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# ICH Courier

Volume 61

Intangible Cultural Heritage Courier of Asia and the Pacific



**ICH and  
Rural  
Revitalization**

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Bangladesh's floating agriculture landscape embodies the value of sustainable traditional agriculture that revitalizes rural areas through intangible heritage © Shutterstock



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Rural areas are vibrant cultural spaces where traditions and community identities thrive, bridging the past and the future. Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) plays a vital role in fostering a sense of belonging and solidarity among rural communities, serving as a key driver of sustainable development.

In this issue, we explore how ICH connects tradition and modernity in rural contexts. We examine diverse strategies that help communities overcome challenges and unlock their potential. In particular, we highlight the role of traditional knowledge and practices in addressing contemporary issues such as climate change and urbanization. These examples demonstrate how ICH contributes not only to the sustainability of rural economies and environments but also to revitalizing community dynamics. Through these stories, we aim to showcase how ICH strengthens the resilience and creativity of rural communities while fostering sustainable development and social cohesion.

We invite our readers to delve into this issue and discover how ICH offers practical opportunities for rural residents to design a sustainable future. We hope you find inspiration in these insights and are encouraged to take meaningful action in your own communities. **ICH**

## ICH Courier

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An aerial photograph showing a narrow waterway in Bangladesh. The water is filled with floating agricultural beds made of water hyacinths. Three wooden boats are visible, each with a person working. The boats are filled with baskets of harvested water hyacinths. The water is dark, and the surrounding land is visible on the right side.

# ICH and Rural revitalization

Rural areas are vibrant hubs where traditions and community identities flourish. In this issue, we explore how ICH fosters a sense of belonging and solidarity among rural community members, while driving sustainable development and revitalizing rural life.

# Floating Agriculture in Bangladesh: A Climate-Smart Heritage of Resilience and Sustainability

Saifur Rashid

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## Introduction

Bangladesh, with a population of approximately 165 million (BBS, 2023), is often described as a country of villages. These villages, typically located in lowlands and tucked away from main roads, are characterized by lush landscapes, sprawling fields, and close-knit communities surrounded by rivers, homestead forests and farmlands. The village life in Bangladesh is deeply rooted in agriculture, a practice that shapes the daily lives and culture of millions.

In recent decades, despite challenges such as urban migration, poor infrastructure, limited education and healthcare facilities, and environmental degradation, rural communities in Bangladesh have made strides to improve local infrastructure, address climate change, ensure food security, and reduce economic disparities. They have achieved this by relying on their time-honored local knowledge and indigenous technologies. Among these initiatives, the floating agriculture of the southern floodplains of Bangladesh stands out as particularly remarkable. Recognized as one of the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) by the Food and

Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in 2015, it is a testament to resilience and innovation.

## An Adaptive Strategy to Climate Change

Bangladesh has become one of the most climate-vulnerable countries globally, facing acute weather extremes and gradual environmental changes, including frequent floods, prolonged monsoons, saline water intrusion and waterlogging. In response to these climate threats, many Bangladeshi farmers have adopted floating agriculture and saline-resistant crops as adaptive strategies. Over the past two decades, this indigenous wetland-based agricultural practice has gained recognition as a form of “climate-smart agriculture.”

## Innovation Rooted in Traditions

Locally known as *vasoman chash*, floating agriculture involves crafting organic beds from water hyacinth, bamboo, and other natural materials that float on waterlogged fields. These beds, typically constructed during the monsoon, act as platforms for cultivating a variety of plants and vegetables. In addition to vegetables, tuber

crops such as turmeric, potato, ginger, and arum thrive better on these floating beds than in soil. According to local communities, this agricultural practice has been in use in parts of Bangladesh for 200-300 years.

## A Unique Example of Gender Based Production

Floating agriculture engages community members as laborers, including men, women, and children. During the peak season (June to December), men typically build the beds and transplant seedlings, while women and children handle seed preparation, *meda*-making (bed construction), and maintenance of the floating beds. Women and children also earn wages through their contributions to the *meda* process, achieving a degree of economic independence and bolstering family income. This practice empowers communities by promoting gender equality and active participation while simultaneously strengthening the local economy.

## Economic and Social Impacts

Floating agriculture has become an economic lifeline for many rural communities, enabling them to adapt to climate change without relocating. Beyond serving as an alternative to traditional farming, it has fostered community-based initiatives where farmers share resources, techniques, and knowledge, thus promoting social cohesion and mutual support. The expansion of floating agriculture provides families with extra income during the lean season and encourages a culture of sharing, as surplus vegetables are often distributed to extended families, kin groups and villagers free of charge, fostering fraternity and goodwill.

## A Sustainable Practice

Floating agriculture is now a model of sustainable resource use and organic farming. The beds, primarily made from water hyacinth—a plant often considered waste—transform discarded materials into valuable assets, reducing the need for chemical fertilizers. This sustainable approach helps communities secure food and economic resources without harming the environment, making floating agriculture an eco-friendly adaptation to climate change. Furthermore, the decomposed residues from the beds, known as *pochla*, become organic fertilizer for future planting cycles, enhancing soil fertility and promoting resource reuse.

## Cultural Heritage and Climate Resilience

Floating agriculture, deeply rooted in indigenous knowledge, is recognized as an intangible cultural heritage (ICH). It has given rise to a new economic supply chain in the region, while fostering collaboration among family members, neighbors, and local residents. This practice strengthens community bonds, promotes social inclusion, and revitalizes the essence of rural life.



Woman preparing *meda* with seedlings before transferring to floating beds © Tasnim Khan Lamisa

The transition to floating agriculture is now reshaping the rural communities and economies of Gopalganj, Barishal and Pirojpur. By integrating traditional knowledge with adaptive farming practices, floating agriculture has emerged as a vital, eco-friendly solution for Bangladesh, offering a replicable model for climate change adaptation and economic resilience worldwide.

## Conclusion

The floating agriculture of Bangladesh illustrates how local farmers are combining traditional knowledge with innovative, sustainable practices. It demonstrates the power of indigenous wisdom in fostering climate resilience and enabling rural communities to thrive amid environmental and economic challenges. By encouraging community participation and supporting shared economic and social experiences, floating agriculture safeguards traditional values while adapting to modern realities. This unique practice highlights the potential for integrating culture, sustainability, and innovation to address global challenges effectively. **ICH**

This article is based on a study partially supported by IRCI, Japan and EBS, South Korea and assisted by Tahsin Momin Antor and Tasnim Khan Lamisa.



Germination of seedlings in *meda* before putting on the floating beds © Tahsin Momin Antor



Farmers preparing floating beds for agriculture © Tahsin Momin Antor

# The Role of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Promoting Rural Tourism in Uzbekistan

**Sukhrob Kurbanov**

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The people of Uzbekistan have a rich historical legacy intricately linked to the history of Central Asia. Uzbekistan is a living archive, home to rich historical and archaeological finds from different eras. Its culture is considered to be one of the most colourful and distinctive in the East, having evolved over centuries by absorbing the traditions of various peoples.

Alongside economic and political reforms, special attention has been paid to restoring the spiritual and cultural values of the people. Spiritual development of society and the formation of national self-awareness have become integral to strengthening Uzbekistan's independence. Since 1991, national and religious holidays such as Navruz, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha have been revitalized. Historic mosques have been restored, and new ones constructed. A number of educational institutions, including Tashkent Islamic University, have also been established.

Uzbekistan places special emphasis on safeguarding, studying, and promoting its intangible cultural heritage (ICH) while broadly showcasing its national values. This priority is well noted in the 'Uzbekistan-2030' Strategy. Rich in historical heritage, Uzbekistan is a treasure trove of cultural heritage, many of which are inscribed on UNESCO's lists.



