

INTERNATIONAL WORK

ASIA

■ VIETNAM

Worshipping Mother Goddess: Pure Heart – Beauty – Joy

Thu Hien, communications officer at the Vietnam Women's Museum introduces one of the museum's exhibitions and outlines the importance of interviewing many different people to support the development of the exhibition:

‘Worshipping Mother Goddess is a purely Vietnamese folk belief. It has a long history and has adapted to social changes over time. Today, this belief is widely practised throughout Vietnam and also among Vietnamese communities overseas. Worship of

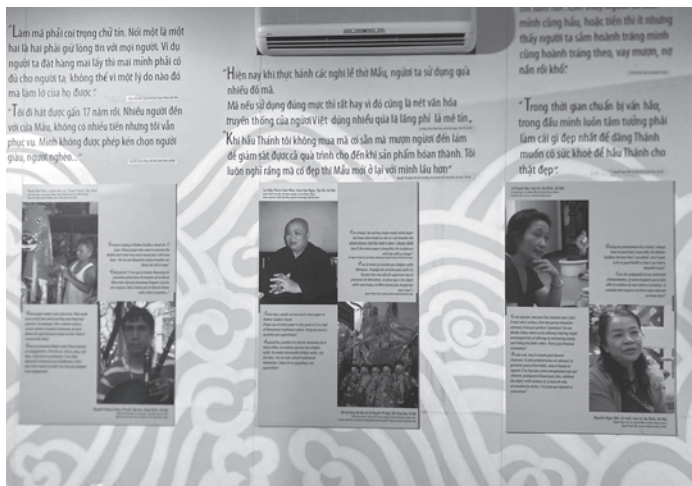
the Mother Goddess addresses the concerns of daily life and desires for good health and good fortune. Worshippers find great emotional support in their belief and it attracts followers from all strata of society.

‘It is one of the key goals of our museum to study, approach and work with the community, and the Vietnamese Women's Museum (VWM) is constantly striving to improve its exhibitions using this approach. A central feature of all VWM exhibitions, both permanent and temporary, is a focus on presenting the stories of individuals, with first-hand accounts, portrait photographs and, where relevant, personal belongings. We believe this is an

effective way to understand history and celebrate women and we also know that sharing real stories touches the hearts of our visitors.

‘VWM started to develop the on-going exhibition “Worshipping Mother Goddess: Pure Heart – Beauty – Joy” in 2012. This was in response to our recognition that the permanent exhibitions at the museum were missing an element of spirituality and religious life related to Vietnamese women. Between 2009 and 2011 researchers connected to VWM audio-recorded interviews with hundreds of mediums and worshippers living mainly in Hanoi and northern provinces such as Lao Cai, Thanh Hoa, Nam Dinh, Hung Yen, and Bac Ninh. Portraits and excerpts from these interviews provide the main content for this exhibition, alongside films and artefacts.

‘The exhibition is divided into four sections – Mother Goddess, Pure Heart, Beauty and Joy. Each section corresponds to one of the four colours identified with the four palaces of the Mother Goddess religion: Red (Palace of Heaven), White (Palace of Water), Yellow (Palace of Earth), Green (Palace of Mountains and Forests). It also presents essential elements of Mother Goddess worship such as the Chau Van musicians and the sacred principles of arranging the altars, offerings, costumes and jewellery. The exhibition aims to convey the beauty of Mother Goddess



Detail from the Worshipping Mother Goddess exhibition showing portraits and interview extracts in Vietnamese, with French and English translation. Photo: Siobhan Warrington.



The replica of a Mother Goddess altar at the Worshipping Mother Goddess exhibition. Photo: Siobhan Warrington.

worship and the core values (pure heart, beauty and joy) it inspires in its worshippers. This exhibition contributes to enhance the public's understanding of a unique and everlasting folk religion of the Vietnamese people.'

