

Editorial



This volume of the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* provides eight articles that focus on three areas of relevance to intangible cultural heritage: analysis of the impact and influence of the 2003 UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* on academic research and its implementation in educational systems; gender empowerment in ritual and craft production; and narratives and rituals and their interaction with places and objects.

The author of **Research flows and results of studies on intangible cultural heritage: A network analysis of articles in related international journals, 2002–2020** collected data from academic papers related to intangible cultural heritage published from 2002 to 2020, and analysed the main research subjects, topics and research trends using the keyword network analysis method. This method extracts words from massive documents and conducts network analysis of the various characteristics of texts. Research into keywords prevalent in four distinct periods of the Convention's timeframe indicate that 'community' had a high occurrence value across all periods. Conversely, the term 'preservation', which appeared consistently in descriptions of intangible cultural heritage in the early period of the Convention, had disappeared by 2012. It has been replaced by 'safeguarding': as the author states, 'preservation' suggests passivity, and a view of culture as an object to be preserved. 'Safeguarding', by contrast, focuses on the processes and people involved in intangible cultural heritage, indicating a more holistic understanding of heritage. This transference of terminology suggests that, over the nearly 20 years of the Convention, an understanding of intangible cultural heritage as living heritage has deepened.

The term 'safeguarding' in relation to intangible cultural heritage is at the forefront of the next article, **Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage through formal education in Flanders: A critical analysis of the implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention**, which investigates the implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention in the formal education system in the Flemish part of Belgium. Linking education and intangible heritage is set as a high strategic priority, not only in the Convention but also according to the Overall Results Framework (ORF), a tool to measure its impact. This impact is examined at three levels: the national level where educational policy and learning outcomes take shape; the educational providers at the meso level, who transfer these outcomes into curricula; and schools and teachers at the micro level who implement the curricula. The article provides useful reflections and strategic learnings for the implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention.

Intangible cultural heritage and societal gender structures: an interview study focusing on changes in gender roles and gender restrictions within Japanese float festivals is the first of three articles that focus on gender roles and changing perspectives and circumstances. This article presents the results of an interview study conducted with preservation associations connected to a selection of seven float festivals in Japan where changes to gender restrictions have occurred. Interviewees were asked about changes that had occurred in gender restrictions and about discussions in local communities. The results reveal similarities in terms of

gender structure between the festivals and differences in terms of displayed attitude towards gender-restricted participation. While roles that were previously male-exclusive have opened up for female participation, there is a limit to the roles made accessible to women, and the top positions continue to be male domains. The organizational structures within the festivals reflect wider societal structures and, while changes have occurred to facilitate increased inclusion, the underlying power structures have remained intact. The article underlines the connection between societal structures and heritage practices, and emphasizes the contemporary nature of traditional practices.

The next paper's provocative title, **A woman can become a "man"**, speaks directly to the transformative power of ritual in the sphere of gender. It is subtitled **Rituals and gender equality among the Nsukka Igbo of south-eastern Nigeria**. Scholars of gender inequality tend to neglect ritual as a mechanism that can aid gender equality, even when it is clear that rituals can be instrumental in bridging the equality gap between genders. Basing its argument on the incarnate being institution among the Igbo, an essentially male-dominated institution, this article explains how rituals can empower women to attain equal status with men and help them to participate actively in the institution. The article addresses questions such as how women are admitted to the society, and the nature and meaning-cum-essence of the rituals. Through oral interviews, participant observation, video clips and photographs of women who underwent rituals, it argues that ritual is a potent force in attaining gender equality; elucidates the logic of the rituals; and brings to the fore the ways in which the intangible heritage of an Igbo society helps to bridge the gender inequality gap.

Gender is also a prime consideration in the final article under this theme, **The status of women weavers as heritage bearers: Accounts on social transformation and empowerment in the province of Canchis, Cuzco, Peru**. Heritage textile arts and the specific skills and knowledge required to produce them are recognised as traditional crafts that constitute the intangible cultural heritage of humanity. Significant links exist among weaving traditions, local societal structures and the history and shared memories of local communities. This article, originating in extensive fieldwork and ethnographic participant observation in Canchis province in the Cuzco region of Peru, illustrates the tradition of loom textile-making in the area, highlighting interdependences among intangible cultural heritage, traditional ecological knowledge and local socio-economic dynamics. Factors that affect the status of women weavers as heritage bearers, such as rigid social structures, familial organisation, relations between genders and institutional support, are addressed to shed light on reciprocal interactions and tensions between cultural preservation and social inequality in relation to heritage textile art. The article reflects on the role of female weavers, their working conditions, and their autonomy and social status within and outside their communities of origin. In the context of modernisation and threatened homogenisation of production, several conditions are identified that contribute to the resilience of this form of intangible cultural heritage, preserving this creative legacy whilst empowering women to overcome detrimental social dynamics.

Ritual and place, and the requirement to preserve the latter to permit the former to operate, are discussed in **Safeguarding ritual practices in the limestone cave areas along the Swahili coast of the Indian Ocean in Tanzania**. The management of sacred limestone cave areas that local communities still use for ritual practices provides challenges for the government, because visitors (tourists) and researchers fail to abide by rules established by locals for the sacred areas. The article reveals that Tanzania lacks sufficient guidelines or frameworks for best practice in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. There are ritual practices, strict taboos and customary laws mandated by the local communities to control access to cave areas, such as the Kuumbi and Amboni limestone caves, which are sacred to them. Visitors and researchers not adhering to the established regulations when visiting the caves and their surroundings has created a disconnect between locals and their ritual practices, preventing them from performing their rituals and other spiritual activities. This article proposes measures for adoption by government to enable local communities to continue to use the caves as a crucial part of their religious life without disturbance.

Place is also a critical component in **The conservation and management of intangible cultural qualities as the fragments of the spirit of place: The case of the Istanbul Land Walls**. The definitions, approaches, and methods required for the inclusion of intangible cultural qualities in site management processes for conservation purposes are rarely published. A methodology for evaluating intangible cultural qualities in site management processes has been developed, and applied to the Land Walls component of the Historic Areas of Istanbul World Heritage Site, inscribed in the World Heritage List in 1985 as one of the four Historic Areas of Istanbul. This article defines and documents the intangible cultural qualities and their inclusion in the site management methodology by relating them to the tangible qualities within the scope of the documentation, interpretation, and presentation of the heritage sites for conservation purposes.

An approach toward enhancing contemporary handmade products with historic narratives explores modern digital technologies to enhance a contemporary traditional craft object with digital stories that connect it to the history, society, traditions and values of Europe. Such stories can support new interest in traditional craft objects by enhancing their meaning, value and uniqueness. As a demonstration of the potential of digital media to interpret intangible cultural heritage, a handbag was created that functions both as an accessory and as a contemporary craft item that can be experienced to reveal its unique history and identity. The process has proven that digital technology can be combined with traditional handmade artefacts to provide a new form of entrepreneurship in the history and tradition of traditional crafts and, at the same time, acknowledge the role of digital technologies in modern societies.

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