

## Editorial



From the historical to the contemporary, from the rural to the urban, from the local to the global, from the commonplace to the ceremonial, the eleven articles presented in this 14<sup>th</sup> volume of the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*, provide a multiplicity of perspectives, disciplines and locations, examining the importance of addressing cultural heritage beyond the boundaries set by fixed administrative categories. 2019 is the UN's International Year of Indigenous Languages which aims to raise awareness of the world-wide endangerment of Indigenous languages, and to establish a link between language, development, peace, and reconciliation; several authors have referenced this issue, both directly and indirectly. They all speak to some aspect of the ongoing transmission of traditional knowledge(s) and practice(s) safeguarding against such language losses through continual communication - whether verbal, visual or virtual.

In **Wangkarra** the authors present an insightful study of a 'Living Heritage' with their intimate examination of the verbal arts of the Ngaanyatjarra people of Australia's Western Desert. While they highlight the fragility of Indigenous languages in Australia, and the measures being taken to preserve them, they also identify ...*a tension between the need to safeguard intangible cultural heritage through collecting, recording and archiving, and ... ensuring their transmission to future generations*. However, language is only one part of a spectrum of Indigenous communication practices in the Ngaanyatjarra lands, including sand-drawing, painting, respect registers and respect rituals. The paper details the rich oral traditions of the region and explains the Indigenous concept of *tjukurrpa* (the Dreaming) in which ancestral beings created the natural environment and imbued it with spiritual values. These values are protected by story and ritual.

Their project aims to safeguard Western Desert verbal arts through documentation, recording, archiving and repatriating the *Memories of past practices [which] continue to live on in everyday life: in ceremonies; in the practice of traditional arts; in media and in digital archives*. Despite the impact of the majority Anglo-culture, Ngaanyatjarra cultural traditions survive and are now being transmitted in new narrative forms such as artworks in acrylic paints, contemporary songs and sounds, new media and digital technologies. The project has repatriated sand stories to the community using a very 21<sup>st</sup> century device, the iPad, on which films and drawings by ten young women *have injected new life into this traditional narrative form*. This paper is a superb exposition of safeguarding without fossilising.

This recognition that *people are the vessels for the songs that emanate from the landscape* nevertheless leads the authors to caution against *linguistic essentialism*, a warning which finds resonance in **Preserving Pansori**. *Pansori* is an archetypal multi-modal Korean form of performance, narrating aspects of the country's history/heritage through dramatic stories in song, text, and action. When it was designated an Important Intangible Asset by the South Korean government in 1964, the style of performance became standardised and all performances were expected to strictly adhere to that

archetype. The author describes how this formal transmission process fossilised the art form, and critiques how this prohibited individual creativity. She confronts a continuing dilemma in the field of ICH safeguarding – the tension between the historical and the contemporary – preserving *pansori* in its original form (*weonhyeong*), as opposed to developing *pansori* into a form of musical theatre (*changgeuk*) to popularise the genre.

The author outlines the historical development of this debate and describes leading protagonists and their arguments; she then analyses the new Act on the Safeguarding and Promotion of Intangible Heritage Properties (2016). This act advocates a clear shift in focus, *changing the principle of preserving and promoting intangible cultural heritage properties to attempting to move towards the combination of the traditional and the contemporary*, thus allowing more creative freedom. In making an analogy with western music, where *only long gone masters are considered part of the canon of Western art music*, the author addresses the problems of a perceived hierarchy of practitioners (*boyuja*) and of the primacy of Seoul over the regions. The jury is still out on the effects that will be wrought by this legal change.

Language, and community engagement with performative traditions, is the foundation of yet another article. The suppression of the different dialects of Shona by Christian missionaries and linguists was undertaken to simplify colonial administration in Southern Africa. The authors of **Living Site, Living Values** assert the Matendera community's determination to celebrate its heritage on its own terms through the co-curation of an annual festival at the archaeological site *...by bringing people into direct contact with their heritage... it is also about understanding and practising shared authority in heritage conservation and presentation*. In rejecting western traditions of innate significance determined through expert judgement, the authors argue that the community has deliberately decolonised the museum and site of such essentialising narratives. Matendera is thus transformed through community values into a living site as *...a transdisciplinary, transcultural space for critical engagement and dialogue [showing] how people make these things their own*.

Asian performance traditions and the language of gesture and movement lie at the heart of **Cross-cultural understanding of Chinese traditional puppetry** which represents an original approach to helping audiences from other cultural backgrounds comprehend traditional arts. As the world increasingly experiences foreign heritage through tourism or travel, and as governments seek to use their nation's heritage in order to enhance their soft power, there is an increasing need for audiences to understand the intangible heritage of others. The authors examine traditional Chinese puppet plays, but one can point to many other cases in which intangible heritage needs explanation and interpretation. Their aim in digitising the ICH focuses on the effective interaction of puppeteer and audience and how this can be achieved; their perspective is innovative in that they present detailed information about the cultural barriers that affect

foreigners' understanding of Chinese puppetry, its language and folk heritage, and seek to solve this by digitising not just the performance of the element, but the various hand gestures which 'speak' to the emotions, traditions and values concerned. They conclude that while digitisation helps, it can never be the whole answer.

