

What's News?

THE ICOMOS-EPWG AFRICA MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Edito

Dear Readers,

The visit to the highly acclaimed exhibition "Art of Benin from yesterday to today: from Restitution to Revelation", which ended in Cotonou on 28 August, began with a quote from Amadou Makhtar Mbow, the first - and to date only - African to be appointed to head UNESCO from 1974 to 1987:

"Returning a particular work of art or document to the country that produced it is to allow a people to recover part of its memory and identity, and to prove that, in mutual respect between nations, the long dialogue of civilisations that defines the history of the world is still going on".

If this statement is truly relevant at a time when the issue of the restitution of African cultural heritage is at the heart of all debates, it also reminds us of the important contribution of the memory and identity of our continent both for our construction as Africans and for collective history. This issue is central to our work as professionals of African cultural heritage. It attests once again to the multidisciplinary nature of our heritage, and the importance of ensuring its preservation and knowledge by, and for, those to whom it belongs at first.

This new edition of the Newsletter therefore proposes to return to these themes, by continuing the reflection on the multidisciplinary nature of heritage and questions of synergy.

Enjoy your reading!

Alyssa K. Barry.
Coordinator of ICOMOS EPWG-Africa



Representation of divinity, Slave Route in Ouidah, Benin © Basile Barrinco, 2020

5 QUESTIONS TO OLAYINKA YAYI

From the world of archives to cultural heritage, who is Olayinka Yayi ?

Olayinka A. YAYI is a young professional from Benin, specializing in cultural heritage management. I'm part of the first promotion of students trained in cultural heritage management at the National School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM) of Benin. My status as valedictorian during my bachelor entitled me to an excellence scholarship; which allowed me to do the Master's degree from 2011 to 2013 and to confirm my valedictorian status for the second time. I practically did all my school and university studies in Benin. Part of my primary education took place in Lomé in Togo before the family returned to Benin for good in 1995. Once I got my high school diploma, I did a degree in Science and Techniques of Documentary Information at the ENAM and specialized in Archiving. This allowed me to work for a few years as a Junior Consultant in various structures before moving definitively towards cultural heritage once the Master's degree was completed.

You are the focal point of the Youth.Heritage.Africa program at EPA. Can you tell us a bit more about this program?

The Youth.Heritage.Africa (Y.H.A.) is currently the ten-year flagship program of ICCROM (International Center for the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Property) which emphasizes the involvement of young people in the promotion and enhancement of African cultural heritage. In line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and the aspirations of the African Union's Agenda2063, the Youth.Heritage.Africa program aims to:

- Build human capital for the future of Africa, the conservation and management of its heritage;
- Promote heritage as an economic asset in the fight against poverty and youth unemployment in Africa;
- Integrate sustainable entrepreneurship opportunities in the heritage sector;
- Engage and strengthen African heritage institutions to enable sustainable and innovative use of heritage for education, development, peace and security.

The official launch took place in South Africa on 25 May 2022. EPA, which is an ICCROM action partner, is in charge of the component "Leadership in the conservation and management of museums" in this program and as such, many activities are planned each year.



What is your work at the EPA outside of the Youth.Heritage.Africa program?

I am at the level of the Programs-Projects Unit at EPA as assistant to the Head for the implementation of programs other than the Y.H.A. As such, I participate in the planning and organization of activities and prepare reports under the supervision of the Head of Unit. In addition, I am Coordinator of the workshop on the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property, responsible for the e-learning platform of EPA which is in full development, and also Acting Head of the Communication and Partnership Unit since January 2022. I am therefore responsible for highlighting the activities of EPA and managing its image through our communication channels, in collaboration with the Head of the Infotheque of EPA. As you can see, I am versatile. As a manager, I consider that I have to play a transversal role and am always ready to make new experiences.

We are celebrating 50 years of the 1972 Convention. What is your vision for African heritage for the next 50 years?