Gelan village in Kashkadarya region © Ildar Sadykov



Melon seller  
© Sultonbek  
Dekhonov

Uzbekistan's unique architectural and historical landmarks are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Millions of tourists flock to visit the medieval buildings of Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva, and Shakhrisabz. Equally significant is its ICH, inscribed on the UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. From the legendary pilaf to the art of lacquer miniature painting, Uzbekistan boasts 15 elements on the List.

Much of Uzbekistan's ICH is rooted in rural areas, offering immense potential for developing rural tourism. This type of tourism plays a vital role in fostering economic and social development. Its success, however, hinges on factors such as infrastructure, regional attractiveness, and accessibility.

Recently, rural ecotourism has gained popularity in Uzbekistan. One key reason is the growing desire among tourists for environmentally friendly and sustainable travel experiences. For urban residents, rural tourism provides an opportunity to show rural life to their children. Foreign tourists, in turn, are drawn to the region's rural charm, cultural richness, and traditional cuisine.

ICH, preserving historical ties and folk wisdom.

As rural tourism expands in Uzbekistan, new historical districts and cultural sites are emerging. Festivals and cultural events attract international tourists eager to learn about Uzbek history, traditions, culture, crafts and art. Prominent events include the traditional Silk and Spices Festival in Bukhara, the Sharq Taronalari International Music Festival in Samarkand, the Makom Arts International Forum in Shakhrisabz, the Games of the Bogatyrs martial arts competition in Khiva and the Pilgrimage Tourism Forum in Bukhara.

Uzbekistan's diverse natural landscapes and rich cultural heritage make rural tourism particularly promising. Regions offer unique setting with proximity to natural monuments and cultural sites, as well as opportunities for ecotourism and cultural enrichment. Visitors are captivated by the country's picturesque scenery, traditional architecture, and welcoming communities, often surrounded by poplar and mulberry trees, along with donkeys and camels, and scrumptious oriental feast. Guest houses are established in villages, or *kishlaks*, provide programs such as the *kelin-salom* ceremony, honey festival, *kumys* shows, and interactive cooking preparation for national dishes like *kozon-patyr*, *kurt-davo*, *kozon-kobob*, and *kozon-non*, among others.

Rural tourism significantly contributes to economic growth by creating jobs, retaining local populations, enhancing cultural awareness, and promoting the production of eco-friendly products. ICH plays a pivotal role in advancing national crafts, trades, customs and rituals. For example, Margilan, a city on the Great Silk Road, is famous for its traditional adras and satin weaving techniques, preserved to this day. Today, over 500 craftsmen in Margilan are engaged in hand silk weaving, contributing to the local economy and enhancing the rural tourism experience.

Old mud-brick villages with authentic architecture and traditions are particularly appealing to rural tourists. The fresh air, village food, and opportunities to engage in daily rural activities contribute to health. Visitors can explore various aspects of rural life, such as horse riding, harvesting, haying, milking animals, cooking, and learning traditional crafts. They also gain insight into the region's unique folklore and culture, experiencing firsthand the simplicity and charm of Uzbek village life.

In conclusion, well-organized rural tourism, supported by the integration of cultural heritage, has the potential to drive structural transformation in Uzbekistan's rural economy. It can act as a catalyst for revitalization and socio-economic development in rural areas. It is important to recognize that the intangible cultural heritage highlighted here represents only a fraction of Uzbekistan's multifaceted cultural wealth. The Government of Uzbekistan is actively undertaking initiatives to preserve and promote this invaluable cultural heritage, ensuring its survival for future generations. **ICH**

Rural tourism offers travellers an immersive experience in the countryside, complete with cozy houses, fresh air, and organic food. This project provides an opportunity to explore the ICH of rural communities, including their traditions and customs. Interestingly, rural areas often serve as the primary custodians of

# Jiao Festival: A Rural Living Heritage for Social Cohesion and Sustainability

Anna Wai Yu Yau  
Global Network Facilitator, UNESCO ICH Convention

The size of a bamboo theatre is determined by the needs and open space availability of each event. The crafting skills and technique involved are an exemplary living heritage in southern China. This photo shows one of the largest bamboo theatres in Hong Kong, with the bamboo set to be reused for other events. Photo taken at the Kam Tin Heung decennial Jiao festival © Anna Yau

**J**iao or Da Chiu festival is, a major spiritual and sacrificial ceremony held regularly in southern China. While specific practices vary by location, the festival's core purpose remains consistent: to purify an area, such as a village, through a series of sacred rites. The Jiao festival embodies Chinese cosmogony beliefs, with prayers for heavenly blessing on the local community. This tradition reflects a profound respect for nature and serves as an expression of gratitude to the deities for the fortune experienced in past years.

## The Living Heritage Ecosystem of the Jiao Festival

A typical Jiao festival spans several days. Its preparation usually involves a range of living heritage elements. In Hong Kong, these elements include the traditional Chinese Almanac for date selection, a bamboo scaffolding building technique for constructing temporary theatres, traditional rituals, Chinese opera performances, mythical beast dances (such as lion and Kirin dances),

paper crafting, and traditional foodways. Together, these interconnected living heritage elements create an ecosystem that defines the festival's unique character. The decline of any one component could jeopardize the event as a whole, underscoring the importance of safeguarding this living heritage.

## Significance of the Jiao Festival for Rural Communities

As urbanization transforms rural villages, the Jiao festival serves as a vital link to their rural heritage. The festival embodies the living history and cultural evolution of these communities, as many urbanized villages still honor their rural heritage through this tradition. Interviews with villagers reveal that many have personal memories tied to the festival, whether it's preparing traditional festive foods or crafting festival tool. These shared experiences collectively become a shared attachment that strengthens community ties. Such memories and experiences linked to the Jiao festival foster a stronger social cohesion among community members. This strong social

bond between local culture and place forms a critical foundation for community sustainability.

## Enhancing Social Cohesion and Tangible Heritage Conservation

The process of organizing a Jiao festival is a complex, resource-intensive undertaking, primarily funded through community donations. To manage the festival, a local organizing committee is often formed, comprising both senior and younger members, to coordinate and organize the event. The committee plays a crucial role by handling fundraising, logistics, food preparation, rituals, and promotion. It also safeguards traditional practices and passes down cultural knowledge across generations within the community. Through this social structure, the festival helps strengthen the capacity and identity of the core community.

The large-scale festival requires the cooperation of community members, and as such prompts them to set aside differences for the common good. Tasks such as cleaning communal spaces, maintaining the ancestral home and ritual sites foster a collaborative spirit, enhancing social cohesion and the conservation of tangible heritages.

## Livelihood Opportunities and Environmental Sustainability

The Jiao festival also generates economic opportunities for the community. Each festival involves a range of living heritage elements, providing a regular income source for local villagers and vendors. In addition, many materials used in the festival, such as bamboo used in building the theatres, are reused in subsequent celebrations by respective intangible cultural heritage (ICH) bearers, creating a traditional circular economy that promotes resource efficiency.

The festival creates business opportunities for rural communities through the sale of traditional foods and handcrafted products, such as herbal teas, which is also a traditional foodways heritage. In addition, the festival also offers creative entrepreneurs a platform for cultural tourism activities, such as guided tours that highlight the region's heritage. The Jiao festival effectively has its own living heritage economy model, attracting urban dwellers and their resources to rural areas.

## Building Partnership and Community Resilience

The Jiao festival also serves as a bridge to connect communities to external stakeholders. It offers a space for learning and experiencing culture rooted in rural traditions. The social cohesion created through the festival also enhances community well-being and resilience, empowering them to unite for a common future. The festival also provides a foundation for future initiatives, showcasing each area's natural and cultural assets, bringing resources and support and facilitating new collaborations and partnerships.

