

# Museums, Intangible Cultural Heritage, and Changing Societies: The *Ber gi dala* Exhibition and Cultural Heritage Preservation at the Kisumu Museum, Kenya

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In 2005, Kisumu Museum, a regional museum that is part of the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) and located in the western region of the country, opened an exhibition that focused on the way of life, traditional buildings, and cultural practices of one of the major ethnic communities in Kenya, the Luo. Named *Ber gi dala*, a phrase meaning ‘It is good to have a home or a traditional homestead’ in the Luo language, the exhibition was developed with assistance from UNESCO and the Belgian government, the local Luo community, and exhibition specialists and other staff of the NMK headquarters in Nairobi. Today, *Ber gi dala* remains a vital part of the visitor experience at the Kisumu Museum.

*Ber gi dala* represented a significant shift for the Kisumu Museum in terms of its engagement with the local community in the area of cultural heritage preservation. For the first time, traditional dwellings—still very much in use in parts of Luo society—would be erected and interpreted on the museum’s grounds. At the same time, the exhibition demonstrated a commitment to celebrating and telling the story of one of the major peoples of Kenya, the Luo, in a way that was accessible to the Luo themselves, as well as to visitors. Perhaps the most extraordinary aspect of *Ber gi dala* was the extent to which basic concepts such as oral traditions, customs and folklore that are associated with intangible cultural heritage were incorporated into the exhibition.

Whether through interpretive material such as murals or panels of photos, text, or labels

presented on outdoor signage, through ongoing educational programming, or through the exhibition displays of cattle and sheep pens, traditional huts, granaries, and fish smoking kilns, the central importance of Luo oral traditions, customs, folklore and other areas of intangible cultural heritage continue to be clearly communicated to visitors through *Ber gi dala*. In increasingly urbanised western Kenya, where modernisation and pressures to westernise are unrelenting, and where as many as half of the population no longer live in the type of traditional homesteads that are depicted in *Ber gi dala*, the need to preserve and present the Luo way of life to the Luo community itself, and to the increasing number of visitors from outside the area, is great. Furthermore, the fact that the former President of the United States, Barack Obama, and his paternal family, are of Luo descent, and that family members live in the area, is not only a source of great pride and celebration, but is seen by many in the region as an opportunity to increase tourism, further accelerating the need to preserve Luo customs, oral traditions, and objects such as pottery, hides and skins, grinding stones, three-legged stools, fish traps, bird traps, axes, and hoes.

This paper looks at the development and continued use of the innovative and well-received *Ber gi dala* exhibition at the Kisumu Museum, and discusses its importance in a cultural heritage preservation framework amidst a setting of major societal change. Firstly, core features of the National Museums of Kenya and the Kisumu

Museum and the principles that guided the development of *Ber gi dala* will be described, followed by a brief discussion of important issues in cultural heritage preservation in Kenya that will allow the concept of intangible cultural heritage and its expression in a Kenyan context to be reviewed. Then, the status of the *Ber gi dala* exhibition today, and future plans for it, as a way to preserve the cultural heritage of the Luo will be described. Finally, in the context of changing societies, an assessment of *Ber gi dala*'s place in the developing international framework for preserving and interpreting intangible cultural heritage is made, and the article concludes with a discussion of the exhibition's role as a model for combining relevant, community-oriented heritage preservation with the education of a range of audiences.

### The National Museums of Kenya and the Kisumu Museum

The National Museums of Kenya (NMK) is a state corporation established by an Act of Parliament, the National Museums and Heritage Act of 2006 (National Museums of Kenya 2015). NMK is a multi-disciplinary institution whose role is to collect, preserve, document, and present Kenya's past and present cultural and natural heritage, for the purposes of enhancing knowledge, appreciation, respect and sustainable utilisation of these resources for the benefit of Kenya and the world (National Museums of Kenya 2015). NMK possesses one of the largest fossil collections in the world, one of the largest zoological and botanical collections in Africa, and research groups that are part of NMK or are entities affiliated with NMK that focus on topics ranging from documenting sites of sacred significance to dry lands management (Farah 2006). NMK also has extensive public

programming, one of the finest cultural collections in Africa, numerous international partnerships, and an active preservation programme that involves the continued acquisition and management of sites (Farah 2006; Mboya 2008).

