and practical advice for all those interested in storytelling.

## The Art of Storytelling—Storytelling in Theatres

Some Lithuanian theatre professionals started to use storytelling for their stage performances. They are looking for new ways to create unique experiences for audiences and seek a more intimate relationship between the teller and the listener. Storytelling as a social art and cultural activity helps actors to share stories and their experiences in a different way—as a conversation between the performer and the audience (Ramsden and Hollingsworth, 2013).



**Storyteller and librarian Dalia Motiejūnienė from the Panevėžys region conducts educational storytelling classes for the visitors of the Vilnius Book Fair, 2022. © Panevėžys County Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė Public Library**

Sometimes theatre professionals intentionally create storytelling performances to give a voice to those who need to be heard. Such stories reflect themes and situations that hurt. Performances aim to create a precedent for crowd empathy, manifest a social position, and offer a new model of behavior and relationship with those who are “different.”

According to Aleksandr Špilevoj<sup>06</sup>, the biggest difference between regular performances and storytelling is that in the first case, the story is told or acted out by the characters, and in the second, it is by the performers themselves. Storytelling performances create an incredibly open relationship between the audience and the actors, who seem to meet for a conversation. For the theatre itself, storytelling gives new forms of dramaturgy, which promotes the development of theatre art.

Aleksandr Špilevoj teaches storytelling to young actors and directors studying at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre in creative laboratories, in which he conducts story-making and storytelling classes for theatre professionals of different generations.

Paulius Tamolė<sup>07</sup> is convinced that storytelling as a skill can be applied in many areas of social life, from culture and education to business, and it is especially needed for children and youth. His five-year experience as a storyteller was extremely useful for leading the youth summer camp, being a creative storytelling workshop for teenagers organized by the Jonas Šliūpas Museum of Palanga.

## Community Storytelling—Storytelling in Education

Storytelling is included in the study programs at the College of Social Sciences, one of Lithuania’s higher schools. There is a teachers’ group of storytelling enthusiasts. Their interests are in video storytelling, digital storytelling, storytelling in business, and public speaking.

The College of Social Sciences successfully organizes storytelling events focused on various topics related to studies.

In 2022, the FEST<sup>08</sup> annual conference was held here. The College of Social Sciences and the Panevėžys Library have since become full members of FEST.

The Vilnius University Cultural Centre started a community storytelling initiative called Salon in 2018. The idea of Salon was born during an international storytelling festival in Anykščiai when Gintė Jokūbaitienė,

### 06.

The actor and director of the Panevėžys Juozas Miltinis Drama Theatre using storytelling elements in the various performances: “On the Way,” Šiauliai Drama Theatre, 2022; “Stepas, Step on the Gas!,” theatre “Meno Alchemija”, an NGO; 2021, “ANTI,” theatre “Menas”, 2021

### 07.

The actor and director of the storytelling performance based on Hans Christian Andersen’s popular fairy tale “The Snow Queen,” 2019

### 08.

FEST, Federation of European Storytelling (<https://fest-network.eu/research/a-competence-model-for-oal-storytelling/>).





**Storyteller Milda Varnauskaitė in one of the Citytelling Festival's events, 2022 © Algimantas Aleksandravičius**

Head of the Vilnius University Cultural Centre, met storyteller Milda Varnauskaitė and decided to organize storytelling evenings at Vilnius University.

Anyone who attends the Salon storytelling evening can stand in front of the audience and tell any story they want. This practice is based on the knowledge that storytelling is a path of inner development. This activity brings together the community of storytellers who feed their souls and free their imaginations while sharing and hearing stories (Ramsden and Hollingsworth, 2013). Storytelling gives a deep sense of belonging, builds up trust in each other, and creates nourishment and warmth for communities. Since 2018, open storytelling evenings have taken place at Vilnius University once a month every academic year. Members of the community of Vilnius University, other scientific institutions, and individual citizens of Vilnius attend.

The Cultural Centre of Vilnius University also organizes storytelling workshops for students and university employees at least several times a year. In these workshops, students learn to tell stories and fairytales and discover narratives relevant to various cultural and historical contexts.

### Storytelling as Part of “Kaunas—European Capital of Culture 2022”

More than a thousand cultural events have been created within the Kaunas—European Capital of Culture program. One of its major events, the Citytelling Festival 2022: JOURNEY HOME, included storytelling evenings in city courtyards, and storytellers from different cultures and

**09.** “Slabotkės Vyšnelė” (“Cherry of Slabotké”) was one of the performances created by storyteller Dominykas Vaitiekūnas for The Citytelling Festival, Kaunas, 2022. The performance was based on the personal memories about the aunt of the actor and his childhood.

countries appeared in city streets and story tours through Kaunas, and cozy storytelling evenings<sup>09</sup> took place in Kaunas cafés. The program was curated by storytellers Daiva Ivanauskaitė and Milda Varnauskaitė.

Since 2019, the Citytelling Festival has been about the complex history of the city, reminding us of events that we often keep silent about, returning the names of those who created it—people of various nationalities, religions, and cultures—to the city’s narratives, including painful stories related to the Kaunas Ghetto Orchestra, Holocaust, World War II, Soviet occupation, and exile. This festival invites everyone to learn from historical mistakes, and by using the language of art, listeners learn empathy and openness to others and their differences. In addition, this initiative brings together all those who tell stories—artists, communities, museums, libraries, enthusiasts, professional storytellers, local communities, etc.

### Conclusion

Not only public cultural, scientific, and educational institutions but also NGOs and communities in various cities and villages in Lithuania return to the art of storytelling in both folkloristic and contemporary ways. Storytelling became an integral part of various events of traditional culture and folklore. At the same time, more and more activities of contemporary storytelling have been initiated by those who graduated from storytelling schools and courses for adults abroad. They spread a new understanding of the possibilities and the value of the contemporary art of storytelling in Lithuania.



**Storyteller and librarian Janina Vyšniauskienė from the Panevėžys region conducts educational storytelling classes for the visitors of the Vilnius Book Fair, 2022. © Panevėžys County Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė Public Library**



Contemporary storytellers inspire cultural institutions to integrate storytelling into their activities. Libraries, museums, universities, schools, theatres, and various NGOs and communities try to transform and adapt traditional storytelling to contemporary audiences as performance art and an applied tool for social change, formal and non-formal education, regional development, and entertainment. Lithuanian museums and libraries started using methods and techniques of spontaneous storytelling while working with their audiences.

Several storytelling communities in Lithuania find storytelling as a path toward inner development and self-realization as well as a tool to better understand other members of society to overcome personal, community, and social challenges and as a tool for dealing with psychological problems. Storytelling, being a form of social art and cultural activity, can be practised by not only skilled storytellers but anyone who needs to be heard.

Storytelling is a niche activity, and that's why separate folk and contemporary storytelling communities in Lithuania should collaborate more, share their practices, and implement common activities to jointly promote the value of this art and culture, making it more visible in society, increasing the number of skilled storytellers, and expanding audiences in Lithuania.

The storytelling genre is probably the most universal means of human communication because anyone can become a storyteller.

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## À côté de l'ancien art du conte, une nouvelle forme est née

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Bibliothèque publique Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė du comté de Panevėžys

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En Lituanie, au cours des dernières décennies, l'art du conte a été nourri principalement par des passionnés de folklore – des spécialistes du Centre national de la culture lituanienne, d'autres institutions culturelles nationales et locales ainsi que des conteurs individuels à l'occasion de divers événements culturels traditionnels. Le conte était peu connu du public et n'était généralement considéré que comme une partie de la culture traditionnelle, identifiée aux performances des conteurs folkloriques, qui partagent des contes et des histoires dans un dialecte d'une région particulière de la Lituanie.

Récemment, l'intérêt pour le conte contemporain en Lituanie a connu une recrudescence. Les conteurs qualifiés inspirent les institutions culturelles à intégrer l'art de conter dans leurs activités culturelles. De plus en plus d'institutions culturelles, scientifiques et éducatives, d'ONG et de communautés découvrent la valeur et l'importance du conte pour les auditeurs, les communautés et la société. Les conteurs transforment et adaptent les récits traditionnels au public contemporain en tant qu'art de la performance et instrument utile pour le changement social, l'éducation formelle et non formelle, le développement régional et le divertissement.

Les spécialistes de diverses institutions et communautés culturelles admettent que le conte constitue une forme d'art social et d'activité culturelle, et qu'il peut être pratiqué non seulement par des professionnels qualifiés, mais par tous ceux qui ont besoin d'être entendus.

Cet article dévoile les initiatives associées au conte les plus intéressantes de ces dernières années en Lituanie.

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**Asta Sarapienė** has a master's degree in Lithuanian Philology from Vilnius University, Lithuania. She has tried most media fields—newspapers, TV, and radio—and has experience writing and editing articles and preparing reports. Since May 2022, Asta has worked as a communication specialist in the Department of Communication and Culture Management for the Panevėžys County Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė Public Library, Lithuania.

# *Sagobygden: Oral Storytelling in the Land of Legends, Sweden*

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**Lina Midholm**

The Storytelling Network Kronoberg

**Tine Winther**

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## 4. Sagobygden: Oral Storytelling in the Land of Legends, Sweden

**Lina Midholm**

The Storytelling Network Kronoberg

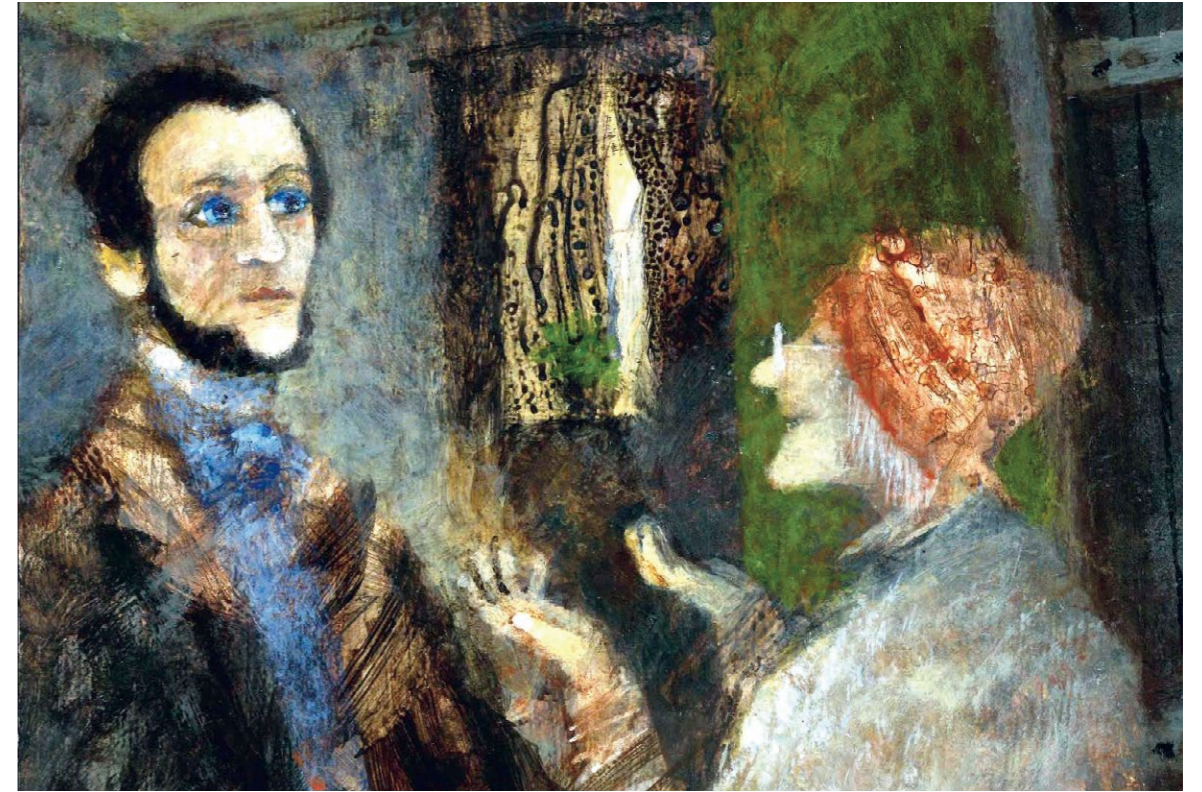
**Tine Winther**

The Storytelling Network Kronoberg

### Abstract

The Storytelling Network of Kronoberg is an accredited NGO to the UNESCO 2003 Convention. The Network runs the Land of Legends program, which has been inscribed on the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices at UNESCO since 2018. The organization was established in 1990, and for more than thirty years, it has been developing, testing, implementing, and supervising a growing range of activities that have succeeded in raising the visibility of storytelling. It has been attracting steady support among the local population and authorities in three contiguous municipalities of the Kronoberg region: Ljungby, Älmhult, and Alvesta in the south of Sweden.

The Storytelling Network runs Sagobygden, which consists of Sagobygden's music and storytelling festival, with around fifty artists and over two thousand listeners. The Museum of Legends is where we have made visible some of the fairytales and legends that were collected in this area during the nineteenth century. With forty-three story locations and location-specific stories placed in red cabinets, Sagobygden also has a wide range of educational work for all ages and at several levels and runs projects in collaboration with other actors both within Sweden and abroad.



**Gunnar Olof Hyltén-Cavallius and Halta Kajsa, 2018 ©Kjell Sundberg/Sagobygden**

The remains of stone foundations and the snowberry bushes are all that are left of the small cottage where Halta Kajsa lived in the 1800s. Gunnar Olof Hyltén-Cavallius, one of Sweden's foremost story recorders, wrote down countless tales, legends, and songs that were in Halta Kajsa's head. Gunnar Olof was born in 1818 in Vislanda parish in Småland, at a time when fairytales were told orally and contributed to the passing on of experiences and knowledge from one generation to the next. The poor widow became one of Gunnar Olof's main sources and her stories became the basis for the books *Svenska Folksagor och Äfventyr* (Hyltén-Cavallius and Stephens, 1844–1849) and *Wärend och Wirdarne* (Hyltén-Cavallius, 1863–1868).

Today in Småland, a region in the south of Sweden, the three municipalities of Alvesta, Ljungby, and Älmhult go by the name Sagobygden (The Land of Legends). Why right here? Well, in addition to the aforementioned Gunnar Olof and Halta Kajsa, two other great storytellers also lived in this area—Mickel i Långhult and Sven Sederström. The botanist Carl von Linné was also born in the area, and he had not only an interest in botany but was also very interested in legends and fairytales. And last but not least, Sweden's first fairytale professor, Carl-Wilhelm von Sydow who founded The Folklife Archive in Lund, was born in the area (Gustavsson and Palmenfelt, 2017). But





Summer in  
Sagobygden, 2020  
©Sagobygden

Let's Start from The Beginning.

During the 1980s, two librarians in Ljungby put the books away and started telling the stories instead of reading them. In 1990, a storytelling festival was organized, and in the same year, the non-profit association Berättarnätet Kronoberg (The Storytelling Network of Kronoberg) was founded. The association aims to protect and highlight the oral storytelling tradition and to create networks for those interested in oral storytelling. Over the more than thirty years that have passed since it was formed, the association and its operation have grown thanks to cooperation partners such as local associations, schools, municipalities, regions, county boards, and state, national, and international bodies.

The association hosts Sagobygden's Music and Storytelling Festival, which with its inception in 1990 is the oldest recurring storytelling festival in the Nordics. The festival covers a large variety of programs, performances, lectures, courses, and fairytale tours. In addition to storytelling, other cultural forms such as music, dance, and crafts are highlighted as well as the storytelling traditions of minorities and other cultures.

Sagobygden also hosts forty-three legendary places with cabinets, and in each cabinet, a story is told about the exact place where the cabinet stands. The places can also be visited digitally via Sagobygden's website



Sagomuseet/The  
Museum of Legends,  
2018 ©Sagobygden

([www.sagobygden.se](http://www.sagobygden.se)) and via a story app where you can listen to the stories in three languages: Swedish, German, and English. There are also forty geocaches placed in nature with a story for each cache. The cabinets and caches are continuously being developed to attract a wider audience to Sagobygden.

