

# Civil Contract between the documented, the documenter, the user of the document and technology

Prepared  
by  
Rayson K. Alex

**National Folklore Support Centre**

Image: from a house- wall at Burkuli Village, Seraikella  
Photograph taken by S. Rajasekar  
Archived at Community Digital Archive, Seraikella

# Who is NFSC?

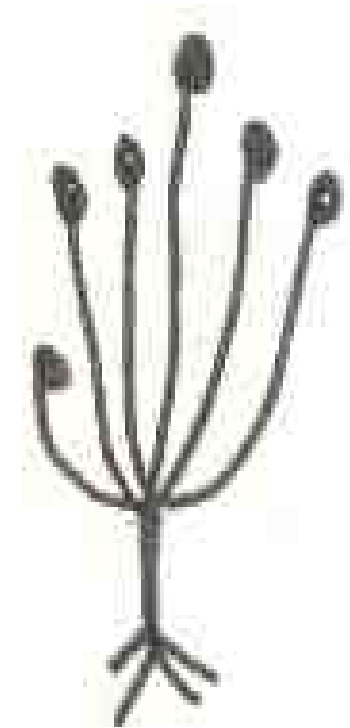


**National Folklore Support Centre (NFSC)** is a group of young persons dedicated to the promotion of Indian folklore research, education, training, networking and publications. Our aim is to integrate scholarship with activism, aesthetic appreciation with community development, comparative folklore studies with cultural diversities and identities, dissemination of information with multi-disciplinary dialogues, folklore fieldwork with developmental issues and folklore advocacy with public programming events.



## What does NFSC do?

- \* engages **public money** – TATA & Ford
- \* works with **cultures of the commons**
- \* documents the **expressions, feelings, memories and concerns** of the voices of the periphery
- \* **returns** the documents to the community
- \* creates **physical and virtual space** for community expression



Border: From Saura art by  
Enam Gomango  
Archived at NFSC





## Publicly funded – So what?

- \* So we are responsible for the money we spend
  - \* responsible to the community
    - \* to the world
      - \* to the funders



Border & picture: From Saura  
art by Enam Gomango  
Archived at NFSC

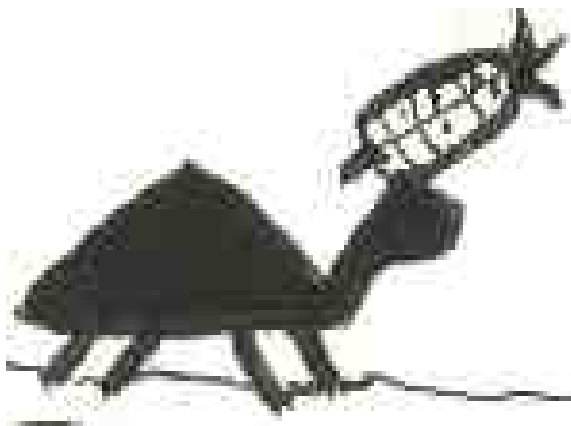




# What is this money creating?

It creates:

- \* technical accessibility (video camera, still camera, voice recorder, computer and internet) for the community members
- \* a repository of cultural expressions of the community
- \* a new space for voicing their concerns
- \* prior registry
- \* a database of authentic research materials



Border & picture: From Saura  
art by Enam Gomango  
Archived at NFSC

## Transformation of money to cultural identity





# Two levels of interactions in the process of documentation

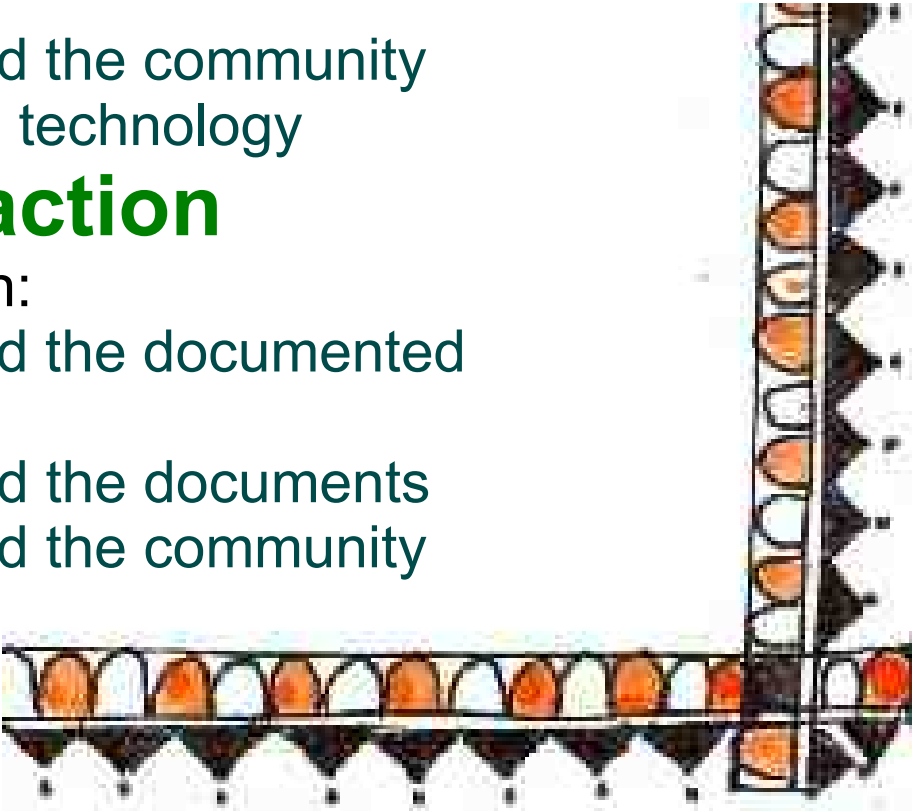
## I. Direct interaction

The relationship between:

