Unit 46

Blika Hand-out 1:

**WELCOME TO THE ORI OF BLIKA**

*Disclaimer: the facts in this scenario are entirely fictitious. Any resemblance with actual facts is mere coincidence.*

#### **Timeline 1:**

Blika and its neighbour Ika are situated on a peninsula at the western end of the Chisai continent. Blika is a middle to high-income country with a gross national income (GNI) per capita of USD 26,500 and a population of about 15 million. The Republic of Blika is a strictly secular state, not linked to any religion.

Until the 1950s, the population of the Republic of Blika was rather homogeneous. There are four so-called old minorities, together numbering about 100,000 people today. A large wave of immigration to Blika started in the 1950s from several countries on the continent. The national language is Blikanese; only recent immigrants to the country do not speak the language.

In the 1960s, about 80,000 Ori came to Blika from the Kingdom of Kvetana, located in the east of the continent. Other Ori went to Ika or other countries. They were welcomed in Blika because Ori men were needed in the booming metal industry, and in the harbour of Harkal. Ori women found employment in nursing and in the textile industry.

Ori migration almost came to a halt in the late seventies, after a change of regime in Kvetana that encouraged the Ori to stay. The Ori in Blika (numbering about 200,000 people) live predominantly in large towns, mainly in the port town of Harkal, the capital Mainkal and in the provincial town of Carkal.

The Ori in Blika have generally continued marrying among themselves and speaking their ancestral language. Many Ori in Blika remain in contact with relatives in Kvetana and in Ika. The figures for Ori people in Blika are approximate only, with many younger descendants of Ori immigrants also identifying as Blika, or as Blika only.

Anyone born in Blika has Blika citizenship. After ten years, immigrants can obtain Blika citizenship. Most of the Ori have applied for this, although they are uncomfortable with the requirement to change one’s family name on acquiring a Blika passport. After their naturalization, the government considers immigrants as Blika citizens; dual nationality is not an option.

Between 1950 and 2005, Blika governments promoted the assimilation of immigrant groups. Social Integration Centres were created in most Blika towns in the 1970s to help immigrants in finding jobs, providing additional schooling (if required), and training in Blika language and citizenship. Blika’s policies did not take account of the culture, language and traditions of its minority communities.

When the economy stagnated in the 1990s, many of the majority Blika citizens became less tolerant towards minorities. Concerns expressed at that time by certain political parties about unemployment and criminality figures among immigrants were later proved unfounded. What started as irritation about the use of ‘foreign’ languages and about minority cultural manifestations (like Ori ‘peasant’ weddings), led to accusations of immigrants taking jobs and, ultimately, to violent altercations in Carkal in 1998-1999. This period is known – among the immigrant minorities – as the ‘years of intolerance’.

Official policies started becoming more accepting of minorities around 2005. Today, more open attitudes towards the immigrant and old minorities are being promoted in educational and cultural policies. Blikanese remains the only official language, but children at school are no longer punished for speaking minority languages. Immigrants still have to change their names to suit Blikanese naming conventions when they become Blika citizens.

Blika public opinion is rather slow to follow changing policies. Intolerance is slowly turning back into indifference, after Blika’s economy recovered between 2003 and 2005. It is fashionable for Blika to claim that they have immigrant friends. Nevertheless, among the Blika majority there is still quite some residual prejudice against immigrant groups. The Ori are generally considered to be hardworking but also secretive, because they have generally married other Ori and like to speak the Ori language among themselves.

The Ori are not a very visible minority in Blika, although it is generally known that Ori football players are well represented in major league teams, and that Ori women have a strong presence in the nursing sector. There are few politicians who come from minority groups – none of them is Ori. Last year’s major literature award went to a novelist with an Ori father and a Blika mother. Many Ori were proud of that, although the author writes in Blikanese and does not emphasize her Ori origin.

Ori, both young and old, tend to understand their ancestral language perfectly, but many young Ori are not at ease speaking it. Increasing numbers of young Ori attach great value to their background and traditions today. They regret that during ‘the years of intolerance (1985-2005) many second generation Ori men and women in Blika did not try harder to transmit their heritage, leaving that task to the generation of the grandparents. Hundreds of young Ori are now taking Ori language courses.

