Traditional Performing Art to Greet the New Year
Editorial Remarks

KEUM Gi Hyung  Director-General of ICHCAP

This year celebrates the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (ICHCAP). Over the last ten years, ICHCAP has been engaged in efforts to safeguard intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and encourage its essential values. One point of delivery for this is through the publication of ICH Courier, one of the flagship projects of the center.

Reflecting on the past ten years, ICHCAP is now facing a turning point for the next decade. As a leading organization for ICH safeguarding, ICHCAP will try to further strengthen its ICH network and expand its base. The recent renewal of ICH Courier Online is a part of these efforts. We created a new Theme section, which we hope will aid user-friendliness. Furthermore, the ICH Courier editorial board also added an online subscription function on the website to introduce ICH in the Asia-Pacific region to more readers.

The theme of the ICH Courier volume 46 is “Traditional Performing Arts to Greet the New Year in the Asia-Pacific Region.” Communities in the Asia-Pacific region celebrate New Year at different times depending on the region and religion, and they welcome the new beginning with traditional dances and songs. In this issue, the “Windows to ICH” section introduces four different traditional performing arts in Japan, Nepal, Micronesia, and Myanmar.

Standing on a springboard for the future, we will keep trying to promote ICH in the Asia-Pacific region as a communicator of information and discourse on the region’s rich and varied cultures. We welcome your interested support for our next ten years of activity and invite you to join us in celebrating the tenth anniversary of ICHCAP.
The Pangalay or Igal, Ancient Dance Tradition of the Philippines
A Case Study in Safeguarding Traditional Performing Arts

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Introduction
Southeast Asia boasts an astounding assemblage of traditional performing arts, varied in form, style or genre, time or period, and geographical source. Through the performing arts people assert ethnic identity, a dignifying and unifying force in a community.

A performing art tradition conjures continuity; it is history. To lose such tradition is therefore to lose history. Dance, like other performing art traditions, is the expression of a people’s soul captured in motion. To safeguard such forms, they must be studied and documented, including the artistic material resources, oral traditions, beliefs, and practices embodied in them. These traditions are not museum pieces, but art forms that must be nurtured as artifacts that grow or transform as societies change.

Safeguarding such living artistic forms should include keeping a sense of newness, or seeing them with “new” eyes, insights, and viewpoints. Being contemporary simply means adapting the form to the present time, although it may be misconstrued as threatening the preservation of traditional or historical forms. Newness is a response to current needs. The transformation or change infuses old dance forms with newness, but does not necessarily create something new. This demonstrates the dynamism of dance.

Historical and Territorial Linkages
The Republic of the Philippines belongs to the Asia-Pacific “Ring of Fire,” so called due to the numerous active volcanoes in the area. By virtue of history, geography, ecology, ancestry, race, and culture, the Philippines is firmly linked to its Asian neighbors. This vast region boasts dance cultures as varied as the physical environment and stages of social, political, and cultural development.

The impact of Indian culture on many Indianized kingdoms that began to emerge around AD 100 in Southeast Asia, and the conversion to Islam of many such kingdoms after AD 1300, was a consequence of the growing importance of the Muslim-controlled trade networks. The Sulu Archipelago, a chain of nearly 500 picturesque islands and inlets that links the southernmost part of the Philippines with the northeastern extremity of Borneo, received such maritime contacts within the Asian region, including the rest of the Philippines, which had access to sea trade since prehistoric times. Owing to the dominance of the Sulu Sultanate until the early nineteenth century, the Sulu Archipelago was the center of a large political sphere that extended to the northwestern coast of Borneo.

Seen against this historical and territorial orbit of the Sulu Archipelago, it is apparent that pangalay or igal, also known as pansak in Basilan province, is a mere fraction of the classical dance traditions in Southeast Asia covering more than two millennia. This living link to Asian dance history, although marginalized, is the closest to a classical form in the Philippines. The rich pangalay or igal vocabulary of postures and gestures affirms a strong linkage with the abundant, consistent, and mature choreographic traditions of earlier Asian civilizations. Evidence of this assertion are tangible records, paintings, tapestry, and statuary that reveal fragments or distinct views of dance (e.g., Angkor, Ayuthaya). Further proof lies in the living legacy of dance heritages and discoveries performed today by a succession of devoted and well-trained practitioners throughout Southeast Asia. Pangalay affirms alliance with Southeast Asia, but also with India—the source of classical dance models in the entire region.

AlunAlun Dance Circle dancers in innovative choreography using masks, 2006 © AlunAlun Dance Circle photo collection

Ligaya Amilbangsa demonstrating basic pangalay movements at the Mindanao State University Bongao basketball court in 1975 © LFA photo collection

Map of the Sulu Archipelago
© Census of the Philippine Islands 1918 Geography, History And Climatology
Research and Tradition in Dance Performance

Dance research is far from easy and researchers are few. Lesser still is the output of recorded material pertaining to folk dance traditions. To see beyond the living artifact, dance research requires extensive study, observation, and documentation of movement vocabulary, together with the music and related artistic material resources including the oral traditions, beliefs, and practices embodied in them. These values are the soul of a dance.

When I first came to Sulu in 1969, my knowledge of Tawitawi, the suluk, and lamgub, which were my main cultural vehicles, was based on hearsay, and from much-publicized performances in Manila in 1975 and 1976 exceeded expectations. The troupe primarily served as a means to revive, stimulate, and sustain interest in local dances, and to rectify certain misconceptions pertaining to their performance. At the same time the troupe gave prominence to the natives as initiators or tradition-bearers. I felt such an impression would somehow neutralize the image of Tawitawi as a trouble spot. For myself, the troupe served as a testing ground that answered a few personal concerns: Could I impart what I had so far observed and learned? How much of it? How liberally should I invoke artistic license without sacrificing authenticity, or the folk quality of the dance tradition I desired so much to preserve? Confounding those concerns, the troupe’s performances in Manila in 1975 and 1976 exceeded expectations.

Innovation in Dance and Publication

To attain my goals, I needed to fully understand the dances in context with the local history and culture—from the artistic viewpoint and from the viewpoints of function and history. I had to learn basic dance postures and gestures through lamp-lit “shadow practice” in the evening at home. Later, as a teaching artist in my lecture-demonstrations, I devised a series of hand exercises and a set of stick figures for studying postures and gestures. (In my pangalay book, shadow figures or silhouettes appear instead of stick figures.) A dancer student who has properly learned basic pangalay or igal movement patterns can easily use the figures as a “memory guide” to recreate various posture/gesture/footwork combinations.

