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INTANGIBLE HERITAGE



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INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

The entry into force of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage represents a new phase for this living and intrinsically fragile heritage.

The Hudhud chants of the Ifugaos (Philippines).



INTANGIBLE HERITAGE: A TANGIBLE BOOST

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Recited for centuries in Yakutia but outlawed during the Soviet era, the Olonkho heroic epos came close to vanishing. This oral tradition linked to shamanic folklore was proclaimed a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2005. **10**

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The entry into force of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage represents a new phase for this living and intrinsically fragile heritage.

INTANGIBLE HERITAGE A TANGIBLE BOOST



The sand designs of Vanuatu are a Masterpiece of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Oral traditions and expressions (including language as a vehicle of intangible cultural heritage), traditional performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, traditional craftsmanship – all merit safeguarding for future generations, in the same way as the Galapagos Islands or the Egyptian Pyramids.

Since 20 April, date of its entry into force, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage stands watch to ensure the continuity of this living testimony to human creativity.

To date, 47 States – from Algeria, first to approve it in February 2004, to Albania, which ratified it on 4 April 2006 – are parties to this Convention that completes UNESCO's standard-setting measures for the safeguard of cultural heritage.

The text is based on certain articles of the 1972 Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural

Heritage that protects “tangible” forms of expression of heritage, both monuments and natural sites. It thus anticipates the creation of a General Assembly which will have its first meeting next June, an Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and a Fund that will make it possible to finance safeguarding projects.

The Convention also stipulates that two lists will be drawn up: the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

The 90 Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity so far proclaimed by UNESCO are likely

As the Galapagos Islands or the Egyptian Pyramids, all merit safeguarding for future generations.

to be incorporated gradually into the Representative List, provided they are located within States that have ratified the Convention.

Discovering the soul

Another of the Convention's important measures is the requirement that each country establish one or several inventories of intangible cultural heritage existing on its territory.

In certain cases, this process is well under way and is producing some truly remarkable results. “In Venezuela, we are now conducting a very detailed census of heritage in all its forms,” explains José Manuel Rodríguez, president of Venezuela's Institute of Cultural Heritage. “We have recorded more than 68,000 entries coming from all of our country's 335 communities and what we have discovered is the genuine soul of the population. People are astonished that the state is taking an interest in things that belong to them in



Demonstration devoted to the Intangible heritage of Southeast Asia, UNESCO headquarters, March 2006.

a very intimate way.”

These inventories will make it possible to classify intangible heritage in its different forms - the items to be included on representative lists, of course, but also Living Human Treasures.

The concept, created in 1950 in Japan,

was adopted by the Republic of Korea in 1964, then by the Philippines, Thailand, Romania, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and France, where the living treasures are called “masters of crafts” and are goldsmiths and silversmiths, traditional bookbinders or makers of

musical instruments.

Languages too are protected by the convention, not just as means of communication but also as reflections of a particular perception of the world. Inventories can also be taken of traditional music.

A little more than two years elapsed between the Convention's ratification by UNESCO's General Conference in October 2003 and its entry into force. For Antonio Augusto Arantes, former president of Brazil's Institute for National Historical and Artistic Heritage, “The speed of the ratification process was a real surprise. But it proves simply that governments are resonating to something that civil society, at least in my country, has laid claim to for 20 years.”

This is just what Juan Goytisolo, president of the jury for the first two Proclamations of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, was describing when he spoke of “the infinite wealth and variety of human inventiveness regarding the origin of the world and our presence in it.”

Lucía Iglesias Kuntz

Thanks to a campaign sponsored by UNESCO, Colombia turns the spotlight on safeguarding its intangible cultural heritage.

CULTIVATING COLOMBIAN TRADITIONS

A commercial aired in prime time recently on Colombian radio and television begins with a murmur, which is gradually amplified until several languages can be distinguished. Some sound as if they are related to Mandarin, others to the very marked phonetics of Slavic languages. Then, in the midst of the babble, you recognize a poem in Spanish by the great Colombia poet José Asunción Silva. At that point the audience grasps that all the languages just heard were indigenous.