The authors of **Dovetailing** reach similar conclusions in another case study on protecting traditional craftsmanship through digitisation, and find themselves similarly engrossed in the subtlety of hand movements as they set out to create a prototype digital instruction resource. Their work begins by establishing the dialogue between ICH and technology, specifically within the domain of traditional craftsmanship. Through an overview and categorisation of all the methods of safeguarding ICH previously published in the *IJH*, they establish a matrix of current methodologies used in safeguarding traditional crafts, examining and summarising the benefits and limitations of each method. The paper demonstrates the process of digitising the method of making dovetails, including capture, representation and dissemination, and seeks to elucidate and enshrine the key values at the core of this traditional form. Based on close cooperation with a Danish master joiner, the authors enable practitioners to *reflect on their own ICH, to make sure that the data [disseminated] is respectfully representing the insiders' views and skills*. As they explain, *traditional joiners were taught through a master-apprentice relationship. The master ... did not just teach joinery techniques, but also functioned as a life mentor. The apprentices respected him, and he respected and expressed pride in his apprentices, which in turn taught them to be proud of their work*. Without this pride in craftsmanship, the authors emphasise, there is a risk that traditional techniques needed for conservation of both the form and the manner of its making will be lost.

Similar traditions of master craftsmanship create *szopki* in Cracow. This is the theme of **Christmas Cribs**, in which the author celebrates UNESCO's 2018 inscription of *szopki* on the *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*. One of Kraków's most popular Christmas traditions, a *szopka* is an idiosyncratic cross between a nativity scene, a gingerbread house, and a dolls' house; these unique structures originally functioned as portable theatres for traditional puppet nativity plays. Today they resemble colourful castles or cathedrals rather than cribs. In an important re-imagining of national identity, the first official Christmas Crib Competition in 1937 re-popularised the craft of making these Christmas cribs, creating ingenious, richly decorated and brightly illuminated extravaganzas inspired by Krakow's architectural marvels.

The meaning of historic/cultural landscapes resides in both their aesthetic qualities and the memories and experiences they embody. The historic landscape is a complex of interwoven expressions of ideas, ideals, ideologies and aspirations, of shifting communities and evolving identities. Three articles in this volume examine landscapes in Europe and Asia, with national and regional legislation and policies playing an important role alongside community engagement or estrangement.

In **Beyond the intangible-tangible binary in rural heritage** the author explores how legislation influences the cultural construct of authenticity in contemporary Spanish heritage. Within the legal framework, values associated with tangible heritage, and principles of integrity and authenticity, are superimposed on intangible cultural expressions. The author asserts that 'static' cultural heritage is affected by continuous manifestations that not only evolve over time, but also depend on different actors and contexts. He thus poses some important questions regarding how fixed criteria are used to understand and classify dynamic cultural expressions: should we now talk of dynamic authenticity? How can we develop a holistic approach to understanding cultural heritage?

A case study in Wanju, South Korea - **(Co-)curating rural traditions and their material culture** - may provide some of the answers in the context of another rural landscape, this time in post-colonial modern Korea. The author stresses the importance of fieldwork in appreciating locally-used or produced domestic artefacts and farming tools repurposed for specific needs. She asserts the need to understand the values of 'cultural materials' (a term she uses to signify both tangible and intangible expressions) as a necessary pre-requisite for preparing and applying safeguarding systems and understanding the dynamics between objects, socio-cultural practices and memories. In this, the input of artefacts' owners is key; *the value of the hidden intangible cultural heritages [can only] be derived directly from the residents themselves as they 'curate' their own stories*. She also asks a critical question: ... *because these cultural resources are relatively modern, are we neglecting their safeguarding because they are not old enough?*

Similar concerns underlie **Safeguarding Memory as ICH** which takes an innovative approach in dealing with 'urban ICH'. In responding to UNESCO's emphasis on promoting *education for the protection of natural spaces and places of memory*, the authors consider patterns of public housing in Hong Kong and its impact on the lives of the inhabitants. Through examining the historical development of Hong Kong's social housing estates, a major feature of the territory, the article acknowledges people's ability to derive meaning and identity through their association with (and within) such estates, and with the everyday. The authors propose the adoption of the term 'popular cultural heritage' (synonymous with popular culture) and make a compelling argument for its application to a previously unidentified form of ICH, the lifestyles and culture shared by housing estate inhabitants. This heritage is a potent social agent and is centrally important to social memory, embodying tacit narratives of moral guidance and local participation in shaping the growth of a community's historical civic identity.

