

Crossing Boundaries: Linking Intangible Heritage, Cultural Landscapes and Identity

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ABSTRACT

After the establishment of nation states, the process of decolonisation and the formation of supranational unions after the Second World War, the concept of intangible heritage became the response to the heavy focus of heritage discourse of protecting monuments and sites. In 1992, UNESCO recognised “Cultural Landscapes” as the combined work of nature and man, establishing the important role of people in shaping the land. Cultural communities started to be integrated to the process of heritage making, which includes their associated traditional customs and spiritual beliefs. At the end of the 20th century, the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted in 2003, which was aimed at promoting cultural diversity and protecting traditional practices, belief systems, knowledge & skills of communities, amidst the formation of homogenous global societies.

This paper looks into the intangible heritage of some cultural landscapes inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List, showing the deep-seated connection between people’s identities and traditions that are found in heritage sites. It identifies cultural identity as a central concept to the discourse of heritage, both in its tangible and intangible forms. It points out to the need for a holistic view that practitioners and researchers now require to document cultural practices and protect heritage sites, which goes beyond the confines of traditional academic disciplines. Comprehensively mapping the cultural significance of different heritage typologies can provide a deeper understanding of the formation of identities of cultural communities.

KEYWORDS

World Heritage, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Cultural Landscape, Cultural Identity

DEVELOPMENT OF GLOBAL HERITAGE DISCOURSE

The definition of what constitutes as heritage has evolved over the last few decades of the 20th century. From a heavy focus on tangible, monumental forms, dedicated to what Richard Engelhardt refers to as the three traditional Ps - “Princes, Priests and Politicians”, a fourth P signifying “People”, has emerged as a growing force in heritage discourse (Taylor, 2008). After the two World Wars, policies and academic studies on heritage conservation, particularly in Europe and North America was primarily focused on saving abandoned buildings, restoring edifices damaged by war or documenting those that have become obsolete because of changing times. Several international charters and conventions were formulated to preserve cultural monuments, such as the 1954 Hague Convention (Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict) which protects historic buildings in times of war and conflict, the 1964 Venice Charter (ICOMOS International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites) which focuses on conserving and restoring monuments, and the famous 1972 World Heritage Convention (UNESCO’s Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage) which identifies cultural and natural heritage sites of “Outstanding Universal Value”.

During the end of the twentieth century, exploration on the concepts of permanence/ impermanence, static/living and the role of people in constructing meaning became part of heritage discourse (Ruggles & Silverman, 2009). In 1992, UNESCO recognised that “Cultural Landscapes” as the combined work of nature and man, which identified the important role of human societies in shaping the land. The concept also embraced the diversity of interactions between man and the environment, highlighting people’s role in sustainable use of the land, preserving traditional techniques of land use and maintaining biological diversity (UNESCO, 2008). Such recognition of public heritage placed cultural communities as part of the process of heritage making, celebrating the importance of people’s associated traditional customs and spiritual beliefs.

Cultural landscapes are becoming important topics of study of heritage as an exploration of the morphology of the land resulting from the interplay between customs, cultural values and land-use practices (Wylie, 2007). Three main categories of cultural landscapes have been identified by the Operational Guidelines of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 2008). The first category is the clearly defined landscape designed and created intentionally by man, wherein gardens and parklands are good examples. Second is the organically evolved landscape, resulting from an

evolution of social, administrative, economic and religious imperatives. There are two sub-categories below this, which is a relict landscape and a continuing landscape. The last category is the associative cultural landscape, which possesses important religious, cultural or artistic associations to nature. The manifestation of material culture on these sites may be insignificant or even absent (ibid).

Although the role of people as an active shaper of tangible heritage sites was identified with the concept of cultural landscapes, it was the UNESCO “Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore” in 1989, which specifically targetted the preservation of people’s intangible heritage. The Recommendation considered measures to be taken to identify, preserve, disseminate and protect “traditional culture and folklore” and encouraged international collaboration to facilitate such measures (Bouchenaki, 2003). The preamble of the Recommendation states its rationale:

***Considering** that folklore forms part of the universal heritage of humanity and that it is a powerful means of bringing together different peoples and social groups and of asserting their cultural identity,*

***Noting** its social, economic, cultural and political importance, its role in the history of the people, and its place in contemporary culture,*

***Underlining** the specific nature and importance of folklore as an integral part of cultural heritage and living culture,*

***Recognizing** the extreme fragility of the traditional forms of folklore, particularly those aspects relating to oral tradition and the risk that they might be lost...*