The ad ends with a message underlining that Colombia is a multicultural, multilingual country. Another spot stars



“The Carnival of Barranquilla “.



Poster edited for awareness campaign.

the Mohán, a sylvan spirit of rivers and forests that farmers used to fear; yet another depicts pise (rammed earth) wall-building technique, a legacy of the Amerindians. Even the Pusandao, a Pacific Coast stew prepared with manioc, yams, fish and coconut milk, makes a subject for an ad.

Colombia, with its wealth of 83 indigenous peoples and nearly 70 languages and dialects, intends to make the most of its intangible heritage from now on, to the point of launching a major awareness campaign. "Show

who you are" was the slogan for the entire campaign, financed for the sum of US\$ 150,000 by UNESCO, the Andrés Bello Convention and the Colombian government.

UNESCO's proclamation in 2003 of the Barranquilla Carnival as a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity contributed significantly to Colombia's realization of the value of its heritage.

The Barranquilla Carnival encompasses cultural events in more than 50 villages and small towns along the banks of the Magdalena river. Tales are told of men turned into alligators and of Indians disguised as women to avenge the honour of their wives, abducted by Spaniards, all to the rhythm of cumbia music and drums that pound incessantly for five days.

Taking inventory of traditions

Coinciding with the proclamation, the Ministry of Culture launched a series of initiatives aimed at implementing the mandates articulated in the UNESCO Convention, soon to be ratified. First it set up a Sub-Directorate of Intangible Heritage, which assists communities in taking inventory of their oral traditions.

That's not all. "Thanks to the work-

shops that we organized in five regions in the country, intangible heritage has become fashionable," claims Emiro Díaz, programming director at the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History (ICANH), organization charged by the Ministry to formulate conservation policies.

In November 2005, when the Ministry's work on the Convention was well underway, UNESCO proclaimed the palenquera culture as Colombia's second masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage. San Basilio de Palenque is a tiny and very poor village inhabited by the descendants of slaves who rebelled against the Spanish crown in the 18th century and declared themselves an independent territory. UNESCO's intention is to preserve their language, a blend of Spanish and Bantu; their music, which is essentially African; their knowledge of traditional medicine; and their funeral rites.

Tangible results

"It's a very special case," explains Betsy Elena Hernández, who works for the Sub-Directorate of Intangible Heritage. "Palenque needs not only policy to preserve its culture but also the means to fight poverty. We are talking about a village with no drainage system, which only gets electricity for a few hours a day. The Ministry wants to attack on both fronts."

Meanwhile, in Baranquilla, there are already tangible results. Tourism increased by 20 per cent last year, according to Chamber of Commerce figures. In addition, several artisans are learning the traditional techniques for making masks and carnival costumes.

Intangible cultural heritage is now sparking interest in the most remote areas of Colombia, such as the southern tropical forest where more than 70 per cent of Colombia's indigenous communities live. Eight states in this region have launched inventory projects that are certain to enrich knowledge of the country's oral heritage.



In 2005, UNESCO proclaimed palenquera culture a masterpiece of intangible heritage.

Sergio Ocampo,
in Bogota.

Rieks Smeets, head of UNESCO's Intangible Heritage Section, examines the implications of the entry into force of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

THERE WILL BE NO MORE PROCLAMATIONS OF MASTERPIECES

© Foto Luigi



The Patum of Berga.

Interview by Agnès bardon and Stephen Roberts.

How would you define oral and intangible heritage in very simple terms?

Rather than defining it, it may be better to recapitulate the areas covered by this heritage. It concerns music and traditional dance; traditional theatre; oral expressions such as folktales or sagas; traditional knowledge related to nature and the universe; skills linked to craftsmanship; and rituals and festive events like carnivals. Generally, they are expressions passed down from one generation to the next that play a significant role in the communities where they are practiced, inasmuch as they give them a sense of continuity and identity.

