Anaïs Da Fonseca
University College London

Paintings, Painters, and Patrons

Institutional Interventions in the Lives of Cheriyal Paintings

In the early 1980s, the All-India Handicraft Board developed an interest in Cheriyal paintings as part of its initiatives to sustain Indian handicrafts. The Board's intervention increased the paintings' visibility and initiated the institutionalization of the Cheriyal painting tradition. In this process, painters adapted their practice to new forms of patronage beyond the local community, particularly museums and the handicraft market, and incorporated new techniques, iconography, and style. In examining various case studies of Cheriyal painting commissions, this article argues that Cheriyal paintings have dynamically adapted to social and cultural changes, particularly to changes in patronage since the 1980s. It further argues that institutions invested in Cheriyal paintings and folk arts and crafts from India, with the intention to ensure crafts' sustainability, have constructed and disseminated a rhetoric of disappearance while encouraging innovation and developing new forms of patronage.

Keywords: Folk painting—heritage—institutions—narrative—performance—tradition—south India

Asian Ethnology Volume 81, Numbers 1 & 2 · 2022, 125–147

In the early 1980s, representatives of the All-India Handicraft Board (AIHB)—now Development Commissioner (Handicraft)—came to Cheriyal (also spelled Cherial [*ceriyāl*]), a large village in Telangana, about 120 miles north of the state capital named Hyderabad. They visited a group of painters known as Nakashis (*nakāṣi*) in the plural, from their caste name Nakash (*nakāṣ*), also known as *citrakār* (image-maker) in other parts of India. At that time, the Nakashis' activity mostly revolved around painting local temple walls, making temple *mūrti*s (statues), and painting long scrolls on canvases unfolded during storytelling performances in the nearby villages.

The AIHB, a Government of India institution under the Ministry of Textiles in charge of developing the handicraft sector, came in with a series of initiatives and schemes to expand the craft practice, ensure its continuity, and improve the financial sustainability of such family-centered activities. One initiative was to nominate Nakashis for award competitions in order to gain state and national recognition, something that was happening elsewhere in India as well. The Nakashis also received funding to train men outside of their caste in Cheriyal painting's traditional techniques, to ensure the tradition's continuity and eliminate unemployment among other communities. Most importantly, the AIHB encouraged and commissioned the Nakashis to produce paintings in a smaller format; namely, on canvas and as wooden figurines, to sell as part of India's handicraft and tourist market schemes. Because Cheriyal was the last village in which Nakashis were painting scrolls at the time of the AIHB's visit, the painting tradition was simply identified by the village's name, filling government records as "Cheriyal paintings." This term is still used today.[1]

The Board's intervention essentially increased the visibility of these paintings, which began institutionalizing the Cheriyal painting tradition and defining the heritage(s) they represent. The sidelining of performance and the emphasis on this tradition's material culture permitted their entry into museums and the handicraft market. Further commercialization to sustain the tradition transformed the scrolls used for storytelling performance into smaller paintings for museums and home decoration, craft commodities, and a wide range of derivative objects and meanings. Cheriyal paintings today—scrolls, smaller paintings, or craft objects—bear the marks of these institutional interventions.

This article is about Cheriyal paintings and their institutions, and therefore the "worlds" (Bundgaard 1999) or "lives" (Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986) they inhabit

and how these have come to shape the heritage they represent. It describes how institutions have played out in Cheriyal painting's visibility and sustainability. The institutional frameworks and environments in which these artistic works exist are multiple and serve as a methodological tool for understanding folk art practices from India, for they are often found in local communities, museums, private collections, or the handicraft market simultaneously. Helle Bundgaard's work (1999), for instance, looked at the Odishan *paṭṭa* painting tradition not only from within the framework of the local communities that produced them, or as ritual practice, but also from the point of view of private collectors, state institutions, awards, and the market, a methodology that influenced my own on study of Cheriyal paintings. In the context of Cheriyal paintings, these "worlds" are the local communities of Telangana that initially commissioned, produced, and consumed such aesthetic works. But there are also new patrons that have emerged since the 1980s, consisting of craft institutions, museums, NGOs, award schemes, private commissioners, and the now very prominent tourist and handicraft market, which I will present and explore in the following sections.

If institutional initiatives such as those created by the AIHB were—and still are—instrumental to the discovery, conservation, revival, protection, and promotion of local craft heritage, they have often done so by introducing, perpetuating, and maintaining a distinct rhetoric of disappearance concerning the tradition in question here. I therefore present Cheriyal painting as a resilient tradition that has become transformed through its adaptation to changes in patronage. However, I also describe how this rhetoric of disappearance has played an essential socioeconomic role in the sustainability of the painting tradition. I also describe what continuity and innovation look like for Cheriyal paintings and their makers.

As an art historical investigation based on ethnographic collecting methods, this article looks closely at the materiality of painting to discuss how changes in patronage, transformation, institutionalization, and the presentation of Cheriyal heritage(s) unfold. On the one hand, it is about identifying the features of a living tradition best named as Cheriyal because it represents what the paintings are today, encompassing at the same time the past and present of the tradition, its heritage, and heritage-to-be. On the other hand, it explores how institutions define imagined Cheriyal painting heritage(s)—whether that of Cheriyal, of Telangana, of south India, of India or Hindu, Indian, rural, vernacular—allowing the generic term to develop ambiguously, largely dependent on the institutions invested in its discovery, preservation, and promotion.

The three core chapters of my doctoral dissertation, submitted in the field of Art History in 2017, have provided the material and informed the arguments presented in this article. Most of the research was empirical in nature. I present here some of the first-hand data that I collected between 2014 and 2015, while conducting fieldwork in Cheriyal, Hyderabad, Warangal, within various Indian museum institutions, and through interviews with the Nakashi painters both in Cheriyal and Hyderabad. The first section provides a short description of Cheriyal paintings' oldest known function as scrolls used in the performance of local caste narratives, how the paintings are made, what they look like, and their particularities, all of which formed the basis onto

which institutionalization developed. Each subsequent section steps away from the performed scroll to propose case studies that illustrate other emergent dimensions of the painting tradition. The first one deals with scroll paintings and wooden figurines identical to those used for performances but commissioned solely for museum collections acquisition and to document the "disappearing" heritage of Telangana. The second set of examples is made up of paintings that remain highly narrative as Cheriyal scrolls are, but that now vary in format and subject depending on the regional and religious affiliation of the commissioning institution. The third section explores paintings sold within the handicraft market, for which the name Cheriyal, as well as the color conventions used to produce the objects, still associates them essentially with a past (or "dying") tradition. These three case studies represent the contemporary and concurrent heritage(s) of Cheriyal paintings. They also illustrate changes the tradition underwent since the 1980s, when handicraft and museum institutions began intervening into the formation of its heritage. These two new environments have provided the paintings with new meanings inasmuch as they served these institutions' goals.

The Cheriyal scrolls

In the new southern Indian state of Telangana and some parts of neighboring Andhra Pradesh, itinerant storytellers recite local caste genealogies using scroll paintings on cloth as visual props for their performances. This is the oldest function known for Cheriyal scroll painting, for they were originally intended to narrate caste genealogies as a form of social memory construction through the creative use of oral history. Unlike other regional art forms from India, the Cheriyal scrolls—also known as Deccani scroll paintings in previous scholarship—benefitted from later and lesser scholarship on the subject. Bengali visual folklore, for example, has received earlier and comparatively more attention than other living traditions of the country. Like Cheriyal paintings, the Bengali *paṭ*s are scrolls storytellers unfold during the performance of sung narratives. People started collecting *paṭ*s as early as the 1930s (Ghosh 2000, 176). And even though Jagdish Mittal began collecting Deccani scrolls around the same time, the earliest scholarly mentions of Cheriyal painting in the literature have come from Kay Talwar and Krishna Kalyan's *Indian Pigment Paintings on Cloth* for the Calico Museum (1979); and Jyotindra Jain, Aarti Aggarwala, and Pankaj Shah's edited volume for the National Handloom Museum (1989). Jain's *Picture Showmen* (1998), especially, extensively discussed Indian performance traditions that utilized visual aids to support storytelling for the first time. The volume gathered essays on the Bengali *paṭ*, the Rajasthani *phaḍ*, the Paithani *pothī*, and two pieces on Cheriyal paintings as well. This landmark publication paved the way for the Cheriyal tradition to join the ranks within broader scholarship concerning the so-called "lesser-known" artistic practices of India. The same year, Kirtana Thangavelu submitted her thesis on Cheriyal painting, the first and only extensive research project on the subject. In 2011, Anna. L. Dallapiccola brought together various scholarship contributions on *Indian Paintings: The Lesser-Known Traditions*, therefore continuing Jain's efforts to increase scholarship on the subject. The volume included

Thangavelu's (2011) essay on the oral and performative dimensions of a painted scroll from Telangana. And in 2014, Jagdish Mittal finally published reproductions of his rich collection of scrolls. Later, Chandan Bose published an anthropological dissertation in 2016.[2] I myself then followed in 2017 with a dissertation coming at the subject from an art historical perspective.