Sagomuseet (The Museum of Legends), which is the very heart of Sagobygden, is located in Ljungby and offers guided tours and performances. At the museum members of the public, schools, companies, and other interested parties can take share in the great treasure chest of storytelling. Sagobygden offers educational programs for all ages; storytelling for all, from the youngest to the oldest. Sagobygden also has university courses in oral storytelling for schools and pre-schools and runs several projects, both nationally and internationally. In addition, Sagobygden has published around thirty books.

## The Enthusiasts

A great deal of voluntary work is behind the growth of the operation and one cannot emphasize that contribution enough. Berättarnätet Kronoberg and its activities are a clear example of the power and willingness of members to develop and build together. Summer in Sagobygden, which offers program activities during the summer, is an example of the members' drive because it is largely organized by the association's membership. During Sagobygden's Music and Storytelling Festival, it is noticeable how much interest there is in creating a creative, educational and fun festival. Volunteers from near and far register their interests and help create the renowned festival year after year.

## Playground, Streets, and Tourism

The Region of Kronoberg and the three municipalities of Alvesta, Ljungby, and Älmhult have all promoted storytelling in their culture plan. However, this has not always been the case. In 2013, Sagobygden carried out a preliminary study on behalf of the region, where the focus was on oral storytelling as part of the intangible cultural heritage. The study showed at an early stage that, among other things, knowledge of intangible cultural heritage was low among cultural actors in the region and that the concept itself was relatively unknown to many. Knowledge of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural





Oral storytelling at the  
Culture School, 2019  
©Sagobygden

Heritage that Sweden ratified in 2011 was non-existent and was confused with the World Heritage Convention.

Through conversations and workshops within the region and the municipalities, things have now changed. Today, oral storytelling is one of Ljungby municipality's focus areas. This means that oral storytelling is given a large space in the municipality's various administrations, which use storytelling in the care of the elderly, in schools, and the corporate world. In addition, it can be seen in the cityscape, where roads are named after locations from legends and stories. In the autumn of 2022, a new playground was inaugurated with, among other things, a figure that is strongly associated with Sagobygden. The other two municipalities in Sagobygden are not far behind with new street names and offers for tourists. The UNESCO accreditation of Sagobygden is used by municipalities and tourist organizations in marketing.

That an operation like Sagobygden, which has grown so large and has become part of society and yet still has to rely mostly on not-for-profit forces, project funds, and grants are difficult to justify in the long run. Constant struggles with financial challenges can easily overshadow creativity and creation. The extent to which representatives of civil

society have the opportunity to participate in the convention work is dependent on financial opportunities. Sagobygden is currently 30 percent financed by funds from the state, the region, and the three municipalities, the remaining 70 percent of income is raised via educational work and project funds. All funds are for the entire Sagobygden operation, with no funds specifically set aside for the convention work.

### Activities—Some Examples

The Cultural School in Ljungby has, for some years, been making it possible for everyone between the ages of nine and nineteen to take a course in oral storytelling. The municipality has applied for funding for the course from the State Council for Culture. Sagobygden also has activities through the Creative School, a state grant that the schools can apply for, which contributes to integrating culture and artistic expressions at schools in the longer term. Unfortunately, this is a rather vulnerable economic solution that political interests can influence all too easily.

Sagobygden works on giving children and young people a voice in society, by learning to tell stories. By working internationally, Sagobygden is part of several projects. One example is an Erasmus+ project that has given young people the opportunity to put experiences into words, experiences, and stories that they have heard at the dinner table at home. In addition, Sagobygden gets the opportunity to be inspired by similar work in Latvia, Ireland, and Spain.



Cliff Burton's memorial  
and cabinet No. 43,  
2022 ©Sagobygden



## Stories in the Landscape

Of the forty-three story locations with cabinets that can be found in Sagobygden today, forty-two of them reflect an older storytelling tradition and convey stories from Halta Kajsa's time, and even further back. These stories were collected by the archives at the turn of the last century when there were concerns that the old ways would disappear along with urbanization, industrialization, and emigration. These legends are about wicked bailiffs, wise old women, various sea creatures, the trolls' party on Christmas Eve, outwitting Danish soldiers, treasures guarded by dragons, and troll trees.<sup>01</sup>

But cabinet number forty-three connects to a real event, and instead, it conveys a more recent story about how fate controls our lives. It is the myth of the ace of spades, also known as "the card of death".

*It was 1986 when the still quite unknown band Metallica were traveling in their tour bus on their way from Stockholm to Copenhagen. When it was time to sleep, two of the members of the band wanted the best sleeping spot, by the window. A pack of playing cards was brought out and whoever drew the highest card would be the winner. Bassist Cliff Burton drew the ace of spades and won. But it would turn out that he, in fact, lost.*

There was an accident, and he was thrown out of the bus window, and when the bus overturned, he ended up under it. At the site, which is very well visited both nationally and internationally, there is a memorial stone to Cliff Burton.

The ambition is to expand the number of locations in Sagobygden with more contemporary stories and legends. Stories can bring a place to life, and the place can, in turn, bring a story to life. Stories can orient us in the landscape, and they can spread local history and help strengthen the community across generational and cultural boundaries. At the same time, landscapes and places change, and people, come and go, but as long as the story is told, it lives on. To be able to carry out projects like these, funds are required, which Sagobygden constantly must apply for.

## Moving Forward

To be able to develop the operation, about a year ago Sagobygden established a scientific council to monitor the operation, provide critical views, and inspire method development based on scientific findings. The scientific council represents different disciplines such as ethnology,

**01.**  
Of these forty-two places, thirty-one are also included in the Swedish National Heritage Board's Fornsök as a place with tradition, either as an ancient remain or other cultural-historical remains.

cultural heritage, archaeology, design, entrepreneurship, and pedagogy. A preliminary study has also been made for a possible institute for oral storytelling, which in that case would be located in connection to Sagomuseet.

Recently, a dissertation in pedagogy showed that a teacher's oral narration can arouse students' interest, give them new perspectives on the content of school subjects and strengthen the relationship between teacher and student (Henricsson, 2022).

Old folk tales are spread over many of the world's countries. They may have different forms, but the core itself is the same and recognizable. Today, these fairytales can be used and integrated with new arrivals. Here we find the similarities rather than the differences. They inspire, develop, and strengthen one's own narrative, language, and communication (Gustavsson and Thomasson, 2020; Henricsson and Lundgren, 2016).

The legends can be used in the schools' work with source criticism and value foundations. The old tales from the past, about gnomes and trolls, were often told to explain the inexplicable, about the fear of what was different and to find something or someone to blame. Today, we can compare it to "fake news" that spreads with lightning speed via the internet and turns into truths and accusations (Gustavsson and Thomasson, 2015).

And when everything else has to be left behind, we take the stories with us. The tales that are told, and what we hold in our heads reunite us and make us feel a sense of belonging. Now you're going to hear... Let me tell you... Once upon a time...

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## Résumé

# Sagobygden : le récit oral en Suède, le Pays des légendes

**Lina Midholm**

Réseau du conte de Kronoberg

**Tine Winther**

Réseau du conte de Kronoberg

Le Réseau du conte de Kronoberg est une ONG accréditée auprès de la convention de l'UNESCO de 2003. Le Réseau gère le programme « Terres de légendes » qui est inscrit au Registre des bonnes pratiques de sauvegarde de l'UNESCO depuis 2018. L'organisation a été créée en 1990 et, depuis plus de 30 ans, elle développe, teste, met en œuvre et supervise une gamme croissante d'activités qui ont permis d'accroître la visibilité du conte. Elle jouit d'un soutien constant parmi la population locale et les autorités de trois municipalités contiguës de la région de Kronoberg : Ljungby, Älmhult et Alvesta dans le sud de la Suède.

Le Réseau du conte gère *Sagobygden*, constitué du festival de musique et de contes de *Sagobygden*, avec environ 50 artistes et plus de 2000 auditeurs; le Musée des Légendes, où nous avons rendu visibles certains des contes de fées et des légendes qui ont été recueillis dans cette région au cours du XIXe siècle, et 43 lieux emblématiques, qui comprennent des histoires spécifiques à un lieu placées dans des armoires rouges. *Sagobygden* propose également un large éventail d'initiatives pédagogiques pour tous les âges et à plusieurs niveaux et gère des projets en collaboration avec d'autres acteurs en Suède et à l'étranger.

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**Lina Midholm** is an ethnologist and storyteller antiquarian at Sagobygden, Sweden. Among other things, she leads the work of collecting new stories and, as an adviser on cultural heritage issues, is responsible for Sagobygden's story locations.

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# *Patuas of Bengal: Singing and Painting Narratives*

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**Ananya Bhattacharya**

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## 5. Patuas of Bengal: Singing and Painting Narratives

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### Abstract

*Patachitra* of Bengal is a storytelling tradition of eastern India practiced by a community known as Patuas. They paint the stories in long scrolls and sing them. The Patuas used to visit rural households and sing songs from mythology, epics, and folklore. This article narrates how the Patuas community living in Naya Village of the Paschim Medinipur District of West Bengal revived their storytelling tradition. There are around five hundred Patuas spread across the districts of Purba and Paschim Medinipur.

Two decades ago, fewer than a score of the tradition bearers in Naya continued the practice. With the proliferation of electronic media, storytellers have lost their audience. To revive their tradition, Contact Base worked with the Patuas to document orally transmitted songs and the forgotten processes of making natural colors. Under the leadership of the veteran storytellers in the village, the Patuas started to paint and sing traditional songs as well as new ones on contemporary issues and happenings. The practitioners started painting their stories on a diverse range of decorative and utility products. Their work was widely appreciated. The Patuas started traveling across India and the globe. The recognition created interest among the youth to pursue the tradition. Currently, all Patua families in Naya are pursuing patachitra as a sustainable livelihood. The painters are regularly commissioned for wall art installations in airports, museums, and prestigious buildings. The village has a community museum. More than a decade back, a village festival was started to create awareness in the community of storytellers.



**Patachitra painting on COVID-19 by Swarna Chitrakar, 2020**  
©Contact Base

The village has now developed as a cultural tourism destination. Patachitra of Bengal has been registered with a Geographical Indication (GI). The painters use social media and websites to promote their work. They also teach about their storytelling tradition in online classes, to children and art lovers worldwide.

The story of Naya has inspired Patua communities in other villages of West Bengal, where the number of practicing artists is currently fewer than ten. The painting forms, motifs, and storylines vary among different parts of West Bengal like Bankura, Purulia, and Birbhum. The Patuas in these areas has now started developing an eco-system for sustained practices and skill transmission. The story of Naya exemplifies how safeguarding ICH contributes to sustainable development.

### Introduction

Since time immemorial, stories have been passed down across generations orally through diverse oral traditions like folklore, ballads, epic songs, poems, etc. Stories are also told through dramatic performances and puppetry. Visual storytelling using narrative art in diverse forms is also popular. Patachitra is a storytelling tradition of West Bengal, a state in eastern India, which marries visual narrative with oral tradition. These storytellers paint stories in a series of frames on a long scroll and sing them. The community is called Patua, and they bear the last name Chitrakar meaning painter. The Patuas sing the stories as they unfurl the scrolls. The songs are called pater gaan.





Visitors listening to  
Pater Gaan, 2016  
©Contact Base

Patachitra comes from Sanskrit and Pali word patta, which implies cloth, and chitra means painting. Thus, the art of patachitra means painting on cloth, along with verbal depictions of the imagery through songs called pater gaan. The storytellers travel from village to village, narrating stories from epics and mythology or singing folklore (Singh, 2003). The mention of pata can be found in the seventh-century text “Harshacharita” (biography of King Harsha) by the Sanskrit poet Banbhata. As television and radio reached rural interiors in the later decades of the twentieth century, the Patuas faced diminishing demand and audience. Most of the tradition bearers gave up practicing or pursuing their traditions (Bajpai, 2016).

### Revival of Patachitra at Naya

The largest cluster of *patachitra* artists lives in Naya Village in the Pingla block of the Paschim Medinipore District of West Bengal. Currently, there are around eighty families who pursue *patachitra* as their livelihood. Around two to three decades back, only a few men used to go around narrating stories in the form of songs with their paintings and received food grains or money. Women used to assist in making colors. Though the Patuas of Naya are followers of Islam, the tradition is inherently syncretic. Many of the stories narrated through *pater gaan* are from the epics of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, regional stories of gods and goddesses such as “Manasa Mangal” (story of the snake goddess Manasa) (Bengal Patachitra, 2019), “Chandi Mangal” (story of the incarnation of Goddess Durga called Chandi), and others. There are also



Making natural color  
with marigold, 2015  
©Contact Base

scrolls on the indigenous story of the origin of man (Bengal Patachitra, 2020) and indigenous ways of life.

Contact Base has been working with the community since 2005 to revive and revitalize performing art traditions. The approach has been to innovate and create new markets for art forms that have lost their traditional audience and context of performance and practice. When Contact Base started documenting the oral tradition, the team observed that only two or three of the masters knew the songs. Dukhushyam Chitrakar knew a large number of songs, and a training program was initiated under his leadership. The Patuas also documented and revived the lost tradition of making colors from fruits, flowers, leaves, and rocks.

Women painters like Swarna Chitrakar and Manimala Chitrakar started painting on new themes like gender rights and environmental conservation to inspire others to innovate. The *patachitras* on catastrophes like 9/11 and tsunamis have become very popular. Nowadays the Patuas are regularly commissioned to paint on a variety of themes



A Patachitra on solar  
energy by Manu  
Chitrakar, 2022  
©Contact Base

Contemporary artists worked with the Patuas to paint on apparel, leather, wood, and canvas and cultural offerings now included a wide range of utility items and decorative products telling the stories. This led to improved income and the artists started attending handicraft fairs and exhibitions



in different cities. Improved income has led to greater interest in the community to relearn their art.



The Art for Life model of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, developed by Contact Base, safeguards the art forms by supporting skill development, direct market linkage of the artists and development of the artist village as a cultural hub. In 2010 Contact Base and the Patua community organized a village festival named POT Maya at Naya and invited art and craft lovers, educational institutions, and students. Over the years the Government also supported the annual village festival. The village has developed as a cultural destination based only on its intangible cultural heritage, drawing visitors from across the country and the world. Many families now offer homestay. With the increased number of visitors, guest houses have come up in the neighborhood offering night stays in a rural setting.

National and international recognition has resulted in community pride and catalyzed the rejuvenation of the tradition. With improved income, there is improved quality of life and sanitation. Safeguarding of *patachitra* has contributed to SDG 1 (alleviation of poverty), SDG 5 (women empowerment), SDG 8 (decent work), and SDG 11 (protection of cultural heritage). The state government has supported the development of a folk art centre as part of its Rural Craft Hub initiative (2013-2016).

Visitors at Naya appreciating diversified products, 2019 ©Contact Base

## IP and Heritage Sensitive Commercialization

A significant milestone achieved in 2018 was the registration of a Geographical Indication (GI) for *patachitra* of Bengal. While the GI is registered under Chitrataru, the artists' collective, individual painters are also registered as users. The GI for *patachitra* is a 'Green GI,' highlighting the environment-friendly practice of using natural colors from vegetables, earth, and mineral sources and recycling old clothes for making scrolls. The GI application describes *patachitra* in classes sixteen (painting) and twenty-four (textiles). The GI thus recognizes that goods covered by GI have to be painted rather than printed and recognizes the knowledge of the Patuas regarding natural colors (Ubertazzi, 2020). The Patuas now use the GI logo on their packaging.



