Editorial

Readers reviewing the contents of this volume might be forgiven for thinking that the *International Journal* had in fact commissioned a special issue on religion, or rather the anthropology of religion. The majority of the papers speak directly to the conservation and continuity of long held belief in one form or another. While psychological and cultural anthropology seek to understand the emergence of certain behaviours over the course of humanity's history, the general consensus of anthropologists today is that religion is a cultural universal; there has yet to be discovered a culture, however 'primitive,' that does not practise some form of religion. The articles included in this volume of the journal offer varying insights into religious practice, whether through tangible or intangible heritage, worshipping through language or litany, with flowers or food, performance or practice, these papers consider issues of memory, performance, oral transmission, intergenerational continuity and cultural (and national) identity as evidenced largely in the continuity of faith.

In **Flowers for 'Mama Mary'** Zona Amper outlines the traditional festivities associated with the *Flores De Mayo* Catholic ritual in Argao, the Philippines and the recent changes, imposed by a parish priest, which have disrupted the transmission of a much-prized 300 year old tradition and upset a number of the author's elderly informants, and the townsfolk in general. The ceremonial transfer of the five letters of MARIA from the centre of the church to the altar by children as *Ijas de Maria*, accompanied with distinctive songs and performances, was an event repeated from one generation to the next, ensuring the transmission of social values and safeguarding cultural identity. Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony is invoked to describe the community's deep unhappiness with the disruption of this 'rite of passage', leading to protestations that *the priest murdered our Flores de Mayo*.

While the Filipino festival focused on the children, on the other side of the globe the Mayan communities in Pomuch, Mexico faithfully follow all the steps of the *Janal Pixan* ritual to commemorate their treatment of the dead. In examining the centuries old process of religious syncretism, intermingling elements of ancient Mayan beliefs with Christian doctrine, **Food for the Soul**'s co-authors Eva Brito and Heajoo Chung equate the preparation of the *pibipollo* covered with banana leaves and placed in the furnace of earth, with the rituals of cleansing and covering the bodies of the dead. This cultural tradition thus becomes an annual rite of remembrance and recreates the fate of all human beings. While it is important to acknowledge that *Tradition by itself is not enough*, as T.S. Eliot wrote in 1934, tradition as the transmission and utilisation of accumulated experience, technical knowledge, and the embodiment of standards and values is quite a different matter. Such tradition is not simply 'of itself,' but involves a complex continuity from the past, through the present, to the future. For the indigenous community of Pomuch, the tie with their relatives is not a temporary event but a constant cycle and a way to maintain *eternal coexistence* between this realm and the next.

In Serbia, such an annual tradition of ancestral remembrance finds a sibling in the feast of a family patron saint - a household celebration in memory of the Christian saint on whose day the family converted to Christianity, and who they chose as their patron and representative before God. While the Balkans, particularly the South Slavic nations, share an intricate web of ethnic, religious and cultural identities, co-authors of **Common Histories, Constructed Identities** Aleksandra Terzić, Željko Bjeljac and Nevena Ćurčić painstakingly trace both the distinct similarities and subtle differences of Serbia's traditional customary practices, documenting the national process of the identification and nomination of certain elements to UNESCO's *Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*. Various aspects of folk performing and festival arts, traditional dress and handicrafts, oral and culinary traditions, and here again, religious practice, are identified as indicators validating not just cultural, but national identity. First amongst a series of exemplars is the country's Patron Saint Feast where once again the annual festive celebration requires the preparation of special foods proffered in veneration of the family saint. Another example of cultural syncretism between Christianity and the indigenous belief, Serbia's Slavic tradition demands the passing down of this customary celebration from father to son where all who share the same name (and saint) are considered to be relatives. But while some of Serbia's elements of ICH are considered suitable for touristic commercialisation, others such as these religious practices are deemed sensitive to interference and commodification and should thus be reserved only for family or local community.

