

# What's News?

THE ICOMOS-EPWG AFRICA MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## Edito

Dear Readers,

Whether it is cultural or natural, tangible or intangible, terrestrial or underwater; whether it stops at the primary definition of heritage or extends to the cultural and creative industries: our Culture is our greatest asset.

Culture, especially on our continent, has no borders, it is what defines our identity and guides our past, present and future.

It is therefore only natural that we present this new issue dedicated to Culture, in all its forms. By giving the stage to emerging professionals covering several components of what makes up Culture, our Newsletter attempts to decompartmentalize cultural heritage to integrate it into a holistic approach, more faithful to what it is, or really should be.

It is also an opportunity for us to highlight some of UNESCO's cultural Conventions, often less known than the World Heritage Convention, in particular the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage adopted in 2001, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted in 2003, or the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions adopted in 2005. These international treaties bear witness to the diversity of aspects to be taken into account in order to promote and preserve Culture as a whole, and which it is important for us to better understand in order to apply them in our respective fields.

Enjoy your reading!

**Alyssa K. Barry**  
Coordinator



Costume de Princesse NDOP - Exposition Route des Chefferies au Musée du Quai Branly © Jean-Paul C. LAWSON, 2022

## 5 QUESTIONS TO MOUSSA WELE

### **From land to the underwater world, who is Moussa Wélé?**

I am a young Senegalese researcher, specialized in underwater archeology and management of underwater cultural heritage. I am part of the first generation of African and Senegalese students, specifically specialized in underwater cultural heritage. I did most of my school and university studies in Senegal and very quickly understood the importance of getting involved as a young person in the knowledge, protection, safeguarding and promotion of African cultural heritage. Already at the University, I had a sustained experience in the field of heritage through the coordination of a research and discovery program of the seven (7) World Heritage sites in Senegal. Then as a young heritage professional, I represented Senegal in several international meetings (Forum of young World Heritage professionals, international congress of pre and protohistoric sciences, Biennale of Luanda, etc.). Over the past 7 years my professional experiences have allowed me to intervene in Senegal, Gambia, Cabo Verde as well as at the level of the UNESCO Regional Office for West Africa in Dakar as a consultant responsible for the training of professionals in the management of underwater cultural heritage, the inventory of underwater archaeological sites, awareness campaigns on underwater cultural heritage, as well as for the support for the preparation of files for the ratification of the UNESCO 2001 Convention. I am a member of the technical and scientific committee of the memorial of the sinking of the boat Le Joola, a member of the Scientific Interest Group (GIS) in History and Sciences of the sea and I'm involved with international associations for the protection of the marine environment in Africa.



### **How did you get into the world of underwater heritage?**

My childhood greatly influenced my choice to work in the maritime environment. Having grown up in my maternal family of Lebou origin (community of fishermen on the Dakar peninsula), I was long impressed by the stories and anecdotes of my fishing uncles. After my High School Diploma, I was directed to the History Department of the Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar as if it was a sign indicating my duty to document the history and culture of this community of fishermen I grew up with. I then chose to specialize in underwater archaeology, a specialty which until then had been non-existent in our university and even in West Africa. Thanks to the support of my professors, the university authorities, the Directorate of Cultural Heritage of Senegal as well as international partners, I then benefited from scuba diving training in Dakar before continuing with other training programs in underwater archeology and underwater cultural heritage management. Since then, other young students from Senegal and from Africa in general have followed our footsteps and today form a group of young researchers committed to research on the maritime cultural landscapes of Africa.



**The cannons of the Portuguese frigate URANNIA, grounded in 1809 off Praia (Cabo Verde), © Erwan Savin, 2017.**

## **What is the state of underwater heritage in Africa to date?**

Underwater cultural heritage is defined by the 2001 UNESCO Convention as "all traces of human existence having a cultural, historical or archaeological character which have been submerged, partially or totally, periodically or continuously for at least 100 years". This lesser-known heritage nevertheless enjoys protection at the international level thanks to this normative framework of UNESCO, the Convention for the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, adopted in November 2001 and which to date has been ratified by 71 countries. The urgency of protecting this submerged heritage had already been understood at the level of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), with the adoption in 1996 of an "international charter for the protection and management of underwater cultural heritage". (Charter of Sofia, adopted by the 11th General Assembly). In addition to this international charter, the establishment by ICOMOS of an International Committee on Underwater Cultural Heritage (ICUCH) now makes it possible to promote international cooperation in the protection and management of underwater cultural heritage and to advise this organization on issues related to this heritage in the world.