Writings up my findings gained momentum in 1979 after an observation stint at the College of Dramatic Arts in Chiangmai, Thailand. Based on a voluminous body of data built up over thirteen years, my book Pangalay: Traditional Dances and Related Folk Artistic Expressions won the 1983 National Award for Best Art Book from the Manila Critics Circle. Its companion volume, Ukul: Visual Arts of the Sulu Archipelago, was published in 2005.

I underscore that the pangalay or igal tradition has the richest documented movement vocabulary of all ethnic dance forms in the Philippines. Like other idioms or styles of dancing with a strong technique, this tradition requires discipline, dedication, and devotion. Pangalay, which means gift or offering, is a temple of dance in Sunskrit. Pure dancing, in essence, it is the child of the period of culture that produced it. When this form or tradition is lost, it would be impossible to dance it as the native initiators did, because it is impossible to live and feel as they did. The imitation or recreated dance will be similar in form, but devoid of inner meaning or without a soul or spark.

The intentional “dressing up” of ethnic dances to make them pleasing to everybody is deplorable; more so if it is intended to deflect attention from deftly trained dancers. Whenever the avowed purpose is to revive or preserve an unfamiliar dance tradition, the true character of its movement vocabulary must be accepted, not altered. Revival for the sake of revivals maintains the integrity of basic postures and gestures. On the other hand, transformation with relevance—adaptation to our times—is not always necessary—uses the postures and gestures as a creative device for choreographic works that uphold the aesthetic qualities of a dance tradition. Juxtaposed with different types of music, instrumental properties, and unusual or improvised ideas, the packaging of the dance looks different, yet the movement vocabulary is faithful to the old form. Reinventing the manner of presentation offers exciting possibilities for transforming and safeguarding a marginalized traditional performing art form.

Theater and Reinventing Tradition

Not long after coming home from Raipur, India, in January 1978, I was prevailed upon to join the Iligan Institute of Technology, a unit of the Mindanao State University (MSU-IIT) in Iligan City, Lanao del Norte. Wasting no time, I organized the nucleus of a theater company, which I named Integrated Performing Arts Guild (IPAG), from students belonging to fledgling groups: a choir, a combo, and a few dance students burdened with a drama cluster yet uncertain whether to go folk or modern in its performance style. IPAG became the resident company of the MSU-IIT, and the adoption of pangalay as its signature performance style earned plaudits. The integration of local and international endowments for its contributions to Philippine arts and letters.

Two decades later a group of professionals inspired by the beauty and versatility of pangalay founded the AlunAlun Dance Circle, Inc. (ADC). This volunteer nonprofit organization is dedicated to preserving, conserving, and propagating pangalay as a discipline and choreographic medium. The...
Promoting Martial Arts, Safeguarding ICH

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As the term “martial” having its origins in the name of Mars (the Roman god of war) suggests, martial arts are often conceived as synonymous with fighting. This prevalent misconception has been intensified by the ever-growing popularity of combat sports and mixed martial arts coupled with the media and entertainment industry. Despite the common perception of martial arts as mere fighting methods, they are in fact the epitome of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). Numerous martial traditions contain such non-martial elements as dances, rituals, and folk games.

In recognition of this versatility, UNESCO has granted ICH status to several martial activities under multiple categories and concepts over the past couple of decades. As recently as December 2020, China's taijiquan was officially inscribed on UNESCO’s Representative List of the ICH of Humanity, highlighting its values as a traditional practice for physical and mental health. The institutional recognition has generated momentum in bolstering and mainstreaming the efforts to safeguard martial arts as ICH.

In keeping with such developments, the International Centre of Martial Arts for Youth Development and Engagement under the auspices of UNESCO (ICM) has delivered nationwide martial arts demonstrations in the Republic of Korea to raise awareness and safeguard the rich diversity of ICH. In 2019, ICM organized an international team of martial artists who respectively specialized in their indigenous martial arts: Brazilian capoeira, Cambodian bokator, Chinese wushu, Filipino arnis, Korean taekkyeon and taekwondo, and Malaysian silat. All the martial artists had been affiliated with professional martial arts organizations in their home countries and practiced the arts for more than ten years. The selection of different martial arts and collaboration by native practitioners were intended to express the sheer diversity of martial arts and their authentic values as ICH.

The demonstration performances were arranged by invitation from a number of local governments and authorities hosting arts and culture festivals, sports and martial arts competitions, exhibitions, and even conferences. From time to time, the team would stand on a magnificent stage taking the applause of thousands of spectators. They would otherwise be enjoying more down-to-earth interactions with dozens of passers-by gathered on random streets. Either way, ICM reaffirmed the adaptability and potential of martial arts as an awareness-raising tool for ICH diversity in various settings, far more than a role as a mere momentary spectacle.

In the demonstrations, a pair of martial artists in each discipline showcased their arts in sequence. Silat practitioners’ demonstrations were characterized by their animal-like moves, often equipped with short sticks or daggers. Wushu members showcased both low-impact and acrobatic skills while carrying a sword or spear. Taekkyeon’s fluid movements with unique steps and arm motions seemed unlike any other arts. These performances culminated with taekwondo players perfectly synchronizing their kicks and flips. The demonstration team would also portray combat and collaborations between different martial arts that signified intercultural exchange and harmonious coexistence.

The displays were not just of skillful and eye-catching moves and techniques, but also many other cultural
manifestations such as traditional attire, rites, prayers, and music. For example, bokator fighters wore a krama (scarf) around their waist and wrapped sangvar (silk cords) around their head and biceps, in a demonstration of what is known to be the uniform of the ancient Khmer armies. They would begin the performance kneeling down and engaging with a brief ritual. This opening was performed in collaboration with the capoeira performers playing the atabaque (drum) and berimbau (musical bow), two of the iconic instruments in capoeira.

These musical elements are quintessential of the Afro-Brazilian identity of capoeira, which developed from the struggles and resistance of African slaves taken to Brazil by the Portuguese. In particular, the sound of the berimbau is believed to be associated with the cries and moans of African slaves nostalgic for their home country. Suppressed by the state authorities, capoeira evolved as a hybrid form of dance, game, and ritual combined with significant musical elements, rather than just a typical fighting system. ICM tried as much as possible to convey these historical and cultural contexts, allowing the audiences to appreciate the essence of the martial arts as well as their dynamic physical representations. The demonstrations of each art were followed by interaction where the team members taught a few spectators some key moves and spirituality of their arts. This gave participants a hands-on experience that could potentially motivate them to learn, practice, and disseminate martial arts heritage. They were also able to gain insight into the underlying cultural identities and characteristics of martial arts. If sustained, these activities will deepen public awareness of the added values of martial arts that can lead to the mobilization of greater organizational and institutional support for the transmission of ICH. In addition, it should not be overlooked that the project was directly beneficial to the professional and personal development of the martial artists themselves, who will further their careers as instructors, performers, academics, and, ultimately, bearers of the valuable ICH.

