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WHAT'S NEWS

THE ICOMOS-EPWG AFRICA MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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EDITORIAL

Alyssa K. Barry

The famous pan-African historian Cheikh Anta Diop once said:

"There is only one salvation, and that is direct knowledge. Educate yourself, arm yourself to the teeth with science and tear up your cultural heritage. With equal training, truth triumphs. There is no other way, young Africans.

Because learning is the key to knowledge, one of the objectives of this Newsletter from the outset has been to promote initiatives aimed at strengthening the skills and knowledge of the continent's professionals, but also of the general public. Benin, which today occupies a central position on the continent when it comes to preserving and promoting African cultural heritage, is the focus of this June issue.

The Ecole du Patrimoine Africain, based in Porto-Novo, Benin, is a benchmark in the promotion and capacity-building of those involved in African heritage. We have chosen to give the floor to its Director, Dr Franck Ogou, who takes this opportunity to talk about his career and the development of the school.

As we celebrated International Archives Day this month, we also drew up a portrait of Hermione Dossou-Kohi, archivist and President of the Association des Documentalistes, Archivistes et Bibliothécaires du Bénin (ADADB), highlighting the importance and role of archives for our continent.

Finally, the floor is given to Djimmy Djiffa Edah, emerging professional and founder of the agency Emergence Culturelle, who talks in particular about the Youth.Heritage.Africa programme run by ICCROM.

So these are three actors from Benin, with different histories and backgrounds, but who above all share, beyond their nationality, a palpable passion for the cultural heritage of their country and their continent, while actively participating in its transmission.

Enjoy your reading!

5 QUESTIONS TO DJIMMY DJIFFA EDAH

by Jean-Paul C. Lawson



1. *From Cotonou to Rome, via Alexandria: who is Djimmy Djiffa Edah?*

Djimmy Djiffa EDAH is a young specialist in African cultural heritage with 4 years of professional experience. He holds a Bachelor's degree in History and a Master's degree in Cultural Heritage Management from Senghor University in Alexandria. Thanks to a European Union grant, he is currently pursuing an Erasmus Mundus DYCLAM+ (Dynamic of Cultural, Landscape, Heritage, Memory and Conflictualities) Master's degree coordinated by Université Jean Monnet. These mobility Master's studies have enabled him to benefit from a professional immersion internship with ICCROM's prestigious Youth.Heritage.Africa program. In addition, Djimmy Djiffa EDAH is a young cultural entrepreneur who founded the Cabinet Emergence Culturelle in 2020, with which he carries out several actions for the benefit of communes.

2. *As a heritage professional, you are passionate about the circulation of cultural goods. In your opinion, how can we redefine the circulation of cultural goods in African museums today?*

I believe that the museum dynamic that heritage professionals in general, and museum professionals in particular, are hoping and praying for, will find its way to a better policy for the circulation of cultural goods. The African museum is no longer a place of conservation or exhibition reserved exclusively for the assets of a given territory or society. In a globalized world, it is becoming an open space that provides information on the specific features of universal culture. For me, the museum is a universal institution where cultural assets from different horizons mingle and dialogue. Benin's heritage should be exhibited and visited in Mali, Burkina-Faso, Kenya, France and elsewhere. In this way, we can also contribute to giving meaning to heritage and museums. It is important to give pride of place in the scientific and cultural projects of African museums to museum cooperation, which would encourage loans and also the implementation of co-curatorial projects for touring exhibitions within African museums.

3. *The African Union's Agenda 2063 calls on young people to innovate, empower and undertake, particularly in the cultural and heritage sectors. You understood this very well when you set up "Emergence Culturelle", a structure providing expertise and advice on cultural and heritage issues. What are your main achievements with this firm?*

Emergence Culturelle was set up to help local authorities develop and promote their cultural, natural and tourist heritage. Since 2020, and thanks to a dynamic team, we have carried out two major inventory missions with this young company in the communes of Aplahoué (2021) and Djakotomey (2022) in the Republic of Benin.

4. *The Youth Heritage Africa program in which you are currently involved. How did this opportunity come about and what do you retain from this program?*

As I mentioned in my introduction, it was thanks to my Erasmus Mundus DYCLAM+ Master's studies that I had the opportunity to apply online for a professional immersion internship in ICCROM's Youth.Heritage.Africa program. I can say that since March 1, 2023, I've been living an exceptional experience, acquiring a wealth of knowledge and skills. It's a program that supports innovation and creativity in heritage, and in which young people are the key players. Through the many projects implemented since 2020, and thanks to the leadership of its manager and the contribution of its partners, this program encourages African youth to turn heritage into a source of jobs and economic opportunities capable of driving Africa's development. What makes this program so special is that it not only contributes to building the capacities of young heritage professionals in Africa, but also uncovers the best cultural and heritage projects (both concrete and innovative) from young people on the continent, and supports their implementation. Find out more about this program at : [Youth.Heritage.Africa \(YHA\)](https://www.youthheritageafrica.org/) | [ICCROM](https://www.iccrom.org/).