It is important to note that NMK manages many sites, monuments, and museums of national and international significance alongside priceless collections of Kenya's living cultural and natural heritage (NMK 2015). Sites and monuments consist of protected places and buildings, ranging from key paleontological sites, historic districts, archaeological sites, indigenous Kenyan cultural sites such as shrines and sacred groves, places associated with the struggle for independence, and mausoleums (Hart 2007; Oloo 2008). Museums include the large National Museum in Nairobi, the unique house museum of Baroness Karen Blixen, the author of *Out of Africa*, and regional museums outside the capital area that focus on the cultural and natural heritage of particular geographic areas (NMK 2017).

In particular, regional museums, such as those in Kitale, Meru, Malindi, Kisumu, Tambach, and Kabarnet, and the new Loiyangalani Desert Museum near Lake Turkana, exist to preserve local heritage and to reach a wide segment of the Kenyan population that lives outside of Nairobi, since traditionally, collections and research activities have been focused in the capital (Farah 2006; Mboya 2008). Regional museums were developed in the 1980s in Kenya in accordance with UNESCO guidelines, designed to make museums more accessible to populations who lived outside the Nairobi area, since it was considered important that these groups benefit from museum services as well (Farah 2006). One

of the first museums built outside of Nairobi was the Kisumu Museum, which focuses on the immense cultural and natural heritage of the western region of the country.

In the past years, NMK has realigned many of its efforts to be more responsive to societal needs so that its museums are increasingly relevant to regional and local concerns. A former Director of NMK, Dr Idle Farah argues that Kenyan museums, like others in the world, 'have to contribute to enjoyment, inspiration, learning, to research and scholarship, understanding, regeneration, reflection, and to communication and dialogue building, and to tolerance between individuals, communities and nations, among others' (2006, p. 28). From this perspective, it is interesting to discuss *Ber gi dala*, the main exhibition at one of Kenya's largest regional museums.

### Kisumu and the Luo People

Kisumu is a port city located on the shores of Lake Victoria in the western portion of Kenya. It is also a regional centre for the former Nyanza province and Kenya's third-largest city, with a population of roughly 400,000, according to the 2009 census (Kenya Open Data 2015). One of the largest ethnic groups in the country, the Luo, are found within the Lake Victoria Region, an area that forms the former Nyanza Province, and are the predominant people in the region, making roughly three-quarters of the area's population (Kenyan Bureau of Statistics 2010; Shipton 2007). Overall, the Luo people account for approximately 12 per cent of the total Kenyan population and represent one of the major ethnic groups in the country. It has been acknowledged that the Luo have dwelt in their home area for several centuries, though they are found in other

regions of the country, especially Nairobi, due to historic patterns of labour migration during the colonial era and to more recent trends involving urbanisation (Carotenuto and Luongo 2009; Shipton 2007). Even Luos who live in Nairobi have strong cultural ties to their home area in western Kenya. Luos are also found in Uganda and Tanzania. The western region of the country has long been under-resourced, as is the case in many developing countries, where for a variety of reasons, resources are sometimes concentrated in capital cities.

Luo culture is characterised by a rich oral tradition, with numerous myths and origin stories being common, and by the ability of many individuals to speak English and Swahili, as well as the rich Luo language, known as Dholuo. In terms of livelihoods, the Luo practise mixed farming (crop cultivation and cattle keeping). Cattle play a prominent role in economic and cultural matters, and are particularly important, for example, at the time of marriage. Fishing in Lake Victoria is also very important to the Luo, as the group thinks of themselves as fishers, though recent changes in fishing practices and the Lakes's ecology, such as the growth of water hyacinth, nearby deforestation, and the introduction of new fish species such as the Nile perch into the Lake, have altered the kinds of fish that are eaten.

In addition to oral tradition and livelihoods, the pattern of where people live, especially after marriage, and the kinds of settlements they live in, are of particular relevance in discussing the Luo homestead exhibition at the Kisumu Museum. Specifically, descent is traced through the male line in the Luo community, and a significant minority of the population is also polygynous, meaning when a man has more than

one wife (Shipton 2007). Traditionally, after marriage and the birth of children, a man and his wife commonly set up a homestead near the man's father, in a pattern that is well recognised by Luo and others in the western region. Although precise numbers are not available, it is believed that over the past 50 years or so, much of the Luo population of the region no longer lives in the traditional, extended-family homestead.