Among the many masterpieces proclaimed by UNESCO, we can give special mention to the Patum in the city of Berga (Spain), proclaimed in 2005. It's a noteworthy example be-

cause all the inhabitants are invited to participate, including the children. They take part in the festivities by parading in the street like the adults, but with a miniature bestiary. They learn in this way to imitate the grown-ups' behaviour and become the future actors of this heritage.

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, adopted in 2003, enters into force on 20 April. What impact will this have?

The text consolidates a new concept of heritage that has developed in the last three decades. In 1972, the Organization adopted a Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, focused on monuments and natural sites. Already in the 1970s we had

begun thinking about other aspects of human heritage. But it took time for this approach to become concrete and to produce the Convention that is now taking effect.

What has changed is that now a binding legal instrument exists, ratified by numerous States. This instrument, first of all, will enable raising awareness in the international community. Then it will make it possible to safeguard this heritage in new ways. The emphasis is placed on the role that must be played by the groups and communities who hold this heritage, not only to identify its different forms but also to safeguard them. Finally, the adoption of the text creates the possibility of raising additional funds to finance more programmes and actions.

The proclamation of masterpieces was at the heart of the intangible heritage programme. Will that still be true?

No, there will be no more proclamations of masterpieces as there were in 2001, 2003 and 2005. Once the Convention enters into force, masterpieces present in States Parties' territory will be inscribed on the Repre-

"they are expressions passed down from one generation to the next that play a significant role in the communities where they are practiced".



Rieks Smeets, Chief of Section for Intangible Heritage.

sentative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The conditions under which they will be included have yet to be determined by the Intergovernmental Committee that will implement the Convention. But most of the masterpieces

are to be found on the territory of States that have already ratified the Convention. We can therefore expect that a great many of them will soon be included among the items inscribed on the representative list.

What are the key issues or the future?

Many aspects need further definition. We have to specify what this representative list will comprise. The States that will implement the Convention must also identify the communities that hold this heritage. Often a system of representation has to be set up for these groups, or help provided so that they can create NGOs. Authorities, too, particularly at the local level, have to be made more aware of the existence, values and

importance of this heritage. There's still work to be done to increase consciousness of this cause.



© National Center for Intangible Heritage of Mongolia

Traditional music of Morin Khuur (Mongolia).

The Zafimaniry of Madagascar do more than sculpt wood. They inscribe their entire cosmogony on this sacred material. In 2003, UNESCO proclaimed their tradition a masterpiece of oral and intangible heritage.

THE SACRED WOOD OF MADAGASCAR'S ZAFIMANIRY

Deep in the heart of the Tanala forest in south-east Madagascar, Antoetra lives in drizzle and fog for much of the year. The village has no particular charm. Yet the region's inhabitants are willing to walk for as long as four hours to get to its weekly market.

Once there, throngs of kids guide the visitor around the houses and workshops where the famous sculpted rosewood chairs are

Zafimaniry country, an area of 700 square kilometers encompassing about 100 villages.



The Zafimaniry are the last to practice woodworking.



Woodworking techniques.

sold, and also stools, honey pots and diverse sculpted chests, renowned as far away as Scandinavia and Japan.

Antoetra is the main gateway to Zafimaniry country, an area of 700 square kilometers encompassing about 100 villages, the most remote of which is a ten-hour hike away. This community of 25,000 is the last to practice woodcraft, previously widespread on the island.

The elaborate tradition, transmitted from one generation to the next, is visible on every construction and object made of wood, even the most ordinary. In 2003, it was proclaimed a masterpiece

of oral and intangible heritage by UNESCO.

A few hours on foot from Antoetra, the village of Sakaivo emerges from the mist. Traditional wooden houses are built on both sides of a stream and a few rice paddies. It is said they once covered all the central highlands, where constructions in pisé, cob or brick have now replaced them.

Mr Rakoto, a reputed carpenter, takes me to see one of his "creations". While a cabinetmaker smooths a plank, helped by an adolescent, he explains that a Zafimaniry house requires three months of work and is assembled only with planks and pegs, without a single nail or other metal hardware.