Traditionally, the making of a scroll painting follows a strict and conventional patronage system that involves three groups of people: the patrons and audience of the performance, the performers, and the painters (Thangavelu 1998, 383). Scrolls are considered sacred and preserved by the performers, handed down from father to sons until they are no longer in useable condition, making the commission of a new painting a rare occurrence.[3] Each performing group is associated with a series of patrons to whom they owe their livelihood by performing their respective genealogical narratives. Each group, therefore, performs in a fixed set of villages. Patrons all come to visit the Nakash caste in Cheriyal when they wish to commission a newly painted scroll, however. According to Mittal (2014, 22), there were several other painting centers apart from Cheriyal in the past. When the AIHB initiated their revival, however, Cheriyal was the last center left in Telangana where Nakashis continued to make performance scrolls.[4]

Today, however, a journey to meet Cheriyal painters would often begin at a suburban house in the urban hub city of Hyderabad, a bustling metropolis now known for its information technology sector. The efforts of the AIHB, NGOs, and other craft-related programs have succeeded, and the eldest and most awarded Cheriyal painter Vaikuntam Nakash, along with his wife and two sons, shifted his residence to Hyderabad in 2013. They now live and work in a more spacious, bright, and comfortable set up, far more accessible for customers or researchers who are likely to visit. Only a few painters represent the Cheriyal painting tradition today. There are six full-time male painters, three of their wives, and four of their sons who also work or study alongside them, as well as two families of assistants. Four of these male painters and their families live in Hyderabad, while only two live in Cheriyal with the assistants. The location that owns the GI (Geographical Indication) tag since 2010 for this "endangered" painting tradition therefore only hosts less than half of its practitioners and representatives today.[5]

The narratives originally depicted on the scrolls are known as *kula purāṇa*s, from *kula* (clan) and *purāṇa* (old).[6] Such narratives are the founding legends of clans and castes, and it is these communities who commission the performances associated with the paintings. The patrons are the local occupational castes of the region, such as the weavers (*padmaśāli*), toddy tappers (*gauḍa*), or cow herders (*golla*), for instance, who all belong to Other Backward Classes (OBC) and Scheduled Castes (SC) classifications devised by the British during the colonial period. Patrons and performers belong to the same caste, but performers are ranked as a sub-caste of their patrons, which means that patrons hold a higher status. Service and duty bind both together in the sense that performers earn their livelihood from performing for their patrons, while patrons must support the performers, even when patrons do not schedule a specific event. Each performing group is hereditarily assigned a number of villages where their patrons live and where they may perform within a socially sanctioned

geographical system known as *mirāśi*. Thus, a performance troupe cannot perform for other patrons or in other villages, except those defined by the *mirāśi* system.[7]

Depending on the community's myth, the origin of the patron's occupation goes back to the necessity for a particular deity to receive that caste's service. A sage or hero intervenes to link the gods' needs for service to the emergence of the caste that will provide the needed service. For instance, Bhavana Rishi is the sage founder of the weavers in Telangana. Bhavana Rishi, the weaver of the gods, came into existence after the deity Shiva needed clothes to wear. The caste's genealogy thus unfolds through a series of events that connects the gods, sages, heroes, and weavers together into one metaphorical fabric, eventually validating the existence of the community and their profession.[8]

The size of the scrolls varies. A completed scroll painting rarely exceeds ten meters in length, either horizontal or vertical, and it is always divided into horizontal registers within the entire configuration, as seen in figure 1. Every scroll painting used for performances shares a similar style. The entire narrative is divided into registers and then subdivided into scenes, making the whole scroll a complex structure of scenes to trigger the performers' memory. Decorative borders visually frame these structures. The distinct red background is a common feature of all the scrolls, accompanied by bright colors for figures and decorative details in order to create a heavy contrast between the pictorial elements of the composition. Figures are mostly depicted in side-view and circled with a black line. Performances take place in the local village center, alternating between recitation, singing, and worship. A performance usually lasts four to five nights. Some audience members may be seated far away from the stage upon which the scroll is placed, so visual support provided lends added texture to the oral narrative as well.

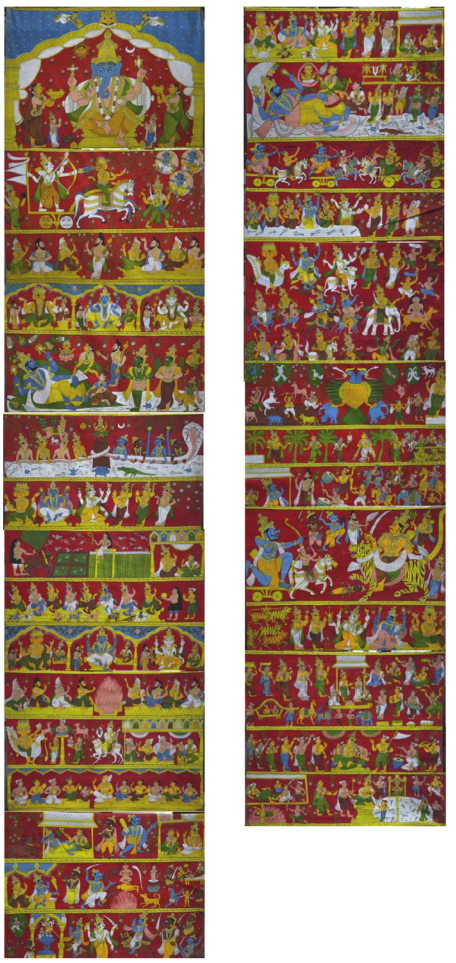

Figure 1. Markendeya Purana, *c.* 2000, 91.5 x 915 cm, watercolor on canvas. Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal. Photograph by Anaïs Da Fonseca.

The performers—not the painters—decide the scenes to be depicted during a genealogical recitation. For the entire duration of the storytelling event, the painting remains a visual support for the

narration of these genealogies. Several details of the patrons' profession may also be depicted regularly throughout the scroll. For instance, in a scroll prepared especially for the weavers, one can see a great variety of different patterns on the clothing of the characters depicted on the surface of the scrolls. The king's pillows and curtains are also ornamentally painted to represent the patterns woven by the caste in question. Similarly, in a scroll for the toddy tappers, there would be toddy (palm) trees depicted everywhere on the scroll. These motifs differentiate the narratives and signify the patrons, even though they may be unknown to the audience and unnecessary for the performers.