We, Emerging Young Professionals, have been in the spotlight for a few years now. The various international organizations that work for the promotion of cultural heritage are giving more and more voice and offering a place of choice to young people, as much through their involvement in the various programs as for capacity building training for them. This means that we have a generation of predecessors concerned about the future of African heritage and the transfer of skills to the younger generation. For example, the annual Regional Forum organized by the African World Heritage Fund is a key meeting of young people on World Heritage issues and a breeding ground for African talent working to promote heritage. UNESCO has also developed support programs for young people who design digital solutions to promote heritage. EPA, in turn, is launching a Regional Forum on Museums in Africa this year (Youth Museum Forum www.forum.epa-prema.net). All this to say that the prospects for African heritage are good: young people are taking the lead.

Your message for African professional youth?

I am proud to belong to this youth. It's ambitious and determined. It's curious and thirsty for success. I invite us to stay on the course and, each in their field, to persevere regardless of the obstacles. We are in a favorable era and you have to know how to position yourself through your skills-actions. We are called upon to take over and therefore have a duty to do better. We have the necessary support and tools available. The key is to know how to develop the managerial spirit and be versatile. Be proactive, learn to adapt to all situations and keep in mind to always exceed your limits; you will see that you will be unavoidable.



Call for Contributions/Testimonials for "VOX POPULI"

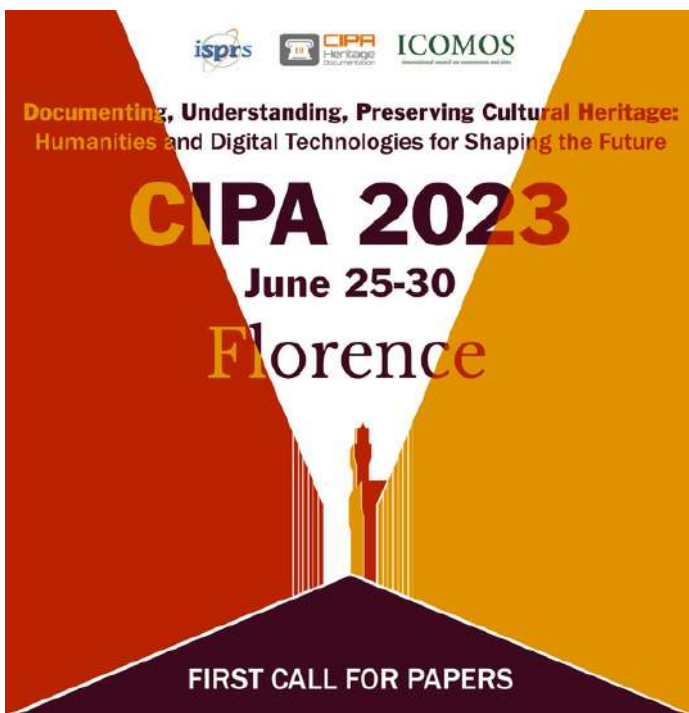
As part of the writing of the next issue of the magazine #La_Lettre_de_l'EPA and the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the UNESCO 1972 Convention on the protection of cultural heritage, the School of African Heritage (EPA) invites cultural heritage professionals to share their contributions / testimonials about their participation in the various programs implemented in collaboration with the #African_World_Heritage_Fund AWHF for the promotion of the Convention.

To submit a proposal, visit <http://tiny.cc/y4hwuz>.

Annual Meeting and International Symposium of the International Committee of Cultural Routes (CIIC)

The annual meeting and symposium of the International Committee of Cultural Routes (CIIC) of ICOMOS is scheduled for Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA, from September 14 to 16, 2022, with an optional day trip on September 17. For information on Santa Fe, click on: TOURISM Santa Fe (www.santafe.org).

