Every minute and every second, we remember something. No matter how happy or sad they are, memories give us strength to live day by day. At this moment, with only a few days left in the year, we are inspired to look back on how we spent the previous twelve months and whether the goals we set ourselves at the beginning of the year were achieved.

Memory is someone’s history—more than that, it’s everyone’s history. Such history naturally contains the feature of culture. The theme of ICH Courier vol. 49, “To Remember, to Be Remembered,” places focus on the link that keeps intangible cultural heritage (ICH) alive through memory as a medium. What the older generation remembers about ICH is remembered by being passed on to future generations—but many people talk about the discontinuity of transmission. However, memory has a lot of power, and with that power it continues to remain in place in the ever-changing modern society. I hope this prompts you think about it again.

The “Windows to ICH” section mainly deals with the transmission of memories of the community in terms of livelihood and custom. In particular, we consider how the development of technology with its attendant pros and cons has affected communities and how they have found ways to accept and adapt it. In addition, to broaden the scope of ICH, we tried to address various areas such as intersectoral points between tangible and intangible cultural heritage, ICH and economy under the wider theme of memory.

The year 2021 was a meaningful one as we marked the tenth anniversary of ICHCAP. I would like to express my gratitude to the many contributors and readers who have cherished us over the last ten years, and I hope you will be with us for the next decade again.

I wish you good health and good luck in the upcoming new year, 2022.

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Cover Art: Gold mosaic of temple chapel architecture complex in Wat Phra Luang (Wat Phra That Luang) in Pha That Luang, Chiang Mai Heritage complex. © mazzzur, kr.123rf.com

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Editorial Remarks

KEUM Gi Hyung  
Director-General of ICHCAP

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Transformational Sites of Conscience: Heritage Sites as Catalysts for Action

Elizabeth Silkes
Executive Director, International Coalition of Sites of Conscience

In calling for memory values to be considered anew in the escalating public debate on the World Heritage Convention’s definition of outstanding universal values, Francesco Bandarin, former director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, speaking as part of the Our World Heritage initiative, recently reminded his audience, “Heritage is not just beauty.” Indeed, it is so much more.

Heritage sites at their best are truth-tellers. They are connectors of past to present and of individuals to our shared humanity, they can even be catalysts for action. They come alive through the power of the stories they hold, but their stories do not necessarily unfold organically or fully, especially those that are complex, contested, or divisive, as most historic narratives are. Further, and critically, these stories unfold in their fullness only over time, often over generations. The power in the stories of heritage sites must be acknowledged by those who are in the position to share them; it should be wielded with care and alacrity, leaving room for visitors and local communities to explore the truths—often multiple truths—they contain, room for reflection and new understandings of the past. This exploration is ideally just the beginning, not the end goal for heritage sites; the end goal is transformation. By broadening the interpretive lens to ensure inclusivity—a plurality of perspectives, including those of marginalized and traditionally excluded voices—heritage sites can create new platforms for communities not only to see their own stories reflected and valued but also to see the stories of others with new compassion and new appreciation in the service of shaping a more just, equitable future.

As Executive Director of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (the only global network of historic sites, museums, and memory initiatives that connect past struggles for human rights and social justice to their contemporary legacies), I see every day the impact that heritage sites and museums can have when they embrace their role in moving society from memory to truth to justice. Twenty years into our work, the Coalition comprises over three hundred members in seventy countries. Our members explore a range of histories—from sites in West Africa, such as Maison des Esclaves, that share stories of the transatlantic slave trade and its connection to contemporary racial injustice, to Ellis Island in the United States and Le Bois du Cazier in Belgium that use stories of historic immigration and labor exploitation to advocate for the rights of migrants, refugees, and laborers today. No matter their context or focus, all sites of conscience are united by the core belief that history has lessons to share and that the past can be a catalyst for transformation, inspiring people today to take action to create more inclusive, peaceful futures. We also see, however, that the lessons of history are not easily told, especially those that are painful or contested. When the lessons of the past are not harnessed with intent and community support in the service of building just societies, they can reinforce revisionist narratives, suppress free speech and civic engagement, and, with tragic consequences, reopen old wounds rather than be a force for positive social change, for new perspectives, reconciliation, and healing.

In our efforts to ensure that the past serves as a foundation for transformation rather than deepening divides, we have found the most effective programs to accomplish that goal at heritage and cultural sites. These programs are holistic, multidisciplinary, community-driven, and relevant—grounded in history, but addressing contemporary challenges. To begin such a process, we assess a site’s leadership, operations, public programs, exhibits, and interpretation, and we ask, whose voice is missing here, whose stories should be centered? Is it women? Is it indigenous community members? Where are the voices of victims of violence or oppression? Where are local community members, elders, and youth? I will highlight just a few exemplary sites of conscience—some also UNESCO World Heritage Sites—that are actively asking these questions with the goal of deepening civic engagement and fostering transformative heritage.

Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello in the United States has long presented Jefferson’s story, but only recently has begun to share Jefferson’s story, but only recently has begun to share the story of Sally Hemings, the enslaved woman who bore six children to Jefferson. The National Centre for Arts and Culture (NCAC) in the Gambia is charged with preserving, promoting, and developing Gambian arts and culture. Among their activities, NCAC manages Kunta Kinteh Island (previously known as James Island), a former transatlantic slave trade site and current UNESCO World Heritage Site. To activate this historic site with narratives and public arts programs that make explicit the connection between the legacies of the historic slave trade and contemporary economic inequities, NCAC is equipping twenty-five local youth to serve as tour guides and twenty-five others to be traditional craft-makers at the site. This initiative is intended to mitigate an urgent migration crisis among Gambian youth through skills development and job creation, ensuring that the narratives shared and visitor experiences at Kunta Kinteh Island not only link history to contemporary social challenges but also showcase Gambian arts and culture while offering economic opportunities to local community members.

The Peace School Foundation of Monte Sole, situated at the location of a 1944 Nazi massacre of over 750 civilians outside Bologna, Italy, uses its history and site for educational programs that promote a thorough examination of the societal context that made Nazism possible in Monte Sole and beyond. Monte Sole uses art, dialogue, creative performance, and storytelling to spark debate and engage visitors, particularly youth, in deep reflection on concepts such as the victim/oppressor dichotomy and how these explorations might be applied to our lives today.

The National Centre for Arts and Culture (NCAC) in the Gambia is charged with preserving, promoting, and developing Gambian arts and culture. Among their activities, NCAC manages Kunta Kinteh Island (previously known as James Island), a former transatlantic slave trade site and current UNESCO World Heritage Site. To activate this historic site with narratives and public arts programs that make explicit the connection between the legacies of the historic slave trade and contemporary economic inequities, NCAC is equipping twenty-five local youth to serve as tour guides and twenty-five others to be traditional craft-makers at the site. This initiative is intended to mitigate an urgent migration crisis among Gambian youth through skills development and job creation, ensuring that the narratives shared and visitor experiences at Kunta Kinteh Island not only link history to contemporary social challenges but also showcase Gambian arts and culture while offering economic opportunities to local community members.