Building on the achievements of the project, ICM will make persistent efforts to support the transmission of martial arts through various initiatives, thereby safeguarding the diversity of ICH.

Notes
Traditional Performing Art to Greet the New Year

Communities in the Asia-Pacific region greet the New Year at different times depending on region and religion. Communities celebrate a new beginning with traditional songs and dances. This volume introduces traditional performing arts to celebrate the beginning of the New Year in Japan, Nepal, Micronesia, and Myanmar.
The Kirin
Lion Dance
Bringing Peace
and Happiness

In a lion dance performed by a team of two, one person
wears a lion's head and acts as the lion's front legs, while
the other enters the fabric cover of the lion's body costume
and takes the part of its hind legs. The head is modeled on
a lion but in fact can bear closer resemblance to a dog with
drooping ears and a red face. The body is usually covered
with green cloth.

In Tottori prefecture, a unique lion dance has been handed
down that differs significantly from more typical lion dances.
This is the kirin lion dance. Kirin is well known as
the name of a popular Japanese beer brand but actually it is
a legendary Chinese sacred animal that is said to appear in a
peaceful world. In this dance, the lion's head is shaped more
like a kirin's explaining why this dance is called "kirin lion."

There are 148 kirin lions in the eastern area of Tottori
Prefecture and 14 in the northeastern area of neighboring
Hyogo Prefecture. The city of Tottori, with less than 200,000
inhabitants, has one of the smallest populations of any pre-
fecture capital in Japan. The kirin has become an icon of local
revitalization as well as peace and happiness, appearing in
village-style festivals held in this small city that is experiencing
depopulation.

The most distinctive feature of the kirin lion is its external
appearance. Although it looks a bit different depending on
the region, it usually has a big horn and a large mouth and
a long face that looks like a dragon's, and is painted in brilliant
gold. On the vivid scarlet cloth that represents the body, a
black backbone is expressed to emphasize the vivid contrast of
colors. Whereas a lion typically has a humorous face, the kirin
lion has a brave expression and sacred face.

In the kirin lion dance, another Chinese imaginary
creature, Shouzou (猩猩), also appears and leads the kirin
lion. The Shouzou is a kind of red monster that is very fond
of drinking. It also appears in Noh, another traditional
performance art of Japan. With the musical accompaniment
of gong, drum, and pipe, the Shouzou appears, brandishing
sticks, before the kirin lion offers its elegant and dignified
dance to God.

The origin of most traditional performing arts is ambigu-
ous or unclear; however, the origin of the kirin lion dance
is comparatively well known. It was in 1660 that Hideyoshi
Mitsunaka, the first feudal lord of the Tottori clan, separated
the spirit of a wild beast from Nikko Toshogu-shrine where
Leyasu was originally enshrined, before moving it into the newly built Tottori Toshogu Shrine (鳥取東照宮) to
demonstrate that he was also a member of the Tokugawa clan
(his grandmother was a daughter of Tokugawa Ieyasu). It was
recorded in ancient materials that the kirin lion appeared
in the magnificent procession held in this Shinto shrine.
Mitsunaka made the kirin, which was one of the motifs on the
buildings in Nikko Toshogu, a symbol of his authority.

This kirin lion dance disseminated throughout the entire Tottori area. It can be said that the symbol of the authority of Han (漢),
Japanese historical term for the estate of a daimyo in the Edo period and early Meiji period) has been fused with indigenous belief in nature and the Ujigami belief (氏神信仰) in worshiping
local guardians.

The photographs accompanying this article were taken
in my home village Oyudana (大湯棚). In this small village of
just fifteen houses in the mountainous region, there is an
Owasaminomiko shrine (大和三命神社), and here the
kirin lion appears in the fall festival in October. The lion's head
that is said to have been made in the middle of the Edo period
(around the seventeenth or eighteenth century) remains and
was registered early along with the dance as an element of
cultural heritage due to its artistic value.

The dance is a performing art basically dedicated to God.
Men in local communities dance in the precinct of a shrine.
After that, they go from house to house, giving a short dance
performance and wishing for the safety of the family and their
good health and long life. In particular, it is said that a child
will live a long life, free of illness, if they are bitten on the
head by the kirin lion. Each family serves liquor and food to
the dancing men in return and spends some time talking with
them. It is a solemn yet very friendly event.

For locals, "lion dance" always means the kirin lion dance.
The reason for the adoption of the kirin name is related to the
desire to differentiate it from other lion dances while trying
to make it a source of tourism in the Tottori area. Since local
residents have grown up seeing this kirin lion dance, they can
take it somewhat for granted — they are often even unaware
of what kinds of lion exist in other villages. On the other hand,
they tend to be proud of their own unique kirin lion. They
may feel a sense of disconnect whenever they see the ordinary
lion that looks more like a dog's face on TV and think, "Our
lion is much more stylish."

For Tottori as a whole, the kirin lion is a very precious
tourism resource. The efforts of people who connect various
communities into a horizontal network and promote their
communities nationwide by using the rare kirin lion to revi-
italize their regions are great. Thanks to this valuable effort,
the kirin lion dance was registered as an element of Japanese her-
eritage. It is also encouraging that several lion dances have been
raised to national ICH status from being merely local elements
of ICH. The kirin lion dance is now also known internation-
ally, having appeared in movies and been performed abroad.

However, the common concern of every community is the
lack of human resources to inherit this heritage. The number
of children who want to be bitten on their heads by the lion
has also definitely decreased. The doors of the lion dance
organizations, which were restricted to young men in the past,
are now widely opened to women, children, and even outsiders,
but still most small communities have to transmit this tech-
ically difficult dance and rhythm while maintaining related
organizations with a limited number of people. Their difficulty
in maintaining the heritage is no little thing. In the light of a
decreasing national population, the difficulty of transmitting
tradition is a common challenge for every community in small
cities.
Nhū dāyā Bhintunā!
Greetings of the New Year!