For more details, please contact: ciicicomos.sec@gmail.com



Call for papers for the next CIPA conference 25-30 June 2023 in Florence, Italy

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION DATES

- December 10, 2022: extended abstract submission (ISPRS Archives)
- February 10, 2023: submission of a full article (ISPRS Annals)
- April 10, 2023: submission of full articles (SIPC Archives)
- May 10, 2023: submission of full papers ready for publication (ISPRS Annals)

For more informations, please click [here](#)

BENEFITS OF A SYNERGY BETWEEN THE 1972 AND 2003 CONVENTIONS FOR AFRICA



A kaya of Mijikenda © Mercy Andeso. 2020

We often hear about “UNESCO heritage” or “World Heritage of Humanity” which are not right designations and which can create confusion between the Conventions on World Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH).

However, this confusion is quite legitimate because in fact the term “cultural heritage” refers to both built heritage and intangible heritage and after all, the importance of heritage as a whole is recognized regardless of the name it is given.

Nevertheless, in the article below, we wanted to make a brief reminder of the importance and the synergies between the 1972 and 2003 Conventions which deal respectively with the World Heritage and the Intangible Cultural Heritage of humanity, in order to refresh memories and open the debate.

In 1972, the General Conference of UNESCO adopted the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, a normative instrument aimed at protecting tangible cultural and natural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). The concept of OUV is at the heart of the World Heritage system and sets it apart from all UNESCO cultural conventions. The OUV of a site is demonstrated when it has the following three pillars: (1) meets at least one of the 10 criteria for inscription; (2) meets the conditions of integrity and authenticity; (3) has a plan management and an adequate protection system¹. The World Heritage Committee includes sites with justified OUV on the World Heritage List. The 1972 Convention defines tangible cultural heritage as monuments, groups of buildings and sites possessing architectural, historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, anthropological values.

“Intangible cultural heritage” is defined by the Text of the 2003 Convention² as a set of practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills that communities and bearers recognize as part of their cultural heritage. The particularity of intangible heritage is that it is moving. It is transmitted from generation to generation and various communities own it in different ways by adapting it to their socio-cultural environment and their relationship with their natural environment in particular. Intangible cultural heritage is at the foundation of everyone's individual identities, it creates a sense of belonging to a community and contributes, according to its definition, to the promotion of respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. The normative instrument aimed at ensuring the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage is the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, also known as the “2003 Convention”. This Convention was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its 32nd session in 2003 following the observation that there was no instrument aimed specifically at safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage and that the enrichment of existing international agreements, recommendations and resolutions through new provisions relating to ICH was necessary.

One of the commonalities between the 1972 and 2003 Conventions is the Listing mechanism. Indeed, within the framework of the 2003 Convention, cultural practices, called “elements”, can be inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity or on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. There is also the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices which is composed of programmes, projects and activities which best reflect the principles and objectives of the Convention³. As part of the 1972 Convention, the World Heritage List identifies all cultural, natural and mixed sites with OUV. It is the most ratified UNESCO Convention and the List best known to the general public.

The two conventions have two major differences. One concerns the type of cultural heritage that is protected. The other concerns the place of communities.

As their name suggests, the 1972 Convention deals with tangible cultural and natural heritage. The 2003 Convention is about intangible heritage. Beyond the “tangible” and “intangible” distinction, the 1972 and 2003 Conventions differ in particular in the way that the 1972 Convention concerns tangible cultural and natural heritage with an OUV.

Within the framework of the 1972 Convention, the place of the Communities was gradually affirmed. In 1992, by recognizing the category of “cultural landscapes”, the Committee recalled the close links that subsist between the populations, in particular indigenous peoples, and their natural environment. This has fostered greater recognition of Aboriginal values. Then in 2007, the Committee recognizes “...the crucial importance of the participation of indigenous, traditional and local communities in the implementation of the Convention” and decides to add “Communities” as the fifth strategic objective of the Convention alongside the four other pillars: Credibility, Conservation, Capacity building, Communication. Local communities must therefore be systematically integrated into the process of preparing nomination dossiers for inscription on the World Heritage List, management of sites and, where possible, be supported to create income-generating activities at World Heritage sites.