The 1989 Recommendation became the starting point of understanding the importance of intangible heritage in forming identities and promoting diversity of living cultures around the world. Equally important declarations after that were the 1999 UNESCO “Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage”, which identified more than eighty forms of cultural spaces and expressions submitted by UNESCO Member States, and the 2001 Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity which highlighted that each tradition is equally valuable as part of humanity’s intangible heritage (Bouchenaki, 2003; Rugs & Silverman, 2009). The 2003 UNESCO “Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage” became the culmination of several international policies mentioned earlier that was aimed at promoting cultural diversity and protecting traditional practices, belief systems, knowledge & skills of communities, amidst the formation of homogenous global societies. This convention became an equivalent counterpart of the World Heritage

Convention, which identifies global representative lists, lists which highlight the need for urgent safeguarding, creates international cooperation, and provides assistance mechanisms to State Parties that need such support.

INTANGIBLE HERITAGE & CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

The recognition of intangible heritage paved the way for a global thrust of protecting living traditions and promoted a bottom-up approach where there is an envisioned active involvement of local communities in identifying and protecting heritage sites. For World Heritage Sites in particular, such connections to intangible heritage are reflected under two inscription criteria. The first is *criterion iii*, which states that sites that “*bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared*” can be a World Heritage Site (UNESCO, 2008). Sites inscribed under this criterion are mainly archaeological sites or cultural landscapes. For example, several sites in Muharraq City, Bahrain serves as a testimony to the glory of the pearling industry which flourished in the city from the 2nd century to the 1930s at the Persian Gulf. Another example is the Konso highlands in Ethiopia, which is a cultural landscape that contains stone walled fortified settlements which are still used by the Konso people up to this day. The Konso have a continuing social practice of erecting stone or wooden stele (columnar decorated slabs) to commemorate ancestors, heroes and fighters (Assoma, 2010). Lastly, the Sacred Kaya Forests are protected sites in Kenya that are revered as the abode of ancestors. The forests are seen as integral part of the Mijikenda peoples’ identity.

Another World Heritage criterion associated with intangible heritage is *criterion vi*, which states that sites which are “*directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas or with beliefs, or with and literary works of outstanding universal significance*” can be inscribed on the World Heritage List (UNESCO, 2008). Examples of these sites are the Coffee Cultural Landscapes of Colombia inscribed for its tradition of collaboratively farmed coffee cultivation, some of which are farmed at difficult mountain conditions; the Vatican City, which is directly linked with the history of Christianity and is a well known religious pilgrimage centre for Catholics; and Mount Fuji in Japan, which is inscribed as a continuing source of inspiration for poets, prose and works of art since ancient times.

There are links between intangible heritage and identity which are recognisable in cultural landscapes (Caballero, 2015). This paper will discuss in greater detail three World Heritage Sites in Asia that have intangible heritage which have been identified by the State. Some of the ICH elements identified have been included to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity while others are recognised in the national or local registers. These examples will illustrate different types of connection between the intangible heritage, cultural landscapes and the identity of particular groups of people.

Intangible Cultural Heritage, Cultural Landscapes and Indigenous Identity

The identity and intangible heritage of many indigenous peoples have a direct connection to the cultural landscapes they derive their meanings from. Ken Taylor (2008) believes that the landscape is the repository of intangible values and human meanings that nurture the existence of people. It serves as the nerve centre of personal and collective memories and are inseparable to cultural identity. The Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras, for example, is directly linked to the formation of cultural practices of the Ifugao people who have resided there for the last 2,000 years. The site was the first cultural landscape that was inscribed to the World Heritage List in 1995 and it represents the harmonious blending of the physical, social, cultural, economic, religion and political environment of the Ifugao. The rice terraces is a living landscape that serves as a testimony to a sustainable and communal system of rice production in the mountain region. There are five inscribed clusters designated as World Heritage, which are the Nagacadan terraces, the Hugduan terraces, the central Mayoyao terraces, the Bangaan terraces, and the Batad terraces. These terraced pond fields are composed of stone or mud walls carefully crafted to the natural terrain of the hills and mountains, and they contain an elaborate irrigation and farming system, which is attuned to the existing biological resources of the agro-ecosystem. Aside from its World Heritage recognition, the intangible heritage of the Ifugao have been recognised in other UNESCO registers (Caballero, 2016).

