

SCREENING INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

Media, Heritage and Representation: The Case of Kutiyattam Sanskrit Theatre, India

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Abstract

This research investigates the role of audio-visual media in the representation of intangible cultural heritage and provides a theoretically and empirically grounded concept of the interrelation of media, ICH and representation. It identifies both the potentials and risks involved in media representation, as well as responding to the question regarding how audio-visual representations can foster the safeguarding of ICH, aiming at its sustained transmission and recreation. The study conceptualizes representation as a process in which meaning is produced and negotiated. It refers to discourse in Social/Cultural Anthropology, Heritage Studies and Cultural Studies, particularly making use of the circuit of culture model, Hall's encoding/decoding model and Assmann's concept of memory. As ICH is culturally contextualized, the analysis focuses on one specific heritage manifestation: the Kutiyattam Sanskrit theatre. It explores in detail Kutiyattam's history, identity, performance practice and transformation, including after UNESCO's proclamation. It analyses the processes and conditions of production, encoding, circulation, reception, utilization and regulation of audio-visual representation and demonstrates the extent to which these dynamic and manifold reciprocal processes influence Kutiyattam practices and practitioners. In the form of a thick description, the study exemplifies that media and modern technologies foster continuity in practice, revitalization, valorization and self-assertion, that they enable education, research, promotion and dissemination of ICH, and contribute to identity construction and the (re)creation of communities. It shows that audio-visual representations - when produced in collaboration with the practicing communities, thereby facilitating culture-specific coding and community use - constitute significant vehicles within safeguarding measures. Differentiating between horizontal and vertical transmission of ICH as well as micro and macro level consumption, the study further identifies numerous challenges involved in the mediatization and digitization of ICH. It addresses issues of access, participation, appropriation and intellectual property and the conflict-ridden processes of homogenization, fragmentation, commercialization and popularization, among others. It argues that rather than being innocent and neutral reflections of cultural practices, audio-visual representations are actively involved in meaning making and knowledge constitution processes and deeply enmeshed in power. It proves that representations shape memory, cultural identity and history and exercise influence on cultural expressions and communities. The study concludes with the provision of general recommendations, giving guidance regarding the utilization of media and the production, consumption and regulation of media work, targeting heritage- and media professionals alike.

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List of Abbreviations

ACCSG: Ammannur Chachu Chakyar Smaraka Gurukulam

AIR: All India Radio

ICH: Intangible Cultural Heritage

ICHC: Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

IGNCA: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts

IP: Intellectual Property

KDCPA: Killimangalam Documentation Centre on Performing Arts

KKM: Kerala Kalamandalam

MMCSG: Mani Madhava Chakyar Smaraka Gurukulam

SNA: Sangeet Natak Akademi

SSUS: Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

WIPO: World Intellectual Property Organization

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The topic

1.1.1 Background and contextualization

International heritage discourse and practice has shifted its focus from objects to an integration of intangible dimensions and finally to an acknowledgement of intangible culture as heritage itself. Heritage is increasingly conceptualized as a “social and cultural process” (Smith, 2006, p. 44); a “dynamically created phenomenon”, that while taking recourse to the past, bears relevance for the present, shapes identities and holds potentials for development (Albert, 2013b, p. 11). Heritage is conceptualized as a “dynamic process”, involving a “social and cultural activity” that continuously influences both the construction of identities and heritage itself (ibid.). Heritage is highly present-centered, it is the product of reconstruction processes of the past that are informed by contemporary needs, while it simultaneously also provides orientation regarding interpretation and formation of the present (Albert, 2002, 2006a). Being constitutive of the present, at the same time it also shapes the future (ibid.). Heritage thus can be conceived “as an asset” and “a source for continuously developing identities” (Albert, 2013a, p. 3). This conceptualization of heritage is even more valid when speaking about Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereafter ICH).

The adoption of the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* by UNESCO in 2003 led to significant international academic debate concerning the meaning and nature of ICH, associated practices as well as aspects regarding its safeguarding (Albert, 2011; Ashworth, 2011; Deacon, Dondolo, Mrubata, & Prosalendis, 2004; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; Kono (Ed.), 2009; Lira, Amoêda, & Pinheiro (Eds.), 2011; Munjeri, 2004; Ruggles & Silverman (Eds.), 2009a; Smith & Akagawa (Eds.), 2009; van Zanten, 2004; Wulf, 2006a, 2011). The convention marks communities as central to ICH and ICH as a mainspring of cultural diversity, which the convention aims to uphold (UNESCO, 2003a, Preamble, para 3 and 7; see also Article 2(1)). It identifies the awareness-raising of ICH and its relevance for humanity as major aims and specifies documentation, research, preservation and transmission as among the activities crucial for the safeguarding of ICH (ibid., Article 1, Article 2(3)). It further calls for community participation in all measures aimed at the safeguarding of ICH (ibid., Article 15). However, neither the convention nor the operational directives provide clear guidance in terms of how to facilitate community participation and engage communities in the documentation of ICH (Kono, 2012). Unlike UNESCO’s 1989 *Recommendation on the*

Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore, which still primarily focuses on documentation and research (UNESCO, 1989), the convention places sustained transmission and enactment of ICH as the central targets. Indeed, as Kirschenblatt-Gimblett (2004) remarks, it not only refers to traditional expressions and practices as ICH, but also accords “value to the ‘carriers’ and ‘transmitters’ of tradition, to their habitus and habitat” (p. 53). Nonetheless, it remains open to question how media can be used effectively to benefit local ICH practitioners, as well as how audio-visual representations can be used to enhance the sustained transmission and safeguarding of cultural practices.

Within academic discourse, the potential of audio-visual and particularly digital media for the preservation, interpretation and representation of heritage has been mainly targeted in the context of cultural and natural heritage to date (Cameron & Kenderdine (Eds.), 2007; Kalay, Kvan, & Affleck, 2008). However, the mediation, preservation and safeguarding of ICH, as “heritage that is embodied in people rather than in inanimate objects (...) raises a whole new set of ethical and practical issues” (Logan, 2007, p. 33).

Both researchers and heritage professionals have increasingly targeted these questions and issues. Research on the interrelation of audio-visual documentation, ICH practices and safeguarding, as envisioned in the 2003 convention, is beginning to take shape (Erlewein, 2011; Graham, 2009; Kearney, 2011; Lipp, 2011, 2013; Sherman, 2010) and has recently also entered institutional realms. In 2012, the International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI), a UNESCO Category II Centre established in Japan in 2011, conducted a researchers meeting on the documentation of ICH as a tool for community’s safeguarding activities; moreover, it has also published respective research on the topic to initiate further academic reflection (Chaudhuri, 2012; Deacon, 2012; Postma, 2012; Smith, 2012).¹

Indeed, audio-visual media are one of the most privileged and powerful tools for the construction and representation of social reality in a globalized world (Hall, 1997a, 1997 [video]), with an ever-increasing number of people accessing audio-visual representations to collect information and accumulate knowledge. These people might even encompass people engaged with the practice, maintenance and transmission of ICH. Media also constitute the primary means for the construction of cultural memory (Assmann, 2004, 2006). They provide records usable for the construction of history and knowledge, as well as the revitalization of practices.

¹ WIPO’s “Creative Heritage Project” can also be named in this context. See subchapter 4.3.5.3 of this thesis.

Audio-visual representations can thus be engaged for multiple purposes: 1. awareness-raising on both a global and local level, for promotion and visibility tasks; 2. the preservation and archiving of ICH practices and knowledge; and 3. the transmission of ICH within the practicing community itself. However, audio-visual representations to date have mainly been produced in view of the first purpose, namely promotion and awareness-raising. Heritage is globally and locally mediated through the signifying practices of film, video and television, as well as through the Internet.² This is a necessary endeavor in the light of awareness-raising concerning ICH, as the diverse ICH practices are mainly performed within their respective time-space continuum, with most people in the world only accessing the diverse ICH practices through media representations. However, so far neither a theoretical or empirically based analysis of the impact of media representation nor comprehensive strategies for the representation of ICH have been developed, which could give guidance to such endeavors.

Today, the majority of institutionally authorized and globally circulated audio-visual representations³ adhere to conventional styles of documentary cinema. Herein, aesthetically refined visual material is arranged to illustrate a verbally transmitted argument and an invisible, omnipotent narrator speaks, while the concerned subjects often remain voiceless and unidentified. Furthermore, the majority of the produced media adaptations to date have tended to reproduce Western standards of value making, as well as hierarchies with regard to representation. Furthermore, multi-visual, multi-vocal and multi-layered representations of ICH have not yet emerged. By this, I mean that ICH is mainly represented by the “other” to describe the “otherness” of a particular piece of heritage. However, at a smaller scale, subject-generated media (also called community media or user-generated media) have enabled members of the practicing communities to produce their own footage about themselves. Moreover, in rather fewer cases, participatory media entailing a collaborative approach between an outsider and insider to cover an insider within audio-visual representation have been made. However, the problem remains that no evaluation has been conducted in any particular case concerning footage made by the other (external representation), the self (self-representation) or a combination of the two (shared representation). As such, subtle

² Projects in Europe aiming at the promotion and awareness-raising of ICH included the TV series *Meisterwerke der Menschheit*, produced by filmhouse in Germany and the TV series *Living Culture*, produced by the French production company ZED. For a major Internet platform promoting ICH practices and expressions by means of textual, visual as well as audio-visual representations, see UNESCO’s webpage: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00559>.

³ Herewith, I mean representations that are either produced by or for cultural institutions or by and for media, like television. With non-institutionally authorized, I refer to audio-visual representations produced by individuals, which are subsequently globally circulated via Internet platforms such as YouTube.

differences of media representations produced by the three mentioned situations and their respective suitability regarding the safeguarding of ICH remain unanswered.

This thesis argues that the audio-visual representation of ICH needs to be rethought in the course of a postmodern reflection on the authorship of knowledge (Clifford & Marcus, 1986) and in view of postcolonial criticism regarding Western dominated regimes of representation (Hall, 1997a). In the context of heritage mediation, it is necessary to consider the strategies and tools in use while representing cultural practices and constituting knowledge through audio-visual means. Furthermore, in view of ICH being a living heritage, it is necessary to differentiate between representation as ‘speaking of’ and ‘speaking for’ (Spivak, 1988). Epistemological and ethical issues regarding the responsibility and the right to speak for, about, with or alongside others need to be considered (Ruby, 1991). Furthermore, concerns in the light of musealization, exoticization, trivialization, commodification and the appropriation of living traditions need to be acknowledged and investigated through detailed field research. The power of representation in knowledge production needs to be discussed specifically in the context of heritage formation and dissemination. Hereby, it is important to take into account not only the product itself, but also the production and reception processes. As Ginsburg (2002a) puts it: “Analysis needs to focus less on the formal qualities of film and video as text and more on the cultural *mediations* that occur through film and video works” (p. 212, italics in the original).

This research can be defined as social research on media. It tries to understand the ways in which local cultural concerns inflect uses of media, as well as better understanding the reasons and motivations behind local communities taking up and adapting the potentialities of media as strategies sustaining ICH and as part of cultural politics, including in the field of heritage. This research strives to interrogate the local community about how they make, use, conceive and talk about media on ICH and how these processes, activities and products shape their histories, lives and subjectivities, as well as their heritage.

1.1.2 Aim, objectives and hypotheses

The overall goal of this thesis is to offer a theoretically grounded and empirically based concept of audio-visual media and its role in the representation of ICH. The underlying aim is to offer an analysis that allows for propositions regarding how audio-visual representations of ICH can foster dynamic safeguarding and therewith sustained transmission and enactment of ICH. As ICH practices are culturally contextualized, this thesis concentrates attention on one specific ICH, the Kutiyattam Sanskrit Theatre, which was proclaimed “Masterpiece of the

Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” in 2001 and inscribed on the “Representative List” by UNESCO in 2008.

By accomplishing the aforementioned aims, this thesis intends to: a) enhance dynamics in the conceptual understanding of the 2003 convention, particularly regarding heritage democratization⁴ and community participation; b) provide guidance for the implementation of the 2003 convention, particularly regarding media work; and c) contribute to the strengthening of a new scientific discipline, Heritage Studies (Albert, 2013b), by elaborating upon a conceptual understanding that links ICH with theory and methods developed in Cultural Studies and Social/Cultural Anthropology and providing a methodological tool for investigation on the representation of ICH.

The overall goal will be reached by deploying the following set of objectives.

The first objective is the development of a theoretical background for the representation of heritage as a process in which meaning regarding heritage is produced and negotiated. This will be reached via an analysis of the conceptualization of ICH, representation and audio-visual media, as well as their interrelation.

The second objective refers to the conduction of one in-depth case study analysis targeting the role of audio-visual media in the representation of the Kutiyattam Sanskrit theatre in Kerala, India. Despite being grounded in theory, focus here is given to the integration of an emic perspective, concerning viewpoints articulated by local practitioners of ICH/Kutiyattam. Four different levels will be analyzed: i) The formation and practice of ICH/Kutiyattam; ii) The ways of representing ICH/Kutiyattam through audio-visual means; iii) The visual texts, their accessibility and circulation; and iv) The impacts of audio-visual representations on ICH/Kutiyattam, the respective communities, groups, individuals and their practices.⁵ The suitability of audio-visual representations for the safeguarding of a living heritage is analyzed throughout.

In the first level, ICH/Kutiyattam is scrutinized regarding identity, history and practice. In the second level, the methodological approaches and motivations for the audio-visual representation of ICH/Kutiyattam are identified, while processes of media production are investigated and assessed regarding suitability. In the third level, the accessibility, circulation and dissemination of Kutiyattam representations is analyzed and assessed.⁶ In the fourth level,

⁴ Heritage democratization is understood as a process that enables access to heritage and participation within heritage processes and practices.

⁵ The latter three levels correspond to the three layers of filmic representation (production, text and reception).

⁶ Due to a clear focus on understandings voiced by the Kutiyattam community, expected repetitions regarding generated meanings and time constrains a separate detailed author-conducted analysis of message/content of audio-visual representations of Kutiyattam has been discarded for this thesis. Nonetheless, in other cases of ICH

the reception and utilization of media representations by the local Kutiyattam community and beyond is targeted. Here, attention is also paid to regulations, while the impact of media representations on Kutiyattam practitioners as well as practice and knowledge is analyzed throughout. Thus, a whole circle is analyzed by looking at ICH/Kutiyattam in detail, including how and why representations of ICH/Kutiyattam are produced, the contexts in which they are located, how they are decoded and used, as well as how consumption influences ICH/Kutiyattam, practices, memory and identity (see figure 1).

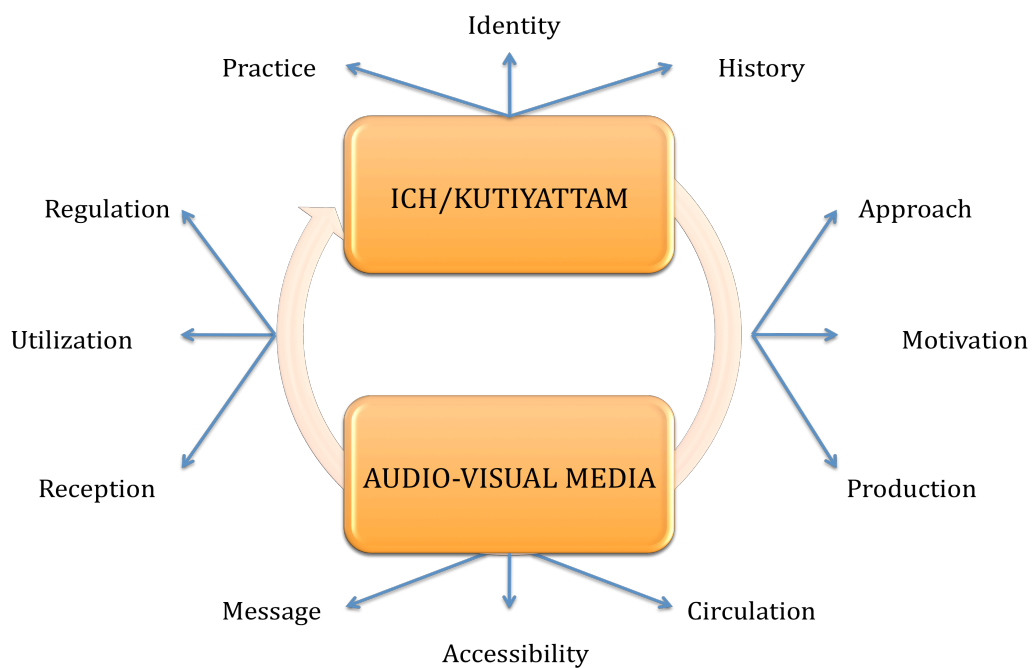


Fig. 1: Representation as a process in which meaning is produced and negotiated⁷ (Diagram: Erlewein).

In terms of the interface of Kutiyattam and media, three possible occurrences of audio-visual representation are differentiated: 1. External Representation by Outsiders (non-members of the Kutiyattam community); 2. Self-Representation by Insiders (members of the Kutiyattam community); and 3. Shared Representation (collaboration of members and non-members of the Kutiyattam community). The methodological approaches refer to documentary cinema, subject-generated cinema⁸ and participatory cinema⁹, respectively. However, these

representation, meanings decoded by the respective community and the author may divert. In such cases, additional analysis will allow for an enhanced understanding of the respective process of representation.

⁷ The concept displayed in the diagram is informed by Stuart Hall's (1997c) conceptualization of representation and by discourse in Visual Anthropology (see Chapter 2 for details).

⁸ The concept subject-generated cinema encompasses other categories, including user-generated video, indigenous media, etc.

⁹ Within Visual Anthropology, participatory cinema and participatory video are separated. However, within this categorization, participatory cinema subsumes both. On participatory video, see White (2003).

categorizations, borrowed from discourses in Visual Anthropology¹⁰, are overlapping and sometimes interpenetrate each other, yet they are separated here in order to serve an analytical purpose.

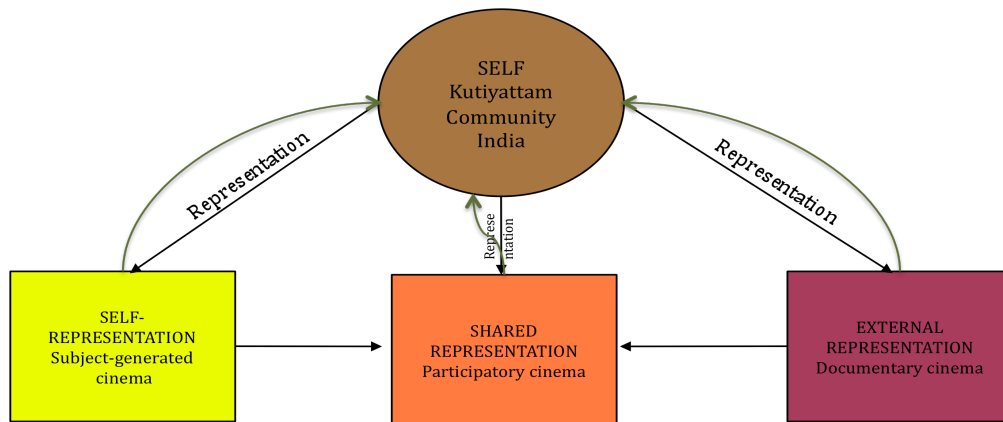


Fig. 2: Three methodological approaches towards audio-visual representation (Diagram: Erlewein).

Subtle differences in the three aforementioned situations and their adequacy regarding the safeguarding of ICH are evaluated by the Kutiyattam community itself.¹¹

Hypotheses

The first hypothesis of this work is that audio-visual media representations of ICH are neither neutral nor innocent reflections of cultural practices and expressions. Being socio-cultural constructs themselves, they are rather actively involved in processes of meaning making and knowledge constitution. Moreover, they do not merely document or re-present ICH, but highly influence the respective heritage referent, communities, groups and individuals, as well as their practices. They (re)construct and mediate identity, continuity, knowledge and memory; modify cultural standards regarding the transmission and interpretation of ICH practices; exercise influence on content and form, value and emotional attachment; and bear political sensibilities. The second hypothesis of this work is that participatory cinema is the most appropriate methodological approach for the audio-visual representation of ICH. ‘Shared representations’ foster agency among local communities and work against the standardization of cultural traditions. They reflect suitable tools for the promotion and preservation of ICH and enable the sustained transmission and (re)vitalization of cultural expressions and practices at risk of disappearance.

¹⁰ For details and references, see Chapter 2 of this thesis.

¹¹ See Chapter 4 of this thesis for details.

1.1.3 Methodology

The thesis follows an interdisciplinary approach, integrating paradigms, concepts, methods and insights from Social/Cultural Anthropology, Cultural Studies¹², including Media Studies, and Indology. It comprises two parts, the first of which follows a theoretical and methodological perspective and the second an empirical perspective.

Theoretically, the thesis is based on a constructionist epistemology.¹³ Within constructionism, the world is not perceived to be given as an objective fact to be observed, scrutinized and analyzed, but rather the relationship to reality is investigated through the constructive processes in approaching it. Instead of meaning being discovered, it is understood to be constructed. The assumption is that social reality is a social product, constructed and produced by institutions, interactions and actors. These productive efforts are based on processes of meaning making (Flick, 2007). Furthermore, given that subjects construct meaning in different ways, a variety of meanings might exist, even regarding the same phenomena (Gray, 2004). Constructionism thus engages itself with the process of creating knowledge, examining how knowledge arises, what concept of knowledge is given and what criteria can be evoked in the evaluation of knowledge. Within constructionist epistemology, a number of theoretical approaches and disciplinary strands can be distinguished. However, this thesis exclusively refers to knowledge production within and on social reality and its theoretical perspective is grounded in social constructionism (Burr, 1995).¹⁴

Social constructionism can be broadly described as an approach engaged with the sociology of knowledge (Weinberg, 2009). The main concern is how knowledge is constructed through social interactions, what is regarded as knowledge and why. Berger and Luckmann (1967)¹⁵ argue that all knowledge, and particularly everyday knowledge, is derived from and maintained by interactions and social practices. Thus, opposing an essentialist

¹² Cultural Studies and German “Kulturwissenschaft” have different genealogies (Assmann, 2012). Nevertheless, given that they are closely connected, they are both categorized under the term Cultural Studies within this thesis.

¹³ Epistemologically constructionism is situated between objectivism, which argues that reality exists independently of consciousness and assumes an objective reality, and objectivity truth in external reality, which can be discovered and subjectivism, whereby meaning is regarded to be imposed by the subject on the object, the external world, and whereby meaning is generated not in interactions but derives for example from collective unconsciousness of beliefs (Gray, 2004, p. 18).

¹⁴ Again, social constructionism has a multi-disciplinary background, incorporating and referring to a number of different positions throughout a variety of disciplines, ranging from psychology, education and sociology to philosophy and linguistics.

¹⁵ This classical sociological work particularly discusses lay-people’s knowledge constructions within everyday life. Philosophical or scientific knowledge construction is not explicitly addressed.

perspective, people are understood to jointly create the social world in which they live.¹⁶ Nonetheless, there exists no straightforward definition of social constructionism; rather, it can be framed as a family resemblance whereby one or more key-features are prevalent in the writing of an author. The key characteristics of social constructionist thought are as follows:

1. A critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge and an opposition to the positivist assumption that reality consists of what we perceive to exist;
2. The understanding that our categories and concepts used to give meaning to the world are time and context bound, historically and culturally specific. Therefore, understanding and knowledge are relative to culture and history, and are thus in fact products of culture and history and liable to change;
3. The understanding that knowledge and our understanding of the world is produced, negotiated and sustained by continuous interactions and social processes; and
4. The understanding that constructions of the world leave an impact on social action (Burr, 1995).¹⁷

With social constructionist thought phenomena are understood to develop relative to social contexts, with a focus on interaction and interrelation, social practices and processes. Furthermore, social interchange and the concepts used therein play a major part in the construction of knowledge. “Knowledge is therefore seen not as something that a person *has* (or does not have), but as something that people *do* together” (Burr, 1995, p. 8). Here, the stress lies on two elements: knowledge practices and actions (what people do); and social context and consensus (what people do together).

While the social construction of the social world and its phenomena might be multiple, diverse and dynamic, some constructions are dominant and exercise a considerable effect on social action. Here, theories and relationships of power need to be considered and are integrated in the social constructionist perspective. Baert, Weinberg and Mottier (2011) differentiate between three strands within social constructionism: analytical, hermeneutical

¹⁶ Berger and Luckmann (1967, pp. 19-46) analytically distinguish between three processes within the construction process: externalization, objectification and internalization, which can be envisioned as a social constructionist triangle. For example, through speaking or writing, a person can externalize an idea or concept about the world. This idea subsequently enters the social realm and is retold or read by other participants of the society, whereby the idea is transformed into an object of knowledge; it is objectified. A child, being socialized in that society, internalizes the concept, it becomes part of the consciousness and understanding of the world and seems to be naturally there, even though it was indeed constituted within social practices and interactions. The same process can also be thought through with the concept of social constructionism itself or the concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The concept is externalized by someone through words (speech or text, etc.). In the objectification process, it is grounded in the social realm. After internalization processes, the concept has the potential to become disassociated with the processes that constructed it and remains as a social fact.

¹⁷ These characteristics can be implicit or explicit in the work of authors. Moreover, it is not necessary that all characteristics appear in the work of individual authors.

and critical social constructionism.¹⁸ The works of Karl Marx and Antonio Gramsci and their respective concepts of ideology and hegemony have been influential within the critical approach and its focus on power relations (ibid.). Furthermore, Michel Foucault (1991) with his conceptualization of power/knowledge, post-colonial thinker Stuart Hall (1997a) and the Birmingham school of Cultural Studies can also be assigned to this approach (ibid.). This critical strain in social constructionism also finds reflection in this thesis.

In its empirical part, this study refers to one particular case study, which was conducted in Kerala, South India and focused on the audio-visual representation of Kutiyattam Sanskrit theatre. The case study was selected according to criteria of relevance, reliability, language, accessibility and expertise. First, audio-visual devices and media appliances are frequently used and accessed by all strata of society in Kerala. Second, a time-span of more than ten years has passed since the proclamation of Kutiyattam as a masterpiece by UNESCO, with a number of audio-visual representations having been produced and in use. Therefore, responses to the main research questions can be provided. Third, the researcher feels familiar with Keralean culture, given that her own mother is from Kerala, which led to frequent visits and exposure to the Malayalam language. The researcher has a shared aspect of identity with subjects under research, which unsettles the anthropological boundary between the self and the other and fosters access, trust and collaboration. Fourth, contacts to “gatekeepers” as well as educational institutions, Kutiyattam Gurukulams and artists, scholars and stakeholders were established during former ethnographic research, intensifying during recent years. In order to facilitate research in Kerala, a research affiliation for PhD students was also granted by Kerala Kalamandalam (hereafter KKM). Fifth, the author has studied anthropology as well as the history and society of South Asia and has experience with fieldwork in Kerala.¹⁹ Moreover, expertise in matters related to the audio-visual representation of ICH was further gained through professional engagements. Between 2005 and 2009, the author worked as a project coordinator and production manager for six parts of the series *Meisterwerke der Menschheit*, produced in HD for the German broadcasting channels ZDF and 3sat. The series was designed to feature the “Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” proclaimed by UNESCO. During the course of producing this series, the researcher conducted

¹⁸ Thinkers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Paul Feyerabend are grouped within analytical social constructionism, and the hermeneutic strand refers to Wilhelm Dilthey’s interpretive approach, the writings of Max Weber, Alfred Schütz, Berger and Luckmann and Garfinkel (ibid.).

¹⁹ Research was conducted in cooperation with Delhi School of Economics, KKM and Free University Berlin in 2002, 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2008 and resulted, amongst others, in the essay *Inventing Tanztradition, eine Ethnographie der Institutionalisierung der Südindischen Tanzform Mohiniyattam*, the thesis *Dancing Kerala - Inventing India: Kulturpolitik im Spannungsfeld zwischen nation-building Prozessen und lokaler Identität* and audio-visual representations on the art of *Mohiniyattam*, *Kutiyattam* and *Mudi yettu*.

fieldwork and film-work on Kutiyattam in Kerala.

This study applies an ethnographic approach with a qualitative research design, because it is interested in a theoretically informed interpretation of Kutiyattam culture and processes of representation, which are locally grounded and context sensitive (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). The main strength of the qualitative research design is seen in its ability to emphasize and explicate local processes, perspectives, meanings and contextual influences in detail (Maxwell, 1996). The study further integrates a combination of methods: 1. primary literature review; and 2. fieldwork. Within fieldwork, data is gathered by means of semi-structured interviews with Kutiyattam artists, scholars and stakeholders, as well as (participant) observation (Bernard, 2011), and to a lesser extent by creating audio-visual documentation as well as by means of film and photo elicitation (Banks, 2001, 2007).

Fieldwork in Kerala was conducted during four months, from the second week of January 2012 until the final week of April 2012. The study largely relies on interviews conducted during fieldwork with 36 individuals, 23 of whom are professional Kutiyattam artists, one *Mizhavu* artist, one make-up artist, two Kutiyattam students with little to no performance experience, one *Kathakali* artist and the remainder being scholars, stakeholders and film professionals who work in the context of Kutiyattam.²⁰ Today, there are around three-dozen professional practicing Kutiyattam artists²¹ and fewer than ten Kutiyattam scholars and stakeholders located in Kerala.²² Hence, the sample for this study can be considered as representative. Participants in this research were selected consciously, relying on information of earlier ethnographic research on Kutiyattam, within which the approaches of random choice and a snowball system were applied. Additionally a raster of variables, including age, gender, affiliation and community background, was created for this research to add further informants using stacked random sampling. This stratified sampling procedure (Bernard, 2011) aimed to increase female voices within the study, incorporate representatives from three generations and involve artists with and without access to the heritage discourse, as well as members of several major Kutiyattam families and institutions. In this respect, the representativeness and reliability of the study was increased. During the post-fieldwork period, the collected data, amounting to 56 hours of audio-recorded interviews, was transcribed, in cases where interviews were conducted in Malayalam, translated, and analyzed

²⁰ See Appendix 2 for details.

²¹ Some further purely hereditary practitioners with no professional training in Kutiyattam and no institutional affiliation might exist. However, they have not been interviewed for this thesis.

²² In some cases, these categories overlap.

with content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004; Mayring, 2010). Subsequently, a systematic triangulation of perspectives (Flick, 2007) was applied.

Finally, the research integrates both a deductive and inductive approach. It starts with theoretically informed hypotheses and investigates their accuracy by means of an empirical case study, simultaneously allowing itself to enhance theoretical understanding due to emerging patterns and insights gained via the analysis of gathered data (Bernard, 2011; LeCompte & Schensul, 2010).

1.1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis comprises five chapters in total:

Chapter 1 has provided a brief contextualization of the topic and an introduction of the aim, objectives and the methodological framework of this study. The second part of the chapter continues by offering definitions of the main concepts used in this thesis. The first section reflects on the concept of heritage, as well as the concept of ICH and safeguarding, as defined in the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Here, the notion of community participation comes to the forefront. Section 2 offers initial definitions of culture, media and representation and positions the thesis in relation to them, before section 3 introduces the central theoretical concepts used in this thesis, namely the circuit of culture (Du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, & Negus, 1997), representation (Hall, 1997c), the encoding/decoding model (Hall, 1992b) and memory (Assmann, 2004, 2006).

Chapter 2 attends to different conceptualizations and usages of audio-visual media in the representation of culture. Hereby, theory and discourse is scrutinized, particularly in the discipline of Social/Cultural Anthropology. The chapter applies a historical perspective and identifies important strands, developments and insights. Part 1 concentrates on the pioneers in ethnographic film and the conceptualization of film as data. Part 2 presents the major shifts and innovations in conceptualization undertaken during the course of the 20th century, identifying a break with positivist assumptions and an increased inclination towards constructivist ideas in representational theory and practice. Part 3 attends to the body and the senses and part 4 gives credit to the social aspects of audio-visual representation.

Chapter 3 introduces the case study and describes the structure, content and historical development of Kutiyattam in detail. While part 1 provides a brief description of the main characteristics of Kutiyattam regarding theory and practice, as well as introducing its major distinctions, part 2 concentrates on the history of the art and the establishment of tradition, with the issue of patronage also discussed. Part 3 offers a detailed account of the far-reaching

innovations and reforms of the 20th century, which led to secularization, institutionalization and a shift in patronage, eventually culminating in the proclamation as “Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” by UNESCO. The final part of this chapter provides an account of the impacts of the proclamation and subsequent inscription on the “Representative List” and identifies its related benefits and drawbacks.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the empirical study and provides a detailed discussion of the audio-visual representation of Kutiyattam. The consequences and impacts of media production, dissemination and usage within and beyond the Kutiyattam community are outlined and key issues for the Kutiyattam community addressed. The benefits and challenges of audio-visual representations for the safeguarding, preservation and promotion of Kutiyattam are identified. Moreover, the adequacy of representing Kutiyattam on audio-visual media as is produced by the other, the self or in a collaborative approach is evaluated. This part clarifies which audio-visual approach in representing Kutiyattam is approved or disapproved by the practicing community and according to what criteria (dis)approval takes place. Throughout the chapter, the circuit of culture (Du Gay et al., 1997) is used as a theoretical tool for the analysis and organization of a complex data set. As a result, the thick description given by Kutiyattam artists and stakeholders allows for an understanding of the processes and practices involved in representation and highlights the extent to which audio-visual representation is interrelated with other spheres or processes constituting culture.

Chapter 5 concludes with the major findings of this research and identifies the major challenges, limits and possibilities that lie in the utilization of audio-visual media for the representation and safeguarding of Kutiyattam. Section 2 expresses recommendations for the audio-visual representation of Kutiyattam and provides further suggestion regarding the representation and safeguarding of Intangible Heritage in general.

The glossary provides a detailed introduction to major concepts and terms used in the field of research and frequently referred to in academic writing on Indian theatre aesthetics, Indian social stratification and religious thought. It aims to facilitate understanding of the cultural context of Kutiyattam Sanskrit theatre and provides information on the terms used within the empirical part of the thesis.

The appendixes include a description of the major institutions concerned with Kutiyattam in Kerala (appendix 1), a list introducing the Kutiyattam artists and other participants in this research (appendix 2), as well as a table with illustrations (appendix 3).

1.2 Framework of the thesis

1.2.1 Cultural policy and key concepts within regulatory instruments

1.2.1.1 UNESCO

UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, was founded in 1945, with its constitution ratified the following year. Having been initiated by 37 countries, it currently comprises 195 member states.²³ UNESCO's main target is the construction of peace through cultural and intellectual exchange and development. The preamble of its constitution²⁴ marks that "since wars begins in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of piece must be constructed" (UNESCO, 2012a). The UNESCO constitution further states that the institutions main goal is

to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaborations among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charta of the United Nations (ibid., Article 1(1)).

UNESCO's ambition attends to themes such as the eradication of poverty, sustainability in resource management and cultural diversity, impacts of climate change, literacy and education, youth integration, gender equality, ethics in research and development and the use of modern technologies for the development of education, science, culture and information. The main program sectors at UNESCO are 1. Education; 2. Natural Science; 3. Social and Human Sciences; 4. Culture; and 5. Communication and Information.

The culture sector's achievements and developments particularly regarding a number of conventions hold major importance for the theme of this thesis. The following seven conventions were passed under the culture sector: the convention on "Universal Copyright" (UNESCO, 1952, revised 1971), on the "Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict" (UNESCO, 1954), on the "Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property" (UNESCO, 1970), on the "Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage" (UNESCO, 1972), on the "Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage" (UNESCO, 2001b), on the "Safeguarding of the

²³ The United Nations comprises 195 States Parties, while the Cook Islands and Palestine are also acknowledged as members within UNESCO.

²⁴ UNESCO's constitution was signed on 16 November 1945 and entered into force on 4 November 1946 after its ratification by twenty countries.

Intangible Cultural Heritage” (UNESCO, 2003a) and on the “Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions” (UNESCO, 2005). The implications of some of these conventions will be discussed in detail below. Moreover, the communication and information sector also touches on the topic. Its main targets are the free flow of information, including the accessibility of information and communication technologies, as well as the promotion of pluralism and cultural diversity via communication. Recent projects have aimed to preserve cultural heritage via information and communication technologies, as well as broadening the variety of languages used in the Internet, women’s access to technologies, including support of libraries and archives. The following section provides an historical account of why and when the concept of heritage evolved, as well as the ways in which the conceptualization of heritage formation and preservation developed.

1.2.1.2 Heritage and the Intangible

The first international document that engaged in cultural heritage preservation, despite not being termed as such, can be traced back to a proclamation that aimed at architectural conservation and was produced in the context of an international congress of architects, held in Madrid. In the *Madrid Charter* (1904), it was acknowledged that a monument should be preserved as it bears historical and technical value. In 1932, *The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments* followed this line of thought. In 1954, considering the intense destructions that had taken place during the course of the Second World War and facing Cold War related developments, the *Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict* was adopted and stressed the notion and indeed moral obligation of cultural heritage protection (Albert, 2007). The convention aimed to protect cultural property in times of war. Cultural property was defined as

- (a) movable or immovable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people, such as monuments of architecture, art or history, whether religious or secular; archaeological sites; groups of buildings which, as a whole, are of historical or artistic interest; works of art; manuscripts, books and other objects of artistic, historical or archaeological interest; as well as scientific collections and important collections of books or archives or of reproductions of the property defined above; (b) buildings whose main and effective purpose is to preserve or exhibit the movable cultural property defined in sub-paragraph (a) such as museums, large libraries and depositories of archives (...); (c) centers containing a large amount of cultural property as defined in sub-paragraphs (a) and (b), to be known as ‘centers containing monuments’ (UNESCO, 1954, Article 1).

In 1964, the *Venice Charter* established a new theoretical framework for restoration and preservation. While the *Athens Charter* still advised hiding new materials added to the original fabric, the *Venice Charter* (ICOMOS, 1964) argued that new materials have to be marked in order to show what is original and what has been added to the historical evidence. While methods of preservation thus differed, permanence and authenticity were crucial factors for the determination of value and significance. Critiques pointed out that the charter pronounced mainly Western conceptions privileging permanent structures and particular definitions of authenticity (Ruggles & Silverman, 2009b); for example, colliding with architectural practices exercised in Japan. The *Venice Charter* also allowed monuments to be reused for different purposes than previously. This aimed at generating a relationship with the respective local communities, who were encouraged to integrate the respective heritage in their webs of contemporary significance and meaning. Within this charter, the local communities first entered into the locus of attention in heritage preservation strategies.

Movable cultural property was again targeted by a UNESCO recommendation in 1964 and the *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* (1970). Here, illicit traffic in valuable cultural goods was meant to be hindered. In 1972, the concept of World Heritage was introduced on a global stage with UNESCO passing the convention concerning the *Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage*.²⁵ Herein, heritage was defined as having outstanding universal value, and thus a heritage described as being lost would mean a “harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all nations of the world” (UNESCO, 1972, p. 1). The convention defined heritage in static terms. Cultural heritage was defined as comprising monuments, groups of monuments and sites of outstanding universal value, while natural heritage was defined as incorporating physical and biological formations of outstanding universal value, geological and physiographical formations or areas building the habitat of threatened species and natural sites excelling in beauty or scientific value.²⁶

²⁵ On the 1972 World Heritage Convention and its understanding of culture and nature, see German Commission for UNESCO & Brandenburg University of Technology (2002). On perspectives on and various aspects of World Heritage, see Albert & Gauer-Lietz (Eds.) (2006a). On capacity building as part of World Heritage management tasks, see Albert, Bernecker, Gutierrez Perez, Thakur, & Nairen (Eds.) (2007) and on an evaluation of the World Heritage Convention in light of contemporary global challenges, such as migration and the maintenance of (cultural and natural) diversity, see Offenhäuser, Zimmerli, & Albert (2010).

²⁶ The 1972 convention defines cultural heritage as: “monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science; groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science; sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point

Three years later, the *Declaration of Amsterdam* (1975) mentioned the collaboration of local authorities with local communities as essential for the conservation and preservation of monuments, again stressing socio-cultural contextualization and present day relevance. It is noteworthy that audience reception had increasingly become an issue since the 1970s, with both local communities and tourists increasingly gaining attention as agents and participants in heritage protection and preservation.²⁷

Beginning in the 1980s, international heritage preservation approaches integrated cultural values and recognized time and change as well as dependencies and interrelation with other sources such as water and sun²⁸ and therewith transcended the definitions by UNESCO, which stood on a Western premise of permanence. For example, the *Florence Charter* (ICOMOS, 1982), an addendum to the *Venice Charter*, stressed the living nature of sites. In Article 2, we read that historic gardens are alive, hence not static, and in constant oscillation between growth and decay.²⁹

Moreover, the notion that heritage takes its relevance from the present contextualization and not from the past became increasingly widespread. Monuments, objects and sites received associated meanings due to their relevance in the present and not as fossils of a long gone past, bearing no relevance for matters of today's life. In 1994, the *Nara Document on Authenticity* by ICOMOS acknowledged the significance of context and criticized existing conceptions of authenticity and practices of preservation. It argued that preservation practices have to be adjusted to the specific object and, even more importantly, exercised according to concerns and regulations articulated in the specific cultural context of the object. Hence, a variety of methods and approaches could be applied if consistent with the respective culture at stake. Article 11 reads:

All judgements about values attributed to cultural properties as well as the credibility of related information sources may differ from culture to culture, and even within the same

of view" (UNESCO, 1972, Article 1). Furthermore, natural heritage is defined as the "natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view; geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation; natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty" (ibid., Article 2).

²⁷ The *International Cultural Tourism Charta* (ICOMOS, 1999) explicitly stressed the need for interpretation of heritage sites for local communities and tourists.

²⁸ Even scale became an issue as natural sites depended on water resources or insects coming from far away.

²⁹ "The historic garden is an architectural composition whose constituents are primarily vegetal and therefore living, which means that they are perishable and renewable.' Thus, its appearance reflects the perpetual balance between the cycle of the seasons, the growth and decay of nature and the desire of the artist and craftsman to keep it permanently unchanged" (ICOMOS, 1982, Article 2). This article shows the contradiction inherent in the charter, given that it recognizes time and change, yet also expresses the desire of the human to keep it "permanently unchanged".

culture. It is thus not possible to base judgements of values and authenticity within fixed criteria. On the contrary, the respect due to all cultures requires that heritage properties must [be] considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong (ICOMOS, 1994).

Therefore, the *Nara Document on Authenticity* argued that diverse definitions of value and different criteria exist, establishing heritage and the value of heritage, beyond notions such as permanence and authenticity.³⁰ Authenticity or truthfulness needs to be culturally contextualized and can hence be defined and legitimated in multiple ways. The meaning, which is attributed to an object, becomes central in its conceptualization as authentic. It is not the material structure per se or the originality or first-hand insignia of that material, but rather its associated meaning that makes it heritage. For the first time, the human being became a prime source in attributing value. Thus, human ideas and culture became essential in heritage preservation processes and material culture was no longer the exclusive focus; instead, its relation to culture and hence also the intangible was highlighted. However, it took almost half a decade until the concept of living heritage³¹ reached an international scale. Still, the above-mentioned ideas were encouraged and blossomed under the guidance and motivation of Director General of UNESCO, Japanese Koïchiro Matsuura.

A first step was taken in 1989, when UNESCO passed the *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore*. Despite being a soft document, which did not exercise a far-reaching impact (Aikawa, 2001; Blake, 2001b), it first targeted the safeguarding and preservation of living heritage. Considering the destructive effects of mass media, industrialization and globalization on cultural traditions and folklore, the document aimed to build awareness concerning the importance of safeguarding these practices and expressions. It asked member states to engage in preservation via the establishment of museums and archives, the encouragement of documentation, as well as via support of custodians of traditions and transmission practices. It further encouraged scientific research and educational programs, arguing that traditional practices are constitutive of identity and continuity and enable dialogue and exchange. However, given that the document did not bear the envisioned fruits, in 1997 the General Conference pointed out that ICH should be given prime attention in the section for culture (Aikawa, 2001) and a new program was developed in

³⁰ Within the respective UNESCO framework and ICOMOS, heritage value was closely tied with the notion of permanence and authenticity.

³¹ Japan preceded this shift in preservation policies and understandings of cultural heritage. Already in 1950, Japan included living human treasures under the umbrella of national patrimony and protection. However, this definition and conceptualization only happened on a national level and did not reach out to UNESCO frameworks.

the late-1990s, called *Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage*. Furthermore, recommendations by a conference³², organized by the Smithsonian Institution, pointed out that a request should be given on behalf of the nation states to UNESCO to consider the institution of a new binding instrument (Blake, 2001a). As a result, the General Conference in 1999 agreed to conduct a preliminary study on the possibility to operate the “protection of traditional culture and folklore” via “a new standard-setting instrument” (UNESCO, 1999, p. 63). Parallel to that, the masterpiece program was adopted in 2001 and in 2001, 2003 and 2005 respectively a total of 90 pieces were declared Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage (UNESCO, 2006).

Moreover, in 2001 UNESCO passed the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, which not only declared that “cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature” and that, in “this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity” (UNESCO, 2002a, Article 1), but also stressed the equality of each culture in terms of its significance and value. Thus, the aim was not to mark specific cultural traditions and expressions as excelling over others, but rather to foster an awareness of the value of each. Furthermore, the declaration expressed the need for mediation and mediatization, arguing: “While ensuring the free flow of ideas by word and image care should be exercised that all cultures can express themselves and make themselves known. Freedom of expression, media pluralism, multilingualism, equal access to art and to scientific and technological knowledge, including in digital form, and the possibility for all cultures to have access to the means of expression and dissemination are the guarantees of cultural diversity” (ibid., Article 6).

In 2003, the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* was finally passed. Here, the term intangible cultural heritage features prominently and finally replaced the notion of traditional culture and folklore as central targets for safeguarding. The concept of ICH was drafted in a tentative step-by-step process on an intergovernmental level³³, and was defined as follows in the preliminary draft of the convention: “‘intangible cultural heritage’ means the practices and representations – together with their necessary knowledge, skills, instruments, objects, artefacts and places – that are recognised by communities and individuals as their intangible cultural heritage” (UNESCO, 2002b, Article 2).³⁴ In response to this draft, States Parties articulated criticisms and a number of concerns in terms of conceptual and terminological confusion, in the form of draft amendments and

³² The conference was entitled *A Global Assessment of the 1989 Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore: Local Empowerment and International Cooperation*; see Seitel (2001).

³³ See Rudolff (2006, pp. 25-27) for a detailed description of the drafting process of the convention.

³⁴ As such, the definition is quite in accordance with the actually adopted definition in the 2003 convention.

general comments (UNESCO, 2003b). For example, India criticized the fragmentation of ICH³⁵, while Australia, Canada and the US criticized “the lack of adequate definitions” (ibid., p. 4) of ICH. Lebanon argued that facing time constraints, the draft “sacrificed consistency” (ibid., p. 34) and criticized defects in terms of logical consistency in so far as ICH is defined as being part of ICH. As such, ICH seems to be ICH when it is decided and understood to be ICH. Barbados, Uganda and St. Lucia voiced similar concerns (UNESCO, 2002c). Finally, Iceland criticized the broad conception of ICH as having “almost the same meaning as the concept ‘culture’ in general” (ibid., p. 18). In fact, more than 1,352 amendments have been made to the draft convention (ibid.), 155 of which were concerned with definition (Rudolf, 2006).³⁶ So what does ICH mean? What does it signify? Moreover, what is actually at stake in ICH attribution, preservation and safeguarding? In order to answer these questions, the following section will take a closer look at the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (ICHC) and its definition of ICH and safeguarding.

1.2.1.3 The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

In speaking about ICH, this thesis exclusively refers to the ICHC, which was adopted by UNESCO’s 32nd General Conference in October 17th 2003³⁷ and entered into force - following a very quick ratification process - on April 20th 2006, with the ratification of its thirtieth States Party.³⁸ As a “mirror image” (Blake, 2009, p. 45)³⁹ to the *Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (UNESCO, 1972), the ICHC established procedures of inventory making and listing. In 2008, three new lists were created: *The List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding*, which currently holds 38 inscriptions; *The Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of*

³⁵ “India holds the view that intangible cultural heritage is the expression of the human’s quest for reconciling spiritual and temporal harmony. India traces the totality of creativity through a unified vision of life in which the individual is considered part of a flow of creation and is related to the total universe holistically (...). The staggering variety and multiplicity of intangible cultural heritage exists in a framework of totality, and interconnectedness rather than as disjointed expressions. Therefore most important yardsticks for the intangible cultural heritage are its universality, excellence, time-tested value and relevance to society in the contemporary context” (UNESCO, 2003b, p. 31).

³⁶ It should also be noted that ICH has been conceptualized within intergovernmental expert meetings without the consultation or integration of local communities, prompting the question of who has the authority to define the scope of ICH. In this regard, Lebanon also asks: “What body has the final authority to lay down the criteria, definitions and fields of action?” (UNESCO, 2002c, p. 34) and Canada complains the absence of observers from indigenous communities at the first intergovernmental meeting of experts (UNESCO, 2003b, p. 17).

³⁷ Interestingly, no member state voted against the convention, although some abstained from voting.

³⁸ By 2014, 161 States Parties out of the 195 member states of UNESCO had already ratified the new instrument and 364 nominations were approved for the lists. In comparison, the *Convention on the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage* took around 25 years to gather this number of ratifications.

³⁹ See also Bernecker (2006) and Deacon et al. (2004).

Humanity, which currently has 314 intangible heritages inscribed; and the *Register of Best Safeguarding Practices*, which reports on 12 programs, projects and activities.⁴⁰ Most of the inscriptions represent China, followed by Japan and South Korea, while Spain, Croatia, France and Belgium have also accumulated ten or more inscriptions on the lists.

While the ICHC established seemingly similar procedures to those exercised in the context of the 1972 convention, it must also be considered as a “corrective to the World Heritage List”, which “excluded the cultures of many states, particularly those in the southern hemisphere” (Kurin, 2004, p. 69) and fostered elitism. Indeed, the ICHC points to a conceptual shift within heritage politics, given that it not only transcends the Western Authorized Heritage Discourse, which has conceptualized heritage as primarily material, if not monumental, as good, aesthetic and of universal value (Smith, 2006)⁴¹, but also explicitly legitimizes the central and vital role of communities, groups and individuals for the recognition and safeguarding of ICH.

The convention’s major aims are 1. Safeguarding of ICH; 2. Insurance of respect for ICH of communities, groups and individuals; 3. Raising of awareness of the importance of ICH at local, national and international levels, including insurance of mutual appreciation; and 4. Provision of international cooperation and assistance (UNESCO, 2003a, Article 1). As the preamble and further articles of the convention show, international cooperation as well as regional and sub-regional cooperation is deemed necessary to ensure the viability of ICH in face of cultural homogenization trends. The convention understands ICH as a “mainspring of cultural diversity and a guarantee for sustainable development”⁴², as a factor enabling intercultural dialogue, “exchange and understanding” between human beings and as a resource being threatened by “the processes of globalization and social transformation” and the “phenomenon of intolerance” (UNESCO, 2003a, Preamble). It accentuates the importance of ICH for the maintenance and (re)creation of cultural diversity in the face of increasing cultural homogenization tendencies due to globalization (Wulf, 2006b).⁴³

⁴⁰ Twelve items were inscribed on the list for urgent safeguarding in 2009, four in 2010, eleven in 2011, four in 2012, four in 2013 and again three in 2014. In 2008, the ninety *Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*, which had been proclaimed in 2001, 2003 and 2005 respectively, were inscribed on the *Representative List*, followed by 76 further cultural practices and expressions in 2009, 47 in 2010, 19 in 2011, 27 in 2012, 25 in 2013 and 34 in 2014. (For the publication of the thesis, this part has been updated).

⁴¹ The AHD defined heritage among others within UNESCO policies. In response to critiques of this Western domination in heritage conceptualization, practices and policies and especially as a consequence of an obvious geographical imbalance regarding the World Heritage List, UNESCO targeted a new legal instrument, the ICHC, and the convention was crafted and conceptualized in order to address, if not remove, this imbalance (Aikawa-Faure, 2009).

⁴² For details regarding ICH and sustainable development, see Erlewein (2015). (Note added.)

⁴³ Wulf (2002, 2006a) asserts that a sensitization regarding cultural heterogeneity and alterity is needed in order to safeguard cultural diversity and prevent homogenization of cultural practices. He further argues that ICH can

1.2.1.3.1 Intangible Cultural Heritage

ICH is defined in Article 2(1) of the ICHC as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage” (UNESCO, 2003a). It manifests itself in the following five domains: “(a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle; (b) performing arts; (c) social practices, rituals and festive events; (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and (e) traditional craftsmanship” (ibid., Article 2(2)).

It is noteworthy that ICH is not described as a masterpiece bearing outstanding universal value across the globe. Indeed, vocabularies such as masterpiece and treasure were omitted from the ICHC.⁴⁴ Instead, the first sentence of the definition already provides reference to “communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals” and identifies their recognition as crucial for the identification of ICH. Thus, for the location of ICH, practitioners primarily have to identify their knowledge, practices or expressions as being ICH for them. As Duvelle (2010), Secretary of the 2003 convention and chief of the Intangible Heritage Section at UNESCO, remarks, this central role of the communities, this “fundamental principle lies at the very centre of the Convention and has huge implications for how it is to be carried out” (p. 10). Article 2(1) proceeds to mention that ICH is

transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (UNESCO, 2003a).

Interpreting this part, it can be noted that ICH is living heritage, which is described as “constantly recreated”, as responsive and interactive and therewith as flexible, evolving and hence constantly changing. ICH is thus characterized by its processual quality, by constant improvisation, transformation and development (Albert, 2011). At the same time, ICH is also described as cohesive, forming a constituent part of the identity of communities and groups, whereby the centrality of “communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals” is again

be a tool for acknowledging and experiencing otherness and alterity. As such, ICH can help to counter strategies of egocentrism, logocentrism and ethnocentrism employed by the homogenized culture of globalization in order to scale down alterity and prevent experiences with otherness.

⁴⁴ Hafstein (2009) has shown that the draft convention, presented by the UNESCO Secretariat in June 2003, proposed the establishment of a ‘List of Treasures of the World Intangible Cultural Heritage’ or a ‘List of Masterpieces of Intangible Cultural Heritage’. These proposals were rejected, with *The Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* created instead. It was agreed that “the idea of ‘universal’ heritage values cannot be sustained” (Smith & Akagawa, 2009b, p. 4) and that value needs to be essentially recognized by the concerned communities, groups and individuals.

illustrated. ICH does not need to be of exceptional value for humanity in the first place, but rather needs to be considered essential for the construction and mediation of cultural identity, for the constitution of one's own self-conception and belonging within a particular group or community (Wulf, 2006b). UNESCO (2009a) further specified that ICH is "traditional and contemporary at the same time", "inclusive", "representative" and "community-based" (pp. 4-5). Thus, ICH can be understood as linking the past, present and future. It encourages social cohesion, linking people within a particular community with each other and cultural practices. ICH is community-based and only the community itself can decide on the extraordinary value of practices and expressions for the continuous (re)creation of identities. Simultaneously, ICH is also instrumental in generating and enriching "respect for cultural diversity and human creativity" (UNESCO, 2003a, Article 2(1), see also Preamble). Thus, listing of ICH does not aim to establish hierarchization processes of cultural goods and achievements, but rather, encourages mutual respect, the valuation of diverse cultural traditions and expressions and engagement with cultural heterogeneity and otherness in the face of globalization (Wulf, 2006b, 2007, 2011). Finally, the convention also makes clear that only practices and expressions that are consistent with international human rights instruments can be considered ICH (UNESCO, 2003a, Preamble).

1.2.1.3.2 Safeguarding

As the title of the convention and the first provision in Article 1 - mentioning the purposes of the convention - suggest, safeguarding of ICH is the prime concern of the ICHC. Article 2(3) provides a definition of safeguarding as foreseen with the ICHC:

'Safeguarding' means measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage (UNESCO, 2003a).

The following part provides a detailed description of the safeguarding tasks envisioned by the ICHC.

'Identification' and 'documentation' refer to activities in the context of inventory making (Duvellé, 2010). They are among the first measures to be initiated by States Parties signing the convention and have to be conducted in close cooperation with communities, groups and individuals, as well as NGOs (UNESCO, 2003a, Article 11, Article 12). Documentation specifically refers to the creation of records on ICH, which can be written, visual, aural or

audio-visual and can be included in inventories, archives or museums, or in other activities. The convention does not provide guidance on the methodology of inventory making; rather, it leaves it to the States Parties to decide upon appropriate steps (*ibid.*, Article 12(1)). However, the convention also requires States Parties to strive for “establishing documentation institutions of intangible cultural heritage and facilitating access to them” (*ibid.*, Article 13(d)(iii)).⁴⁵ Thus, documentation also transcends inventory making and relates to archiving and the generation of cultural memory.

‘Research’ refers to the academic investigation and analysis of the diverse aspects of ICH, including its cultural manifestations, techniques of transmission and maintenance, history, as well as associated meanings, functions and levels of significance. Research contributes to the knowledge on a particular ICH, as well as the understanding of ICH in general.

‘Preservation’ refers to measures and efforts that aim to secure continuity of practices, expressions and knowledge over time.

‘Protection’ refers to legal measures undertaken by official or governmental bodies, providing legal grounds for the exercise of ICH or access to relevant resources and aiming at the protection of ICH from misuse, misappropriation and other threats to its viability. Protection also refers to respective customary laws regulating the transmission and utilization of practices and knowledge. However, neither measure aims to freeze or constrain the development of a living tradition (Duvelle, 2010).

‘Promotion’ and ‘enhancement’ refer to the dissemination and circulation of information concerning aspects of practices, expressions and knowledge among the regional, national or international general public, thus beyond the respective practicing community. Promotion fosters pride and self-esteem among practitioners and can thereby also attract the younger generation’s involvement with ICH. Moreover, it can further increase intercultural understanding and respect (*ibid.*).

‘Transmission’ refers to practices engaged with the conveyance of practices, expressions, skills and knowledge inherited from earlier generations to the present generation, as well as potentially to future generations of practitioners. Given that safeguarding aims at the viability of practices, etc., within communities, groups and individuals, transmission can be considered crucial. Indeed, it is the prime measure enabling the continuity of practices, and thus it will be

⁴⁵ The convention consciously avoids precision regarding the functioning of documentation institutions and the provision of access to inventories and documentations. However, the convention mandates States Parties to apply participatory approaches (UNESCO, 2003a, Article 15) and ensure “access to the intangible cultural heritage while respecting customary practices governing access to specific aspects of such heritage” (*ibid.*, Article 13(d)(ii)).

discussed in some greater length: transmission can be exercised in formal educational settings, via long-term apprenticeship or other processes of initiation; and in informal ones, by participation in events and activities, or active observation and imitation. It can encompass the transmission of particular techniques, cultural manifestations or practices, but can also entail transmission of other aspects of culture, history, significance, reception and appreciation (ibid.). The human body is central in transmission processes, as well as for ICH in general. The body is the bearer and medium for ICH and guarantees transmission via mimetic practices, through processes of creative imitation in which ICH is inherited, actively recreated and simultaneously modified and potentially changed (Wulf, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2011). Via practices of simulation, likening and creative copying, people pick up and incorporate aspects of the social and cultural world, of practices and expressions (Gebauer & Wulf, 1995, 1998, 2003). Via these mimetic processes, which are sensual, bodily and often exercised unconsciously, practical knowledge is acquired, which is directly tied up with the body (ibid.; Wulf, 2006a). This practical knowledge is historically and culturally contextualized, diverse and closely related to the performativity of the body. Furthermore, it also manifests itself via repetition, in which practices are both re-enacted and transformed (ibid.). Practical knowledge, particularly regarding body movements, is “stored in the body memory” and allows the conduction of complex culturally embedded bodily activities (Wulf, 2013, p. 198). In contrast to mimicry, mimetic processes also contain creative acts, which alter the original and lead to dynamics in the re-creation of cultural practices and thus to developments and innovations in transmission and performance of these practices from generation to generation. Moreover, the body as a carrier of ICH also bears implications for practice and transmission. As Wulf (2011) remarks, “bodily practices are determined by the passage of time and the temporality of the human body. They depend on the dynamics of time and space” (p. 77). Thus, not only are ICH practices dynamic, processual and subject to social change and exchange (Wulf, 2006b), but also bearers and practitioners of ICH change, grow old or pass away and vary in their practices. Therefore, in particular in cases of endangerment of practices, traditional processes of transmission and their inherent focus on the body and mimetic processes can also be supplemented by institutionalized forms of education and educational tools such as written, visual and audio-visual documents.⁴⁶

‘Revitalization’ finally refers to activities that aim to strengthen ICH and revive particular aspects of practices, expressions or knowledge that are still actively memorized by members of communities or groups yet face distinction in the future, when even individual and social

⁴⁶ See also subchapter 4.2.2.1-4.2.2.3 of this thesis.

memory⁴⁷ terminates due to the death of such members. If practices are no longer actively memorized, they do not constitute part of a living heritage; therefore, rather than being revitalized, they would be (re)invented (Duvelle, 2010).

In sum, the ICHC gives central importance to safeguarding measures, which encompass – yet are not restricted to – documentation, preservation and protection; instead, they go far beyond these concepts, which have been predominantly used in the context of cultural heritage so far, and aim at enabling viability. Rather than aiming at the musealization or freezing of living practices, and taking into account continuous development and change, measures encourage the sustenance of these cultural practices and expressions (Albert, 2011). Therefore, safeguarding departs from notions of conservation and preservation, which might lead to a “fixed or frozen” heritage⁴⁸ and rather aims to foster the continuous development and transmission of ICH, of “knowledge, skills and meaning” (UNESCO, 2009b, p. 3). Instead of focusing on the “production of its concrete manifestations”, crucial importance is given to “processes” (ibid.). Hence, even though listing and inventory-making take central stage, the sustainable maintenance of socio-cultural conditions that enable ICH to be re-created and transmitted are explicitly mentioned as a target aim. Moreover, the “communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals” again come into play here.

Finally, safeguarding is envisaged at two levels: in the form of national safeguarding measures (UNESCO, 2003a, Part III, Article 11-15); and in the form of international safeguarding activities, policies and programs (ibid., Part IV, Article 16).

1.2.1.3.3 Community participation and communities

Safeguarding measures at the national level provide a clear orientation towards community participation. The State Party needs to “identify and define the various elements of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory, with the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental organizations” (UNESCO, 2003a, Article 11(b), Article 12). Blake (2009) observes this is a crucial factor, given that “the identification of ICH is not only fundamental to its safeguarding but it also addresses a deeply political issue as to what and whose ICH is to be given value by the process” (p. 50). However, besides authorizing communities and NGOs for identification processes, the convention also

⁴⁷ On individual and social memory, see Assmann (2006) and subchapter 1.2.3.3.

⁴⁸ The issue of freezing a living heritage through preservation and safeguarding measures has been discussed by Arizpe (2004) and van Zanten (2004, p. 41).

explicitly authorizes the state, which holds a dominant role in the implementation of the convention (UNESCO, 2003a, Article 11(b), 12(1) and 13).⁴⁹

Nonetheless, Article 15 most explicitly positions the “participation of communities, groups and individuals” centrally within safeguarding. We read:

Within the framework of its safeguarding activities of the intangible cultural heritage, each State Party shall endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management (UNESCO, 2003a, Article 15).

With reference to the above-cited definition of safeguarding tasks, States Parties are herewith bound to engage in a participatory approach, accommodating local, or localized, concerns regarding the safeguarding of ICH. Considering that ICH is constantly re-created, transmitted and maintained by members of the particular community or group, manifests itself in the socio-cultural realities of communities, groups and individuals and that safeguarding measures interfere and leave a direct impact upon the respective contemporary realities of these communities, groups and individuals, the requirement of community participation seems relevant. Indeed, as Duvelle (2010) remarks, without the active participation of communities in the design and implementation of safeguarding measures, the effectiveness of measures and not least the continuous transmission of ICH within communities cannot be secured.

However, who is meant by community and who has the right to define this community? The convention does not provide a definition of what the terms communities, groups and individuals mean. However, during an UNESCO and ACCU organized expert meeting in Tokyo in 2006, a definition was elaborated⁵⁰ and the terms defined as follows:

1. Communities are networks of people whose sense of identity or connectedness emerges from a shared historical relationship that is rooted in the practice and transmission of, or engagement with, their ICH;
2. Groups comprise people within or across communities who share characteristics such as skills, experience and special knowledge, and thus perform specific roles in the present and future practice, re-creation and/or transmission of their intangible cultural heritage as, for example, cultural custodians, practitioners or apprentices.
3. Individuals are those within or across

⁴⁹ See Kearney (2009) on a critic of the role of states in the implementation of the convention. Kearney (ibid.) argues that with the ICHC the exclusivity of indigenous ownership over their practices and traditions is challenged as the act of “bestowing ultimate discretionary power onto the state renders Indigenous owners of ICH mere stakeholders” (p. 217).

⁵⁰ The definition does not have any binding force, but is widely utilized.

communities who have distinct skills, knowledge, experience or other characteristics, and thus perform specific roles in the present and future practice, re-creation and/or transmission of their intangible cultural heritage as, for example, cultural custodians, practitioners and, where appropriate, apprentices (UNESCO/ACCU, 2006, pp. 17-18).

Thus, communities are not territorially defined but rather refer to a network of people who share a sense of belonging, identity and connectedness, which is directly nourished by the exercise of their ICH. Individuals identify their membership in the community via the practice, transmission or involvement with cultural expressions and traditions, with these practices simultaneously being vital elements for the community, its continuity and integrity. Wulf (2011) remarks that “by staging practices of intangible cultural heritage, cultural communities are produced, and this production process is not only linguistic and communicative, but also bodily and material. People stage themselves and their relationships, and in doing so, produce culture” (p. 78). Via performing ICH, they give order and meaning to the world. Cultural communities are constructed via communication and interaction, which can be exercised by both verbal and non-verbal means; they rely on “collectively shared symbolic knowledge” and “cultural action”, on “collectively shared practices” (ibid., p. 79).

As the cultural expression or practice evolves in time and space, the respective community might also evolve.⁵¹ In terms of defining a community, Deacon et al. (2004) agree that exclusive ownership of heritage by a specific community is problematic and philosophically challengeable, which prompted the term “practising community” (p. 42). This term stresses the role of the community in the re-creation, practice and transmission of ICH and challenges the notion of a “holding” community (Blake, 2001). Nevertheless, the process of defining the practicing community and selecting appropriate representatives might be equally difficult. Moreover, Deacon et al. (2004) stress that “communities are not the organic, stable and coherent groups they are often assumed to be” (p. 42). Indeed, it is important to take into consideration that communities are not homogenous, monolithic and self-contained; rather, they are fragmented, polyphonic, dissonant and dynamic. They constantly (re)create and change their practices, expressions and their ICH. There might be different interpretations of ICH between different groups and communities, as well as within one specific group or community, while ICH is simultaneously performed and sustained collectively by all members of the group or community. Furthermore, talking in spatial categories, a community or group might exist on a local, regional, national, international or even transnational level.

⁵¹ Thus, the practicing community might not correspond to the traditional community. As such, a contestation over definition and meaning might arise. For an example of such an evolving community, see subchapters 3.3 and 3.4. For an example over contestation over meaning of the term community, see 4.3.5.1.2 of this thesis.

Furthermore, the convention does not actually state how participation shall be understood. It refrains from offering an exact definition of its scope and meaning. Hence, it can be interpreted in a wide array of ways, ranging anywhere between information about projects and activities, cooperation, collaboration and the support of communities' self-initiated projects; for example, with expertise, know-how or funding.

The *Operational Directives* are of major importance for the implementation of the ICHC and community participation in particular.⁵² These were adopted by the General Assembly in its second ordinary session in June 2008 and amended at its third, fourth and fifth session in 2010, 2012 and 2014 (UNESCO, 2012b).⁵³ Lixinski (2011, pp. 97-98) argues that regarding awareness-raising, the first revised directives explicitly stress the states' obligation to implement community participation. This remark in the directives points towards a quest for enlarged community participation and the empowerment of communities. However, the evaluation report on the 2003 convention, published in 2013, also identifies community participation exercised so far as insufficient. The report specifically advises "strengthening community participation in safeguarding" and recommends the promotion of "increased NGO and community involvement in the development of policy, legislation, safeguarding plans and sustainable development plans" (UNESCO, 2013, pp. 69-70). Nonetheless, the active participation and involvement of communities or community representatives in decision-making processes regarding the conceptualization, nomination and uses of heritage, including within the international realm, remains an aim to be targeted, while community participation remains at a fledgling stage on an international level.

Altogether, the ICHC can be considered groundbreaking. It manifests an important milestone in international heritage regulations by acknowledging living and dynamic cultural expressions, practices and knowledge as ICH, as well as explicitly legitimizing the central and vital role of "communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals" for the recognition and safeguarding of ICH. Therefore, the convention bears a strong potential for demonstrating a democratization process regarding culture in general and cultural heritage policies and practices in particular. This process not only empowers so far disadvantaged and marginalized forms of cultural heritage in terms of (international) attribution of value and significance, but

⁵² In terms of the implementation of participation, a specific chapter, named "Participation in the implementation of the Convention" (UNESCO, 2012b, Chapter III, 1, 79-89) has been created within the *Operational Directives*. In its first section, it mentions the "Participation of communities, groups and, where applicable, individuals, as well as experts, centres of expertise and research institutes" (ibid.). The next section is devoted to NGOs. Most interestingly, the experts and research centers fall within the same section as the communities.

⁵³ (This part has been updated.) One of the Committees' functions is to prepare and submit operational directives for the implementation of the convention to the General Assembly for approval (UNESCO, 2003a, Article 7).

also engages the local people, who are the custodians and creators of heritage (Deacon et al., 2004, p. 11). Indeed, the convention even goes beyond engagement or involvement and identifies local people, practitioners and custodians of ICH as authorities in identifying ICH. Nonetheless, the ICHC is yet to reach its full potential, with the democratization of heritage and culture's potential yet to have been fully utilized. The following section provides a definition of culture and its application in the field of heritage.

1.2.2 Preliminary definitions

1.2.2.1 Defining culture

Culture has stood in the focus of attention since the 19th century and it remains one of the most fragile concepts in academic debate. Indeed, it had become even more difficult by the 21st century, with the global outreach and proliferation of media culture, and it remains highly contested in terms of definition. Culture is conceptually rooted in cultivation. Etymologically nature is considered the opposite of culture. Nature takes its root in the Latin Verb *nascere*, which means to be born. Here, the specific quality of innateness is stressed, while culture, being rooted in the Latin verb *colere*, to cultivate, stresses the process of cultivation.

The following part provides a brief outline of the conceptualization of culture as it was developed within the discipline of anthropology.

While in early anthropology primitive culture was conceived to be authentic and conceptualized in contrast to mass culture of the West, a further distinction was made between high and low culture, with the former comprising elite culture such as art, classical music, literature, while the latter referred to popular culture, integrating cinema, television and popular music. The latter approach was based upon a conceptualization of culture as it evolved in 18th century Europe, and the former, conceptualizing culture as a total set of human activities, developed in 19th century anthropological thought. It originally referred to humankind as a whole, yet was later compartmentalized and used in reference to a variety of existing different and separate cultures. In *Primitive Culture*, Tylor (1871) initially defined culture holistically as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (p. 1). While he understood culture as a singular entity that could serve to determine where a specific group stands on an evolutionary scale in terms of its culture, Franz Boas, father of American Anthropology, harshly criticized this evolutionist stance at the turn of the century and established a sense of discrete and multiple cultures independently existing side by side.

Definitions, approaches and methodologies further changed at least in the second half of the 20th century. For example, the American anthropologist Geertz (1973) argued for a more “narrowed and specialized” conception of culture (p. 4). Following the German sociologist Max Weber, he understood culture as webs of significance in which humans orient themselves and which they themselves have created (ibid., p. 5). He defined culture as “an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life” (ibid., p. 89). Hence, culture can be understood as shared knowledge, as historically transmitted and therewith largely inherited patterns of meanings encoded in symbolic forms and shared and understood by a specific community or group of people. In order to understand culture as an integrated whole, its study must therefore be an interpretive science in search of meaning.

By the end of the 20th century, discourses tended towards acknowledging hybridity in the conceptualization of cultures and the rejection of static cultural identities and cultural authenticity. It was understood that intersection, interconnectedness and interrelation of diverse cultural elements lead to the transgression of bounded cultural unity and foster cultural diversity (Wulf, 2002, 2013).

In this context, it is particularly necessary to also address the contributions of Cultural Studies and post-colonial theory to the conceptualization of culture. Here, culture is conceived as being produced in a creative process within which representation plays a central part. Key authors in this regard are Stuart Hall (2006, [orig. 1990]), Homi Bhabha (1990) and Raymond Williams. Williams (1965, 1981) formulated the idea of culture as a whole way of life. He understood culture to be produced by ideologies, social formations and institutions and argued that culture is a process, constantly in movement and development. He erased the distinction between high and low culture and considered the practices of all people commonly to form culture. The notion of power, dominance and hegemony plays a crucial role within Cultural Studies, which American geographer Mitchell (as cited in Ashworth, Graham, & Tunbridge, 2007) also stresses in the following statement, arguing:

Culture consists in practices, but is also a ‘system of signification’. Culture is a way people make sense of the world (...) but it is also a system of power and domination. Culture is a means of differentiating the world, but it is also global and hegemonic. Culture is open and fluid, a ‘text’ (...) always open to multiple readings and interpretations, but it is something with causative power (...). Culture is a level, or sphere, or domain, or idiom; but it is also a way of life (p. 7).

Referring to a variety of conceptions of culture in the social sciences and humanities, Jenks (2003, pp. 8-9) offers a fourfold typology: 1. Culture as cognition, as cerebral or cognitive capacity. Here culture is understood as a product of human consciousness; 2. Culture as embodied and collective, a concept, which was applied in evolutionist theory, early anthropological endeavors as well as in colonialism; 3. Culture as a descriptive category, referring to the “best which has been said and thought in the world” (Arnold, 1869) and to products which are commemorated for example in museums;⁵⁴ and 4. Culture as a social category, as constituting the whole way of life of people in general and/or of specific social groups. Indeed, this last approach is the one most widely applied today, whereby culture is conceived as an integral part of social practice. Jenks (2005) further argues that the contemporary understanding of culture incorporates absolutist and relativist approaches towards the respective cultural products and processes. The absolutist approach aims at maintaining a particular cultural formation, even at the costs of others, whereas the relativist understands different cultures as well as cultural artifacts as equal. In terms of social impetus, it is necessary to differentiate between elitist and egalitarian approaches. In effect, culture is either understood as being essentially in the hands of a few or, conversely, in the hands of all. However, combinations of absolutist and egalitarian as well as relativist and elitist might also exist. For example, the former are also present if the larger public accepts only one cultural canon, while the latter exists when the acknowledgment of the equality of diverse cultures becomes a sign of a specific social distinction.

Which concept of culture is applied within UNESCO’s recent policy instruments? As already argued in the previous sections of this thesis, UNESCO has accomplished a shift in its approaches to culture, steadily sliding towards the acknowledgement of a relativist and egalitarian approach to culture, thus giving elitist notions less space. This shift was paved in the 1980s when UNESCO reshaped its understanding of culture, neglecting elite notions in favor of a more democratic conception. In the Mexico City Declaration, which can be considered a milestone document in this regard, culture is defined as

the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs (UNESCO, 1982, p. 1).

With this declaration, the concept of culture, which defined culture as art (or as a product

⁵⁴ It should be mentioned that this category is not only descriptive but also normative.

oriented material or intellectual achievement (Albert, 2006a)) and cultural heritage as monuments and sites, was replaced by a more holistic understanding of culture, also integrating intangible aspects (Albert, 2002). Culture was no longer merely determined by elitist codes, but rather referred to meaningful practice exercised by all members of a society. As such, the concept of culture was democratized (Bernecker, 2002). Furthermore, culture was increasingly understood as both exclusive as well as dynamic and dialectic, as unique and simultaneously open for development, assimilation and change, and as such as prone to processes of globalization (Albert, 2002). Moreover, culture was explicitly understood as bearing effect in the process of identity formation (ibid). Finally, criteria for the evaluation of cultures, such as development, modernity and prosperity, which categorized cultures as developed or underdeveloped, were identified as eurocentristic and diverse cultures were increasingly conceived as egalitarian (ibid). Adopted in 2001, UNESCO's *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, reaffirmed this (re)definition of culture, stating that

culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value-systems, traditions and beliefs (UNESCO, 2002a, Preamble).⁵⁵

It further acknowledged that culture is crucial for identity formation, social cohesion and the development of a knowledge-based economy (ibid). The 2003 convention finally erased notions of elite culture in favor of a representative list, in which cultural practices and expressions are listed not as outstanding examples, superior to others, but rather as representatives of the diversity of cultures existing in the world. Again, the major criterion for inscription is their function in the identity formation of a specific group.

We can state that culture constitutes of a system of meanings, it consists of practices and knowledge, one of which is heritage. Culture and heritage always incorporate tangible and intangible elements, objects and meanings. Furthermore, acknowledging the dynamic character of cultures also means recognizing that heritage is constantly (re)created and in the process (re)shaped (Albert & Gauer-Lietz, 2006b). Finally, for the purpose of this thesis, culture is understood as the knowledge and practices, language, representations, including objects and artefacts, beliefs and customs, as well as rules and regulations that position subjectivities in the world and inform the behaviors of participants of that culture on a daily

⁵⁵ The document further declared that this definition is in accordance with “the conclusions of the World Conference on Cultural Policies (MONDIACULT, Mexico City, 1982), of the World Commission on Culture and Development (Our Creative Diversity, 1995), and of the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development (Stockholm, 1998)” (ibid., p. 12).

basis. Culture generates shared social meanings that allow us to make sense of the world. These meanings are neither static nor fixed; rather, social practices might reshape and reconfigure culture and generate new, shared meanings (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1999). Thus, culture consists of all structures and processes that shape meaning and in which meaning takes place. It integrates the production and exchange of meanings between and within a community or society. On a community level, culture can be understood as continuous cultivation, also involving dynamism. Thus, culture implies process, movement and development. Culture as a process socializes people in webs of meaning, which might move and shift within a community and beyond, thus implying development and change.

1.2.2.2 Defining media and mediatization

Generally speaking, media refers to a variety of tools through which people communicate with each other in order to produce or refer to a shared reality. It incorporates all modern technologies that enable communication through space and time. Earlier in history the dominant reference was to the printing press, while today media mainly refer to digital technology and the Internet. The classical Latin *medium* describes a state or entity in the middle (Soanes & Stevenson (Eds.), 2006, p. 887). In postclassical Latin, media also referred to the means of doing something. From the 19th century onwards, with technological innovations having created new means of communication, such as the telegraph, telephone, radio and film, and later television and the Internet, medium has been understood as an artistic modality, material or technique of, or channel for, communication, and particularly mass communication. Since the 1960s, media has largely denoted mass communication technologies and institutions. Moreover, medium denoting a physical material able to record or reproduce, audio, visual or audio-visual data has become widespread; for example, in the use of digital media.

Media and communication research began in the 1950s, with three main concepts of media having subsequently been articulated: 1. Media as a neutral tool for information dissemination (e.g. a newspaper or radio sender).⁵⁶ Lasswell, who coined this concept in 1948, identified different stages within communication: who speaks, in which channel, who is the receiver and what is the impact. This approach, which also understands media as institutions, is mainly applied within the social sciences; 2. Media as material technology with social implications; and 3. Media as aesthetic means of expression and as carriers of cultural

⁵⁶ The sender might follow a strategy and be selective in the choice of information that is disseminated.

and historical meaning. Here, media is discursive and understood as discourse, with this approach mainly applied in the human sciences. All three conceptualizations interrelate with each other. Thus, media integrates institutions⁵⁷, materials⁵⁸ and modalities⁵⁹.

Furthermore, media can be divided into three categories (Jensen, 2002, 2008): 1. First degree media refers to “biologically based, socially formed resources that enable humans to articulate an understanding of reality (...) and to engage in communication about it with others” (Jensen, 2008, p. 2815). Such examples include verbal language, speech, song, musical expression, dance, theatre, and arts, often relying on mechanical techniques such as instruments and utensils. 2. Second degree media, following Walter Benjamin, refers to “technically reproduced and enhanced forms of representation and interaction which support communication across space and time” (ibid.). Examples include the printing press, photography, film, video, radio and television. Common features are so-called “one-to-one” reproduction, storage, reproducibility and enlarged dissemination possibilities. 3. Third degree media refers to “digitally processed forms of representation and interaction” (ibid., p. 2816). These forms can be gathered on one platform or interface: the computer. Hence, the computer has been conceptualized as meta-media (Kay & Goldberg, 1999). These three types of media can be interrelated and do not necessarily exclude each other.

This thesis refers to all three conceptualizations of media, whilst concentrating on the conceptualization of media as carriers of meaning, or rather, as I will argue later, as representations enabling the construction of meaning. The thesis further refers to all three types of media, yet when speaking about media, primarily focuses on second and third degree media.

1.2.2.3 Defining representation

The concept of representation can be conceived as a relationship between two, three and four parts (Kenney, 2005). Representation involving two parts has been mainly conceptualized by Swiss linguist Saussure, who established a dyadic model. For him, the linguistic sign comprises a sign vehicle, the signifier, which could be a word, as well as the meaning of the sign, the signified, which could be the mental concept of a thing or activity. Reaching beyond

⁵⁷ People generate understanding of the world through media, understood as institutions. Media and other social institutions reproduce each other; for example, print media have extended culture in time and space and helped in the forging of nation states.

⁵⁸ Media as materials includes sound recordings, for example.

⁵⁹ Media as modality includes music or language, for example. Modalities are based and grounded in the human senses. Modalities could include music videos, virtual worlds, etc.

Saussure and his focus on language, C. S. Peirce incorporates multiple types of signs in his analysis. He developed a triadic model for representation, which involves the sign, object and interpretant. Hereby, the sign is connected with the signified object in order to create meaning in the mind of the interpreter. Mitchell (1990) adds a fourth part to this model, namely the maker. He emphasizes communication by conceiving the axis of representation, connecting the signifier and object, and the axis of communication, connecting the maker of the representation with the viewer, as equally important. A maker of a representation might intend certain meanings and prevent others.

Following Peirce (1998), the sign and the object can have three different relations: the indexical, the iconic and the symbolic. The first relation signifies by means of causal relationships, proximity or direct connectedness, the second stresses resemblance or similarity between the sign and the object, while the third relation, stressing the arbitrary, signifies by reference to social convention. However, most representations utilize more than one of the mentioned relationships.

Kenney (2005) provides a categorization and clustering of theories, underlining their diverse features, which is helpful as a first systematic overview of the topic. He identifies four main categories of theories that explain how visual representation takes place: 1. Causal relation theories (e.g. transparency theory, recognition theory), stressing indexical and iconic relations; 2. Resemblance theories (perceptual and non-perceptual), focusing on iconic relations; 3. Convention theories, stressing symbolic relations; and 4. Mental construction theories (illusion, make-believe and seeing in), focusing on iconic and symbolic relations.

