Editorial



Today, as we face the global outbreak of COVID 19, a virus demonstrating the capacity to catalyse what the German historian Eva Schlotheuber terms a 'pandemic of the mind' where misinformation proliferates and wreaks havoc, and where the lines between fact and fiction are routinely and almost nonchalantly crossed, the value that the intangible heritage holds is becoming increasingly crucial to human wellbeing. Now more than ever, the authors and editors represented herein share the vision that Volume 15 of the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* may offer some consolation for the continuity of the human spirit, and can help illuminate a thoughtful path towards sustainable development, one reliant both on science and evidence-based reasoning, as well as respect for human creativity and spiritual energy.

Almost as though planned, this volume offers insight into the varied fora in which to encounter, examine and exhibit ICH in its many different forms. Equal attention has been given to the ways in which museums, academia, and administrative policy all play a part in the transmission of ICH to future generations. Equally of interest is the variety of methodologies, structures and systems which inform these approaches, through dissemination from memorialising and transmission to popularising the diversity of human creativity and expression. A wide range of traditional practices and knowledges are showcased in the following pages – from craft to cuisine, from religion to ritual, and from sacred sites to CiteSpace, all contribute to our growing comprehension of the value and virtue of the vernacular.

Museums take centre stage in this volume of a journal that was from its inception designed to introduce and induce better understanding about the role museums could play in supporting the identification, documentation and transmitting of ICH, when provided with the opportunities, policies and resources to do so. In **Re/constructing collective memory** the authors tell the story of an abandoned coal-mining area in West Sumatra, Indonesia and the transformation of a series of industrial sites into successful heritage museums. This paper's premise is that the reinstatement and formation of community memory in a range of locations and practices associated with coal mining in Sawahlunto constitutes Intangible Cultural Heritage. While all social history museums aspire to pass on community memories to current and future generations, there appears to have been a concerted effort to reconstitute and reinstate the memories of specific demographics in the region (notably of former political prisoners -'people in chain' - sent to work in the coal mines), thus connecting the current community with its diverse roots. This gives this museum grouping a distinctive role in fostering community identity and integration.

From the largest of the Southeast Asian nations to practically the smallest, the change in focus and approach is palpable. A thorough survey of legal and institutional frameworks, as well as publications of ICH has produced one author's balanced, critical review of ICH actions in the form of a clear and comprehensive analysis in **Safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in Brunei Darussalam**. The study of the implementation of state policy, or perhaps inaction would be more to the point, reveals the dramatic decline of those activities over the last few years. The strength of this contribution rests on its state-of-the-

art assessment and possible impact on awareness for policy-making purposes. The author accurately indicates that *The strategy for safeguarding ICH requires a national ICH policy, a solid network of museums and heritage institutions, and a strong collaboration with the communities.*

A possible source of inspiration for the fraught situation outlined above may be at hand. In his review of the recently published ***Research Handbook on Contemporary Intangible Cultural Heritage*** the author is at pains to point out that a reference manual of this type which acknowledges and prioritises *contemporary intangible cultural heritage policy and practice from the perspectives of both law and heritage* will soon become an essential resource. While the majority of ICH-related publications to date have focused almost exclusively on its persistence as traditional practice, this has in fact run counterintuitively to the notion of ICH as a living cultural form which can evolve, adapt and reinvent itself over time, in varying conditions and in different contexts. Museums in particular are called on *to more effectively serve their communities by embracing equitable inclusive processes and increased community participation with those institutions expected to take an active collaborative role in the documentation, collection and presentation of contemporary intangible heritage.* For the reviewer, though the key premise that this volume presents readers is based on the rich ongoing dialogue between heritage and the law *which re-imagines intangible cultural heritage in terms of human rights, sustainability, power, trade and identity* and focuses on the way *intangible cultural heritage shapes expressive culture and contemporary identity.*

Elements of this dialogue are also reflected in **At the interface between living heritage and museum practice** where the authors have privileged us by sharing their learnings from the just-completed EU-funded Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museums project (IMP) which *aimed to be an incentive to connect the safeguarding of living heritage more closely with museum work, as well as to bring about a better understanding of the questions that arise through dialogue and collaboration between the different stakeholders and perspectives.* Their finding that much of the work involved related to the priority given to sustainable development while working through a complex maze of ethical questions in tandem with economic considerations, passionate practitioners counterbalancing power politics, and concerned communities often overshadowed by advances in cyber communications, was perhaps not unexpected. However, their insights into the collaborative processes undertaken result in the identification of a 'third space' between ICH and museums could both engender and reap the benefits of *participatory museology and the inclusion of audiences, in which shared governance, shared creation of content, a redefining of the notion of expertise, and the relation with and (self-)representation of (source) communities.* As articulated in the project's final resolution these methodologies are likely to become a resource to be treasured for generations of museums to come.

