

Volume 5, Number 2, 2016

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# Orality Journal

*The Word Became Fresh*



## Arts & Orality Part 2: Equipping for Ministry

**Logan • Hall-Heimbecker • Rajendran • Harris • Sanha  
Bauson • Goffe • Schrag • Hollingsworth • Negrão  
Saurman • Neeley • Scheuermann • Rowe • Reggy  
Bowman • Stahl**

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# Orality Journal

*The Word Became Fresh*

Volume 5, Number 2, 2016

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## **Cover Photo**

A group of women who are part of a choir react with delight as they hear a story told by pastor Elasi, in their mother tongue—Nyanga.

## **Additional Photos**

All photos not otherwise credited have been contributed by members of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists (ICE).

Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,  
and establish the work of our hands upon us;  
yes, establish the work of our hands!

Psalm 90:17 (ESV)

One generation shall commend your works to another,  
and shall declare your mighty acts.

Psalm 145:4 (ESV)

# Orality Journal

*The Word Became Fresh*

Orality Journal is the journal of the International Orality Network. It is published online semi-annually and aims to provide a platform for scholarly discourse on the issues of orality, discoveries of innovations in orality, and praxis of effectiveness across multiple domains in society. This online journal is international and interdisciplinary, serving the interests of the orality movement through research articles, documentation, book reviews, and academic news. Occasionally, print editions will be provisioned. Submission of items that could contribute to the furtherance of the orality movement is welcomed.

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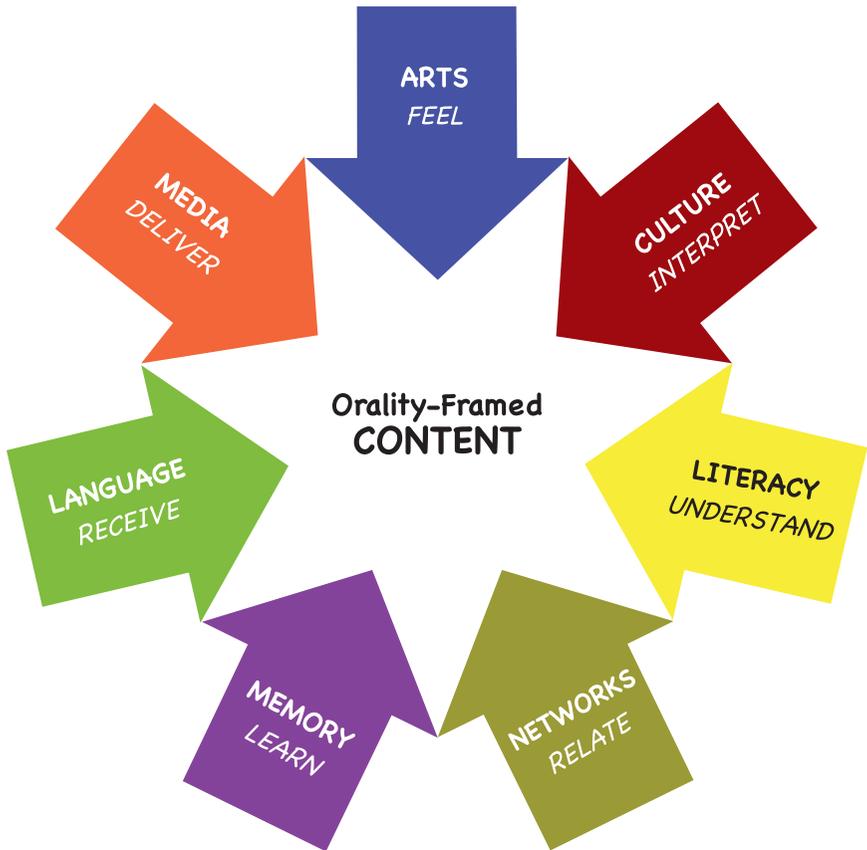
The dramatic impact of biblical storytelling has brought transformation both to and through these South Asian women as God opens doors through His word and these women’s faithfulness.

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# The Seven Disciplines of Orality



*Courtesy of Dr. Chuck Madinger who leads Global Impact Mission and serves on the International Orality Network's Leadership Team facilitating the Research Task Force.*



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# Co-Editors' Note

*Samuel E. Chiang and William Coppedge*

## Orality and the Arts in the Early Church

The multi-faceted nature of communication, specifically orality, continues to surprise and delight us. One specific area inviting further exploration is that of the relationship between *orality* and *the arts* in the growth of the Early Church.