Monika Maharjan

Youths playing dance using an alley in Kathmandu with the banner at the back. © Shailesh Rajbhandari

Nepal is a diverse country with 103 ethnic communities and 93 spoken languages and dialects. Besides the languages, each ethnic community has its own lifestyle, food habits, traditions, rituals, and festivals. The country, which covers roughly 147,000 square kilometers, has varied climate, terrain, and biodiversity. These factors also contribute to the diversity of food, culture, and lifestyle.

New Year is one example of a festival for which each community has its own celebration. This is despite Nepal as a nation following the historical Bikram Sambat calendar, which currently is in the year 2077 and celebrates its New Year around the month of April. All the formal events of the country and offices follow Bikram Sambat.

The Newah community, indigenous to Kathmandu Valley, also have their own New Year and way to celebrate the day. This New Year falls in the month of October according to the Gregorian calendar, and is celebrated on the fourth day of a five-day festival known as Tihar, which is a festival observed by both the Hindu and Buddhist communities of Nepal. But on the fourth day of the Tihar festival, the Newah communities celebrate Nepal Sambat New Year, a day they also refer to as Mha Puja.

Nepal Sambat was established as a new era on 20 October AD 1799, making it currently the year NS 2077 in the Nepal Sambat calendar. The legends refer to a merchant named Sankhedar Valadeva who found a sack full of gold sand. He used that gold to pay off the debts of all people.

On the morning of the New Year, people in most of the cities, towns, and villages in Kathmandu Valley, and those outside the valley that have Newah communities, perform processions. The streets, courtyards, and squares of the ancient settlements are filled with traditional music, beating drums, flutes, and impromptu dances. Large gatherings of people, with considerable participation of youth, are seen in colorful, traditional dress. Amid a vibrant atmosphere of music and dances, the air is filled with people chanting “Nhū dāyā Bhintunā”—Greetings of the New Year!

Within the Newah community there are different castes and each has its own traditional musical instrument, which is their identity. Each caste has its own social organization based on the locality and function known as a Guthi. These Guthis are responsible for teaching the traditional music to the younger generations as well as taking care of temples, rituals, and festivals. The Guthis participate in the processions with the musical instruments associated with their group, carrying banners wishing a happy New Year and displaying the name of the Guthi. For example, the farming community brings their big drum known as a dholam along with dhwara (long poles with banners and yak's hair attached), while Tamrakar (coopersmiths) and Shakya (goldsmiths) bring their dha baja drums, which are smaller than dholam and are played with sticks. Some Guthis bring daga (double headed drums) that are played only in certain months while some play banar (flute). Guthis play the same musical instruments during these processions that are played in other rituals and ceremonies.

Even though the Vintuna procession has become an integral part of the Newah New Year, the celebration as a New Year event was started in NS 1075 by Chosa Pasa on the 100 years anniversary of the Newah poet Siddhidas Mahaju. Later the organization Nepal Bashaha Matka Khala took responsibility for the New Year celebration, with the first procession taking place in NS 1350. At that time there was single-party rule in Nepal under the direct control of the king, and people were protesting for full democracy. This cultural event was also used as a medium of expression of protest against the undemocratic rule. People did not have freedom of expression, neither did they have freedom of language. Today, the New Year celebration is still seen as a medium to unite and promote awareness of the Newah language.

After more than forty years of the continuation of the procession, every city and town in Kathmandu Valley began to organize their own events. In Kathmandu, Nepal Sambat Niluta Rongya Samariy is the current organizer. A week before the New Year celebration, the organizing committee invites Guthi members for a ritual to worship “Nasha Dhyo.” The participants are fed some snacks and small offerings, and it is also considered an invitation to Guthis to participate in the New Year procession. Besides the traditional Guthis, many young people form groups with their musical instruments and participate in the procession.

Prior to the event, the streets and squares are cleaned and decorated. Along the sides of the streets and raised platforms, people from different institutes and groups showcase their skills in mandala making. The morning procession starts around 8 a.m. and continues until midnight. In the evening, families celebrate Mha Puja in an offering where the eldest family member (especially the female members) blesses each of their relatives with a mandala. This signifies that they are worshipping the soul of the person. Families celebrate together and share traditional feasts. In this way, the welcoming of the New Year continues from morning to evening for the Newah people, with a combination of public and private events.
People have lived on the small atolls that make up the Central Caroline Islands, now part of the Federated States of Micronesia, for over a thousand years. Micronesia, as it is commonly referred to, is made up of four mountainous states: Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk, and Yap, with hundreds of small raised coral atolls.

Yap is considered still to retain much of its cultural heritage. Life on these remote, outlying islands could be some, especially those from more developed countries, prove lonely and isolating, if not downright difficult. For one thing, the typical size of these atolls is around 2.6 square kilometers (1 square mile) with an average population of 200. Being surrounded by the vast Pacific, they appear on maps as nothing more than tiny dots in the deep blue ocean.

But for anyone from these islands, life is full and never short of activities. These will include daily fishing or hunting voyages. Constructing canoes and gardening are common work that most community members are occupied with. In the evenings and on specials days such as Church or other holidays, including Christmas and New Year, the entire island community comes together to enjoy variety of performing arts such as dances.

Dances are believed to be gifts passed on to the ancestors of these islanders by higher beings or deities, or were composed by individuals or groups in commemoration of historical events on the island or individual achievement. Since cultures on these islands were never written in previous times, their histories and accounts of achievements and catastrophic events were often translated in chants, oral stories, and dances. Dances on the islands come in various forms, including sitting and standing dances for women or for men, war dances using sticks or clubs, and more recently marching dances. Both the stick dances and marching dances can be performed by mixed gender groups. It is common that before special events and holidays such as New Year, the chiefs and elders of the community will instruct the community to begin practicing for dances to perform on those occasions.

Since dances are believed to be gifts from spiritual beings above, the dances must be "brought down" for display and "hung up" again afterward. Once the dance is brought down, there are several stages of preparation. These include the initial preparation stage (haapulaf), during which potential participants meet and lead dancer(s) (faapoo) are identified. The lead dancers are a couple of individuals who are well versed in the chants associated with the dance along with detailed choreographed movements. Organizing and positioning of individual dancers in an orderly line formation is also done at this early stage. Practicing the dance will take a couple of weeks. Haapulaf is when the movements and chanting are in sync, and the dance is pretty much ready to be performed in front of a wider audience. During this stage, the community is requested to join the pre-show, final rehearsal prior to the main event. Haapulaf thus means both a bonfire party for final corrections and a sneak preview. This event normally takes place a day before the actual event.