1. the documents (community knowledge) and the community
2. the documenter and the community
3. the community and technology

## II. Indirect interaction

The relationship between:

1. the documenter and the documented material
  2. the third person and the documents
  3. the third person and the community
- 



# In the Process of documentation who is the owner of the document?

- \* **Community ownership** -which means
- \* **collective ownership**

**Even if the document is reproduced or altered.**



Border & picture: From Saura  
art by Enam Gomango  
Archived at NFSC

# Possible violations of civil contract

- \* the documents Vs the community – **the violation is internal**
- \* the documenter & the community – **uncontextual & unsystematic documentation**
- \* documenter & the documented material – **wrong interpretation, improper logging and archiving of documents**
- \* community & technology – **imposition of technology without informed consent**
- \* third person & documents/community – **without proper acknowledgement of materials used** (example-Community Digital Archive of **Seraikella Chhau**)



Border: From Saura art by  
Enam Gomango

Picture: rangoli drawn in front  
of a house at Seraikella  
Archived at NFSC



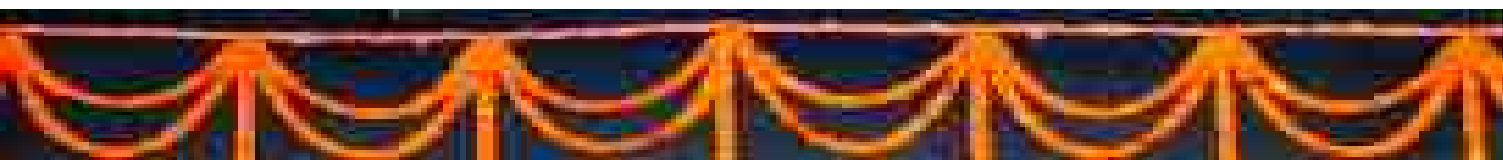


Chhau is a folk dance of the people of Seraikella.

- \* Classical or folk
- \* Dance does not belong to a particular community
- \* Conflicted interpretations about upalayas, movements & other techniques

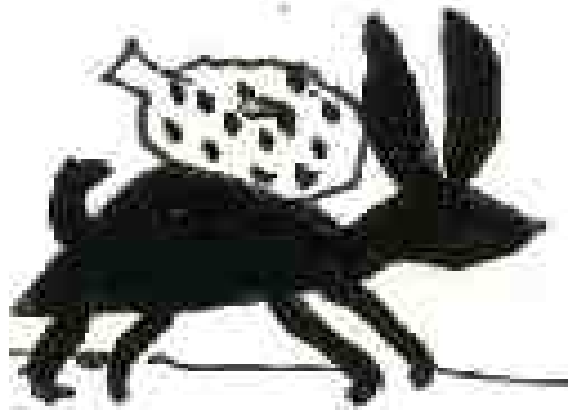
Border: From the stage decoration  
at Govt. Chhau Dance Centre  
Picture: A Chhau performance at  
Seraikella

Photographed by Rayson Alex  
Archived at Community Digital  
Archive, Seraikella



# What really happens? Why?

- \* **Transformation of ritual to performance** – religious-orientedness is lost within the community
- \* **Cultural objectification** – documents not contextualised which tends to lose its connection with the community – at the involvement of second and third parties



Border & picture: From Saura  
art by Enam Gomango  
Archived at NFSC

# What does the Community Digital Archive do?



- \* **It creates citizenship** - and its identity is created by people themselves - not by media, academicians and politicians
- \* **It creates creative expression** which will serve as political expression – “situatedness” as bioregional activism - instating power

Border: From Saura art by Enam Gomango  
Picture: crown of *thira*-an art form of Kerala  
Photographed by S.Rajasekar  
Archived at NFSC & Community Digital Archive, Kerala

# How do we protect the rights of the creators of the documents?

- \* by giving respect to the community and the knowledge of the community
- \* by directly channelising the benefits to the community
- \* by acknowledging the community when the documents are used

Picture: *kuthira*-a ritualistic art form of Kerala  
Photograph from Vayali Folk Group  
Border: crown of *thira*-an art form of Kerala  
Photographed by S.Rajasekar  
Archived at Community Digital Archive, Kerala





# Creative Commons Public License

– Share, Remix, Reuse - Legally

- \* A decision that the community has to take
- \* The discussion with the communities where the archives are situated are initiated



Border: colour pattern in a cloth designed by Parayar of Kerala  
Photographed by S.Rajasekar  
Archived at Community Digital Archive, Kerala  
Logo from <[www.creativecommons.org](http://www.creativecommons.org)>



This presentation was done in OpenOffice. A Software that can be freely downloaded, updated and used.

Border: Design on an arch wall  
Photograph taken by S.Rajasekar from Kerala  
Picture: A temple lamp of Paraya Community  
Photograph by S.Rajasekar  
Archived at Community Digital Archive, Kerala