Two ICH elements have been recognised as part of the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The first element is the Hudhud epic chants inscribed to UNESCO in 2008. *Hudhud* is a manner of chanting an epic performed by women, which predominantly describes Ifugao wealth, love, marriage and heroism (Peralta, 2012). There are at least two hundred narratives, and they are chanted on four occasions: weeding the fields, during the rice harvest, during wakes and re-burials where bones of the dead are venerated. The second element is the

tugging ritual of *punnuk*, which was part of a transnational inscription of tugging rituals from the Philippines, South Korea, Vietnam and Cambodia. The tugging rituals were included in the Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2015. This ritual activity (*huowah*) has three parts and is observed after the completion of rice harvest (Respicio, 2013). The first part is the *baki*, which is a ritual divination presided by the village priest using 3-5 chickens or a pig as a sacrifice. The second part is the *inum*, which is a communal drinking of rice wine. The third part, the *punnuk*, happens the day after, in which able bodied men from three communities would participate in a tug-of-war at the embankment of the Hapao river and compete with opposing or rival communities. Such activities strengthen community sportsmanship and celebrate the bounty of the harvest season.

Other intangible heritage of the Ifugao such as the *Alim* epic chant, death rituals such as *Pu'al*, *Bogwa* and *Him'ung*, the *Uhag* ritual, the prestigious wedding ritual *Uyauy*, the prestigious *Hagabi* rites, several agricultural and harvest rites, and the meat sharing system called the *Hamboki'an* have been documented by the National Commission on Culture and the Arts together with the UNESCO International Information and Networking for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific (ICHCAP) (Peralta, 2012). All these are part of a bigger investigation of intangible heritage, not only of the Ifugao, but of other cultural communities in the country and covers all the five domains of cultural expressions.

The review done by Fernanado Zialcita (2015) highlighted serious threats to the cultural landscape's long term viability due to the diminishing desire of many Ifugao people to practice their cultural traditions. This is due to several factors, including social change brought about by the eradication of pagan beliefs, changing educational aspirations, loss of traditional knowledge of farming and building techniques, participation to the market-based economy in lowland areas and outward migration of younger people. Understanding how to preserve both tangible and intangible heritage in the Cordilleras need to look at sustainable incentives that would strengthen the cultural practices of the Ifugao. Strategies should be linked with traditional farming methods, which will benefit the long term health of the cultural landscape, and may also affirm the cultural identity of the cultural community.

Intangible Cultural Heritage, Cultural Landscapes and National Identity

Laurajane Smith, a well known proponent of Critical Heritage Studies, identified that the act of experiencing a place is also an act of heritage. Cultural landscapes provide a setting and a sense of

occasion for people to pass on and receive cultural meaning, memories and knowledge, even if the place does not serve as the usual domain of the people who associate with the site (Smith, 2006). The landscape can serve as an embodiment of a larger shared memory, a place of remembering and of performance to connect with a particular national identity. This type of connection between a cultural landscape and intangible heritage is reflected in Orkhon Valley, Mongolia. Orkhon Valley is a cultural landscape that was inscribed to the World Heritage List in 2004. The site covers vast grasslands which was the home of successive nomadic cultures from prehistoric times, which eventually became the centre of the Mongol Empire led by Genghis Khan in 1220 AD. Contained within the 120,000 hectares of grassland are a number of archaeological remains of the empire that linked East and West across the Eurasian landmass. The site is associated with the strong culture of nomadic pastoralism that is highly regarded in Mongolian life, and is considered as a noble way of living in harmony with the land.

Nomadic pastoralism is central to the significance of Orkhon Valley. As an organically formed cultural landscape that was crafted over centuries of nomadic life, it has greatly defined the Mongolian lifestyle not just inside the World Heritage Site, but also the entire country (Caballero, 2014). Several ICH elements in Mongolia are part of the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which celebrate such a lifestyle. For example, the traditional craftsmanship of the Mongolian *Ger* and its associated customs was inscribed in the Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2013. It showcases the various traditional enterprises of wood carving, painting, sewing, and felt making that are part of creating the round structure of the portable home. *Naadam*, the Mongolian national festival celebrated from the 11th to the 13th of July every year was also inscribed in the Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2010. This festival focuses on three traditional games - horse racing, archery and wrestling, all of which are intrinsically connected to the military preparations of nomadic Mongols training for battle. The performances of *Khöömei* overtone singing, the traditional folk song of *Urtiin duo* and the Mongolian epic *Mongol Tuuli*, which is regarded as the living encyclopaedia of Mongolian oral traditions are performed during social events like the *Naadam*. The three ICH elements are also included in the Intangible Cultural Heritage List.