Cheriyal paintings as scrolls for performances display a distinct continuity over time. Looking at several scrolls of the same narrative across a wide chronological range would highlight how little the changes are over time. It is possible, for instance, to observe the visual evolution of the *padmaśāli purāṇa* scrolls, since we have scrolls ranging from 1625 to the 2000s (Da Fonseca 2019).[9] Such a historical exercise leads to the conclusion that apart from minor and incremental changes, the scrolls remain mostly identical to the extent that painters themselves call it a "copy" (ibid., 113). This understanding of identicality depends on the understanding of the painters and performers, but not isolated to the Cheriyal painting tradition. For instance, Kavita Singh (2011, 117) observed a similar situation with the *phaḍ* paintings from Rajasthan, scrolls painted on cloth that are also used in storytelling performances. The *bhopā*, performers of the *phaḍ*, refer to a new scroll as *chapnā* (printing), which implies reproducibility. Cheriyal painters do not necessarily know the narrative they depict on these scrolls for performers, because they may use an old scroll that they "copy" to make a new one. As with the Rajasthani *phaḍ*, the scroll's fixity, in depiction and narrative, is a choice that supports the painting and the performance's functions. Such fixity, however, functions differently on the *phaḍ* and the Cheriyal scrolls. The same figure depicted on the *phaḍ* may be used as several characters in the oral narrative, making the scroll an *aide-mémoire* rather than a strict illustration (Singh 2011, 116). Like the *phaḍ*, Cheriyal scrolls are *aides-mémoire*, but the necessity for such fixity is primarily due to their function of recording the patrons' genealogical narratives. The scrolls are, in fact, the actual genealogical certificates of the patrons, and the performances mark the process through which the caste group reiterates its legitimacy (Da Fonseca 2019, 132).

The disappearing heritage of Telangana, India

The tradition's oldest known scroll is dated 1625 CE from an inscription on the back. It is preserved in Jagdish and Kamla Mittal's collection in Hyderabad.[10] Their private museum houses the largest collection of such scrolls, with most of the pieces in the collection dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[11] Prestigious museum collections—such as the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Salar Jung Museum in Hyderabad, the Calico Museum of Textiles in Ahmedabad, and the Crafts Museum in Delhi—all serve as repositories of other scrolls from the same period.[12]

The scrolls described in the preceding paragraphs received the Handicraft Board's attention in the 1980s to form the base for institutions to construct imagined Cheriyal heritage(s) over time. These scrolls are gradually disappearing. Patrons have changed professions or, at times, moved away from their villages. Performers thus had to find other sources of income. To this end, some have taken up other professions. As for painters, they receive less and less commissions these days for performance scrolls. Lack of patronage has thus forced them to paint about a wide range of other themes nowadays. This situation has encouraged museum institutions to archive and document the tradition's disappearing features. The long, narrative scroll for performances may, under such circumstances, represent the Nakashi community's heritage, Telangana's legacy, or rural India's more broadly construed. The perceived pressing need for preservation resulted in several Indian museums commissioning lengthy narrative scrolls identical to those used for performances, but which never circulated among performers. The museums discussed here are the Telugu University Museum in Warangal, Telangana, DakshinaChitra in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, and the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS), known in English as the Indira Gandhi National Museum of Humankind, which is located in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. Unlike the prestigious international museum collections that collected antique pieces, these museums commissioned new scrolls. The material features are more or less the same, and the scrolls are equally long, with registers divided into scenes, red background, and contrasting colors, just as they would be on scrolls that would have circulated among performers and be seen by audiences during narrated events. Like the originals, it would take three to six months of intense labor to complete one. The subject matter remains the same as well—local castes' genealogical narratives—with a preference for two narratives, the *kāṭama rāju kathā*, and the nearly extinct *padmaśāli purāṇa* that I mentioned briefly earlier.

If these museum institutions all share an interest in documenting Cheriyal painting, each displays its orientation. The Telugu University Museum chose to commission a scroll of the *kāṭama rāju kathā* (figure 2). The *kathā* (story) is Katam Raju's narrative. He is the hero-founder of the *golla*, a pastoral caste of the Telangana and Andhra Pradesh regions. The performing community is known as Madaheccu.[13] The particularity of Katam Raju's story is that storytellers use different props in their performances. It could be a scroll, a cloth hanging, a set of wooden figurines closer to the puppetry tradition, or even masks. At the Telugu University Museum, the newly commissioned scroll hangs in the gallery along with an older one, this time collected from performers, and with a set of figurines and masks. The museum belongs to the folklore department of the Telugu University, Warangal Campus. Its collection is small but condensed. It documents the local folklore of Telangana in the form of artifacts, photographs, and tools, but with an ominous focus on the numerous "disappearing" performance traditions of the region. It is the curated product of research conducted at the university, while its orientation is academic and anthropological. The newly commissioned scroll, in this context, is a representation of Telangana's continuing folk heritage, both tangible and intangible.

Like the Telugu University Museum, DakshinaChitra in Chennai has commissioned a scroll and a set of wooden figurines of the hero's *kathā* (figures 3 and 4) for what

it has called its "cross-cultural living museum of art, architecture, lifestyles, crafts and performing arts of South India" (DakshinaChitra Museum n.d.). The open-air museum documents the cultural production of southern Indian states in the form of a large village setting. Each house or hut hosts a series of artifacts representing a state's contemporary cultural production—mostly craft and artisanal practices.

Somewhere in between the Telugu University Museum's anthropological display and DakshinaChitra's village setting, the IGRMS in Bhopal commissioned in the early 2000s a scroll of the *padmaśāli purāṇa*, displayed in figure 1.

It is the story of the *padmaśālī* caste. The IGRMS, Museum of Humankind, utilizes an anthropological orientation, coupled with an insistence on historical documentation, thereby resulting in ancient artifacts from vanished traditions and more recent materials mixed together in chronotopic display frames. The main difference between these three museums lies in their geographical scope. The first two display regional heritages, whereas the IGRMS displays the heritage of India more broadly conceived. Bhopal is the state capital of Madhya Pradesh, home

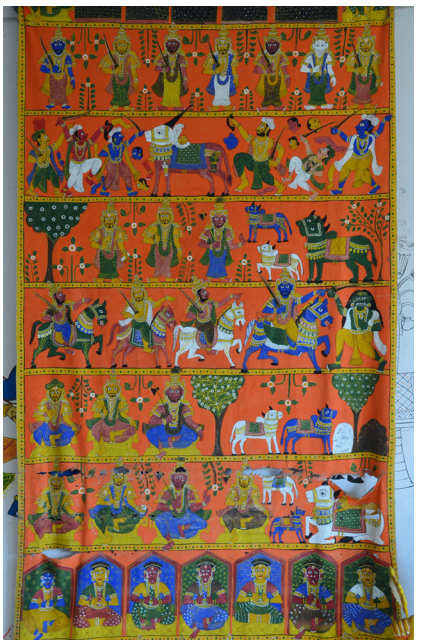

Figure 2. Katam Raju Katha, c. 2000, watercolor on canvas. Telugu University Museum. Photograph by Anaïs Da Fonseca.

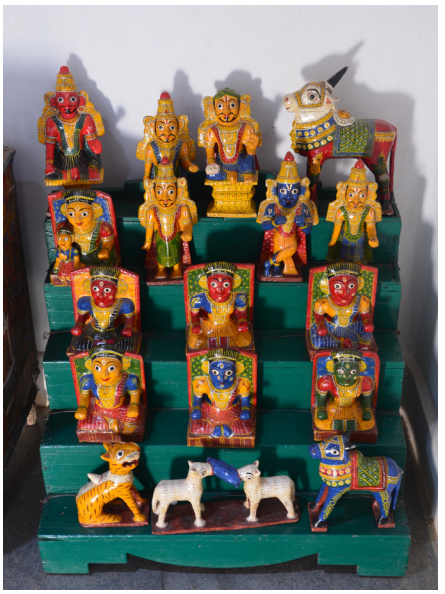

Figure 3. Katam Raju Katha, c. 2000, painted wood, DakshinaChitra. Photograph by Anaïs Da Fonseca.

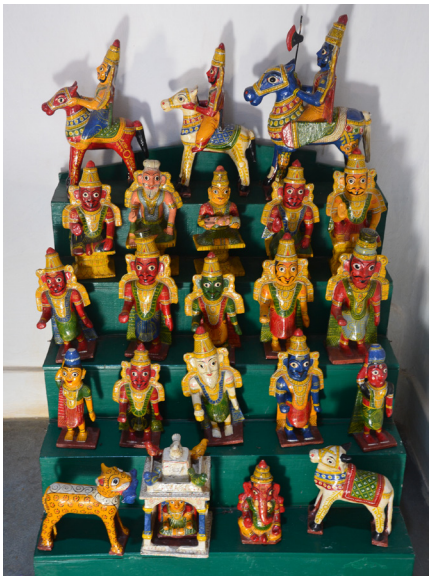

Figure 4. Katam Raju Katha, c. 2000, painted wood. DakshinaChitra. Photograph by Anaïs Da Fonseca.

to a large number of surviving vernacular practices, many of them "tribal" in nature, a designation that carries romanticized symbolic value in the region. The city is also relatively close to Delhi, and, being home to several museum institutions unique to the country, such as the Bharat Bhavan, the Tribal Art Museum, or the very well-maintained State Museum, it is an attractive weekend destination for residents of the nation's capital.