In **A History of Separate Initiatives** the author provides a substantial overview of more than a century of institutional efforts in the United States to research, document, safeguard and promote intangible cultural experiences. Despite decades of dedicated initiatives, it is the author's concern that the US, having withdrawn from UNESCO and having never become signatory to its 2003 *Convention*, has excluded itself from the international discourse on safeguarding ICH. He shows the US has a lot to offer in terms of best

practice and scholarly interest in the topic, and wishes to place on record the significant history of such initiatives, both public and private, and the agencies of government at state and national levels providing resources for these endeavours.

The geographical range of the author's survey places equal focus on mainland USA, Alaska and Hawai'i, and on US territories in the Caribbean (Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands), and Pacific territories such as US Samoa, Guam, the Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Such a broad appreciation of the cultural diversity that is encompassed by the term 'United States' is critical at a time when the US administration is actively withdrawing from engagement outside its own borders. The author makes the point that *These expressions collectively form a "kind" of national picture, but they are significantly different in their totality from the kinds of intangible heritage that might be recognised in other countries.* In other words, the sheer size and diversity of the US militates against the identification of *expressions of American culture as a whole.*

**Gastronomic heritage elements at UNESCO** focuses on the complexity of interpreting concept(s) of food heritage. The author firstly reminds us of Bendix's statement that *Cultural Heritage does not exist, it is made*, and further extrapolates that *It is only post-World War II, from the late 1960s..., that the concept of 'a common heritage of mankind' emerged, shifting the private nature of heritage to the public sphere and attracting international attention.* The author's examination of the issues surrounding the inclusion of culinary traditions as a 'common and collective' category of heritage brings into focus the coloniality of heritage thinking, governance, and practice which continues to inform the functioning of normative instruments. This echoes a major paradigm shift in the evolution of the UNESCO doctrine on cultural heritage, its Eurocentric underpinnings, the concerns with the authorised heritage discourse, and its [gradual] decolonisation. Of the 508 elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage currently inscribed on UNESCO's *Representative List*, less than 4% represent gastronomic heritage. The author highlights the *difficulty, nay the impossibility, of setting the parameters of the category.*

The spirit of UNESCO's 2003 *Convention* requires that communities should be seen as having an open character, not necessarily linked to specific territories. However, the notion of heritage as officially sanctioned practice is bound up with the community/communities' re/defining of practices and disrupting national narratives, which is something of a paradox. Both of this year's book reviews address these questions though from very different standpoints. In **The role of Communities, Groups and Individuals** both the theoretical framework for the implementation of the *Convention*, as well as the various methodologies employed to ensure participatory engagement are examined up close. However, the reader is still left to seek answers to the critical questions raised: *is it enough to demonstrate the consent or involvement of a few representatives of the community, or is evidence of a more widespread community participation*

*required? Over what period of time or what proportion of the process is involvement necessary? How can involvement be demonstrated and proven to be legitimate and effective in achieving the aims of safeguarding heritage under the Convention?*

The author of another book reviewed herein might have provided some of the answers. In **The African Roots of Marijuana** *African knowledge is fundamental to the now-dominant global practices of cannabis use ... Words and phrases, paraphernalia and techniques, plants and knowledge variably survived the Middle Passage ... and [the] cultural centrality of cannabis use amongst Africans persisted.* Marijuana's widespread medical, spiritual and recreational applications thus *represent[s] a thousand years of African intangible heritage and cultural continuity.* The author insists we reconsider and reconfigure colonial narratives which have served to demonise and marginalise these longstanding cultural practices. He has been diligent in documenting the practices he describes: the conservation of traditional spaces, the communication of cultural knowledge, the continuity of social practices, and the ways in which the deconstruction of colonially-constructed myths resonate with the collective historical consciousness and sense of community.

While the majority of these articles do reference long and even ancient traditions of communal cultural practice, all of the authors are invariably concerned with the contestations inherent in contemporary interpretations of both the ICH and the communities concerned. What may be germane to the profound and insightful debates in this issue is that while the notion that a heritage site cannot be divorced from the traditional practices associated with it has gained currency in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is the increasing credence that Intangible Heritage still cannot hold the authority of 'authenticity' without its encompassing context that has perhaps taken most time to accept. Publishing papers about the need for transdisciplinary approaches to cultural heritage thus becomes not merely important, but vital and necessary. As Griffiths - quoted elsewhere - demonstrates *the discourse of authenticity may overwrite and overdetermine the full range of representations through which identities might be represented, hence disavow[ing] the possibilities for the hybridised subjects of the colonising process to legitimate themselves* (1994, p.72). The evidence emerging in this volume is that *Intangible heritage can help in promoting tolerance, overcoming stereotypes, and in supplanting meanings which, instead of serving memory, might otherwise be reaffirming counter-memory.*

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