Over the last decade, Kde Karuna has become one of the leading peacebuilding and reconciliation NGOs in Cambodia, through their exploration of and programming around the history of Khmer Rouge atrocities. Through participatory arts and culture programs situated at heritage sites around the country, the organization implements truth-telling, memorialization, and healing initiatives, engaging diverse stakeholders including former Khmer Rouge cadres and victims, ethnic minorities, elders, and youth. The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience recently partnered with Kde Karuna on a series of theatrical performances to raise awareness of forced marriage and gender-based violence during the Khmer Rouge regime. As part of this programming, youth interviewed elders who had survived that era and created a theater piece from the interviews. The piece was performed at Phnom Trung Bat, a former site of detention and execution that now serves as a memorial site. This powerful project used heritage, intergenerational dialogue, and performance to shine a bright light on the consequences of forced marriage and its impact on gender norms in contemporary Cambodian society.

A final example is Villa Grimaldi in Chile, a site of detention, torture, and extermination during the Pinochet era, which today has a profound impact on visitors and local community members alike as the Villa Grimaldi Park for Peace. Survivors of the detention center as well as families of those who did not survive, find solace, healing, and transformation in actively shaping the stories that are shared there and applying the lessons learned from that past trauma to address social challenges today through partnerships with local senior schools and community groups.

The multiple perspectives reflected in and fostered by these sites of conscience are emblematic of our larger global work. Those long gone, and those yet to be, are a strong counterforce to truth-telling efforts, one that targets not only human rights but memory itself by manipulating, discrediting, and effectively erasing histories of totalitarianism and abuse. This trend coincides with the global increase in nationalist rhetoric and extremist policies that undermine core democratic values and exclude from the public narrative the stories of marginalized groups, of victims and survivors, indigenous communities, religious and ethnic minorities. Sites of conscience recognize that history’s darkest chapters are erased, their hard-won lessons will be lost. When historic narratives are presented with transparency and courage, however, and are confronted from multiple angles, they promote profound new connections at the individual, community, and global levels. At its core, this is a discussion about power, about who chooses what stories are told and how they are told. By selecting only stories that might be told more comfortably about a site’s history, by choosing not to reflect the full story, including contested memories, we are no longer working in the service of truth-telling; instead, we are perpetuating the inequitable power structures that led to those contested memories in the first place.

This, then, is the transformative potential of sites of memory, arts and culture—to help us see our shared humanity through the stories that are shared and to offer tangible ways to nurture and protect that sense of interconnectedness, ways that might be subtle, such as intergenerational dialogues or art-based storytelling, or less subtle, such as advocacy for reparations to victims, survivors, and descendant communities. But they are what make heritage not just relevant, but absolutely essential to a just and equitable society today and long into the future.
Bamseom Island—Village of Boatwrights and Boatbuilding Technology

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Bamseom, located between Yeoido-dong, Yeongdeungpo-gu, and Seogang-dong, Mapo-gu, in Seoul, is a village that used to be known as being home to boatwrights. The name, which literally translates as chestnut island, was inspired by its chestnut-like shape. During the Joseon dynasty, there was a governmental office, Oesa Sasuham, belonging to Jeonhamsa, which took charge of boats and warships in the Seogang area near Bamseom island. It is for this reason that many boatwrights lived together on the island.

The use of watercraft as a means to carry people, livestock, and other goods has a long history also in the Bangudae Petroglyphs in the Upper Taehwa River in Eonyang-myeon Woolju-gun, Ulhan Metropolitan City. The technology of boatbuilding developed from the primitive method of using split wood into the current method, through the method of adding planks between the split wood.

As well as a means to travel to other regions across rivers and seas and to freight large loads at a time, the ship also has important symbolic meanings in Korean traditional culture. It is a means to carry the deceased into the afterlife when performing Saenamgut, a shamanic ritual for the dead, and also a means to send away impurities during the village Gut (a shamanic ritual for a village). In this way, a ship was perceived as an important means of transport in both this world and the next.

A picture taken on the sandy beach where boats made on Bamseom Island were placed for repair © Lee Il Yong

Bamseom was detonated in February 1968, but it became an island again as the sediment of the Han River piled up. Every year, residents return to the island by boat for a memorial service a day before and after Chuseok © Lee Il Yong

A photo of Lee Il Yong making a boat © Lee Il Yong

A photo of Lee Il Yong making a boat © Lee Il Yong
Korea is a peninsula surrounded on three sides with seas and crisscrossed with many large and small rivers. This geography required various watercraft to be built to fit the characteristics of each terrain. The boats built by the boatwrights in Bamseom were typically of the Cheomjeo or Pyeongjeo type. The hull of the Cheomjeo-type boat has a V-shaped bottom, meaning that inside it is deep and its floor is narrow. On the other hand, the Pyeongjeo-type boat has U-shaped hull, so its inside is not as deep and its floor is full-bottomed. The depth of the Cheomjeo-type boat can prevent it from capsizing in rough conditions at sea. Meanwhile, the Pyeongjeo-type boat with its wide and flat bottom can easily sail the West Sea where the tidelands are widely spread, and it can also travel in shallow rivers.

The characteristics of the Korean boats that the boatwrights of Bamseom remember are the method of fixing the outer hull planks and use of wooden nails and Daetgal (cedar bark used for patching holes between planks). When building a boat, the method of fixing the outer hull planks in Korea is different from that of China and Japan. In China and Japan, the carvel joint method is used to fix the outer hull planks, where the plank edges are butted seam to seam. However, in Korea, the clinker joint is used, where the edges of the hull planks overlap each other. When overlapping planks, the underside edge of the base side of the plank is cut in an L shape and is then overlapped on the plank below.

The wooden nails used in boatbuilding in Korea are divided into two kinds: Gasoemot, made of wood from the mulberry tree, and Pisaemot, made from oak. Gasoemot nails are used for connecting garboard strakes with the outer hull planks, while Pisaemot nails are used for connecting the outer hull planks to each other. Daetgal made of cedar bark is thin and soft, making it easy to use for plugging leaks in the garboard strakes or outer hull planks of a boat. Patching up leaks with Daetgal plays a role in keeping water out when a boat runs aground. In Korean boatbuilding, use of clinker joints, wooden nails, and Daetgal offers the advantage of being able to complete partially repairs without dismantling the whole of a boat.

As part of the process of developing Seoul, explosives were detonated on Bamseom on 13 February 1968, in anticipation of which the residents moved to the nearby Changcheon-dong neighborhood. Since the twentieth century, the development of railroads and automobiles, and the associated construction of roads and big bridges, reduced the effectiveness of water transportation. This migration from Bamseom and the decreased need for boats drove boatwrights into a crisis, as a result of which they eventually became housebuilders.

Bamseom island, the islanders, and their boatbuilding technology appear to have been forgotten and discontinued. However, people still get together in Changcheon-dong and the newly built Bamseom island in the Han River to perform Bamseom Bugundang Gut, a village ritual that takes place twice a year (the second day of January in the lunar calendar and around the Chuseok Full Moon). At these gatherings, they talk about Bamseom, and share and transmit various knowledge (ice digging, river fishing, daily life knowledge, boatbuilding techniques, etc.) passed down on Bamseom island. This content has become widely known to the public in the form of fairy tales, museum displays, art exhibitions, images, newspaper articles, and so on. Bamseom and its related ICH is still being shared and passed down by Bamseom islanders, though not through its space.
To Remember, to Be Remembered

"Without memory, there is no culture. Without memory, there would be no civilization, no society, no future." — Elie Wiesel.

