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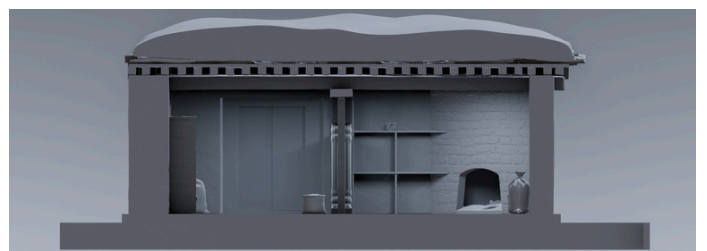
## THE EMKP GRANTING CYCLE 2025-2026

The EMKP started strong this year with a very successful 2025/2026 call for applications. This round had the highest number of submissions to date, with some countries represented for the first time. Each round of applications brings a wealth of knowledge about the current state of material knowledge systems at risk. The EMKP is delighted to receive applications from all over the world. Thank you to the big network of practitioners, scholars, institutions and organisations that made it possible.

The EMKP offers funding in two modalities: [documentation grants](#) and [legacy digitisation grants](#). Documentation grants can be large, with a duration of 2 years, and small, lasting 1 year. Both are intended to document living material practices, and the difference between the two relies on the scope and complexity of the systems of knowledge documented. The Legacy Digitisation grant has a duration of 1 year, and it is intended for projects aiming to digitise existing archives focusing on material practices that were or are still endangered. Documentation grants and legacy digitisation grants can be applied for simultaneously, providing that they are related.

The new call for applications will open later this year; watch this space, as we will be providing more details. In the meantime, you can start preparing your application by visiting our [grants page](#) and our [frequently asked questions page](#). You can also send us an email to [emkp@britishmuseum.org](mailto:emkp@britishmuseum.org).

Finally, spring was also a period of close collaboration with community members, scholars, and organisations engaging with the EMKP in different ways. During this season, we hosted visits from Chile and Brazil, both interested in developing online repositories with a strong emphasis on Indigenous ontologies and voices. More information about these collaborations can be found in the next section.



EMKP 2025 Project, Traditional Construction Systems in Pir Panjal Region (Image: 3D model, Rahul Bhola, 2026)

## RECENT VISITS

Javier Silva Zurita, a musicologist from the University of Los Lagos in Chile, recently undertook a short stay at the EMKP to learn more about the programme's work, with a particular focus on collections documenting the material knowledge of musical instruments. Javier works closely with Indigenous musicians and instrument makers from the Mapuche Williche communities of San Juan de La Costa, Chile.



Ney performance (Image: Max Harwood, 2024)

His research, funded by the Chilean National Agency for Research and Development (ANID), focuses on archiving the musical and sonic features of Williche culture in the region. Drawing on his stay with us, Javier has written a short piece reflecting on the potential of the EMKP repository for his practice, click [here](#) to find out more.



Playing angkuoch - Chi Monivong (Image: Griffith University / Cambodian Living Arts, 2020)



María Luisa Lucas (Image: EMKP, 2026)

In April, we hosted Maria Luisa Lucas, Majoí Favero Gongora, and Hekeré Terena from Kanajó – Centro de Documentação de Línguas e Culturas Indígenas. Maria Luisa and Majoí are, respectively, the principal investigator and a collaborator on two different EMKP projects, while Hekeré is an Indigenous researcher from the Terena people with extensive experience in community-engaged research.



Majoí Favero Gongora and Hekeré Terena (Image: EMKP, 2026)

Together, they are undertaking the important task of establishing the working frameworks for the recently created centre dedicated to the research, documentation, and dissemination of the rich linguistic and cultural diversity of Indigenous peoples in Brazil. The EMKP was of particular interest to the group as an opportunity to learn from and exchange experiences on digital repositories, Indigenous community-led documentation, and the overall management of the programme. Click [here](#) to learn more about their visit.

