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WHAT'S NEWS

THE ICOMOS-EPWG AFRICA MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

AFRICA

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EDITORIAL

Alyssa K. Barry

Here we are. The year 2023 is drawing to a close, and with it the wonderful adventure of this Newsletter, which began over a year ago.

In 20 issues, we've highlighted over a hundred actors, initiatives, institutions, events and opportunities related to African cultural heritage. But "What's News" was also a way for us to prove that, as emerging African professionals, we were capable of setting an example with nothing more than our passion, will and determination. I believe that this experience has benefited each and every one of us, both professionally and personally, and has strengthened our ability to work as a team, to innovate and reinvent ourselves, as well as our capacity for dedication, resilience and tenacity.

The Newsletter has experienced many highlights, from its launch in May 2022 to celebrate African World Heritage Day, to the unveiling of its new design in January 2023, to the publication of the first-anniversary special edition in May 2023, which we were able to present in its printed version at the 21st ICOMOS General Assembly in Sydney last August.

Over the past 20 months, we've taken up the challenge of publishing a new issue each month in both English and French, with an exceptional Portuguese version in May 2023 to mark World Portuguese Language Day on May 5. For this final issue, we are also pleased to present an Arabic version in honour of World Arabic Language Day on December 18: a great way for us to close this chapter having represented (as best as we can) Africa in all its diversity (many thanks to our friend Nader for the translation!).

This is therefore an opportunity for us to thank once again all those who have contributed to this wonderful adventure, and for me in particular to thank the fabulous Bureau team - Jean-Paul, Affoh, Florentine and Avenir - without whom this Newsletter would never have seen the light nor lasted this long.

But this isn't just a goodbye ! We invite you to follow our news on our various social networks, and to find us again very soon, in another format, on the ICOMOS website.

In the meantime, happy reading and happy festive season to you all!

MY ENCOUNTER WITH HERITAGE

by the EPWG Africa Bureau



Alyssa K. Barry

My adventure into the world of African cultural heritage began in 2014. As a third-year architecture student at the École nationale supérieure d'architecture de Marseille, I had to choose a subject for my Bachelor's thesis. I knew from the outset that the subject had to be linked to Africa, and more specifically to the continent's traditional architecture, without really knowing which typology or country to turn to.

I carried out my initial investigations and discovered several examples of architecture that I had never heard of during my childhood in Dakar, let alone during my university studies in Marseille. But my choice fell on the Cameroonian Mousgoum hut, firstly because its form intrigued me, but also because there was enough documentation to allow me to devote my thesis to it.

My work, entitled "From the hut to contemporary housing: how can the Mousgoum habitat influence contemporary housing?" was truly the starting point for my love of African cultural heritage, and I have never stopped questioning this heritage and what it can bring to us today since then.

I could go on and on about all that followed, whether it was my final year architecture project, imagining a crafts training center inspired by these same Mousgoum huts, as part of the Dakar cultural park project; that course on cultural heritage during my Master II in Urban Planning and International Expertise at the École d'urbanisme de Paris, where my work group and I chose to give a presentation comparing the heritage of Jerusalem with that of Timbuktu; that meeting with Lazare Eloundou Assomo, then Deputy Director at the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, during which we talked for hours about the Mousgoum huts which he had also studied; or my internships at Cape Verde's Institute of Cultural Heritage, then at the Africa Unit of the World Heritage Centre... I could go on and on about the passion that has driven me for almost 10 years, and which has now become my profession.

But this story is still being written. There's still a long way to go, but it's clearly worth the effort. A luta continua !



Jean-Paul C. Lawson

After my Secondary Diploma in Benin in 2008, I wanted to enroll in Labour and Social Security Administration at the Benin National School of Administration and Magistracy. But, in the end, it was the 'Archives-Documentation' stream at the same school that accepted me. After 3 years of training, graduating with a bachelor's degree in documentary information science and techniques, with a major in archival science, and 3 years of professional experience, I decided to go back to school. So in 2014, I obtained my first scholarship from the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie to join the Master's in Archival Science at the Ecole des Bibliothécaires et Archivistes de Dakar. The following year, I passed the entrance exam to Senghor University in Alexandria, Egypt, in the Cultural Heritage Management programme. It was at this prestigious African university that I really discovered the world of cultural heritage. Throughout the courses I took on this programme, I came to understand that the promotion, management and safeguarding of heritage is the responsibility of our generation as well as those to come. And in the context of globalization in which we currently live, it is important, particularly for African countries, to equip themselves with the tools they need to make known and bring to life the elements of their national heritage (archives, libraries, heritage sites, museums, cultural landscapes, etc.). At the time, I already had ambitions to explore other areas of heritage beyond archives. But my dissertation supervisor had recommended that I work on digital archiving. So that was the start of my passion for digitisation of collections. It was also during this period that I joined the International Council on Archives (2016) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (2017). In 2018, I arrived in Paris as part of the Master Erasmus Mundus Techniques Patrimoines & Territoires de l'Industrie and in 2020, I began my doctoral thesis through the project at CY Cergy Paris Université as part of an EUTOPIA cotutelle with the University of Warwick in the UK. In this research project, which focuses on "Digital conservation, valorization and circulation of European and African heritage: perspectives on museums of civilization in West Africa", I seek to examine the use of digital technology (tools, devices and contents) for the mediation and enhancement of collections by and in West African museums in particular, to understand the current context of circulations with Europe, and why and how West African museums can take advantage of digital technologies for the conservation and enhancement of collections despite the difficult context of access to resources, and I propose an innovative mediation portal for West African museums in response to the difficulties they face. The culmination of this work is scheduled for 2024.