5. *Your message to Africa's young professionals?*

My message is simple: young heritage professionals must adopt an entrepreneurial approach that contributes effectively and sustainably to the conservation, enhancement and promotion of African heritage. Above all, we must continue to receive training and build our capacities on subjects of major interest to the smooth running of African heritage.



SENIORS' VOICE

by Florentine Okoni

Since 2019, Dr Franck Komlan Ogou has been the director of the Ecole du Patrimoine Africain - EPA, an academic institution dedicated to the conservation and valorization of cultural heritage in Africa, created by the University of Abomey-Calavi and ICCROM in 1998 at the request of African heritage professionals. As a heritage professional specialising in historic cities and urban dynamics in Africa, Dr Ogou has some fifteen years of experience at the Ecole du Patrimoine Africain, where he is involved in training professionals from the continent. Acting Director since 2019 and appointed Director since 1 January 2023, he will lead the EPA for the next 4 years.



Dr Franck K. OGOU

1) As a heritage specialist with ten years' experience at the Ecole du Patrimoine Africain and more recently as Director of EPA, what have been the major stages in your career?

I joined EPA on 6 July 2004 as a trainee fresh out of university. After the traineeship, my path was inseparable from that of EPA. I was subsequently recruited to the staff, where I have held several positions in the past. In January 2019, at the end of my predecessor's term of office, the Board of Directors appointed me as interim director until a new director was appointed. But given the institution's situation, it needed a lot of time to get up to speed, which I tried to do with the means at my disposal. Finally, after nearly 4 years of interim management, in December 2022 the Board of Directors, following a nomination process, chose me to head the EPA for the next 4 years.

2) Defined by the African Union as a pan-African organisation with a regional vocation, EPA is a world reference for the safeguarding of tangible and intangible cultural heritage in Africa. As a former graduate of this school, can you tell us more about EPA's influence today?

Since its creation in November 1998, EPA has worked in all 26 French-, Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking African countries. In 2015, the African Union, having noted the difficulties of the Center of Heritage Development in Africa (CHDA), added the English-speaking zone to EPA. We are gradually managing to carry out activities in this area. Today EPA is present in Africa and has established itself as a leading training institution in the field of heritage. Every year, we run our own programme, in addition to commissions from institutions and governments. All Africans recognise EPA as the leader in heritage training. In addition to presential trainings, since 2020 we have had our online training platform, which is now one of the most effective and is in demand by all institutions, including UNESCO, ICCROM, the AFD campus and others.

EPA is a great source of pride for Africa, because in addition to the programmes we run for African professionals, EPA is entirely self-financed. Only the government of Benin contributes annually to the running of EPA, and this is a good opportunity to thank Benin for all the support we receive to carry out our work.

Cultural heritage must no longer be just a factor of social cohesion, but must also contribute to improving the daily lives of communities.



3) In addition to your role as Director of EPA, you also have a passion for photography. This passion has led you to develop a programme to safeguard photographic archives in Africa. Can you tell us more about it?

Ah yes! Old photography is my first love. It goes back to 2004. When I was finishing university my research topic was old Beninese photography. And since then I've never left that subject, even though I'm now more involved in other professional subjects. After defending my thesis, I had to organise several photography-related activities. In 2014, thanks to funding, I organised a regional workshop with Delaware University in the USA. This workshop focused on the collection of Cosme Dossa, the first photographer from Dahomey (now the Republic of Benin), who worked for the first president after the independence in 1960. Today I've managed to set up a platform where Cosme Dossa's photographs are presented. We have many other requests, but our resources are very limited.

4) What are the main challenges facing EPA today and what is your vision for tangible and intangible cultural heritage in Benin and Africa in the coming years?

EPA's biggest challenge since its creation has been funding. In spite of everything, we exist and will continue to exist for years to come, because Africa's cultural heritage needs us. We are going to continue to train and implement development projects by putting heritage at the heart of our concerns. Cultural heritage must no longer be just a factor of social cohesion, but must contribute to improving the daily lives of communities. Only then will it be protected and better promoted. That is my vision.

5) What is your message to Africa's youth?

African youth is the future of the world. I'm a great believer in that, but young people themselves have to believe in it and give themselves the means to achieve it. It's not easy in our context, but the future is very positive and I want to encourage young people not to lose hope. I went from being a trainee to director of EPA. I'm a young African and I did all my training on the continent. I hope that every young person will find in my career path reasons for hope in moving forward.

DID YOU KNOW ?

