

Editorial



Water security is not an issue one generally expects to find between the pages of a heritage publication, but many would agree that water lies at the heart of our existence and is fundamental to human life. The notion that water could be considered the 'fount of all knowledge', should therefore find resonance in our day to day lives, where switching on a tap to dispense this valuable commodity could mean the difference between life and death. Two papers in this Volume 9 crystallise our understanding of this issue while exploring centuries (if not millennia) old traditions of water management. Where they diverge is not merely at the point of the scale of the enterprise, at micro versus macro levels, but also in the strategies employed to ensure their application in the communities concerned. While Angkor's kings decided that the solution was to designate water management as a sacred practice, Bahrain's farming communities generated a complex system of water sharing, based on sound logic, equity and ethics, which has now passed into law.

Rudolf and alZekri's **A network of traditional knowledge**, examines the value and importance of conserving Bahraini communities' heritage of shared, equitable water distribution critical to the regular irrigation of an island's precious farmlands. The adoption of modern networks of pipelines has led to the gradual erosion of traditional values which shared responsibility for the ebb and flow of water through meticulously planned irrigation channels and the timing of water distribution. This has seen the consequent decline in the sustainability of both their crops and their communities, which as the authors advocate, can best be addressed by adherence to the customary law and the restoration of communal management of land and water resources.

For decades scientists have supported the disputed hypothesis that the architects of the Khmer's famed Angkor - the world's most extensive mediaeval 'hydraulic city' and pre-industrial metropolis - had unwittingly engineered its own demise. Hang Peou's article, **Sacred water**, is effectively a revelation which negates such claims. In it the author demonstrates that Angkor's pre-eminence was made possible by a sophisticated and innovative technology, developed on an unparalleled scale, for resource management and harvesting water for use during the dry season. But the lack of maintenance and expert knowledge some six centuries later led to neglect and the total deterioration of the system. The restoration of this mammoth system would not have been possible without the recovery of knowledge embedded in the community itself. As the author says *The Khmer people have lived with water since the creation of Cambodia in the 1st century. Water management is a part of their daily life...[and] was considered to be basic knowledge that everyone understood...* Water as a form of life blood, and traditional knowledge about the names and places of its workings which only local people knew, was critical to its rediscovery and rehabilitation within the last decade.

Intergenerational transmission of knowledge is a key aspect of other articles in this volume when answering a question such as 'when is a monument not a monument?' When it is a *Living National or Human Treasure*, the phenomenon which Noriko Aikawa covers in **Excellence and authenticity**, documenting its historical development and refinement, principally in Japan and Korea. The kind of meticulous observation of traditional or folk practice which these knowledge bearers embody on a day to day level has been the basis of a well-respected practice for safeguarding these

countries' ICH. However, with its success has come the attendant concern about the fossilisation or even 'standardisation' of various forms of ICH, where, despite its extraordinarily hierarchical categorization into elite versus popular categories, it was feared that designation of some elements of Japanese heritage as 'Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties' could prevent their natural development, and consequently lead to the loss of 'authenticity' and diversity. Korea shares many of the same issues and dilemmas facing Japan and other countries, where the issue of 'protecting' the 'authenticity' of folk heritage could lead to the very fossilisation they all fear.

Yet Soma and Sukhee's **Altai-Kazakh falconry as 'heritage tourism'** presents us with the stark evidence of what the passing of one such Living Treasure might mean to a community. It is a case study in understanding how invaluable individuals can be in becoming standard bearers for elements of a country or region's heritage. In this article the authors' acknowledgement that in Altai *Sum* the culture of falconry has been transmitted primarily by a single family, the Komarkhans, is disconcerting. The recent passing of the 95 year old patriarch, the Master Komarkhan has thus sounded the death knell for the transmission of the tradition of golden eagle falconry amongst those herders who now have no standard to follow. Instead, young, uninitiated herders have begun to respond to the growing demands of a tourism market which, in seeking the thrill of witnessing this unique survivalist way of life at Western Mongolia's Golden Eagle Festivals, have unknowingly subscribed to the dislocation of the indigenous form by its appropriation into 'demonstration falconry' which bears little resemblance to the original, even as they celebrate their inscription for the 'authenticity' of that particular practice on the *ICH Representative List*.

Mongolia's dilemma in responding to modernist economic imperatives to find new means to sustain communities has been echoed by the exploitative development re-shaping the townscape of Suakin and seriously undermining its authenticity. In **The value of memory** Shadia Taha compellingly illustrates the way in which Suakin, placed on Sudan's *Tentative List* in 1994 very simply as ... *a very important port on the Red Sea during the Middle Ages and the Ottoman Empire* [containing] *very fine houses and Mosques, some of them are partially preserved...* has effectively been relegated to the status of an 'abandoned port'. Instead as Taha remonstrates, counterintuitively *the legislation continues to favour the historicity and monumentality of cultural heritage*, a process of official 'heritagisation' which effectively obscures and devalues the intrinsic significance ascribed by community pride and ancestral memory to Suakin's cultural landscape. Notwithstanding these pressures, community loyalties and values still endure and must be taken into account if management is to be successful and sustainable.

