

Editorial



An unbroken thread running through virtually all of the contributions to Volume 11 of the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* demonstrates the interdependence of the intangible and tangible heritage, driven in most instances by their rootedness in a particular place. The overarching themes of the presence of the past in the present and sustainability seem also to be the lifeblood of many endeavours, whether it be in the form of performance or practices, policies or politics, people or principles, all hold equal sway over the lives of many peoples in far flung places, from the hinterlands of Africa to the Americas and islands of the Caribbean, and from the hills of Asia to the shores of Europe. The concept of sustainability, and by implication the more specific concept of sustainable development, is herein subject to a range of differing interpretations and contexts. Sustainable development as defined in the influential 1987 Brundtland Report is development that *meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*. The question for many of the communities represented is: to what extent has the past (heritage) been recognised or acknowledged as a need?

The 12 articles included in this volume of the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* consider key issues of societal interaction and sustainability through intergenerational continuity and identity reinforcement evidencing, as the 2003 *Convention* instructs, the *practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills...as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith* in virtually all regions of the world. Underpinning each of them is the fundamental recognition that a community or communities has acknowledged these particular forms or expressions as evidence of shared characteristics or values as central to their identity, whether in the past or the present.

As the key instrument now being invoked by most, if not all, of our writers for this journal, the attainment of new mechanisms to guide the decision-making processes of the 2003 *Convention* must be of great moment. The elaboration and adoption of a new set of 12 Ethical Principles are introduced and examined in depth in **The Spirit of the Convention** where the author frames their attainment against the backdrop of the internal tensions between political expediency and professional interrogation. What is most instructive however, is his critical analysis of how the role of human rights and the attainment of sustainable development very much contextualised the escalation of treatment for these new rules, both in terms of past experience as comparable to earlier systems of ethical consideration, and today with the insistence of acknowledging culture's efficacy within both the United Nations' 2030 *Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the *Cop21- Agreement*.

Space, whether real or imaginary, urban or rural, is another theme which underlies many of the pieces presented in this volume. As the authors of **Zhao Mu: The Presence of the Past**, put it the '*sense of space*' as an alternate form

of heritage blurring the boundaries... between the tangible and the intangible has informed the organisation of mounds and tombs, tablets and trees within the highly ritualised setting of Confucius' cemetery for more than 2,500 years. Although violent destruction and forced removal of the tangible artefacts occurred during the Cultural Revolution in China, this was not perhaps the worst desecration. For the authors, it was the imposition of modern practices of heritage preservation and management, established with the adoption of the West's Authorised Heritage Discourse and, rather ironically, reinforced by the requirement for a modern site management plan by the World Heritage Committee, which has most severely disrupted the graveyard. The traditional practice of ancestor veneration as evidence of the virtues of filial piety and loyalty which has sustained the cemetery and underlined its authenticity for generations, needs to be acknowledged. In that regard, the authors felt privileged to witness its active/actual transferral from one generation to the next.

Some of the same values can be attributed to the veneration of monuments established as part of the iron-smelting tradition of the Lejja community in South-eastern Nigeria. In ***Uzo-mma, Pathway to Intangible Heritage*** the authors trace both the processes and the people embedded in the open, ritual square at the heart of a commune of thirty-three villages in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite the complete difference in character of the former urban traditional industrial site, the organisation of this space into arenas for both judicial hearings and ritual worship, communal celebrations and secret rites, male dominance and female nurturing, all still observed by the community, are oriented on the basis of the recognition of strict veneration of ancestral spirits, admiration for individual valour and above all, absolute respect for family lineage, and resonate with the same Confucian spirit.

A significant disparity may be in the authors' insistence on the link between iron smelting and spirituality in the form of the blast furnace or *omabe*, which for the community is in fact a spirit house. The West's complete misrepresentation of masquerade as at best, an art form or at worst as playing games, has marginalised the centrality of this structure to life in Lejja. Rather the authors' are obdurate in their view that:

As masks are born of religion, preserved from generation to generation, the mask is the 'abode' of a particular power, the breathing place of the spirit of departed elders, the resting place of communal secrets, the sanctuary for the meaning and memory of a people's volatile identity. (p.4)

Thus 'Masqueraders' in Igboland are *the embodiment of the ancestral spirits and the desecration of the 'masquerade' is the desecration of the land itself.*

Something of the same could be said for the perspective offered by the author in **Masquerade as Memory** where the virtual erasure of a small town from the mid-Western landscape in 19th century Brazil lies hidden not just behind the mask of time but cloaked in the disguise of heritage. Comprising a rich ensemble of religious rituals, folk traditions and cultural expressions, the highly popular Festa do Divino Espiritu Sanctu is an annual celebration deeply rooted in the daily lives of communities in many parts of Brazil. The vigorous encounter between the *Mascarados* and *Cavalhadas* originally represented a re-enactment of medieval battles between Moors and Christians in honour of both the Emperor and the Holy Spirit. However, in Pirenópolis the opposition of the servile Mummings with painted paper masks, and the noble *Cavalhadas* on horseback, carries quite different connotations.

