

**Intangible Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Cities and Communities:
Perspectives for Integrated Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage
in the Asia-Pacific Region**

Kyoto, Japan
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ABSTRACTS



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International Research Centre
for Intangible Cultural Heritage
in the Asia-Pacific Region

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KEYNOTE SPEECH

Living Heritage and World Heritage Sites

Ananya BHATTACHARYA (Contact Base, India)

Though the UNESCO World Heritage Convention primarily safeguards tangible heritage, there is growing recognition of the importance of connecting heritage management with living heritage—local traditions, knowledge, and practices—at World Heritage Sites. Aligning heritage management with sustainable development goals, particularly through community involvement and cultural heritage tourism initiatives, helps preserve site values while sustaining their dynamic relationship with local communities. SDG 11.4 focuses on strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage. Improving reporting on 11.4 entails tracking of both qualitative and quantitative measures to safeguard cultural and natural heritage and assess conservation efforts alongside socio-economic benefits for local communities.

Santiniketan was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2023. Santiniketan, founded by Rabindranath Tagore, was envisioned as a hub for universalism and sustainable rural development. Tagore emphasized the principles of self-reliance, which were to be achieved through a holistic integration of education, agriculture, art, and crafts, creating a unique model for rural regeneration. This vibrant centre for culture, education and arts is a unique destination offering insights on architecture, education, cultural exchange and co-creation, art and craft. Addressing economic dimensions of safeguarding living heritage through capacity building, promotion and market linkage and integration into the tourism offerings has been instrumental in fostering sustainability and viability of local art and crafts. Using Santiniketan as a case study, the paper illustrates the broader impact of incorporating ICH into community empowerment strategies. It demonstrates how such efforts can revitalize cultural practices, strengthen community identity, and contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to poverty reduction, gender equality, and sustainable cities and communities. The findings of this paper highlight the necessity of adopting a holistic approach to heritage preservation—one that includes both tangible and intangible elements. Such an approach ensures a more comprehensive and inclusive representation of cultural heritage at World Heritage Sites, while also empowering local communities and fostering sustainable development.

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Evaluation and Preservation of the Uji-cha Tea Cultural Landscape: How Is It Possible to Preserve Landscapes That Are Adaptable to Change?

SHIMIZU Shigeatsu (Kyoto Institute of Technology, Japan)

The preservation of cultural landscapes has gained global momentum, with many regions being registered as World Heritage Sites. Cultural landscapes are remarkable examples where tangible and intangible aspects come together to create value. They possess both the physical aspects of tangible heritage and the phenomenal aspects of intangible heritage. Among these, tea cultural landscapes in Asia have attracted significant attention in recent years. In 2021, ICOMOS conducted a thematic study on tea, and in 2022, the Cultural Landscape of Old Tea Forests of the Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er was inscribed on the World Heritage List. In this presentation, I would like to discuss the issues surrounding cultural landscapes that transcend tangible and intangible elements, using the cultural landscape of Uji tea in Japan as an example.

The Yamashiro region in Kyoto Prefecture, where is the Uji-cha tea Production Area, is considered the birthplace of green tea in Japan. Japanese tea is represented by three main types: matcha, sencha, and gyokuro, all of which originated in the Yamashiro region. The production of these tea varieties involves different cultivation and processing methods, and the distribution systems also vary accordingly. The diverse combination of production and distribution processes has created a variety of landscapes.

When viewed as a cultural landscape, the scenery is not static but constantly undergoes subtle changes due to natural cycles and human activities. Furthermore, as tea production in Uji continues to this day, it is necessary to pursue sustainability while maintaining traditional production methods, which inevitably involves a certain degree of modernization and rationalization. Mechanization and modernization have been advancing in various aspects, and how these changes can sustain the value of cultural heritage is a significant challenge.

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Traditional Handicraft Contributing to Sustainable Communities at Krabei Riel: Toward Community development, Safeguarding and Transmitting ICH within Angkor World Heritage Site

IM Sokrithy (APSARA National Authority, Cambodia)

In FY 2023, the project aimed to collect information using anthropological method and GIS program to explore the geographical characteristic of Krabei Riel Community, identify natural resources used for handicraft within Angkor world heritage site and beyond, recognize types of local weaving products and its flow, and understand economic benefit for local residents, mapping the Cultural Landscape of the local Community.

In FY 2024, the project is focusing on dissemination the research result of traditional handicraft to young generations in Krabei Riel community and stakeholders to understand the importance of preserving natural resource, valuing local products, and transmitting knowledge from generations to generations which is the core component of ICH, while creating the opportunity for stakeholders to discuss on how a world heritage site and tourism create a better living condition for local community while practicing their traditional knowledges or ICH.

The presentation will demonstrate on the activities and research results as following:

- Different types of local weaving products and Cultural Landscape of target community
- The products flow from local community into business center of the community, the city of Siem Reap and exporting to Thailand
- From collected data to analyzing the family and community system related to ICH and livelihood development
- Infographics/documentary short video about process of weaving handicraft and the locations of finding raw material
- Poster presentation and an exhibition at local primary schools.