At the opposite end of the scale the theme of abandonment and forgetting also underpins Marc Jacobs' **Bruegel and Burke were here!** While Europe's popular culture is welcomed within the ranks of the rapid expansion of UNESCO's *ICH Representative Lists*, nevertheless elite forms of culture as patronised for centuries by the upper echelons of European society seem tacitly excluded from similar consideration. Although both popular and court forms of culture from outside Europe find easy acceptance within the ICH Committee's ambit, Jacobs employs visual culture to detect the origins of

this form of self-deprecation. Citing Breugel's hugely successful oeuvre exemplified by *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent* in which the artist adroitly assembles realms of oppositional activity this foregrounds, as Peter Burke deftly explicates, the canvas acting as a mnemonic tool etching in stark relief the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane, and revealing the rationale for the nobility's deliberate 'abandonment' of popular culture to the masses as both Catholic and Protestant reform movements struggled for agency. Recovering this heritage, Jacobs argues, will require a conscious reconsideration of what he calls 'implicit' criteria, adopted by 1800, over two centuries ago.

In **Marshal Nezha transformed**, Leo Yuan's exposé on the rampant resurgence of a Chinese folk hero re-invented as a Taiwanese deity, offers a vivid contrast to the angst-ridden internalized panegyrics outlined previously. Rather than viewing the heritage as being at risk of redundancy, his enthusiastic reification of the transformative power of the western entertainment industry, suggests rather a form of cultural continuation (if not accommodation) has been the result, invoking Hobsbawn's concept of an 'invented tradition' as the rationale for this approach. Yuan brings to centre stage the brazen belligerence of Nezha in the face of official authority, which has generated many admirers who truly believe in his courage and power to triumph over his (and their) enemies. Hero-worship of this god in his many emanations, as the protector of children and patron saint of warriors, was expressed in the traditional 'welcoming god' festival. Today, this parade has now been transmogrified into the more extravagant form of Techno Nezha, where the performances combine modern music, dance, costume and gesture to communicate the marshal *manqué's* childlike delight in his contemporary evocation displayed to his fervent young worshippers.

Throughout the entire volume writers raise concerns about the yet tangential allegiances of youth, and the continued relevance of traditional ICH to the next generation raises its head over and over again, playing like a mantra in the background of each article. The impact of new technologies is certainly making itself felt in the communities described in this issue, but what is an equally strong message is the ability of our communities to adopt these technologies and adapt their usage to the purposes people now require of them. The myriad means of ICTs, mobile phones and uniquely, SMS, are the focus of El-Sayed el-Aswad's **E-Folklore and cyber-communication** project where the high level of mobile phone usage among Emirati youth sounds the alarm for some traditionalists. However, the author observes that *Rather than reflecting an opposition between the traditional and the modern, the relationships between tradition and modernity are intricate and can be looked at as existing in a continuum.* This is a critically important statement because, as the writer asserts, *young people are the brokers of a new future, go-betweeners of different cultural world views and invariably developers of hybrid value systems and practices.*

The convergence of ICH with ICTs is explored in greater depth in the last two of our articles from South Africa and South Korea respectively. Soon Cheol Park meticulously reconstructs the whole process of developing an ambitious experiment in inventorying South Korea's ICH in his article **ICHPEDIA, a case study of community engagement.** Innovative methodologies for inventorying the ICH were grounded in new concepts of marrying human collective

intelligence with the phenomenal artificial intelligence of advanced information technologies. The goal of safeguarding the ICH relies not only on the ongoing production of multi-media rich records on an accessible web-based platform, but on the recognition that the dynamism of the continually evolving ICH needs also to be captured by modern technologies. Ultimately though, as the author acknowledges, success could only be achieved with the trust and cooperation generated amongst information providers and users, working interactively (and intuitively) to identify ICH and interpret its value for future generations.

In **eNanda Online** Sabine Marschall explores similar territory but pushes the boundaries of this subject as she interrogates the ethical dimensions and dilemmas which emerge as the ICH project documents certain cultural practices, norms or expectations amongst the Zulu populations in South Africa. While the eNanda website provides a welcome interactive resource to facilitate community self-documentation, the author nevertheless fears that the *intergenerational transfer of indigenous cultural knowledge is increasingly disrupted due to factors such as urban migration, fragmented family structures, HIV/Aids, the influence of the media...* Her concerns highlight another growing aspect of the debate around the ICH *Convention* where worry is escalating about the dilution, distortion or de-contextualising of the ICH by the very act of its documentation at a particular point in time. Marschall, however, emphasises the importance of the community's engagement in balancing authenticity with autonomy, and stresses that *eNanda Online avoids universalised narratives about customs and traditions written by masked authorities*.