### The Kisumu Museum and *Ber gi dala*

The Kisumu Museum was founded in 1980, and aims to disseminate information on cultural and scientific issues with emphasis on the immense heritage of Western Kenya. Research activities feature prominently, and the museum hosts many visiting researchers. The museum is also developing as a regional heritage centre: a number of sites and monuments of historical significance are attached to the Kisumu Museum, including world-famous archaeological, paleontological, and cultural places. They include the Songhor Prehistoric site, where Miocene fossils dating to about 19 million years represented by the famous *Proconsul* were recovered, and Fort Ternan paleontological site, where fossils of humanity's earliest ancestors, *Kenyapithecus wicker*, were found (Kelly 1986; McCrossin and Benefit 1993). Other sites under Kisumu Museum are Muguruk archaeological site and Thimlich Ohinga Cultural Landscape. The museum is also surrounded by a number of smaller museums and heritage places of great significance, such as Tom Mboya Mausoleum, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Mausoleum and Museum, amongst others. The proposed Obama Kogelo Community Museum in Nyangoma Kogelo, the home area of President Obama's father, would form another cluster of heritage areas in Kisumu.

Exhibitions at the Kisumu Museum include those on the cultural and natural history of the western region. The museum provides educational services to schools, colleges, and universities in its neighborhood, and houses and cares for a diverse collection of fauna and some flora (a kitchen garden and trees are used in educational programmes), as well as cultural items of great interest to peoples in the region.

In addition to *Ber gi dala*, a permanent exhibition in the main gallery highlights traditional Luo cultural objects such as baskets, items used in fishing, the management of livestock, or in medicine and rituals. The museum exhibits live animals, including local reptiles such as snakes and turtles. There is also an aquarium with local fish species. The museum provides educational programmes that focus on these aspects, and includes guided tours of the main gallery for school groups. Traveling and temporary exhibitions are housed in a second gallery, and in the recent past have included those on the conservation of Lake Victoria and ancient rock art of the region.

### Recreating the traditional Luo homestead

The *Ber gi dala* exhibition recreates the process of establishing a traditional Luo homestead, and demonstrates how intangible cultural heritage (ICH), consisting here of belief systems surrounding the evolution of Luo living space to accommodate the extended family, can be translated into a physical, tangible exhibition of an extended family's homestead, using explanatory text mounted on outdoor signage in both English and *Dholuo*. Dwellings and outbuildings associated with an imaginary man named Mzee Odero, his three wives, and his eldest son, form the nucleus of the exhibition. As one enters the homestead



area, a main structure can be seen—a large, circular hut of mud and woven twigs with a thatched roof—which is the dwelling of the man and his first wife, an accurate representation of a traditional Luo homestead. The husband's hut, as well as those of his two other wives, are positioned according to their traditional placement and are sized relative to one another in the traditional way, and the entire homestead is laid out in a circular manner around a central, open space.

The granaries and pens commonly associated with the wives' huts are also included in the exhibition, adjacent to the wives' huts themselves. When a Luo man marries and has children, it is traditionally expected that he will set up a household near his father's own. The first son's hut is a key component of the exhibition. Its positioning follows the traditional pattern, which requires that his hut be built to the right side of the father's hut when one is standing in the doorway looking out. The second

son's hut and other structures are also included in the homestead.

Throughout the exhibition, instructive text is used and recorded sounds are played to explain the reasons for the layout of the homestead, together with Luo marriage practices, and how Luo traditional dwellings were constructed. The panels in the homestead use a fictional character named Mzee Odera, and his extended family to highlight Luo cultural practices and beliefs in an effort to appeal to, and educate the public. A working garden adjacent to the homestead circles out the exhibition and is a vital part of it. Panels explain the traditional use of plants that are currently grown in small plots on the museum's grounds. Garden plots are maintained by members of the Luo community.

The entrance to the homestead has a large sign that directs visitors to the first installation of



Fig. 1. View of *Ber gi dala* Homestead.

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the exhibition—a hut-like structure, similar to those found inside the homestead. This hut has images and didactic text mounted on its walls, and serves as the formal introduction to *Ber gi dala*. Remarkably, the main panel, written in English and Dholou, describes the concept of intangible cultural heritage as ‘authentic, spiritual, symbolic, or other social values people may associate with the cultural spaces in which these “living heritage” traditions are played out,’ and that ICH may include ‘oral traditions. . . performing arts. . . social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, [and] traditional craftsmanship.’ ICH is also described in terms of its transmission from generation to generation; its continual recreation by communities and groups; that it provides people with a sense of identity and continuity; and that its safeguarding promotes, sustains, and develops cultural diversity and human creativity.