● Further information: website <https://baotangphunu.org.vn/>

AFRICA

■ KENYA AND ETHIOPIA Oral narratives and crisis management

Peter Wasamba, professor of oral literature and Mark Obure, a PhD candidate at the University of Nairobi, report on a joint five-year project (2022-2027) with Ghent University and HOWEST in Belgium, and Jimma University in Ethiopia. The project brings together oral literature researchers, students and community actors from Kenya and Ethiopia. The principal investigators are Professor Inge Brinkman (Ghent), Professor Peter Wasamba (Nairobi) and Professor Teshome Egere (Jimma).

'The "Storytelling and Young

People Coping with Crisis" project seeks to explore how indigenous strategies are employed by young people in the two countries to cope with emerging challenges in a rapidly technologising landscape. The role of oral literature in sustainable development needs no overstatement. Folktales are essential in revealing communities' perceptions of their challenges and coping strategies. Rather than merely serving as moral lessons or definitive solutions, folktales embody an alternative model for crisis management and historical consciousness, particularly among the youth. These narratives are integral to (re)connection processes in broader decolonisation efforts. By transcending simplistic categorisations, folktales invite us to reconsider oral literature's dynamic and influential role in shaping and reflecting community identities and ecological consciousness.

'In Kenya, the project has been documenting and analysing oral performances rendered by young people in Kwale County in the



Peter Wasamba (right) and Mark Obure (the last passenger on the left motorcycle) during fieldwork in Msambweni of Kwale County, February 2024. Photo: © P Wasamba.



Mark Obure documenting narratives on ecology in Kwale, Kenya. Photo: © P Wasamba.

coastal region. Though still at its formative stages, preliminary data reveals that storytelling has more potential for facilitating crisis reflection than previously thought. Using narrative analysis, workshops and performances as our primary methodologies, we have identified five domains: gendered crisis situations; othering and exclusion; poverty; disease; and ecological crisis. So far, there is evidence to infer that storytelling can help prevent and deal with contemporary crises experienced by young people.

‘The project operates through Oral Literature for Development (OL4D) hubs in Kenya and Ethiopia. Through monthly meetings of the OL4D-Hub branches and inter-university exchange, members have gained vastly in terms of analytical, methodological and theoretical tools and concepts. Through oral history fieldwork among the Digo community in Kwale, Kenya we are able to use the stories collected to train young people through a local theatre group (Kwale Arts Troupe) on how to identify local challenges and devise approaches to cope with crises such as poverty, climate change and gender issues.

Some of the project’s key outcomes include starting

databases on oral literature in Swahili and in Digo of Kwale in Kenya. We have set up a website (www.ol4d.ugent.be) to publish information regarding project activities, workshops, performances and project publications from our members, and we are now fully engaged in realising audio-visual web publications that will form the backbone of a co-created sustainable educational tool. These publications will feature a variety of content, including recorded oral performances, interviews with young people, and analyses of the narratives. We have published a Swahili play by the Kwale Arts Troupe based on a Digo narrative. The project has a bright future as it builds the capacity of local theatre groups on how best to incorporate technology in oral history performances to enhance skills and expand reach for impact.

Finally, the project is an opportunity to strengthen South–South co-operation between the

University of Nairobi (Kenya) and Jimma University (Ethiopia) for the project’s sustainability beyond the funding period. Other key players in the project include Dr Kimingichi Wabende (Nairobi), Dr James Wachira (Nairobi), Gherti Wouters (HoWest), and Mark Obure, PhD researcher (Nairobi).