The author instead traces a faint trail where he opines that, based on archaeological evidence and the competing claims of intergenerational recollection, this medieval masquerade has been reinforced and conflated with a later, more sinister episode in 1887. This has since been transmogrified into heritage by the community's shared memory, or rather, collective amnesia, in which the conflict over the goldmine at Lavras do Abade has become a lost island in a sea of silence. In the end though, it may be memory itself which is the communal heritage.

Traditions 'masquerading' as something else share space in this year's journal where the authors of **The Name of the Game**, uncover the true significance of the African counting game of Oware – The Game of Houses. Mancala board games, of which Oware is one, show an extraordinary range of distribution from West Africa to the Caribbean and parts of South America, from Northern to Southern Africa, from South East Asia, to South Asia and the Middle East. Recent visits to Oman and Qatar in 2013-2014 left me with many questions of why and how a game which I had seen played many times in the fish markets and rum shops of the Caribbean would also find space on the shores of Arabia. Questions of a shared heritage for which I continue to search for answers.

The authors have little doubt in the shared belief and awareness amongst Caribbean players of the spread of Oware / Warri from West Africa to the West Indies during the time of slavery. Equally compelling however is their argument that ... *when males played Oware they collectively engaged their African cultures and organised themselves in opposition to the slave plantation and colonial systems in the Caribbean.* ... and [that] *the colonial suppression of male activities and interactions were circumvented...* Warri 'masquerading' as an innocuous board game allowed for the creation of male social space amongst creolised communities and enabled enslaved men to re/create the activities and reconstruct important African male groups. Sugar Island Warri as it is sometimes called, was once a popular game on the plantations and among stevedores and fishermen in Antigua and Barbuda as well as Barbados where the best Warri masters in the island are still found in districts connected with those trades. Names of 'warriors' like Hood, Ben-Ben and 'Lord Jesus' remain legendary even today.

The notion of social space takes on quite different characteristics in a variety of other contexts and settings presented in this volume. For the authors of **The Fiesta of the Patios** this durable form of social gathering merits consideration for the touristic value it generates amongst visitors to Cordoba who are charmed to be invited into these normally private spaces during an event which is an expression of the identity and traditions of the Cordovan community. Very little is understood and appreciated in terms of the tremendous knowledge and skill it requires to create these intimate areas of socio-cultural interaction. As the authors of **Fiesta** demonstrate in the context of the economy of value generation and commodification, no measurements have yet been created to successfully monitor customer satisfaction with this form of communal coexistence and transmission of ancestral traditions, but these are essential for the Fiesta's sustainability and continuity.

In **Chuskor**, a very different sort of endeavour also relies on the proximity of plants, water and traditional knowledge to ensure environmental sustainability and cultural continuity. Here the author offers an in-depth analysis of the functioning and role of this traditional milling technology in small mountainside communities of the Monpas of Arunachal Pradesh inhabiting the western-most part of the state. Living in close proximity to the forest and other natural resources the Monpas are some of the only remaining tradition bearers of an indigenous water powered milling process for grinding grain into fine flour, which could have relevance for both water conservation and sustainable utilisation of renewable resources. However, with the gradual disappearance of both customary patronage systems and skilled technicians capable of ensuring the *chuskor's* operability, and the popular replacement of grain with rice as the main food source, the viability of these mills is at risk. Appropriate measures for adaptation and knowledge transfer have been established for the conservation and continuity of the *Chuskor* system, but a concerted effort will be needed to win the confidence of the village communities.

When does a ship 'set sail' on land and not on water? When it is a Landship, the oldest social and cultural institution in Barbados, dating back to the mid-19th century. While visitors to the island might be forgiven for assuming it is merely a colourful folk dance troupe, the author of **All Hands on Deck** offers insights into this traditional communal social association which derives its identity from an intricate amalgam of entertainment and discipline, and illuminates the many layers of *tuk* music and ship crew 'manoeuvres', funerary rites and oral traditions, hierarchical structure and 'naval' costume, drills and docks, symbols and *susu* saving schemes through this case study of two of the pre-eminent Landships launched earlier in the 20th century. While the jury is still out on claims for historical Asafo origins, The Landship is a unique amalgamation of African and European cultures which served to educate and entertain the poor black masses of the island, while at the same time empowering them through public parades and performances which have been, and continue to be, a foundation stone in the bedrock of Barbadian cultural identity.