Very active in professional heritage networks, in 2019 I set up the PatriMundus association with a few friends, which I chair and whose mission is based on three fundamental actions: Identify & Protect heritage elements; Restore & Reconstruct monuments and sites; & Raise awareness & Pass on the importance of safeguarding and promoting cultural and natural heritage. I have taken part in numerous international conferences and led many projects, always with the ultimate aim of making Africa's cultural heritage a real driving force for the sustainable and inclusive development of our continent.

The road will be long, but the way is clear, as we often say! It's up to us young people to take this path so that Africa and its heritage can shine again and again for the benefit of future generations.



Affoh Guenneguez

In December 2011, I graduated from the Université de Montréal with a Bachelor's degree in Economics and Politics. It was then time for me to make some choices. Being passionate about media, the history of the African continent and its culture, I was leaning towards becoming a journalist, researcher or university professor.

During this period, I immersed myself in the Memoirs of Amadou Hampâté Bâ, which were a revelation for me. His life, work and career inspired me and confirmed my choices. Much like him, I envisioned traveling around Africa collecting oral traditions, spreading African history and culture around the world, working for UNESCO and writing books.

In February 2012, I took the first step by launching a blog to share my passion for literature from Africa and its diasporas. That summer, while vacationing in Côte d'Ivoire, a particular piece of news made the headlines: the historic town of Grand-Bassam had just been inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. Although I didn't fully grasp its significance initially, the news intrigued me. Therefore, armed with my pen and notebook, I embarked on an adventure to Grand-Bassam. I explored the town, talked to the locals, took photos, found out about the UNESCO label and wrote a blog post entitled: "Grand-Bassam, historic town, cradle of Côte d'Ivoire". Remarkably, this post gained unprecedented traction, becoming the most widely read, shared and reposted on various websites and Facebook pages. My interest in culture and history then crystallized around heritage issues.

In September 2013, fueled by my unwavering passion for the African continent, I decided to delve into it more academically by pursuing the Master of Research in African Studies at Leiden University's African Studies Research Centre. My research project was a continuation of my blog article on Grand-Bassam. I was particularly interested in the perception of colonial buildings and their use by different groups of local inhabitants. After 6 months of field research in the historic town, I wrote a dissertation titled: "Le processus d'appropriation symbolique d'une ancienne capitale coloniale patrimonialisée, cas de la ville historique de Grand-Bassam en Côte d'Ivoire" (which can be translated into "The Symbolic Appropriation Process of a Heritage-Preserved Former Colonial Capital: A Case Study of the Historic Town of Grand-Bassam in Côte d'Ivoire"). In January 2016, I landed a job as a French-speaking editor at RNW Media (Netherlands).

A few months later, while exploring the UNESCO website out of curiosity, I came across a call for participation in a conference on the theme: "African World Heritage as a driving force for sustainable development". Despite initial hesitations, I proposed a topic inspired by my dissertation, which was accepted. In May 2016, I flew to Arusha, Tanzania, to present my work in front of the entire team of the Africa Unit of UNESCO's World Heritage Centre (WHC). As the youngest speaker, I felt intimidated but I kept telling myself that I had to deliver, realizing this could be my chance to enter UNESCO. My presentation and Q&A session went so well that several people came up to congratulate me. I openly expressed my dream of working at UNESCO, and the Africa Unit team encouraged me to apply. Shortly after the conference, I secured an internship and subsequently a contract as assistant project manager in the Africa Unit of UNESCO's WHC. My work focused mainly on the site of the Royal Palaces of Abomey in Benin.

Since 2016, I've actively contributed to the implementation of the 1972 Convention on the African continent through: involvement in the implementation of projects, coordination of capacity-building workshops, field missions, presentations, writing or editing communication materials and many other actions. The world of heritage is both thrilling and fascinating, and I believe the adventure is just beginning!



Florentine Okoni

The world of cultural heritage and I have a long history, without really knowing each other at first, at least on a professional and academic level.

My history with heritage is quite personal and began with an introspection I had to make during my teenage years, some time before I had to choose my academic path. German - Congolese by origin, during my childhood the German language and traditions took over my life, through the schools I attended and my family situation. For a long time, I felt that a part of me was being neglected, and I couldn't put into words what was causing this lack. When the time came to choose my academic path, I couldn't understand how I could choose an academic path and consequently a profession I'm passionate about without even knowing who I was. After a long period of research, I was finally able to put into words the things that I missed: knowledge of my heritage, cultural practices, and pride in coming from a multicultural background. That's what led me to do a degree in anthropology, which opened my mind to different worldviews, cultures, and social organizations. Following my Bachelor's degree in anthropology, I decided to pursue a Master's degree that focused more on the management, safeguarding and promotion of cultural heritage. I was led to study and work in Senegal, Congo and Mauritius because of my interest in the African continent, where my homeland is located. I have worked in international environments such as the Secretariat of the 2003 Convention and the World Heritage Centre at UNESCO, as well as locally at the Aapravasi Ghat site in Mauritius, the UNESCO office in Brazzaville, the Musée Théodore Monod d'art africain and the Kaani association in Dakar. My research focused on the management and safeguarding of African World Heritage sites in a context of sustainable development, in the light of the Sustainable Development Goals and risk management, with a case study at Aapravasi Ghat. In Dakar, my research focused on urban arts and alternative cultures, their associative structures and socio-economic issues.