● Further information: Peter Wasamba email pwasamba@uonbi.ac.ke, website www.ol4d.ugent.be

■ SOUTH SUDAN Likikiri Collective: using oral history and storytelling

Likikiri Collective is a growing arts and education organisation based in Juba, South Sudan. Co-founder Rebecca Lorins introduces the organisation and the role of oral history and storytelling in their work, and describes their latest project on South Sudanese women’s song heritage:

‘Established in 2016, our organisation uses the arts and humanities, cultural heritage and

CULTURAL PROTECTION FUND
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#LIKIKIRILAB

Jacinta Poni

As a child, I learned a song that mentioned my name, Poni. It was in a Bari storybook and praises Poni as a great chef:

*Jada a tatu nyuri,
Poni a der ja lokore ku kayata*

Jada has hunted bush meat and Poni has cooked meat with sweet potatoes

The song evokes sweet memories of home and belonging, especially now that I am in a refugee setting.

Even today, whenever I am in the kitchen, this song motivates me to do my best because I have been praised as an amazing chef.

STORYTELLING AS SAFEGUARDING

LIKIKIRI COLLECTIVE | Imagining the nation through the arts and humanities, cultural heritage and creativity

Shirigada Nakuma

BRITISH COUNCIL | Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport

Social media post for the ‘Storytelling as Safeguarding’ project. Courtesy of Aura Ltd. © Likikiri Collective.

creativity to work with communities on social issues and to act as a bridge between higher education, public institutions and community-based initiatives. Our name *likikiri* means “stories” in Bari, one of the South Sudanese languages. *Likikiri* are part of a broader South Sudanese oral tradition and a vehicle for the intergenerational transmission of social and cultural information and values.

‘Oral history, storytelling and narrative approaches are all central to our work. Our organisation was founded in the wake of the independence of South Sudan in 2011 after decades of war. Independence ushered in renewed interest in the past among South Sudanese and accelerated attempts to find new methods of knowledge production, documentation and dissemination.

‘We have conducted numerous workshops on oral history for university students, faculty, cultural centres, civil society and community groups and community-based organisations, and have also designed and co-ordinated several oral history and multimedia projects. Our latest project, *Storytelling as Safeguarding: Protecting South Sudanese Women’s Cultural Heritage in Refugee Settings in Uganda and Kenya*, is supported by the British Council’s Cultural Protection Fund in partnership with the UK’s Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Together with Community Development Centre in Uganda and SheLeads Kakuma in Kenya, we are empowering twenty young women from four different South Sudanese ethnic groups (Avokaya and Kakwa in Uganda and Dinka and Nuer in Kenya) to become storytellers, scribes and custodians of the song heritage of the elder women in their communities.

‘The young women are holding a series of Story Circles focussing on distinct life moments and associated song genres in a woman’s life cycle: (1) Early



Above: Story Circle on women’s work songs in Nuer conducted in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya, in partnership with SheLeads Kakuma. Below: Young women during our first workshop ‘Documenting Song Heritage through Story Circles’ in partnership with Community Development Centre in Rhino Camp, Uganda, transcribing and translating the songs they recorded during a Story Circle on Avokaya marriage songs. Photos © Likikiri Collective.



childhood (birth songs, naming songs and lullabies); (2) Transition to adulthood (initiation and other transition songs); (3) Marriage (songs from marriage rituals, ceremonies and married life); (4) Work (songs associated with work); (5) Death (mourning and funerary songs). During the Story Circles, the elders perform a song and then narrate stories about the song, its context and its meaning. The project aims to document 400 songs by August 2024. These songs are a portal to learning about the history of the community from women’s perspective, and they also teach us about traditional song

composition and performance among South Sudanese women.

‘The young women are leading in identifying, recording, transcribing, translating and archiving the songs both locally and at the British Library’s Sound Archive, World and Traditional Music Collection. They will then curate and share the songs and their own reflections on the songs in the form of a podcast series at the end of the project in January 2025.

‘The project reconnects the young women with their elders, creating space for meaningful intergenerational exchange. Furthermore, the project activities

have provided opportunities for skills-building for the young women, especially strengthening different forms of literacy, including language skills (both mother tongue and English), computer literacy and media literacy and production.'