Causal relation theories encompass two corpi of theories: transparency theory and recognition theory. Transparency theory argues that photography, film or video are transparent and “we can see the world *through* them” (Walton, 1984, p. 251), similar to a mirror, telescope or a window through which we can see the world. Walton (ibid.) states that we are even enabled to see into the past through pictures and video; we “see, quite literally our dead relatives themselves when we look at photographs of them” (p. 252). This ability was related to its mechanical or automated origins. If human beings made the picture, it would have been considered second-hand information, but giving credibility to the mechanical mechanism, which could be repeated identically at any time, information was considered true, valid, reliable and first-hand. Here, only the sign and object are acknowledged, while the influence of the viewer and maker are neglected. Within recognition theory, the picture or film is understood as facilitating remembrance and recognition. The picture or film looks exactly like a phenomenon that we already know. It stresses the iconic

relationship and neglects the symbolic. This can also be thought with the three-part model by Peirce. In this approach, the viewer sees the picture and accordingly learns about the world. This is opposite to conventional approaches, which stress that we first have to learn how to see and read an image, the necessary conventional codes, grammar, language, etc. Recognition is conceived as dynamic; it is not understood as face-to face recognition but also incorporates changes and adjustments in time and space. Recognition theory lies between mere seeing and interpreting, between transparency and convention theory. While both seeing and interpreting are acknowledged, this theory cannot explain misrepresentation or non-adequate pictures. Furthermore, the making of the images is not considered relevant.

Resemblance theories (both perceptual and non-perceptual) only focus on iconic relations between the sign and object. Both viewer and maker are omitted and communication is neglected. Indeed, no thinking is required for understanding. Here, similarity is stressed. However, resemblance also exists without representation. If only similarity counts, then the object could represent the sign and the sign the object, or a sign a sign or an object an object. Furthermore, feelings produced by the sign and object might differ immensely.

On the other hand, convention theories stress symbolic relations. Here, pictures do not copy, resemble or imitate. Indeed, the relationship between a picture and its subject is grounded in the custom that “almost any picture may represent almost anything” (Goodman, 1976, p. 38.) A picture represents through its belonging to a symbolic system with rules and conventions, which in turn provides the link with the picture and its subject. Hereby, resemblance is one among many phenomena used in representation, although it is not necessary and, even more importantly, not sufficient to explain representation. Resemblance is also based on convention; for example, filmic representation is grounded in conventions shared by the makers and viewers alike. In conventionalism, there are no fixed criteria for realism. Conventions are imposed by culture, shaping the viewer’s way of seeing, which again shapes reality. Goodman (1976) stresses the communication axis over the representational axis, whereby the maker and viewer become prime figures. However, this theory was also largely criticized given its implication that any image can represent anything, and on the contrary, not that many meanings are applied to specific pictures when shown all over the world. Moreover, perception is neglected; we do not know how pictures symbolize.

Finally, mental construction theories stress iconic and symbolic relations, with mental states receiving prime importance. It is understood that detailed and full mental representations of the object are produced together by the viewer and maker. The viewer

participates in constructing the illusion of actual experience triggered by the presence of the object. Here sign, object, viewer and maker are acknowledged.

To conclude, the concept of representation clearly embodies a wide range of different meanings, derived from different approaches to representation developed in the diverse disciplines. The following part particularly stresses the conceptualization of representation as it was developed in the field of Cultural Studies. This approach is deemed most fruitful, also regarding the analysis of media, heritage and their interrelatedness.

1.2.3 Theoretical and conceptual framework: The Cultural Studies approach

1.2.3.1 The circuit of culture and the conceptualization of representation

Generally, the word representation carries the notion that something or somebody was already there, which has been re-presented through the media. Thus, representation is understood as a form of symbolism by which an autonomous external world is mirrored. In this view, representation is a reflection/distortion of reality. Besides referring to the depiction or imaging of something, the term representation is also used in the sense of standing in for or taking the place of someone. For example, the latter understanding is prevalent in politics, where one person speaks or acts on behalf of a group, representing them. Taking these two points together, representation can be understood as consisting of a set of processes wherein signifying practices depict, stand for or take the place of objects, people, events or even practices occurring in the external or “real” world.

However, in Cultural Studies analysis, representation neither simply reflects in symbolic form what appears to already exist in the world, nor does it engage with the assessment of reflections as accurate or distorted; rather, representations are understood as being constitutive of the meaning of the referent, of that which they appear to stand in for. In the words of Barker (2004, p. 177), representation does not involve correspondence between signs and objects, but creates the ‘representational effect’ of realism.⁶⁰

In Cultural Studies, representation is one of the key moments in the “circuit of culture”⁶¹ (Du Gay et al., 1997). The moments or processes within that circuit are representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation; all five are closely interrelated, with culture located at the center of these processes.

⁶⁰ Realism is understood by Barker (2000) as “an epistemological claim that the truth is identifiable as that which corresponds to or pictures the real. A set of aesthetic conventions by which texts create ‘reality effects’ and purport to represent the real” (p. 390).

⁶¹ The “circuit of culture” refers back to a model established by Richard Johnson in 1986.

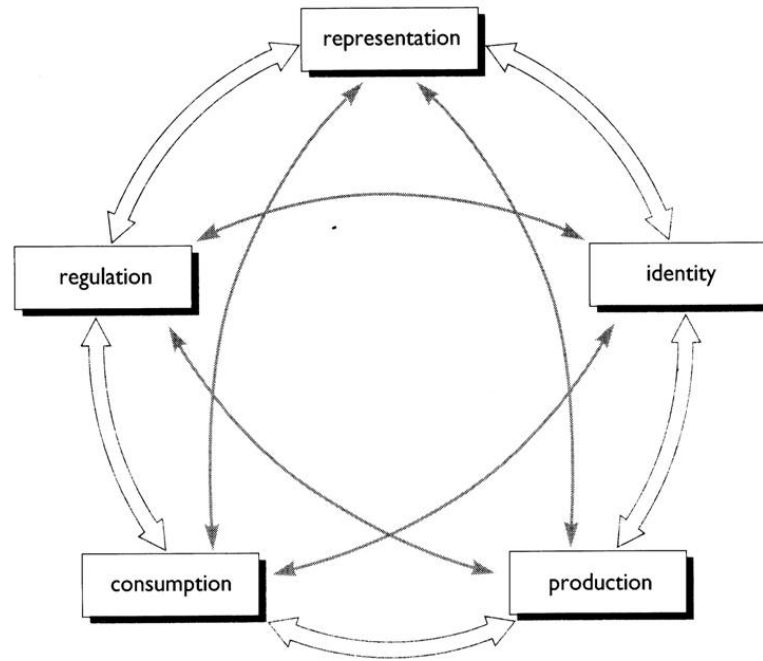


Fig. 3: Circuit of culture (Du Gay et al., 1997, p. 3).

In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Stuart Hall (1997b) argues that representation “is one of the central practices which produce culture” (p. 1)⁶²; it “connects meaning and language to culture” (Hall, 1997c, p. 15). He further argues that representation “is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture” (ibid.). Turning to representation as a creative practice and process, he defines representation as “the production of meaning through language” (ibid., p. 16). Language functions as a representational system, wherein sign and symbols stand for or represent concepts, ideas or feelings (Hall, 1997b). Hereby, language as signifying practice refers to the written and spoken words, as well as visual images or sounds. Hall (1997c) argues that “any sound, word, image or object, which functions as a sign, and is organized with other signs into a system which is capable of carrying and expressing meaning is, from this point of view, a ‘language’” (p. 19). In this sense, photography and film are representational systems, they use sign to communicate meaning or rather participate in the articulation of meaning.

Three theoretical approaches can be distinguished in terms of how language is used to represent the world: the reflective approach, the intentional approach and the constructionist

⁶² Culture is understood as being “about ‘shared meanings’” (ibid.), about “shared conceptual maps, shared language systems and the *codes which govern the relationship of translation between them*” (Hall, 1997c, p. 21; italics in the original). In fact, research on culture within Cultural Studies is almost synonymous with the analysis of the processes of representation. Even though culture can be understood as also encompassing matter, practices and spaces, it is argued that it is the signifying practice of representation that gives meaning to matter, practice and space (Barker, 2000, 2004).

approach to representation (Hall, 1997c, pp. 24-26). While in a reflective approach language reflects a meaning that already exists in the external world, whether regarding objects, subjects or events, within an intentional approach language serves as a device for the expression of thoughts by individuals; for example, writers, or painters. Within the constructionist approach, meaning is constructed through language, which is understood as a social phenomenon, exercised between people.⁶³

Hall elucidates his constructionist approach to representation and the alliance of signs, concepts and objects by making recourse to two complementary approaches: the semiotic approach by Ferdinand de Saussure (and early Roland Barthes) and the discursive approach by the post-structural theorist Michel Foucault.⁶⁴

Saussure investigated synchronic aspects of language, considering them as rather static. He fully concentrates on the internal structure of language (Saussure, 1960, pp. 22-23) and argues that the production of meaning is dependent on language, understood as “a system of signs expressing ideas” (ibid., p. 15). He developed a dyadic or two-part model of the sign, consisting of the signifier (the word or spoken sound) and the signified (the mental concept it refers to). Saussure argued that the connection between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, thus the words used to refer to specific concepts are not naturally linked but rather via convention, common agreement on the interconnection. Signification is further based on opposition within binary systems and difference (ibid., pp. 120-23). Thus, signs are only given meaning when juxtaposed with others, within a differential system of signs. Saussure further argues that the mental concepts by themselves are arbitrary categorizations of the world we experience. Thus, the concepts, categories and divisions that help us to understand or make meaning out of the world are arbitrary in themselves; indeed, different languages provide different concepts and a different number of concepts, as well as differentiations to understand the world. In fact, the objects of our mental world do not necessarily pre-exist in the external world and language simply names, labels and ascribes meaning to them; rather, the conceptual world can be structured differently according to the society we live in and the

⁶³ Signs in the latter approach also have a tangible dimension as “representational systems consist of the actual *sounds* we make with our vocal chords, the *images* we make on light-sensitive paper with cameras, the *marks* we make with paint on canvas, the digital *impulses* we transmit electronically” (Hall, 1997b, p. 25; italics in the original). Thus, representation utilized tangible objects to generate an effect. However, meaning results not due to the materiality but rather the symbolic function of the sign.

⁶⁴ Structuralist theorists and post-structuralist theorists alike regard reality as a product of systems of representation. Burr (1995) argues that structuralist and poststructuralist approaches, which both understand language as the major force in the construction of the person, were appropriated within social constructionism and its understanding of language, as well as the role it plays in psychological life and the construction of social reality. Hall adds that the semiotic approach is more concerned with investigating the ways in which language operates in the production of meaning, its ‘poetics’, while the discursive approach is more concerned with the effects of representation, its ‘politics’ (Hall, 1997b, p. 6).

culture we exercise. Moreover, concepts are only formed and described by means of referring and differentiating them from other concepts. Therefore, meaning does not reside in the sign in an intrinsic way, but rather in the relationship between the sign and other signs. Signs do not bear intrinsic meaning. In sum, for Saussure, language does not reflect a pre-existing social reality, but rather constitutes that social reality frames it within diverse concepts, signs and their relations towards each other. This structure of language, the system of signs, consisting of the signifier and the signified, which are constituted within differences between signs, makes up our conceptual space (Burr, 1995, p. 38, see also Hall 1997c, pp. 30-36). Saussure understood the relationship between the signifier and the signified as arbitrary, but, once established, fixed and stable with regards to meaning, leading to the argument that the structure of language structures knowledge, consciousness and experience. Even though Saussure (1960) foreshadowed a “science that studies the life of signs within society” (p. 16), his own work was confined within linguistics. As cultural objects and practices convey and depend on meanings, which in turn are generated via the use of signs, culture works like a language and is open to semiotic analysis.

Relying upon and adding to Saussure’s semiotic approach, Roland Barthes (1967, 1972) investigated popular culture and how meaning is generated within photography, sports, advertisement, fashion, etc. Barthes differentiates between two systems of signification: denotation and connotation. Denotation refers to a basic and descriptive level of meaning upon which almost all members of a culture share and agree. At the second connotative level, signifiers refer to wider cultural codes of meaning, semantic fields and conceptual frameworks, beliefs, value systems and social ideologies. Thus, one sign can refer to a multiplicity of meanings. In case the connotations are accepted and read by a large number of a culture’s members, they become naturalized, hegemonic and are integrated into its conceptual map. Barthes refers to the connotative level as the level of myth, resembling the concept of ideology, whereby connotations are culturally constructed yet seem to be naturally there, unchallengeable and embedded in common sense. Myth functions as a second-order semiological system, a kind of metalanguage (Barker, 2000). Hereby the sign, consisting of the signifier and the signified of the first denotative level, unite and become the signifier of the second connotative level (Barthes, 1972). Saussure and Barthes argued that (cultural) texts do not transparently bear meanings but rely on signs, and are constructed with signs. However, the idea that signs bear stable meanings - for example, also expressed in the notion of denotation - was criticized in the work of later Barthes, where signs are understood as

polysemic, as carrying and enable multiple meanings.⁶⁵ Thus, texts can be interpreted in multiple ways, with such interpretation heavily relying on the cultural backgrounds and competencies of the readers. Moreover, on a pragmatic level, by use of language, alternative constructions of the self, ideas and concepts as well as feelings can be produced. Thus, this approach was further developed and expanded within poststructuralist approaches to language. Indeed, meanings of specific words can change in time, are contested and also can carry multiple meanings, depending on the context and the person using them. Meanings are never fixed or referential, but rather relational, temporary, context-bound and always under negotiation. Hereby, representation “endows material objects and social practices with meaning and intelligibility and in doing so constructs those webs of meaning that are constitutive of culture” (Barker, 2004, p. 177). Given that meanings are always contested and transitory, so too are our experiences and identities. This is the central tenet of post-structuralism. Thus, beyond being a system of signs with commonly shared and relatively stable meanings, as was envisaged by Saussure⁶⁶, language is also a site of disagreement, struggle and conflict, and thus interwoven with power and hegemony. Within a poststructuralist approach, language is understood as a site inter-layered with power-relations; a site also relevant regarding identity, personal and social change (Burr, 1995).

While Saussure does not focus on the social, political and historical environment or context of a language, as well as power relations, which influence meaning production, Foucault investigates the dynamic aspects within the production of knowledge through language, wherein these production processes are historically contextualized and social interactions and relations play a crucial role. While Saussure investigated the conditions for language to operate meaningfully, Foucault concentrates on what can be meaningfully articulated at a given historical moment within a given episteme. He expands upon Saussure’s notion of representation as fixed within language, rather concentrating on the role of power in knowledge formation processes and accentuating that power is closely interlinked and intersected with knowledge.⁶⁷ For Foucault, knowledge is produced via discourse. Hereby, discourse extends the notion of language, given that it refers to “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment” (Hall, 1997c, p. 44). Being regulated by rules and conventions themselves, discourses also simultaneously frame the discursive fields

⁶⁵ See for example Barthes (1977).

⁶⁶ However, it should be stressed that Saussure aimed at understanding the structures of language, how language works; the effects or consequences of language were not part of his research question.

⁶⁷ See also Foucault (1972).

or conceptual spaces in which meaning is intelligible. In conjunction with the syntactic and pragmatic levels of language, they provide the conditions for meanings to appear or be generated in specific historical moments. Discursive formations determine the ways in which subjects think and speak about phenomena and define the appropriateness and limits of formulations of representations and practices. Foucault assumes that nothing meaningful exists outside discourse. In a way, discourse produces the objects of knowledge and leaves traces within the body of the object itself. Thus, discourse reaches far beyond linguistics and connects language with practice, institutions and interactions.

In a similar way, Hall (1997c, 1997 [video]) argues that even though phenomena exist in an external world, they only become meaningful within cultural representations and signifying practices. For Hall, representation expands the notion of standing in for something but refers to social practices in general. This social practice manifests itself within two systems of representation (Hall, 1997c, pp. 17-19). The first refers to a system that correlates objects, etc. with mental representations, with concepts in our mind in the form of a shared conceptual map. The second system refers to exchange within a shared language consisting of signs, wherein concepts are related to signs through a code.⁶⁸ The connection or alliance between both systems is what Hall refers to as representation.

Representation is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to *refer to* either the ‘real’ world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events (Hall, 1997c, p. 17, italics in the original).

According to Hall (ibid.), meaning “does not inhere *in* things, in the world. (...) It is the result of a signifying practice” (p. 24, italics in the original). Representation is thus conceptualized as a process through which meaning is created and given to things, people, events or experiences, which do not bear any stable or true meaning. Instead, meanings are produced by the participants in a culture, by those who have the power to signify and make things mean. The generated meanings relate in some way or another to how the object or event is represented. Moreover, as the representations change due to changing socio-cultural or historical contexts, the meaning of the event also inevitably changes. He further accentuates that when meanings are attributed to objects or events for a long period of time, they seem to be naturally there. Nonetheless, he argues that these attributions are always culturally, socially

⁶⁸ In a similar context, Fiske (1987) has defined “code” as a “rule-governed system of signs, whose rules and conventions are shared amongst members of a culture, and which is used to generate and circulate meanings in and for that culture” (p. 4). He argues that “reality is encoded, or rather the only way we can perceive and make sense of reality is by the codes of our culture” (ibid.).

and linguistically constructed, as well as time and context bound. As such, meanings are never stable or fixed, but rather constantly re-affirmed and re-negotiated.

To conclude, applying Saussure's semiotic approach and Foucault's discursive approach, Hall (1997 [video]; Media Education Foundation, 1997) understands representation not as a post-event activity, but rather accentuates that the event has no fixed meaning until it is represented. Meanings are generated within representation practice and do not exist outside this practice. He acknowledges the existence of the external world, yet suggests that representation is needed for it to become socially and culturally meaningful. For Hall, the process of representation enters into the event itself. He stresses that

representation doesn't occur *after* the event; representation is *constitutive* of the event. It enters into the constitution of the object we are talking about. It is part of the object or event itself (...). It is one of its conditions of existence (ibid., pp. 7-8, italics in the original).

Furthermore, as representations, language as the form of representation by excellence, are not transparent or neutral reflections of the "real", no innocent medium that facilitates the transfer or communication of thoughts, feeling or ideas, but are cultural constructions, in some way dominating thoughts, feelings and ideas⁶⁹, representation is intrinsically connected to power. This is the case given that representations are formed by the exercise and application of complex technological and institutional procedures, which are interwoven with power and by use of selection, inclusion and exclusion whereby some objects, people, events or practices are placed at the center of focus and become institutionalized, while others are marginalized or neglected. Thus, the "power of representation lies in its enabling some kinds of knowledge to exist while excluding other ways of seeing" (Barker, 2004, p. 177). Hall (1997d), being influenced by post-colonialist theory, also considers representation as closely connected to identity. He points out that "meaning is what gives us a sense of our own identity, of who we are and with whom we belong", it gives direction and effects our practices and our conduct (Hall, 1997b, pp. 3-4); indeed, it is in this context that the 'politics of representation' become most relevant. Hall (1997d) addresses the essentialization of difference through stereotyping and shows how meaning can be battled over and transformed within systems of representation. The power-identity-culture triad is in fact at the center of Cultural Studies discourse and research, whereby none is exercised, articulated or analyzed without taking the others into account (Marchart, 2008). As Marchart (ibid) points out, the concept of agency,

⁶⁹ See also the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, namely that language determines thought (Sapir, 1947).

the idea of the ability to act also with regards to 'normal' people, as well as the concepts of empowerment and education for democratization, in the sense of a participation of all socio-cultural groups within the negotiation process which defines meaning, or in Hall's terms, the process of representation, are relevant issues for Cultural Studies' work.

1.2.3.2 The encoding/decoding model

Cultural Studies explores culture from a political perspective. Culture, looked at through the prism of Cultural Studies, is understood as a field of power-relations in which social identities are constructed, or rather articulated and tied up to form hegemonic patterns (ibid.). The political conceptualization of culture within the Cultural Studies approach is also reflected in its conceptualization of media.

Media Studies at the Centre for Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham⁷⁰ challenged a number of conceptualizations and traditions of thought that were hitherto prevalent in the study of media and (mass-)communication. First, the Cultural Studies approach to media went beyond the model of direct influence, where media content worked as a trigger stimulating a particular effect in the audience, in an approach that gave shelter to behaviorist ideas. Instead, Cultural Studies focused on the ideological role of media. Media were understood as a cultural and ideological force, playing a major role in the definition of social or even political relations and phenomena. They were further understood as holding a large ground in terms of the shaping and reshaping of popular ideologies⁷¹ (Hall, 1992a). Secondly, the Cultural Studies approach to media challenged the conceptualization of media as transparent, as pure, neutral and innocent message; rather, media were understood as being linguistically and ideologically structured. In this regard, semiotic analysis was applied in the study of media. Thirdly, the audience was conceptually freed and understood as actively engaging with the (audio-visual) text. Hereby, attention was given to the relationships between the encoding processes, the "moment" of the encoded text and the diverse decoding processes (ibid., p. 118). Finally, focus was placed upon the role of media in the manifestation, circulation and securization of dominant ideologies and representations.

⁷⁰ The Centre was inaugurated in 1964 under the directorship of Richard Hoggart. Four years later, Hoggart left and became Assistant Director-general at UNESCO. From 1968 to 1979, Stuart Hall functioned as the director of the Centre (Hall et al. (Eds.), 1992, p. 7). Hall was later a professor of sociology at the Open University.

⁷¹ Ideology is understood as the "attempt to fix meanings and world-views in support of the powerful", as "maps of meaning which, while they purport to be universal truths, are historically specific understandings which obscure and maintain the power of social groups (e.g. class, gender, race)" (Barker, 2000, p. 386).

Stuart Hall, one of the most influential representatives of British Cultural Studies⁷², elaborated the above-made claims in several publications, with his text *Encoding/decoding*⁷³ (Hall, 1992b) becoming particularly influential. The essay undermines communication theories prevalent in the 1970s, which understood communication as a linear and uni-dimensional process involving the sender, message and receiver. Indeed, Hall argues against a deterministic concept of communication and meaning (Lasswell, 1948) as being inscribed in the message and subsequently adopted by the audience. Instead of conceiving of producers and receivers or consumers⁷⁴ of messages as separate subjects or entities, in his model Hall speaks about the activities of encoding and decoding. In doing so, he stresses the processual character of communication and meaning production and the role of “articulation”⁷⁵ within this rather complex process. He understands the process of communication as the articulation of several “moments”, namely production, circulation, distribution/consumption and reproduction (Hall, 1992b, p. 128). While each moment is linked to the next, it does not necessarily lead to the next moment. Furthermore, each moment operates with its own distinctive modalities and practices. The circle can also be halted. While meaning is embedded within each moment, meanings can become shifted or even eroded between moments. For Hall, meanings are made in a discursive process of encoding and decoding. A person, object or event is not transmitted or mediated in television. Indeed, Hall suggests that the event needs to be “signified within the aural-visual forms of television discourse”; therefore, it is subject to the rules of language and signification (ibid., p. 129). The event is made into a story, a message, in order to be communicated over TV. The TV program is meaningful discourse. Here, the rules of discourse are in dominance and the event is modulated into a “message form”; however, later, at the “moment” of consumption, the “message form” is again dissolved and meaning is generated, which is to be articulated to practice. However, there are several “determinate” moments within this process.

At the “moment” of production, for example in the television communication process, technological infrastructure, relations and practices unite to generate a program in which the message is constructed. This process is informed by institutional television discourse,

⁷² Cultural Studies is not a discipline in a strict sense, but rather a transdisciplinary project. Culture is not an object of study, but rather a perspective on social phenomena, which places power relations and the (re)-production of identities at its center. Culture is used as a prism to investigate the social world (Marchart, 2008). British Cultural Studies is about the articulation between culture and power (Hall, 2000).

⁷³ Hall’s model was originally developed for television in 1973 and was subsequently modified in 1980.

⁷⁴ Hall terms the receivers of information consumers, referring to Marxian theory, in which production affects consumption but, on the other hand, consumption also affects production.

⁷⁵ Here, articulation refers to the notion of expression and representation, as well as linkage or joining together (Barker, 2000).

frameworks of knowledge and meaning, professional know-how, skills and ideologies, as well as assumptions about the audience (ibid.). This discourse is again linked to other discourses and discursive formations, from which topics and agendas are derived, for example. The ways in which the program is to be distributed and the ways in which the message is assumed to be interpreted by the audience feeds back into the production processes. Thus, production and reception are to some extent interrelated (ibid., p. 130).⁷⁶

The televisual sign is constituted by the visual and aural discourse (ibid., p. 131). It is an iconic sign, resembling and bearing some properties of the thing or event represented, yet is not identical with it. While reality indeed exists beyond language, language is needed to generate knowledge about reality. Hall defines discursive knowledge as “the product of the articulation of language on real relations and conditions” (ibid.). Communication in language is grounded on codes. Thus, he argues, visual signs are coded signs and visual codes are culture-specific. The linkage of the visual sign and the concept of the referent is arbitrary and made by the use of a code. Indeed, following Hall, a visual sign has no ‘literal’ meaning as assumed in the notion of denotation. He used the term denotation to refer rather to a dominant meaning, which is preferably decoded by members of a language community. However, the connotative meaning, the associative meaning, which is generated by the audience, always goes along with the sign, and the distinction between them is a rather analytical one. Hall further accentuates that the politics of signification and the negotiation or rather struggles over meaning are situated in relation to the connotative level, given that the denotative meaning in most cases corresponds with perception and appears rather fixed, “natural”, while the associative meanings are frequently articulated and re-articulated with ideologies and are open for contestation (ibid., p. 133)⁷⁷. It is at this level, the level of connotation, where signifiers intersect or communicate with culture, with knowledge and history (Barthes, 1967) and in this process signification can also be transformed.

The spectator or consumer is the final arbiter of meaning. However, in order for the spectator to derive meaning from a given encoded (audio-)visual text, again articulation is needed. Herein, a temporary linkage is made, connecting diverse discursive elements within a given context, with a unity created between the image as a signifier, the spectator’s capability for interpretation and the socio-cultural context of the spectator. Thus, meaning arises within the connection of several moments and is articulated within a given context. However, these connections are not stable and can change over time. Thus, meanings might vary across time,

⁷⁶ Here, an analogy to Marxian theory is articulated.

⁷⁷ Ideology also permeates the denotative level, but appears as natural (ibid.).

given that they are constantly in a state of becoming and never fixed. Indeed, meanings cannot be fixed or determined, by neither the producers nor the consumers. Indeed, images or films can generate different meaning or even no meaning at all. There is no guarantee that an audience interprets the audio-visual material as envisaged by its authors. Following Parkin, Hall (1992b) identifies three hypothetical social positions that the viewer can exercise: the dominant-hegemonic position, where the dominant code is accepted; a negotiated; and an oppositional position. In this regard, Hall observes a correlation between a person's socio-cultural situation (e.g. in relation to class or gender, etc.) and the derived meaning decoded from an audio-visual product. If the decoded meaning corresponds to the reference code, then hegemony exists; namely, the spectator is "*operating inside the dominant code*". The "*professional code*" is also situated within this category, referring to the one used by professional broadcasting teams "encoding a message which has *already* been signified in a hegemonic manner" (ibid., p. 136, italics in the original). This code is situated within the dominant-hegemonic code but functions rather independently in a way that it applies its own rules, regulations and conventions, particularly regarding the technological and practical sides of encoding meaning, visual quality standards and professionalism. In doing so, it reaffirms and reproduces the dominant code and definitions in most cases.⁷⁸ When the viewer does not belong to the hegemonic ideology⁷⁹ that the visual product represents, then negotiation takes place. In this second position, hegemonic definitions are acknowledged, yet modified in parts and related to a specific and situated (localized) ground or social situation. Within the third position, an opposition against the encoded meaning takes place, whereby the preferred denotative and connotative meaning is understood yet rejected, with the viewers applying an oppositional code and reading against the preferred meaning. Within this position, the "politics of signification" (ibid., p. 137), the power-relations within discourse appear. In sum, the relationship between the audience, film and meaning is neither static nor uniformly follows the rules of cause and effect. Rather, the outcome of this complex interactivity and relation is dependent on many aspects, including cultural experience and practices of looking and seeing prevalent in one's culture. Various members of the audience bring their own subjectivities or rather social positionings, thus generating multiple meanings, whereby polysemic response, positioning or identification in relation to the generated meaning takes

⁷⁸ The reproduction of the dominant code is, among other reasons, due to the fact that the broadcasting apparatuses themselves are ideological apparatuses in most cases, closely linked to the elites within a society (ibid., pp. 136-137).

⁷⁹ Hall defines the hegemonic viewpoint as a definition of the terms of a "mental horizon, the universe of possible meanings, of a whole sector of relations in a society or culture"(ibid.). These definitions are made to appear legitimate, natural and inevitable regarding social order.

place. This is the case given that the audience is not conceptualized as an empty vessel passively receiving information, but rather as an agent actively interpreting and generating meaning (Hall, 1997a). Furthermore, the meaning of an image or film, screened on television or a computer by use of the Internet, is

not in the visual sign itself as a self-sufficient entity, nor in the sociological positions and identities of the audience, but in the articulation between viewer and viewed, between the power of the image to signify and the viewer's capacity to interpret meaning (Evans & Hall (Eds.), 1999, p. 4).

For Hall, communication is a very complex process and images or films can be read in a variety of ways. However, it is also accentuated that communication is always linked with power, with groups who yield power in a society influencing what is represented in the media. Even though the encoded message in television productions is constructed as a system of signs that can be decoded in polysemic ways, the encoding limits the possible ways of decoding and constructs some parameters and limitations for the text. Moreover, the text is generally "structured in dominance" and guides the reader to "dominant or preferred meanings"⁸⁰ (Hall, 1992b, pp. 134-135). Additionally, cultural codes, through which power and ideology are exercised, align the sign with the "maps of meaning"⁸¹ prevalent in a culture (ibid.). Hall claims that images are always intersected with power, which manifests itself in media through economic, social and political factors. These factors determine who is allowed to speak and who is not, who will be represented and who will be not, which claims or reflections will be generated and which will be neglected. In this case, power mirrors ideology⁸² and structures perpetuating social dominance. Indeed, the term politics of the image refers to the contestation and struggle over what is represented in the media.

1.2.3.3 Memory

Similarly to Hall, W.J.T. Mitchell (1994), a pioneer in Visual Culture Studies, understands representation as going beyond the singular representation, and rather as a "whole field of representations and representational activity" (p. 6). He argues that representation does not simply communicate knowledge that is subsequently consumed by the spectators or the audience, that "representation (in memory, in verbal description, in images) not only

⁸⁰ These meanings are inscribed by the political, institutional or ideological order, simultaneously becoming institutionalized themselves (ibid.).

⁸¹ Social meanings, practices and usage, etc. are already situated within these maps.

⁸² For a conceptualization of ideology, see also Jowett and O'Donnell (1999, p. 281).

‘mediates’ our knowledge (...), but obstructs, fragments, and negates that knowledge” (ibid., p. 188). He criticizes the notion of memory as an innocent and straightforward representation of the past. Instead, for Mitchell (ibid.), memory refers to “something more like a site of cultural labor, a body of textual formations that has to be worked through interminably” (pp. 188-189). Figured as a medium, memory selects, includes and excludes, shows, tells and hides knowledge at the same time. It functions as a process in which meaning is created, in which the past is actively interpreted, narrated and made usable for the present. This process involves power. Thus, memory is inherently political.

Aleida Assmann (2006) conceptualizes memory as closely interconnected with identity. Both are mutually reaffirming, are interdependent and the relation between both is circular. She stresses that the individual is a social being, embedded in society and language, which form the conditions of its existence. The ‘I’ is always related to the ‘we’, and it is from the ‘we’ that key elements of identity are extracted. Furthermore, the we-group is not a homogenous group, but rather disparate, fragmented and layered into different crosscutting elements. It offers diverse horizons⁸³ in front of which an individual can become mirrored and consolidated. In sum, a person exists within and in close interconnection to several we-groups, which can be distinctive, interrelated and asserting each other. Assmann (n.d.) argues that individual memory is created in correlation to these we-groups. Therefore, we-groups can refer to a wide spectrum of potential groups, ranging from friends or family to the nation; indeed, we might even add humanity at large. Furthermore, she stresses that individual remembering is closely connected to emotional traits; what is deemed meaningful and emotionally dense is selected to become memorized. Assmann differentiates between three different dimensions or conditions of memory, the first of which is entirely biological and based on the central nervous system. With its neuronal base, this system then engages and interacts with the social and cultural field, the first essentially referring to communication and the second to cultural signs and symbols in form of tangible representations through artefacts such as texts, films, images and memorials, as well as in the form of symbolic practice, like in festivities and rituals (Assmann, 2006, pp. 31ff). It is through these interactions with fellow humans and media - understood in a broad sense - that biologically based memory is formed and elaborated. Thus, on a first organically based level, memory refers to a neuronal network; on a second socially based level, it refers to a communicative network; and on a third culturally based level, it refers to a collective symbolic construction based on signs (ibid.).

⁸³ Citing Nietzsche, Assmann (2006) refers to horizon as a view field that is determined and limited by the position and thus perspective of the viewer.

Furthermore, Assmann distinguishes between individual, social, collective and cultural memory. The borders between the different categories are not rigid, but rather permeable and all participate in the formation of we-groups and their respective identities.

Individual memory is understood as entirely belonging to one specific perspective; it is selective, not transferable and unique. It is always temporary; as it is related to the singular human being, it becomes extinguished with the death of this person. Simultaneously, it is also part of a network of memories. It is connected with, crosscuts and is superimposed by other memories. In this way, the diverse memories reaffirm and commune with each other. Moreover, individual memory is fragmentary, limited, unstable and shifting. It needs assertion and contextualization through communication and further narration (*ibid.*). Following Halbwachs (1985a), individual memory is always socially grounded, as an individual, without engaging in communication acts, is incapable to remember, to constitute memory. Memory, as language, is a social phenomenon and language is a necessary precondition for it to arise. Given that language and society are constitutive of memory, individual memory is always socially grounded. Assmann further accentuates that a three-generation-memory is a kind of horizon, in front of which individual memory is constructed. Through communication with members of three generations, the individual can extract experiences and notions relevant for his or her own memorizing. However, after this term, the horizon becomes exchanged and replaced by that of a newer generation formation.

Social memory relates to the wider horizon of experiences encompassing whole generations; it is closely connected to history, the cultural, social and political environment and frequently becomes reorganized, preferably in intervals of approximately 30 years (Assmann, 2006). It is conceptualized as temporary, as polysemic, encompassing multiple perspectives and as incorporated in human beings. The major media for social memory is communication. Communication within a social group about a common experience, despite being experienced differently, constitutes and consolidates social memory.⁸⁴ This type of memory is preserved by means of continuous repetition and reassertion, either under trivial everyday circumstances or through formal festivities. Furthermore, this memory is also biologically determined as in case the human beings, the vehicles of this memory, die, their specific social and communicative memory becomes extinguished (*ibid.*). The individual automatically participates in social memory as he or she is embedded within it. The social is the condition for his or her existence. The individual is born into it, and through language and interaction grows into social memory.

⁸⁴ See also Halbwachs (1985b).

On the other hand, collective memory⁸⁵ is conceptualized as stable, enduring over long periods of time, focused on one perspective and thus as reductionist. Within this type of memory, according to Assmann (n.d.), mental images are transformed to icons and stories to myths. Their main characteristic is the persuasive and affective power that operates through them. Here, historical contexts, experiences as well as conditions for the existence of phenomena, etc. are sidelined and even neglected. Narratives are constructed, which are situated beyond concrete time. Hereby, experience and knowledge become detached from humans as vehicles and instead operate through symbols and signs, such as monuments or memorials, rituals or festivities. Indeed, collective memory is symbolically constructed, based on selection, manipulation and neglect and is embedded in institutions, operating from 'above' onto society and its members. It is continuously asserted through repetition, transmitted from generation to generation and functionalized to promote the aims of the group, as well as enhancing the group's identity. National memory is the example par excellence for this category of memory. According to Assmann (ibid.), the individual acquires collective memory through participation in rites or rituals such as national memorial days, which require periodical repetition to be effective. Hereby, history is interpreted and indeed practiced in relation to the present; it is collectively and physically exercised and incorporated via practice. In case the formulated symbolic manifestations and signifying practices become dysfunctional in terms of collective identity construction, they are omitted and replaced. Examples of the latter are the re-naming of streets and the destruction or re-building of memorials and major site-marks of identity in the context of political change. In such a context, discrepancies between social memory and collective memory can become visible as signs, set by nation-states, and read and decoded in dissonant ways to those intended.

While collective memory is based on selection and omission, prioritizing one specific perspective, cultural memory is a rather neutral knowledge repository, wherein selection nonetheless occurs. Cultural memory is thus conceptualized by Assmann (ibid.) as complex and durable, despite simultaneously being fragile and versatile, it is always polysemic and includes a variety of perspectives. The major media for cultural memory are institutions, libraries, museums and archives (ibid.), their related data-sets such as texts, images and other types of objects, as well as respective professionals, including librarians, curators and historians. They, the institutions and actors, are engaged with conserving, preserving and interpreting the material or materialized objects of a culture. Within this category of memory,

⁸⁵ The term collective memory was initiated by the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs in the 1920s, referring back to social memory and the role of communicative exchange. Thus, it can also be termed as communicative memory.

institutionalization and stabilization of memory takes place. The individual participates in cultural memory through entering into an aesthetic and cognitive critical engagement with the contents provided by libraries, archives, etc.; indeed, it is through this individual reflection and acquirement of knowledge that archival contents are transformed into memory. Codified and archived signs constitute cultural memory, which operates and is acquired through systems of signs, not via own experiences and practices, physical engagement or imitation. For example, it is accessed via educational institutions and influences identity construction. Nonetheless, continuous re-interpretation and discussion is necessary to keep the memory relevant in society across time. Assmann (ibid., 2004) further distinguishes between two dimensions within this category of memory: storage memory (“Speichergedächtnis”) and functional memory (“Funktionsgedächtnis”). Both are permeable, with elements frequently able to cross over into the other dimension. The first is a cultural archive, collecting and conserving a selection of tangible artefacts that are no longer in use, which at a certain moment in time do not actively relate to any lived practices or form of remembrance. It conserves objects like a treasury and operates on a rather passive level. A specific item enters into the functional dimension of cultural memory in case it becomes relevant and connected to contemporary issues again; this is the active part of cultural memory. In order to enter this realm, artifacts have to pass through a selection process and enter the cultural canon of a society. Visual and verbal ‘texts’, once settled in the functional dimension of memory, become institutionalized within museums, theatres, television, publication houses, as well as educational institutions. These institutions foster the continuous re-interpretation and re-contextualization of these elements of cultural memory over time. Contents within functional memory are open to a variety of readings and need to be asserted through individual interpretations from a variety of backgrounds. However, once an element is no longer used or deemed relevant, it drops back into the storage memory dimension.

Overall, it is a system of sign-based and symbolic media that enables trans-generational communication and thus collective or cultural memory. Memories can be attached to individuals, social groups, political collectives and cultures. On all these levels, identities are constructed, even conflicting ones, which interrelate with and challenge each other. Memory, the reconstruction of the past encompasses selection, omission, re-interpretation and re-contextualization (Assmann, 2004). These practices correspond to the interests and frameworks of reference and knowledge, the episteme of the present. Thus, politics, power and memory are closely interrelated.

Chapter 2: The audio-visual representation of culture - politics and poetics

2.1 Introduction

The representation and documentation of culture, material and immaterial are integral aspects of safeguarding strategies for ICH (UNESCO, 2003a), with audio-visual media applied in many cases to exercise these tasks.⁸⁶ However, a number of crucial points need to be taken into consideration in this regard. Audio-visual representation involves media and practices through which meanings are produced, constructed, constituted and mediated, communicated as well as circulated among social groups. These meanings are to a certain extent shared meanings and they are constitutive of culture. Therefore, audio-visual representations, as constitutive practices are never innocent, neutral or objective. It is important to reflect that these representations do not merely present reality but rather participate in the production and (re)shaping of reality. They produce knowledge and exercise power in a Foucaultian sense.⁸⁷ Furthermore, these meanings, which make sense of the world and position subjectivities within the world, can be manufactured from either outside or within a socio-cultural group. Additionally, several rivaling and contesting representations may simultaneously exist and co-produce each other. Thus, while engaging in practices of the audio-visual representation of ICH, it is necessary to take into account the politics of representation.

I argue that in the context of mediating ICH, as it has been defined by UNESCO, ethical and epistemological issues regarding the responsibility as well as the right to speak on behalf, with or alongside others need to be considered (Ruby, 1991). Representation as speaking of and representation as speaking for must be differentiated (Spivak, 1988). It is necessary to reflect upon the representational strategies and tools in use while representing and mediating cultural practices and constituting knowledge through audio-visual means. Furthermore,

⁸⁶ Selected parts of this chapter have been integrated in an article, which will be published in the *International Journal of Heritage and Sustainable Development* Vol. 4, No. 1, ISSN 1647-4112.

⁸⁷ Foucault (1998) understands power as being everywhere and coming from everywhere. Thus, power is neither understood as a structure nor as a form of agency. Instead, power is conceived as disperse and pervasive, as discursive, embodied and enacted. Rather than being coercive, possessed or employed by actors or agents, power is understood as constituting them. Furthermore, power is envisaged as diffuse, dynamic and constantly under negotiation. Foucault conceives of power as closely connected and interwoven into discourse. Signifying the intimate and dialectical relation of power and knowledge, or the “regime of truth” prevalent in a society, he coined the term “power/knowledge” (Foucault, 1991; Rabinow, 1991). Foucault (1991) argues that “power and knowledge directly imply one another (...) there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (p. 27). Furthermore, Foucault (1982) understands discourse as not representing or mirroring reality, but rather as producing and constituting reality.

besides the text/content, the social parameters of production and reception of audio-visual representations also need to be scrutinized and refined in accordance with the local context of the represented cultural practice or expression. I suggest considering a conscious approach towards shared representation. This approach considers the fact that within shared representation cultural codes, values, norms and notions from the outside community are appropriated⁸⁸ and that the representation is consciously speaking on different levels and to different groups, incorporating diverse, overlapping and evolving meanings. This approach does not aim to undermine the diversity between cultural practices and practitioners, but rather strives to give credit to the fact that audio-visual representations are no ‘windows into the world’, but are constructed in an encounter between representatives from different cultures, within which the camera does not mark a demarcation line between cultures but a possibility of shared practice and meaning. Within this encounter, “*hybrid cultural forms*” can emerge,

in which elements belonging to different systems and contexts change their character in a mimetic process, leading to a new cultural identity. This identity is no longer constituted by distinguishing oneself from another, but in mimetically assimilating oneself to the Other (Wulf, 2013, pp. 109-110, italics in the original).

While a number of different approaches to the audio-visual representation of culture can be applied, a look at the legacy, utilization, conceptualization and discourse on filmic representation is helpful to ascertain sustainable strategies for the safeguarding of ICH.

In this chapter, the different strategies and approaches to the representation and documentation of culture are presented, as they have been developed, discussed and applied in the discipline of Social and Cultural Anthropology and especially the sub-discipline of Visual Anthropology. Hereby, attention is devoted to the respective paradigms at stake. Moreover, the contribution of individual filmmakers⁸⁹ is acknowledged. Furthermore, several authors of neighboring disciplines that have been influential in the discourse on audio-visual

⁸⁸ Appropriation refers here to a post-colonial discourse in which “post-colonial societies take over those aspects of the imperial culture – language, forms of writing, film, theatre, even modes of thought and argument such as rationalism, logic and analysis – that may be of use to them in articulating their own social and cultural identities” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007, p. 15). Within representational practice, this is done in order to reach the widest possible audience. Through this approach, effects might be reached that are hardly possible with un-appropriated forms of representation, such as subject-generated cinema in local languages with local audiences as the target group. Appropriation strategies are not negative; they can be described as “a different mode of post-colonial resistance to cultural hegemony” (ibid., p. 16). Through appropriation intervention, articulation and active and target-oriented participation in a dominant discourse are possible. This strategy does not have to be a continuous one; “metonymic gaps” will still point to the difference between two cultures, as well as the fact that not all can be shared (ibid., pp. 122-123). Nevertheless, as an ideal scenario, in shared representations appropriation shall take place in both directions.

⁸⁹ Throughout the work, the word filmmaker will refer to both film- and videomakers.

representation in Visual Anthropology are discussed. The first part presents a history of developments in the first decades of film, as well as the conceptualization of film as record and research footage serving scientific interests and the salvage paradigm. The second part starts with a brief definition of Visual Anthropology and ethnographic film, respectively, before the development of observational cinema and, later on, participatory cinema is explicated. Furthermore, indigenous media and subject-generated cinema are discussed in detail. In the third part, sensuous and haptic approaches to cinema⁹⁰ as well as the notions of transcultural and intercultural cinema are discussed. In the final part, the implications of the social context of film are reflected upon.

2.2 Histories: Film as Evidence and the Salvage Paradigm

Ethnographic film in the beginnings can be described as a major project trying to document with visual and later audio-visual means ‘disappearing cultures’ – cultures of the ‘Other’, the small-scale, kinship-based and non-Western societies, societies that were the primary objects of anthropology in its beginning stage. However, the focus of the aims and objectives of ethnographic film changed considerably during the course of several historic developments, such as colonialism, post-war experiences, democratization and the independence of new nation states (de Brigard, 2003; Grimshaw, 2001). In the following, I provide a fair yet selective account of the histories of Visual Anthropology.⁹¹ The discussion will mainly focus on ethnographic film and related developments in the US, the UK, France and Germany.

2.2.1 The Pioneers

Pinney (1997) and Young (1998, p. 4) argue that anthropology and photography had “parallel historical trajectories” that were closely linked to colonialism, while de Brigard (2003, p. 15) also asserts that ethnographic film started as a “phenomenon of colonialism”.

Alfred Court Haddon and his British multi-disciplinary expedition to the Torres Straits Islands in 1898 can be identified as the first documented anthropological project using film in the field to study the island’s population (ibid.; see also Griffiths, 2002, pp. 129-48). Film and photography seemed to permit direct observation and were used as a scientific tool and

⁹⁰ Under “cinema”, I include film and video productions. The word cinema shall refer to the notion of an assembled audience that encounters a shared impression. Moreover, cinema in the context of mediating culture of the “others” is understood as a relation between cultures.

⁹¹ Visual Anthropology evolved as a sub-discipline in the 1970s and has a clear-cut history of developments, which differ according to the regional focus.

method of research.⁹² Furthermore, sound recordings were taken through the use of wax-cylinders. However, only a few minutes of material have survived to the present day, showing three men performing a mask-dance and the attempt of lighting a fire. Besides interests relating to physical anthropology, one of the central aims of the expedition was to record all aspects of culture, involving religion, social organization and material culture. Indeed, one of Haddon's main objectives was ethnographic salvage⁹³ and his main interest was in material culture. Furthermore, Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen used visual devices as part of the participatory observation in their work with Australian aboriginals at the turn of the century. They took several portraits serving the evolutionary paradigm, as well as taking photographs of rituals. According to Pink (2006), they used their photographic material for elicitation in the field and did not stage events for filming; rather, they filmed daily life, such as women having an argument. As Morphy (1996) mentions, they used photographs to communicate the atmosphere and experience of the Australian rituals. Following de Brigard (2003), they recorded 7,000 feet film as well as sound using wax recorders. One hour of film was produced showing the Aranda engaged in ceremonial acts.

In 1904, Rudolf Pöchl, an Austrian anthropologist who was greatly inspired by the work of Haddon, used visual recordings, having been highly impressed seeing the mask-dances of the Monumbo in New Guinea. The films in Port Moresby and Cape Nelson show daily activities like children playing and bathing and being carried around by women, men smoking and a woman doing pottery and carrying vegetables from the field. Later, he also filmed a traditional dance by "bushmen" in the Kalahari and the process of making a string (Spindler, 1974). Furthermore, the Hamburg expedition to the South Seas (1908-1910) can be mentioned, which aimed to investigate and undertake complete documentation of the culture and nature of the Bismarck Archipel (today part of Papua New Guinea), New Guinea, the Caroline- and Marshall Islands (Böhl, 1985).⁹⁴

⁹² As Howes (2003, p. 5) points out, one task of the expedition was also to test the hypothesis that "primitive" cultures, like the people on the Torres Straits Islands adhere to the "lower", "primitive" and "animal" senses, being categorized as smell, taste and touch, whereas the visual would be less significant, while in "civilized" European cultures sight and hearing would be the privileged senses.

⁹³ A number of leading Victorian anthropologists understood that native people and their culture were disappearing due to the encroachment of colonialism. Consequently, the making of records about native culture was deemed urgently necessary. However, salvage anthropology was not eminently interested in the safeguarding of these cultures, but rather aimed at the production of neutral evidence that could be applied to the evolutionary scheme and made useful for scientific analysis, particularly in the context of the search for the "primitive origins" of European society (Grimshaw, 2008, p. 296). Salvage ethnography is defined as: "Any ethnographic study which is carried out in order to document cultures or institutions which are disappearing or expected to disappear in the near future" (Barnard & Spencer, 2010, p. 782).

⁹⁴ All were part of the German colony German-New Guinea at the time.

It is interesting to note that Haddon, Spencer and Gillen not only used visual material for ethnographic research, but also for public presentations of their findings, e.g. in multimedia lectures (Griffiths, 2002). Pösch further engaged film for demonstration purposes at scientific lectures (Spindler, 1974). While the work of Pösch has been somehow neglected, that of Haddon, Spencer and Gillen had a considerable effect on visual methods in social and cultural anthropology (Grimshaw, 2001; Morphy, 1996).

Félix Luis Regnault, a French physician, has also been influential in the conceptualization of the usage of film in science. Regnault produced the first ethnographic film already in 1895, at the same time that the first cinematic film was screened openly by the Lumière brothers using a cinematograph. At the colonial exhibition *Exposition Ethnographique de l'Afrique Occidentale* in Paris, he recorded a Wolof woman doing pottery and members of different ethnic groups in resting positions (Böhl, 1985). In later studies, Regnault, being highly interested in physiology, engaged in cross-cultural and comparative studies on movement. He was a sincere advocate of the usage of film for systematic comparative research. Following Regnault (cited in de Brigard, 2003), film “preserves forever all human behaviors for the needs of our studies” (p. 15). Furthermore, Regnault also called for the establishment of film archives. In 1900, the *International Ethnographic Congress* in Paris acknowledged the usage of film for documentation purposes and expressed that museums could include film archives to facilitate an understanding of the usage of artefacts displayed. This understanding was believed to be gained through exact cinematographic documentation (Spindler, 1974). Some museums even financed visual recording, like the Heye Foundation - Museum of the American Indian, which enabled the production of a series about the Zuni in 1923, led by the social anthropologist F. W. Hodge. Films focused on material culture, ceremonial dances as well as daily activities (de Brigard, 2003). Regnault’s understanding of the usage of film anticipated scientific approaches towards film, such as the belief in objectivity, which have been relevant ever since. Taureg (1983) points out that unlike

‘reality’ cinematographic records could be studied repeatedly and in every detail; they could be analyzed and measured frame by frame, or assembled and compared with other records. Moreover, according to Regnault, cinematography would eliminate personal, subjective factors and introduce a laboratory-like, experimental situation (p. 22).

In general, ethnographic films were produced for research interests relevant in the scientific community; they were not produced for lay people (de Brigard, 2003). The general expectation towards film was the possibility of recording reliable neutral evidence concerning other cultures, which could be investigated and comparatively analyzed by scientists, or at

least, serving the salvage paradigm, could function as reliable, detailed and exact documents of material culture.⁹⁵ Furthermore, the positivist approach to science in the 19th century aimed at the systematic and standardized collection of “life”, which could then be scrutinized, classified and compared. In Regnault’s words: “Only cinema provides objective documents in abundance; thanks to cinema, the anthropologist can (...) collect the life of all peoples; he will possess in his drawers all the special acts of different races” (cited in Ruby, 2000, p. 44).⁹⁶

With declining interest in material culture and increasing interest in social structures and intangible aspects of culture at the beginning of the 20th century, interest in the highly expensive and difficult technology of cinematography also dwindled. However, two of the founding fathers of Social and Cultural Anthropology⁹⁷, Bronislaw Malinowski and Franz Boas, used visual devices such as photography and film in their work. Nonetheless, even though some experts mark Boas as a founding father of Visual Anthropology (Jacknis, 1984; Ruby, 1980) his approach to the visual was limited and limiting (Pink, 2006). As Jacknis (1984) points out, Boas was quite critical regarding the scientific use of visual material. He believed that visual recordings only touch the surface of culture and, for him, the study of the human mind was only possible through the medium of language. Nevertheless, serving the salvage paradigm, he also used film and photography in his work on the Kwakiutl Indians between 1883 and 1930. His photography relied on anthropometric studies, including measurements and plaster casts of body parts. He essentially used film to record native dance and utilized raw material as a source for triangulation with other sources (Griffiths, 2002).

Malinowski, on the other hand, did not agree with anthropometric photography and tried to record “living” people (Young, 1998, p. 4); he extensively made use of photography⁹⁸ and used the images widely in his publications.⁹⁹ Grimshaw (2001, pp. 54-56) suggests that his use of visual technologies contradicted his fieldwork practices and his aim of creating a picture about a “whole” society. He fundamentally disagreed with the use of technology and mechanical skills in the understanding of other societies and cultures and promoted long-term fieldwork and human sensibility. There was no room for visual methodology (ibid.). Instead, Boas and Malinowski both advocated participant observation, according to which information

⁹⁵ In contrast to this paradigm, after spending three seasons with the Kwakiutl, the photographer Edward Curtis filmed a remarkable film: *In the Land of the Headhunters* (1914). He filmed a drama of love and war, staging events and reconstructing settings in order to create the atmosphere of authenticity as it might have prevailed before contacts with the “Whites”.

⁹⁶ For a critical assessment of Regnault’s work, see also Rony (1996).

⁹⁷ The establishment of Social and Cultural Anthropology as a discipline is widely credited to Bronislaw Malinowski, Franz Boas, A. R. Radcliff-Brown and Marcel Mauss (see e.g. Eriksen & Nielsen, 2001).

⁹⁸ More than 1,100 pictures are archived at the London School of Economics (Young, 1998).

⁹⁹ See Grimshaw (2001) for an analysis of his uses of photography and film.

shall be first gathered through the observing eye, or, in the words of Grimshaw (ibid.), the “ethnographic eye” (p. 6), and later analyzed and represented through and via language. Thus, in the aftermath of the First World War, the “belief in the inevitability of progress” (p. 25) and the “confidence in sight (...) as a privileged source of knowledge” were damaged (p. 41). Instead, a way of seeing was cultivated in anthropological research¹⁰⁰ that refused technological and standardized equipment and relied on the senses, and particularly vision, as well as the physical encounter in the field.

In sum, the new technology film was utilized in its early stage in the context of the colonialist endeavor. Filmic records were collected and compared, with objects and subjects researched upon, classified and categorized according to the evolutionary model and colonial needs. Film was used as a method of research, enabling direct observation and conceptualized as an objective scientific tool for documentation. Thus, at the very beginnings of an ethnographic filmic tradition, the observer and observed were differentiated through a strong demarcation line, the technological instrument camera, whereby the ‘civilized’ could study the ‘racial other’, the ‘primitive’. Moreover, reliable neutral evidence about other cultures was also particularly sought after in the context of ethnographic salvage. However, this did not aim towards the safeguarding of cultures, but rather the preservation of cultures for the need of scientific investigation. Filmic material was understood as pure and undisturbed evidence of culture, usable for illustration, documentation, preservation and presentation purposes. This understanding of film mirrored the positivist stance in science prevalent in the 19th century and anticipated the general belief in the objectivity of the filmic material.

2.2.2 Film as Data: Marginalization

When the evolutionary paradigm in anthropology developed into a realist paradigm and anthropology established itself as a scientific discipline, the use of visual technologies was marginalized.¹⁰¹ Instead, alongside the written word, diagrams and maps were used widely to represent and objectify knowledge (Grimshaw, 2001). Anthropology became a “science of words” (Mead, 2003, p. 5).¹⁰² Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson’s usage of film and

¹⁰⁰ *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) was instrumental in the shaping of this new strand in anthropology.

¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, there were some exceptions, such as the work of Evans-Pritchard with the Nuer and the work of Pitt-Rivers in Southern Spain in the 1950s. Overall, photographic devices in this period were not regarded as methodological or even analytical tools, but served as illustrations in publications; an approach that is now regarded as an objectifying practice. See Hutnyk (1990) for an analysis of Evans Pritchard’s work and Brandes (1997) for a discussion of Pitt-River’s photography.

¹⁰² Generalizing beyond the specific disciplines, Martin Jay (cited in Grimshaw, 2001, p. 5) talks about a “crisis of ocularcentrism” in Western culture, a “denigration of vision” as a source for generating knowledge in the last

photography during their work in Bali in 1936-1938 was an exception. In Bali, Bateson was responsible for collecting pictures, while Mead and her Balinese assistant I. Made Kaler took notes. Later on, both materials were interrogated in relation to each other. The pictures and films (without sound)¹⁰³ tried to record Balinese behavior spontaneously, uninterrupted and un-staged.¹⁰⁴ The unedited and spontaneously recorded films¹⁰⁵ and stills were expected to lead Mead to formulate hypotheses that were again scrutinized through analyzing the visual material.¹⁰⁶ Observing, analyzing and subsequently generating intellectual capital was the approach. Mead understood film as objective research data, which allowed for a purely technical illustration of reality. Freed of human subjective interpretation, the camera was believed to be neither naive nor educated, but rather neutral.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, Mead acknowledged film as being predestined for systematic visual research and scientific analysis. With *Balinese Character* (Mead & Bateson, 1942), she tried to open the floor for the acceptance of image-based media in the discipline. Nevertheless, her approach to visual media shows a strong linguistic predisposition and is nowadays highly criticized for its positivistic presuppositions. Their publications as well as methodology and epistemology were innovative, but they failed to reach a lasting effect regarding the promotion of a visual anthropology. “Indeed, Mead reduced them to a sort of simple scientism harnessed to a salvage paradigm” (Grimshaw, 2001, p. 88).¹⁰⁸

In *Visual Anthropology in a Discipline of Words*, Mead (2003, [orig. 1974]) refers to the anthropologist’s “responsibility” for “making and preserving records of the vanishing customs and human beings” (p. 3). Using the context of the disappearing cultures discourse and the salvage paradigm, she strongly argues for the usage of visual technologies as an effective method and objective scientific instrument for data collection and storage. Acknowledging “the limitations of language in conveying or translating aspects of social life”

century, a marginalization that has followed the very privileged status of vision in the sciences until the 20th century. Nonetheless, for Grimshaw (ibid.), “anthropology, as a European project, is marked by an ocularcentric bias“, involving “distinct ways of seeing” categorized as “*modernist, romantic and enlightenment*” (pp. 7-9). She defines Malinowski’s conceptualization of the anthropologist’s eye as innocent and romantic (ibid., p. 45).

¹⁰³ Bateson shot around 25,000 photographs and between 22 000 and 25 000 feet film.

¹⁰⁴ Some dramatic events, usually performed at night, were staged and recorded during daytime. They have since been heavily criticized for this interference.

¹⁰⁵ The edited films were released in form of the series *Character Formation in Different Cultures* (Bateson & Mead, 1952).

¹⁰⁶ Following Engelke (2007), Mead did not adhere to this method herself, since she came to Bali with an already developed hypothesis in mind. In this respect, Catherine Bateson speaks of a dialectic process between neutral material and pre-given hypothesis.

¹⁰⁷ Here, Bateson holds a different opinion: as a photographer, he selects pictures and therewith cannot be neutral. As a solution to this problem, he tried to take as many pictures as possible, defying all criteria for selection (Sullivan, 2007).

¹⁰⁸ See also Banks & Morphy (1997).

(Grimshaw, 2001, p. 88), she points to the fact that “dance, song, language and transactional relations” in particular can be analyzed well through audio-visual footage (Mead, 2003, p. 5). She argues that

because these are disappearing types of behavior, we need to preserve them in forms that not only will permit the descendants to repossess their cultural heritage (and, indeed, will permit present generations to incorporate it into their emerging styles), but that will also give our understanding of human history and human potentialities a reliable, reproducible and reanalyzable corpus (ibid., pp. 8-9).¹⁰⁹

She expresses her disappointment regarding a debate about aesthetics and expectations of film as a “work of art”; a debate that hinders anthropologists¹¹⁰ from making film footage at all, while meanwhile “whole cultures go unrecorded” (ibid., pp. 5-6).¹¹¹ In her words, human forms of behavior are disappearing while scientists are sent into the field “with no equipment beyond a pencil and a notebook, and perhaps a few tests or questionnaires”, with what is called “a hopelessly inadequate note taking of an earlier age”, while the usage of new visual technologies would have preserved different cultures and behaviors for centuries of scientific analysis (ibid., p. 4). According to Mead, much of this self-imposed “negligence” of the new instrumentarium has resulted in “losses that can never be regained” (ibid., p. 6).

For Mead, visual technology is able to accurately observe and therewith produce “objective materials” that will be available for analysis and reanalysis, even in the light of changing theoretical paradigms and objectives (ibid., p. 10). She calls for “long sequences from one point of view”, “unedited stretches of instrumental observation”, “prosaic, controlled, systematic filming and videotaping” and predicates that a “finer recording of these precious materials can illuminate our growing knowledge and appreciation of mankind” (ibid.). For this purpose, Mead even recommended using an un-manned and continuously running 360-degree camera with synchronous sound. In the light of vanishing ‘primitive’ cultures, languages and material artifacts, she calls for a preservation of

observations in as complete a form as possible. Sound-synch film today is the closest we can come to the preservation of a complex event, which will be subject to later analysis in the light of new hypotheses. With a 360° sound-synch camera we will come even closer (Mead, 2004, p. 47 [orig. 1973]).

¹⁰⁹ According to Mead, each culture has a specific “cultural pattern” determining behavior. Her approach can be attributed to the culture and personality studies, which investigated the relationship between individual dispositions and cultural patterns (Engelke, 2007).

¹¹⁰ For Mead, every anthropologist in the field is able to place a tripod in a scene and press the record button.

¹¹¹ Mead was an advocate of a holistic concept of culture (Engelke, 2007) and, according to this view, she held the opinion that the whole of a culture could be recorded audio-visually.

However, this approach has been subject to substantial criticism. For example, Engelke (2007) argues that anti-aesthetic is also a form of aesthetic, namely an aesthetic that is chosen in order to guarantee the impression of pure objectivity to promote the transformation of images to data; a transformation that tried to gain the status of objectivity of data, a status associated so far with the use of data in the sciences. Weinberger (1994) finds rather harsh words for this approach, articulating that the

ideal, then, is either a dream of invisibility, or worse, the practice of the surveillance camera. Leaving aside the obvious moral and political questions of surveillance, - white folks, as usual, playing god, albeit an immobile one with a single fixed stare - the value of such information could be nothing more than slight (p. 12).

Dicks, Mason, Coffey and Atkinson (2005) further add that “unmanned cameras can only represent a partial view of the life-world (...). Such a recording would not approximate to ‘reality’ any more than an edited film montage” (p. 132). A camera used in this style can only communicate on a superficial level, while underlying cultural significance and context remain unmediated. According to Dicks et al., the static camera, having an objectifying tendency that is already embodied in the usage of the central perspective, will only convey “flat” and “distanced” footage (ibid.). Bateson himself corrected his positions and criticized his own work in Bali, where he used “cameras on tripods just grinding”, or what he calls a “dead camera”. He argues that an image is always altered and stresses that a freed camera is needed in order to catch the relevance of the situation, or what is happening between people (Mead & Bateson, 2002, pp. 41-46).

In sum, Mead and Bateson transcended the usage of images for illustration purposes of already developed arguments towards a conceptualization of images as data and records and therewith to primary sources for the study of social interaction and for elements in – as opposed to simply illustrating - an argument (Grimshaw, 2001; Sullivan, 2007). Filming devices were conceptualized as purely technological, objective and neutral tools, non-interfering with reality. The camera was understood to exercise an interrogatory rather than illustrative function. Recorded material was envisaged to facilitate the posing of rather than the answer to ethnographic questions (Grimshaw, 2008). Following a realist paradigm, Mead and Bateson thought to film an un-manipulated and uninterrupted pre-filmic reality. Finally, motivated by the salvage paradigm and the idea of rapidly dissolving cultural practices, Mead aimed at the large-scale generation of research film, which could later be repeatedly screened and scrutinized in the light of changing paradigms, research questions and interests.

2.2.3 The Encyclopaedia Cinematographica in Germany

In Germany, Fritz Krause was an advocate of a scientific approach using a realist paradigm. He established the following rules for a newly established film archive in 1929, stating that the film documents should: 1. mediate the living culture in moving pictures and record processes, which photography and descriptions are only able to communicate to a certain extent; 2. facilitate the repeated and close study at a distance, even if these cultures/peoples are already extinct or the cultural practices no longer practiced; and 3. allow for the recognition and study of individual processes that have not been recognized immediately.¹¹²

Despite innovative developments in France, Britain and the US, this positivist approach remained strong in Germany for decades and was institutionalized in the work of the IWF Institut für den Wissenschaftlichen Film (Institute for Scientific Film) in Göttingen and its *Encyclopaedia Cinematographica*.¹¹³ In 1959, Günter Spannaus (1959, pp. 234-238) established 12 principles for the production of ethnographic films¹¹⁴, the first of which was a definition of scientific film as an “optisches Dauerpräparat von Bewegungsvorgängen” (optic permanent preparation of movement procedures). Films were supposed to record complete processes, or at least representative parts. The consideration of geographic and socio-cultural context should be briefly given in an overview shot, a strict adherence to the pre-filmic reality was mandatory, manipulative acts were prohibited and, when unavoidable, needed to be recorded in writing in detail. Furthermore, montage and the use of different optical diaphragms were prohibited, and, in order to categorize the anthropological type, filmed people needed to be recorded via close-ups, thus enabling later comparison (Böhl, 1985, pp. 97-98). Authors were instructed to record the smallest thematic unity of activities following strict regulations, to facilitate later cross-cultural comparison. Additionally, all films required a written companion to explain the visual material (Klöpping, 2006).

Here, again scientific film was regarded as objective observation and record, describing a pre-filmic reality. Favored were rough materials, footage, and montage was regarded as having a potentially manipulating effect. Scientific film, as opposed to artistic film, was not supposed to offer an interpretation or variation of reality; rather, it was conceptualized as providing a neutral evidence of reality itself. A conscious reordering of footage through editing was believed to distort reality and therefore was not accepted in the scientific endeavor to understand reality. I argue that these strict regulations of filming and the

¹¹² See Böhl (1985, p. 79).

¹¹³ See Taureg (1983) for a history of ethnographic film in Germany and a critical account of the respective aims and objectives since 1959. See also Böhl (1985).

¹¹⁴ Leitsätze zur völkerkundlichen und volkskundlichen Filmdokumentation.

fragmentation of reality into small and rigidly ordered sequences enabling classification may serve the scientific paradigm, but instead of representing a pre-filmic authentic reality in its completeness, this approach fosters the production of highly artificial filmic artifacts, dehumanizing and objectifying in its effects, which remain at a distance from people's lived experience, socio-cultural contexts and cultural significance.

Today, this approach seems outdated within Social and Cultural Anthropology (Banks, 2001), given that knowledge production is considered to be generated essentially through a form of interaction, involving a relationship of the informant to the researcher, rather than through an intellectual output of the researcher gained through objective observation of the informant. Jean Rouch, distinguished and celebrated French ethnographic filmmaker, already described salvage anthropology as a risky endeavor. While it might help to gather extensive amounts of data, allowing for a quite superficial glance, it cannot help in gaining insights into practices, experiences and values. Therefore, he advocates an approach whereby the whole is not penetrated, but rather one part in greater detail and with passionate and intellectual strive. One perspective might help to enlighten the whole; digging from within not observing from outside was the maxim. In MacDougall's (1995) words, stimuli and "human archaeology" will help in going beyond the outer layers of culture, "reveal[ing] its fundamental assumptions" (p. 127).¹¹⁵

In sum, the positivist approach to the audio-visual documentation of culture was followed in Germany from the late-1920s onwards. During the 1950s, this approach was institutionalized in the IWF in Göttingen, where a database of scientific films was created, based on brief sequential film-material that was subsequently categorized and explained in accompanying texts. Interaction, manipulation and montage were prohibited. Films were conceptualized as records of a pre-cinematic reality and understood as neutral and objective evidence, providing research footage for cross-cultural comparison.

At the same time, beginning in the 1950s, the positivist paradigm in filmic representation was seriously challenged by innovations in audio-visual technology and related practices, especially in France and the US. However, prior to presenting these new developments, I will first provide a brief description of the concept of Visual Anthropology and ethnographic film.

¹¹⁵ But what fundamental assumptions are we talking about? What is the concept of culture, which is used here? Critics like Appadurai (2003) have argued that cultures are "fractal"; they do not consist of discrete bounded entities besides of time and space, uniform and coherent. "What I would like to propose is that we begin to think of the configuration of *cultural* forms in today's world as fundamentally *fractal*, that is, as possessing no Euclidean boundaries, structures, or regularities" (ibid., p. 46). Instead of perpetuating colonial distinctions between the West and all others, the interconnections and consistencies between cultures could be studied.

2.3 Innovations: Visual Anthropology and Ethnographic Film

In the early-1970s, the Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communication was accepted as a subsection of the American Anthropological Association. Through this step, Visual Anthropology was first officially acknowledged as having a scientific endeavor (Ruby, 2001-02). Furthermore, in 1974, Sol Worth founded the journal *Studies in Visual Communication*, where, according to Ruby and Chalfen (cited in Pink, 2006), the approach to Visual Anthropology was defined under the following three points:

(1) the study of human non-linguistic forms of communication which typically involves some visual technology for data collection and analysis, (2) the study of visual products, such as films, as communicative activity and as a datum of culture amenable to ethnographic analysis, and (3) the use of visual media for the presentation of data and research findings – data and findings that otherwise remain verbally unrealised (p. 10).

Nonetheless, ethnographic film has been the major practice and input for discussions in Visual Anthropology until the present day. Indeed, it has become the outspoken representative of Visual Anthropology.¹¹⁶ Various films circulated at diverse ethnographic festivals and were used in educational training (Dunlop, 1983; Heider, 1976; Taureg, 1983). The definition of ethnographic film as a classificatory category has been highly debated and has soft, overlapping borders with artistic and documentary practices. Karl Heider (1976) admits that “in some sense we could say that all films are ‘ethnographic’: they are about people” (p. 5). The “ethnographicness” of the film itself shall be judged according to a framework, including different “attributes” such as a scientific ethnographic basis, cultural contextualization, scientific commentary and so on (ibid., pp. 46-117). Following this framework, according to Heider, films could be objectively defined as more or less ethnographic. However, Ruby (2000) criticized Heider’s criteria for being too restrictive and suggested the following ‘disciplinization’ of filmic practice:

I propose that the term *ethnographic* be confined to those works in which the maker had formal training in ethnography, intended to produce an ethnography, employed ethnographic field practices, and sought validation among those competent to judge the work as an ethnography (p. 6, italics in the original).

¹¹⁶ Visual anthropologists have been defined, among others by Pink (2006), as a “community of practice”. The “community of practice” has been defined by Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) as “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (p. 4). See also Wenger (1998).

Nonetheless, according to Sol Worth (1981), “there is no such thing as an ethnographic film. Or to put it another way any film may or may not be an ethnographic film, depending on how it is used” (p. 83); therefore, the reception of the film is what matters most. Finally, Pink (2006) strives for the redefinition of Visual Anthropology as

the anthropology of the relationship between the visual and other elements of culture, society, practice and experience and the methodological practice of combining visual and other media in the production and representation of anthropological knowledge (p. 144, italics in the original).¹¹⁷

2.3.1 Observational Cinema and Cinéma Vérité

With the invention of light-weighted synchronous sound cameras, new possibilities in filmmaking opened up.¹¹⁸ Additionally, the experience of the Second World War encouraged filmmakers to challenge existing notions about truth and reality, to “break with those styles compromised by war and propaganda, and to engage anew with life through the subversion of hierarchies built into the conventional relationship between filmmakers, subjects, audiences and technology” (Grimshaw, 2001, p. 79).¹¹⁹ The documentary project changed its practices and approaches, with the notion of observation, ethics and respect now at its center.

Two schools developed in the US and France, respectively: direct cinema, established by the Drew associates in the US, who opposed any influence and stimulation of, or interaction with, the film subjects; and cinéma vérité, developed already in the 1950s by the French anthropologist and filmmaker Jean Rouch, who invented the notion of the participant camera (Rouch, 2003a) and used the act of filmmaking as a stimulus. He understood the camera as a catalyst and transformative agent, which enabled the production of new knowledge.

Cinéma vérité was committed towards an unfolding and undirected process of filmmaking, within which scripts were not allowed; rather, films evolved spontaneously and in an improvised manner. The camera was meant to bath in a fluid and evolving reality, it was freed from the constraints of the tripod and was allowed to be mobile, alive, active, flexible and embodied – here, Rouch (2003b) speaks of the “cine-transe” (p. 99). Furthermore, the filmmaker and camera were acknowledged as participating in the event of the film, in creating

¹¹⁷ A re-positioning of approaches, aims and objectives in Visual Anthropology has also been explored in Grimshaw (2001, 2005), Grimshaw & Ravetz (2005), Pink (2001) and Pink, Kürti, & Afonso (Eds.)(2004).

¹¹⁸ John Marshall (filming with synchronous sound with the !Kung and the Gwi in the Kalahari) and Jean Rouch started as one of the first filmmakers, already in the 1950s.

¹¹⁹ Grimshaw (ibid.) relates the development of new approaches in filmmaking in the 1950s and 1960s to an increased political awareness, especially in France and the US, where intense political struggles took place regarding colonial independence and civil rights.

realities in the plural rather than discovering and recording a fixed reality. Films had a highly interactive and reflexive stance; they did not mean to record objective ethnographic reality, but rather aimed to break with objective and objectifying endeavors and attend to the complex and diverse subjectivities of the people, acknowledging that ethnographic realities are produced in an encounter.¹²⁰ Moreover, the audience was not patronized; instead, they were considered to actively participate in the creation of meaning.

At the same time in the US, Robert Drew, Donn Pennebaker, Richard Leacock and the Maysles brothers developed a similar yet also profoundly different approach: direct cinema.¹²¹ The use of new technologies and the break with old conventional styles in documentary filmmaking was similar, where films were rather expository, arranged around a verbally transmitted argument or a narration and addressed the audience in an authoritarian way.¹²² Now, films were meant to show, not to tell. However, no direction was allowed; instead, spontaneous recording without tripods, lights and scripts, without staging and repetition were practiced. Small film crews of around two people recorded reality with synchronous sound, as it unfolded before the camera. The filmmakers and the camera were free to move in order to catch what was happening around them. Accordingly, they first had to learn to see and immerse themselves in the situations unfolding in front of them. While Rouch's approach allowed engagement, interaction, even stimuli and provocation of action in order to reveal the truth, direct cinema filmmakers conceptualized themselves as a sort of eyewitness of the actions. Furthermore, the Drew associates rejected montage, the conscious editing of material, favoring the *mise-en-scène*. They did not conceptualize themselves as partaking in the creation of a (filmic) reality, but considered themselves to investigate on the world through intense observation practices. In order to generate significance and meaning, the audience was expected to engage with the shown material; it was conceptualized as immersing and participating in the event through the reception of the film. Nonetheless, the material of the film was still conceptualized as evidence. Used in an ethnographic context, this methodology was termed observational cinema.¹²³ It referred to an active passionate attention to the world,

¹²⁰ Rouch's most important films of the 1950s and early-1960s were *Les Maitre Fous* (1954), *Moi, un noir* (1957), *Chronique d'un été* (1961) and *Jaguar* (1967). The films give credits to Rouch's notion of "cine-transe" and "ethno-fiction". For an analysis of the films, see Grimshaw (2001, pp. 90-120).

¹²¹ Important films were *Primary* (1960), *Salesman* (1968) and *Titicut Follies* (1967). For an in-depth discussion, see Grimshaw & Ravetz (2009, pp. 24-50).

¹²² Nichols (1991) offers four different classifications of documentary film: the expository mode, the observational mode, the interactive mode and the reflexive mode. Within these categories, conventional documentary would engage in an expository mode, direct cinema in an observational mode and cinema vérité in an interactive mode.

¹²³ Roger Sandall (1972) used the term "observational" as a description of a kind of documentary. The term "observational cinema" as a genre dates back to Colin Young (2003, [orig. 1975]).

an attention, whose objective was not to control (Sandall, 1972). Its approach radically differed from the realist paradigm, in which the camera was considered to record data or illustrate arguments. Instead, the camera became deeply involved with the subjectivities of people and an all-knowing expert summary or narration was replaced with a variety of voices speaking in diverse ways and contexts. Leaving their privileged positions, anthropological filmmakers attempted to immerse themselves into the world, striving to be open and receptive towards the world. The method was observation, an approach that was considered to foster respect and carried an ethical stance (Grimshaw & Ravetz, 2009).

However, despite first being celebrated as a major breakthrough in ethnographic filmmaking, observational cinema quickly encountered serious criticism.¹²⁴ Already in 1975, David MacDougall (1995) argued that the “orthodoxy” of the observatory approach¹²⁵ involves a “self-denying tendency” (p. 118). Its “methodological asceticism” has strong limitations, given that an active search for information is forbidden and the filmmaker has to rely on what is given “naturally” in front of the camera; therefore, access to culture is also limited. The filmmaker “is denied access to anything they know but take for granted, anything latent in their culture, which events do not bring to the surface” (ibid., p. 124).¹²⁶ Since the audience is not being instructed, it learns through observing the events unfolding on screen. Observational films are “placing the viewer in the role of an observer, a witness of events. They are essentially revelatory rather than illustrative” (ibid., p. 116). Images on the screen are regarded as evidence for meaning-making.¹²⁷ Furthermore, the camera is not participatory but seems to be not there, an unseen presence able to deliver evidence through its ability to adopt countless perspectives and positions.¹²⁸ Hereby, the process of production, of filmmaking and meaning-making is mainly neglected. The camera wants to film things as if they would have happened anyway, to film people in an undisturbed interaction; an approach that seems to legitimize the “voyeurs peephole” or the surveillance camera. The camera

¹²⁴ Among the critics were MacDougall (1995, 1998), himself an early proponent of observational cinema, as well as Nichols (1991). MacDougall’s earlier film *To Live with Herds* (1972) is generally attributed to the observational style, while later films such as the Turkana trilogy, *Lorang’s Way* (1979), *A Wife Among Wives* (1981) and *The Wedding Camels* (1977), as well as the films with Australian aboriginal communities, give account of participatory approaches and can be read as a critique of the earlier approach. For a deeper analysis of the films, see Grimshaw (2001, pp. 121-149) and Loizos (1995, pp. 91-104).

¹²⁵ Here, he refers to methods used in the direct cinema approach.

¹²⁶ The films of David and Judith MacDougall used to focus their attention on people’s experiences in daily life, informal talks, etc.; they did not focus on ritual activities and special events.

¹²⁷ Nichols (1991) adds that the absence of a commentary and the disacknowledgement of the filmmaking process in the film itself foster the illusion that the audience partakes in an unmediated reality.

¹²⁸ Young (2003) argues that the fly on the wall argument is a misrepresentation of the observational style, since the filmmaker never pretended that there is no camera, but rather tried to film normal behavior in front of the camera.

figures as the invisible and the all-knowing at the same time, the “secret weapon in the pursuit of knowledge” (ibid., p. 120). Finally, the filmmaker is conceptualized as omnipotent, invisible and all knowing, able to grasp an event in its totality and provide evidence of it.

MacDougall argues that this “lonely approach”, within which the filmmaker has to neglect his or her presence, makes the audience an accomplice in a reinvention of the colonial legacy of separating the self and the other on rigid lines. He states:

It was once the European who decided what was worth knowing about ‘primitive’ peoples and what they in turn should be taught. The shadow of that attitude falls across the observational film (...). The traditions of science and narrative art combine in this instance to dehumanize the study of man. It is a form in which the observer and the observed exist in separate worlds, and it produces films that are monologues (ibid., pp. 124-125).

Film subjects are denied access to the film, as well as access to the filmmaker. The filmmakers, pretending to be not there at all, are not open for interactions with the subjects of the film; the production crew and the audience conceive of themselves as being separate from the seen, unable to interact and communicate. At the same time, the screen serves as a demarcation line and a protective shield. While immediate emotional reactions might arise, the audience remains in the secure locus of absolute separation. The observational filmmaker “becomes no more than the eye of the audience, frozen into their passivity, unable to bridge the separation between himself and his subjects” (ibid., p. 122). MacDougall further argues that instead of continuing a scientific paradigm in which the camera is seen as a high precision tool for data-gathering, a paradigm for which the recording of footage would be satisfactory - or unsatisfactory as we have seen at the beginning of the chapter - film could be used as a “medium of ideas” (ibid.).

On the other side, Grimshaw and Ravetz (2009) call for an acknowledgement of positive strands in observational cinema, proposing

to put to one side the familiar discussion that has both conflated and reduced the meaning of observation to a narrowly ocular strategy with a tall order of negative features - voyeurism, objectification, surveillance, looking not seeing, assumed transparency, concealed ideology, lack of reflexivity, quasi-scientific objectivity, the ethnographic present, and so on (p. 115).

Observation shall instead be reframed “as a particular kind of skilled practice, one that has the selective training of the filmmaker’s attention at its core” (ibid.).¹²⁹ Furthermore, observational cinema also gives credit to the body and senses, since “observational *sensibility*” is needed for good filming (ibid., p. 119, italics in the original).

2.3.2 Participatory Cinema

For David MacDougall (ibid.), participatory cinema lies “beyond observational cinema”, since it acknowledges the event of production and allows for an encounter between subjects and filmmaker.¹³⁰ He argues the

camera is there, and it is held by a representative of one culture encountering another (...). No ethnographic film is merely a record of another society: it is always a record of the meeting between a filmmaker and that society. Until now they have rarely acknowledged that an encounter has taken place (p. 125).

In an interview with Grimshaw and Papastergiadis (1995), he points out that participatory cinema speaks about three different kinds of participation:

One is the participation of the audience in constructing meaning. Then there’s the sense in which for the viewer, the film-makers are participating in the life of the subjects: they’re present, the film is contingent on the encounter between them. That’s a form of participation that also comes out in observational cinema, perhaps in a different way. And thirdly there’s the degree of participation in the life of the subjects in giving direction to the film (p. 40).