An outdoor signage outside this structure is planted on a pathway leading to the homestead,

where a mural mounted on a wall approximately 1.5 metres high depicts Luo origin and migration stories. In particular, the story of how a man sets out to build a new homestead, in part by taking specific actions to protect the homestead from evil eyes and animals that are bad omen, unfolds.

As part of educational programming and tours, museum guides explain to visitors the Luo creation stories, Luo practices related to the foundation of homesteads, and outline important Luo festivals and traditional knowledge, by using the mural as a prompt. The outdoor signage adjacent to the mural explicitly conveys some cultural factors involved in selecting sites for huts and the experience of dwelling in a hut for the first night. This also serves as a transition to the entrance to the homestead *per se*.

The overall interpretive approach to the origin story mural allows visitors to connect stories, which have been presented orally by museum



Fig. 2. Mural of Luo Origin and Migration Stories.

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guides, using the images on the mural, so that learning, interpretation, and understanding take place through listening, looking, and reading. This multi-dimensional mode of delivery is not only evocative of Luo culture, but is also an effective way to engage visitors and to enhance learning (Falk and Dierking 2012; Hein 1998).

### Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in a Kenyan Context

Many African countries, including Kenya, have been keenly interested in preserving tangible and intangible cultural heritage (Abungu 2006, Yoshida and Mack 2008). In 2007, Kenya ratified the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2015a). In 2009, the traditions and practices associated with the Kayas in the Sacred Forests of the Mijikenda in Kenya were inscribed on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (UNESCO 2015b), and in 2010, the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was hosted by Kenya, in Nairobi, the first time that an African country had hosted a meeting of the Committee.

In 2015, Kenya received funding from UNESCO to develop safeguarding plans for Mijikenda Kayas (UNESCO 2015c), with the full participation of concerned communities, and in 2014, the Isukuti dance of the Isukha and Idakho communities of Western Kenya, a traditional celebratory performance dance accompanied by drumming and singing, was inscribed on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (UNESCO 2015d). Other efforts within Kenya on ICH include the documentation of the traditional culinary culture of the Isukha, an agricultural group of western Kenya, and the Pokot, a pastoralist group in the Rift Valley

(Maundu and Kapeta 2013); George Abungu's assessments of ICH and Mt. Kenya (2014); accounts of how groups use traditional practices in the context of ICH to withstand the pressures of modernity (Egesah *et al.* 2014); and studies of tourism in landscapes that are considered sacred to local communities (Hayombe *et al.* 2014). More generally, George Abungu has written about ICH in Africa, noting that there is a close link between the tangible and the intangible across the continent, and that ICH is delicate and fragile in Africa, requiring 'recognition, nurturing and use for it to be alive and sustainable' (Abungu 2014, p. 68).

According to the International Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which was adopted in 2003, ICH is defined as practices, representations, experiences, knowledge, skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts, and cultural spaces associated therewith—that communities, groups, and in some cases, individuals, recognise as part of their cultural heritage (UNESCO 2003; 2015e). ICH, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, and their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (UNESCO 2015e).

Furthermore, as outlined in the Convention, ICH is manifested in the following ways: through oral traditions and expressions; performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and traditional craftsmanship. Recent research on the Convention and ICH is outlined in Arizipe and Amescua (2013).



### Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and *Ber gi dala*

The *Ber gi dala* exhibition expresses the intangible cultural heritage of the Luo people using objects (traditional structures), didactic material (text panels), and programmes (presentations to visitors about Luo myths and stories). Traditional craftsmanship, in the form of Luo homestead structures, expresses ICH, though didactic material is also used to transmit information about Luo craftsmanship. Equally as important, however, is that the homestead structures serve as a platform for the expression of Luo social practices, rituals, and important festive events associated with living within a homestead and establishing a new homestead.

While information on social practice is also conveyed through didactic material, the origin story mural is used to transmit messages about creation, the establishment of homesteads, legends, and the importance of storytelling itself, through guided tours that can be tailored to specific cultural, regional, national, or international audiences. At the same time, the actual physical layout of the homestead, even without reading the signage, expresses ICH to Luo visitors themselves in a profound and recognisable way, through the exhibit of a husband's hut and those of his three wives, for example, as well as through the close association of these structures to cattle pens, granaries, and nearby garden plots.