Product tag with GI Logo and QR Code, 2021 ©Contact Base

As *patachitra* became popular, the Patuas faced new challenges like the use of their paintings in books, diaries, calendars, and artwork without attribution; duplication of their painting; use of prints of their paintings; etc. In research supported by the British Academy, a multidisciplinary team from Coventry University collaborated with Contact Base and the Patuas to explore how IP and digital strategies can be used to market their art to a wider audience (Waelde et al., 2021). The artists worked with stakeholders like gallery owners, publishers, craft retailers, photographers, and others who use their art to develop a code of

ethics to explain their rights (HIPAMS India, 2019). The UNESCO 2003 Convention's Ethical Principles (UNESCO, 2015) gave the foundational basis for these codes. While Indian laws on copyrights, image rights, or performers' rights give the Patuas the right to prevent unauthorized copying or distribution of recorded content, enforcement is difficult. The art codes have helped the Patuas to negotiate better prices when someone wants to print multiple copies or use their art in any way. The Patuas have also started signing their paintings to enforce copyright. They are using a Creative Commons License to create awareness of the unauthorized use of photographs and videos. Naya Village now has a board mentioning photography and recording, and non-commercial dissemination is welcome under a CC-BY-NC license. To empower the



Patuas as protagonists of their marketing strategies, they were trained in social media and digital storytelling. The Patuas were encouraged to build a collective brand for Bengal *patachitra*, as web analytics revealed that the art tradition was overshadowed by the Odisha *patachitra* tradition of the neighboring state. They started promoting hashtags and shared audiovisual recordings of Bengal Patachitra (2020) website. The outcome was greater control of the artist community in the commercialization process (Rinallo, 2020; Rinallo, 2021).

## ICH and Resilience

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a disruption in market channels and village tourism. Swarna Chitrakar developed a song and painted a scroll about the pandemic and recorded and shared the recording on social media. The song raises awareness about the health crisis and the precautionary measures that should be taken. Swarna represented the virus as a bright red monster on her scroll painting. The video went viral and had more than a million hits.



Online heritage education class, 2022  
©Contact Base

The artists also started to take online heritage education classes and started teaching making natural color and narrating stories in painted frames to young people across the world (Belanus, 2020). Access to songs via websites and social media has increased demand for the songs. Buyers now want recordings of the songs and translations of the story along with the painted works. The painters send QR codes that give access to the recordings on their website, [www.bengalpatachitra.com](http://www.bengalpatachitra.com). In this way, digital strategies to promote and market *patachitra* have reinforced the link between *pater gaan* (songs) and paintings or painted products. The young generation is providing leadership in the use of the internet and social media for storytelling.

Contact Base is now exploring the use of digital tools to enrich storytelling. In a workshop with a team of Danish animators from Perlefilm, children created an animated version of Hans Christian Anderson's story "The Emperor's New Clothes" using *patachitra*.



Children at Naya creating animated story, 2021  
©Contact Base

## Conclusion

The Patua community of Naya has been able to revive and revitalize its visual storytelling with oral storytelling traditions in the past decade, unlike several other visual storytelling traditions in India that have lost the oral component. A key achievement has been establishing an ecosystem of skill transmission where the young learn from the elders and innovations supporting new avenues of income through art. Cultural tourism has been instrumental in the process of engaging the community at large. While two decades back, only a handful of painters were traveling to academic conferences in India and abroad and were getting commissioned for work, the strategy of developing the village as a destination led to greater pride and recognition, and engagement of the younger generation. As the Patuas bridged the digital divide, access to recordings created new demand for storytelling. The use of intellectual property rights supported the negotiation of appropriate attribution and value in the market. The process corroborates the importance of interdisciplinary and multipronged approaches for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and using it as an asset for sustainable development.

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## Patuas du Bengale: Chanter et peindre des récits

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Le *patachitra* du Bengale est une tradition de contes de l'est de l'Inde pratiquée par une communauté connue sous le nom de Patua. Ses membres peignent les histoires en longs rouleaux et les chantent. Les Patuas visitaient auparavant les ménages ruraux et chantaient des chansons de la mythologie, des épopées et du folklore. Cet article raconte comment la communauté Patuas vivant dans le village de Naya du district de Paschim Medinipur au Bengale occidental a revitalisé sa tradition contée. Il y a maintenant environ 500 Patuas répartis dans les districts de Purba et Paschim Medinipur. Deux décennies auparavant, moins d'une vingtaine de porteurs de tradition à Naya perpétuaient cette pratique. Avec la prolifération des médias électroniques, les conteurs avaient perdu leur public. Pour faire revivre leur tradition, Contact Base a travaillé avec les Patuas pour documenter les chansons transmises oralement et les processus oubliés de fabrication de la couleur naturelle. Sous la direction des conteurs vétérans du village, les Patuas ont recommencé à peindre et à chanter les chansons traditionnelles ainsi que des compositions récentes sur des problèmes et des événements contemporains. Les praticiens ont commencé à peindre leurs histoires sur une gamme variée de produits décoratifs et utilitaires. Leur travail a été largement apprécié. Les Patuas ont ainsi commencé à voyager à travers l'Inde et le monde. Cette reconnaissance a suscité l'intérêt des jeunes à poursuivre la tradition. Actuellement, toutes les familles patua de Naya se tournent vers le *patachitra* comme moyen de subsistance durable. Les peintres sont régulièrement mandatés pour des installations d'art mural dans des aéroports, des musées ou des bâtiments prestigieux. Le village possède entre autres un musée communautaire. Il y a plus d'une décennie, une fête de village a été organisée pour sensibiliser la communauté des conteurs. Le village s'est ensuite développé en tant que destination de tourisme culturel. Le

*patachitra* du Bengale a aussi été enregistré à travers une indication géographique. Les peintres utilisent les médias sociaux et les sites Web pour promouvoir leur travail. Ils enseignent également leur tradition narrative dans des cours en ligne, aux enfants et aux amateurs d'art du monde entier. L'histoire de Naya a aussi inspiré les communautés patua dans d'autres villages du Bengale occidental, où le nombre d'artistes actifs est actuellement inférieur à dix. Les formes de peinture, les motifs et les histoires varient selon les différentes parties du Bengale occidental comme Bankura, Purulia et Birbhum. Les Patuas de ces zones ont maintenant commencé à développer un écosystème pour des pratiques durables et la transmission des compétences. L'histoire de Naya illustre comment la sauvegarde du PCI contribue au développement durable.

**Ananya Bhattacharya** is the co-founder and director heading projects at Contact Base, a social enterprise specializing in culture and development in India. Ananya is an electrical engineer who studied at Jadavpur University and a Commonwealth Scholar with a master's degree in Sustainable Development from Staffordshire University, UK. Ananya has worked extensively with diverse communities in India to safeguard their ICH.

**Dr. Arina Bardhan** completed her Ph.D. in Sociology from Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India, in 2022. Arina is a project manager at Contact Base. Her areas of interest are sustainable development, gerontology, communication for development, and technology for social knowledge management.

# *Stories of the Acoli Community : Storytelling as a Practice to Enhance Harmony and Unity in a Post-war Community*

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**Okello Quinto**

Gulu Theatre Artists (GUTA)



## 6. Stories of the Acoli Community : Storytelling as a Practice to Enhance Harmony and Unity in a Post-war Community

**Okello Quinto**  
Gulu Theatre Artists (GUTA)

### Introduction

The Acoli community in northern Uganda is part of the Luo community whose origin of migration began from Sudan (Bahr el Ghazal) to the northern part of Uganda. The Acoli community first settled in northern Uganda. At this time, the majority of the population occupying eight districts and one city in the north are the Acoli people. Others proceeded up to Kenya (the Jopalu of Kenya). Part of the Luo continued up to Ethiopia, while the rest remained in Sudan. The Acoli community was affected by the civil war that lasted for over two decades. During the war, the districts where the Acoli people resided were considered poor and the least developed. But as the war came to an end, the communities made a steady recovery. As a result of the war, almost half of the population is young, and most of them still attend school and, therefore, portray a high dependency ratio. Therefore, a great part of the Acoli community does not properly know their cultural history, norms, values, and generational backgrounds. Another fact in this community is that due to the rapid disappearance of fireplaces that were once regarded as classroom areas for informal education where parents or guardians transferred cultural knowledge transfer of culture has reduced. These are no longer common, and the younger generation becomes subject to the influences of Western culture.

The Gulu Theatre Artists (GUTA) NGO was initiated in 1997 with the primary purpose of promoting and strengthening the diverse Acoli cultural identities, enhancing social cohesion and collaboration, and promoting the participation of all people in cultural life. Through the

initiation of regular activities, the NGO strives to promote community-based events on cultural practices that instill beliefs of human dignity and secure the conservation, safeguarding, and continuation of Acoli's intangible cultural heritage. The members of GUTA are mainly from the Acoli community and are active in the Acoli community of northern Uganda. Therefore, community engagement with GUTA is easily established. The members of the NGO speak the language of the Acoli people and are, therefore, better able to facilitate proper communication and knowledge transfer. The Acoli community is known for their hospitality but more so for their cultural practices, highly respected norms and values, firm beliefs, and customs that have been passed on through generations and continue to remain relevant in the community. Cultural traditions, such as oral stories and expressions, are where language serves as a vehicle to transfer cultural elements. Oral traditions consist of folktales, proverbs, riddles, nursery rhymes, legends, myths, epic songs and poems, charms, prayers, chants, drama performances, and so on. The preservation of the Acoli language takes center stage in oral stories. Therefore, GUTA's collaboration with schools where the Acoli stories were translated into English versions became important.

This article focuses on telling folktales as a form of intangible cultural heritage. The Acoli folktale oratory forms an integral part of their daily lives. Most daily activities, rites, and celebrations are performed to the accompaniment of melodious stories oratory, which is punctuated with music and body movement. GUTA is working in partnership with Pageya and Pawel chiefdoms to ensure that the annual program activities are successfully accomplished. GUTA involves the community through talk radio shows, organizing community gatherings, and community celebrations. And the success of these activities is accomplished through the optimal participation of the community and its enthusiasm in submitting several storytelling practice varieties. Their commitment has supported GUTA in safeguarding many Acoli ICH elements, including storytelling.

### The Storytelling Festival

The storytelling festival is an annual event in which members of the community are gathered to compete in skills and knowledge to transfer oral stories with the purpose of educating and entertaining the audience. Skills such as eye contact, storyline development, professional reasoning, dramatization, mature decision-making, etc. The festival is



designed to strengthen community fellowship, value community agency, and develop communication skills such as oral expression and public speaking. GUTA members play a key role in inviting festival participants. To select potential competitors, they first create awareness about the event through various means such as radio programs, community meetings, and road trips to identify potential adjudicators. The groups or individuals who confirm their participation are registered, and the NGO continues to arrange suitable rewards for the participating teams. Over the years, the festival gained great publicity, and the number of participants and the quality of the stories have increased steadily.

## Other Storytelling Practices in the Community

### **Family and Neighborhoods Engaged in a Powerful Storytelling in the Evening**

Subject to the festival, storytelling remains an important daily activity to be consumed by every homestead. In the evening, community members gather at the fireplace, which is considered a significant place for non-formal education in the Acoli tradition. With the support of knowledgeable mentors, specific groups within the community are being educated about past events and morals to further develop the mentors into persons of virtue within their community. The mentors include cultural leaders, elders, chiefs, and professors.



**The storytelling festival is an annual event in which community members are gathered to compete in skills and knowledge to transfer oral stories to educate and entertain the audience, 2017.**  
©Okello Quinto

On some occasions, a person is invited to lecture young women or youths because of their expertise with this group. Such gatherings, for instance, educate the community about the danger and impact of gossiping, and folktales are used as a methodology to creatively express the message. The creative part of this process is that the storytelling happens through an interactive and dynamic transmission between elders or the experts and the group that has been selected for that evening. The elected folktales are always designed as dialogues to facilitate the interaction. At the end of the story, the audience is required to offer possible solutions to the displayed issue as told through the story. This form of storytelling addresses challenges, and as such, it is mostly used by women to not only resolve issues but also make plans for the betterment of the whole community.

To secure the continuation of this tradition, GUTA draws ideas, plans mandatory fireplace gatherings, and installs safeguarding measurements to ensure that transmitting these folktales to the younger

generation happens regularly.

### **Storytelling during Harvest Time and while Waiting to Go to Work in the Field (Work Parties)**

Communal work is a common social practice within Acoli communities. Usually, the women of the community are involved in communal work. While executing their tasks, they would tell each other stories. The narrative of these stories must serve to mold not only young girls but also fellow women as they experience different stages of growth but also denounce unacceptable behavior in society. An example of one such story is:

*Once upon a time, four beautiful young girls went to fetch water. Upon arrival at the well, a poor ugly, and thirsty old woman approached them for a cup of drinking water. Three of the girls denied this old woman access to their drinking utensils, but one girl named Ayaa cleaned her drinking bowl thoroughly and gave the thirsty old woman water to drink. The old woman secretly shared with Ayaa words of wisdom. The other girls disassociated themselves from Ayaa because of her choice to show kindness toward the old woman. As the girls were on their way back home, the three girls drowned because of sudden flooding. But, Ayaa followed the instructions given by the woman and, as such, survived. The moral in this story is clear, which is to always be kind and supportive to all.*

Over the years, GUTA has managed to document a wide variety of storytelling practices in the community. Some of the practices that might be described in a follow-up to this article are stories through visual art,



**An experienced person is invited to lecture young women through the sharing of folktales. It is a methodology mostly used by women to resolve issues and gather productive ideas that will eventually transform the community's life, 2019.**  
©Okello Quinto

whereby GUTA strives to collaborate with visual artists of African Culture Funds ACF to request financial support and visualize the oral stories of the community. Other forms of storytelling share wisdom and life lessons by visualizing animals as humans, relaying stories to children during mealtimes, and using stories to enrich children's life experiences during their upbringing.



### The Future of Storytelling as ICH in the Acoli Community

Folktales, as part of leisure, happen daily and in many forms. While they serve several purposes, the value of such stories is rooted in a local Acoli saying, "To fish knowledge from an elder, one should pay a visit or meet him/her during the elder's leisure time." By doing so, GUTA has managed to source a wide range of hidden and powerful stories from elders.

GUTA continues to work closely with renowned bearers of knowledge in the community, who are practitioners and members of the Council of Elders as well as senior citizens harboring great levels of wisdom and others engaged in safeguarding traditional elements. However, there are times when involving bearers can become a major challenge, especially when it comes to transporting an expert to support a community that is lacking a knowledgeable person.

Situations such as religious differences, a lack of sufficient financial support, and inadequate equipment to document and record the continuation of the ICH continue to remain the biggest challenges to secure the future of safeguarding storytelling as ICH. GUTA continues to strive for further collaboration and the invention of creative ways to promote different storytelling practices in the Acoli community.

**GUTA strives to collaborate with visual artists of African Culture. These artists utilize their talent to capture the folktales through visual art, 2021. ©Okello Quinto**

## La narration comme pratique pour renforcer l'harmonie et l'unité dans une communauté d'après-guerre

**Okello Quinto**

Artistes du théâtre de Gulu (GUTA)

La communauté d'Acoli se remet d'une guerre civile de deux décennies. Elle travaille assidûment à la restauration de ses valeurs et ses traditions communautaires et à l'intégration de pratiques culturelles qui ont traversé les générations. Une société qui a fait face à la violence, à la pénurie et à la destruction causée par la guerre lutte généralement pour retrouver son statut d'avant-guerre. Les défis d'après-guerre tels que les conflits d'identité, la perte de repères culturels et le déséquilibre de la population en fonction du sexe et des générations ont causé des cicatrices profondes. La communauté Acoli n'a pas été épargnée par ces cicatrices. C'est grâce à leur capacité à préserver les traditions, les pratiques culturelles transmises de génération en génération et les rites que ses membres ont relevé le défi de redevenir une communauté unie. L'organisation non gouvernementale GULU Theatre Artists (GUTA), dont les membres font partie de la communauté Acoli, a pris la responsabilité de soutenir les autres membres de la communauté dans leur quête de revitalisation des normes, des valeurs, des croyances, de la fierté et des traditions. Cet article fournit un aperçu approfondi et visuel des différentes formes de récits du patrimoine culturel immatériel acoli. L'auteur s'appuie sur des exemples pour montrer comment le conte favorise le transfert de compétences sociales, personnelles et culturelles. L'objectif de GUTA est de renforcer les capacités des membres de sa communauté et de sauvegarder le patrimoine culturel immatériel, lequel s'est avéré utile pour recouvrer ses forces, assurer un avenir radieux pour la jeune génération et reconquérir une position respectée parmi les autres sociétés qui les entourent.

