

The Praxis of Safeguarding Intangible Heritage

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The most democratic among the suite of instruments in international heritage law is the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. It has a significant impact on the culture in sustainable development discourse in the Asia-Pacific region. This bodes well for the on-going struggle to provide a human face to globalization. Intangible heritage elements provide signposts for progress made in safeguarding the cultural and linguistic diversity of humanity. This paper focusses on bringing together people and their heritage in integrated approaches for promoting culture in development¹. The following three case studies exemplify approaches to safeguarding intangible heritage in Asia and the Pacific. The recommendation is that ICHCAP, with its mandate for networking and information sharing, promote such case studies.

1 Galla, Amareswar. (Ed.) *World Heritage: Benefits Beyond Borders*, Cambridge University Press and UNESCO Publishing, 2012 (English). Translations: French, UNESCO Publishing; and Korean, Korean National Commission for UNESCO, 2013.

*niVanuatu from the Pacific*²

The Pacific provides one of the most dynamic examples of inventorization of intangible heritage. Inventories of intangible heritage are living documents. Vanuatu has developed over the past three decades a systematic programme for inventorying the living heritage of its over one hundred language groups. This is realized through the First Voice of the bearers and transmitters of its diverse intangible heritage.³ This unique approach known as the Community Fieldworkers Programme is directly managed and driven by the practitioner communities in the management of their own living heritage. The Vanuatu National Museum and Cultural Centre is the facilitator for this safeguarding process for both men and women. The Centre also implements research policies stipulated by the Vanuatu National Cultural Council that ensures ethical and accountable community engagement at all levels.

The Centre provides a good example for facilitating synergies in managing both tangible and intangible Heritage. It is the responsible agency for the administration of Chief Roi Mata's Domain, a World Heritage site. This 'property' consists of landscapes and waterscapes delineated by three sites on the islands of Efate, Lelepa, and Artok. Dating back to early seventeenth century CE, they are associated with the life and death of the last paramount chief or Roi Mata. The sites include Roi Mata's residence, the place of his death, and his mass burial site as a chief. The whole area is closely associated with the living traditions surrounding the chief and the moral values he advocated. The designated area for World Heritage is in present-day Central Vanuatu.

The domain is a cultural space of convergence between oral traditions and tangible heritage sites. The descendants or present-day chiefs are the responsible custodians. It is the illustrator for the continuation of Roi Mata's social reforms and conflict resolution informing the relationships between different community

2 This example is based on material provided by Marcelin Abong, Director of the Vanuatu National Museum and Cultural Centre. Ralph Regenvanu, Former Director of the Vanuatu National Museum and Cultural Centre and until recently Chair of the Vanuatu National Cultural Council has been generous with time and support providing a range of published and unpublished materials.

3 Galla, Amareswar. (2008) 'The First Voice in Heritage Conservation' *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*, Volume 3, June 2008, pp.1-17.

groups in the region. The sustainable development of the domain is through the primary stakeholders. It is their intergenerational responsibility. They are exploring pathways for future development of the local communities so that the benefit sharing does not diminish the inheritance of the niVanautu (indigenous peoples of Vanuatu).

One of the projects in the domain is led by rural women. The focus is on sustainable livelihoods in the villages for poverty alleviation. It is about community development at Mangaliliu and on Lelepa Island. These villages are collectively known as the Lelema communities. The project entitled, Craft Revitalisation and Enterprise Program, aspires to produce high-quality, contemporary handicrafts using traditional techniques and knowledge. One of the activities includes inventorying and revitalizing some of the traditional crafts that are endangered due to the legacies of colonialism.

The traditional communal systems of land tenure enable the safeguarding of intangible heritage. The landowning chiefs are paid an annual tribute for the use of their land in tourism initiatives such as the Roi Mata Cultural Tours, bringing economic benefits to the Lelema community and to Vanuatu. The domain has had a unifying influence within the Lelema community. niVanuatu address holistic or integrated local area planning of both intangible and tangible heritage through the community fieldworker's network and craft revitalization.

The above valiant efforts by the niVanuatu in the safeguarding process of their heritage face many threats. Changes to the land tenure and land leasing to outside interests are a major concern. Experiential tourism through Roi Mata Cultural Tours and accommodation in Bungalows could provide alternative livelihood opportunities to land leasing. Product development to enable adequate time for visitors to experience the domain with respect for the living heritage of the people is still a major challenge. Cruise tourism can contribute to job creation and poverty alleviation.

