

Editorial



The first cycle of the 2003 *ICH Convention* was completed in October 2009 with inscriptions on the Urgent Safeguarding List and the Representative List during the Inter Governmental Committee meeting in Abu Dhabi. We have now reached an important milestone to stop and rethink about intangible heritage in general and the *ICH Convention* in particular. Some of the new thinking may not be so new for stakeholder communities or for specialists and researchers, but we need to continue to scope and find pathways for coming together in local, regional, national and international efforts to safeguard intangible heritage.

The 1972 *World Heritage Convention* has become the most globalising and influential of all the standard-setting instruments of UNESCO. It is not surprising that several scholars, specialists, civil society organs and community groups have been using World Heritage concepts in operating the 2003 *ICH Convention*. For example, the concept of *outstanding universal value* which is central to the *World Heritage Convention*, is not relevant for the *ICH Convention*. In fact, there is no hierarchy of heritage thinking promoted by the *ICH Convention*. Authenticity is another concept that has little relevance. This is ironical given that the Nara Recommendation on *Authenticity* brought the significance of intangible heritage into the World Heritage discourse. While the transfer of a World Heritage property onto the *Endangered List* is embarrassing for the State Party concerned, the inscription of an Intangible Heritage element on the *Endangered List* does not entail the same sense of loss of face.

The *ICH Convention* promotes the participation of primary stakeholders far more than any of the other Conventions. But what does participation mean? Is it through a process of empowerment which is where the civil society organisations have a critical role to play? Even if you have a strong sense of community, you could still be oblivious to some of the forces of globalisation, how they can destroy your own sense of place and identity, your ICH elements. You react to them from within because of that resilience of communities to survive, to deal with their own issues and this is where the whole question of how does one enable the participation of communities, NGOs and CBOs is extremely critical. What is good practice in this area? Could we profile in future such good practices?

We need a balanced partnership approach to promote collaboration among all the stakeholders. There are primary stakeholders, the carriers and transmitters of ICH; and then there are secondary stakeholders like the research institutes, experts and the whole range of people who play the role of being mediators, facilitators in assisting with the safeguarding of ICH. Finally there are the tertiary stakeholders: government bodies and international bodies that provide the auspicing mechanisms in the safeguarding process. Safeguarding is an on-going, organic and collaborative process with respect for the primacy of the carriers and the transmitters of ICH.

The discourse of intangible heritage is emerging with greater clarity demanding conceptual rigour. Some of the publications include collations of already-published articles and speeches into readers and new monographs that endeavour to scope intangible heritage. This corpus addresses concerns with everything from definitions and delineations to analyses of select elements of intangible heritage. However, few have been able to scope and provide critical insights into the processes and mechanisms for safeguarding ICH.

IJIH attempts to bring together contributions from a diverse group of researchers, ensuring multiple voices

are understood in the way we have been scoping the challenges and opportunities in the safeguarding of ICH. Developing a critical practice for safeguarding ICH is a priority.

There is criticism that most of the academic research and inscription of elements of the Urgent Safeguarding and Representative Lists have perpetuated the notion of the 'otherness', focussing on the minority cultures conventionally studied by anthropologists and ethnologists. IJH is going beyond this limited conceptualisation of ICH and presents case studies from all over the world. Of urgent concern is also the need to balance the way we deal with the diversity of heritage resources and develop integrated approaches to tangible and intangible heritage.

Revitalisation; language and musical heritage; the critical interface between the false binary of the natural and cultural dimensions of ICH; safeguarding of ICH during armed conflicts and the revitalisation of ICH following the destruction due to war; safeguarding heritage trades beyond the stereotype of the ethnographic 'other'; the impact of changing technologies on skills and social relations within systems of ceramic production; and the documentation process by the carriers' communities ensuring the integrity of the 'first voice' – these are some of the themes addressed by authors in this volume of the IJH. Once again, we have made every effort to ensure that contributors from different language backgrounds were able to contribute.

I would like to acknowledge the perseverance and unflinching support and dedication of Dr. Shin Kwang Seop, Director General of the National Folk Museum and Chairperson of the IJH Editorial Advisory Committee. IJH benefits from the collective wisdom and intellectual rigour of the Editorial Board and the International Advisory Committee consisting of distinguished scholars. The Secretariat of IJH at the National Folk Museum continues to provide the supporting environment and hard work critical for the quality and success of the Journal.

Finally, I would like to bring to the attention of the readers a major concern shared by advocates of post-colonial heritage and scholarship. The majority of publications in the cultural and heritage disciplines are often expensive and out of the reach of the majority of readers from low economic indicator countries. This is resulting in a process of cultural reproduction that has become a threat to the cultural diversity of knowledge systems and to safeguarding intangible heritage. IJH is a unique, refereed research journal that is made accessible free of cost on the web to anyone who is interested, whether academic, professional or carriers and transmitters of ICH, across the world irrespective of their economic status. We sincerely appreciate the National Folk Museum of Korea, ICOM Korea and the Korean Government for making possible the democratisation of intellectual endeavours, a spirit that is consistent with the participatory nature of the 2003 *ICH Convention* which is dubbed 'the democratic convention'.

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