On the day of performance, the entire island community busses itself gathering and preparing all the materials needed to fix costumes, body ornaments, and other decorations for use by the dancers. It is important that the dancers be uniformed in costumes that include grass skirts for the women, made from lubicous or coconut leaves. Turmeric powder and coconut oil are applied to the body, while flowers or young coconut leaves are woven into headwear. This performance stage is shie, which refers to the break in or bringing the dance to the dancing platform.

Because dances are gifts given to the community through their chiefs and guardians, it is essential that prior to performing the dance, established protocols must be accorded. As such, the dancers are led to the platform by an elder who is expected to carry a bundle of leaves and a traditional gift offering. The leaves are used to ward off bad spirits or dark omens and any ill feeling toward the dancers. The gift offerings are given to the chiefs as a token of appreciation for allowing the dance to be performed and the dancers to raise their voices and make a loud noise in the village. On the main island of Yap, a large, round piece of Yapese stone money is usually brought to the dancing area to be presented to the chiefs.

During the dance, it is a cultural taboo for any spectator to walk in front of the dancers, much less in between them. However, an exception is made for those who are expected to bring traditional gifts to bestow upon any one particular dancer whom the relatives feel has put on a fine performance, and then they lay gifts in front of the dance area for all performers.

After the performance is done, the village the dancers come from will enjoy the final show stage, chengag—"hanging up" or returning the dance to its rightful owners, the gods. The villagers will gather food and beverages in preparation for this final festive event. The dance will again be performed in its entirety, and when it is done, the performers will be recognized for their achievement and the villagers will feast on the abundance of food that had been collected.
In Myanmar traditional dance, Yein Aka (group dance) is a form in which dancers perform solos, alternating with their fellow group members. It is performed with the accompaniment of a traditional orchestra known as Hsaing Waing. There are various kinds of Yein, including Thagyan Yein (water festival dance), Nat Kadaw Yein (a dance to pray to spirits), A Pyodaw Yein (ladies’ dance), and Simi Yein (candle light dance). Most group dances are performed by women, although some are for men.

Among these group dances, Nat Kadaw A Pyodaw Yein is considered very traditional. This dance is performed during special ceremonies and also at the Zat Pwe theatrical performances and dramatic shows. In Zat Pwe, Nat Kadaw Yein is traditionally performed the first night, while the A Pyodaw (maids of honor) dance is performed on the second. Nat Kadaw is the purest and oldest form of Myanmar traditional music and dancing. It was traditionally performed as a solo dance by a woman dancer but now, as A Pyodaw, it takes the form of a group dance. This dance serves as an act of propitiation to ask that the Zat Pwe performance will proceed smoothly, with no accidents.

The dancers, Nat Kadaws, dress in red tops and traditional skirts (longyi) with red shawls around the chest, and wear red headbands with their hair hanging down and tightly knotted. More recently, Apyodaw dancers have also been seen to dress in white tops and red traditional skirts (longyi), but not to wear headbands—instead, they wear flowers with their hair hanging down.

With the opening music played by the traditional drum circle orchestra, prayers to the Buddha and the ritual dances are performed by Nat Kadaws and Apyodaws. Even though the Nat Kadaw dance is traditionally performed the first night of Zat Pwe and A Pyodaw on the second, today the dancing styles tend to be mixed and danced the first night as group dances for the further excitement and interest of the audience.

It is tradition in the Nat Kadaw dance to make an offering to the Lamaing Nat and Guardian Spirit of Land with a bowl (kadawpwe) made of green coconut, three hands of bananas, and other items. This appeasement of the spirit is usually done by a spirit medium dancer (Nat Kadaw). Chanting folk songs about nats (spirits) is an essential part of the beginning of Zat Pwe. These ritual songs pay respect to the Sakka, the lord of the first and second levels of existence of the nat deus, thirty-seven national nats, and to the local guardian spirit.

The Nat Kadaw dance is a great demonstration of the skill of the dancer; it comprises many elements of choreography and can take up to 45 minutes. At the beginning of the performance, the dance is delicate and the music is legato. The song begins “Mingalar yay te mha man taing,” and the Nat Kadaw sings and dances in propitiation, repeating the sequence three times with the offering bowl. After a vocal injunction, the dancer quickens to the rising intensity of the music, and the movements and the music reach a frenzied escalation. At this performance, special songs for the nats such as “Atulay yey te yhain karyaine yhain karyaine hpyap moaar shway kawjaw ramhaaw illoethite” (Sitting together on the golden carpet) are sung with accompanying dances. This ecstatic song and music style is also used in A Pyodaw Yein.

These traditional dances are transmitted to new generations by training at the National University of Arts and Culture in Yangon and Mandalay. The aim is to preserve, promote, and disseminate Myanmar ICH. Nat Kadaw and A Pyodaw dances are included in the curriculum of dramatic arts courses at Myanmar universities.

Nat Kadaw A Pyodaw Yein and the special songs dedicated to the nats are safeguarded and transmitted not only for purposes of worship but also as elements of a distinctive cultural heritage.
Pulaka
A Staple Food of the People of Tuvalu

Rt. Hon Bikenibeu Paeniu
Former Prime Minister and Agricultural Economist

This article describes one of Tuvalu’s renowned intangible cultural heritages—the cultivation of pulaka. Pulaka (Tuvaluan) is known by different names in other countries, such as babai in Kiribati or via in Fiji, and also has different monikers in other countries like the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)—Korsae, Pohnpei, Chuuk, and Yap. Its scientific name is *Cyrtosperma chamissonis* and its common English name is the “giant swamp taro.” Pulaka is the traditional root crop for the people of the atolls but is also found in volcanic lands like Fiji, Pohnpei, Vanuatu, and others. In the latter case pulaka provided a vital source of food in times of shortages.

Tuvalu is an atoll nation made up of five coral atolls and four raised atolls. The raised atolls do not have lagoons while the others have lagoons surrounded by small islets. Among Tuvalu’s intangible cultural heritage landmarks are the unique pulaka burrow-pits. On each of the eight main islands of Tuvalu one will find these burrow-pits located close to the main settlements; they can also be found on other small islets surrounding the lagoons. Atoll soils are porous and relatively poor for crop cultivation. Thus, since the ancestors of Tuvalu settled the islands, they dug burrows deep enough to reach ground water. The pulaka pits vary in size, from around 5 x 30 m to 10 x 60 m. In some cases, burrow-pits can be as much as 10 m deep. On Niutao, the third island from the north, there is what they call *te pela*—a traditional site for cultivating pulaka. *Te pela* are dug just a meter deep, unlike the traditional burrow-pits in Niutao that usually go down around 7–8 m below the surface.