For many coming from cultures heavily influenced by print-based communication paradigms, consideration of orality and the arts among the Early Church feels counter-intuitive.<sup>1</sup> Often in light of the Reformation and the subsequent Evangelical emphasis on the sacred text of scripture, it becomes easy to project a printed mindset back onto previous generations' experience with God's word. This mentality ends up reflecting, usually unintentionally, a form of communication snobbery. But for us to better understand the relationship of orality, the arts and contemporary mission praxis, we need to better understand that orality and artistic expression—specifically creative elements like oral performance—would have been central to the Early Church's communication practice.<sup>2</sup>

For example an argument can be made that many of the New Testament writings were either transcripts collected from oral performances or they were composed orally through dictation and then written down but for the purpose of being orally performed.<sup>3</sup> Therefore most of the Early Church (some argue as much as 95 percent) experienced the scriptures not by reading but through oral performance.<sup>4</sup> Is oral performance exactly what Paul had in mind when he recommended that the churches of Colosse and Laodicea were to “read” each other's letters “in the church”?<sup>5</sup> These “readings” would have been both an *oral* and an *artistic* communication experience involving a text but also a performer, the audience, and a shared communal space. Therefore while more needs to be investigated, our own interest in the interrelationships between oral, artistic, and textual discourse seems to have clear biblical precedent.

In the Spring 2016 edition of the *Orality Journal*, volume one in a two-part series on *Orality and the Arts*, we focused our attention on exploring the power of artistic expression for capturing and transforming people's lives. This first volume sought to demonstrate how twenty-first century Christians are allowing the arts, whether henna, dance, or visual art to "orally" speak, visualizing what are so often invisible spiritual realities. We saw that culturally adapted artistic expressions, many oral in nature, are creating liminal spaces—spiritual thresholds, through which people can encounter new understandings of salvation and restoration available through Jesus Christ.

While having established the power of the arts for transformation in volume one, the reality remains that many practitioners today need equipping for contemporary communication challenges. How does one integrate the arts, a strong commitment to the biblical text, worship of the Triune God and contextual mission praxis among oral-preferenced communicators? This Autumn 2016 edition of the *Orality Journal* provides a continuation of volume one, seeking to address this broader practical question from a variety of different perspectives.

The International Orality Network (ION) deeply appreciates the hard work of International Council for Ethnodoxologists (ICE) in their bringing together yet again a tremendous cache of resources, this time for *equipping* people for adopting and adapting the arts into their own ministry contexts. Like many first-century audiences, ICE recognizes many people today still prefer oral methodologies, even if they have been impacted by print. Communication practices like silent encounters with the biblical text or mono-tonal readings are limited in ways that can impact today's audiences. Therefore for those who are only tentatively experimenting with the arts for the first time or for those who are fully convinced of their transformative impact, these articles provide catalytic ideas as well as the practical nuts and bolts for equipping those interested in incorporating artistic expression into their own oral communication practices.

From its origins, Christianity has seen orality and the arts as integral for communication. Like the Early Church, we desire that people from

every tribe, tongue, people and nation will be able to hear, receive, believe and obey the good news of Jesus Christ.

May the Holy Spirit give us creativity and courage as we seek to follow the early Christians' example in communicating Jesus Christ in today's world.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "William Cappedge".

William Cappedge

---

<sup>1</sup>David Rhoads, “Performance Criticism: An Emerging Methodology in Second Testament Studies--Part I,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 36, no. 3 (2006): 118–34; David Rhoads, “Performance Criticism: An Emerging Methodology in Second Testament Studies--Part II,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 36, no. 4 (2006): 164–84.

<sup>2</sup>For another helpful introduction to communication practices in first-century Christianity, see P.J.J. Botha, *Orality and Literacy in Early Christianity*, Biblical Performance Criticism (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2012).

<sup>3</sup>Carol Harrison, *The Art of Listening in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.

<sup>4</sup>Rhoads, “Performance Criticism: An Emerging Methodology in Second Testament Studies--Part I,” 118.

<sup>5</sup>Colossians 4:16

# Note from Guest Editors

*Katie Hoogerheide and James R. Krabill*

*Katie Hoogerheide serves as associate director of the Center for Excellence in World Arts in Dallas, Texas. The overseas experiences particularly influencing her work include time spent living, working, and traveling in Europe, the Middle East, and South Africa. In addition, she draws from work and graduate studies in organ performance, ethnoarts, linguistics, and pedagogy. A member of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists, she also works as associate editor for the Global Forum on Arts and Christian Faith.*

*James R. Krabill served from 1978–1996 as a Mennonite mission worker teaching Bible and church history in oral culture settings among African-initiated churches in West Africa. Currently serving as Senior Executive for Global Ministries with the Mennonite Mission Network, Krabill has authored or edited various works, including *Music in the Life of the African Church* (with Roberta King and others, 2008) and *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook* (2013).*

And the things you have heard me say in the  
presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable  
people who will also be qualified to teach others.