Participatory cinema tries to balance fundamental inequalities between the observer and the observed. It acknowledges the presence of the filmmaker as being fundamentally involved in the process of meaning-making, acknowledges audience participations in the negotiation of meaning and gives space for culture being “imprint[ed] directly upon the film” by the subjects themselves (MacDougall, 1995, p. 125). MacDougall (ibid.) points out that “by revealing his role, the filmmaker enhances the value of his material as evidence. By entering actively into the world of his subjects, he can provoke a greater flow of information about them”.

¹²⁹ With this perspective on observation, I refer to Grasseni (2007), who specifically points to a situated learning and the acquirement of “skilled visions”, which are “the result of concrete processes of education of attention, within situated practices and ecologies of culture, that are at the same time ‘vulnerable, unruly and evanescent as well as contested, collective and distributed’” (p. 7). Important is here a re-conceptualization of vision to skilled visions in plural form as local and shared practices, which are also necessarily connected to the other senses. This approach might add to the critical debate on ocularcentrism and panoptic vision.

¹³⁰ Nichols (1991) and Loizos (1995) agree with him on this issue.

Furthermore, film-elicitation is mentioned as a tool for gathering deeper data, for making corrections and gaining insights.¹³¹ Collaboration and joint authorship are additionally mentioned as promising and necessary strategies. Within participatory cinema, (audio-visual) ethnographic knowledge production is now conceptualized as an exchange, as a process and a dialogue involving two sides, rather than a process of simple data collection and scientific interpretation from one side. Interestingly, film is still seen as evidence and the encounter may be used as giving stronger credibility and validity to the filmic reality. Here, the pre-filmic reality is not in focus for mediation; nevertheless, the accumulation of information “about them” is positioned as an aim and therewith corresponds with the aim raised in observational cinema as well as realistic approaches in scientific cinema. I propose that the “entering actively into the world of his subjects” can be better described as actively entering into a co-produced process of meaning making of a world, which differs from ‘their world’ in that it is a shared world.

However, it should be noted that participatory ventures in knowledge production might also lead to confusions and criticism. Speaking about filmmaking in collaboration with Australian Aborigines, MacDougall himself talks about a precarious collaboration between (Western) filmmakers and Aborigines.

In those films one never really knows who is speaking for whom, and whose interests are being expressed. It is not clear what in the film is coming from us and what is coming from them (...) it’s a slightly uncomfortable marriage of interests that masks a lot of issues (Grimshaw & Papastergiadis, 1995, p. 45).

Responding to this matter, Papastergiadis rightly asks the question: “Wasn’t this confusion a logical extension of participatory cinema?” This question remains open; in any case, a reaction to this concern so far has involved a more clear-cut definition of voices in collaborative projects and a re-exploration of “the individual author’s voice” (Grimshaw & Ravetz, 2009, p. 79).¹³²

Nevertheless, we can summarize that ethnographic film departed from the objective and objectifying endeavor in anthropology and became increasingly subjective and reflexive until the 1980s and 1990s.¹³³ It developed in its approach from a realistic paradigm to an observational cinema and subsequently to a participatory cinema (Loizos, 1993).

¹³¹ A predecessor of film-elicitation practices as well as the participatory camera was Flaherty, with his work *Nanook of the North* (1922). Indeed, Rouch even integrated film-elicitation in his film *Cronique d’un été* (1961).

¹³² MacDougall’s film *Tempus de Baristas* (1993) can be cited as an example.

¹³³ For a history of the developments and innovations in ethnographic film, see Heider (1976), Loizos (1993), Ruby (2000) and Grimshaw (2001).

2.3.3 The Crisis of Representation

In the 1980s and 1990s, anthropology entered a “crisis of representation”, also called the “Writing Culture” debate (Clifford & Marcus, 1986), whereby the “monomedia practice” (Pink, 2006, p. 12) in anthropology¹³⁴, the written texts and their epistemological grounds for the representation of culture were considerably criticized from inside the discipline. Grand theories and scientific methodologies associated with the comparative paradigm and the notion of holistic cultures were accused of serving the European imperialistic endeavor (Clifford, 1986; Clifford & Marcus, 1986). As an outcome of this debate, anthropologists considered and reflected upon the constructedness of their texts and the power relations reflected therein. Especially regarding fieldwork and representation, individual standpoints and perspectives and therewith the subjectivity of the researcher’s and informant’s positions were discussed. Furthermore, the process in which this subjectivity is mirrored in the respective academic representations was reflected upon. As a result, an opening up in representational styles was granted, which allowed for experiments in the anthropological representation of culture and experience. Such experiments not only fostered new writing styles, new ways of representing culture, but also stressed the importance of the notion of reflexivity. Within this, new political awareness as well as subjective and reflexive approaches gained ground and were at least partially recognized in academia, opening the floor for visual methods of research and representation.

Regarding the issues raised in the “Writing Culture” debate and the “crisis of representation”, visual anthropologists can be considered as a kind of avant-garde. At the time of intense disciplinary debate, they were already able to refer to several filmmakers and project several possible solutions to the raised problems, pointing to key notions such as ethics, reflexivity¹³⁵, collaboration and inter-subjectivity.¹³⁶ For example, the reflexive approach in observational cinema is attributed to the works of Judith and David MacDougall in the 1970s and 1980s. Films reflect on the process of and the motivation for filmmaking. MacDougall insists that an integral reflection on the motives, experiences and conditions of research is not sufficient. Instead, a continuous account of the changing experiences, power relations and positions throughout the research should be an integral part of the film

¹³⁴ Following Pink (ibid.), until the 1980s, anthropology was a “monomedia anthropology, based on written text and verbal presentation”.

¹³⁵ Across disciplines, literature of the 21st century on visual methods discusses reflexivity as a key component of visual research and representation (Banks, 2001; Emmison, Smith, & Mayall, 2000; Pink, 2001, 2006; Rose, 2001; Ruby, 2000; van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2000).

¹³⁶ For example, Jean Rouch gave answers to the above-mentioned problems as early as the 1950s, while the films of the 1970s by Tim Asch, Barbara Myerhoff, Gary Kildea and Jorge Preloran can also be mentioned.

(MacDougall, 1998). Therefore, not only an account of the researcher's background and positioning needs to be given, but rather a whole and continuing process should be documented, in which positions are negotiated and re-negotiated and where knowledge is produced inter-subjectively. Furthermore, the collaborative or participatory approach questions the readability of given truths via observation, instead pointing to the fact that experiences and knowledge are produced in a complex process. It acknowledges that meaning could differ according to different contexts. Additionally, the notion of "the native voice" as a voice in direct dialogue with anthropological interpretation was an issue that was already discussed among ethnographic filmmakers (Ginsburg, 2002a, p. 214).¹³⁷ Moreover, strands in Visual Anthropology completely rejected the comparative paradigm, favoring instead the notion of "social agency" and "social intervention", therewith pointing to similarities or common concerns across cultures rather than outlining the differences between individuals in the respective cultures (MacDougall, 1998, p. 256).

2.3.4 Subject-Generated Cinema and Indigenous Media

While academic discourse on authority and authorship of culture was at its peak, novel filmic productions were enabled due to the new affordability and availability of light and easy-to-handle technological equipment. Since the 1970s and especially during the 1980s and early-1990s, former film subjects (indigenous, minority, disenfranchised) started to "shoot back", "reversing the colonial gaze by constructing their own visual media, telling their stories on their own terms" (Prins, 2004, p. 518). In a move that resembled the postcolonial strategy of "writing back" against colonial master-narratives, they challenged existing power relations in the representation of their own culture.

Subject-generated cinema relates to the conscious self-production of audio-visual representations by members of the represented community using an insider's point of view. It both encompasses and transcends indigenous media, as it incorporates a variety of communities, using visual media as a tool for self-expression, self-determination and identity construction. Following Ruby (1991), subject-generated media is used by "disenfranchised people in their efforts to negotiate a new cultural identity" (p. 50). It provides them (indigenous, minority) "with a way into the profits and power of the established order" (ibid.). Subjects increasingly demand and assert their right to take over control or at least participate in the construction of their own image and visual representation.

¹³⁷ Ruby (2000) argues that only reflexive, collaborative ethnographic films, which also give voice to the informants, could be called ethically correct visual representations.

In this regard, Ginsburg (2002a) defines indigenous media as a “cultural product and social process”, as a form of “cultural activism”, produced by people “who have been dominated by encompassing settler states such as the United States, Canada and Australia” (p. 212). Indigenous media producers identify themselves as members of “First Nations” or “Fourth World People”.¹³⁸ As such, indigenous media is different to national or independent media from Third World countries, as well as media produced by ethnic minorities who migrated to the First World. Ginsburg also locates indigenous media “within broader movements for cultural autonomy and political self-determination”, therefore having a political dynamic, which most often stands in contrast to the dominant culture. Thus, indigenous media is used as a “creative tool in the service of a new signifying practice” (ibid.). In this context, Prins (2004) labels the transformation and appropriation of new technologies to suit the aims of indigenous peoples as the “indigenization of visual media” (p. 516). In the following, I will provide a brief discussion of the debates relating to indigenous media within the discipline of Cultural Anthropology.

Sol Worth, a communication scholar and John Adair, an anthropologist, opened the academic inquiry about indigenous media in the 1960s. Their Navajo-project (Adair & Worth, 1972; see also *The Navajo People*, 1966) can be considered one of the first experiments with indigenous filmmaking. The objective was to teach film technology to selected Navajo without giving them instructions concerning the film’s subject matter, editing styles as well as aesthetics. The aim was to observe and study the views of indigenous people, including differences in grammar, selection, positioning and, accordingly, the Navajo worldview. However, given that processes of filmmaking, pre-production, viewing circumstances and social contexts, or to frame it in the words of Sam Yazzie¹³⁹: “Will making movies do the sheep good?”, were highly dismissed, the project lacked long lasting effects and is nowadays broadly criticized as patronizing. Furthermore, Deger (2006) mentions that the “forms of visuality and ways of seeing (...) explore[d] in *Through Navajo Eyes* (1972) derive from a linguistically inspired model”; film was seen as a “culturally coded text” (p. 38).

¹³⁸ Citing Daes, Wilson and Stewart (2008) identify indigenous as including “(a) priority in time with respect to occupying and using the resources of a particular territory; (b) the voluntary perpetuation of cultural distinctiveness (which may include language, social organization, religious and spiritual values, modes of production, laws, and institutions); (c) self-identification, as well as recognition by other groups or by the state authorities as a distinct collectivity, and (d) an experience of subjugation, marginalization, dispossession, exclusion, or discrimination, whether or not these conditions persist” (p. 14). Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are defined by the United Nations (1983) as “those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them” (p. 50, point 379).

¹³⁹ Sam Yazzie, elder and leading medicine man, represented the Navajo in early negotiations on the project.

One decade after the Navajo-project, issues of power, control over production, distribution and content, as well as the social implications and dimensions of media were highly discussed. Indigenous people, the former and often exotic objects of ethnographic film, started to produce their own images and filmic representations.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, indigenous media was initially often closely linked to applied anthropology¹⁴¹, bringing to the forefront indigenous issues such as cultural regeneration, documentation of injustices and specific cultural practices, as well as the reconstruction and reassertion of identity (Prins, 2002). Inuit Television is a famous example, given that it also includes Satellite transmission of small community video productions. Here, Ginsburg (2002b) points to the dynamic potential of visual technologies in revitalizing Inuit culture, arguing that indigenous media provide a “self-conscious means for cultural preservation and production and a form of political motivation” (p. 41).

Indigenous media became a distinct field of anthropological enquiry due to the major works of Terence Turner with the Kayapo in the Brazilian Amazon, Eric Michaels with the Walpiri in the Central Desert of Australia and Faye Ginsburg with the Inuit in Canada and aboriginal communities in Australia.¹⁴² Turner (1991a) argued that the usage of media through the Kayapo representing themselves transformed their social, political, historical and ethnic consciousness. It enabled them not only to participate in objectification processes and the display of their own culture and identity, but also amplified their sense of control over these processes (Turner, 2002). The Kayapo produced media, not only documenting internal political events but also their encounters with Brazilian state representatives. Video work helped to foster a Kayapo self-awareness in which culture and cultural difference were regarded as a political resource. Thus, cultural events were staged to not only archive, record or educate, but also to position and involve an international audience in their struggle against the state (Turner, 1991b). Therefore, through the use of media, the Kayapo executed agency. In this process, video became regarded as an increasingly important event to be recorded itself, rather than merely a technical tool only used for recording. However, as Turner (1992)

¹⁴⁰ Famous examples are Inuit producer and director Zacharias Kunuk and Hopi artist Victor Masayesva Jr.

¹⁴¹ Applied anthropology also has a strong colonial legacy. Ethnographic film, applied anthropology and colonialism became strongly interwoven in 1912 when the US used films to educate the Ifugao, Bontoc Igoro and Kalina in the Philippines, with the aim of promoting sanitary issues (de Brigard, 2003). From the 1990s onwards, applied anthropology was reinvented and exercised mainly as part of community work. The principles of reflexivity, participation and collaboration hold a privileged status. Since the beginning of the 21st century, it has again been intensely debated. See van Willigen (2002) and Wright (2006). Pink (2006) classifies John Collier Jr, Ian Dunlop, Roger Sandall, David MacDougall and Richard Chalfen as applied anthropologists.

¹⁴² Indigenous media in Australia is well researched and encompasses community production, TV and documentary productions, as well as feature films.

himself mentions, besides all of its positive outcomes, this work also created political and social conflicts and was highly criticized.

Criticism was raised, among others, by Faris (1992), who points to the fact that Kayapo media was highly influenced by existing power relations, the “nexes of power and history”, as well as national and international viewing expectations, the “external agency” (p. 175). He argues that the Kayapo enter the global village on pre-described grounds, already “situated by the West” and “not as equal participants” (ibid., p. 176).¹⁴³ Furthermore, Weiner (1997) is irritated by an imagined loss of pre-cinematic culture, due to technologically determined mechanisms that privilege the audio-visual above other forms of knowledge and representation and therewith foster, obscure or even destruct pre-existing, authentic cultural modes of expression and tradition. He argued that a “genuine (...) difference” is replaced with an “ersatz difference among electronic images” (p. 208). He notes, “we are replacing genuine historical and social difference with the connotation of it” (ibid., pp. 208-209). For Weiner, visual technologies produce a profound shift in indigenous culture; with the production of indigenous media, a mediation of culture takes place, which at the same time undermines the indigenous culture. Substantial criticism of indigenous media was also raised by Russell (1999), who points to the fact that indigenous media took over the problems within representation struggles and enhanced it through the use of a counter-strategic, incorporating predefined guidelines and frameworks as well as aesthetics and conventions of the West, thereby revitalizing hegemonic and objectifying regimes that were predominantly in use during the colonialist endeavor. It could further be argued that the very act of resisting a dominant culture might limit the potentiality of actions since the frame of resistance is a limited, limiting and predefined frame and has to be positioned against the already existing. This strategy might even lend itself to further reify the existing divide between the Other and the Self, or the indigenous and the West. However, Hamilton (1997), among others, is quick to mention that these pre-cinematic subjects predominantly no longer exist. In one way or another, contact with visual representations already took place and indigenous life-worlds underwent considerable changes, also regarding the visual technologies used. Indeed, Deger (2006) even attributes Weiner as holding a “patronizing attitude toward the indigenous media makers” (p. 56).

Pioneering work has also been undertaken by Michaels, who worked extensively with Warlpiri-speaking aboriginal people of the community of Yuendumu in the Central Desert,

¹⁴³ See also Moore (1994), who argues that only certain parts of culture lend themselves to visual mediation, while other parts will be dismissed, given that they cannot be represented visually.

near Alice Springs. He also helped to train Yuendumu filmmakers and built up a pirate broadcast of Warlpiri video and television. His report assesses the impact of television in remote aboriginal communities (Michaels, 1986). He argues against the hegemonizing effects of media technologies and the standard setting mechanisms of technological determinism¹⁴⁴ and instead points to the fact that the production and reception of media among the Warlpiri resonates with their own cultural predispositions and susceptibilities. Therefore, rather than being abstracted from society, technology is integrated into society. He further argues that instead of destroying or undermining local indigenous cultural practices and issues, local media productions would actively foster a “cultural future” based on cultural maintenance, traditional values and knowledge.¹⁴⁵ He states that a “cultural future can only result from political resistance” (Michaels, 1994). Furthermore, he also points to the Warlpiri “economy of knowledge”, whereby access to and distribution of knowledge is highly controlled and regulated, thus standing in juxtaposition to the free flow of information advertised in Western usages of media. His monograph of 1986 points to an invention of aboriginal television, whereby information on video was meant to travel predefined paths resonating with the travels of ancestral beings, thus creating a new television; a television that at least challenges theories of technological determinism and colonial infiltration through new technologies.¹⁴⁶ Michael’s work further expresses the importance of cultural contexts and social processes, therewith pointing to the role of interpretation in media reception and the influence of local meanings and concerns in shaping the text itself.¹⁴⁷

Ginsburg (2002a) also provides an account of the positive and negative outcomes of the far-reaching media activities in aboriginal communities in Australia and quotes Philip Batty, who argues that “resistance to global television” can only be

accomplished in any effective way, by gaining an active if basic knowledge of television technology, and applying that knowledge in locally relevant and meaningful ways, and thereby be in the position to develop the confidence and the community consciousness to deal with global television on an equal footing (p. 229).

¹⁴⁴ For Raymond Williams (2003), in technological determinism “research and development have been assumed as self-generating. The new technologies are invented as it were in an independent sphere, and then create new societies or new human conditions” (p. 6).

¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, as Deger (2006) has pointed out, the cultural future for the Warlpiri community remains highly linked to the traditional. Therefore, Michaels fails to transcend the dualistic categories of tradition and modernity and reiterates the close linkage of the local and the traditional with authentic culture.

¹⁴⁶ For a deeper reflection on the work of Michaels, see also Deger (2006, pp. 37-41) and Ruby (2000).

¹⁴⁷ In this regard, Deger (2006) says that his approach to Warlpiri media was constrained by an over-attention to encoding and interpretation processes, as well as by questions regarding access. Viewing videos was considered equivalent to reading texts, whereby the eye was seen as a tool for encoding and gathering information.

Ginsburg (ibid.) further states that indigenous media activities also challenged approaches in ethnographic film production. Despite both approaches sharing common aims, such as “mediating across cultural boundaries”, indigenous media is more concerned with “heal[ing] disruptions in cultural knowledge, in historical memory, and in identity between generations”, “offer[ing] a possible means (...) for reproducing and transforming cultural identity amongst people who have experienced massive political, geographic and economic disruption” and an “opportunity for influence and self expression”. On the other hand, ethnographic film is more concerned with creating “understanding between two groups separated by space and social practice”. Nonetheless, both approaches are shaping the “*processes* of identity construction” within and outside the community. Both works do “not try to recreate a pre-existent and untroubled cultural identity”; they “are not based on some retrieval of an idealized past but create and assert a position for the present that attempts to accommodate the inconsistencies and contradictions of contemporary life” (ibid., pp. 212-217, italics in the original). Ginsburg (ibid.) further argues that criticism raised in the cultural studies that any gaze and filmic representation of the “other” is essentially colonialist, that “we” and “them” are separate and “we” should stop to picture “them” since they are now able to picture themselves, is “built on the trope and mystique of the noble savage, living in a traditional bounded world, for whom all knowledge, objects and values originating elsewhere are polluting of some reified notion of culture and innocence” (p. 215).¹⁴⁸ For Ginsburg, indigenous cultures and subjectivities are “emergent, processual, and responsive” (Deger, 2006, p. 46). Indigenous media is used as a form of social practice, a self-conscious positioning within the politics of representation, a positioning that at the same time creates and represents contemporary indigenous subjectivities. Ginsburg further stresses that the long proclaimed indigenous “other” shall not be maintained to be positioned within a dichotomic order that recreates and rearticulates the discourse of the “other”, but should be included in analysis as a diverse yet shared representational practice on an equal standing. She sees ethnographic film and indigenous media as two distinct genres, but argues for incorporating both “within the same analytical frame” (Ginsburg, 2002a, p. 216). Using the metaphor of a “parallax effect”¹⁴⁹ she states that indigenous media has an “epistemologically positive impact” on ethnographic film (Ginsburg,

¹⁴⁸ The Faustian dilemma and the global village can be identified as the major paradigms used regarding the positioning of indigenous media activities. For a detailed discussion, see Erlewein (2011).

¹⁴⁹ Parallax refers here to the Greek *parallaxis*, which denotes change and alternation. Developed in astronomy, the parallax effect describes “the phenomenon that occurs when a change in the position of the observer creates the illusion that an object has been displaced or moved; this effect is harnessed to gain a greater understanding (...). In optics, the small parallax created by the slightly different angles of vision of each eye enables us to judge distances accurately and see in three dimensions” (ibid).

1995, p. 65). For Ginsburg, the cinematic representation of culture appears different when seen through the perspective of indigenous media and ethnographic film, respectively, and a juxtaposition or combination of these “slightly different angles of vision” will allow for a better understanding of the complex phenomenon we call culture (ibid.).

Today, indigenous media

have emerged from geographically scattered, locally based production centres to become part of globally linked media networks with increased effectiveness and reach (...). Indigenous media now occupy a significant place not only in local cultures and communities but also in national and global media discourses, policies, industries, and funding structures (Wilson & Steward, 2008, p. 2).

In sum, a new genre of film emerged in the 1980s and 1990s that was variously called indigenous media or subject-generated cinema. Herein, former objects of the Western middle class gaze and filmic ethnographic investigation started to produce their own representations and speak for themselves on their own behalf. Media was used as a social, cultural and political tool for the (re)construction of cultural identities, knowledge and historical memory. It provided indigenous or minority groups with influence and agency to advance self-chosen issues and served as a means for self-positioning and self-assertion. Academic attention and debate shifted from methodological approaches to and conceptual understandings of media production towards an enhanced interest in the politics of representation, the cultural players involved in the making of film, their right to speak and represent, as well as implications and usages of film by the target audiences.

2.4 The Corporeal: The Body and the Senses

An anthropology of the senses has developed since the late-1980s, with concepts such as the body, senses and experience, as well as notions like the emotional and affective discussed in reflexive and phenomenological strands in visual ethnography.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, they have also become a topic of interest across the disciplines over the past decade. It has been argued within Visual Anthropology that some aspects of knowledge and experience are best represented visually (MacDougall, 1997). However, this notion of the potential of ethnographic film is not shared by Pink (2004, 2006), who adds that some other aspects are better communicated and represented through the wider sensorium of smell, touch or sound.

¹⁵⁰ For an account of anthropology and the senses, see Howes (2003); see also Wulf (2013, pp. 119-124).

Pink (2006) further points to the risk of mixing up personal feelings, shaped by individual and cultural biographies, with feelings perceived as the audio-visually represented people's feelings. Experiences and feelings need to be contextualized, so it should be made explicit what these experiences mean in the respective cultural context. It has further been argued that members of other cultures might not use the same sensory categories and might not attach the same relevance and meaning to the respective sensory impressions as a Western-trained anthropologist (Geurts, 2002).

Deepening a little further into the vision of David MacDougall (1998), it can be argued that ethnographic film has the potential for "transcultural communication" of subjective experience, an objective that written ethnography has more difficulties in achieving. In other words, visual and verbal metaphors might foster an empathetic interpretation of emotions and sensations of individual sensory experience, which seem to be similar across different cultures. He argues: "In still pictures, as in films, the strangeness of even the most exotic subject was counterbalanced by a sense of familiarity" (ibid., p. 245). Rather than pointing to the differences between societies and cultures, which was long the focus in the social sciences, films point to the commons, to the known and accustomed.

Throughout the history of ethnographic film, this underlining of the visible continuities of human life has challenged, and in a sense, opposed anthropology's prevailing conceptions of culture and cultural difference. Ethnographic films have been widely understood as transcultural, in the familiar sense of crossing cultural boundaries (...) but they are also transcultural in another sense: that of defying such boundaries. They remind us that cultural difference is at best a fragile concept, often undone by perceptions that create sudden affinities between ourselves and others apparently so different from us (ibid.).

In other words, while anthropology was historically engaged with cultural differentiation, "images revealed a world of more modulated and overlapping identities" (ibid., p. 248). MacDougall (ibid.) raises the question: "On what basis, or in what particulars do we define human groups as culturally 'other'?" (p. 249). Moreover, he argues that Visual Anthropology is participating in a "countercurrent" against the prevalent "cultural boundaries in the modern world, including that most persistent one, between 'us' and 'them'" (ibid., p. 248). He argues that the content of a visual representation is

overwhelmingly physical and psychological before it is cultural. It therefore transcends 'culture' in a way that most written ethnographic descriptions do not – both by subordinating cultural differences to other more visible contents (including other kinds of

differences, such as physical ones) and by underscoring commonalities that cut across cultural boundaries (ibid., p. 252).

He stresses that, in “contrast to ethnographic writing this transculturality is a dominant feature of ethnographic films” (ibid.). According to MacDougall, audio-visual representations are transcultural in the sense that they point to human conditions and relations beyond culture, which could be named biological, physical or psychological; moreover, they might be even called “counter-cultural” (ibid., p. 260), given that they also focus on the non-cultural.

The film theorist Marks¹⁵¹ (2000) takes this point further and investigates the sensual dimension of film regarding production and reception. She explicitly focuses on touch and how it is represented or reproduced using the materiality of film. Marks (ibid.) phrased the term “intercultural cinema” (p. 5), which points to a cinema that takes place beyond or besides the institutional modes of representation, an intercultural phenomenon that tries to express the former hidden and oppressed, which resists the dominant, the linear and the uni-phonic narratives, a cinema, where the haptic in filmic representation and experience is particularly emphasized.¹⁵² Marks mainly focused on migrant and diasporic cinema.¹⁵³ Nevertheless, several of her points are also of interest to us. Her thesis is that even though the access to audio-visual media is mainly through the eyes and ears, other sensory experiences are triggered and memorized. For Marks, “intercultural cinema” involves a “haptic visuality”. She says that “vision itself can be tactile, as though one were touching a film with one’s eyes”. Therefore, Marks conceives film as having a “skin”, which offers contact between the represented and the receiver or audience. The materiality film and video is regarded as “impressionable and conductive” (ibid., xi-xii). Not only do the films leave impressions on the audience, the receivers, but also the films themselves receive “impressions from the people who have seen them” (ibid., xii). Marks argues:

¹⁵¹ Major work, particularly focusing on the relationship of culture, knowledge/power and visuality has also been conducted outside the discipline of anthropology. Here, I will mainly refer to Laura Marks (2000), but I would also like to mention the works of Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989), Rachel Moore (1994), Bill Nichols (1994) and Fatimah Rony (1996). These film theorists point to the colonialist legacy, the objectification and appropriations, produced in films about cultural others, as well as the crucial relationship between film and the knowledge/power regimes.

¹⁵² Marks (2000) identified the years between 1985 and 1995 as a major period for intercultural cinema.

¹⁵³ She specifies that “most of the work comes from the new cultural formations of Western metropolitan centres, which in turn have resulted from global flows of immigration, exile and diaspora” (ibid., p. 1). Major works were made by “cultural minorities living in the West”. Nevertheless, Marks notes that “this movement is an international phenomenon, produced wherever people from different cultural backgrounds live together in the power-inflected spaces of diaspora, (post- or neo-) colonialism, and cultural apartheid. Intercultural cinema is characterized by experimental styles that attempt to represent the experience of living between two or more cultural regimes of knowledge, or living as a minority in the still majority white euro-American West” (ibid.).

The cinematic encounter takes place not only between my body and the film's body, but my sensorium and the film's sensorium. We bring our own personal and cultural organization of the senses to cinema, and cinema brings a particular organization of the senses to us, the filmmaker's own sensorium refracted through the cinematic apparatus. One could say that intercultural spectatorship is the meeting of two different sensorial systems, which may or may not intersect. Spectatorship is thus an act of sensory translation of cultural knowledge (ibid., p. 153).

Furthermore, Marks (ibid.) argues that the "contingent and contagious circumstances of intercultural cinema events effect a transformation in its audience. As hybrids, the works challenge the separateness of cultures and make visible the colonial and racist power relations that seek to maintain this separation" (xii).

Visual representation may not just invoke uni-sensual experience, but rather an array of sensual experiences and therefore differs in the production of knowledge. This difference, as well as difference in filmic productions, is welcomed (Moore, 1994). On the other hand, Deger (2006) criticizes the focus on alterity in "filmic language" as a tool for asserting or challenging cultural difference, rightly making the point that "this is a difference of alterity only, one that gains its strength from and against the dominant discourses of the West (male, colonial, white), one that doesn't consider adequately the cultural contexts and meanings from which these works derive" (p. 52). Nonetheless, the intertangledness of the mimetic and mnemonic, as well as the sensuous impressions that arise in the encounter of the image with the viewer and the imaged, are worth been studied in depth and might hint at a shared space in which the rigid dichotomic structure of self and other, subject and object, dwindles.

2.5 The Social Context

Banks (2001) identifies three main categories of questions to be asked in

social research about pictures: (i) what is the image of, what is its content (ii) who took it or made it, when and why? and (iii) how do other people come to have it, how do they read it, what do they do with it? (p. 7).

The relationship between the social context and content of the image is understood by Banks (ibid.) as an image having an internal and external narrative, the first referring to the content of the image and the second to "the social context that produced the image and the social relations within which the image is embedded at any moment of viewing" (pp. 11-12). He rejects the idea that an image has a coherent stable meaning that simply needs to be read and

uncovered by the audience and argues for the importance of the social meanings of images; therefore, he proposes going beyond the visual text. Moreover, Ruby (2000) strongly argues in favor of focusing on the social practices of media. He holds the opinion “that it is time for ethnographic film-makers to stop being concerned with making ‘important’ films and to become more interested in how their work affects the people they portrait and those who view the images” (ibid., p. 221). Furthermore, Ginsburg (1994) points to the fact that textual practices are socially embedded. Labelling this as “embedded aesthetics”, she argues that the concern for social relations and a concern for textual content of a production is highly interlinked and cannot be separated. Therefore, the “extratextual objectives” such as the work’s “capacity to embody, sustain, and even revive or create certain social relations” are and have to be taken into account in the evaluation of productions (ibid., p. 368).

Furthermore, Rose, a cultural geographer¹⁵⁴, asks to take the social and textual aspects of images into account, pointing to the relevance of cultural significance, social practices and impacts of viewing. According to Rose (2007, pp. 13-25), meanings of images are made at three levels: during production, at the image and through what she calls “audiencing”.¹⁵⁵ She differentiates respectively between the technological, the compositional and the social. Rose further points to the importance of social aspects and contexts to the production of meanings in images. She also stresses reflection on the complex processes of decoding and how “different audiences might react differently to the same image”; therefore, different viewing by various audiences might occur (ibid., p. 206). Similar interests have also been marked in Visual Culture Studies. Lister and Wells (2001) point to “an image’s social life and history”, the “cycle of production, circulation and consumption through which their meanings are accumulated and transformed” (p. 64). Looking is regarded as embodied activity, undertaken by an individual subjective person, having a specific identity. Visual meanings are therefore personal and framed in a wider context. There “is no neutral looking. An image’s or thing’s significance is finally its significance for some-body and some-one” (ibid., p. 65).

¹⁵⁴ Social Anthropology and Sociology were mainly concerned with the social uses of visual material, whereas cultural geography or cultural studies, media studies and visual culture studies focused on the study of the images themselves.

¹⁵⁵ Rose (2007) borrows the term “audiencing” from Fiske (1994) and applies the term to the “process by which a visual image has its meanings renegotiated, or even rejected, by particular audiences watching in specific circumstances” (p. 22).

2.6 Concluding Remarks

The question of how appropriate audio-visual representations of ICH practices can be produced, both by anthropologists and filmmakers and through collaborations with local people and indigenous filmmakers can be at least partially answered by looking at the aforementioned methodological approaches to audio-visual representation as they have been invented and developed in the discipline of Social and Cultural Anthropology.

This chapter has shown that anthropology initially followed the enlightenment vision and strived to make the world visible and knowable by means of advanced technology. Early endeavors in ethnographic film were closely interconnected with colonialism, the evolutionist paradigm and a belief in straightforward progress. However, with the First World War, confidence in evolutionism, progress as well as sight as a privileged source of knowledge became shattered. After the war, methodologies in anthropology also changed, placing long-term fieldwork and participant observation, thus the Malinowskian approach, at its center. Instead of vision that was based on mere technology, a vision was cultivated that was based on learning, on immersion into the other's culture. After the war, anthropology focused on literary representations of culture and visual representations were largely categorized as popular, entertaining and thus non-academic. After Malinowski, anthropological practice also largely abandoned evolutionism and racial categorization; furthermore, it increasingly dissociated itself from the salvage paradigm and the culture of collection, exposition and display. Nonetheless, Mead was exceptional in two ways. She not only extensively applied visual technologies in her research and thus followed a scientific agenda that was rather reminiscent of early anthropological endeavors, but also practiced salvage ethnography and aimed at the preservation of disappearing cultures through recording on film. However, in her work, visual representations - unedited footage acquired via sequential and technology-dominated filming – functioned as data sets and research materials; the camera was used as a note-taking instrument and representations were meant to be interrogatory rather than illustrative and expository. In the context of independence struggles and civil rights movements, two entirely new strands in the representation of culture developed: *cinéma vérité* and observational cinema. Within the first modus of documentary film, the notion of *ciné-transe* was given attention. Rouch conceptualized the camera as embodied, as an extension of the body and a transformative agent. Rather than harnessing objectivity and detachment, he entered into intense interaction with subjects of the film and even stimulated confrontation and provocation in order to create a new space for intercultural understanding. He strived to

break down borders between the self and the other, as well as between reality and imagination, also considering imagination as an agent of transformation. Within observational cinema, the notions of respect and ethics adopted prime importance. Here, rather than talking about the subjects of films, filmmakers aimed at listening to subjects, abandoning their privileged positions, expertise and authority; they gave space to the mediation of a variety of different voices and positions. Nonetheless, observational cinema, and particularly direct cinema, still did not engage in direct dialogue and exchange with the subjects. The camera, located at a distance, continued to mark a demarcation line, whereby existing power relations were also (re)manifested with this line. Participatory cinema marked a turning point in this regard. Here, not only the dynamics of the filmmaking process were acknowledged, but also subjects of the film were allowed to imprint their culture directly on film. The filmmaker was acknowledged as part of the ethnographic situation and part of the event of film. Furthermore, anthropological knowledge was reconceptualized as being created within and through dialogue, exchange and interrelation between individuals and members of diverse cultures, rather than “existing as a block of disembodied knowledge apart from intersubjective exchange” (Grimshaw, 2008, p. 304), waiting to be discovered. The central notion in participatory cinema and collaborative films is conversation, the creation of conditions that allow for the generation of knowledge rather than the exchange of existing information (ibid.). Shared authorship is one of the means in reaching this aim. The “Writing Culture” debate in the 1980s finally marked anthropology’s reflexive and postmodern turn, whereby concepts of culture, methods as well as practices of representation were rethought. Participatory cinema was used to generate platforms for the articulation of the subject’s points of views, as well as the support of their needs and aspirations. In the 1980s and 1990s, former film subjects also increasingly gained access to media technologies and were enabled to generate their own filmic representations, to use media for their own sake, shooting back to (colonial) master narratives and reasserting their own cultural identity. Moreover, anthropological filmmakers supported them in their endeavors, enabling access to technologies and know-how. Even though subject-generated cinema proved useful as tools for empowerment, the revitalization of cultural practices and the assertion of identity, in particular indigenous media activists were accused of fostering change within indigenous cultures, as well as being naive agents of a Western-dominated visualist project. While academic debate centered on the benefits and drawbacks of media usage, indigenous, minority and disenfranchised communities and groups all over the world embraced the new possibilities for articulating, representing and positioning themselves within the politics of

culture and representation. They welcomed opportunities that allowed them to exercise control over visual representations of their culture and film became increasingly polyphonic and multilayered, giving space to diverse and even rival interpretations of social reality. Finally, this chapter also paid tribute to the body and the senses, as well as the potentials of film in transcultural communication and the mediation of the commons. Last but not least, it stressed the social contexts of film, not only in terms of production of filmic representations, but also in terms of its reception and consumption.

Recapitulating the history of ethnographic film and the diverse methodological approaches to the generation of knowledge, I argue that in the context of the safeguarding of ICH, we should take seriously the challenges and opportunities that new technologies offer to subjects who have long been the objects of anthropological inquiry and colonial gazes, and offer or maintain dialogic possibilities. We should try not to fall back to practices and approaches reminiscent of the turn of the century anthropology and rather engage in practices that foster respect and dissolution of the rigid framing of the self and the other. A bricolage, the conscious assembly and recombination of cultural forms, might resist models of traditional culture, which again have been imposed on the communities to a certain extent; they might open up a broader spectrum of cultural identity and heritage for mediation and representation, a spectrum which might also reach beyond the defense of an ‘authentic’ or revived cultural identity and tradition. Indeed, subject generated media and participatory media can be considered significant circuits through which culture may be shaped and re-shaped and through which heritage-related knowledge and cultural identity can be generated and mediated. Nonetheless, it might be asked how subject-generated media and shared representations¹⁵⁶ alter understandings of culture and heritage? One answer is that these media might break the circuit of creating products for the consumption and reassertion of a dominant position within the culture of dominance and might be of interest to both cultures. I argue for a dynamic account of mediations of ICH experiences and life-worlds, linking the traditional with the modern, the past with the present and the future, and the local with the global. I hold the opinion that when approaching visual representations as acts of performances rather than empirically realist portraits of culture, we acknowledge our all temporal, spatial and cultural embeddedness, we acknowledge change and the crumbling of the rigid order of the self and the other and might instead configure an - at least visual - space for the shared.

¹⁵⁶ Shared representations might refer to aspects mentioned by Pink (2006) for applied visual anthropological endeavors, such as the representation of experience “in ways that are framed culturally and institutionally to give the target audience a sense of it that is in a familiar ‘language’ but simultaneously causes them to stand back from their existing knowledge and experience to understand new forms” (p. 101).

Chapter 3: The Kutiyattam Sanskrit Theatre

3.1 Introduction

Following the above elaborations on the concept of ICH and the exemplification of various conceptualizations of media and the representation of culture, the following chapters will attend to one particular cultural expression, the Kutiyattam Sanskrit theatre, which was proclaimed one of the *Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* in 2001 (UNESCO, 2006) and subsequently inscribed on the *Representative List* in 2008.¹⁵⁷ Hereby, its distinctive characteristics, formation and development are analyzed in an initial chapter, followed by the terms, conditions and impacts of practices of audio-visual representation in a further chapter. Thus, one particular case study is intensely investigated to derive empirically based insights into the concept of ICH and its representation through audio-visual means.

Kutiyattam refers to the traditional Sanskrit theatre, performed in the state of Kerala in southwest India.

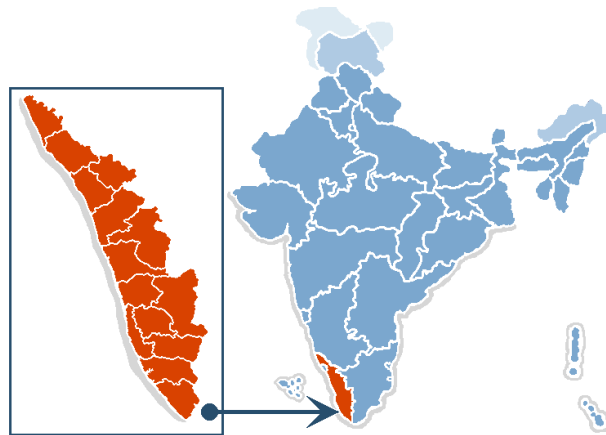


Fig. 4: Map showing the location of Kerala in India (Wikimedia Commons).

The Sanskrit theatre tradition can be traced back to *Bharata's Natyashastra*, the ancient Sanskrit treatise on dramaturgy and art, which was written between 200 BC and AD 200.¹⁵⁸ As the Sanskrit scholar K.G. Paulose (2006) argues, the time between 500 BC and AD 400 can be described as the golden era of Sanskrit theatre. During this time, a pan-Indian performance style might have existed, accompanying only minor regional variations. However, during the following 500 years, the theatrical practice slowly but steadily declined, with a predominant focus instead on the play-texts. The period since the 11th century AD was

¹⁵⁷ For the *Representative List*, see <http://www.unesco.org/culture/intangible-heritage/masterpiece.php>.

¹⁵⁸ Dates of the *Natyashastra* are highly disputed among scholars, with some arguing that parts of the treatise were added until the 5th century AD and earliest references might have their origins even in the 5th century BC.

one of heavy decline, with regional languages establishing themselves all over India and regional performance practices emerging, which first borrowed heavily from the Sanskrit tradition and later became autonomous in format and style. Their popularity marginalized the Sanskrit theatre, which finally disappeared due to its inability to adapt and mingle with indigenous formats (ibid., pp. 41-57). However, Kutiyattam in Kerala remained an exception, marking the only surviving tradition of Sanskrit theatre worldwide. On the other hand, Kutiyattam also rests on elements that differ strongly from this tradition, or share no common ground at all. The innovations of King *Kulasekhara Varma* in the 11th/12th century¹⁵⁹ marked the deviation from the pan-Indian tradition of Sanskrit theatre, which was heavily losing ground in other parts of India; indeed, it was during his period that Kutiyattam slowly evolved as a tradition. Notably, being under royal patronage, drama catered to an elite audience in a secular setting during that time, and it was only in the succeeding centuries that Kutiyattam became attached to the temples.

However, on an international and non-academic scale, Kutiyattam is often presented as a temple-based “sacred theatre” and millennia old tradition. For example, the popular webpage Wikipedia introduces Kutiyattam in the following way: “Kutiyattam, is a form of Sanskrit theatre traditionally performed in the state of Kerala, India. Performed in the Sanskrit language in Hindu temples, it is believed to be 2,000 years old” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koodiyattam>). Furthermore, in a short text on UNESCO’s webpage, introducing the newly proclaimed *Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*, the first line reads:

Kutiyattam is a form of sacred theatre which was originally performed in temple theatres (...). The use of fire as a sign of the divine, the sanctification of the stage and the purification of the actors, along with the sacred power of the performance, support a view that Kutiyattam theatre derives from a sacrificial ritual (http://www.unesco.org/bpi/intangible_heritage/india.htm).

Additionally, the document presented to UNESCO and Japan-Funds-in-Trust after the proclamation, outlining the budget for the proposed action plan, describes Kutiyattam as follows:

Kutiyattam is the oldest existent classical Sanskrit theatre of India. It has a history of about two thousand years and is a unique phenomenon in the history of Sanskrit theatre, by being the only surviving link to the otherwise lost tradition of performance of Sanskrit plays (Gopalakrishnan, n.d.).

¹⁵⁹ The exact dates are highly disputed among academics in Kerala.

Moreover, the description of Kutiyattam after its inscription on the *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* shows a preoccupation with antiquity, whereby we read:

Kutiyattam, Sanskrit theatre, which is practised in the province of Kerala, is one of India's oldest living theatrical traditions. Originating more than 2,000 years ago, Kutiyattam represents a synthesis of Sanskrit classicism and reflects the local traditions of Kerala" (<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/00010>).

Indeed, the Kutiyattam Sanskrit theatre is not what Sanskrit theatre might have been 2,000 years ago.¹⁶⁰ The local environment has strongly affected and conditioned its practices, with Kutiyattam instead representing a unique synthesis of Sanskrit and local Dravidian traditions of Kerala. Indigenous practices localized the tradition and this process proved substantial for the very survival of the art.

In fact, the ways in which we as scholars approach Kutiyattam and how it is represented by artists and stakeholders themselves has shifted across time and been highly influenced by a number of historical developments that gave direction to new ideas and established new contextual references. Therefore, in order to understand Kutiyattam, it is necessary to trace the theatre's social, cultural, economic and political history, which the following sections intend to achieve. However, before detailing the history of Kutiyattam, it is also necessary to provide a brief outline of its main characteristics and distinctive features.

3.2 A description of Kutiyattam

3.2.1 Distinction

Kutiyattam has a set of distinctive characteristics. First, it is traditionally performed by specific communities, namely the *Chakyars* and the *Nambiars/Nangiars*. The terms *Chakyar* in *Malayalam* and *Sakkiyar* in *Tamil* are related to the Sanskrit terms *Slaghya* and *Sakya*: the first means adept, celebrated and refers to the *Chakyars*' proficiency in art (histrionic and verbal narration); while the second refers to a Buddhist mendicant. On the other hand, a *Cakkaiyan* in Tamil language is a professional in drama and dance (Nair, 1995a, p. 15).¹⁶¹ In Kutiyattam, the *Chakyars*¹⁶² traditionally enact the male (for some maestros, see appendix 3, figures 6-10) and the *Nangiars* the female roles, with one exception of the demoness

¹⁶⁰ In the absence of a variety of detailed historical sources, the practical enactment of ancient Sanskrit drama remains largely unknown and can only be partially reconstructed.

¹⁶¹ Gundert (1991) mentions in his dictionary the following explanation: "cakki pl. hon. cakkiyar, cakyar N. pr. A Caste of half-brahmans, who sing and dance for Gods & Brahmins" (p. 352).

¹⁶² The women in this community are called *Ilottama*. They do not participate in theatrical practice.

Surpanakha, who is also enacted by the *Chakyars*. Furthermore, the *Nangiar*s recite the *slokas* (verses) and play the basic rhythm on a small pair of bell-metal cymbals called *Kuzhithalam*. The *Nambiar*s, male members of the latter community, traditionally play the *Mizhavu*, a large belly shaped copper drum¹⁶³, which is the main accompanying instrument in Kutiyattam. They further assist the *Chakyars* in make-up, costume and specific stage activities (M.M. Chakyar, 1995). Traditionally, they are not allowed to enact the roles of a *Chakyar* on stage. However, they entertain a form of theatre that resembles *Chakyarkuttu*, which is called *Patakam*. Both communities consider the practice and transmission of Kutiyattam as their *kuladharm*a, as their traditional and hereditary profession, right and duty (A.M. Chakyar, 1995b). Within caste hierarchy, they belong to the *ambalavasi* communities, the temple castes.¹⁶⁴ They are positioned below the *Namboodiris* (Brahmins)¹⁶⁵ and above the *Nayars*, and follow a matrilineal lineage system, *marumakkattayam*, wherein performance rights are passed from the maternal uncle (*ammavan*) to the nephew. Until the mid-20th century, female members of both communities entertained hypergamous marriages and practiced so-called *sambandham* relations with *Namboodiri* men. The children of such liaisons became *Chakyars*. Furthermore, *Nangiar*s also used to have *sambandham* relations with *Chakyar* men. In this particular form of marriage, offspring are socially accepted and, following matrilineal and matrilocal regulations, integrated into the family of the women, hence becoming *Nangiar* or *Nambiar*. Even though law, which practically affected all newborn babies after 1975, banned the *marumakkattayam* system¹⁶⁶, the matrilineal lineage system is still considered relevant in the context of Kutiyattam. Furthermore, all *Chakyars* are bound to the performance practice, having to perform a stage debut (*arangettam*) before they undergo the initiation ceremony (*upanayanam*) (A.M. Chakyar, 1995a).¹⁶⁷ However, not all of them continue the practice of the art thereafter, with the Kutiyattam practicing *Chakyars* comprising fewer than twenty in number today. Moreover, members of the *Nangiar/Nambiar* community are only entitled to their name and status after they have performed their stage debut (Paniker, 2005). In Kerala, eighteen *Chakyar* families¹⁶⁸ performed Kutiyattam as part

¹⁶³ In early days, clay vessels were used (Nambiar, 1995).

¹⁶⁴ *Ambalavasi* are temple-serving castes in Kerala. Herein, *Chakyars*, who undergo the *upanayanam* ceremony and are allowed to wear the sign of *Brahmanic* identity, the sacred thread, are considered of higher rank than the *Nambiar*s, who do not wear the thread.

¹⁶⁵ The *Chakyars* originated as illegitimate offspring of *Namboodiri* (Brahmin)-ladies with men belonging to a lower rank than them (Nair, 1995a; Vatsyayan, 1980).

¹⁶⁶ See also Jeffrey (1993, pp. 43-44).

¹⁶⁷ See also Śliwczynska (2007, p. 112).

¹⁶⁸ According to Kaladharan (2007), each of the eighteen zones of ancient Kerala entertained one *Chakyar* family, who held the privilege of performing *Kuttu* and Kutiyattam in the respective temples of the area.

of their hereditary profession.¹⁶⁹ However, by the 1960s only one-third of these families remained in practice (Jones, 1967; Raja, 1964), with fewer than fifteen people professionally engaged in the art form. By the 1980s, several families had merged, with others becoming practically extinct and a mere number of three traditional families devoting their life to the art (Vatsyayan, 1980), among them the Koypa (also known as Painkulam), Mani and Ammannur families.¹⁷⁰

Traditionally, *Chakyar* families maintained a family *Gurukulam*. In this system of education, not only were theatrical techniques taught, but also studies of Sanskrit literature, the *Puranas*, *Natakas* and *Kavyas*, as well as the science of logic and grammar were provided (M.M. Chakyar, 1995). Moreover, the *Nambiars* who traditionally support the *Chakyars* had to study Sanskrit literature, the *Puranas* and other legendary stories, as well as the Sanskrit plays (Nambiar, 1995). Together with the *Namboodiri - Brahmins*, they were the “principal repositories of the Sanskrit literary tradition” (Jones, 1967, p. 28).¹⁷¹ Originally, there were almost twenty *Nambiar/Nangiar* families who acknowledged Kutiyattam as their family tradition.¹⁷² Each of the families transmitted and preserved specific manuals as a joint family property. These manuals consist of *Attaprakarams*, acting manuals in *Malayalam*, which describe in great detail the verses used on stage and how they shall be enacted, and *Kramadipikas*, stage manuals, which provide background information, make-up and costume details, as well as guidance regarding how specific characters enter and move on stage. Thus, information on textual interpretations and elaborations are provided in the *Attaprakarams*, while acting instructions are discussed in the *Kramadipikas* (Nambiar, 1995; Pisharoti, 1995). The manuals are transmitted in the form of palm-leave manuscripts, and they remain in the custody of the *Chakyar* and *Nambiar/Nangiar* families today. Besides, each family had their own costumes, specific rendition of *slokas* and codes of presentation. Indeed, knowledge and artifacts were exclusive; they were transmitted from generation to generation and were rarely revealed outside the boundaries of the respective family.¹⁷³ Consequently, given that documentation and preservation facilities were only minimal until the last decade of the past century, many intricacies and subtleties in variation in style and the fourfold concept of acting in Kutiyattam were lost.

¹⁶⁹ For detailed information on the families and artists, see P.R. Chakyar (1995b), Menon (1995, pp. 128-140) and Venugopalan (2007, pp. 93-110).

¹⁷⁰ The Kidangoor and Pothiyil families are noteworthy. The Kuttanchery family stopped performing after 1918.

¹⁷¹ Jones (ibid.) argues that *Chakyars* and *Nambiars* were not only actors and musicians, but also scholars, highly proficient in *Sanskrit* and *Malayalam* literature.

¹⁷² For details, see Venugopalan (2007, pp. 111-115).

¹⁷³ Nair (1995a; 1995c) notes that *Attaprakarams* and *Kramadipikas* were rather protected properties, only accessible by the *Chakyars* themselves.

The traditional repertoire in Kutiyattam focuses on Sanskrit plays by *Bhāsa*, *Kulaśēkhara Varma*, *Śaktibhadra*, *Nīlakaṇṭha*, *Mahēndra Vikrama Varma* and others. Overall, over a dozen Kutiyattam plays were already in use in the 1980s (Vatsyayan, 1980). However, the performance is solely based on single acts or even parts of single acts from the plays. These are highly elaborated and staged as full-fledged plays, traditionally lasting between 5 and 41 days.¹⁷⁴ The texts are recited in different sound-themes (*svaras*), which accommodate and enhance the mood and characteristics of the character on stage. According to the different schools, between 21 and 24 themes of recitation can be differentiated (K.R. Chakyar, 1995b; Paulose, 2006).¹⁷⁵ The recitation has a certain resemblance to the Vedic chanting of *Namboodiri*-Brahmins in Kerala (Moser, 2008; Nair, 1995a; Nambiar, lecture demonstration, January 15, 2012; Paniker, 2005; Rajagopalan, 1995; Vatsyayan, 1980).

Furthermore, Kutiyattam has been institutionalized in the temple, becoming intimately linked with temple-worship.¹⁷⁶ Temples assigned performance rights to specific families and performances took place according to an annual calendar. Kutiyattam is traditionally performed in a *Kuttampalam*, a highly formalized and permanent theatre hall (see appendix 3, figures 12-18), which is attached to several major temples in Kerala.¹⁷⁷ Theatres are situated on the temple ground to the right side of the deity and face the deity. In case the temples had no *Kuttampalam*¹⁷⁸ at their disposal, the performance took place in a hall attached to the temple.¹⁷⁹ The *Kuttampalam* itself is a “sacred structure” (Richmond & Richmond, 1985, p. 52) and Kutiyattam is often perceived as a ritual event, a sacrifice, conducted within sacred space. Indeed, performance space is ritually consecrated, whereby the actor or actress, believed to enter the world of the sacred, is no longer affected by incidents of the profane world. For example, once the actor or actress has tied the red cloth, *choppu thuni*, on his or her forehead, he or she is immune to ritual pollution.

¹⁷⁴ A.M. Chakyar (1995a) asserts that the enactment of the full *Ramayana*, which is covered by the combination of three plays, lasts for one year.

¹⁷⁵ In KKM, 21 *svaras* are taught. For details regarding specific sound themes, see P.R. Chakyar (1995b).

¹⁷⁶ Active *Kuttampalams* exist, for example, within the compounds of *Vadakkunnathan* temple in Trissur, *Kutalmanikkam* temple in Irinjalakuda and *Srikrishna* temple in Guruvayoor. Altogether, Lowthorp (2011) counted 14 *Kuttampalams* in Kerala, 9 of which are inactive. Sullivan (1996) mentions 16 temple theatres in Kerala, 5 of which were dedicated to *Shiva*, 3 to *Subrahmanyam*, 2 to *Bhagavati* and 6 to *Vaishnava* deities. Nair (1995b) provides precise measurements for 16 *Kuttampalams* in Kerala, altogether naming 19 sites.

¹⁷⁷ For a detailed discussion of the *Kuttampalam*, see Jones (1967).

¹⁷⁸ The *Kuttampalam* features a blend of the pan-Indian Sanskrit tradition with distinctive regional features, among them the rectangular shape of the theatre, as opposed to the predominantly circular temple-architecture of the region (Vatsyayan, 1980).

¹⁷⁹ Paniker (2005) recalls one exception when *Chudalakuttu* was performed by the *Nangiar* at the cremation ground and hence outside the temple ground. The last *Chudalakuttu* took place approximately 72 years ago.

Until recently, performances on a secular ground were strictly forbidden. Kutiyattam was not designed as a popular art form to be enjoyed by people with disparate social, cultural and educational backgrounds; rather, access was restricted to only a few scholarly art-lovers from the higher castes and upper classes of society, to *Namboodiris*, *ambalavasis* and members of the royal family (Richmond, 1990b). The spectators were generally highly educated and had prerequisite knowledge of Sanskrit, the narratives of the text, the meanings inscribed, as well as the adequate use of hand-gestures, histrionic action and theatre grammar. Eagerly attending to the performers' interpretation, new meanings were constructed in a joint imaginary effort between the actors and the audience (Paniker, 1995). However, primary to the elite audience, the respective god of the temple was considered a spectator. A large bronze lamp (*Nilavilakku*) with three lighted wicks, two of them facing the actor and one the audience, is one of the major stage properties and traditionally placed at the center of the stage.¹⁸⁰ The flames represent the presence of the gods *Brahma*, the creator, *Vishnu*, the preserver and *Shiva*, the destroyer as divine spectators (Paulose, 2006). Moreover, performances are conducted with the doors of the *sanctum sanctorum* open. The deity of the temple is believed to leave the *sanctum* and attend the spectacle. Thus, the stage in the *Kuttampalam* must be on the same level as the residence of the deity in the *sanctum*.

Furthermore, the *Mizhavu*, which is solely played for Kutiyattam, is considered a "temple-based instrument" (Rajagopalan, 2005, p. 29) and a living being, a Brahmin (P.K.N. Nambiar, personal interview, March 10, 2012). *Nandikeswara*, god of the percussion instruments, is invoked inside the *Mizhavu*, where his *chaitanya* is believed to remain.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, after being placed in the *Kuttampalam*, a number of rituals and ceremonies are conducted to animate and sanctify the *Mizhavu*, including rituals for purification, bathing, childbirth, name-giving and initiation to receive food (Nambiar, 1995). The *Mizhavu* further undergoes an elaborated initiation ceremony (*upanayanam*) and is given a sacred threat, *punul*, before it is played on stage. The Brahmin hands over the instrument to the custody of the *Nambiar*, although the instrument is not expected to leave the temple space. After being considered dead, it is buried with pre-described ceremonies (ibid.; P.K.N. Nambiar, personal interview, op. cit.).¹⁸² In fact, as Kaladharan (2007) summarizes, the *Mizhavu* is treated "like a

¹⁸⁰ Kutiyattam can be described as a "pure theatre" (M.P.S. Namboodiri, personal interview, March 5, 2012), given that stage properties are very limited. Besides the bronze lamp and cloth placed on the side for the accompanying *Nangiar* to sit on, only a frame for the *Mizhavu*, a wooden stool for royal characters and a handful of weapons including swords, arrows and bows are used. The stage is usually decorated with tender coconuts, coconut leaves, as well as green plantain.

¹⁸¹ C.K. Jayanthi remarks that her family, committed to the art form, treats the *Mizhavu* like a god (ibid.).

¹⁸² For a detailed description of rituals, see Rajagopalan (2005).

Brahmin being, suggesting caste hierarchy even among the temple percussions” (p. 26). Furthermore, since the *Mizhavu* has a high-level status, or, as some would argue, “because of the divinity attached to it” (Rajagopalan, 2005, p. 32), non-*Chakyars* and non-*Nambiars* are traditionally not allowed to touch it (Nair, 1995a); indeed, even students of the art are not permitted to play on it and instead have to practice on a different instrument, called *Abhyasa Kutti*. Besides this instrument, a small drum called *Etakka* is also played (see appendix 3, figure 32). This instrument is again referred to as a “sacred” instrument symbolizing *vedas*, *sastras* (science) and *kalas* (arts).¹⁸³ Additionally, a shell-horn (*Sankhu*) is used, mainly for the first entrance of major characters on stage. Furthermore, a wind instrument similar to an oboe (*Kurumkuzhal*) was also played until a few decades ago.

3.2.2 Theoretical notes and aesthetics

Taken literally, *Kūṭi-āṭṭam* means “combined dance” or “together play”. Interestingly enough, it is a combination of two Dravidian words. Hereby, reference is given to the enactment where several characters jointly perform on stage (Raja, 1964; Richmond, 1990b). Besides, several other interpretations can be considered. For example, *kuti*, meaning “together” or “combined”, can also refer to the combination of theatrical elements from the Southern Dravidian tradition and the Northern (often claimed Pan-Indian) Sanskrit tradition of theatre and drama (Brückner, 2000).¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, it might refer to the combined acting of *Chakyars* and *Nambiars/Nangiars*, who practiced separate theatre traditions until the reformations of *Kulasekhara Varma* in the 11th/12th century AD. Alternatively, it could also refer to the combined acting of male and female actors on stage, a particularity of Kutiyattam, which is exceptional in the region (Moser, 2008). *Kuti* in Malayalam also means “prolonged” or “extended”; as such, it might also refer to the technique of elaborate interpretation within which the performer unravels several layers of meaning inscribed or interpreted into a text (S. Gopalakrishnan, 2011a, p. 18).

Kutiyattam is an inclusive term that integrates several art forms: Kutiyattam, in which *Chakyars* and *Nangiars/Nambiars* perform together; *Nangiarkuttu*¹⁸⁵, the solo-performance of

¹⁸³ “The four *Jeevakkol* (life-sticks), 64 woollen balls and the six holes on the face of the *Edakka* symbolize the 4 *Vedas*, 64 *Kalas* (art forms) and six *Sastras*” (Kaladharan, 2007, p. 26).

¹⁸⁴ Brückner (ibid.) describes Kutiyattam as a large-scale translation-project of Sanskrit culture for a South-Indian audience. Means are the popular character *Vidushaka* and hand-gestures, which reflect the Sanskrit text in detail.

¹⁸⁵ Views differ as to whether *Nangiarkuttu*, which was once an independent art form, shall be considered a separate female ancient theatre tradition or equivalent to an elaborated *nirvahanam* solo. Advocates of the latter idea are Moser (2008) and Kaladharan (2007).

the *Nangiars*; and *Prabandhamkuttu*, also called *Chakyarkuttu*.¹⁸⁶ The latter is a verbal narrative drama in which the *Chakyar* in the guise of a jester performs a solo monologue, spotted with critical comments concerning current socio-political maladies or refined jokes aimed at high-ranking members in the audience. According to Indian tradition, Kutiyattam is an art, a visual art, *dryshyakala*.¹⁸⁷ It gives reference to a pan-Indian dramatic tradition, represented through the theories formulated in the *Natyashastra*.¹⁸⁸ Nevertheless, Kutiyattam has developed its own specific aesthetic principles, codes and conventions, which reveal stark differences towards the postulates of this Sanskrit treatise on drama.¹⁸⁹ The *Natyashastra* distinguishes between *natyadharmi* and *lokadharmi* (Paulose, 2006): *natyadharmi* means stylized representation, while *lokadharmi* refers to a realistic representation of emotions, events or even objects or characters. For example, in *natyadharmi* a specific hand-gesture (*mudra*) would be used to depict an animal, while in *lokadharmi* the animal would be imitated and depicted with its characteristic movements. Hence, the former is more implicit and particularly addresses a scholarly ‘initiated’ audience (*prekshakas*, *rasikas*), whereas the latter, more explicit in expression, caters to a general audience (*nanaloka*).

Abhinaya is a central concept in Indian dramaturgy, referring to the expression of the character’s feelings through body movements and facial expressions. It comprises four techniques, which are all reflected in Kutiyattam: *angika-abhinaya* (representation through hand-gestures and body movements, primarily used by all characters, except the *Vidushaka*); *vachika-abhinaya* (verbal representation); *aharya-abhinaya* (costume, make-up and stage accessories); and *sattvika-abhinaya* (emotive acting). Hand-gestures, belonging to the category *angika-abhinaya*, are based on the 24 basic *mudras* mentioned in the *Hastalaksanadipika*, a handbook that also provides the major *mudras* for other performance traditions in Kerala, such as *Kathakali* and *Mohiniyattam*. The *mudras* function as signifiers and convey meanings parallel to language. Conversations are conducted via specific combinations of hand-gestures and movements of the hands and body. Hereby, each gesture has a beginning, a process and an end. Furthermore, hand-gestures may signify case endings, gender and modality. In general, one gesture can signify dozens of meanings and can only be understood in the context of the movement, sentence or play-text.

¹⁸⁶ Also P.K.N. Nambiar (lecture demonstration, op. cit.) argues that Kutiyattam and *Kuttu* are the same.

¹⁸⁷ V. Namboodiripad, personal interview, February 13, 2012.

¹⁸⁸ See Ghosh (1967).

¹⁸⁹ One major deviation from the postulates of the *Natyashastra* is the central role of the *Vidushaka*. Vatsyayan (1980) argues that the “Vidusaka of kutiyattam belongs to a different category than the Vidusaka of Sanskrit drama, where he does not depart from the text of the plays. Here he improvises, interpolates and has the freedom for wide deviations and departures. In this respect, the kutiyattam heralds a totally new tradition in Indian theatre” (p. 27).

The *Vidushaka* (jester) mainly refers to verbal narration, *vachika-abhinaya*, and rarely uses any stylized gestures. Instead, he frequently uses the regional language, *Malayalam*, and hence is highly popular among the local audience (see appendix 3, figures 26-27). On the other hand, the actress in *Nangiarkuttu* (see appendix 3, figure 11) is bereft of any oral narration and *slokas* (verses) are rendered by the accompanying female artist at the side of the stage (see appendix 3, figure 40). However, the actress is free to enact the meaning of the text and its context, to improvise and interpret it by use of histrionic acting. She also makes use of the acting technique *pakarnattam*¹⁹⁰, which allows her to impersonate multiple, including male, characters. Altogether, Kutiyattam can be described as a multilingual theatre, as within “combined acting” (Kutiyattam)¹⁹¹ the female and male characters are both allowed to speak. Nonetheless, female characters recite *slokas* in *Prakrit*, while male characters use *Sanskrit*. The *Vidushaka*, if a member of the actual play, functions as a translator, making the text intelligible to the audience through the use of the vernacular.

Altogether, Kutiyattam departs heavily from the text of a play and has deemphasized ensemble playing to a great extent (Richmond, 1990b). In fact, “combined acting” only takes place in the last sequence of a performance, during which an ensemble of characters appears on stage together. Moreover, besides the verbal language, the theatre form makes extensive use of other communication devices, including the language of hand-gestures (*hasta-abhinaya*), facial expressions (*mukha-abhinaya*), movements of the eyes (*netra-abhinaya*), limbs and torso, as well as costume and make-up (see appendix 3, figures 19-39 and 42).

In *sattvika-abhinaya*, with *netra-abhinaya* as its nucleus, the inner emotions of the characters are exposed. Hereby, feelings such as joy, grief, fear, anger, disgust, calmness, shyness and love are expressed through facial expressions, encompassing the eyes, as well as the eyebrows, lips, cheeks, chin and so on. Movements and expressions are highly stylized; for example, the pupils move in nine described ways and each movement can be exercised in different tempi. Ocular and muscular movements help to convey the emotions felt by the character or described in the text. Hereby, the sentiments are not only exposed (*bhava-vishkara*)¹⁹² but ideally also evoked in the spectator (*rasa-vishkara*).¹⁹³ *Netra-abhinaya*, the

¹⁹⁰ This theatrical device shows that the actor or actress does not become the character but enacts the character and is not totally identified with one specific character or role.

¹⁹¹ In line with scholarly practice, the term “Kutiyattam” is used as a generic term referring to the art or tradition in general and as a particular term referring to the specific practice of combined acting.

¹⁹² According to the *Natyashastra*, eight emotions (*bhava*) are distinguished: “love, mirth, anger, sorrow, energy, terror, disgust and astonishment” (Richmond, 1990a, p. 81).

¹⁹³ See Kaladharan (2007).

movement and expression of the eyes, is used to convey subtle interpretations of the text and introduce multiple layers of meaning to the initiated audience.

Aharya-abhinaya (costume, make-up) is very explicit in Kutiyattam, signifying the main characteristics of the character and the main *rasa* (sentiment, literally: “tasting” of emotion). While female roles are standardized and invariably wear the same costume¹⁹⁴ and make-up, which is categorized under *minukku* (gloss) but follows the *pazhukka* (dark yellow) type (see appendix 3, figure 19), on the other hand, ornaments, headgear, color of make-up and beards distinguish male characters. The major types are as follows: *pacca* (green) (see appendix 3, figures 20-22), *pazhukka* (dark yellow), black beard (see appendix 3, figure 36-39), red beard, white beard, *kari* (black) (see appendix 3, figure 42) and *katti* (*knife*) (see appendix 3, figure 32).¹⁹⁵ In general, costumes and make-up are designed to be seen from the front only (see appendix 3, figure 23). In make-up, the eyes, eyebrows and corner of the mouth are particularly elaborated. Through the use of dried kernel of the *chunda* flower, the eyes are colored red. This focus aims to guide the spectators’ attention towards eye expressions and the mimicry (Somadas & Chakyar, 1995). A further characteristic feature is the *chutti*, a three-dimensional structure made of rice-powder and paper, which is placed around the chin and cheekbones (see appendix 3, figure 22). Given the limited stage-light provided by a single oil-lamp (see appendix 3, figure 32), as was the case in traditional performances, the *chutti* might have also involved the further function of reflecting light in the performer’s face, while framing it attracted attention to mimicry. The *Vidushaka*’s eyes are accentuated with black Kajal and his body is smeared with thin layers of rice powder (see appendix 3, figure 24-25). Furthermore, red dots on his face as well as a moustache are noteworthy.

3.2.3 Practice

The following section attempts to briefly describe the basic structure of a traditional Kutiyattam performance.

Traditionally, the performance is initiated by a *Nambiar*, who lights a lamp in the *nepathya* (dressing room) as well as on the stage with a wick inflamed from the temple sanctum. He then sounds the *Mizhavu* (*mizhavu ochchappettal*), which is followed by a

¹⁹⁴ Slight differences in costume have only appeared very recently.

¹⁹⁵ For example, noble heroes like *Srirama* or *Arjuna* are represented in *pacca*, wear *chutti* and refined headgears. Headgears showing long hairs are only used by kings. *Sutradhara* as *minukku* character usually wears no *chutti* but paints a frame around the face in black color. Noble characters like *Bhima* or *Vidyadhara* are categorized as *pazhukka*. *Sugriva*, the monkey king, is categorized as a *karuthathaadi*, black beard, the colors red and black denoting wilderness. *Hanuman* belongs to the white beard category. *Ravana*, on the other hand, is a *katti* (lit. knife/basic red) character, a noble character, which follows the evil path.

rhythmic pattern called *goshthi kottal*. Subsequently, the *Nangiar* sings *goshthi-akkitta* or propitiatory verses, invoking the gods *Ganapati* and *Sarasvati*, and the *Nambiar* purifies the stage by sprinkling water and flowers, *arangutali*. In a next step, the *purappadu* (entrance of a character) is performed behind a specific stage curtain and the first lines of the text are presented (Nair, 1995a). After the *nityakriya* (dance movements as part of preliminary sequences), the actor, traditionally a *Chakyar*, has the right to ring the bell in the temple, in a rare privilege that is only enjoyed while performing Kutiyattam. In case of *Nangiarkuttu*, the *Nangiar* will go to the sanctum sanctorum (*sreekovil*) and worship the deity.¹⁹⁶ On the next day, the *nirvahanam* (narrative recapitulation) is performed in the form of one character's solo. This part, which mainly entertains *angika-abhinaya*, can last for a minimum of two consecutive days. Only then does the second character or the *Vidushaka* enter the stage, doing *purappadu* and again *nirvahanam* (in case of the *Vidushaka*, *nirvahanam* is presented mainly through *vachika-abhinaya*). Similarly, this section can last for around two consecutive days. "Combined acting" is only displayed during the last days of performance, when several actors jointly enact the dramatic text on stage, making recourse to *angika- and vachika-abhinaya*. The performance ends with a benediction (Richmond, 1990b; Vatsyayan, 1980).

Looking at the actual enactment of the play, the following can be stated. First, the play-text is recited in a *svara* that reflects the specific character and situation, while the text is simultaneously translated into hand-gestures. Hereby, the text is mediated in a word by word and grammatically correct structure. However, even though the reference text is in *Sanskrit*, hand-gestures follow a Dravidian grammar and morphology.¹⁹⁷ In a next step, the text is interpreted, with subtleties in meaning described in great detail by the artist. Hereby, the use of *angika-abhinaya*, mimicry, body language and hand-gestures reflect the sole devices, with the artists' histrionic skills, imagination, creativity and knowledge exposed to a great extent. Hereby, the interpretation of a single verse can give rise to a solo by an artist that might last up to two hours.¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, in the *nirvahanams*, during which one of the main characters goes into retrospection, the pre-story leading to the present story or even side-episodes are elaborated in detail by use of stylized mimicry and gestures. These *nirvahanams* (retrospections)¹⁹⁹, which deviate from the prime text of the play, can last up to several days

¹⁹⁶ For a detailed description of procedures in *Nangiarkuttu*, see Paniker (2005) and Moser (2008).

¹⁹⁷ For a deeper elaboration, see Moser (2008, pp. 6-7), who speaks in this context of a first adaptation of the Sanskrit text into the Dravidian context.

¹⁹⁸ For this part, the *Attaprakarams*, written in *Malayalam*, provide basic guidelines to the performer.

¹⁹⁹ *Nangiarkuttu* refers to the *nirvahanam* of the maid companion *Ceti* in the play *Subhadradhananjayam*. Hereby, the actress has to enact more than 200 *Sanskrit* verses. It might have been introduced into tradition in the 16th/17th century (Moser, 2011a).

and are performed in the form of a solo. In these solos, the linear structure of the main play is corrupted (figure 5(a)). The actor leaves the present situation depicted and goes step-by-step further back in time (figure 5(b)), with explanations solely depicted in *mudras* (hand-gestures) and mimicry. When the performer reaches the sighted situation in time, namely the situation in which the review is supposed to start, a further rapprochement thought from a linear perspective is conducted. Elaborations are given that approach the particular time slot from an adverse angle in the time continuum and end at the present situation in the play (figure 5(c)). Hereby, the cycle of recapitulation is again corrupted and the story is re-constructed from a new starting point, lying far behind in the very early history of the plot. Only after this part, which again solely depends on gestures and facial expressions, does the particularly aimed for *nirvahanam* begin, with review given in great length and detail (figure 5(d)). Verses recited in Sanskrit accompany all stages of this review and are sung directly after the mimic demonstration. However, in *nirvahanam*, verses are recited by the accompanying *Nangiar* and not by the actor or actress him- or herself. At the end of the *nirvahanam*, the performer enters the main plot again on the spot where the recapitulation started. These reviews of related past events contextualize the play and can be carried out by all the main characters on stage.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, several *nirvahanams* can be subsequently presented. Hence, a traditional staging of a Kutiyattam play lasted between five and eleven days.

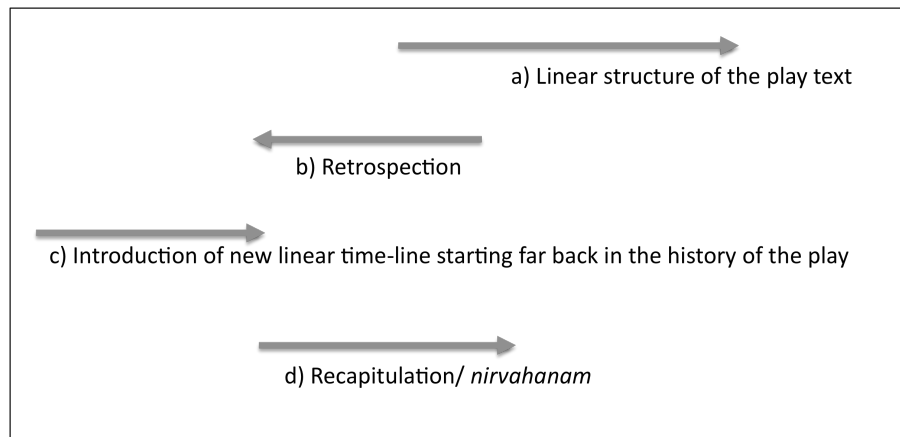


Fig. 5: Diagram visualizing the structure of a *nirvahanam* (Diagram: Erlewein).

3.2.4 Discussion

Kutiyattam has many connections with the practices and daily routine of the temple; a feature that has prompted scholars and stakeholders to refer to Kutiyattam as a “temple theatre” (Jones, 1967), a “ritualistic performance of great sanctity” (Venu, 2005, p. 7), a “ceremonial

²⁰⁰ In case a *nirvahanam* stretches over several days, on each subsequent day the performance starts with the second above-mentioned linear line, providing a summary and leading up to the present point in narration.

ritual”, “ritual offering”²⁰¹ (Paniker, 2005, p. 35), “sacred art form” (Sullivan, 1996, p. 35) or “sacrifice” (Richmond & Richmond, 1985, p. 52). Richmond (1990b) described Kutiyattam

[as] a sacred event, designed as a ritual dedication to the presiding deity of the temple in which it is presented. It has none of the trappings of a commercial venture, none of the associations with the profane world outside the walls of the temple compound (p. 94).

Instead, it “first serves a religious function” (ibid., p. 88).²⁰² For Daugherty (1996), the *Nangiar* is a “ritual specialist (...) whose performance is auspicious to see” (p. 55). Tying the red cloth on the forehead, the *Nangiar* “breaks with the ordinary world and enters the realm of the sacred” (ibid., p. 58). Sullivan (1997) argues that “dramatic performance in India has always been linked with religion” and that all *Chakyars uni sono* declare that the performance of Kutiyattam is a “religious duty and religious experience” (pp. 97, 102-103). Also to the audience, the performance offers the praise of gods and *darshan*, contact with god through eye contact with the deity on stage, or, if there was no deity on stage, the experience of *bhakti*. Following Sullivan, it was this religious context, the exercise of performances as devotional offerings in the temples, which was instrumental for the survival of Kutiyattam. However, he also mentions that since the secularization of Kutiyattam the audience has not experienced religious sentiments while watching Kutiyattam; rather, they refer to an aesthetic experience or to its entertaining qualities (Sullivan, 1996). Consequently, Sullivan (ibid.) argues that the “dichotomies between the aesthetic and the religious, between entertainment and devotion, collapse in kutiyattam performance, where all this aspects continue to live” (p. 35). Moreover, Gopalakrishnan (2011a), who wrote the candidature file for UNESCO’s program *Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*²⁰³ in 2000, asserts that the “drama symbolically represents a visual sacrifice or *chakshusha yajna* and, therefore, each component has a sacred association” (p. 21).²⁰⁴ She extends her interpretation of Kutiyattam as a “sacred art” and “sacred offering” (ibid., p. 19), even to the actor himself, arguing that he undergoes a transformation of personality, which sets him apart from the mundane world. She writes:

The actor (...) purifies himself through a ritual bath. He then takes blessings of the temple priest, accepts the ritual cloth from him, contemplates on God and his masters, and ties a sacred red cloth on his forehead. This simple act of tying the cloth is a bridge that sets him apart from the domain of human action (ibid., p. 21).

²⁰¹ Paniker refers here particularly to *Nangiarkuttu*.

²⁰² See also Richmond (1995, p. 620).

²⁰³ See Gopalakrishnan (2000a).

²⁰⁴ See also P.K.N. Nambiar (1995, p. 101; 2012).

The academic discussion concerning the ritualistic or artistic aspects of the art arose possibly due to the opening up of the art form since the 1960s. However, it is interesting to note that while the artists stripped themselves of the boundaries of the temple as the main context of the art in order to survive, scholars, initially in particular from the West, discoursivized the art as a sacred art, a ritualistic or religious activity primarily referring to temple-worship. In fact, the distinction between art and ritual is a Western distinction, with even the words themselves having been adapted from Western discourses. As V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, op. cit.) observes, ritual is a word coined by Western anthropologists. It was translated and integrated into the *Malayalam* vocabulary rather recently: “In Malayalam *kala* and *anushtanam* are the words now used, it is a translation from the English words. *Kala* is an old word, antique, but *anushtanam natakam*, ritual theatre, these kind of things are new”.²⁰⁵ Nevertheless, this new concept has also been widely used by Indian scholars and artists, among them D. Appukkuttan Nair and Ammannur Madhava Chakyar, who both assert that Kutiyattam is a “*natya yajna*”, translated in the text as “ritualistic theatre” (Nair, 1995a, p. 17) and “ritualistic worship” (Chakyar, 1995a, p. 33), respectively. Moreover, P.K.N. Nambiar (personal interview, op. cit.) also speaks about “*anushtana kala*”, ritualistic art.

In my understanding of Kutiyattam, I distance myself from the proclamation of a ritualistic or even religious identity of Kutiyattam and follow the “contemporary” perception of most of the Indian artists and scholars interviewed, namely that Kutiyattam is an art that has been gradually integrated into temple practices yet has never lost its identity as an art.²⁰⁶ For example, K. Girijadevi recalls that the late Painkulam Rama Chakyar already emphasized the technical intricacies prevalent in histrionic representation. Opposing mere ritual significance in acting, he argued for artistic refinement and conducting performances in terms of a professional engagement as an artist (K.K. Gopalakrishnan, 2008). C.K. Jayanthi (personal interview, March 8, 2012) is also eager to articulate that even though Kutiyattam has ritualistic and sacred aspects, Kutiyattam “is an art, a complete art”. Referring to Bharata’s *Natyashastra*, she describes it as a “*natya*, a complete art-form which includes rituals, songs, cultural elements, stories, dance and steps” (ibid.).²⁰⁷ Thus, Kutiyattam must be regarded under the category of art, although it constitutes of different aspects, only one of them being ritual, yet all of them being equally important.

²⁰⁵ See also Richmond, Swann, & Zarilli (1990).

²⁰⁶ Personal interviews with K.R. Chakyar, February 18, 2012; C.K. Jayanthi, March 8, 2012; K. Kanakakumar, February 15, 2012; P.K.N. Nambiar, op. cit.; V. Namboodiripad, op. cit.; and G. Venu, March 30, 2012.

²⁰⁷ Jayanthi argues that Kutiyattam contains ritualistic aspects; nevertheless, the identity of Kutiyattam is connected to drama, art, and Kutiyattam practitioners are first and foremost artists, not religious practitioners.

3.3 History

Sanskrit plays were initially performed all over the subcontinent. However, variant styles became extinct²⁰⁸ and only in Kerala has an unbroken Sanskrit theatre tradition survived until the present day. The following section reconstructs the historical developments that shaped the tradition.

3.3.1 Early history

Reconstructing the historical development of Kutiyattam is not an easy task, given that most of the relevant publications either cite names and events without clear reference and historical proof or are involved in dispute about the exact time-span and content of reformations and developments. Nonetheless, this section aims to stress that, despite being blurred in some parts, Kutiyattam has a history and was moulded, shaped and adjusted from its early days onwards to fit respective contemporary demands and local circumstances. Moreover, the repeated claim of a millennia old tradition seems to be exaggerated. In fact, historical proof supports only an 800-900 year old tradition, wherein older theatrical practices were incorporated (Vatsyayan, 1980). Furthermore, *Nangiarkuttu* practices, wherein *Kuttu* refers to performance in general, can also be traced back until the 11th/12th century. However, *Nangiarkuttu*, as an integral part of Kutiyattam, has only 400 years of history (Moser, 2011a).

3.3.1.1 Early textual references

Kutiyattam is often claimed by well-known artists, scholars and journalists to have a history of almost two millennia (K.K. Gopalakrishnan, 2011; S. Gopalakrishnan, 2000b; R. Iyer, personal interview, March 14, 2012; Nambiar, 1995; Mishra, cited in Paul, 2005; Venu, 1989; Venugopalan, 2007). This is due to the fact that reference to a *Chakyar* is given in the Tamil classic *Chilappatikaram*, written between the 2nd century AD and 5th century AD.²⁰⁹ The performer's name is given as *Kutta Ccakkaiya* from *Paraiyur* and he is mentioned in relation with dance and theatre.²¹⁰ Nevertheless, as several authors have shown (Moser, 2008; Sowle, 1982), it is quite unclear whether the theatrical practice resembled Kutiyattam. Further historical evidence can only be given from the late-10th/11th century AD onwards. However, all inscriptions refer to an area belonging to today's Tamil Nadu. By the 12th century, a few

²⁰⁸ On Sanskrit theatre in medieval Gujarat and Rajasthan, see Leclère (2010).

