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# WHAT'S NEWS

THE ICOMOS-EPWG AFRICA MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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# EDITORIAL

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Alyssa K. Barry

The month of November already announces the end of the year, and usually the opportunity to start reflecting on a chapter that's drawing to a close, while another is preparing to unfold. Until we reach the end of this rich year 2023, we remain faithful to our mission to once again share the challenges and the men and women who shape our continent's heritage on a daily basis.

Whether it's promoting education and capacity-building around heritage, highlighting women's knowledge and know-how, or making our museums and heritage more accessible and inclusive, this new issue shows once again that the world of African cultural heritage is dynamic, and just waiting to be showcased.

From Alexandria to Gaborone, via Grand-Bassam and Douala, are you ready for this new journey?

Happy reading!

# 5 QUESTIONS TO GOABAONE GEE MONTSHO

*interviewed by Alyssa K. Barry*

## **1. From Vancouver to Gaborone, who is Goabaone Gee Montsho ?**

My interaction with the heritage sector began at Vancouver Island University in Canada. As part of my Anthropology degree I took a course in museum anthropology. This course triggered my passion in museum curatorship. The job of a museum curator allows for creativity. Story telling about human societies through exhibitions was an adventure for me. However, as a student with a disability, I was concerned about what could be done to make museums accessible for the blind. This question became practical for me at the Botswana National Museum. After completing my Masters degree in public administration from the University of Botswana in 2018, I got employed by the Botswana National Museum.

## **2. As a professional with a disability, how did you navigate the heritage world to get to where you are now ?**

As a visually impaired professional, I utilize my senses of hearing, touch and intuition to navigate the heritage world. I believe in professional empowerment to improve my performance as a museum curator. Subsequently, I am passionate about participating in multiple heritage forums for purposes of networking and capacity building. As the chair of the International Council of Museums Botswana, I represent Botswana's national committee in heritage related issues.



## **3. What does your job as museum curator involve ?**

My job as a museum curator involves disseminating cultural knowledge with museum audiences. I attend to researchers and students who seek information from the museum. I produce cultural heritage content relevant for Botswana National Museum audiences. This content is shared through radio and museum blogs. As an ethnographer, I participate in curating temporary exhibitions at Botswana National Museum.

## **4. In your opinion, how can we make museums and heritage in general more accessible to people with disabilities, and how do you contribute to this ?**

Museums and heritage in general can be made accessible to people with disabilities by first raising awareness amongst all heritage stakeholders. Developing frameworks and legislation on accessibility is critical in making museums and the heritage sector universally accessible. I do give lectures to university students studying heritage courses on accessibility. I also organize outreach activities for museum audiences with disabilities.

## **5. What is your message to African youth ?**

African tangible and intangible heritage is an opportunity to explore by young Africans. Heritage has the potential to create employment and different business opportunities. Through innovation, creativity and technology, African youth can sustainably utilize their heritage to improve economic and social development in their respective countries.







# SENIOR'S VOICE: RIBIO NZEZA BUNKETI BUSE

*interviewed by Jean-Paul Lawson*



## **1. From Kinshasa to Alexandria via Johannesburg, who is Ribio NZEZA BUNKETI BUSE?**

I'm a professor at the Catholic University of Congo (UCC) and at the University of Kinshasa. I am currently Director of the Culture Department at Senghor University in Alexandria (Egypt), a direct operator of La Francophonie.

After studying communications, I worked as a journalist for BRT Africa and Radio Okapi. I was Assistant at the Faculty of Social Communications at UCC where I studied. After my Master's degree in Management of Cultural Enterprises (Senghor University, 2009), I contributed in Johannesburg to the creation in 2013 in Nairobi of the Music in Africa Foundation, of which I was elected President (2 terms).

I took part in drafting the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) Cultural Development Strategy adopted in 2015, Kinshasa's successful bid to join UNESCO's Creative Cities for Music network, and the UNESCO inscription of rumba as an element of intangible cultural heritage.

## **2. From radio and Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI), you moved into public procurement, where you stayed for a decade. What role did this change of direction play in your career path?**

Working in procurement gave me a solid grounding in development project management, especially in relation to international donors such as the World Bank, African Development Bank (AfDB) and Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA).