**Okello Quinto** is the managing director of the UNESCO-accredited NGO the Gulu Theater Artists, Uganda. He is also the prime minister of the Pageya chiefdom and the chair of the Pageya Youth Association (PAYA). Quinto initiated Gulu Theater Artists in 1997 to promote and strengthen Acoli cultural identities, enhance social cohesion, collaborate and participate with people in cultural life, promote community action on cultural practices, and protect and promote Acoli tangible and intangible cultural heritage.



# *Stories behind Family Objects*

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07

## 7. Stories behind Family Objects

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After more than forty years of conceptualization around cultural heritage, UNESCO has encouraged different stakeholders to join their efforts to work with protecting and safeguarding. For many years, world heritage sites seemed far away from their social importance, and intangible cultural heritage elements did not have or seemed not to have a physical representation. This division during the 1980s and 1990s led to different governments demanding more inclusion of non-physical expressions, which in the end, resulted in the 2003 Convention. UNESCO itself has recently worked to diminish that idea during the last several years, making more visible the close relationship between physical and non-physical representations of cultural heritage, which we all already know but need to reinforce.

In that sense, governments, bearer communities, and civil society organizations need to work on that same line, aiming to protect and safeguard all cultural heritage expressions and make visible their tangible and intangible representations. The International Council of Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts (CIOFF®) has been working over the last fifty years to safeguard

**Wooden, gold and silver  
"Mate", 2021  
©Enrique Alcoba**



intangible cultural heritage. Still, it has always been aware of its physical representations through musical instruments, costumes, handicrafts, and dishes, among others.

That is why all its national sections are working toward intangible heritage safeguarding through different projects to make visible the importance of the symbols and processes as well as the products. For CIOFF®, festivals have always been the best way to highlight all cultural heritage elements, as they gather people from all backgrounds through different activities: live performances, fairs, workshops, and exhibitions. Other types of projects are also of interest to CIOFF® National Sections to promote intangible heritage safeguarding at different levels, which is possible thanks to their multi-disciplinary teams.

However, during the last two years, the world has seen a significant change in the ways of living, due to the hard pandemic that suddenly attacked all societal levels. This includes, of course, one of the most affected sectors: the cultural one.

Before the pandemic, festivals and all cultural activities' success depended on contact and proximity, so "reinvention" discourse came in to teach us new ways of creating and different ways of taking in the culture. Fortunately, a lot of organizations were already aware of the importance of social media as a medium to take messages to the most unexpected places, and their projects deserve a lot of attention on these channels, but this was not the case for everyone.

Then all CIOFF® national sections started wondering how we could take the joy and cultural spirit to our usual guests' houses. What channels are available for us to keep spreading the message of cultural safeguarding at all levels?

Lots of projects and initiatives came to life, and some of them continue today, even as the pandemic is slowing. One of these projects found a way to bring together the importance of an object with its symbolic burden, coming back to the roots of the cultural heritage definition: our family members' belongings, passed on through generations, which later became our heritage. For this, social media was a perfect ally.

In 2021, CIOFF® Argentina, through its diffusion committee, created the Objects: Belonging and Identity. An Image, a Testimony project and asked its members to think about an object of great importance to them and to tell the story behind it. The result was amazing, as sometimes our cultural heritage is made up precisely of those ancient family heirlooms and stories that shape our identity before community influence (as

citizens of a country, for example). The project was the best way to bring cultural heritage back to their family houses, where we stayed for more than a year and a half and lived a back-to-basic lifestyle. During those hard times, looking around the four walls was a way to discover ourselves, and the project was also a perfect excuse to think about some forgotten objects, how important they are to us, and all the efforts we should make to protect them, as we have been doing for years with sites and monuments in our cities. It was not in vain, for those objects had been sheltered for an important time in people's memories.

In that sense, the committee designed the parameters of the participation to guarantee the minimum of information to be shared, asking for a photo of the object, the story behind it, and the name of the participant. The easier the way of participation, the more stories they would gather, so the people interested only had to fill a Google forms.

For the implementation itself, a design presenting the object along with the story was planned to be posted on the organization's social media (Facebook and Instagram) regularly to leave enough space for people to react, share, and get familiar with the story. From June to October 2021, daily posts of objects and stories were shared, making the project grow even outside Argentinian borders. Members from CIOFF® Bolivia, Chile, and Paraguay also joined the project with four stories that somehow connected to the Argentinian ones, making also visible the cultural connection among those countries.

An average of seventy stories were gathered and posted, coming from different associate members of CIOFF® Argentina: artistic groups, festivals, delegates, and all CIOFF® Argentina members who wanted to join were free to do so. From the shared stories, it was possible to find a variety of objects such as radios, old irons, wooden tools, earrings, hand fans, musical instruments, trunks, books, handmade clothes, toys, mate containers, documents, and a wide range of elements with symbolic significance for their owners. The storytellers also had a variety of contexts from different regions of the country and ranged between 6 and 70 years old, which also marked different voices to speak about their past and their



Sifón Plaza Hotel, 2021  
©Marcelo Alcoba

perception of self-identity.

One of the most shocking stories came from Ana Vera, whose object was a metal kettle for the stove. Her story:

*My father worked during the harvest, and since the work did not stop until the batch was finished, my sisters and I helped him to complete all the necessary tasks. While the biggest siblings put the burlap bags close to the pipe where the seeds slid till they were filled, and then they sewed them up and put them out in the stubble, I, who was one of the smallest, prepared the herb. In that green kettle, the water was heated over a fire, the herb was added, and the drink was ready to liven up the cool moments of the day or to replace the lunch that was often missed. Every time my dad, Esteban, turned around at the end of the lot, he brought with him the cup that would accompany him on the next stretch. Once this task was accomplished, the kettle returned to the stove (or matera, as it was called), and I joined my sisters' helping.*



Metal kettle for stove,  
2021 ©Ana Vera

In that sense, storytelling then became not only a safeguarding initiative for cultural heritage elements but also a moment of self-reflection about family identity, the past, and Argentinian history itself. Along the stories, it is possible to understand different historical phases of the Argentinian society conformation, starting from the European migration and all the costumes they brought until the 1970s and 1980s social context that keeps shaping today's identities.

A side effect of this project was the readers' reaction and perception of the storytellers. Most of them were colleagues from years within their artistic groups, dancing mates that only shared cultural spaces but never had the opportunity to go in deep into the stories and feelings behind them. Even within the social media posts, some family members of the storytellers came to complement the stories with their own memories, adding information and details that made the stories richer than the originals.

Only with Facebook and Instagram posts the project reached an average of 3,000 people between reactions and shares. However, it had such an impact on the participants and readers that CIOFF® Argentina decided to go further, compiling all the stories into a book to be distributed among its members and published on the organization's website. Additionally, a conference about it and its results, along with



some of the storytellers, was held during the CIOFF® Argentina XIX Cultural Forum in Brinkmann city.

In this case, storytelling through social media became a way of maintaining closeness, strengthening ties, and renewing cultural commitment in the midst of uncertain times. Recalling personal objects along with the stories behind them was a perfect opportunity to confirm that cultural heritage is both a product and a process, and they cannot be split from each other. Movable and non-movable tangible heritage would not be what it is without the symbolic significance that societies have put on them. Legends, myths, stories, memories, and historical events all make what we have called “universal values” and are among the most important reasons for us to want to protect them. The same is so for the intangible heritage expressions that mostly have a physical representation to give context. Traditional recipes would not have had the same impact without the dish itself that allows experimentation with that knowledge; the same is true for music and instruments, handicraft techniques, and the final products.

This storytelling initiative was a call to think about self-identity, as most people involved in the cultural sector are not used to doing so. Reinvention during the pandemic brought an opportunity to think about ourselves and go back to the roots that allowed experimentation in cultural heritage concepts at home, where they all began.

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Après plus de 40 ans de conceptualisation du patrimoine culturel, l'UNESCO a encouragé différentes parties prenantes à joindre leurs efforts pour travailler autour de sa protection et de sa sauvegarde. Le Conseil international des festivals de folklore et des arts populaires (CIOFF®) travaille ainsi depuis 50 ans pour la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel immatériel tout en étant conscient de ses représentations physiques à travers les instruments de musique, les costumes, l'artisanat, la vaisselle, entre autres. Alors que la pandémie a amené à réfléchir à des projets « en abstentiel » pour continuer à partager la culture, le CIOFF® Argentine a mis en œuvre le projet « Objets : appartenance et identité. Une image, un témoignage » en demandant à ses membres de réfléchir à un objet de la plus haute importance pour eux, et de raconter l'histoire qui se cache derrière cet objet. Le résultat a été étonnant, car parfois notre patrimoine culturel est constitué précisément de ces objets anciens, familiaux et de leurs histoires qui façonnent notre identité personnelle, avant celle de la communauté (en tant que citoyens d'un pays, par exemple). Avec cet article, il est possible de discuter du patrimoine culturel dans son ensemble, à la fois des produits et des processus, et de la façon dont un projet apparemment simple, à travers les médias sociaux, peut constituer un moyen unique de revenir aux bases du concept de patrimoine culturel. Le patrimoine matériel mobilier et immobilier ne serait pas ce qu'il est sans la charge symbolique que les sociétés lui ont imprimée. Il en est de même pour les expressions du

patrimoine immatériel, qui ont la plupart du temps une représentation physique qui leur donne du sens.

La présente proposition se fonde sur des innovations en matière de sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel au sein de la famille qui ont été mise en œuvre pendant la période de confinements. L'expérience, basé sur la narration, a permis aux participants et aux organisateurs de vivre une stratégie très importante de sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel et de ramener ces discussions à la maison.

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**Silvana Piemonte** is a cultural manager, folklore performer, and teacher. She studied graphic design, has a degree in folklore, and is an international management and politics in culture and communication graduate. In 2022 she received a PCI research grant, and in 2020 she received a Scholarship for Improvement in Theater Management and Production granted by INT. She has directed and produced "Entrevero Danza en Compañía" since 2017. She is also president of the Culture Commission (2020–24) and coordinator of the Diffusion Committee at CIOFF® Argentina.

.....  
**Ana R. Vera** has been a folklore performer and member of the Lazos de Amistad Association since 2016. As part of the delegation, she attended the third Minguero Jeroky International Festival in Paraguay and the second International Folkloric Dance Encounter for Couples DANZANDO AL PIE DEL MISTI in Peru. She also participated in the delegation that represented Argentina in the fourth edition of the World Folkloriada organized by CIOFF® in South Korea. Since 2014 she has taught various dance initiation workshops for children and tango in public and private spheres.

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**Marcelo P. Alcoba** is a professor of Argentine folk dances and cultural manager, co-founder, and co-artistic director of the Group Abriendo Surcos from Río Cuarto, Argentina, through which he has received national and international awards and distinctions by participating in meetings, festivals, conferences, and congresses in the field of traditional and popular culture in America, Europe, and Asia (1975 to present). As a founding member of CIOFF® Argentina (1988), he has integrated the institutional council in several periods, also serving a term as president (2016–20). He is also a founding member of the Latin American Network of Folkloric Dances for couples and the Argentine delegate of the network of International Children's Festivals organized "Dancing for World Peace."

.....  
**Facundo J. Gaztelú** is a visual communication design student and folklore dancer. He has participated in CIOFF® since 2014, serving as president of CIOFF® Youth Argentina between 2017 and 2022 where, together with the young people of Argentina, he carried out a variety of safeguarding and cultural dissemination projects. He currently works as a youth representative in the CIOFF® Culture Commission.

# *Storytelling in Refugee Camps and Displaced Communities : Embodying Past Times*

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**Sara Green**

Art for Refugees in Transition (A.R.T.)





## 8. Storytelling in Refugee Camps and Displaced Communities: Embodying Past Times

**Sara Green**

*Art for Refugees in Transition (A.R.T.)*

### Introduction

Stories carry our history, our culture, and our traditions from generation to generation. Storytelling preserves and perpetuates this intangible cultural heritage while creating an emotional connection between the storyteller and the listener. In refugee camps, where communities look to their past for a sense of comfort and familiarity, important lessons and values are remembered by the older generations and passed down to younger generations through these stories.

The conflict in Burma, now named Myanmar, has been raging since 1984. A pro-democracy uprising against the military who were in power

**Burmese elders in Thai refugee camp listening to the songs of their heritage in Thai refugee camp, 2003. ©Sara Green**



**Burmese children in Thai refugee camp, 2003 ©Sara Green**

at the time led to the ethnic cleansing of minority groups as well as persecution of students involved in the uprising, millions of Burmese refugees fled their country for safety in Thailand. (Human Rights Watch, 1998.)

After traveling through fields of landmines and military snipers, tens of thousands of Burmese refugees find their way to camps in the northwest corner of Thailand. Searching for safety, freedom, and a new beginning, they are now living in overcrowded refugee camps.

Within the camps, the refugees are given what they need to survive. They have food to eat, medicine to keep them healthy, a place to sleep, clothes to wear, and schools where they can continue their education. They are safe.

Refugees are aided by relief organizations whose mission is to help them survive and begin the processes of rebuilding their lives. When you are placed in these camps for an unspecified amount of time, and all your basic needs are cared for by the NGOs, there is little to no motivation to become self-sufficient.

In Mae Hong Son, UNHCR white and blue plastic tents are nowhere in sight. Instead, the refugees are given wood when they enter the camps with which to build a house. There is a permanency to this, but a permanency with an overhanging question: How should these people be encouraged to move forward with their lives and rebuild? What about their history, their culture, their traditions, and their heritage that was left behind? What about their identity? What are they rebuilding?

### The Project

Art for Refugees in Transition (A.R.T.) implemented its pilot program in 2003 in these camps. A.R.T. helps rebuild individual and community identity for refugees, the displaced, migrants, and the marginalized worldwide. Drawing upon the indigenous art forms of each community, A.R.T.'s programs are designed to enable the elders of culture to educate and incorporate the younger generation into their cultural traditions. By developing self-sustaining curricula and training programs, A.R.T. enables refugee communities to engage their children and adults in visual, performing, and creative arts drawn from their own cultures.





**Burmese women dancing in Thai refugee camp, 2003.**  
©Sara Green

To implement its pilot program, A.R.T. partnered with the International Rescue Committee in two camps, Ban Mae Surin and Ban Mai Nai Soi. The program's focus was an intergenerational arts program that would help the community rebuild and strengthen its identity and relationships between the generations by engaging the elders to pass down their culture and traditions to the children. These traditions are the foundation of individual and community identity, which is in danger of being lost as the older generation dies off. Most of the children in these camps were born there; they do not know their history, their traditions, their culture, or their heritage.

Many of these refugees, who are from the Karenni tribe, came from hill towns with no written language and traditionally shared lyrical stories—their history—all day long. In Burma, the women would sing these stories as they traveled to rice paddies with their babies strapped to their bodies: their stories and their history were passed down as part of everyday life. But when they came to the refugee camp, the singing and the stories had stopped. I asked one woman why. "Since we no longer walk to the rice paddies, we no longer sing the songs," she replied.

In introducing the program to the community, an announcement about a meeting of the elders went out over the camps' loudspeakers at top volume in several Burmese dialects. At first, the path to the clearing where we would be meeting was deserted, but then the elders started to emerge, and hundreds and hundreds of men and women joined together at the clearing in the lush jungle surrounded by fruit and cotton trees.

When it was explained to the elders the purpose of the program, there was excitement as they spoke of their culture and how their heritage is important. They spoke about how, because of displacement, they are not passing their culture through their stories down to the younger generation. Yet, this is something that they wanted to do. Then, one woman started to sing slowly and expressively.