Though this article's scope does not permit me to expand more on each of these museums' orientation, these three examples may be considered together for the type of Cheriyal paintings that their respective curators and administrators have chosen for their collections, as well as for the heritage these paintings have come to represent. Dialogically the material features of the Cheriyal tradition are attached to certain institutional discourses. Here we have examples of Telangana (a state), South India (a linguistic family region), and India (a nation) that encompasses the other two. All three are based on attempting to preserve and revitalize heritage through the commission of newly made objects representing the old, rather than through the actual acquisition of historical pieces. DakshinaChitra and IGRMS's mimicry of village settings insists on associating craftsmanship to rurality and bringing what they define as authentic rurality to the museum.[14] The other important point is that the traditional scroll for performances—the tangible and intangible heritage of Telangana—transforms into a refurbished, ongoing practice in a new institutional context as it becomes a curated object in the three museum collections. The Cheriyal painting tradition, therefore, receives museum validation not only through the valuation of ancient pieces, as is often the case with museum institutions of "universal outreach" (Flynn 2012), but also through the contemporaneity of the tradition.[15]

Following the museum institutions' orientations or biases presented in the preceding paragraphs, the scroll for performance comes to represent the disappearing, yet contemporary, Telangana, south Indian heritage. However, this bias in favor of one particular artistic tradition has sidelined other types of paintings produced by the Nakashi craftsmen who make and transmit the type of Cheriyal heritage documented and produced in these museums. There are a variety of other formats, props, iconographies, and functions that paintings produced by Cheriyal painters include, representing other aspects of the local, vernacular traditions belonging to yet other heritages. The following case studies illustrate these diverse forms of Cheriyal paintings, supporting the argument that Cheriyal painting is a patron-sensitive tradition: patrons mainly define what Cheriyal painting represents.

Regions and religion

The set of paintings discussed in this section follows the Cheriyal visual conventions but differs in terms of iconography, function, and discourse. This set depicts lengthy narratives laid over a canvas divided into registers and scenes, with a red background and contrasting figures. Unlike the scrolls used for the performance of *kula purāṇa*s, however, these paintings have been acquired or commissioned to illustrate the discourses of one institution—a museum that supports the politics of Hindutva that has taken India by storm in recent decades.

The example that will be discussed here is a set of ten panels of the *Ramayana* produced for the Ram Katha Sangrahalaya, a museum located in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, which is the town in northern India believed to be the deity Ram's royal headquarters, based on the epic narrative (figure 5). The Ram Katha Museum is a small provincial museum established in 1996 as part of a cultural institution in place since 1988, which promotes the story (*kathā*) of Ram, the epic's divine hero. The museum collects and preserves antiquities that relate to his narrative.[16] It is an archaeological museum that displays both prehistoric and historical evidence of Rama's relationship to the town of Ayodhya. The museum is located inside the Tulsi Smarak Bhawan. The Government of India built it in 1969, and it is now under the jurisdiction of Uttar Pradesh's Cultural Department. There is a hall for prayers, meetings, and religious discourse in its premises; a research institute called the Ayodhya Shodh Sansthan (Ayodhya Research Institute) established in 1986; and a library. Performance of the *rāmlīlā* (theatrical presentation of the *Ramayana*) takes place there every day.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Ayodhya was a place of intense communal violence in India revolving around a controversy focused on the so-called the Ram Janmabhoomi Movement concerning the disputed birthplace (*janmabhūmi*) of Lord Rama, or Ram in the vernacular. The conflict was over a disagreement about a religious site, Ayodhya, then a mosque within it called the Babri Masjid, which was built during the Mughal period. The central question was whether the mosque was built over the spoiled remains of the exact place where the Hindu deity was born. In 1992, Hindu fundamentalists destroyed this sixteenth-century Muslim place of worship in order to reappropriate the site. On November 9, 2019, the Supreme Court of India ordered

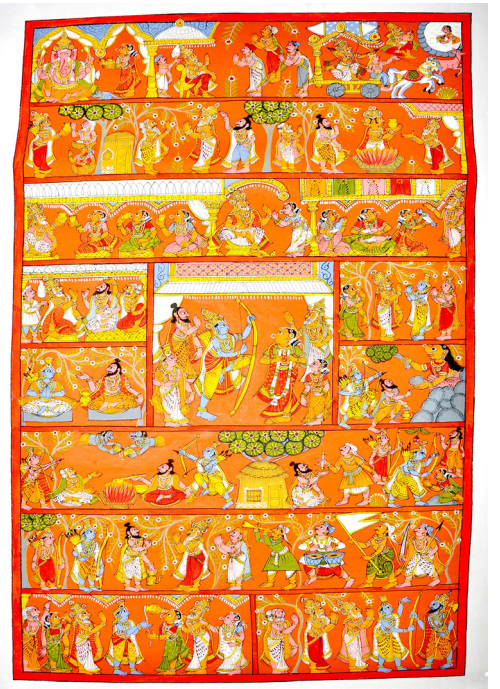

Figure 5. Panel 1 Ramayana, Rama and Sita's wedding, Vaikuntam Nakash and family, 2013, watercolor on canvas. Ram Katha Museum Ayodhya. Photograph by Anaïs Da Fonseca.

the disputed land to be handed over to a Hindu trust and permitted the construction of a temple at the site where the Babri Masjid once stood.[17] In reality, the conflict is much more complex and dates to the earlier communal violence around a similar religious disagreement over sacred sites in Ayodhya in the mid-nineteenth century. Tapati Guha-Thakurta (2004) proposed a complete chronology of the conflict under the critical eye of the role of heritage in this religious dispute. In particular, she discussed the court case that followed the destruction of the Babri Masjid and called for archaeological evidence to support Hindu fundamentalists' claims over the site.[18]

In this context, the presence of a museum dedicated to Rama's story in Ayodhya is certainly no coincidence. It is safe to assume that the museum and its dedication to the *Ramayana* contribute to the museum's support of powerful Hindutva politics and, in this case, the building of Ram's temple on the site of the former mosque. When I heard about this museum for the first time in 2014, I assumed that it was promoting one version of the *Ramayana* and that the museum had commissioned a Cheriyal painting to illustrate it. I expected to look at each episode and search for particular events or narrative plots to support Ram's story and its political agenda. I expected this version to ascribe a special status to Ayodhya, following the museum's alliance to the Hindutva ideology it supported.

While looking into the commission process, however, I realized the significance of this set. The museum curator explained that he regularly traveled to the Rajiv Gandhi Handicraft Bhawan in Delhi, where all state handicraft emporia are clustered together. There, he searched for craft productions that narrate or relate to the *Ramayana* in a broad sense and acquired pieces for the museum. He encountered the *Ramayana* set on one of his trips to Delhi, displayed in the Lepakshi Emporium. Working closely with the Development Commissioners' Office (Handicrafts), the state emporia have become the first marketplaces that bring together the handicrafts of each particular state for sale at a centralized location within the capital. At that time, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana shared a network of emporia called Lepakshi, founded in 1982.[19] The Development Commissioner of Handicrafts in the southern region managed it. These emporia function as showrooms divided into sections where one can find all the handicrafts that a state has to provide. They are generally supplied with fresh objects regularly and have numerous showrooms across the country.

