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## WELCOME TO OUR FIRST ISSUE

### Edited and Authored by Elizabeth Hicks

Welcome to the first issue of our new Endangered Material Knowledge Programme (EMKP) newsletter!

Through this newsletter, we want to inform our grantees, collaborators, the wider public, and new audiences about EMKP news and events. Our newsletter is an avenue to showcase research funded by the programme into the documentation of material knowledge systems under-threat, and celebrate the achievements of our grantees. Click on the images within this newsletter to read more about individual projects on the EMKP website.

The EMKP was launched in 2018; it is funded by Arcadia and hosted by the British Museum's Department of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas. The EMKP offers grants to knowledge holders, practitioners, and scholars globally to carry out documentation research on critically threatened material knowledge especially in historically understudied areas of the globe. This knowledge is hosted in a **Digital Open-Access Repository**. To date, EMKP has supported 82 projects in 44 countries. More information on all grants awarded can be found [here](#).

Purna Bahadur Chitrakar painting the final details on a mask for the Nava Durga dance, Bhaktapur, Nepal (Image: Renuka Gurung)



Basket making process (Chikok), western Ethiopia (Image: Alfredo González Ruibal)



## 2023/2024 CALL FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS

The 2023/2024 call for EMKP grant applications is now open. The closing date for submissions is the 7th January 2024. The EMKP provides two types of funding:

The **Documentation Grants** support projects to digitally record material knowledge systems that are currently under threat. This includes knowledge systems associated with material objects, as well as spaces, architecture, and the material dimensions of performance and environments. The EMKP offers small grants that last up to a year with a maximum award of £20,000, and large grants that can last up to two years with a maximum award of £100,000.

A **Legacy Digitisation Grant** supports the digitisation of pre-existing collections and research records pertaining to material knowledge that is now endangered or was endangered at the time the research took place. This includes the digitisation of fieldnotes, photographs and negatives, videos/reels, audio recordings and physical objects. The grant lasts for up-to one year with a value of £20,000.

Applicants for the 2023/2024 round of grant funding can for the first time apply for money to incorporate community engagement within their wider project proposal. We encourage applicants to co-design their proposals with relevant community participants.

Further guidelines can be found on our [website](#). To apply for an EMKP grant, please follow this [link](#).

Spinning weft and warp thread in North Benin (Image: Olivier Gosselain)



## REFLECTING ON THE PAST FIVE YEARS

On the 8th June 2023, the EMKP celebrated its fifth anniversary with a one-day conference at the British Museum. The event included papers and panel presentations by EMKP grantees, displays about ongoing projects, and an interactive digital display showcasing the EMKP repository and the uses of technology in the documentation of material knowledge. The papers presented covered a diverse range of themes, highlights from the day included:

Maria Luisa Lucas' presentation on the textiles of the indigenous Bora community of the Colombian Amazon. Maria underlined that the practice of dyeing and producing textiles is a resource that knowledge holders use to teach community members about mythology, enchantments, ritual songs, as well as traditional medicine and cosmetics.

Kristen Pearson presented the preliminary results from her investigation into the carpets and wall-hangings of communities living in the Mongolian Altai. Research by the team is revealing new information about the impact of machine-made-carpet and textiles on the diversity of designs being

produced, and how the biographies of these objects reflect constantly changing social relationships across the steppe.

You can watch the aforementioned presentations and other presentations from the day by visiting our [website](#). The EMKP team would like to thank everyone who attended on the day and has helped us to reach this momentous five-year milestone.

EMKP Grantees and collaborators with EMKP director Lissant Bolton (Image: Paula Granados García)



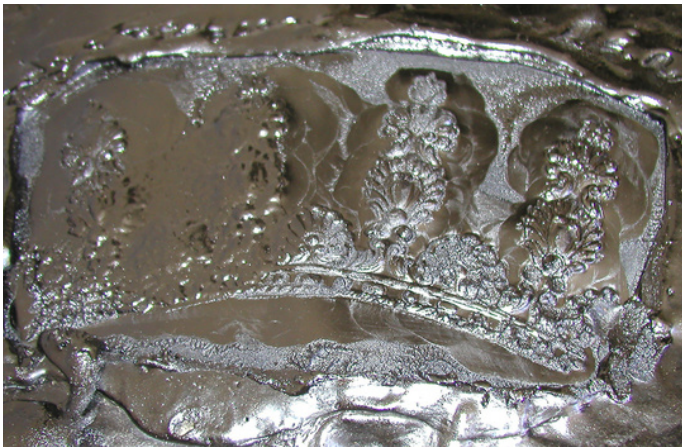


# KEEPING THE HAMMER'S VOICE ALIVE

**Emilia Ferraro and Sandra Wilson (with Elizabeth Hicks)**

Ecuadorian silversmithing can be compared to an eco-system: a community of interacting organisms and their physical environment, a complex network of interconnected systems. Like all eco-systems, this one has a dangerous predator: the encroaching global economy. More and more Ecuadorian artisans are being forced to migrate elsewhere for better economic opportunities; whilst others are being driven from their craft by the rising price of materials and loss of access to natural resources. Under this mounting pressure, workshops are being closed, skillsets lost, and intergenerational networks of knowledge transmission shattered.