²⁰⁹ The date is disputed. Nair (1995a) mentions the 2nd century AD as the time of origin for the *Chilappatikaram*.

²¹⁰ For a discussion of this part, see also Paulose (2006, p. 63, footnote 6).

references can be found in Kerala, while no further evidence can be provided from Tamil Nadu. Furthermore, early historical evidence in Kerala largely refers to female actresses, while *Chakyars* are rarely mentioned. Nevertheless, by the 11th century a handful inscription give reference to *Kuttu* (Moser, 2008).²¹¹ The earliest epigraphic reference in Kerala, which names a *Chakyar* performing *Chakyarkuttu* (lit: *Sakkaimar* performing *Sakkai-Kuttu*), dates back to the beginning of the 12th century (Jones, 1967).

3.3.1.2 Sociocultural history

Brahmanic settlement in the region belonging to today's Kerala first occurred in the 3rd century BC. However, a major flow of Brahmins only settled in the area in the 7th/8th century AD, with indigenous culture strongly affected. Brahmin culture started to dominate the region, with temples replacing local *Kavu* shrines and Brahmin priests taking center stage in the mediation between god and the believer (Paulose, 2006).²¹² Furthermore, Brahmins established themselves economically as owners of large estate and as local chieftains (Menon, 2000). By the 9th century AD, village-oriented and temple-centered Brahmanic culture was firmly established as the new dominant culture. Sanskrit language was integrated into academic studies in Kerala on a large scale. Between the 8th and 16th century, many scientific works were written in Sanskrit language, despite still being visualized in Malayalam script (Vatsyayan, 1980). Sanskrit theatre only entered the Keralean scenario from the 7th/8th century onwards. From the 12th century onwards, the *Chera* Empire crumbled and village-based temple culture emerged, whereby the temples became the center of social life. The Brahmins entered into an alliance with the warriors and lower ranked casts and strengthened their predominant position. Sanskritization of the indigenous communities became boosted and the theatre was used as a vehicle for propagation. The first plays to become popular in the region were the *Mattavilasa*²¹³, the farce *Bhagavadajjuka*²¹⁴ and, patronized earlier by Buddhists, *Nagananda*. By the 12th/13th century at the latest, Sanskrit theatre was used to mediate and translate the new Brahmanic culture to the Dravidian upper class. It was during this period

²¹¹ Moser argues for the possibility that *Chakyars* (migrating from today's Tamil Nadu into today's Kerala) and *Nangiyars* (inhabitants of today's Kerala) had independent performance traditions, which were subsequently merged by king *Kulasekhara Varma* in the 11th/12th century; hence, *Kutiyattam*: to play/act together.

²¹² Besides Dravidian religions, Buddhism and Jainism were also strong in Kerala. In particular, the Buddhist belief was widespread during the 7th and 9th centuries. With *Kulasekhara* taking over power, decline started and Buddhist monasteries and shrines were subsequently incorporated or replaced by Brahmin temples. For example, *Vadakkunnathan* temple in Trissur, where one of the major *Kuttampalams* is situated, used to be a Buddhist shrine (Menon, 2000).

²¹³ *Mattavilasa* is a 7th century play, wherein all sects in Kanchi are criticized and ridiculed.

²¹⁴ The farce was enlarged to cover 35 days, with the majority used to ridicule and criticize Buddhist-, Jain- and other philosophies (Paulose, 2006).

that the jester in Sanskrit Drama was enabled to translate Sanskrit texts and references into the local language. Moreover, hand-gestures assisted in the venture of popularizing Sanskrit culture, Sanskrit language, norms and values (Moser, 2008; Paulose, 1998, 2006). In this context, theatre functioned as a kind of missionary device and was instrumentalized for the re-Hinduization of Brahmins who became attracted to other religions.²¹⁵

3.3.2 Establishing Kutiyattam tradition

By the 11th/12th century, the *Chera* king *Kulasekhara Varma* wrote the famous *Sanskrit* plays *Subhadradhananjayam* and *Tapatisamvaranam*, both adaptations from the epic *Mahabharata*. He started a serious reformation and revitalization of the Sanskrit stage in Kerala and is often credited as the founder of the Kutiyattam tradition. To explain his ideas for performance practice, *Kulasekhara* worked together with scholars and actors, whom he invited to his court. He himself enacted the characters in order to convey what he envisioned in his mind. A Brahmin wrote two stage scripts in which his advices were recorded; the Sanskrit document is called *Vyangyavyakhyā* and gives ample reference to the performance practices of the 11th century (Paulose, 2006). *Kulasekhara* introduced elements that strongly deviated from the theories mentioned in the *Natyashastra*, although they have remained the most salient features of Kutiyattam until today. Major innovations include the enactment of multiple roles by one actor without a change of costume, later known as *pakarnattam*, the recapitulation by characters during their first entry on stage (*nirvahanam*), a preoccupation with subtexts, which go beyond the actual outer meaning of the text and are communicated to a sophisticated audience mainly via ocular movements and the accentuation of hand-gestures in order to display not only the text, but also associated ideas, interpretations and imaginations (ibid.). *Kulasekhara* introduced two levels of acting: one to please the elite audience (*preksaka*) via emotions (*bhava*) and ocular movements (*netra-abhinaya*); and one to entertain the common audience (*nanaloka*) via the fourfold concept of acting established in the *Natyashastra*.²¹⁶ These reforms liberated the performers from the limitations of the text and established them as interpreters of the text (ibid.). Their entry on stage and recapitulation, the linking up of past events up to the present stage in the drama, as well as the portrayal of associated mental and emotional conditions, provided scope for improvisation and creative

²¹⁵ See Paulose (1998), who argues “as the Buddhists earlier used the Sanskrit theatre for the propagation of their religion, now the Brahmins (...) utilized the theatre to drive away Buddhism from this land” (p. 26). In particular, the play *Bhagavadajjuka* can be named in this context, describing in detail the negative sides of a conversion to Buddhism. Moreover, *Mantrankam* and *Mattavilasa* also give negative reference to Buddhism.

²¹⁶ In Paulose’s (2006) words, *Kulasekhara* added poetry to grammar.

expression that led to elaborations for days on end by one single actor. These new acting devices afforded them ample scope for histrionic action. Altogether, the actor, as opposed to the actual play-text itself, received prime attention, in a development that was entirely new to the Sanskrit stage. In fact, the actors are independent from the play-text during the solo performances, *nirvahanams*, and these parts were to become the most salient features of Kutiyattam in later centuries. However, the new methods also required rigorous life-long training and sufficient talent. This led to a selection process, which might have laid the premises for an exclusive right given to certain families to train in and perform the art (ibid.; Sowle, 1982).

The outcome of the reform was striking. Artists as well as spectators were enthusiastic and productions increased substantially. Stage manuals were written for already successful plays like *Mattavilasa*, *Bhagavadajjuka*, *Nagananda* and *Kalyanasaugandhika* and the repertoire continuously increased during the following centuries (Paulose, 2006).²¹⁷ However, catering to Brahmanic culture, the dramatic texts were modified and reinterpreted in order to suit a present day context, namely the promotion of Vedic culture in the region. Even dramatic characters were transformed in order to resemble native characters; for example, the minister *Vasantaka* of *Udayana* in the North took the guise of a local *Namboodiri* Brahmin. These re-interpretations and adjustments localized the tradition in Kerala.

Nonetheless, the most important reform was the introduction of *Malayalam* on the *Sanskrit* stage around the 12th/13th century. Initially, the *Nambiar* narrated the story at the beginning of the play; subsequently, he added explanations together with each new entry of a character on stage. Later on, the *Chakyar* initiated the introduction of *Malayalam* on a grand scale, with hand-gestures and the vernacular combined in order to facilitate understanding, in a break-through that attracted people from all strata of society. The *Vidushaka* not only enacted himself, but also humorously repeated and reinterpreted sentences of the other characters. Consequently, the theatre gained wide popularity and, in effect, the *Vidushaka*'s role occupied center stage.²¹⁸ His function drastically changed and a solo performance was developed that was staged independently of the drama: *Chakyarkuttu* (Paulose, 2006).

²¹⁷ According to V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, op. cit.), the oldest *Attaprakaram* was supposedly written in 14th century A.D. Many others were written between the 15th and the 18th century (Pisharoti, 1995).

²¹⁸ A further novelty was the parody of the sacrosanct *purusarthas* by the *Vidushaka*. Hereby, “the four aims of (Brahmanic) life: pleasure (*kama*), wealth (*artha*), duty (*dharma*), and enlightenment (*moksha*) are replaced by the four aims of a corrupt society: sexual enjoyment with a prostitute, service under the king, deception, and food” (Nair, 1995c, p. 68; see also Raja, 1964, pp. 17-31). The *Vidushaka* criticizes and ridicules Brahmin community and degeneration within it. This innovative flexibility brought and continues to bring Kutiyattam “near to the people in time here and now” (Vatsyayan, 1980, p. 27).

Initially, *Kuttu* mainly made use of the Puranic stories, while later actors asked scholars and poets for new material, with new texts, *prabandhams*, particularly composed during the 15th and 18th centuries. Providing a platform for social criticism, the performances became highly successful and established a virulent link to contemporary matters and therewith to the audience.

A further striking development of that period is the confinement of Kutiyattam and *Kuttu* to the temples, the restriction of performance rights to members of the *ambalavasi* communities and the establishment of *Kuttampalams* on the temple ground as the main performance space. *Kuttampalams* were most likely erected in the late-14th/15th century, hence during the post-*Kulasekhara* period (Kaladharan, 2007). During this time, “drama became ritual. Natya became to be looked upon as yajna” (Paulose, 2006, p. 86) and “the actor was elevated to the status of the temple priest” (ibid., p. 89). Many rituals were added in that process. *Purvaranga* was done before the performance, while the *kriyanrtta*, a ritual dance performed by the actor or actress, was added to the performance. Furthermore, a reediting and restructuring of existing performances also took place; for example, when *Mattavilasa* became an offering in the temples, several characters were erased from the play, among them a Buddhist monk. The female character *Devasoma* was omitted and only *Kapali* remained. Slowly but steadily, Kutiyattam became attached to the temples and finally absorbed within them. Acting became the *kuladharm*a of specific casts and the temple an exclusive performance space. Consequently, the female characters’ presence on stage was also curtailed and parts where multiple characters were on stage became limited. It is interesting to note that instead of featuring the epic heroes such as *Rama* and *Krishna*, who are considered minor roles and mainly played by junior artists, Kutiyattam gives prominence to the anti-heroes, to *Bali*, *Ravana*, *Duryodhana* or even the demon *Surpanakha* (see appendix 3, figures 32 and 42).²¹⁹ Furthermore, a number of new features that give tribute to regional practices and tastes were added to the Sanskrit theatre on the Kerala soil; for example, performances expose blood scenes, like during the chopping-off of *Surpanakha*’s nose and breasts²²⁰, as well as scenes in which the character flies²²¹ or hangs from the sky.

Overall, the reforms transcended the tradition of Sanskrit theatre and instead created a unique synthesis of Sanskrit and local Dravidian traditions of Kerala. Distortions from

²¹⁹ Sympathies of the audience are with *Bali*, instead of *Rama*, in *Balivadham*, with *Surpanakha*, instead of *Lakshmana*, in *Surpanakhankam*, with *Ravana*, instead of *Rama* in *Thoranayudham*.

²²⁰ The *Guruti* of the *kavu* temple influenced this performance (Paulose, 2006).

²²¹ This part is influenced by the performance of *Garudantukkam* in temples (ibid.).

classical dramaturgy, represented by the *Natyashastra*, were so striking that an anonymous commentary called *Natankusa* was already written in the 15th century, strongly criticizing the new conventions for the Sanskrit stage (Paulose, 1995). Severe criticism particularly targeted the flexibility of the *Vidushaka* (jester), his use of the local dialect on stage, as well as the practice of *nirvahanam* and elaborated interpretations of the text (Raja, 1964). However, it must be noted that it is due to these reformations and innovations that the theatre has flourished and survived until the present day. In particular, the popularity of the *Vidushaka* and the striking role that *Malayalam* received within the Sanskrit tradition, hence the “localization” or “Keralization” of the tradition, has enabled the survival of Kutiyattam.

3.3.3 Patronage

Since the advent of Kutiyattam performance tradition in the 11th/12th century, the integration into the temple structure by the 14th century and subsequently the “ritualization” of Kutiyattam, the tradition remained intact and in large parts unbroken until the 19th century. This is due to the relatively stable political, economic and social framework that surrounded Kutiyattam, a framework in which the aristocracy and particularly the temples took center stage and the responsibility of patronage.²²² Temples assigned exclusive performance rights to specific families belonging to the *ambalavasi* communities, with regular performances taking place according to an annual calendar (A.M. Chakyar, 1995a). Moreover, the temples supported the artists with tax-free landed property, daily remuneration and natural products. Therewith, they not only provided them with basic financial security, which gave them the freedom to practice, transmit and excel in the art, but also a stable system of patronage that fostered dignity, “reasonable comfort” and a respectable position in society (Venu, 1989, p. 5; 2005). This tenure system (*virutti*, also called *Kuttu-viruthi*) not only sustained the traditional practicing communities, but also the practice of the art itself. Members of the respective families were obliged to conduct the annual performances in the temples and, in case they were unable to do so, the temples held the right to withdraw the given properties (A.M. Chakyar, 1995b)

On the other side, the *Chakyar* established authority over the form, whereby nobody dared to challenge his position. Tampering with codes of performance and conventions was considered sacrilegious. As a respectable organ in society, the *Chakyar* in form of the *Vidushaka* was even free to openly comment on contemporary political and social nuisances,

²²² Feudalism in Kerala was strengthened through a matrilineal joint-family system. By the end of the 19th century, royals, nobles, Brahmins, Hindu temples and shrines constituted the major patrons of Kutiyattam.

while the respective addressee, even royals, were bared of any reply. Comments, sarcasm and criticism were expressed by way of hinting. They were interwoven into the respective storyline and never openly offensive. Enjoying his immunity and economic support, the *Vidushaka* acted within a framework in which criticism worked within predefined parameters. Thus, he abstained from all too harsh critics of the social order of which he was part and parcel and instead participated in maintaining it. While bringing “Kutiyattam dangerously close to the profane world” (Richmond & Richmond, 1985, p. 58), he functioned as “a communicator between high and low, past and present” (Vatsyayan, 1980, p. 26) and made Kutiyattam attractive for the contemporary audience.²²³

However, in the period between 1850 and 1910, anglicization, secularization and modernization processes led to remarkable changes all over India (Jeffrey, 1976). Indeed, during the early-/mid-20th century, the societal structure that supported Kutiyattam was thoroughly disintegrated by a number of developments, while English had largely replaced *Sanskrit* in the educational system.²²⁴ In 1947, the princely states united under the new umbrella of the independent nation-state and temples in north and central Kerala, the princely state of Kochi and Malabar, were opened to members of all castes. Until then, castes below the *Nayars* had been denied access to the temples.²²⁵ The state of Kerala was created in 1956. One year later, the Kerala Communist Party was elected to take over power in the state and, in the 1970s, land reforms ultimately ended a system of patronage that was no longer sustainable. Temples were dispossessed and *Namboodiris* as well as aristocratic owners of large estate lost their influence. Consequently, the temples were unable to support the *ambalavasi* communities any longer. *Chakyars* and *Nambiars/Nangiaris* lost their protective environment and main source of income, and faced poverty. Furthermore, state legislation officially banned the matrilineal inheritance system, a law that theoretically illegitimized the practice of inheritance of performance rights and duties within the traditional Kutiyattam communities. Henceforth, *Chakyars* had to marry endogamous and find their mates within the same community, while the same applied to *Nambiars* and *Nangiaris*. Due to these marriage practices, the *Chakyar* lineages became integrated into one another and consequently dwindled in number.²²⁶ Under these new conditions, the art increasingly lost its relevance,

²²³ Today, *Chakyarkuttu* is immensely popular, while Kutiyattam and *Nangiarkuttu* still struggle for every single spectator. *Prabandhas* in *Manipravalam*, a mixture between *Malayalam* and *Sanskrit*, have been created enabling the staging of episodes from the Hindu epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, as well as the *Puranas*.

²²⁴ In the 1960s, only 2,500 people considered *Sanskrit* their mother tongue (Richmond, Swann, & Zarilli, 1990).

²²⁵ An exception is the princely state of *Travancore* in the South, where temples already opened up in 1936.

²²⁶ Furthermore, as offspring of *Chakyar-Nangiar* marriage were still integrated into the mother's family, *Chakyar* lineages declined dramatically and today only six families exist, overall comprising around 200

with artists forced to seek other sources of income and, attracted by the English educational system (Ramanath, 2005), left the traditional training structures that were a basic requirement for sustaining the art. Consequently, art forms like Kutiyattam lost their major patrons, the artists themselves, and thus were threatened with extinction.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Kutiyattam performances were still staged in the temples. However, as remuneration was low, the cast was very few and the audience, comprising a “mere handful”, was almost extinct (Venu, 2002, p. 16). Venu notes that the *Nangiars*’ training and acting quality in particular was in a crucial state. He states that “they performed the *Kuttu* with the doors of the *Kuttampalam* shut since they thought that nobody should see their miserable condition” (ibid., p. 54). Kaladharan (2007) offers another reason why viewership steadily declined, arguing that the *Chakyars*’ move into the exclusive realm of the temples supported a steady emphasis on rituals while theatrical aspects guiding the spectators through the plot of the drama were neglected. Consequently, the audience was discouraged from joining the performance and instead opted to indulge in other, less ritualistic and less stylized forms such as *Krishnanattam* and *Ramanattam* (ibid.).

During the same decades, the 1980s/1990s, the state increasingly took over patronage.²²⁷ Schemes for the preservation of “threatened traditions” were developed at the *Sangeet Natak Akademi* (SNA), National Academy of Music, Dance and Drama, in Delhi, and a discourse on the safeguarding (*samrekshanam*) of traditional art forms emerged during the course of these developments that seems to be of vital importance until today.

In the initial stage, safeguarding strategies can be contextualized within a widespread practice of (re)inventing tradition (Hobsbawn & Ranger, 1983), a practice that aimed at moulding a national cultural identity in the context of nation-building. The practice of (re)inventing and classicizing tradition, wherein traditional performing arts were classified as classical arts, started in India at the turn of the 20th century and reached its peak in the 1940s. It can be seen as part of India’s active construction of its “Self” as opposed to the “Other”, the British colonial rule. Nonetheless, Kutiyattam was not easy to be appropriated for the nationalist project, given that it remained closely protected and hidden within the temple precincts on the one hand and was endowed with considerable agency through the involvement of high-castes on the other. Parallel to this, academic discourse on Kutiyattam, also declined

members, with only twelve *Ilottamas* shouldering the responsibility of giving birth to favorably male offspring. As *Kidangoor* family encompasses no young females, the line will be extinct with the passage of time. However, in order to secure the survival of the art, matriliney was reinforced during the 1970s/1980s. Given that several marriage practices exist side by side today, there is considerable doubt about the legitimacy of descent rights and offspring receiving performance rights for the temples (Johan, 2011a).

²²⁷ In 1988, Margi was also successful in securing a six-year grant from the Ford Foundation (Daugherty, 2000).

and practically vanished while articles on classical dances and dance-theatres increased. It took until the second half of the 20th century for reforms to be taken that step-by-step also paved the way for national appropriation. Accordingly, the following section provides a detailed account of these far-reaching developments.

3.4 Tradition cum innovation

3.4.1 The 20th century reforms: Secularization and institutionalization

"Once Kutiyattam was done for the deity; now the people have become the deity, and we try to please the people".

M. Kochukuttan Chakyar (cited in Unni & Sullivan, 2001, p. 64)

Temple associated dance and theatre underwent a huge crisis during the 20th century, due to the decline of the feudal order, major land reforms in Kerala, dispossessing temples and grand Namboodiri households, therewith leading to a lack of financial resources, as well as due to increasingly visible changes in value-systems and lifestyles. By the late-1960s, Kutiyattam was almost forgotten among the population, even inside Kerala, and subsequently faced extinction. Simultaneously, *Kathakali*, a traditional dance-theatre from Kerala that faced severe decline between 1890 and 1930, was successfully revived within the precincts of the 1930-founded KKM. Realizing the enormous threat to Kutiyattam and recognizing the changes in society as well as the beneficial impact of modern institutions, Painkulam Rama Chakyar (1910-1980) was the first member of the traditional community who dared to initialize major reforms (see appendix 3, figure 6).

A landmark step was taken on September 21, 1949, hence only two years after India had gained independence. Plainly costumed and without support of the *Nambiars* and *Nangiars*, and hence without drums and cymbals, Painkulam Rama Chakyar performed a *Chakyarkuttu* in a house of a Brahmin near *Kottarakkara* and therefore outside the traditional performance space, the temple ground. Even though the orthodox community was outrageous, his teacher *Cachu Chakyar* and several other artists supported his effort. Furthermore, Mani Madhava Chakyar (1899-1990), another eminent artist (see appendix 3, figures 7-8), supported this new trend, performing a *Kuttu* for All India Radio in 1951.²²⁸ Breaking with the conventions, he also trained his sons, who were *Nambiars* and hence not entitled to study Kutiyattam

²²⁸ Thirty years earlier, he had already received an invitation by V.P.S. Varier, the founder of *Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Shala*. Varier offered to patronize Kutiyattam, establish a drama troupe, which would perform in his drama hall, and promote the art. Mani M. Chakyar denied, given that the socio-cultural setup of the art would not allow such a step (K.R. Chakyar, personal communication, 2012; Paulose, 2006, p. 222).

abhinaya, how to perform. One of the reasons for the initiation of his sons was a clear lack of support by fellow *Chakyars*, as well as an urgent need for assistance in the conduction of performances.²²⁹ P.K.N. Nambiar and P.K.G. Nambiar started studying Kutiyattam in 1948-49 and can be marked as the first non-*Chakyar* apprentices in the art. In 1954, Mani M. Chakyar arranged their *arangettam* (premier performance) in the *Vayanashala*, a village library near his house, and therewith on secular ground. On this occasion, a full-fledged ensemble performed *Subhadradhananjayam*, including actors and actresses, percussionists (*Nambiars*) and vocals/*talam* (*Nangiar*s). All members of this small yet revolutionary act belonged to the *Nambiar/Nangiar* community.²³⁰ Mani M. Chakyar himself authorized the performance, although he did not actively participate in it. The performance was dominated by young actors in their late-20s, at least one of whom had served as a freedom fighter in India's struggle for independence. Thus, besides pragmatic reasons, a desire for cultural and social change might have been one of the motivating factors. Subsequently, a further landmark step was taken in August 1956, namely the first Kutiyattam performance by a *Chakyar* with invited guests on secular ground. The six night-long performance of the first Act of *Subhadradhananjayam* was organized by and directly broadcasted via All India Radio, staged in the palace of the *Zamorin* of Calicut and featured Painkulam Rama Chakyar in the leading role.

All these activities were met with virulent criticism from the side of conservative *Chakyars* and temple authorities. However, the scholarly public became interested, with Mani M. Chakyar staging the first performance outside Kerala in 1963. On three nights, scenes from three different plays, *Subadradhananjaya*, *Abhiseka* and *Nagananda*, were staged. The performance in Madras received wide media coverage, which raised interest across India. Invitations followed and subsequently performances were conducted in Delhi, Benares and Ujjain. During this period, the intimate relationship between Kutiyattam and the Sanskrit language became noticeable to scholars all over India. The liaison with *Sanskrit*, the unofficial *sermo patrius* of the new nation state, functioned as a catapult on the national level. Subsequently, the art form received attention on a national scale and even reached out into the international academic sphere. In this respect, Dr. Jones from the University of Pennsylvania also warrants mention, having initiated a performance on the premises of the KKM in 1962

²²⁹ C.K. Jayanthi, personal interview, op. cit.

²³⁰ The ensemble comprised P.K.N. Nambiar as Arjuna, P.K.G. Nambiar as Koundinyan (*Vidushaka*) and Amminnikutty Nangiaramma as Subhadra. K. Krishnan Nambiar and P. Raman Nambiar, the noted Sanskrit scholar, served as drummers and Vasumathi Nangiaramma and Kochampilly Sreedevi Nangiaramma were doing the *talam*, rhythm. The performance was understood as a contribution of the family to the establishment of a village library, it was conducted with ease and without large-scale press announcements (ibid.).

and encouraged scholarly debate during a first Kutiyattam seminar in 1966, conducted under the auspices of KKM and the American Institute of Indian Studies. Consecutively, Kutiyattam entered international academic discourse and a presentation was held at the 1971 World Sanskrit Conference in Delhi.

Beginning with the reforms of the 1960s, Kutiyattam left its protected space within the temple and reached out into the secular realm. Modernization and particularly secularization of the theatre tradition was rapidly taking shape. Within the course of merely a few years and with the primary support of Painkulam Rama Chakyar, a secular department, the faculty for Kutiyattam at KKM, was established. With this new form of institutionalization, not only was a new location for teaching created, but also the relationship between the guru and the student was altered. The 1960s/1970s can be marked as a door-opener, with access to the art first granted to members belonging to other castes. In 1965, the same year of its inauguration, KKM enrolled the first apprentice coming from outside the traditional communities engaged with Kutiyattam: A.M. Shivan Namboodiri (see appendix 3, figures 20-22).²³¹ As a member of the *Namboodiri* (Brahmin) community, which holds a higher rank than the community of *Chakyars*, the practice of Kutiyattam is not part of the *kuladharma* of his caste. Henceforth, even today, and being one of the most prominent and acclaimed artists in the field, he is not accepted in orthodox circles and is not allowed to perform in the temples on certain occasions. In 1971, the first non-*Nangiar* female student, P.N. Girijadevi, a member of the high caste Mussat group, was accepted by Painkulam Rama Chakyar (Girija, 2011; see also appendix 3, figure 35). She remained the only female student for around 4 years and was joined in 1974 by C.K. Shylaja, the first female student holding a lower caste-status than the *Nangiar*s.²³² In 1972, the first non-*Nambiar* student, K. Eswaranunni, was also enrolled for learning *Mizhavu* under P.K.N. Nambiar.²³³ Furthermore, the first foreign students were accepted for private lectures and gurus like Painkulam Rama Chakyar even went abroad to instruct students.²³⁴

In 1976, a further step towards the secularization and popularization was taken with the first *Kuttampalam* on secular ground inaugurated on the premises of KKM (see appendix 3, figure 18).²³⁵ As KKM not only allowed members of all castes and communities to perform in

²³¹ Shivan Namboodiri has recently been honored with the *Padmashree* award, the fourth highest civilian award conferred by the government of India on the occasion of the Republic day.

²³² In the 1970s, in post-colonial India, it was very difficult to find female apprentices for theatre and art.

²³³ All are engaged as senior lecturers at KKM today, playing a crucial role in the safeguarding of the art.

²³⁴ Richmond, who staged a Kutiyattam version with an English adaptation at Michigan State University already in 1976, was among the first foreigners to be instructed in Kutiyattam. Maria Krzysztof Byrski, coming from Poland, took regular classes under Mani M. Chakyar already in 1964, thus even before classes started at KKM.

²³⁵ A further *Kuttampalam* was erected at SSUS in *Kalady*. Furthermore, the Kutiyattam Kendra in *Thiruvananthapuram* has the construction of *Kuttampalams*, among others on its own premises, on its agenda.

the *Kuttampalam*, but also allowed *Kathakali* and *Mohiniyattam* performances to be staged there, Kaladharan (2007) speaks in this context of a “democratization of the performance-space” (p. 49). Furthermore, Painkulam R. Chakyar encouraged Kutiyattam students to attend performances conducted in styles other than their own, even comparing it to *Kathakali* and other performance traditions, a practice that was hitherto strictly forbidden for apprentices and even full-fledged artists were hardly seen attending each others’ performances.²³⁶ Hence, Kutiyattam stepped out of its artistic isolation. Furthermore, in 1980, the first full-fledged Kutiyattam performance under Painkulam R. Chakyar was staged in a foreign country²³⁷, namely in France and Poland.²³⁸ Subsequently, the first secular performance of *Nangiarkuttu* was staged by Girijadevi in 1984.

The turn of the 1990s marked a further important event, with temple authorities starting to engage and therewith accept actors and actresses trained in secular institutions to conduct performances as part of temple activities and rituals. Despite conservative and orthodox fractions of the *Chakyar* community still holding much power, the latter part of the 1990s witnessed even more far-reaching innovations and a radical opening of the tradition. First, after continuous persuasion by G. Venu in conjunction with SNA, in 1995, Madhava Chakyar and his troupe, consisting of members of the traditional communities and members of other castes, performed Kutiyattam, for the first time in history, inside an idle *Kuttampalam* belonging to the *Harippad Subrahmanya* temple (Venu, 2002).²³⁹ This was a breakthrough as artists not belonging to the traditional communities face exorbitant difficulties in accessing the temple stages and exceptions are still rare.²⁴⁰ Second, KKM student Sophi took over, for the first time in history, a male role for Kutiyattam in the same year, while only three years later a full-fledged artist, Girijadevi, staged the role of *Srirama* during a performance in Mumbai. Today, largely due to a lack of male actors, this practice is widespread, with apprentices in the art learning male roles regularly during their training (see appendix 3, figures 43-46). Moreover, foreign students of the art (in particular from Germany²⁴¹ and Japan) make their debut (*arangettam*) on stage in Kerala and local artists started to engage in

²³⁶ V. Namboodiripad, personal interview, op. cit.

²³⁷ This performance was partly sponsored by UNESCO via the International Fund for the Promotion of Culture (Kinnane, 1980).

²³⁸ Moreover, Madhava Chakyar and his troupe accomplished their first international tour in 1982 (Venu, 2002). Further tours were carried out 1985, 1987 and 1989. Hence, it was Ammannur Madhava Chakyar who popularized Kutiyattam in foreign countries (Paul, 2005).

²³⁹ The *Kuttampalam* was disused for several decades (ibid.).

²⁴⁰ Among them are performances in the *Arpookkara Subrahmanya* temple theatre in *Kottayam* in 1996, where Kutiyattam had not been staged for almost two centuries (Paul, 2005) and in *Harippad* in 2000 (Venu, 2002). Furthermore, artists were granted one time access in the *Kuttampalams* of *Harippad* and *Kidangoor* as part of the film productions for the candidature file for UNESCO.

²⁴¹ The first *arangettam* by a foreigner was by Heike Moser (2011b) in the *Kuttampalam* of KKM in 1995.

national and international artistic exchange.²⁴² Thus, the art form steadily opened up within and towards the local, regional, national and finally international realms. With the admittance of foreign researchers as students of the art, it irrevocably reached out into the Western hemisphere.

3.4.2 Transformations in performance, performance space and audience

Along with performances outside the temple ground, the institutionalization of the art within secular parameters and the admittance of students from outside the *ambalavasi* groups as students and practitioners of the art, the training technique and performance itself also underwent major changes. First of all, since 1965, training was systematized and a syllabus for a 6 years training course was developed. Pupils no longer learned only by observation, imitation and repetition, but had to follow a concrete training structure. Systematic body shaping was initialized through massage and physical training and emphasis in training was given specifically to precision, aesthetical refinement and stylization of body movements and postures. Prime attention was given to the body and bodily feelings, and not only the eyes.²⁴³ *Cholliyattams*, acting rehearsals, became a regular feature of the training. Moreover, with the support of P.K.N. Nambiar, son of Mani M. Chakyar, acting in Kutiyattam and drumming were synchronized and refined in order to maximize effects and coherence in expression. Therefore, *Mizhavu* and acting lessons were jointly exercised, whereby the *Mizhavu* players were allowed to sit in front of the actors to study their facial expressions and gestures used.²⁴⁴ Likewise, lighting on stage was radically changed in order to cater to the expectations of a changing audience. Furthermore, costumes and make-up were modified to appeal to the eyes and maximize show effects. Here, the costume and make-up of the female characters in particular underwent major changes. A number of splendid and beautifying ornaments, such as the silver chain on the forehead, *Vellialukku*, were introduced and the female headgear was almost completely exchanged (see appendix 3, figures 33-43)²⁴⁵ Additionally, the female role also received wider attention. According to K.V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, February 28, 2012), Painkulam R. Chakyar was influential in bringing female characters to a

²⁴² Initially, G. Venu, for example, took part in the World Theatre Project in 1996 and M. Madhu and K. Unnikrishnan participated in a pan-Asian theatre experiment in New York in 1997. Today, this practice is widespread, with students and lecturers of ACCSG and Natanakairali regularly participating in international artistic and academic programs, particularly in Japan and Korea. For a comment on an exchange between artists of Kutiyattam and Noh theatre in 2012, see <http://www.narthaki.com/info/rev12/rev1206.html>

²⁴³ V. Namboodiripad, personal interview, op. cit.

²⁴⁴ P.K.N. Nambiar, personal interview, op. cit. So far, *Mizhavu* players were only allowed to sit behind the actors during training and performance.

²⁴⁵ Some examples are given in Moser (2008, pp. 57ff, 162, 263). See also Paniker (2005).

prominent position on stage. Until then, while female characters had been part and parcel of the Kutiyattam repertoire, performances including female characters on stage were rarely conducted and female acting-roles were given no importance.²⁴⁶ Nevertheless, *Nangiars* were always supporting the performances through reciting the *slokas* and playing the rhythm with the cymbals at the side of the stage. However, for example, up to the reforms of Rama Chakyar, the female character Tara in *Balivadham* was never performed (ibid.). Thus, in order to enhance female stage presence and exposure of their artistic skills, new choreographies were designed. Indeed, Rama Chakyar even (re)-produced an acting manual of Lalita's *nirvahanam* (retrospection). Finally, choreographies of Kutiyattam, traditionally lasting for several days, were edited to two to three hour plays. These new compilations were again constructed to cater to the expectations of secular audiences. In order to restrict the time scale, Chakyar radically shortened the *nirvahanam* and mainly referred to the literal text, *nataka*. He further selected dramatic peak points of the plays and edited accordingly.²⁴⁷ Additionally, he also composed so-called *prathishlokams* (parody verses), which were used by the *Vidushaka* to communicate meaning to the spectators by use of the regional language. All such transformations led to a steady marginalization of rituals. During the 1960s, Rama Chakyar was harshly criticized for all these reforms, among others by Ammannur M. Chakyar. However, they spearheaded a "silent revolution in the field of traditional performing arts" (Kaladharan, 2007, p. 47), with most of the innovations having survived until the present day. They became salient features within Kutiyattam²⁴⁸, proving fruitful for the mediatization of the art, as well as crucial for the attraction of local and international audiences. Aesthetic enjoyment was elevated to one of the prime factors of appreciation and Kutiyattam became a widely appreciated art form.

With the transformation of performance and performance space, the audience also gradually changed. While Brahmins constituted major parts of the audience in former days, spectators from other strata of society, mainly belonging to India's mushrooming middle class, increasingly gained access with the reforms. These new spectators did not necessarily have preliminary knowledge about theatre grammar or *Sanskrit*, but aimed for aesthetic

²⁴⁶ Kutiyattam troupes were very small, consisting of one or two actors and one actress. Females would have only performed within a protected environment within close proximity (ibid.). Furthermore, Johan (2011b, p. 247) has shown that only independent women or "active" women are incorporated in the play in temple performances, whereas women who are accompanied by their husband were disembodied.

²⁴⁷ V. Namboodiripad, personal interview, op. cit. For example, in 1976, Rama Chakyar edited *Bhagavadajjuka* into a five-hour performance, radically shortening the *nirvahanam* of the *Vidushaka* and highlighting the garden scene. Previously, the farce was presented in thirty-five days, out of which the actual drama was only enacted in the last four days, with the main characters taking their entry on stage in the preceding days.

²⁴⁸ Namboodiripad (2011) hence speaks about the present time as the "Ramachakyar epoch" (p. 17), which started in 1949 with the breaking of the first taboo.

pleasure and joy. This development subsequently led to a change in relationship between the audience and the performance. While the artist and the scholarly audience had previously developed a reciprocal relationship during the performance, mutually stimulating each other, V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, op. cit.) recalls that

practitioners as well as spectators changed their understanding of what Kutiyattam is. More people have started to see Kutiyattam as an enjoyable art form (with all the necessary) norms of enjoyment, the norms of rating Kutiyattam as an art form.

Consequently, “now you have it *pacca*” (ibid.), everything needs to be very neat, dress as well as carpentry and ornaments need to be polished in order to be consumed. Kutiyattam is now pleasing the eyes; it attracts and caters to the eyes of a new audience, which entertains new values, expectations and demands, which have also found reflection in the performance. For example, reflecting tastes and morals of the new audience, which was primarily exposed to the British education system and Victorian values, the *Vidushaka* nowadays abstains from indulging in references pointing to erotic sentiment, *sringara*, or sexual activity, a practice that was in existence as long as the temples were still the prime location for performance and *Namboodiris* constituted the prime spectators. Furthermore, in order not to harm or hurt the feelings of spectators, and therewith alienate the audience, jokes and criticism are placed very carefully. Nowadays, individuals are rarely targeted; again, a practice that was widespread in the olden days and did not even bare high-ranking officials or kings (ibid.). In this regards, the *Sanskrit* scholar K.G. Paulose (2011) speaks about the “transformation of ritual into theatre” (p. 14) that was initiated in the KKM in 1965. However, with the death of Painkulam R. Chakyar in 1980 and Mani M. Chakyar in 1990, two major artists who were largely involved in the revival and maintenance of Kutiyattam unfortunately passed away. Ammannur M. Chakyar, who initially strongly opposed all initiatives for the radical opening and adaptation of Kutiyattam to contemporary contexts and demands, was the only legendary guru left able to represent the art to an ever-expanding and encroaching audience of interested academics, theatre enthusiasts and laypersons.

3.4.3 New Patronage

In 1991, new patronage also became consolidated. The SNA expanded assistance²⁴⁹ and launched a program in support of the classical Sanskrit Theatre of Kerala.²⁵⁰ The program

²⁴⁹ Individual stipends, program sponsorships and financial assistance for research and documentation were already provided by SNA since the late-1970s. Financial support was given particularly to ensure the

aimed at the preservation and promotion of Kutiyattam and provided regular financial support to institutions and artists to conduct training and performances, with scholarships also provided for students. Altogether, the program aimed at ensuring the transmission of artistic knowledge and practice from one generation to the next, as well as at enlarging an appreciative and knowledgeable audience for the art. Funding was particularly provided to non-state Kutiyattam institutions, excluding the state-run KKM.²⁵¹ In 1995, the *Akademi* further conducted a Kutiyattam *Mahotsavam* at Delhi. Bringing together Kutiyattam artists and scholars from all the major institutions in Delhi, the event was placed in a national framework of reference and tellingly aimed at bringing Kutiyattam into “the national cultural consciousness as a classical heritage of India” (<http://www.sangeetnatak.org/sna/kutiyattam-centre.htm>, accessed May 21, 2012).²⁵² Revival and safeguarding strategies were multiple and multi-layered. On the one hand, short choreographies were prepared to please a contemporary and mainly secular audience. On the other hand, long *nirvahanam* solo performances were re-invented, which partially revived almost forgotten parts, only to be performed in front of a selected and initiated few. In 1999, a new trend started with the production of a number of new manuals for the enactment of female roles hitherto banned from elaborated stage presence.²⁵³ Moreover, a new play was written for the Kutiyattam repertoire. Heavily based on classical Sanskrit plays, but never used in the context of Kutiyattam, the play was adapted to the art and published by Margi Sathi in 1999. It includes a self-created *nirvahanam* for *Sita*, a 41-day female solo, as part of the third act of *Bhavabhutis Uttararamacaritam*. Herein, the actress herself enacts the full *Ramayana* story. With this effort, female solo performances and artistic exposure were given performance space and prominence. This act led to a vitalization of female agency and anticipated developments that were to be given increasing focus at the beginning of the 21st century. Overall, during the second half of the 20th century Kutiyattam was considerably “freed from its bondage as a temple-oriented art form” (S.

transmission and continuation of the art. Awards were granted to Kutiyattam since the mid-1960s, with Mani M. Chakyar being the first Kutiyattam artist to receive a national award from SNA in 1964. Furthermore, the Department of Culture, Government of India, initially supported Kutiyattam through funds since 1982 (Kaladharan, 2007). SNA also initially supported ACCSG in 1982, but withdrew after three years (Venu, 2005).

²⁵⁰ The scheme *National Centres for Specialized Training in Music and Dance* at SNA placed exclusive focus on Kutiyattam during its initial years. In 1993, Chhau was also accepted under the scheme.

²⁵¹ From 1991 onwards, *Margi* for example received funds from the SNA to conduct weekly performances and support students. Even though the audience generally comprised fewer than four persons, this practice resulted in positive outcomes as young artists, rehearsing repeatedly with costume and make-up, steadily expanded their artistry as well as the general repertoire of Kutiyattam and therewith helped to rescue the art. Additionally, the Ford Foundation provided sponsorship between 1994 and 2000 (R. Iyer, personal interview, op. cit.).

²⁵² The festival was completely video-documented and recordings of performances, lecture-demonstrations and interviews with artists and scholars were archived at SNA.

²⁵³ In 2003, *Natanakairali* restaged Kalidasa's play *Shakuntala* and a new *Attaprakaram* was also written.

Gopalakrishnan, 2011a, p. 10) and placed in a new context, pointing rigorously towards the secular and the nation state. Kutiyattam increasingly transformed itself in order to suit the demands of the present-day audience, which is quite eclectic and has ever-less time at free disposal. The main characteristic of this transformation is a trend towards institutionalization, secularization and gender-equality.

To summarize, Kutiyattam of the 21st century is no longer what it used to be between the 14th/15th and 19th centuries, when it was closely attached to the temples. While conservative attitudes are still maintained, guarding the exclusivity of temple performance rights and strengthening the position of traditional communities, a radical opening of the art has also taken place. Secular performance opportunities far away from traditional performing spaces and times have been increasingly provided and utilized. An initially intracultural²⁵⁴ opening has preceded an intercultural opening of the art. As an effect, the control over Kutiyattam seems to be slowly sliding away from the traditional bearers of the art. Moreover, orthodox temple authorities additionally weaken traditional artists who do not subscribe to strict caste regulations with regards to marriage. For example, Usha Nangiar gained performance rights for Kutiyattam at *Vadakkunnathan* temple in *Trissur* at the beginning of the 1990s. Only seven years later, she lost her rights after marrying a *Nayar* of lower caste status, the excellent *Mizhavu* player V.K.K. Hariharan.²⁵⁵ Hence, one of the best female performers in Kutiyattam was stripped of her performance rights at a young age (33) due to caste controversies.²⁵⁶ Now, her student Apparna Nangiar holds the performance rights at *Vadakkunnathan* temple. However, strictly conservative temple-traditions are no longer sustainable, given that only a few out of the pre-described communities proceed to study Kutiyattam. Furthermore, today many *Chakyars* marry *Nayar* women, who are not members of the *ambalavasi* groups and are of lower rank. Sons are traditionally ascribed to the caste of the women; thus, they will be *Nayar* and hence prohibited from performance in the temple. Therefore, the temples will have to either restrict themselves to only a handful of artists or also open the floor to dedicated artists from non-traditional communities. Indeed, this is a task that will have to be decided by the next generations.

²⁵⁴ Bharucha's (2000) "intracultural" points to "dynamics between and across specific communities and regions *within* the boundaries of the nation-state" (p. 6), while the term intercultural points towards relations and exchange *across* national boundaries.

²⁵⁵ Women of matrilineal communities traditionally either marry men of higher or the same rank. In case they choose to marry a lower rank, their own rank affiliation is degraded and privileges given to that particular community are traditionally no longer given.

²⁵⁶ Shivan Nambodiri, Shylaja and Girijadevi openly protested in Malayalam newspapers (Moser, 2008). Furthermore, K.K. Gopalakrishnan (2006) criticized this orthodox practice in India's national newspaper *The Hindu*. He remarked that this tradition is discriminatory with regards to women, as *Chakyars* do not lose their performance rights in case of marriage with a non-Ilttama or non-Nangiar.

3.5 Kutiyattam as Intangible Cultural Heritage

“Information regarding the new initiative by UNESCO reached the world of Kutiyattam by chance” (S. Gopalakrishnan, 2011b, p. 6). In 1999, the Margi Troupe was invited by Milena Salvini from Mandapa to perform in Paris. Meanwhile, UNESCO launched a new program called *Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* and the director of the new-born Intangible Heritage Section of UNESCO, Noriko Aikawa, present during one performance, suggested preparing a nomination dossier for Kutiyattam to be proclaimed as a masterpiece. The dossier was based on several documents (UNESCO, 2001a), two of which held major importance: first, a written document authored by Sudha Gopalakrishnan (2000a), Vice President of Margi, with the help of Rama Iyer, in 1999; and second, a documentary film directed by Adoor Gopalakrishnan. The nomination was supported by the Ministry of Culture and subsequently passed the evaluation process by UNESCO. In 2001, Kutiyattam, along with eighteen other traditional expressions and cultural spaces, was proclaimed a “Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” (UNESCO, 2006).²⁵⁷

When UNESCO conducted its 31st General Council at the Paris headquarters, Dr. Noriko Aikawa invited a Kutiyattam troupe featuring Ammannur M. Chakyar to conduct a performance.²⁵⁸ The time slot given was 45 minutes, out of which Ammannur M. Chakyar was allotted 15 minutes to present the *navarasas*, the nine sentiments. This was followed by a 30-minute performance of a piece of *Surphanakhankam* (Sruti magazine, cited in Paul, 2005). The troupe comprised artists from all three major institutions, namely Margi (Thiruvananthapuram), KKM (Cheruthuruthy) and ACCSG (Irinjalakuda). The artists consisted of Kalamandalam²⁵⁹ Shivan Namboodiri (as *Srirama*), Margi Sathi (as *Lalita*), G. Venu (as *Surpanakha*), Margi Narayanan (as *Lakshmana*) and Usha Ratnam (as *Sita*), while the percussion instrument *Mizhavu* was played by K. Rajeev and Hariharan. It is interesting to note that with the exception of the master Ammannur M. Chakyar, all the participating artists representing Kutiyattam during the 31st Session of the General Conference in October 2001 belonged to communities other than the traditional *Chakyars*, *Nangiars* and *Nambiars*. However, it was not without good reason that the great Ammannur M. Chakyar was featured prominently on the front page of the UNESCO brochure *First Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*. Furthermore, in a document handed in to

²⁵⁷ Dissemination of the news in Kerala through TV and radio broadcasting happened to coincide with the celebrations of the 84th birthday of Ammannur M. Chakyar on May 19, 2001.

²⁵⁸ Six of the nineteen proclaimed masterpieces were invited to conduct a performance at this international venue (S. Gopalakrishnan, n.d., p. 3)

²⁵⁹ Hereafter, Kalamandalam as part of a name is abbreviated as K.

UNESCO/Japan-Funds-in-Trust, Kutiyattam is described as “the only form of theatre in India where men (from the Chakyar community) and women (from the Nangiar community) perform alongside each other, accompanied by percussionists (from the Nambiar community)” (S. Gopalakrishnan, n.d, pp. 3-4). Later on, the document mentions that the art form opened up during the past century and that new training institutions were created. However, it leaves the reader with the assumption that *Chakyars*, *Nangiars* and *Nambiars* remain the prime practitioners of the art.

This constellation anticipates some of the developments that will be described in detail below. Nevertheless, before coming to these developments, a number of positive, ambivalent and negative outcomes of the 2001 proclamation (and respectively the 2008 inscription on the *Representative List*) are worth mentioning.

3.5.1 Benefits

Understandably, the initial impacts of the UNESCO proclamation were very positive. First of all, the nomination comprised fundamental financial assistance. It projected a ten-year action scheme, which was subsequently implemented with the assistance of the Japan-Funds-in-Trust (S. Gopalakrishnan, 2011b). A total budget of US\$ 124,879 was granted for the 2003-2005 period²⁶⁰ by UNESCO/Japan-Funds-in-Trust, for the safeguarding of Kutiyattam, with half of the money being scheduled equally to seven different Kutiyattam institutions, including KKM, ACCSG, MMCSG, the International Centre for Kutiyattam and the Department of Ancient Theatre at Kalady University. Equal amounts were also issued for the audio-visual documentation of a masters series, produced by the Centre for Development of Imaging Technology (C-DiT)²⁶¹, for seminars, research and publication, as well as the establishment of archives and library. Finally, seed capital for networking between the institutions as well as financial resources for the promotion of performances were accounted scheduled with higher sums (S. Gopalakrishnan, 2000b). Furthermore, an action plan was developed at the national level, encompassing the revival of old plays and the development of new choreographies, visual documentation and research, promotion of performances, dissemination as well as support of training in the *guru-shishya* system (S. Gopalakrishnan, 2011b). Furthermore, the Ministry of Culture in India already created a fund in 2003 to specifically support Indian art forms that have been proclaimed *Masterpieces of the Intangible*

²⁶⁰ The project was implemented from 2004 onwards.

²⁶¹ The series focuses on performances and portraits of artists, including P.K.N. Nambiar and S. Namboodiri, and particularly stresses the hardships that actors experienced during their childhood and early careers.

Cultural Heritage by UNESCO. Moreover, in 2006, one year after India ratified the 2003 convention, the Minister of Finance, Government of India, provisioned an initial amount of 50 million Rupees for the safeguarding of the masterpieces (ibid.).²⁶² From 2007 onwards, funds for Kutiyattam were channeled via SNA to the newly inaugurated Kutiyattam Kendra: National Centre for Kutiyattam in Thiruvananthapuram²⁶³, which was established to systematize and expand SNA's patronage of Kutiyattam in Kerala, ensuring the active maintenance and transmission of artistic practice, sustenance for a large number of artists (teachers and students) and simultaneously enabling public promotion and state-sanctioned administration of Kutiyattam.²⁶⁴ The advisory committee of the Kendra most noteworthy includes two artists, one *Chakyar* and one *Nambiar*, thereby simultaneously integrating traditional artists in decision-making bodies as well as excluding non-*Chakyar/Nambiar* and female artists from the same body.²⁶⁵

It should be noted that via support programs and funding schemes, not only the economic viability of the art but also its vitality was profoundly strengthened. Kutiyattam practitioners received a financial “injection (...) a shot in the arm” (V. Kaladharan, personal interview, February 17, 2012), which was essential for an initial optimism that boosted energy, “hope” (Venu, 2005, p. 11) and confidence among young apprentices and subsequently led to an increase in young *Chakyars*, *Nambiars* and *Nangiars* studying Kutiyattam. Johan (2011a) recapitulates that in the first decade of the 21st century, hence after the UNESCO recognition, one quarter of the young *Chakyars* indulged in the study of the art, whereas a maximum one-in-five followed the profession in the 20th century. Furthermore, a number of young *Nambiars* today are regularly trained in Kutiyattam and stage *Chakyarkuttu*. Indeed, the impact has been particularly visible among members of the traditional communities, yet not so much among artists belonging to other castes, who became trained in public institutions like the KKM. However, *Chakyars* and *Nambiars* understood that they represent, incorporate and “stand for the glory of tradition” (V. Kaladharan, personal interview, op. cit.), a glory that was neither attached to the art nor to the artists before.²⁶⁶ Embodying the new heritage discourse, C.K.

²⁶² However, it is unclear whether funds allocated for Kutiyattam were transferred after the announcement of the provision.

²⁶³ Further Kendras have only been established by SNA for two further art forms in India: Kathak and Manipuri.

²⁶⁴ The central government is in charge of lecturers at governmental institutions such as KKM and Kalady University. It supports training facilities and research scholarships. Mainly SNA, via the Kutiyattam Kendra in Thiruvananthapuram, provides funds for students, artists and non-governmental institutions. Moreover, the latter also supports performances outside the temples and the preservation of acting manuals.

²⁶⁵ See <http://sangeetnatak.gov.in/sna/kutiyattam-centre.htm>, last accessed April 5, 2012.

²⁶⁶ V. Kaladharan (ibid.) remarks that for a long time none of the *Chakyars* “wanted to glorify the history of this theatre form” or establish and proof its “antiquity”. They considered it as their tradition, as a lived tradition and precious artistic practice, however similar in value to many other artistic practices and indigenous traditions in

Jayanthi (personal interview, April 22, 2012) proudly states that “after 5 years, this house will be a museum”. She adds that besides documents, artifacts and media, the family members will also be part of the museum. “We are also museum pieces, I am also a museum piece, my mother also is a museum piece, my father also is a museum piece” (ibid.). Thus, based on an economic tenet and social stimulus, a cultural re-awakening took place, in which the art became repositioned and revalorized and, being among the prime beneficiaries, the traditional communities made a conscious attempt to support this new trend.

Moreover, the proclamation helped to create an international reputation, which in turn restored social prestige, respect, awareness and interest within the local population and Indian society at large. Sudha Gopalakrishnan (n.d.) elaborates that in

the province of Kerala where the art form survives, there is a feeling of pride that a sacred art belonging to the region has won international recognition. It [the proclamation] has re-emphasized the value of the art form in the local context (p. 4).

Furthermore, wide media coverage after UNESCO’s declaration “has resulted in boosting the image of this traditional art form to a national audience” (ibid.). Consequently, Kutiyattam subsequently transformed itself from a precious tradition of a selected initiated few to a priceless heritage for the whole nation. S. Gopalakrishnan (2011b) further recalls that “the Kutiyattam community came together, perhaps for the first time in history” (p. 6), to jointly discuss the use of adequate methods for safeguarding. Custodians and practitioners formed a network in order to share knowledge and facilitate exchange. She even remarks that “this unity within the Kutiyattam community has perhaps become the greatest advantage of the UNESCO recognition” (S. Gopalakrishnan, n.d., p. 5). According to insights gained during my fieldwork in Kerala in 2012, I would like to add that this network or “unity” had either already dissolved less than a decade later or remains far from being achieved.²⁶⁷ However, the proclamation indeed substantially enhanced cooperation, collaboration, mutual invitations and exchange among Kutiyattam practitioners and institutions.

As a further positive outcome, accessibility warrants mention; indeed, access increased substantially. In some cases, even temples, where access was hitherto strictly prohibited for non-Hindus, allowed interested non-Hindu individuals to enter the temple ground, take

Kerala. With the “heritagization” of the tradition a distinction took place, creating a hierarchy among indigenous practices and art forms. Kutiyattam was glorified, although this glorification remained abstract for the elder practitioners and impacts regarding value are felt primarily among the younger generation of artists. Today, links with the art form are created via an imaginary of the art and no longer solely through memory and the act of remembering, connecting oneself to the art and the great masters.

²⁶⁷ See also Daugherty (2011a).

photographs of the *Kuttampalam* or attend a performance (Richmond, 2011; own fieldwork experience).²⁶⁸ Furthermore, Kutiyattam performances within and outside India increased substantially. Hereby, the SNA gave special assistance especially for the dissemination of the art beyond its traditional areas of practice. The art progressively gained visibility even beyond the local scale. Moreover, in order to increase accessibility and knowledge, a new feature was promoted, so-called interactive classes or lecture demonstrations, in which the artists impart to the audience the basic meaning of the play as well as the techniques used in a brief introduction before the performance starts. In doing so, the audience is enabled to understand and enjoy some of the deeper levels of meaning in Kutiyattam. Consequently, interest among the spectators increased substantially, leading to new viewership, a wider educated audience and scholarly interest among students within Kerala and abroad (K.K. Gopalakrishnan, personal interview, February 6, 2012; see also appendix 3, figures 47-48). Catering to this audience, a number of new webpages on Kutiyattam and Kutiyattam institutions and artists were established and interactive web-forums created. For example, the Mani family acquired the domain name kutiyattam.com. Furthermore, popular platforms such as YouTube are used to upload and share performances, particularly of *Chakyarkuttu*. Besides, plenty of audio-visual representations of Kutiyattam and *Nangiarkuttu* have been made available on CD and DVD, while local, national and international media coverage and promotion of Kutiyattam performance has increased substantially. Additionally, a centralized archive with written, audio-, visual- and audio-visual material is envisaged and a “Program of documentation of Masters Series” (S. Gopalakrishnan, 2011b, p. 7) advocated, aiming to audio-visually document the distinctive existing styles of the senior performers. Additionally to the performances, old manuscripts were documented and *Attaprakarams* published. Hence, knowledge on Kutiyattam increasingly went beyond the custodians of the art, with at least some tangible artifacts, which encompass knowledge and were formerly in the exclusive custody of traditional families, becoming accessible to a wider audience.

Furthermore, scholarly interest also increased. However, it should be mentioned that serious academic studies in ancient theatre started in Kerala in the 1980s²⁶⁹, when several outstanding papers, monographs and old manuscripts such as the *Vyangyavyakhya*, an 11th century stage script, were published.²⁷⁰ The *Tripunithura*-based center for research and publication was already opened in 1995 and a new Department for Ancient Theatre was

²⁶⁸ In general, foreign scholars still have to convert to Hinduism in order to study Kutiyattam in the temples. Richmond was the first to do so, with scholars following his example until the present day.

²⁶⁹ International academic attention to Kutiyattam also started in the 1980s.

²⁷⁰ See also Jones (1984) and Venu (1989).

established at Sanskrit University in *Kalady*. Hence, serious attempts to document and research Kutiyattam were already developed long before UNESCO entered the field as a cultural player (Paulose, 2011). Nevertheless, after the UNESCO proclamation, UNESCO funds were also used to foster further publication (e.g. Kaladharan, 2007; Paul (Ed.), 2005; Paulose, 2006; Venugopalan (Ed.), 2007, 2009). Additionally, several new research projects in universities in Kerala were initiated and the creation of “Academic Resource Centres” in schools (S. Gopalakrishnan, 2011b, p. 7) was encouraged. Academic exchange on both a national and international level was stimulated and workshops and seminars conducted. In 2006, the first *International Seminar on Kutiyattam and Asian Theatre Traditions*, organized by UNESCO, the Ministry of Culture in India and Margi Theatre, was held in *Thiruvananthapuram*. Today, besides Indian and international scholars, an increasing number of artists are participating in the academic discourse on Kutiyattam.²⁷¹ However, as Jayanthi (2011) remarks, Western scholars still dominate the scene.

Moreover, due to intense scholarly and expert discourse, a number of new words were coined and are widely used today. One such example is *pakarnattam*, naming the technique of diverse character embodiment by one single actor or actress (Richmond, 2006). Even the concept of heritage had never previously existed in the Kutiyattam vocabulary and is considered to be a new concept, coined by the West and introduced into Kutiyattam discourse.

Notably, a striking feature of safeguarding projects implemented by the respective institutions in charge was a focus on the “new”. Examples include new productions, new choreographies or new adaptations of old choreographies to a present day demand, as well as the revitalization and reinvention of earlier plays (S. Gopalakrishnan, 2011b).²⁷² Since obtaining financial support, new choreographies have received prime attention and flooded the Kutiyattam scene. The artist and scholar C.K. Jayanthi (2011) recapitulates that more than 12 new choreographies were created after the UNESCO recognition. This development is not regarded as essential by some artists but is called for via funding schemes, which, being a major and inevitable financial source for most of the artists, predetermined activities and demands within Kutiyattam practice.²⁷³ In addition, a generation of talented young drummers

²⁷¹ Examples include Indu G., Jayanthi (2011), Madhu (2002, 2011), P.K. Usha Nangiar, P.K.N. Nambiar (1980, 1984, 1995, 2005) and Sathi (1999). Even though A.M. Chakyar (1995a, 1995b) might not be listed as a scholar, his texts have entered academic debate, while the same is also true for P.R. Chakyar (1995a, 1995b).

²⁷² The re-staging of *Subhadra's nirvahanam*, not performed in living memory, and financed by the American Institute of Indian Studies, can be cited as an example. Later on, U. Nangiar excelled in re-staging characters such as Mandodari and Katyayani in 2003, Menaka in 2004 and Draupadi in 2005 (Daugherty, 2011b).

²⁷³ C.K. Jayanthi, personal interview, April 22, 2012. Until today, professionals and students highly depend on government stipends and support programs, as only the very popular *Chakyarkuttu* guarantees a good income during the 3-4 months in which the temples in Kerala conduct their annual festivals.

emerged, who cater to the ears as well as the eyes of a modern audience. The attractiveness of the *Mizhavu* play was amplified via sound accentuations, corresponding body movements and eye expressions, fostering increased audience attention.²⁷⁴ The *Mizhavu* play became more popular, with an independent artistic expression, *Mizhavu thayambaka*, subsequently created.²⁷⁵

Above all, the traditional immobility of the female characters on stage, which reflected predominant ideas of female decency and respectability, ideas that restricted the exposure of the female body and hence sexuality to a minimum, were replaced by an enlarged mobility, artistic freedom and agency on the side of female actresses. For example, Usha Nangiar took liberties in creating and representing her own meanings, meanings that deviated from the acting manual at hand.²⁷⁶ This artistic and individual freedom was by and large unthinkable a few decades earlier. Today, particularly in *Nangiarkuttu*, female physical artistry and body techniques are increasingly exposed. New stories are enacted with the use of new techniques, such as the exposure of the tongue in *Narasimhavataram*, presented by Kapila in 2009. Female roles and bodies have gained more stage presence, as they are no longer only “voiced” (Johan, 2011b, p. 249) or symbolically represented, but embodied and exposed. Consequently, the status of female performers has increased substantially. Women are actively participating in the definition of Kutiyattam’s new boundaries and push conventions to the limits. In this regard, the female body literally embodies the innovations and changes in the field.

3.5.2 Cases of ambivalence²⁷⁷

Female artists physically conquering the stage can be regarded as a very positive development. However, looking at it from a different perspective, Johan (ibid.) argued that in traditional performance ‘good women’ rarely physically appeared on stage, but were rather represented and imagined through voice, symbols or other theatrical devices. This practice led to a wide variety of acting methodologies and stage conventions, which are lost in cases where an actress would actually appear on stage. Moreover, the actual physical presence of the character on stage can also be viewed as another form of classicization, as it is explicitly

²⁷⁴ Indeed, in some cases the percussionist’s physical performance on stage is so thrilling that the attention slides away from the actor or actress and rests in large parts on the music and musicians. This development gathered momentum in the context of increasing strains for self-marketing on the side of the artists, as well as the modern urge for self-enjoyment.

²⁷⁵ P.K.N. Nambiar, personal interview, op. cit.; see also Richmond, 2011.

²⁷⁶ She presented her own intuitive interpretation of a scene during a performance (Daugherty, 2011b).

²⁷⁷ Under this category, cases are listed that unfurl positive as well as negative effects.

mentioned in the *Natyashastra*, while strategies for substitution, widely prevalent in Kutiyattam, were already criticized in the 15th century *Natankusa* commentary as deviating practice (Paulose, 1995). Furthermore, given that performance stages are no longer protected spaces, actresses have to face new challenges, including the fear of eroticization of their body; for example, when no proper identified stage is provided that can function as a protective shield and the performance takes place on the same level as the audience or in a casual environment.²⁷⁸ A further case of ambivalence is the re-emphasis of ensemble play. While in traditional performances the elaboration of single characters on stage (*nirvahanam*) consumed several days, today several characters are deemed essential for a successful performance.²⁷⁹ This presupposition also invites actresses to increasingly play a part on stage. For example, three actresses appeared simultaneously on stage in *Subhadra's nirvahanam*, act five of *Subhadradhananjaya* and *Shakuntala* respectively in 2001 and 2002, with this practice having since become widespread (Daugherty, 2011b). On the other hand, elaborate hours or even day-long interpretations have been sidelined and independent artists face difficulties in gaining stages.

Last but not least, a further institutionalization of the art has gradually taken place as either traditional, already functioning *Gurukulams* were registered as institutions to be eligible for funding schemes or new *Kalaris* and institutions were created. Some of these recently created institutions cater particularly to a new group of students, including part-time students as well as pupils who only learn for the purpose of a one-time performance as part of the popular school competitions. School competitions publicly demonstrate and reinforce regional and national cultural heritage and hence identity. They receive considerable media attention and construct youth as a major bearer of tradition and cultural heritage. Hereby, caste and religion are sidelined and traditional performing arts are packaged into 10-20 minute demonstrations. For some artists, these new venues provide a welcome opportunity to promote the art form and gain financial benefits as instructors or members of the jury.²⁸⁰ However, it must be added that even though these competitions create new audiences and offer a way of popularizing the art form, trivialization as well as fragmentation and commoditization might also prove to severely threaten the art. Hence, this development is also viewed very skeptically among some practicing artists.²⁸¹

²⁷⁸ K. Krishnendu, personal interview, April 21, 2012.

²⁷⁹ Ensemble play is easily enjoyable for the common uneducated audience, as a variety of characters, exposing different costumes, make-up and movements, guarantee curiosity and attention.

²⁸⁰ Personal interviews with K. Girijadevi, op. cit; and K. Kanakakumar, April 6, 2012.

²⁸¹ Kutiyattam has been integrated into this format despite vehement criticism. In 2011, *Nangiarkuttu* was first performed on such an occasion, even though it was not yet part of the competition.

3.5.3 Drawbacks

The impacts of the UNESCO recognition and subsequently implemented programs and structures are also viewed very critically and a number of potentially negative outcomes can be articulated.

First, the *Guru-shishya* system, which followed a “traditional method of training” (Jayanthi, 2011, p. 19), provided individualized training of an excellent quality. Today, new teaching curriculums framed within a “formal system of education” (ibid.) are binding for the newly constituted institutions under government aid and are perceived to prompt a declining quality within training (Gopalakrishnan, 2011b), as well as within the tradition itself (Jayanthi, 2011). Moreover, new funding schemes and attached power structures and dependencies have also undermined established hierarchies in decision-making, the choice of students and execution of training. Venu (personal interview, op. cit.), co-founder of ACCSG, argues that clerks, authorized by the SNA in Delhi, currently occupy powerful positions regarding the definition and implementation of strategies suitable for the safeguarding of Kutiyattam. On the other hand, artists and scholars, who developed and exercised strategies for the maintenance of the art for decades, now simultaneously also being beneficiaries of support programs, are excluded from these processes and categorized as receivers of funds. Indeed, today artists and institutions are required to follow specific program outlines, administrative acts and regulations, as well as keeping records of their activities. Venu (ibid.) argues that these new acts, which to a certain extent establish governmental control over the art²⁸², lack genuine respect for the artists and their needs. Thus, some artists and stakeholders, working independently for the preservation and safeguarding of Kutiyattam for decades, have felt disempowered, patronized and deprived of their artistic freedom and dignity.²⁸³ Consequently, those who could afford to have lost interest or resigned their position.²⁸⁴

Furthermore, the financial support as part of implementation projects was almost exclusively institution-based, covering secular institutions and attached artists. Students who left the institution after completing their course and remained un-affiliated to any institution did not fit to a number of support categories. Hence, independent artists, in need of assistance, faced considerable disadvantages and institutional affiliation became a prime concern. Moreover, financial support and the promotion of artists, particularly through tours and

²⁸² Support schemes as well as administrative acts are exercised by the Kutiyattam Kendra, running under the SNA, which again functions under the Ministry of Culture.

²⁸³ A.M. Chakyyar (2005) mentions the maintenance and preservation of “the dignity of the profession” (p. 4), via support of training and performance, as the main target of safeguarding activities.

²⁸⁴ Venu himself resigned his post as a lifetime secretary of ACCSG and today occupies the position of a *Kulapati* (honorary).

exposure abroad, did not cover all professional Kutiyattam artists, but rather focused on the prominent few. Additionally, the eminent artist M. Madhu and Indu G. (2011) accentuate that the funding schemes catered in particular to “those with proficiency in technical writing and the execution of projects” (p. 13). The general artist, trained mainly in matters of practice, was disadvantaged, with funds appropriated by “fake persons” who made “the funds their goal” while giving “little value to the quality of performances or commitment to the art form” (ibid.). Madhu (personal interview, March 31, 2012) further adds that artistic aspects of the art can easily become marginalized, as today’s audience is not endued with the scholarly knowledge and depth required for evaluation. Consequently, large-scale funding and the unequal distribution of funds has reinforced competition and rivalry among artists, institutions, stakeholders and other professionals. For example, ACCSG was initially not eligible for financial assistance, only eventually being listed as a beneficiary of monetary aid after intense public discussions. Funding thus created a “chasm, a gulf between the beneficiaries of UNESCO support and the non-beneficiaries. It really created a kind of inequality which was earlier not there” (V. Kaladharan, personal interview, February 17, 2012). Furthermore, as there is no monitoring system and systematic evaluation of the utilization of funds, artists and scholars in Kerala remain skeptical regarding the distribution of funds, as well as the ambition and results of funding.

Second, V. Kaladharan (ibid.) argues that “underneath the whole funding and the politics of UNESCO assistance (...) there is underlying politics which is normative and revivalistic”. He expresses the concern that Kutiyattam is increasingly becoming purified and depoliticized in order to be re-integrated in new frameworks of socio-political reference and usage. In this process, the period of Kutiyattam’s golden past, its temple culture and feudal aristocracy, are glorified and idealized, while negative aspects of the same culture are marginalized. Examples of the latter include the availability of the *Chakyar* as a medium for religious and socio-cultural propaganda, as well as humoristic comments by the *Vidushaka*, which discriminated for example disabled people or those with physical deformities (ibid.). Indeed, it is notable that UNESCO’s 2003 convention, which makes explicit reference to the term “communities”, leads, at least in its implementation practice within Kerala, to a reinforcement of conservative aspects within Kutiyattam practice. In fact, paternalization and support by UNESCO offers a large shelter to members of the hereditary communities, as well as the old and middle-aged generation of artists. Moreover, contemporary discourse promotes and re-establishes the traditional bearers of the art, the *Chakyars*, *Nambiars* and *Nangiars* as genuine and original

practitioners and therewith as the most suitable preservers of the performance tradition. Performance tradition is understood here as

that body of knowledge, including techniques of performance, texts, and aesthetic principles or rules or assumptions, which constitute and defines what the particular genre is, and it is simultaneously the process of handing that knowledge on from one generation to another (Richmond, Swann, & Zarilli, 1990, p. 4).

Furthermore, current practice is slowly re-vitalizing and freezing values that have exclusively contextualized the art within these hereditary communities and their taste, as well as within temple culture, temple rituals and practices. An artist remarks that Venu started the discourse on ritual. Indeed, ideologization and a renewed focus on rituals and communities already took place with Ammannur M. Chakyar. V. Kaladharan (personal interview, February 17, 2012) confirms he “wanted to be a priest, (...) evoking the deity of Kutiyattam”. Venu, who promoted his legacy, stressed his strict adherence to conventions and rituals, also placing the ritual in the spotlight within the secular sphere. In effect, Kutiyattam was classified and discoursivized as a ritualistic theatre, as a ritual art form. However, K.R. Chakyar (personal interview, February 18, 2012) continues to ask that, if it is a ritual, how can his own daughter learn it? In this context, it should be mentioned that Venu re-named his daughter Kapila Nangiar in the 1990s, even though she is not a *Nangiar* by caste but rather by profession.²⁸⁵ After receiving strong criticism, particularly from the side of the *Chakyar* and *Nambiar/Nangiar* communities, today she calls herself Kapila Venu again.²⁸⁶

Furthermore, V. Kaladharan (personal interview, February 17, 2012) also argues that “there is no way they [the *Chakyars*, *Nambiars* and *Nangiar*s] can be invaded”. In fact, the younger generation belonging to other communities and castes, and those who projected different futures for themselves and their artistic practice, are disempowered. Having not acclaimed the same artistic rigor and refinement as the elder generation, they do not have chances to support their arguments on artistic ground. Members of the traditional communities support the marginalization of these artists and the cementing of their own dominant status. In the course of this development, traditional communities are privileged and might re-gain “absolute hegemony over these forms” (ibid.).

²⁸⁵ G. Venu (personal interview, op. cit.) understands *Chakyar* and *Nangiar* not as caste titles but rather as professional titles.

²⁸⁶ P.K.N. Nambiar and C.K. Jayanthi (personal interviews, op. cit.) remark that no artist from outside the caste can become a *Nambiar* or *Nangiar*, as caste affiliation and prescribed rights and duties extend far beyond artistic knowledge and expression. Furthermore, they add that commitment to the art is a family duty, whereby the responsibility always lies with the whole family rather than an individual artist.

On the other hand, it should be noted that some influential *Chakyars* also argue against this notion. The eminent artist K.R. Chakyar (personal interview, op. cit.) strongly criticizes a focus that centers almost exclusively on the traditional families and neglects passionate artists, who have been rigorously trained in the art, based upon their community background. He further stresses that “just because a person is born in the Chakyar community he shouldn’t be included in the Kutiyattam community at all” (ibid.). In this context, if someone did not receive considerable training in Kutiyattam, they should not be privileged in funding and promotion. In this respect, he strongly criticizes the UNESCO-funded Kutiyattam register (Venugopalan, 2007), in which Kutiyattam actors, musicians and scholars are represented with name, address and short description. Herein, members of traditional families are promoted without having the necessary experience in training and performance practice, according to K.R. Chakyar. He further calls attention to the fact that, due to their community background, *Nangiars*, *Nambiars* and *Chakyars* are currently securing a variety of stage performances even in the secular realm, while many professionally trained and dedicated Kutiyattam artists still remain stage-less and have persistent problems in guaranteeing their necessary income.²⁸⁷

Consequently, since they fear disadvantages and discrimination, gifted and ambitious young people from non-*Chakyar*, non-*Nambiar* families do not select Kutiyattam for their studies. They have a “congenital fear that they are not welcomed in this, so they go either to *Kathakali* or some other art-forms which do not have this caste hierarchy (...). *Kuttu* and Kutiyattam are losing such talents” (V. Kaladharan, personal interview, March 23, 2012). In this context, it is interesting to note that, even though the number of students belonging to the traditional communities increased in the aftermath of UNESCO’s proclamation, the number of male students in secular governmental institutions such as the KKM stagnated and some Kutiyattam classes vanished altogether.²⁸⁸ K. Girijadevi (personal interview, February 19, 2012) further points out that since men have to be financially responsible for their family, they are unable to opt for an unprofitable study. Thus, the above-mentioned politics pose a threat to newcomers in the field and might, in the course of time, even undo the achievements

²⁸⁷ The young Kutiyattam actress K. Krishnendu (personal interview, op. cit.) also argues that while rigorously trained artists of non-traditional communities are not given many stages, members of traditional families, having neither developed a deeper interest in the art nor gained expertise in acting, receive a number of stage opportunities due to their caste affiliation. She adds that this situation is disappointing and painful for young artists, facing financial problems and lack of appreciation, and therefore losing their confidence in the art.

²⁸⁸ A number of females are enrolled in Kutiyattam. However, most of them did not receive admission for dance and were recommended to study Kutiyattam. Currently, there is only one advanced male student enrolled at KKM (J. Prathap, personal interview, April 6, 2012). In Margi, there are only four girls and two or three boys studying Kutiyattam across all age groups. Additionally, classes at Margi are only part-time and conducted during weekends or summer vacations (R. Iyer, personal interview, op. cit.).

of the past five decades, particularly concerning the democratization of the art form. Furthermore, today's generation of rigorously trained young artists face a situation in which major secular events or ventures engage mainly established or traditional artists while temple stages remain inaccessible to non-*Chakyars*/non-*Nangiars*, with all institutional positions being filled. Thus, there is a high risk of losing these young artists to other professions related to art or to other regions of India and the world. At present, young artists are increasingly accepting job opportunities in lecturing theatre practice and techniques outside Kerala or abroad, usually accepting teaching positions for up to several months. During these periods, they are neither available for performances and rehearsals in Kerala nor for the training of students in one of the institutions. Indeed, without the support of the young generation, this tradition will encounter difficulties in prospering. Nevertheless, UNESCO cannot be blamed for the current developments taking place, having opened new spaces. In fact, management within the specific country holds the responsibility for how to use this space and its dedicated funds. It is due to politics, decisions and aspirations within India that the art is disabled from moving beyond communal hegemony and that further democratization is difficult to project into the future.

Third, the following points can be mentioned regarding performance practice. Despite seeming contradictory, it is not the performance in the temple that is promoted, but rather the attached communities (*ambalavasis*), their values and practices, albeit relegated to a new frame of reference, the nation state, that receive attention. In fact, while dissemination of Kutiyattam in the secular realm has been granted prime support, Kutiyattam's traditional position in the temples of Kerala has been widely neglected and remains highly fragile. Even though annual performances (*adiyanthiram*) are still conducted in several prosperous temples, remuneration of the artist is inadequate or non-existent and the audience is very few.²⁸⁹ Thus, A.R. Chakyar (2011), a young artist from the Ammannur tradition, openly calls for support schemes for "artists who remain attached to the temples" (p. 9). Moreover, Jayanthi (2011) observes that "rituals and ritualistic performances did not get any support or promotion from UNESCO recognition" (p. 19). The relevance of "Gana Akkittas [hymns in praise of the gods] for goshti and other kriyas was partially lost, with Arangutali, Mutiyakkit, [rituals] etc. avoided" (ibid.). Within these songs, the deities *Ganapati*, *Sarasvati* and in some cases *Shiva* were invoked, a common practice among many art forms all over India, while in *arangutali* the stage was ritually cleaned by the sprinkling of purified/sacred water. Additionally, the highly important solo-acts *Mantrankam*, *Anguliyankam*, *Mattavilasa* and *Kuttus*, traditionally

²⁸⁹ K.R. Chakyar, personal interview, op. cit.; Chakyar, 2011; Johan, 2011a.

staged in the temples as a votive offering (*valivatu*), have not received considerable attention, despite *Mantrankam* and *Anguliyankam* still being considered as the backbone of Kutiyattam.²⁹⁰ Today, only one eminent artist, K.R. Chakyar, is able to perform the complete 41-day *Mantrankam*. However, he has not received any support for his recent enactments (2006-2008) and had to cover the majority of the costs himself. As a consequence, *Mantrankam* has not been performed since 2008. He states that if these *Kuttus* are not maintained, an important element of Kutiyattam will be lost.²⁹¹ Such losses have been proved by the vanishing of *Brahmacari Kuttu*, which again was a votive *Kuttu* previously performed in the *Subrahmanyam* temples.²⁹²

Furthermore, developments in the 21st century, hence after the UNESCO proclamation, show a trend towards reactionary politics in the representation of Kutiyattam. Herein, *Kulasekhara's* reforms are undone and Kutiyattam is realigned in line with a pan-Indian *Sanskrit* dramaturgy. One of the outcomes is the marginalization of the *Vidushaka's* space. Comedy, as well as flexibility in elaboration and articulation is sidelined. Furthermore, in order to cater to a wider audience, long sequences stressing *angika-abhinaya*, like in *nirvahanam*, are edited into “dramatically effective scenes of shorter duration” (S. Gopalakrishnan, 2011b, p. 8). One such example is *Shakuntala*, a “present-day Kutiyattam” (Venu, 2002, p. 125) that premiered in 2002. In this play, the *Vidushaka* was pushed to the margins and emphasis of performance was shifted to the hero. Consequently, no translations into *Malayalam*, no satire or comments on members of the audience, and hence no link to contemporary, political or social issues, was presented. Furthermore, the *nirvahanam*, the extended recapitulation of a character in which the device *pakarnattam* is used extensively and where the original *Sanskrit* play text is pushed to the margins, has been excluded. Moreover, radically departing from Kutiyattam conventions, a full play text was presented, rather than a single act. DuComb (2007) argues that “by privileging the play text over the performative practices of the kutiyattam tradition” (p. 101) Venu, who was mainly in charge of the production of the play, classicizes the tradition and brings it closer to the conventions framed in the *Natyashastra*. In doing so, he undermines the conventions established by *Kulasekhara*, which gave Kutiyattam a distinctive identity, and returns to an imaginary of a classical *Sanskrit* tradition, which is now extinct all over India.²⁹³ The selection of

²⁹⁰ The first applies mainly *vachika-abhinaya* and the latter exposes *angika-abhinaya* in all its subtleties.

²⁹¹ K.R. Chakyar, personal interview, op. cit.

²⁹² Today, long performances are only scheduled at least once a year in three temples in Kerala (*Vadakkunnathan* temple in *Trissur*, *Kutalmanikkam* temple in *Irinjalakuda* and *Srikrisna* temple in *Guruvayoor*). In *Perumanam* temple, *Anguliyankam* was stopped in 1995.

²⁹³ Earlier, Venu (1989) asserted the centrality of the *Vidushaka* for Kutiyattam.

Shakuntala, one of the most referred to and popular classical texts, seems to underscore this intention.²⁹⁴ The reduced scope of the *Vidushaka*'s role and the limited use of the vernacular hint towards a trend in contemporary Kutiyattam practice. This trend increasingly looks beyond Kerala and acknowledges the influence and expectations of new patrons, new performance spaces and a widened audience, covering foreign nationals more than ever. Jayanthi (2011) asserts that "the main audience for the art has become non-Malayalee, so *Malayalam* language sections have been omitted" (p. 19). Indeed, Kutiyattam practices are increasingly translated to cater to a new target group, a modern, contemporary and global audience. In fact, if the aim is to cater to intercultural and international audiences, the use of the vernacular and critical comments that are only of regional relevance seem to provide an unnecessary barrier between the art and its new audience. Admittedly, revival, renewal, reinterpretation and improvisation are inherent practices of any art, necessary even for the survival of the art form. However, it must be added that classicization and the contextualization within a symbolic framework of continuity while entertaining expectations of disparate audiences also bears risks regarding nationalistic or even Hindu-nationalistic appropriation (DuComb, 2007; Sullivan, 1996).

Fourth, it should be noted that Kutiyattam's idioms and imaginary are increasingly appropriated, with traditional practices hijacked, used and even misused. They are utilized by "others" not belonging to the Kutiyattam community and those who have not dedicated their life to the art or have no holding in the tradition, but rather strive for their own benefit. Here, in particular, the local media has attracted immense criticism. Following the UNESCO proclamation, a number of local television channels started to utilize the art form as a product to attract attention and viewers. Sensing the newly gained attractiveness of the art, artistic practice was consciously contrived, packaged into a distorted form and commoditized by the media. In particular, *Chakyarkuttu*, which has become quite popular in Kerala, was presented in bits and pieces as a screen-filler or used as an advertisement background. Some local television channels even developed their own programs, lasting only a few minutes, in which actors or comedians bluntly imitate the jokes, make-up and dresses of the *Chakyars* and sell it to the entertainment market. Herein, new words, references and gestures are used to address a larger society who has no preliminary knowledge concerning the background, profoundness and intricacies of the art.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ However, Venu (2002) also presented a further innovation, the inclusion on the secular stage of an antique five-faced drum, *panchamukha mizhavu*, which was hitherto only used for temple rituals.

²⁹⁵ V. Kaladharan, personal interview, March 23, 2012. For further details, see subchapter 4.3.4.4.