For this set, the museum did not ask the painters to produce specific episodes of the *Ramayana*, because it did not directly commission the paintings. The set was already made, destined to any customer visiting the Lepakshi Emporium. The museum thus acquired the Ram *kathā* set by chance. Vaikuntam Nakash, who painted it, did so following the narrative he had always known since his childhood in Telangana. It is important to note that the *Ramayana* as understood in its mainstream northern Indian version was never part of the genealogical narratives depicted on the Cheriyal scrolls that circulated during performances. Only the *addaṁ purāṇa*, the genealogy of the Telangana barbers (*maṁgali*), contains some episodes of the *Ramayana*, isolated and inserted into the patron's genealogy to validate the caste group's existence through its connection with the main Hindu deity Ram. However, along with the *Mahabharata* and the *kṛṣṇalīlā* (sports of Krishna), the *Ramayana* is the most popular mythological narrative representation of Indian—understood as Hindu—culture within India,

but even more particularly abroad. For this reason, the subject is prevalent among artifacts sold to tourists in the handicraft markets as representative of authentic, yet selective, Indian culture.

The Ram Katha Museum exhibits objects related to the *rāmkathā* (story of Ram), collected from everywhere in India. One finds *kalamkārī* (hand- or block-printed) cotton textiles as well as puppets from Andhra Pradesh and the Deccan more generally, masks from Kerala, Tanjore paintings from Tamil Nadu, and Varanasi dolls. The museum also exhibits materials from the Thai, Cambodian, and Indonesian versions of the *Ramayana* alongside other local artifacts, supporting further the broader span of a national Indian/Hindu epic in the form of the *Ramayana*. In this context, introducing a Cheriyal *Ramayana* to the museum collection is not to assert one specific version of the epic, but to bring together all of the diverse vernacular versions of the text from India and beyond, with the underlying logic being that the story's vast diversity is definitive proof of its validity. The diversity of Ram's story is disseminated through its variety of narrative and visual forms, rather than an ideal type based on a hypothetically constructed original. The museum's agenda could thus be to display and communicate an awareness of the *Ramayana*'s wide appeal throughout the country, including places as remote as Cheriyal in Telangana.[20]

The museum, I observed, has devised three prerequisites to support Ram and his *kathā*'s historicity: multiplicity, authenticity, and contemporaneity. The *rāmkathā*'s multiplicity is presented as a token of its validity first. Then, India's most remote and rural areas are depicted as repositories of authenticity, including places like Cheriyal, where the *Ramayana* also circulates. Finally, contemporaneity certifies the continuing validity and relevance of the Ram narrative cycle. According to this logic, craft emporia, which are relays of the central government's numerous handicraft boards in each state, can thus ultimately provide multiplicity, authenticity, and contemporaneity through the various regional development commissioners. The promotion of a traditional and seemingly disappearing Indian culture has become the number one priority of these institutions. In that sense, both the museum and the craft emporia dialogically contributed to maintaining Cheriyal painting's association with a traditional, not to mention fundamentally Hindu, India. The process just described may thus intentionally ignore other features that do not necessarily support the nationalistic master narrative that the government wishes to disseminate intentionally.

The style of the Ram Katha Museum painting is significant, too. Looking at the balanced distribution of episodes on each panel and evenly over the ten panels, it is clear that the Cheriyal painters competently master the depiction of the lengthy narratives, here as in other paintings. When I discussed this specific skill with the painters, they insisted on having chosen and mastered a miniature style. This "miniature style" is something that Cheriyal painters have repeatedly mentioned with great pride to qualify their most refined works. Paintings usually proposed for award competition and those receiving the awards are almost systematically in the miniature style. Here, the miniature style translates literally as a very small depiction of figures within lengthy narrative panels. Craftsmen all over India recognize this style as the most prestigious and refined genre of painting, undoubtedly following

the long art historical construction of miniature painting as one of the highest forms of artistic expression in the South Asia region.[21]

This example of a miniature-style *Ramayana* displayed at the Ram Katha Museum in Ayodhya is significant for several reasons. The choice of a miniature-style Cheriyal *Ramayana* indicates that the tropes of "miniature" and the "*Ramayana*," which both play an important role in the creation of a homogenized version of pan-Indian culture, have slipped into the Cheriyal tradition. What is suggested is a drifting away from regional depictions of Telangana heritage to the representation of a unified national image of India based on a Hindu icon. Pika Ghosh, regarding the Bengali *paṭ*, locates the early interest for the tradition in the inspiration Bengali folklore represented for modernist artists of the Bengal School, who turned to the vernacular as a counter to European influences and as a starting point for envisioning a national Indian culture (see also Korom 1989, 2010). Such nationalism has evolved and, since the 1990s, increasingly taken the form of right-leaning Hindutva politics, for which craft and folklore—including the Bengali *paṭ* but also Cheriyal paintings—now represent an Indian identity defined solely in Hindu religious terms. In contrast with a Nehruvian notion that envisioned the nation in terms of "unity in diversity," such an example of the absorption of regional specificities into the national imagination clearly illustrates the Hindutva project that has been unfolding since the 1990s in India, which the Ram Katha Museum supports.

My first example also highlights the capacity for Cheriyal painters to adapt to changes in patronage. In this case, the Ram Katha Museum did not directly commission the painting, but the Lepakshi Handicrafts emporium did. With commercial interests, the new patron requested that the painting be the *Ramayana*, a subject that Cheriyal painters had never actually depicted entirely before. The emporium also requested that the painting should be ten panels of equal size, easier to display or store than the single ten-meter-length canvas Cheriyal painters usually make. This format was new to the painters as well. Finally, the emporium did not impose the miniature style; instead, Vaikuntam Nakash adapted to the patron's specifications in format and subject by responding with a style he deemed fit to the prestige and financial reward of a commercial commission of this scale.

Cheriyal visual culture and its authentic innovations

At the dawn of their revival, Cheriyal paintings were essentially a scroll painting tradition. As already explained earlier in this article, they functioned as a well-regulated local folk practice that involved several communities, all bound together by service and duty, and all apprehending fixity through the legitimizing function of the paintings and their accompanying performances. Since the 1980s, the Handicraft Board's intervention and the overwhelming presence of national and state patronage "canonized" the fundamental features of Cheriyal paintings characterized by a predominance of red, the heavy contrasts between colors, and the distinctive thick black lines. These visual characteristics now form stylistic codes followed by each painter and transmitted rigorously as the tradition's visual tenets. At the same time that the canon was being fixed, institutional interventions also managed to increase

the visibility of the tradition among patrons outside of the traditional contexts within which such aesthetic works circulated. They paved the way for many changes, among which are a favor for smaller objects, the use of ready-made watercolor or even acrylic instead of natural pigments, the depictions of shorter narratives, as well as the inclusion of pan-Indian mythological themes and village scenes instead of the local caste *purāṇa*s that only a few can decipher.

The previous paintings presented in this article have demonstrated the importance of institutional discourses in constructing heritage and the responsiveness of Cheriyal painters to changes in patronage. There are many other types of Cheriyal painting, however, applied to other media. For instance, objects such as key chains (figure 6), masks, sari paintings (figure 7), and decorative ceramic plates now take part in what we could call Cheriyal visual culture. One may also find masks and wooden figurines (figure 8), as smaller versions of those that used to be a part of the performance tradition. The handicraft market commercializes them at state emporia or private outlets; they also serve as interior decoration, privately commissioned or bought in lifestyle stores. The primary colors of these objects remain the bold red, yellow, and green hues that are also used on the scrolls, usually punctuated with decorative borders. When the objects are two dimensional, they are also organized as registers or individual scenes, following Cheriyal painting conventions. The production remains handmade, but assistants or the masters' wives and children produce them in large numbers, much like an assembly line in a factory. Cheriyal cloth paintings that are sold within the handicraft's scene are handmade in large numbers as well. The mass-produced ones follow Cheriyal painting conventions, but they have shrunk noticeably in size to be portable. Moreover, they now depict mainly popular pan-Indian Hindu subjects, particularly the *Ramayana* and the *kṛṣṇalīlā*. On rare occasions, one may find the depiction of what Cheriyal painters commonly call a "village scene" (figure 9). These scenes depict one or several characters engaged in farming or village life activities. They are meant to represent the "authentic" version of India, which is to say rural and agrarian. Such pastoral motifs and scenes are derived from the persistent legacy of Mahatma Gandhi's romanticization of Indian crafts and village life that has informed marketing strategies since India's independence in 1947. In this context, Cheriyal craft as a whole plays a metonymic role for the production of an authentic Indian heritage. To accomplish the task of creating imagined authenticity, the audience or buyer must be convinced that the products are made by hand in a rural context, even if mass produced by the hundreds in Hyderabad or elsewhere.