Many of these knowledge associated with nomadic life is unfortunately disappearing in Mongolia. Historically and until the 1990s, Mongolian pastoralism was carefully defined, structured with a system of user-rights and mobile system of land-use (Sneath, 2000). Starting the 1990s, when

Mongolia became a democratic country with a free-market economy, there was a shift from pastoral life to commercial herding. Herding cooperatives were removed and collective assets were privatised, which had long lasting impacts to the traditional herding regulations, which eventually created a decline to long distance transhumance and seasonal movement of pastoralists (Caballero, 2014). Many people also decided to live in cities and many of the nomadic cultural practices were no longer considered as important activities needed for daily life.

With the rapid changes in society and shifts in living patterns of younger generations, documenting cultural practices and identifying traditional bearers was important in protecting Mongolia's intangible heritage. In 2011, the Mongolian National Commission for UNESCO concluded a study that elaborated the national inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage. It highlighted 88 ICH elements which formed part of the country's national representative list of intangible heritage. The study also identified 35 individuals with high-level skills and were acknowledged as official intangible cultural heritage bearers (IRCI, 2011; UNESCO Mongolia, 2009). This process helped the national government of Mongolia as it expanded its network of experts and stakeholders, and it created permanent operational mechanisms and information system for documentation, while involving the public around different parts of the country (ibid). Notably, Mongolia has constantly updated its Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, with one new element incorporated to the list each year since the completion of the project.

Intangible Cultural Heritage, Cultural Landscapes and Hybrid Identity

There are cultural landscapes that represent the intangible heritage of people with hybrid (mixed or hyphenated) identities. Hybridity in this context, refers to what Nikos Papastergiadis (1997) defines as the open acknowledgement that identities are constructed through the negotiation of differences, while acknowledging the presence of gaps, contradictions and fissures. These identities capture the cultural values of different distinct cultural groups, combining several sets of values. Cultural landscapes that represent migrant or hyphenated histories have layered meanings derived from the identities of different groups of people. These places contribute to the diversification of cultural expressions and transforms societies while multiplying knowledge of receiving societies (Sussemihl, 2012). The Macao Special Administrative Region and its historic centre is an example of this, showing the influence of both Eastern and Western cultures reflected in the urban fabric and its people.

Macao is a strategic port city with over 400 years of history of Portuguese and Chinese interchange. It is a testimony to the first and still continuing encounter between China and the West, bringing about international trade in the region. Within its historic centre are streets, religious, residential and public Chinese and Portuguese buildings reflecting the mixing of the East and West showing a unique social, religious, cultural and urban mixture. The ensemble of twenty-two buildings and public spaces representing the old trading port city was inscribed as part of the World Heritage List in 2005. As a political entity, Portugal transferred Macao's sovereignty back to China in 1999, which changed the economic priorities of the city from a port city to an entertainment and casino hub. Currently, the city's historical significance has been overshadowed by its casino industry and a number of its older buildings have been demolished, while the building façades are maintained as empty shells of their previous forms (Pereira & Caballero, 2016). The tension between purposeful construction of historic-looking façades to create 'Vegas in Asia' casinos versus the rampant demolition of Macao's older townscape, rich with Eastern and Western influences while protecting the *Spirit of Place* is a topic of great debate in the city (Imon et al, 2008) .

In terms of the culture of Macao, the centuries of intermingling between the Chinese (mostly Cantonese) and Portuguese have produced a unique culture known as the Macanese. Loosely defined, the Macanese are offsprings who were born from interracial marriages between the Portuguese and local Chinese (Noronha & Chaplin, 2012). Their unique culture is anchored in several cultural practices: they are born in Macau, believe in the Catholic faith and they have a linguistic knowledge with the Portuguese-based creole, called the *Patuá* (ibid). There is limited research about the culture of the Macanese and the *patuá* is considered to be an endangered language because of the switch of many Macanese to Cantonese and English as the lingua franca. UNESCO has even classified *patuá* as a "critically endangered" language, with only 50 remaining fluent speakers, as documented in 2000 (Carvalho, 2015).