Fifth, international research is also viewed with increasing skepticism and precaution. While academic enquiry was still treated with benevolence and support during the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, attitudes seem to have changed during the past two decades. A shift in behavior and awareness has particularly taken place since UNESCO's intervention and together with a new wave of scholars conducting research in the field of Kutiyattam, pointing to an antagonism between scholars and practitioners. This is due to a number of reasons:

a) After the initial years of grand financial assistance and uplifting of the art, monetary support through the Japan-Funds-in-Trust was limited and finally ceased. Even though national agencies like the SNA and the Kutiyattam Kendra took over and still sincerely engage in the safeguarding of Kutiyattam, many upcoming and less popular artists, particularly members of the non-traditional communities, have gathered the impression that they did not benefit from UNESCO's recognition. Instead, they recognize that a number of government officials, academics and other professionals acquired financial support and powerful positions. V. Kaladharan (personal interview, April 23, 2012) asserts that an "information gathering mechanism gathered momentum" and UNESCO's intervention and assistance indeed ended up as an "academic affair". Scholars and institutions are regarded as prime beneficiaries, with Kutiyattam practitioners thus feeling marginalized and disappointed in some cases.

b) Attitudes from the researchers' side have also changed. It seems that information collection became more intrusive and "aggressive" (ibid.) and artists feel irritated about the very motivation and intention of the enquiry. Considering officials and academics as competitors within a fresh established field of practice and being unsure whether they will benefit from collaboration, several artists withdrew their full-hearted cooperation. Rather, they have restricted access to their knowledge and consciously select or refuse exchange with individual scholars. In effect, mutual trust and relation between artists, scholars and stakeholders has been considerably affected.

c) Indeed, artists are increasingly losing control and command over the information and knowledge related to Kutiyattam. Until recently, the transmission of this knowledge was their exclusive right and responsibility. Individual artists had the power to decide which part of their knowledge they would share with their disciples and which part they would retain. Moreover, traditionally knowledge and artistic style were heavily guarded; it was neither common nor legitimate practice to share or distribute information that belonged to one

particular family.²⁹⁶ Today, Kutiyattam knowledge is increasingly becoming a common good, accessible to all, with traditional families experiencing the de-monopolization of knowledge. Thus, intellectual property rights and copyright have become a strong issue, given that artists, at least in some cases, fear misuse, exploitation and even disownment. Parallel to that, the glorification of the art has enhanced a fear of loss, leading to the suspicion that knowledge and imaginary are stolen, taken away and capitalized by others.

d) In this regard, a supposition among Indian intellectuals also gathered momentum, articulating the possibility that political aspects might lie dormant in current academic research practices. For example, V. Kaladharan (ibid.) points to the agenda of cultural imperialism, in which cultural institutions and universities, particularly from the West, gather information related to art and culture. These collections, stored in universities in the West, are considered elements of a “revisited colonial culture”. They seem to allow a monopolization of knowledge, possibly enabling the West to exercise a cultural bargain and “hold a cultural hegemony over Asians, over the underdeveloped or developing countries” (ibid.).

Sixth, fresh attempts to curate Kutiyattam, and hence culture and positioning within culture, have also stifled artistic creativity and dedication to the art. “A way of life” (Ramanathan, 2005, p. 12) is being transformed into a ‘mere’ profession, where monetary gain and the market place play an ever-increasing role.²⁹⁷ A performance of traditional format, rigor and radiance is slowly but steadily being replaced by an “instant” performance. In the process, the art loses its depth, intensity and inner strength and might surrender to commoditization. However, this would not only reflect an outcome of UNESCO’s intervention but also of many complex cultural, social, political and religious factors. Nonetheless, Kutiyattam will cater to its new patrons and fears are voiced that the “UNESCO stamp is turning out to be more of a trade mark than a tradition insignia” (Iyer, 2011, p. 19). “Showing-off” is increasingly replacing quality in artistic and aesthetic expression. Furthermore, concerns have been voiced that deviation, commoditization and commercialization trends are leading to a dilution of the art, in a tendency that threatens the very existence of the artistic “tradition, which earned the art its world status” (ibid.).

Overall, new funding schemes, international prestige and foci in academic discourse have changed the way in which artists, scholars and laypersons relate to each other and to

²⁹⁶ In fact, until the beginning of the 20th century, *Chakyars* did not attend each other’s performances and apprentices of one performance style were not allowed to see performances of another style.

²⁹⁷ R. Iyer (personal interview, op. cit.) remarks that children of prominent Kutiyattam artists are not indulging in the art but go for different professions, while on the other hand others are interested in performing for the sake of pride and recognition.

Kutiyattam itself. Interventions by governmental and inter-governmental support programs have led to ruptures within local hierarchies, within the practicing communities themselves, as well as within relationships to outsiders, and last but not least have fostered a slow transformation of the practice at large. Within new structures and new points of reference, new developments have taken place. As within these new trends not seldom deviations from the tradition are highlighted, artists as well as journalists also increasingly seek for a “first time ever” situation to break news. Indeed, the major trademark within this trend nowadays is innovation. Antagonistic paradigms seem to play together, although it remains to be seen whether this is for the benefit of the art.

3.6 Concluding remarks

Kutiyattam is a vibrant art form. Its custodians long preserved inherited traditions on the one hand and adapted them according to new situations as well as local or immediate challenges on the other. For example, *Kulasekhara* invented new rules and regulations that established new conventions for Kutiyattam. However, these also had to be revised, re-interpreted and improvised to face contemporary demands and therewith guarantee the very survival of the art. To put it in Vatsyayan’s (1980) words, Kutiyattam survived since actors were “flexible enough to give their presentation contemporary validity and significance” (p. 21). Moreover, it also survived because it never lost sight of its socio-cultural and political environment and patrons: when they changed, Kutiyattam also changed. In fact, transformation is not a new phenomenon; rather, it has existed throughout the history of Kutiyattam and assisted in its survival. Indeed, tradition, we have to remember, has always embraced its two faces, namely preservation and innovation.

With the developments of the 20th and 21st centuries, including Kutiyattam changing its patrons and being inscribed on UNESCO’s *Representative List*, as well as its re-enforced entrance into the global cultural market, Kutiyattam has reached a new stage in its history. This stage represents not only the result but also the beginning of a process, namely the process of its regional, national and international appropriation. This form of appropriation involves re-contextualization and again innovation. Precisely these abilities, innovation from within and flexibility have laid down the necessary premise for inscribing the art as an *Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*. The SNA phrased it as follows: “Kutiyattam, being the most ritualistic and orthodox form that resisted change and stubbornly stuck to tradition was the last among the classical arts to submit to the call of the world outside”

(<http://www.sangeetnatak.org/sna/kutiyattam.htm>). Indeed, without the developments that shaped Kutiyattam tradition in the latter half of the 20th century, an inscription on the *Representative List* seems barely thinkable. However, UNESCO inscribed Kutiyattam partly because it was represented, in words and the audio-visual document, as an ancient temple based art form performed in temple theatres (*Kuttampalams*) by a specific caste (*ambalavasi*) that serves in the temple (S. Gopalakrishnan, 2000b, n.d). However, Kutiyattam has multiple faces and dimensions, with performances in non-traditional contexts as well as the predominance of non-traditional artists pervading the scene. The art is no longer a preserve of the traditional custodians, the *Chakyar* and *Nambiar/Nangiar* communities. Indeed, half of the contemporary Kutiyattam artists belong to other communities (Venu, 2005, p. 8). For example, *Nangiarkuttu* is unthinkable without female artists coming from different communities. While many young *Nangiar*s have abandoned the art, the joint efforts of K. Girijadevi, K. Shylaja and Margi Sathi, all non-*Nangiar*s, together with Usha Nangiar, have practically rescued the performance tradition and re-invented the aesthetics of the art.²⁹⁸ Among the younger generation of upcoming artists, the same proportion of actresses from non-traditional communities can be listed. Indu G., K. Krishnendu and K. Sindu, as well as Kapila Venu, an internationally acclaimed artist, are all non-*Nangiar*s. Currently, Aparna Nangiar is among the very few who are able to safeguard the traditional temple performances. It is now up to the temple authorities and the traditional communities to also enable the democratization of this performance space. After all, it is not the *Chakyar* or the *Nangiar* that can be considered a “threatened species” (Paul, 2005, p. 15) or “endangered species” (Daugherty, 1996, p. 64), but rather it is the art itself that needs nourishment and support.²⁹⁹

Furthermore, Kutiyattam has been increasingly exposed to urban as well as international audiences already since the 1980s, when only a few more than a dozen artists regularly performed Kutiyattam (Richmond, 1990b), as well as more heavily since the beginning of this century. It is no longer merely a localized, ritual performance attached to the temples, accessible only to the elite and confined to local audiences and spaces. Instead, performances on the “ritual” temple stage appear simultaneously with performances on the modern, secular

²⁹⁸ In the 20th century, *Nangiarkuttu* was represented and kept alive mainly by two actresses Kunjikuttipillai Nangiar and Subhadra Nangiar. Both were from *Irinjalakuda* in *Trissur* district and exclusively performed in the *Kutalmanikkam* temple of *Irinjalakuda*. Traditionally, the *Villuvattam*, *Kusampilly* and *Meledath* families had the rights to perform *Nangiarkuttu*. However, the families were unable to uphold the art and it faced extinction. In 1984/1985, the art was revived in ACCSG (Paniker, 2005). Painkulam R. Chakyar sent his student Girijadevi to *Irinjalakuda* to study *Nangiarkuttu* under the above-mentioned teachers and subsequently integrated the art in the curriculum of KKM.

²⁹⁹ However, these sites of cultural production currently remain highly contested and also arguments against further democratization seem relevant and noteworthy.

and public stage. The classical, the ritual and the modern/secular exist side by side without much contradiction, with “spheres of influence” (Richmond, Swann, & Zarilli, 1990, p. 8) seemingly mutually interlocked. The Sanskrit scholar Kapila Vatsyayan (1980) already argued in 1980 that Kutiyattam is “moving on multiple planes and therefore containing within it the dimensions of eternity and at the same time a preoccupation with ‘Time’ here and now – in a word with contemporaneity” (p. 15). Indeed, today, almost all the artists continuously oscillate between ritual inclination, traditional practice and pragmatism. Kutiyattam has transformed itself into a “player in the field of performing arts” (de Bruin, 2011), a “form of international theatre” (Namboodiripad, 2011, p. 17), an “art of the universe” (Jayanthi, 2011, p. 19). Indeed, Kutiyattam is experiencing one of the most dynamic periods in its history, having been incorporated into the transnational flow of cultures and a new social order. Consequently, Kutiyattam practitioners are also looking for a way to project Kutiyattam into the future, to give it a modern outlook and modern form that will give ample credit to the tradition while also allowing for its survival within a contemporary context. In this context, the artist G. Venu asserts that the Kutiyattam theatre is “as contemporary as any other contemporary theatre” (First City, cited in Paul, 2005, p. 50). He argues that instead of using methods that fossilize the tradition, the tradition shall evolve as a contemporary art. This would not necessarily imply the involvement of modern themes or experimentation; rather, it refers to the methodology of constant reflection and interaction with one’s own artistic practice (ibid.). Nonetheless, Kutiyattam is continuously discoursivized and therewith re-invented as an art form of the past and contemporary realities of existence are marginalized.

We have to remember that the concepts of “tradition” and “modernity” have been coined primarily to establish, stabilize and legitimate colonial hegemony. However, neither tradition nor modernity is a static principle and they do not necessarily have to be antagonistic ideas. For example, de Bruin (2011) notes that “tradition” often means something else to the insiders of a practice than for an outsider doing an academic research. Tradition understood from an insider’s point of view not seldom refers to “an omnipresent (eternal) abstract, a kind of blueprint that is able to accommodate or reproduce all change without affecting or altering its core ‘meaning’ - perhaps a kind of ‘life-insurance’ against change” (p. 31). If we consider tradition to be a stretchable principle, which happily accommodates change as long as it does not affect an imagined core, the question remains as to who can judge and evaluate a transgression of this imagined lines of acceptance. Can Kutiyattam become something “other” than itself? I argue that as long as transformations are sanctioned and controlled by the practicing artists themselves, and hereby I equally refer to artists from traditional and non-

traditional communities, the tradition of Kutiyattam theatre will be safeguarded or, to put it in K.R. Chakyar's (personal interview, op. cit) words: as long as a tree has firm roots it can grow branches, flowers and fruits.³⁰⁰ Overall, tradition seems to be increasingly hijacked by modernity. However, the same is true for the opposite perspective, with modernity also being hijacked by tradition. Tradition and modernity are no antagonistic concepts; rather, one is penetrating the other and both seem to be informed by and interwoven within each other. In other words, rather than being contrasting ideas, "'tradition' seems to be enveloped by 'modernity' and vice versa" (de Bruin, 2011, p. 23). The same can be said for the case of ICH. Heritage is infused with modernity; it is not antagonistic to it but rather closely interrelated with and indeed dependent on it. An honest heritage discourse and an honest representation of Kutiyattam need to acknowledge this matter. Finally, the question arises of which form of Kutiyattam deserves to be preserved and which community deserves to receive support? I argue that Kutiyattam as ICH needs to pay tribute to the developments that shaped its existence. It needs to encompass all Kutiyattam artists and all its facets and faces. While safeguarding practices in Kerala are already pointing in this direction, international representation seems to (often unknowingly) support a more reactionary approach. However, without this acknowledgement, the artistic practice will not be safeguarded but rather at least to some extent risks being musealized, fossilized and subsequently endangered.

The following chapter will provide a detailed account of practices of audio-visual representation of Kutiyattam, including its aims and ambitions, as well as its impacts on the tradition and artistic expression.

³⁰⁰ K.R. Chakyar argues that without ritual, the old quality, antiquity and tradition of Kutiyattam will be lost. In losing it, Kutiyattam will be unable to survive. He stresses that ritual is the root of Kutiyattam and important for its survival, although this is only one side of it and there are many other parts to Kutiyattam that are not primarily ritual (ibid.).

Chapter 4: The audio-visual representation of Kutiyattam - remarks from the community

4.1 Introduction

This chapter elaborates on the actual processes and practices involved in the production, reception and utilization of audio-visual representations of Kutiyattam. It scrutinizes the processes of meaning-making that configure knowledge and engender certain kinds of identity as well as standards of practice. The chapter also addresses issues regarding power and ideology. It questions the way in which Kutiyattam is represented, how far representations are used and consumed, as well as the extent to which the consumption affects identities and the exercise of traditional practice and artistic expression. Moreover, the underlying question of whether audio-visual representations reproduce and represent knowledge and meaning regarding Kutiyattam or whether they actively influence knowledge and meaning construction regarding Kutiyattam and thus manipulate local practices is also investigated. Finally, the question of whether media representation is an adequate means for the safeguarding of ICH is researched, with results presented in the form of benefits and challenges.

The chapter primarily makes use of insights gained through the analysis of interviews conducted with members of the Kutiyattam community, artists, connoisseurs and stakeholders. However, theory developed in Cultural Studies is also integrated into the analysis. The notion of the circuit of culture (Du Gay et al., 1997), comprising the processes of representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation, is applied as a prism to develop a multilayered and complex understanding of the diverse loci, ways and processes in which meaning regarding Kutiyattam is produced and negotiated. Hereby, the circuit does not refer to a sequential order of ‘moments’, whereby one follows another in a linear line, but rather is to be understood as a conceptual frame in which all ‘moments’ are closely tied up with each other, where meaning is constructed independently within all the cultural ‘moments’ and where even slight manipulations and modifications within the setting of one ‘moment’ bear consequences regarding meaning production in another ‘moment’.

The separation of ‘moments’ within the cultural circuit enables an analytical focus on particular ‘moments’ within the circuit; in terms of this thesis and the analysis of the collected material, a major focus lies in the process of representation. Thus, the interrelatedness of the process of representation to other specific ‘moments’ is targeted and discussed in detail within

separate sections of the chapter. Nevertheless, in line with Cultural Studies thought, it is acknowledged that all processes are inextricably linked, influence and feedback to each other, that all ‘moments’ correlate with and interpenetrate each other. For example, identity is crucial in all processes, in representation, consumption, production and regulation. Nevertheless, it is only stressed within analysis when comments directly point out identity matters as a crucial area of current discourse among members of the Kutiyattam community.

4.2 Benefits of audio-visual representation

Stakeholders, scholars, connoisseurs and artists generally emphasize that audio-visual documentation and representation is necessary and beneficial for the art and the artists. Audio-visual representations being in private custody, archived in libraries and institutions, disseminated via broadcasting channels or freely accessible via the Internet fulfil a number of tasks, practices and processes and serve the Kutiyattam community in a number of ways. Audio-visual representations provide means and tools for self-assertion and identity construction, for continuity in practice, for the reinvention of the art as well as for valorization. All of these strengthen, constitute or are inspired by identity. Furthermore, audio-visual representations are used for the transmission and maintenance of the art, for study, reflection and artistic improvement, for education and research, for promotion as well as dissemination. All of these can be subsumed under the process of consumption.

The following section addresses the above-mentioned issues and highlights the emic views in greater detail.

4.2.1 Representation and identity

4.2.1.1 Identity and continuity

One of the major functions of all heritage is the construction and maintenance of identity (Albert, 2006a). Identities are produced, consumed and regulated within culture, which creates meanings through symbolic systems of representations concerning the identity positions that people might adopt and identify with (Woodward, 1997). Audio-visual representations and the symbolic systems involved also generate meaning about Kutiyattam and the people practicing Kutiyattam, thus contributing to the (re)production and assertion of identities associated with Kutiyattam. Hereby, identity is not understood as transhistorical or stable, it is not attributed with essential qualities that can be uncovered, but rather is conceived as fluid, contingent and culturally constructed. Thus, identity is (re)moulded and

(re)shaped under the influence of historical circumstances. Identity can relate to shared history, but can also surpass shared history. In order to assert identity, it is rather necessary to lay claim to a shared history, to actively identify with historical moments and practices. Hall (1996) argues: “Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies” (p. 4). Identity, it can be argued, is processual. It is continuously constituted by means of identification with mediated cultural patterns, practices and discourses.

Furthermore, audio-visual representations influence the identity and continuity of practices within particular groups and communities (Assmann, 2004, 2006; Hall, 1997a). They can preserve a corpus of practice and knowledge that has been transmitted from generation to generation within traditional communities and families practicing Kutiyattam and recently also beyond, and which by means of human memorization can no longer be maintained, and they enable identification with these practices through time. This identification possibility refers to members of the traditional communities who, besides oral narration and personal experience, can also relate to media to construct their history, tradition and identity; however, even more so, it relates to newcomers in the field of Kutiyattam, to contemporary and future students and artists coming from outside the traditional communities of practice, who lack possibilities to locate themselves within tradition and face difficulties in identifying themselves as genuine Kutiyattam artists. Thus, identity and continuity relate to both 1. the maintenance of a Kutiyattam corpus as crucial for the identity of the art; and 2. the identification of artists with Kutiyattam as a tradition.

4.2.1.1.1 The Kutiyattam corpus and threats of disappearance

P.K.N. Nambiar (personal interview, op. cit.), an authority in Kutiyattam and the eldest practicing Kutiyattam artist, stresses that documentation is crucial for the very survival of a broad spectrum of knowledge and practice in Kutiyattam. Referring to the Indian traditional practice of *Ayurveda* and *Mantra*, where knowledge has been irrevocably lost with the deaths of the knowledge bearers, he points out that his father Mani M. Chakyar, who was one of the stalwarts in *Netra-abhinaya*, acting with the eyes, had the ability to illustrate eight different types of erotic sentiments via movements with the eyeballs. Nambiar says that he did not learn this practice from his father and argues that as the acting technique was neither orally transmitted nor documented, it cannot be taught to the younger generation of artists and will be lost completely in the future, given that nobody will even be able to remember it (ibid.).

This loss not only affects Kutiyattam practice but also the knowledge of Kutiyattam, what Kutiyattam was, is and can be. Furthermore, H. Nambiar (personal interview, March 10, 2012) regrets that no documentation was undertaken in the younger days of his gurus and family members. For example, he recalls that his grandmother Nangiar Kochampilli, Mani M. Chakyar's wife, was acclaimed for her way of chanting *slokas*. According to P.K.N. Nambiar, she even excelled Mani in recitation. However, no audio documentation was conducted and her way of recitation was lost. Moreover, guru Mani's documentation was not properly undertaken and thus details and intricacies of performance and therefore continuity in some aspects of performance practice were lost. P.K.N. Nambiar (personal interview, op. cit.) emphasizes that specific, intricate and highly complex performances indeed need to be documented urgently, as otherwise they will become lost for Kutiyattam practice and humanity. One such example is *Ozhukal*, the swimming scene in *Tapatisamvaranam* when the heroine falls into the water. This part was previously performed by generations of artists, but nowadays is no longer performed; therefore, it will become lost if the knowledge by those still remembering it is not documented, as no written descriptions exist. Furthermore, *Parakkal*, the flying scene of Garuda, also needs to be documented, as it is no longer performed. Here, written descriptions exist, albeit no audio-visual representations or performance documentations. In addition, the hanging scene in *Nagananda* requires documentation, with need to neatly record stage arrangements and decorations. Nambiar further accentuates that only by means of written inscriptions will it be impossible for future generations to delineate exact application and enactment. He explains, for example, the word *puttu* (mark on the forehead) appears often in *aharya abhinaya* (make-up). However, its application varies according to the *veshams* (characters), with these variations not explained by naming the word alone but also by practice and imitation. Thus, visual documentation, through drawing, photography and videography, are helpful devices for the future generations (ibid.), offering the possibility to foster continuity in practice by providing reference.

However, some scholars argue that the whole concept of preservation by technical means is a Western concept, alien to traditional art forms, which are based on *Gurukulasampradaya* transmission, oral tradition, face-to-face interaction and repeated physical corrections by the guru and thus future transmission can essentially refer to these methods of transmission and preservation. In response to this argument, members of the traditional community of Kutiyattam practitioners argue that technological facilities were not available in earlier days and thus artists were unable to utilize them. They stress that now, with new devices having

become available, they can and indeed must be used.³⁰¹ K.R. Chakyar (personal interview, April 24, 2012) further stresses that for the moment, the focus must lie on the old versions, given that soon nobody will be there to accurately remember and perform them. Furthermore, K.V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, March 25, 2012) argues that performance culture is now quickly changing, with maestros or members of the elder generations who witnessed Kutiyattam when it flourished passing away. The records of their existence as well as records of the performance practice and culture prevalent during their lifetimes will be valuable for the coming generations (ibid.). Indeed, Kochukuttan Chakyar has already passed away and the leading artists of the elder generation will stop performing within the next few years.³⁰² Simultaneously, it will take years for the younger generation to reach their level of perfection. K. Kanakakumar (personal interview, April 6, 2012) stresses that there are fewer than twenty good performers in Kutiyattam in the world now, “there are very few who can perform without too low standard and there are only few scholars”. He adds that if no care is taken, not only what the old generation of Kutiyattam artists did will be lost, but also the knowledge of the experts; if no proper care is taken, a great “inheritance will be lost”. Thus, he says: “We have to interview all of them, keeping away some prejudices, we must collect all the materials we can get as a great dictionary for the next generation” (ibid.).

Furthermore, R. Chakyar (personal interview, April 5, 2012) from ACCSG highlights that currently in particular “old *prabandhams* are getting lost”. He stresses that “25% nobody is performing because it is not available” and points out that “if it is recorded in last twenty years, it will be an asset for this generation”. He similarly stresses that if the remaining *prabandhams* in practice are not recorded now, future generations of students will not be able to perform them. Moreover, as performances largely apply *vachika abhinaya* and thus knowledge of the vernacular language, *Malayalam*, is a prerequisite to follow and enjoy the performance, the recording and documentation of *Chakyarkuttu* and the *prabandhams* were marginalized and largely neglected. Instead, the focus in audio-visual representation and preservation to date has mainly been placed on Kutiyattam (joint acting). Chakyar emphasizes that this neglect prompts cause for serious concern, as “since it is not recorded it is not available for the future, so no one can perform that one” (ibid.). Indeed, existing audio-visual representations and any other forms of documentation of Kutiyattam practice are “very essential tools for the succession and vitalization” of the art (G. Venu, personal interview, op. cit.). They constitute useful means for the safeguarding and restoration of traditional

³⁰¹ Personal interviews with C.K. Jayanthi, April 22, 2012; and K.R. Chakyar, April 24, 2012.

³⁰² R. Iyer, personal interview, op. cit.

performance practice, particularly in the light of artistic expressions being at risk of disappearance. Moreover, archived representations can assist contemporary and future practitioners in reviving lost traditions or expanding their repertoire. For example, Venu accentuates that if a documentary or documentation has a high quality and exposes an artist's acting technique, then the visual representation can help in reviving a play. Commenting on a documentation of guru Ammannur shot in 1979, he highlights that

this documentation is enough to revive the Ammannur style of acting, because it is so wonderfully done, with three cameras, 16mm, sharp, one is doing the close up, one the long shot and his performance was the best I have ever seen (ibid.).

R. Chakraborty (personal interview, op. cit.) furthermore articulates that not only the preservation of performance practice is necessary but also the digitization of manuscripts, as well as their protection and preservation by national institutes being crucial, given that many palm leaf manuscripts have already been destroyed or lost. He further appreciates projects that focus on the visual documentation of *Kuttampalams*, as architectural buildings and their contained artifacts have also been partially destroyed and continue to be affected by decay (ibid.).

4.2.1.1.2 Identification with tradition

The documentation and archiving of Kutiyattam performance practice, of artifacts, artists and culture, would amount to the documentation of Kutiyattam history and tradition. As Sudha Gopalakrishnan (personal interview, op. cit.) highlights: "Archive is history created now". Again, history is essential for community-building, for identity construction and the continuation of practices. Indeed, as Kutiyattam artists point out, representations of historical practice are crucial for the transmission of an idea of historical Kutiyattam culture and tradition. K. Kanakakumar (personal interview, February 15, 2012) remarks that present day students, "the new generation, they don't know anything about this", about the history of Kutiyattam. Instead of merely being told, they need to "see the exact things", "the culture" of the past, they need to be effectively introduced to the tradition of Kutiyattam (ibid.). Indeed, a number of young students and artists with no family background in Kutiyattam lack experiences of witnessing performances by masters in the art and lack opportunities to interact with the history of the art form. They feel detached from the art rather than fully integrated into traditional practice. For example, K. Krishnendu is not a member of a traditional Kutiyattam community and does not have strong family support. Nonetheless, she has devoted her life to the art of Kutiyattam. She articulates her deep felt wish to see her guru, the founding father of the artistic style that she is currently practicing, via audio-visual

representations. She stresses that she has heard praise and many stories about the late guru and his marvelous performance practice, but to date has been unable to “see” him perform.³⁰³ Moreover, the B.A. students Deepika and Priyanka (personal interview, April 25, 2012) articulate their deep interest in seeing their gurus and teachers perform. They stress that they have never seen any audio-visually recorded documentation of neither late Painkulam Rama Chakyar nor the other maestros. They also have never seen any recordings of the old *Nangiars*. Moreover, both students stress that they have no family background in Kutiyattam and thus, when they started studying, they did not know anything about Kutiyattam, besides that it is a drama. They are interested in engaging with the history of the art, in seeing how Kutiyattam was exercised in the past and in understanding the value of the art (ibid.). They indeed need inspiration and motivation to proceed with an art form that does not belong to them yet.

In this context, S. Gopalakrishnan (personal interview, op. cit.) points out that since no recording was made fifty years ago, there is no “evidence” on what was performed at that time. V. Kaladharan (personal interview, March 6, 2012) also points to the historical significance of audio-visual representations, which enable the future generation of students to have “a click to the past”, to revisit their passed-away masters and ensure that they “did exist”. In this context, R. Chakyar (personal interview, op. cit.) argues that audio-visual representations will particularly help the next generations of artists, due to the fact that the main “gurus are going” and accordingly “there will be a lack of influence, contact” with the art. He stresses that students and artists can see the documentations in such a situation, “they can feel on this” and generate an emotional attachment to the artistic practice (ibid.). M.P.S. Namboodiri (personal interview, March 6, 2012) also argues that audio-visual recordings are important tools to reveal the continuity of the art and keep it alive. Audio-visual representations can introduce to contemporary students the great artists of the past, they can enhance awareness of the past and knowledge of artistic practice as it was exercised in the past, they can point to the hereditary element, to the continuity exercised within artistic practice and thus to value and relevance.

In sum, via interactions with historical representations, attraction and attachment to artistic practice as well as knowledge about historical practice can be generated. Thereby, involvement and identification with the art can be enhanced.

³⁰³ K. Krishnendu, personal interview, April 25, 2012.

4.2.1.2 Memory and preservation

Today, youngsters of traditional communities engaged with Kutiyattam practice bear the burden of responsibility for the maintenance and transmission of knowledge acquired and passed on within their families for generations. Fears of loss regarding Kutiyattam knowledge and practice are great, specifically since international value has also been placed on Kutiyattam via the 2001 proclamation as masterpiece and the inclusion on the *Representative List of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*. One artist expresses the enormous psychological pressure placed on young members of practicing families now responsible for preservation and transmission and stresses:

I didn't manage to collect everything. I studied only very small things and my father knows lot of things and I did not collect properly. I am collecting in my mind and I am also collecting with audio, video and written books. Fear is not ending, completely preserving not by me, this is vast and wide, like an ocean; I am only preserving a cup of water, every night I am crying, thinking and feeling for the preservation.³⁰⁴

He points to the limited capacities of individuals, who might neither have the same artistic abilities nor the same socio-cultural context as their well acclaimed family elders and stresses: “Memory is very low, because it is not copy paste (...) every day is coming new one”. Today, the change in pace and tasks to be handled by individuals in modern society is far greater than one or two generations ago. Nowadays, many members of traditional families hold regular jobs and professions despite upholding the traditional practice. These occupations generate stable income for their families but also require time, energy and intellectual capacity. In comparison to the elder generations, who spend all their time and effort on the art and accumulated numerous experiences due to their continuous engagements in multiple programs, young and middle aged artists combine several activities and professions and face a far more complex world. They feel obliged to do their best to safeguard the art, but simultaneously lack the intellectual, artistic or simply temporal capacities to do so. Based upon this situation, individual memory, written records as well as audio and video recordings must combine in the preservation and transmission of the art, with only this combination of sources able to enable its truthful and accurate transmission. Multiple sources of reference will be crucial, given that in a few decades masters will no longer be actively performing, commenting on and correcting practices or might have passed away due to old age.

³⁰⁴ Name omitted for confidentiality reasons.

4.2.1.3 The visualization of memory (Reinvention of tradition)

New costume articles and facial make-ups are being designed, particularly regarding new or reinvented choreographies of plays that were previously in Kutiyattam repertoire, whose production is being supported by governmental funding schemes. Hereby, 3D multimedia animations have recently been applied for the recreation of costume articles and choreographies, with 3D visualization software used to enable the visualization of memory. For instance, H. Nambiar (personal interview, March 10, 2012) utilizes modern computer technologies for the drafting of headgear models. Nambiar accentuates, for example, that *Kaliya vesham*, the many-headed evil serpent character, was not performed for a long time, even though it was enacted until some decades ago. He designed the headgear with the help of his father's memory on what he had seen in his younger days. Using computer graphics and 3D simulations, they collaboratively reinvented the design of the headgear for *Kaliya vesham* in 2012, trying thereby to be as truthful as possible to the version previously seen displayed on the stage.³⁰⁵ Hereby, multimedia animation technologies have enabled repeated and instant re-modelling and adjustments of form, size and color in accordance with remembrance. Accordingly, it has facilitated what H. Nambiar calls "memory creations" (ibid.).

4.2.1.4 Modern technologies as status setters

Finally, modern technologies also function as status symbols and thereby influence identity. Similar to the way in which audio-visual representations screened on television or disseminated via other media signify contemporary cultural relevance, technologies used for producing these representations also function as signifiers during actual performance.

While Kutiyattam presentation practice remained relatively stable for centuries, a number of innovations have been introduced to the format of theatrical presentation after the art entered secular stages in the late-20th century. Hereby, presentation formats have been profoundly influenced by Western styles and conventions in theatrical presentation.³⁰⁶ Innovations included the widespread utilization of modern technological facilities, including the extensive utilization of electric lights on stage. While traditional performances were only partially illuminated by one single source, the bell-metal oil lamp, *Nilavilakku*, which was placed center stage and left considerable space on stage unlighted, the contemporary modern

³⁰⁵ No electric stage lights were used in P.K.N. Nambiar's younger days. Details of the costume being not illuminated by the oil lamp on stage could not be seen properly and were thus not memorized and recreated.

³⁰⁶ Western theatre and Western presentation formats were introduced to India by the British in the late-18th century. Contemporary Indian theatre styles based on this Western premise started to develop in the middle of the 19th century.

stage is completely exposed. Halogen lamps and electric spotlights facilitate the all-encompassing visibility of the characters on stage, leaving lesser space for imagination. The utilization and accurate application of modern technologies in presentation signifies a valuable and relevant performance. Modern Indian audience demands these facilities as they convey the values and status of the (urban) middle class, articulating an orientation towards modernity. Lighting, audio and video equipment such as microphones, amplifiers and cameras are understood as signs signifying modern technology and modernity at large. They physically frame the performance and become part of the modern performance itself. Technologies are visibly displayed on stage; for example, microphones are placed center stage, obstructing the audience's views of the character's performance, while video operators are also situated directly in front of the stage, visible for everyone (see appendix 3, figure 27). Furthermore, keyboards, mixing desks, amplification systems, cables, lights, etc. are all very visibly positioned, either on stage or directly in front of it.

Moreover, the usage of modern technologies requires the respective skills and assistance of professionals, as well as proper time, space and budget management. Today, video crews are present recording the performances at almost all important or large-scale Kutiyattam performances. Even at small-scale events, frequent if not regular recordings and documentations take place. Given that records, as in the case of KKM and other institutions, are neither well preserved nor adequately stored, are neither catalogued nor systematically protected from damages or loss and have not been used or accessed to date on a frequent basis, it can be argued that the act of recording itself is seen as a major objective. If an audio-visual representation is made of the performance, the making of the record alone signifies the prominence of the artist and the importance of the performance. The presence of camera operators and particularly established production companies is a sign of prestige, social status and, last but not least, financial liquidity, given that the utilization of modern technologies requires considerable financial investments and costs are covered by the commissioning institutions, sponsors or the artists themselves. Thus, next to their explicit functionality, modern video and sound technologies operate as symbols of modernity. This ability for signification constitutes their attractiveness for utilization in the proscenium stage. The operation of technology during live performance valorizes the practices exposed, conveys respect to the practitioners and the art, placing it in the frame of the modern.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁷ Referring to Javanese wayang puppet theatre, the utilization of modern technology and the recording of live performances, Mrázek (2005) issues a similar argument, stating that “television of wayang is in part motivated by the association of television with modernity: one attraction of wayang is simply that it is televised, that it becomes television” (p. 445).

4.2.1.5 Concluding remarks

This section has shown that Kutiyattam artists fear losing aspects of their traditional practice and cultural expression. It is argued that these losses influence identity, social and collective memory and practice. Audio-visual representations can assist artists in (re)creating and (re)articulating identity, in the preservation of knowledge and memory, as well as in securing, reviving and (re)inventing continuity in practice. Artists argue that individual members of the practicing community alone cannot handle the preservation and transmission of knowledge and practice. Instead, for comprehensive preservation, there is a need to combine diverse resources: individual memory, as well as written and audio-visual representations, thus cultural memory. They stress that even though the utilization of media for the purpose of preservation has not been part of their historical practice, the art form always integrated new impulses and adapted to changing demands and circumstances.

Besides the preservation of performance practices and knowledge for the use of future generations of artists, audio-visual representations also provide proof of the past, of history and memory, necessary for the continuous construction and perpetuation of cultural identity. Cultural identity, similar to individual identity, is never fixed, stable and unchanging but rather is dynamic (Albert, 2002) and continuously (re)constructed.³⁰⁸ History, tradition, knowledge and memory are all foundational elements of identity. However, identity is not understood as consistent but rather as continuously recreated in relation to the past, present and future. Indeed, as Hall has emphasized, identity is never constructed backwards but rather considers the present and future as main reference points. Hall (1996) argues that identities

are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation. (...) Though they seem to invoke an origin in a historical past with which they continue to correspond, actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation. They relate to the invention of tradition as much as to tradition itself (p. 4).

³⁰⁸ Hall (2006) argues that identity is ever-changing in process, stating: “Cultural identity (...) is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities (...) undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in mere ‘recovery’ of the past, (...) identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past” (p. 435).

Albert (2002) also remarks that it is always present day society that defines its history. Values, aims and ambitions of the present motivate and orientate reflection upon the past. In a similar way, cultural identity is rooted within the consciousness of people via historical processes, while elements of cultural identity are simultaneously signified as meaningful or relevant by present day society. Finally, cultural identity is an integrative part of individual identity (Albert, 2006b). Individual identity is dependent on culture as it is developed in the context of culture, whereby values and norms relevant in that culture are internalized within processes of socialization and enculturation (ibid.). In a similar way, knowledge and memory related to Kutiyattam, when consulted and used in the process of identity construction, never relate exclusively to the past, but, while making recourse to history, they are always substantially involved in shaping the present and future. This idea becomes particularly clear in the light of young students coming from outside the traditional communities of practice. For them, historical representations provide useful tools for aligning themselves with the historical dimension of the art, as well as locating themselves within cultural identity. This affirmation of belongingness to a cultural tradition can be fostered by audio-visual representations providing narratives and images of the past that can also be integrated in the formulation of individual identity.

Moreover, audio-visual representations assist in the revitalization of artistic practice and thereby directly influence present day practices. Furthermore, audio-visual technologies, and particularly specific software, enable a visualization process that supports the articulation of remembrance and thereby the constructed representations of memory facilitate a (re)invention or (re)vitalization of historical plays and artifacts no longer in active use. Finally, the application of audio-visual technologies provides further means for the valorization of traditional practices as holding relevance within contemporary modern society. Their utilization influences the identity of the art as being firmly located within the present and, as representations can also be consulted later on, within the future.

4.2.2 Representation and consumption

4.2.2.1 Transmission, study material for students

Audio-visual representations of Kutiyattam facilitate the transmission and safeguarding of Kutiyattam and foster continuity in performance practice. Exert connoisseur R. Iyer from Margi theatre and K.R. Chakyar from KKM argue that young students of Kutiyattam today are straying away from the art, while only a few artists show artistic excellence and proficiency in the traditional styles of acting. Thus, it is crucial to record and preserve the old

styles and traditions of performance. In doing so, audio-visual documentations can function as reference material for contemporary and future generations of students. They can find “the right way” (R. Iyer, personal interview, op. cit.) of action and intonation and the style preserved in the documentations can function as a base for further improvisation, *manodharmam*. This base is crucial given that new inventions without referring to the basic techniques of Kutiyattam are not accepted within the tradition.³⁰⁹ Moreover, young Kutiyattam professionals from different traditional styles and schools argue for the need to not only study performance practice but also watch audio-visual representations of performances in order to learn and improve their skills. However, while some institutions encourage, enable and foster the utilization of audio-visual materials for study, others neglect this issue. The following section provides an insight into the diverse practices at the institutions ACCSG, MMCSG and KKM.

Ammannur Chachu Chakyar Smaraka Gurukulam

The artist R. Chakyar (personal interview, op. cit.) argues that continuous consultations of recorded materials that expose the Ammannur style of acting are important for the study of his traditional performance style, particularly as his guru has already passed away and live performances can no longer be witnessed. He further points to the difficulties in studying the style of a guru, who had been at the peak of his abilities during a time when the student was not yet born and who is no longer on stage in a time when the student would be able to also grasp the intricacies of the performance style. He points to the immense usefulness of having audio-visual materials available that cover the “most powerful performances” of guru Ammannur shot during the 1960s and adds that he learned new combinations of eye expressions and *mudras* from watching the old documentations. R. Chakyar (ibid.) adds that audio-visual representations are referred to “again and again” and have already been integrated into study and preparation processes of artists at ACCSG. He explicates when

we have studied, trained well and have a debut performance of a new character, like Bali or Ravana, first we read all the Attaprakarams, we make our own vision and see guru’s performance. When he is alive, we just go and watch it, so these days we take the video and we watch it. Parvativiharam, Kailasoddharanam, Death of Bali, we watch and go and perform. So these will be great achievements for the recordings. This is what we are doing in Ammannur Gurukulam, we just check with the guru’s performance. Good recording is very helpful.

³⁰⁹ K.R. Chakyar, personal interview, April 24, 2012.

However, audio-visual materials are not systematically integrated in teaching and study processes at an administrative or official level. Thus, they are not equally accessible to all the students and artists even of the same institution. Access is restricted and depends on the ability of the persons seeking consultation with the media to establish a close rapport or collaborate with the person in whose custody the media are. As male persons are in charge of media, it can be argued that a close rapport or convincing argument might be harder for female students and artists to generate compared to male artists. This might be one of the reasons why a female student reports less access to audio-visual representations within the same Gurukulam.³¹⁰

Mani Madhava Chakyar Smaraka Gurukulam

Audio-visual documentations have also served as study materials for students at MMCSG on a regular basis since 2008/2009. Already at the beginning of the 21st century, MMCSG started to establish an archive, with members having since utilized audio-visual recordings, particularly of eye expressions and *Navarasas* for illustration purposes.³¹¹ In some cases, performances have also been screened. Today, the Gurukulam trains approximately one dozen students. The maestro Mani M. Chakyar already passed away and P.K.N. Nambiar, a stalwart in the field of Kutiyattam, is constrained in demonstrating foot and bodily movements or whole plays to the students on a regular basis, due to old age. Thus, members of the Gurukulam need to rely on audio-visual documentations. H. Nambiar (personal interview, April 22, 2012) stresses that all items currently taught at the institution have been preserved at least by one documentation, which is archived in the institution and remains under his custody. Exclusively during the study time of particular items, students are asked to watch the documentations, reflect upon them and enhance their own performance practices by means of engaging with the documentations. Technical facilities are hereby provided by the Gurukulam itself or students, having access to facilities at their homes, are allowed to borrow CDs in order to rework the parts under study at home. Documentations are also sometimes used during classes to demonstrate *vachika-abhinaya*, the style of *sloka* recitation, as guru Mani exercised it. Nambiar further articulates that students having problems in understanding music by means of written documents and face-to-face lecturing can receive further assistance by viewing and listening to documentations. Particularly in the case of *Mizhavu* training, recordings are already serving demonstration and exemplification purposes.

³¹⁰ Name omitted for confidentiality reasons.

³¹¹ Personal interviews with C.K. Jayanthi, April 22, 2012; and H. Nambiar, April 22, 2012.

Written documentation, in the form of notes taken during lectures, published books and manuscripts, in combination with audio or audio-visual recordings enable the teaching of Kutiyattam in cases whereby gurus are not able to intensely physically contribute to regular classes and lectures. This is due to the fact that the basics in Kutiyattam, the stances, *mudras*, expressions (*abhinayas*) and exercises, remain the same. They can be preserved within documentations, so that the future generations will also be able to enrich their understanding of Kutiyattam and further develop their skills. However, not only the physical techniques require preservation; moreover the cognitive knowledge concerning Kutiyattam practice and Kutiyattam culture also needs to be documented and preserved. Thus, family members currently record all major speeches as well as regular lectures and spontaneous explanations of P.K.N. Nambiar. Furthermore, in order to enrich the archive of the Gurukulam, all major performances by artists at the precincts of the Gurukulam are audio-visually documented. Besides videographing formal lectures and public performances live from stage. One artist further accentuates that he unobtrusively and often in a concealed way even records informal details, explanations, directions, recitations, narrations and sudden recollections disclosed by the guru by use of his iPod, often during unofficial situations with familiar atmosphere, in a private setting, in front of the television or during leisure time. These “instant recordings” are subsequently transferred to CDs as well as hard discs and archived.³¹² In such a way, a vast number of *prabandhams* and *slokas* have been collected and preserved through formal and informal recordings. Moreover, H. Nambiar, being a trained computer and software specialist, even further enlarges the available corpus for study materials on Kutiyattam. He actively engages in the crafting of digital animations displaying *abhinayas*, facial expressions and eye movements, as well as details given in the *Natyashastra*. Adjusting the color and style of animations according to the students’ age group, he thereby also tries to attract the young students’ attention (ibid.).

A young apprentice gives clear notice of the priority that he gives to media as tools for study. Besides oral teachings, he considers engagement with audio-visual media as the main source for acquiring knowledge on Kutiyattam and accentuates that they have already given him major support in his studies. He argues:

Only through visual media we can develop. Reading is essential, but more essential is the visual. By seeing this we acquire knowledge, get the idea from there. Reading gave me not more development, only by visual media. (...) The mudras and others, I can see that, I

³¹² Name omitted for confidentiality reasons.

can develop and change. Fully I cannot change because I have one style, Mani style. We can just take the good ideas, mudras and techniques from there.³¹³

He further adds that by viewing audio-visual representations, only small portions can be elaborated in line with the documentations, rather than full sequences. He stresses that while studying and elaborating a portion of a play, he always consults audio-visual representations of the masters' or the contemporary leading artists' performances to correct himself. He thereby also points to the student's personal and solitary engagement with his practice and stresses: "I can change it; I can correct it by myself, by seeing". Hereby, prominent artists, including from other styles and lineages of practice, function as role models and students imitate elements of their make-up style and performance practice as exposed and displayed in the audio-visual documentations.

In this regard, C.K. Jayanthi (personal interview, April 22, 2012) stresses that one of the impacts of the utilization of audio-visual documentations, circulated on the Internet or provided by the Gurukulam, is slight distortions in artistic style. However, she argues that experimentations are acceptable, given that artistic practice was never fixed and as long as students continue to learn their basic style by face to face transmission by their guru.³¹⁴ Guru P.K.N. Nambiar (personal interview, op. cit.) further asserts that audio-visual documentation and oral transmission need to combine for the safeguarding of Kutiyattam. "Both are necessary," he says; if documentations are produced, at least those portions can be used in the future to keep the tradition alive. Otherwise, it might fade. However, he also argues that if the original process of oral transmission and intense training are no longer practiced, all the knowledge regarding Kutiyattam will fade. H. Nambiar (personal interview, April 22, 2012) speaks of a "joint venture" concerning the transmission of Kutiyattam to younger generations and stresses that, within MMCSG, only those parts of the play that are currently studied by an individual student are provided. In doing so, a dual influence can be guaranteed.

Kerala Kalamandalam

While audio-visual representations are already widely in use in MMCSG and continuous reference to audio-visual materials is enabled and practiced in ACCSG, the situation at the governmental institution KKM is different. Despite KKM having already started one documentation room when video technology came to Kerala in the 1980s and even though a

³¹³ Name omitted for confidentiality reasons.

³¹⁴ She highlights that it is not in the interest of the Gurukulam but rather due to the appeal for the students that audio-visual media exposing different styles are used. The Gurukulam only provides materials upon request.

documentation committee was established with the upgrading of the institution as a deemed university in 2006, all major programs at KKM being documented and archived within a few years, audio-visuals are not used for teaching purposes so far and audio-visual materials are not utilized by students in class. However, in general, gurus, lecturers and experts at KKM agree to the additional value of using audio-visual representations for preservation, study and teaching purposes. Nonetheless, support is articulated with some reservation due to the limited experience in the matter to date. For example, K.R. Chakyar (personal interview, April 24, 2012) points out that utilization needs to be encouraged and guided by the teachers as it is uncertain whether the next generation will watch the audio-visual materials at all.³¹⁵ K.V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, March 25, 2012) also points to the necessity of initiation into the usage of audio-visual representations for study and teaching purposes by professionals. He accentuates that a number of teachers and students within KKM “are not aware of (...) how the visual medium can help them”. Teachers and students are not utilizing the media as “nobody has told them how they can use it”. However, positions in strong support of media utilization have also been voiced. For instance, M.P.S. Namboodiri (personal interview, op. cit.) argues that audio-visual materials at KKM could be part of the curricula for M.A. and Ph.D. students. Furthermore, as a member of the documentation committee, Namboodiripad officially articulated a recommendation proposing the integration of virtual classrooms in the syllabus for M.A. students at KKM. Moreover, technical equipment was also to be facilitated for. However, decision-making bodies at KKM were not interested in making use of video as a teaching tool. Again, in 2012 M.P.S. Namboodiri handed in a report, describing the current situation of audio-visual materials at KKM and the urgency to revive, protect and preserve the existing audio-visual archive. The report further recommended the revitalization of the documentation section at KKM. Again, KKM officials did not consider media to be an important matter and the project is still pending (ibid.).

In fact, gurus, lecturers, artists and stakeholders from all the major institutions support the utilization of audio-visual representations for transmission and study purposes. However, all accentuate that no simple copying of movements or positions exposed in the recordings should be encouraged. Instead, audio-visual recordings can be provided to facilitate recollection and understanding of the performance and the characters’ emotions displayed. Based upon this understanding, further face-to-face teaching and corrections by the gurus

³¹⁵ K. Shylaja (personal interview, March 23, 2012) adds that audio-visual documentations could be useful for learning purposes, but so far not even books are used in teaching Kutiyattam, while K. Girijadevi (personal interview, February 25, 2012) accentuates that if she had the possibility she would use audio-visual representations in her Kutiyattam classes.

needs to take place.³¹⁶ M.P.S. Namboodiri (ibid.) argues that students first need to train, master and “understand the body by their own” effort; they need to internalize and “need not look outside”. They “have to think something else, rather than on their vision”, before the mind is placed in focus of attention in a second step, while only at a third level is visualization and externalization encouraged. He adds that for the first internal processes, the guidance of the teacher is needed. Hereby, stress is placed on physical practice, whereby the body remains the “sole medium of communication” and has to be made perfect to be able to communicate anything later on in drama and dance (ibid.). The teacher gives physical corrections, listens to the body and touches or points to the body to provide instructions. Only after this stage can external references be consulted, otherwise the learning process will be corrupted. Body awareness and awareness of space can only be accomplished through a rigid way of bodily repetition. Thus, the usage of audio-visual materials is only recommended for advanced students, as opposed to beginners.³¹⁷ Oral transmission and live performances need to be given prime attention, whereas audio-visual representations as learning tools should only be a secondary step and a secondary source of knowledge. K.V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, February 28, 2012) emphasizes: “The best documentation of such intangible heritage is of course teaching. The second best is what we are doing with the technology”.

4.2.2.2 Memory aids for contemporary artists

Audio-visual documentations are used as memory aids, particularly by practicing young and middle aged artists and professionals. Generally, the guru only teaches a play once to his students. Moreover, during lectures, instructions are mainly given verbally, with physical exemplifications of body movements and positions only displayed in some instances. The majority of plays are only performed once a year and it is not unusual that the performance possibility for a young artist only arises several years after having learned the play. Forgetfulness is a human characteristic. However, if a word or mudra is not expressed correctly, it will blemish the art; it will be a “defect” on the art (K. Kanakakumar, personal interview, April 06, 2012). In such situations, besides written notes, audio-visual recordings can provide valuable memory aids for the young artists, who lack frequent chances to perform

³¹⁶ Personal interviews with K.R. Chakyar, April 24, 2012; K. Girijadevi, February 22, 2012; H. Nambiar, personal interview, April 22, 2012; and G. Venu, op. cit.

³¹⁷ Ibid.; K.R. Chakyar, personal interview, April 24, 2012. However, due to their increasing availability, the use of modern technologies at the beginning stages of study is already increasing and in particular music students are listening to tape recordings from very early stages onwards. However, this practice profoundly limits their capacities for free elaboration and improvisation (ibid.).

and thus miss opportunities to memorize and embody knowledge regarding particular performances. For example, K. Sangeet (personal interview, op. cit.) recalls that he choreographed a new story. In this story, he combined the style learned by his guru with elements of the style transmitted in his family line. However, the play was not staged and Sangeet argues that in the future when he will stage the performance publicly, he will need to take recourse to audio-visual documentation in order to remember (ibid.). This is due to the fact that embodied knowledge regarding plays is only possible through continuous repetition, reflection and correction or repeated performance practice. Without this, further tools such as audio-visual representations are of crucial importance to facilitate remembrance.

Young artists also stress that while they are now able to perform, in a few decades they might encounter insecurities or not be able to correctly remember all the mudras, expressions or words in the various plays. In such a case, audio-visual representations will enable them to clear the doubts and “refresh” (ibid.) knowledge. In this context, H. Nambiar (personal interview, March 10, 2012) recalls the incident of the staging of *Kaliyankam* in 2004. In 2012, after only eight years, the choreography was restaged. However, besides the guru, only one of the artists to have originally participated in the performance was still located at the Gurukulam and new students were enrolled who had not seen the play before. Thus, additionally to receiving the oral instructions by the guru, given in the traditional way, the viewing of the audio-visual documentation of this performance was provided as an aid. This practice, according to Nambiar, has proved beneficial for students and young lecturers alike.

Last but not least, audio-recordings facilitate a new memorizing practice. In particular, young and lesser-experienced artists listen to audio-recordings during their journeys to performances through headsets and portable audio-players. They do so in order to recapitulate, memorize or internalize *slokas* and portions of the play to be performed. The recordings hereby assist them in visualizing the performance and exercising it in imagination.

4.2.2.3 Reference and artistic improvement

Audio-visual representations enable the detailed study of performance practice and artistic improvement. Hereby, artists can scrutinize their own performances, their guru’s performances and performances of artists from other lineages and styles. While in the initial stage of learning the teacher is a mirror to the student, who, without thinking, sees himself or herself in the teacher, copies the teacher and is reflected by the teacher, in the later stage, once the student starts to perform, his or her own mind should take over that function. The artist has to think about the aesthetics and beauty of the performance by himself or herself.

However, K.V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, February 28, 2012) stresses that the mind as mirror also has some drawbacks:

You can visualize almost anything, the hand may not be perfect, be lower, the chest may not be in the proper position (...). The artist cannot recognize his problems in the stage.

You cannot see it in the mind, you have to see it in another media.

Moreover, it is the students and the artist's duty to strive for perfection in the art. It is not solely through teaching that a student acquires knowledge or develops in the art, but also through the students' self-interest in the art, through their own strive to learn and study via participatory observation or the engagement with study materials. The majority of young artists argue that only by seeing their own mistakes and their beauty and attractiveness on stage are they able to evaluate their own performance and improve. Viewing their own performances on video assists them in the examination of their performance quality, in realizing mistakes and potentials for enhancement. Thus, the majority of young ambitious artists record their own performance for critical examination, self-study and improvement. In particular, young male artists frequently invite friends and camera professionals for the recordings of their own performances.³¹⁸ Distortions and developments of what has been learned in the training with gurus and what is finally presented on stage become obvious and can be corrected. K. Kanakakumar (personal interview, April 6, 2012) remarks that he has reviewed his own performances on video repeatedly to find drawbacks and stresses: "I can recognize what my shortcomings are and the improvement through seeing that I have had". Hereby, the media functions similar to a mirror, whereby the artist can correct his or her positions and expressions, scrutinize the audience's reactions to elements in the play and receive positive or negative feedback. Thus, the consultation of media representations fosters improvements in the quality of presentation.

Audio-visual representation further enables the viewing and study of performances by other artists and gurus. Today the leading maestros in Kutiyattam have already passed away, while almost all of the upcoming artists still have capacities and needs for further refinement. K.K. Gopalakrishnan (personal interview, March 13, 2012) accentuates that "the young people are going to be tomorrows masters, so let them watch the masters performing, let them see what is the difference". Audio-visual representations function as reference tools, particularly for artists encountering insecurities in preparing for solo performances.³¹⁹ In this regard, guru K.R. Chakyar (personal interview, April 24, 2012) and percussionist K. Rajeev

³¹⁸ Personal interviews with R. Chakyar, op. cit.; and K. Sangeet, op. cit.

³¹⁹ Personal interviews with, M. Madhu, March 31, 2012; and G. Venu, op. cit.

(personal interview, March 30, 2012) accentuate that recordings of the doyens of the art greatly help the young artists. K. Kanakakumar (personal interview, April 6, 2012) further highlights that audio-visual representations of performances of the grand maestros are the “most appropriate” medium facilitating referencing, remembrance and the removal of doubts.

Engagement with media further enables the study of and comparison with other styles in Kutiyattam. By oral transmission, only the style of one’s own family, specific guru or institution is transmitted and incorporated. Knowledge on Kutiyattam can thus be further enhanced by the study of audio-visual representations of other styles. In particular, the study of historical documents allows knowledge generation, which adds to the already accumulated knowledge by interactions with family members and gurus of one’s own style.³²⁰ A young artist from a traditional family background even accentuates that his knowledge on the different styles in Kutiyattam was only facilitated by the study of the respective audio-visual representations.³²¹ Moreover, due to multiple commitments, artists and young students are unable to attend all relevant performance occasions at a variety of remote places. However, the viewing of actual performance techniques by the masters is crucially important for their own further development. Moreover, not all elements and scenes of the play are equally memorized by the viewer of an actual live performance. Thus, K. Sangeet (personal interview, op. cit.) stresses that he strives to document all major performances that he can attend and has permission to record. Hereby, plays are recorded in particular where he has doubts and questions, which are then clarified by consulting the media representation.

Audio-visual documentations are utilized by a number of young artists for personal artistic improvement, particularly regarding *Chakyarkuttu*, *Prabandhamkuttu* or other parts within Kutiyattam plays where improvisation is needed.³²² Specifically the conduction of *Chakyarkuttu* requires significant experience. In classes only the *Sanskrit slokas* are transmitted and practiced, while the *Malayalam* elements of the play have to be improvised and added by the students themselves. Subtle and sophisticated humor needs to be linked to *Sanskrit* plays and literature and must be interwoven into the story performed.³²³ However, as the great gurus are no longer alive and only very few artists have reached excellence in verbal acting, there is only limited reference possibility for young apprentices and artists. A.R.

³²⁰ Personal interviews with K. Sangeet, op. cit.; and A.R. Chakyar, op. cit.

³²¹ Name omitted for confidentiality reasons.

³²² Personal interviews with K. Kanakakumar, April 6, 2012; H. Nambiar, March 10, 2012; S. Narayanan, April 22, 2012; and J. Prathab, op. cit.

³²³ Even the characteristic language wherein *Sanskrit* is mixed with the vernacular, while leaving aside ordinary as well as anglicized terms, is difficult to maintain for younger artists who often use English terms in their everyday communication (personal interviews with J. Prathab, April 6, 2012; and H. Nambiar, March 10, 2012).

Chakyar (personal interview, op. cit.) laments: “We cannot hear, there is no base. If we cannot get the base we cannot develop a building (and if) I create my own, that will not match to the base. Base is tradition”. In order to attain proficiency in this artistic practice, which is heavily grounded in literal knowledge, it is crucial to continuously listen and learn from the masters over long periods of time. However, even students and professionals with close connections to stalwarts in the art of *Chakyarkuttu* and *Prabandhamkuttu* lack regular exposure to the art. Due to a number of commitments and thus lack of time, attendance at live performances of the masters is not always possible.³²⁴ In fact, since senior artists did not agree to be audio-recorded several decades ago, people started to secretly audio-record the *Kuttu* performances by the masters. Today, these copies are secretly disseminated among young apprentices who had no direct or frequent access to the masters’ performances or official recordings. In such a way, the *Kuttu* of Ammannur M. Chakyar in his 80s have also been audio-recorded and are unofficially used by contemporary students.

The Internet functions as a further source for materials, with the student J. Prathab (personal interview, April 6, 2012) remarking that he and his friends review the Internet for new performances being uploaded at least once a week. However, only advanced students benefit from using the files on the net, given that only very few examples of good performances are available. The majority of performances are poor in artistic quality or conducted by untrained actors lacking deeper knowledge and understanding of Kutiyattam. Thus, watching indiscriminate YouTube representations, particularly of *Kuttu* performances, can even add to misunderstandings, distortions and wrong views. Therefore, people who compile and show the videos on the Internet are often not considered real advocates and promoters of Kutiyattam (ibid.). A further lack of audio-visual representations accessible via YouTube and other sites is that only a few minutes of performance are uploaded in most cases, and never the full performance. Nevertheless, young apprentices still repeatedly investigate and intensely work with the few minutes of good material available on the net.³²⁵

However, besides the large-scale utilization of audio-visual representations by members of the practicing community, usage for artistic improvement and reference seems to be still gender-based. Only men operate cameras and audio-equipment during shooting, mainly male artists and students commission camera men for taking recordings and only male artists report the frequent utilization of websites and file-sharing sources such as YouTube on the Internet. Female students and young actresses neither have regular access to nor are familiar with

³²⁴ Personal interview with A.R. Chakyar, op. cit.; K. Sangeet, op. cit.; K. Kanakakumar, April 6, 2012; S. Narayanan, op. cit., J. Prathab, April 6, 2012, and K. Krishnendu, op. cit.

³²⁵ Name omitted for confidentiality reasons.

Internet facilities.³²⁶ Moreover, female students do not have the cultural and financial freedom to independently contract male camera operators. However, some mature female artists frequently commission video documentations of their performances³²⁷ and some female artists utilize their own mobile phones to generate video documentations during live performances for later scrutinization.

4.2.2.4 Dissemination and promotion - cultural and economic development

While films are mainly produced for representational, academic or educational purposes, promotional and economic ends can also be a reason for production. Cultural expressions like Kutiyattam are cultural assets for the Kutiyattam community. They embody and define the community's cultural identity, values, skills, beliefs and history. These assets are also consumed, traded and commercialized, generating income for community members and fostering economic and cultural development on a local level.³²⁸ In this regard, audio-visual representations assist in a number of ways.

First of all, audio-visual representations make the art accessible for a wider public. K.V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, March 25, 2012) stresses that it is only in the last twenty years that people beyond the traditional communities and audiences actually see Kutiyattam. Even within Kerala, a huge number of people have neither seen a Kutiyattam performance nor a visual representation of the art yet. Furthermore, most of the people in the world have no idea about the existence of this art form. Audio-visual representations and modern technologies are used to promote and disseminate cultural expressions on a regional, national and international level. They not only enable widespread dissemination but also provide easy entry points into the art. DVDs can be purchased in retail shops and video clips can be accessed via the Internet. Indeed, as several artists point out, most of the people in the world and even in India itself will only see audio-visual representations and might never be able to see a live performance.³²⁹ Thus, it is only via media that information on the art can reach people on both a global and local level. In this regard, audio-visual representation offers an

³²⁶ Personal interviews with Deepika and Priyanka, April 25, 2012; and K. Krishnendu, April 21, 2012.

³²⁷ U. Nangiar, personal interview, January 15, 2012.

³²⁸ Referring to the case of Warli and Madhubani wall paintings in India, Chaudhuri (2009) argues that community practitioners and patrons joined hands to expose the art to a wider audience and generate cultural products and sustainable commercially valid income resources. Of course, becoming widely known and accessible, illegitimate copying also takes place. However, positive outcomes also need to be given notice; for instance, women were transformed from tradition practicing housewives to income-generators and craftspeople, generating respect even beyond the respective community at stake. In India, both forms of art are widely appreciated today and, as Chaudhuri (2009) adds, this popularity again "creates a space for the traditional practitioners to promote themselves as genuine for the discerning buyer" (p. 194).

³²⁹ Personal interviews with K. Sangeet, op. cit; K. Kanakakumar, April 6, 2012; and M. Madhu, op. cit.

advantage also for those people who know the art yet have no opportunity to see it live on stage. Furthermore, as young artists in particular are eager to articulate, only modern audio-visual media technologies potentially offer the possibility of seeing a performance or event live on screen while it is being performed in another corner of the world.³³⁰

Promotion and information dissemination via audio-visual representations screened in film archives, cultural or educational institutions, broadcasting channels and the Internet generate awareness, respect and a market on a regional, national and international level. They “increase the audience“, provide the means to “popularize the art”, facilitate new or more performance opportunities and thus a wider patronage for the art (K. Girijadevi, personal interview, February 25, 2012). Even external productions, often remaining at a surface level regarding the deeper meanings of Kutiyattam, have a positive effect through facilitating recognition and appreciation of Kutiyattam among common people. They generate and foster curiosity and interest in the art among national and international audiences, facilitating the generation of new spectators, potential sponsors and visitors.³³¹ Appreciation and knowledge need to grow step-by-step, starting with the need to raise interest. Girijadevi (ibid.) accentuates that “what is important is people’s desire to know about this art”. Documentary films and documentations can raise this motivation, inspiring people to learn more about the art, to meet the artists and even to study or conduct research on Kutiyattam.³³² In particular, excelling performances by the maestros can anchor interest in the art at an international and scholarly level. Nonetheless, the art will always only be attractive for a limited number of people. In fact, broad popularization of Kutiyattam is “impossible” (K.K. Gopalakrishnan, personal interview, February 6, 2012) and “not even necessary” (personal interviews with A. Gopalakrishnan, March 14, 2012; and G. Venu, op. cit.). However, the dissemination of basic knowledge on the existence of the art, its conventions and repertoire is necessary. Indeed, certain popularity and a stable audience are crucial for the very survival of the art. Besides the actual practitioners and artists, contemporary and future spectators, *rasikas*, scholars and connoisseurs of the art are crucial for the very viability of the art, for the reciprocity between artist and spectator, which only stimulates artistic experience and development. These people, the future *rasikas*, can only be reached and attracted via large-scale dissemination. Thus, in order to sustain the art, it needs to be disseminated within and beyond India.³³³ K.

³³⁰ Personal interviews with K. Kanakakumar, April 6, 2012; and K. Sangeet, op. cit.

³³¹ Personal interviews with K. Sangeet, op. cit.; N. Paniker, op. cit.; J. Prathab, op. cit.; and K. Rajeev, op. cit.

³³² Personal interviews with M. Madhu & Indu G., op. cit.; and N. Paniker, op. cit.

³³³ Personal interviews with A. Gopalakrishnan, op. cit.; K.K. Gopalakrishnan, February 6, 2012; and S. Gopalakrishnan, op. cit.

Kanakakumar (personal interview, April 6, 2012) argues that substantial dissemination and promotion can only be reached via the utilization of modern media, stressing that “it is only through media that Kutiyattam “can be brought into society” and expressing the idea that “now the media only is developing all art forms’ career”.

Additionally, the utilization of visual representations live on screen during actual performances can be used to facilitate further understanding of Kutiyattam plays. A. Gopalakrishnan and K.K. Gopalakrishnan (personal interviews, February 6, 2012) articulate that it is beneficial to provide simultaneous visual presentations with a projector during lecture demonstrations in front of an audience with limited knowledge on Kutiyattam, wherein explanations are given on the characters on stage as well as the content of acting by means of subtitles and visual or literal cross-reference to Indian mythology. On the other hand, R. Iyer (personal interview, op. cit.) argues that a recorded translation, description or depiction of what is exposed on stage cannot be provided for the audience, given that the performance cannot and must not be pre-planned and pre-structured. This is due to the reason that the artist’s performance differs and something else is exposed on each occasion. Moreover, the time frame and pace of performance varies substantially. In light of these characteristics, a pre-recorded document would confine the artists in their expressions and improvisations and add to the standardization and homogenization of the art. In order to remain faithful to the art, the only possible way is to ask a co-artist to simultaneously type and visualize what is performed on stage and screen this word-by-word translation to the audience while the play is ongoing.³³⁴ This sort of simultaneous explanation of *mudras* and actions can be provided in a number of different languages and would enable the basic understanding of the particular repertoire performed.³³⁵ While this activity requires serious preparation and will not be executed rapidly, the subtitling of existing good audio-visual representations with several international languages, as well as complementary commentaries and notes as supplements to audio-visual information, should be encouraged and would enable further dissemination, promotion, understanding and respect on a global level.³³⁶ Moreover, in the light of the already very limited media attention given to Kutiyattam and the current lack of performance opportunities, K. Kanakakumar (personal interview, April 6, 2012) adds that the criticism of a few conservative artists of the older generation must not be allowed to stop coverage and popularization by the media. He adds that some “people who see the media in a

³³⁴ For this activity, a well-educated artist is needed who is professional in Kutiyattam, in applying software, in typing and in the English language.

³³⁵ K.K. Gopalakrishnan, personal interview, February 6, 2012.

³³⁶ Personal interviews with R. Iyer, op. cit.; and S. Gopalakrishnan, op. cit.

negative way think that only through them everything should be understood. When such selfish interests are there, that will affect Kutiyattam in a bad way” (ibid.). The art form needs to be brought to the people in order to respectively attract them, bring them into the art and thereby enlarge possibilities for the art and the artists.

However, interaction with the general local and global public requires not only mediated dissemination but also openness to this development on the side of the artists. In this regard, an artist stresses that due to the attention given by the media in the aftermath of the UNESCO proclamation, artists also increasingly came outside; namely, artists left the protected private and ritual space and opened themselves for integration into public space. Audio-visual representations helped Kutiyattam and Kutiyattam artists to open up to the outside world. Thus, films not only facilitated the encounter of new audiences and the transmission of information, but also a transformation within the culture of Kutiyattam itself. Indeed, through audio-visual representations original contexts of performance are replaced by new contexts of viewing and hearing, enabling access to the cultural expression of Kutiyattam for new and remote audiences beyond those physically present at the performance. Media coverage has enabled Kutiyattam to become part of the public discourse and has simultaneously signified it as being relevant for the public.³³⁷

It is worth noting that an ‘artist’ is usually created in a joint effort by institutions, practitioners and consumers. Until some decades ago, Kutiyattam artists were considered mere practitioners of a tradition or artistic cultural expression.³³⁸ Among other things, the publication of texts, the screening or dissemination of audio-visual representations also confers value to the practitioner, now being understood as an artist on the local, regional, national and international ground. Audio-visual representations are valuable tools for the generation of knowledge and respect, particularly also regarding the immediate neighborhood, the local and regional community, which is not aware of the value of Kutiyattam. Being screened on television adds to the performer’s status as an artist, as well as the arts’ status as being of general cultural significance. Audio-visual representations promote the art, but also individual artists. They are used as proof and validation of their skills and signify their status. K. Rajeev (personal interview, op. cit.) accentuates that due to the wide media coverage in local theatres, local media as well as national television, guru Ammannur became a celebrity. K. Sangeet (personal interview, op. cit.) stresses that “we get a name” and recognition through media promotion. Thus, all artists strive to be interviewed. Margi Sathi (personal interview,

³³⁷ See also Graham, 2009, p. 188.

³³⁸ V. Kaladharan, personal interview, March 23, 2012.

March 14, 2012) also accentuates that due to media promotion on television and the Internet, the exposition of skills and names of the artists, publicity for the respective artists increases, leading to their increased number of performance opportunities. Besides broadcasting channels, easily accessible photographs and videos on the Internet also facilitate promotion of the artists. Specifically regarding the younger generation, who utilize media on a daily level, remembrance is often linked to digitally accessible visual materials. Through this way, the artist's publicity and market value is enhanced. However, traditionally, marketing was not considered good practice within Kutiyattam communities and Keralean culture. However, within today's globalized culture, the forces of globalization and capitalism have also become dominant within Kerala and Kutiyattam culture.³³⁹ Kutiyattam artists adjust to these conditions and market themselves to a certain extent. Accordingly, almost all the institutions active in the training, promotion or preservation of Kutiyattam entertain their own websites³⁴⁰ promoting the art, the artists, the respective institution, related products such as books, articles, visual and audio-visual representations, as well as performance venues and programs conducted by the respective groups.

Furthermore, artists, community members and institutions financially benefit from participating in audio-visual recordings. They either enter well-paid contracts for collaborations in films or documentations or sell films for their own or the institution's benefit; for example, the latter is the case at KKM, ACCSG, Natanakairali or Margi. Moreover, artists consider rare historical photographs, film or video recordings as very valuable assets.³⁴¹ V. Kaladharan (personal interview, April 6, 2012) remarks that the new generation of artists in particular became apprehensive of the value of these materials, while elder members so far have not shown any concern on the matter. Specifically, traditional families hold a relative monopoly over old records necessary for historical analysis, which increases the value of the records for the families, the researchers and professionals, as well as the cultural agencies and institutions. If agreed upon, these materials can be traded or supplied for use in academic, educational or cultural institutions in exchange for adequate remuneration.³⁴²

³³⁹ Personal interviews with V. Kaladharan, , April 6, 2012; and C.K. Jayanthi, April 22, 2012.

³⁴⁰ KKM utilizes <http://www.kalamandalam.org/>, Margi theatre <http://www.margitheatre.org/> and ACCSG <http://www.ammannurgurukulam.com/>. MMCSG registered the domain <http://www.kutiyattam.com/> in 2005.

³⁴¹ Personal interviews with H. Nambiar, April 22, 2012; and C.K. Jayanthi, April 22, 2012.

³⁴² S. Gopalakrishnan, personal interview, op. cit.

4.2.2.5 Education and research

Audio-visual representations serve as educational materials on Kutiyattam in Gurukulams, schools, colleges and universities. In particular, edited representations on CD or DVD enable the digital display of performance practices in classrooms, during lecture demonstrations, school excursions to the Gurukulams or tourist visits at institutions. School excursions during peak periods bring huge numbers of Indian students into the Gurukulam on a daily basis. Basic demonstrations and explanations regarding Kutiyattam need to be provided to all of them. However, a demonstration of *Surpanakha vachika*, the style of talk by the demoness *Surpanakha*, which can be easily enjoyed by youngsters, cannot be adequately mediated without the respective costume, *vesham*.³⁴³ If a live demonstration of Kutiyattam cannot be scheduled due to lacking capacity, the quality of individual lectures is substantially enhanced via the use of audio-visual representations. The advantage of audio-visual recordings lies in the limited demands in terms of time, space and human capacities (actors, actresses, musicians, make-up artists, costume and stage assistants), as well as the possibility to exhibit a wide range of different portions of plays, characters, music, costume, acting and recitation styles. Thus, members of MMCSG even envision the operation of a cinema hall in the precincts of the Gurukulam, where audio-visual representations can be accessed and screened to visitors, students, artists and scholars upon request.

Besides enabling frequent and large-scale demonstrations, audio-visual representations also constitute ideal educational materials for lecture demonstrations and seminars. While performances and their preparations occupy a number of artists for a whole day and involve considerable financial investments, edited versions of digital recordings, displaying specific characters, plays or musical variations, can be screened during a 90-minute seminar, even allowing time for discussions. C.K. Jayanthi (personal interview, April 22, 2012) has utilized audio-visual representations for illustration purposes in class as well as during national and international conferences since 2009. It can be argued that digital technologies and software such as PowerPoint projections, the usage of visualization-techniques for findings in diagrams, clip-charts, chart-papers, pictures and video-clips is a well-accepted method in education and presentation, widely applied within academia as well as other professional spheres. The usage of these techniques and methods, of a particular style and format of presentation, contributes to the scientific validation and reliability of the exposed arguments and topics. Specific software and hardware technologies hereby function as signifiers of

³⁴³ H. Nambiar, personal interview, April 22, 2012.

modern academic practice. Furthermore, the usage of media representations exposing performance practice by the respective artist himself or herself enables the simultaneous positioning of the artist/lecturer as an expert giving a lecture and as a practitioner of the art. Teaching at Kalady University, C.K. Jayanthi also uses video clips as part of PowerPoint presentations during her seminars. She argues that the display of audio-visual representations during lectures led to an enhanced understanding by the audience, as well as fostering a higher appreciation of the art itself (ibid.). Furthermore, representations can be selected according to research interests of the students present during the presentation. Jayanthi (ibid.) recalls that students' interests in digital documentations have increased substantially in recent years. While one decade ago students were still ready to travel long distances to see a Kutiyattam performance, nowadays students majorly demand digital materials for classroom study. Today, technical facilities, including the knowledge to use them, as well as the materials, CDs and DVDs are available. Contemporary Indian graduate and post-graduate students are interested in the application of modern technologies and the respective knowledge recreated through these technologies. They are "interested in their desktops. They only believe in the clippings and in the desktop and in the net" (ibid.). On the other hand, interest in visiting live performances in remote villages has declined (ibid.).

A. Gopalakrishnan (personal interview, op. cit.) even goes one step further and promotes the idea that in order to raise an awareness on the artistic traditions of Kerala at a local and regional level, audio-visual representations could be used in high-schools, colleges and universities all over Kerala, even without an artist being present at all times. Indeed, audio-visual representations can independently function as educational materials and sources for research facilitating comparative studies regarding different lineages and styles of performance, for example. C.K. Jayanthi (personal interview, April 22, 2012) recalls that post-graduate students at Kalady University increasingly show an interest and need for the usage of audio-visual documentation in their research. In particular, young female students in India, who are not directly related to the practicing families or artists and do not enjoy the cultural freedom to participate in night-long performances in distant places from their homes, face difficulties in accessing live performances of Kutiyattam. In such situations, audio-visual representations of the art can provide useful materials for engagement with the art during research practice. Students at KKM³⁴⁴ have also voiced an interest in using audio-visual representations as research materials for conducting historic analyses of bodily exercises, classroom practices, student-teacher interactions, performance practices, stage decorations

³⁴⁴ Personal interviews with Deepika and Priyanka, op. cit; and K. Krishnendu, op. cit.

and costume design. These demands receive the support of lecturers and associate professors at KKM. If used seriously, audio-visual representations can provide a first-hand impression of performances or lecture demonstrations, which can then be reflected upon, critically assessed and integrated into research.³⁴⁵ In particular, historical changes can be analyzed in detail, showing the extent to which repertoires were edited and adjusted to the respective socio-cultural environment. Recordings offer the possibility of the in-depth and detailed study of performances, given that visual representations can be frequently seen, stopped, fragmented or wound back. Indeed, documentations or records of culture can be repeatedly scrutinized, analyzed and studied, even in the light of changing research aims. Furthermore, audio-visual representations facilitate access to performative practices for humanity at large, as digital representations can be accessed from all over the world. If granted access to the audio-visual representations, international students and scholars can enjoy the opportunity to conduct research on Kutiyattam culture and performance practice, even from abroad.

4.2.2.6 Concluding remarks

In sum, this section has stressed the diverse and manifold practices by which audio-visual representations are consumed on a micro level by members of the Kutiyattam community. In this context, consumption refers to the process of appropriation and utilization of audio-visual representations in everyday life. Kutiyattam institutions as well as individual artists and scholars, who utilize materials mainly on a local level, appropriate and integrate representations into their everyday practices. Utilization hereby relates to the safeguarding of Kutiyattam in a number of aspects, encompassing transmission, dissemination and promotion, as well as education and research. Representations furthermore facilitate study, artistic refinement and practices of memorization. Referring to the documentation of cultural practices by means of modern technologies and their utilization, Graham (2009, p. 195) differentiates between “vertical transmission” and “horizontal transmission” of cultural practices and expressions: the former refers to the transmission of culture across generations within a local community; and the latter to transmission across cultural space, involving the projection of local culture to new audiences. For both purposes, Kutiyattam artists and stakeholders consider audio-visual representations to be valuable tools. Indeed, artists from all Kutiyattam institutions emphasize the benefits of using audio-visual representations for the sake of transmission, study and dissemination. However, it is also emphasized that

³⁴⁵ Personal interviews with M.P.S. Namboodiri, op. cit.; and K.V. Namboodiripad, February 28, 2012.

documentation can only be an additional means supporting efforts in transmission and study, as opposed to the prime means. They stress that in the initial and primary stages students need to learn via mimesis, face-to-face interaction and continuous repetition, with the body being the sole medium. Only in advanced stages of learning can audio-visual documentations be used as additional secondary sources for knowledge acquisition. Then again, based on the meaning decoded and the information derived, further personal consultation with gurus and experts needs to take place, including to prevent simple copying of information exposed in the recordings. Thus, the consumption of audio-visual representation always needs to be firmly integrated within larger institutionalized structures of teaching and learning.

Following insight gained during fieldwork, it can be argued that in particular traditional Gurukulams, who have lately become institutionalized, integrated audio-visual representations firmly in their study routines, while governmental institutions like KKM, despite having strong proponents of consumption among its lecturers and affiliates, still largely negate the issue. This discrepancy might be due to a number of reasons. First, Gurukulams are led by artists who know about the needs of co-artists and students, rather than by bureaucrats. Second, Gurukulams were able to accumulate audio-visual representations of the performance practice of their major gurus, while on the other hand only very limited visual material on Painkulam R. Chakyar's practice exists at KKM. Thus, Gurukulams have the respective source materials to work with and in aiming to preserve the style of their gurus and discourage diversions provide frequent interaction with the media and thereby continuous reference possibilities. Third, Gurukulams, and particularly Mani Gurukulam, in fact need to engage audio-visual documentations as study materials to secure continuity in repertoire transmission. In fact, today, artists all over Kerala increasingly engage video professionals to record performances by masters and co-artists, as well as their own performances. In particular, the younger and middle-aged generation of artists frequently utilize recordings for the improvement of their own artistic practice, for study and refinement. They stress that by means of audio-visual representations, they can engage with performance practice on a solitary basis, unmediated by elders. They highlight that representations provide new information to them, offering tools for self-reflection and facilitating remembrance. With regards to the latter, it should be noted that a number of young artists face insecurities in relation to artistic practice. Artists value representations as additional memory aids, as tools enabling the removal of doubts and the recapitulation of repertoire. In this context, specifically modern portable technologies are used for instant and on-the-spot memorization practices prior to performance. Moreover, artists further emphasize a gap in reference

opportunities needed for their artistic development. Given that relevant knowledge for improvisation needs to be acquired by means of revisiting the performances of old masters and contemporary gurus, audio-visual representations are frequently consulted, in some case providing the only means to engage with traditional performance practice. However, again, only advanced students can profit from the materials given that representations, particularly those circulated via the Internet, also disseminate distortions in performance practice, necessitating artists' capacity to distinguish between valuable and valueless recordings.

Besides these cases of "vertical transmission" whereby representations directly influence the performance practice of individual artists, audio-visual representations are also consumed on a horizontal level. They provide easy means for rapid and widespread dissemination of the art, enable individual and collective promotion on a local, regional, national and international level, enhance publicity and thus market value and status and foster commercial gains. Audio-visual representations enable new contexts of performance consumption and allow new and remote audiences access to Kutiyattam. Being consumed by the common public, audio-visual representations facilitate attraction to the art, generating awareness, interest and respect. Indeed, they immensely contribute to the popularization of the art and potentially lead to an increase in audience for the art. Moreover, audio-visual representations situate Kutiyattam within public discourse and public space and signify it as relevant and meaningful for larger society. They create a bond between a traditional, elite, rather exclusive art form and contemporary modern society. Thus, they not only mediate information and facilitate encounter with new audiences, but also foster a transformation of Kutiyattam culture per se. Given that future audience and societal relevance is a substantial element of artistic practice, audio-visual representations ultimately also add to the viability of the art. In addition, artists can also accumulate financial benefits through the commodification of artistic practice by way of exposing the art for visual representation or trading with representations of the art.

Finally, audio-visual representations are also consumed in the context of education and research. They are utilized as educational materials in academic institutions, schools, colleges and universities, both within India and beyond. They serve demonstration and illustration purposes in classrooms, in showrooms at Gurukulams and Kutiyattam institutions and at international academic events. They raise awareness, foster understanding and appreciation of the art with an audience ranging from uninitiated pupils and tourists to students and scholars in the art. They serve a variety of research interests and can be used as sources of analysis. As digitized representations cover a variety of information and can transcend time and local space, they can be scrutinized repetitively, independently and from all over the world.