#### **The practice and transmission of Ori ICH in Blika**

Nowadays, in the three major towns of Blika, there are nine Ori organisations and clubs where old and young enjoy or practice Ori cultural expressions, including improvised poetry, singing and music and some dancing. Since 2002, the creation of such organisations, some of which have the status of NGOs, has been encouraged on the municipal level and they are supported by modest subsidies. Some of these organisations have only a few active members.

The Ori Language Support Network, which is run by a few professionals, organizes language classes for adults and for children. Last year some 500 people attended their courses. About 10% of them were non-Ori. The network is housed in the very building in which the first groups of Ori who arrived in the early 1960 were lodged; they stayed there for a long time. The building became a real place of memory when fifty years later it was included in the title of a novel by the Ori owner of Mainkal’s Central Bookshop.

The very active Ori Students Association in Harkal organizes cultural and social events including the New and Old Citizen Autumn Festival, a popular event where Ori and other minority artists (‘traditional’ and ‘modern’) perform. They also organize competitions in Ori improvised poetry and the peninsular Top Ball Championship. They are supported by a few Ori entrepreneurs.

The Ori Students Association also keeps the Ori Culture Portal up to date, a bilingual website that provides information on Ori organisations, Ori-related activities and publications and Ori news from Blika, Ika and Kvetana. Ori clubs and organisations have their own websites, and there are some dedicated blogs.

From the 1970s on, there have been Ori coffee houses in Mainkal, Harkal and Carkal where Ori men (and, less often, women) play cards, watch football and listen to Ori music. Some have a hall for archery and an archery association attached to them.

In all, there are six Ori tea gardens (down from 11 in 1985), all of them with gardens or large terraces. Blika Ori try hard to organize their wedding parties in such places, of which there are not enough to meet the demand. The decreasing number of Ori specialized (semi-)professional musicians and singers and the diminishing diversity of Ori traditional dancing also have an impact on the viability of large-scale Ori weddings.

The sense of identity of the Ori in Blika is based primarily on their language, even of third-generation Ori who may not be fluent in it, and includes Ori names, name giving and improvised poetry. The Ori keep to their system of name giving which is not recognized in Blika, and many Ori are unhappy that they are not allowed to use their ‘real names’ in public.

Most Ori also consider the Ori New Year celebration to be crucial for their identity, next to traditional wedding parties. In both traditions several Ori practices and expressions come together, such as music, singing, dancing, poetry, cooking, table speeches and haf (mutual assistance), while giving birth at home and Ori sports (Top Ball and Archery) also rank highly for specific groups.

Lace-making is practised by only a few people – women and men; there is no market for their produce, as the Ori in Blika (unlike the Ori in Kvetana) are no longer interested in wearing traditional costumes, not even at New Year celebrations or weddings. Some Ori practices, such as cock fighting, rope walking and falconry, though still fresh in the memory of older Ori, have not been practised in Blika territory.

Fortune-telling, traditional healing and, in particular, tattooing are three viable Ori practices that most practitioners – and people using their services – do not want to speak about in public.

#### **Ori in Kvetana, the Ori homeland**

Ori today comprise about 20% of the 24 million population of the Kingdom of Kvetana. Between 1955 and 1976, Kvetana was under a military dictatorship that pursued hard line policies towards minorities. Because of the political climate, over 200,000 Ori left Kvetana in the 1960s and 1970s, about one third of them ending up in Blika.

Kvetana ratified UNESCO’s Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2005. In 2008, the Ministry of Culture instructed the National Open Air Museum to create a database of ICH. Twelve out of the 200 elements that were included in the Kvetana Inventory so far are associated with the Ori community. The process of inventorying is ongoing. The box below presents the listed Ori elements (ranked from 0 to 5, according to increasing levels of viability):

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| --- |
| Traditional healing (0); Falconry (1); Lace making (2); Cock fighting (2); Storytelling (2); Archery (3); Tattooing (3); Improvised poetry (3); Ori language (4); Wedding dances and music (4); Rope walking (5); Top Ball game (5) |

#### **Blika implements the Convention**

#### **Timeline 2:**

Blika ratified UNESCO’s 2003 Convention in 2013. Then, based on documents prepared by the Ministry of Culture, Parliament held lengthy debates on the identification of communities for the purposes of the Convention and the ways to involve them in its implementation – a novelty after many decades of assimilationist policies.