'As we do this collaborative work in retrieving, revaluating and reinventing histories and elements of cultural heritage, Likikiri Collective looks forward to contributing to building more inclusive institutions such as school curricula, archives, theatres and museums for South Sudan's future.'

● Further information: website www.likikiri.org

EUROPE

■ NETHERLANDS **Friends in a Cold Climate**

'Friends in a Cold Climate' is a film and oral history project about town twinning in the 1960s and 1970s, initiated by Stichting (Foundation) Reis van de Razzia. Project director and documentary filmmaker Erik J de Jager introduces the project:

'Starting in the 1950s, some European towns began establishing ties with each other to promote the integration of European countries after the Second World War. These connections expanded, and in the 1960s a close circle of friends was established involving the towns of Esslingen (Germany), Schiedam (Netherlands), Udine (Italy), Velenje (Slovenia), Vienne (France) and Neath Port Talbot (UK). Each town in this "Verbund der Ringpartnerstädte" (Circle of twinned cities) had to maintain contact with at least two towns within the wider network. "Friends in a Cold Climate" traces the trajectories of the citizens of these seven European towns who took part in youth exchanges as part of the town-twinning.

'The ideals propagated by this "Verbund" are contrasted in this study with the ideas and desires of the participating youths, who might



Anna Storti (left) from Udine, Italy, on a youth exchange in Neath (1965), with her host Susan. Photo © Anna Storti.

have had quite different reasons for engaging in youth exchanges. And so the project explores the ideology of town twinning and its alignment with the emerging youth culture of the 1960s and 1970s in western Europe.

'At the time of writing, seventeen interviews have been conducted with participants from all towns involved. International travel was still a rarity for the youths who took part in a youth-exchange in the 1970s, let alone living with a foreign family. The filmed interviews explore the following questions: How did these young people move about in a Europe that tried to forget the Second World War? What ideals were they supposed to uphold? What idealism did they share

among themselves? The project investigates the transmission of the ideology of a peaceful and united Europe and how that aspiration was married to the emerging youth culture of the sixties and seventies. Interviewees talk about the fun meeting each other freely, about being involved in organising exchanges, about (obligatory) talks about the European Community (EC), about being part of the post-war generation and, ultimately, about how their lives evolved.

'Across these oral histories, personal experiences are recalled with the Second World War and the emerging EC as a backdrop. The interviews cover a significant time period including the admission of the United Kingdom to the EC, the fall of the Iron

Curtain and Brexit. They also cover changes within the twinning arrangement: after several towns left the Verbund in 2017 the mayor of Esslingen exclaimed that it was an emergency, and that “the circle had to be closed again”.

‘The filmed oral history interviews, transcripts and project reports are securely archived and accessible (doi:10.17026/SS/BEYVDP) in the digital archive of the KNAW (The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences) at <https://easy.dans.knaw.nl/ui/home>. The project will also be published on www.oral-history.digital.

● Further information: email info@erikdejager.nl, websites <https://ssh.datastations.nl>, or <https://stichtingreisvanderazzia.nl>, and search for ‘Friends in a Cold Climate’.

■ SPAIN Iberian Network of Oral History

Juan José Gutiérrez is professor of anthropology at California State University, Monterey Bay and currently engaged in a number of research initiatives in Spain. He reports on the creation of the Iberian Network of Oral History:

‘In a significant move towards cross-border academic collaboration, the creation of the Iberian Network of Oral History was announced during the VII International Oral History Seminar, held on 19 and 20 June 2023 at the Bizkaia Aretoa of the University of the Basque Country (EHU) in Bilbao. This event marks an important milestone for the studies of memory and oral history in Spain and Portugal, providing a structured platform for academic exchange and co-operation.

