

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Transformations and Applications of Folkloristic and Ethnological Knowledge: Historical Perspectives on Public Practice

The International Society for Ethnology and Folklore's (SIEF) Historical Approaches in Cultural Analysis (HACA) and Cultural Heritage and Property (CHP) Working Groups, in cooperation with the IDEAS (Aix-Marseille University, CNRS) will present a symposium with participatory roundtable discussions between 27-29 May 2026, in Aix-en-Provence, France.

This convening will explore the transformations and applications of folkloristic and ethnological knowledge in historical perspectives, and their impact upon contemporary heritage policy and public practice. During the convening, there will be a tour and symposium presentations at Salagon, a centre for ethnobotanical research and museum, which includes a 12th-century Romanesque church and themed gardens exploring the relationship between humans and plants.

We invite proposals from scholars, researchers and practitioners which address one or more of the themes and topics listed below in the Symposium Concept. Proposals should consist of an abstract and a short bio. Presentations of 10-15 minutes in length will be grouped into roundtables that will have a highly interactive format.

In order to ensure adequate time for meaningful discussions around the symposium themes, and due to space constraints at the venues, the number of in-person delegates will be limited to 30. However, there will also be capacity for presentations and participation remotely through Zoom.

Presentation proposals should be sent to aixheritage2026@gmail.com by **February 20, 2026.**

Presentation Proposals should include:

- The title of the presentation
- Name and institution/organization affiliation of the presenter
- 250–300-word proposal
- Short bio of 100-150 words.

Decisions about acceptance of proposals will be communicated in early March.

Young scholars and practitioners and/or those in precarious employment situations are particularly encouraged to participate. Funded by SIEF, subventions of up to €150 for maximum 4 presenters, each will be available towards partial support for travel and reduced registration fees for these individuals to present at the conference. To be considered for a subvention, please include a brief statement, with your application, indicating your status as a graduate student or precarious situation of limited or non-employment, your estimated travel costs, any funding you might have available from other sources.

This symposium will provide an opportunity for SIEF members, and in particular HACA and CHP Working Group members, to meet and exchange ideas between bi-annual SIEF Congresses. Non-members of SIEF are also encouraged to submit proposals and register for this symposium.

SYMPOSIUM CONCEPT

For the past half-century, government and civil society institutions have been created which apply folkloristic and ethnological knowledge to enable the safeguarding and sustainability of traditional cultures. Heritage programs situated in government and civil society institutions may reinforce misconceptions and/or engage academic and lay scholars in bringing their knowledge to broad public audiences. While these programs are uniquely shaped by their national and political contexts, they are also influenced by transnational entanglements, drawing on, adapting and circulating practices, methodologies, and frameworks from other regions and countries. Ethnologists and folklorists engage as experts, practitioners and policy advisors, bringing into focus issues of academic privilege, role conflict, shared authority and the dissemination and application of scholarship.

This interdisciplinary conference will engage critical and historically-informed perspectives on how folkloristic and ethnological knowledge has been applied, transformed, and operationalised by circulating through heritage regimes. Attendees can participate in person or online. The conference will include a field trip to the Salagon Abbey Ethnobotany Research Centre and encounters with local individuals and associations involved in heritage.

Historical approaches are particularly insightful when retracking the manifold, dispersed and stratified trajectories of different cultures and forms of knowledge systems and academic scholarship. Such analysis illuminates how scholarship and local knowledge is utilised and shared in the public sphere. This convening will consider both how heritage policy and practice may contribute to the development of heritage theory and may entail the circulation of dichotomised, static, and essentialised misconceptions of Indigenous, popular, and folk culture.

The symposium will explore the following themes:

- How does historical research allow us to investigate the ways in which boundaries and interrelationships between different cultures and forms of knowledge have been constructed, maintained, and negotiated across time? In what ways can disciplinary histories in folklore and ethnology shed light on these shifting epistemic boundaries?
- Who are the complex and intertwined constellations of actors involved in the institutionalization of culture within academic, governmental, and heritage entities? How are multiple roles as scholars, policy advisors, practitioners, and/or

administrators appropriately navigated, while maintaining intellectual integrity and ethical standards? What are the forms and formats of such communications across different cultures and heritage regimes?

- How do institutionalization, heritagization, negotiation, and commodification transform cultural practices? And how do practices of cultural production and consumption circulate between different times, spaces, and social groups?
- What are the ways for mediation and collaboration to be carried out and reconceived through the work of cultural brokers, who endeavour to reconcile academic and local knowledge systems, negotiate epistemological authority, and co-produce heritage in both scholarly and community contexts?

We are planning to record the presentations and roundtables once we have the presenters' approval. We are also planning to publish selected papers.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE (in alphabetical order):

Robert Baron (Goucher College)

Hande Birkalan-Gedik (Institut f. KAEE, Goethe University)

Antonin Chabert (Salagon Ethnology Research Center)

Cyril Isnart (IDEAS, CNRS)

Gabriele Orlandi (Université de la Vallée d'Aoste)

Carley Williams (Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen)