Jiao festivals exemplify how living heritage can sustain the sustainability of rural communities by contributing to the environment, the well-being of people, prosperity, peace and partnerships. They demonstrate how living heritage can be a powerful driver for sustainable development. The Jiao festival is not just an element of living heritage; it serves as a vital mechanism that strengthens community identity and promotes social cohesion and resilience in an ever-changing world. **ICH**



Many of the rituals in the Jiao festival are carried out by local residents and other community members. This active participation helps strengthen the capacity and identity of the core community. Photo taken at the Lai Chi Wo decennial Jiao festival © Anna Yau

# Sada: A Celebration of Light and Warmth

**Dilshod Rahimi**

*Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Tajikistan to UNESCO*

The Tajiks, a people of Iranian origin in Central Asia who speak the Tajik dialect of the Persian language, celebrate national holidays deeply rooted in sociocultural phenomena associated with natural events. These holidays connect humanity with nature and strengthen bonds between individuals and the community, fostering a deep love for their homeland among the Tajiks. Four ancient Tajik holidays are directly linked to the four elements of nature, the seasons, and cosmic phenomena, making them an exceptional cultural legacy in the history of civilization. The spring festival of Navruz is associated with the earth, the summer holiday of Tirgon with water, Mehrgon in the autumn with the Sun, and Sada in the winter with fire.

The Sada festival, in particular, symbolizes the

triumph of light over darkness, warmth over cold, and good over evil. People honor this festival by lighting large bonfires. Traditionally, the Sada festival is celebrated on the 10th day of the month of Bahman in the Hijri solar calendar, which corresponds to 30th January in the Gregorian calendar.

In ancient times, fire held great significance. It provided light, warmth, and a means for worship, cooking, waste disposal, and warding off wild animals. Since its inception, the Sada festival has honored fire, which, in the mythological imagination of Tajiks, represents a fragment of the sun on earth, offering both illumination and warmth.

The origins of the Sada festival are deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of ancient Iranians. Historical, literary, and mythological sources attribute its creation to

King Hushang. In his renowned epic *Shahnama*, Abul-Qasim Firdawsi recounts how King Hushang discovered the technique of making fire. During a hunting expedition with his loved ones, King Hushang encountered a giant serpent and threw a stone at it. The stone struck another stone, producing sparks that ignited dry grass, resulting in fire. Amazed by this phenomenon, Hushang celebrated the discovery with grandeur, thanking God for this revelation. This event marked the beginning of the Sada festival.

Celebrating the Sada festival was highly important throughout Tajik history, especially during the reigns of the Sassanids (3rd-7th centuries) and Samanids (9th-10th centuries). However, its prominence waned with the rise of the Ghaznavids (10th-11th centuries) due to the influence of fanatical priests. Subsequent kings and regional rulers did not recognize Sada as an official public holiday. Nevertheless, the tradition persisted among the people, albeit in slightly modified forms, and continues to this day.

Finally, in the 21st century, the Sada festival gained official recognition and support. Under the leadership of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, specific dates were designated for celebrating the traditional holidays such as Navruz, Mehrgon, and Sada. 30th January was officially declared as the official day for celebrating Sada, in alignment with ancient calendars and traditions. The modern celebration incorporates national ideals while considering economic and social interests.

Today, the Sada festival is celebrated in parks and squares throughout the day. Large bonfires, often over two meters high, are lit in two or three locations, symbolizing the festival's central theme of light and warmth.



Exhibition and sale of seeds during the Sada celebration in Firdawsi Garden, Dushanbe, Tajikistan © Dilshod Rahimi

The event includes concerts, theatrical performances, sports activities, and various cultural competitions. Additionally, exhibitions and markets offer fruit tree seedlings, ornamental flowers and bushes, agricultural seeds, farming tools and equipment, mineral fertilizers, agricultural books and manuals, along with the latest inventions and achievements of Tajik scientists. For this reason, the Sada holiday is also recognized as a celebration of farmers in Tajikistan.

The festival brings together gardeners, farmers, agriculturists, cattle breeders, artisans, and residents from across the country. They participate in the festivities, exhibit and sell goods, exchange advice, and provide mutual support. This convergence fosters cultural, economic, and social bonds, uniting the people of Tajikistan regardless of their ethnicity, religion, language, gender, or age. An intriguing aspect of the Sada festival is the decoration of the festive tables, which have social and cultural symbols and meanings. To wish for abundance and happiness, people place sweets, homemade candies, halva, nuts, almonds, dried fruits, as well as fresh fruits on the holiday table.

Winter celebrations during Sada often include traditional horse-riding competitions, including goat pulling and equestrian games. Winners of these folk competitions are awarded valuable prizes, ranging from cars to electronic devices like televisions and computers.

A major milestone for the Sada festival was achieved on 5 December, 2023, during the 18th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO, held in Kasane, Botswana. The multinational nomination of the "Sada celebration" by the Republic of Tajikistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran was reviewed by the Committee and officially inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, gaining global recognition for its cultural value. **ICH**



Karatagh folklore ensemble, during the Sada celebration in Tursunzoda, Tajikistan © Dilshod Rahimi



Sada fire in Firdawsi Garden, Dushanbe, Tajikistan © Dilshod Rahimi

# Preserving the Oral Traditions and Expressions of the Rohingya Community:

## The Role of the Rohingya Cultural Memory Centre in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

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With Collaborators

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### Oral Traditions and Expressions of the Rohingya Community

Since 1978, the Rohingya—an ethnic, linguistic, and religious minority—have endured repeated forced displacements from Myanmar to various parts of South Asia, with the majority finding refuge in Bangladesh. The largest of these replacements occurred in August 2017, resulting in over a million Rohingya refugees now residing in 33 camps in Cox's Bazar, the world's largest refugee settlement, and on the island of Bhasan Char.<sup>1</sup>

The Rohingya people have a rich tradition of oral storytelling that preserves their history, despite the ethnic state suppression that has hindered the development of Rohingya resources in Myanmar's Rakhine State.<sup>2</sup> Rohingya remains primarily a spoken language, widely used among the diaspora. However, recent efforts have been made to introduce written scripts, with the Hanafi script gaining widespread acceptance. This script has also been recognized as a digital script by the Unicode Consortium<sup>3</sup> and is now available on Google Fonts.<sup>4</sup>

Rohingya cultural expressions are deeply embedded in the community's oral traditions, passing down stories,

"Kissár Asmali" (storytelling box) is a rotating box with engravings and illustrations of culturally significant Rohingya stories. RCMC organizes regular storytelling sessions for the community, especially for children, to teach them moral values © IOM/ RCMC



wisdom, and traditions from one generation to the next. From joyous celebrations like Rohingya weddings to cultural competitions such as the traditional Rohingya boat-racing sport (locally known as Gadi Kela), the oral traditions of the Rohingya reflect a vibrant culture, rooted in every aspect of their daily life.

The diverse traditions are embedded in day-to-day Rohingya life, and are expressed in proverbs, riddles, myths, poems, and songs. Among the most common types of Rohingya oral traditions, proverbs convey practical life lessons, reflecting moral values that are passed down from one generation to the next. For instance, "Am gasót zam nodóre," which translates to "a mango tree never produces black plums," teaches that one should not expect too much from a single source, as everyone can only work according to their own abilities. Riddles are also important, as they entertain, reflecting



During the 2024 World Refugee Week, RCMC celebrated Rohingya resilience with cultural exhibitions and community-led cultural events, featuring "Tarana" (traditional Rohingya song), "Boli Khe-la" (wrestling), "Bai Doni Kissa" (riddles), poetry, and knowledge-sharing sessions © IOM/RCMC

the playful, introspective side of Rohingya culture. A popular Rohingya riddle: "Sam asé gusto náí, souk asé futuli náí," means "It has skin but no mass, an outer shape like an eye but no eyeball." The answer to this riddle is a snake's shed skin.