‘The Iberian Network of Oral History, proposed by the “Modern Experience” Research Group at EHU, seeks to overcome the isolation that often characterises research in this area. By connecting researchers from both sides of the Spanish-Portuguese border, the network will facilitate a fruitful exchange of ideas,



Poster promoting the seminar to launch the Iberian Network of Oral History. Courtesy of Modern Experience Research Group of the Basque University System, University of the Basque Country (UPV-EHU).

methodologies and research findings. Additionally, this joint effort will enable addressing common challenges and exploring similarities in approaches and concerns in memory studies in both countries.

‘The initiative is particularly timely at a moment when international collaboration is crucial for advancing historical and cultural knowledge. Through seminars, workshops and collaborative projects, the Iberian Network of Oral History promises to be a catalysing force in strengthening research and pedagogy in oral history across the Iberian Peninsula, thereby encouraging future academic meetings and collaborations.’

● Further information: email RIHO@listserv.rediris.es

Oral History Archive Project: Museo de los Pueblos Leoneses, Spain

Jorge Martínez Montero is the director of the School of Art and Higher Education for the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage of León. He introduces the Oral History Archive Project which he is

currently developing in collaboration with Juan José Gutiérrez from California State University, Monterey Bay (USA):

‘The Ethnographic Museum of León (Museo de los Pueblos Leoneses) has launched an initiative known as the Oral History Archive Project, aimed primarily at preserving and enhancing the visibility of collective memory in the province of León. This initiative is part of a series of existing efforts in the region and expands the content of the Concepción Casado Lobato Archive – a large collection of ethnographic materials donated by the family of Concepción Casado, the renowned Spanish linguist and ethnographer.

‘The oral history initiative is supported by the museum, currently led by Lucas Morán Rodríguez, and is expected to involve researchers and students from different universities interested in the initiative working closely with senior staff at the museum and participating scholars.

‘Located in Mansilla de las Mulas (a town twenty kilometres from the centre of León), the Ethnographic Museum has played a crucial role in documenting Leonese culture through its exhibitions and educational programmes. This new oral history initiative aligns well with the museum’s work documenting and disseminating Leonese cultural heritage, and focusses specifically on collecting oral testimonies and stories. The initiative will record new oral histories and will also archive existing recordings from the region. It will add a substantial contribution to the preservation of León’s intangible cultural heritage.

‘Regarding oral history in León, the University of León, through its chair of Leonese studies, has made significant contributions to the study and documentation of oral narratives, providing a robust academic framework for analysing these narratives. These efforts have facilitated a deeper understanding

of regional history and have underscored the importance of oral transmission of the cultural heritage of the region.

‘The context of rural depopulation in León, which threatens the transmission of knowledge between generations, lends additional importance to oral history. Faced with the demographic decline in rural areas, the Oral History Archive stands as an essential resource to ensure that local traditions and stories are documented, preserved and communicated to different audiences. This project serves not only as a conservation mechanism but also as a link between the past and the future, ensuring that the narratives of León remain accessible for future research and the general public.

● Further information: website www.institutoleonosedecultura.es/museo-de-los-pueblos-leoneses

■ UKRAINE

The Museum of Civilian Voices

Iryna Shender, external communications manager at the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation introduces the Museum of Civilian Voices:

‘The war in Ukraine has persisted for ten years, escalating into a full-scale invasion over the

past two years. Every person in Ukraine, and every Ukrainian refugee abroad, has experienced loss due to this war. Each individual has their own story to tell, and every story matters. This is the core message of the Museum of Civilian Voices, established by the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation, founded by the well-known Ukrainian philanthropist and named after him.

‘The museum has amassed a staggering collection of over 100,000 first-hand stories, sharing experiences of those who have lived through the war. This archive is the world’s largest collection of living testimonies about the war in Ukraine directly from its witnesses.

‘The goal of the museum is to serve as a source of truth about life during the war, by gathering testimonies from survivors so that the world remembers and never forgives Russia’s war crimes against Ukraine. Documenting Ukraine’s oral history and preserving these memories is crucial for the future, and will also provide evidence for future trials against the aggressor.