The study of Cheriyal paintings that I have presented here locates it within that body of existing scholarship that considers living traditions as resilient and adaptable to changes in patronage (Jain 1997, 2019; Korom 1989, 2011; Bundgaard 1999; Hauser 2002; Venkatesan 2009; Singh 2011; Chatterji 2012; Bose 2019). However, the history of crafts and decorative arts in India has not always promoted traditions as contemporary and adaptable to changes. During the colonial era, for instance, art historians such as Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1909) or Stella Kramrisch (1968) adopted a preservationist approach to craft, design, and vernacular practices, following the conviction that craft's value lies in a past that must be salvaged at

Figure 6. Cheriyal keychain, Sai Kiran Nakash, 2014. Photograph by Anaïs Da Fonseca.

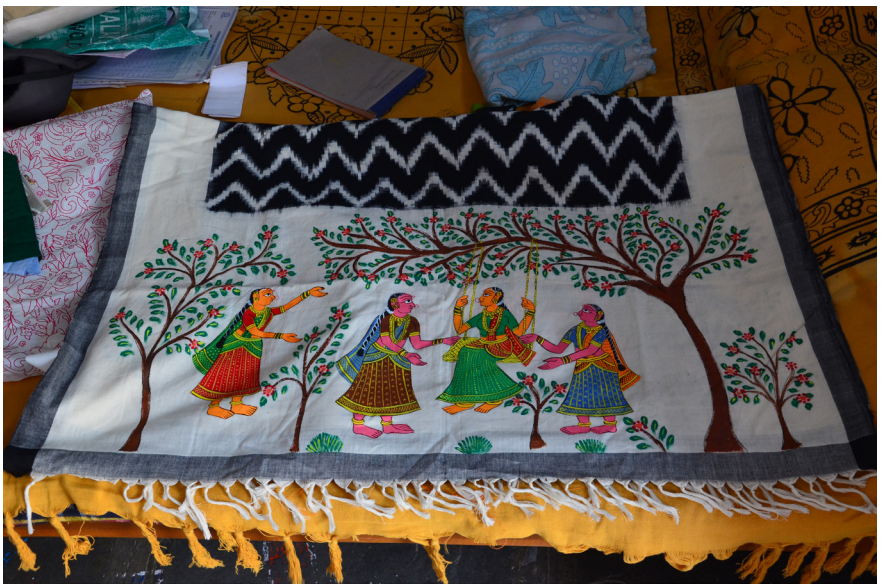

Figure 7. Village scene, 2015, watercolor painting on canvas. Photograph by Anaïs Da Fonseca.

all costs. Modernity was seen as a threat to craft traditions that disappeared due to industrialization, mechanization, and urbanization. It is only later with post-Independence thinkers and institution makers—such as Pupul Jayakar, founder of the Crafts Museum in 1956, and K. G. Subramanyam in the 1960s, with his musings on the "living traditions" of India—that the dynamic and creative potential of craft and folk traditions developed. In particular, Jyotindra Jain's extensive work on what has now come to be known as "lesser-known" traditions since the 1980s led to the publication of interdisciplinary monographs that brought art historical concerns to the study of visual folklore. Trained as an anthropologist, Jain developed an empirical approach to visual folklore that looked at the makers, reception, and continuity that permitted an understanding of visual traditions' contemporaneity. Until today, his work considers

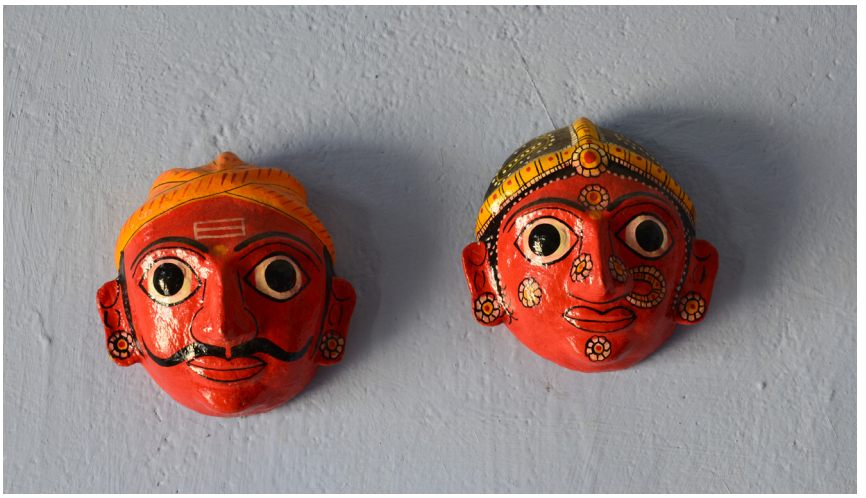

Figure 8. Cheriyal masks, 2015, painting on coconut shell. Photograph by Anaïs Da Fonseca.

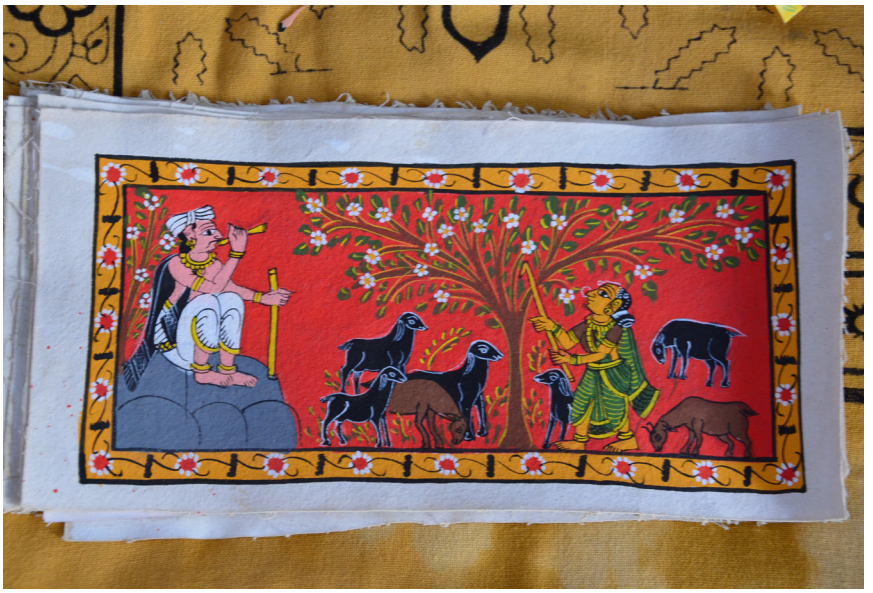

Figure. 9. Village scene, 2015, watercolor painting on canvas. Photograph by Anaïs Da Fonseca.

equally the features of a tradition that disappeared and those that transformed over time, something that has also inspired my approach to contemporary Cheriyal paintings.

The impact of institutional intervention on folk painting practices in India has been discussed most extensively in the context of the Bengali *paṭ*, particularly regarding changes in iconography (Chatterji 2012; Korom 2006). For instance, NGOs have been instrumental in iconographical changes as well as contextual uses of scrolls (Korom 2011). The *paṭ* tradition continues to depict mythological stories as it used to, but it also illustrates AIDS or family planning campaigns devised by these NGOs. Because the Patua (*paṭuẏā*) painters and performers of the Bengali *paṭ* (scroll)

tradition used to be mostly itinerant, going from village to village seeking alms in exchange for their storytelling, they would ensure the spread of NGOs' development and health messages to the most remote and rural parts of the region. Changes in Cheriyal painting iconography are not quite as innovative. Except for "village scenes," the painted subjects remain primarily religious even today. What the nationalization of patronage did, however, was to increase the exposure of Cheriyal painting. It expanded possibilities for commissioning politically charged Cheriyal paintings, such as the *Ramayana* in Ayodhya discussed in the preceding paragraphs. Such examples of the nationalizing tendencies that have impacted Cheriyal painting always highlight Hindu iconographical motifs, thereby anchoring them in the religious realm.