2 Tim. 2:2 NIV

**R**esilience! All of us who invest energy into people or projects like to see our work prosper. We love to see individuals, communities, and initiatives grow in strength and in their ability to weather times of hardship. When the cause involves the Kingdom of God, our hearts burn even hotter with the desire to see the gospel message not just firmly rooted, but also thriving within cultures around the world.

*How can we encourage such resilience in the communities we serve? How can we support others in pursuing peace, justice, and God himself?* The International Council of Ethnodoxologists (ICE) once again joins with the International Orality Network (ION) in seeking wisdom on these and similar questions. Earlier this year, ICE guest edited a first volume on arts and orality for the Orality Journal, where we explored just how significantly the arts impact communication.<sup>1</sup> In this second volume, we

pursue questions of longevity and durability by sharing current practices in equipping people to invigorate their ministries with the arts.

Drawing from her research on an oral storytelling genre, Robin Harris proposes two keys for promoting resilience in arts traditions: (1) ongoing *innovation* and (2) provision for *transmission*.<sup>2</sup> In other words, two of our top priorities include encouraging the creation of local arts and empowering others to carry out and pass on best practices for engaging the arts in ministry. The articles in this volume specifically highlight both of these intentions.

Whether you seek equipping for ministry for yourself or for others, we trust you will find a wealth of inspiration, ideas, and resources within these pages. Accompany Cornelius as he prepares artists for an oral arts festival in India (Bowman, “Celebrating the Word”). Get your creative juices flowing with practical ideas for integrating storytelling, songs, paintings, sculptures, drama, and other visuals into preaching (Scheuermann). Find out how participating in “Arts for a Better Future” can energize your ministry, no matter what your involvement with the arts (Schrag). Listen to Jeremias’ story and learn how he uses the arts to support the church in Guinea-Bissau (Sanha & Bauson). Join in a rich exploration of the mentoring relationship (Hall-Heimbecker).

Effective equipping for ministry involves a wide variety of facets. Logan and Hall-Heimbecker emphasize RELATING to those with whom we work, and, most importantly, to the One who gives us the strength and grace to invest in the Kingdom in the first place. We placed these articles first because establishing respectful and mutual relationships is the starting point for any work we do. In a similar vein, Rajendran & Harris, Sanha & Bauson, and Goffe & Harris highlight the importance of DIALOGUING, which includes listening to the stories, thoughts, and dreams of others. Schrag, Hollingsworth & Negrão, and Saurman present helpful tools and tips in the articles on TRAINING. Neeley, Scheuermann, and Rowe provide suggestions for INTEGRATING the arts into the fabric of community life. Reggy, Stahl, and both of Bowman’s articles share on-the-ground accounts of IMPLEMENTING the arts in orality ministries—equipping in action.

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Cross-cultural work often comes fraught with tensions surrounding respect, perceived authority, control, power, and colonialism. Some months ago, a woman from a non-majority country expressed to us her frustration that the missionaries “first told us that we couldn’t use our arts, and now they tell us we should.” What a reproof! Logan provides a much-needed balance to this hegemonic posture with her thoughts on the art of silence. We are also glad to include a wide range of global voices in this volume. Our authors were born on five of the six populated continents, and they have also worked on five of the six. In addition to these direct voices, Stahl brings us a wealth of reported perspectives from an increasingly influential group of women in South Asia.

Read these contributions, study their main points, learn from new perspectives. Perhaps your next workshop could benefit from Hollingsworth & Negrão’s highly practical set of considerations for organization. Perhaps Rowe’s suggestions for creatively sharing scripture will infuse your next worship service with new life. Reggy’s account may inspire you to enrich scripture memory in your own context with the arts. Neeley’s ideas may increase your confidence in commissioning new artistic works. Saurman’s worship wheel may enhance your future discussions with others on the breadth of applications of their local arts in worship. Perhaps you never thought of the concept of “bringing our real selves” into worship (Goffe & Harris) or considered learning how to use the arts to help people recover from trauma (Rajendran & Harris).

Whatever your situation, we pray this volume will increase resilience in your ministry by sparking creativity (innovation) and by providing resources for engaging the arts with others (transmission). As in our first volume, we encourage you to maximize the influence of the people within the community you serve, whether that community represents your own culture or another. We repeat here the closing section of Bowman’s article (“Scripture Alive”), a paragraph that we believe encapsulates the collective desire of both ICE and ION:

I believe our greatest challenge is not how to train and equip, but to believe. We must recognize with complete and unwavering faith that those with whom we work in the field are more than capable of

doing anything they set their minds to. When they are inspired and fulfilled by their own God-given, culturally relevant talents, they will take that same vision to their peers, and this momentous progress toward indigenous, creative worship in the worldwide church will be unstoppable.