Complex symbolism

On doors and windows you discover the finely chiseled geometric motifs for which the Zafimaniry are famous. The symbolism marked in the wood is in fact a reflection of their beliefs. The spider's web pattern stands for family ties, while the honeycomb represents community life.

And that's not all. The houses are actually built in accordance with even more erudite rules. From

their orientation in the heart of the village to the lay-out of the only room, it is the entire Malagasy cosmogony that is represented in the four directions, or the four major destinies.

The founder of the line always takes his place in the village's most sacred angle, the north-east. As for the oldest son, he takes the space just below his father while the youngest has to settle farther to the south-west, the entirely profane angle.

Similarly, inside the house, the bed is in the north-east while the entrance and the unimportant objects are placed in the west. Each of the 20 different species of wood used by villagers is reserved for a specific purpose.

A threatened culture

But today this culture is endangered. Following food shortages in the 1950s, the Zafimaniry began selling their crafts, but they have not succeeded in making their trading profitable, unlike the distributors of their products, nor have they been able to prevent counterfeiting.

In addition, with the growing deforestation of the region, they have begun to run short of raw material and are turning to other activities, such as slash-and-burn shifting cultivation, which further aggravates the deforestation problem.

In the end, young people tend to go look for work in town or in the shipyards, becoming part of the rural exodus and the disintegration of Zafimaniry identity.

This is why UNESCO has launched an action plan aimed at protecting the community's natural environment and monitoring the transmission of traditional techniques. It is a way to preserve the knowledge acquired down through the centuries by the Zafimaniry, "descendants of those who desire".

Fabrice de Lestang



Deep in the heart of the Tanala forest, situated in the southeast of Madagascar, Zafimaniry encompasses about 100 villages.

Considered one of the best traditional weavers in the Philippines, Haja Amina Appi has been named a “living human treasure” in her country in 2004. By transmitting her art to future generations she guarantees the preservation of this example of intangible heritage.

WEAVING COLOR INTO CULTURE



© Renato S. Rastrollo

Haja Amina Appi uses dried pandan leaves to weave her mats.

Mat weaver Haja Amina Appi walks with a strong stride that betrays her 80 years. She is off to harvest leaves from the pandan trees that grow behind her home in Ungos Matata, in the province of Tawi Tawi, a small island in the southwestern tip of the Philippines.

The bulky leaves are thorny-edged, but she prefers this variety because it produces strong and sturdy matting strips. She has become accustomed to the prickly thorns after years of working with them to produce the raw materials of her art.

Throughout her life she has been a mat weaver, teacher, artist, and most recently, a National Living Treasure or Gawad sa Manlilikha ng Bayan Awardee.

In line with UNESCO's efforts to promote living human treasures, the Republic of the Philippines esta-

lished this prestigious national title in 1992 to identify individuals who play a special role in the preservation and revitalization of traditional arts threatened by extinction.

Since then, eleven artists have been named in recognition of their dedication to their craft and use of indigenous methods and materials. Haja Appi received this designation in 2004 in recognition of her skills in the art of weaving mats from pandan leaves, or paghahablon.

An ancient technique

Tepo mat making is a very precise “counted thread” weaving technique practiced by women of the Sama community of Tawi-tawi for generations.

The Sama mat is known for its bold colors, geometric designs, and du-

rability. A plain white mat is sewn against a colored one and serves as the design's frame, contrasting with the rich palette and serving as a protection for the thin dried pandan strips. A mat can take up to two months to weave, even longer for more intricate designs. Haja Appi has earned a reputation for creating the most intricate and finely woven mats.

Her work begins with the harvest of the pandan leaves. She then removes the thorns with a small knife and strips them with a *jangat deyum*, a thin piece of wood with sharp tines. The resulting narrow ribbons are then sun-dried and colored in a boiling vat of *anjibi*, a commercial powdered dye.

To soften the strips and make them pliant enough for weaving, she crushes them repeatedly with a *paggosa* or heavy log, in a process called *pagtabig*. This arduous and repetitive chore is essential to properly dry the pandan strips without rendering them brittle and useless.