# SAHARAN OASES AND THE FOGGARAS

**The future of life in the oases of the Sahara depends on water from the foggaras.**

By Juan Ignacio Robles (Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain)

The foggara is an ancient underground irrigation system used in deserts, especially in Algeria, to capture groundwater and bring it to the surface. It consists of inclined galleries built by hand, with ventilation shafts, which prevent water evaporation under the extreme heat, being vital for oases.

For two years, the team have been conducting intensive fieldwork in the oases of Adrar (Southern Algeria), where the foggara – as an underground gallery – drains water by gravity from the groundwater to gardens. Introduced in the 9th century, foggaras gave rise to a few hundred oases in southwestern Algeria, supporting the lives of thousands of families still today.



Aeration well, Adrar, undergoing community work to maintain the foggara (Image: J.I. Robles, 2025)

Agriculture in this region is only possible through irrigation. During the summer, the entire community cleans and maintains the underground drainage channels, as part of a collective effort called 'tuiza'. The work is done in summer so that young people and children can participate. Their contribution is important because the underground channels are very narrow, and children and young people find it easier to clear the earth and stones accumulated in the channels throughout the year.

On leaving the underground, the water is accumulated in a small basin, *qasri*, bordered by a distributing comb, a piece of cut stone with holes,

which determines the shares of the co-owners. The calculation of the water is done by the *kayal*, a hydraulic expert who knows the techniques of measurement. He uses the *hallafa*, a measuring tool made of copper and drilled in several holes of different diameters, which is used to determine the volume of water. This system is recognized as World Material Heritage by UNESCO.



Zamam of the Ben Aissa oasis at the Djmáa meeting (Image: J.I. Robles, 2025)

Our fieldwork methodology, based on participatory observation, has allowed us to understand the complex water distribution system based on flow volume rather than irrigation time. The water that reaches each farm in the palm grove is calculated according to three hierarchical orders: ethnicity, religion and farm size. All this information is recorded in a book, the *Zmam*, which is the core component of the entire foggara regulation system, and it is carefully kept at the oasis mosque. The imam of the village (ksar) of Othmane Ben Aissa showed us the book and brought it to the meeting we held with the Djmáa (oasis management institution). Meetings functioned as semi-structured discussion groups, halfway between group interviews and participant observation. It was an ethnographic technique perfectly suited to the 'interaction matrix' of oasis society.

Today, this socially and ecologically sustainable peasant production method is being redefined by an intensive agricultural economy, causing the tangible and intangible heritage embodied in the foggaras to be in decline.

To read the full version of this piece, click [here](#).

## REPOSITORY UPDATES

We are pleased to announce the following projects that have completed their documentation work. Their collections are now fully accessible in the [EMKP Online Repository](#). Congratulations to the teams that made these collections possible! Click the links to discover endangered practices and intangible heritage from Slovenia, Colombia, Pakistan, and more.

### **The traditional production of shoes and boots in Tržič, Slovenia**

(Bojan Knific, 2021)

This project worked closely with the only two remaining traditional shoemakers in Tržič – Roman Zaplotnik and his father – their fieldwork approach is based on participant observation. Traditional Tržič footwear can be traced back to the end of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. Changes in shoemaking technology and fashion are behind the reasons for the decline of this traditional practice.

### **Keeping the hammer's voice alive**

(Emilia Ferraro, 2021)

Silversmithing in Ecuador is the craft of creating three-dimensional objects from a flat sheet of metal, usually silver. The characteristic sound of hammers working the silver sheet provides an extra sensorial element – sounds being an important component of the sensorial experience of this material practice. The project conducted documentation work in three silversmiths' workshops in Quito and provides a rich ethnographic record of this practice with roots in the pre-Hispanic period of this region.