Family and community are also key components in Rashmirekha Sarma's **Disappearing Dialect** where each community in Arunachal Pradesh shares a voluminous oral literature on the myths and legends surrounding their origin and religious belief. In the context of this Indian frontier region, the shaman or *igu* still plays a central role in the arena of religious beliefs and practices in Idu society, a further example of religious syncretism, where shamanism still plays a very important role, even though Christianity is gradually becoming a dominant reality. Idu life revolves around the *igu* who as the mediator between the Idus and their world of the unknown, conducts various rituals performing a unique dance wearing the *amralapoh*, a specific costume comprising eleven items, the most sacred possession for an *igu*. They are therefore treasure-troves of not just the Idu-Mishmi oral tradition, but often of its performance culture and traditional craft production as well, and thus have the essential duty to preserve and pass on this wealth of language, artefacts and knowledge to the next generation.

Chants are the most important part of this tradition. Like the Serbian family celebrations, the priestly chanting is a process of narration beginning with the narration of genealogies and geographies, then proceeding to prayers for particular occasions and then for the well-being of households. The Idus' death ritual alone requires continuous chanting of the genealogy of the deceased for several days, but there are now few priests who can properly perform such rites. The Idu language in both its priestly and popular forms has been described as unlike any other in the world, and its loss, despite several attempts to 'translate' it into written form, endangers Idu identity. Placed

alongside UNESCO's recent estimates that *about 3 percent of the world's population accounts for 96 percent of all languages spoken today* and that *Out of all languages in the world, 2,000 have fewer than 1,000 native speakers*, the fact that Hindi-Urdu is second only to Chinese in terms of the largest number native language speakers in the world (with English coming a close third), offers stark evidence of the author's claims. With expectations *that about half of the world's spoken languages will disappear by the end of the century*, the urgency of the issue grows increasingly compelling. New proposals to the Language Development Committee for its consent to the development of an orthography based on phonetic transcription of this unique language may offer some proverbial light at the end of the tunnel.

Ironically, given Chinese's point position with more native speakers than any other language, the hegemony of official languages (or perhaps more properly, semantics) is also the key to another case study offered in **Indigenising Intangible Cultural Heritage** where Zhuang Liu holds up a critical lens to the language employed in both the construction and implementation of the UNESCO 2003 *Convention*. As with the Serbian study, the writer offers insights into the role a central government must accept when it becomes a signatory to the ICH *Convention*. This case study interrogates aspects of both the iteration and interpretation of clauses in the *Convention*, where the problems of achieving consensus on the meaning of 'intangible heritage' are multiplied on the one hand by the position of Chinese officials who view aspects of it as representing the *infiltration of powerful foreign cultures*, and on the other the perspective of Chinese academics that 'intangible' must mean the opposite/negative of 'material', and can thus only mean 'spiritual heritage' in Chinese. Traditional practitioners of uniquely indigenous performing art forms such as the *Xiushan* Festive Lantern/ Lantern Opera for example, are invariably caught in the middle of the argument.

Moving from the macro to the micro level, and from central to local government, festivals are presented as the heart of creative expression of cities and communities. In **Why Local Governments Matter**, co-writers Heekyung Choi and Sumi Nam offer the ICCN as a network of mutual support and argue fervently for a greater consideration of municipalities and local authorities as more than merely site owners or managers in the process of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. The facts and figures of two cycles of ICH Periodic Reporting provided in this article indicate that the evidence is clear – local governments have become more determined to claim their own space in the context of implementing and promoting the ICH *Convention*. While this paper hints at both the inter- and intra-cultural narratives that shape the conceptualisation, production and reception of festivals as tourism development projects for cities and small regions, repurposing cultural centres (particularly government-sponsored projects) aimed toward local cultural enfranchisement, is fraught with what others have called the *complicated dynamics of a transcultural discourse* that is too often *burdened with all the imbalances, reversals and discontinuities that mark historical, and often postcolonial transactions*. The results have yet to be definitively quantified.

Understanding the meaning and intent of 'safeguarding' intangible heritage requires close communication and cooperation. In her report on the **Conservation of Traditional Craftsmanship** in Cappadocia, Turkey, Özlem Karakul focuses as much on restoring the master-apprentice system she deems essential for conserving traditional building practices, as on restoring the buildings themselves. The delicate balance between the recognition that the 2003 *Convention* gives to intangible heritage as living and evolving, and the goal of preserving historic buildings as tangible heritage, is the issue at hand. In vernacular architecture such traditions are frequently modified over time to meet the changing needs of the communities they serve and are not therefore resistant to change. However, vernacular traditions should be understood more as a process rather than an outcome, and as a discursive act which constitutes social relations and practical consciousness: effectively constructing identity through 'making' history. The author documents a university workshop intended to revive the master-apprentice relationship through a broader implementation of the 'Living Human Treasures System,' into the realm of academia recreating the direct transfer of knowledge *held only in the minds of master craftsmen* to student apprentices, communicating old technologies by direct observation and hands-on training.