Today, I'm still driven by the desire to help others to learn about their history and heritage, and to take pride in it. It's only when you know and appreciate your origins that you can fully give yourself to valuing them and passing them on to the world. I've found that many people are in my situation, whether they be young people from diasporas growing up in countries where they are taught little about their cultural heritage and history, or people from multicultural backgrounds who are familiar with only part of themselves.

Beyond the technical expertise we have acquired, it is above all our passion for heritage that drives us through this Newsletter. We each have a different story to tell, but one thing unites us all: our determination to give our all to safeguarding and promoting our heritage.



Avenir G. Meikengang

If I had to write a note about my first steps and my motivations in the world of heritage, it could take me years. It's a story of frustration, motivation, perseverance, and determination!

When I graduated from the University of Douala in Cameroon with my baccalaureate in 2009, I was, like every young student, excited to finally leave my school uniform behind and embrace the world of grown-ups. Unfortunately for me, not everything went according to the plan. I wanted to do Communications but ended up doing anthropology. It was a nightmare when I got home. The first question was: What job are you going to do with that? During my interview with the guidance counselor, she had told me that anthropologists are like forensic pathologists, so that was the answer I gave at home. Very angry, I was told: "You're going to school so that later you can do autopsies, handle corpses...?"

And throughout my four years at master's level, I was reminded that I was not going to school, that I was wasting money for nothing, that I was going to university to support real students and not as one. During my time at university, I had a very dynamic professor who was a role model for any woman who wanted to make a career for herself. She used to say to me: "Anthropology is open to all disciplines. All you need is patience, perseverance, and determination. You can go into any other discipline if you wish". This was one of the things I relied on not to give up, despite the rejection, insults, and frustrations of everyday life.

So, in 2014, I found out about the Francophonie scholarship in Egypt in Alexandria. When I checked the eligibility criteria, I realized that with my profile as an anthropologist, I was indeed eligible. But I didn't really know what 'Cultural Heritage Management' meant, because that was the stream that matched my profile. I did some research and came across documents that talked about Timbuktu in Mali, the pyramids in Egypt and so on. I found it interesting, especially as it talked about local communities and their involvement. In the meantime, I became a young mother and said to myself I was not going to abandon my child for this, and I was all confused. But I was already left to myself because nobody in the family believed in me, so I decided to go for it. And to top it all off, I was selected. When I shared the news, it was always a disaster, because between 'Anthropology' and 'Cultural Heritage Management', there was nothing good about it. Nobody in the family knew anything about this field, and to be honest, neither did I. But I told myself that life was a challenge: you learn and discover something new every day, and on top of this, it was a fully paid scholarship.

Once I got to Egypt, I finally realized that this was where I belonged. The subjects taught, which revolved around the issues of enhancement, promotion, safeguarding, conservation, and transmission, were the triggering factors. One of the teachers used the grandmother's room to explain the concept of heritage to us. I then began to better understand and integrate the field of heritage, which is nothing other than precious things that require structured intervention (identification, conservation, safeguarding, promotion, and transmission). I became even more passionate about the issue of involving local communities in the identification, conservation and management of heritage elements and the importance of protecting cultural and natural assets.

So I decided to work on the development of objects within local communities, particularly Fomopéa, which is my home village. My work placement at the Route des Chefferies gave me my first hands-on experience of heritage objects, and I carried out my first field surveys and my first inventory. Towards the end of my stay in Egypt, I was selected for the 2nd African World Heritage Youth Forum in Burkina Faso, and it was from there that my love of heritage grew, and that I truly entered the world of World Heritage. Meeting Jean-Paul Lawson in Egypt was crucial, and we were already planning to work together in the future.

Once I'd finished my Masters, I returned to Cameroon and decided to do an internship at the National Museum of Cameroon. Everything went well and after the museum I found myself at the Cultural Heritage Department where I worked with Alice Biada on several projects, including the revision of Cameroon's Tentative List. But the drumming wasn't over yet, because my family expected me to work in a big office with a big salary. Unfortunately, I was just a trainee and even worse, I had to pay for my own transport to get there. Frustrated after more than a year, I decided to leave Cameroon again for the Erasmus Masters with the ambition of doing a PhD, because in Cameroon my attempts were in vain.

It was as part of this master's Programme between Hungary and Italy that I ended up at ICCROM in 2019, where I had to compile a database on African museums. I realized that in Africa there are fewer than 10 museums in several countries and few museums dedicated to traditional costumes. My interest in this category took shape and I decided that after my Erasmus master's degree, my PhD thesis would focus on the promotion of traditional costumes in Cameroon. Without neglecting World Heritage, I continued to take part in activities, and it was in November 2019 that I met Affoh Guenneguez at a capacity-building workshop for managers for the nomination of properties on the World Heritage list. I discovered another young enthusiast and through our discussions the idea of working together was born.

In 2020, my internship at UNESCO finally gave me a better grasp of the issues and challenges of World Heritage. But as I was already working on my PhD thesis on costumes, I finally decided that I had to lead both conventions, because at the end of the day, the tangible cannot be dissociated from the intangible. In Africa, our cultural sites still have a significant intangible component, they are places of memory, and it is interesting that all aspects are taken into consideration. It's with this in mind that I intend to focus my professional career after my PhD.

Very active in the world of heritage, the creation in 2019 of the PatriMundus association with a few young people has enabled me to carry out a first project that bears my signature: the virtual exhibition "Vêtir son identité" where the traditional costumes of Cameroon are highlighted. This project made me realize that I could achieve even more. Meeting Alyssa K. Barry in 2020 also helped to motivate me, because I saw another passionate young person. So, during a discussion the idea of working together was born and gave life to the Newsletter.