4.3 Challenges of audio-visual representation

Exercising the safeguarding and preservation of ICH via recording, documentation, digitization and archiving practices also involves a number of challenges. As mentioned above, audio-visual representations produced by local, regional, national or international agents generate information, which is disseminated again at local, regional, national and global levels, leaving an impact on knowledge, identity and memory and in turn influencing local practices. Therefore, artists are concerned about the proper representation of their artistic practice and tradition in film and other media used for dissemination, archiving and promotion. Representations are thoroughly scrutinized by members of practicing communities regarding the information disseminated, the persons highlighted and promoted, as well as in terms of their possible utilization. Moreover, the integrity of artistic practice and artistic presentation is also a matter of great concern. The underlying aims and objectives of media products are investigated and need to stay in accordance with conventions, quality standards and value systems.

In the case of Kutiyattam Sanskrit theatre, Kutiyattam artists, scholars and stakeholders identify numerous areas of conflict. The major fields of concerns have been: 1. the intrusion of modern aspects and technologies into traditional Kutiyattam practices and their impacts on presentation style and experience of the art; 2. issues of the representativeness and content of audio-visual representations, stressing the artistic quality and intellectual accurateness of displayed information; 3. issues of authority and control, highlighting power-relations in production processes and beyond; 4. concerns regarding dominant narratives and codes in audio-visual representations, leading to a potential limitation and freezing, homogenization and stereotypification of a complex, multilayered, dynamic and living practice; 5. concerns regarding knowledge and archiving, emphasizing issues of accessibility, dissemination and utilization; and 6. concerns regarding misuse and protection, touching upon issues of intellectual property, copyright and ownership.

The following sections attend to the aforementioned fields of concern in greater detail.

4.3.1 Challenge 1: Representation and traditional practice

4.3.1.1 *Sensual immersion versus partiality of experience*

A certain drawback of audio-visual media is its limited possibility to represent or provoke a Kutiyattam experience. Being two-dimensional, audio-visual media limits the experience of time and space. It minimizes physical engagement, psychological reactions, feelings and thus

the experience of the viewer. Therefore, audio-visual representations of Kutiyattam never accurately and truthfully mirror, but rather merely represent partial elements of the event of performance. This is due to a number of reasons:

First, the commitment to time, space and sound is drastically reduced. It is important to note that the audience is also part of a live performance. The audience assembles in the night and sits for hours without interruption. Naturally, the spectator becomes physically fatigued and attention and concentration within the timeframe of performance fluctuates accordingly. This fluctuation gives rise to physical surrender, a loss of control, enabling moments of direct and intimate interaction with the art. For example, at the moment when the audience becomes drowsy and sleepy during midnight or early in the morning, the *Mizhavu* play is often at its peak, it is intrusive, unbearably loud and clashing on the senses and the body. Moreover, the sound is all-encompassing. The viewer is physically completely exposed, becomes affected and needs to surrender in order to enjoy. Furthermore, the climate plays a role, the location of performance, including the half-open space, into which wind, heat, humidity and animals intrude, the gathering per se and the relationship developed between co-viewers.

On the other hand, audio-visual representations either balance sound effects or the technology leaves it to the spectator to reduce the sound during vociferous, terrific portions of the play when the drums are beaten with high speed and increase the sound during peaceful and calm portions. The viewer thus gains a control over the soundscapes that he or she lacks during live performances. Furthermore, recordings can be watched at any time of the day and for any temporal duration. They can be repeatedly stopped and restarted and parts can be even skipped. Thus, the viewer gains control even over temporal dimensions. Moreover, the environmental atmosphere cannot engage in a direct communication with the audience. C.K. Jayanthi (personal interview, April 22, 2012) highlights that the audience is “detached” and stresses that while audio-visual media are able to generate two or sometimes even three dimensions, one additional dimension of interaction, information and exchange, “mind-to-mind-conversation is missing in audio-visual” representations, as eye contacts between artist and spectator are not facilitated. Jayanthi (ibid.) further points out that everything that comes into film is no longer alive and therefore cannot be felt. Due to this reason, audio-visual representations of Kutiyattam can never replace or truthfully stand for participation in an actual live performance. V. Kaladharan (personal interview, March 6, 2012) emphasizes that virtual frames have “no radiance. You just don’t feel anything, there is no atmosphere in it”, no ambience, “you don’t see the truth in the performance, you see only a shadow of the truth”. The truth here relates to intellectual, physical and emotional experience and

interactivity, to “concrete eye-contacts between the audience and the performer” (ibid.) and the engagement of all the senses, besides hearing and sight also including touch and smell. K.V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, February 28, 2012) also points to losses that occur in the process of mediatization of performance. He stresses that through the visual medium, “the aura” of the performance is lost: “You cannot see how good the artist was in the mental mood. It can be a perfect performance in technical ways but the mental setup you cannot see in a TV, you cannot feel” (ibid.). This feeling cannot be transmitted via modern technologies; rather it has to be experienced live.

Furthermore, conventions of contemporary media, video or TV demand edition, a certain pace of new information being released, the zooming to specific elements and, last but not least, technical perfection. Media representations are tailored products, with performances usually conducted perfectly, while mistakes and flaws are erased, despite playing a role during live performances and audience-performer interaction. Often-standardized audio-visual representation clearly lacks the capacity to transmit the experience of participating in an event, the emotions and feelings that participation triggers or generates. The technology as well as standards and conventions of filmmaking and reception shape the representation of performance. This (re)shaping in fact compromises the ability to transmit the message of a live performance.

In fact, “recording processes, whatever form they take (written, audio, audio-visual) extract or decontextualize instances of performance from the rich and dynamic social situations in which they occur” (Graham, 2009, p. 188). Through decontextualization, elements such as duration, sound intensity, darkness, the intrusion of nature in the form of animals or wind are removed, even though they confer meaning to the local audience as well as the artists. Therefore, recordings do not fully capture a performance and its ambience; they are not truthful copies or reflections of the event. They are incapable of mirroring the actual experience of personal, temporal and environmental interaction that occurs during a live performance. Indeed, audio-visual representations are always limited and limiting.³⁴⁶ The objective of documentation via audio-visual technologies can never be total replication or total transmission. K.V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, February 28, 2012) stresses that a focus lies on the “documentation of the physical” attributes. Thus, audio-visual products are extracts from the event, they de-contextualize and single out particular features of the event to re-use and re-contextualize them for other purposes, whereby they function as tools.

³⁴⁶ See also Graham (2009).

4.3.1.2 “The world of your own” versus demonstration and spectacle

V. Kaladharan (personal interview, March 6, 2012) points to the limitations of audio-visual recordings for teaching purposes, stressing that students feel detached from what they see; they do not “get into it”, but rather regard it as “an alienated spectacle”. He elaborates that the actual “aura” of the classroom would become compromised, as students “transform themselves the moment they step into the classroom” (ibid.) in the presence of a guru. Classroom encounter is a cultural construct. Students prepare themselves for this encounter and once the guru and student share the class, they pass over into a “world of their own” (ibid.). The teacher and student meet in an imaginal space, wherein mind-to-mind communication takes place. Kaladharan further stresses that this sort of teaching is already fading away, while the usage of technological devices would further facilitate its dissolution. He stresses that media as teaching tools focus on a “non-emotional transmission of ideas” (ibid.). Thus, through the use of audio-visual media, the process of teaching and the experience of learning are de-personalized and de-emotionalized.

Performance practice in general is undergoing fast transformation at present. Rather than an artist ‘being’ on stage, artists are increasingly instructed to ‘perform’ on stage, to cater to an audience, to the camera eye, to tourists. Before, G. Venu (personal interview, op. cit) adds, the artist was “in another world”. He or she focused on the lamp, not on the people sitting in the front. “You create a world of your own” (ibid.). Venu also elaborates that Kutiyattam performance space is conceptualized in this manner, with two sides, the left and the right, being kept empty. Choreographies take these sides into consideration; portions are displayed towards all the sides, even those that are empty. This dimension, he adds, is very essential for the art. “The whole idea is that if you are on stage you are not performing, you are being there” (ibid.). In this context, Venu argues that unnecessary performances spoil the attitude of the performer. It infects the art with a “virus of demonstration”, which is most dangerous as the art dilutes to a form of “showing” (ibid.). Performances are explained in English, they might even be conducted in English in the future and “teaching itself is becoming a thing to see and watch” (ibid.). For example, since 2003, as part of a cultural tourism project undertaken by the Department of Tourism of the government of Kerala in collaboration with KKM, national and international tourists can pay some fees for “serious entertainment” (<http://www.kalamandalam.org/culturaltourism.asp>). They are allowed to enter the campus and watch lectures in the various art disciplines. By doing so, Venu laments that teaching itself has been partially transformed to become “showing off” (ibid.). S. Gopalakrishnan (personal interview, op. cit.) also argues that publicity as well as exposition to the media

fosters a “conditioning of the actor” and the students, who slightly adjust their style and interpretation into a form of “playing to the gallery”. Therefore, V. Kaladharan (personal interview, March 6, 2012) opposes frequently-made audio-visual recordings as they (re)generate, push and satisfy the ego of the performers and thus manipulate artistic expression. Ammannur M. Chakyar’s brother also articulated this concern and did not accept the intrusion of the media into his private sphere, the family or his performance practice.³⁴⁷

4.3.1.3 Distortions in presentation and diversion of attention

Beyond limitations of audio-visual recordings in terms of preservation and transmission, modern stage conventions, which are heavily grounded in the use and application of modern technologies, are also criticized. Artists and spectators voice concerns regarding the utilization of modern technologies on stage, leading to distortions in presentation, diversion of attention and a flattening of performance experience. Artists, filmmakers and connoisseurs stress that by use of limited light sources, as stipulated by traditional Kutiyattam stage conventions, the viewer is not distracted by other illuminated objects or persons on and off the stage, but rather is encouraged to focus and solely concentrate on the enlightened parts of the character on stage.³⁴⁸ This concentration is felt by the performers and provokes mutual interplay and encouragement which again facilitates the generation of “aura”. Today, even though most Kutiyattam artists articulate a disagreement in terms of aesthetics, they give concessions to the requirements of the modern audience and adjust to the utilization of modern technologies on stage. However, they still criticize that stage lights dilute the original color of facial make-up and costumes, that they produce additional shades that conceal other elements and create unwanted reflections, for example, in costume-articles.³⁴⁹ Furthermore, spotlights influence the well-being of the artists on stage and irritate physical expression, given that exposure generates bodily heat and leads to perspiration. Heat and perspiration again slightly manipulate the adequate display of emotions (*bhavas*).³⁵⁰ Additionally, the equal and impartial illumination of all elements on stage, the costume and physics of the characters, background and surrounding spaces, encourages the distraction of attention and boredom within the audience, which is unwanted by both the performers and spectators.

³⁴⁷ R. Chakyar, personal interview, op. cit.

³⁴⁸ Personal interviews with A. Gopalakrishnan, op. cit.; and H. Nambiar, April 22, 2012.

³⁴⁹ H. Nambiar, personal interview, April 22, 2012.

³⁵⁰ Perspiration is consciously produced when corresponding to the feelings of the character displayed; it does not fit all situations.

4.3.1.4 Traditional documentation methods versus modern technologies

Even though current research and preservation projects generally focus on the use of modern technologies in the preservation of ICH, the traditionally exercised form of archiving and documentation, which proved sustainable over centuries, was intangible, given that knowledge and information were stored in the mind and transmitted through mind-to-mind interaction. G. Venu (personal interview, op. cit.) accentuates that every art form that has survived more than a century must have its own system and form of preservation, otherwise it would not have survived. This traditional system of preservation and documentation needs to be looked upon, acknowledged, utilized and encouraged, including by the international community.³⁵¹ Furthermore, private and social archiving has always existed. However, preservation was not exercised by the use of modern technology but rather via palm leaf manuscripts and other written forms of notation, which have been repeatedly rewritten to preserve them across time.³⁵² Kutiyattam has its own conventions of preservation, namely through oral transmission, repetition and memorization. In this context, V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, April 20, 2012) accentuates that “even memory is an archive”. N. Paniker (personal interview, April 1, 2012) also argues that the transmission of the art from teacher to student is the most important method of documentation. She emphasizes that

certain things only from one mind to another mind you can pass. That camera cannot do it. As an artist I know this is only when you sit with a teacher and understand him, the way he lives and the way he dances and the way he expresses things. You can teach the art through media but not the 100% can come, for that you need the heart.

Modern media and technologies are unable to preserve all aspects of the art form. Thus, modern documentation facilities should not be allowed to replace *Guru-shishya* transmission and the process of personal disclosures of knowledge by the guru himself.

4.3.1.5 New dependencies and pressures

With the increasing use of audio-visual technologies, new forms of dependency³⁵³ as well as financial and psychological pressures are generated. Artists feel the need to audio-visually

³⁵¹ This traditional system includes manuscripts as well as notations. Venu has collected 2,000 hand-gestures (*mudras*) used in Kutiyattam, *Kathakali* and *Mohiniyattam*. He developed a system of notation, which is published in *Malayalam* and widely utilized in particular by students practicing *Mohiniyattam* and *Kathakali*. Hereby, it serves as an instant and ready-at-hand reference work, which can be easily accessed as no further technical equipment is needed (ibid.; Venu, 2012).

³⁵² Personal interviews with V. Namboodiripad, April 20, 2012; and N. Paniker, op. cit.

³⁵³ See also Graham (2009).

document unique performances for the sake of preservation.³⁵⁴ Indeed, young artists increasingly consider preservation by audio-visual means to be their responsibility; a responsibility with respect to the future generations of artists and also with respect to the living artists, whose knowledge might partially fade or be lost if it is not recorded and preserved. As every performance by a master artist is unique, a huge number of performances by masters are recorded nowadays. However, due to a lack of technical equipment and know how, artists generally need to hire external videographers for documentation. Moreover, in most cases, artists do not have adequate financial resources to cover the expenses and consequently they run into debt. Therefore, actual preservation practice leads to financial burdens and concerns.³⁵⁵

In the light of documentation aims, new psychological pressures and tensions also arise. Some artists feel in charge of preserving the unique knowledge of their elder family members. At the same time, they lack capacities and feel helpless when they cannot measure up to their own expectations. Admitting the pressure that members of traditional families in particular face, one artist provides a brief insight into challenges and describes his anxieties: “I cried several times because of the preservation. Because if my father dies, then [it] is the ending of his knowledge!” Financial constrain limits artists in conducting documentations, even though they are aware of the benefits. This awareness, the knowledge concerning what would be necessary to preserve or promote the art and the inability to undertake the necessary steps is also a burden to the artist and stimulates negative feelings.

4.3.1.6 Concluding remarks

In sum, intangible cultural practices and interactivities are objectified and made tangible through audio-visual representation. In the process of tangibilization, a number of interpersonal relations and qualities attached to artistic practice, experience and transmission are sidelined. Intangible practices are de-contextualized, de-emotionalized and partially de-sensualized, as some aspects related to time, space and the environment as well as sensual, physical, mental and cognitive interaction are lost within the process of tangibilization and cannot be re-evoked in the reception of the film. Indeed, crucial intangible elements of Kutiyattam culture (performance culture and transmission culture) such as face-to-face interaction, mind-to-mind communication and physical exposure cannot enter Kutiyattam

³⁵⁴ See subchapter 4.2 of this thesis.

³⁵⁵ For example, an artist recalls that only in 2012 did he have the financial means to repay the debt accumulated two years previously for the recording of a 31-day Kutiyattam performance.

documentation as they cannot be manifested in tangible products. In this context, it should be noted that intangible elements are not necessarily disconnected from the tangible, given that sensual, emotional and cognitive activities also rely on physical entities like the body, while location, climate and space are also physically and materially grounded; rather, intangible elements are termed intangible here as the main aspect lies in orientation, in inter-relation, inter-action and inter-connection. These intangible aspects are multidimensional and relate to a density of nexuses and processes that generate ‘art’. Most importantly, they are not controlled or generated by individuals but rather manifest themselves in a joint effort between individuals, culture and context. Thus, tangible products that cut off major elements of culture and context miss important intangible dimensions of the intangible cultural practice. They allow the viewer, normally being part of the event, to step out of the event, to objectify the art and abstract, channel and control his or her own involvement with the art in accordance with new demands that lead astray from traditional artistic practice and lend themselves to modern realms of product-oriented preservation and presentation. This abstraction negates a full immersion into the art, which is a precondition for a Kutiyattam student and practitioner. Finally, as further limitations, the generation of new dependencies and pressures as well as the distortions and distractions generated by usage of modern technologies on stage are given notice. Consequently, the adequate extent of recording and documentation is a matter of debate and some members of the Kutiyattam community do not regard further recording and utilization of materials as beneficial to the art and the artist, but rather consider them to be distracting³⁵⁶ and potentially leading to ill effects.³⁵⁷ Instead, face-to-face interactions between student and teacher as well as between performer and spectator are advocated. Moreover, attention to traditional methods of transmission and documentation is recommended, even though only a very selected few with continuous access to the masters will benefit in this process. Nonetheless, fundamental objections regarding the production and use of audio-visual representations are only emphasized by a handful of artists and stakeholders, while the majority of artists, stakeholders and connoisseurs articulate their approval of audio-visual documentation and stress that further representations need to be produced and disseminated. However, a high number of critiques and recommendations for refinement in the production processes and content of filmic representations are also given among proponents of audio-visual representation. Accordingly, these are discussed in further detail in the following section.

³⁵⁶ Personal interviews with R. Iyer, op. cit.; and G. Venu, op. cit.

³⁵⁷ C.K. Jayanthi, personal interview, April 22, 2012.

4.3.2 Challenge 2: Representation, production and power

Artists and stakeholders are conscious of the fact that filmic representations remain as a lasting source of knowledge generation and transmission within and beyond the actual community of Kutiyattam practitioners and connoisseurs. Artists are also aware of the impact of circulation of representations. They closely assess films regarding information, quality and potential usages. However, in a number of cases, artists do not agree with audio-visual representations of their traditional practice and the ways in which they are produced. Artists point to professional codes that construct representations not correlating with their cultural sets of meaning-making and stress that these codes influence socio-cultural relations at the set and condition artistic practice and representation. Artists further articulate irritation regarding the aims and objectives of representation, voice concerns addressing matters of utility and content of representations and finally provoke thought on the adequate extent of documentation.

4.3.2.1 Kutiyattam conventions versus film conventions

By obeying conventions of conservative shooting styles and manners of working at professional film sets, the conventions of artistic practice are marginalized.³⁵⁸ This marginalization as well as the lack of respect and attention given to the art and the artist leads to a decrease in expression of artistic quality and thus to shortcomings in representation. Moreover, the allocation of funds in favor of costly equipment rather than high-class artists leads to an increase in international professional usage and the potential dissemination of materials, while also hazarding further loss in artistic quality exposed and preserved. In this regard, artists and connoisseurs highlight that documentation should always be conducted with the best artists available. There is no need to document ordinary artists or those who have reached a medium stage in quality, as these documentations would leave a negative impression with viewers and even provide a wrong example when materials are used by students for study, research and revitalization purposes.³⁵⁹ However, as Indu G. (personal interview, op. cit.) adds, with the funding provided by the Indian government and UNESCO, agencies are documenting Kutiyattam without knowing anything about the artistic practice, the particularities of the play or the repertoires and specifications of the artists. She stresses

³⁵⁸ By conservative documentary filmmaking, production methodologies are meant that do not give voice and space to people represented in the film and do not integrate methods of participatory film, observational film and cinema vérité. Conservative filmmaking speaks on and about people rather than with people. See also Chapter 2.

³⁵⁹ Personal interviews with G. Venu, op. cit; and R. Iyer, op. cit.

that “they don’t know which artists do roles best and will choose the second level, third level, sometimes fourth level artists” for the recordings (ibid.). As funds are often allocated to equipment and professional film teams, costs in the engagement of artists are often cut. Consequently, in some cases, artists were invited to represent the art, even so they were unable to showcase higher standard artistic practice. Referring to the low standard in quality displayed in audio-visual representations, Indu G. laments that “even without the basic things of Kutiyattam they have documented” (ibid.). K. Sangeet (personal interview, op. cit.) also accentuates that the majority of performances in filmic representations are poor in quality and leave a wrong impression concerning the artists’ ability. Besides the individual artistic capabilities of artists, reasons for the display of performances with poor artistic quality are numerous and structurally conditioned by matters related to film production.

First, professional production situations do not generate the necessary atmosphere to evoke inner knowledge, memory and artistic perfection. This is due to the fact that major attention during professional productions is placed on filming processes rather than artistic presentation and knowledge exposed. A huge number of film professionals gather, while most of them show no interest regarding Kutiyattam and the actual performance, being rather concerned with technical matters, logistics, lighting or sound. Therefore, it is unlikely for Kutiyattam artists, who are not experienced in displaying or enacting their knowledge and personalities off the theatrical stage and in the public sphere, and even lesser experienced in performing for a camera, to expose subtle, deep and intricate meanings of the art in a situation set by standards of a production set. H. Nambiar (personal interview, March 10, 2012) remarks that “artists know about the performance only not about conveying” to outsiders. Artists are unable to overcome the situational context of the production set and enact performance as if it happened under more favorable circumstances. Rather, the situational context “conditions their mind” and artists are “playing to that moment” (S. Gopalakrishnan, personal interview, op. cit.). “That’s a disadvantage”, as overall “the performance will be more artificial than in a spontaneous performance” in a live setting (ibid.).

Second, during production time-pressures, stress and hierarchies in production settings dominate the scene, which are unusual to artists and generate irritation. Artists complain that they are not always treated with the necessary respect and interest in the art. An actress criticizes that due to vast differences between artists and media professionals regarding remuneration and income, the latter consider themselves to stand socially above the artists.³⁶⁰ She explains: “They are coming, they are commanding the artists. They are the boss, they are

³⁶⁰ Name omitted for confidentiality reasons.

the higher level people and the artists are only the tools”. She stresses that the disrespectful interaction of technicians with gurus and stalwarts of the art particularly occurred during shootings with Indian television crews and a number of “artists, especially the senior persons, have been hurt during the shooting”. In this context, a *Mizhavu* artist also recalls being scolded by media professionals when he dared to offer advice to sound technicians regarding the musical arrangement in Kutiyattam and the adequate way to place microphones in accordance with that. S. Gopalakrishnan (personal interview, op. cit.) also points out that “impersonal” film sets, with rules and regulations of the film industry dominating the scene, condition the artists in a negative way and they are “not playing fully to their extent”.

Third, during most of the professionally produced representations artists need to wait fully costumed for hours until the crew and technical settings are ready, before they can start the performance. M. Madhu and Indu G. (personal interview, op. cit.) explain that under such conditions, “the artist is totally upset. Body pains and frustrations come and with all those things the artists cannot do the best performance”. They emphasize that “performance comes from the mind” and thus the artist needs to undertake a “mental preparation”, which is achieved via various activities during the process of make-up and costuming (ibid.). Via these ritualized processes, the artist to a certain extent identifies with the character that he or she is going to represent (ibid.). This mental make-up is crucial for the artist’s concentration, which in turn affects his or her ability to perform. At film sets, where artists have to wait fully costumed until technical settings are ready, before subsequently facing an uninterested audience that does not provide further stimuli, this mental state is lost even before shooting and can hardly be recovered during performance. In such a situation, the artist is rather displaying and representing/illustrating performance rather than developing performance from within his or her mind. In this context, Indu G. highlights that “they are documenting the worst performances of the good artists”, while M. Madhu comes to the conclusion that, “real performance, the real energy of the actor or actress” cannot be documented by way of conventional filming and its respective priorities (ibid.).

Fourth, besides interference with Kutiyattam conventions related to the performance preparation, performance context and attitudes of the audience, interference with stage conventions also influences the mood of the artist and leads to distortions in the art exposed. K.V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, March 25, 2012) emphasizes that Kutiyattam has its own conventions of presentation, which need to be respected. For example, performing only a few minutes of a whole performance is dissatisfying for the artists, who have spent years learning the art. Performing such instant presentations without indulging in interaction

with the audience, and thus without receiving any positive feedback, “is painful for the artist” (K. Krishnendu, personal interview, April 21, 2012). The dignity of the art and the artist is affected and violated as the art does not actually figure, and is neither appreciated nor even sought in the process of filming. Thus, senior artists in particular do not appreciate interruptions in performance, as well as frequent repetitions of scenes. Moreover, connoisseurs highlight that Kutiyattam should be represented without the originality of the art being lost. For example, if the artists are asked to change positions on stage, or if the lamp is removed from the stage for a long shot perspective, it is a misrepresentation of the art and a number of artists would face difficulties in obeying such instructions.³⁶¹

The following part provides a few samples that artists have repeatedly referred to in order to underline their arguments:

First, the documentary film *Kutiyattam* (2003), directed by A. Gopalakrishnan for the candidature file for UNESCO, was particularly strongly criticized as expectations were high and the film was meant to represent the art to the world. Artists articulate their disapproval that the film was conducted in a hasty manner and remains at the surface level of Kutiyattam, exposing merely a number of performance scenes and basic historic information. Artists stress that the film did not represent all the major gurus, artists or Gurukulams and that it was shot under immense time pressure, in only a few days. Fully costumed artists at the different sets had to wait for hours until the director and technicians started filming and allowed the assembled artists to perform. Moreover, social hierarchies negatively pervaded respect and interest in interactions with artists. Consequently, the moods of the artists became affected and performances were not up to the usual standards.³⁶² In effect, one artist articulates: “I don’t think *Kutiyattam* has anything to offer and it was in anyway helpful to Kutiyattam or the Kutiyattam artists. I even doubt if he really needed to make such a documentary”. He stresses that the film is about, not on or for, the art and the artists. Even though the film is perfect in filmic standards, it was neither able to document high-class artistic performance nor the essence of the art. Thus, according to artists, it does not have the quality to be preserved and transmitted from generation to generation. Another artist also articulates a devastating opinion on the film, highlighting that it is neither representative nor exposes high quality performance, and thus he considers the film to be a “waste of money, time and energy”.³⁶³

³⁶¹ K.V. Namboodiripad, personal interview, March 25, 2012.

³⁶² Names omitted for confidentiality reasons. Simultaneously, several artists express deep respect for the director, who himself respects the artists and Kutiyattam but was unable to positively manipulate the conventions of film shooting or the behavior of crew members at the set.

³⁶³ Positive criticisms have also been voiced regarding the film. However, as they do not necessarily touch upon the artistic quality and other issues mentioned in this section, they are not referred to here. See subchapter 4.2.

Second, M. Madhu further comments on the Kutiyattam documentation project by Kalady University, which he coordinated. For this project, 75 hours of Kutiyattam performance were documented. However, due to financial restrictions and a high camera rent, shooting was only undertaken in a few (three to four) days. Consequently, artists had to line up and perform continuously for up to eighteen hours a day. Madhu (personal interview, op. cit.) argues that artists are unable to mentally prepare in such an uncommon technology-driven situation, and thus the performances lack intensity and depth. He emphasizes that “artists can’t perform like this, some preparation in their mind is needed” (ibid.).

Third, the documentaries executed by Doordarshan, the major governmental broadcasting channel, do not display the standard quality of the artists represented. For example, the shootings of guru Ammannur’s performances were conducted in a professional studio with the use of heavy light equipment and other technological tools. According to an artist, who was present at the recording time, merely 1% of the artist’s capacities and abilities were captured in the recording, due to the setting, context and timing.³⁶⁴

Fourth, referring to the well acclaimed and nationally awarded locally produced documentary, *Pakarnnattam - Ammannur the actor (1995)* by M.R. Rajan, an artist again remarks: “I saw better performances than this”.³⁶⁵ He further highlights that time and climate is of crucial importance for artistic quality and elaborates that for a local production “the crew came in a very awkward time, at 11 o’clock in the morning. By the time Ammannur Madhava Chakyar dressed up it was much later, very hot. [Thus,] he was not at all near to the perfection in his standard, so for me I don’t want to see it” (ibid.).

It should be noted that as films are archived and will not only be used by researchers and interested art lovers, but also by the future community of artists, mid- and low-level artistic documentation can be potentially misleading. In this context, filmmaker A. Gopalakrishnan (personal interview, op. cit.) remarks that care needs to be taken in the production of audio-visual representations. Realizing deficiencies in filmic representations, he highlights that filmmakers and producers are often unaware of the multiple ways in which the films are used and how they influence the art. He stresses that “people who contract them [filmmakers] for doing this and people who are undertaking the project don’t realize that their work is going to do a lot of harm” and highlights “it can be disastrous. If you don’t do it properly, the risks and disadvantages are higher than the benefits” (ibid.). Giving advice on good practice, G. Venu (personal interview, op. cit.) articulates that the “main aspect must be the artist. The artist’s

³⁶⁴ Name omitted for confidentiality reasons.

³⁶⁵ Name omitted for confidentiality reasons.

mood must be kept, not the documentary expert's mood". The artist should be given central importance and treated with respect, as he is the holder of ICH.³⁶⁶ Moreover, the proper time for performance needs to be given, in terms of the actual duration of the play and time in the day when the performance is recorded.³⁶⁷

Furthermore, an approach to the audio-visual representation of Kutiyattam that does not stage the art but rather approaches it in its accustomed cultural setting can be helpful. A yet unedited and unpublished documentation of Ammannur M. Chakyar³⁶⁸ shot by an Italian crew in 1979 can stand as an example here. G. Venu (personal interview, op. cit.) praises this audio-visual representation as the best existing recording of Chakyar's performance. Shooting was conducted in a very informal way, with only a very small crew comprising a handful of people. The performance was undertaken at the usual time and the camera simply observed. The filmmakers neither interrupted performance, nor were any additional artificial lights used. Another reason for the perfectionism of this documentation, in the eyes of Venu, was that guru Ammannur was unaware of the camera, of the process of filmmaking and what it entails. He only knew his friend Dr. K. N. Pisharoti, who gave the instructions during the filming and whom he trusted very much, given that he was a great scholar and promoter of Kutiyattam. Consequently, Ammannur felt very comfortable and did not bother to play a role, to act and perform for the sake of the camera being there (ibid.). Thus, the major reasons for its success include the unobtrusiveness of camera, technology and team, the predominance of art and interest in art, and thus a reciprocal relation between spectators and artist, as well as the respective comfortability of the artist with the situation.³⁶⁹

In sum, production conditions of conventional documentary film, power-relations at the set as well as stress on technical infrastructure and operation generate a technology-driven, time- and outcome-pressured situation, which in turn conditions performances and answers to raised questions. Experts and connoisseurs argue that the majority of audio-visual recordings only show a slice of actual performance capabilities. Thus, they only partially convey the complex aesthetic refinement of the art, as well as individual artistic skills and mastery. M. Madhu (personal interview, op. cit.) even emphasizes that "yet no good performance has been documented" and documentations and documentary films so far do not represent the "actual

³⁶⁶ H. Nambiar, personal interview, April 22, 2012.

³⁶⁷ In this context, G. Venu (personal interview, op. cit.) mentions that some of the documentations undertaken in professional studios in Delhi are excellent, since they were made during the right time and with the right mood.

³⁶⁸ The film has not yet been edited and released and only rough material exists that is currently sound synchronized and edited in collaboration with a university in Rome (G. Venu, personal interview, op. cit.).

³⁶⁹ Moreover, the shooting was done without pressures. Recordings were not made inside the *Kuttampalam* at Irinjalakuda, since shooting was still restricted in the late-1970s. Instead, it was conducted in the *Uttupura*, the dining hall of the same temple.

art”. Madhu further recommends that in order to represent a “real performance”, shooting must occur within the actual socio-cultural setting of the art and during a life performance, rather than on a shooting set (ibid.).

4.3.2.2 New visual codes, levels of cooperation and utilization

Artists regret that most films made on Kutiyattam at present are meant for archiving or promotion purposes and thus are not intended for direct and immediate utilization by the majority of artists. In particular, externally produced documentaries and documentations undertaken by outsiders of the practice from India and abroad do not reflect the needs of the Kutiyattam community. Thus, external documentaries are limited regarding preservation and utilization by the source communities. K. Krishnendu (personal interview, April 21, 2012) remarks that due to the fact that documentaries focus on narration and general description rather than performance practice or scholarly insights, she “never got any new knowledge”; moreover, despite five to ten minute performance “capsules” being integrated into the film, the displayed portions are generally highly edited and thus “incomplete”. Furthermore, film directors and technical operators do not know what is happening on stage and thus in many cases a wrong focus is given in terms of selected artists and scenes, of recorded parts and their actual importance within the play, as well as light and sound arrangements.³⁷⁰ Moreover, meaning is obstructed via editing in a number of cases. In this context, meaning refers to the meaning of the enacted portions of the *Sanskrit* play, as well as the respective artistic elaborations and interpretations, and thus to text and artistry. For example, during scenes that are relevant to artists and connoisseurs as intricate facial expressions, *abhinaya*, and emotional states are exposed by the characters on stage, external directors often show other elements such as music instruments or stage and costume details. This form of editing, uninspired by knowledge on Kutiyattam, pervades the elaborate acting method in Kutiyattam and diminishes perfection achieved within it. Thus, for most artists, audio-visual representations of Kutiyattam performances do injustice to the performance and the deeper significance embodied in it, as, being heavily edited, they cut off or fail to display the meanings that are possibly generated within the actual performance and contextual social situation. Consequently, artists and connoisseurs seeing the edited parts often fail to perceive any relevant meaning in the recordings. As a result, G. Venu (personal interview, op. cit.) stresses that documentaries and edited films “are not for us, they are for the ordinary people,

³⁷⁰ Personal interviews with A. Gopalakrishnan, op. cit.; M. Madhu op. cit.; and K.V. Namboodiripad, op. cit.

not for the performing community”; the performing community will “gain nothing”, besides having cultural assets available that they can refer to and distribute to interested people. In a similar way, K. Rajeev (personal interview, op. cit.) accentuates that 90% of the films executed so far are neither useful to the genuine and advanced artist nor to the art itself, given that the filmmakers either had no prior knowledge on Kutiyattam or were unable to transmit the substance of Kutiyattam in the film.

The fact that audio-visual representations lack meaning and usability in the eyes of Kutiyattam artists can be in some cases attributed to broadcasting formats and target aims of productions, having large-scale dissemination and general information of people in mind, rather than the artistic community. If widespread promotion of the art is the prime aim, then a number of strategies are used by producers to secure the attention of the target audience. In some cases, these strategies compromise aims and priorities set by the Kutiyattam community and, given that visual codes are culture-specific, a new arrangement of visual and aural signs and a new encoding of meaning lead to a ‘lack of meaning’ in the eyes of Kutiyattam practitioners. On the other hand, diverse coding and formulation of meaning in films enable the construction of a message that is likely to reach and be consumed by the respective target audience and thus raise awareness concerning the existence of Kutiyattam with the general national and international public.

As filmmakers do not engage in dialogue with the artists and do not consider the structures of meaning and framework of knowledge prevalent in the source community but rather produce films based upon their own framework of knowledge, the final product cannot be meaningfully decoded by Kutiyattam artists and connoisseurs. Consequently, not only documentary films but also Indian documentations designed for preservation, archiving and research have been strongly criticized. M. Madhu (personal interview, op. cit.) accentuates that generally “documentation people do not study about the performance, the specialties of the performance, what are the important things. They just come and see and shoot it”. K.R. Chakyar (personal interview, April 5, 2012) also laments that “people from outside Kerala (...) forget to take the advices of the gurus”. Similarly, Indu G. (personal interview, op. cit.) stresses that in order to achieve a good documentation or documentary film, “first they [filmmakers] have to talk with the artists, but they are not doing, that is the main problem”, instead, recordings are made without enquiring “what artists think about the shooting of Kutiyattam”, which finally lead to what artists call “fake documentations”.

Criticism regarding content and meaning expressed in audio-visual representations not only addresses external film productions, but also specifically national or local productions

conducted in close cooperation with Kutiyattam institutions. This latter criticism is due to the fact that documentation and promotion projects, even when hosted by Indian authorities or Kutiyattam institutions, are generally outsourced to external professional media agencies. For example, due to a lack of facilities, the Kutiyattam Kendra hires private media agencies for documentations of its main programs.³⁷¹ Moreover, also KKM hires external filmmakers for documentations and edited representations of artistic practice. Describing the process of recording under local film productions, an actress laments that: “A chartered person will come, shoot, take the tape and go somewhere else. The next day they will be giving another contract to another person; there is no coordination, everything is scattered”. Filmmaker A. Gopalakrishnan (personal interview, op. cit.) points to the risks in engaging local independent agencies and individuals for documentation purposes, arguing that, “those people who were making the documentaries, none of them had ever seen any Kutiyattam performance before”.

The lack of cooperation and collaboration with artists in pre- and post-production periods as well as the considerable lack of knowledge about Kutiyattam on the side of the agencies responsible for documentation have prompted a number of difficulties and mistakes within audio-visual representation, which in some cases have led to considerable delays in the release of productions or even hindered publication. The Kutiyattam documentation project can serve as a sample: The 75-hour documentation by Kalady University was shot in 2002, as part of the strengthening Sanskrit program funded by the Indian government. Besides a number of interviews with eminent Kutiyattam artists³⁷², the documentation covers almost 60 hours of performance, including parts of *Mantrankam*, *Anguliyankam* and *Ashokavanikankam*.³⁷³ However, the documentation has never been published nor screened openly. Even though a Kutiyattam artist was the main coordinator of the project and despite a committee being established to represent artists, scholars and stakeholders, the project was finally handed over for realization to an external governmental film agency, the Kerala State Film Development Corporation. One of the results of selecting a production process, which authorizes complete control over production to a film company, was that documentations were produced by a film crew with no prior knowledge in Kutiyattam and without continuous advice by artists and stakeholders. In effect, a number of mistakes occurred, particularly related to false editing and false sound synchronization. Moreover, such defects were realized several years after shooting and only after the product had been finalized by the agency and

³⁷¹ K.K. Gopalakrishnan, personal interview, March 13, 2012.

³⁷² Interviews were conducted with P.K.N. Nambiar, Tankamma Nangiaramma, Kuthappa Chakyar, Sarojini Nangiaramma, the late Madhava Chakyar and Paramesvara Chakyar.

³⁷³ Hereby, only selected portions of the plays were recorded, rather than the full performances.

subsequently screened to the artists, who were only able to identify mistakes in response to the final product.³⁷⁴ In such a situation, communication, correction and clearance is highly difficult. Furthermore, during the course of one decade, a number of responsible staff members had already been replaced or retired. Due to these constraints, negotiations remain ongoing and it is still unclear if and when this large-scale documentation will be released.

Furthermore, realizing deficiencies and misrepresentations in representation, M. Madhu and Indu G. (personal interviews, op. cit.) accentuate that audio-visual representations of Kutiyattam do not always benefit the collaborating performing artist and often generate a distorted view on the art and the artist. Thus, artists are concerned about their individual reputation. The following three cases are given as examples. First, artists accentuate that in some cases, contrary to initial agreements, only parts of the play are documented rather than the full play. Given that fragmentary display of performance is no accepted standard among Kutiyattam practitioners, artists responsible for designing the documentation feel misrepresented and fear for their reputation as genuine artists. Second, a further malefactor is that the directors, not being properly informed about Kutiyattam artists, their repertoire and specialties, in some cases manipulate senior artists to perform Kutiyattam plays or portions that they were neither familiar with nor prepared to perform. In such a way, this casts a negative light on the art, as well as senior gurus who are unknowingly exposed to criticism or ridicule (ibid.). Third, the majority of artists are not familiar with the media and the possible consequences of accepting a live interview. K. Sangeet (personal interview, op. cit.) hints at the dangers prevalent in giving interviews, lamenting that many artists have dedicated their lives to the art and practiced sincerely for years. However, they sometimes spontaneously reply and give an unfavorable answer in interviews, which they regret later on. Once recorded, it is screened and disseminated or forever remains documented in the archives. Thus, spontaneous interviews might be negative promotion for the artist in some cases.

4.3.2.3 Comprehensive documentation and preservation

The aim and content of audio-visual representation is a matter of great concern to members of the Kutiyattam community, who shed light on current limitations in practices of preservation and documentation. Artists articulate that a different type of documentation is needed than currently exercised for the sustainable preservation and safeguarding of artistic practice. Emphasis is particularly given to 1. the documentation of full performances and full plays; 2.

³⁷⁴ Name omitted for confidentiality reasons.

multiple documentations of performances by all styles and performance traditions; and 3. the complete documentation of Kutiyattam knowledge.

First, K.R. Chakyar (personal interview, April 24, 2012) argues that for the preservation of the art, the accumulation and generation of knowledge and the meaningful utilization by present and future generations of artists, the complete performance of a full play is needed, from beginning to end, covering for example three hours per day for 27 days. G. Venu also remarks that it is only helpful and useful for the artists if a set of a whole play is recorded. However, despite artists articulating their need and even though several full plays have already been documented in Delhi several decades ago, this approach has not been followed in recent documentation and preservation practice and artists have no information on existing materials.³⁷⁵ For example, KKM has not taken any effort so far to document full plays.³⁷⁶

Second, artists from all schools and lineages highlight the necessity to document and preserve not only one style of performance, one school or lineage, but rather all the major styles and variations of performance in existence today.³⁷⁷ In order to ensure the preservation and safeguarding of all styles, it is insufficient to film one performance by one particular artist, as this documentation will only preserve one way of enacting a play. Moreover, performances need to be marked as belonging to specific styles, as only then is differentiation enabled in the future, whereby styles will not merge into each other or disappear. Furthermore, documentation and archiving must be undertaken in a continuous process, given that performances are changing due to socio-cultural factors, as well as the changing relationship between performers and the audience. Thus, old and new versions of plays need to be documented and preserved. Moreover, artistic practice and the quality of performance change over time. Accordingly, documentations can have a slightly negative effect when only one performance by one particular artist is documented, giving rise to the impression that this performance represents the ways and style of performance by this particular artist. For example, the maestro Mani M. Chakyar was only documented in old age, during his 90s. Thus, despite being extraordinary documents, the intricacies of his style were not exposed to the full extent in the recordings.

Third, in terms of documented knowledge, H. Nambiar (personal interview, March 10, 2012) stresses that audio-visual representations (documentary films and documentations) of Kutiyattam so far have primarily focused on the narrative, script or dramaturgy of the films.

³⁷⁵ Personal interviews with G. Venu, op. cit.; and C.K. Jayanthi, April 22, 2012.

³⁷⁶ K.R. Chakyar, personal interview, April 24, 2012.

³⁷⁷ Ibid. Personal interviews with K. Sangeet, op. cit.; K. Girijadevi, February 25, 2012; K. Kanakakumar, April 6, 2012; K. Krishnendu, op. cit.; and H. Nambiar, April 22, 2012.

Accordingly, only questions that align with the script of the films have been raised. Given that questions also shape possible answers, only selected elements of Kutiyattam knowledge are recorded and preserved, while others are omitted. He argues: “When we are pressing and forcing [the artist], only you tell that verse and that portion, then the artists’ inner knowledge is not coming, only the scriptwriters’ and directors’ one. That is not a preservation, only a good film”. From an artist’s perspective, accurate preservation needs to preserve everything, all the knowledge, and not only specific selections. Therefore, artists in self-produced films would not restrict themselves to scripts but try to preserve as much as possible, including the diversity of artistic expressions in performances and styles, contextual cultural knowledge, socio-cultural relationships, influences on practices as well as the culture of training, learning and reception of the art. A few examples can be provided as follows.

Artists and scholars articulate that if the full life of an artist or an apprentice of the art, including his daily routines and practices, is covered in documentation, encompassing a variety of performances in a variety of situations and over a long period of time, it will be beneficial for the art and other artists and thus worth preserving.³⁷⁸ K.R. Chakyar (personal interview, April 24, 2012) adds that it is indeed necessary to document the process in which a young student becomes a full-fledged actor, how he grows up, is trained rigorously, how the relationship between the teacher and student is developed, where the student’s mind should be and where the teacher’s mind should be during training. If one or two full training cycles with a young boy until he performs one story are audio-visually documented, it will be a significant achievement for the art as nowadays this sort of training is no longer undertaken and will soon be lost forever (ibid.). V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, April 20, 2012) highlights that in order to conduct a proper documentation, audience reactions also need to be archived. He elaborates that the reciprocity between art and patron or audience, how the audience encourages the artist in exhibiting good *bhava abhinaya*, and how in turn the audience is enjoying the *bhava*, is an essential element of the art and thus needs to be documented and preserved. Furthermore, the way in which the artist is stimulated by the audience and vice versa is continuously changing and proper documentation could enable research on changing audience-performer relations.³⁷⁹ Moreover, in case it is a drama with *Vidushaka* or a *Chakyarkuttu* performance, videography of the connection between the artist and the audience is crucially important to understand the performance in audio-visual

³⁷⁸ Personal interviews with K. Girijadevi, February 25, 2012; and V. Namboodiripad, April 20, 2012.

³⁷⁹ Besides spectators’ reactions, criticisms as well as press and TV reports also need to be archived. These collections will enable a documentation of how the performance text is read by the spectator, how it is used and enjoyed, how it is encouraged and criticized (ibid.).

representation.³⁸⁰ Indeed, without showing the audience, the viewers' reactions, the particular settings and contexts of performance and hints in the play cannot be understood. Thus, in order to foster understanding of the art through film, it is necessary to also include the reception of performance by the audience. However, this has rarely been done so far, if at all.

On the other hand, stakeholders also voice concern regarding the prevalence of indiscriminate documentation of Kutiyattam, stressing the current popularization and spectacularization of traditional artistic practice. R. Iyer (personal interview, op. cit.) points to the video recording of Kutiyattam during large-scale competition programs in schools and youth festivals in Kerala and highlights that all performances at festivals are professionally videographed, despite students having often only studied for three months to perform a *Chakyarkuttu* and even though presentations are specifically designed to fit the context of demonstration and evaluation. According to Iyer, these records will not only give a wrong impression but also might be misinterpreted by the general public as representing the art of Kutiyattam (ibid.). Furthermore, bits and pieces of performances are recorded and posted on the Internet, with the only equipment needed being a mobile phone with video function. Even though these files represent present day practice in the field of Kutiyattam, when not adequately contextualized representations of these performances generate a distorted view of genuine artistic refinement and traditional practice within the larger population. Thus, Iyer articulates that the documentation of Kutiyattam performance practice with low-level artistic quality should be stopped (ibid.). Being aware that implementation of this recommendation would be rather impossible, he emphasizes the need for audio-visual representations to be attached with a sign denoting the artistic level of performance.

4.3.2.4 Collaboration and participation

Artists stress that to adequately represent Kutiyattam, documentation, digitization and promotion projects need to be conducted in intimate collaboration with the respective community members and artists. Moreover, in order to represent Kutiyattam meaningfully to the Kutiyattam community, artists need to be consulted in advance of filming³⁸¹ and their opinions need to be respected. Eminent artists need to collaborate and participate, not only in pre-production and production processes but also in the process of post-production, in editing

³⁸⁰ Ibid.; K.R. Chakyar, personal interview, April 24, 2012. Within a documentation of *Bhagavadajjukiyam* by Ekadanta Creations, released in 2011, the audience was neglected and main artists participating in the shooting regret that audience reactions were not given attention in the film.

³⁸¹ Personal interviews with K.R. Chakyar, April 24, 2012 and K. Rajeev, op. cit.

as well as subtitling.³⁸² Furthermore, filmmakers who seek to generate (new) knowledge through film need to collaborate and integrate the advice of scholars, academics and intellectuals in the field.³⁸³ In short, only via intense collaboration is it possible to achieve high quality in filmic representation and thus usability regarding safeguarding and preservation purposes.

Nonetheless, while a majority of artists and stakeholders consider participatory cinema an ideal method for filmmaking, G. Venu (personal interview, op. cit.) argues for subject-generated cinema. He accentuates that “preservation should be done within the community itself” (ibid.). This is due to the fact that outsiders will always only have limited knowledge at their disposal to construct a film or documentation. On the other hand, the practicing artists or stakeholders first have a vast knowledge and understanding of the art, the culture as well as the repertoire, and second also know about the needs within the community (ibid.). Thus, recordings and documentation can be made in accordance with priorities within the community itself and in doing so, documentation and preservation can be efficiently exercised regarding safeguarding purposes. On the other hand, when artists and institutions engage in self-produced documentations or collaborative productions initiated and produced by their own effort, the filmic quality is often not very high. Generally, artists themselves do not know how to use the camera, and thus they need to hire professional local videographers. However, the majority of local camera operators are trained to film marriage functions and not stage performances. Even though some of them are regularly commissioned for the documentation of Kutiyattam, they often do not know how to film Kutiyattam adequately. The recordings often display a wrong focus and due to frequent zooms and close-ups, corresponding mudras, footsteps, body movements or facial expressions are not documented adequately. On the other hand, continuous total views do not provide the necessary details and intricacies of acting styles, particularly also where *Netra-abhinaya* is exposed.³⁸⁴ Thus, the artist often cannot use the documentation for study, comparison and promotion.³⁸⁵ Additionally, many recordings lack quality regarding professional standards in filmmaking.

Artists and experts appreciate the expertise of film professionals in shooting a film and stress that they favor collaboration between experts on both sides, rather than opportunities to undertake filming and documentation on their own. They point out that artists might only be able to handle filming to a certain extent, but never to the same degree as an expert in the

³⁸² K.K. Gopalakrishnan, personal interview, March 13, 2012.

³⁸³ V. Kaladharan, personal interview, April 6, 2012.

³⁸⁴ Personal interviews with A. Gopalakrishnan, op. cit.; K.K. Gopalakrishnan, February 6, 2012

³⁸⁵ Personal interviews with K. Kanakakumar, April 6, 2012; and H. Nambiar, April 22, 2012.

field.³⁸⁶ Furthermore, artists would need to invest considerable time in order to acquire professional know how and technical capacities regarding filming, which would distract them from their artistic practice.³⁸⁷ Moreover, as filmmakers and representatives of governmental cultural institutions stress, audio-visual representations that aim at being disseminated within cultural or educational governmental institutions on a regional, national and global level are required to follow the highest professional standards in filmic representation. Thus, they consider either well-trained professionals or individuals with considerable experience in filmmaking as being ideally positioned to produce and shoot filmic representations of Kutiyattam in close collaboration with the artists.³⁸⁸ Furthermore, artists and experts declare in unison that it is insufficient to place a cameraman and some technicians somewhere to record. Rather, documentation must be regarded as a serious effort to preserve something for humanity. It should not be handled casually or transmuted to mere spectacle, but with a deeper interest. Thus, collaborations between highly professional technicians, performers and authorities are considered most effective for adequate documentation and preservation.³⁸⁹

In terms of the artists involved in decision-making and production, K.R. Chakyar (personal interview, April 24, 2012) further argues that films must not simply represent the opinion of one person, but rather decisions that were achieved by a group of representatives. He adds that for important documentations, the selection of artists, students and teachers, techniques of training, performances and performance locations and all Kutiyattam elements exposed in the film need to be discussed and decided in an expert committee. Chakyar (*ibid.*) further argues for direct interaction between filmmakers and artists, pointing to the inherent challenge in translation processes and the loss in meaning that occurs when engaging intermediaries. Continuous instructions and advice given during shooting time further help to cover the scenes more accurately. Indeed, Kutiyattam artists and stakeholders frequently engage in the training and instruction of local videographers during self-produced or collaborative productions regarding detailed documentation of performances. Artists give instructions concerning the moments in which long shots or knee shots are adequate, as well as further stressing the preferred angles of filming and selecting the moments and details for close-ups. However, these cases mainly occur where friendship exists between artists and technicians, as well as under unofficial or private circumstances of filming. Moreover,

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ Personal interviews with K.K. Gopalakrishnan, March 13, 2012; and N. Paniker, *op. cit.*

³⁸⁸ Personal interviews with A. Gopalakrishnan, *op. cit.*; and K.K. Gopalakrishnan, March 13, 2012.

³⁸⁹ Personal interviews with K.R. Chakyar, April 24, 2012; K. Sangeet, *op. cit.*; K.K. Gopalakrishnan, March 13, 2012; S. Gopalakrishnan, *op. cit.*; K. Kanakakumar, April 6, 2012; M. Madhu, *op. cit.*; K. Rajeev, *op. cit.*

professional film crews also need to be given intense instructions and guidance regarding the recording of performances.³⁹⁰ Within documentation it is important that the camera eye stays with the movements, which convey meaning to the Kutiyattam community, to those who are able to decode these meanings. For example, K.V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, February 28, 2012) explains that a close-up can help to illuminate the scene, but while doing so no other movements or *mudras* should be lost, “otherwise the meaning will be lost”. Moreover, cutting between several camera angles, close-ups, long and medium shots can be beneficial for the effect of the film, although editors should pay serious attention not to lose any important gestures, otherwise the film will not adequately represent the art for preservation purposes and cannot be used as educational or study material (ibid.).

For this detailed recording, intense preparations are needed. K.R. Chakyar (personal interview, April 23, 2012) recommends conducting study rehearsals without costume and make-up, wherein all film professionals participate, including camera operators, directors, light and sound technicians. He accentuates that indeed all participants need to invest time and effort to this process and all participants need to be selected according to their ability and motivation to do so, taking the pains of repetition until a “perfect vision”, a perfect audio-visual representation is achieved (ibid.). N. Paniker (personal interview, op. cit.) even stresses that archivists, librarians and documentarists, who have documentations on Kutiyattam under their custody, need to be instructed in the basics of Kutiyattam. However, only a very few technicians and film professionals will be ready to accept this patience and involvement with the art.³⁹¹ Thus, for a substantial and sustainable documentation of Kutiyattam, it will be crucial to find film professionals interested and open to methods used in participatory films, as well as the task and subject of the film.

4.3.2.5 Power, valorization and social recognition

Safeguarding practices, like documentation, entail issues of power and control, as well as social appreciation and exposition. Even when collaboratively produced, a number of issues arise and negatively influence practices. Generally, Kutiyattam practitioners articulate their interest in being involved in representational practices, in recording, documenting and representing their culture on regional, national and international ground. However, they also articulate a considerable lack of control and participation in decision-making processes involved in filmmaking, referring to processes of initial research, pre-production, production,

³⁹⁰ Personal interviews with K. Sangeet, op. cit.; M. Madhu, op. cit.; and N. Paniker, op. cit.

³⁹¹ Personal interviews with A. Gopalakrishnan, op. cit.; and K. Kanakakumar, April 6, 2012.

post-production, as well as the dissemination of the products. Audio-visual representations produced so far were either not produced in a participatory way or did so in the initial stage yet failed to continue in post-production processes, in which the filmic narrative is finalized. Moreover, those films that were created via intensive collaboration and consultation with artists did not give adequate credit to the collaborators in the final product. Even though their practices, relations and knowledge are used to produce the film, sole authorship of the generated product is claimed by the filmmaker and crew, to whom the prestige and publicity is attributed when the film is released or screened. For artists who collaborated thoroughly in scriptwriting, pre-production and production periods, this practice is not only a nuisance but also inadequate as it under-privileges and marginalizes knowledge-bearers and practitioners.

Recalling for example the production of the candidature film for UNESCO artists argue that P.K.N. Nambiar had collaborated in the writing of the script, as well as being strongly involved in the selection of artists and portions of performance. The filmic narrative was constructed according to his knowledge and advice, while he also functioned as a stage director during the actual time of shooting. R. Iyer (personal interview, op. cit.) from Margi theatre, who was closely involved in the production of the film, asserts that P.K.N. Nambiar “was a kind of director for us”. As a “total expert”, simultaneously being an actor and drummer, he guided and instructed the whole activities on stage. Iyer asserts that the documentation was a “total collaboration” involving artists, professional film experts and scholars. However, Nambiar’s name does not prominently appear in the credits of the film and his multiple functions as well as his relevance for the production of the film are not detailed.³⁹² Instead, the initiating institution Margi and other professionals involved received individual exposure and promotion. Similar experiences were also felt in a number of other film productions, including the documentary film on *Mizhavu* by V. Mankara. One artist argues that “Mankara did not know anything about Kutiyattam or Mizhavu” and stresses that the film was “fully directed” by the *Mizhavu* maestro P.K.N. Nambiar, who wrote the script and gave directions during shooting. The film was produced and released after the UNESCO recognition, gaining a national award. However, the protagonists of the film, the Kutiyattam artists, did not receive any remuneration for their work and have neither received a copy of the film nor been able to see the film so far. Therefore, artists criticize a lack of reciprocity, as well as a disproportional bias regarding prestige and social recognition. They lament that outsiders are granted prestige by way of hijacking their traditional practices.

³⁹² A version of the film exists that mentions the names of the participating artists in the credits. However, this version does not expose the technical functions exercised by artists like P.K.N. Nambiar in the film’s production.

Moreover, in cases where long sequences of performances are shown within the filmic representation, no adequate attribution to all artists is given. This and similar practices are understood by artists as infringing their rights to the traditional expression and the ICH concerned. Again, the candidature film for UNESCO can serve as an example here. While the director of the film A. Gopalakrishnan (personal interview, op. cit.) argues that a knowledgeable audience would be able to recognize artists even without the names given in the subtitles and that individual artists' names would neither generate meaning within the external audience nor add meaning to the art itself, expert connoisseur V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, April 20, 2012) stresses that performance sequences in films should always expose and promote the name of the artists simultaneous with performance. He points to the inter-dependency between art and artist and stresses that an art form does not exist above and beyond the artist, but rather is intricately linked to its practitioners. He further emphasizes that it is always the performers and the patrons who mould the system or technique of an art. "The art lives through the artist and artists live through the art" (ibid.). Therefore, the naming of individual artists is crucial. Furthermore, he stresses that without information on the artist, the "feeling" that arises while witnessing a particular artist's performance cannot arise. Artists themselves also argue that without the dedication of P.K.N. Nambiar and other artists to the art in general as well as the film in particular, neither the art would have survived nor the film would be there.³⁹³ However, the neglect of adequate attribution is tolerated as the common goal, recognition by UNESCO, is achieved. Nevertheless, the omission of names, functions and merits fostered feelings of injustice and exploitation. Consequently, this and similar incidents have nurtured the withdrawal of trust in terms of collaboration and cooperation with institutions, outsiders and officials within India. Moreover, not only Indian but also foreign film productions generate a feeling of discomfort. A gap felt in power and authority relations, fear of cultural exploitation and disapproval of the final outcome of productions prompt some artists to withdraw from international film productions and requests by international researchers regarding audio-visual documentation.

Artists feel that their practices and skills are exposed to the benefit of outsiders of the practice, including national and international filmmakers, bureaucrats, researchers, government officials and other professionals who are, according to the artists, not intimately and long-lastingly concerned with the maintenance, transmission and safeguarding of Kutiyattam but rather follow their own needs and ambitions.³⁹⁴ They further lament that

³⁹³ Personal interviews with C.K. Jayanthi and H. Nambiar, April 22, 2012.

³⁹⁴ Names omitted for confidentiality reasons.

within Indian centers and institutions, it is the intermediaries who gain power, authority and control over what is documented, promoted, archived and disseminated while the artists are only consulted at a secondary stage. Artists deplore that preservation, documentation and promotion ventures introduce new power relationships and place intermediaries in central positions by granting them authority regarding negotiation processes and knowledge mediation. They lament that projects generate platforms for newcomers and professionals, who are enabled to communicate their ideas and understandings of the art, despite only having limited or no experience in artistic practice. Moreover, artists criticize that they are not provided with adequate information regarding procedures, projects or outcomes of official meetings related to documentation and other safeguarding processes, given that communication is often channeled via intermediaries, with information only partially forwarded. In this context, one artist points to language and communication problems in the creation, implementation and management of safeguarding projects. He argues that the majority of artists only speak *Malayalam* and *Sanskrit*. Not being fluent in Hindi or English, they need to rely on translators or other intermediaries to communicate their ideas and interests, although they are often not adequately mediated. Thus, the transmission of information in both directions, from artist to stakeholder or institution and vice versa, is corrupted, often, as artists believe, to the benefit of mediators.

4.3.2.6 Concluding remarks

Artists regret that attention in the production of audio-visual representations is given to the accurate display and application of state of the art technology and filmic professional expertise rather than high-end exposure of artistic practice. They stress that interest and respect regarding the represented art and the artists does not figure prominently, either during production processes or in the final products, the films. In filmmaking, processes striving for the perfect film in terms of light, sound and technical qualities in almost all cases overweigh and replace a strive towards perfection in artistic practice. Furthermore, artists articulate that a number of filmmaking conventions obstruct the application of Kutiyattam conventions and ritualized activities enabling concentration and inspiration required to conduct a high quality performance. Atmosphere on film sets and a lack of knowledgeable audience set the frame for rather standardized expressions of Kutiyattam practice not showing depth and intricacies of the art. Consequently, the performance is not up to the artist's highest capacity and representations do not actually represent the artistic rigor and vigor of the art. In effect, artists recommend that shooting methods be unobtrusive to the cultural space and time of

presentation and the maintenance of artistic mood and spirit needed for the conduction of artistic practice. Dominance and hierarchies on production sets need to be renegotiated and resettled, also giving central importance to the protagonists of the film. Possible methods have been developed in the styles of observational cinema, cinema vérité as well as participatory cinema.³⁹⁵ Moreover, the media apparatus, involving technology, people, practices and relations relevant for the media sphere defines and determines the coding of the film's message. However, often this message cannot be decoded meaningfully by the Kutiyattam community. Emphasizing that recorded performances so far only expose the "half-truth", lack meaning or are even "fake", artists stress that safeguarding benefits, with respect to preservation and utilization for active artistic practice, are only very limited and that recorded performances might even be misleading and ill-effective for future generations. Focusing on their own needs rather than on mere promotion, artists advocate for more informed documentation by means of a close collaboration and more primary research. They further address the need to go far beyond existing documentation activities and advocate more comprehensive and systematic documentation, giving space to the importance of complete plays and diverse styles in presentation, acknowledging the embeddedness of artistic practice in culture and traditional knowledge and considering dynamics in presentation and audience reception. As such, artists argue for cultural contextualization, for complexity and diversity of artistic expression within representation. Nevertheless, not all performance practices are considered equally eligible to enter the corpus of Kutiyattam representations. In particular, very recent inventions of Kutiyattam practice that have adapted to the modern framework of spectacle, competition and evaluation are not acknowledged as representative of Kutiyattam.

Moreover, without access to inside and in-depth knowledge of the cultural practice of Kutiyattam, detailed and profound documentation of performances and other practices cannot be achieved by film professionals. On the other hand, without trained film professionals, the production lacks quality regarding sound recordings and other technical and aesthetical matters, which in turn limits utilization and dissemination. Thus, artists advocate intense collaboration between filmmakers and artists as the ideal framework for safeguarding projects related to the documentation, archiving and promotion of Kutiyattam. Indeed, interest in the art as well as the aim of documentation, namely sustainable preservation and safeguarding, is a further prerequisite. Sustainable preservation involves paying tribute to local ways of seeing and understanding, to cultural codes that are readable and decodable by the practicing community itself. Artists further highlight that in order to undertake meaningful

³⁹⁵ See Chapter 2 of this thesis.

documentation, which can be used later on for transmission, reference, study and research, intense rehearsals with all members of the crew are needed. Given that this is a time-consuming and rather unusual activity for filmmakers, technicians and artists alike, adequate prior information and selection processes need to take place. Besides the production of valuable representations, this hope for serious dialogue and exchange, for intense interaction between artists and filmmakers/technicians in pre- and production processes also addresses the wish for social acknowledgement of the identity of artists as experts and of artistic knowledge as a valuable primary good. Reflecting on experiences with collaborations, artists also articulate skepticism addressing the intentions of collaborations and the work of intermediaries. They point to changing power relations, new patterns of dominance and new professionals intruding and influencing traditional practice, representation and social recognition. They lament that the artists' actual functions in collaborative films, pointing to their identities as artists, experts, stage managers, script-writers or assistant directors, are neglected or marginalized in the final product and thus within social and cultural memory. Altogether, while members of the elder generation do not articulate strong disapproval in terms of conditions, due to either cultural constraints or humility in attitude and character, the middle-aged generation of artists, who learned to articulate their rights and wishes in public, feel deprived of their rights as tradition bearers. They are aware of the high cultural and social capital involved in traditional expressions now proclaimed ICH and fear that their hereditary tradition and cultural artistic practice, which forms a crucial part of their identity, is intruded and appropriated by outsiders, leaving traditional practitioners only second rank positions regarding decision-making, social status, income and prestige.

4.3.3 Challenge 3: Representation, identity and hegemony

4.3.3.1 Dominant narratives and ideologies

Audio-visual representations are no neutral reflections of cultural practices and cultural agents; they do not transmit a message that is already there, but rather they construct a message and participate in the production of meaning. In the production process of a film, the message is coded based on specific structures of meaning and regulations of discourse (Hall, 1992b). These correspond to structures and codes prevalent within the culture of the filmmakers and decision holders and not necessarily with those of the source community. As a message can only become a message when it aligns with the discourse horizon of a society and relates to existing codes, filmmakers construct and rearticulate a number of narratives that refer to these codes and enable hegemonic meaning production. These dominant narratives

are imposed on Kutiyattam culture and practice and do not necessarily correlate with local identities and realities. The following sections address a few of these hegemonic narratives and dominant ideologies rearticulated in the context of Kutiyattam.

4.3.3.1.1 Ritualization, stereotypification and prototypification

External, collaborative and even some of the Indian audio-visual representations of Kutiyattam incorporate a Western view on Kutiyattam and cater to a Western discourse on Indian theatre and performance practice, which gives ritual prime importance.³⁹⁶ Ritualistic elements in films are consciously highlighted to raise attraction, curiosity and fascination within the Western audience. Indeed, even though Kutiyattam consists of aesthetic, artistic, socio-cultural, ritualistic and religious aspects, external representations most commonly focus on ritual. Referring for example to the candidature film *Kutiyattam* by A. Gopalakrishnan, C.K. Jayanthi (personal interview, April 22, 2012) argues that the documentary uses a ritualistic approach towards the art, which attracts the Western or Western-educated audience by serving Western expectations. Commenting on the same film, G. Venu (personal interview, op. cit.) argues that even though the film was not representative, it was successful in the UNESCO meeting because it was spectacular. The documentary visualizes and rearticulates the interrelatedness of the concepts of India, Hinduism, ritual, religion and ancient art, all being popular and powerful concepts in Western discourse on India and Indian practices. By starting with *Balivadham*, a performance with ritualistic relevance, and by exclusively taking temple precincts as locations for performance, the film places Kutiyattam in the framework of the temple, catering to the Western formulated view that Kutiyattam is a sacrifice and offering to the gods.³⁹⁷ Thus, the film rearticulates long-standing stereotypes regarding Kutiyattam practice in particular and Indian cultural practice in general. Likewise, the limited use of lighting in the film and the placement of the lamp as the sole source of light not only connotes the ritualistic element of Kutiyattam but even aims to create nostalgic ideas and sentiments, particularly regarding foreign spectators and the UNESCO jury.³⁹⁸

Moreover, documentary films from abroad exoticize the art in order to render it more attractive for the audience. For example, commenting on the Kutiyattam film by Norbert Busé, K. Girijadevi (personal interview, op. cit.) points to stereotypes connected with Indian art and an overemphasis on the notions of holiness and sacredness, which are repeatedly

³⁹⁶ See Chapter 3 of this thesis.

³⁹⁷ See Chapter 3 of this thesis for details.

³⁹⁸ C.K. Jayanthi, personal interview, April 22, 2012.

stressed in the commentary of the film. She emphasizes that while Kutiyattam has ritual elements, the elements displayed in the film itself do not necessarily bear sacred or holy value (ibid.). Commenting on the film on *Nangiarkuttu* shot by Keli Ramachandran, V. Kaladharan (personal interview, March 23, 2012) again stresses that the film, despite including non-*Nangiar* actresses, is structured in a way that remarks, which are meant to be authentic, are made by *Nangiar*s rather than non-*Nangiar*s. He further points to the exposure and re-emergence of revivalism within documentary films on Kutiyattam, arguing that the majority of films produced so far are “ideologizing some of the rituals, iconizing the big artists” (ibid.). Commenting on the film *Pakarnnattam* by M.R. Rajan, he points to the overt glorification of the main protagonist Ammannur M. Chakyar and an art form that flourished under feudal society. He argues that the film covertly revives values of these times, which are no longer applicable in current democratic Indian society and also stresses that the contribution of an artist is not only positive (ibid.). If gurus are transformed into icons then a critical reading of their practices is neither enabled nor encouraged. Furthermore, prevailing ideologies exposed in “the actual body of Kutiyattam texts, which sometimes go against the tenets of Hinduism or the criticisms that are made against the institution of hermitage” are not given due attention (ibid.). Moreover, while stressing the glorious elements of the past and the era in which the art form flourished, the Gurukulam system of education is idealized. In doing so, the impression is implicitly put forward that “all subsequent cultures that have come into play and all the developments which have taken place in the field of education, these are none and void” (ibid.). Audio-visual representations of Kutiyattam indeed participate in the re-establishment of an old and already partially overcome community (caste) hierarchy. They encourage and nourish the idea that only temple performances are valuable performance spaces and that only the traditional communities, the *Chakyars*, *Nambiars* and *Nangiar*s, are well-equipped with the prerogatives to preserve and safeguard the art. By neglecting the historical and artistic importance of members of the non-traditional communities, the secular space and the proscenium stage, films support and disseminate the message that the art form has only survived until today in the hands of the traditional communities and in the sacred space of the temple and thus the art form will only survive in future in the hands of these communities.

Moreover, C.K. Jayanthi (personal interview, April 22, 2012) stresses that visual representation of traditional South Indian performing arts focus on ritual markers, such as fire and red or black colors. In Kutiyattam representation, the lamp on stage is given central importance and mainly red colored characters, like *Ravana* or *Bali*, are exposed. In this context, it should be noted that the performances per se or the displayed *veshams* are not

themselves ritualistic, but rather indicate the ritual. By contrast, the character *Sutradharan* is neglected in visual representation as he does not directly expose or connote ritualistic elements. Moreover, historical photographs and recordings of *Pacha veshams*, characters with green facial make-up, are rare. For example, only one or two photographs with green facial make-up are available within the collection of photographs of Mani M. Chakyar held by the Gurukulam, while a large number of photographs as *Ravana* exist (ibid.). Today, due to the increased practice of self-representation, self-controlled production and self-controlled dissemination of pictorial representations, *pacha veshams* are widely exposed. Thus, through the involvement of Kutiyattam artists in decision-making processes, the audio-visual representation of Kutiyattam became more balanced. Nonetheless, external documentations focus on performances and characters closely connected to or connoting the ritual and enhance this aspect to become an identity marker of the artistic practice itself. However, Jayanthi (ibid.) stresses that it is not the ritual that is the thriving force within Kutiyattam, but artistic practice; rather, ritual is only one element of Kutiyattam, “Kutiyattam is also an offering of god, Kutiyattam IS not an offering of god, it is also a purpose”. Visualizing this idea in the form of a metaphor, she points out that when Kutiyattam is thought as a train, ritual resembles a compartment that can be easily attached and detached, depending on the context of performance (ibid.). Within audio-visual representation, and especially when circulated globally, Kutiyattam is equalized with ritual. However, Kutiyattam and ritual are not amalgamating, fusing or merging into each other. Therefore, rather than only praising and providing a platform for historic conditions of performance, modern and contemporary performance practice and the theatrical importance of Kutiyattam should also be represented and valorized within filmic representation. In doing so, a theatre or proscenium stage as a performance location would be adequate. Jayanthi (ibid.) stresses while within the UNESCO candidature film Kutiyattam was “recreated as a temple theatre of centuries before”, as an ancient traditional and ritualistic practice, “Kutiyattam has its importance in the modern sense, (...) in today’s tradition”. She argues that as the film is produced today and as Kutiyattam is alive and has contemporary relevance, the film unit can also utilize modern lighting facilities. Still, she says, “if we are presenting a *Mathavilasam* in a full light it has its own impact, its own importance, but we are afraid about that” (ibid.).

4.3.3.1.2 Exotization, trivialization and popularization

Commenting on documentary films being part of the *Incredible India* project, V. Kaladharan (personal interview, April 6, 2012) points to a framework of exhibitionism whereby Indian

filmmakers are trying to boost the image of India as a “recognizable cultural force in the world”. In order to project this idea, adequate images and scenes are collected from all over the country and then re-arranged in collages to represent India to the world.³⁹⁹ Hereby, the Western hegemonic idea about India as fascinating, amazing and exotic is rearticulated. This image is subsequently also further disseminated among the local population in India itself. Via montage, selection and omission, via fragmentation, re-arrangement, re-articulation and new coding, filmmakers generate a message about a place or practice, a message forming an identity that is situated in dominant ideologies and attracts attention and interest. In order to do so, cultural practices and expressions are simplified, exoticized and trivialized to a great extent. In this context, S. Gopalakrishnan (personal interview, op. cit.) accentuates that “for the sake of gaining instant popularity people are compromising the depth of the art”. Only small portions or popular pieces are documented, which are potentially widely appealing or easily understandable and thus potentially more attractive to the general public audience.⁴⁰⁰ On the other hand, lesser known plays and aspects of the art are marginalized or neglected in documentation and audio-visual representation. Indeed, a few scenes, like the death of *Bali*, the fighting scene between *Bali* and *Sugreeva* in *Balivadham*⁴⁰¹ or the lifting of mount *Kailasa* and *Parvativiharam*, are repeatedly recorded and disseminated. Moreover, portions are selected that include many characters on stage, as well as colorful and different types of costumes. A positive effect of this practice is that it is likely that the spectator memorizes and is able to recognize Kutiyattam via these repetitions. However, on the other hand, vast areas of Kutiyattam remain undocumented and the meaning of the art within audio-visual representation is restricted to only a few sequences and small episodes. Such limitations will also foster the trivialization of Kutiyattam as an art.

However, not only commercial Indian film industry but also international documentary films manipulate content in order to make it more attractive for the audience. This is achieved in two ways: the audience is enabled to identify with the events or persons displayed through generalization strategies; or interest and curiosity are shaped through mystification and exoticization strategies. Commenting for example on the Kutiyattam film by N. Busé, K. Sangeet (personal interview, op. cit.) articulates his irritation at seeing the sincerity and decency of the art sidelined and the actual representation of performance practice shortened to

³⁹⁹ The *Incredible India* campaign was launched by the Ministry of Tourism of the Indian government in 2002. Via branding and marketing, it aimed at creating an identity of India that was attractive for foreign visitors and could consequently increase tourism. Since 2008, the campaign has also targeted domestic tourists.

⁴⁰⁰ P.K.N. Nambiar, personal interview, op. cit.

⁴⁰¹ The story of *Bali* and *Sugreeva* in the *Ramayana* is very familiar and popular with common people in India. Having prior knowledge on the story, the audience easily understands and enjoys the performance.

only a few minutes, while banal affairs of the mundane world, student relations and personal wishes are highlighted. Commenting on Indian productions, he further points to the dangers of decontextualizing the art or the traditional practice of the *Chakyar* and *Nambiar/Nangiar* communities within documentary or feature films. He stresses that decontextualization from tradition and history generates misconceptions of the art and leads to a degeneration of the art among the general public (ibid.).

Overall, documentations and documentary films⁴⁰² deploy different strategies and oblige to different demands and regimes of representation. In order to avoid misunderstandings, objectives of audio-visual representations must be made clear.⁴⁰³ If a film is meant to represent, document or preserve an art form, then a number of conventions, necessities and constraints need to be considered. However, only some films are designed for preservation or utilization by the community, while others are designed for attraction or providing brief information to the public. Here, small items and fragmentary elements of plays can be displayed. In order to foster the large-scale circulation and circulability of audio-visual products, representations need to orient themselves at the market, at regulations of the industry and at possible audiences. If a film aims to raise awareness in the general public and caters to a large audience, other codes need to be applied and a variety of narratives can be legitimate. However, it should be made clear that the audio-visual product does not aim to represent the art but rather aims at its promotion and dissemination.

4.3.3.2 Predominance in representation

Artists and stakeholders further voice concern regarding selective and disproportionate representation. Indeed, a majority of media repeatedly expose the same artists, locations and narrations. Thus, representations align with discourse on the art already in circulation.

K.V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, March 25, 2012) argues that documentaries and documentations produced so far give a distorted view of the art, given that the majority of films available and internationally disseminated are on Ammannur M. Chakyar. This is due to the reasons that he lived during a time when video became prominent and when both national and international attention on Kutiyattam steadily increased. On the other hand, Painkulam R. Chakyar already passed away in 1981. During his time, video still did not reach Kerala and film recordings were highly costly, technically difficult to handle and consequently very rarely made. This is why there are almost no existent visual recordings of Painkulam R.

⁴⁰² Genres are not distinct and boundaries between them are overlapping.

⁴⁰³ K.V. Namboodiripad, personal interview, 2012.

Chakyar in circulation, while recordings of Mani M. Chakyar are also very rare.⁴⁰⁴ Therefore, as Namboodiripad argues, “within international representation, Ammannur figures as the main figure”. However, he adds, “Ammannur, Mani and Painkulam were all supreme” (ibid.). He further accentuates: “Everywhere I went in the world, they hardly knew Kalamandalam and Painkulam Rama Chakyar and what he did to Kutiyattam”, while on the other hand Ammannur Gurukulam and Ammannur M. Chakyar were very well known (ibid.). One person receives all the prominence, becoming dominant in the field while other artists and other locations of practice are relegated and become marginalized. However, it is important to note and give value to the fact that KKM is the institute that helped Painkulam R. Chakyar in teaching members of the non-traditional communities and that it is due to their initial initiative and effort that not only the art form became secularized and survived but also that UNESCO was finally able to step in. In this context, Namboodiripad (ibid.) emphasizes that “UNESCO and documentarists should see that everybody should be given what is due to them”. Nonetheless, global representation highlights Ammannur, his Gurukulam and his attention given to ritual and temple culture. Thus, connoisseurs argue that the worldwide representation of Kutiyattam “got manipulated”. Moreover, while several institutions and stakeholders took strains regarding representation and individual promotion and were successful in establishing international relations, KKM for example did not pay much attention to international publicity and promotional work. Furthermore, “they didn’t archive things and didn’t publish books on the matter”.⁴⁰⁵ Today, this neglect and the subsequent lack of international recognition and respect, particularly in the face of the disproportionate representational dominance and international value attached to other Kutiyattam institutions, makes people related to late Rama Chakyar, his students and his work feel “sad, neglected and forgotten”. Namboodiripad argues that respect and recognition “depends on who is filmed and popularized” by the media (ibid.). Therefore, he emphasizes that selection of artists and locations by media professionals should always reflect the merits of the artist. Likewise, young artists point to a “wrong method”, because “great gurus have been neglected” in much local, national and international documentation (A.R. Chakyar, personal interview, op. cit).

Furthermore, it is noted by artists that audio-visual representations repeatedly promote established actors and actresses who greatly benefit from such publicity, while a number of acclaimed artists as well as the majority of artists belonging to a younger generation are widely ignored by regional, national and international media agencies. Instead, artists who

⁴⁰⁴ Personal interviews with K.V. Namboodiripad, March 25, 2012; and R. Iyer, op. cit.

⁴⁰⁵ Name omitted for confidentiality reasons.

have already reached wide media coverage are repeatedly asked to represent the art.⁴⁰⁶ Once an artist has entered into media discourse, it is likely that he or she will be approached again for further projects. Thus, the media only features specific artists and, while doing so, it adds to the marginalization of other artists who would be grateful to receive such media attention and publicity.⁴⁰⁷ While this imbalance is particularly applicable to the stalwarts of the art, it also addresses potential imbalances among artists in general.

Predominant roles in representation, as achieved for example by ACCSG and Ammannur M. Chakyar, can also foster rivalries, competition and non-cooperation, in turn generating disputes among members of the Kutiyattam community. Two films provide exemplary samples for the politics involved in representation.

First, representatives of all the Gurukulams and institutions participated in the UNESCO candidature film *Kutiyattam*, apart from ACCSG and Natanakairali. Ammannur M. Chakyar was informed of the shooting but had no information on the actual shooting, due to either a communication gap or politics involved, and he was not on the set. The fact that also other representatives of the Gurukulam such as G. Venu, U. Nangiar, R. Chakyar, K. Venu and S. Nambiar were not present in the documentary points not to a misunderstanding in communication or technological difficulties⁴⁰⁸ but rather to politics involved in issues of representation. G. Venu was the only representative during the UNESCO meeting held in Morocco in 2001 and was thus accustomed with terms and matters related to the convention. Nonetheless, he was not given the assignment to write the candidature file. Therefore, rivalries and competition between the two institutions, Margi, which functioned as a nodal office in the candidature process, and ACCSG/Natanakairali, were at their height during the crafting of the file and the production of the film. As a result of this competition, either ACCSG was not wholeheartedly encouraged to join the recordings or specific members of the Gurukulam, thinking that the film could not be representative of Kutiyattam without Ammannur and his disciples, boycotted the event and artists had no other choice than to correspond to the Gurukulam's decision. Given that there are two conflicting accounts of the proceedings, this question cannot be solved here.⁴⁰⁹ However, both accounts clearly show an awareness of the power of representation and point to the rivalry, competition and politics involved in representation.

⁴⁰⁶ Personal interviews with K. Krishnendu, April 21, 2012; and K. Shylaja, op. cit.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid. K. Sangeet, personal interview, op. cit.

⁴⁰⁸ It was argued that guru Ammannur could not be reached on the phone.

⁴⁰⁹ Names omitted for confidentiality reasons.

Second, the film *Indien: Das Geheimnis der Tempeldiener* (India: Secret of the temple servants) made by filmhouse fostered rivalries, envy and dispute, in this case, among a group of Kutiyattam students. Shalini, a young Kutiyattam student, was recommended to be selected as one of the film's leading characters by the public relations officer at KKM and by her mother K. Girijadevi, who served as the head of the Kutiyattam department at KKM at the time. After being assured that it would be highly difficult to integrate other young outstanding artists from rival institutions in the function of a production director of the film, I chose her to represent a young female student at KKM. However, as I came to know later on, senior students at the KKM felt underprivileged and after filming ended protested openly, that only one student was exposed and that in doing so inequality among students was generated.⁴¹⁰ Moreover, Shalini was considered an outsider to the community of students, given that she was not enrolled as a full-time student of Kutiyattam at KKM. Representivity was thus understood differently by the students represented by Shalini and the institutional staff members and producers of the film, including myself. A further main character of the film representing a male student at KKM, J. Prathab, was also not a KKM student at the time of filming. He was also recommended by the institution, which has faced a severe lack of male students in Kutiyattam. However, in his case no concerns have since been voiced. Moreover, J. Prathab, after participating in the film and getting into intimate contact with teachers and instructors, later even enrolled as a full-time student. Today, he is the only post-diploma student in Kutiyattam at KKM and his decision to join KKM was dominantly influenced by his participation in the film.⁴¹¹ Considering these two cases, it can be argued that incorporating an "outsider" into a representative practice might lead to two effects: rivalry and exclusion from the group; or identification with and integration or incorporation into the group. Naturally, this can be exercised to different degrees.