### Singing as a Storytelling Practice

In the Karenni tribe, the stories, history, and traditions are passed down in song. The woman was singing about how she missed her homeland and she wanted to be back home. In the Karenni tradition, when a child is born, the placenta is buried under a tree, and when a person dies, they are buried under the same tree, a circle of life. Now that she is in a refugee camp in Thailand, the Karenni woman sang that she would never be able to be buried under her tree. As she sang, many of the other elders started to weep.

As the woman's dirge faded, out of the jungle surrounding the clearing came people playing flutes, gongs, and drums as if cued by the woman's song. People stood up and started to dance and sing. Hundreds and hundreds of people. And as they danced and sang, they cried. And cried.

"We have been in these camps for over fifteen years," she replied, "and this is the first time anyone has given us permission to feel."

The women in the refugee camp were encouraged to share their



**Burmese men playing music in the clearing of Thai refugee camp, 2003.**  
©Sara Green

knowledge and participate in developing a curriculum that could be applied as a guideline for others in refugee camps to share their storytelling techniques and experiences in a more structured way. The women served as the teachers, as they were the ones who held the knowledge. I was told by the community that in their culture, it is the women who bear the responsibility to transmit their heritage. A.R.T.'s curriculum guides the teachers through not what to teach but how to transmit these stories to the younger generation in their new environment. The elderly women were overwhelmed with excitement to have a reason to reconnect with their past, their culture, and their heritage and felt reinvigorated and empowered, knowing that they possessed something of value, their heritage, that was deemed important and therefore desired, that they come from somewhere.

We announced the program in the camps, and the youth and the adults were equally excited, and regularly scheduled workshops were organized in clearings within the camps. The elderly women would teach the adults and the youth the stories through songs. Other community members became involved by accompanying the stories with music. The camps were alive with the sounds of stories.

Two years after we began this program, it was turned over to the community to run, and it continues today, almost twenty years later. These communities are now sharing their traditions and heritage through stories as songs—a history, an identity that would otherwise have been lost.

Building on the programs we started in Thailand, A.R.T. then began working in Colombia. Like the Burmese refugees in Thailand, these displaced communities left their culture, their traditions, and their stories behind when they fled the violence. We started a program in a poor, displaced community in the southwest of Bogota, working with a local school and a community center. In this urban setting, far removed from the villages they had fled during Colombia's decades-long civil war, the elders would go to the center looking for a connection with other elders but had no contact with the youth. Using the same curriculum as in Thailand, we implemented a multigenerational program that included storytelling and songs.

"The children come to hear our stories, and they learn from us, but we also learn from what they know," said one of the elderly participants, proud to be the leader and organizer of the program. One boy said,

*They can learn from us, and we can learn from them. The old people feel that we value what they are teaching us because*

*the land they live in is forgotten. The grandparents aren't as shy now. Before, maybe they felt like they were out of style, like an old toy. They teach us many things that we did not know about, they feel good, like they are home again. And we feel good, too.*

Holding on to and passing down their traditions, their history, their culture, and their stories, gives communities a renewed sense of identity and dignity.

These communities are empowering their younger generation, as well as themselves, with the knowledge of their heritage that links them to a common purpose: their identity. The bonds which are formed within communities through the process of transmission of storytelling, an important part of their ICH, serve to strengthen not only individual identity but also family and community identity as well.

"These are the details that tell the world that we are not invisible, that our heritage, our traditions, our history, our stories matter," said one of the elders.

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## *Le conte dans les camps de réfugiés et les communautés déplacées : Incarner les temps passés*

**Sara Green**

*Art pour les réfugiés en transition (A.R.T.)*

Les récits véhiculent notre histoire, notre culture et nos traditions de génération en génération. L'art de conter préserve et perpétue ce patrimoine culturel immatériel, le PCI, tout en créant un lien émotionnel entre le conteur et l'auditeur. Dans les camps de réfugiés, où les communautés se tournent vers leur passé pour retrouver un sentiment de réconfort et de familiarité, les générations plus âgées se rappellent des leçons et des valeurs importantes qui sont transmises aux jeunes générations à travers ces histoires.

Des camps de réfugiés birmans en Thaïlande aux Barrios de Bogota (Colombie), l'art du conte est un moyen de préserver, de transmettre et de perpétuer l'histoire, la culture et le patrimoine d'une communauté ou d'un individu. Ces communautés fournissent entre autres à leur jeune génération la connaissance de leur patrimoine qui les lie à un sens partagé, à leur identité. Les liens qui se forment au sein des communautés à travers le processus de transmission du conte, une partie importante de leur PCI, servent à renforcer non seulement l'identité individuelle mais aussi l'identité familiale et communautaire.

"Ce sont les détails qui disent au monde que nous ne sommes pas invisibles, que notre patrimoine, nos traditions, notre histoire et nos histoires comptent", a déclaré l'un des aînés de Colombie.

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**Sara Green** is the founder and executive director of US NGO Art for Refugees in Transition. She worked in management, fundraising, development, and strategic planning for nonprofits, and danced professionally for ten years in Europe and the US. Sara received her MBA in Finance and Economics from Columbia Business School, USA, and holds a BFA in Dance and a BA in History from Ohio State University, USA.

# *The Remarkable Kid : Safeguarding ICH through Storytelling*

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**Jorge Gustavo Caicedo**

The Intangible Cultural Heritage Encyclopedia  
(La Enciclopedia del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial)



## 9. The Remarkable Kid : Safeguarding ICH through Storytelling

**Jorge Gustavo Caicedo**

*The Intangible Cultural Heritage Encyclopedia (La Enciclopedia del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial)*

The concept of the city is quite new in terms of human history and has evolved as fast as cities themselves. They are large expanses of built land, buildings, massive transport systems, universities, and a lot of services that cannot be found in the rural zones. Cities have become attractive since life in them is considered to be “better” than in rural areas. Then, migration to cities was reported, and such migration grew fast throughout the twentieth century. International migration is another phenomenon but similar to domestic migration, with similar motivations: better opportunities, better life conditions, or safety and protection. In other cases, cities absorbed rural zones because of fast growth, forcing people to adapt to new conditions. It could be said, in general terms, that cities are always the melting pot of their countries. In that sense, “adapt to the cities’ conditions” means that you have to behave as urban people do: to dress, eat, move, work... and talk. There are thousands of people with different cultural backgrounds inhabiting cities; some are native some are migrants, but they all need places to learn, teach, practice, and reproduce elements related to their intangible cultural heritage. This is an urbanistic challenge that has to be addressed in a city’s development plans as part of a comprehensive strategy to foster economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights for all its citizens.

Cities also grow and incorporate neighboring towns. This modifies their daily dynamics, and its impact is felt in different aspects, from social interaction to the reproduction of festivals and other cultural practices. During the 1990s, intangible cultural heritage did not exist as a concept, as it only appeared a few years later in UNESCO discussions. However, communities and bearers of cultural practices alike needed an effective strategy to transmit and thus ensure continuity of knowledge,

techniques and abilities of their cultural practices.



**Inocente Morales**  
(Head of the Indigenous  
Council of Old People),  
1995 ©Jorge Gustavo  
Caicedo

In 1994, Inocente Morales Branada-Teuctli, who at the time, was the head of the International Council of Old People, representing the Chichimeca indigenous group, stated his concern that youngsters in the twelve towns of Milpa Alta, a rural municipality in the south of Mexico City, showed a lack of interest in their native language (Nahuatl) as well as with other elements of their cultural heritage.

Having the situation of a language at risk of disappearing, we designed a project aimed to contribute to the reconstruction of social bounds that could lead the community to ask themselves about their language and cultural roots. To do so, the most important stakeholders were children, as those mainly responsible for taking traditions to the future. As a kind of premonition, the project included all ICH safeguarding elements, even before ICH safeguarding existed, recognizing language as a main transmission vehicle for traditions and cultural expressions and being important to the community to be the protagonist in their cultural expressions safeguarding, as well as the importance of new generations to be aware of their cultural heritage and to be engaged in those safeguarding actions.

The project then focused on children, starting with its name, Xocotzin, which means “remarkable kid” in Nahuatl. But it is also aimed to bring back the recognition of elderly people as the main knowledge bearers, and hence figures of respect. It was an initiative to revitalize and safeguard elements of a community’s intangible cultural heritage through elementary school students and the elderly of the same community.

The project started with research or a diagnosis of the traditions and cultural expressions within the community, which years later would be called an ICH inventory, and showed them to the council. Understanding that the project was focused on youngsters, they selected storytelling and oral tradition as the most effective way to engage with them and gain their attention—not any type of oral tradition, but playful ones like traditional sports and games.

After that, the project team decided to focus on the thirty-nine Milpa Alta public schools. It was the biggest gathering of children and their learning place, and then they started to reach out to them. The project activities aimed to encourage children to find fun and interest in their traditions, so the community and the team selected the *temalacachtli*, a



traditional game that is like hopscotch with native elements. The project had two phases or two ways of participation from children. When the team arrived at the participants' schools, we gave students a call to participate in the project. The task was to ask their grandparents the following questions

- What games did you play when you were a kid?
- What were those games called?
- Did you use any toys? If so, what did they look like?
- Do you remember any myths or legends from the community?

They needed only to write and do a drawing of the game, myth, or legend; they could also build a traditional toy. After explaining the call, we took the children to the playground and taught them *temalacachtli*. We finished by letting them know when we would come back to collect the texts, drawings, and traditional toys. On the day we return, we'll do a school *temalacachtli*.



Teaching  
Temalacachtli,  
1998 ©Jorge Gustavo  
Caicedo

The interview helped reconnect children with their grandparents through a common interest in games and stories. The elders no longer looked as though they were far figures but rather similar to the children themselves, with children playing and enjoying their time, using their available means to amuse themselves, and making friends through play. At the same time, children were subconsciously learning a lot of things by coming to their native roots through previously unknown words. In this case, language was not a tool to teach traditions, but rather traditions were the tool to teach language. Storytelling from grandparents to grandchildren was the motivation for the latter to get interested in the past and feel motivated to learn more, to bring back those things their grandparents told them, and to try to keep those traditions alive.

Finally, they had to deliver one of the following to the team:

- Tell a myth or legend from the community, so they had to write it and make a drawing to illustrate it.
- Ask what games their grandparents played as children, write the information, and illustrate it.
- Build a traditional toy together.

The team collected the project work and held a *temalacachtli* competition. We invited the finalists of each school to a final competition. The winner won a trophy, but all the children that participated in the competition got a Nahuatl language-learning book for children, which was approved by the International Council of Old People; we published ten thousand copies to give to participants. The first version of the project covered thirty-nine elementary public schools from the twelve towns of the Milpa Alta municipality, with ten thousand students participating.

Finally, the team visited each school to host an award ceremony to give each student a book and a certificate of participation. During the ceremonies, the drawings, texts, and toys collected were displayed for students, teachers, and parents who attended the event. We made a festive occasion by hosting workshops for toy making, traditional sports and games, language, math, and mask painting—all related to their local heritage. On the stage, a professional storyteller presented the selected myths and legends to the audience after the tournament winner was announced. All the winners received a copy of the Nahuatl learning book, which was called *Tohuehuetlahtol* (which means “our ancient word”), as a way to

motivate them to learn their native language.

As a special outcome, in 2000, the team prepared a big tournament with all Milpa Alta finalists (from the thirty-nine schools that participated), and the best one, Óscar Rodríguez, an 11-year-old boy, got the chance to attend the TAFISA World Festival of Traditional Sports and Games in Hannover, Germany, where he taught the



Poster 2000  
Tournament for  
Germany ©Jorge  
Gustavo Caicedo

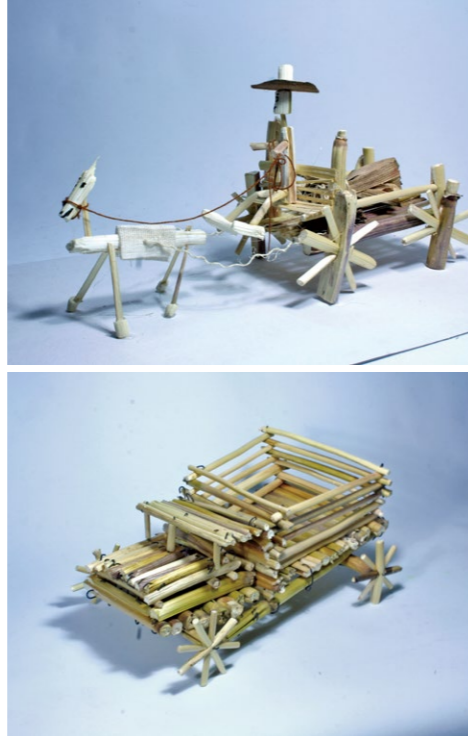
*temalacachtli* to four hundred German kids in a special school day of sports from the world.

After our initial experience, the project turned out to be a model that could be replicated at many schools, not only for the Nahuatl language but for other indigenous languages and cultures as well. So, it was successfully implemented for over ten years (1994–2004) in other native communities all over the country: the Raramuri community in Chihuahua, the Nahuatl community in Puebla, and the Purépecha community in Michoacán.

Over the ten years of implementation, an average of seventy thousand children participated and took part in a project for ICH re-valorization through storytelling and oral traditions, which left important outcomes for the communities. They got to recognize the role of the elders again as bearers of the community's collective memory of local myths, legends, and traditional knowledge. The children created new bonds with the elderly through local myths and legends, traditional sports and games, and traditional toy making. They rediscovered their local myths and legends and enjoyed them being performed by professional storytellers, understanding that their intangible cultural heritage is alive and can be adapted in many ways to reach more audiences. Children learned and practiced traditional sports and games as a way to interact with other youngsters and strengthen the bonds of the community through living traditions and felt empowered to keep safeguarding those traditions during the time.

In conclusion, the project enhanced the use of native languages and ensured the safeguarding intangible cultural heritage elements such as traditional sports and games and traditional toy-making for the present generation through a storytelling exercise that reconnected children and elderly people. Even before ICH existed as a concept, and its safeguarding existed as a need, civil society and native communities were already worried about the continuity of their knowledge and traditions, and this project aims to help them and all those who are concerned about the future of intangible cultural heritage and the future of indigenous communities around the world.

We are now preparing a massive online open course (MOOC) on how to implement this program at a community level, with a step-by-



**Traditional toy, 1998**  
©Jorge Gustavo  
Caicedo

step process and a website to link to other regions implementing the program.

Xocotzin: The Remarkable Kid Project is a model that can be adapted in different countries and communities. It is easy to replicate at a low cost, and it is an effective way to engage youngsters, elders, and schools in safeguarding the community's intangible cultural heritage.

## L'enfant remarquable : Sauvegarder le PCI par le conte

**Jorge Gustavo Caicedo**

*Encyclopédie du patrimoine culturel immatériel (La Enciclopedia del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial)*

Le concept de « ville » est assez nouveau, en termes de chronologie de l'histoire humaine, et a évolué aussi vite que les villes elles-mêmes. Elle s'apprécie à ses vastes étendues de terrains bâtis, bâtiments, transports massifs, universités et nombreux services introuvables dans les zones rurales. Les villes sont devenues attractives car la vie y est considérée comme « meilleure » que dans les zones rurales. Elles s'accroissent au rythme des exodes ruraux, exode qui connaît une croissance rapide depuis le XXe siècle. La migration internationale est un autre phénomène similaire à cette migration interne, avec les mêmes motivations : chercher de meilleures opportunités, de meilleures conditions de vie ou même protéger sa propre vie. Dans certains cas, les villes ont absorbé les zones rurales en raison de leur croissance rapide, obligeant leurs populations à s'adapter aux conditions de vie urbaine. En ce sens, « s'adapter aux conditions des villes » signifie qu'il faut se comporter comme les citadins : s'habiller, manger, se déplacer, travailler... et même parler. La ville regorge de milliers de personnes d'origines culturelles différentes, les unes autochtones, les autres allogènes, mais toutes deux ont besoin d'endroits pour apprendre, enseigner, pratiquer et reproduire des éléments liés à leur patrimoine culturel immatériel. Il s'agit d'un défi urbanistique qui doit être abordé dans les référentiels de développement de la ville, pour une stratégie globale visant à promouvoir les droits économiques, sociaux, culturels et environnementaux pour tous les citoyens. Dans d'autres cas, les villes se développent en absorbant d'autres villes voisines. Cela modifie leur dynamique quotidienne et son impact se fait sentir sous différents aspects, dont la disparition de certains éléments culturels. C'est ainsi

qu'en 1994, Inocente Morales Branada - Teuctli, qui était à l'époque à la tête du Conseil international des personnes âgées, représentant le groupe indigène Chichimeca, s'est dit interpellé par le fait que les jeunes des douze villes de Milpa Alta, une municipalité rurale du sud de Mexico, montraient un manque d'intérêt pour leur langue maternelle (nahuatl) ainsi que pour d'autres éléments de leur patrimoine culturel. Pour éviter la disparition du PCI en milieu urbain, a été élaboré la présente stratégie de sauvegarde du PCI par le conte, objet de notre contribution.