My participation in international seminars, conferences and colloques enables me to strengthen my skills daily and to contribute to the promotion and enhancement of African heritage. My wish is to see African heritage ranked among the best in the years to come. The fight goes on, and with each passing day I set myself new goals, because at the end of the day, anything is possible for those who believe and give themselves the means to make their dream a reality. Africa has potential, both material and human. Young people have a lot to contribute to building the Africa we hold so dearly.



SENIOR'S VOICE: ANNIE JOUGA

interviewed by Alyssa Barry



1. From Gorée to Dakar, via Paris: who is Annie Jouga?

I'm a bit puzzled by this question, since you've placed Paris between Dakar and Gorée, because Paris is actually just a small episode in my life. But I'm not unhappy to be able to answer it, because it takes me back to what's dear to me, which is cinema in general and Senegalese cinema in particular, especially the movie *Touki Bouki*. When the main character, illegal passenger, leaves Dakar and looks out of the porthole of the boat he's been traveling on, he sees something completely marvelous and says: "That's it, I've arrived in Paris": in fact, it was Gorée! So from Dakar to Paris, via Gorée... I really have a great affection for cinema. Cinema has given me a lot of what I should be, what I could be; Djibril Diop Mambéty in particular, with all his movies revolving around the city of Dakar, and for whom I have great respect, great recognition. I think he's one of those people who has seen and looked at the city in a way that too few architecture professionals do. So that's my link with Paris.

But I went there anyway to study architecture and stayed for 6 years. Looking at Dakar from Paris, I was in a school where the teachers knew Dakar better than I did, at least professionally, and I realized that I didn't know my city and my country well enough. That's when I found my bearings. It was also in Paris that I learned to look at the city differently, because in the course of our student work we learned to push open doors and enter wherever we could to look inside, something that codes no longer allow us to do today. I discovered a wonderful city from the inside.

Dakar is the city I spent all my childhood exploring, and which I felt I knew well before starting my studies: I knew the names of all the streets, the layout of Dakar. We walked a lot, both downtown and in other neighborhoods. It didn't directly give me a taste for architecture, but it did teach me to make my city my own. Today, 40 years later, I'm happy to have known it at a certain point, and frustrated to see it being transformed in a way that doesn't seem to me to be in its best interests. But it's a city I'm happy to live in... and that it's up to us to save.

And Gorée, of course, is a more than carnal attachment. As Elie Wiesel said of Jerusalem, Gorée is my home, even though I don't live there. I'm Gorean on my mother's and father's side, but I'm not Ilian. I've never lived on the island, so I have this hindsight, this outsider's view, but I feel fully Gorean. Of course, it's this visceral attachment that led me to get involved professionally, but also socially, as I was deputy mayor for 20 years. However, I'd already started to get involved when I studied for my architecture diploma in 1978, on the theme of "Grandeur and Decadence", because at the time they wanted to turn Gorée into a museum. Fortunately, Gorée remains a living island today, because it's inhabited by its people.

2. You are the first woman to be registered in the Senegalese Order of Architects. How do you see the evolution of architecture since your registration?

I returned to Paris in November 1978 and was lucky enough to start working in January 1979. At the time, I was doing a lot of real estate appraisals for a bank, particularly in residential areas where the status of houses was often not very well defined. I kept telling myself, I hope in 20 years we'll get out of these neighborhoods and plan better. I had the dreams of a young prime! When I look at Grand Dakar today, 40 years on, I sometimes feel like crying... I don't understand how things were done so that we're still all in the same boat. I see that Grand Dakar has hardly moved at all, and it's not because you see a building going up every now and then that things have moved. Urban planning isn't done point by point, it's an overall project. I can say the same thing for Dakar Plateau, which was structured in a certain way, and on which we've done one-off projects. I don't think we can evolve in this way, and we're going round in circles: we're not solving any urban planning problems, we're just replacing them. I think there's still time for future generations to put a stop to this. We need to think about how we're going to act as architects, with urban planners, sociologists and artists, with an integral concept, a global vision. We need to dare to talk about architecture, because there's too little architecture that comes from within, from ourselves, something our generation hasn't been able to do or hasn't known how to do, or very few. We need to direct our research, particularly in terms of building materials that are adapted to our cultures and environments.

3. You've always been a fervent defender and activist of Senegal's architectural heritage. What are Senegal's successes and failures with regard to its heritage?

I wouldn't call myself a heritage activist. Rather, I'm someone who likes to look at what's around her, and who respects what has been and will be done before, during and after. I think heritage is all about enrichment. We're enriched when we add it up, and I want us to add it up. That's how I see it and what I do about it. Is that what being an activist is all about? I couldn't say... And it's because heritage enriches a community that I'm a bit sad today. I wasn't directly involved in the annihilation of the Lebus districts of Dakar, but I can see from what I read how the colonial and then the Senegalese administration thoughtlessly got rid of them; it wasn't to add to or enrich, and that's a shame. But what I'm seeing today, and witnessing helplessly, is how all this 20th century architecture is being demolished and made to disappear, particularly in the city of Dakar, for purely speculative reasons; buildings of real architectural richness are being demolished and replaced by architecture that doesn't suit us at all. For me, it's carnage, and I'm sad to see the country going up in smoke like that. The good thing, perhaps, is that the Heritage Department is fighting to get as many sites listed as possible.