4.3.3.3 Freezing and homogenization

C.K. Jayanthi (personal interview, April 22, 2012) highlights a further disadvantage of documentation and points to the potential freezing of living traditional practice. Taking the example of sound themes or melodic patterns, *svaras*, in Kutiyattam, she exemplifies that recitation styles have always been slightly modified and changed by students of stalwarts in the art and that traditionally artists slightly adapt the way of recitation in accordance with situational contexts and moods. She accentuates that if documentation is conducted, exact,

⁴¹⁰ K. Shylaja, personal interview, op. cit.

⁴¹¹ J. Prathab, personal interview, op. cit.

stable and enduring notations exist that, in case they are frequently taken as reference, will freeze and tighten artistic practice (ibid.). N. Paniker (personal interview, op. cit.) also underscores that it is always the interpretation of one particular artist that is recorded, his or her vision. She points to the risk of imitation and copying, emphasizing that by way of mere imitation, “the energy, the art form and the way how you use your body will be different” (ibid.). Thus, in the light of a potential musealization and qualitative degradation of the art, some artists argue that documentation is not useful and necessary but rather harmful for the art and the artist.⁴¹²

On the other hand, the majority of artists and stakeholders strongly promote audio-visual documentation of Kutiyattam. K.V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, March 25, 2012) explicates: “We are documenting what we see in a certain moment of time. The same performance cannot be repeated again”. Consequently, he emphasizes that it will never be possible to freeze a living art form. Similarly, P.K.N. Nambiar (personal interview, op. cit.) underscores that performance always depends on the quality of the artist and the same portions are and will be performed differently by different artists. Addressing the recording of *Chakyarkuttu*, K. Kanakakumar (personal interview, April 6, 2012) further stresses that an actor performing in the role of the *Vidushaka* will not say the same thing twice. There is only repetition in the text, but not in the interpretations and elaborations. Thus, documentations will enable knowledge generation concerning how linkages can be made, they can facilitate further understanding of the techniques and methods used and give ideas that must subsequently be further interpreted by the actor or differently applied. Pure and simple duplication will not be possible.

Moreover, a serious student or artist will never just imitate what has been seen in the films, but will rather engage in critical reflection.⁴¹³ In fact, young artists, who frequently use audio-visual materials for study and reference, are conscious of possible negative influences. For example, A.R. Chakyar (personal interview, op. cit.) points to the risk of unconscious imitation of what has been seen and memorized from the study of audio-visual representation. Pointing to the fact that generally only one particular performance is preserved in audio-visual documentation and thus only this particular interpretation of the performing artist is

⁴¹² U. Nangiar and K.R. Chakyar are strong proponents of the documentation of *svaras* by means of audio-visual recordings and written notation (P.K.N. Nambiar, personal interview, op. cit.). However, K.R. Chakyar (personal interview, April 24, 2012) also hints that imitation effects, facilitated by media utilization, are increasingly used in the study of music. Referring to a conversation with the *Mrdangam* percussionist Chandrasekharan Nair, he recalls that contemporary students do not agree with the need to spend time with the gurus, but instead learn via listening to CDs and other audio recordings. C. Nair asserts that students who learned this way tend to simply imitate what they heard and consequently have severe lacks in improvisation.

⁴¹³ Personal interviews with K.R. Chakyar, April 24, 2012; and M.P.S. Namboodiri, March 6, 2012.

repeatedly scrutinized, as opposed to a variety of different elaborations when seeing live performances, a risk of internalization and memorization is given. He stresses:

[When] I see one performance four times, automatically the imitation of that artist is also coming on my body. Unconsciously it will come. I also feel when I am doing like this, oh, this is done in that one [movie] my style is this one (ibid.).

Consequently, he recommends only viewing materials once or twice in order to extract information, before furthering individual elaboration on that basis. Moreover, sincere artists reflect on their practice and are able to act in self-responsible ways. Chakyar argues that he is very self-conscious about what he adapts and integrates from audio-visual representations.

Considering me an artist, I have the personal fear to follow what the other artist is doing. So, it will go as an imitation. I have to keep my own style, my own body movements, my own eye movements, my own foot movements, (...) not like you or any other person (ibid.).

Furthermore, acknowledging dynamics in presentation, A.R. Chakyar highlights that not only must one performance of one particular artist be documented, but rather a number of them.

One documentation is not enough. Gurujis, there are lots of perfect documentations. If you see the same [performance] documentation in three different resources you can feel, the three are different (ibid.).

Additionally, artists renounce the concept of purity in artistic practice, articulating that “performance is always changing” (M. Madhu & Indu G., personal interview, op. cit.). Therefore, similar to the integration of modern lighting facilities on stage, the utilization of audio-visual representations can also be integrated in practice and study. Provided that the documentation is done in the right way, they deny any risks regarding possible limitations of purity or authenticity of the artistic practice by the usage of media (ibid.). Moreover, even though audio-visual documentations exist, there will always be disagreement among artists on the accurateness of the displayed *mudras*.⁴¹⁴ Thus, the artist always has a certain freedom to change. Therefore, the existence of good audio-visual documentation will not bear any harm to students and artists; rather, documentations can generate or enhance an idea or feeling (*bodham*) of how Kutiyattam can be done.⁴¹⁵

Finally, artists stress: “What the elders did is not the same what we see today”; they argue that an art form naturally develops, “but as a whole it will stay the same” (K. Sangeet,

⁴¹⁴ K. Sangeet, personal interview, op. cit.

⁴¹⁵ Personal interviews with K.R. Chakyar, April 24, 2012; M.P.S. Namboodiri, March 6, 2012, K.V. Namboodiripad March 25, 2012; and K. Kanakakumar, April 6, 2012.

personal interview, op. cit.) and they highlight that “there will always be development, without disturbing the structure and essence of Kutiyattam” (K. Kanakakumar, personal interview, April 6, 2012). In fact, during some periods, changes appear in a very slow pace, while in others changes appear like ruptures and, as K.V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, March 25, 2012) accentuates, “no art form has lived in a kind of frozen situation. It has either evolved gradually or people have intervened and purposefully changed it”. He further argues that when films present the idea of a stable art form, the art is misrepresented. He emphasizes: “We cannot say it will not change. It is a fact that it has changed” and stresses that “people who will later watch the documentation have a tendency to believe that the art form they see has always been like that, which is never right (ibid.).⁴¹⁶ Indeed, the art form was always changing and will continue to do so in the future, while documentation refers to the recording of a specific performance or practice situated in a particular moment in time and space. People who make documentaries and documentations have to be very careful not to generate a distorted view of the art. K.V. Namboodiripad (ibid.) explains: “Since it is intangible heritage, it has a long root of history. When you try to dig the root it is never in a straight line, fibers, networks and branches go here and there”. Thus, any sort of master narratives regarding the artistic practice and master samples concerning performances should be avoided.

4.3.3.4 Concluding remarks

In sum, all sections in this part point to issues of power and politics involved in signification and thus representation. The first section addresses the power of media to re-code and produce preferred meanings that align with dominant ideologies and hegemonic narratives, thereby influencing the shaping of knowledge and identities, while the second section addresses personalized issues of selection, inclusion and omission within representation, as well as their respective consequences, and the third section ponders the potentially homogenizing impact of master narratives (re)produced within audio-visual representation.

As Stuart Hall (1992b) has already argued, meaning is jointly negotiated by producers of audio-visual representations, who encode a message in the film, as well as decoders of the message, the spectators of the film. Thus, consensus on meaning between producers and receivers cannot always be guaranteed. Indeed, members of the Kutiyattam community, who decode the message of films based on their own structures of meaning, do not agree with the message formulated in films representing their artistic practice. They criticize that a number

⁴¹⁶ He adds: “Some people, including unfortunately some scholars today, think that Kutiyattam has never changed” (ibid.).

of narratives and ideologies are encoded, which either do not correspond to their identity, practice and lived realities or manipulate them in ways in which they do not agree. Their reading therefore stands in opposition to hegemonic meaning production (ibid.). This opposition is particularly articulated regarding coding in line with the ritualization, stereotypification and prototypification of dynamic, complex and multilayered practices, in a practice that aligns Kutiyattam practices with dominant narratives of India that are prevalent in the West. They further voice disagreement concerning a focus on past identities of Kutiyattam, they counter revivalist tendencies that marginalize the achievements of non-traditional artists and transmission methodologies and stress the contemporary relevance and present realities of artistic practice. Last but not least, they show irritation regarding coding catering to the exoticism, trivialization and degradation of the art. Moreover, selective and disproportional media exposure of artists and institutions affects self-esteem, identity and knowledge concerning artistic practice as well as artists and schools. While in some cases disproportional representation can generate positive outcomes and energies, in most cases rather negative feelings are stimulated. These feelings can stifle cooperation among artists and thus undermine the reach of safeguarding projects.

Finally, several artists believe that audio-visual documentation would infringe on traditional practice, stifle dynamics and creativity and rather lead to a musealization and freezing of the art. They argue that filmic representations generate samples of artistic practice that are elevated to masterpieces, which will be continuously imitated and copied by successive artists. However, artists not only differ in their individual capacities, but are also conscious of the risks of imitation and actively strive to establish their own artistic identity. Furthermore, utilization and ways of consumption of the media are not determined by the media itself; rather, it depends on the user of media, on the specific student or artist, how they decode the media and use the acquired information. Responsibility concerning whether media lead to imitation and copying or rather improvement and understanding not only lies with the filmmakers, but equally with the students and artists consuming the media. It depends on the attitude of the artists and their actual practice. Nonetheless, in order to neither encourage homogenization nor foster the idea that only one style is the original and one presentation the most perfect, contextualization of artistic practice within a historical timeline is needed. The actual time, place and context of recording needs to be given⁴¹⁷, either in the text of the films or in a written attachment. Filmic representations, which encode the idea that the art of

⁴¹⁷ The location and the attendees are also of crucial importance as they inspire and influence the performance quality. Furthermore, the *Vidushaka* always varies in his interpretations and elaborations of the play and performance is always inextricably linked to the time and place in which it is performed.

Kutiyattam is a stable practice and has not encountered changes in time, generate master narratives on the art that are not only wrong but also potentially dangerous, given that they marginalize actors, locations and events that have led to interruptions or pursued modifications in artistic practice. The decoded message, which may correspond to a (mis)representation of the art within the film, influences artistic practice as well as socio-cultural reception and support; for example, members of traditional communities, the *Nambiars/Nangiars* and *Chakyars*, are continuously promoted in audio-visual representation, thus gaining status and performance opportunities. However, documentation should rather be conducted without evaluation, giving equal relevance to all involved communities, styles, conventional modes and contexts of teaching and performance. Additionally, complete documentations of plays should be careful to mention that the documented performance is only one amongst many ways to enact and perform the same play. They should take care to leave scope for further development and interpretation.

4.3.4 Challenge 4: Representation, consumption and the archive

4.3.4.1 Non-consumption

While artists of the younger generation increasingly utilize audio-visual representations and place great hopes on the usefulness of using them, traditional practitioners of the elder generation voice no interest in the utilization of existing audio or audio-visual recordings at Irinjalakuda, Margi or KKM. For them, as they know the repertoire by heart, had the possibility to both perform numerous times and see the performance of other great artists, audio-visual documentation has not proved to be of substantial importance yet, neither in relation to their own performance practice nor for the continuity of the tradition.⁴¹⁸ Thus, they have hardly ever asked to see or use any audio-visually recorded materials so far. K.V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, March 25, 2012) explains: “They don’t watch it. None of the older generation ashans ever even watched their students performing. They perform, they don’t watch their colleagues or people of their own age”. He further points out that he and his father used to invite artists to come and see their collections, although so far only very few artists have come to the Killimangalam Documentation Centre on Performing Arts (KDCPA) (ibid.).⁴¹⁹ Indeed, today large collections of audio-visual representations on Kutiyattam,

⁴¹⁸ Personal interviews with R. Iyer, op. cit.; V. Kaladharan, March, 6, 2012; and G. Venu, op. cit.

⁴¹⁹ KDCPA was inaugurated in 1984/5 and aimed at preserving performing art traditions from Kerala, which were threatened with extinction. Among others, Kutiyattam, Kathakali, Teyyam and Vedic Chanting were widely covered by audio-visual means (ibid.).

archived at several locations and institutions, exist, but as Namboodiripad remarks, “what do you do with all these? Nobody is interested” (ibid.). On the other hand, a high number of international scholars, researchers and students have come to KDCPA and other institutions and made use of the materials (ibid.).⁴²⁰ Thus, G. Venu (personal interview, op. cit.) asserts that, for the moment, “most of the documentations in fact are used by outside experts such as researchers and the media for their own purposes” (ibid.). Asked about the legitimacy of producing vast collections of audio-visual material with only a limited number of local people using them, K.V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, March 25, 2012) emphasizes that the major users of these materials will be the students and lecturers of the coming generations, starting even from the present generation of youngsters in the art. He stresses, “in Kerala in 10 years’ time, Kalamandalam will think that these things are important. They will start using it” (ibid.). Similarly, most of the senior artists who do not currently make use of the materials emphasize the need for audio-visual documentation and preservation for the sake of future generations of artists.

Offering an example, Namboodiripad (ibid.) highlights that his collection of Sama Veda recordings, after a long period of non-utilization, has become useful to Vedic scholars and practitioners in recent years.⁴²¹ He recalls that in 2011, during the conduction of a Vedic ritual, several Sama Veda scholars encountered slight insecurities. Therefore, one of the scholars approached him and requested to clarify the doubts by referencing the recordings. Moreover, during a screening of the recordings to a group of Vedis, a mistake was noticed. Thus, audio-visual documentations assisted Vedic chanters in recognizing where they have gone wrong in their practice. Realizing this mistake, the Vedis corrected the relevant portions and requested to redo the recordings. In this context, Namboodiripad (ibid.) further alerts that “nobody is there to judge also the Sama Vedis now. Nobody knows whether it is the right way of chanting, if someone chants. Nobody can judge if this generation of artists is gone”. Coming back to Kutiyattam, he stresses when this generation of expert artists, scholars and connoisseurs is gone, there will be only very few persons able to critically comment on Kutiyattam performance systems, styles and techniques (ibid.). In the light of this potential lack of expertise, audio-visual representations will provide useful reference tools.

The aforementioned non-utilization of Kutiyattam recordings archived in several institutions and the high interest in audio-visual representations articulated by a number of

⁴²⁰ At KDCPA, recordings of *Kathakali* and percussion were particularly targeted (ibid.).

⁴²¹ Vedic Chanting was proclaimed “Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” in 2003 and inscribed on the *Representative List* in 2008. Sama Veda chants have been recorded and recordings are kept in KDCPA, in Kalady University, as well as in Finland.

middle-aged and younger Kutiyattam artists raise a number of questions. My own experience has shown that access is difficult and time-consuming, and requires the explicit support and cooperation of several officials, staff or family members. Furthermore, discrepancies between the verbal assertion of benefits and the actual utilization of the recordings point to structural problems rather than individual or common choices. S. Gopalakrishnan (personal interview, op. cit.) also accentuates that a major reason for artists not utilizing audio-visual representations on a larger scale is a lack of access to the materials, as well as a lack of knowledge on the existence of these materials and their locations. Furthermore, insecurities, gaps within communication, competition, rivalry and power-relations play a role. Accordingly, the following section addresses these issues in greater detail.

4.3.4.2 Inaccessibility and the knowledge archive

One serious concern that is repeatedly voiced by artists of all generations and both genders is access to audio-visual representations. The issue of access relates to a number of fields: first, access to materials collected by foreign agencies and individuals; second, access to materials collected by Indian national agencies; third, access to materials collected by Kutiyattam institutions; and fourth, access to materials in the hands of traditional Kutiyattam families and individual artists.

First, many Kutiyattam performances and much knowledge related to Kutiyattam has been audio-visually recorded or written down by professional and amateur film crews, researchers and art lovers. It now exists in the form of films, videos, DVDs, photographs, books, articles and visual field notes.⁴²² Researchers and other professionals have compiled collections situated in their host institutions, libraries, national archives or at home, yet in most cases far away from the practicing communities. Therefore, access to professionally produced collections proves extremely difficult for artists, given that collections are often located in foreign countries.⁴²³ Nonetheless, upon request, artists are generally granted access on location to consult the material, but copies, which would be of great use to the artists, are denied. Without question, due to the distance and the lack of financial means, most artists are unable to refer to these collections. Additionally to professionally produced films and documentations, a number of amateur videos on Kutiyattam taken since the 1980s could be available, but probably lie scattered in individual houses around the world. Access to

⁴²² Historically, outsiders have been primarily engaged with collecting, preserving and documenting oral and intangible traditions in India. These collections were often taken abroad and not returned.

⁴²³ Kutiyattam collections are kept for example in the US, Israel, Italy and Germany.

recordings conducted by amateurs, students or art lovers is almost impossible given that no information is available to artists and students concerning the respective persons and the availability of materials at present. In this context, A.R. Chakyar (personal interview, op. cit.) argues that awareness on the needs of the artists is also required among people who make documentations. He stresses that a number of foreign media professionals and researchers never gave a copy of the recordings or the final products to the artists (ibid.).⁴²⁴ Furthermore, artists regret that many of the films are never openly released, while production companies make no effort in bringing them to the theatres in Kerala. Thus, artists and the local population cannot see the films and promotional effects for artists in Kerala are limited.⁴²⁵

Second, G. Venu (personal interview, op. cit.) asserts that also within India, “so far the practitioner never gets a copy”⁴²⁶; instead, recordings are kept at a far distance in India itself. The collections at the national archives of Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) the National, Akademi of Music, Dance and Drama in Delhi, the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) and the Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT) can be cited as prominent examples. The manuscript library in Delhi, as well as broadcasting institutions such as Doordarshan and All India Radio (AIR), provide further samples. The following part takes a closer look at the accessibility of materials within these institutions:

1. The documentation unit at SNA was established in 1953 in order to preserve “the heritage of the performing arts through the medium of audio, video, and photographic documentation. (...) [It] exclusively specializes in audio/video documentation of the performing arts traditions” (<http://sangeetnatak.gov.in/sna/documentation.htm>). Material has been collected and archived mainly for preservation purposes, as well as promotion and the facilitation of research. Today, the archive at SNA hosts India’s largest collection of audio and visual materials on Kutiyattam and other performing arts in India. However, a vast number of materials remain disclosed and access is only granted after passing a number of bureaucratic acts, whose outcome is uncertain. Reportedly, access has been irregularly granted or refused according to goodwill, cooperation and support of administration officers and artists are even frequently denied access to materials that they participated in producing. For example, G. Venu (ibid.) recalls that he initiated the production of an audio-visual documentation series on Ammannur M. Chakyar at SNA in 1979, and shootings were

⁴²⁴ Exceptions are a Japanese television company that handed over 10 hours of material in VHS (ibid.). Copies of the film *Indien: Das Geheimnis der Tempeldiener* have also been handed over to KKM, as well as protagonists of the film; and H. Moser gave some of her collections to KDCPA.

⁴²⁵ K. Rajeev, personal interview, op. cit.

⁴²⁶ An exception in the case of recordings made in collaboration with guru Ammannur is Sanskriti Pravah in Delhi, which made a 20-hour documentation and gave VHS copies of the recordings back to the Gurukulam.

arranged for in Delhi. Another shooting was undertaken at *Koodalmanikyam* temple in Irinjalakuda in 1982. Altogether, the collection of Ammannur M. Chakyar and disciples amounts to 70 hours of material, encompassing interviews, classes, demonstrations and performances given by the maestro. A highlight in the collection is a 13-hour documentation of the play *Ashokavanikankam*, which is very rarely performed. Venu (ibid.) further mentions that the results of research that he conducted on *mudra* documentation was also displayed by guru Ammannur and was recorded together with his English interpretations. However, as no dissemination regulations exist in India to guide national archives in the provision of copies to people represented in the documentations, the Gurukulam did not receive a copy of the recordings. The seriousness of this issue became evident the moment guru Ammannur stopped performing and Venu tried to revive *Ashokavanikankam*. Even though the audio-visual documentation at SNA was initiated by Venu and was collaboratively done in locations in Delhi as well as Irinjalakuda, and even though neither the artists nor the associated researchers received any remuneration for their performance, guidance and work, Venu, after posting requests for several times, failed to obtain any copies of the materials for the purpose of study and research by the disciples of Ammannur M. Chakyar within the Gurukulam in Irinjalakuda itself (ibid.). Venu further accentuates that since he is a member of the committee at the national academy in Delhi and given that he could not handle this problem, artists not well established in the cultural and political field will face even more difficulties in gaining access (ibid.). Guru K.R. Chakyar (personal interview, April 23, 2012) even says there is “no chance to see” *Ashokavanikankam* archived at SNA, as the academy is keeping all documentations very securely and “nobody can see it”. Venu (personal interview, op. cit.) further recalls an incident when he wanted to show his students at ACCSG the recorded performances of their guru on location in Delhi, but access to the recordings was denied. Excuses for non-accessibility, he explains, often relate to technological difficulties (ibid.). Besides, in cases whereby the officers are supportive and technology is working, then only editions of 15 minutes or important scenes are displayed (ibid.). However, artists cannot work with 15-minute extracts of the play but need to also see the larger contextualization in the play or preferably the full play. Furthermore, artists report that attitudes of officials are demotivating given that access remains insecure for days after posing an enquiry on location and is then frequently denied. Artists in this process are degraded to supplicants and often fail as they do not have the authority or cannot put convincing arguments in the field. Moreover, the general atmosphere is not very inviting for artists, who personally feel unwelcome and that their requests are a burden for officials.

2. IGNC documents and disseminates documentations on performing arts, available for sale also to the general public. It has preserved recordings and hosts a small collection of Kutiyattam films. However, according to artists, cooperation with the artists and access to the materials can be improved.

3. The situation at the CCRT is not satisfying, as on request the institution stated that access to recordings could not be provided as collected materials were not preserved.⁴²⁷

4. Referring to the national manuscript library in Delhi, A.R. Chakyar (personal interview, op. cit.) states that “we have the priority to access”. Nonetheless, he adds:

They never give a copy to us. (...) Every time we have to go and take the permission again. We have to convince the people, then we can check the manuscripts. We can do, because from us they take the manuscripts (ibid.).

However, as family members still have the original manuscripts available in their houses, access has not been tested so far.

5. Furthermore, the national Indian broadcasting agency All India Radio (AIR) has collected vast materials on Kutiyattam. However, according to the Mani family, the collections of Mani M. Chakyar in AIR were not preserved. Therefore, no family member was able to listen to the documents. Nonetheless, AIR supposedly hosts a number of rare audio-recordings of the late Painkulam Rama Chakyar. As Rama Chakyar passed away in 1981, visual representations have not been produced on a large scale and perhaps only a few minutes of material altogether exist on his performance practice. However, a number of audio-recordings exist and, as the only available documentations, they are considered very valuable to his disciples and followers. Again, access to the materials is very difficult, with K.V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, March 25, 2012) reporting that he tried many times, but didn’t get any copy.

6. Additionally, in cases in which viewing permission is granted and respective technical facilities are provided for utilization, artists lack the monetary means necessary to gain access. For example, Doordarshan, a public service broadcaster, who owns collections of films featuring specifically Ammannur M. Chakyar, provides their access for a charge of rupees per film. However, as remuneration in Kutiyattam practice is low, the coverage of these amounts is not feasible for the majority of artists engaged in this profession.⁴²⁸

Considering the overall limited access to audio-visual representations of Kutiyattam, G. Venu (personal interview, op. cit.) asks: “What is the use of documentation? What is the use,

⁴²⁷ In the above three paragraphs, several names have been omitted for confidentiality reasons.

⁴²⁸ Names omitted for confidentiality reasons.

for whom”? Guru K.R. Chakyar (personal interview, April 24, 2012) further emphasizes that if access to audio-visual documentations is not granted by the respective authorities in charge, then indeed documentations are of no use. Therefore, artists and stakeholders jointly demand that wherever historic materials on Kutiyattam are kept, access should be granted to whomever is interested in the study of Kutiyattam.

In addition, referring to collections at national archives in Delhi, Chakyar (ibid.) points to the fact that most of the Kutiyattam artists are in Kerala, while none of the artists is situated in Delhi. Highlighting that students of the art need the audio-visual documents for their studies, he argues that copies of the audio-visual documentations should be brought to Kerala and made available to them. Moreover, Kutiyattam Kendra, established in 2007 under the scheme of SNA, had within its portfolio the establishment of a Kutiyattam archive in *Thiruvananthapuram*. The engagement of a documentation officer, librarian and research officer was part of the initial design of the Kendra, yet could not be implemented. Furthermore, the action plan for Kutiyattam, which was developed as part of the candidature file for UNESCO and aimed at the safeguarding of Kutiyattam, entailed the creation of a common archive in Kerala (S. Gopalakrishnan, 2000b; personal interview, op. cit.). Copies of all existing audio, visual and audio-visual representations as well as all future productions were planned to be collected, preserved and made accessible for students, researchers and the general public alike (ibid.). Thus, stakeholders in Kerala tried hard to gain access to materials, which are archived at the headquarters of SNA in Delhi. Nonetheless, no single film to share with the artists or the public has reached the Kendra so far. Indeed, officials failed to gain access to the audio-visual materials and shift copies of them to Kerala. In light of these problems, it is articulated that an international or national agency, if possible in collaboration with UNESCO, should take up negotiations to initiate research on existing collections, as well as the collection of existent materials in an archive that preserves them and grants continuous access enabling study and research within Kerala itself.⁴²⁹

Third, not only national, governmental and commercial institutions fail to adequately cooperate with artists and stakeholders, but even governmental and non-governmental local institutions, engaged with training or research on Kutiyattam or the documentation and preservation of performing arts in Kerala, lack the respective awareness concerning the needs of artists and the benefits of archiving and preserving materials. A number of requests by artists to local institutions for permission to watch recordings of their family members have remained unanswered by authorities. Furthermore, in case the institution is cooperative and

⁴²⁹ K.V. Namboodiripad, personal interview, March, 25, 2012.

assistance is given by a member of staff, it requires a considerable amount of time and repeatedly formulated requests, lasting from several weeks to months, until a film is found, the respective officer in charge has an available time slot to engage himself in the matter and technological equipment is ready to screen a film or video. A further example is given by C.K. Jayanthi (personal interview, April 22, 2012), who argues that Kutiyattam manuscripts, *Attaprakarams*, *Kramadipikas* and other documents were collected and digitized by the Centre for Development of Imaging Technology (C-Dit), a governmental institution in Kerala, as part of an UNESCO-funded project. MMCSG collaborated and gave 40 manuscripts from their house as well as early scholarly presentations from the 1960s for digitization. Today, members of the Gurukulam have no information regarding the location of the digital documents, as well as access and utilization conditions. They further applied several times for a copy of their now digitized materials but were never granted one (ibid.).⁴³⁰ Furthermore, the large-scale documentation of Kutiyattam conducted by Kalady University in 2002 is not accessible at present. As close relatives of participating artists and the coordinator of the project reveal, the documentation was never released, published or screened openly, nor have any copies been given to artists involved. Indeed, the majority of artists have never seen it and only individual artists watched parts due to personal connections with members of staff at the university. As C.K. Jayanthi (ibid.) explains, the documentation was done purely for archival purposes and generally the public, the artists themselves and the students of the university do not have access to the materials.

One of the reasons for this inaccessibility is that no technological infrastructure for the management and dissemination of digitized materials in libraries, universities or other governmental institutions in Kerala is available to date (ibid.). Furthermore, no agreements regarding the management of the materials have been negotiated so far with the involved artists, in terms of control, access and remuneration, and universities and governmental institutions holding documents in their custody or producing documentations are responsible for the prevention of misuse.⁴³¹ As CDs and DVDs can be easily copied and given that incidents of misuse, illegitimate utilization and accumulation of financial benefits by outsiders regularly occur, one easy means of prevention is non-publication.

⁴³⁰ Instead, they continue to facilitate academic research via the provision of paper copies of their manuscripts to majorly Indian Sanskrit scholars. Mani family has engaged in the collection, archiving and documentation of written texts, palm leaf manuscripts, etc. since the 1990s. However, not all traditional artists grant access to their documents, with some having refused to provide their manuscripts for research purposes.

⁴³¹ Ibid.; K.K. Gopalakrishnan, personal interview, March 13, 2012. As the number of academic Kutiyattam scholars is very low and most of the senior Kutiyattam researchers in Kerala are coming from the Kutiyattam field itself or have close relations to the practicing families and institutions and thus have access to live performances, artists working in the academia accept the enclosure of the materials as a protection measure.

However, not only does access to archives of alien institutions prove difficult; even access within the home institution is sometimes difficult, if not impossible. For example, an assistant teacher in the Kutiyattam department of KKM and a student complain that their application for access to audio-visual representations of their gurus and late gurus, being collected and stored at the documentation section of KKM, was dismissed by the respective officials in charge. On another occasion, KKM officials did not support a joint request made by a group of post-graduates to permit access to audio-visual documentations in KKM. Students argue that the institution hosts a collection of materials, which are inaccessible at least for students. Students have no information on the terms of usage, the plays covered or the location of materials. Furthermore, neither documents exist that provide information on the recorded and stored performances, on actors, stories and media format, nor are any spatial and technical facilities available to students and lecturers within the institution to watch the numerous CDs, DVDs and films on 35mm and 16mm on a regular basis.⁴³² Moreover, the existence of collections is neither addressed nor promoted, either within or beyond the institution. In this regard, stakeholders and students argue that since KKM is a deemed university and research center, it has a responsibility in documentation and preservation of what is available now on the Kutiyattam stage and in the facilitation of materials for use by students and researchers. It must further be noted within this context that authorities at the institution do not neglect the value of audio-visual recordings. Rather, since 2004 in KKM all major performances staged within the *Kuttampalam* as part of festivals or other important occasions are digitally recorded. A rather casual archive is constructed, whereby audio-visual representations are merely collected and stored without any archival system being followed. Therefore, no systematic inventory is available and no catalogue of contents exists. Due to these reasons, nobody has approached the archive or made use of the materials to date.

Fourth, besides governmental institutions, traditional families and Gurukulams are also not always willing to share information on their collections or grant access to materials that are in their own property. S. Gopalakrishnan (personal interview, op. cit.), in charge of designing the action plan at the time when Kutiyattam was proclaimed ICH, states that Gurukulams, institutions and families were encouraged to provide their materials to a common archive. However, due to their non-cooperation, the project could not be implemented and was finally stopped. Furthermore, due to rivalry, competition, orthodox attitude and a lack of dialogue between members of the diverse institutions and traditional lineages, an exchange of collected audio-visual representations is unlikely to take place in

⁴³² Names omitted for confidentiality reasons.

near future.⁴³³ Furthermore, artists feel reluctant and discouraged to go and ask permission to see a film in rival Gurukulams or private houses. One professional artist remarks:

These traditional families have these documents but they don't exchange these things. I have heard it that they deny that they have it. Anyway, somebody like me, I go to them and ask, I am sure that it will not be available. So because I know this fact, I have never tried.⁴³⁴

The problem becomes even more complex as several individual artists from all generations and castes refuse to supply copies of their performance to co-artists for reference. One artist further emphasizes that if technical equipment is provided to Gurukulams and documentations are produced, it is unlikely that these will be exchanged with other artists in the field. He says: "There will be ego in this. When there is ego, they wouldn't give what they have to others".⁴³⁵

Facing this situation, artists highlight the need for access, either through governmental intervention and the establishment of proper archives or via an opening up of the traditional families themselves. The *Sanskrit* scholar V. Namboodiripad (personal interview, April 20, 2012) also accentuates the need for the systematization of documentation practice and archival tasks. He advocates that a formal plan of action is to be initiated, by either a governmental institution or a cultural institution, giving direction on what shall be recorded, collected and archived, how archiving shall be facilitated and exercised and how access for the purpose of study and research can be granted. Indeed, there is an urgent need to act, systematically collect and preserve materials, as audio-visual representations and other forms of documentation are being damaged and people with knowledge on the existence and the exact locations of these materials might pass away.

4.3.4.3 Storage and changing technologies

A further hindrance regarding consumption can be seen in the consistency of the media themselves. Adequate storage facilities as well as changing technologies (hardware and software) prove to be exuberant challenges in the archiving, preservation and consumption of audio-visual representations of Kutiyattam, as well as in the safeguarding of the art. Storing data adequately in places with a humid and hot climate and keeping them accessible is an enormous task, demanding professional expertise, space, as well as financial resources and

⁴³³ H. Nambiar (personal interview, April 22, 2012) mentions that the academy has provided funds for the documentation of performances to all the major Kutiyattam institutions. Thus, documentations are likely to exist within all institutions. However, they have not been exposed or shared so far.

⁴³⁴ Name omitted for confidentiality reasons.

⁴³⁵ Name omitted for confidentiality reasons.

capacities, which are hardly manageable by individuals, Gurukulams and small institutions alone. Indeed, most of the collections on Kutiyattam in governmental and non-governmental institutions within Kerala today are inaccessible due to either fungus or missing technological instruments, tools or software.

As stakeholders admit, almost all early Kutiyattam collections at KKM, KDCPA, ACCSG and Natanakairali today have been either seriously damaged and destroyed or already affected with fungus.⁴³⁶ In this context, artists and stakeholders lament that audio-visual representations, despite being valuable assets for artists as well as family members and close acquaintances of those portrayed, remained unprotected for decades and are often still stored under conditions that do not allow sustainable preservation and future usage.⁴³⁷ For example, while Painkulam R. Chakyar's and Mani M. Chakyar's performances were recorded, the majority of documentations were not preserved and consequently disappeared due to fungus or loss. Existing films on 35mm and 16mm, VHS as well as recordings in other analogue formats need to be cleaned urgently and regularly to prevent further destruction by fungus.

Furthermore, since all VHS materials have gathered fungus and since the climate will continue to take tributes, it is high time to preserve recordings on other media. Audio-visual representations in KKM, KDCPA, Natanakairali and ACCSG or in private hands need to be transferred to DVD or other formats before they are irreversibly damaged or lost. Transfer to hard-discs, CDs or DVDs will enable temporary preservation and, at least in some cases, access and use. Indeed, a vast number of materials are currently inaccessible as technologies, format and tools, hardware and software systems have changed. For example, Natanakairali has a huge collection of video documentations of Kutiyattam on VHS and Beta Card yet no adequate players to operate the videos. The institution denies buying a new player as formats have already changed and available resources are rather invested in up-to-date technology or other aspects of safeguarding.⁴³⁸ Due to financial reasons, as well as a lack of interest, time and space, individual artists and small institutions are generally unable to remain updated regarding changing technologies and operating systems. Even governmental institutions face difficulties in keeping updated in terms of the technological equipment needed to see the representations. For example, while KKM operates a film projector, technical tools are often not functioning or missing, and thus it is rarely used. Furthermore, KKM neither owns a video player, which would facilitate reference to audio-visual representations conducted since the 1990s, nor facilitates access to DVD players or computers.

⁴³⁶ Personal interviews with K.V. Namboodiripad, March 25, 2012; and G. Venu, op. cit..

⁴³⁷ Ibid.; Personal interviews with M.P.S. Namboodiri, March 6, 2012; and H. Nambiar, April 22, 2012.

⁴³⁸ G. Venu, personal interview, op. cit.

In addition, archiving digital copies on hard drives or discs bears risks and is not reliable for long-term storage. For example, major parts of the Kutiyattam collections at Natanakairali have already been lost when the respective hard disc was corrupted.⁴³⁹ Moreover, DVDs and CDs will be outdated again in the near future. Adding a concern of the majority of stakeholders engaged in preservation, G. Venu (personal interview, op. cit.) asks: “How can I go with the time? My technology knowledge is very limited.” Thus, attention should be paid to the pace of changing technologies and equipment, as well as the artists’ inability to frequently respond to changes. Regarding continuous demands in format transfer as well the continuous threat caused by the humid climate, Venu (ibid.) accentuates that “even national academy cannot cope with it” and thus individuals and small institutions will hardly be able to manage alone. Moreover, digitization and the copying of early tape recordings on discs are highly costly and can only be exercised efficiently in professional institutions in Delhi. In this regard, Venu (ibid.) stresses that the transformation process (from VHS or Betacam to DVD) of the materials in his hand alone would cost approximately three to four lakh rupees. This amount no artist in Kerala can afford. Thus, the central government should support Kutiyattam artists and institutions in the matter of preservation and archiving, by keeping up-to-date preservation technology at hand and providing usage. In this regard, international expertise and assistance can also be useful.⁴⁴⁰

4.3.4.4 Misuse, macro-level consumption and identity

One of the most frequently articulated and emotionally charged concerns regarding the usage of modern technology and the production of audio-visual representations is their potential and factual misuse and commercial exploitation. Artists, identifying with their traditional and artistic practices, feel betrayed, exploited and attacked by a number of ways in which Kutiyattam is (re)produced, popularized and consumed. This concern currently dominates individual feelings as well as decision-making processes concerning the accessibility, production and dissemination of audio-visual documentations to a large extent. Indeed, modern technologies and recordings in digital format enable a variety of uses, dissemination far beyond the local and traditional ground and thus the consumption of media on a macro-level. With the widening of potential audiences and users having access to the material, the potential distortions and mutilations also rise. Audio-visual technologies and representations might assist and facilitate misuse, misappropriation and exploitation of cultural expressions

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.; K.V. Namboodiripad, personal interview, March 25, 2012.

and traditions by people not belonging to the tradition or expression bearing communities. Even well-intentioned projects risk encouraging unauthorized use and disclosure or cultural exploitation by outsiders.⁴⁴¹ This is also the reason why most of the websites entertained by public and private Kutiyattam institutions do not expose historical photographs or video clips of masters and gurus. According to Kutiyattam practitioners, specific usage of Kutiyattam content and artistic practice is considered inappropriate and offensive to the practitioner and the honor of the art itself. Accordingly, the following cases can be given as examples.

First, several artists accentuate their disapproval that photographs and audio-visual representations of their performances are collected or copied by outsiders of the artistic community, by media journalists and researchers, and sold to broadcasting institutions or other industries settled in India, which use the records for the promotion of their own products or for their own private interests. While broadcasting institutions, media professionals and others generate income and benefit through the usage of visual representations, the artists are not paid well for their services and feel exploited.⁴⁴² Furthermore, in several cases, performances were recorded and later sold, even without consent and agreement of the artists.⁴⁴³ Moreover, cases have been reported in which copies were sold to Indian nationals living in the US or the Gulf countries in a considerable scale and without providing remuneration to the artists.⁴⁴⁴ Therefore, outsiders of the practice repeatedly fostered consumption of audio-visual representations of Kutiyattam in order to gain and accumulate profit, while artists feel that they do not receive a due share of the profit.

Second, audio-visual representations of Kutiyattam are increasingly used by Indian dance and theatre artists and lecturers for teaching purposes, as well as the creation of new choreographies. Hereby, without consent and permission of the Kutiyattam artists, performances, particularly involving new choreographies, are recorded, scrutinized and subsequently trained to pupils for the sake of school competitions. V. Kaladharan (personal interview, March 6, 2012) argues: “This practice facilitates the duplication of performances and thus undermines the monopoly over performance style by the artists themselves”. He further stresses that the “problem (...) relates to the issue of intellectual property” (ibid.). In this context, K. Kanakakumar (personal interview, April 6, 2012) emphasizes that the illegal recording of performances for the purpose of acquiring teaching material for school

⁴⁴¹ A publication of a study can also foster misuse, whereby photographs, illustrations and other visual material exposed therein can be used and misused by others. In case of misuse, the copyright owner, the scholar or academic institution, can file a case and prohibit further utilization. For a prominent case, see Janke (2009).

⁴⁴² Personal interviews with H. Nambiar, April 22, 2012; C.K. Jayanthi, April, 22, 2012, and J. Prathab, op. cit.

⁴⁴³ Personal interviews with K. Sangeet, op. cit.; and K.K. Gopalakrishnan, March 13, 2012.

⁴⁴⁴ Personal interviews with K.K. Gopalakrishnan, March 13, 2012; and V. Kaladharan, February 17, 2012.

competitions “is another type of theft”. He stresses that this is a serious issue, given that numerous misconceptions and misunderstandings regarding Kutiyattam arise through this sort of instant trainings, wherein even primary and basic knowledge is not acquired through a proper Kutiyattam teacher but rather by copying from audio or audio-visual recordings, as well as by these kind of “foolish” performances (ibid.), whereby the depth of performance techniques are missing, with such issues influencing the art form as such.

Third, V. Kaladharan (personal interview, March 6, 2012) remarks that one impact of “UNESCO’s strong intervention into the field of Kutiyattam is that (...) it has glorified the tradition of Kutiyattam much more than what it is”. An increased activity in documentation and audio-visual recording took shape simultaneously with the proclamation by UNESCO. In effect, an impression or rather fear was inculcated, that by use of the media “a whole heritage” is recorded and taken into possession by outsiders, who have increasingly become envisioned as “stealing the culture of this country (...) and taking it to different parts of the world” (ibid.). While activities of audio-visual recording were either welcomed or not taken seriously before UNESCO’s proclamation, artists, sponsors and stakeholders have since become suspicious of recording practices. They understood that, via the proclamation, Kutiyattam was transformed into a precious commodity and feared that outsiders and foreign nations capitalize on Kutiyattam practice and knowledge. Here, the “notion of knowledge imperialism” in particular was discussed (ibid.). Consequently, in order to enable India to capitalize on Kutiyattam, dissemination and production of recordings were “strictly prohibited” within governmental institutions (ibid.).

Fourth, in the aftermath of the UNESCO proclamation, visual and audio-visual representations of Kutiyattam, and particularly of *Chakyarkuttu*, have been increasingly utilized for commercial exploitation in advertisements and product placements of private companies, as well as in teasers in local television channels. Within the latter practice, a Kutiyattam program is scaled down into a few minutes of attractive visual material. This edition is subsequently exposed as a screen-filler or brief interlude between scheduled programs or advertisements, attracting the attention of audiences. Visual representations of Kutiyattam are placed as fresh objects of curiosity for the general viewers in Kerala, who did not know Kutiyattam until it was mediated in the aftermath of UNESCO’s proclamation. Being a “virgent topic” (V. Kaladharan, personal interview, March 23, 2012), Kutiyattam was appropriated by media professionals who aimed at national or international attention. K. Sangeet (personal interview, op. cit.) highlights that Kutiyattam is misused in this process. The art is used to increase the profit of others, to attract audiences to one particular channel

and thus to promote the interests of the channel, rather than the interests of the art or the artists (ibid.). Indeed, misuse and commodification are local impacts of the UNESCO proclamation, given that this phenomenon was non-existent prior to UNESCO's support.

Fifth, a further case of misuse relates to small items, screened on TV, whereby actors dress up as *Chakyars*, interact with locals and comment on banal political events happening within society. Programs, comedy shows, exposing *Chakyarkuttu* duplicates were specifically designed and have been broadcasted on Jivan TV, as well as a number of other local mainstream channels in Kerala. The programs were immensely successful and screened up to four or five times a week.⁴⁴⁵ However, rather than genuine Kutiyattam artists being engaged, general broadcasting actors were hired by the TV channels to enact *Kuttu* for their program. Actors conducting the *Chakyarkuttu* for television programs neither received serious training in Kutiyattam nor acquired knowledge on *Kuttu* or *Sanskrit*. As artists argue, some might not have even seen a live performance. The source materials that enable them to construct their performances are illegally acquired recordings, audio or audio-visual representations, taken secretly during temple performances and other events. Taking these representations as a base for their work, one or two *padams* of the original text are extracted and interpreted in order to ridicule contemporary politicians, political parties and other public persons or events of interest. However, as artists argue, the *padams* are rather misinterpreted and the language used in the TV shows as well as the humor displayed reflect neither linguistic refinement nor literal background regarding *Sanskrit* texts needed for accurate interpretation.⁴⁴⁶ However, all these capacities are evident markers of Kutiyattam and genuine Kutiyattam artists. Moreover, the language used in the TV shows is defective, given that the pronunciation is not accurate and Kutiyattam conventions are not observed. For example, a number of English words are applied within performances, whereas English is strictly forbidden in traditional *Chakyarkuttu*. Besides aesthetics, content and quality, these comedy shows are also highly political, as programs were presented as representing the original *Chakyarkuttu* and local television channels facilitated this misrepresentation by supplying recorded performances of Kutiyattam artists, which were subsequently mimicked and manipulated for the shows.⁴⁴⁷

Sixth, another atrocity is that *Chakyarkuttu* performances are recorded and then re-enacted by “fake artists” using “vulgar words” and “vulgar humor” that insult the audience (J. Prathab, op. cit). Moreover, these “fake performances” are shown inside the temples in the local villages (ibid.). K. Kanakakumar (personal interview, April 6, 2012) laments:

⁴⁴⁵ The screenings of this program stopped approximately in 2010.

⁴⁴⁶ Personal interviews with K. Kanakakumar, April 6, 2012; K. Sangeet, op. cit; and J. Prathab, op. cit.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

They take the audio (...), they make some vulgar *sloka* and it is recited in the style of Kutiyattam *sloka*. Sometimes in the same style very vulgar things will be presented. They take this and produce something, which has nothing to do with Kutiyattam.

Video recordings of these “fake” performances, sometimes conducted even as part of temple festivals and taken by use of cameras in mobile phones, are disseminated via YouTube and the Internet and add to the misconception of the art. People accessing the files are often unable to discriminate between a *Kuttu* performance that is faithful to the original, to rigorous physical training and scholarly expertise in *Sanskrit* language and plays, and the distortions, which use cheap humor and ordinary language to attract and entertain the audience on a rather low artistic level. In effect, the general audience misunderstands the given performance as representing the art form as such, which is very dangerous for the art and insulting to the genuine artist. Beliefs, practices, values, conventions and the history of the art form are ignored, bits and pieces are excavated and made fruitful for attraction and entertainment purposes cater mainly to material ends, while leaving behind spiritual values and the aesthetics of the art. In this context, K. Sangeet (personal interview, op. cit.) also stresses that while national media professionals observe the ethics of their profession, the local media show no code of conduct, no ethics and no shame in their treatment of Kutiyattam.

The aforementioned utilizations of audio-visual representations of Kutiyattam assault practitioners of the art, who consider the art form as such to be seriously attacked. Artists argue that dilutions and misrepresentations of the art lead to misconceptions and negatively affect the value and appreciation of the art within society at large. For example, K. Sangeet (personal interview, op. cit.) argues that “the sanctity and value of this art form is ruined”, while K. Kanakakumar (personal interview, April 6, 2012) emphasizes that “a noble good art form is brought down to a very low status” and can be even “killed” if misuse is not prevented.

Nevertheless, authorities in Kutiyattam have a tendency for gentle interactions. They hardly engage in open conflict and thus in many cases of infringement no reaction was taken. Nonetheless, the artist’s traditional way of interacting with malpractices in society is by way of subtle hinting in conversation as well as during actual performances of Kutiyattam; in fact, a number of these hints can be observed when attending live performances. For example, during a performance of *Subhadradhananjayam* in Kozhikode in 2012, K.R. Chakyar, in the role of the *Vidushaka*, comments on cameras in the auditorium. Pointing to individual photographers and videographers, the *Vidushaka* on stage makes comments like “what are they going to do by taking it in the camera, how are they going to use it later, maybe they

think they can see it later, but we don't know how they are going to use it" or "we hear that they take this all in this and do something which is not so pleasant". These comments are made in a humorous way, stimulating laughter and enjoyment among the audience. Moreover, in accordance with Kutiyattam conventions, they also inherently address and criticize current practices and the artists' irritation with them. K. Kanakakumar articulates: "From many places they have been getting this into the box, we don't know what is going to happen, actually we are afraid. Such hints are given" (ibid.). Artists feel they are losing control over their art form, that in many locations a huge number of recordings have been made that are partially misused or can be potentially misused in the future. By way of hinting, they publicly alert to this social malpractice.

In addition to hinting and as a result of the aforementioned practices of misuse, the majority of artists also strictly prohibit recordings by outsiders, and particularly by people catering to the local channels.⁴⁴⁸ Moreover, recordings have also been stopped within institutions. Pointing to the abominable tendency to misuse the art in local television and spread misrepresentations of artistic practice that degenerate the dignity of the art, artists requested KKM authorities to take measures against this practice. Consequently, shootings within KKM became highly restricted and in particular the shooting of *Chakyarkuttu* by Indian local and national film crews is frequently prohibited.⁴⁴⁹ However, a response to the issue of misuse is still pending from the side of other governmental bodies.⁴⁵⁰ Realizing the seriousness of effects in representation and artistic practice, a few artists have also brought in an action for infringement. By doing so, they have been able to stop the television programs, for example in Jivan TV.⁴⁵¹ Indeed, legal steps help to protect the integrity of traditional cultural expressions and works of art.⁴⁵² In particular, the copying of performances and the exploitation for commercial sale without permission and even information of the source communities can be prevented. However, prevention can only be exercised if rights (copyrights and moral rights) are marked in the first place and if individuals go for their rights and start negotiations or file a case.

⁴⁴⁸ For instance, K.R. Chakyar frequently asks his disciples to stop people recording his *Chakyarkuttu* during performance time.

⁴⁴⁹ V. Kaladharan, personal interview, April 6, 2012. For example, an Indian team producing a film for the *Incredible India* serial in 2012 was denied shooting permission at KKM. The director explicitly came to take shots of *Chakyarkuttu*. While interviewing him, it became obvious that even basic knowledge regarding *Chakyarkuttu* was missing.

⁴⁵⁰ K. Sangeet, personal interview, op. cit.

⁴⁵¹ K. Kanakakumar, personal interview, April 6, 2012.

⁴⁵² See also Janke (2009, p. 172).

4.3.4.5 Concluding remarks

This section has addressed the moment and consequences of consumption of audio-visual representations. Consumption is hereby understood as the process of utilization of audio-visual representations and it relates to institutions, consumers and local practices. The process of consumption refers to the utilization of media on a micro level, by members of the Kutiyattam community and on a macro level, by regional or national archives, broadcasting institutions and individual agents within the larger society. Furthermore, access to consumption, facilities and maintenance of representations as a precondition for consumption was targeted. The first section has shown widespread non-consumption of audio-visual representations by members of the elder generation of practitioners, while the second section has scrutinized some structural patterns that influence the consumption of audio-visual representations. The latter section has shown that a majority of artists predominantly from the younger and middle-aged generation, as well as a number of stakeholders from the elder generation, articulate strong support regarding the documentation of their practices and a great interest in the consumption of audio-visual representations. Artists declare in unison that documentations of Kutiyattam are meant to be useful to artists and researchers and regret that no provisions have been taken that enable the usage and accessibility of films and digitized documents archived by regional or national Indian or foreign institutions, agencies and individuals. In this context, H. Nambiar (personal interview, March 10, 2012) emphasizes that “the actors’ protection is the main thing, he is the living heritage”. Thus, everything should be done to support artists in their needs. However, artists point to a lack of facilities, ranging from the provision of information on materials, terms of use, procedures and locations to the provision of access to and usage of materials. Indeed, a number of archives within India largely cater to what Aleida Assmann (n.d.; 2004) has called storage memory, whereby knowledge is accumulated and maintained as being potentially of use later on, rather than to functional memory, whereby knowledge and representations are actively consumed by practitioners and thus (re)integrated into artistic practice. For example, it seems that storage memory rather than functional memory is targeted at KKM as well as Kalady University.

Moreover, due to the absence of financial means, technical know how, influence, authority or intimate relations to stakeholders, officials, traditional families or Gurukulams, artists encounter unequal access to archived materials, to resources for information and knowledge. Hereby, students and artists at governmental institutions coming from non-traditional family backgrounds face particular disadvantages. In fact, artists not affiliated with traditional families and the respective Gurukulams are highly underprivileged in access to

(historical) audio-visual materials and documentations of the great doyens in the art and their performance practice. Furthermore, the majority of media has already been severely damaged due to lacking policies, inappropriate storage and climate impacts. National or even international support regarding technological development and preservation possibilities would be needed to secure the lasting preservation and accessibility of materials. Moreover, in order to safeguard Kutiyattam, the drafting of national regulations and the establishment of a centralized archive within Kerala, which guarantees consumption possibilities to all members of the Kutiyattam community, are advisable. However, terms of use and access for non-institutional members of the Kutiyattam community and beyond could remain uncertain when the general archive is attached to an established institution. Artists lament that they do not feel invited to visit archives of rival institutions or have already tried to gain access and failed. Thus, an impartial, neutral agency, either governmental or non-governmental, would be most appropriate in facilitating documentation, preservation and indiscriminate access. In any case, for the successful establishment of a central archive and for further “common” documentation, prior negotiations with artists need to take place and a common agreement of all artists, institutions and Gurukulams must be reached. Furthermore, advocacy is also needed regarding documentations in national archives and agencies. Given that no national policies have been developed so far that guarantee or facilitate the dissemination of copies of documented materials to the represented people, in this case to the Kutiyattam practitioners, negotiations need to take place on an administrative and governmental level. In the meantime, one recommendation for contemporary and future film work, particularly by independently working or foreign agencies, is to voluntarily give copies of the film and/or the rough material back to the source communities in order that they can develop utilization strategies fostering their needs and therewith direct safeguarding of practices.

Finally, artists voice their sincere concern regarding the increasing appropriation and commodification of their practices by means of the utilization of audio-visual representations. They argue that their group identity and the identity of the art are corrupted via copying from audio-visual representations for training purposes, via product placements and new broadcasting formats aiming at large-scale marketing and entertainment. They lament that the usage and consumption of representations benefit outsiders of the practice, local industries and commercial agents, which are neither involved nor interested in genuine Kutiyattam practice; moreover, they stress that the art is misused and exploited for the sake of profit and capitalization, pointing to the degradation of artistic practice through these misrepresentations.

4.3.5 Challenge 5: Representation, regulation and identity

4.3.5.1 Intellectual property and copyright

Intellectual property (IP) can be regarded as a key issue in the context of protection of traditional cultural expressions against misuse. UNESCO has concerted efforts involving questions related to IP and a number of international conventions and documents have been compiled that touch upon the issue (Wendland, 2009).⁴⁵³ For example, the 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* explicitly states that the convention does not affect any responsibilities and obligations regarding other treaties and international documents signed by States Parties (UNESCO, 2003a, Article 3(b)). As such, States Parties initiating recording, documentation, inventorying and archiving of ICH need to do this in correspondence with relevant laws on IP. With its 188 members⁴⁵⁴, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is the key institution of the United Nations in charge of the promotion and protection of innovation and creativity by means of an international IP system and related rights.⁴⁵⁵ IP protection exercised by WIPO protects outcomes of creative intellectual activity against misuse and misappropriation.

Copyright and related rights cover literary and artistic expressions (e.g. novels, poems, plays, films, music, artistic works and architecture) and the rights of performing artists in their performances, producers of phonograms in their recordings, and broadcasters in their radio and television broadcasts (<http://www.wipo.int/about-wipo/en/faq.html>).⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵³ These are: the 1967 amendment to the *Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works*, where protection also in the case of unknown authorship and unpublished works was granted at the request of India; the 1976 *Tunis Model Law on Copyright for Developing Countries*; the 1982 *Model Provisions for National Laws on the Protection of Expressions of Folklore Against Illicit Exploitation and other Prejudicial Actions*; and the 1984 *Draft Treaty for the Protection of Expressions of Folklore Against Illicit Exploitation and other Prejudicial Actions* (Wendland, 2009). UNESCO's 1989 *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore*, the 2003 *Convention* and the 2005 *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression* are also relevant documents in this regard. Issues of misuse and misappropriation of cultural traditions and expressions have also been targeted within UN declarations. See for example the 1993 *Mataatua Declaration on Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the 2007 *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (ibid.).

⁴⁵⁴ For the publication of this thesis, the number of member states has been updated.

⁴⁵⁵ IP rights refer to several rights, granted by law, which protect creative intellectual, scientific and industrial activities and outputs such as ideas, inventions, discoveries and designs. Article 2(viii) of *The Convention Establishing the World Intellectual Property Organization* states that "intellectual property" includes rights relating to: literary, artistic and scientific works; performances of performing artists, phonograms and broadcasts; inventions in all fields of human endeavour; scientific discoveries; industrial designs; trademarks, service marks and commercial names and designations; protection against unfair competition and all other rights resulting from intellectual activity in the industrial, scientific, literary or artistic fields (WIPO, 1967, amended 1979). The *Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works* is the major international treaty addressing copyrights, enforcing the aforementioned rights in countries that signed the document. Furthermore, the 1994 *Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights* (TRIPS Agreement) also addresses the issue. In these documents, the periods and levels of protection for copyright in member states are defined and limitations or exceptional cases outlined.

⁴⁵⁶ Last accessed June 24, 2013.

Regulations aim to give rights to the creator as to whether his or her products are used, by whom and under what conditions. They aim to enhance respect and acknowledgement for the creator, author or innovator and assist in finding regulations for benefit sharing.⁴⁵⁷

Intangible traditions and expressions can be placed under copyright protection. However, in order to be granted copyright and protection, the idea or creation must be accessible in a material form.⁴⁵⁸ The work does not need to be published but needs to be fixed and tangible. In accordance with this rule, only performances, stories and songs that have been tangibilized are protected under copyright law in a number of countries, while those that have not been recorded in film, photography or sound are not granted protection. Thus, audio-visual records can be of immense use to practitioners of traditional cultural expressions. Records and respective property rights can provide security, transparency and protection regarding practices and the community involved. Records can further help in negotiations in terms of benefit sharing, assisting tradition bearers in defending their rights against newcomers or entrepreneurs in the field⁴⁵⁹, or in case several communities or groups claim rights to the same expression, they can help in finding agreements and settling disputes. However, the relationship between the safeguarding of ICH, including its documentation and preservation, and the protection of creativity against unauthorized use is a complex one, involving a set of ambiguities and challenges that are outlined in the following two sections.

4.3.5.1.1 Artists versus documentarists

According to international IP law, traditional songs and expressions as well as dance and theatre are treated in the public domain and thus ICH is also located in the public domain. On the other hand, the production of audio-visual representations required for safeguarding measures such as inventorying, documentation and archiving, research or promotion of ICH, the tangible parts of intangible expressions and traditions creates new IP rights. The exercise of these new rights influences local communities and their interest, while researchers and the general audience are also affected. This is due to the fact that copyrights encompassing oral and intangible traditional expressions are generated that are largely not owned by the traditional custodians of the traditional expression (Janke, 2009). The intellectual content of

⁴⁵⁷ As Wendland (2009) stresses, this form of protection “is distinct from but complementary to the concepts of ‘safeguarding’, ‘conservation’ and ‘preservation’” (p. 94).

⁴⁵⁸ France can be considered an exception. Here, copyright is given to works without earlier fixation in material form. The requirement for protection is rather that the work is of an *oeuvre d’esprit*, a work of the mind. Moreover, the *Berne Convention* does not require material fixation before granting protection.

⁴⁵⁹ Gupta (2009) shows that the Indian database *Traditional Knowledge Digital Library* (TKDL) assisted in the prevention of exploitation of traditional medicinal knowledge by outsiders and corporate industries.

visual representations is not owned by members of the bearing community, by artists or stakeholders, but rather by the person or company who made the film.⁴⁶⁰ Communities or actors generally hold no rights in the audio-visual recordings produced; rather, the rights to expose, generate income or disseminate filmic representations lie with the production company, author, anthropologist or researcher involved. They are the holders of the copyright over the product and, unless otherwise agreed in a contract, the cultural practitioner and custodian of ICH has no further say regarding the material's use and way of dissemination. Moreover, in terms of oral stories, the one who writes down a story and brings it into material form is recognized as the owner of this version of the story. The recorder becomes the copyright owner, even if he or she is an outsider to the community of practice. In a similar way, copyright over music can be claimed after recordings have been made. This can be done even without giving attribution and recognition to the source community.⁴⁶¹

In the case of India, binding legal instruments and contract systems regulating the recording of cultural traditions are missing (Chaudhuri, 2009).⁴⁶² Moreover, legislation regarding community rights and community ownership remain absent. In 1997, a law referring to IP was introduced in India, targeting performers' rights (*ibid.*). Performers' rights are protected through the act of recording and performers are granted individual rights regarding their performance. Performers' rights allow the practitioner to prevent specific unauthorized usage of the recordings of the performance. Furthermore, creators are granted moral rights by law, which are assigned to the author even when he or she does not own the copyright. They include: 1. the right of attribution of authorship; 2. the right not to have authorship falsely attributed; and 3. the right of integrity of authorship. Moral rights do not extend to the community or communal ownership, but remain with the individuals involved in making a film, for example. The right of attribution of authorship or against false attribution may be assigned to a performer or artist and the right to integrity allows the performers or artists to prevent the derogatory treatment of the practice or art. This particularly refers to treatment resulting in a distortion or alteration of the work, which contradicts the author's honor or reputation. Hereby, de-contextualized and inadequate usages of film or filmic material are also covered. Thus, performance can be protected from exploitation, while recordings from that performance are also protected in this way.

A further challenge is that copyright as well as moral rights are generally only granted for a limited period of time. Works are thus only protected for a limited time, after which

⁴⁶⁰ See also Anderson (2005).

⁴⁶¹ If performers are not paid, they might hold partial copyrights in sound recordings of a live performance.

⁴⁶² An exception is AIR, which provided guidelines and policies (*ibid.*).

recordings can be used and copied without royalty payment or permission. In this regard, it is necessary to ensure that practitioners and artists have the right to practice their traditions without time constraints, and thus rights should not end with the ending of copyright terms. In these contexts, S. Gopalakrishnan (personal interview, op. cit.) addresses the need for action on a policy level. Guidelines and regulations need to be negotiated and set by the Indian government. The guidelines need to encompass the scope of dissemination of audio-visual representations, as well as the rights of the performers and the filmmakers or producers of the products. Gopalakrishnan further highlights that products should not be owned and copyrighted by the person documenting it, but rather should remain with the artists and performers. She stresses that property “is theirs, it’s their right” (ibid.).

4.3.5.1.2 Individual versus community ownership

Copyright protects the author and the work in such a way that performance reproduction, display or dissemination is protected by law and needs to be exercised with the author’s approval. Indeed, a focal element in this legal conception of the author’s rights is the individual author. Copyright law was conceptualized based on the Western premise of an individual. However, these rights might not be entirely fruitful and adequate in the context of ICH safeguarding, as customary law defines a collective or communal ownership of cultural traditions and expressions in many communities. Also in the case of Kutiyattam, artifacts and knowledge are considered traditional property, communally owned by particular communities and certain families.⁴⁶³ Therefore, intellectual rights belong to communities, as opposed to individuals. Indeed, the communal character of this knowledge and practices renders the Eurocentric notion of individual authorship inappropriate.⁴⁶⁴ In fact, mimicry, mimesis and copying are part of the sustainable transmission of Kutiyattam. It is the way by which young apprentices learn and incorporate artistic practice. Moreover, an individual artist can only make interpretations based upon a common artistic base. As such, without substantially altering the performance practice, an individual practitioner is hardly the creator of an original and innovative piece of work. Furthermore, the scope and time for interpretation, variation and individuality is regulated in detail within Kutiyattam practice. Still, individual artistry differs in artistic quality and creativity and individual artists might indeed lead to a

⁴⁶³ C.K. Jayanthi, personal interview, April 22, 2012.

⁴⁶⁴ See Mgbeoji (2009, p. 215) for a similar argument. Mgbeoji (2009) further remarks that in the context of ICH, individuals, being social beings and therefore in intimate connection and interaction with their social, cultural and environmental surroundings, can only act as interpreters. Providing a variety of examples of Igbo culture, he adds that ceremonies, dances, festivities and songs are at the heart of culture.

development or further enhancement of artistic practice. Nevertheless, individuals are hardly considered to be the sole authors and therewith owners of their work.⁴⁶⁵

However, it is generally the individual who is ascribed copyright according to copyright law. According to the Indian archivist Chaudhuri (2009), copyright notice is automatically placed in digitization and archiving processes and particularly during the publication of recordings, identifying the performing artists. However, in many cases the composition exposed does not belong to the artist but rather the community and thus copyright placement to an individual becomes problematic. Even though joint authorship by way of collaborations is generally possible, community authorship, encompassing multi-generational attributors, is not recognized. The case becomes even more intricate when the artist does not belong to the traditional community but is considered an “outsider”.

In fact, Kutiyattam and the respective traditional communities used to be closely interrelated with each other. Kutiyattam was transmitted as part of the family tradition of certain communities. Members of these communities inherited the right to perform Kutiyattam as well as rights in particular performance locations.⁴⁶⁶ They exercised considerable control over knowledge, performance stages as well as apprentices and performers. Traditionally, in the *Guru-shishya parampara*, students belonged to the family or were selected by the guru, with artistic lineages and styles emerging through this relationship. Indeed, practitioners differentiate authorship in terms of attribution to family and style and artists generally refer to and name the family and style to which they belong. Even today, practitioners belonging to the traditional communities conceive of themselves as custodians of the art, practicing Kutiyattam as a family right and duty. Community members consider themselves trustees of the traditional expression and no individuals are allowed to make decisions that could compromise the deceased, the present or the future generation in the conduction of their right and duty. Therefore, by customary law, Kutiyattam assets do not belong to individual members of traditional families but rather to the whole family.

However, Kutiyattam was also continuously re-contextualized and re-modeled in the course of time and the strong connectedness and exclusive link to specific communities has been slowly but steadily dissolving. Particularly during the second half of the 20th century, a number of innovations took shape, with Kutiyattam going beyond traditional communities and suspects regarding practitioners, patrons as well as audience.⁴⁶⁷ Kutiyattam has opened up to members of other castes and a number of prominent artists emerged who have rendered

⁴⁶⁵ However, a case for authorship can be made in interpretations and associations undertaken by the *Vidushaka*.

⁴⁶⁶ See Chapter 3 of this thesis for details.

⁴⁶⁷ See Chapter 3 of this thesis for details.

outstanding services to the art and its safeguarding. Moreover, today students train with more than one guru and even more than one institution. Nonetheless, even under such conditions, practitioners generally know where and with whom individual artists learned, and acknowledgement and respect is always given to the respective gurus and styles.

In the light of these developments, G. Venu (personal interview, op. cit.) strongly argues against the usage of the term communities within the UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* and the respective guidelines. He highlights that in the context of Kutiyattam, the positioning of the term communities generates privileged positions and therefore stifles ill effects. He accentuates that “if community is given the copyrights of a particular art form, it is very dangerous. It will affect the future of the art form” (ibid.). The granting of copyright would privilege the traditional communities and members of the communities who have not always shown continuous interest in the practice of the art, while on the other side it would marginalize those who have shown concerted efforts for the survival of the art over the last decades (ibid.). A strengthening of community ownership in the case of Kutiyattam could therefore re-create boundaries that have long been overcome, create unnecessary competition, rivalry, envy and distrust and stifle artistic creativity. For example, artists who do not belong to the traditional communities or artists who are not located in Kerala may not get recognized as members of the community and would thus face difficulties regarding Kutiyattam practice and usage. Legal strengthening of communal ownership is also not recommendable as it could in fact be counter-productive to the safeguarding of the art. Legal measures could indeed stifle engagement in practices, in learning Kutiyattam at all, as well as in recruiting students. Legal protection measures can thus potentially foster negative effects in terms of the safeguarding, promotion and further transmission of Kutiyattam. Thus, individual ownership and copyright is not an option to artists.

4.3.5.2 Monopoly over knowledge versus free dissemination

A further challenge concerning the process of regulation refers to the regulation of access to knowledge, the issue of knowledge transfer and protection measures exercised by local institutions, groups and individuals. Considering the safeguarding of Kutiyattam, it must be argued that representations should be available to artists, members of the community and the public. However, unconstrained accessibility and transfer of materials must not necessarily include all materials and representations to an equal extent. In this context, Hazucha and Kono (2009) argue that respect for the ICH of the communities, groups and individuals

(UNESCO, 2003, Article (b)) needs to also encompass the “recognition of such communities, groups and individuals concerned, as well as social norms regulating the access to, and use of, particular parts of heritage” (p. 152). Rituals or activities that have specific regulations regarding access within the community should be respected (ibid.). Indeed, dance and theatre are often not protected under copyright law; however, customary law, local responsibilities and mechanisms of control have regulated access and usage for centuries. A number of protocols, norms and conventions already exist in practicing communities that regulate and control transmission, usage and dissemination of ICH and the respective knowledge.

While these rules might not be fixed in written form and might not privilege the individual author, they exercise a binding authority over those concerned and have helped in safeguarding Kutiyattam over the centuries. Indeed, knowledge regarding Kutiyattam was not easily accessible, not unrestricted and uncontrolled, but rather highly regulated and guarded by a number of factors. For example, traditionally *Chakyars* restricted access to knowledge on Kutiyattam. They facilitated circulation and access to manuscripts in family ownership only to family or community members. Venu (2012) argues that manuals, which were composed by practicing artists, were understood to convey “endemic and rare knowledge”, even “most sacred knowledge and therefore the secrecy was maintained” (p. 60). He further explains that the imparting of this knowledge to a selected few, even from outside the traditional community, can already be considered as “their gift to the future generations” (ibid.). In fact, usage and transmission of knowledge and practice related to Kutiyattam were restrictive and exclusive in terms of gender, age, class, caste and religion.⁴⁶⁸ Differential access was further granted according to other factors such as prior knowledge and familiarity with the art and tradition. Indeed, the idea of indiscriminate public accessibility and circulation is not part of the tradition and practice of the *Chakyars*.

However, actual practice always also encompassed exceptions. For example, Painkulam R. Chakyar joint hands to go with the demands of the time and made the art accessible to a wider public, even against Kutiyattam conventions and the will of orthodox members of the community. As a result, the extent of control over Kutiyattam substantially decreased. Today, long-standing conventions and traditional communities no longer exclusively and communally exercise authority regarding control and access to Kutiyattam practice and knowledge; rather, institutions, stakeholders and government officials following their own regulations and criteria for access and dissemination also play a crucial role. With the proclamation of Kutiyattam as ICH and the further encouragement of respective safeguarding

⁴⁶⁸ See Chapter 3 of this thesis. For a different example, see also Mgbeoji (2009) on Igbo Cultural Heritage.

strategies involving documentation, digitization, archiving and promotion, access to communally owned knowledge and artifacts is even further enlarged. In effect, authority and exclusive control over knowledge on Kutiyattam is slowly but steadily sliding out of the hands of the traditional practicing communities.

Nevertheless, at a number of Gurukulams and families, restrictive practices regarding access to Kutiyattam assets and knowledge are exercised and, until today, practitioners do not consider specific practices, artifacts and representations to be for the general public. This relates, for example, to secret or sacred, spiritual or religious aspects of Kutiyattam or aspects and materials considered valuable in terms of economic as well as social and cultural capital. In the light of recent experiences with newcomers in the field of Kutiyattam, an increasing competitiveness and demands for large-scale collection and uncontrolled dissemination of Kutiyattam knowledge and practice, restrictions and reservations even seem to become reinforced. Indeed, today, families, Gurukulams and institutions do not feel the need to disseminate valuable materials and share with the public, outsiders, researchers or even co-practitioners. For example, access to audio-visual representations as well as manuscripts at ACCSG is highly restricted. Upon request, it is argued that Kutiyattam is still a living practice and thus materials in custody of members of the community are supplied only to members of the community, to some selected locally based or affiliated researchers and artists, but not to outsiders or external researchers or professionals. Furthermore, access to audio, visual and audio-visual representations of Kutiyattam at MMCSG is highly restricted. Only students of the Gurukulam are granted access to the recordings, while students of other institutions are invited to attend live performances or personally enquire with the guru or other lecturers of the Gurukulam in order to remove their doubts. In particular, rare recordings of Mani M. Chakyar are regarded as family property and are not shared with outsiders. Filmic representations are considered cultural capital, and thus, besides their content, their rarity also adds to the attached value. Moreover, audio-visual representations are not displayed on the family website. Artists articulate the concern that once recordings of the major guru of the Gurukulam are published, direct consultation and reference to present day members of the Gurukulam might shrink. Furthermore, financial gain is also an issue of concern, as once audio-visual materials are exposed and disseminated, control and authority over their usage is lost. Thus, before providing materials, the motivations of interest are thoroughly scrutinized. While artists in general appreciate research on Kutiyattam and are ready to provide answers to posed questions, they refuse to provide their (in-)tangible knowledge archive, their materials. They fear that by providing a comprehensive catalogue of source materials, they would enable

researchers to conduct research regarding multiple research aims without the necessity of direct interaction and collaboration with the local community. Furthermore, journalists and art lovers would no longer need to contact the source person of the materials but might refer directly to the materials in order to gather information. Artists have therefore decided to collaborate to an extent that is mutually beneficial and where research and projects are grounded in dialogue and exchange.

Moreover, S. Gopalakrishnan (personal interview, op. cit.) recalls that a number of actors and actresses “think some kind of secret knowledge which they possess may be gone, if it is made public”. From these artists’ perspective, audio-visual recordings infringe on their rights and the exclusivity of knowledge and practice. Indeed, today several families are opposing the ‘*common-alization*’ and collectivization trend and refuse to provide their knowledge, their cultural assets, manuscripts and audio-visual documents, for digitization and storage in national or regional archives or for dissemination on the Internet. One artist argues: “All these documentations are traditional. I myself don’t have any right to sell or to keep. (...) So I can’t make it a public property (...) we can’t give it to the government”. Cultural assets of Kutiyattam, including audio-visual representations and manuscripts, are considered traditional property. No single member of the family has the right to sell materials in the original or to alienate rights.⁴⁶⁹ Accordingly, artifacts cannot be transformed into public property and given to the state or common archives.⁴⁷⁰ Consequently, financial assistance by the government in matters of the preservation and publication of documents also cannot be enjoyed, given that acceptance of aids would be bound with concessions regarding ownership, copyright and use.

Simultaneously, C.K. Jayanthi (personal interview, April 22, 2012) also argues against the traditional way of restricting access to knowledge regarding Kutiyattam. She articulates a right for knowledge and aims at facilitating knowledge dissemination via the establishment of a digital library in her own house. Given that she intends not to use any governmental funds, facilities and artifacts, the library would remain entirely within family possession and under family control. In doing so, the archive would increase the family’s cultural capital and foster recognition, prestige and authority in the field. Indeed, while artists face a partial loss of monopoly over knowledge and therewith authority and control with the publication of materials, artists would strengthen their position as a cultural player in the field of Kutiyattam with the establishment of a private archive designed for public use.

⁴⁶⁹ This law is customary law and no written records of regulations exist. For example, within the Mani family, twelve members of the family hold equal rights to the documents.

⁴⁷⁰ Nonetheless, copies of the materials can be provided to individuals, as well as institutions and agencies.

Altogether, S. Gopalakrishnan (personal interview, op. cit.) argues that, in principle, UNESCO has facilitated a “universalization” of Kutiyattam and the creation of a “common identity” of humanity in which Kutiyattam is one unique reference among many. While, on the one hand, this development is highly appreciated by artists, on the other hand it is also carefully and skeptically scrutinized and even blocked when it comes to dissemination and the collectivization of “their” traditional knowledge, practice and expression. However, artists are generally interested in performing on international stages and being part of international discourse. In this context, Gopalakrishnan further stresses that international recognition cannot remain unanswered; it will be crucial to facilitate knowledge dissemination by providing freely accessible information on the art. Recalling that the art form has stepped out of the temples and that its value is thus no longer limited to spiritual and sacred connotations but rather to a universally appealing theatre language, she accentuates that communication and knowledge exchange with the world, the “culture of dissemination”, of free knowledge circulation “has to come” (ibid.). She argues “that artists should set their terms and conditions prior to recording” and emphasizes that “a documentation can be sold for a price, but (...) it has to be available to the public” (ibid.).

4.3.5.3 Protocols, recommendations and codes of conduct

Recommendations, codes of conduct, best practices, practical tools, protocols and in some cases even guidelines can be helpful regarding the implementation of documentation, promotion and archiving tasks related to the safeguarding of ICH. International guidelines might constrain valuable documentation and digitization work in particular contexts. However, legally not binding protocols⁴⁷¹, codes and recommendations derived from case study analysis might provide valuable assistance and orientation in all cases. Chauduri (2009) argues that most of the institutions, companies, NGOs or professionals who are criticized by community members for their approaches are not ill-intentioned but rather miss relevant information that provides easy guidance regarding legal instruments and ethics. Indeed, recommendations, protocols and codes of conduct are needed to provide assistance to cultural institutions, NGOs or companies working in the field. They need to guide professionals who might not be aware of the risks and challenges of audio-visual documentation, preservation and promotion of ICH.⁴⁷² It is noteworthy that approaches and codes of conduct need to be

⁴⁷¹ Protocols work on a voluntary basis; however, institutions and universities, when engaging in the funding of research or projects, could insist on the application of terms mentioned in protocols.

⁴⁷² See also Janke, 2009.

diverse and multiple, given that each cultural expression is situated within a socio-cultural and political context. However, protocols always need to take these cultural contexts into account and ethical conduct and mutual respect can be stressed within all protocols. Furthermore, specific feelings and beliefs of the respective communities or groups always need to be considered. Considering the crafting of protocols or guidelines, it is highly advisable to engage practitioners and stakeholders in a debate on the contents of the documents, or to produce them in a collaborative effort. One way to proceed in the case of Kutiyattam could be through the establishment of a group of representatives that can be empowered as caretakers of the ICH concerned. Hereby, it needs to be specified that this group is supposed to make decisions for the benefit of all members of the community, traditional and non-traditional ones, male and female and all age groups. By means of majority resolutions, issues such as the prevention, usage and facilitation of preservation, promotion and digitization measures can be decided and matters relevant to individual members of the community can be discussed, negotiated and solved in the group. Moreover, all members of the practicing community should be made aware of the protocols, recommendations or produced documents once they have been established, and should also be granted easy access to them. In doing so, awareness among practitioners regarding their rights and the sustainable protection of their artistic practice would be increased.⁴⁷³

Some cultural institutions have already developed standard setting documents, protocols⁴⁷⁴ or codes of conduct⁴⁷⁵ concerned with access, ownership and control of cultural heritage and safeguarding. WIPO has initiated a “Creative Heritage Project”⁴⁷⁶, which compiles best practices, advice and guidelines for IP issues, as well as ways to record, digitize

⁴⁷³ See also Chauduri, 2009.

⁴⁷⁴ See for example the protocol performing culture:

www.wipo.int/export/sites/www/tk/en/folklore/creative_heritage/docs/performing_cultures.pdf.

⁴⁷⁵ Examples are the *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums* by the International Council of Museums and the *PIMA Code of Ethics for Pacific Museums and Cultural Centres* by the Pacific Islands Museum Association. Furthermore, WIPO conducted surveys of existing practices, protocols and policies, available online at www.wipo.int/tk/en/resources/surveys.html (last accessed at June 22, 2013).

⁴⁷⁶ The project developed a cultural documentation training scheme for members of local or indigenous communities and staff members of museums in developing countries. Herein, approaches, archival skills and techniques of documentation are communicated. As part of the project, WIPO further provided audio and video equipment in several exemplary cases. In 2008, a pilot project was conducted with members of the Maasai community and the National Museum of Kenya. Moreover, the project is preparing a compendium to assist museums, archives and libraries in issues related to IP and collections of local/indigenous cultural expressions. WIPO is also developing a guidebook for indigenous and local communities on how to develop their respective IP protocols. These might enable them to negotiate terms and rights regarding their documentation with third parties (Wendland, 2009).

and archive or disseminate ICH.⁴⁷⁷ It aims to combine issues related to the preservation of ICH with issues related to the protection of creativity, combining safeguarding activities with IP protection, thereby facilitating mutual support (Wendland, 2009). In 2006, WIPO has filed a draft convention on the protection of traditional cultural expressions/expressions of folklore. This draft aims to complement the 2003 convention and assist safeguarding ventures. The draft has not been adopted so far, but can be used as a reference point. One point regarding copyright warrants special mention here. The draft explicitly states that protection measures would not be applicable to utilization “by way of teaching and learning, non-commercial research and private study, criticism and review, reporting news or current events” and also not regarding “the making of recordings and other reproductions” of cultural expressions “for purposes of their inclusion in an archive or inventory for non-commercial cultural heritage safeguarding purposes” (WIPO, 2006, Annex, Article 5(a)(iii)). As Kutiyattam community members have also identified these fields of consumption as being conflict ridden, guidelines and protocols need to integrate further advanced regulations addressing these fields.

4.3.5.4 Concluding remarks

In sum, this section addresses the ‘moment’ in the “circuit of culture” (Du Gay et al., 1997) termed as regulation. It ponders the question of how a cultural tradition and expression can be protected in the face of increasing commodification and popularization interests occurring in the aftermath of the UNESCO proclamation as ICH, as well as how the interests of the practicing community can be secured. As has been shown in the previous sections, the diverse ‘moments’ of the cultural circuit are closely interrelated and penetrate each other. The production and consumption of cultural representations, including audio-visual representations, influence identity construction and regulation is also closely connected to identity (Thompson, 1997). As Thompson argues, society is composed of different groups, all adhering to different cultural meanings. Meanings regulate conduct and practices and determine rules and regulations, which again organize social life (ibid.). Influence in meaning construction thus simultaneously means influence on the exercise of conduct and practices within social groups. Given that representations shape meaning construction and meanings influence practice and identity, struggles over meanings arise (ibid.). Consequently, not only are representations contested, but also traditional practices are protected from integration into

⁴⁷⁷ A WIPO database provides codes, guides, policies, protocols and standard agreements relating to the recording, digitization and dissemination of ICH, with an emphasis on IP issues, available online at www.wipo.int/tk/en/databases/creative_heritage/ (last accessed June 25, 2013).

unwanted meaning-making processes via various means. These means refer to controlled access and dissemination of knowledge on cultural traditions and expressions, thus to regulations exercised on a micro level within the practicing communities and protection measures granted by governments and organizations on a national or regional level, therefore on a macro level. While the former often refers to orally transmitted customary law, the latter encompasses written regulations by law, such as copyright protection or institutional policies and regulations such as codes of conduct and guidelines.

On a macro level, IP rights can be regarded as a key issue in terms of the protection of traditional cultural expressions against misuse, while relevant laws on IP also need to be considered within safeguarding activities. Cultural expressions can be granted copyright protection, providing that they are accessible in material form. Within audio-visual representation, intangible cultural practices are objectified and made tangible. In this regard, they can be helpful tools for the provision of protection against illicit use, theft, financial loss, degradation or distortion of artistic practice. Nonetheless, protection and safeguarding measures do not always correlate with each other. One major challenge is that produced goods create new IP rights from which the bearers of the art do not necessarily directly benefit. The copyright owners of audio-visual representations that cover intangible expressions differ from the bearers of the cultural expression represented in the film. As a result, “outsiders” can control usage and access to the material, as opposed to the cultural custodians of ICH. Moreover, copyrights, moral rights and performers’ rights can assist in preventing misuse, but are always assigned to individuals and always restricted to a specific time period. In light of these limitations and ambiguities, a need for governmental regulation is articulated. Politically legitimated guidelines need to address issues of authorship, ownership, dissemination and use of materials and strengthen the rights of the respective communities, groups and individuals in their practices and in products firmly related to these practices. Regulations would further liberate artists from fears and constraints, prevent enclosure of materials and information and potentially foster cooperation on a regional, national and international level. A crucial element in the process of gaining trust, protection and mutual benefit would also be to sensitize the artists about their rights, about the benefits in relation to audio-visual representation and documentation.