In light of the definition of ICH, *Ber gi dala* is a remarkable expression of the principles outlined in the 2003 UNESCO Convention. The principles are depicted in a multi-dimensional and almost effortless way, highlighting not only oral traditions and storytelling, but also social practices and traditional craftsmanship, all in a

manner that is true to Luo culture. Thus, *Ber gi dala* can be seen both as a foundation for educating a range of audiences about authentic, vital, and ongoing components of one particular group, the Luo, as well as providing a place where key cultural information can be transmitted across generations, in the context of change, supplying a sense of identity and continuity. It is important to note that the practices exhibited throughout this exhibition are fast disappearing from the Luo traditional set up due to modern influences. The exhibition therefore acts as a preservation of the ICH related to this important feature of the Luo society from which future generations can learn.

Looking at the *Ber gi dala* exhibition today, some key questions can be asked, such as, how was the exhibition developed, what are the key issues facing it, and what are the future plans for it? These questions are important in understanding preservation needs, the continuing goals of the exhibition, and in carrying out the UNESCO principles as outlined in the 2003 Convention. They are therefore dealt with in the section that follows below.

### Future development of *Ber gi dala*

The *Ber gi dala* exhibition was developed and designed after extensive research conducted by NMK anthropologists, in consultation with Luo elders. The project was funded by the Belgian government through its VVOB programme, *Vlaamse Vereniging voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking en Technische Bijstand* (Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance), to help in the development of interactive public programmes. An extensive research effort was conducted by NMK researchers and anthropologists. This included field trips to Luo homesteads in villages at the heart of Luo land.

The Kisumu Museum receives an average of 200,000 visitors per year, 80 per cent of whom are school groups. A large number come from the adjacent communities and schools from Rift valley and Nyanza. Lately, visitors come from as far away as Mount Kenya and the Coastal Region. The exhibition is built with organic materials and is set outdoors, making it vulnerable to weather effects. Kisumu is also predisposed to termites, which attack the timber and grass used to thatch the roofs. The huts are therefore repaired almost annually. In cases of severe attacks, a whole hut may need to be replaced. Members of the local Luo community are engaged in the repair works for a fee. Labels are also replaced from time to time, especially when colour fades from the impact of the tropical sun, or when they are vandalized by visitors. Labels were replaced in early 2015 and there are plans to do this on a regular basis in order to ensure that the exhibition maintains its attractive and informative nature.

While *Ber gi dala* remains a vital, enlightening, and unique exhibition, the museum is aware of the need to maintain its relevance in a changing society. As a physical manifestation of a deeply valued ICH among the Luo ethnic community, revitalising the exhibition is viewed by museum personnel as an opportunity to engage and educate local communities on an ongoing basis, especially since societal change in the region continues. Work also continues to build on the exhibition's success: museum staff are seeking funds to host a series of Cultural Festivals at the Kisumu Museum that will not only highlight Luo heritage, but will present objects, oral traditions and live demonstrations of song and dance from several of the other rich cultural traditions in the region.

At the same time, efforts are underway to upgrade the Kisumu Museum's main gallery,

which highlights Luo material culture that includes baskets, ritual objects and tools by redrafting the exhibition text, conserving objects on exhibit, and by improving storage and climate control conditions. In the museum's second gallery, which is designed for temporary exhibitions, the idea of creating exhibitions that highlight contemporary social and cultural issues amid the Luo and other groups in the Western region has been raised. Themes might include public health, contemporary artistic responses to the pressures of urbanisation, and historical figures of the Luo community with enduring impact, who are known as 'heroes'. As in many museums throughout the world, the funding of these important endeavours is always an issue. Overall, the Kisumu Museum is working closely with the devolved governments to ensure public participation and for awareness creation. It is hoped that the devolved governments will provide much needed funding for the organisation of festivals and refresh the *Ber gi dala* exhibition materials.

### The meaning of *Ber gi dala*

While much of the challenging work concerning intangible cultural heritage involves identifying, documenting, listing, and developing management systems for the long-term preservation of intangible cultural heritage (Smith and Akagawa 2009), *Ber gi dala* represents a different stream in the development of ICH—a museum-based exhibition that both educates visitors about ICH and preserves and communicates it in a specific cultural context. Mechanisms to safeguard ICH are undeniably of critical importance. However, museums cannot only play a more prominent role in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (Kurin 2004, Shouyong 2008), but they are uniquely situated to educate the public about it

(Musinguzi and Kibirige 2009; Segadika 2006; Yerkovich 2006; Yoshida 2004).