As a living heritage, intangible cultural heritage means that memories you hold and memories I hold represent shared and penetrating history. Contemporary society has experienced a loss of intimacy among people and has seen the environment of transmission changed beyond recognition. However, intangible cultural heritage reveals its presence, quietly saying, “I am still here next to you.” Let’s visit Kyrgyzstan, Bhutan, Laos, and Samoa to see what kind of voice they give us.
Practice May Change but the Foundation Remains Constant

Galumalemana Steven Percival
ICH Correspondent, Samoa

Samoan independence is an independent nation that is homogeneous in language and ethnicity and is part of a broadly defined group of islands that make up the "many isles" of Polynesia. With a total population of just under 200,000,¹ over 80% of Samoans live in rural villages where subsistence lifestyles have been transformed to varying degrees by foreign paradigms, values, and imported foods. The vast majority of Samoans identify with some form of Christianity and there are estimated to be an incredible 500,000 Samoans living throughout the Samoan diaspora. There are in Samoa.

Despite foreign influences and globalization, the ICH of the people of Samoa remains rich and distinctive. At the foundation of the ICH of Samoa is the spoken word. It has only been in the last two centuries that Samoans have shifted from living in an oral culture to a society in which the written word has gained ascendency. The work of early missionaries to translate the Holy Bible into Samoan not only produced the scriptures in the vernacular but also created the look-to model for written Samoan that endures to this day. If the spoken word lies at the bedrock of ICH, capturing the language in a written format has helped ensure its continued use and transmission from one generation to the next, both in Samoa and throughout the Samoan diaspora.

Lauga oratory

Eloquent speeches at Samoan rituals and traditional ceremonies represent the pinnacle of cultural knowledge and serve as a primary form of collective memory. At formal occasions, such as the bestowal of a chiefly title or at a funeral, where talkadile (orator chief) make lauga or speeches, vying for the honor of speaking can be intense and may last for many hours. The debate is known as or a le siva loa ma le faiatam pa'as, or the long dance and sacred encounter. This deliberation and the speeches that follow are replete with the knowledge and history of people, place, and time, reinforcing familial ties and ancestral relations while strengthening identity, heritage, and entitlement. It is this articulated knowledge that also finds expression in poetry, in song, and in dance.

But the knowledge shared at such occasions does not exist in a vacuum; it is neither static nor unchanging. Cultural expressions are a reflection of a reality that is in a constant state of flux, and while changes in ICH can be slow and imperceptible in the short term, the long view can reveal catastrophic impacts on lifestyle, language, and the representation of culture.

Practice may change but the foundation remains constant

There is an interesting proverb often invoked by orator chiefs in modern Samoa that suggests a willingness to accommodate change in the transmission of ICH: "e sui faiga ae tūmau fa'avea." This means that while a practice (faiga) or the modus operandi manifesting an aspect of Samoan culture may change, the foundations (fa'avea) or underlying purpose of that practice remains the same. And so we see that where a whole pig (sua tali sua) may once have been ceremoniously presented along with other food offerings and finely woven mats according to custom, we now observe an envelope containing money that is referred to by the orator chief as the sua tali sua. Similarly, it is not uncommon to see a bottle of wine or a soft drink replace the young, fresh coconut that is offered as the vailolo, a beverage presented at ceremonial occasions. Moreover, when a coconut is used in this ritual in modern Samoa, it is corked with a rolled-up bill where a flower may once have been used. The question modern Samoans may do well to explore is whether these changes are impinging on the foundational purposes of the practices. If the desire to express the cardinal virtue of respect (faa'alaoalo) gives rise to the practice of presenting a sweet, young coconut at ceremonial occasions, does the inebriating effect of wine or the high sugar content in soft drinks still reflect this virtue? Has convenience substituted the effort previously demanded by traditional offerings?

Tea or le fagogo, the telling of educative fables, was once widely practiced in pre-contact Samoa. Along with ceremonial oratory, the importance of remembered realities was exemplified by the regular telling of these fables. Losing this once highly valued and morally imperative space for storytelling and quality intergenerational dialogue, has greatly diminished the array of ICH known to Samoans today. These fables are no longer told at nightfall, with that time now spent watching television or listening to the radio. While these new technologies can and do convey ICH, the intimacy is no longer present in the transmission.

NOTES

Memories and Traditions: ICH of Laos in the Twenty-First Century

Dr. Linda S. McIntosh
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ICH of Laos in the Memories and Traditions: Research Associate, Tracing Patterns Foundation

Dr. Linda S. McIntosh

ICH COURIER

VOLUME 49

The ICH of Laos is vibrant despite the instability experienced by the country’s populace throughout the twentieth century. Peace returned to the country in 1976 once the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDR) was established on 2 December 1975. However, a large proportion of the population relocated to other countries, including many custodians and practitioners of ICH, not only those of the Lao ethnic group but also other ethnicities such as Hmong. The relocation of these masters or knowledgeable persons led to a break in the transmission of this wisdom to younger generations.

To give one example, the former ruling elite, the royalty, and nobility, were the patrons of some practices such as traditional dance and music. Only one member of the royal orchestra of Luang Prabang is presently alive, but about a dozen young musicians have learned from this master. One of his students is now able to teach new generations of students how to play the acoustic instruments that comprise a Lao musical troupe. Performing at wakes is a continuing tradition, and tourists have become a new audience. Dances previously performed for the court, which were actually performed as offerings to deities, are only known by a handful of women today.

The upper classes also commissioned the construction and decoration of Buddhist temples. The skills and knowledge around the production of materials and techniques disappeared when this patronage stopped. Royal women held the prerogative to create goldwork or couching using metal threads and appliqué of stones and became status markers. After the establishment of the Lao PDR, members of this rank left the country, and Lao goldwork ceased.

The creation and use of these markers of royal class were discouraged as well, leading to the end of the transmission of this knowledge. Other ICH elements related to the courts were discouraged by the authorities, resulting in the temporary or permanent halt of some traditions.

Over time the restrictions mentioned above were lifted, allowing for the revival of various ICH elements. Memory served as a reservoir of knowledge for ICH traditions whose practice and transmission had ceased temporarily. The masters of some elements are no longer present in Laos to transmit the wisdom of techniques, symbolism, and use. Memory is thus crucial since this knowledge is not recorded in books, but rather is passed on via oral instruction.

Modernization and urbanization have also altered the active practice of other heritage elements. For example, the urbanization of the town of Luang Prabang has reduced its green space, especially the home gardens that provided food, medicine, and materials for offerings. Presently, most people buy offerings composed of marigold flowers and banana tree parts rather than create their own. Seasonal flowers, whose names have auspicious meanings, are no longer part of these offerings due to their absence in the landscape and the lack of transmission of this ICH.