It was agreed that ten communities were to be identified: the majority Blika community, five immigrant communities (including the Ori community) and four old minorities. The old minorities, who are not happy with the way they have been identified as communities, were taken into account on the same level as the immigrant minorities in spite of their lower numbers. Existing heritage legislation would only be adapted after a trial period for these policies.

In 2014, the ministry organized a series of training workshops, with UNESCO assistance, for community representatives, NGO workers, researchers and local authorities, to inform them about the goals of the Convention, its implementation and the discussions in Parliament. Representatives of all minority groups were involved in these workshops, along with representatives of the majority Blika community.

The ministry then created a 24 member Blika ICH Council, composed of various types of members: practitioners, external experts, officials and NGO representatives, 12 of whom were also minority representatives. The council was to oversee and guide the implementation of the Convention. A substantial budget was made available for setting up a preliminary inventory of ICH in Blika, and for pilot safeguarding projects.

The Blika ICH Council invited the ten communities to form Community Safeguarding Committees (SafeComs). They were told that their membership should be gender-balanced, reflect diversity within communities and include people that had attended ICH training workshops. Within six months, all five immigrant communities managed to create such committees – as opposed to the old minorities who have not yet reached agreement whether to identify themselves as three or four communities.

The safeguarding committees were asked to identify a first set of ICH elements from their communities, discuss which ones might be included in the inventory, and how this could be done. The committees were also asked to suggest what measures or activities might be required for safeguarding specific elements of the ICH of their community or for safeguarding their ICH in general, and in what ways the inventorying process could help in safeguarding their ICH.

After two meetings and consultations with practitioners, the Ori SafeCom established a list of eleven items (see Blika Hand-out 4 *Preliminary list of Ori ICH in Blika*) that were considered important for the sense of identity and continuity of the Ori in Blika. Three or four of them may be proposed next year for inclusion in the preliminary inventory, once the consent of the groups or individuals concerned has been obtained and final descriptions and names for the various elements agreed upon. Later, after a call for proposals for more elements to be added to the preliminary inventory, the Ori SafeCom will discuss what other Ori ICH in Blika might be added. The preliminary descriptions that are not yet publicly available do contain some information on the viability of the eleven elements.

The Ori SafeCom tentatively concluded that the viability of much Ori ICH had been affected by negative attitudes in Blika society towards minority cultures and their ICH, and by Blika regulations and official policies. Although some of these regulations are no longer strictly observed, the viability of much of the ICH of minorities is at stake.

After having identified a preliminary set of elements of Ori ICH in Blika, the Ori SafeCom decided to intensify its activities, and to work on the remaining questions it had to deal with, on an extended basis. It convened a two-day meeting to discuss which Ori elements to propose for inclusion in the preliminary inventory of ICH in Blika in the first round and – more urgently – to develop a draft safeguarding plan for Ori ICH in Blika, or aspects thereof before the deadline (which is in one month). The Blika ICH Council indicated that up to USD 200,000 could be made available for an ambitious but realistic safeguarding plan for Ori ICH.

#### **Participants in the meeting**

The Ori SafeCom is composed of eight members, three of whom attended ICH capacity-building workshops. Six of its members are available for the meeting; they will be reinforced by persons with relevant expertise who are not members of the Ori SafeCom. All participants will speak in their personal capacity, and with the same rights. All participants received a printed version of the short descriptions of eleven Ori ICH elements as identified by the Ori SafeCom. At the request of the Ori SafeCom, the ministry sent a consultant who was trained by UNESCO as a facilitator for ICH capacity-building workshops, to assist the meeting.

The meeting starts tomorrow and will hopefully be attended by all of the thirteen persons listed at the top of the document *Meet your neighbours* – not all have confirmed their participation yet.