How then did our ancestors cultivate the pulaka in these burrow-pits? There are no clear records of the technology they used then, neither are there proven records of how they dug these pits so deep. But conventional observation plus the continuation of the art of cultivating pulaka to the present day yields knowledge of how ancestors created a burrow-pit environment that was conducive to growing pulaka. After having dug the burrow-pits to levels where brackish ground water stands, dark soil and organic compost were then placed at the bottom in several layers. The organic compost was mainly composed of green leaf, and rotten coconut trunks and leaves. Over the years this organic compost became very rich soil ideal for cultivating pulaka. Absolutely no fertilizer was used.

Not so long ago, with advances in technology, the government pursued innovative agricultural projects aimed at building the resilience of the communities of...
Tuvalu, and some islands ventured into adapting the traditional pulaka burrow-pits into concrete-lined pits around 2 m below the surface. For a few months, organic compost was left in these concrete pits. This concrete pits somehow made the cultivation of pulaka easier, but whether the quality of the main tuber of the pulaka is the same as that cultivated in traditional burrow-pits is yet to be tested.

Cultivating pulaka is an art. In Tuvalu, transmission of this art is quite secretive and, traditionally, knowledge is passed from father to son. This shows that there are many ways or styles of cultivating pulaka given that each family may have its own secrets. Many people share their pulaka cultivating knowledge and skills, but again it is traditionally believed that even when pulaka cultivation experts go public sharing their “style,” people will always say “Yes, but they still keep certain secrets!” Nonetheless, the accounts provided herein in terms of the cultivation of pulaka are my own, having practiced it in partnership with my father and elder brothers, as well as having served as Director of Agriculture in Tuvalu from 1980 to 1984 where I acquired knowledge from other key pulaka farmers in Tuvalu and beyond.

What is illustrated here gives the reader an idea of cultivation practices, but is not necessarily the cultivating technology used by all. There are a number of pulaka varieties but generally in Tuvalu they are categorized into two main types: ilakalo and tuatiti, both of which are made up of different varieties. This article describes the process applied to ilakalo. Tuatiti, on the other hand, is cultivated simply by manuring the pulaka plot (each farmer’s share of the community pulaka pit is regarded as a plot). It is advocated that the more time in a year you cover your plot with compost, the greater your tuatiti crop grow in size. However, a renowned pulaka grower is rated by the number of ilakalo they cultivate in their plot. Ilakalo is the main crop cultivated in a well-manured titi—a pulaka circled hole around 1 m in diameter dug down to the water-table floor. These holes are manured using dark muddy soil with organic leafy compost. The ilakalo seedling is then planted. There are two types of seedlings—a young ilakalo shoot or a stem of a matured crop after cutting the “root” (the edible part of the pulaka crop). The seedling is then covered with organic compost soil to a level around 50 cm from the water-table floor (this water table normally sits on hard rock). After covering with organic compost soil, the grower must use their feet to push the soil down around the seedling. There is one important tactic in order to give the ilakalo a nice shape (called kauli kuoga), and that is to make sure the seedling from a harvested crop is placed firmly onto the hard rock water-table base, additionally, when pushing down the soil with your feet, the plant must always stand firm. In this way you will get a beautiful oval kauli kuoga with a diameter at the center of the root of around 30–50 cm.

From planting the seedling to harvesting time, the owner of the crop will then feed each ilakalo according to the sprouting of a new leaf. Again, the feeding technology is kept secret within a family but, in general, pulaka farmers would feed their crop (individually) using either green or brown leafy compost placed around 40 cm below the soil at a position opposite the front of the new leaf. The choice of the green and brown compost is another family secret. When the corm or tuber of the ilakalo reaches around 30–50 cm high, the area surrounding the crop is fenced with woven brown coconut leaves to a diameter of 1–2 m. When this is done, all the remaining feeding of the crop is performed within this fence. It may be inferred following the presentation in this article so far that pulaka cultivation is very environmentally friendly and sustainable. Certainly, it is a traditional art of cultivation that boosts the positive features of a resilient environment and can help in the fight against climate change.

To conclude the presentation on this Tuvalu intangible cultural heritage, we will now focus on the art of harvesting. Ilalaoi can take as much as ten years to grow, depending on how the farmer chooses to manage their crop. Pulaka corms of as high as 1–2 m were traditionally displayed during important festivities. Skilled growers will have no rotten portion in their corms and the diameter across the corm could reach over 50 cm. Tuatiti when harvested usually stands around 60–70 cm high with a diameter of 50 cm or thereabouts. The pulaka crop is mature enough for harvest when it has around three or four leaves left. A grower will normally stop feeding an ilalaoi if they want to harvest that crop. For tuatiti, three leaves remaining is the sign the crop is mature enough for harvesting.

The traditional harvesting of the crop is an example of sustainability espoused in the cultivation of pulaka passed on from our forefathers. A skilled, hardworking farmer would normally walk around their pulaka plot searching for crops with three leaves remaining. A lazy farmer, on the other hand, would just walk into his plot and start harvesting no matter the number of leaves remaining on each plant. This three-leaf crop is particularly important for the tuatiti that is normally used in the Tuvalu delicacy fekei—mashed pulaka mixed with red toddy syrup before baking, and with coconut cream mixed in when cooked.
The goal is to capture the opponent’s pieces and accumulate different cultures. On top of helping to develop the player’s cultural meaning and promoting problem-solving skills across the cala family and is considered to be one of the oldest Kazakh tribute to achieving the educational goals of cultural heritage. Traditional board games, also known as toguz korgool in more on one’s own side. Players use small stones, beans, or were trying to introduce the culture of the Kazakh people knowledge about other cultures. Therefore, board games was carved in wood or produced out of plastic materials. Game sessions can last from thirty minutes to as long as five hours or more.

**Educational Value**

There is great potential in using games in creating a learning environment. Many studies have proven that using games to engage students in the process of learning can improve the quality of learning. Therefore, the idea of incorporating board games as educational tools is not new. Some schools have already implemented togyzkumalaq as an extracurricular activity or an additional class. Most of them stated that they were trying to introduce the culture of the Kazakh people by using folk games as a means of systematic education, and togyzkumalaq is a popular choice.