### **Between presence and disappearance of traditional Bulgarian textiles of Stoianovca, Republic of Moldova**

(Marina Miron, 2022)

Bulgarian textiles in the Republic of Moldova are part of an old tradition. In 2014, Bulgarian carpets from Ciprovtsy were included in the List of Intangible Heritage protected by UNESCO. This project documented the entire seasonal process of weaving Bulgarian carpets in the village of Stoianovca, Cantemir District. The team works closely with several knowledge holders in the personal space of



Traditional Weaving Documentation Team (Image: Marina Miron, 2023)

the Caradjov family home. This practice is disappearing, among other factors, due to lack of intergenerational transmission of knowledge.

### **Documenting endangered knowledge of making Chitrali shu (handwoven woollen cloth) in Chitral, Northwest Pakistan**

(Adil Iqbal, 2022)

Chitral is a mountainous region in Pakistan that borders Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Xinjiang (north-west China). Here, the *shu* – a windproof textile – has emerged as a central element of local identity in Chitral and has been continuously traded across these borders. This project documents each stage of the practice, from raw fleece to finished cloth, while addressing the social, ecological, and cultural complexities that sustain this endangered tradition.

### **From Reed to Ney: Documenting Musical Craftsmanship and Pedagogy in Turkey**

(Banu Senay, 2023)

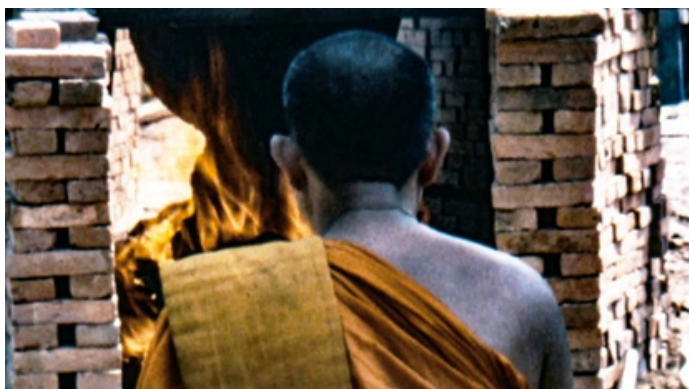
The Ney is an end-blow reed traditional instrument whose production is threatened by an increasing pressure on the reeds' fragile ecosystems. This documentation work focused on two communities – the Hezarfen Ney and Art School in the historic neighbourhood of Üsküdar, Istanbul – and tells an intimate account of a group of Ney instrument makers and practitioners while they engage in diverse ways of sustaining the knowledge system behind the production of this instrument, together with the pedagogical methods and social bonds that make this practice possible.

## FORTY YEARS ON

By Tristram Riley-Smith (Sainsbury Research Unit, University of East Anglia)

In 1984, as a young Anthropologist of Art researching the traditional casting of metal sculpture, I was privileged to witness the three-day festival surrounding the creation of a “Paramount Buddha” in Wat Chang – an isolated monastery linked to the farming community of Tha Mai, in the heart of rural Thailand. This led to the creation of my film *The Birth of a Buddha*, which featured in the British Museum’s *Buddhism – Art and Faith* exhibition in 1985 (available online via The Meridian Trust’s Buddhist Film Resource).

Forty years on, in January 2026, I returned to Thailand as an EMKP “Legacy Grantee”. The aim now was to augment that historical record by conducting interviews with the last of the craftsmen who create metal Buddha images using those traditional methods. This goal has been achieved thanks to the impressive support provided by my Co-Applicant (Professor Pitchaya Soomjinda, known as *Kratik*) and my Research Assistant, Dr Peerapat Ouysook (known as *Earth*).



Ajahn Thong prays before a baking Buddha mould, Wat Chang (Image: Super-8 film still, Pitchaya Soomjinda, 1984)

In Wat Chang we reconnected to a wider community and revealed a rare and endangered record of the making of their Paramount Buddha – the life-size figure that has overseen the ordination of monks into the *wat* for decades. We produced display boards with pictures of the Buddha-casting and the villagers; and projected the uncut Super-8 footage from my 1984 visit on a loop (digitised thanks to the EMKP legacy digitisation grant). This generated great



Ajahn Thong looks at legacy footage with his wife and Earth at home, Phichit (Image: Pitchaya Soomjinda, 2026)

interest as villagers gathered to look out for their relatives and friends: a palpable frisson of excitement ran through the room as characters from the past were recognised. My footage also confirmed stories villagers have told themselves over the years about households donating precious metal vessels to be melted down and incorporated into the body of their Buddha. Afterwards, we invited householders to be interviewed on camera, sharing their memories and reflecting on the significance of their Paramount Buddha (which, we learnt, carries the name Vipassi).