The cultural sector not only needs talented people, but also managers with knowledge of proven tools, methods and techniques. However, this is without ignoring the specificities of cultural goods and services. This passage has shaped my thinking, my outlook and the nature of my analyses of the cultural sector in general, and the cultural and creative industries in particular. My publications reflect this. In addition to contracting, I was exposed to operational management, financial management, auditing and project monitoring and evaluation.

I also learned about development planning, which helps me to communicate effectively with public sector players.

Today, this experience is of great use to me in leading activities within the Culture Department of Senghor University in terms of coordinating and managing projects entrusted to me by donors.

## **3. In 2017, you moved into higher education, first in Kinshasa and, since October 2021, Senghor University in Alexandria as Director of the Culture Department. Why teaching and what are the main directions of your mission in Alexandria?**

Teaching is linked to my desire to share my knowledge and put my skills at the service of society. It's what motivates me, because I feel I've received so much during my academic and professional career that I can't not give back to others. It's an exhilarating mission insofar as it enables society to move forward, to see what not everyone else sees, to point out new paths to explore. What's more, the academic world demands greater self-discipline in reflection, analysis and appreciation of situations. Somewhere there's an obligation to excel, all the more so as one is serving as a guide.

At Senghor University, I aim, as part of the overall strategic plan, to help provide a unique university experience in the field of culture on a continental scale. The result is that people will say: "If I want to become such and such in the African cultural field, I have Senghor University as one of my first choices for training". All this is achieved by paying particular attention to courses, para-academic activities, study trips, exchange programs, projects, partnerships, positioning with renowned institutions in the sector, and so on.

**4. "Culture au futur. Perspectives pour le développement du secteur culturel et créatif congolais" is the title of the book you published on January 24, 2021. In your opinion, what is the role of African youth in the cultural development of Africa today, in light of the African Union's Agenda 2063?**

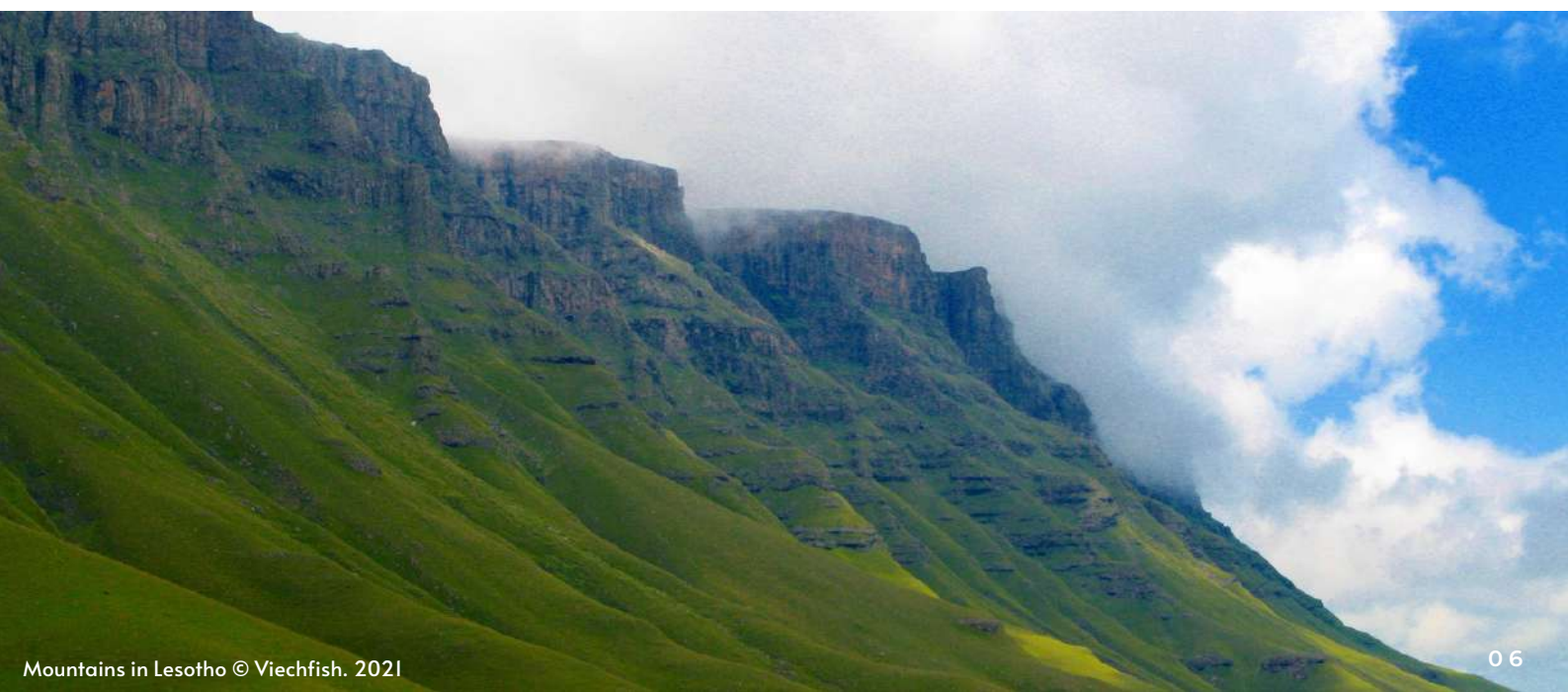
The first thing for African youth in general is to take ownership of Agenda 2063 in its entirety. It's the basic document outlining the continent's development after the first political phase of the African Union (AU), which has almost achieved its mission.