Moreover, in the context of ICH and its safeguarding, before legal measures on a policy level might be able to influence practices, a number of recommendations should already be given to people working in the field. These might encompass the following points:

1. In all cases, consultation and prior informed consent should be given by the source persons or communities prior to recordings or documentation, in either audio, audio-visual or written format.⁴⁷⁸ Hereby, stress should be given to aspects of both prior consent and informed consent in terms of copyright, utilization and dissemination issues related to the recordings. 2. In case verbatim transcription of stories and plays are used in documentation, then permission, attribution of (co-)authorship and even (co-)ownership of the material by the source community, group or person involved should be granted. The same procedure can be applied for unedited audio-visual recordings of un-manipulated performances. In both cases, full rights can be given for the source community, while a separate contract can guarantee utilization by the filmmakers for a particular purpose or time duration. 3. In cases whereby producers, authors and copyrights holders of audio-visual representations live overseas, a joint copyright with local institutions or authors/artists is also recommendable as it might prove difficult for institutions and artists to ask permission to use the work in training courses or other safeguarding activities over time. Copyright can further be assigned in a written contract to members or representatives of the source community. 4. In case copyrights and moral rights have been given to particular artists, people aiming to use contents related to the cultural expressions should strive for approval and permission with the source persons or communities even in case such rights have already expired.⁴⁷⁹

A further challenge is seen in the concept of copyright itself. Despite protecting outcomes of creativity against unauthorized use, duplication and circulation, it has severe shortcomings in the context of ICH protection and safeguarding. The major reason is that copyrights and authors' rights are assigned to individuals, while traditional practices and expressions are often communally exercised and owned. For example, Kutiyattam knowledge, values and practice is commonly exercised, maintained and developed and Kutiyattam embodies, transmits and modifies communal knowledge, beliefs and values. The relationship between the community and the art can thus be described as reciprocal. Indeed, communities and their practices, representations, skills are mutually dependent, they mutually shape each other and their relationship is dynamic. Within a reciprocal relationship, they shape the identity of the

⁴⁷⁸ The difficult issue in terms of community agreement is that different opinions often exist within the community regarding matters of access, control and dissemination of visual artifacts. However, in all cases it must be argued that local communities, institutions or representatives of the cultural expression need to consent to publication, usage and dissemination of audio-visual material. Consent must be a necessary requirement and must be assigned and assured before production, publication and especially before dissemination via the Internet.

⁴⁷⁹ For the Australian context, Janke (2009) asserts that the timeframe of copyright law “does *not* adequately reflect the nature of traditional cultural expressions, which are created as part of an ongoing process of passing cultural knowledge to future generations. Indigenous rights to cultural works are recreated in perpetuity and therefore cultural consent to their use should always be necessary” (p. 166, italics in the original).

community and are shaped by the community. Moreover, knowledge, artifacts and practice related to Kutiyattam are considered traditional property and are communally owned. However, community authorship, which recognizes trans- and multi-generational attributors, is not feasible according to law. Nevertheless, Kutiyattam and traditional cultural expressions in general are the outcome of inter- and cross-generational creation, and thus many members of a given community are involved in its shaping, although the initial creations, which formed the basis of further creations, might have been made hundreds of years ago. Creativity also encompasses trans-communal activity and authorship. Thus, the notion of community authorship and ownership again has disadvantages. This is due to the fact that, in the case of Kutiyattam, members not belonging to the traditional communities of practice have become substantially relevant for the re-creation and safeguarding of the art since the latter half of the 20th century. Attribution of community ownership and copyrights to traditional families would thus re-introduce old boundaries and frictions, re-enforce the privileged positions of *Chakyars*, *Nambiars* and *Nangiars*, locate artistic identity firmly within particular families and consequently disempower artists with no family background in Kutiyattam. Artists who already struggle for respect, performance opportunities and community integration would face further hindrances and marginalization. In effect, legal regulation could be a disincentive for young people interested in the art; it could stifle creativity and the reach of safeguarding activities. Therefore, in order to foster safeguarding, legal measures need to be negotiated with representatives of all sections of the practicing community and be consistent with the socio-cultural realities of contemporary artistic practice. Regulating principles simultaneously need to protect traditional artistic expression against misuse, exploitation and distortion and allow for utilization possibilities beyond traditionally defined benchmarks and conventions.

While regulations on a macro level address the issue of protection, regulating practices on a micro level also bear impact. Customary law and traditional regulatory techniques such as norms and conventions, which hold authority within the communities, controlled the access, usage and dissemination of artistic practice and knowledge over centuries and helped in protecting the art. Kutiyattam knowledge transmission was exercised in accordance with a number of rules and was firmly located within the respective communities. Differential access was granted, while indiscriminate public accessibility and circulation has never been part of Kutiyattam tradition and is indeed unfamiliar to the majority of artists. Nowadays, control and authority are no longer communally exercised, but also governmental institutions and stakeholders have the power to share resources on the art and establish their own criteria for dissemination and knowledge transmission. Moreover, once cultural practices are informed

by the discourse on ICH and recognized as such, even further blurring of control and authority as well as enhanced disclosure of information takes place. Access to communally owned Kutiyattam knowledge and artifacts has been widened after UNESCO's proclamation. In the course of safeguarding measures, large-scale documentation and digitization projects have been initiated, accumulating representations of Kutiyattam knowledge and practice that are now in governmental, public or private hands. Consequently, authority and control over Kutiyattam knowledge, transmission and practice is no longer exclusively located in the hands of the traditional or practicing communities. As a result, members of the practicing community fear disempowerment and degradation of status, loss of influence, loss of monetary gains, loss of monopoly over knowledge, knowledge resources and property, and thus loss of social, cultural and economic capital. Today, in the face of increasing competition, the intrusion of outsiders and newcomers, lack of reciprocity and adequate remuneration, cases of misuse, access to audio-visual representations and other documents not being granted to artists by other institutions and simultaneous claims for free dissemination of knowledge, artists, Gurukulams and institutions feel suspicious and increasingly retain their knowledge resources from inclusion in national or regional archives and from public use. Specifically, traditional families and the respective institutions highly guard materials considered family property. These materials also include audio-visual representations of performances, which in some cases are attributed extraordinary value. The contemporarily practiced enclosure of representations, cultural assets and information can be seen as a strategy to increase or maintain the value of the practitioner as the main source of knowledge, having access to assets. Furthermore, the provision of partial access granted via cooperation agreements enables artists to remain authorities in the field, thereby simultaneously securing dominance and monopoly in knowledge production and reproduction. While partial access to materials is granted, access to the complete archive is never permitted. This precautionary measure enables practitioners to retain control of regulatory mechanisms and strengthen their position as cultural players. Overall, artists fear that free dissemination of Kutiyattam knowledge and practice via audio-visual representation would lead to a popularization, commonalization and collectivization of their practices, which would infringe upon their exclusive rights to the practice, diminish their efforts and privileged positions as authorities, knowledge bearers and custodians of ICH, and in the worst case would replace collaboration or minimize community participation in research, education and promotion projects. However, if mutual trust can be generated and adequate terms, conditions and regulations can be negotiated, the next generation will see the benefits of sharing knowledge and

representations with the global public.

Finally, legally not binding protocols, recommendations, codes of conduct and best practices, derived from case study analysis may assist people in the field. However, given that each cultural expression is situated within a specific socio-cultural and political context, regulatory documents will necessarily differ from each other. Moreover, it is important that these documents are verified or better co-designed on the local ground together with the respective practitioners and stakeholders. Furthermore, artists and community members should be made aware of the crafted documents and granted access to them. In doing so, awareness will be increased regarding rights and the sustainable protection of artistic practice.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

This thesis provided a theoretical model of representation that targets the interrelation of audio-visual media and ICH and enables analysis of a dynamic and complex process. Following Stuart Hall (1997c), representation was conceptualized as a process in which meaning is continuously (re)constructed and negotiated. This process is further understood to engage in reciprocal interrelation with several elements and spheres of action that have processual character themselves (see Chapter 1). These elements and spheres of action, which influence and are influenced by representational practice, have been identified as: the identity process, encompassing the history and practice of the aspect of culture to be represented; the production process of audio-visual representations, involving approach and motivation; the circulation process, encompassing the archiving and accessibility of representations; the encoded message of audio-visual representations; the reception process, involving the decoding of messages and respective positioning; the utilization process, referring to the consumption and strategic placement of representations; and finally, the regulation process.

Devoting attention to all these aspects of representation allowed for a detailed analysis and thick description (Geertz, 1973) of an ethnographic situation, as well as insights into the role and impact of audio-visual representations for and on cultural practices and expressions understood as ICH. The validity of this model has been proven within the case study of this thesis, whereby it enabled the description of representation as a dynamic process and the demonstration of a local perspective on representational practice encompassing a multitude of aspects, experiences and reciprocal relations (see Chapter 4). It was further shown that the diverse processes and practices involved in representation are not only closely interrelated, but also that meaning is constructed independently within several moments and that even slight manipulations and modifications within the setting of one moment can bear consequences regarding meaning production in another moment. It was thus understood that all processes involved in representation constantly feedback and influence each other.

This conceptualization of the interrelation between audio-visual media, representation and ICH was influenced by the circuit of culture model (Du Gay et al., 1997), the concept of memory (Assmann, 2004, 2006), the encoding/decoding model (Hall, 1992b) and discourse in Social/Cultural Anthropology giving attention to the politics and ethics involved in representation (MacDougall, 1995; Ruby, 1991, 2000), as well as the impact of representations on identity formation, cultural practices and the construction of knowledge (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Ginsburg, 1995, 2002a, 2002b).

Regarding the second aim of this thesis, namely assessing the suitability of audio-visual representation as a tool for the safeguarding of ICH/Kutiyattam, the results can be summarized as follows. Case study analysis has provided evidence allowing the argument that audio-visual representations of ICH, particularly when produced in close collaboration with members of the practicing community and designed according to their needs, constitute significant vehicles within ICH safeguarding measures. They can provide means and resources for sustained transmission, mediation of knowledge and history relevant for the continuation of practices and the sustained enactment of ICH. This is specifically the case when elders who functioned as archives and mediators of knowledge, memory and practice are no longer actively engaged in artistic performance or have already passed away and the succeeding generation of practitioners has not been able to incorporate and/or memorize practical and cognitive knowledge related to ICH in an overall comprehensive way. While audio-visual representations can never replace incorporation of practices and knowledge via mimesis, continuous repetition as well as mediation via the body and face-to-face interaction, they nevertheless can provide important secondary sources enabling the transmission, study and revitalization of elements of knowledge and practice otherwise lost for future generations of practitioners. Considering both the complexity of ICH and the multiple and diverse demands that shape the modern lives of community members, a combination of individual memory and audio-visual representations, thus cultural memory (Assmann, 2004, 2006), is considered effective for comprehensive and multilayered preservation and transmission of ICH. This combined mechanism particularly supports those traditional practitioners holding responsibility in maintaining ICH practices and facing lacking capacity in terms of limited human resources or time shortages, in doing so in an all-embracing way. However, in order to facilitate dynamic safeguarding and counter distortion and homogenization risks, consumption needs to be integrated within structures of teaching and learning that center on intimate teacher-student relationships, continuous interaction and feedback on the one hand, and encouraged not in primary but rather in advanced stages of apprenticeship on the other. In this stage, representations furthermore potentially encourage individual reflection and engagement with own performance practice, thus enabling artistic refinement and development. They provide students and young professionals with additional memory aids, with reference sources facilitating focused enquiry and the recapitulation of whole repertoires. It can be argued that limitations in traditional practices of preservation and transmission can entail disadvantages for non-traditional practitioners with no steady access to source materials or knowledge bearers and no continuous opportunity to participate in the enactment of ICH

practices. The case of Kutiyattam Sanskrit theatre has shown that practice has been democratized, secularized and institutionalized in the past decades and that new institutions and practitioners coming from non-traditional community backgrounds have been substantially involved in safeguarding measures that have allowed the development of practices, integration in modern society and the revival of elements of Kutiyattam that were severely threatened with extinction. However, these ‘new’ practitioners, despite having largely contributed to Kutiyattam, have not been entirely integrated into the nucleus of Kutiyattam and face discrimination in terms of access to and participation in traditional practices that are still community/(caste)-bound (see Chapter 3). For this category of practitioners and particularly their apprentices, additional reference materials can provide substantial means for teaching and study, refinement and development. In addition, representations by means of specific software and portable technologies introduce new ways of memorization. They facilitate the respective realization and visualization of memory that is vital for revitalization purposes and short-term or on-the-spot memorization practices that are functional for young professionals in pre-performance periods.

Case study analysis has further shown that audio-visual representations have an impact on the identity construction of ICH practitioners, on individual and social memory. Providing narratives and visualizations of the past, they enable the (re)construction of history and belonging, they assist individual practitioners, and particularly newcomers to the field of practice with no community background in the exercise of ICH, in articulating and aligning themselves within the history and tradition of ICH, with locating themselves within cultural identity. Moreover, audio-visual representations provide resources and tools for research and education, they facilitate demonstration and illustration and provide source material for detailed and repeated academic investigation. Moreover, they also enable the rapid and widespread dissemination and promotion of ICH, transgressing the local time-space continuum of practice. Enabling new ways of performance consumption and allowing access to ICH to new audiences, even from remote places, representations enhance awareness and knowledge on ICH practices and facilitate the democratization of ICH. They add immensely to the popularization of ICH, facilitate the generation of interest and respect and potentially enlarge the local audience attending ICH practices. Furthermore, representations offer publicity, increase the market value and social status of practitioners and potentially generate commercial income, via either participation in production, engagements resulting from publication and circulation or trade with generated products. Finally, they provide means for the valorization of ICH, tools for signifying societal relevance and ways in which to locate

ICH within contemporary public discourse, practice and space. Audio-visual representations thus mediate information, facilitate new encounters and transform aspects of ICH. They encourage openings and bridges into modern society, which potentially also attract youngsters to engage with ICH. With all these aspects and attributes targeting the transmission and continuity of practice and increase in audience and societal relevance, audio-visual representations substantially contribute to the viability of ICH.

Besides these benefits, representational practice by audio-visual media also bears a number of challenges. Case study analysis has allowed for the identification of five major fields of conflict addressing the interface of tradition and modernity, the spheres of production, identity, consumption and regulation, as well as the notions of power, hegemony and ideology, which are interwoven into these spheres and exercise influence on both practices and the coding of messages disseminated concerning ICH. As a first reservation, the argument can be raised that intangible practices are objectified and made tangible within audio-visual representations. Within this process, a number of aspects integral to the meaning and nature of these practices are lost. These aspects relate to the body and the senses, to individual experience of time, space, sight, sound and smell. Within audio-visual representations, ICH is partially de-contextualized and de-sensualized, experience of ICH is de-emotionalized, immersion into its multidimensionality is abstracted and as such, ICH, which largely relies on physical exposure, personal interaction and interrelation, is only partially represented. By means of audio-visual media, the audience, and practitioners becoming audience, can step out of the event, objectify practice and exercise control on its reception in terms of time, locality, involvement and exposure. This perspective on ICH fosters a focus on the product, the concrete manifestation of ICH practices, such as a particular performance, rather than the variety of processes and dimensions involved in practice. Objectification and abstraction as such can lead to the spectacularization of elements of ICH practices, as well as distortions and distractions in orientation within practice.

A second reservation and indeed challenge can be seen in the current approach to the production, coding and utilization of representations. External representation by outsiders of the community of practice has been identified as useful for promotional purposes on a macro level, awareness-raising in general society and the generation of collective and cultural memory. However, in cases whereby motivation of representations remain unmarked and those in which these representations are stored and made accessible in archives as genuine, neutral and unmanipulated representations of ICH practices, they potentially unfold ill-effects in the practice of ICH. They provide samples of ICH performance practice that have been

conditioned by a production framework that introduced new power and dominance relations (see also Chapter 2), new reference points, new context, location and ways of interaction. However, the enactment of ICH under the umbrella of filmmaking conventions, generally applied within documentary cinema, obstructs the full unfolding of skills and meaning associated with the respective ICH, leading to the exposure and preservation of samples of ICH that are considered by community members to be of average quality in terms of artistic expression. In this context, practitioners have voiced concern that if these samples are used by future generations of practitioners for reference or transmission, these representations would influence practice in a negative way, leading to distortions and unwanted manipulations in the practice and identity of ICH.

In terms of self-representation by insiders, community members stress the lack of equipment, capacities and skills, and thus limitations regarding the filmic quality of representations, dissemination and usage. Based on remarks given by community members, it must be argued that only shared representation, the collaborative design and production of representations involving community members in all aspects of decision-making can facilitate the preservation of complex, multilayered and diverse practices. Without engaging in participatory approaches, it is impossible for outsiders of the practice to produce representations that encode community defined value and meaning of the respective ICH. Without this coding, representations remain meaningless and unusable for community-based consumption in the context of the transmission and revitalization of practices, as well as in terms of research and higher education. In addition, participatory methods concentrating on dialogue, exchange and participation in encoding processes can balance power relations involved in the making of representations, position practitioners as experts of ICH and enhance agency and social status. Thus, they not only potentially generate respect but also apply respect within encounters in a more comprehensive way (see Chapter 2). In identifying participatory approaches to the production of representations as the most suitable approach fostering the viability of ICH, the second hypothesis of this thesis was also verified.

Nonetheless, a major challenge for the usability of representations by practitioners is a lack of information concerning existing representations and limited possibilities to access and use representations. A further challenge inherent in audio-visual representation is that representations as social and cultural constructs always imply selection. Within the context of polyphonic and multilayered cultural practices, which are continuously (re)created and thereby changed and modified, representations emphasize specific meanings and relations. Moreover, representations can potentially mirror and rearticulate preferred readings, aligning

with dominant ideologies and hegemonic narratives rather than the actual realities of practices (Hall, 1992b). In such cases, struggle over discourse arises, which alerts to the politics of signification. This is due to the fact that the representation of people and their practices has implications and consequences for the contemporary lives of these people. For example, representations of ICH participate in anchoring memory and legitimizing versions of heritage and identity. These versions imply inclusion and exclusion, remembering and forgetting, inheritance and disinheritance and position subjectivities within both heritage and the social world.

Furthermore, by means of master narratives, representations can foster the homogenization and stereotypification of dynamic practices. In cases whereby they construct the idea of an unchanging practice, they support revivalism and the privileging of particular strata of practitioners having authority in the past and simultaneously neglect innovations and diversity in contemporary practice. Influencing local power relations, audio-visual representations encourage both the empowerment and marginalization of cultural players, practitioners and aspects of practice and knowledge, and thus bear an influence on both identity and diversity, as well as the embodiment and enactment of living traditions. Disproportional media exposure and perceived impacts can further strengthen hierarchies and frictions, competition, envy and distrust among communities of practice, in effect potentially stifling networking and cooperation in safeguarding measures. A further challenge can be located in increasing the trivialization, exotization, appropriation and commodification of cultural practices and expressions by means of or within audio-visual representations. De-contextualized ICH practices are utilized for the sake of capitalization and marketing, often without the agreement and information of practitioners. Aspects of ICH are further becoming abstracted and remodeled to suit entertainment aims and product placements, often at the cost of the very essence and meaning of ICH. In addition, it is generally not the community of practice that benefits from commercialization and remodeling, but rather outsiders of the practice, who often have no genuine interest in the safeguarding of ICH. In such cases, practitioners need to cope with feelings of theft, exploitation and degradation. In such instances, intellectual property law can assist practitioners. As copyright law largely requires the prior tangibilization of practices, audio-visual representations can provide useful tools. However, legal protection measures also bear challenges, given that ICH is often not individually but rather communally owned and rights are difficult to allocate. Further challenges are that representations generally create new rights, which are mainly assigned to outsiders of the practice and that restrictive regulations can stifle safeguarding measures and

engagement with ICH, in particular by non-traditional members and youth. Finally, comprehensive audio-visual representation, sustainable preservation and archiving generate knowledge pools, potentially enabling the collectivization of ICH practices. This form of commonalization poses a challenge to ICH practitioners fearing a decrease in their monopoly over knowledge and authority over practice. In order to prevent reservation due to feelings of dispossession and disempowerment and in order to encourage future collaboration and disclosure of knowledge, this challenge needs to be addressed by cultural policy in an integrative way, locating ICH practitioners firmly and institutionally within the center of expertise on ICH.

Acknowledging all these potentials and challenges, this thesis argues that heritage democratization and community participation as envisioned in the concept of the 2003 convention can still be enhanced. In relation to heritage representation, it argues for a shift in discourse and practice, for access and participation, for the enabling of conditions that allow the production and consumption of audio-visual representations for the sake of strengthening the viability of ICH and for a higher involvement of the respective communities, groups and individuals in the representation of their ICH.

5.1 Recommendations

As ICH practices are always socially and culturally contextualized, the findings of this research cannot be universalized and attributed to all ICH practices and processes of representation. Nonetheless, as an outcome of this thesis, the following general recommendations are given, targeting ICH professionals, people involved with the implementation of the convention on a national, regional or local level, as well as media professionals, people engaged with the production and dissemination of representations on ICH.

Recommendation 1 addressing access and customary practices

Article 13(d)(ii) of the convention explicitly requires States Parties to ensure access to ICH, “while respecting customary practices governing access to specific aspects” of ICH (UNESCO, 2003a). As such, free, prior and informed consent of communities, groups or individuals is necessary in activities that also include outsiders of the community of practice or in educational or promotional projects that reach out to the general public and aim for awareness-raising (UNESCO, 2012b, para 101(d)). The recommendation is to interpret this

provision holistically and provide in-depth and comprehensive information to all community members involved in representational practice prior to production. This information shall encompass the aims and ambitions of representations, the target groups addressed, copyright arrangements, the ways of circulation and dissemination, as well as potential outcomes and usages.

Recommendation 2 addressing the provision of access to representations

Considering that ICH practitioners, particularly in the field of performing arts, potentially rely on audio-visual representations in the revitalization of specific aspects of ICH, as well as in securing continuity in the transmission and enactment of practices, accessibility of representations plays a crucial role. It is recommended to develop and apply legal procedures that guide and allow institutions and archives to provide continuous access to the full scale and length of representations in their custody or, in cases where archives are located at a far distance from the main locality in which ICH practices are performed and (re)created, allow the provision of copies of representations to practitioners of the respective ICH or representative institutions. It is further recommended to provide unedited rough materials of recordings, if available, for reference and community usage.⁴⁸⁰

Recommendation 3 addressing the production of audio-visual representations for community use

Considering aspects of ICH practices being at the verge of extinction and realizing that governmental parties and independent agencies have mainly produced and utilized audio-visual representations so far for horizontal transmission, inventorying, documentation (mainly addressing archival or educational purposes) and promotion into general society, it is recommended to shift a focus on vertical transmission and integrate the needs of communities, groups and individuals engaged in the practice of ICH. It is recommended to actively create conditions for the creation of audio-visual representations that can be used by practicing communities as tools for the sustainable transmission and enactment of ICH.

⁴⁸⁰ This recommendation can be read also in association with paragraph 87 of the *Operational Directives* (UNESCO, 2012b), which invites States Parties to share documentation on ICH practices on the territory of another States Party with that respective States Party, while simultaneously the States Party receiving the documentation “shall make that information available to the communities, groups and, where applicable, individuals concerned, as well as to experts, centres of expertise and research institutes” (ibid.).

Recommendation 4 addressing production processes and the production of “informed” representations

Realizing that audio-visual representations produced by outsiders of the respective ICH practice are considerably lacking regarding exposed performance quality, context and meaning of the respective ICH and acknowledging that these representations often cannot be meaningfully decoded by members of the respective ICH community, it is recommended to apply participatory approaches in the production of ICH representations. In particular when aimed at vertical transmission within the community, intense preparation, dialogue and exchange between both filmmakers and ICH practitioners is required to foster encoding that respects and gives full account of the culture depicted. Acknowledging that this is a time- and work-consuming process, it is recommended to create conditions enabling such work, to initiate procedures looking for film professionals and technicians ready to engage in such endeavors and to build capacity among ICH practitioners regarding such collaborative work. This capacity building can range from language skills to negotiation skills to technological skills of filmmaking.

Recommendation 5 addressing respect and remuneration

In cases where practitioners have collaborated in the production of representations, adequate respect and remuneration are to be given. It is recommended to develop a code of ethics or protocols guiding interactions and decisions at film sets, as well as during pre- and post-production periods. It is further specifically recommended that technical functions exercised by practitioners during production of representations be exposed in the credits of audio-visual representations.

Recommendation 6 addressing the consumption, storage and maintenance of audio-visual representations

Considering conditions in which climate affects the materiality of representations in a destructive way and conditions in which practitioners do not have steady access to electricity or technological facilities, it is recommended to actively create institutions or integrate sections in existing institutions that provide technological facilities for the consumption of representations and exercise proficiency in the storage and maintenance of these representations. These institutions or sections shall be located in close proximity to the local practicing community. They shall not privilege specific practitioners but rather provide

indiscriminate access to all practitioners of ICH, while still respecting customary practices regulating access to specific practices. In order to guarantee the usage and acceptance of this institution, it is recommended to negotiate location as well as access and consumption regulations in close collaboration with members of the respective practicing community.

Recommendation 7 addressing the protection of ICH practices

Realizing the increasing misappropriation of represented knowledge and skills as well as the misuse of audio-visual representations in ways that damage the reputation of practitioners or the identity of the respective ICH practice as a whole, it is recommended to provide legal consultancy facilities to ICH practitioners regarding the potential exercise of intellectual property rights and related rights, as well as respective procedures. It is further recommended to create national guidelines that regulate issues regarding the authorship, ownership, dissemination and use of representations, which directly focus and reflect upon ICH practices. These guidelines shall be negotiated with the respective practicing community, involving representatives of all existing sections of practice and shall aim at strengthening their rights. Considering that legal measures might also prevent safeguarding measures and attracting youth to ICH practices, it is recommended that guidelines simultaneously protect ICH practices and allow for the utilization of practices and representations, including beyond traditionally defined benchmarks. In this respect, collaboration and exchange with WIPO is recommended, especially regarding experiences gained within its “Creative Heritage Project” and in relation to the international-standard setting instrument for the protection of intellectual property rights of communities, which is currently being developed.

Recommendation 8 addressing contemporary relevance and democratization

Considering that ICH practices have evolved over time and bear relevance not only in relation to the past but also to the present and realizing that ICH practices in certain cases have incorporated changes with respect to practice, practitioners, audience, culture as well as patronage, it is recommended that audio-visual representations of ICH go beyond a reflection of presumed “authentic” traditional practice of the past and do not construct a timeless existence of ICH practices, but rather position ICH within historical time, reflecting upon the manifold realities of contemporary ICH practice and experience.

Recommendation 9 addressing heritage democratization and popularization

Realizing that audio-visual representations can function as a tool supporting the democratization of ICH among practitioners as well as society, considering that media technologies can provide innovative means in safeguarding ICH and acknowledging that representations influence the construction of meaning and knowledge concerning ICH, it is recommended to facilitate capacity building within local communities, enabling members to engage with the potential of audio-visual representation.

Recommendation 10 addressing awareness-raising

Considering that audio-visual representations need to address a variety of different target groups and realizing that in order to reach audiences, representations need to be constructed within the respective culturally conditioned frameworks of understanding available to these audiences, it is recommended to devote attention to the prevention of objectification, stereotypification, trivialization and de-contextualization.

Recommendation 11 addressing gender equality

In cases whereby attention in audio-visual representation of ICH practice has been predominantly placed on male-exercised practice, it is recommended to also include female viewpoints and practices. Furthermore, in cases whereby females, particularly young female apprentices, face disadvantages in terms of access to and utilization of audio-visual representations, it is recommended to actively create the necessary conditions enabling their usage. These conditions need to be adapted according to the specific socio-cultural context in which the respective ICH practice is located.

Glossary

Dealing with several languages (*Malayalam*, *Sanskrit*, Tamil and English) and given that precise and concise transliteration is often disregarded in Indian and Western texts or does not correspond to each other, consistency in transliteration has proved difficult. In order to provide convenience in reading, the author uses popular anglicized words and concepts in the main text. However, in this glossary, the *Sanskrit* version of many words is additionally given in brackets. Regarding names of persons and cities, the author solely follows spellings that are widely used among the Kutiyattam artists and scholars.

- Abhinaya:** Acting, histrionic representation. Four categories are distinguished: *āṅgikābhinaya* (gestures and movement), *vācikābhinaya* (words, speech), *āhāryābhinaya* (make-up and costume) and *sāttvikābhinaya* (emotions).
- Akkitta:** Recitation of *ślokas*, *Sanskrit* verses, by the *Nangiar* in accordance with the *Mizhavu* and movements by the actor as part of a ritual sequence in the prelude of a play.
- Ambalavāsi:** Temple serving communities (castes) in Kerala, including the communities of *Chakyars* and *Nambiars/Nangiars*. In terms of rank, they are above *Nayars* and below *Namboodiris*.
- Ammannur:** Name of a famous *Chakayar* family.
- Ammavan:** Maternal uncle.
- Aṅgika-abhinaya:** Dramatic expression by the use of gestures and body movements.
- Anushtanam natakam:** Malayalam word for ritual theatre.
- Arangettam (araṇṇettam):** Stage debut, first performance.
- Arangutali:** The ritual act of cleaning the stage via the sprinkling of purified or sacred water.
- Arjuna:** Hero in the epic *Mahabharata*.
- Āśān:** Title for a teacher, denoting great respect.
- Ascharyachudamani (Āścaryacūḍamani):** Play by *Saktibhadra*.
- Asura:** Clan of demigods, demon.
- Āṭṭam:** Acting or dancing within rhythmic and stylized movement patterns.
- Āṭṭaprakāram:** Acting manual that gives instructions for gestures and the *Vidushaka*'s verbal displays.
- Bālacharitam:** A play by *Bhasa*.
- Bāli:** Monkey king, depicted in the epic *Ramayana*.
- Bhagavadajjuka:** A single act play by *Bodhayana*.
- Bhagavati:** Goddess.
- Bhakti:** Type of religious devotion.
- Bharata:** Probably the author of the *Natyashastra*, the ancient Indian treatise on theatre.
- Bharatanāṭyam:** Classical dance form of south India.
- Bhāsa:** Acclaimed *Sanskrit* playwright. Dates are unclear and variously set between the 2nd century BC and the 5th century AD. Probably the author of 13 *Sanskrit* plays rediscovered in *Thiruvananthapuram*, Kerala, in 1912. His plays are widely used in Kutiyattam until today.
- Bhāva:** Sentiment or state of emotions reflected in facial expression.
- Bhavabhuti:** *Sanskrit* playwright.
- Bhima:** Hero in the epic *Mahabharata*.
- Brahma:** Supreme god, first part of the holy Hindu trinity, the creator.
- Brahmin:** Member of the upper caste, traditionally priests.
- Chachu:** Name of an important *Chakayar* personality.
- Chaitanya (Caitanya):** Divine consciousness within an idol.
- Chakshusha yajna (chakshusayājna):** Visual sacrifice, visual offering.
- Chakyar (Cākyār):** Community (caste) of traditional performers of Kutiyattam.

Chakyarkuttu (Cākyārkūttu): Oral performance of epic stories by *Chakyars*.

Chera (Cēra): Dynasty that ruled in the area, belonging to today's Kerala until the 12th century. Two dynasties must be distinguished: the ancient *Chera* dynasty (approx. 2nd century AD – 6th/7th century AD) and the medieval one, which re-established power in the 9th century AD. The last king *Kulasekhara Varma* was involved in the revival of Kutiyattam in the 11th/12th century AD.

Cheriya Parisha: Name of a *Chakyar* family.

Chilappatikaram (Cilappatikāram): One of the five grand Tamil epics. Classic in Tamil literature written at the beginning of our common era. It provides details about Tamil culture and society at the time.

Cholliyattam: Acting rehearsal.

Chutti (Cuṭṭi): Characteristic facial make-up item in Kutiyattam made of rice powder or paper.

Darshan (Darśana): Devotion through the visual perception of the divine.

Deva: God.

Dharma: Righteous code of conduct, duty, virtue. According to Hindu philosophy, one of the major goals in life.

Dhvani: Suggestion, underlying meaning, subtext.

Draupadi: Heroine in the grand epic *Mahabharata*.

Dravidian: A language family that is predominant in south India. The term also covers the people belonging to this language family.

Dryshyakala: A visual art.

Duryodhana: Hero in the grand epic *Mahabharata*.

Eḍakka: Hourglass shaped percussion instrument mainly used in temple performances.

Ezhava: Community (caste) of laborers, agriculturalists, mainly working with coconut palm trees and artisans. Often tenants on land belonging to *Namboodiris*, *Nayars* or Syrian Christians. Traditionally holding a low ritual and social status. Until the 20th century, not permitted to enter temples or streets close to temples or houses of members of the higher castes.

Ganapati: Hindu deity, referred to as the remover of obstacles and patron of the arts and sciences.

Goshti: Sounding of the *Mizhavu* as a signifier for the start of a performance.

Gurukulam: Traditional school system, whereby students study and reside in the house of the teacher.

Guru-shishya parampara (Guru-śiṣya): In this traditional system of mentoring and teaching, the student stays at the house of his teacher, assists and learns from him. The teaching corresponds to the student's ability to learn. There is no fixed syllabus, course term or time limitation.

Guruvayoor: City in Kerala with a famous *Krishna* temple.

Hanumān: Monkey god, depicted in the epic *Ramayana*, where he assists *Rama* in rescuing *Sita*.

Hasta: Hand gesture, *mudra*.

Hasta-abhinaya: Acting through hand gestures.

Hastalakṣanadīpikā (Hastalakṣaṇadīpikā): Treatise on hand gestures. A major reference text, which provides the major *hasta-mudras* (hand gestures) for several performance traditions in Kerala, including *Mōhiniyāṭṭam* and *Kathakali*, among others.

Illōṭama: Caste name of women in the *Chakyar* community. They do not participate in Kutiyattam.

Irinjalakuda: City in Kerala.

Jatāyu: Eagle character depicted in the epic *Ramayana*.

Jatāyuvadhāṅkam: Act in the play *Ascharyachudamani*.

Kailāsa: Mountain abode of Lord *Shiva* in the Himalaya.

Kailāsōddhāraṇam: Famous scene in Kutiyattam that depicts the lifting of mount *Kailasa*.

Kala: *Malayalam* word for the arts.

Kalady: Village in *Ernakulam* district, Kerala.

Kalari: Training space.

Kālidāsa: Acclaimed classical *Sanskrit* poet and playwright, dated approximately in the 5th century. He set standards for *Sanskrit* plays; after him, no plays were found that do not commit themselves to the conventions set in the *Natyashastra*. His plays were (re)introduced in Kutiyattam rather late.

Kapāli: Hero of the play *Mattavilasa*.

Kari: Make-up style that features black. Used for the character *Surpanakha*.

Kathakali: Traditional dance theatre from Kerala, categorized under *nritya*, (not under *natya*, which means drama).

Katti: Type of character in Kutiyattam.

Kāvya: Body of *Sanskrit* literature written by Indian court poets at the beginning of the 7th century AD.

Kerala: Name of a modern state at the Western coast of south India, separated from the neighboring state of Tamil Nadu by the Western Ghats, a huge mountain range. The common language is *Malayalam*.

Kerala Kalamandalam: Premier institution, which provides training and research in traditional art forms. Acknowledged today as a deemed university.

Kitangur: Town in Kerala, seat of the Cheriya Parisha Chakyar family.

Kramadipika: Stage manual for Kutiyattam, providing details on costume and make-up, etc.

Krishna (Śrīkrṣṇa): Deity, eighth *avatar* (incarnation) of the supreme god *Vishnu* (*Mahavisnu*), hero of the *Bhagavata*, a great *puranic* text, probably written in the 10th century and considered holy by many Hindus.

Krishnanāttam: Dance theatre also performed as a votive offering, particularly in the temple at *Guruvayoor*, Kerala. It developed in the 17th century and tells the story of Lord *Krishna*.

Kuladharmā: Traditional or hereditary profession, right and duty.

Kulaśekhara Varma: King and playwright, who reformed Kutiyattam in the 11th/12th century AD.

Kurumkuzhal: Music instrument (wind pipe) used in Kutiyattam.

Kutalmanikkam: Name of a temple in the city of *Irinjalakuda*.

Kūttampalam: Theatre structure inside the temple premise; traditional performance space for Kutiyattam.

Kuttanchery: Name of a *Chakyar* family.

Kuttuvilakku: Particular oil lamp with a large handle.

Kuzhithalam: Small cymbals, used by the *Nangiar* in Kutiyattam.

Lakshmana: *Sriramas*'s younger brother.

Lokadharmi: According to the *Natyashastra*, a type of dramatic expression that makes use of realistic, mimetic representation.

Mahābhārata: Great Hindu epic written in *Sanskrit*. Together with the *Ramayana*, it is one of the most illustrious and influential Hindu scriptures of ancient India. Authorship is given to the sage *Vyasa*. However, between the 5th century BC and the 2nd century AD, a number of authors contributed to the work. It consists of 106,000 *slokas*, which are divided into eighteen books. It covers the majority of Hindu myths, legends and tales. The main plot centers on the fight between the two *Bharata* lineages, the sinister *Kauravas* and the virtuous *Pandavas*. Regarding philosophy and devotion, the most important book is the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which is considered holy. Herein, *Krishna* gives instructions to *Arjuna* before he goes to fight in the battle of *Kurukshetra*.

Mahendra Vikrama: *Sanskrit* playwright.

Malayālam: Language in Kerala.

Maṇḍōdarī: Wife of king *Ravana*.

Māṇi: Name of a famous *Chakyar* family.

Maṇipravālam: *Sanskrit*-Tamil/*Malayalam* mixture; early literary language in south India. Prose manuals for Kutiyattam are written in this language.

Mantrāṅkam: Act from the play *Pratijnayougandharayanam*.

Margi: Institution facilitating the training and promotion of Kutiyattam and *Kathakali*.

Marumakkattayam: Matrilineal inheritance and descent system.

Mathavilāsam (Mattavilāsa): Play by *Mahendra Vikrama Pallava*.

Minukku: Type of make-up used for females and sages.

Mizhavil Thayambaka: Percussion ensemble with *Mizhavu* drums.

Mizhāvu: Major percussion instrument in Kutiyattam, traditionally made of copper and treated with great respect.

Mōhiniyāṭṭam: Traditional female dance form of Kerala.

Moksha (Mokṣa): Salvation.

Mudrā: Specific hand gesture unique to Indian dramaturgy.

Mukha-abhinaya: Acting through facial expression.

Mutiyettu: Traditional (semi-ritual) folk theatre of Kerala.

Muzhikkulam: Name of a *Chakyar* family.

Nāgānanda: *Sanskrit* play written by king *Harsha*, probably in the 7th century.

Nambiar (Nanpyār): Community (caste) of traditional *Mizhavu* players, drummers in Kutiyattam.

Namboodiri (Nampūtiri): Community (caste) of Kerala Brahmins, occupying a supreme position within traditional society, due to their ritual status and wealth. Traditionally, they are priests and owners of large estate. They practiced a patrilineal inheritance system and primogeniture. Thus, only the eldest son married within the caste, while other male members practiced *sambandham* relations. They were the last caste in Kerala to be integrated into the British education system.

Namboodiripad: Exalted section among *Namboodiri-Brahmins*.

Nānālōka: General audience.

Nandikeswara (Nandikēśvara): Author of a treatise on dramaturgy called *Abhinayadarpana*.

Nangiar (Naññyār): Women of the *Nambiar* community; female performers and singers in Kutiyattam.

Nangiarkuttu (Naññyār-kūttu): Solo female enactment, art form allied to Kutiyattam.

Narasimhavataram: *Narasimha* is an *avatar* (incarnation, manifestation) of god *Vishnu*. The name also refers to a play in Kutiyattam.

Natakam (Nāṭaka): Theatre, play, one of the two types of drama as classified in the *Natyashastra*. A play with religious or mythical content, featuring a deity, sage or king as the hero.

Naṭankuśa: 15th century *Sanskrit* treatise on drama, critique on Kutiyattam.

Nāṭya: Dramatic art, drama.

Nāṭyadharmi: According to the *Natyashastra*, a type of dramatic expression that makes use of stylized representation.

Natyashastra (Nāṭyaśāstra): Ancient Indian treatise on performing arts written between 200 BC and 200 AD. It serves as a kind of encyclopedia for *Sanskrit* drama and has a great influence on drama productions in India until today.

Nāṭya yājna: Offering, worship or sacrifice through drama.

Nāyars: Traditionally a community (caste) of warriors, landed gentry and landowners. However, this caste was never homogenous and has quite a number of subcastes that also cover day laborers. Traditionally, members follow the matrilineal system.

Nepathya: Green room behind the stage, space for make-up and costume.

Netra-abhinaya: Acting through eye movements and expressions.

Nīlakaṇṭha: *Sanskrit* playwright.

Nilavilakku: Traditional oil lamp in Kerala, especially used for rituals and ceremonies.

Nirvahanam: Recapitulation solo that can last for several days. Dramatic technique, unique to Kutiyattam, in which incidents are described in a retrospective manner, leading up to the entrance of the character on stage.

Nityakriya: Dance movements, part of a preliminary sequence, first item learned by an apprentice.

Oḍissi: Dance form of north India.

Pacha: Type of character that denotes nobility.

Padmashree: The fourth highest civilian award conferred by the government of India on the occasion of the Republic day.

Painkulam: Name of a famous *Chakyar* family.

Pakarnāttam: One actor/actress depicting multiple characters on stage.

Panchamukha mizhāvu: Five-faced drum that is predominantly used for temple rituals.

Pārvatī: Wife of *Shiva*.

Pārvatīviharam: Famous act in Kutiyattam.

Patakam: Oral presentations of epic stories traditionally by *Nambiars*.

Pazhukka: Type of noble character in Kutiyattam.

Peetham: Chair with four legs, used by actors/actresses to sit on stage.

Pothiyil: Name of a *Chakyar* family.

Prabandham (Prabandha): Genre of *Sanskrit* literature used for *Chakyarkuttu*.

Prabandhamkūttu: Solo performance of the *Chakyar*.

Prakrit (Prākṛta): Middle Indo-Aryan language family. In comparison to *Sanskrit*, it is considered of lesser or more ordinary status in literature or religious texts. It also refers to native languages, dialects or the vernacular.

Prathishlokam (Pratiślōka): Parody verse.

Preksaka: Elite audience.

Pūjā: Hindu devotional offering.

Pulayas: Agricultural laborers. Traditionally with very low ritual and social status. Together with *Pariahs* and *Kuravas*, they belong to the lowest caste, traditionally considered to be “polluting” to high castes. In Kerala, ritual pollution was considered to happen by touch and sight.

Purāṇa: Important genre of ancient religious texts that provide legends about Hindu deities and details on philosophical concepts. The texts were probably written and compiled all over India between the 2nd and 10th/11th century AD. The eighteen *Maha-Puranas* (great Puranas) alone count 429,000 verses. They consist of major religious scriptures, particularly for devotees of the divine *Trimurti* (trinity): *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva*. The most famous and influential among them are the *Vishnu* and *Bhagavata-Purana*, with the latter describing the story of *Krishna*. The eighteen *Upa-Puranas* (lesser Puranas) cover further deities and consist of basic texts for devotees of the goddess (*Devi*).

Purappadu (Purappātu): Entry of a character on stage.

Puruṣārthas: The four goals of life in Hindu philosophy: *Dharma* (righteousness, duty, virtue), *artha* (prosperity, wealth), *kama* (love, desire) and *moksa* (liberation).

Rāga: Melodic pattern in Indian music.

Rakshasa: Clan of demons.

Rāma: God, hero of the epic *Ramayana*, incarnation of Lord *Vishnu*.

Rāmanāṭṭam: Drama that tells the whole story of the *Ramayana* in eight parts. It developed in the late-17th century and was modeled with reference to *Krishnanattam*.

Rāmāyaṇa: Great Indian epic. One of the two major Indian epics. Telling the story of *Rama*, who fights with *Ravana* to rescue his abducted wife *Sita*.

Rāsā: Literally “tasting” of emotion, sentiment or feeling evoked in the audience, emotional theme of a work.

Rāsā-abhinaya: The acting of emotions.

Rāsika: Scholarly, educated audience.

Rāvaṇa: Demon king, villain character in the *Ramayana*.

Sāhitya: Literature.

Śaktibhadra: *Sanskrit* playwright.

Sāmaveda: Third of the four *Vedas*. *Veda* that gives melodic rhythmic patterns to verses, mainly derived from the *Rgveda*.

Sambandham: Literally “connection”. Particular form of simple marriage, wherein offspring are socially accepted and, following matrilineal and matrilocal regulations, integrated into the family of the women. Men and women of specific castes could simultaneously entertain *sambandham* relations with several persons.

Sangeet Natak Akademi: National Academy of Music, Dance and Drama located in Delhi.

Sankhu (Śaṅku): Conch shell marking the entrance of a character on stage, also considered an auspicious instrument and used in temple festivals.

Sanskrit (Saṃskṛtam): Historical Indo-Aryan language. Prime liturgical language in Hinduism with a majority of ceremonies and *pujas* exercised in this language. Also widely used in poetry and drama, as well as philosophical and scientific texts. As a spoken language, it is almost extinct.

Sarasvatī: Goddess of wisdom, science, music and the arts. Wife of Lord *Brahma*.

Sāttvika-abhinaya: Display of emotion triggered physical reactions such as tears, sweat or faint.

Shakuntala: Heroine in the epic *Mahabharata*. Also heroine of the popular classical *Sanskrit* play written by *Kalidasa*. Name also refers to a play in *Kutiyattam*.

Shiva (Śiva): Supreme God, one among the trinity of gods, the destroyer.

Sītā: Heroine of the *Ramayana*, wife of *Rama*.

Śloka: A four-lined stanza in *Sanskrit*.

Smaraka: Memorial.

Śrī: Prefix to denote respect.

Srikrishnacharitam (Śrīkrṣṇacaritam): Story of *Krishna*.

Sriramacharitam (Śrīrāmacaritam): Story of *Rama*.

Subhadra: Sister of god *Krishna*, heroine of the play *Subhadradhananjayam*.

Subhadradhananjayam: Very popular *Sanskrit* play by *Kulasekhara Varma*. In this play, the love affair between *Arjuna* and *Subhadra* is stressed.

Subrahmanyam: Name of the Hindu deity *Murugan*, who is a god of war and victory.

Sugrīva: Monkey king in the *Ramayana*, younger brother of *Bali*.

Surpanakha (Śūrpaṇakhā): Demoness, sister of *Ravana* in the *Ramayana*.

Śūrpaṇakhāṅkam: Act of the play *Ascharyachudamani*.

Sūtradhāra: Stage manager in *Sanskrit* drama.

Svara: Melodic pattern in Kutiyattam reflecting and evoking a specific emotional state or situation.

Talam (Tāla): Rhythm, rhythmic pattern in south Indian music.

Tamil: Language spoken in Tamil Nadu, which is situated beyond the eastern border of Kerala.

Tapatīsaṃvaraṇam: *Sanskrit* play by *Kulasekhara Varma*.

Thiruvananthapuram: District in Kerala and capital city of Kerala.

Travancore: Hindu feudal kingdom until the mid-19th century and princely state until the mid-20th century.

Tripunithura: Region in the city of Kochi, Kerala.

Trissur: City in Kerala, where *Vadakkunnathan* temple with the largest standing *Kuttampalam* is situated.

Upanayanam: Initiation ceremony for *Brahmin* boys.

Vācika-abhinaya: Verbal acting.

Vadakkunnathan: Deity of a temple in Trissur.

Vaishnava: Devotee of Lord *Vishnu*, follower of a major branch in Hinduism called *Vaishnavism*.

Vallathol: Poet and founder of Kerala Kalamandalam.

Veda: Literally “knowledge, wisdom”. Ancient Indian scriptures, written in Vedic Sanskrit and considered sacred. They consist of four main bodies of texts: *Rgveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Samaveda* and *Atharvaveda*. Vedic literature developed approximately from 1500 BC onwards. The Vedic period is considered to last until the middle of the first millennium BC.

Vidushaka (Viḍūṣaka): Jester in *Sanskrit* drama.

Vishnu (Viṣṇu): Supreme god, second among the trinity of gods in the Hindu pantheon, the maintainer or preserver. Famous incarnations are *Rama* and *Krishna*.

Vyaṅgyavyākhyā: 11th century stage script.

Yāga or Yājna: Sacrificial rite derived from Vedic practice. Herein, the ritual fire, *agni*, and the chanting of *mantras* play a major role.

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Appendix 1: Institutions, Gurukulams and schools

Since the second half of the 20th century, several schools for the revival and maintenance of Kutiyattam have been established in Kerala. Among them, a handful of institutions are most noteworthy: KKM in Cheruthuruthy, ACCSG and Natanakairali - Research and Performing Centre for Traditional Arts in Irinjalakuda, Margi Theatre in Thiruvananthapuram, as well as MMCSG in Lakiddi. Almost all living Kutiyattam artists have either been trained in or are affiliated to one of these institutions. The following glossary provides a brief introduction to these institutions. Following a chronological order, institutions that opened first and left a major impact are mentioned first and described in greater detail. Furthermore, the glossary does not aim to be comprehensive, as further institutions are mushrooming.

Kerala Kalamandalam: KKM is located in Cheruthuruthy and was established by poet Vallathol Narayana Menon and Mukunda Raja in 1930. The main target of the institution was to rejuvenate the traditional performing arts. It also opened the floor for the institutionalization of Kutiyattam, given that it launched the first Kutiyattam faculty under Painkulam Rama Chakyar in 1965. Even though it followed the Painkulam family tradition, lecturers at the faculty also included P.K.N. Nambiar and, after the death of Painkulam R. Chakyar in the 1980s, occasionally Mani M. Chakyar, as well as Ammannur M. Chakyar. In 1966, KKM organized the first Kutiyattam conference. The main characteristic of this institution is that it opened access to the training of traditional performing arts irrespective of religion, caste or nationality. In training, its focus lies on body techniques and short choreographies. Students can be admitted at the age of 12 years. Diploma courses in Kutiyattam have been scheduled for six years, and courses in *Mizhavu* for four years. Furthermore, a one-year post diploma course is offered. Today, KKM is recognized as a deemed university, offering B.A., M.A. and, since 2012, Ph.D. courses in Kutiyattam. It is acknowledged as the premier institution in India offering training and research in the classical art forms of Kerala.

Margi Theatre: In 1971, a few years after KKM, Margi was established in Thiruvananthapuram as a society for the revival and revitalization of the classical arts. Among the founding fathers were Appukkuttan Nair, K.V. Kochaniyan and T.N.N. Bhattathiripad. In the same year, Margi organized a Kutiyattam festival and a Kutiyattam school was inaugurated by 1981. Senior lecturers were M. (Ammannur) K. Chakyar and occasionally Ammannur M. Chakyar. Hence, the Ammannur tradition was mainly followed in this institution. Initially, only three students were trained: Raman, Narayanan and Madhu. Female graduates (Sathi and Usha) only joined Margi in 1989 and 1991, respectively. From its beginning stage, Margi placed a stress on the revival of Sanskrit plays that were no longer in active repertoire. Margi established a performance troupe and, recently, with financial support from the state, revived several acts in full length. As an institution, it focuses on performances in maximal length and detailed elaborated interpretations of details. Furthermore, it also largely participated in the modernization of the art, given that it was primarily involved in the crafting of the candidature file for UNESCO's *Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage* program and later considered the prime institution for the implementation of the subsequently elaborated action plan. Margi further cooperated with Tübingen University in the production of a 100-hour long video documentation of the revived acts of Ascharyachudamani, as well as Mantrankam and *Nangiarkuttu* performances.

Ammannur Chachu Chakyar Smaraka Gurukulam & Natanakairali - Research and Performing Centre for Traditional Arts: The *Kalari* at ACCSG was opened in 1918 to instruct Painkulam R. Chakyar, Chachu Chakyar's brother-in-law, and later on Chachu Chakyar's nephews. After 23 years, no further students were taught and the *Kalari* remained closed until its reactivation in 1979, when two females were admitted. Natanakairali opened in 1975. Both institutions are intertwined and located

next to each other. The Kutiyattam style follows the Ammannur family tradition. Senior instructors at both institutions were Ammannur M. Chakyar and Ammannur P. Chakyar. The latter, born in 1916, is considered a strong representative of the conservative and orthodox section among the *Chakyar* community. He only performed inside the temples and vehemently opposed secularization and the permission of non-*Chakyars* as students. Ammannur M. Chakyar considered Kutiyattam to be equivalent to worship (*upasana*). Among his most known students are P.K.U. Nangiar, Ammannur P.K. Chakyar and K. Venu. Until today, the institution predominantly hosts students from *Chakyar*, *Nangiar* and *Nambiar* families. Training corresponds to the traditional Gurukulam style and is scheduled for 15 years. The main focus is placed upon temple performances and *nirvahanam*. On the other hand, Natanakairali fosters an open atmosphere regarding the promotion and sustainable maintenance of Kutiyattam. It has not only welcomed students from all castes but also increasingly those from foreign countries. Predominance in training is given to eye practices, facial expressions and breathing techniques. Since 1982, an annual festival has been provided in Irinjalakuda, which aims towards the promotion and preservation of Kutiyattam.⁴⁸¹

Mani Madhava Chakyar Smaraka Gurukulam: The third of the three main remaining styles in Kutiyattam is the Mani family tradition, which is mainly taught in MMCSG in Lakiddi. The Gurukulam was officially opened in 1990 under the director P.K.N. Nambiar. Training, mainly in *Mizhavu*, has been provided since 1986. However, with the death of Mani M. Chakyar, the Gurukulam was established in his honor. While in the beginning stage activities mainly centered on lecturing members of the family, today, regular introduction programs are offered to schools and performances are conducted on a monthly basis to disseminate the art. MMCSG further conducts research and offers short-term courses on the *Natyashastra*. Furthermore, students also from outside the traditional communities are enrolled and trained.

Painkulam Rama Chakyar Smaraka Kalapeedom: Painkulam Kalapeedom, located in Painkulam, Trissur, is a small institution that opened in 1991 and is directed by K.P. Narayana Chakyar. Here, irregular classes are held and mainly school children are taught as a preparation for annual youth festivals, as well as dance and theatre competitions that feature 15-20-minute performances.

Pothiyil Gurukulam: The Gurukulam is located in Mangaam, Kottayam, and aims at the training and performance of Kutiyattam.

Krishnan Nambiar Mizhavu Kalari: The Kalari is located in Chathakudam, Trissur, and particularly concentrates on percussion training.

Koppu Nirmana Kendram: The Kendram is located at Kothavil Vellinezhi, Palakkad, and constitutes the single institution that manufactures ornaments and headgears for Kutiyattam.

International Centre for Kutiyattam in Tripunithura: Inaugurated in 1995, the center targets the dissemination and better understanding of Kutiyattam. It has conducted more than 200 classes and workshops in educational and cultural institutions to create the impetus for a growing audience, capable of understanding the intricacies of the art.

School for Ancient Theatre: The school is part of SSUS in Kalady and opened in 1997. The institution represents members of all the main styles and traditions. Studies follow course regulations and syllabi for higher education and interests mainly lie in scientific approaches to Kutiyattam.

Nepatya – Centre for Excellence in Koodiyattam: The center is located in Moozhikulam, Aluva, and was opened by Margi Madhu in 1998. The institution trains students and conducts regular performances. It further offers courses that aim at a better understanding of the art among the local population and an international audience.

⁴⁸¹ As temple authorities only allowed members of the *Chakyar* and *Nangiar/Nambiar* communities to perform inside the *Kuttampalam*, in 1984 the festival moved out of the temple, with the compound of the schools in Irinjalakuda being the venue since 1991 (Ramanath, 2005, p. 24; Venu, 2002, p. 61).

Kutiyattam Kendra - Centre for Kutiyattam: The center is located in Thiruvananthapuram and was inaugurated by the then Governor of Kerala Sree R.L. Bahatia in 2007. The Centre is a constituent centre of the SNA, the national academy for music, dance and drama and, as such, runs under the Ministry of Culture. It does not provide training facilities but rather aims at substantially supporting the existing Gurukulams and institutions. Hereby, funds are provided for the training, maintenance and performance of activities within the existing Gurukulams and institutions in Kerala. Target aims include enhancing research, documentation and publication, as well as the organization of programs for the dissemination and appreciation of the art, for example, via lecture demonstrations, workshops, performances and festivals, and the preservation of traditional performing spaces, as well as the creation of a Kutiyattam complex with a *Kuttampalam*, library, archive and museum.

Appendix 2: Biographical notes on interviewed persons and table of interviews

Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Padmashree and Padmavibhushan⁴⁸² (born in 1941): Film director, scriptwriter and producer. A. Gopalakrishnan is an internationally acclaimed feature and documentary filmmaker who made an outstanding contribution to Indian cinema. He is holder of a number of acclaimed national and international awards. In 2000, he directed the documentary film on Kutiyattam required for the candidature dossier for UNESCO's *Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* program.

Aparna Nangiar (born in 1984): Kutiyattam actress. Aparna is a member of the Muringamangalam Nambiar family and daughter of Ammannur Kuttan Chakyar. She was trained at ACCSG under Ammannur M. Chakyar, Ammannur K. Chakyar and U. Nangiar and performed together with Natanakairali and ACCSG extensively within India and abroad. A. Nangiar performs the annual *Nangiarkuttu* at *Vadakkunnathan* temple and other *Kuttampalams*.

C.K. Jayanthi, Dr. (born in 1968): Kutiyattam actress and scholar. C.K. Jayanthi is a member of Cherumanathu Nambiar family and was trained under Mani M. Chakyar, P.K.N. Nambiar and Vasumathi Nangiaramma. She obtained her M.Phil with research on Mantrankam, her Ph.D. with research on Anguleeyankam and is the author of a number of research papers on Kutiyattam. She currently serves as associate professor at the Department for Sanskrit Sahitya, SSUS in Kalady. Furthermore, she is a lecturer at MMCSG and participates in performances and interactive classes. As an artist cum scholar, she frequently gives lectures on the history and aesthetics of Kutiyattam.

C.K. Shylaja, Kalamandalam (born in 1961): Expert Kutiyattam actress. K. Shylaja was the second girl admitted for the study of Kutiyattam at KKM. She trained under the late Painkulam Rama Chakyar since 1974. Today, she is an expert in *Nayika* characters and *Nangiarkuttu*. She has lectured at the faculty of Kutiyattam at KKM since 1982, currently holding the position of a senior lecturer.

C.K. Vasanthi Narayanan (born in 1966): Kutiyattam actress. C.K. Vasanthi is a member of the Cherumanathu Nambiar family and was trained under Mani M. Chakyar and P.K.N. Nambiar. She obtained her diploma in Kutiyattam at KKM and currently serves as a lecturer cum performer at MMCSG.

C.R. Sangeet Chakyar, Kalamandalam (born in 1985): Kutiyattam actor. K. Sangeet is a member of the Kuttanchery Chakyar family. He was trained at KKM under K. Rama Chakyar and K. Shivan Namboodiri. For a brief period, he was a lecturer in Kutiyattam at KKM. He is regarded as a promising upcoming artist.

Gopal Venu (born in 1945): Expert connoisseur, Kutiyattam actor and researcher. G. Venu was trained under Ammannur M. Chakyar and Ammannur P. Chakyar. He is the co-founder of ACCSG and Natanakairali. Venu is a specialist on dance notation and the author of several books on Kutiyattam, Mohiniyattam and other traditional art forms of Kerala. He further choreographed a number of plays for Kutiyattam and *Nangiarkuttu*. As a lecturer and researcher in Kutiyattam, he has performed and worked extensively within India and abroad.

Indu G., Dr. (born in 1977): Kutiyattam actress and scholar. Indu G. trained under M. Kochukuttan Chakyar, Margi Madhu and U. Nangiar. She wrote a Ph.D. thesis on Kutiyattam at SSUS and is the author of several research papers on Kutiyattam. She currently serves as the secretary of Nepatya, a Kutiyattam training and performance center, and regularly conducts performances at various locations.

⁴⁸² The Padmashree award is India's fourth highest and the Padmavibhushan India's second highest civilian award.

Jishnu Prathap, Kalamandalam (born in 1990): Kutiyattam student. Jishnu trained at KKM under K. Rama Chakyar and K. Shivan Namboodiri. He is currently the only senior male Kutiyattam student at the institution.

Kanakakumar, Kalamandalam (born in 1978): Kutiyattam actor. Kanakakumar obtained his diploma and post diploma in Kutiyattam at KKM. He trained under K. Rama Chakyar and K. Shivan Namboodiri. He is currently a lecturer at the faculty for Kutiyattam at KKM. He has further launched an independent institution and strives to adapt Kutiyattam to contemporary themes.

Kapila Venu (born in 1982): Kutiyattam actress. Kapila is the daughter of N. Paniker and G. Venu. She was trained at ACCSG under Ammannur M. Chakyar, G. Venu, N. Paniker, U. Nangiar and Ammannur K. Chakyar, and has performed extensively at major theatre events abroad and all over India. She has further participated in various workshops and projects worldwide. Kapila is proficient in rare and novel items; at the same time, she is also interested in innovation and artistic exchange. Kapila runs a blog called virali diary, which provides regular information on Kutiyattam events.

K.K. Gopalakrishnan: Expert connoisseur, performing arts writer and photographer. By profession, an officer in the State Bank of India, he chose to resign to focus on arts studies. He frequently authors articles on performing arts traditions of Kerala for India's leading newspapers and magazines. He has further published papers on Kutiyattam in academic journals. He is the Honorary Associate Editor of Nartanam and critic of Chennai based Sruti, India's premier magazine for the performing arts. He has been the director of the Centre for Kutiyattam in Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala) since December 2010. The Centre financially supports artists and institutions that sustain Kutiyattam and develops programs and projects to safeguard and disseminate Kutiyattam.

K. Rama Chakyar, Kalamandalam (born in 1950): Expert Kutiyattam actor. K.R. Chakyar is a member of the Koyya (Painkulam) Chakyar family and son of Ammannur Parameswara Chakyar. He joined the KKM department with its inception in 1965 and studied Kutiyattam for nine years. He was trained under his uncle Painkulam Rama Chakyar. Since 1978, he has served as a lecturer at KKM. He is currently a visiting professor at the faculty of Kutiyattam. He is acclaimed as an outstanding artist and teacher known well for his excellence, particularly as *Vidushaka*, *Sugreeva*, *Jatayu* and *Ravana*.

Krishnendu, Kalamandalam (born in 1985): Kutiyattam actress. Krishnendu graduated in Kutiyattam at KKM. She was trained under K. Rama Chakyar, K. Shivan Namboodiri, K. Girijadevi and K. Shylaja. Since 2012, she has been enrolled as a Ph.D. student in Kutiyattam at KKM.

Kunju Vasudevan Namboodiripad. Expert connoisseur. K.V. Namboodiripad is a member of Killimangalam mana. By profession, he was a lecturer in English and English Literature. Since the 1980s, he has engaged himself in the audio-visual documentation of Kerala's traditional performing arts, particularly Kutiyattam and *Kathakali*. He is the director of KCDPA, has conducted extensive documentation also regarding Vedic Chanting, is interested in both preservation and innovation and has worked as a choreographer and director in cross-cultural theatre experiments.

Madhu Chakyar, Margi (born in 1966): Expert Kutiyattam actor. Margi Madhu is a member of the Pothiyil Chakyar family and son of Moozhikulam Kochukuttan Chakyar. He was trained in Margi under his uncle Ammannur M. Chakyar, M. Kochukuttan Chakyar and P.K.N. Nambiar. He has performed in different parts of India and abroad and participated in cross-cultural dance venues. Proficient in rare items such as *Mantrankam* and *Ascharyachudamani*, he is also interested in innovation and exchange and has revived and choreographed a number of new plays, including Macbeth by William Shakespeare. He has further authored several books on Kutiyattam and serves as the artistic director of Nepatya, a Kutiyattam training and performance center. He is currently employed as an assistant professor in the Theatre Department of SSUS in Kalady.

M.P. Sankaran Namboodiri, Kalamandalam: Expert Kathakali actor. M.P.S. Namboodiri is a former principal of KKM and lecturer in *Kathakali* and aesthetics. For many decades, he has guided foreign researchers in their endeavors to understand traditional Keralean art forms. He is noted for his scholarly and practical knowledge and the ability to mediate this knowledge to Western theatre

scholars. Since the late-1970s, he has engaged in the audio-visual preservation and documentation of traditional art forms and still advocates technology-inspired archival practices at KKM.

Nirmala Paniker (born in 1950). Mohiniyattam actress, choreographer and researcher. N. Paniker has been a member of ACCSG since 1994. She is the author of a book and a number of articles on Kutiyattam, particularly on *Nangiarkuttu*, as well as other female performance traditions of Kerala. She is the founder of Natanakaisiki, a research and training center for *Mohiniyattam*, where she has revived and choreographed a number of new plays and serves as a teacher.

P.K. Hareesh Nambiar (born in 1977). Kutiyattam actor and *Mizhavu* player. H. Nambiar is a member of the Cherumanathu Nambiar family and grandson of Padmashree Mani M. Chakyar. He was trained under Mani M. Chakyar and his father P.K.N. Nambiar at MMCSG. He is the first performer of *Mantrankam* from a non-*Chakyar* family background and served as a lecturer at Margi Theatre. His particular interest lies in the preservation of Kutiyattam. As a trained software specialist, he is currently establishing an archive at MMCSG and serves as a lecturer cum performer.

P.K. Narayanan Nambiar, Padmashree (born in 1927): Expert *Mizhavu* player and expert Kutiyattam artist. P.K.N. Nambiar is a member of the Kochampilli Nambiar family and son of the great Kutiyattam thespian Padmashree Mani M. Chakyar. Coming from a non-*Chakyar* family, he was the first artist to perform Kutiyattam on a secular stage. Nambiar gave an outstanding contribution in the reformation of the *Mizhavu* play. Almost all living *Mizhavu* players were trained under him and continue to perpetuate his style. He further conceptualized *Mizhivil Thayampaka* and excelled in various Kutiyattam characters and *Vidushaka* roles. He performed extensively within India and abroad, and is the author of a number of acclaimed books and articles on Kutiyattam, including *Mantrankam*, *Srikrishnacharitam Nangiaramma Kuttu* and *Mizhavu*. Nambiar served as Dean of the Kutiyattam faculty at KKM and as visiting professor at Margi Theatre. He is further the main guru and president of MMCSG.

P.N. Girijadevi, Kalamandalam (born in 1958): Expert Kutiyattam actress. K. Girijadevi joined KKM in 1971, as the first female Kutiyattam student from a non-*Nangiar* family background. She was trained for nine years under Painkulam Rama Chakyar and further studied *Nangiarkuttu* under Kunjippillakkutty Nangiaramma in Irinjalakuda. Since 1981, she has been a lecturer and is currently Head of Department at the faculty for Kutiyattam in KKM.

Prasanna, Kalamandalam (born in 1968): Kutiyattam actress. K. Prasanna was trained under K. Rama Chakyar, K. Shivan Namboodiri, K. Girijadevi and K. Shylaja. She obtained a post diploma in KKM and currently serves as a lecturer at the faculty of Kutiyattam at KKM.

Priyanka and Deepika (names have been changed): Female students studying at B.A. level at KKM.

P.S. Sathidevi, Margi (born in 1963): Expert Kutiyattam actress. Margi Sathi trained at KKM under the late Painkulam Rama Chakyar, K. Rama Chakyar and K. Shivan Namboodiri since 1976 and received training at Margi under Ammannur M. Chakyar and M. Kochukuttan Chakyar since 1988. She further received special training in *Nangiarkuttu* by P.K.N. Nambiar. She is acclaimed as an outstanding artist who excelled in various female characters. Sathi authored the performance manuals *Sriramacharitam* (1999) and *Kannakicharitam* (2002) and enacted the complete *Srikrishnacharitam*. She performed extensively within India and abroad and has been a senior lecturer at the faculty of Kutiyattam at KKM since 2005.

Rajaneesh Chakyar, Ammannur (born in 1981): Kutiyattam actor. R. Chakyar is a member of the Ammannur Chakyar family and grandnephew of Ammannur M. Chakyar. He was trained under Ammannur M. Chakyar, Ammannur P. Chakyar and Ammannur K. Chakyar. He performs annually at *Vadakkunnathan* and *Kutalmanikkam* temple. As a member of ACCSG and Natanakairali, he has performed extensively within India and abroad. Currently he is a Ph.D. student in Kutiyattam at KKM.

Rajeev, Kalamandalam (born in 1974): Expert *Mizhavu* player. K. Rejeev received his post diploma in *Mizhavu* at KKM and was trained under K. Eswaranunni and V.K.K. Hariharan. As a member of Natanakairali and ACCSG performance troupe, he has performed widely within India and abroad. He

is a well-known *Mizhavu* player of the younger generation and has been secretary of ACCSG since 2012.

Rama Iyer (born in 1932): Expert connoisseur. Since 1970, R. Iyer is a manager and currently program chief at Margi Theatre. He managed the tour to France in 1999 and was largely involved in the process that ultimately led to the proclamation of Kutiyattam as a “Masterpiece” in 2001.

Satheesh Kumar, Kalamandalam (born in 1985): K. Satheesh studied chutti (make-up) and costume at KKM. He is currently a make-up artist at MMCSG.

Sharath Narayanan: Kutiyattam and Mizhavu student. Sharath is a member of the Cherumanathu Nambiar family and grandson of P.K.N. Nambiar. He trained under P.K.N. Nambiar at MMCSG.

Sudha Gopalakrishnan, Dr. (born in 1952): Expert connoisseur and scholar. S. Gopalakrishnan has a post graduate degree in literature and doctoral degree in comparative drama. She is the author of several books and scholarly articles on Kutiyattam and drama. She has worked at the Sahitya Akademi (India’s national academy of letters) and IGNCA. Gopalakrishnan was the Founder Director of India’s National Mission for Manuscripts. She was in charge of the candidature file for UNESCO in 2000 and was co-author of the script for the documentary film on Kutiyattam, which was submitted as part of the dossier. She is currently Executive Director of SAHAPEDIA, an online encyclopedia on Indian arts, culture and heritage.

Usha Nangiar (born in 1969): Expert Kutiyattam actress. U. Nangiar is a member of the Chathakkudam Nambiar family and daughter of the late Chathakkudam Krishnan Nambiar. She trained for 17 years at ACCSG under Ammannur M. Chakyar and Ammannur P. Chakyar and participated in a number of Kutiyattam festivals within India and abroad. An outstanding artist, particularly excelling in *Nangiarkuttu*, she is one of the last professional female Kutiyattam artists from the traditional *Nangiar* community. She has choreographed and performed a number of new female characters in Kutiyattam, including Subhadra, Mandodari, Draupadi, Menaka and Rambha. She is further the author of a book and a number of research papers on Kutiyattam. She is currently a lecturer at the Theatre Department of SSUS in Kalady.

Vasudevan Namboodiripad (born in 1925): Expert connoisseur and scholar. V. Namboodiripad is a member of Killimangalam mana, a family of *Sanskrit* scholars. He joined KKM in 1956. He is noted for his mediations between Western scholars of dance, theatre and music and the traditionally trained gurus at KKM since the late-1950s. As an acclaimed art critic and scholar, he has presented numerous papers at academic seminars and provided valuable guidance to national and international researchers. Namboodiripad was closely acquainted with late Painkulam Rama Chakyar and intimately participated in the establishment of the Kutiyattam department in 1965. In 1980, he was the responsible manager of the first Kutiyattam tour abroad. He is currently the president of KCDPA and guides Ph.D. research in Kutiyattam at KKM.

V. Kaladharan. Expert connoisseur and scholar. A post-graduate in Economics, Kaladharan joined the Publicity Wing of KKM in 1982. He is in charge of international students and has worked with a host of anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, dance and theatre scholars from the West as translator, interpreter and research associate. As a bilingual writer, art critic and cultural commentator, his articles are published in scholarly journals and frequently in India’s leading newspapers and magazines. Kaladharan has extensively toured India and abroad for lectures on the history, aesthetics and contemporary concerns of Kerala’s traditional performing arts. He further anchored programs in the television channel *Soorya* on performing arts and is a regular invitee for talks by AIR. Kaladharan is now Assistant Registrar at KKM.

Table of individual interviews⁴⁸³

	Name	Affiliation	Date of interview	Duration of interview	Language
1	Adoor Gopalakrishnan	Independent	14.03.2012	2,5 hrs	English
2	Aparna Nangiar	ACCSG	30.03.2012	1,5 hrs	English
3	C.K. Jayanthi	SSUS;	10.03.2012	10 min	English
		MMCSG	22.04.2012	2 hrs	
4	C.K. Shylaja	KKM	23.03.2012	1,45 hrs	English & Malayalam
5	C.K. Vasanthi Narayanan	MMCSG	08.02.2012	15 min	Malayalam
6	C.R Sangeet Chakyar	KKM	06.04.2012	1,15 hrs	Malayalam
7	Gopal Venu	Natanakairali;	30.03.2012	2 hrs	English
		ACCSG			
7	Indu G.	Nepatya	31.03.2012	45 min	English
8	Jishnu Prathap	KKM	06.04.2012	45 min	English & Malayalam
9	Kanakakumar	KKM	15.02.2012	1,50 hrs	English & Malayalam
			06.04.2012	1,15 hrs	
10	Kapila Venu	ACCSG;	01.04.2012	2 hrs	English
		Natanakairali			
11	K.K. Gopalakrishnan	Kutiyattam	06.02.2012	20 min	English
		Kendra	22.02.2012	30 min	
			13.03.2012	1 hr	
23	K. Rama Chakyar	KKM	18.02.2012	1,5 hrs	Malayalam
			24.04.2012	2 hrs	
12	Krishnendu	KKM	21.04.2012	1,45 hrs	English
			25.04.2012	5 min	
13	Kunju Vasudevan	KDCPA	26.02.2012	5 min	English
	Namboodiripad		28.02.2012	2,15 hrs	
			25.03.2012	1 hr	
14	Madhu Chakyar, Margi	SSUS;	31.03.2012	45 min	English
		Nepatya			
15	M.P.S. Namboodiri	KKM	05.03.2012	15 min	English
			06.03.2012	1,5 hrs	
17	Nirmala Paniker	Natanakairali	01.04.2012	1 hr	English
18	P.K. Hareesh Nambiar	MMCSG	10.03.2012	1,20 hrs	English
			22.04.2012	1 hr	
19	P.K.N. Nambiar	MMCSG	10.03.2012	2,5 hrs	Malayalam
5	P.N. Girijadevi	KKM	19.02.2012	1 hr	Malayalam
			25.02.2012	2 hrs	
20	Prasanna	KKM	23.04.2012	15 min	English & Malayalam
16	Priyanka & Deepika⊗	KKM	25.04.2012	20 min	Malayalam
27	P.S. Sathi, Margi	KKM	14.03.2012	1,30 hrs	English
21	Rajaneesh Chakyar	ACCSG	05.04.2012	45 min	English
22	Rajeev, Kalamandalam	ACCSG	30.03.2012	1,5 hrs	English & Malayalam
24	Rama Iyer	Margi Theatre	14.03.2012	2 hrs	English
26	Satheesh Kumar	KKM	20.01.2012	1,15 hrs	English
28	Sharath Narayanan	MMCSG	22.04.2012	35 min	English
30	Sudha Gopalakrishnan	Independent	27.04.2012	1 hr	English
31	Usha Nangiar	SSUS	15.01.2012	20 min	English
32	Vasudevan	KKM,	13.02.2012	1,45 hrs	English
	Namboodiripad	KDCPA	20.04.2012	1,15 hrs	
33	V. Kaladharan	KKM	17.02.2012	30 min	English
			06.03.2012	1 hr	
			23.03.2012	1 hr	
			06.04.2012	15 min	
			23.04.2012	30 min	

⊗ names have been changed

⁴⁸³ Interviewed persons not cited by name within this thesis, are not included in the list.

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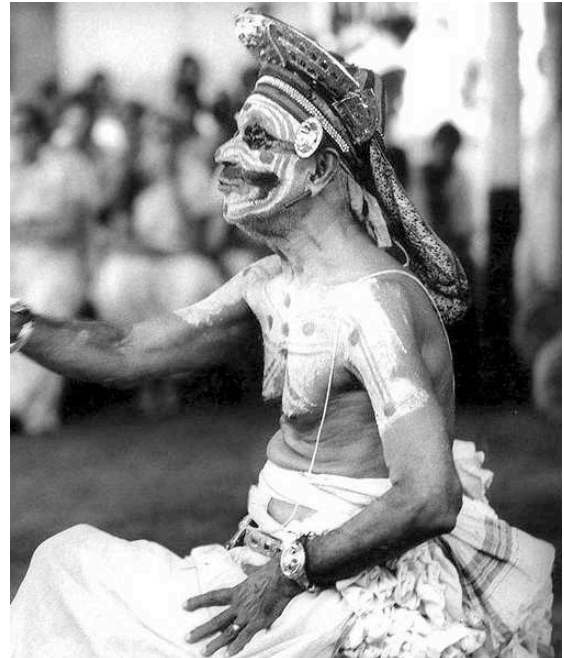


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Figure 23: Costume seen from the back during the *purappadu*, the first entrance of a character on stage, Moozhikulam, S. Erlewein. 2012.



Figure 24: K. Rama Chakyar preparing to put on the white beard, Cheruthuruthy, S. Erlewein, 2012.



Figure 25: K. Rama Chakyar in the greenroom, fixing beard and *Kuduma* (headdress) for his performance as *Shandilyan* (*Vidushaka*), Cheruthuruthy, S. Erlewein, 2012.



Figure 26: K. Rama Chakyar as *Vidushaka* (*Shandilyan*) in *Bhagavadajjuka*, performed in the *Kuttampalam* at KKM, Cheruthuruthy, S. Erlewein, 2012.



Figure 27: K. Rama Chakyar as *Vidushaka* (*Koundinyan*) and K. Krishnendu as *Subhadra* in *Subhadradhananjayam*, auditorium hall of Chinmaya mission school, Kozhikode, S. Erlewein, 2012.



Figure 28



Figure 29



Figure 30



Figure 31

Figures 28-31: Scenes show different hand gestures, body positions and percussionists attending to the performance, Moozhikulam, S. Erlewein 2012.



Figure 32: Pothiyil Renjit Chakyar as *Ravana* in *Thoranayudham* at ACCSG, make-up type: *katti*, in the background (right) K. Rajeev playing the *Mizhavu*, Irinjalakuda, S. Erlewein, 2012.



Figure 33: Sarojini Nangiaramma performing *Nangiarkuttu* at Sri Krishnaswamy temple in Ambalappuzha. The scene displays make-up, headgear and ornaments as they were predominantly in use until the 1970s, author and date unknown.

Figure 34: K. Krishnendu showing the *Vellialukku* (silver chain on the forehead), *Makuta* (headgear) and ornaments for female characters, Kozhikode, S. Erlewein, 2012.



Figure 35: K. Girijadevi and K. Prasanna in the greenroom of KKM, Cheruthuruthy, S. Erlewein, 2012.



Figure 36: K. Rama Chakyar, assisted by *chutti* artist K. Satheesh Kumar in applying the make-up (type: black beard) for Sugriva, Lakiddi, S. Erlewein, 2012.



Figure 37



Figure 38



Figure 39

Figures 37-39: K. Rama Chakyar performing *Sugriva's nirvahanam* at MMCSG; scenes expose different hand gestures, body positions and eye- and facial expressions, Lakidhi, S. Erlewein, 2012.

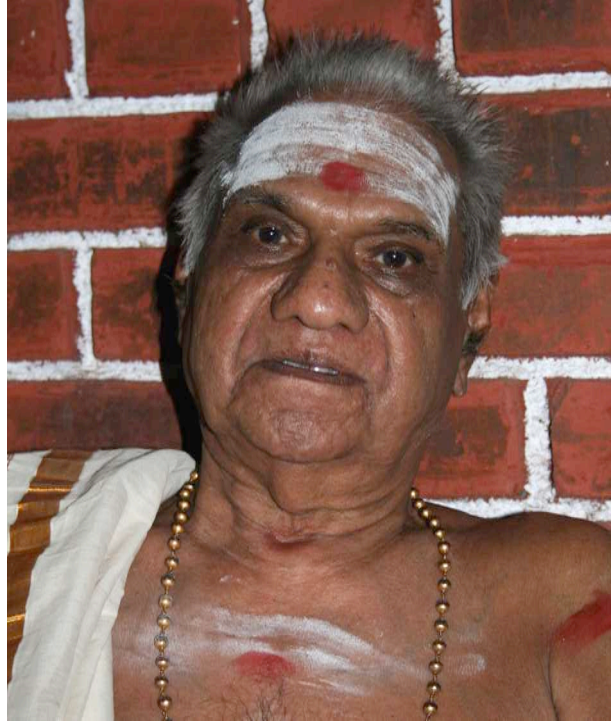


Figure 40: A female student chanting a *Sloka* during a performance at Nepathya's *Kuttampalam* in Moozhikulam, S. Erlewein, March, 31, 2012.

Figure 41: P.K. Narayanan Nambiar, Lakiddi, S. Erlewein, February 22, 2012.



Figure 42: Hareesh Nambiar as *Śūrpanakhā* during an interactive class at Chinmaya Mission College, Kolazhy, S. Erlewein, 2012.



Figure 43: A *chutti* artist applying rice paste on the face of a female student before fixing the *chutti*, Kolazhy, S. Erlewein, 2012.



Figure 44: Members of MMCSG applying make-up in the classroom of a college before a lecture demonstration, Kolazhy, S. Erlewein, 2012.



Figure 45: Prashanti being assisted by a *chutti* artist in her make-up for *Arjuna*, Cheruthuruthy, S. Erlewein, 2012.



Figure 46: Prashanti performing *Arjuna* as part of the syllabi at KKM, Cheruthuruthy, S. Erlewein, 2012.



Figure 47: Interactive class under the tutelage of K. Rama Chakyar. On stage, K.S. Chakyar as *Ravana* and Sooraj Nambiar as *Sankhukarna* performing an episode of *Thoranayudham*, Venginissery, S. Erlewein, 2012.



Figure 48: Students with an interest in art lining up to receive the blessing of K. Rama Chakyar after an interactive class at Gurukulam Public School, Venginissery, S. Erlewein, 2012.