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**Jorge Gustavo Caicedo** is CEO of the NGO La Enciclopedia del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial, Mexico. He has designed several safeguarding initiatives and promoted traditional sports and games. He is also a writer and publisher; among his publications are eight books on traditional sports and games, indigenous languages, and indigenous myths.

# *The Role of Maestro and Local Language in Preserving Oral Traditions in Indonesia*

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**Pudentia Mpss**

Oral Traditions Association (ATL)



## 10. The Role of Maestro and Local Language in Preserving Oral Traditions in Indonesia

**Pudentia Mpss**

Oral Traditions Association (ATL)

### Introduction

In the era of globalization in Indonesia we can witness how climate change, biodiversity reduction, and the lack of awareness in preserving cultural ecosystems will lead to the extinction of what traditions can bring forth in maintaining culture for sustainable development steps ahead. It is noted that in various regions of Indonesia, oral traditions are extremely close to extinction.<sup>01</sup> This fact, however, also leads to the fact that several crucial aspects related to cognitive systems, traditional folk knowledge, religions, customs, traditional medical systems, ecologies, environmental preservation acts, and many other areas noted as the source of the nation's identity and character are also heading toward extinction. One important factor in efforts to preserve oral traditions, such as storytelling, is the role of the maestro who not only tells stories, but at the same time preserves the local language as a vehicle for this tradition which is used when telling stories.

#### 01.

In some cases we can also witness the resurrection of oral traditions through how Indonesian youths are passionate about many kinds of traditions associated with the performing arts.

### The Challenges in the Preservation of Storytelling within Oral Traditions

Culture nowadays is often symbolized by the act of opposition to globalization. However, on the other side of the spectrum, today's culture can be shown by the acceptance of globalization that has been corresponding with local contexts, both combined with and regarded as globalization. Something interesting about the development of culture is that this phenomenon also divides Indonesia into generally three related domains: religion, culture, and social. Every individual tends to choose

one of these areas that he/she believes is easiest to indicate his/her identity while neglecting the others. It's almost as if there is no linkage between the three fields and as if only one is sufficient: the inclusion of the others would become a hindrance to determining his/her identity.

It has been two decades since Huntington predicted that the process of modernization, in terms of economic and social movements, can uproot people from all around the world from their traditions and separate them from their local identities. Cultural diversities in Indonesia have been symbolized by the *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*<sup>02</sup> motto (Unity in Diversity), and we shall not grow if it means losing this identity. This Indonesian motto was mentioned the very first time in the 14th century in the *Kitab Sutasoma* by Mpu Tantular.

#### 02.

Unity in Diversity

This paper will show the main role of organizing the continuation of oral tradition in its diversities. Some of these oral traditions in Indonesia, which number more than 500, have been designated as intangible cultural heritage, which are markers of the identity of the area of origin of these oral traditions. Most of these oral traditions contain stories told by traditional masters from one generation to the next and how some of the traditions in question have developed into tokens of regional identities. In that case, delivering oral traditions such as myths, legends, folktales, and other local stories into the local languages can be one way to link tradition with newly adopted culture.

By the results of research conducted by the Oral Traditions Association (OTA) since 1999 regarding the existence of regional languages in oral traditions, it is proven that the act of preservation of the narrative of oral traditions will have a significant influence not only on the continuation of some particular traditions but also on the resistance of the local languages that are used within the tradition. In this case the role of the maestros who function as storytellers or speakers of tradition is very strong in maintaining the continuity of the regional language carrying the tradition concerned. If the maestro uses Indonesian, which is the national language, then the tradition with the local language he brings will disappear. This means that various valuable values and sources of character formation contained in the oral tradition are also lost. Several examples will be described in the following sections which show the connection between stories in the oral tradition and the language as a vehicle of it.

In order to survive and keep their existence, the Baduy people are known to be very strict in maintaining the "*pikukuh*" (traditional customs) in their daily life. *Pikukuh* is often spoken in various kinds of ways, such as



through traditional games, folk songs, and rituals. The traditional folk knowledge of Baduy people is believed to protect them from the effect of flood regardless of the close proximity of their residents and the local river; can turn their houses to be resistant to earthquakes despite living in an area that is prone to earthquake; and is able to protect their forest away from the possibility of forest fire, all done in



**Ibu Wai Yayi, the keeper and storyteller from Tindoi Fort, Wangi-Wangi Wakatobi, Southeast Sulawesi. She tells the story behind The Forbidden Forest, 2016.**  
©ATL, Pudentia Mpss

traditional ways though they have to also cut the trees and burn their forest to provide agricultural needs and farming areas. It says *"gunung teu menang dilebur, lebak teu meunang diruksak"* (the mountains cannot be torn down, valleys cannot be destroyed) which is stated in the story as advice on environmental care that is contextual with the situation in the Baduy area, Banten Province.

The Tengger people by the hillside of Bromo Mountain, Wonokitiri village, East Java, are known to have a rule of "cut one, plant two" in order to preserve their protected forest. By adhering to the *Sesanti Pancasetia* (five pledges of loyalty) and strictly avoiding bad things along with the combination of five rules of life, it is proven that the crime rate of Tengger people is from low to zero by cumulative number. *Sesanti Pancasetia* practically contains a pledge of loyalty against several things, keeping the customs of the ancestors ; trying to speak only according to the deed, pledge, responsibility over tasks, and affinity/ solidarity.

Local wisdom that can be found among those mentioned traditions can be passed down from one generation to the other with the help of a maestro. Performer of a tradition is a maestro who gets storytelling skills from his ancestors or from studying with previous masters/maestros. He or she and their descendants is a key person in regard to the ancestry of oral tradition within their community narration. If a maestro along with the performer of a tradition are no longer practising their function, it will lead to the extinction of a tradition. Likewise, if the maestro tells his story in Indonesian, then the existence of the regional language as the

transmitter of this oral tradition is threatened with extinction. The spoken tradition can change meaning and lose its context.

To prevent extinction, it is necessary to carry out management that strengthens the inheritance system. Maestros and other traditional performers need to be facilitated thoroughly in order to keep their performance in conveying the local stories, namely giving them assistance to bequeath the tradition to the next generation. This first management model relies on the existence of the maestro concerning their age, their condition, and the possibility for them to transmit the tradition firsthand. In today's case, it's often difficult to convey the narration of tradition, and thus why local tradition is prone to perish by existence. Maestros who do not have any inheritor will find it elusive to process the transmissions of tradition. That is why the attempt to record and document every verbal trace of the maestro is important. An example that has just been done is to carry out an apprenticeship process from heirs or young performer/s and also school teachers who are interested in study with the maestro.

As for the second management model, it is not restricted to only focusing on the maestro, but on the practice or performance. The determination of the selection of the second model over the first one was based on the extent of the decreasing number of performances and demonstrations of tradition. This situation can lead to a significant reduction of inheritors and performers although the maestros are still alive. This incident can happen because the public is generally no longer interested in nor paying any significant attention to traditional performances. The performance of tradition, however, can be held



**Syarifuddin Daeng Tutu, Sinrilik Storyteller from Makassar, South Sulawesi Sinrillic is a story or narrative conveyed or told in a rhythmic chant. He has passed away in 202. Unfortunately, there is no proper successor yet, 2017.**  
©ATL, Pudentia Mpss

in numerous forms, such as verbal storytelling or conducted with a particular melody and dances (music and folk songs), and even performed in between rituals. The insensitivity toward traditional performances might be caused by the lack of awareness while watching the performance or because the mentioned tradition has severely moved into other places. Take the tradition of reading *Kakawin*<sup>03</sup> *Negarakertagama* from the 14th century for example. This tradition has moved from previously being settled and known in East Java (the center of Majapahit kingdom) to Griya Sidemen and Griya Pidada, precisely in Amlapura, Karangasem, Bali. These griya—or traditional houses, are the location of the Brahmana community that beholds onto *kakawin*.

The third management model is practiced in conditions where oral traditions are still alive and developing. In this model, the number of maestros, performers, and conveyors is enough to conduct a performance and are also in a good condition to hold a process of inheritance or transmission. Tradition is expected to develop even more by the role of maestro, performer, and conveyor who take the function to preserve and lead their tradition, even though under the limitation and deprivation of interest from the general public. However, the initial support can come from the local government and other related institutions to advise and boost the number of audiences for a performance. The more a performance or narration is conducted, then the more it will also give a positive impact on the continuity of tradition within the life of its community.

The utter spirit to keep the practice of oral tradition must be considered thoroughly because the existence of a tradition depends on its context of usage. Likewise, the story of the rebellious son in the tale of “Malin Kundang” can be understood much easier among the region that is close to the concept of “*merantau*” (going out of hometown to seek a successful life in a bigger city) better and knows the matrilineal system from the Minang people in West Sumatera, where the story originally comes from. The Malin Kundang story can be delivered in numerous forms like tales, film, and performance of *randai* (musical poem with dances, martial arts, and music) into a wider audience out of its origin community with an adjustment of language and provided context.

The method that OTA has been doing for the past three years with the Indonesian private school community is by conducting storytelling session using local languages. This event was initially targeted for teachers and students from the elementary and middle school level. The chosen stories must be the ones that originally come from their hometown. This

**03.**  
Panegyric poem titled *Nāgarakrētāgama* presented to Hayam Wuruk, the king of Majapahit.



**Pak Kada, Pakacaping Maestro from Polewali Mandar, West Sulawesi, with his grandson, 2021.**  
©ATL, Pudentia Mpss

festival aimed to preserve both tradition and local languages as well. Furthermore, the students could also learn directly from the maestros that came from similar hometowns as theirs. Accordingly, it is noted that the attempt to empower maestros along with local inheritance by planting it through school and academic background is one of many effective ways to preserve oral tradition.

## Conclusion

A special method is emphatically needed to manage the existence of oral tradition because numerous local wisdoms and valuable principles that are related to environmental maintenance, human bonds, and other traditional knowledge within the oral tradition are also prone to extinction. The same threat can also happen to local languages of which the maestros are conveyors, and traditional performers use as the medium for various traditions if nobody uses them for a long time. The attempt to generalize local languages among public interactions, increases the role of maestros as the resource and conveyor of tradition, and preserves the ecosystem of culture as the contexts of tradition in showcasing oral tradition are urgently needed. “Nusantara Storytelling Festival” for children at the elementary level in Indonesia is one of the effective ways in keeping the oral tradition going on.

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## Le rôle du maître et de la langue locale dans la préservation des traditions orales en Indonésie

**Pudentia Mpss**

Association des traditions orales (ATL)

Cet article démontre les rôles fondamentaux du maître et de la langue locale dans la préservation et la continuité des traditions orales en Indonésie. Lorsqu'un maître d'une tradition de folklore met en valeur les mythes, les légendes, les contes populaires et d'autres histoires locales en utilisant une langue locale, il contribue considérablement à la perpétuation des traditions locales en cette ère moderne. Ce maître, en tant qu'élément principal de la continuité de la tradition orale, doit être supporté. La transmission du maître à ses successeurs apparaît au cœur du processus, y compris la langue utilisée dans les contes car il existe un lien fort entre la langue et les traditions qu'elle porte, en particulier dans la construction d'une identité locale riche.

**Pudentia Mpss** followed a doctoral sandwich program in Oral Traditions, University of Indonesia, with UC Berkeley, USA, and Leiden University, the Netherlands, which she completed in 2000. She was also a lecturer and researcher at the University of Indonesia until 2021. Pudentia is an ICH expert and a member of the assessment team for Indonesian cultural awards under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. Her research and articles have been published and presented in national and international forums. Currently, she is completing revised edition of a dissertation about Mak Yong as Malay traditional theater and, with other authors, a book on methodology and various concepts of oral tradition. She successfully coordinated proposals for the joint nomination of the *pantun* oral poetic form for inscription in the UNESCO Representative List in 2020, and has been the lead author of the ICH safeguarding module of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology since 2021.

# *Le fabuleux voyage d'Arwenn*

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**Charlotte Courtois**

Konstelacio



*II*

## 11. Le fabuleux voyage d'Arwenn

Charlotte Courtois  
Konstelacio

Il était une fois, une petite fille du nom d'Arwenn...

Ainsi commence mon histoire. Celle d'une petite Bretonne intrépide et curieuse qui, sur un grand voilier, tellement grand que son grand mât fait la taille de la Tour Eiffel, part à la découverte du monde et de ses merveilles. De la Bretagne à la Tunisie, en passant par l'Inde, elle rencontre des musiciens traditionnels qu'elle va vouloir faire jouer ensemble. Mais cela va s'avérer plus compliqué qu'elle ne l'imaginait...

Arwenn, sans en être consciente (quoique...), est une passeuse de mémoire. Personnage aujourd'hui d'un livre-CD pour enfants, elle était au départ le cœur et l'âme d'un conte oral qui a été narré à des centaines d'enfants en France, en Inde et en Tunisie, dans des écoles, des orphelinats ou encore des hôpitaux. Son objectif ? Éveiller leur curiosité envers les patrimoines musicaux et, par ce biais, leur montrer que ceux-ci peuvent être un outil de dialogue et de découverte de soi et des autres.

Ou, avec des mots d'enfants : « Même si on vient de partout, on peut très bien faire quelque chose de joli ensemble » – Clémentine, 9 ans.

### Le conte, un outil naturel pour transmettre les valeurs de Konstelacio?

Konstelacio est une ONG française qui sensibilise au dialogue interculturel. Depuis 2011, elle mène des actions internationales auprès d'enfants et d'adolescents afin de développer leur curiosité envers les autres cultures mais aussi dans le but de leur permettre de découvrir, accorder de la valeur et partager leurs propres patrimoines culturels. Naturellement et presque inconsciemment, la narration a toujours été au cœur de nos ateliers pédagogiques.

Je propose ainsi d'explorer l'utilisation de la narration pour la transmission du patrimoine culturel immatériel dans le cadre du projet précédemment exposé, poétiquement intitulé Lyra en clin d'œil à la constellation de la lyre.

Notre objectif sera d'étudier l'impact de l'utilisation de cet outil dans un cadre pédagogique de transmission, ses avantages, ses inconvénients ainsi que les difficultés rencontrées. Nous en tirerons enfin des conclusions sur son intérêt et les éléments à garder en tête pour une utilisation optimale.

La liste des utilisations de la narration dans la société est longue (et passionnante). Les éléments centraux qui semblent revenir dans la plupart des nombreuses recherches sur le sujet, du griot africain au conte de fées en passant par le pūrākau māori, sont la transmission du patrimoine, de valeurs et du comportement jugé comme acceptable en faisant réfléchir l'auditeur et en l'amenant à tirer lui-même les conclusions de l'histoire et à s'en inspirer.

Quel meilleur outil quand on a pour objectif de transmettre le patrimoine culturel et musical aux enfants?