In **Spirit of the Loom**, Ratchaneekorn Sae-Wang examines one such historical experiment in the adaptation of Khmer woven silk production in Surin, Thailand. Here, in examining the persistence of tradition and the gendered power hierarchies embedded in Surin textile production and consumption, the key issue appears to concern the nature of traditional art/craft and the changes that inevitably ensue in the global village of the twenty-first century. The author draws on Kotler and Armstrong's model to analyse textiles as a cultural commodity, but it is another fascinating reference to Lefebvre, made almost in passing, which captures our attention. To what extent do traditional cultures risk what Frantz Fanon terms 'fossilising' their cultural heritage and thus essentialising their cultural identities, rather than embracing complexities and creatively working with change? To what extent are Surin textiles today *products of the imagination*?

Certainly, the traditional practice of carefully protecting precious silkworms from persistent flies has moved from close observation of natural phenomena into the realm of the imagination and is now enshrined in Surin's folklore, where the ancient saga of human love, treachery and tragedy has been invoked to explain the transmogrification of the woman into a silkworm protected in a cloth-covered basket, while the man as a fly, can only hover over the baskets and look longingly at them. Such tales have been woven into the fabric of a community's identity and deftly illustrate the interconnection between nature and culture etched so poignantly in **Ghost of the Forest**. Here Marcel Robischon offers an intriguing series of examples to help us comprehend the interconnectedness of cultural and natural, tangible and intangible heritage as central to conservation initiatives, and argues insightfully that *the addition of a fourth category of intangible natural heritage to the already existing categories of World Heritage would strengthen conservation efforts* buttressed by *an integrated understanding of natural and cultural heritage*. The

validity of Robischon's proposals is persuasively demonstrated elsewhere in this journal where the potential loss of their forested land to the introduction of a major dam will not only have *a negative impact on ecological diversity, and the erosion of language diversity... linked to the loss of knowledge about flora and fauna*, but may ultimately mean the extinction of a sacred space where the Idu-Mishmi believe an individual must meditate to gain cosmic power and attain the priesthood, threatening the very identity of this unique Indian community.

In **A Decade Later** Kasper Rodil and Matthias Rehm have done both the *Journal* and its readers a great service by critically examining the relevance and rigour of almost a hundred articles within the matrix of ICH's five domains, and offer a useful rationale and criteria for their categorisation. The challenge however, is not so much to our varying concepts of intangible heritage, as the manner and methodologies we have adopted for its capture and collection. Delineating sensitively yet systematically the paradox of opposing aspirations: desire for development on the one hand versus nostalgia for the traditional on the other, the authors do not waste time either justifying or deploring the lack of authenticity of contemporary production in this scenario. Instead, they take us into a completely different dimension, using a cross-disciplinary approach combined with a modern model of data collection. The results rely on a participatory framework designed to empower indigenous communities to take control over the capture, collection and communication of traditional practices and ICH and defining it, if you like, as a kind of visual 'orthography' of their own.

Other approaches to this process of valorising the authenticity of heritage are presented through our two book reviews for the volume, taking entirely different approaches to critically interrogating the process of authorising of the heritage's credentials, particularly through UNESCO's procedures for negotiating and securing intangible heritage's safeguarding and interpretation. Steven Engelsman's review of Russell Staiff's **Re-imagining Heritage Interpretation. Enchanting the Past-Future**, characterises this monograph as an *intellectual journey of discovery* that explicitly disrupts the comfortable familiarity of the heritage interpretation paradigm adopted by the Tilden School over fifty years ago. Instead Staiff calls for the recognition of heritage interpretation as *a system of representation and meaning making* which *respects cultural differences and observes sensitivities, engages in conversations and asks questions*. As Engelsman suggests, Staiff has joined the chorus of those moving away from the *authorised heritage discourse* and boldly opens the door to personal observation and values as a valid basis for site interpretation. The results are nothing less than a dialogue in mutual enchantment.