Community-led groups are forging the path to safeguard various Lao ICH elements. One of these is the Norphoa Group, based in Luang Prabang. Besides teaching new generations of musicians, members are transmitting traditional wisdom concerning ephemeral offerings including paper lanterns, fire boats, and floral arrangements, and wisdom regarding goldwork embroidery, ipok puppetry, and the stenciling that decorates the Buddhist temples of Luang Prabang. The dances that were once performed for the court and its guests are being taught once more. Dancers must perform rituals to thank the masters, both alive and deceased, for imparting the skill and knowledge needed to dance, including the dancers producing their own attire. It is considered disrespectful to the masters if a dancer does not create her own garments for performing. New dancers are also taught that some dances are solely for the gods and should thus be performed with their backs to the human audience.

Elder residents of Luang Prabang remember these various ICH elements even if they were not masters nor practitioners themselves. Their memories can facilitate the return of the practice of some traditions as the elders can recount them to other members of the community, which is extremely useful in safeguarding ICH. However, it is also crucial to record the knowledge that is the foundation and raison d’être of these traditions. A few residents possess this knowledge, but many do not.

Some aspects of ICH in Laos are at risk, while others are extinct. Thus, it is crucial to safeguard extant ICH elements, their foundations and raison d’être, beyond oral transmission. Written documentation can be disseminated to communities, schools, libraries, and universities. Interviews with stakeholders can be preserved in audio and audiovisual recordings.

The ICH of Laos is vibrant. The telling of time via the beating of temple drums and ringing of bells continues even though everyone owns a clock, watch, or cell phone that tells accurate time. However, these modern measures of time do not convey when it is time to prepare for daily almsgiving or when a festival will occur. Modernization and life in the twenty-first century bring changes to individuals and communities, but Laotians have managed to maintain many ICH traditions. Organizations can cooperate with communities to safeguard the country’s ICH by sponsoring the documentation and dissemination of knowledge to the wider populace.
Kyrgyzstan, a landlocked country the territory of which is more than 94 percent mountainous, is among the most attractive lands located at the heart of Asia on the ancient Silk Road trade routes. There are more than eighty ethnic groups living in the Kyrgyz Republic, although the majority of the population are ethnic Kyrgyz. The cultural heritage of the Kyrgyz people has been greatly influenced by their nomadic history. Kyrgyz people occupy a unique cultural environment and have a rich ICH. The vitality of this cultural heritage is ensured by the continuous transmission of knowledge and customs, and rites. The viability of the cultural heritage is safeguarded and transmitted from generation to generation informally through practice or expression and oral transmission; written and recorded forms only began to be developed in the twentieth century.

The modern state in its current form possesses an ancient history, culture, traditions, and customs that are reflected by practice and expression. The traits of the nomadic ancestors are still evident in the contemporary Kyrgyz family and are ensainted in an everyday spiritual attitude. As noted by one ethnographic study, “Kyrgyz people aspire to conserve the sacred structure of their world, to retain its global order, passing these values from generation to generation through ritual practices, and encouraging in their children the special attitude to their native land which they have inherited from their ancestors, the ancient nomads.” Nomadic traditions and customs are still prevalent today, taking the form of social practices, rituals and festive events, traditional craftsmanship, and so on. Therefore, cultural memories and ICH are very important parts of the life of Kyrgyz people, evidenced by the household practices, customs, and rites. The viability of the cultural heritage is ensured by the continuous transmission of knowledge and skills that are essential for their enactment or embodiment. As elsewhere in the world, the cultural heritage of the Kyrgyz people has traditionally been transmitted orally rather than in written form, memory meanings transmitted in intangible forms bear significant value. The best-known example of the Kyrgyz culture is the Epic of Manas, an incredibly long poem that has been transmitted orally through generations, while the lines only began to be committed to paper in the twentieth century. The Epic of Manas is one of the longest epic poems in the world and was transmitted orally by manaschi, the bearer of the element. The Epic of Manas describes the traditions, customs, rituals, ceremonies, holidays, and daily life of the Kyrgyz people, thus representing the heart of the culture, and is widespread among the Kyrgyz people. Its traditional oral form meant people were aware of the cultural heritage in general, even though it was not written. The values and practice of cultural heritage are influenced and developed by different communities and overall are considered as a collective memory. Therefore, Kyrgyz people bear a lot of shared heritage representing a variety of cultures, which fosters social cohesion. For instance, Kyrgyzstan is included in a number of multinational items inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, such as the traditional intelligence and strategy game Togyzqumalaq, Toguz Korgool, or Mangala/Gočürme (inscribed by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkey), the flatbread making and sharing culture known as lavash, katyrma, jupka, or yufka (inscribed by Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkey), and the new year celebration Nooruz (inscribed by twelve countries including Kyrgyzstan). This reflects that Kyrgyz people bear a rich history, culture, and traditions rooted in their nomadic culture, with evolving manifestations and transmission from generation to generation. The memory plays a significant role although the cultural heritage is composed of diverse and plural memories. The cultural heritage gives people a sense of identity and continuity from the past to the present, and the future can evolve in accordance with the environment. Everything in Kyrgyz culture bears a trace of ancient generations that represents the material and the spiritual world. However, intangible heritage remains the most fragile form of heritage and is subject to measures for safeguarding and development. In the face of globalization and modernization, living heritage is at risk of becoming devalued.

In line with modernization and technological development, cultural memories began to be recorded and digitized in Kyrgyzstan. Digital documentation enables the continued safeguarding and transmission of the cultural memories of communities. There are a number of governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Kyrgyz Republic who are working to develop the digital documentation of cultural memories. Among them are the National Academy of Science of the Kyrgyz Republic and KTRK (the national public broadcasting corporation). In one example, the NGO Agine Culture Research Center (CRC), accredited under the UNESCO 2003 Convention, has pioneered digitization of the entire Manas, Semetey, Seitek epic trilogy recited by the contemporary epic chanters. Meanwhile, Rural Development Fund, another NGO, developed a series of digital documentation of Kyrgyz traditional knowledge as well as knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe.

Recognizing the fact that more and more readers use the internet to access information, libraries in Kyrgyzstan such as the National Library of the Kyrgyz Republic have developed a catalog of national bibliography in digital format. For instance, within the framework of the ‘Network of Heritage’ project, the National Library has committed to CD-ROM various episodes of early editions of the Epic of Manas as well as historical and cultural heritage books. Digitization is an efficient way to ensure the safeguarding and transmission of cultural memory as well as raise awareness among younger generations about the cultural heritage that bears the core of Kyrgyz traditional wisdom.

The cultural heritage of the Kyrgyz people has been safeguarded and transmitted over generations as collective memory, orally or through practice and expression. However, contemporary lifestyles require contemporary approaches to reaching the general public, especially young people. To this end, the development of digital documentation is an innovative way to meet today’s needs for the Kyrgyz Republic as well. The older generations possess valuable cultural memories that are subject to digitization to ensure the safeguarding of ICH and to transmit it to their younger counterparts.

NOTE


Kyrgyz traditional game during a national holiday © National Commission of the Kyrgyz Republic for UNESCO
In Pursuit of Safeguarding the Fading Memories of Bhutan

Karma Jamtsho
Researcher, The Loden Foundation

still remember my grandmother sharing a story in which Norbu, a buffalo living in the southern plains, promised his friends he would bring salt from Tibet. To do so, he wanted all the furs of the other buffalo. So, he left with their fur, but once he reached Tibet he fell in love with the place and also found he was warm enough to live forever in the mountains. That is why the yak has a lot of fur. Meanwhile, the buffalo still gazed up to see if Norbu is returning with the salt. My grandmother shared such stories with me, and back then I took them as mere stories.