Cheriyal paintings and Bengali *paṭ*s may depict scenes of the *Ramayana* or the *līlā* of Krishna, but these have also become common subjects for most of the country's visual folk practices like *paṭṭa*s from Odisha, *kalamkārī*s from Andhra Pradesh, or Madhubani paintings from Bihar. Each of these traditions initially had its specific local subjects and functions. Their commercialization took place through the same shared handicraft platforms, state retailers, and museums, which contributed to homogenizing iconography, something discussed by Hauser (2002) and Korom (2006) with regard to the Bengali *paṭ* tradition, by Bundgaard (1999) concerning the Odishan *paṭṭa*s, Hart (1995) in the context of Madhubani paintings, and by myself (2017) on Cheriyal paintings. All these have now become popular depictions of Hindu subjects, particularly the *Ramayana* and the *kṛṣṇalīlā*, serving the political construction of a joined Hindu heritage for India.

All of the painting traditions discussed here today bear the marks of institutional intervention, interventions that constructed heritage to be displayed in front of us, the viewer. They have responded dynamically to the interventions that I described, such as replacing local rural- and community-based patronage with state patronage, or introducing assistants or middlemen into the traditional structure of production. This article has demonstrated that contemporary Cheriyal paintings can be conceived as objects transformed into ten-panel miniature sets, masks, and key chains while still remaining an integral part of the tradition, just as much as they once were scrolls used for the performance of caste genealogies. Each type of painting described in this article represents an aspect of Cheriyal painted production. The consideration that I gave to institutions in this article was intended to support an understanding of Cheriyal painting as being variegated, adaptable to changes in patronage.

Conclusion

When one hears about Cheriyal paintings for the first time, it is often through the rhetoric of disappearance, a Victorian preservationist attitude that still lingers over most of the handicraft and handloom master narrative in India even today. Indeed, within the Cheriyal painting tradition, this discourse relies on the slow disappearance of one aspect of the painting style, which is also its oldest function: that of being a scroll used for performances of local caste genealogies. Government institutions and NGOs disseminate this discourse that painters themselves carry forward by following the more authoritative words of governmental powers like

the arts and crafts institutions that intervene into the daily affairs of artisans and craftspeople. However, the artists nonetheless understand the significant financial potential of governmental interventions, which makes them appealing. A perceived "disappearance" or even decline in such a tradition should not be seen as a death knell, for commercialization has opened up a whole new range of iconographies, styles, and techniques, which has allowed for stimulated innovation among younger painters who are emerging on the arts and crafts scene.

The changes are significant. They make one question the criteria that define what a "folk" tradition may be (Korom 1989). But they also force us to ponder when a distinct tradition begins becoming something else. They further question whether changes such as the ones I pointed out in this article—and innovation in general—are inclusive elements of the tradition in question and to what extent they define its parameters. More importantly, how would changes introduced through intervention interfere with the construction of a community's own self-perceived heritage? My study of Cheriyal painting answers only part of the questions raised here in locating changes and innovations not as indicators of decline, but rather as the dynamics that exist and function at the heart of the tradition to guarantee survival and continuity over time. It is essential to understand the Cheriyal painting tradition—and probably many others, such as those mentioned comparatively in passing—as a malleable cultural entity that maintains its survival through the agency of its purveyors themselves. They are the ones who have managed to deploy a natural form of adaption that allows for developing a resilient capacity to retain their heritage by nurturing a few visual consistencies, despite the massive changes that their tradition is undergoing in the face of modernity and globalization. The study of Cheriyal paintings thus reminds us that "tradition" is also a dynamic space of social and cultural changes, and these changes play an equally important role in the construction of a craft's heritage.

Author

Anaïs Da Fonseca is an associate lecturer in history of art at University College London. She received her PhD in history of art at the School of Oriental and African Studies in 2017. Her research and teaching focus on modern and contemporary art from South Asia; the history of craft, design, and "folk and tribal arts"; and the politics of culture and heritage in South Asia. She is also interested in the phenomenology of contemporary art making, and in the Europe-India-Africa trade and movements of skills since the 19th century. She is currently completing a co-edited volume on the transcultural practice of artist Prafulla Mohanti, *The Dancing Hands: Life and Works of Prafulla Mohanti* (forthcoming 2022).

Notes

1. The (hi)story of Cheriyal paintings' revival was narrated to me on many occasions by Nakashi painters, the then-district commissioner of the Handicraft Southern region, and the marketing director of the Lepakshi Emporium (the retail platform of the District Commissioner for Handicraft, then known as Andhra Pradesh), while doing fieldwork in 2014–15. However, nobody

gave an exact date for the beginning of the AIHB's intervention, yet they all agreed to locate the first training program in Cheriyal during the early 1980s.

2. Bose's 2016 dissertation was converted into a book in 2019 titled *Perspectives on Work, Home, and Identity from Artisans in Telangana: Conversations around Craft*.

3. Performers of *kula purāṇa*s in Telangana are strictly male; hence, a scroll transfers from father to son, or the nearest male descendant.

4. Mittal (2014, 22) reports that the late Venkatramaiah revealed the presence of painting centers in four of the eight districts of Telangana: Warangal, Karimnagar, Nizamabad, and Adilabad.

5. In the 2000s, the Nakashi painters grouped into a cooperative and handed in an application for Geographical Indication (GI), an intellectual property rights system used in India to recognize the geographical location or origin of a particular product (for more on the GI tag, see Kadhir 2013). A GI tag was granted to "Cheriyal painting" in 2010, now legally binding the painting practice to the geographic origin to which it is attributable, Cheriyal. Thus, it is now protecting the tradition from potential imitators or people claiming hereditary authorship to Cheriyal painting from outside that locality.

6. For more on *kula puraṇa*s see, for instance, Das (1968, 141), Ramanujan (1993, 101–20), Sadanandam (2008), Subbachary (2003), and Thapar (1992, 1996).

7. In exchange, patrons support performers through donation, either in rupees, clothes, or grains, according to Sadanandam (2008, 157).

8. Da Fonseca (2019) details the *padmaśāli purāṇa*'s narrative.

9. The article focuses entirely on the concept of replication in the Cheriyal painting tradition.

10. Mittal dated the scroll 1625, using an inscription located on the backside of the object. The inscription indicates 1944, the year in which the scroll changed hands, which means it had been produced sometime before that.

11. Mittal (2014) reproduced each of the scrolls from his collection in his publication.

12. Images of these scrolls have been reproduced in the following publications: for the British Museum, see Dallapiccola (2010); for the Calico Museum, see Talwar and Kalyan (1979); and for the Crafts Museum, see Jain, Aggarwala, and Shah (1989).

13. The English name is derived from the Telugu *manda hecculu*, a sub-caste of the Gollas. *Manda* means group and *heccu* suggests "exaggeration," to which the plural suffix *lu* is added. Members of this group are known for their extravagant, heightened, or magnified tales.

14. Boccardi (2019, 7) defines authenticity "in the context of heritage conservation . . . as a condition that should be met in order to validate a statement of cultural value or significance." In the context of Cheriyal paintings at IGRMS and DakshinaChitra, the rural village setting bolsters the construction of authenticity meant to support an already existing claim for cultural significance.

15. Eighteen museums across the world signed the Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums (2002) to declare that their particular mission as a "universal" collective of museums makes the retention of objects acquired long ago crucial for the interests of all peoples. For more on the definition of a universal museum see Flynn (2012), Prott (2009), Wilson (2002), and Miller (1974).

16. This conjecture is based on a personal discussion with Avinash Kumar, curator of the Ram Katha Sangrahalaya Museum in Ayodhya that was conducted on June 23, 2014.

17. In return, it granted five acres of land to Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board to construct a mosque.