The second thing is knowledge of other fundamental documents such as the Charter for the Cultural Renaissance of Africa, the AU's revised action plan on cultural and creative industries, and the model law on the protection of cultural heritage. Once this has been done, it will then be up to them to develop useful projects, broaden horizons and build synergies at national and continental level, so that culture can truly be the lever of African development. It is the foundation of the continent's future, for infrastructure, the economy, health, education, technology and other sectors will only find their relevance if they draw on it.

**5. Your final message for young African heritage professionals?**

I would recommend that young African heritage professionals continue to train to improve their skills and knowledge, and to acquire others required by our ever-changing world. Current and pressing issues linked to climate change, technologies such as artificial intelligence and NFTs deserve to be integrated into thinking patterns and solutions to realities. However, there is no need to forget the persistent issues of preservation, conservation, enhancement and promotion of cultural heritage. This year's increase in the number of African sites on UNESCO's World Heritage List is both a motivation and an encouragement to work harder.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the national and international commitment of young heritage professionals to organizations such as ICCROM, ICOM and ICOMOS. I warmly encourage them. May they take advantage of these forums and opportunities to make a difference!



# I TOOK PART IN THE UNESCO WORKSHOP “STRENGTHENING THE NETWORK OF FACILITATORS IN AFRICA AND ARAB STATES: TRAINING OF TRAINERS”

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*by Bathusi Lesolobe*

The recent “Strengthening the Network of Facilitators in Africa and Arab States: Training of Trainers” workshop, organized by UNESCO and hosted by the Sharjah Heritage Institute in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), brought together Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) trainers from Africa and Arab States. The workshop aimed to equip these trainers with the necessary skills to join the Global Facilitators Network, which seeks to assist States in building capacities related to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Participants included researchers, university lecturers, government officials, officials from NGOs working in the field of culture and trainers from the private sector.

By bringing together trainers from Africa and Arab States, the workshop not only fostered collaboration and knowledge exchange but also contributed to the empowerment of local communities in safeguarding their cultural heritage.

During the workshop, participants got to experience the intangible cultural heritage of Sharjah through engagement in practical exercises with ICH practitioners from different regions of Sharjah. One such experience was the documentation of ICH related to the breeding of camels and associated practices such as camel races. Participants had the opportunity to interact with practitioners, share ideas and assess the status of the cultural practice particularly the technological developments incorporated into the enactment of the element. This exercise enhanced the capacity of facilitators in assessing the status of ICH from a different perspective.

The workshop marked a significant step in enhancing the capacity of trainers from the two regions to contribute to the safeguarding and viability of intangible cultural heritage. As these facilitators join the Global Facilitators Network, they are poised to play a pivotal role in supporting States Parties in their efforts to safeguard and promote their cultural traditions.