### Le projet Lyra, Le fabuleux voyage d'Arwenn et la transmission du patrimoine musical

Les études et recherches ne sont pas la raison première de l'utilisation du conte dans notre projet. Comme pour de nombreuses histoires à portée pédagogique, il s'est imposé comme une évidence et la pratique en a confirmé l'intérêt. Le conte, en tant qu'élément traditionnel de nombre de cultures, vient facilement à l'esprit quand il s'agit d'éduquer, particulièrement des enfants. Si de nombreuses recherches confirment cette intuition profonde, restait à vérifier sa mise en pratique sur le terrain.

Konstelacio a souhaité développer un projet de transmission du patrimoine musical et, par ce biais, de sensibilisation au dialogue entre les cultures. L'âme du projet : *la rencontre de l'altérité n'est pas une menace à mon identité, bien au contraire*. Elle me permet de découvrir d'autres manières de vivre, d'échanger, de penser, mais elle me permet également de prendre un peu de recul et avoir un regard nouveau sur mon propre patrimoine et mes pratiques culturelles.

L'association a choisi de réunir six musiciens traditionnels : deux musiciens bretons (France), deux musiciens indiens et deux tunisiens.



Ce groupe, nommé Lyra, comme le projet pédagogique les réunissant, était complété par une conteuse (moi-même), une illustratrice jeunesse, un ingénieur du son et un réalisateur. De 2015 à 2017, cette équipe multiculturelle et multidisciplinaire est partie en résidences artistiques dans les trois pays d'origine des musiciens. Au programme de chaque résidence, des ateliers pédagogiques avec des enfants de 4 à 14 ans, des temps de création et des collaborations artistiques locales, le tout axé autour d'un conte musical, « Le fabuleux voyage d'Arwenn ».

Cette histoire raconte l'aventure d'une petite fille de Bretagne, à l'ouest de la France, qui rêve de voyager. Elle se trouve embarquée sur un grand voilier pour un tour du monde. À bord du navire, certains marins jouent de la musique bretonne. Ils arrivent un jour en Inde, où Arwenn rencontre un musicien et une chanteuse dont elle découvre la musique et qu'elle invite sur le bateau. Puis l'histoire se reproduit en Tunisie où elle rencontre à nouveau deux musiciens. Avec ceux-ci, Arwenn décide d'organiser un concert mélangeant leurs musiques, mais elle se rend très vite compte que ce n'est pas si simple. En découvrant la cacophonie ainsi provoquée, elle se rend compte que les musiciens vont devoir apprendre à s'écouter les uns les autres pour pouvoir jouer une musique riche de leurs différences.

La toute première fois où les musiciens ont été réunis était en février 2015, pendant une semaine. Cette rencontre devait être un temps fort unique pour sensibiliser un maximum d'enfants sur le territoire du Sud Goëlo, en Bretagne. Les échanges ont été tellement enthousiasmants, autant pour les enfants que pour les musiciens et les enseignants, que nous avons choisi de donner une envergure supérieure au projet. C'est ainsi que la suite de Lyra a été dessinée, développant l'équipe afin d'y intégrer une illustratrice, un réalisateur et un ingénieur du son et afin de partir cette fois dans chacun des pays des musiciens. En juin 2016, l'équipe a ainsi été réunie au Domaine de La Roche Jagu, un château du XV<sup>ème</sup> siècle en Bretagne. En octobre de la même année, elle s'est rendue en Inde, au cœur du Rajasthan, dans la ville d'Amber. En mars 2017, l'équipe s'est enfin rendue en Tunisie, dans la banlieue de Tunis. Au total, ce sont 1300 enfants qui ont été sensibilisés dans les trois pays. À l'issue du projet, un livre-CD et un album musical ont été produits et diffusés, et plusieurs concerts ont été donnés.

De châteaux médiévaux en amphithéâtres romains en passant par des forts indiens, Konstelacio a découvert et fait découvrir la richesse du patrimoine architectural des différents pays que l'ONG a visités. Mais au cœur même de son projet Lyra, la lumière était tout spécialement



**Elèves de Radès en Tunisie, 2017**  
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orientée sur un élément du patrimoine immatériel : la musique.

Les ateliers se déroulaient de la manière suivante. Le cœur de la rencontre avec les enfants était l'histoire que je contais accompagnée des musiciens. Ces derniers apparaissaient au fil du conte, créant un élément de surprise et de fascination chez les jeunes. À la fin de l'histoire, les musiciens parlaient librement de leur pays et de leur instrument avant de proposer aux enfants d'essayer de jouer de la musique, avec leur aide. Enfin, ces derniers prenaient part à un jeu où ils étaient invités à choisir quels musiciens devaient improviser ensemble. L'objectif était de leur montrer que, comme dans l'histoire d'Arwenn, si les musiciens du groupe réussissaient à jouer ensemble, ce n'était pas parce qu'ils avaient répété en amont mais bien parce qu'ils s'écoutaient les uns les autres pour jouer en harmonie.

**Aziz Ouertani, musicien tunisien de Lyra accompagné d'élèves indiens, 2016**  
©Simon Guyomard



Aziz Ouertani, musicologue à l'Université de Gabès et joueur de oud ayant participé au projet Lyra, souligne le fait que, « contrairement à ce qui est dit, que la musique est une langue universelle partagée par la plupart des peuples du monde, c'est en fait un ensemble de langues qui diffèrent en termes d'identités musicales et dialectales ». Il revient en ces mots sur cette expérience : « Il est très utile d'entamer une tentative de transmission des éléments patrimoniaux par l'interaction directe avec les enfants, afin de présenter une synthèse d'interprétation musicale diversifiée, qui confirme l'idée de la possibilité de dialoguer et interagir positivement entre les cultures



avec des outils techniques semblables ».

### « J'ai appris que quand on n'arrivait pas à quelque chose, il ne fallait pas abandonner » – Asma, 7 ans

Les retours des enfants ont été très positifs, parfois même surprenants. L'outil du conte, utilisé dès le début de l'atelier, captait leur attention, créait une bulle hors du monde et du temps et était une manière très intéressante d'introduire le reste des activités de découverte des musiques traditionnelles. La timidité initiale dont pouvaient faire preuve certains en début de séance avait totalement disparu au moment d'essayer les instruments, peu importe l'âge ou le pays. De même, ces ateliers permettaient d'accompagner les musiciens dans la transmission de leur art, ce qui n'est pas toujours chose aisée sans formation pédagogique spécifique.

La principale problématique s'étant présentée à nous était celle de la barrière de la langue. Nos six musiciens avaient une langue en commun, le français, ce qui a favorisé la fluidité. L'histoire était contée en français en France. Il a été décidé d'avoir recours aux musiciens pour jouer les interprètes en Tunisie et en Inde. Je racontais ainsi l'histoire en français en Tunisie et en anglais en Inde et un musicien du pays traduisait en tunisien ou en hindi au fur et à mesure. Cela nous inquiétait au départ, car nous craignions que cela perturbe l'attention des enfants. Finalement, il n'en était rien. Nous avons même eu l'impression que cela attisait leur curiosité et leur attention, créant une forme de suspense dans l'histoire.



Ilyas Khan musicien indien de Lyra avec des élèves tunisiens, 2017  
©Simon Guyomard

Un des éléments à souligner dans l'utilisation du conte était l'utilisation de la gestuelle et de l'emphase. Contrairement au conte écrit ou enregistré, la transmission orale donne une liberté d'interprétation. Le conte s'appuie sur l'intonation, la puissance de la voix, les gestes mais également sur le rire. Or, comme le souligne très bien Williams (1999 : 81), une information liée au rire se grave plus facilement dans la mémoire. De la même manière, un certain socle de connaissances est important pour comprendre l'histoire. Lorsque nous intervenions auprès de jeunes enfants, il était nécessaire d'expliquer certains mots de vocabulaire afin que l'incompréhension ne nuise pas à l'attention portée à l'histoire. La difficulté réside ainsi dans le fait de ne transmettre que les connaissances nécessaires. Ces « pauses » narratives qui auraient pu faire perdre l'attention aux élèves se sont révélés être des atouts, permettant de créer du lien et de l'interaction avec eux. Il restait néanmoins fondamental pour la fluidité du conte de ne prendre les questions et remarques des enfants qu'à la toute fin.

Une des manières très claires à nos yeux d'évaluer l'impact de ces ateliers était d'observer le public présent aux concerts proposés à l'issue des résidences artistiques. Notre objectif, rappelons-le, était de développer la curiosité des enfants et leur sensibilité pour les patrimoines musicaux. Si nous n'avons pu chiffrer méthodiquement les spectateurs, il était néanmoins évident que de très nombreux enfants présents aux ateliers revenaient pour le concert et amenaient avec eux leurs familles.

La question qui pour nous reste en suspens et que nous aimerions creuser dans le futur est celle d'une éventuelle adaptation culturelle de l'histoire. L'impact aurait-il été différent (supérieur?) si l'histoire avait été modifiée et adaptée au contexte culturel dans lequel elle était narrée? Si



Intervention de Lyra à Radès, Tunisie, 2017  
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oui, comment savoir avec précision ce qui devrait changer?

## Quelques mots de conclusion

Aux yeux de Konstelacio, des membres du projet, des enseignants et des partenaires impliqués, le conte « Le fabuleux voyage d'Arwenn » a été la clé de la réussite de Lyra. Il a agi en brise-glace efficace, créant un lien simple et une connivence entre les enfants et notre équipe, facilitant ainsi la transmission du patrimoine musical.

L'élément de traduction et interprétariat qui aurait pu être un frein n'en était pas un, facilitant son éventuelle utilisation dans de la transmission internationale.

Nous avons relevé plusieurs intérêts particulièrement marqués dans l'utilisation du conte oral pour la transmission du patrimoine : la gestuelle, l'emphase et le rire. Tous trois permettent au conte et à sa morale de se graver plus facilement dans la mémoire des enfants (et des grands).

Enfin, l'interaction permise par le conte est un facteur clé de réussite de cette action.

Mais qui mieux que les enfants eux-mêmes pour revenir sur cet impact? Voici donc quelques-unes de leurs réactions : « La morale d'Arwenn c'est que dans la vie il faut s'écouter et se poser des questions », « Grâce à la musique, nous pouvons nous unir et devenir amis », « Même si on est différents, on se trouve toujours des points communs », « C'était des jolis sons qu'on ne connaissait pas forcément, et donc c'était assez rigolo ».



Charlotte Courtois avec le livre du conte lors d'une intervention en France, 2022  
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Intervention de Lyra à Amber, Inde, 2016  
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Tous les retours que nous avons eu de la part des enfants, que ce soit par écrit à notre demande ou lors d'interviews menées auprès d'eux, sont particulièrement positifs et encourageant sur la méthode utilisée. Ils retiennent souvent la morale que nous souhaitons leur enseigner, mais ils peuvent également en tirer des choses auxquelles nous ne pensions pas, comme cet élève qui, après avoir essayé pendant une grande partie de la séance de jouer du ney tunisien, a retenu que « Quand on n'y arrive pas tout de suite, il ne faut pas abandonner ».

Le conte est un outil que nous avons eu plaisir à utiliser et qui s'est avéré particulièrement utile à l'heure de transmettre le patrimoine musical et d'encourager le dialogue chez les enfants. Il sera très certainement réutilisé lors de nos prochains projets et pourrait même s'inscrire au cœur d'un projet interculturel autour des arts du conte oral au sein de notre ONG.

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**Charlotte Courtois**  
Konstelacio

The French NGO Konstelacio aims to raise awareness of dialogues between cultures. From 2015 to 2017, it led the Lyra project to introduce children to traditional music from France, India, and Tunisia and to arouse their curiosity about it. The NGO, with six traditional musicians from these three countries, an illustrator, a director, and a sound engineer, met 1,300 children between 2015 and 2017 in schools, orphanages, hospitals, etc., to have undifferentiated access to culture. The Lyra project is centered around a tale entitled "The Fabulous Journey of Arwenn," written by Charlotte Courtois, founder of Konstelacio. This article thus returns to this experience and more specifically, to the usefulness of storytelling as an educational tool for transmitting musical heritage to younger generations. Its objective is to show, by a concrete example, the interests identified by the NGO in the use of storytelling to transmit values and to arouse interest (particularly among the youth) in intangible cultural heritage and traditional music.

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**Charlotte Courtois** est la directrice et fondatrice de l'ONG Konstelacio. A la suite de ses études en commerce international ainsi qu'en sociologie et anthropologie, elle a créé cette ONG française pour éduquer les enfants à la paix et à la diversité culturelle. Charlotte Courtois qui anime également des conférences sur la gestion de la diversité culturelle, est l'auteure du livre pour enfants "L'incroyable voyage d'Arwenn".

# *Quand le patrimoine chemine, pas à pas*

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Christian-Marie Pons



12

## 12. Quand le patrimoine chemine, pas à pas

“C’est le lieu même de la tradition orale. La théorie du pas à pas. Une connaissance d’avant le savoir.”  
- Pierre Perrault, *Le mal du Nord*, 1999

**Christian-Marie Pons**

En 2020, en partenariat avec la Maison des Arts de la Parole à Sherbrooke (Québec)<sup>01</sup>, s’amorce le projet “PasàPas”<sup>02</sup> sous forme d’atelier formatif entre cinq conteurs professionnels québécois<sup>03</sup> et un mentor réputé : Jihad Darwiche<sup>04</sup>. C’est de ce projet qu’il est question ici, non seulement parce qu’il est dédié à maintenir vivant et à nourrir l’Art du conte à partir de la pratique de ses conteurs, mais surtout parce qu’il repose sur une approche traditionnelle, essentiellement liée au travail de l’oralité par l’oralité (en excluant quasi systématiquement le recours à l’écriture). En outre, l’atelier offre aux conteurs un encadrement long et suivi, étalé sur un an et demi; ce qui est peu fréquent dans l’éventail des formations offertes dans le domaine du conte (la plupart sont des formations brèves d’une fin de semaine ou de quelques jours, souvent introductives, qui ne permettent pas de mener un travail en profondeur).



**01.**

La Maison des Arts de la Parole est un organisme culturel à but non lucratif. Sa mission est de promouvoir la littérature orale, par la diffusion d’activités culturelles ou d’artistes, par la formation et l’encadrement d’artistes de la relève, par la réalisation ou la publication de documents liés à la littérature orale et par la sollicitation et l’obtention de subventions et autres ressources financières dédiées à la poursuite de ses objectifs.

**02.**

Je maintiendrai la graphie “PasàPas” choisie par J. Darwiche pour nommer la formule des ateliers qu’il offre (cf. <https://www.jihad-darwiche.com/formations>)

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**03.**

Marie Lupien-Durocher, Claire Jean, Petronella van Dijk, Jacques Falquet, Jean-François Létourneau. Chacun a été subventionné pour ce projet par le Conseil des arts du Canada.

**04.**

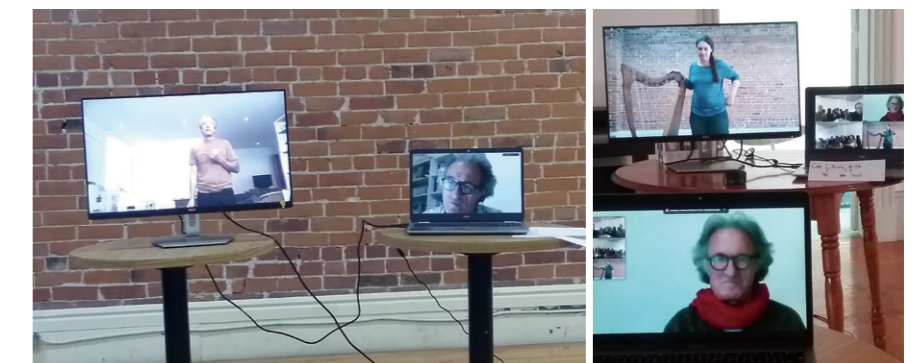
Jihad Darwiche, d’origine libanaise, conte depuis une quarantaine d’années. Il est aujourd’hui renommé comme l’un des grands conteurs de la francophonie et du monde arabe. Il est aussi réputé pour son implication dans la création, le soutien et la direction artistique de plusieurs festivals (en France, au Liban, en Afrique). Il est reconnu comme formateur et grand transmetteur de l’art du conte, de ses racines, de son humanité. Auteur de maints articles et d’une trentaine de livres de contes ou sur le conte.