The 2003 Convention is mainly differentiated by the fact that there is no concept of OUV or uniqueness and that it aims to safeguard the intangible heritage that the bearers and communities themselves recognize as part of their cultural heritage, without the intervention or evaluation of an expert. In other words, the identification of such heritage is done here by the communities, the experts only having the role of mediators and facilitators, unlike the 1972 Convention for which the experts play the central role of identification and evaluation of heritage. In the context of the implementation of the 2003 Convention, the importance of community involvement is such that the decontextualization or over-commercialization of an inscribed element, which would lead to the loss of function and meaning of the element within the communities concerned, constitutes a real threat which could lead to the implementation of its urgent safeguarding or to the loss of the cultural practice as a whole. Therefore, safeguarding activities supported by local authorities, non-governmental organizations and bearers of these elements is essential to their sustainability.

Because it promotes a monumental vision of heritage that has its roots in the European conception of heritage, the 1972 Convention has come under considerable criticism. For these reasons, UNESCO has set out to develop new approaches to heritage. The 2003 Convention is one of the results of this reflection on the (re)interpretation of heritage which is more suited to non-Western societies, in particular to African realities⁴. From now on, African States Parties can inscribe sites or elements of their culture on the Lists of these two Conventions. However, in Africa, there is no dichotomy between tangible and intangible heritage which are often intertwined. The intangible constructs the tangible and, at the same time, the tangible embodies and expresses intangible values⁵. In this context, it is important to strengthen the synergies between the two conventions by creating more interactions between them in order to apprehend African cultural heritage in a more holistic way.

At its 33rd session (Seville 2009), the World Heritage Committee requested the World Heritage Center to prepare a document on the links between the 1972 Convention and the other UNESCO conventions in the field of culture (Decision 33 COM 5). In accordance with this request, a document on the normative instruments of UNESCO relating to the protection of heritage was discussed the following year (Decision 34 COM 5E). This document presents interactions between the Lists of the 2003 Convention, namely the Urgent Safeguarding List (USL), Representative List (RL) and the World Heritage List, notably through the existence of cultural spaces common to the two agreements. Cultural spaces are physical spaces, built or not, which have the characteristic of inseparably or closely intertwining cultural practices with a specific place (Decision 34 COM 5E).

There are very few cultural spaces in the world. The African continent has one located in Kenya. The sacred Mijikenda Kaya Forests of Kenya were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2008 and on the List of Intangible Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (ULS) in 2009.

In accordance with the 1972 Convention, the Mijikenda were listed under criteria (iii), (v) and (vi)⁶. They consist of 10 distinct forest sites that stretch almost 200 km along the coast. They contain the remains of many fortified villages, the Kayas, of the Mijikenda people. The Kayas, created from the 16th century, were abandoned in the 1940s. They are considered today as the homes of the ancestors, revered as sacred sites and maintained by the councils of elders. The site is inscribed as a unique testimony to a cultural tradition and for its direct links to a living tradition.

Regarding the 2003 Convention, the Traditions and practices associated with the Kayas in the sacred forests of the Mijikenda have also been inscribed since 2009 on the List of Intangible Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (USL)⁷. The Mijikenda consist of nine Bantu-speaking ethnic groups from the Kaya forests along the coasts of Kenya. The identity of the Mijikenda is expressed through oral traditions and manifestations linked to the sacred forests, which are also a source of useful medicinal plants. These traditions and practices constitute their codes of ethics and their systems of governance, and include prayers, oaths, burial rites and spells, naming of the newborn, initiations, reconciliations, marriages and coronations. The Kayas are fortified habitats whose cultural spaces are essential to the perpetuation of living traditions that highlight the identity, continuity and cohesion of Mijikenda communities. These traditions are in danger due to the pressure exerted on the resources of the land, urbanization and social transformations, the traditions and cultural practices associated with the Kaya habitats are in rapid decline, posing a serious threat to the social fabric and cohesion. Mijikenda communities who venerate and celebrate them as representative of their identity and a symbol of continuity. Although the 1972 and 2003 Conventions protect distinct elements of the Kayas, their tangible and intangible aspects are intertwined and interdependent. Also, the fact that the traditions and cultural practices associated with the Kaya habitats are experiencing a rapid regression (which explains their inscription on the Urgent Safeguarding List) can have significant consequences on the integrity and authenticity of the site (according to the 1972 Convention). Thus the inscription of these practices on the USL is an indicator of the urgency to take action and of the efforts which must be made in order to preserve and perpetuate these traditions while safeguarding the attributes which prevailed at its inscription on the World Heritage List.