THE TOMBS OF BUGANDA KINGS AT KASUBI

Alyssa K. Barry



Mazibu-Azaala-Mpanga Main Tomb © Alyssa K. Barry. 2023

Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2001, the Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi represent a major spiritual centre for the Baganda people, where traditional and cultural practices have been preserved over time. Covering an area of 26.8 hectares, the site is located on the Kasubi hillside, in the heart of the Ugandan capital city Kampala.

The site is composed of a main courtyard, accessible from the Bujjabukula Gate House Building traditionally guarded by a gatekeeper. A group of traditional and modern dwellings are located on the periphery while in the centre stands the Mazibu-Azaala-Mpanga, the main tomb, with a height of 16 metres and a diameter of 31 metres. Behind the main courtyard is a back yard which includes dwellings, graves and a garden used for the growing of endemic plants as well as for traditional rituals.

The traditional tombs and dwellings are a remarkable example of vernacular architecture, whose know-how has been preserved over time. The most striking feature is the imposing thatching, made of a wooden structure topped with a vegetal roof made of reeds, sisal and spear grass.

The property is still traditionally managed today, with on one side the still active Buganda Kingdom led by the Kabaka (King), its Katikiro (Prime Minister) and ministers, with the active involvement of the Nalinyas (King's wives); and on the other side the State through its Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, with the appointed Site Manager working under the Department of Museums and Monuments.

HIGHLIGHTS ON THE YOUTH MUSEUM FORUM - "MUSEUMS & SOCIAL MEDIA"

Alyssa K. Barry



African museums need to have a marketing department that understands what people want and how they will be able to achieve their wishes, especially young people who are currently very close to the whole issue of social networks.



Zuhura Mtenguzi



Laurine Azebaze

In the light of digital developments, social networks should form part of museum communication strategies, as they represent a real niche for potential museum audiences. In this sense, they support museums in their mission to raise awareness and inform the public about the history of peoples, and even about the arts and traditions specific to communities.

For museums to properly market and promote themselves through social media, they need to put in place structures that allow for youth-oriented models which in turn enables them (museums) to be more visible and accessible digitally.



Abdulrahman Ndegwa



Moustapha Dieye

As places of excellence for education and entertainment, museums must be able to adapt to meet public expectations as the world changes. They must learn to weave their web in the Internet by using social networks to retain the audience they have acquired and to win over a global audience.

Social media platforms are a great way for museums to connect with their audiences and promote their exhibitions and events. Social media can also be used to give feedback from visitors as they engage in conversations about their museum experiences with the collections.



Tscholofelo Kenathetswe



PORTR'ELLES - WOMEN OF HERITAGE

by Jean-Paul Lawson

Many quotes could be used to describe her, as her expertise, her work and her fight for the development of archives and information science in Africa are beyond question. But the one I'd like to use to introduce her is inescapably that of Maya Angelou, the American poet and activist who said: "I'd like to be known as an intelligent woman, a courageous woman, a loving woman, a woman who teaches by example". Many people still don't know her. Hermione DOSSOU-KOHI, an archivist for whom (African documentary) heritage no longer holds any secrets, has been president of the Association des Documentalistes, Archivistes et Bibliothécaires du Bénin (ADADB) since 2019. And it's fitting that in this month of June, when we celebrate "Archives", she should be chosen to be the portrait of the month! But who is she in fact?



Kikinto Hermione Isabelle Dossou-Kohi, full name, is a Beninese national. In 2004, after obtaining her Baccalauréat, she decided to enroll at the Ecole Nationale d'Administration et de Magistrature du Bénin (Benin National School of Administration and Magistracy) in the "Sciences et techniques de l'information documentaire" (Sciences and techniques of documentary information) stream, specializing in Archivistics, even though her family had advised her to opt for a career in law, and more specifically in the judiciary. Graduating three years later with a professional degree, she decided, like her colleagues, to embark on a professional career, with the option of working as an independent consultant. It was a path that quickly brought her into contact with the archival and documentary heritage of public and private structures in Benin (National Archives, National Library, Central Authority for International Adoption in the Republic of Benin, SONOU University Courts, accounting firm, etc.) and other African countries (Togo, Guinea, etc.), as well as through expert appraisal and consultancy missions for development cooperation organizations and INGOs (GIZ, Swiss Cooperation, Care International, etc.). But her thirst for knowledge and self-improvement compelled her to return to her studies, from which she graduated with a Master's degree in Cultural Heritage Management in 2015 (her dissertation focused on the valorization of the archive holdings of the February 1990 Conférence des Forces Vives de la Nation; to this end, she set up an archive exhibition, the first of its kind in Benin) and a Master's degree in Analysis, Design and Research in Educational Technology Engineering (ACREDITE) in 2023.