To answer the question on the state of underwater heritage in Africa, it is important to already understand its meaning and the interest for its protection and safeguarding.

In Africa, the oceans and rivers have been production spaces as well as an axis for the circulation of resources, ideas and people throughout prehistory until the contemporary period. These maritime and river environments attest to the long-term cultural practices of coastal communities, Africa's contribution to the construction of the modern world as well as the history of international navigation. Knowledge of this universe and its historical trajectory is therefore essential for the governance of the environmental, economic and cultural resources it contains. Underwater archeology is today the discipline that allows us to study and understand the importance of protecting these submerged cultural resources. Whether it is the submerged protohistoric sites of the Saloum Delta (Senegal), witness to age-old practices geared towards the maritime economy, the anchor cemetery of Cidade Velha (Cabo Verde) which can tell us a part of the of international maritime navigation, or the wreck of the slave ship Sao Jose Paquete D'Africa, sunk in 1794 in South Africa with more than 200 slaves, all these sites are in urgent need of protection and enhancement for a sustainable development. In Africa, underwater cultural heritage is largely not inventoried and unfortunately subject to intense looting. It is also a victim of commercial exploitation and various industrial impacts such as dredging works and major port development works in the maritime public domain, thus depriving several generations of the opportunity to benefit from essential knowledge especially the knowledge of the historical and cultural trajectory of the marine environment.

These various threats to these submerged cultural assets have provoked significant reactions from African States. Several initiatives have been born on the continent to respond to these threats, in particular through: training and capacity building programs for the management of this submerged heritage, the implementation of research projects with targeted issues (slavery wrecks project, Rising from the depths, Margullar project). There are also initiatives aimed at developing recommendations or action plans that can improve the management of underwater cultural heritage at the regional level.



Submerged dam in the Port of Dakar (Senegal), © Moussa WELE, 2019

### **What is your vision for Africa's underwater heritage for the next 50 years?**

The United Nations Decade for Ocean Science, 2021-2030 is an opportunity to lay the groundwork for the integration of underwater cultural heritage into economic development policies. Today, the discovery, preservation and enhancement of this heritage could promote scientific, cultural and economic development for the benefit of coastal, riverine and island communities in Africa as well as for future generations. Examples of enhancement and protection of this submerged heritage in the world today have shown the possibilities of job creation for young people through scuba diving tourism and the development of museums.

Furthermore, the sustainable management of these submerged cultural resources is also in line with the goal of the African Union's Agenda 2063, a blue/ocean economy for accelerated economic growth to aspire to a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development.

In the next 50 years, the vision would therefore be to build training programs in the management of submerged cultural assets adapted to the African context, the integration of this heritage into all marine development plans as well as the encouragement of research initiatives multidisciplinary around the underwater cultural heritage.

### **A last word for African professional youth?**

I would simply say to African youth that the quest for knowledge and the duty to commit to the safeguarding of African heritage are essential acts today if we want a better Africa.



Cidade anchor graveyard (Cabo Verde), © E. D'Oliveira, 2017



**Emblem of the 2003 Convention © UNESCO**

The intangible cultural heritage (ICH) brings together all the traditions and living expressions transmitted from generation to generation. They can manifest through oral traditions, social practices, rituals or even the knowledge and know-how necessary for traditional craftsmanship, among other things.

Intangible heritage is of crucial importance in defining our identities, our sense of belonging to a cultural group and our creativity. Unlike “tangible” heritage, intangible heritage is constantly changing. Throughout the history of humanity, peoples have migrated, mixed and new cultural practices were born. These cultural practices, rituals and knowledge concerning nature and the universe have been transmitted from generation to generation, thus forming the cultural identity of peoples that can be found in all four corners of the world.