Ultimately, the workshop underscored the commitment to preserving cultural diversity and highlighted the importance of collaboration and knowledge sharing between the two regions.







# DID YOU KNOW ? GRAND-BASSAM: HISTORIC TOWN, CRADLE OF MODERN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

*Affoh Guenneguez*



Historic town of Grand-Bassam © Affoh Guenneguez. 2011

The historic town of Grand-Bassam is located 40 km southeast of Abidjan. It includes Côte d'Ivoire's first colonial capital, the "Quartier France", and a village inhabited by the N'Zima socio-cultural group.

The Quartier France was built at the end of the 19th century on a strip of land between the Ouladine lagoon and the Atlantic Ocean, where the N'Zima village is also located. From 1893 to 1900, Quartier France was the administrative, port and judicial headquarters of Côte d'Ivoire. In 1900, an epidemic of yellow fever decimated  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the local Europeans, and the town began to decline. The capital was relocated, but Grand-Bassam remained the country's economic and judicial center until the 1950s. For this reason, in December 1949, it was the scene of the first large-scale collective movement organized by women against the decisions of the colonial administration.

The historic city has been inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List since June 2012, under criteria (iii) and (iv). It is home to an important tangible heritage represented by the importance of colonial buildings, its urban organization, which has remained the same since its foundation, and the N'zima village.

It also embodies an intangible heritage represented by the presence of the N'Zima kingdom, its social space and the Abissa festival.

# PORTR'ELLES : AMÉLIE ESSESSÉ

*Alyssa K. Barry*



If there's one woman we should include in our Portr'elles section, it's Amélie Essessé. Her bold and passionate career is a testimony to her commitment to highlighting women and their role in heritage preservation.

After spending her childhood in Douala, Cameroon, Amélie was sent to France at the age of 15, where she continued her education. In 1990, she was one of the few girls to obtain a technical baccalaureate F4 - Civil Engineering. She went on to study architecture at the École d'Architecture de Paris Conflans, UP4 (formerly the École des Beaux-arts), where she soon asked herself: "If I wanted to build a house in Cameroon, what type would it be?" In 1992, she joined forces with other African students to organize a symposium on "Art and Architecture in Africa", which marked the beginning of her interest in African architectural typologies. After obtaining her Diploma of Fundamental Studies in Architecture (DEFA) in 1993, she continued her studies at the Paris la Villette School of Architecture (UP6), where she followed a program on developing countries. She was active in the student association and set up the "La Villette Africaine" branch, which organized cultural events, including a conference on the theme of "Women Builders of Africa", a fundamental element in understanding her subsequent career.

Today, Amélie is a DPLG (Diplômée Par Le Gouvernement) architect, an international expert for UNESCO's World Heritage Centre, the author of children's books, documentaries and various articles on African heritage, and President of the Bâtir et Développer association with its flagship project "Femmes bâtisseuses d'Afrique et d'Ailleurs" (Women builders from Africa and elsewhere). She campaigns for a harmonious habitat that respects human beings and their environment, and for wider debate on the value of women's know-how and place in architecture and in the trades involved in safeguarding this built heritage, taking into account the intangible dimension.

In her words: "Taking into account the role of women in heritage preservation is more than urgent. Indeed, women are also the guardians of our heritage. They are the ones who pass on their know-how while educating and running their households. Intergenerational transmission, the ingenuity they deploy and the renewal of the many forms they produce, make them exceptional living human treasures. Their place and future in the preservation of our heritage can only be further recognized and enhanced. This contributes to their empowerment, to the enrichment of knowledge, and thus participates in the great milestones of human history forging a before-and-after."



# LATEST OPPORTUNITIES

- **ICOM International is launching a call for project proposals for grants for SAREC 2024 special and solidarity projects. For more information: <https://tinyurl.com/appelicom24>**
- **Call for abstracts for participation in the AFRICA24 Initiative Conference. For more information: <https://tinyurl.com/africa24ciav>**
- **Call for action for COP 28 - Culture at the heart of climate action. For more information: <https://tinyurl.com/appelcop28>**
- **Open call: Black Rock Senegal 2024 residency program. For more information: <https://tinyurl.com/blackrock24>**

# MASTHEAD

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