

Museums in Intercultural Dialogue

- New Practices in Knowledge Sharing and Information Integration

Introduction

An ethnographic museum can be a positive actor of globalization, publishing culturally relevant and empowering information of its collections, via the Internet. The task implies a carefully balanced management of resources in cataloguing: an equilibrium between background research (richness of the content) and the use of standardized but progressive presentation of the data. Helinä Rautavaara Museum is facing the challenge to publish information on capoeira, a newly globalized Afro-Brazilian martial art. Capoeira had and still has an important role in the struggles over ethnic and national identity in Brazil. Globally it reverberates different waves of Black movements. Objects, photos, audio tapes and even a few footages of film are being digitized and catalogued in Helinä Rautavaara museum for the use of researchers and other interested audience. Three berimbau instruments, used for capoeira play, and a dozen of photos of a founding master, Mestre Pastinha's capoeira school, are currently visible online, representing the museum's collections (for example: <http://suomenmuseonline.fi/fi/kohde/Helin%C3%A4+Rautavaaran+museo/HRE7%3a436a-c?freetextSearch=berimbau&itemIndex=8>).

Objectives

The paper is based an optimistic view on the new possibilities of sharing museum and archival data for mutual enrichment. The common goal of developing and sharing information infrastructures globally, such as, the work that is carried on by the CIDOC Co-reference Working Group, can unite the scarce and scattered information on capoeira in meaningful hypertexts, regardless of the country of origin of the user. Today there are academic scholars searching for a true history of capoeira as opposed to both opportunistic historically uninterested entrepreneurs and traditionalists, who view capoeira as heritage descended from the slaves brought to Brazil, and transmitted down as an unaltered "essence". In an emerging scholarship there is a lack of preserved source materials.

The people who today are well experienced in the practice of capoeira and who have personal knowledge of its oral history often do not have the resources to travel to important preserved historical sources in museums of archives, for example in Finland. Helinä Rautavaara Museum, on the other hand, does not have the best possibilities to show this corpus of cultural heritage information in its native context. The Finnish capoeira community is interested in finding out, who were the teachers of each teacher today, and consequently, what is the history and genealogy of the colours, songs and movements used in their plays (rodas) and their paraphernalia. The digitized museum material has both an educative meaning for new players and an aura of the era of capoeira's founding fathers in the 1950's and 1960's.

ABSTRACT

Conclusion

The paper discusses suggestions on the relevant information fields of catalogued capoeira-related materials. The aim is that a varied user community can have the best possible use of it. They should be able to trace the genealogies of the different colours, rhythms and compositions of both the objects, music and gestures, visible or audible in this museum's and in other museum collections. At a certain point, however, the authoritative voice of the museums, should quiet down, and an invitation for commentary from the practitioners, be made instead.

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