The case of the Mijikenda demonstrates that if intangible heritage is affected, tangible heritage is invariably affected and vice versa. To properly protect such a site, a concerted and joint approach between the mechanisms of the two conventions should be encouraged, with the necessary involvement of local communities.

The inscription of more cultural spaces is a possible way to strengthen the synergy between the mechanisms of the 1972 and 2003 Conventions. This would first lead to the implementation of a joint strategy to conserve the attributes of the OUV of the sites concerned as well as the associated practices and traditions. This would allow heritages in danger to survive longer because of the measures adopted to protect them in their entirety and various dimensions. It would contribute to making local communities major players who will act as guardians of the protection and management of the sites as well as the transmission of the knowledge, practices and traditions associated with them. Finally, this would lead to a better consideration of the entanglement between tangible and intangible heritage in Africa, which all professionals are calling for.

Affoh Guenneguez & Florentine Okoni

SOURCES

1. See the July newsletter for the origin of this convention: https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/Secretariat/2022/EPWG_Africa_Region/EN_Special.pdf
2. Article 2 - Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage <https://ich.unesco.org/fr/convention>
3. <https://ich.unesco.org/fr/objectifs-des-listes-00807>
4. The integration of criterion VI in the 1972 Convention is also a consequence of these reflections
5. Herzfeld, M. 2004. *The Body Impolitic: Artisans and Artifice in the Global Hierarchy of Value*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
6. <https://whc.unesco.org/fr/list/1231>
7. <https://ich.unesco.org/fr/USL/les-rituels-et-pratiques-assis-au-sanctuaire-de-kit-mikayi-01489>



Dance, Ivory Coast © Roger Sekoua, 2019.

I VISITED.. THE DAK'ART 2022 BIENNALE !

59 ARTISTES ET
COLLECTIFS D'ARTISTES
SELECTIONNÉS
POUR L'EXPOSITION
OFFICIELLE
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ANCIEN PALAIS DE JUSTICE

Ĩ NDAFFA#

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SITE WEB BIENNALE : <http://biennale.dakar.org/>

Official poster ĩ Ndaffa © Biennale Dakar 2022.

The event thus enabled to highlight the contemporary artists of the continent and its diaspora, whether established or emerging, through a multitude of media and themes addressing the issues and challenges specific to the world and Africa today. The biennial once again transformed the Senegalese capital into a real hub for encounters and sharing around art and culture, and offered an opportunity for synergy between the different components of cultural heritage.

The use of the former courthouse is a good illustration of this. After having been abandoned for about twenty years, this emblematic building built in 1958 has housed the official exhibition of the Biennial since 2016. It is an exemplary way of reusing architectural heritage to highlight art, thus allowing a true communion between the two, but also a new look at each of these cultural entities.

The 14th edition of the Dakar Biennale was held from 19 May to 21 June 2022. Organised for the first time in 1990, this event, which was initially devoted to the arts and letters before focusing on the visual arts in 1992, has become one of the most important events on the continent, and even in the world, in the field of contemporary African art.

This new edition, which was cancelled in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, had as its theme "Ĩ Ndaffa#" or "forging" in the local Serer language: a theme referring to the founding act of African creation while inviting us to imagine new ways of narrating and comprehending the continent. It welcomed more than 450,000 visitors from all over the world, who were able to discover the 59 artists and collectives from Africa and the Diaspora selected for the official exhibition, as well as the 400 exhibitions and other artistic projects spread throughout the Senegalese capital and beyond.