On the other hand, myths and epic poems play a critical role in shaping a collective cultural identity. These narratives not only provide entertainment but also serve to explain significant sociocultural phenomena and reinforce moral values. Some traditional songs are woven into daily activities, while others are used for rituals or communal gatherings, enhancing the sense of shared experience within the community. Genres like Baittalyi, sung to uplift farmers during the rainy season, and Hoñla, performed exclusively by Rohingya women during traditional Rohingya weddings, emphasize community bonds and celebrate life in general. Meanwhile, Tarana songs provide the community with an emotional outlet for coping with their everyday hardships. Each genre holds a unique significance, as it captures a different aspect of the Rohingya cultural identity and resilience that continue to thrive across generations.

### Threats to Rohingya ICH

The need to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) of the stateless Rohingya is critical, given that their heritage faces six of the nine broad threats identified by UNESCO: demographic issues, decontextualization, weakened practice and transmission, cultural globalization, loss of objects and systems, and economic pressures.<sup>5</sup>

**Demographic issues and Decontextualization:** The continued displacement of the Rohingya poses a major threat to their oral traditions and expressions. The possibility of decontextualization arises when cultural elements are removed from their original context, lead-



ing to misappropriation and a loss of meaning.

**Weakened Practice and Transmission:** Living in the confines of the world's largest refugee camp weakens the practice and transmission of Rohingya oral traditions. The loss of cultural spaces and restrictions on movement within the camps directly impacts the ability to practice and pass down these traditions.

**Cultural Globalization:** Rapid sociocultural changes and the influence of global cultures can dilute and overshadow traditional Rohingya cultural expressions. Younger generations of Rohingya, particularly those who are raised outside Myanmar, maybe more assimilated into the host country's culture, leading to a diminishing of their unique cultural identity.

**Loss of Objects and Systems:** Forced displacement and prolonged residence in refugee camp conditions results in the loss of cultural objects and systems that are integral to the practice and preservation of Rohingya ICH.

**Economic Pressures:** Limited financial resources for free and independent cultural expressions further exacerbate the challenges faced by the Rohingya community in preserving their ICH.

The interconnectedness of these threats makes it essential to actively protect the Rohingya's cultural heritage, oral traditions and expressions, which are at high risk of being lost due to the ongoing challenges of forced displacement.

### Safeguarding Rohingya Oral Traditions and Expressions

One of the primary purposes of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) is to safeguard ICH. The Rohingya Cultural Memory Centre (RCMC) plays a vital role in collaborating with the Rohingya community to preserve and promote their cultural heritage.<sup>6,7</sup> The RCMC is a community-led initiative of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, and started as a digital archive in 2019. This initiative arose in response to an identity crisis voiced by the Rohingya community, with the goal of preserving and promoting the Rohingya cultural heritage.<sup>8</sup> Many Rohingya researchers documented and continue to document traditional knowledge, particularly oral tradition and expressions.

A multipurpose center located in Camp 18 was built by the Rohingya and opened in 2022, providing a space not only to showcase the numerous cultural artifacts on display, but also for the Rohingya community to continue expressing their cultural creativity. The Rohingya provide guided tours of the centre, facilitate masterclasses to pass down traditional knowledge from one generation to another, and organize cultural education workshops and other community-based creative activities, promoting mental health and psychosocial well-being. In addition to the RCMC located in Camp

18, there is a smaller cultural centre in Camp 20 Extension. Rohingya volunteers use the "Rohingya Rosomor Sónduk" (Rohingya Cultural Box), a portable box with miniature replicas of key artifacts, and the "Mobile RCMC," a mobile cultural centre, for outreach activities to enhance cultural awareness across camps. Over 10,000 community members have been reached through these diverse activities.

Regular capacity-building and skills-transfer initiatives in music, embroidery, basket-weaving, carpentry and gardening are aimed at ensuring that culturally significant traditional knowledge and skills are passed down to younger generations. Music classes cover genres like Baittalyi (boatman's song), Hoñla (wedding songs by Rohingya women), Zari (mournful songs), Murshidi (devotional folk songs), Ma'rifati (spiritual songs), Maaizbhandari (devotional songs), and Tarana (traditional ballads).

Storytelling sessions that present numerous moral stories and riddles engage children and adolescents, ensuring that these cultural narratives remain alive. Rohingya cultural events (celebrations of Rohingya cultural heritage that include a range of cultural performances such as traditional ballads, riddles, dramas depicting life in Myanmar, proverbs and poetry recitations, traditional Rohingya wrestling and songs) and outreach activities contribute to the many initiatives which actively involve the Rohingya in the transmission of their cultural heritage.

Publications on Rohingya folklore, coupled with digital documentation, ensure that the Rohingya ICH, especially the oral traditions and expressions, is preserved not only for youths growing up within the camps of Cox's Bazar but for the diaspora and future generations. Utilizing the "Rohingya Hanafi Script," 22 Rohingya women recently completed a calligraphy masterclass in which they mastered the art of Rohingya calligraphy, using traditional Rohingya "boson" proverbs, "nosiyo" advice, "bai doni kissa" riddles, and "tarana" traditional ballads.

Community-led initiatives, outreach efforts, cultural events and skill development for younger generations remain vital to safeguarding the Rohingya culture. The progress made with the recognition of the Rohingya script can be further enhanced by promoting the production and utilization of literature in the Rohingya language. In addition, continued advocacy for alternative pathways to include the Rohingya community in the List of Intangible Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding will raise awareness and support the protection of their cultural heritage. **ICH**

At Camp 9, 22 Rohingya women have completed the Rohingya Calligraphy Masterclass, learning the basics of the Hanafi script and calligraphy techniques using traditional proverbs and poetry. This initiative by RCMC fosters the preservation of Rohingya linguistic heritage through calligraphy and oral traditions © IOM/RCMC



Story-Threading is a collection of ten folktales and childhood memories, narrated and stitched by the female embroidery artisans of the RCMC. Each story imparts a life lesson, whether social or personal, and represents a piece of the artisans' childhoods in Arakan © IOM/RCMC

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# International Collaboration Program for the Promotion of Kyrgyzstan's Traditional Crafts and Cultural Tourism Industry

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ICHCAP has been leading a four-year project (2023–2026) titled “Promoting Cultural Tourism Industry by Capacity Building for Production and Digital Marketing of Traditional Craft in the Kyrgyz Republic.” In collaboration with the Korea Heritage Service, Kyrgyzstan’s Ministry of Culture, and the Kyrgyz National Commission for UNESCO, the initiative aims to elevate Kyrgyzstan’s traditional crafts as cultural and tourism products. By fostering cultural heritage cooperation and revitalizing the crafts industry, the project seeks to drive regional economic growth, reduce poverty, and support sustainable development.

Residency Program participants for Kyrgyz Craftspeople © ICHCAP



## 1

### Traditional Crafts Policy and System Development: Establishing a Framework for Sustainable Development

A long-term, structured strategy is essential for the sustainable development and growth of Kyrgyzstan’s traditional crafts industry. This project prioritizes the establishment of a mid- to long-term strategic plan and the implementation of a certification system to promote and enhance the value of Kyrgyzstan’s traditional crafts. Recognizing the significant historical and cultural importance of these crafts in the modern market requires a robust legal and institutional framework. To this end, the Traditional Crafts Act of 2022 will be revised, and a new certification system introduced, ensuring a solid foundation for the continued growth and vitality of Kyrgyzstan’s traditional crafts industry.

## 2

### Improved Capacity of Stakeholders in Traditional Crafts: Supporting Independent Growth

The revitalization of traditional crafts requires strengthening the shared industrial vision and enhancing the capacity of key stakeholders. To this end, policymakers are offered training to develop policy perspectives that promote traditional crafts, while intermediaries in the craft sector participate in market-focused training programs held in Korea. Artisan residency programs further support Kyrgyz craftspeople by fostering cultural exchange and inspiring creative innovation. Additionally, efforts are made to empower local communities, ensuring that the traditional crafts industry is deeply rooted in the community and capable of achieving sustainable growth.