At the end of our Community Engagement Day at Wat Chang, I was invited to have my photograph taken with the villagers who had worked in the kitchens preparing our meal. They encouraged me to raise my right hand with thumb and forefinger crossed together. This was not, as I initially thought, invoking the conventional Western money gesture (as in *Pay Up!*). For the Thais, this represents the heart and is a sign of amity and friendship. Could there be a more powerful emblem of Community Engagement than that!

To read the full version of this piece, click [here](#).



Farewell to Tristram at the end of the Community Engagement Day, Wat Chang (Pitchaya Soomjinda, 2026)

## NEWS BITES

### Publications

Gerelmaa Erdenechuluun ([EMKP2024SG05](#)) has recently published an article in *Social Science and Humanities Open*. The piece titled [Mongolian traditional wooden cradles: Types, techniques, and cultural](#), draws on her ongoing project among Mongolian nomadic herders.

Patrick Nunn ([EMKP2023SG05](#)), together with his research team and other colleagues, published the paper: [Contextualising future climate-forced community relocations on islands: the deep history of water-linked settlement mobility in Ra Province, Fiji](#). The article, published in the journal *Human Ecology*, relates to Patrick's current EMKP project documenting the tradition of artificial islands in the Western Pacific Islands.

### Exhibitions

On 26 January, Sayali Athale ([EMKP2024SG01](#)) held an exhibition at the Pune International Centre, India, where she talked about her recent findings and learnings from her EMKP project: Documenting the craft of creating floating dwellings in the socio-ecological landscape of Kashmir Valley, India.



A visitor at Sayali Athale's exhibition (Image: Sayali Athale, 2026)

### Conferences

In February this year, the University of Ahmedbad in collaboration with Oxford Brookes University and the Endangered Wooden Architecture Programme (EWAP)

Vernacular Architecture for a Decolonised World. There, Sayali Athale, EMKP grantee, delivered two papers. The first one titled, "From Doonga to Houseboat: Craftsmanship, Material Memory, and Overcoming Colonial Narratives in the Waterscape of Kashmir." The second paper, titled "The implications of social access conflicts on crafts, produced through their digital documentation and availability," was co-authored with her project collaborator, Anton Glore.

In February, Wale Ogunyale ([EMKP2024SG](#)), presented his paper "Creating a dictionary of Yoruba Aṣọ òkè weaving" at the Linguistic Society of America Annual Meeting. This presentation builds on the outputs of his EMKP project, A documentation of weaving and designs of aṣọ òfì: alápásá, alábe, jáwùú, and other decorative Yorùbá woven fabrics.

### Staff News

Paula Granados García, Head of the EMKP programme, was recently appointed as a member of the Collections Trust Board of Trustees, where she will contribute her experience in digital technology at its intersection with cultural heritage. Click [here](#) to learn more about her appointment. Congratulations, Paula!

### ITP Session

In April, the EMKP was invited to deliver a session for the [International Training Programme \(ITP\)](#), at the British Museum, as part of its *Legacy Programme (ITP+)*. The ITP+ programme offers fellows further opportunities for continued engagement beyond the ITP annual programme. This year's theme was Global Engagement and Cultural Diplomacy. Paula Granados and Elia Quijano delivered a session on the EMKP, with a particular focus on the role of digital repositories as spaces for stewarding living knowledge. The session addressed key issues including the development of ethical frameworks for documenting knowledge, the decolonisation of digital collections, and global perspectives.

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