‘The museum, as a project, seeks to promote the psychological wellbeing and mental health of Ukrainian residents who have experienced

war in their homeland. It provides people with the opportunity to share their pain, in a safe space with those who care, as they tell their stories and also learn about the experiences of others.

‘The groundwork for the museum was laid ten years ago when the Foundation began providing critical aid to civilians in the Donbas. It became clear that thousands of people wanted to share their experiences and record their stories. The archive grew rapidly, leading to the founding of the Museum of Civilian Voices in 2020. After 24 February 2022, it became a chronicle of the entire Ukrainian nation’s tragedy.

‘The museum’s team records people’s stories while providing humanitarian aid through the Foundation’s programmes. In addition anyone who is willing to share their story can do so via the museum’s portal at <https://civilvoicesmuseum.org/en>, a chatbot or a hotline. Interviews are conducted in person, as well as remotely, through either video, audio or text messaging. Interviews that are conducted in person are usually filmed and last between a few minutes and an hour or sometimes even more.

‘The museum launched its offline presence with the VOICES exhibition, showcasing its



Illustration used to promote the Museum of Civilian Voices. Image designed by Olexander Voloshyn, © Rinat Akhmetov Foundation.

multimedia space with art objects to reveal the tragedy of war and the dignity of people who have endured despite the horrors.

'In 2024, the museum included stories of children who were illegally taken to Russia and made it back to Ukraine. The Rinat Akhmetov Foundation was the first to provide comprehensive aid to these children and teenagers, offering psychological support and recreation opportunities.

'The museum provides support to Ukrainians by the Foundation's qualified psychologists, including broad assistance in overcoming war trauma. 591,000 people have already received psychological help through webinars, videos and expert advice. In addition, within the framework of museum projects the Foundation's psychologists have provided on-site consultations for frontline residents and displaced persons, as well as support for people after residential areas have been shelled.

'The museum is a dynamic platform that continually evolves. It works with international media to convey the truth about Ukraine's experiences, partners with foreign universities in education and science, holds events with global experts, shares stories with filmmakers and so on.

'The Museum of Civilian Voices continues to grow and reach a broader global audience. The VOICES exhibition is also going to tour the world. The team constantly seeks new formats for presenting stories and fostering a culture of remembrance in Ukraine, ensuring that the slogan "never again" truly means "never".

● Further information: websites <https://civilvoicesmuseum.org/en>, <https://akhmetovfoundation.org/en>

LATIN AMERICA

■ ARGENTINA

The interview as a space for freedom

Oral historian and educator Laura Benadiba introduces a participatory oral history initiative



Participants in the Library of Batán prison, taking part in the oral history training. Photo courtesy of Laura Benadiba, © Liberté Co-operative.

with prisoners held in a maximum security prison in Batán in the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. The Oral History Archive for people in confinement was started in 2023 as a voluntary initiative by Laura Benadiba to contribute to developing prisoners' self-esteem and demonstrating their desire to rehabilitate.

'The initiative involves a collaboration with Liberté, a venture that is one hundred per cent self-managed by prisoners, which in 2021 became a formal co-operative (see <https://cooperativaliberte.coop/es>).

'The objective of this project is for members of the co-operative to develop and build its own oral history archive of the Liberté Work Co-operative. It initially consisted of three virtual workshop sessions delivered by Laura Benadiba to members of the co-operative involving almost 70 prisoners. This

learning programme was quickly extended with further sessions, at the request of the participants, which has enabled follow-up throughout the entire process.

'Following thirteen virtual training sessions the inmates have recorded ten filmed oral history interviews which were shared on an internal drive. The interviews focussed on the formation of the Liberté co-operative and its impacts, particularly on the changes it has brought about to their lives inside the prison.

'The topic guide for interviews was prepared and then further developed by the inmates themselves, who added questions based on the outcomes of the initial recordings, which included situations that had not been taken into account in the initial planning.