### Strengthening the Value Chain of Traditional Crafts: Transformation Into Cultural Tourism Products

For traditional crafts to generate economic value and contribute to Kyrgyzstan's tourism industry, a systematic strengthening of the value chain is essential. The third strategic task focuses on enhancing this value chain to enable traditional crafts to gain commercial significance. As part of this effort, the project includes research to establish a comprehensive database of traditional crafts, systematically documenting their techniques, types, and historical value. Additionally, initiatives such as contests and support for product development aim to facilitate the creative transformation of traditional crafts into cultural tourism products. These efforts not only inspire pride among local artisans but also help to attract new consumer markets for Kyrgyzstan's traditional crafts. Furthermore, strategic branding and marketing research, along with the production of promotional content, aim to showcase the value of Kyrgyz traditional crafts on both domestic and international platforms, elevating their profile and appeal worldwide.

3

4

### Establishing and Operating Traditional Crafts Infrastructure: Physical and Technical Support

The project focuses on creating infrastructure for training and exhibitions to support the sustainable growth of Kyrgyz's traditional crafts industry. Traditional crafts centers will be established within existing institutions and establishments, such as the Bishkek School of Contemporary Art, Burana Tower in Tokmok, and the Nomadic Civilization Center in Issyk-Kul, and will be equipped with essential resources. These centers are expected to serve as vital hubs where artisans can showcase their works and engage with visitors, fostering greater appreciation and interaction with Kyrgyzstan's traditional crafts.

### Project Management and Collaboration System

Effective operation of the project requires close collaboration with local experts and relevant agencies. To this end, local coordinators are appointed to oversee detailed coordination on-site, while cooperation with the National Com-

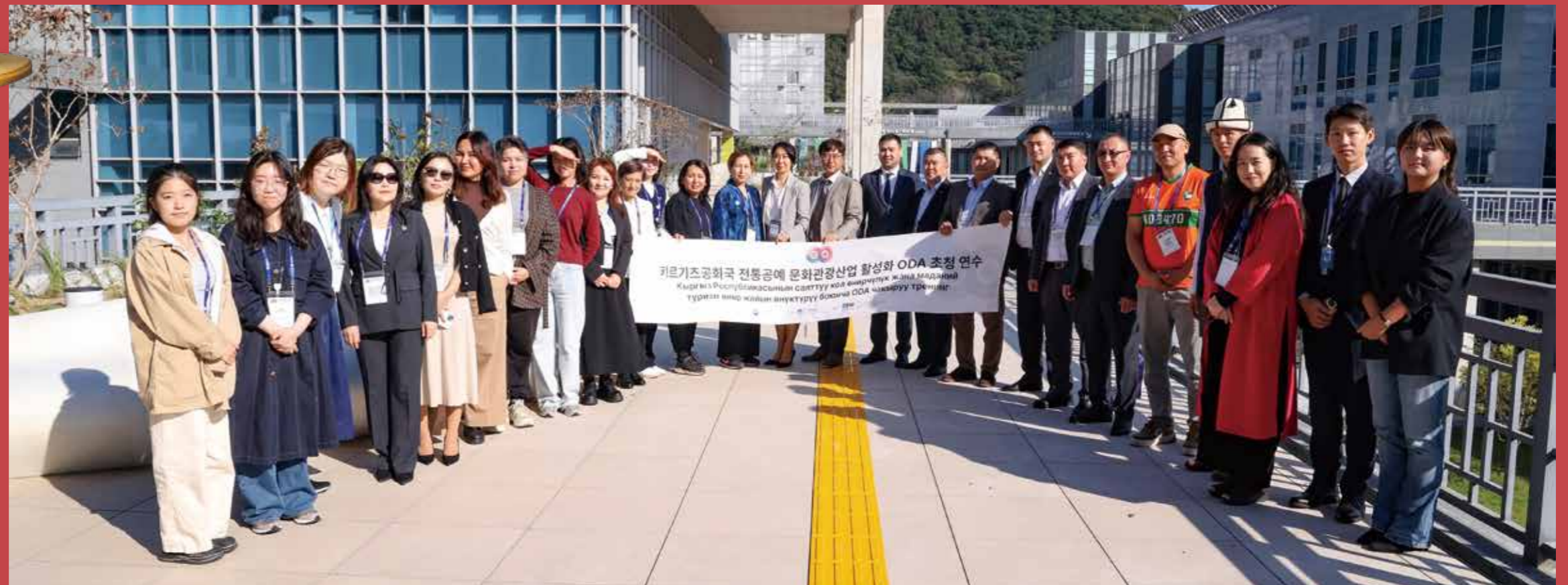
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mission of the Kyrgyz Republic for UNESCO enhances localization and execution efficiency. A Project Management Committee, comprising experts from Korea and Kyrgyzstan, formulates policy directions and implementation strategies. Additionally, a strong partnership between the two countries is fostered through collaboration with the Korean Embassy in Kyrgyzstan and the Kyrgyz Embassy in Korea.

### Conclusion: Vision for Mutual Growth Through Cultural Heritage Collaboration

This project stands as a valuable example of how Korea and the Kyrgyz Republic can collaborate to safeguard intangible cultural heritage (ICH) while sharing cultural values. By safeguarding traditional crafts and linking them to sustainable regional economic development, the project presents a forward-looking model for ICH safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific region. It serves as a significant milestone in advancing collaborative efforts for heritage protection and sustainable growth. ICHCAP remains committed to strengthening its partnership with Kyrgyzstan, working together to develop innovative models for ICH safeguarding and sustainable development. **ICH**

6



Group photo of invitation program participants with KG ambassador © ICHCAP

# The Role of Creolization in the Cultural Fusion of Caribbean Intangible Cultural Heritage

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## 1 What role does the fusion of diverse cultural influences play in shaping Caribbean an intangible cultural heritage (ICH)?

Caribbean cultural heritage evolved from the interplay of diverse populations within a comparatively short span of time following colonization. While the strongest and most meaningful cultural heritage for the population became ingrained and remained embedded, it was impacted by both the environment and interactions with other heritages, enabling syncretization. Processes of both colonization and creolization provided opportunities and constraints, fostering the retention, reinvention and perpetuation of the region's intangible cultural heritage (ICH).

## 2 How has the history of migration—both voluntary and forced—impacted the resilience and evolution of Caribbean cultural identity?

Migration, whether forced or voluntary, is characteristically restrictive in what can be carried from the point of origin to the destination. Limitations on physical belongings, however, did not extend to psychological and intellectual signifiers like memory and practice, which are almost limitless, with external forces being the primary barriers to transmitting property, skills, knowledge, and practices. Regional cultural practices often intermingled diverse factors, holding onto customs and traditions as mobile markers of identity. Fearing these “signaled” danger, authorities sought to suppress them, while practitioners deliberately disguised and transmitted them inter-generationally. For instance, drumming survived despite fears of its fostering resistance, while the use of medicinal herbs for traditional healing was widely accepted and even utilized by colonizing populations. Assimilationist strategies adopted by colonists sought to control communities by confining their knowledge and skills to exploitative labour processes.



The Admiral Dancing the Maypole – Landship Manoeuvres © Bern Wells

## 3 Can you elaborate on how the Caribbean's unique process of “creolization” reflects in ICH expressions like language, music, and festivals?