With time, I gradually understood that the stories my grandmother shared with me were ICH elements being transmitted to me so that someday I would be able to share the stories—such as the tale of Norbu, the buffalo who became a yak—with my children. However, the question is, how can we increase the outreach of these ICH elements and continue to preserve them from generation to generation?

I have been working for the Loden Foundation, a Bhutanese civil society organization dedicated to developing an enlightened and happy society through education, social entrepreneurship, and preserving the culture and traditions of Bhutan. I realized how committed the Loden Foundation was to preserving and passing on the unique cultural heritage of Bhutan by creating a comprehensive archive of oral and written cultures, thereby imparting ancient Bhutanese knowledge and wisdom across generations. The Loden Foundation has identified ten ICH elements of Bhutan that are on the brink of disappearing as time passes. To preserve records of these cultural traditions and raise awareness of them among the people, the foundation aims to make documentaries about these elements with support from ICHCAP.

One of the identified at-risk traditions is the Yakhla, an annual ceremony to propitiate the yak deity. This was celebrated even before Buddhism spread throughout Bhutan, most probably over a thousand years ago. It is fascinating to imagine how many Ura yak herders lived simple lives with their families and yaks in the lush green highlands, simply subsisting on the products of their livestock. However, the development of the nation has brought serious changes to the demographic and occupational culture to the extent that the Ura region has only one remaining yak herder, leaving both yak-rearing practices and the cultural elements associated with yaks, such as the Yakhla ceremony, highly endangered.

There is little written on the Yakhla ceremony except for a short essay by Karma Phuntsho. The Loden culture team, which is dedicated to creating a documentary that would record lasting memories of the disappearing traditions, traveled to document the ceremony held among the last herd of yak that exists in Ura. I was honored to be part of the team sent to memorialize this dying culture using multimedia tools.

The entire ceremony was captured in 4K video format, with photographs of key scenes and interviews and recordings captured via personal communication. The team will upload these media on the Loden Foundation’s Cultures of Bhutan (CoB) website, a digital resource that the Loden Foundation is currently creating. CoB will include almost 3,000 hours of material documenting oral traditions such as folk tales, music, poems, narratives, jokes, languages, culinary recipes, farming techniques, social contracts, customs, and other types of intangible cultures.

Simply providing such information is not a successful strategy for raising awareness, particularly among the youth who are not aware of such cultures and tend to be deeply engrossed in social media. It is, therefore, important to leverage social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to promote cultures. Using such technological and media tools, it will be possible to raise significant awareness about Yakhla both within Bhutan and further afield. Our promotion of the awareness of Yakhla and the Sang ceremony in Ura through social media has been a testament to how we can sustain the awareness of ICH using technological and social media tools for storytelling. Our Facebook posts and pictures were shared a few hundred times within the first twenty-four hours alone and viewed by thousands of people.

Going further, I wonder at how fascinating it could be to experience the ICH recordings in virtual reality (VR), in which a narrator describes the element and the viewer can observe it virtually. With VR, we could actually bring the memories of our ancestors to life, albeit it as a digital avatar. As a young man reflecting on my cultural identity, I understand these cultures, traditions, and everyday practices and habits transmitted from our elders are essential for my wellbeing. The current generations have a responsibility as custodians of these ICH elements to guarantee that the knowledge and memory of these cultures and traditions are not lost and that we pass on this gift to our children.

This way, the story of Norbu the yak and thousands of other tales can continue as a heritage element of humanity.

Darmsho school is one of the few remaining highland yak herders in the Ura region. He shares his concerns that yak herding is nothing like as prevalent as it was many years ago, and hopes there will come a time when the herding culture in the highlands vanishes. Paro, Bhutan

© The Loden Foundation, Karma Jamtsho

Ura women ascending Purshé Mountain while singing “Shomo Alélomo,” accompanied by Rinzen Tshomo’s drumming. The Sang ceremony and the Azhé Lhamo dance are cultural practices unique to Ura and the neighboring Shingkhar village. Both are entirely performed by local women, and they most certainly existed before Buddhism. In the spectacular festival, women take the lead during the entire ritual. However, the event has declined as most young women leave the area to attend school, college, or work © The Loden Foundation, Karma Jamtsho
Catalysing the Growth of the Sri Lankan Handloom Industry with Radical Transparency

Selyna Peiris
Director, Selyn Exporters (Pvt) Ltd.

In 2021, the world watched as global leaders gathered in Glasgow for COP26, the United Nations Climate Change Conference. It was a test for each leader, their nation, and commitment to the Paris Agreement. While these discussions and ideas might seem completely foreign for some, we are not isolated from the consequences of inaction.

We all know the importance of respecting the environment and people around us, but somewhere along the way, it seems we lost track. We also have lost the connection to the richness of our heritage, the value it brings to people, and the solutions it can provide.

We see and hear the heavy use of words such as “sustainable,” “empowerment,” “circular.” But words lack meaning or truly give impact, if actions are not transparent or interconnected and aligned to the overall outcomes. For instance, the practice of openly sharing information about how, where, and by whom products are made and what information is being used is critical.

Working in the field of ICH has always been an occupation of purity and trust from the original crafts person, working humbly with their communities, material, and environment. Issues always arise when you place it within a commercial supply and demand model, where financial profit outweighs the need to look after planet and people. With the integration and adaption of technology, we’ll be able to jump the curve and bring back the allure and value of artisanal craft.

We Can’t Achieve Sustainability Without Being Radically Transparent

Many businesses are evolving to respond to a more socially conscious consumer. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, consumers increasingly want to make the best purchasing decisions for themselves, for other people, and the planet. The fast-growing consumer desire for sustainability—especially within the fashion industry—is increasing demand for radical transparency and solutions such as blockchain technology that allow brands to demonstrate that their products have been produced ethically and sustainably. Transparency holds brands accountable, leading industries to become more ethical and sustainable.

Being radically transparent also holds all players in the value chain accountable—gone will be the days where brands point the finger at a broken supply chain. It will no longer be possible simply to blame someone else upstream—instead, people at all levels will be held accountable, enabling everyone to make better decisions and work towards a greater good.

How is This Relevant to the Sri Lankan Handloom Industry?

For thirty years, my family has run Selyn Exporters (Pvt) Ltd, a Fair Trade guaranteed social enterprise that promotes handloom weaving and finished production, and supports over a thousand rural artisans across Sri Lanka. At Selyn, we go out of our way to assist our network of local artisans with an operational business model designed to provide access to work. With the Selyn Foundation we provide the skills to stay in work, which is not always a given for rural women. In summary, we have flexible working models that enable part-time and work-from-home possibilities; further, we encourage artisans to set up their own “business” by developing workshop infrastructure, upgrading design and technical skills, and ensuring a guaranteed flow of work. In addition, our members have access to services such as health camps, childcare facilities, life skills programs, and leadership and entrepreneurship training to support them to be holistically empowered.