4. In 2008, together with Jean-Charles Tall and Mouhamadou Naby Kane, you founded the University College of Architecture of Dakar (CUAD). What role does heritage play in this institution?

When my colleagues and I set up the CUAD in 2008, we were clear from the outset that heritage was one of the foundations of the school, along with architecture and urban planning. As early as 2009, we started to raise awareness of heritage among our second-year students, because we realized that we needed to raise awareness before we could get into the heritage aspects of our profession. For us, heritage wasn't just about looking at the architecture of the past. That's where the misconception comes in, because when we talk about heritage in general, people think it's the past (or thiossane in Wolof). Heritage is not the past: it's the link between past, present and future. And that's something that's a bit difficult to get people to feel and understand. What we did was ask the students to see things differently, which is what architects are generally asked to do anyway.

I remember a class of students who bluntly threw it back in my face: "But why do you insist a little too much on colonial heritage, it's none of our business!" For us, heritage means appropriating our history, including colonial history. It's obvious that you can't talk about heritage in Senegal if you don't look at colonial heritage, and I think we need to be able to look at it, analyze it, and above all make it our own. What's interesting is to be able to hold it by the right end, to take it through the centuries: that's what heritage is all about. So I tried to make them understand that by cutting out colonial heritage, we're also cutting out some of their habits: we know very well that Thieboudiene, recently classified as World Heritage, had a strong colonial flavour. I also think it's important to preserve some of the built heritage, because then we can say it existed. The most important thing is to make it our own and give it a new life. We got the students to think a lot about the city of Dakar and its heritage, about the traces of the Lebou districts, and how the present is superimposed on them, to see how the centuries overlap and discuss each other. I think it's important to be able to look at things and, above all, document and enhance them. You can't think of architecture without the past, especially as the architect is doing something today that will contribute to tomorrow's heritage. For me, it's the link that structures a society, and it seemed important to us to have it as the basis of teaching in our school.

The same applies, of course, to our traditional architecture, which we need to be able to maintain, with the right technology, so that it will also survive the centuries. We need to educate both young people and those who have the power to change things. And we mustn't be afraid! But we do need to know how to look, and help them to stand with all the dignity a building should have. As well as raising heritage awareness, we're now working on rehabilitation techniques to suit the heritage concerned.

Of course, heritage also means going beyond the built environment. Intangible heritage and landscapes are also important. We face incredible challenges in educating our students, because the architect's gesture is too important when he has to fit into landscapes.

5. What is your wish for the future of African youth in general, and Senegalese youth in particular?

The future for Africa's youth, at least as far as I'm concerned, i.e. architects, starts today, precisely with training in this field. Just as we took action 15 years ago, today more than ever there is room for several schools, and we need them! It's the only way we'll be able to train people and bring them a different way of thinking. And Senegal can't be left out of everything that's going on in Africa. When I see, for example, how many schools there are in English-speaking Africa, it makes no sense that we're so far behind in Senegal and elsewhere in French-speaking Africa. The future lies in training, and our thinking must obviously revolve around how to ensure that we learn and create our architectures, that we carry out research so that our architectures are sustainable, and so on. We also need to make them understand that a sub-regional and regional approach changes everything, and so teach them to look around them, to think with those around them, to take action together. It's not so much a question of knowing how to sell what we do, but of being able to set out the main lines of what we want for our Africa, and architects have a part to play in this.



FEEDBACK ON UNESCO'S INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

by Florentine Okoni

December was a fruitful month for African heritage, and more particularly for intangible heritage. During the first week of December, the eighteenth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was held in Kasane, Republic of Botswana. From 5 to 8 December 2023, H.E. Mr. Mustaq Moorad, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Botswana to UNESCO, chaired the session, which was marked by the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the 2003 Convention.

Among the elements emanating from Africa, two have been inscribed on the List of Intangible Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, namely Ingoma Ya Mapiko in Mozambique and Xeedho in Djibouti.

8 African elements have been inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity:

- Hiragasy, a performing art of the Central Highlands of Madagascar ;
- Mahadra, a community system for transmission of traditional knowledge and oral expressions in Mauritania ;
- Malhun, a popular poetic and musical art in Morocco ;
- Nguon, rituals of governance and associated expressions in the Bamoun community in Cameroon ;
- Sango Festival, Oyo in Nigeria ;
- Shuwalid festival in Ethiopia ;
- Sona, drawings and geometric figures on sand in Angola ;
- Traditional skills of loincloth weaving in Côte d'Ivoire.

And 2 transboundary elements including African countries have been inscribed:

- Arts, skills and practices associated with engraving on metals (gold, silver and copper) inscribed jointly with Iraq, Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen ;
- Midwifery: knowledge, skills and practices inscribed jointly with Colombia, Cyprus, Germany, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Nigeria, Slovenia and Togo.