Bold designs

Haja Appi does not work from a written pattern, nor does she use paper and pencil to keep track of each loop and fold. She relies on her innate

Since 2004, Haja Amina Appi has been named a “living human treasure” in her country.

sense of mathematical progression to calculate when and how the colored fibers will eventually join to create symmetrical geometric designs.

What sets Haja Appi apart from her fellow mat weavers is the exceptional evenness of her weave and the startling creativity of her patterns. Although she uses a traditional repertoire of weaving techniques to create delicate, precise, and minutely detailed patterns, her simple geometric designs are dramatic bursts of color that both defy and celebrate tradition.

Historically, the Sama mat was plain white in color, but she began experimenting with dye to achieve her desired effect. As commercial



To soften the strips, Haja Appi she crushes them with a heavy log.

dyes are often not bold or striking enough for her taste, she mixes them to obtain vibrant reds, purples

and yellows, sometimes using up to eight colors at a time.

In order to preserve this tradition for future generations, Haja Appi teaches young women in her community the art of Tepo, a skill traditionally passed from mother to daughter.

Her deep knowledge of both the technique of paghahablon, as well as her lifelong efforts to preserve this important Filipino tradition, has earned her a special place as one of the nation's culture bearers. Her work is available for public view in the collection of the National Museum of the Philippines.

Maricris Jan Tobias

Recited for centuries in Yakutia but outlawed during the Soviet era, the Olonkho heroic epos came close to vanishing. This oral tradition linked to shamanic folklore was proclaimed a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2005.

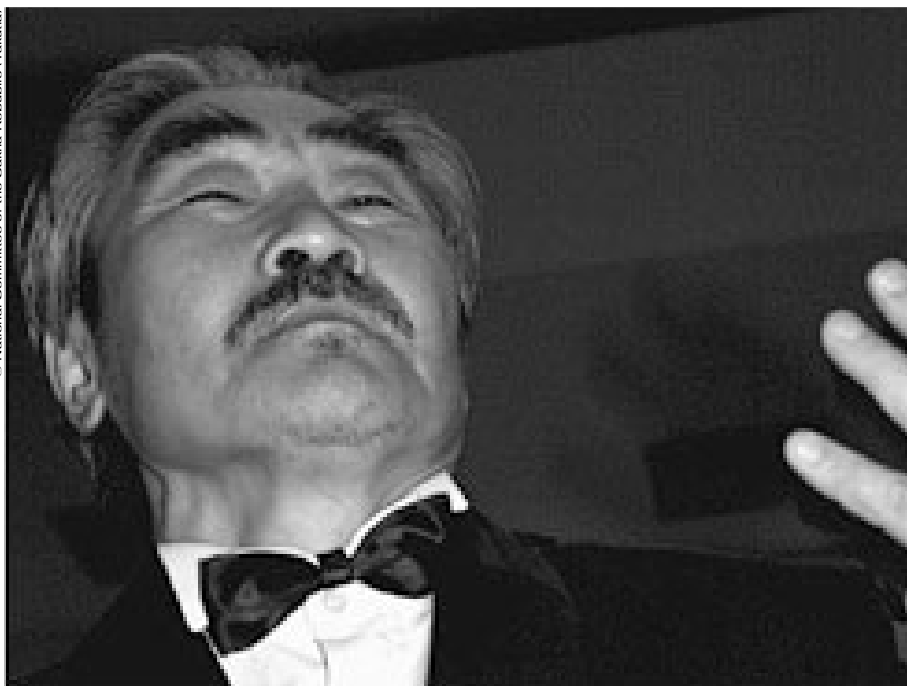
OLONKHO, AN EPOS FROM TWELVE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

Once upon a time there was a witch from the Lower World named Sarakhana. One day, she stole three babies from the Upper, Middle and Lower Worlds. Sarakhana's three adopted children, transformed into wolves, soon conquered the homeland of hero Chugdaan Bukhatyir. He battled them and won the vic-

Delving into local warrior legends and closely connected to shamanic folklore, it carries the epic memory of the Yakut nation.