Togyzkumalaq play a special role in the upbringing of the new generation since it creates challenges and goals, and teaches players to make meaningful decisions. Togyzkumalaq develops memory, attention, creativity, observation, and sequence of reasoning. It is especially important for them to consider this type of game to children who display attention deficit behaviors and have issues with concentration. It can help them to become calmer, more balanced, gain the ability to overcome difficulties, and strive to achieve set objectives. Traits such as patience and endurance are essential parts of togyzkumalaq. The game enhances the thinking capacity of an individual, sharpening the ability of calculation. All players have to prove their forethoughtness by cognitive orchestration. Therefore, playing togyzkumalaq from an early age creates a good foundation for the further development of deep thinking, intellectual dialogue, ethical communication, and decision-making skills.

**Revitalization and Safeguarding Measures**

Togyzkumalaq rapidly regained its popularity in Central Asian countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Togyzkumalaq Federation of Kazakhstan (www-skum-alak.com) was formed in 2004, and four years later the International Togyzkumalaq Federation was established. The number of fans of the game seems to be gradually growing every year. According to practitioners, togyzkumalaq is now popular in many countries around the world and has one of the leading positions among online games. The game has become recognized as a major mind sport and is being promoted as a national sport by governments in Central Asia. It is played by men and women, children and adults; in addition, special versions adapted for blind players have been launched. There are regular regional championships across the Central Asian countries, along with the international tournaments outside of the region. Nevertheless, the president of the federation recently mentioned that “the paradox is that this game is gaining popularity all over the world, but in the country itself it leaves much to be desired.” He emphasized the importance of introducing the game in schools and teaching children the basics of togyzkumalaq from an early age.

In early December 2020, deputies of the Mazhilis approved amendments to introduce national sports into the school curriculum for physical education. According to the Minister of Culture, Sport, and Youth Affairs, they are planning to introduce national sports in schools gradually. The first to be introduced will be Kazakh kures, togyzkumalaq, and asyk atu. In addition, more and more new centers for national sports and arts are expanding in new areas, offering a variety of classes and activities for children and youth. One of them is the recently opened “Arba alak”—the center of national sports—which was created on the basis of the “Shyryan” children and youth center, where there are different sections for children to join.

Togyzkumalaq, together with toguz korgool (of Kyrgyzstan) and mangala/göçürme (of Turkey), was inscribed in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity within the framework of the fifteenth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the ICH, which was held online from 14 to 19 December. Being inscribed in the list as a traditional game of intelligence and strategy is a significant step in its further promotion and transmission. Additionally, recent increases in the prevalence of digital games brought to attention the potential use of the motivating nature of this ubiquitous culture for education purposes. Togyzkumalaq is adaptable to the digital world, which has been particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic. It can successfully be transferred to an online platform, unlike contact or team activities that require a physical presence. Today, togyzkumalaq can be accessed online or through mobile apps, which facilitates novel ways of transmitting skills to the younger generation. The developers of online togyzkumalaq games tried to preserve all the traditional features of the game in their apps, and offer different levels of difficulty.

Overall, active promotion of togyzkumalaq in education benefits both the educational process itself and the raising of cultural awareness. Many traditional games have already been lost, and people often have a limited knowledge of the wealth of their own cultural heritage, especially of the intangible type. One of the initiatives of UNESCO within the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the ICH is about promoting and safeguarding ICH elements through formal and non-formal education. Integrating togyzkumalaq in school education could be a direct contribution in activating this safeguarding measure, and an example of teaching with ICH rather than just teaching about ICH. Learning based on traditional games can guide younger generations closer to their cultural heritage through engaging, interactive, and educational content. Board games are low cost, easily available, and, most importantly, make the learning process fun.

School children playing togyzkumalaq during open air masterclasses in the center of Almaty (Kazakhstan) © Togyzkumalaq Federation, 2018 from UNESCO page

**NOTES**

Safeguarding Pioneers

Dalian Maritime University

Safeguarding China’s Navigation Culture

Sarah Ward
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Founded in 1909, Dalian Maritime University (DMU) is a Project 211 National Key University and an International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Centre of Excellence. Known affectionately as the “cradle of navigators,” DMU has, since its inception, produced more navigators than any other Chinese institution. DMU is, without doubt, the beating heart of China’s maritime industry.

Following China’s ratification of the 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, DMU established the Centre for Maritime History and Culture Research (CMHCR) in 2008. Charged with safeguarding China’s navigation culture, CMHCR has, over the past twelve years, grown to become home to more than twenty-one associated experts, drawn from disciplines as diverse as history, archaeology, heritage, languages and linguistics, translation and interpretation, marine engineering, navigation science, and technology. This short article will highlight the vital work of this safeguarding pioneer.

Navigation culture encapsulates the navigation practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and know-how inherited from our ancestors and transmitted from one generation to the next. Navigation culture is both created and adapted by communities and provides them with a sense of identity, belonging, and continuity. The importance of navigation culture lies not in the tangible manifestation of that culture—the ships, shipwrecks, locks, or weirs, for example—but in the wealth of knowledge and skills transmitted through it.

Unfortunately, the threats to China’s navigation culture are many—aging practitioners, diminishing youth interest, material shortage, and industrialization, to name but a few. Its safeguarding is, therefore, about the transfer of knowledge, skills, and meaning. For the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of achieving quality education (SDG4), CMHCR works with DMU’s Navigation College to strengthen and reinforce the diverse and varied processes necessary for the continuous evolution, interpretation, and transmission of navigation culture to future generations. Its Navigation Science and Technology undergraduate program, for example, balances the retention of past practices, such as celestial navigation, with the transmission of the modern practices that are needed to adapt to the present, such as the use of Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS). Why? Because the past is the key to the future and fundamental to the DMU’s approach is the understanding that communities and knowledge-bearers are key actors for safeguarding and transmission. Engaging them is crucial for the survival of the customs and traditions of navigation culture.

In establishing CMHCR, DMU had the following aims and objectives:

1. Safeguard navigation culture through the establishment of an inventory of navigation culture, developed in conjunction with the communities concerned;
2. Monitor, propose, and, where appropriate, adopt policies to protect China’s navigation culture and raise awareness of its importance both within China and abroad;
3. Research all aspects of navigation culture, both inland and seafaring;
4. Disseminate research results through publication, presentation, outreach, and public activities including academic conferences, public lectures, and in the popular media;
5. Encourage international cooperation, cross-discipline dialogue, and knowledge-sharing to build China’s capacity to safeguard its navigation culture, in part through the visiting scholar program;
6. Participate in the delivery of education, outreach, and awareness-raising activities to promote the importance of China’s navigation culture and the need to preserve it; and
7. Pursue other appropriate safeguarding activities, such as maritime and ethnoarchaeological field research, always with the communities’ full consent and participation.