REGIONAL SEMINAR SERIES: THE NEXT 50 WORLD HERITAGE AS A SOURCE OF RESILIENCE, HUMANITY AND INNOVATION FOR AFRICA'S PORTUGUESE SPEAKING AND DIASPORA

by Maria Manjate

Since 2022 (precisely on 5 May, 25 May, 7 June, and 5 October 2022), I organized a Regional Seminar Series in Maputo (and online) in collaboration with several partners (Mbenga Artes e Reflexões, Associação Iverca, Museu Mafalala, Gabinete de Conservação da Ilha de Moçambique-GACIM, AWHF, AU-Culture Division, Stand4 Heritage-Network of Young Heritage Experts of Mozambique, CAIRIM, Directorate of Culture of the Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM), Museu da Moeda, Centro Cultural Municipal Ntsindya and Maputo City Council). The event was conceived as part of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the 1972 Convention with the aim of:

- Analyzing the principles of the World Heritage Convention, its varieties on management and conservation of cultural and natural heritage, discussing the vision and ambitions of the Convention and the future 50, in the socio-cultural, economic and political context of PALOP, and its relationship with the 2030 and 2063 Agendas;
- Raise debates and reflections around the importance of cultural and natural heritage, with regard to the preservation and valorization of the World Heritage consecrated by UNESCO, challenges of sustainable development, climate change and new technologies, share matrices of results relating to the implementation of the world heritage convention in different spheres around PALOP;
- And finally, reflect on the challenges upon integration of youth in the management of cultural and natural heritage in Africa.

It gathered 27 panelists and a variety of participants coming from different sectors of the heritage fields and African countries (Mozambique, Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and Senegal).

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. World Heritage as a source of resilience, humanity and innovation

Despite its richness and diversity, African heritage still faces several challenges linked to the protection, preservation, states of conservation and tourism economy. African World Heritage sites should be catalysts in transforming the image of the continent in order to stimulate socio-economic growth and sustainable development for the benefit of the various peoples of our continent.

World Heritage is a complex matter that requires a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach that considers and addresses issues related to efforts to harness the vast potential of Africa's cultural and natural heritage as a force for poverty reduction and social cohesion, as well as a driver of sustainable development and innovation. Focus should also be put on global awareness of African heritage, through community heritage approaches with a special focus on youth, since they are the new generation of defenders of African heritage. Lastly, we should mobilize reinforced cooperation for its safeguarding at local, regional and global levels, and ensure that heritage is part of the recovery strategy from the negative effects and disasters that the continent faces and contributes to more sustainable growth, peace and prosperity for countries.

2. African Heritage as an attempt to reach the Africa we Want

Reflections upon the theme were among the place of cultural and oral legacy of Africa, the heritage processes activated by the implementation of slavery memorialization projects, modern and contemporary art based on tradition, and the preservation of intangible heritage in the digital era, as well as the protection and safeguarding of the traditions, practices, knowledge transmission.

Furthermore, a concern was raised on the construction of the narratives of the places of memory – the dimension of the historical sediment that can guide in a participatory way the re-significations of places of memory, through understanding of the social devices for the construction of an identity, community and national consciousness.

3. Challenges and practices in the context of the SDG 11

Contributions were among practices, experiences and challenges of implementing sustainable management policies to face climate change. Therefore, the pillars of sustainable development in the context of cultural heritage should enhance the values of the city, and local identity and cultural heritage as a reference for identity and memory and as a booster of local self-esteem.

Furthermore, consensus and awareness with specific regard to the protection of built heritage, legislation and practices, urban requalification and the challenge of new ICTs and climate change, application of the recommendation on historic urban landscapes in the African context, requires integrative approaches and conservation practices to broader objectives of the urban sustainability.

4. Documentary heritage linkages with SDG 16 (16.10)

The key issues highlighted related to gender inequalities in the film sector, educational value of documentary heritage, the gains of documentary heritage for sustainable development and best practices for safeguarding documentary heritage at risk and treats for its conservation.

However, it is crucial to understand that documentary heritage should remain accessible to the public and future generations, as it constitutes an affirmation of collective memory and a valuable source of knowledge and reflect the cultural, social and linguistic diversity of communities.

The adventure will continue in 2024 with new topics for discussion, to ensure that heritage continues to be a tool for the development of our countries.

AFFIBA'S TRIP TO MUSEUM. READING REVIEW

by Jean-Paul Lawson



Let me start by saying that I am delighted to have read this first children's book by my colleague and friend [Affoh Guenneguez](#). Published by [Editions Nimba](#), the book offers a captivating exploration of the National Costume Museum in Grand-Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire, through the eyes of Affiba, a curious young girl. The story focuses on Affiba's visit (accompanied by her brother and mother) to the national costume museum, giving readers a unique opportunity to discover the cultural richness of Côte d'Ivoire. This exploration of local heritage through the eyes of a child underlines the importance of educating younger generations about their cultural heritage. Wonder and discovery, key elements in stimulating children's curiosity, are the focal points of the author's narrative.

Culture and heritage education:

This book seeks to promote culture and heritage education, highlighting the crucial role of raising awareness from a young age. By exploring the national costume museum, Affiba has the opportunity to learn about and admire traditional clothing representing the cultural diversity and heritage of Côte d'Ivoire. This educational approach can help to strengthen children's cultural identity, connecting them to their roots and encouraging respect for cultural diversity.

Cultural resonance:

This opus offers a real cultural immersion, highlighting the specific features of Côte d'Ivoire. By highlighting traditional costumes, the author invites readers to appreciate the richness and variety of cultural traditions present in the country. This could also spark a wider interest in African culture south of the Sahara, contributing to a better understanding of the continent's cultural diversity.

The themes covered:

Beyond the discovery of heritage, the book addresses broader themes such as family, education, and valuing diversity. Affiba's visit to the museum becomes a family experience, underlining the importance of family ties in the education process. In addition, the emphasis on cultural diversity encourages readers to embrace the variety that enriches their environment.

The debate on cultural education:

By highlighting the importance of culture and heritage education, the book contributes to the wider debate on the education system in Côte d'Ivoire and sub-Saharan Africa. It raises questions about how these subjects are integrated into school curricula and suggests that a more immersive approach, such as visiting museums, can be beneficial for children.