'During the programme, guidelines were also established for the use of oral history among peers,



Laura Benadiba delivering an oral history training session over Zoom. Photo: © Laura Benadiba.

to support the further development of the oral history archives of the Liberté Co-operative, with interviews carried out from within the prison. Overall, the programme aims to be reflective regarding the co-operative and with the main objective of learning from each other.

‘Below are some reflections on this project:

- The collective initiative to construct oral sources promoted collaboration, strengthened bonds, contributed to improving co-existence and allowed the construction of autonomous knowledge.
- Participants’ self-esteem, motivation, commitment, reflection and appreciation of belonging to the organisation began to be strengthened. They were able to recognise and value each other’s achievements despite the challenging prison environment and explore for themselves various lines of research according to their collective interests.
- The experience shared by all highlights that their lives have changed significantly with the use of mobile phones since 2020, allowing them to learn trades through YouTube tutorials and that has supported development of the co-operative.
- Collective analysis of the life histories by participants contributed to the identification of factors influencing criminal behaviour and rehabilitation.
- Sharing experiences began to foster empathy, solidarity and support networks, which are essential both within prison and also in relation to social re-integration upon release.’
- Further information: email lbenadiba@gmail.com, website www.laurabenadiba.com

NORTH AMERICA

■ CANADA

Father and son

Angela Carlson, programme assistant for German-Canadian studies at the University of Winnipeg, reports on a project that



Mr Edward Henseler, former agronomist from Cologne, Germany and his son, Ulric, five years old, St-Thomas de Caxton, Québec, circa 1962. Photo: Le Nouvelliste/Library and Archives Canada/PA-186362.

began in 2023. The project is led by Dr Alexander Freund, professor of history and chair in German-Canadian studies at the University of Winnipeg, and managed by Angela Carlson.

‘Titled “Father and Son: A History of German Immigrant Fathers, Sons, and Their Relations in Twentieth and Twenty-first Century Canada”, the project is

funded for three years by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. It is also supported by the chair in German-Canadian studies and the university’s oral history centre. Most of the funds will go to hiring undergraduate and graduate research students to conduct analyses of oral histories, auto/biographies and other life writings.

“Our project documents the life experiences of German immigrant fathers and their sons under the conditions of war, violence and toxic masculinities, and wild economic fluctuations”, says Freund. “We also consider a range of cultural factors shaping the twentieth century. These include social expectations of ‘good fatherhood’ and loving father-son relations, prescriptive policies about ‘breadwinning’, ‘delinquency’ and ‘vulnerability’, cultural stereotypes of ‘caring’ or ‘absent’ fathers and ‘rebellious’ sons.” Freund adds that “we also examine religious-ideological representations of ‘strict’ fathers and ‘obedient’ sons.” German Canadians’ narratives tell us about broader Canadian developments,



Hans Petersen, a new Canadian who came to Canada from Germany, applies centuries-old skill to the construction of a fishing boat, Kitimat, British Columbia, circa 1960. Photo: Malak/Library and Archives Canada/PA-186358.

about the more specific situation of immigrants, and about the at times difficult experiences of Germans abroad, especially during and after the two world wars.

'In the first two years of the project, researchers are collating and analysing all secondary literature and published primary sources, including existing oral histories. Locating primary sources is a major challenge, because most German-Canadian memoirs were either published with small publishers, self-published or only privately printed and circulated among family and friends. However, the researchers can also draw on several hundred extant oral histories with German Canadians that we are currently archiving at the University of Winnipeg, that have been recorded as part of previous projects.

'In a later phase, the researchers will conduct eighteen oral history interviews with fathers and sons of different generations and backgrounds. Project outputs will include an open-access monograph about the history of father-son relations in Canada since 1900, blog posts, podcasts and colloquia. The project will also make all research materials publicly available, including a database of all primary and secondary sources and an archive of oral histories.