18. Guha-Thakurta's chapter on the subject looks at the role of archaeology and history as academic disciplines in the conflict. As the dispute was going on in court, archaeologists and historians from both sides called for archaeological evidence to support or counter the case of a razed temple—or more broadly a Hindu religious shrine—under the mosque. Guha-Thakurta denounces the misuse of this evidence to corroborate mythological fact about Ram's life and, therefore, the misuse of archaeology as a discipline to ironically support certain religious beliefs.

19. Until 2014, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana were one single state of India called Andhra Pradesh, of which Telangana was a region. Between 2014 and 2017, Lepakshi Handicrafts represented both states. Since 2017, Lepakshi Handicrafts continues to represent Andhra Pradesh, while Golconda Handicrafts now represents Telangana.

20. Across two publications about the *Ramayana* (1991, 2001), Paula Richman and her contributors first establish the varieties of the epic and the possibility of constant retelling without an actual original. *Questioning Ramayanas* assumes the multiplicity of the epic and further questions its motives across time and space.

21. I encountered this attitude when discussing competence and skill with painters from other folk traditions, particularly with the *paṭṭa* painters from Odisha and the Bengali *paṭ* painters.

References

Appadurai, Arjun, ed. 1986. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511819582

Boccardi, Giovanni. 2019. "Authenticity in the Heritage Context: A Reflection beyond the Nara Document." *The Historic Environment: Policy & Practice* 10 (1): 4–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/17567505.2018.1531647

Bose, Chandan. 2016. "Is There an Indian Way of Telling a Story? Technique, Performance and Function of Narration of Cherial Scrolls of Telangana." PhD diss., University of Canterbury.

———. 2019. *Perspectives on Work, Home, and Identity from Artisans in Telangana: Conversations around Craft*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bundgaard, Helle. 1999. *Indian Art Worlds in Contention: Local, Regional and National Discourses on Orissan Patta*. Richmond, UK: Curzon.

Chatterji, Roma. 2012. "Global Events and Local Narratives: 9/11 and the Chitrakars." In *Speaking with Pictures: Folk Art and the Narrative Tradition in India*, edited by Roma Chatterji, 62–106. New Delhi: Routledge India.

Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. 1909. *The Indian Craftsman*. London: Probsthain.

Da Fonseca, Anaïs. 2017. "Continuity and Changes in Contemporary Cheriyal Paintings from Telangana India." PhD diss., School of Oriental and African Studies.

———. 2019. "Replication and Innovation in the Folk Narratives of Telangana: Scroll Paintings of the Padmasali Purana, 1625–2000." *Manuscript Studies: A Journal of the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies* 4 (1): 112–33. https://doi.org/10.1353/mns.2019.0002

"DakshinaChitra Museum." N.d. Dakshina Chitra: The Living Museum. http://dakshinachitra.net/

Dallapiccola, Anna L. 2010. *South Indian Paintings: A Catalogue of the British Museum Collection*. London: British Museum Press.

———, ed. 2011. *Indian Painting: The Lesser-Known Traditions*. New Delhi: Niyogi Books.

Das, Veena. 1968. "A Sociological Approach to the Caste Puranas: A Case Study." *Sociological Bulletin* 17 (2): 141–64.

Flynn, Tom. 2012. "The Universal Museum, A Valid Model for the 21st Century." In *The Potosí Principle: How Can We Sing the Song of the Lord in an Alien Land; Colonial Image Production in the Global Economy*, edited by Alice Creischer, Max Jorge Hinderer, and Andreas Siekmann, 281–83. Berlin: Haus der Kulturen der Welt.

Ghosh, Pika. 2000. "The Story of a Storyteller's Scroll." *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 37 (1): 166–85. https://doi.org/10.1086/RESv37n1ms20167499

Guha-Thakurta, Tapati. 2004. "Archaeology and the Monument: On Two Contentious Sites of History." In *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Post-Colonial India*, by Tapati Guha-Thakurta, 268–304. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hart, Lynn M. 1995. "Three Walls: Regional Aesthetics and the International Art World." In *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*, edited by George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers, 127–50. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hauser, Beatrix. 2002. "From Oral Tradition to 'Folk Art': Reevaluating Bengali Scroll Paintings." *Asian Folklore Studies* 61 (1): 105–22. https://doi.org/10.2307/1178679

Jain, Jyotindra, ed. 1998. *Picture Showmen: Insights into the Narrative Tradition in Indian Art*. Mumbai: Marg Publications.

———. 2019. *Jangarh Singh Shyam, A Conjuror's Archive*. Ahmedabad: Mapin.

Jain, Jyotindra, Aarti Aggarwala, and Pankaj Shah. 1989. *National Handicrafts and Handlooms Museum, New Delhi*. Ahmedabad: Mapin.

Kadhir, Preetha. "What Is the GI Tag?" *The Hindu*, March 11, 2013. http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-in-school/what-is-the-gitag/article4495471.ece

Kopytoff, Igor. 1986. "The Cultural Biographies of Things." In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, 64–91. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511819582

Korom, Frank J. 1989. "Inventing Traditions: Folklore and Nationalism as Historical Process in Bengal." In *Folklore and Historical Process*, edited by Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin and Maja Povrzanović, 57–84. Zagreb, Croatia: Institute of Folklore Research.

———. 2006. *Village of Painters: Narrative Scrolls from West Bengal*. Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press.

———. 2010. "Gurusaday Dutt, Vernacular Nationalism, and the Folk Culture Revival in Colonial Bengal." In *Folkore in Context: Essays in Honor of Shamsuzzman Khan*, edited by Feroz Mahmud, 257–73. Dhaka, Bangladesh: University Press.

———. 2011. "Civil Ritual, NGOs, and Rural Mobilization in Medinipur District, West Bengal." *Asian Ethnology* 70 (1): 181–95.

Kramrisch, Stella. 1968. *Unknown India: Ritual Art in Tribe and Village*. Philadelphia: Museum of Art.

Miller, Edward. 1974. *That Noble Cabinet: A History of the British Museum*. London: Andre Deutsch.

Mittal, Jagdish. 2014. *Deccani Scroll Paintings in the Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art*. Hyderabad: Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art.

Prott, Lyndel V., ed. 2009. *Witnesses to History: A Compendium of Documents and Writings on the Return of Cultural Objects*. Paris: UNESCO.

Ramanujan, Attipate K. 1993. "On Folk Mythologies and Folk Puranas." In *Purāṇa Perennis: Reciprocity and Transformation in Hindu and Jaina Texts*, edited by Wendy Doniger, 101–20. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Richman, Paula, ed. 1991. *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

———, ed. 2001. *Questioning Ramayanas: A South Asian Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sadanandam, P. 2008. *Art and Culture of the Marginalised Nomadic Tribes of Andhra Pradesh*. New Delhi: Gyan.

Singh, Kavita. 2011. "Transfixed by the Arrow of Time: Phad Paintings of Rajasthan." In *Indian Painting: The Lesser-Known Traditions*, edited by Anna L. Dallapiccola, 108–25. New Delhi: Niyogi Books.

Subbachary, Pulikonda. 2003. "Caste Myths of Andhra Pradesh." In *South Asian Folklore: An Encyclopedia; Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka*, edited by Margaret A. Mills, Sarah Diamond, and Peter J. Claus, 100–1. New York: Routledge.

Talwar, Kay, and Kalyan Krishna. 1979. *Indian Pigment Paintings on Cloth*. Ahmedabad: B. U. Balsari.

Thangavelu, Kirtana. 1998. "The Painted Puranas of Telangana: A Study of a Scroll Painting Tradition in South India." PhD diss., University of California Berkeley.

———. 2011. "Oral and Performative Dimensions of a Painted Scroll from Telangana." In *Indian Painting: The Lesser-Known Traditions*, edited by Anna L. Dallapiccola, 126–37. New Delhi: Niyogi Books.

Thapar, Romila. 1992. *Clan, Caste and Origin Myths in Early India*. New Delhi: Manohar.

———. 1996. *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations*. London: Sangam.

Venkatesan, Soumhya. 2009. *Craft Matters: Artisans, Development, and the Indian Nation*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

Wilson, David M. 2002. *The British Museum: A History*. London: British Museum Press.