

Introducing the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*



The *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* is a refereed academic and professional journal that embraces theory and practice in relation to the study, preservation, interpretation and promotion of the intangible heritage. Over recent years, academics, researchers and professionals in many different parts of the cultural sector have increasingly been collecting, systematising, documenting and communicating the intangible heritage, and in particular supporting its traditional cultural expressions. This new *Journal* therefore seeks to serve as a spotlight on this important and growing aspect of heritage studies.

It is certainly true that traditionally the concerns and interests of governments, cultural institutions and specialists across the world have been focused very largely on tangible heritage issues: on monuments and sites, museums, libraries, archives and their collections. Recognising the great importance of intangible heritage creates a new cultural insight and can unveil a new cultural paradigm that has long been overlooked or at least seriously undervalued. More active exchanges between international researchers and heritage bearers, for example through this *Journal* will, we very much hope, rapidly increase to the benefit of the understanding and sustainable development of the intangible heritage.

In 2003 the General Assembly of UNESCO adopted by consensus the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. The following year UNESCO published a major series of papers about the intangible heritage in a double issue of its prestigious quarterly journal *Museums International* (no. 221/2, May 2004), and later the same year the International Council of Museums (ICOM) held its triennial General Conference in Seoul, Korea, with the theme of *Museums and the Intangible Heritage*. One of the important achievements of ICOM 2004 Seoul is that it presented for the first time the Asian civilisation under a new perspective. Arguably, ICOM's commitment to supporting and promoting the preservation and development of the intangible heritage was one of the most important steps forward taken by the organisation since its creation in 1946.

Following the adoption of the new UNESCO Convention (which came into force among its first 47 States Parties on 21 April 2006) and the theme and achievements of ICOM 2004, the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* has been launched to serve as a comprehensive academic journal on the intangible heritage, as defined in the UNESCO Convention:

- (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage
- (b) performing arts
- (c) social practices, rituals and festive events
- (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe
- (e) traditional craftsmanship

In particular, the *Journal* aims to promote international communication, and the exchange of ideas, research, investigation, conservation, transmission, and performance relating to any aspect of the intangible heritage among scholars, researchers, professionals, educationalists other practitioners and organisations involved in the intangible heritage sector. The *Journal* and its organisers and publishers also aim to play an international

role in promoting professional and academic exchange and co-operative working with other institutions and organisations to produce and disseminate this journal.

Originally conceived as the result of informal discussions during the ICOM 2004 General Conference in Seoul, over the subsequent 18 months there have been extensive contacts with museum directors and intangible heritage experts from many countries and many specialisations, seeking to raise and confirm awareness of the importance of intangible heritage and of the need for greater opportunities for academic and professional publication and information exchange in relation to it. In order to support these efforts the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Korea has now allocated funds to support this *Journal* project through the National Folk Museum of Korea.

It is very important to stress that though the original idea for this *Journal* as well as its organisation and management lie within the museums sector, and most notably with the staff and other resources of the National Folk Museum of Korea, the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* is intended to cover all aspects of the intangible heritage as defined above, and not just the work of museums in relation to it.

Working with the Editorial Advisory Committee and Editorial Board, which between them draw members from thirteen countries, the Publication Secretariat, Editors and the designers and printers have now produced this first annual volume of the *Journal*. We wish to express our most grateful thanks to all of these, to the President of ICOM, Alissandra Cummins, and the Chairperson of the Korean National Committee of ICOM, Professor Choe Chong-pil, for their support and their forewords to this first volume. Most of all, of course, thanks are due to the authors of the various papers who have been willing to share their views and experiences with colleagues around the world.

The *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* is being distributed to a very large number of key institutions in the heritage sector around the world, including national and specialist museums and libraries, as well as to universities and other institutions researching the intangible heritage or working on staff training and on education and communication in the heritage field. In addition all published papers will be available for downloading from the *Journal's* own web site at: <http://www.ijih.org/>. We trust that this very wide dissemination of the *Journal* will be a spur to further academic activities and studies and publication in relation to all aspects of study of the intangible heritage.

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Left: *Mangudaetaggut*, a shamanic ritual of Korea has long been performed as a regional tradition to pray for good luck and longevity. This parade carries a great shaman on a flowered palanquin and is believed to purify the village and its shamanic shrine.

Right: May Day Festivities in Padstow, Cornwall: believed to be one of England's oldest surviving 'calendar customs'. The children's dance through the town is led by their own half-size 'tobby-horse'.