'Through our research, we want to participate in a larger public debate about fatherhood and sonhood, especially in times of crisis', says Freund. 'Historical knowledge can provide orientation and perhaps even reassurance to families in trying times'.

● Further information: email an.carlson@uwinnipeg.ca, website <https://uwgcs.wordpress.com>

OCEANIA

■ NEW ZEALAND Southland Oral History Project

Rosie Stather, co-ordinator of the Southland Oral History Project, writes about the development and



Southland Oral History Project co-ordinator Rosie Stather (third from left) with some of the project's volunteers at an end-of-year get-together in 2023.
Photo: © Southland Oral History Project.

future of this project, and the motivations to make the region's previously hidden voices heard by a wider audience:

'The Southland Oral History Project was born in 2006 out of a desire by the Southland Rural Heritage Trust, now Heritage South, to keep alive the stories of Southland's rural traditions and way of life from the 1920s to the 1950s. Many small, independent oral history initiatives had been undertaken around the region in the 1980s and 1990s using the recording technology available at the time. The Trust recognised the need to both preserve this material by getting it digitised, and to proactively collect more material, as the age and health of key people gave urgency to capturing the stories before they were lost.

'In 2008 the project found a home in the Archives at the Invercargill City Library, digital recording equipment was purchased, volunteer interviewers were trained, and ethical and technical frameworks were developed under the guidance of the National Oral History Association of New Zealand.

'Fast forward to 2024 and the project has over 600 recordings in its collection, 565 of which are currently discoverable in its public catalogue, along with audio extracts and photographs. The project is overseen by the Heritage

South Trust in collaboration with Invercargill City Council, who employ the coordinator to manage the project. The project has an active group of around twenty volunteer interviewers and abstractors, who produce fifteen to twenty new interviews a year. The scope of the project has expanded and includes many urban stories along with contemporary material.

'Southland is mainland New Zealand's southernmost region and covers 32,612 square kilometres. Stewart Island, which lies twenty kilometres off the southern coast, accounts for a further 1,735 square kilometres. The estimated population was 103,900 as of June 2023, two per cent of New Zealand's population, making Southland the country's second most sparsely populated region. These factors present challenges for oral history collection with a large area to cover. The project has encouraged a decentralised approach to both interview collection and access – developing regional hubs that enable easier access to oral histories along with local expertise and enthusiasm to collect interviews.

'The project aims to celebrate the diversity of cultures in Southland and reflect the many and varied pathways people have taken to become part of the Southland region. The project

acknowledges the special spiritual relationship Māori have with their taonga (treasures) and their long oral tradition. Those associated with the project actively seek ways to develop relationships with tangata whenua (people of the land) that ensure recordings related to iwi (people/tribe) are managed in the most appropriate way.

'The collection contains many examples of what makes Southland such a special place. There are stories of early industry: flax mills, sawmills, farming and hydro-schemes, alongside traditional practices such as fishing, carving and mutton birding. Interviewees recount the vast changes that have occurred in land use, farming

practices and urbanisation. The expansion of some towns and settlements contrasts with the retraction and sometimes complete disappearance of others. The oral history collection brings a crucial human element to the history of the province.

'Promoting awareness and use of the amazing richness of material held in the project remains a challenge. With the New Zealand school's history curriculum focussing on local history, the project is a treasure trove of information, but one that needs to be packaged up for easy classroom use by teachers. The coordinator undertakes a number of community presentations each year and use by GLAM (galleries,

libraries archives, and museums) institutions is increasing – incorporating material into podcasts, information boards, displays and books. Developing a more engaging and easier to search online presence is a priority. In the meantime, the collection is searchable online via the Invercagill Archives.'

● Further information: email Rosie@ilibrary.co.nz, website <https://ilibrary.co.nz/research-archives/oral-history>

International Work is edited by Siobhan Warrington, who welcomes all contributions by email to siobhan.warrington@newcastle.ac.uk

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