Following this model, we have established many workshops in handloom villages in the rural outskirts of the North Western, Eastern, and Southern provinces of Sri Lanka. In this way we hope not only to empower them financially but also to create a way of life within which they are comfortable.

In view of this, I was honoured to share some of our practical experiences at ICHCAP’s 2021 Sub-regional Meeting for Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Safeguarding in South Asia in September 2021. As 2021 is the International Year of the Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, the
meeting was a valuable opportunity to explore the power of creative industries in building resilience. The global pandemic—a constant backdrop to the discussion—served as a focus of the discussion, having certainly tested the resilience of our sector in ways not previously imagined. Addressing the topic “Implementing Stable Virtuous Circle for ICH Marketing Route in line with Safeguarding ICH,” I focused on the trajectory for the Sri Lankan handloom industry and found it to be crucial that Sri Lankan handloom products are pitched to premium or even luxury markets, which value quality over mass-produced quantity and speed.

In addition, and perhaps more innovatively, increasing the transparency of our production methods with the integration of blockchain technology into our supply chains will be a crucial step to allow us to better tell the Sri Lankan handloom story, addressing the “green-washing” debate, and providing consumers with verifiable data to inform the purchase of a higher-value textile. Global emerging trends support this hypothesis, as these premium markets and more conscious customers are now craving the stories of heritage and responsibility that Fair Trade and ethical brands can tell. This is an opportunity, not just for the Sri Lankan handloom industry but, in my opinion, for many craft brands around the world.

**Radical Transparency: Paving the Way**

For those companies in control of their supply chains, especially those committed to Fair Trade and ethical trading practices, blockchain technology can be a fundamental tool to enable radical transparency. With blockchain integrated from the point of sourcing to point of purchase—from fiber to fashion—by scanning a QR code, a consumer can now be fully aware of what goes into their product, and how it is made. Blockchain technology ensures that each point in the production process is recorded so that consumers can access independently verified, real-time, detailed metadata of what they want to know. And that’s not all. Consumers can input their own information via the QR code, whereafter if it is given to a friend or resold, it enables circularity for the product.

For us in the handloom industry, this means openly sharing information about how, where, and by whom a product was made. This becomes more than a storytelling exercise, especially since this technology demands that we pay attention to people at all stages of the supply chain: who works for the brand, in what factories, under what conditions, are they safe, are they paid a living wage, how many hours do they work, do they have workers’ rights? It also demands that we be conscious of the waste we emit into the environment, into our forests and our seas, and it brings our attention to how we can be more carbon neutral as we maximize profit. It allows us to humanize our supply chains and spread the premiums that Fair Trade and ethical brands have commanded fairly among all those involved in the process of taking a product to market. We work with people, artisans, and craftsmen with decades of skill and experience. They are all part of the process, and our end consumer deserves to know what goes into weaving craft into apparel. The dignity of our craft has to be taken back to our weavers.

Of course, this is easier said than done and, naturally, brands who have already invested in Fair Trade or ethical trading and operating standards would find it easy to begin the process of integration. Most importantly, this process will require a shift in mindset, away from traditional business approaches of industry competition to one of collaboration and cooperation. For the Sri Lankan handloom industry to thrive, effective partnerships are required across the sector. Shifting towards cocreation using handlooms where all stakeholders enjoy recognition and economic gain, is the only way to protect and grow Sri Lanka’s handloom sector. This also holds true for the rest of its craft sector.

**Selyn: Embracing Blockchain**

At Selyn, we are committed to transforming our industry by encouraging full transparency of supply chains, integrating new production technologies, and revolutionizing the product we offer. We see a different future for the handloom sector. Having begun the process of integrating blockchain into our supply chain, we believe we can truly walk the talk and present to the world a truly authentic and responsible craft brand, drawing on our Fair Trade foundations and using our social enterprise credentials. With COVID-19 accelerating its work, Selyn is repositioning its presence in the handloom sector to address emerging market opportunities. Our aim is to leverage a commitment to ethical and sustainable practices combined with greater transparency, and ultimately carve out a unique niche for handloom craft as an important part of Sri Lanka’s ICH. And, we are working hard to bring the industry along with us. We believe that the enabling radical transparency in the handloom sector is an innovative step toward positioning Sri Lanka as an industry and global leader that combines technology and tradition to conquer sustainability.
Relevance of Involving Community Members in Safeguarding Di Pyākhāṁ (Goddess Dance)

Rashila Maharjan
Graduate Student, Seoul National University

Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, is known as a city of temples dedicated to various gods and goddesses. Newāris are indigenous people who mostly reside in Kathmandu valley. They have a unique identity among Nepalese people as lovers and preservers of many Nepal cultures and traditions. Different NGOs, INGOs, government organizations, and other local bodies undoubtedly play vital roles in safeguarding the different cultures and traditions prevalent in society. But Newāris as a local community have a strong bond with those cultures and traditions. There are innumerable cultural practices that Newāris have been observing since time immemorable. Thus, Newāri communities play very active roles in the preservation of unique Newāri cultural elements.

Among many, one of the cultural dances I am throwing light on is Di pyākhāṁ. In the Newāri language, Di means “goddess” and pyākhāṁ means “dance,” therefore the name can be translated as “Goddess Dance.” Di pyākhāṁ is a traditional mask dance with a glorious history. It is performed on the occasion of Indra Jātā, one of the major festivals of Kathmandu. The Indra Jātā festival honors Indra, the god of rain, and is held just before the harvest, at the end of the rainy season. The Di pyākhāṁ dance is not performed on any day other than Indra Jātā. There is no written documentation to be found regarding the origin of this dance. However, a song sung during this dance mentions a king, Gunakar Raja, which some believe refers to King Gunakarma Deva, who possibly founded this dance in the eighth century. There are seven characters in this dance: bhairav, kumāri, chandi, daitta, kanwa, bētā, and khyā. The dance starts from Kālāgār Dabli (Kālāgār Junction) on the occasion of Bhaḍra Shukla Chauthi (the fourth full moon day that falls in the Nepali month of Bhaḍra) every year. On the day of Indra Jātā, this dance can be performed at Jaisideval Dabli, then the next day at Bangemudha Dabli and Wanga. On the last day, again, the performance is delivered at Kālāgār Dabli, and the dance ceremony reaches a formal conclusion.

The dance itself is based on the victory of truth over untruth. Newāris believe that performing this dance every year protects the community from evil and brings harmony. Old performers even say that, “if the dance is not continued, god will get angry and curse us.” The dancers dye their hair black and wear a mask. They beat the drums and dance for two to three hours in a trance-like state, during which it is said they lose control over their bodies and only a tantric spell can release them and remove their masks.

The Devi Nāca Preservation and Conservation Committee is a group comprising forty members (including dancers and musicians as well as staff) in Kālāgār. The group has played a crucial role in practicing, performing, and transmitting the Goddess Dance for decades. Without any external support from the government, NGOs, or other institutions, this group continues with Di pyākhāṁ simply because it was handed to them from their forebears, or through their voluntary desire to preserve the culture. The group’s work is cross-generational, involving people ranging from four or five years old to middle-aged, as well as even older generations.

