Unit 48

Published in 2016 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

© UNESCO 2016



This publication is available in Open Access under the Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO (CC-BY-SA 3.0 IGO) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/igo/>). By using the content of this publication, the users accept to be bound by the terms of use of the UNESCO Open Access Repository (<http://www.unesco.org/open-access/terms-use-ccbysa-en>).

The images of this publication do not fall under the CC-BY-SA licence and may not be used, reproduced, or commercialized without the prior permission of the copyright holders.

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The ideas and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors; they are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

Facilitator’s narrative 2: case study 57

This case study provides one of many examples of communities around the world, which recognize, revere, and integrate more than two gender categories, without there necessarily being a hierarchy among them. Some cultural communities have three, four, five or even more genders. Rather than being marginalized or seen as alternative, certain genders are particularly celebrated for their intangible cultural heritage. In some such cases, the practitioners do not identify as men or women, but an intermediate condition or a state of being both. In this case study, the ICH practice is, in fact, only possible due to the existence of a gender category different than that of the commonly recognized female and male genders and, in contrast, to case study 42 (iii), the gender group is fully accepted and especially respected in the society. Moreover, practice of the ICH reinforces the non-hierarchical presence of multiple and fluid gender categories. Like case study 42, the contextual appropriateness of the study in relation to the participants’ societal cultural beliefs should be considered when deciding whether to present this case study.

It may also be useful to know that cultures with more than two genders have a long history. For example, in pre-colonial Andean culture, the Incas worshipped chuqui cinchay, a dual-gendered god. Third-gender ritual attendants or shamans performed sacred rituals to honour this god. The shamans wore androgynous clothing as ‘a visible sign of a third space that negotiated between the masculine and the feminine, the present and the past, the living and the dead’. Similarly, in the centuries before European colonists arrived in Africa, the Bangala people’s animist beliefs were carried out by shamans who would dress in women’s clothing in order to gain the ability to solve crimes. In Europe as well, there is a history of communities which included a third gender, such as the male-bodied ‘femminielli’ of 18th-century Italian society. Living mostly in the Spanish Quarter of Naples, one of the city’s poorest neighbourhoods, the femminielli were thought to confer good luck onto the households in which they were raised. In Hawaii, long before Cook and other Europeans’ arrival, a multiple gender tradition existed among the island’s native community. Individuals could be biological males or females inhabiting a gender role somewhere between or encompassing both the masculine and feminine. Such individuals were and continue to be valued and respected. Their gender fluidity and ability to embrace both male and female qualities is seen as an asset and as empowering them as healers, teachers, and promulgators of ancient traditions and rituals. Today, however, this group faces discrimination in a culture increasingly dominated by a binary gender ideology.

#### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

* How do you understand the term ‘two-spirit’ people in the context of the Nahili society and, in particular, the ritual ceremony – solang?
* What is the role and status of the ‘two-spirit’ people in the Nahili society?
* Does the example remind you of other examples of ICH where gender roles play a role?
* How do you think that gender impacts ICH?