Locating culture as an integral part of the social, economic, and environmental development of the domain is critical for the whole country. Chief Roi Mata Domain offers the potential for a demonstration project to develop responsible tourism in safeguarding intangible heritage in Vanuatu and the wider Pacific region.

Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras

In the Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras, community groups in clusters take responsibility for safeguarding intangible heritage and the environment. The Rice Terraces are a result of cultural traditions that bring together agrarian practices and rituals to ensure good harvests. Conservation of the Rice Terraces is based on the local knowledge systems. Primary stakeholder communities are responsible for the creation and maintenance of the landscapes. Traditional knowledge based cooperative management (the ubbu, the dang-a, and the baddang) ensure availability of help for the expansion and maintenance of the fields. The harvest of crops by the local communities includes the performance of agrarian practices and its associated rites and rituals.

There has been a noticeable erosion of the performance of traditional knowledge and practices. Men prepare the land for planting. Women harvest the crops. Women played a significant role prior to colonial times as shamans and custodians of the Ifugao world view.⁴ However, disruptions during colonial times caused an imbalance marginalizing women from important spiritual and decision-making roles. In the customary political system, rice districts were governed by women who were also peacemakers. Now, priests are mostly men. Women with ritual knowledge only contribute on occasions.

Proactive intervention for the revitalization of this local intangible heritage has resulted in stemming the negative impacts on local community development. Men and women work together in the fields throughout the agricultural cycle. Balanced gender roles through the integrity of social relationships of the primary stakeholder communities and their cognitive processes have become critical to ensuring the viability and sustainability of agricultural world heritage.

Documentation of intangible heritage through the indigenous knowledge experts who are the elders of the communities and the transmission of these elements to children allow for a sustained rice terrace conservation program. Children once again learn hudhud chants.⁵ The chants have become critical for intergenerational transmission of heritage values along with the associated knowledge of the agrarian landscapes.

4 Interviews and meetings with Ifugao elder Maria Galleon and Marlon Martin, 4-5, October, 2013.

5 The Hudhud Chants of the Ifugao were proclaimed as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2001 and inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008 by UNESCO.

Sustainable development of the Rice Terraces enables continuity of traditional practices and innate dynamism to adapt to changes. The extent to which culture is recognized as a vector in safeguarding these highly vulnerable agricultural systems will provide the evidence for the success or lack of it in future. What is evident is that scoping synergies in cultural actions dealing with all forms of heritage is critical for the safeguarding of agrarian knowledge systems in Philippines and across Asia.

Participatory community engagement has been critical for mapping the cultural landscapes, the intangible heritage and sustainable developmental practices and knowledge among the pilot sites illustrative of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems.⁶ They address concerns of food security, livelihoods and adaptive communities and small family farming by both men and women through complex interwoven roles in continuation of their localities.

*Hahoe – Village on the Winding River*⁷

Historical villages in Korea are characterised by diverse forms, including clan villages. They are representative of over 80 per cent of all Korean historical villages. Their genesis is from the late Goryeo dynasty (918-1392). They become typical of Korean villages from the latter part of the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910). Clan villages are on the decline with rapid urbanization and industrialization of Korea. Hahoe Clan Village is traditional and fully expresses the academic and cultural achievements of the Joseon dynasty.

It faithfully adheres to the pungsu principle (traditional siting principle, feng shui in Chinese), in village construction. It is among the very few examples of intact traditional Korean clan villages safeguarding their original spatial layouts. It features three functional areas for productive, residential, and spiritual life. It is exceptional in the continued function of the areas.

Hahoe Village is a project in Korea addressing the integrated management of

diverse heritage resources, tangible and intangible. Hahoe has primary community stakeholders living in the village. It is a well-known village for yangban (literati). The inhabitants are mainly from the Ryu lineage, the descendants of Ryu Seong-ryong. Hahoe was designated by the Korean government as an Important Folk Property in 1984 due to the large number of traditional upper-class houses built there during the Joseon dynasty. The local Hahoe Mask Dance, traditionally performed by the servant classes, was made a state-designated Intangible Cultural Asset in 1980.