In his review of Keith Howard's book ***Music as Intangible Heritage***, Patrick Boylan welcomes this cogent work on the principles and practice of preserving both musical and musicological traditions as ICH in East Asian countries, given the dearth of research literature on the topic. He outlines some of the invaluable case studies presented which document the diversity of musical expression around the region. At the same time, some of the issues discussed in the chapters of the book parallel the views expressed in this volume's pages, regarding the importance of, and yet ambivalence towards, the appropriateness of both state and multilateral processes for safeguarding intangible cultural heritages such as music. Hilary Finchum-Sung's examination of Nathan Hesselink's ***Samulnori*** dovetails very nicely with Boylan's review providing a useful context, despite the relative youth of this ground-breaking musical genre emerging from the incubator of South Korea's university environment. Here again the book clearly echoes thoughts and ideas outlined elsewhere in this volume when Finchum-Sung observes that Hesselink's book serves as a response to detractors by giving due recognition that *samulnori represents the revival of an inclusive living tradition, a possibility seemingly thwarted by a preservation system that denied change*.

Amareswar Galla's comprehensive review entitled **Rethinking the Nature/Culture divide and intangible heritage** examines the state of the art of living sustainably in three recent publications on the intertwined themes of nature as intangible heritage and living culture. His reviews of ***Sustaining Living Culture, Environmental Perspectives and Cultural Heritage in China*** and ***Intangible Natural Heritage*** together chart the course of *rethinking the artificial dichotomy of*

nature and culture in intangible heritage studies both within the context of the establishment and implementation of UNESCO's 2003 *Intangible Heritage Convention*, but perhaps more importantly as a legacy or outgrowth of the final report of the Brundtland Commission on *Sustainable Development*, 1987 which each of the publications explicitly references. Each monograph charts a very different course in approaching these themes. ***Sustaining Living Heritage*** is, for example, structured around the five cultural practices delineated in the 2003 *Convention* and illustrated with case studies. ***Environmental Perspectives*** provides for a critical examination of China's policy approach to 'Ecological Civilization' which speaks to a paradigm shift in Chinese scholarship with the finding that *an item of cultural heritage ... is inseparable from the "eco-site" that nurtured it*. ***Intangible Natural Heritage*** signals the International Council of Museums' (ICOM) growing concern since its seminal 2004 Triennial General Assembly in Seoul, that the *nature/culture dichotomy in museological discourse is hegemonic and Eurocentric* and that in the future there is a vital need to *understand [museum collections] and liberate them from legacy discourses to one that is holistic and relevant in the contemporary world*.

Galla ultimately frames all of these considerations within the context of the outcomes of Rio+20 *et al* which all point to rethinking the paradigm of what was broadly called *Ecological Sustainable Development (ESD)* with its attendant Achilles' heel remaining *the extension of modernist ideas of conservation with a nature/culture binary opposition*. Instead he reiterates UNESCO's perspective, calling for a *human rights based approach that respects the cultural and linguistic diversity of humanity* which needs to be *addressed through informed applied heritage studies to bridge the gulf between theory and practice in safeguarding both tangible and intangible heritage*. All in all it is a masterly exhalation of long held considerations in this field.

Finally, the entire contents of Volume 9 lay on the table the underlying complexities, ambiguities and contradictions inherent in varied forms of protection, whether national or international, where these seek to 'preserve in their original form' heritage which is in a continual state of evolution. The combination of articles elegantly elucidates the delicate balance between 'preserving' and 'petrifying' intangible forms of cultural expression. The prospect of hope in the younger generations holds the key. The BBC's 2011 programme *Human Planet: Life in the Air* provides essential evidence as it documents the process of a young apprentice coming of age under the eagle eye of his father.ⁱ And we should also see hope in the young eagle hunter and huntress Irka Bolen and Ashol-Pan's joy and excitement at releasing their birds in the extraordinary photographs by Asher Svidensky. In virtually direct response to Galla's final point regarding the critical necessity of urgently addressing *gender mainstreaming as a process and gender equity as an outcome ... to bridge the gulf between theory and practice in safeguarding both tangible and intangible heritage* the photographer reiterates *The generation that will decide what will happen with every tradition that Mongolia contains is this generation ... Everything there is going to change and is going to be redefined - and the possibilities are amazing*.ⁱⁱ
[Plates 1 and 2]

So while observing the profound influence wrought by these changes in the technological environment, it is also amazingly uplifting for Pam Inder and myself to observe that new media are in effect the new tools which inter-generational communities are appropriating for their use, and which are in fact empowering rather than overpowering the ingenuity of human enterprise in reshaping the dynamic between humans and their environment. As the late great Stuart Hall wrote *...it is by our use of things, and what we say, think and feel about them - how we present them - that give them ... meaning...*ⁱⁱⁱ This volume therefore might serve as an homage to him.

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i <http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/humanplanetexplorer/environments/mountains#p00dwd5x>

ii Asher Svidensky interview on "The Girl becoming an eagle hunter in Mongolia", World Update, BBC World Service, 7th April, 2014 : <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01wztnh> see also William Kremer, A 13-year-old eagle huntress in Mongolia, BBC News Magazine, 14 April, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-26969150>

iii Hall, Stuart, [ed.] 1997. 'The work of representation' in *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, London, Sage, p.3.



Plate 1
13 year old Ashol-Pan with her eagle Photo: Asher Svidensky/Caters News



Plate 2
13 year old Irka Bolen with his eagle Photo: Asher Svidensky/Caters News