Traces of metal chasing in pitch (Image: Emilia Ferraro)



On entering the workshop of master silversmith Gabriela Andrade, Emilia Ferraro and Sandra Wilson (PI and co-PI for the '**Keeping the Hammer's Voice Alive**' EMKP funded project) felt an air of beauty and calmness. It is common for the workshops of traditional Ecuadorian metalsmiths to be part of the home. Gabriela's workshop is the beating heart at the centre of her house. This position of her workshop reflects the simple fact that to Gabriela silversmithing is not just an occupation, but a way of life.

In Ecuador, silversmithing is the product of hundreds (if not thousands) of years of accumulated knowledge, passed down from generation to generation. In the workshop of master craftsman Luis Fernando Buitrón Benitez, his 93-year-old father Luis Fernando Buitrón Almeida resists retirement and continues to produce silver objects. Quite possibly the oldest silversmith in Ecuador, Fernando (the elder) emphasised to Emilia and Sandra that until recently knowledge about the craft was passed down intergenerationally within families.

Hammering the inside of what will become a silver bowl (Image: Sandra Wilson)



In the past 30 years many of his fellow silversmiths, have fallen prey to rapidly changing economic conditions forcing them to migrate elsewhere.

Masters like Luis Fernando Buitrón Benitez are not only the product of their father's teaching, but their own life-long commitment to their craft. Emilia and Sandra enjoyed a moment of pure poetry with master craftsman Fernando (the younger). When speaking about the process of manipulating silver, Fernando spoke of it like a loving relationship: a partnership between his body, the hammer, and the metal performed like a dance, his body responding to the resounding vibrations.

Emilia Ferraro and Sandra Wilson's '*Keeping the Hammer's Voice Alive*' EMKP funded project is working to record and investigate the artisanal knowledge systems of contemporary silversmithing in Ecuador. If you would like to read more about their project, please follow this [link](#).

Fernando (the elder) talking to Emilia and Sandra in his workshop (Image: Sandra Wilson)





# EMKP DIGITAL OPEN ACCESS REPOSITORY

The EMKP supports research teams across the world to document material knowledge and provides access to that knowledge by stewarding the research outputs within a **Digital Open Access Repository**. This initiative is the largest of its kind within the British Museum, and the first to generate a repository for research data, not only publications. The repository is available for anyone around the globe to access and share, you do not need to be an academic, or a researcher. The documentation is published under a Creative Commons (CC) Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 licence (**CC BY-NC-SA 4.0**); which guarantees protection for the creator, and community rights over the data. Anyone is permitted to use and share EMKP assets if they are not used for commercial purposes, and any derivatives are issued under the same license.

Playing a Cambodian angkouch (Image: Griffith University/Cambodian Living Arts)



The repository currently holds six complete datasets generated by projects from Kenya, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines. A total of 2,357 assets have been uploaded to date, and not just images but videos, audio, maps, transcripts, fieldwork notes, and even 3D models. The repository allows for the recording of multilingual information, facilitating search and retrieval by non-English speakers. Detailed contextual information is recorded alongside the assets ensuring the voices of knowledge holders are preserved within the digital format of the platform.

Making a Badek Sarawak machete (Image: Durham University/Sarawak Museum)



To help you navigate each dataset, the EMKP has created specific pages on their website for individual completed projects. Each page explains how the projects have been developed, the sort of data generated, and how it has been organised. On each **project page** you will find a button called '*project repository*', this will take you to the repository page for that specific project. For a more detailed outline of individual project datasets, you can then type '*Guide to the Data*' or '*Guide to the Dataset*' along with the project code into search bar at the top of the page.

We would like to encourage you to explore the EMKP Digital Open-Access Repository, and if you choose to use any of the materials within the repository, we want to hear from you! How did you use these resources and why? You can contact us via our email: [emkp@britishmuseum.org](mailto:emkp@britishmuseum.org).

Transporting the beehive to Koropkwen glade, Kenya (Image: Campbell Martin)



Contributions and suggestions for future issues should be sent to: [emkp@britishmuseum.org](mailto:emkp@britishmuseum.org)