Beya Gille Gacha, "The Other Kingdom"; Official exhibition
© Alyssa K. Barry, 2022.

par Alyssa K. BARRY

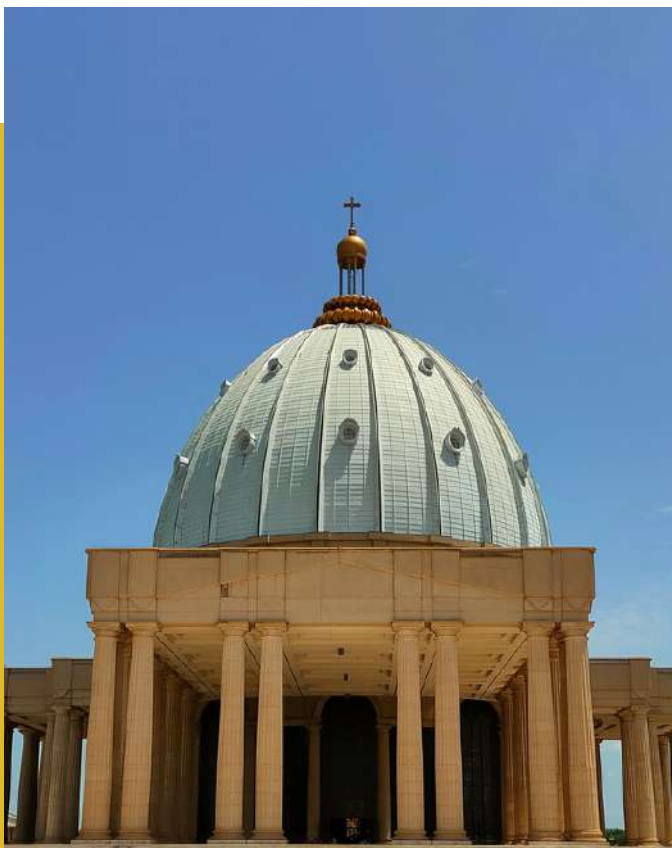
You have also visited an exhibition or participated in an event related to African heritage and you wish to share it with our community? Send us your text (200 words and 2 photos maximum) to epwgafrica@gmail.com. We will publish it in one of our next issues.



Some of the pieces returned to Benin here on display and poster of the exhibition in Cotonou © Jean-Paul Lawson. 2022

For several months, the royal treasures of Danxomè have been in the spotlight through the exhibition “Art of Benin yesterday and today: From restitution to revelation”, which ended on 28 August 2022. This circumstantial exhibition installed within the Palais de la Marina in Cotonou took the visitor on a journey through time. The result of a long-term battle, the heritage works exhibited there reflected the court art of Danxomè, a powerful kingdom in the Gulf of Benin. In 2016, France considered Benin's request to be legitimate, but refused to accept it on the basis of the principle of the inalienability of its public collections. Everything changed, however, with President Macron's speech in 2017 and after negotiations, 26 royal works returned to their native land on 10 November 2021. They include, among other things, three anthropo-zoomorphic royal statues, four doors carved in polychrome wood, the thrones of King Ghézo and King Glèlè, a soldier's tunic, portable altars and others. It should be remembered that these works were taken away during the coronation of Abomey and Cana, by Colonel Amédée Dodds in 1892 during the war between France and Danxomè. After being housed in the Ethnographic Museum of Trocadéro, the works will be integrated into the collections of the Quai-Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum in Paris until their return. However, we deplore the absence of the famous iron statue of the God Gou by the artist Akati Ekplékando which inspired many contemporary artists. Let's hope for Benin that it will be part of act 2 of the restitution of Beninese works.

Esther S. VIHOUKPAN



Yamoussoukro Basilica © Jean-Paul Lawson. 2022

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