The Caribbean exists almost entirely as a multivocal society, where the population is immersed informally in vernacular daily living while engaging in formal interactions originating in colonial governance structures. Most inhabitants move fluidly between these realms, having been educated in the latter while growing up in the former. Now inseparably intertwined, people often overlook how they instinctively “code switch” between cultural signifiers, navigating between formal and informal environments. In the 21st century, Caribbean governments, largely led by majority black populations, increasingly recognize the intrinsic value of traditional culture as markers of identity. ICH is prominently expressed in vernacular forms like *kweyol* and patois and through street festivals such as *jonkonnu*, *cropover* or *carnival*, originally performed as a means of release or escape for the lower classes. Today, traditional practices and craftwork, vernacular expression and syncretic spiritual forms, having evolved through creolization, now resonate through contemporary interpretations by visual, performance, and spoken-word artists.

## 4 What challenges do Caribbean communities face in safeguarding traditional practices, especially those that were historically suppressed?

Cultural practices, historically suppressed as socially unacceptable, now attract national investment and sponsorship, promoting certain forms such as festivals which can generate much-needed revenue for small island developing states (SIDS). However, a tenuous balance exists between promoting ICH to tourist markets and safeguarding it from appropriation, sanitization, distortion, and dilution. These pressures risk stripping cultural value for local populations, who often depend on these practices for income. Addressing such challenges requires capacity building, community co-curatorship, and public education focused on youth to ensure sustainable safeguarding efforts.

## 5 How does Caribbean ICH support global understanding and connect Caribbean diasporas to their cultural roots?

Caribbean diasporas around the globe practice and engage with ICH, showcasing these cultural expressions through festivals, traditional cuisine, contemporary art, and allied church congregations and sports teams. Increasingly, many return to explore their roots, connecting the communities they have settled in with unique Caribbean ways of knowing and understanding life. These interactions promote global cross-cultural understanding through



(Top) Modern Interpretations of traditional practice - Mother Sally - Crop Over by Sonja Boyce © William Cummins

(Bottom) Still Walker and Tuk Band, Rural Barbados, 1900. BMHS, (Lennox Honychurch Collection) © BMHS

diasporic communities in Africa, Australasia and Europe, helping SIDS achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as “peace, justice and strong institutions” and “sustainable cities and communities.” Cultural diversity remains one of humanity’s best hopes for reparative justice, peaceful coexistence, and sustainable living.

## 6 Do you have any unique insights or focal points you'd like to highlight?

Powerful exemplars of Caribbean ICH underscore the factors discussed above. Barbados' Landships represent one such phenomenon, activated amongst the working class, rooted in a creolization process, which popularized the adoption and adaptation of the ranks, uniforms, and marches of the British Navy, combined with African-originated tuk rhythms and movements. The organization also facilitated communal fund gathering through the African tradition of *sou sou* (su su) or meeting turn, a rotating savings and credit system often seen as the precursor to today's credit unions, which flourished in post-colonial societies giving agency to oppressed communities. This blend of cultural elements from colonizer and colonized evidences the foundational impact of migration- both forced and voluntary- on its emergence. For Barbadians, Landship practices represent survivance strategies where each new generation depends on reinvention or recreation in new locations to address modern challenges, even as its more fragile elements are lost. **ICH**

# Preserving the Legacy of Nomadic Civilizations: A Vision of Cultural Continuity

**Anudei Erdenebat**

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With Collaborators  
**Yuanhui Ding**

In 1991, UNESCO embarked on a remarkable initiative known as the *Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue* project. This international and interdisciplinary endeavor was not just a study of the historical, scientific, and cultural interactions along the ancient Silk Roads and their contemporary legacies. Beyond its scholarly ambition, the project carried a bold vision of fostering mutual understanding, respect, and international cooperation through shared cultural heritage. From this foundational project emerged a new institution dedicated to preserving one of humanity’s most resilient, dynamic, and sustainable ways of life: nomadism.

In 1993, the International Institute for the Study of Nomadic Civilizations (IISNC) was established in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, by Resolution 27C/3.12 of the 27th UNESCO General Conference. Designated as a UNESCO’s Category 2 Research Centre, the institute’s mission is as vast as the steppes it serves: to study, preserve, and promote the rich and diverse heritage of nomadic civilizations, with a particular focus on the Mongolian nomadic lifestyle. Its work aligns with key UNESCO frameworks, including the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005). These global frameworks, coupled with Mongolia’s Vision-2050 national development strategy, guide the backbone of the IISNC’s efforts to ensure that the indigenous knowledge of nomadic peoples can thrive beyond its past, as part of the world’s broader cultural diversity and sustainability agenda.

As a hub for the academic study of nomadic cultures, the IISNC conducts extensive research on the social structures, economic systems, cultural practices, and tangible heritage of nomadic communities in

Mongolia and Central Asia. The institute curates and disseminates its intellectual progress through its academic publications, the peer-reviewed journals *Nomadic Studies* and *Intercultural Dialogue*. These journals build platforms that explore the historical significance of nomadic communities and the contemporary challenges of nomadic cultures, offering invaluable insights to scholars and policymakers alike. The institute also nurtures the next generation of researchers through its vast library of over 19,000 resources spanning history, ethnography, archaeology, and anthropology. Complementing this is a state-of-the-art laboratory equipped for bioarcheological and cultural heritage research.

By 2025, the Mongolian government will begin transitioning all its official documents to the country’s traditional script. The IISNC has been a driving force in this initiative, publishing ten academic works in Mongolian script between 2023 and 2024.

Part of the IISNC’s mission is to connect Mongolian scholarship with intellectuals around the world. Our institute has hosted scholarly visits and exchanges from the UK, the US, Canada, Hungary, France, Turkey, Japan, Korea, and China, fostering an international network dedicated

to preserving nomadism in an increasingly modernized and unequal world. In 2024, the IISNC’s research focused on “Challenges Facing Nomads Today,” addressing the pressing issues not only within Mongolia but across other nomadic cultures in Asia, including Nepal, Russia, China, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. As part of this initiative, the IISNC co-organized the “Cambridge Mongolia Forum: World Problems, Nomad Solutions 2024” in collaboration with the Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit at the University of Cambridge. The forum showcased how indigenous knowledge and adaptability of nomadic communities can offer innovative solutions to global challenges, from environmental sustainability to social cohesion. Domestically, the IISNC actively cooperates with other research institutes such as the American Center of Mongolian Studies and the Chinggis Khan Museum. It has successfully mobilized Mongolian scholars toward a common agenda of reviving and promoting nomadic culture.

There have also been efforts to bring cultural studies into interdisciplinary dialogues. At the “Anthropological Approaches to Air Pollution and Decarbonization in Ulaanbaatar” conference, hosted by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the National University of Mongolia, the IISNC shared insights into how nomadic practices of environmental stewardship can help mitigate air pollution. Similarly, at the “Water Sharing and Water Purity: Past and Present” conference, organized by the University of Cambridge and the National University of Mongolia, the IISNC presented its research on the sustainable water management practices of nomads, offering historical perspectives on this critical resource. These endeavors effectively demonstrate that the nomadic interpretation of human-nonhuman relationships can offer substantial value in addressing sustainability challenges during a time of global crisis. The IISNC is well-positioned to play a critical role in this area.

In July and August 2024, the IISNC brought nomadic culture to the global stage with the “Nomadic Mongolia



(Top) The Chairperson of the Academic Council of IISNC presenting at the “Cultural Values of Mongolians” discussion © IISNC, Mongolia

(Bottom) An IISNC employee conducting bioarchaeological analysis on artifacts discovered during the “Exploration of Ancient Nomads in Mongolia” project, a collaborative effort between IISNC and the Cultural Heritage and Archaeological Institute of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China © IISNC, Mongolia

– Cultural Days” event in Paris. Aligning with the goals of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), the event celebrated Mongolia’s intangible heritage through captivating performances and demonstrations. Visitors experienced traditional practices such as knuckle-bone shooting, the Folk Long Song, and Mongol Biyelgee, alongside research presentations highlighting efforts to safeguard and promote these traditions.