With *Ber gi dala*, core elements of Luo intangible cultural heritage are expressed throughout the entire exhibition, and in particular, the use of the origin story mural demonstrates that intangible cultural heritage can be integrated in an effective manner both into museum exhibition agendas and into non-traditional exhibitions, such as those in outdoor settings. Though some may quibble that the exhibition is a *recreated* Luo homestead, and thus may challenge its authenticity as part of a living tradition, *Ber gi dala*, in reality, an expression of the community, striking a balance between the need to preserve ICH, and the need to educate audiences.

Secondly, the success of *Ber gi dala* is that ICH permeates all aspects of it. Significantly, the exhibition is also a *practical* expression of the developing international framework for preserving intangible cultural heritage. Although ICH is placed front and centre in the exhibition through a presentation of the concept in introductory panels, the topic is not directly addressed again. Instead, guides explain actual Luo myths, traditional knowledge, and oral histories, and Luo social practices are explored through traditional architecture. Meanwhile, the local Luo community continues to be involved in the upkeep of the exhibition today, and was involved in its development. *Ber gi dala* therefore expresses the ongoing, unique nature of Luo intangible cultural heritage in a way that Luo visitors easily comprehend, and that others outside Luo society can easily understand, even if they have never heard of ICH, or if they skipped reading the introductory exhibition panels. In many ways, *Ber gi dala* demonstrates that educating visitors about ICH in this manner is one of the most effective routes to preserving ICH.

Thirdly, on another level, the *Ber gi dala* exhibition is notable because it expresses the ICH of the Luo people in their home area. Issues of access to significant cultural objects and the control of cultural information, often a concern of museums in the developed world that house collections from abroad, are mitigated when decisions regarding such items are in the hands of local museum officials and appropriate community members. At the same time, due to recent migration patterns, family structure is increasingly under stress in Kenya, especially in groups such as the Luo (Prazak 2006). As a result, an exhibition that presents and preserves important aspects of lifeways to both urbanised and rural Luo, in terms that are recognisable to Luo but that can be understood by other visitors, is especially important.

Fourthly, the *Ber gi dala* exhibition highlights the diversity of ways in which museums can exercise social responsibility, as well as the different pathways open to museums in developing social ties and cohesion. While museums in one region of the world might address educational inequality or human rights through exhibitions, for example, others may not yet be positioned to do so when their very way of life is changing. The *Ber gi dala* exhibition therefore addresses a key issue for the well-being of local people: preserving and transmitting vital *intangible cultural heritage*, in the face of major changes in family structure, increasing urbanisation and westernisation, in a way that demonstrates a *local* sense of the social role museums can play and the museum's responsibility to society.

Finally, and more broadly speaking, we believe that *Ber gi dala* serves as a model for an accessible, community-oriented approach to heritage preservation, one that seamlessly combines

intangible and tangible cultural heritage, while also educating both broad and specific audiences. Indeed, the Kisumu Museum has positioned itself as a place where a range of different audiences are educated, while also serving as a key player in the transmission, and increasingly, in the generation of cultural information that is relevant specifically to Luo cultural heritage, in a period of great societal change.

### Conclusion

The global implications of the approach taken by *Ber gi dala* are considerable—an intangible cultural heritage that integrates preservation with education, for example, as well as an active embrace and incorporation of intangible cultural heritage into museum efforts in a way that is multi-dimensional and responsive to local context, in addition to an intangible cultural heritage that is accessible to varied audiences. At the same time, while many museum communities, especially in North America, have not yet begun to comprehend the importance of intangible cultural heritage, governments, museum systems, and museum professional communities throughout Africa are well aware of the essential nature of preserving intangible cultural heritage.

For the Luo community, however, the critical role of the Kisumu Museum in efforts to preserve a full range of its cultural heritage is of particular note. Through the use of engaging and accessible didactic material, the display of actual traditional structures, and by continuing to develop cultural festivals and exhibitions on regional culture in the museum's more traditional galleries, the Kisumu Museum has quietly taken a leadership position in efforts to preserve Luo cultural heritage, all the while serving as a global example of how intangible cultural heritage can play an

integral part in a museum's core mission, its vision for the future, and in being an important part of a society's adaptation to change.

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