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<sup>1</sup>View this first volume at [orality.net/library/journals/volume-5-number-1/](http://orality.net/library/journals/volume-5-number-1/).

<sup>2</sup>Read more about Harris' research and ideas on resilience in her book about the death and rebirth of the Siberian oral epic tradition, *olonkho* (University of Illinois Press, forthcoming).

## Beyond Listening—Arts and Orality in India

*Pramila Rajendran, interviewed by Robin Harris<sup>1</sup>*

*Pramila Rajendran worked with Operation Mobilisation for over 20 years, both within India and overseas in different mission and leadership capacities. She initiated the Membercare Network for Indian Missions and currently provides consulting and training throughout the world in leadership development and counseling. Both she and her husband, Dr. K. Rajendran, serve on the WEA Mission Commission leadership team.*

*Robin Harris (PhD) is president of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists (ICE) and director of the Center for Excellence in World Arts in Dallas, Texas. She has served for decades in cross-cultural ministry, including ten years in northern Russia. She co-teaches Arts for a Better Future, and her publications include co-editing Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook and a book about a Siberian oral epic genre, forthcoming from University of Illinois Press.*

**Robin Harris (RH):** Pramila, tell me where you are located and a little bit about people's preference for orality in the context where you serve.

**Pramila:** I live in Bangalore, in the Karnataka State of India. That is important for discussing orality because when you look at all the different religions, Hindus are the ones who most like orality! They like orality because of the drama and the arts and the different ways that culture is presented through the arts. *Many Christians have not understood that!* Muslims are also open. They use *qawwali* songs and they express their feelings through the *qawwalis*—that's a Muslim way of doing it.

**RH:** What are the important arts genres being contextualized in your culture?

**Pramila:** One of the most popular arts is *rangoli*, designs made from brightly colored powders on the ground and in front of the house and in festivals. *Rangoli* is for rejoicing, for joyful expressions and happy occasions, like weddings and festivals. Hindus make designs and paintings a lot this way, but actually a lot of Christians use *rangoli* [see photo of *rangoli* art demonstrating "Jesus is the light of the world"].<sup>2</sup>

Also, dances are very much a part of Hindu culture. So when Christians want to share the gospel,



we can take a Bible story and create choreography for it, so that the story can be danced. Acting out the stories through drama works well, too. We also use poems, painting, and instruments such as drums, flute, sitar, and tanpura, along with songs and dances for weddings and at various functions.

**RH:** What are the main times of year that you experience arts in your culture?

**Pramila:** I cannot say one particular time of the year, but any time there is a function—festivals, weddings, or other joyful occasions—songs, music, and dances are used. Christians especially use arts at Easter, Christmas, conferences, and conventions, but also for weddings, anniversaries, or any kind of festival. But it doesn't have to be a special occasion; many people use all kinds of arts in daily life.

In a few Indian cultures, when someone dies, they use drums, played in a special way, as an expression of mourning. Indians also express lamentation through poetry and songs.

**RH:** What challenges do you face in using arts in ministry?

**Pramila:** There are a few churches that will not use any instruments besides organ and piano. This restriction has filtered down from Western culture and certain kinds of denominations. They think and believe that other music is not worthy to be in worship, so they will not allow it. Indian instruments like sitar, harmonium, and tabla are anathema to them.

**RH:** What encourages you?

**Pramila:** Today, churches are changing. Many churches are using various musical instruments, songs, poems, recited prose, dramas on the stage, and choreography to express biblical stories.<sup>3</sup> They are also using songs for young people, not just songs from books or hymnals. The ones who do not change are losing the young people, actually.

**RH:** You have a story about how your husband learned about the gospel through arts in the

Catholic Church. Please tell me about that.

**Pramila:** Catholic churches have for a long time been an example in how they used choreography, songs, and icons to tell biblical stories. For example, the fourteen Stations of the Cross is a great use of visual art to bring people to Christ. My husband became interested in Christianity when he was only 5 or 6 years old. He comes from a Hindu background. Near his house, there was a Catholic church and he used to wander in it with his dad and friends. He was fascinated and very touched by the icons of the fourteen Stations of the Cross. This church also did dramas on Easter and during Christmas, narrating stories and reciting Bible verses. He would listen and memorize them! Today, he knows all those verses, because as a kid he listened to them being recited.