As a beacon of cultural protection and academic research, the International Institute for the Study of Nomadic Civilizations stands at the intersection of tradition and modernity. It works not only to safeguard the heritage of nomadic peoples but also to seek ways to apply historically accumulated knowledge to the contemporary world. In the era of the Anthropocene, the Enlightenment approach to human-nonhuman relationships is being met with skepticism. In an increasingly interconnected world, the lessons of the nomads—rooted in harmony with nature and resilience in the face of change—have grown to become more relevant than ever. **ICH**



A traditional Mongolian yurt set up during the “Nomadic Culture of Mongolia: Cultural Days” event organized by IISNC in Paris, France, 2024 © IISNC, Mongolia

[ November 11, 12, 18, 2024 ]

## Three-Part Documentary Series 'The Great Heritage: South Asia' Premieres

The three-part documentary series *The Great Heritage: South Asia*, co-produced by ICHCAP, the Korea Educational Broadcasting System (EBS), and the Asia Culture Center (ACC), aired on EBS 1TV at 10:45 PM on 11th, 12th, and 18th November. This series marks the fourth collaboration among the three organizations, providing a fresh perspective on the rich cultural identities of Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh by exploring their intangible cultural heritage (ICH).

The first episode dives into the vibrant Mithila paintings of Janakpur in southern Nepal. Formerly the capital of the legendary Mithila Kingdom, Janakpur is celebrated for its colorful murals, a tradition upheld by women over generations. This episode highlights the art's transmission, portraying the empowered lives of Nepali women and their evolving stories in the modern era.

The second episode delves into Sri Lanka's traditional string puppet theatre, *Rukada Natya*. It captures the dedication of artisans who work tirelessly to safeguard the art of puppet-making and performance. This episode uncovers the historical and cultural value of string



© ICHCAP

puppetry as a unique artistic medium in Sri Lanka.

The final episode focuses on the resilience of Bangladeshi farmers facing the dual challenges of climate change and flooding. Through traditional floating agriculture in the flood-prone Gopalganj region, the episode illustrates how farmers sustainably coexist with nature, showcasing the wisdom and ingenuity needed to adapt and thrive.

*The Great Heritage: South Asia* offers a moving exploration of how ICH connects tradition with modernity and harmonizes human activity with nature, providing a meaningful opportunity to deepen understanding and appreciation of South Asia's rich cultural legacy. **ICH**

[ October 11, 2024 ]

## International Symposium on the ICH for Sustainable Cities and Communities Held in Kyoto, Japan



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The international symposium entitled *Intangible Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Cities and Communities: Perspectives for Integrated Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region* was held in Kyoto, Japan on 11th October. Organized by the IRCI, the event focused on the role of ICH in achieving SDG 11.4, fostering a deeper understanding of the interactions between tangible and intangible heritage, and promoting integrated safeguarding practices. The symposium also shared findings from the project *Research on ICH Contributing to SDGs: Intangible Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Cities and Communities*.

The symposium featured two keynote speakers. Ananya Bhattacharya from India emphasized the importance of holistic approaches to living heritage and World Heritage, while Shimizu Shigeatsu from Japan addressed the preservation of the Uji-cha tea cultural landscape.

Researchers from partner institutions presented case studies. Cambodia's APSARA National Authority highlighted traditional handicrafts' role in sustainable community building at Krabei Riel. A study by Waan Aelõn in Majel and Pasifika Renaissance examined traditional Marshallese canoes as sustainable sea transportation. Malaysia's George Town World Heritage Incorporated discussed linking built heritage and ICH through the George Town Heritage Celebrations, and Kyrgyzstan's Taalim-Forum shared community-driven strategies for safeguarding cultural landscapes.

The symposium served as a valuable platform for discussions on integrated heritage management, uniting tangible and intangible heritage. **ICH**

[ October 4-5, 2024 ]

## 2024 World Children's ICH Festival: Nurturing Future Cultural Stewards

The 2024 World Children's Intangible Heritage Festival was held on 4th and 5th October at the National Intangible Heritage Center in Jeonju, Republic of Korea. Hosted by Jeonju City and organized by ICHCAP, this event followed the inaugural 2023 World Children's Intangible Heritage Festival. It welcomed international participants from Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam, alongside children from various regions across Korea.

The National Folk Museum of Korea, the Korea Traditional Culture Center, the Asia Culture Center Foundation, and the UNESCO International Martial Arts Center also joined this event. Recognizing children as future custodians of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), the 2024 festival aimed to engage them in exploring and experiencing diverse ICH. This two-day festival featured performances, exhibitions, and experience booths. At the World Children's Intangible Heritage Performance Hall, children enjoyed multicultural ICH performances, including Jeonju Children's Flag Dance, Jinju Children's Gummy, Chungju Children's Taekkyeon, Jindo Drum Dance, Namwon Pansori, and

traditional dances from Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Vietnam, including Vietnamese Traditional Lion Dance.

The festival offered children a meaningful opportunity to understand the significance of ICH while experiencing diverse cultures.

Carefully designed programs allowed participants to appreciate the importance of ICH transmission, leaving a lasting impression on attendees. Organizers hope the festival will continue to inspire children to explore and engage with ICH, nurturing the next generation of cultural stewards. **ICH**



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[ November 19-21, 2024 ]

## Embracing Traditional Wisdom: 2024 International Conference on Intangible Cultural Heritage in Kuala Lumpur



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The 2024 International Conference on Intangible Cultural Heritage was held at the Avante Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, from the 19th to the 21st November. Co-hosted by the Department of Heritage Malaysia and ICHCAP, the conference brought over 20 experts from 16 Asia-Pacific countries together to explore the theme *Local Heritage Wisdom: Traditional Medicine*.

The conference opened with the session *Traditional Medicine for Women: Postpartum Mother Care*, where participants discussed traditional massage techniques, herbal treatments, and the role of traditional medicine in maternal health. The second session, *Practices and*

*Beliefs in Traditional Medicine*, provided an opportunity for participants to share ancestral healing practices and highlight the social and cultural roles of traditional medicine within their communities alongside strategies to safeguard these fragile traditions. The final session, *Safeguarding and Sustainability of Traditional Medicine*, emphasized the importance of community engagement and youth participation in ensuring these practices endure for future generations. A dedicated NGO networking session facilitated, on 21 November, the exchange of experiences and strategies among NGOs working to safeguard intangible heritage, fostering valuable future cooperation.

With broad participation, the conference underscored the essential role of international collaboration and community-centered approaches in preserving traditional medicine. The gathering celebrated cultural diversity and the enduring value of traditional medicine, setting a path for transmitted heritage safeguarding across the Asia-Pacific region. **ICH**

## 2024 World Forum for Intangible Cultural Heritage

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The 2024 World Forum for Intangible Cultural Heritage was held at the National Intangible Heritage Center in Jeonju, Republic of Korea, on 17th and 18th October. Hosted by the Korea Heritage Service and organized by the ICHCAP, this forum marked its 8th year as a significant international academic event in the Asia-Pacific region.

This year's forum, themed *Migration: Broadening the Horizon of Intangi-*

*ble Cultural Heritage*, gathered over 30 scholars, experts, and officials from 14 countries, including representatives from UNESCO and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Participants discussed how intangible cultural heritage (ICH) helps communities preserve their identities, adapt to new environments, and contribute to cultural diversity.

On the first day, Feng Jing, Chief of the Culture Unit at UNESCO's Bangkok Office, delivered the keynote presentation on migration and ICH, followed by two sessions. Session 1, *ICH as Records of Human Lives amid the History of Migration*, featured presentations on safeguarding and transmission of ICH within the Caribbean, Irish, and Indian

diasporas. Session 2, *The Role of ICH as a Means of Inclusive Migrant Societies*, explored how ICH fosters inclusivity in migrant communities.