On the international level, it is the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, also called the “2003 Convention”, which constitutes the normative instrument aimed at ensuring the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage. The identification of intangible cultural heritage, within the framework of the implementation of this Convention, is done by communities, and experts only have the role of mediator or facilitator, contrary to the 1972 Convention. As of today 50 African States Parties ratified the 2003 Convention and 88 African elements are inscribed on its various lists. Among the actors of ICH safeguarding, there are about twenty accredited NGOs on the African continent and one Category 2 Centre, the “Regional Center for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Africa” located in Algeria. During its last session in December 2021, the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage inscribed 7 elements from the African continent, including 5 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, 1 on the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices and 1 on the List of Intangible Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

Among the recent emblematic inscriptions, we find the Congolese rumba, a musical genre and popular dance whose nomination file was proposed jointly by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo and which constitutes for the two countries the first element inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. We can also mention the project for the promotion of traditional foods and safeguarding traditional foodways in Kenya, which has been inscribed on the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices and which is for the moment the only African element inscribed on this Register. More information on recent inscriptions is available on the Convention website: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists>

*Florentine Okoni*



Photography of "On the Road to Chiefdoms of Cameroon, from the Visible to the Invisible", Quai Branly Museum. © Jean-Paul Lawson, 2022

The Grassfields cultural landscape is the combined work of man and nature and illustrates in a unique and special way the specificities of the relationship between man and his natural environment. Rich in cultural spaces and commemorative and living objects, traditional Grassfields societies have jealously preserved their natural and cultural heritage, with people cohabiting peacefully with nature, through the real and surreal phenomena it contains, as a medium for beliefs and traditions. The Grassfields cultural landscape illustrates important moments in the creation of traditional chieftaincies, as well as being places of intersection and contact with the afterlife, a space for consultation with ancestors and particular deities.

**"On the Road to Chiefdoms of Cameroon, from the Visible to the Invisible"** is a temporary exhibition that opened from 4 April to 17 July 2022 at the Quai Branly Jacques Chirac Museum in Paris, immersing the visitor in the culture of the Grassfields societies of Cameroon. Spread over an area of more than 2000m<sup>2</sup>, the exhibition presents more than 270 living objects, lent by some twenty traditional chiefs, guardians and keepers of local and ancestral traditions. It is made up of three main sections describing the major cultural and natural elements observed in these societies. Each section of the exhibition is governed by the material and the immaterial, translated according to the chosen theme by the visible and the invisible, characteristic elements of these societies. Like a projection on large screens, the visitor travels through Cameroon, discovering a rich living heritage. The landing thus projects the visitor into a unique urbanism, characterised by exceptional traditional architecture, a source of human and natural imagination and creative genius. The journey continues with the presentation of several characteristic elements of the Grassfields culture, including conical roofs, symbols, forging and the knowledge and skills of local craftsmen, as well as the impressive presentation of community life through the frescoes of a young Cameroonian artist. The exhibition also describes the concept of totemism, by which man and animal cohabit in a single body. This doubling of man and animal is symbolised by power, strength and authority, as man uses animal energy to govern and lead, especially chiefs.

From one surprise to another, the exhibition plunges the visitor into the heart of the social organisation of Grassfields societies, where a chief and his queens with their prestigious thrones and ceremonial outfits, each with a very specific role and function within the community. The journey ends with the discovery of the main secret societies, regulatory and decision-making bodies, the very basis of invisibility, as the traditional chieftaincies are in themselves a mark of identity and unity of the Grassfields territories. The overall exhibition thus presents the cultural and natural diversity, a characteristic element on which the Grassfields societies have relied to shape their living space.

**Avnir G. Meikengang**



**ICOMOS celebrate 50th anniversary of The World Heritage Convention in November 2022!**

We invite you to celebrate the successes and challenges, strengths and achievements of the World Heritage Convention and the role and contribution of ICOMOS.

Send us your stories about how the World Heritage Convention influences your professional practice. What does it mean to you?

We are asking all ICOMOS members to share their most impactful stories from the last 50 years and the next 50 years to come.

**Tell us what you have experienced and hope to see in the future.**

**For more information about this celebration, and how to contribute, click [here](#).**

**CALL FOR PAPERS**  
ICAHM Annual Meeting 2022

The World Heritage Convention at 50: Evolution and influence on Archaeological Heritage Management since 1972

**ABSTRACT DEADLINE**  
1 SEPT 2022

The ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management (ICAHM) is happy to announce that the 2022 ICAHM Annual Meeting will be held at the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, Ireland, 8-10 Dec 2022.

The meeting is open to all but registration is required.