In summary, "[Affiba va au Musée](#)" seems to be a children's book that offers much more than just an entertaining story. By highlighting the cultural wealth of Côte d'Ivoire through the eyes of Affiba, the author promotes education in culture and heritage from an early age. The book thus contributes to the debate on the importance of these subjects in the education system in Côte d'Ivoire and sub-Saharan Africa. By offering an immersive experience, the book has the potential to inspire young readers to appreciate and respect the cultural diversity that surrounds them, strengthening their identity and their connection to their heritage. It's a great book to share with your children.

If you would like to purchase this children's book, contact [the author here](#).

DID YOU KNOW ? THE KASBAH OF ALGIERS

by Nadia Carde



Dar El Soltane - Kasbah of Algiers © Housseem Mokeddem. 2017

Situated on the Mediterranean coast 118 m above sea level, the Kasbah overlooks the rooftops of Algiers and nicknamed "El-Beida" (the white one) is the seventh Algerian property to be listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

A Phoenician trading post in the 6th century BC, the Kasbah of Algiers was ruled in turn by the Carthaginians, the Berbers, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Ottomans and then the French, each of whom left a cultural and architectural mark on the medina of their presence.

The term "Casbah" originally referred to the citadel fortress located on the highest point of the medina, which was rebuilt in the Zirid period on the Roman ruins of Icosium. The gates of the Kasbah, including Bab Azzoun, Bab Dzira, Bab Jdid, Bab Labhar and Bab el-Oued, the ruins of which can still be seen today, as well as the remains of the ramparts, were the original of the present-day Kasbah and bear witness to the fortification strategy that was pursued under the Ottoman Empire.

Impregnable for nearly three centuries, it was then nicknamed "El-Mahroussa" (the well-guarded). During the French colonial period (1830- 1962), the medina underwent major architectural transformations and destruction. In 1957, it became the scene of the Battle of Algiers, which now embodies the African independence movement.

Classified as a national historic site in November 1991, then added to UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1992 under criteria (ii) and (v), the Kasbah of Algiers will then be classified as a protected sector in 2003 by the Algerian authorities.

Much more than an example of Islamic architecture and the urban planning of Arab-Berber medinas with its ancient mosques and Ottoman palaces, the Kasbah of Algiers is the result of an ongoing process that has helped to build Algeria's memory and identity.

Home of the poet Himoud Brahimi, known as "Momo de la Casbah", and the setting for the famous film *La Bataille d'Alger*, the Kasbah is a living heritage that is both an object of artistic inspiration and a testament to traditional know-how. Although its buildings are now in danger of collapsing, the medina retains all its uniqueness and originality. It is a symbol of Algerian cultural heritage, whose intrinsic intangible components underpin the property's Outstanding Universal Value.

PORTR'ELLES: DR ZAKIA BEN HADJ NACEUR-LOUM

Jean-Paul Lawson



For a special issue, a special woman. The woman we are honouring this month in the Portr'Elles section is not only a woman of honour, she is also a leading figure in the world of Arab heritage, for whom excellence goes hand in hand with tenacity and commitment. Dr Zakia Ben Hadj Naceur-Loum holds a doctorate from the Université Michel de Montaigne, Bordeaux III, and today has two main responsibilities: she has been a lecturer and researcher in ancient history, archaeology and numismatics at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Tunis since 2013, and Director of the Museum of Money at the Central Bank of Tunisia since 2019.