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Intertwining Built Heritage Protection and Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding: Case Study of George Town Heritage Celebrations

ANG Ming Chee and TING Siew Jing (George Town World Heritage Incorporated, Malaysia)

George Town (Malaysia) was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in July 2008 through the serial nomination with Melaka Heritage City under the name of “Melaka and George Town, Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca” based on criteria (ii), (iii) and (iv). This designation has recognised George Town and Melaka as cities where the imprints of the Malay, Chinese, Indian and European influences are reflected on the historic urban fabric, forming the multicultural community who practice their rituals and daily lives in the town and creating unique architectural styles of a townscape that is exceptional in East and South Asia.

Through the case study of George Town Heritage Celebrations, this presentation detailed the strategies and approaches of George Town World Heritage Incorporated– the site managers of George Town Historic City–incorporating intangible cultural heritage safeguarding on world heritage management. Our presentation commences with the introduction of the George Town Historic City, followed by the elaboration of the George Town Heritage Celebrations. Held annually in July, the Celebrations is a bottom-up project organized by GTWHI and participated by more than 40 multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious associations and groups from Penang.

We will also be sharing the types of activities, selections of heritage locations, collaboration strategies with the local communities, and the curation of celebration content during the presentation. We shall end our presentation with our approach to appealing the heritage activities to the younger generation, in particular the youth and the school children. Such an approach is very important to ensure peaceful coexistence despite our differences in this melting pot.

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Traditional Canoes of The Marshall Islands: Sustainable Sea Transportation of Today

Alson KELEN (Waan Aelōñ in Majel, Marshall Islands) and Takuya NAGAOKA (NGO Pasifika Renaissance, Japan)

Historically, the mainstay of the traditional fishing and voyaging in the Marshall Islands is the outrigger canoe. The outrigger canoe represents the ultimate in design adaptation for inter and intra-lagoon travel and fishing. For thousands of years, the outrigger canoe has been at the heart of cultural life as well as practical survival for millennia. This is an exploration of the state and shape of the canoe tradition for Marshallese people today, how and why it has changed over time, and how it articulates with broader Marshallese culture and modern way of life. The canoe is analyzed as a means of understanding broader issues of social change – the nature of modern social change; contemporary issues of identity; and culture change, loss, and revival. Using a methodology founded upon the centrality of Marshallese voices, both directly through interviews as well indirectly through proverbs, legends, and language, a new understanding of the canoe is explored as a way forward into a future shaped according to the terms and values of Marshallese people themselves: the canoe as a potential vehicle for purpose, identity, and pride. This program has demonstrated that sustainable economic and cultural development, self-identity and self-worth strengthening, are not only important to nation building but are essential and achievable. Since its inception, the Waan Aelōñ in Majel Program (Canoes of the Marshall Islands) has always promoted the concept that sustainable solutions and practices in direct response to climate change especially within the maritime sector can be found and harnessed within the vast resources and heritage of the Marshallese people. Ri-Majel, the people of the Marshall Islands, have always been known for their boat building and navigational skills. The Marshallese canoe is one of the more impressive outrigger canoes in the entire Pacific region.

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Local Community Strategies for Safeguarding Cultural Landscapes in Kyrgyzstan

Jyldyz DOOLBEKOVA (Taalim-Forum Public Foundation, Kyrgyzstan)

Kyrgyzstan's cultural landscapes are significant both regionally and globally, while facing increasing threats from rapid globalization and environmental pressures. The presentation highlights proactive strategies and successful case studies initiated by the local visionary community in Kyrgyzstan's Issyk-Kul region.

The first case study focuses on a cultural practitioner who has enhanced wildlife stewardship and engaged the younger generation through the revitalization of a traditional hunting system. This system, along with the accompanying ancient culture, serves as a living model of coevolution and collaboration among people, hunting birds, hunting dogs, and horses in mountainous landscapes. The second case highlights a woman-led initiative by the founder of an ethno-village aimed at promoting traditional felt carpets, which have nearly disappeared from Kyrgyz homes. This initiative seeks to improve the quality of these carpets and elevate the status of local artisans within their communities. Both cases foster the revival and transmission of traditional knowledge, skills, traditions, and ceremonies, which are crucial cultural components providing Kyrgyz people with a sense of identity and continuity. Additionally, these strategies strengthen the self-reliance and resilience of the local community, helping them adapt and survive in a rapidly changing world.

The presentation will also emphasize how these strategies contribute to the consolidation of the local community, the development of leadership among women and youth, become a source for cultural and economic resilience, inspiration, and collective responsibility. Based on traditional ecological knowledge to safeguard cultural and natural heritage, these approaches effectively address both local and global challenges and contribute to achievement of Sustainable Development Goal target 11.4. The strategies contributed to increase of public awareness of the importance of reviving spiritual and cultural roots and preserving natural heritage at national, regional, and global levels.