Registration details, attendance fees and **ABSTRACT SUBMISSION FORM** can be found on the conference website:

<https://icahm.icomos.org/>

**THEMES**

- Key issues in World Heritage Policies and Management
- Re-visiting Notions of Integrity
- Climate Change and Integrity
- Exploring Concepts of Authenticity

The scientific committee welcomes abstracts (100-300 words) on these themes. Presentations to be 20 mins in length; the language of this conference is English. Please submit abstracts electronically via the conference website.

**IMPORTANT DATES 2022**

9 JULY	1 SEPT	30 SEPT	14 OCT	17 NOV	8-10 DEC
Registration opens	Abstract submission closes	Paper acceptance notification	Early bird registration closes	Registration closes	Conference

Logos: ICOMOS ICAHM, 50th Anniversary, ICOMOS, An Roinn Turais, Rialtas Árainn agus Oidhreachta, Department for Communities

More Information <https://icahm.icomos.org/> [ICAHM2022@gmail.com](mailto:ICAHM2022@gmail.com) @ICAHMnews

The ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management (ICAHM) is happy to announce that the 2022 ICAHM Annual Meeting and Conference will be take place from **8 to 10 December 2022 in Ireland** at the Royal Irish Academy close cooperation with Irish partners: Royal Irish Academy, ICOMOS Ireland, National Monuments Service and the Historic Environment Division.

The theme of this year’s conference is **“The World Heritage Convention at 50: Evolution and influence on Archaeological Heritage Management since 1972”**. We welcome abstract submissions from all interested researchers, professionals and practitioners.

Find more information on the official website of ICAHM, <https://icahm.icomos.org/2022-icahm-annual-meeting/>.

Abstracts can be submitted using the official Abstract Submission Form available at <https://bit.ly/3uTMKT1>.

## DID YOU KNOW IT?



Photography of archaeological site of Gounoudoudji © Dekart. 2021

### **The archaeological site of Gounoudoudji or “men with tails” in Dogbo in the Republic of Benin**

The Republic of Benin has an enormous cultural and heritage potential which is quite rich and diversified. Among the Beninese heritage assets that are receiving more attention is the archaeological site of Gounoudoudji, called the site of the “men with tails”. The latter is located in the Commune of Dogbo, located in the department of Couffo in the South-West of Benin.

Indeed, it is a site discovered in 1998 during an archaeological mission led by a Beninese-Danish delegation. The archaeological results sought that the site was an underground gallery of iron extraction having worked between the 9th and the 15th century. It is essentially composed of two elements, namely the underground structure (holes) and the heaps of iron slag. It should be noted that the underground structure “extends over an area of approximately 150 hectares with the presence of lateritic curasses. Access to this structure is through fourteen (14) openings.” (trad. Houessilo, 2015). Regarding the presence of iron slag on the site, it is the expression that the underground structure would have been a real industry dedicated to the transformation of iron ore. There is a large amount of slag there, which can be attributed to nearly 3000 tons, according to Arimi Soglo, guide and animator of the site.

Moreover, according to the legend told by the local communities, the holes found on the archaeological site of Gounoudoudji are supposedly former habitable places of the people of blacksmiths who were said to have tails. To hide these, they would go very early in the morning to the market to sell the tools they made. At the market, they tried on their tails in order to hide them and did not return until late at night.

From all the above, the archaeological site of Gounoudoudji in the municipality of Dogbo has a certain cultural, heritage and archaeological value and deserves a development that would contribute to its enhancement and promotion.

***Djimmy Djiffa EDAH***





Notable headdress in the Batie chiefdom in Cameroon © Jean-Paul C. LAWSON. 2022

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## LATEST OPPORTUNITIES

- **Course on Conservation of Built Heritage 2023**

ICCROM invites applicants interested in the Conservation of Built Heritage Course to submit their applications. The 2023 course will examine different approaches to conservation within the framework of sustainable development. To apply, <https://bit.ly/3FJBQn7>. Deadline: August 31, 2022.

- **Recruitment of Project Officer Culture Sector UNESCO**

UNESCO is recruiting for its headquarters in Paris, a project Officer within the Culture Sector. For more information and to apply, <https://bit.ly/3ogWzGL>. Deadline: August 12, 2022.



Throne of Chief Bamdjom © Jean-Paul C. LAWSON. 2022