Research is at the center of CMHCR’s activities, and two significant safeguarding projects are currently underway. The first, “Inland Water Transport,” led by CMHCR Director Han Qiang, is a two-year project funded by China’s Ministry of Transport. The project aims to inventory, investigate, and document inland navigation culture and its tangible expressions. It will result in a significant co-authored publication due out later this year.

The second project, which will be the first of its kind in China, is “Globalisation of Sino-Foreign Maritime Cultural Exchange (Ocean Cultures).” This three-year project is funded by China’s Ministry of Education, and aims to document, protect, preserve, and promote China’s safeguarding navigation culture and the long history and tradition of China’s international maritime exchange. This programme commenced, to the best of our knowledge, in 11 BCE. The outcome will be a 400,000-word monograph, ten journal articles, eight policy papers, and a unique edited volume prepared in collaboration with the University of Helsinki. There are also plans to launch the edited volume with an international conference intended to promote cross-cultural dialogue on the safeguarding of navigation culture. To find out more, visit dmu.edu.cn.

NOTE
1. Project 211 is a National Key Universities project initiated in 1995 by the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China to raise research standards at high-level universities. The name for the project comes from an abbreviation of the 21st century and 100 participating universities.
Available Now for the Renewed ICH Courier Online

ICHCAP has completely renewed ICH Courier Online, the digital version of ICH Courier, and will introduce it to subscribers around the world from March.

The ICH Courier is a quarterly magazine specializing in the field of ICH and since 2009 and is one of the representative projects of ICHCAP. Through this quarterly, the Centre delivers discourses and the latest news on ICH in the Asia-Pacific region, and introduces various living heritage elements from the forty-eight UNESCO member states in the region. The Centre intends to share with its subscribers around the world the activities and efforts of communities and related organizations to safeguard ICH through the quarterly magazine.

The renewed ICH Courier Online tries to provide information intuitively on major ICH information in the most user-friendly fashion. In addition, information can be easily searched by applying intuitive content composition and UI.

In particular, a new online subscription application function was added and a viewing corner for each ICH theme was newly established, enabling more convenient access to ICH information. The Centre hopes that ICH Courier Online will make it easier for subscribers to get closer to ICH. The Centre also hopes that such efforts will contribute to raising awareness of ICH and ultimately serve as a foundation for the safeguarding and transmission of ICH in the Asia-Pacific region. For further details, please visit the website, https://ichcourier.unesco-ichcap.org.

ICHCAP’s New Publication “Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity: Meet the Traditional Martial Arts of the World”

ARTS OF THE WORLD” jointly with the International Centre of Martial Arts for Youth Development and Engagement Under the Auspices of UNESCO (ICM).

This book is a Korean version of “Traditional Martial Arts as Intangible Cultural Heritage,” the latest book in the series on living heritage. It was jointly published by the Centre and ICM, as a symbol of the two organizations’ cooperation for safeguarding and promoting traditional martial arts as intangible heritage of humanity.

This book introduces traditional martial arts handed down all over the world including Silambam in India, Leonesque style wrestling (aloches) in Spain and Kirkpnan oil wrestling in Turkey from the point of view of intangible heritage. In particular, it shows the aspects of traditional martial arts as intangible heritage that have changed with the passing of time and environmental changes, and have struggled to maintain consistent transmission, through examples such as the rapid decline of Bach Ho, which was popular in Vietnam until the early 2000s, and the efforts of martial artists for its renaissance; and the development process from Capoeira of Africa to Capeotra Roda after its introduction into Brazil during the Portuguese colonial period.

By publishing this book, the Centre would like to share the historical stories contained in traditional martial arts with readers and raise awareness of traditional martial arts as intangible heritage among them. At the same time, we aim to maintain and promote the values of “cultural diversity” as highlighted by UNESCO. This publication is also available in English and can be downloaded free of charge from the Centre’s website, www.unesco-ichcap.org.

ICHCAP Advisory Committee Meeting Held in February 2021

The 2021 Advisory Committee of ICHCAP was held online, 2 February.

Seven cultural experts, including Hae-jin Park (CEO of Current Korea) and Sang-mee Bak (professor, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies), commissioned in 2020 and staff of the center took part in the meeting. In this meeting, reports on the plans for 2021 and current challenges of the Centre were presented, followed by discussions between committee members. In particular, participants shared their insight on rising center’s visibilities and international promotional strategies. Accordingly, participants discussed actively on the diversification of the promotional methods at home and abroad and external extension of the Centre, which is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year.

The Advisory Committee, held semiannually, is expected to continuously share various opinions on the development plans and mid- and long-term goals and topics of the Centre, focusing on reestablishing strategies on the activities of the Centre and strengthening its partnerships.

ICH Information-Sharing Platform ichLinks Looking for Partners

ICHCAP is recruiting the second group of partners for the Asia-Pacific ICH information-sharing platform ichLinks. ichLinks is a digital sharing platform that cooperates with UNESCO member states in the Asia-Pacific region to collect and service ICH-related data and contents. ichLinks’ partner organizations are the core operating entities of this platform that shares, accumulates, and utilizes ICH-related data and contents with ICHCAP. Organizations interested in participating in ichLinks can contact ichlinks.secretariat@gmail.com. More information on this project is available at www.unesco-ichcap.org/ichlinks/.

Last year, ICHCAP selected the first group of cooperation institutions, centering on institutions that possess a significant quantity of ICH information in the Asia-Pacific region. The partners are Malaysia Arts & Cultural Practitioners Association (MACPA), Mongolian National Center for Cultural Heritage (NCCH), Vietnam Institute of Culture and Arts Studies (VICAS), Uzbekistan Republican Scientific-Methodical Center for Organization of Culture Institutions Activity under the Ministry of Culture, and Kazakhstan National Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

After selecting the first partner organizations, ICHCAP received sample data from them, uploaded it on ichLinks, and used it for archive service and planning future projects. In addition, ICHCAP provides financial and technical support to promote participation of partner organizations. An official from the Vietnam Institute of Culture and Arts Studies said, “There were restrictions related to information and communication technology at the national level and equipment in the safeguarding and use of cultural heritage resources. Through participation and support in the ichLinks project, while widely promoting Vietnamese ICH, it is expected that the profit will be able to be diverted and more cooperation and partnerships will be established in the cultural creation industry.”

IchLinks Platform © ICHCAP
ICH Courier Online
A way to Get Closer to ICH in the Asia-Pacific Region

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