The second day included a lecture by Marie McAuliffe, Head of Migration Research and Publications at IOM, on migration and global agreements, followed by Session 3, which examined future migration trends and their implications for ICH. A concluding session focused on Korea's immigration and multiculturalism initiatives, with contributions from experts in research, museums, and international organizations.

The forum underscored the essential role of ICH in cultural diversity and peaceful coexistence, offering insights for addressing migration's challenges in a globalized world. **ICH**

## Digital Innovation in ICH Safeguarding: A New Chapter from Bhutan

© ICHCAP



The 1st Information Officers' Capacity Building Workshop on ichLinks Online Platform, hosted by the National Library (NLAB) and ICHCAP, was held in Thimphu, Bhutan, from 7th to 8th October. This workshop brought together Information Officers from Partner

Organizations to strengthen data management skills and explore strategies for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH).

Held at the NLAB, the workshop emphasized global collaboration in ICH safeguarding.

Participants from 10 countries learned about UNESCO's safeguarding strategies and the latest ichLinks platform features. Presentations on content creation and curation sparked interest, establishing a strong foundation for

future safeguarding efforts.

On the second day, participants captured footage of Bhutanese woodblock engraving and printing processes, documenting their craftsmanship and cultural significance. They uploaded the footage to the platform and practiced organizing and editing materials, understanding the importance of digital documentation.

This workshop established ichLinks as a vital tool for ICH safeguarding, enabling participants to enhance skills and advance the platform. ICHCAP aims to improve ichLinks and expand its global network to lead future ICH safeguarding efforts. **ICH**

## Heritage Meets Climate Action: East Asian Experts Discuss ICH Resilience

© ICHCAP



From 5th to 6th November, the 2024 Sub-regional Meeting on Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in East Asia was held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, under the theme *The Role of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Face of Climate Change*. Co-hosted by the UNESCO Regional Office for East

Asia and ICHCAP, it was co-organized by the Mongolian National Commission for UNESCO and the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism and Youth of Mongolia, and sponsored by the Korean Heritage Service.

The meeting gathered experts from Korea, China, Japan, and Mongolia together to assess climate change's impact on intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and discuss strategies for safeguarding ICH amidst environmental challenges.

On the first day, participants examined ICH's role in mitigating climate change threats and integrating disaster risk reduction (DRR) frameworks into safeguarding policies. The second day focused on combining ICH and DRR approaches to address climate change, with actionable outcomes presented to strengthen ICH resilience.

This meeting provided a platform for understanding climate change's effects on ICH and sharing safeguarding strategies. It also reinforced networks among ICH and climate experts in East Asia, paving the way for future collaboration on climate action and ICH safeguarding. **ICH**

## The 19th Session of the IGC Held in Asuncion, Paraguay

The 19th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (IGC) convened from 2nd to 7th December at the Conmebol Convention Center-Hotel Bourbon in Asuncion, Paraguay.

The session opened with the adoption of the agenda, followed by a report on the Secretariat's activities over the past year. The Committee reviewed reports from States Parties on the implementation of the Convention and the current status of elements inscribed on the Representative List and Urgent Safeguarding List.

Key discussions included the evaluation of nominations for inscription, proposals for transferring elements between lists, and amendments to the Operational Directives to strengthen the implementation of Article 18. Thematic initiatives on intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and sustainable development were

also discussed, with a focus on climate change. Recommendations encouraged States Parties to integrate ICH into their climate response strategies.

On the second day, the Committee inscribed 'Knowledge, beliefs, and practices related to Jang making in the Republic of Korea,' bringing Korea's total inscribed elements to 23. Other notable nominations included the 'Custom of Korean Costume' from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the 'Spring Festival' from China, and the 'Traditional Knowledge and Skills of Sake-making with Koji Mold' from Japan.

The session featured side events



© ICHCAP

such as a symposium hosted by the ICH NGO Forum on participatory safeguarding, discussions on 'ICH, Climate Change, and the Environment,' and presentations on the Overall Results Framework and periodic reporting guidance. These events fostered active engagement and provided valuable insights.

For further details on the session's agenda and outcomes, please visit the UNESCO website. **ICH**

## INU-OH

### A Harmonious Fusion of Traditional Nôgaku Theatre and Contemporary Rock Music

The *Inu-Oh* combines the UNESCO-recognized traditional Japanese performing art of Nôgaku theatre with modern music to create a distinctive musical animation. Nôgaku, one of the world's oldest theatrical forms, has a 600-year history as a classical Japanese drama. The film reimagines the legendary tale of Inu-Oh, a famed entertainer of the Muromachi period, delving into the resilience of art and its preservation amid the pressures of political power. Through Inu-Oh and Tomona's friendship, the film highlights their struggle to protect their artistic freedom from outside control, weaving together vibrant animation and evocative music. For these characters, their songs and dances are more than performances—they are a way of life, an essential part of their identity, empowering them to rise above their curses and captivate audiences.

### A Tale of Friendship and Mutual Understanding Forged through Art

Inu-Oh, born into a group of sarugaku performers—a traditional Japanese form of entertainment popular in the Muromachi era—is shunned due to his unusual appearance. He hides his face behind a gourd-shaped mask to shield himself from a rejecting society. His life changes when he encounters Tomona, a young biwa player blinded by a curse from the Taira clan. Together, they form a deep bond, finding kinship through music and dance as they come to understand each other's pain. As their friendship deepens, Inu-Oh begins to embrace his true self. This heartfelt story of two artists finding solace in each other was introduced to Korean audiences at the 2021 Busan International Film Festival and the Bucheon International Animation Festival. The film also received an invitation to compete in the Orizzonti section of the 78th Venice International Film Festival. **ICH**



- **Director**  
Masaaki Yuasa
- **Cast**  
Akiko Nogi
- **Running Time** 98 min

## Intangible Heritage (2009)

*Intangible Heritage (2009)* by Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa provides a critical analysis of the concept and significance of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) within the global heritage discourse. It highlights the pivotal role of ICH—traditions, practices, knowledge, and skills—in shaping cultural identity and fostering community cohesion. The book offers an in-depth exploration of UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, examining its frameworks, principles, and challenges in a globalized world.



**Editors**  
Laurajane Smith  
Natsuko Akagawa

The first chapter reviews the Convention's historical development and core principles, while the second focuses on the practical and political dynamics of safeguarding efforts, particularly the interplay between states and communities. The third chapter reflects the essence of "intangibility," offering a philosophical perspective on ICH.

This book is an essential resource for heritage professionals and scholars, providing valuable insights into the complexities of safeguarding and the enduring value of ICH. **ICH**

# Online Archive Service

- *ichLinks*: A One-Stop Platform for Sharing ICH Information -



Archive

*ichLinks* is an Asia-Pacific platform connecting 14 Member States for seamless ICH data sharing and utilization. Recently upgraded, it now features improved data management and engaging ICH stories, videos, and content.

Organizations managing ICH-related information in UNESCO Member States in Asia-Pacific are invited to join as *ichLinks* Partners. Use the platform to showcase your cultural heritage globally.

Please contact [ichlinks.secretariat@gmail.com](mailto:ichlinks.secretariat@gmail.com)



Main page of *ichLinks*



### Vietnamese Hát Bội and Types of Hát bội Characters - A quick guide

"Hát bội" is a traditional performance art in Vietnam, it has a rich historical foundation, and quite an influence on the community. Just like any traditional art form, the stage of Hát bội also consists of Viet aesthetic values, reflecting the life, stories, and aspirations of the common Viet people.

For the staging performance of hát bội, characters hold a crucial factor. Without the characters, other elements such as plot, actions, dialogues...won't be expressed fully. From then, the performers can have the relevant information to choose the appropriate motifs of musical-dialogue performance, choreography and costume.

Online exhibition content of the *ichLinks*





## ICH and Rural Revitalization