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Les principes de l’atelier sont les suivants :

- Chaque conteur choisit un récit (un seul) à travailler de façon progressive tout au long des 18 mois que dure l’atelier.
- L’appropriation de ce récit et les exercices pour ce faire relèvent fondamentalement de l’oralité comme mode d’acquisition.
- L’atelier propose un ensemble de rencontres de travail entre les conteurs que J. Darwiche accompagne. Son accompagnement consiste à en superviser toutes les étapes, dès la rencontre avec le récit jusqu’à sa présentation publique.
- Neuf séances de travail, collectives, d’une durée de quatre jours (un total de 36 jours) tous les deux mois répartis sur un an et demi.
- L’intention de l’atelier vise davantage la maturation et l’approfondissement de cette acquisition d’un récit par la parole plutôt que l’impératif butoir d’un spectacle à livrer, si ce n’est l’étape projetée d’une “sortie d’atelier”, publique, en fin de parcours.

L’atelier devait débuter en avril 2020 et se poursuivre jusqu’en octobre 2021. Les circonstances covidiennes en ont perturbé le déroulement initial, notamment par l’impossibilité pour J. Darwiche de se rendre au Québec et de devoir remplacer sa présence réelle par des visioconférences. Les conteurs, en revanche, ont presque toujours pu se réunir à la Maison des Arts de la Parole pour y travailler ensemble, en présence virtuelle de leur maître. Les rencontres initialement prévues ont été plus courtes, mais plus nombreuses, réussissant à atteindre les 36 jours prévus au projet. Le calendrier initial n’a été retardé que de quelques mois. Il est important de souligner que, malgré l’obstacle encombrant de la pandémie, l’atelier a atteint son objectif, celui d’honorer la sortie d’atelier envisagée (décembre 2021) et d’en permettre retour et évaluation les mois suivants. Comme prévu.





Deux observations semblent intéressantes à relever de cette expérience menée entre Sherbrooke (où se retrouvaient les conteurs et conteuses) et Avignon (résidence de J. Darwiche). Dans l'optique de témoigner d'une circulation vivante et fertile d'un patrimoine immatériel, celui de la parole et du conte, malgré les contingences du moment, certaines adverses, d'autres finalement complices. D'emblée un constat réjouissant : parole et tradition orale ont su, dans ce cas, surmonter les obstacles qu'elles rencontraient, poursuivre leur route et s'enrichir même des encombres du chemin.

La première observation est l'occasion d'insister sur la spécificité d'un travail du conteur reposant sur l'oralité comme mode traditionnel d'acquisition d'un récit (et pas seulement sur le fait de le raconter de vive voix), incluant le temps nécessaire à sa maturation.

La seconde est de montrer que la pratique traditionnelle d'acquisition d'un conte par l'oralité (comme mode d'acquisition surtout, puis de transmission) peut surmonter les contingences occasionnelles et miser sur la vivacité, fut-elle immatérielle, d'un patrimoine porté par la parole.

### Parlant d'oralité...

La plupart des nouveaux conteurs, au Québec comme ailleurs, sont d'un côté fortement imprégnés de littérature et d'un autre côté peu instruits, ou les dédaignant, des modes traditionnels d'acquisition d'une parole conteuse, celle qui relèverait d'une « oralité première », pour définir cette oralité précédant l'écriture et renvoyant aux cultures ou aux individus non-alphabétisés (Ong, 2014). Il suffit de rappeler que l'Art du conte (et celui des conteurs, aèdes, griots, bardes et rhapsodes) précède bien sûr, et de longue haleine, la découverte des alphabets; que bien des conteurs depuis cette découverte en ignoraient l'usage, au moins jusqu'à la fin du XIXe siècle et aux premières lois imposant une scolarisation obligatoire.

Notre culture moderne aujourd'hui est si profondément imprégnée et mentalement structurée par les logiques de l'écriture qu'elles nous sont devenues naturelles (Jack Goody (1979) parle de « raison graphique »), et il est bien difficile de s'y soustraire. Pourtant, « La lecture à haute voix, la récitation orale, littérales ou non, ne sauraient se confondre avec l'Art du Conteur » (art. II-3 de la CHARTE NATIONALE DES CONTEURS — Hindenoch, 1997 : 53).

L'intérêt de la démarche proposée par J. Darwiche à travers

“PasàPas” est de travailler le récit à conter à même la parole, dès sa conception, sa composition et sa mémorisation, en excluant le support de l'écrit. Et même si la source du récit se retrouve souvent imprimée dans un livre (ce qui est aujourd'hui le plus fréquent), l'objectif de l'atelier sera d'en oublier la rigueur et la fixité du texte, pour retrouver la fraîcheur et la souplesse de la parole partagée.

Pour ce faire, ce long travail d'assouplissement, de maturation et d'affinement repose essentiellement sur la reprise inlassable de la narration verbalisée d'un même récit en versions successives amendées et ajustées peu à peu – pas à pas, puisqu'il s'agit d'une démarche – pour en préciser la foulée et le chemin, tant par ajouts (additions) que par retraites (soustractions), par déplacements (permutations) que par remplacements (substitutions) de mots, de gestes, de rythmes, de séquences, à chaque fois modifiant pour enrichir, autant la matière à dire (l'histoire) que la manière de la dire (sa narration).

Ce travail de répétitions et d'approvisionnement du récit se fait en partie solitaire – entre deux séances d'atelier – mais en partie et surtout au sein du groupe, à la fois auditeur critique lorsque l'un raconte, à la fois participant (par exemple en racontant à sa façon un passage du conte de l'autre). C'est dans le tissage collectif des paroles échangées que s'enchaînent les motifs narratifs et se trament les intrigues, qu'ainsi s'étoffe le récit et son lustre.

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La première finalité (transitoire) est celle d'atteindre, à coups d'esquisses revisités et précisés, un récit assez solide et indépendant de fortune pour être partagé publiquement (en « sortie d'atelier »). La seconde finalité, plus précieuse encore, est d'obtenir l'équilibre délicat entre la consistance d'une histoire à mener et l'ondolement de son rendu, longuement peaufinés – comme l'on tanne un cuir, patiemment corroyé autant pour en préserver la substance que pour en assouplir la texture.

« Par rapport à la littérature [...], l'orature se distingue par son mode de composition : elle peut être immédiate dans l'improvisation, ou différée, mais n'a recours qu'à une fixation mémorielle; par son mode de performance : elle implique une interaction entre l'interprète et son public; par son mode de transmission

enfin, qui n'impose pas nécessairement la fidélité absolue à un original. Autrement dit, à la rigidité de la littérature, l'orature oppose sa ductilité : la parole coule, mais l'écrit est forgé. » (Dor, 1995 : 30).

Entre orature et littérature, « l'une repose sur le patient polissage d'une parole longuement apprivoisée, mais non prisonnière de l'emprise de ses lettres; l'autre sur la maîtrise d'un texte à déclamer, assuré par le contrôle policé de l'écrit, en sage et fidèle préposé. » (Pons, 2008 : 71).

« Je crois qu'il y a une confusion entre le conte écrit et le conte. Le conte a besoin de la présence du conteur; il remet l'homme au centre des choses. Quand il est écrit, c'est un conte écrit. Dans l'art du conte, c'est la présence du conteur qui fait le conte. » (Darwiche, 2011 : 85).

Explorer, alors, les moyens dont dispose cette orature, libre de graphie : aussi bien l'euphonie, l'imagerie et le rythme des mots convoqués, que le travail de mémorisation (fragilité et entretien d'une « mémoire vive », immatérielle, en l'absence de l'assurance et de la fixation d'une « mémoire morte » dûment gravée sur matière solide et permanente). Importance du corps et du temps nécessaire à assimiler (incorporer) l'histoire à délivrer. J. Darwiche insiste sur la « mémoire du corps » habitée par cette histoire. Apprendre par corps plutôt que par cœur (comme on le dirait du musicien : ce sont ses doigts plus que sa tête qui savent où trouver les notes de l'instrument au moment d'en jouer). Le processus est long : le temps au corps de s'habituer à l'histoire venue l'habiter.

Une autre dimension importe au cœur de l'approche "PasàPas", celle du groupe, chacun assistant par son écoute l'autre au moment où il conte, quitte à ce que les conteurs s'échangent momentanément leurs récits respectifs, histoire d'en varier les couleurs, d'en rompre le carcan possible des ressassements. Convocation d'une « intelligence collective », elle aussi propice à la vitalité des paroles échangées. « La performance apparaît comme une action orale-aurale complexe, par laquelle un message poétique est simultanément transmis et perçu, ici et maintenant. [...] Dans la performance se recourent les deux axes de toute communication sociale : celui qui joint le locuteur à l'auditeur; et celui sur quoi s'unissent situation et tradition. » (Zumthor, 1987 : 248).

### Tradition et nouvelles technologies

Comme bien des activités culturelles, l'apprentissage et la pratique traditionnels du conte tels que proposés par l'atelier "Pasàpas" ont été confrontés aux restrictions sévères de circulation et de rencontre

qu'exigeait la menace de Covid-19. Les différentes ressources d'Internet se sont présentées comme l'un des modes dont la virtualité a pu amplement compenser, sans pouvoir remplacer, le besoin des relations et contacts entre humains dont notamment se nourrit le conte.

C'est pourtant en plein cœur de la tempête pandémique que cet atelier long sur la parole vivante a pu se tenir d'un bord et de l'autre de l'Atlantique. Et qu'il est parvenu à ses fins.

La parole conteuse a su braver la tourmente et la surmonter. Belle démonstration de ténacité et de vigueur, bel exemple d'un art millénaire poursuivant sa route vers l'avenir comme il su se rendre jusqu'à nous aujourd'hui. Car il appartient bien au conte de tirer parti et force des aléas et contingences qui jalonnent la condition humaine et son histoire.

Ainsi, paradoxalement, ces puissantes technologies qu'on pourrait croire antagoniques aux survivances de pratiques traditionnelles se sont avérées plus adjuvantes qu'opposantes. Force tranquille de la parole nue – on pourrait la croire fragile – qui a su mettre à son service la détermination des modernités plutôt que de s'y soumettre. La disponibilité d'un grand écran pour y recevoir les vidéoconférences, celle de micros de qualité et de caméras efficaces, les performances de la fibre optique ont été les employés serviables de la parole, aïeule et souveraine.

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L'expérience "PasàPas" se révèle instructive en matière de sauvegarde et de transmission d'un patrimoine immatériel, celui que porte la parole conteuse.

Ultimement, cette aventure met de l'avant peut-être moins la matière à sauvegarder d'un PCI que la manière active d'en assumer la sauvegarde et l'esprit, d'en maintenir l'héritage vivant. Mais elle souligne, parlant de conte, l'attachante précarité d'une parole toujours mouvante qui depuis longtemps a su définir la singularité de sa manifestation; comme elle souligne la puissance fondatrice de ce vieil art<sup>05</sup>, dont la fougue et la vivacité persistent contre vents et marées des écrits, des écrans, des pandémies.

De son côté de l'océan, J. Darwiche se prépare à rassembler une nouvelle cohorte de jeunes conteurs prêts à cheminer sur le sentier d'un prochain "PasàPas". De ce côté-ci, Jacques Falquet, l'un des participants à l'aventure sherbrookoise, a mis sur pied un Step by Step, version anglophone, en équipe avec cinq conteuses du Canada. Petronella van Dijk s'entoure elle aussi de différentes conteuses de la région, adoptant rigoureusement le même principe de travailler en chœur le répertoire traditionnel de l'oralité par l'oralité. L'intention, comme le patrimoine, poursuit son chemin. Pas à pas.

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### 05.

Disait Jocelyn Bérubé, l'un des grands conteurs du Québec actuel. Il s'est mérité en 2019, le prix Gérard-Morisset, la plus haute distinction accordée par le gouvernement du Québec à une personne pour l'ensemble d'une carrière consacrée au patrimoine. Pour une première fois remis à un conteur.



## When Heritage Moves Forward Step by Step

Christian-Marie Pons

This article reports on a storytelling training workshop called Pas à Pas (Step by Step) that was held at the Maison des Arts de la Parole in Sherbrooke (Québec, Canada) between September 2020 and April 2022, during the COVID-19 pandemic. It involved five Québécois storytellers supervised by Jihad Darwiche, a Franco-Lebanese storyteller of international reputation, who has been very careful to pass on his knowledge and experience in the art of storytelling.

Two observations are interesting to note about the cooperation between Sherbrooke (where the storytellers met) and Avignon (home of Darwiche), with the perspective of affirming living heritage, that of speech and storytelling—despite outstanding circumstances. From the outset, a pleasing observation, speech, and oral traditions were able to overcome obstacles to continue on their way and to be enriched by those obstacles.

The first observation is an opportunity to specify the work of storytellers based on oral transmission as a traditional mode of story acquisition (and not only saying it aloud), including the time required for its maturation. Almost systematically excluding any writing recourse, the workshop favors an approach for oral transmission through the storyteller's speech, one that traditionally came under "primary orality" (Ong, 2014). To define this orality preceding writing and in opposition to modern societies that is dominated by "graphic thinking" (Goody, 1979).

The second is to show that the traditional practice of acquiring tales orally as a mode of transmission can overcome occasional obstacles and enhance the liveliness of a heritage carried by the spoken word. Paradoxically, due to the pandemic, this workshop was able to take place and achieve its goals thanks to new technologies (videoconferences, Internet, etc.) to assist the storyteller in speaking authentic words freely.

Thus, the Pas à Pas venture proves to be instructive in terms of

safeguarding and transmitting an intangible heritage that the storyteller carries. Ultimately, this experience around the story promotes not so much a matter of the story being safeguarded as ICH but rather a way of assuming its safeguarding and the spirit of keeping the heritage alive.

And this, against the winds and tides of writings, screens, and pandemics.

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**Christian-Marie Pons** a été, jusqu'en 2017, professeur-chercheur en communication à la Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines de l'Université de Sherbrooke (Québec). Observateur du Renouveau du conte depuis une trentaine d'années, il a l'occasion de donner des conférences, d'organiser et d'animer rencontres et tables rondes, de rédiger de nombreux articles, et de diriger plusieurs ouvrages collectifs à ce sujet. Ses activités sont régulièrement liées à la Maison des Arts de la Parole.

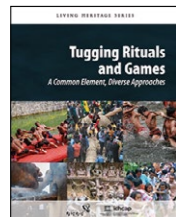
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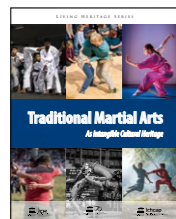
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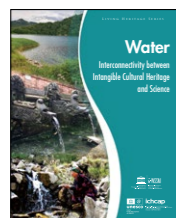
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## LIVING HERITAGE SERIES

For the past several decades, UNESCO has been increasingly championing the importance of living heritage as a driving force for proliferating cultural diversity and sustainable development of a global society. Sustainable development in this sense, however, is not equated to economic growth alone but also to a means to achieve equitable intellectual, emotional, and spiritual fulfillment in the global community.

At the same time, international society has been facing challenges in promoting the values of cultural pluralism. UNESCO has advocated for promoting culture, and intangible cultural heritage, in particular since the 1980s with the Decade for Cultural Development and later with the Living Human Treasures program (UNESCO 142EX/18 and 142EX/48). These promotions and programs culminated with the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Both of these instruments recognize the importance of sharing and promoting living heritage to enhance understanding and appreciation of the cultural assets of humanity.

In 2017, UNESCO-ICHCAP, a UNESCO Category 2 Centre in the intangible cultural heritage field, started the *Living Heritage Series* to promote cultural diversity and safeguard intangible cultural heritage. In this publication project, ICHCAP collaborates with other organizations to share information about beliefs and practices from living heritage around the world in the hopes that living heritage can be widely transmitted and practiced by communities in the international society.