While invoking James Clifford's 'contact zones' in this reconstruction of a national museum's evolution, Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand which is the subject of one book under review, offers a virtual

model for this 'third space' identified in the preceding project with its determination to be dialogic in order to be democratic. In its design and development, the reviewer of ***Bi-culturalism...An Ethnography of Te Papa*** has found that the author has captured with compelling immediacy the passions, politics and practices aroused in the process of this museum's becoming *...a bicultural institution, democratising, inclusive, polyphonic, guaranteeing access to all and contributing to human dignity.* If, as Sharon Macdonald has suggested the act of 'just having a museum' was itself *a performative utterance of having an identity*,[1] then the decision to be bi-cultural is, as the book's author states, *a necessary phase on the journey of moving away from monocultural institutions towards indigenous empowerment, a journey ultimately bound for Maori self-determination*. The reader might then consider whether in her retelling of the Te Papa story, the author has provided a 'biography' rather than an 'ethnography' of a living entity.

Rounding out this kaleidoscope of perspectives on the role of museums with ICH, in **Reconstructing the past** one author takes us on a very different tangent in his exploration of museums of the history of science and the experimental history of science. While that discipline has traditionally used libraries and archives as its sources, the author has shifted the lens to include museum collections, using and experimenting with historical artefacts. The author describes his own case study of making and using an astronomical photometer to better understand the 'tacit knowledge' by which objects related to ICH functioned. The essential concept of 'tacit knowledge': what did people in the past have to know and which implicit skills did they use, a process which he equates with experimental archaeology or maritime expeditions with old Viking ships. It is a concept which I very much appreciate as we approach the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Ra II expeditions, conceived by Norwegian Thor Heyerdahl, the final journey between the ports of Safi, Morocco and Bridgetown, Barbados undertaken by a multinational team - in the best spirit of the United Nations - successfully demonstrated that 'tacit knowledge' of boat building, maritime conditions and navigation amongst early inhabitants probably resulted in transatlantic voyages well before Columbus set sail.

Almost in counterpoint to the highly personal interaction described above, other authors take a quite different approach to exploring the **Academics of Intangible Cultural Heritage**. For them, the global accumulation of knowledge as the subject of academic research is tracked through patterns of publication and dissemination of ICH-based information, following the adoption and implementation of the 2003 ICH *Convention* over the last fifteen years or more. The development and analysis of an ICH knowledge map utilising the CiteSpace algorithm offers intriguing insights as to the evolving hotspots of high levels of pedagogical activity, resulting from increasing levels of publishing to meet the demands of a growing audience.

1 Sharon Macdonald, 2003. 'Museums, National, Postnational and Transcultural Identities' in *Museum and Society* 1:1: p. 3.

In my view though, returning to the theme of tacit or even implicit knowledge, this construct falls somewhere within the realm of both traditional craftsmanship and traditional knowledge, matters which are addressed in several articles in this volume.

While some ICH clearly provides sustenance for the spirit, the reviewer of ***Flavours of our Memories – Os saberes das nossas memorias*** insists on the tradition of food, its preparation and presentation, its communal anticipation and consumption, as an essential signifier of identity. With the explosion of distinct regional and national cuisines seeking space on UNESCO's *Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* following the Mediterannean Diet's successful bid in 2010, the world has paid more serious attention to food, not simply as a subcategory of intangible cultural heritage, but as a complex web of living traditions that weaves its way through aspects of cultural identity and regional pride. The range of online or televised cooking or travel shows tracing the multiple roots (and routes) of everything from barbecue to pasta demonstrates the tremendous popularity of this form of heritage and the strong opinions and emotions which often erupt within communities heavily invested in its sustenance. In perhaps the most erudite and elegant writing which has found space in this *Journal*, the reviewer offers an appreciation of the author's *excavat*[ion of] *an archaeology of memory reflective of a culinary triangle …of food, self and identity*. **Flavours** for her provides a fundamental framework for *analysing the symbolic value of food and using it as a medium for the reconstruction of a Macanese border identity that has already lost its vehicular language, Patuá.* In offering praise to this *alchemist of Macanese memories*, the reviewer is both elegiac and introspective in referencing the melancholia evoked by this undertaking.