**RH:** How did you get motivated to become involved with the arts?

**Pramila:** At school! As a little girl I used to watch many functions which involved dramas, songs, and music. During school functions, we acted as different characters in many stories, so art was always a part of life. I have always loved

drama; it has always fascinated me. We also used poetry and prose to express our thoughts and beliefs.

I grew up in that atmosphere, and took it for granted as just being part of life. But when I became a Christian, I saw its impact. When I started to hear about this orality idea, I started to connect things. I began to think, “Hmmm, you can use all these things to share the gospel!” Until then, I took the arts for granted, and didn’t see much value in it; just that it was enjoyable.

**RH:** How do you inspire and train others to use the arts in daily life? How do you encourage them to use the arts in the life of the church, or to connect their arts with God?

**Pramila:** I would like to help people become aware of the value of their own culture. If they don’t understand their culture, they will not do anything useful. They have

to see the value of their own culture—how it can play a vital role in their lives—while not mixing it with certain religious beliefs or practices. Some people think arts and culture are part of the Hindu religion. They think all the culture belonging



to India is evil, so they boycott the beauty and its essence. This [attitude] has been taught by the past missionaries. That’s how Christianity came to India.

Of course, there are some connections between culture and religion, so people must learn to be discerning, but not all culture is evil, so we have to learn to value it first.

This process of discernment is happening now. Slowly, many churches are accepting cultural arts. To bring this new thinking in, and to train them up, this is important. Churches need to be educated that arts can play a very significant role in communicating with people.

**RH:** What have you learned recently that you can recommend to other people?

**Pramila:** I recently received training in Arts in Trauma Healing, a course<sup>4</sup> which was a real eye-opener for me. It helped me to know how to train my colleagues in missions and churches in using local arts for trauma healing. Arts can really help people recover from their trauma. There are different kinds of trauma in India, like domestic violence (even within Christian communities, churches, and missionary families), moral issues, death, trafficking, and gay-identity issues. This course was wonderful in helping me to see arts from a different perspective, especially how they could be used in trauma healing.

**RH:** What advice do you have to our readers who may have experience with storytelling, but not with other arts?

**Pramila:** They may want to look into incorporating other arts for sharing the gospel, because there are people who might not be impacted by listening, listening, listening. Seeing impacts more than listening! It has to be visual. You can hear and forget, but what you see stays for a longer time. I sometimes think of what William Glasser said:

We learn  
 10% of what we read  
 20% of what we hear  
 30% of what we see  
 50% of what we see and hear  
 70% of what we discuss  
 80% of what we experience  
 95% of what we teach others.<sup>5</sup>

Let me give you an example. Once we were in Africa, and we did some oral sessions there. We could see that some people were listening, and some were not. We didn't have any visual things to accompany what we were saying. However, one person who was with us picked up a stick and started to draw in the mud—and all the people were looking at it! So what you see is secure. If you can act it out, or something like that, it helps it to be more memorable.

<sup>1</sup>The original interview by Skype on April 16, 2016, has been edited for length.

<sup>2</sup>This art project was initiated by Hethne Consultation 2015. Photo used with permission.

<sup>3</sup>For example, the program ARISE (Alert and Release India of Slavery Entraps) is run under the Bethel Church Association in Katihar, Bihar, India. See the photo of one of their performances in this article, used with permission. For more on their work, including use of the local arts, see [www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWrfESyVk4s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWrfESyVk4s)

<sup>4</sup>**Arts in Trauma Healing** is a graduate course offered by GIAL's Center for Excellence in World Arts in Dallas, Texas. See [www.gial.edu/world-arts-center/intensives/](http://www.gial.edu/world-arts-center/intensives/) for more information.

<sup>5</sup>See [thinkexist.com/quotes/william\\_glasser/](http://thinkexist.com/quotes/william_glasser/).

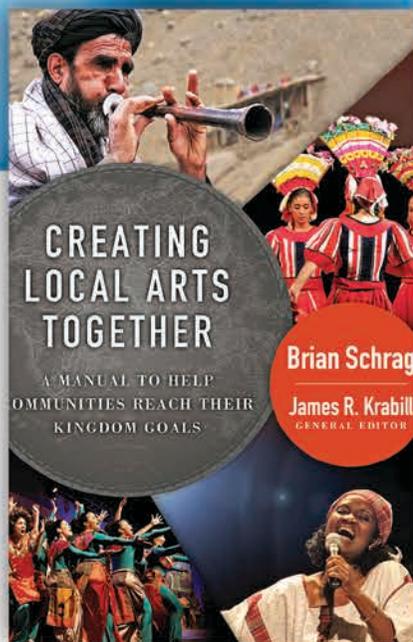




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