Marcia Burrowes in her review of **Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage** confronts a task of a different order. While this is a timely addition to this particular volume, where the preparation and consumption of certain foods run as a subtext to the indelible link between life and death illustrated in a small corpus of the articles

presented, Burrowes' exploration of the many national and cultural assumptions outlined in this anthology of 14 different voices and views indicates that while the research is presented as a 'conversation' on how *the cultivation, preparation, and communal consumption of food is used to create identity claims of 'cultural heritage'* .., the attendant issues suggest a quite different result. Burrowes' draws attention to the way in which UNESCO's *Representative List of ICH* is implicated in 'heritage construction' through its *complex processes of classifying, designating, and valorising food* ... as ICH, and points out that as ... *Hobsbawn and Ranger clearly warned ... the very entity nominated as a tradition needs closer interrogation as the element of invention is problematized by its very credentials and ... are made more complex as notions of the idealized past are re/packaged and re/narrated*. In fact, as Burrowes observes, it is not so much food heritage itself but the 'heritagisation processes' employed which have led to her assessment of **Edible Identities** as...*a fascinating discourse* and... *a must read for all who engage in the politics of identity formation*. Indeed in his reflection on what he terms *The salvage paradigm, reflecting a desire to rescue 'authenticity'* James Clifford insists that ... *ethnic history cannot be preserved as an intact component of modernity; rather, another history must come forth, one which includes items of past experiences*. Both publications in their different ways have challenged the notion that while the salvaging of the 'authentic' may offer a means of cultural resistance to technological hegemony and globalisation, the process is not without its consequences.

The 10th anniversary of any fruitful endeavour deserves its own claim as a cultural tradition, and the 10th issue of this *Journal* must be considered an appropriate point for its celebration and recognition. Over the past decade the *IJIH* has been true to its word in bringing to attention the excellent work of so many researchers - academics and administrators, practitioners and tradition bearers, curators and conservators – all of whom have helped to produce almost 100 articles of original work (not including the often thought-provoking book reviews). This has inspired the editorial team, the Secretariat, Dr Pamela Inder and I, to produce the *Journal*'s first index, inventorying this diversity of scholastic enquiry by volume, author and subject, as a special anniversary gift to our readers. While it is by no means comprehensive in scope but rather a work in progress, we believe that this is an important endeavour complementary to the intent and content of the *IJIH*'s several volumes, and provides a sound foundation which will aid the *Journal*'s scope and dissemination, making its resources more meaningful and accessible to those exploring its depths. Its further growth and development as a web-based resource will continue for the foreseeable future.

Finally, as we reviewed and edited this text for publication, much of the work was done at my mother's bedside as she took her last journey to meet her maker. The almost religious theme of so much of the material presented was more than a distraction, it was a consolation. I was reminded of this by the invocation of the consecration prayer as solace for her loss to our Lady of Guadalupe where we ask the Virgin Mary to teach us by her virtuous

example - *how to live, how to love, how to sacrifice and how to die*. Hyacinth Marjorie Cummins (1923-2015) as a child a member of the Legion of Mary, had clearly learned well these lessons, but most particularly by demonstrating steadfastness in her faith and enduring to the end she was undoubtedly gifted with the Grace of Final Perseverance. This script I offer in her memory.

Alissandra Cummins
Editor-in-Chief

Plate 1
Alissandra and Hyacinth Cummins, and two young fans at the farewell ceremony of the ICOM general conference, October 2004, National Folk Museum of Korea.
Photo: Cummins family.

Plate 2
Hyacinth Cummins on site visits to Korean Temples, with Linda King, Constance Allman and more young fans, October 2004.
Photo: Cummins family.

Plate 3
Hyacinth Cummins on site visit with Korean tour guide and son, October 2004.
Photo: Cummins family.

Plate 4
Hyacinth and Alissandra Cummins following the latter's inauguration as President of the International Council of Museums, Korea, October 2004.
Photo: Cummins family.