In **Remembering traditional craftsmanship** the author pays tribute to the virtually unwritten traditions of woodworking from Rize in Turkey, delineating the changing and adaptive nature of carpentry traditions from a holistic perspective; as part of the communities' longstanding interactions with cultural landscapes. The article emphasises the need for documenting oral testimonies regarding vernacular traditions, particularly wood engraving which is listed in the national inventory of the intangible cultural heritage of Turkey. But where the traditional craft has relied in the past on well-honed techniques to transform natural materials, such as river stones and timber, into domestic and decorative objects and dwellings, the author has signaled a troubling trend where invaluable skills and knowledge are gradually disappearing leading to the diminution of techniques over decades. The article tackles an important issue regarding traditional craftsmanship and transmission of knowledge; resource sustainability. The author makes the important connection that the continuity of cultural heritage is heavily reliant on the natural heritage and acknowledges that: *Due to the overconsumption of natural resources, the ministries took control of the management of rivers, forests which have been sources for human habitats*….The protection of natural resources is thus consequential for both the retention of indigenous knowledge and the safeguarding of a Turkish community's wooden traditions if the nation is to encourage 'artistry and experimental knowledge' to motivate local people to 'embrace their timber customs.' In particular, rather than focusing solely on the master craftsmen who still retain important

knowledge, the paper also pays attention to the consumers of the crafts, who actually shape the basic foundation for the transmission of the tradition. Oral traditions are invaluable for the retention of the constant sense of identity and continuity embodied within the whole tradition.

The multiple authors of **The Aceh Method** present a more methodological discussion on the importance of oral testimonies in archiving the endangered languages of vernacular architecture. The study is based on reviewing in detail the related literature, and on the authors' current pilot studies at two sites in Indonesia. The Method developed from an interdisciplinary approach to document, record, archive and interpret vernacular architecture and its complex environments, is fundamentally collaborative in nature. The interactive, grassroots development it embodies is constructive. It will not only elaborate the theory and method of archiving the existing vernacular architecture, but may also enhance strategies for reconstructing vernacular architectures in communities that are in the process of recovering from disasters, hence contributing to the enrichment of ICH safeguarding theory. It may be that, as one reviewer argued, *oral history is not only a separate element to maintain the craftsmanship tradition, it should actually be identified as an integrated component of the tradition or ICH per se*. In essence, oral history represents presence, encounter and interconnection. The moment when you *know* absolutely that you are not alone in your mission.

In a highly original paper which similarly points to the importance of documentation and shared stewardship, the author of **Contemporary *camereros***, treats to the whole subject of stewardship or sponsorship of religious images by individuals in the Philippines from pre-Hispanic days, through the period of Spanish rule and colonialism's impact on the link between material culture and intangible cultural heritage, into the contemporary era. Sustained as one colleague opined by *belief systems that have morphed from traditional folk beliefs to Christian-inflected piety, the author demonstrates the practice's relatedness to changing social structures and patterns of wealth distribution in the Philippines*. By combining the experience and vision of 'insider ethnographer', this manuscript depicts a clear developing line of a religious image sponsorship system in the Philippine tradition, from the perspective of art history. The demonstration of the provenance, transformation and recreation of the system provides a vivid picture of the dynamic history of the element concerned. Questions concerning the historical impact of the system on the artistic features of the religious images, the socio-cultural function and heterogeneity of the system, the possible otherness of some *camareros*, and the reason for them to compromise on a shared identity, still leave room for further exploration. However application of social media for the purpose of continual contact, encouraging self-education and transmission of knowledge, offers an intriguing filip to this offering and delineates multiple complementary paths for communicating heritage.