Hot Stone and Cool Digitals on the other hand offers insights into quite innovative approaches using both the real and virtual social space of museums intent on developing community engagement with their heritage. The authors take as their starting point James Clifford's influential 1997 essay *Museums as Contact Zones*, which deprecated the deeply unequal power relations that existed between major museums and indigenous communities and argued for the adoption of new strategies of respectful accommodation and representation. The design and construction of museum/community partnerships in the case studies presented interrogate notions of ICH safeguarding in the context of Finnish museums serving as contact zones. Here projects were based on reinforcing notions of connections within and among remote (even virtual) communities, often using digital technologies. Yet no matter how modern the technology, the underlying factors ensuring mutual understanding and intuitive engagement is fundamentally reliant on the five senses – light/sight, sound, touch, scent and taste.

Shared social spaces of a different sort are seriously at risk in **Sanctuary of the Spirits** which highlights the value and importance of sacred natural sites (SNS) for the retention of traditional ideologies and identities in Southern Nigeria. While these values have spread outward from Africa to the diasporic populations in the Caribbean and the Americas they are rapidly disappearing at home due not just to the onset of modern ideals of development, but also ancient notions of fundamentalism. Both dendrology and dendrolatry are invoked by the author in his study of the erosion of community support for the maintenance of sacred trees and groves, sacred mountains and waters which have been essential components of both human sustenance and natural landscapes across millennia in Africa. But how much longer will these sacred sites and the communities which both sustained and are sustained by them, continue to co-exist within their natural habitat under such determined onslaughts?

Sufiani Mausiqi, an elite form of choral ensemble music connected with the rituals of Sufis (Muslim mystics) native to Kashmir, is another form of traditional worship now seriously in conflict with the incursion of fundamentalist beliefs. This amalgam, born of a synthesis of the musical cultures of Persia, Central Asia and India emerged during the rich period of intercultural dialogue that was the 15th century and endured in varying forms of popularity until the present day. In **Mystical Music** the author seeks to reclaim the importance of yet another element of intangible heritage now under threat of extinction. The loss of patronage of community leaders has led to the erosion of a once flourishing community of musical training schools where today's few remaining elderly *Sufiani* music masters sustain gratis the four remaining *gharanas*. With the pool of competent young apprentices drying up, *Sufiani Mausiqi's* continued existence remains seriously in question.

In **Classical Horsemanship**, while these still flourishing skills of horse and human forming symbiotic relations of trust and training came into existence at the very same time in Renaissance Europe, the issue at hand is precisely

their elite origins which put this form of traditional practice into question. Here the author is concerned with dispelling notions that it is in any way acceptable to deny the relevance of such an art form to the concept of intangible cultural heritage. Described as foundational to the political struggle against the inclusion of this element on the *Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage*, the invocation of Smith's Authorised Heritage Discourse as the author irresistibly concludes, has allowed for the emergence of an 'anti-discourse' predicated upon the questionable ethics of allowing 'implicit' principles to drive professional considerations of the criteria to be applied.

As a counterpoint to the internal structural changes examined elsewhere in this volume, the new publication ***UNESCO on the Ground***, offers a welcome alternate perspective from the point of view of *the communities concerned* on how the inscription of their intangible cultural heritage has been received and accepted within each group, how it has impacted on their day to day lives and enhanced or depleted the capacities of communities. It draws upon the experiences of communities ranging across three continents and the challenges and tensions confronting them after ICH inscription. As our reviewer establishes in his lucid exploration of the inherent complexities of enshrining authenticity of indigenous expression - *The essays are richly informative, wonderfully nuanced, and credibly interpreted, which only persons with a close and extended relationship with local communities and their cultural heritage could produce.*

Etienne Wenger has defined the concept of practice as a form of *doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do*.¹ Such a construct aims to encompass both the explicit and the implicit: what is stated and what remains unsaid, as well as what is presented and what is assumed. In 2016 as we commemorate the varying fortunes of intangible heritage in the context of the 50th anniversary of both the descent into the nadir of China's Cultural Revolution as well as the ascendancy of cultural identity as a key aspect of Barbados' newly achieved independence, the articles in this volume require not merely our comprehension but our conscious attention to both sides of the coin.

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1. Wenger, E. *Communities of Practice, Learning, Meaning, and Identity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 47.