The younger generation takes part in the dancing while the senior performers who teach them play different music to accompany the dance. Throughout the year, there are internal dance parties in which a lot of people are involved, with the youths of the group active in every aspect of the work. There is less interest today among the younger generation due to advancements in modern technologies, the availability of the internet, computers, cell phones, and so on. But the group proactively involves youngsters, getting them to participate in dancing to prevent this ICH element from disappearing and giving it continuity.

Di pyākhāṁ is not easy to learn. Each dance has a different meaning and is supported by different songs, musical instruments, and rhythms. This means it takes a long time to become proficient in Di pyākhāṁ. Characters like bhairav, kumāri, and chandi can require between two and five years of practice before the dancer is ready to perform them in the street, while the other gods take two to three years of practice. However, the one who performs well and is drawn by the power of god is the one who is selected. After the tantric power has duly completed the tasks, he is made to participate in the dance. The extended period of practice also provides an opportunity for participants to learn to work together in social harmony. To this end, various tasks are assigned according to work required.

Not only does Di pyākhāṁ have religious significance but it is also culturally significant, touching on different artistic aspects. The musical accompaniment is provided by instruments like the khin, dhaa, naykhin, dangakhin, and bhushyaa. And the dance also maintains the traditional art of Newāri culture, and portrays Newāri culture to the world. Thus, this is a living heritage of Nepal.

Amar Dangol, one of the dance participants, says, “I have been involved in the Goddess Dance since 1997. I used to dance as a demon king (khyā), and I have continued as a member after handling it over to the next generation in the year 2013.” When asked how he had learned the dance, he responds, “Our original guru of Goddess Dance is Mr. Indra Maharjan who taught me this dance, and I was also taught by our senior brothers who used to dance as the monster before I did.”

Since local people have seen this dance since their childhood, it generates a special feeling among them. It is also a medium of fun for children—after Indra Jātā, Newāri children dance with the same gestures, but using paper masks and swords, which develops a special attachment to this dance among the younger generations. Amar adds, “This was one of the funnest moments of our game that indirectly helped to preserve and transfer this traditional mask dance to the next generation.”

One issue is the maintenance of the clothes and ornaments used by the goddesses in the dance, given they are only brought out once a year for Indra Jātā. If they are not stored properly with good protection, there is a chance of damage to the fabric. These physical aspects need to be safeguarded quickly, and their importance recognized. It is vital to preserve antiquities. For that reason, the Devi Nāca Preservation and Conservation Committee also take care of all clothes and ornaments so that they will be in the best condition on the day of the festival.

Local community members who contribute to the culture are having a lot of issues sustaining it as they are not getting enough support from the government and relevant authorities. Despite the difficult situation and many hindrances, the Di Pyākhāṁ community is trying their best to preserve their cultural heritage. This demonstrates the vital role of community members in safeguarding, preserving, and protecting ICH.
Introduction to the Muong Cultural Space Museum

Hien Vu
Manager, The Muong Cultural Space Museum

The Muong Cultural Space Museum is a cultural and art institution in Vietnam, deeply inspired by an artist’s desire to reproduce a whole living space of the Muong tribe. The Muong museum was the creation of its owner, Mr. Vu Duc Hieu. The museum is situated in the hills above a small, narrow limestone valley about 80 km from Hanoi to the west, in Hoa Binh City, where the ancient Muong people used to live. After almost ten years collecting and preparing, and another year for construction, the Muong Cultural Space Museum was officially inaugurated on 16 December 2007 by the chairman of the National Assembly of Vietnam, Nguyen Phu Trong, with a performance of the symbolic Muong gongs.

This is the first private museum in Vietnam dedicated to the Muong culture. The Muong are one among many ethnic tribes in the big family of Vietnam, a country which has long-age cultural traditions. The museum is composed of two main areas for reproduction and exhibition, respectively. The reproduction area consists of four housing blocks representing the living premises of different classes in a miniature Muong community. The exhibition area, meanwhile, consists of housing blocks for thematic exhibitions, a permanent exhibition, and library. These blocks are connected with each other by internal paths and outdoor exhibition areas.

The Muong Cultural Space Museum is regarded as a significant center where the cultural values of the Muong people who live in Hoa Binh particularly and in Vietnam in general are restored, demonstrated, and promoted. Visitors come here not only for sight-seeing or entertainment but also to research and study an ethnic tribe that has an extensive history and culture. Many researchers suggest the Muong tribe are the ancient Viet people who used to live in a great area recognized by the world as the Hoa Binh culture. As a consequence, visitors from Vietnam and further afield, students and scientists, are strongly attracted by the museum.

The museum was designed and developed with a new concept that is relevant for current trends in museum development. This is the aim that the museum can appeal to a mass audience and should not have limited access or poor nature. The museum is intended to enable visitors to obtain knowledge and understanding about the Muong culture in a short period of time. This means visitors will be able not only to observe, watch, but also completely immerse themselves in the daily life activities performed by a few Muong families who were invited to come to live in the museum area. These activities include working on the hill plots, rice pounding and threshing, weaving, cooking typical Muong foods, participating in Muong celebratory activities, and playing traditional games.

As the museum regards the Muong cultural space as its focus, the installations in the museum are very simple, clean, friendly, and uncomplicated. However, even the finest details in the museum, such as fences, internal paths, furniture arrangements, even an altar for the Lares, are designed to show or to reproduce specific features of Muong culture in relation to its economics, social life, traditions, and customs— or to put it another way, display a miniature Muong society. The reproduction area includes: reproduction of the purely agricultural life of the ancient Muong people (with water sources, terraced rice fields, fish ponds); community playground (con throwing, swing play, rope walking); Muong houses on a stilt architecture complex representing the living premises of the four classes in Muong society— houses for Lang (Lang mandarins), Au (Lang Mandarin’s assistants), Nooc (popular residents), and Nooc Troi (the lowest and poorest class); and a traditional herb garden with hundreds kinds of plants.

In the exhibition area, the exhibits comprise not only valuable ancient items but also popular things that are closely connected with daily life. The collection reflects all aspects of the object and non-object cultures of the Muong community. The exhibition room contains, in the Muong people section, traditional weaving equipment, tools used for work on hill plots, domestic appliances, and hunting tools; in the spiritual life section, reproduction of all details related to a Muong funeral ceremony, which was famous for its complexity; in the arts section, the paintings and ceramics made by the artist Vu Duc Hieu and others that demonstrate the daily life of the Muong people. It is also possible for visitors to undertake research on Muong culture in the museum’s library. This can help give the visitors a diversified view of Muong culture. The museum also has a specific area for thematic exhibitions, with the space arranged in different ways to demonstrate different collections or themes (e.g., agricultural cultivation, hunting tools, traditional herb collection).

The Muong museum is one of the most famous museums in Vietnam today, and it is a member of the international museum network. As well as being a museum, it also functions as a resident center for international artists. Since 2011, the museum has become a center for contemporary art, among its other activities. An 18,000 m² area is currently reserved for artistic activities, including outdoor and indoor space, with some reserved land turned into the art studio. The museum has also hosted a number of workshops:

1. 2011: A month-long workshop in which over thirty Vietnamese artists participated.
2. 2012: A fifteen-day international workshop with over sixty artists from fifteen countries including France, the United States, India, and Thailand.
3. 2018: A two-month ceramics workshop with over twenty Vietnamese artists.