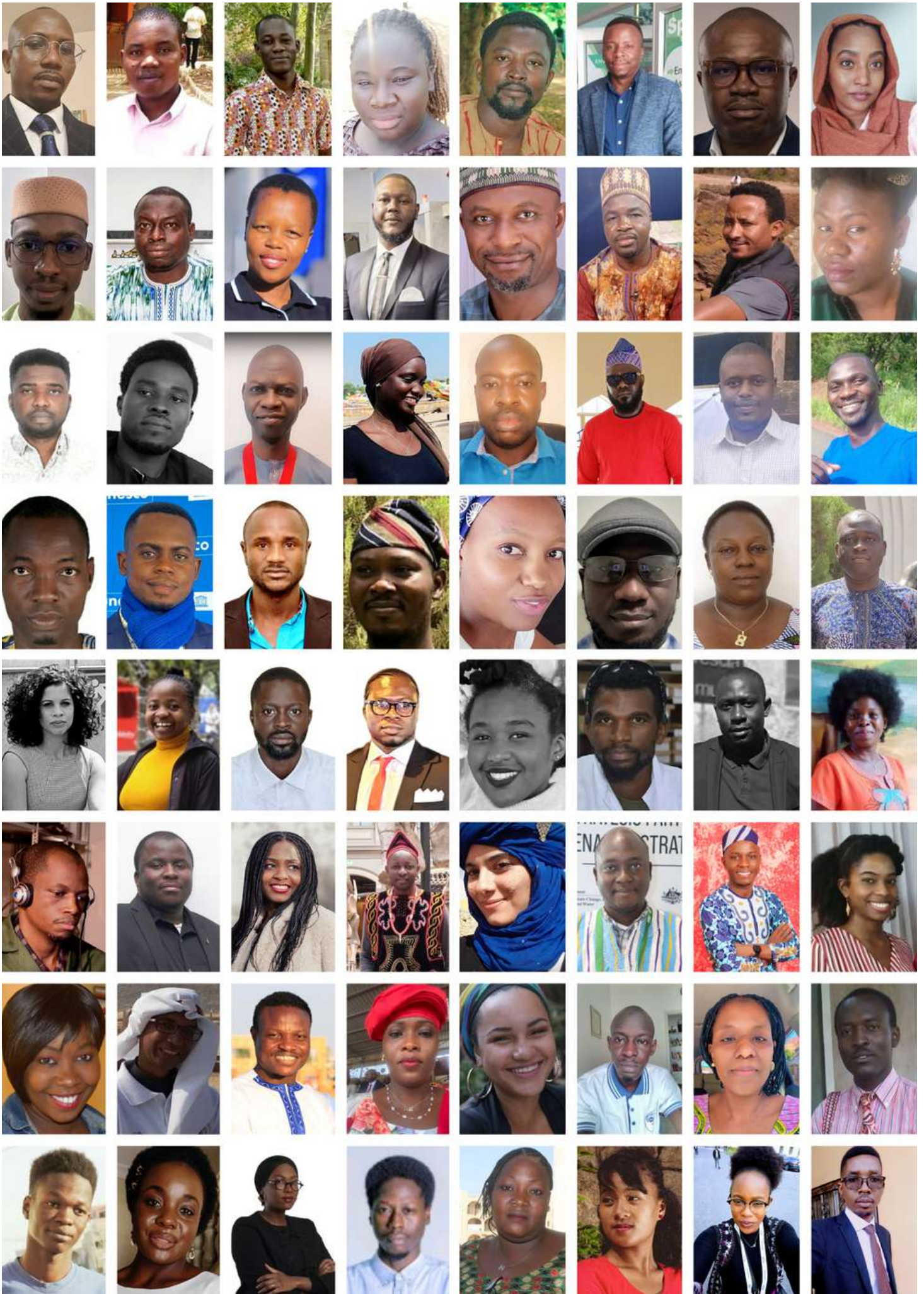
After obtaining a Baccalauréat ès Lettres in 1989, and with a passion for ancient history, it was only natural that she should choose to study in the History Department of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Tunis Carthage, graduating in 1995 with a Master's degree in History and Archaeology. This marked the start of her career as a trainee researcher for the national map of archaeological sites and historic monuments in Tunisia. Her intellectual qualities were quickly noticed by her supervisor at the time (the eminent Tunisian researcher Sadok Ben Baaziz), enabling her to win a grant from the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education, followed by a second one from the French Government, which enabled her to obtain a Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies in 2000 and her doctorate in 2005 on the theme: "Research into the circulation of money in the eastern part of Roman Africa between the reigns of Gallien and Theodosius (253-395 AD)".

On her return to Tunisia, she was recruited by the University of Tunis, first as an Assistant Lecturer (2003) and then as Senior Assistant in Ancient History, Archaeology and Numismatics at the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences in Tunis in 2005. This marked the start of her career in Tunisian higher education, a career that has seen her called upon on several occasions by a number of Tunisian heritage institutions (Institut National du Patrimoine, Musée National du Bardo) as a study and research assistant. At the same time, she has been involved in various associations (Maison Archéologique de Bordeaux, Association Museum Lab, Club d'Histoire et d'Archéologie) and has left her mark on many of the achievements of these organizations.

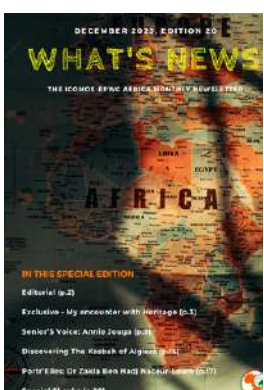
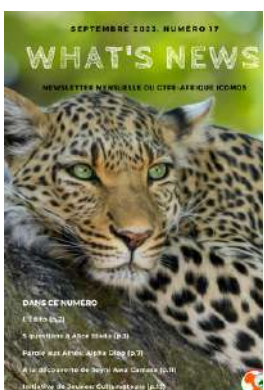
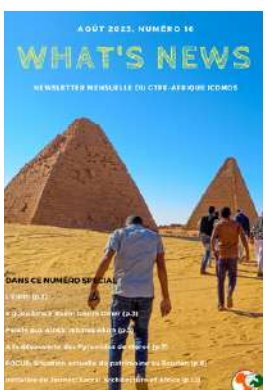
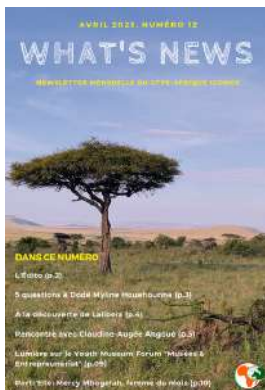
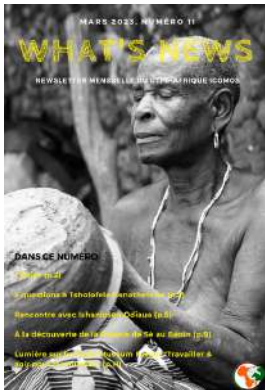
Consultant, trainer, author, member of several scientific committees, expert in historical and archaeological heritage in general, and numismatics in particular, Dr Naceur-Loum joins the Central Bank of Tunisia where she will be appointed Director of the Museum of Money in 2019, with the task of continuing to implement a policy of democratizing access to Tunisia's monetary heritage.

For her, *"It is important for the younger generations of Tunisia and Africa to know their history, their heritage and where they come from, so that they can face the challenges of today and tomorrow"*.

YOUNG ACTORS OF AFRICAN HERITAGE



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