True to her ambition to put her knowledge and expertise to work for the benefit of as many people as possible, since 2022 she has been developing and promoting a system for acquiring knowledge or developing skills partially or totally at a distance, the aim of which is to promote autonomous distance learning for young people and adults accessible via <https://cores-benin.com>. A training engineer and gifted pedagogue, she has been training a large number of people for some ten years now on a variety of subjects: archive management, information management, leadership, etc. Very active in civil society (President of the Rotary Club of Porto-Novo for the 2022-2023 term), she gives a great deal of her time to projects such as setting up a school library, donating equipment and teaching materials to a public nursery school, treating severe anemia in needy children in pediatrics...

Elected to lead the ADADB, she and her team are campaigning for better recognition and promotion of the documentary information science professions in Benin (archives, libraries, documentation centers, etc.) through sustained advocacy of the role and importance of these training courses and professions in a country's development.

For her, *"knowledge is a strategic resource. This knowledge, which is to be found in books, archives, databases, etc., must be made accessible in order to raise the level of reflection of our populations in general, and to guarantee objective decision-making by politicians"*.

FEEDBACK ON THE WEBINAR "HERITAGE IN THE HANDS OF AFRICAN YOUTH: SHARING INITIATIVES"

The coordination

The ICOMOS Emerging Professional Working Group for the Africa Region (ICOMOS EPWG Africa) celebrated the African World Heritage Day on 4 May 2023 with a webinar entitled “Heritage in the Hands of African Youth: Sharing Initiatives”. It aimed at highlighting youth initiatives in favor of the protection and promotion of African cultural heritage.

Four initiatives were represented:

- Archeo-groupe from Senegal, represented by Ladji Dianifaba;
- African Digital Heritage from Kenya, represented by Mutanu Kyanya;
- Citiz'on from Morocco, represented by Mahja N. Barka;
- Sounds of Freedom from Kenya, represented by Mutana W. Gakuru.

With attendance from 24 participants, the webinar demonstrated the active role of the youth in participating in the transmission of African cultural heritage, but also the power of digital and new technologies in that regard.

Here's what the panelists say about it:

- Ladji Dianifaba

"First of all, I'd like to reiterate my thanks to the organisers and participants. I think this is a very good initiative that should be repeated and encouraged. I have learnt a lot from the presentations of others, especially Citiz'on and African Digital Heritage."

- Mutanu Kyanya

"It was amazing to see the work that fellow young cultural heritage practitioners are putting in to promote and preserve their cultures. The constant reassurance that you are not alone was quite timely. I cannot wait to see a time when practitioners from Anglophone and Francophone Africa collaborate on a project that will change the scene."

- Mahja Nait Barka

Thanks to ICOMOS EPWG Africa for facilitating the networking and sharing of skills between organizations involved in African heritage projects from the north to the south of the continent! I was delighted to exchange views with my colleagues from African Digital Heritage, Archeo-Group and Sounds of Freedom on May 4, on the occasion of African World Heritage Day. It was an opportunity to present the CitizOn project, unusual urban guided tours in Morocco, and to glean some very interesting feedback. What communicative energy, and what an achievement!

- Mutana Wanjira Gakuru

"I am deeply grateful for the wonderful experience we shared during the African World Heritage Day celebration. It was a privilege to discuss the Sounds of Freedom project and witness your incredible enthusiasm. Our journey together does not end here; we are committed to expanding our efforts in preserving and promoting African cultural heritage through film and digital media. Let us continue to amplify the voices of our ancestors and shape the destiny of Africa through our shared legacy. Thank you for your unwavering support, and stay tuned for exciting new ventures ahead!"

DIARY OF THE MONTH

CELEBRATION OF 75 YEARS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON ARCHIVES

5 years ago, the ICA created a virtual exhibition to celebrate its 70th anniversary. This year, the institution has decided to expand this timeline to better represent the rich diversity of its members and their collective achievements since its founding in 1948. If you would like to contribute, click here: <https://tinyurl.com/mrx3z46b>.



5TH WORLD HERITAGE SITE MANAGERS FORUM ON THE THEME: "MANAGING WORLD HERITAGE FOR THE NEXT 50 YEARS".

The Forum will take place both online and face-to-face. UNESCO World Heritage site managers from around the world are invited to participate in this year's Forum, which aims to build the capacity of World Heritage site managers on the international stage.

For further information: <https://whc.unesco.org/fr/whsmf23>



LATESTS OPPORTUNITIES

- Call for applications for a post-doctoral fellowship in "Immaterial cultural heritage and digital writing" at Paris Nanterre University. Further information: <https://tinyurl.com/mr2h875v>. Deadline: June 19, 2023.
- ICCROM permanent call for research grants. For more information: <https://tinyurl.com/32z5hbj5>. Deadline for applications for research stays in 2024 is September 1, 2023.

MASTHEAD

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