Art conferences are an indispensable part of the workshops at the museum. They are a space for artists to share their conception of art and ideas built up over years of experience. These events can enhance the understanding and connection between artists from different geographical origins, and create co-working opportunities in the future. The Muong Cultural Space Museum also involves the local community in its activities. Artists sometimes engage the assistance of local people and staff in their outdoor creations.

Private museums are still a relatively new concept in Vietnam. The Muong Cultural Space Museum was created through the investment of just one individual. Consequently, there could certainly be lots of issues that the management might encounter in the running of the museum. Therefore, museum management would appreciate vital assistance from local as well as international authorities, agencies, and organizations that would enable the museum to implement its objectives of restoration, preservation, and promotion of Muong culture, and introducing Vietnamese art and culture to the world.
Intergovernmental Committee: Sixteenth Session Held Online, 13 to 18 December 2021

With the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to present uncertainties, the sixteenth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (16.COM), chaired by Mr. Punchi Nilame Megaswatte (Sri Lanka), was held fully online from 13 to 18 December 2021. During this year’s session, the Committee inscribed forty-six elements on the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, thirty-nine elements on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and four programs to the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. This year, for the first time, the Federated States of Micronesia, Montenegro, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Congo, Denmark, Seychelles, Timor-Leste, Iceland, and Haiti had elements presented for inscription on UNESCO’s intangible cultural heritage lists, which now feature 650 elements corresponding to 140 countries.

The items on the agenda were notably broad and diverse. The Internal Oversight Service (IOS) evaluation of UNESCO’s action in the framework of the 2003 Convention, the proposed revisions to operational directives for the listing mechanisms of the Convention, and the report by the secretariat on its activities were reviewed. Notably, it was the first time that new periodic reports on the implementation of the Convention in Latin American and Caribbean countries were applied; therefore, in-depth discussions were conducted.

Newly Published Living Heritage Series: Traditional Musical Instruments

UNESCO-ICHCAP published a new book in the Living Heritage Series, *Traditional Musical Instruments: Sharing Experiences from the Field*, in collaboration with a Heritage Live, the ICH NGO Forum’s online journal, in November 2021. Since the series started with the publication of Traditional Medicine in 2015, UNESCO-ICHCAP has published volumes annually to raise the visibility and viability of intangible cultural heritage worldwide.

Proven over a long history, music enables the sharing of thoughts and emotions among community members who play instruments and enjoy the experience. This book was made with the contributions of fifteen writers from countries across the globe. The authors describe the current status of traditional music and provide insight and ideas on how to revitalize these traditions based on the 2003 Convention.

UNESCO-ICHCAP, with the ICH NGO Forum’s #HeritageLive initiative, held an information session on 15 December, during the 16.COM online program. The official launch event will be held in Paris in June next year.

The book is available on the UNESCO-ICHCAP website, and you can hear examples of the music described in each chapter by scanning a QR code inside the book.

Cultural Industry Content Dam — Global Need for a UNESCO Creative Space

KEUM GI Hyung Director-General, ICHCAP and Preparatory Office for the International Centre for the Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites (WHIPIC)

The popularity of the TV drama *Squid Game* is great vigilance of foreign aid projects is increasing. This series worldwide. In the show, we saw the Muguwha flower blossom and games played such as Red Light, Green Light, the Dalgona challenge, Tug-of-War, and Didakji; however, these have more or less disappeared from our leisure time. Elements of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), such as language, music, festivals, oral traditions, crafts, and rituals—including our old games—are becoming a mainspring of the modern cultural industry. In particular, the Asia-Pacific region is a veritable treasure trove of cultural heritage. One-third of enlisted ICH elements on UNESCO lists are located in the area.

However, in the pursuit of rapid economic growth, culture is pushed down to make matters worse, the extinction of ICH elements is accelerating due to industrialization, urbanization, and climate change. At the same time, there is great vigilance of foreign aid projects because of the history of the colonial experience. Therefore, it is not easy to build trust in the cultural domain concerning overengagement of cultural sovereignty. This is why cultural official development assistance outcomes and sustainability are poor.

UNESCO channels can be an alternative to overcoming this. They are open to international cooperation under the name of the "UNESCO family," which represents solidarity with intellectual organizations based in 190 UNESCO member countries. ICHCAP, established in Korea with the aim of safeguarding ICH in the Asia-Pacific region, was able to accumulate over 100,000 ICH contents in just a decade thanks to the UNESCO network. With this achievement, the Centre launched ichLinks, a digital platform that member states can use to share ICH content bilaterally. This platform will become a content dam and function as a warehouse that stores and delivers necessary resources for the cultural industry.

Bucking the trend amid the economic shrinkage caused by COVID-19, the gaming industry and over-the-top (OTT) services actually expanded. This was prompted by the increase in demand for online play and communications with large numbers of people in lockdown situations. Competition for original content among the major OTT companies is fierce. Netflix, which values localized production, strives to establish a relationship by recognizing the effectiveness of UNESCO and the production of animations based on Indian ICH. Disney is also increasing its work with the Asia-Pacific region, including productions such as *Mulan*, *Moana*, and *Raya and the Last Dragon*.

This is not to say that UNESCO data have not been uploaded from various stakeholders to the Open Archive on ichLinks, and overseas content companies are interested in what the Centre has in its databases. Another factor that has helped the Centre achieve its goals is the active support of the government. Member states might thus also have expectations for technical support from Korea for the development of their own cultural industries.

At this point, there are tentative proposals to build a UNESCO Cultural Heritage Creation and Production Complex. As UNESCO category 2 centres, WHIPIC, ICHCAP, and the International Centre for Documentary Heritage (ICDH) are active as a trinity in Korea. The Korea National University of Cultural Heritage, the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) Graduate School of Culture and Technology are located nearby, facilitating human resource and R&D support. It is easy to connect with many of the key content production institutions within 1–2 hours via the KTX railway network. The complex is expected to grow rapidly as a creative space specialized in UNESCO cultural heritage by utilizing already established tools.

Nothing is complete unless you put it in its final shape. Korea boasts the world’s seventh-largest cultural industry. Considering the size of the industry, with annual receipts of KRW 126 trillion, the financial resources are certainly there. This facility will become a hub and supply base for UNESCO cultural heritage in the future. As a cultural infrastructure resource, it will offer high cost-effectiveness in terms of job creation, production, exhibitions, performances, and conventions. In other words, a structure is created in which cultural heritage creates added value as a resource for the creative industry. In this process, it is expected that the completion of a value chain that shares profits with the community will play a key role in implementing the UNESCO goal of safeguarding cultural heritage and sustainable development.
ICHCAP now has an open call for papers for various sections of the ICH Courier.

Topics for Windows to ICH

- Volume 50: Oral Traditions and Storytelling related to Animals (2022.01.–2022.03.)
- Volume 51: Jewelry Making (2022.04.–2022.06.)
- Volume 52: ICH Spaces as Workshop (2022.07.–2022.09.)
- Volume 53: ICH for Food Storage (2022.10.–2022.12.)

Further information about submissions is available on our website https://ichcourier.unesco-ichcap.org/submissions/