The meaning of sustainable heritage development warrants an understanding of the layers of cultural values embedded in the recent history and heritage of Hahoe Village. It was recognized for its significance as a centre of Confucian tradition in the 1970s. It was the beginning of nationwide recognition. One of the aspects of living heritage is that it could be used by a range of actors in societal development. The Hahoe Byeolsingut Tallori Mask Dance Drama was revitalized as a symbol of anti-establishment movements in Korea in the 1980s. It profiled the village nationally and attracted many dissidents and students to Hahoe. The new found heritage consciousness soon made Hahoe a tourism destination from the early 1990s.

Hahoe villagers as the custodians of local heritage have had to resist the external appropriation of Hahoe culture and struggle to reclaim their cultural custodianship of the village. The recognition of the skills and knowledge of the local communities has come to guide all conservation and safeguarding measures. Respect for local communities is considered critical in all cultural experiences.

The empowerment of the primary stakeholder communities, the villagers in their diversity of class, gender, and occupational contexts, has resulted in a strong sense of ownership and valuing of their heritage as carriers and transmitters of local knowledge systems. The opportunities for jobs and economic development provided through growth in local GDP, has led to softening the hierarchy of class status.

Intergenerational transmission and responsibility for heritage conservation have become important among all classes in the village. Hahoe has become a symbolic project for Korea where the anticipated rural-urban migration will result in more than 80 per cent of the population living in about twenty urban conglomerations. Valuing the rural life as the mainstay of traditional Korean life has become a concern for promotion to all levels of government. Moreover, villages such as Hahoe have become educational resources in school curricula to understand Korean history and culture.

6 Parviz Koohafkan and Mary Jane Dela Cruz, 'Conservation and Adaptive Management of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)', *Journal of Resources and Ecology*, 2011 2(1) 22-28.

7 Keynote speaker and resource expert in the Hahoe workshop on Integrated Heritage Management organized by the Mayor of Andong, Cultural Heritage Administration and ICHCAP of the Korean Heritage Foundation. February 2011. The author also drew on both published and unpublished material from Hee Ung Park and Hyosang Jo, Cultural Heritage Administration, and Professor Okpyo Moon, Academy of Korean Studies.

Local knowledge illustrated through tangible heritage of the structural and environmental resources is the main draw card in tourism. The experiences are facilitated through the creation of products that are informed by stories, performances, and skills of the carriers and transmitters of intangible heritage. The visitation numbers have increased substantially from the base line of 374, 391 in 1998 to over a million within a year stimulated by the UK royal visit and then averaging about 900,000 until 2011. Domestic visitors continue to be over 97 per cent. International visitors have increased from 5,488 in 1998 to about 25,000 in 2011.

The conservation of Hahoe Village offers valuable lessons for totality of local community engagement, especially the value of traditional knowledge carriers. Outside expertise relies on specific heritage elements, often creating a binary between the tangible and intangible, but village community culture requires a neighbourhood approach or ecomuseology that brings all elements together. Promotion of participatory democracy by bringing together the village, local communities in and around it in stimulating community based development through heritage tourism contributes to poverty alleviation without compromising the integrity of heritage resources.

Conclusion

All the three case studies underscore the importance of community ownership through empowering engagement and ensuring primary stakeholder benefits. These are valuable indicators so that the implementation of programmes and projects ensures economic and social benefits to the carriers and transmitters of living heritage values. Interventions top down by researchers, tourism agencies, or official policies could often drive an external perspective in conservation and minimise the First Voice of local communities. Such interventions marginalize community groups from dealing with viability and sustainability of intangible heritage in the face of rapid change.

It is important to understand what sustainable development means with regard to the local intangible heritage element concerned. What kind of safeguarding framework is required for ensuring and enabling sustainable development through community ownership and primary stakeholder engagement? What is the evidence based benefits to the carrier and transmitter communities and their contextual ecosystems? What are the anticipated ways forward in bringing together local and neighbouring communities

through the cultural, environmental, economic, and social dimensions of sustainability for safeguarding all forms of heritage? In celebrating the tenth anniversary of the 2003 Convention, ICHCAP could aspire to promote diverse case studies and approaches approaches in the region, adding value to the growing professional knowledge in this area.