The government body mandated to protect the heritage of Macao is the Cultural Affairs Bureau. The bureau is in charge of implementing the Cultural Heritage Protection Law of 2013, which protects both cultural heritage and intangible heritage and provides mechanisms for inventory formulation and emergency protection (Cultural Affairs Bureau, 2017). For the moment, the bureau has identified ten ICH elements of which, in 2012, two cultural practices of the Macanese people have been included in the local list: the Patuá Theatre and the Macanese Gastronomy. The theatre performances capture the unique characteristics of *patuá* and provides satires and comedies

pertaining to prevailing social issues. It is considered a favourite pastime for many local residents and articulates the sentiments of the Macanese to their homeland of Macao (ibid). On the other hand, the Macanese Gastronomy, which is a fusion cuisine based on Portuguese cooking methods, is widely recognised. It incorporates African, Malaysian, Indian and local Chinese methods of cooking to produce a unique taste that is the by-product of the sailing culture developed in Macao. Techniques such as baking, roasting and grilling are incorporated, and materials such as coconut, turmeric, cinnamon and milk are used, which is not typical of Chinese cooking.

Macanese culture and the urban fabric of Macao is slowly changing. The traces of intangible and cultural heritage brought about by the interchange of people from the east and west are now being replaced with new forms - English and Cantonese, serving as the new lingua franca and casinos with faux European (Venetian, Lisboa, Parisian, etc) or replicated facades are changing the historical urban landscape of the city. Although intangible cultural assets such as food and gastronomy can easily be passed on to future generations through recipes and oral transmission, other aspects of intangible heritage should also be identified to celebrate the unique character of Macao. Knowledge on hybrid construction techniques and unique architectural expressions can help conserve the urban fabric and the World Heritage Site, while deeper study of patuá can highlight the contemporary Macanese world view and migrant history. It is important for heritage practitioners to map the interconnected histories, migrant identities and rich heritage values to understand the hybrid narratives that are part of the unique character of Macao. Using holistic mapping tools will help present-day Macau to be understood and better managed (Pereira & Caballero, 2016).

CONCLUSION

This paper provided historical references to the development of the concept of intangible heritage in the last several decades. It shows the starting point of intangible heritage as a concept intertwined with cultural heritage, which has moved away from monumental expressions of architecture to people-oriented expressions. Several examples in the World Heritage List have been identified which shows the presence of intangible heritage in cultural heritage sites. The history of intangible heritage also indicates that the changing global politics drive the understanding and priority of heritage, as seen in the formation of various international policies and conventions of culture. Cultural landscapes, the combined works of nature and man, serve as the meeting point of tangible and intangible heritage. Currently, there are signs of shifting perception on heritage studies which situates the identification and safeguarding of heritage as part of political discourse, embedded in

society's web of power relations. Those whose cultures are seen as more important are saved and protected, while those cultures who are in the fringes of society are deliberately or unintentionally forgotten.

The rice terraces of the Cordilleras, the Mongolian pastoral lands and the historic centre of Macao show different types of interconnected relationships between intangible heritage, cultural landscapes and identity. Some cultural landscapes resonate with particular cultural communities who are traditional owners of the land, much like what is seen with the Ifugao people of the Cordilleras. Other landscapes reinforce a feeling of belonging to a national identity, similar to how Mongolians connect to with pastoral lands and the perceived noble way of nomadic living. There are also places that show the character of hybrid identities, reflecting the layered history of people from mixed societies, much like what is seen in the Macao. All these examples are affected by globalisation, where economic needs, ways of living and value systems are different from traditional ways of life. In the Cordilleras, the changing lifestyles of the Ifugaos have directly created a decline on the agricultural practices crucial to the preservation of the rice terraces. While the free market economy that Mongolia embraced when it became a democratic country changed the patterns of traditional pastoralism. This made people start to forget the rich intangible heritage related to the cultural practice of pastoral nomadism. The return of Macao to China in 1999 and the push for economic development through casinos have promoted architectural façadism over preserving traditional architectural built forms, influenced by the cultural interchange of the East and West.

This paper highlights that cultural identity is central to the discourse of heritage, both in its tangible and intangible forms. Heritage represents the underlying norms and values of society, which manifests as cultural practices, built forms and systems of harnessing the land. As Marie-Theres Albert (2006) opines, heritage has the function of creating, maintaining and forming identities and destruction of tangible heritage and disregard of intangible heritage accompanies the destruction of identities. In order to sustainably safeguard heritage, it is important for researchers and practitioners to engage in interdisciplinary thinking to holistically analyse heritage in all its forms as part of a system integrated to the different aspects of cultural life. Collaborations from different disciplines can help shed new light and meanings to the diverse lives of people around the world.

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