The effects of colonialism and the introduction of the Christian imperative is knowledgeably explored in another article about the practice of ***Ofo*: tangible and intangible heritage** in Igboland, Nigeria. This paper

describes the essential elements of *ofo* and its multiple resonances and meanings in Igbo society. The authors, as both adherents and academics, assert that *Ofo* is *the foundation of all the basic moral principles in Igbo traditional ethics, such as truth, justice, innocence, uprightness and moral purity.* The authors further opine that *the two alien institutions – Christianity and colonialism – presented a tapestry of ironies as they adopted distinctive techniques of manipulating and controlling the people* through deliberate attempts to obliterate symbols of status such as the *ofo*. The authors thus find it their moral duty to interrogate the impact of Christianity (even in the contemporary era) on the indigenous belief systems, structures and social values through the operation of *ofo*, and illustrate some evolution in Igbo social relations as a result.

The oppressive combination of Christianity and colonialism made itself felt in many other parts of the world, in differing forms and amongst a diverse array of peoples. As the authors of ***Duni zuz 'utilnilh,* 'tanning moose-hide'** assert in their detailed explication of the tradition of animal-hide tanning in Canada, it was perhaps most felt amongst the indigenous groups and tribes whose sustainable practices of living communally with nature soon brought them into conflict with the commercialising systems of the imperial industrial engine. This along with the assimilationist motives spelt out in the residential schools' policy which was *to separate children from their parents until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic* has had a devastating impact on the lives, languages and legacies of Canada's First Peoples. To redress such actions, amounting almost to cultural genocide, has been a long road to recover some of what was lost, but as the authors indicate, *Indigenous cultures in Canada are reviving elements of their cultural heritage. As such, numerous Indigenous communities are working with higher learning institutions to safeguard elements of their heritage*. This article offers an object lesson for those who have been trying to incorporate traditional methods of teaching in the field of ICH with western styles of pedagogy. What the authors make clear, however, is that for such models to succeed, simultaneous processes of decolonising and indigenising academia must be consciously (and even conscientiously) undertaken. *The combination of theory and praxis as well as the learning-by-doing and learning-by-reading helped validate to the students that a significant portion of cultural heritage elements are actually embodied through the practices – and not the products* – of Canada's first peoples. *Theoretical frameworks of current policies … and revitalisation approaches* were introduced through 'embodied' pedagogy combined with collaborative approaches of working together, *where the two styles of transmitting knowledge and heritage can merge symbiotically to complement each other for the benefit of enriching Indigenous intangible cultural heritage.*

Similar considerations of collaborative processes in defining and interpreting both natural and indigenous ICH find resonance in **Living universe or GeoFacts: stone arches in Utah National Parks** where the epistemological divide is drawn in sharp relief. This issues lies at the heart of so much of the research reflected in this publication that it might seem unnecessary to emphasise its presence. And yet this is the critical issue for many heritage practitioners today as they seek to put in place, adhere to and honour their

communities by embracing equitable inclusive processes and increased community participation in the valuing and safeguarding of the heritage which informs sustainable professional practice. The authors of this article acknowledge upfront the differences in the way that *Geologists interpret arches as inert stones that have been eroded away by natural forces, while Native Americans see arches as having been formed by the Creator as stone portals designed to provide travel to other dimensions*. Each perspective has drawn on conflicting epistemological premises which support the competing truths of their stipulated GeoFacts. This division has created significant dissonances in the ways these monumental natural sites are interpreted, managed and utilised. Through a major project of systematic interviews with hundreds of native practitioners, the project seeks to reverse the privileges of visibility, values and voices and demonstrates how ICH could make tangible heritage come alive and be meaningful. It demonstrates the possibility of combining two approaches, but its implementation is difficult to resolve because the *heritage value of the environment is not inherently embedded in the resources themselves. Finding heritage meaning(s) in the environment thus requires conversation with the cultural groups who understand and value it/them.* One key heritage value embodied by the stone arches *is the notion of portals* [as] *a fundamental component of Native American epistemological beliefs in multiple and simultaneously existing dimensions of space and time. In essence these living portals are considered 'self-voiced', meaning that they actually talk to Indian people.*

In her recent article for the Financial Times, 'The Pandemic is a Portal,' Arundhati Roy writes, *Our minds are still racing back and forth, longing for a return to 'normality', trying to stitch our future to our past and refusing to acknowledge the rupture. But the rupture exists.* As she points out *Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data bank and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.* For me, in this (almost) post-pandemic period, Volume 15 of this *Journal* can be regarded as *a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.* One we can choose to *walk through lightly, ready to imagine another world*. And indeed be *ready to fight for it.*

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