Scene extracted from the Olonkho performance Kyys Debiliire.



The narrator, called Olonjosut, lends his voice to each character.

tory. But the losers called their “older brother” for help, the monster Dyghyidaana Beghe, and the hero was forced to retreat.

So begins “Kyys Debillie”, one of the countless variations of the Olonkho epos, handed down from generation to generation in the Sakha Republic in Yakutia, a north-eastern region of the Russian Federation. Delving into local warrior legends and closely connected to shamanic folklore, it carries the epic memory of the Yakut nation. As in ancient Greek myth, the Olonkho gods put the first humans on earth, in the Middle World. The gods ruled over the Upper World, its borders inhabited by dangerous giants, the abaasy. The Underworld was the domain of monsters hostile to humankind. But behind the array of warrior adventures, the struggle for good and evil is at the heart of this oral tradition.

An epos that is sung

Unlike most other epic tales the Yakut Olonkho is not spoken but sung. The personality and actions of each character have their own melody. The Olonkhosut, the narrator, sings the monologues of the heroes and recites the rest in a rapid tempo, in a sort of sing-song

chant. He may mix in the imitation of a horse neighing, birds singing or other animal sounds. With these different voices, alternating song and recitation, the Olonkhosut can keep spectators on the edge of their seats the whole night long.

The Olonkho belongs to the epic arts of the Turkic-Mongolian peoples and its melodies reveal its oriental influences. Specialists have also found that the Olonkho has elements in common with Indian raga, Central Asian makom and Azeri magam, which gave birth to Gregorian chant. Traditional Yakut music is also linked to the traditional song of the akyn in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

The Yakut epos had its moment of glory in the early 20th century. Plays were staged based on the Olonkho, including “Young Hero Beriet Berghen” (1906) or “The Hero Kulantai on his Prancing Horse” (1907). Then it foundered in the Soviet period. Considered a remnant of the past, the popular tradition was banned. It continued, but went underground. As a result, while once there were hundreds of Olonkhosut in Yakutia, now there are only two: Daria Tomskaya, 96, in the village of Ene, and Piotr Rechetnikov, 77, in the village of Cherkekh. “Yet in a world where people are constantly

pushed around, the Olonkho’s serenity is beneficial,” comments Andrei Borissov, film and theatre director of the Olonkho performance Kyys Debillie.

A threatened tradition

In response to the threat against this oral tradition, UNESCO proclaimed the Olonkho a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. A number of initiatives to ensure its safeguarding were taken following the proclamation. A decree “on the measures for conservation, study and circulation of the Yakut heroic epos Olonkho” was adopted, proposing primarily to launch an “Olonkho decade 2006-2015” in the Republic and pay a pension to the “living depositories of the epic tradition” Daria Tomskaya and Piotr Rechetnikov. An Olonkho study centre, an Olonkho theatre and an annual folklore festival entitled “World culture on Olonkho territory” will also be founded. Particular focus, finally, has been given to the younger generation – the ministry of education will develop educational programmes and material devoted to the Olonkho epos».

Vladimir Sergueev

Important dates on intangible heritage at UNESCO

By José Banaag



© UNESCO Andrew Wheeler

UNESCO's General Conference of 2003 adopts the Convention on the Intangible Heritage.

1966

UNESCO's General Conference adopts the Declaration on the Principles of International Cultural Cooperation which lays the basis for the development of cultural policies within UNESCO.

1970

An Intergovernmental Conference on the Institutional, Administrative and Financial Aspects of Culture is convened (Venice, Italy), marking the emergence of the notions of "cultural development" and of the "cultural dimension of development."

1972

When the Convention for the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage is adopted, several Member States express interest in the importance of safeguarding the intangible heritage.

1973

Bolivia proposes that a Protocol be added to the Universal Copyright Convention in order to protect folklore.

1982

The Mondiacult World Conference on Cultural Policies (Mexico City) acknowledges the increasing importance attached to 'intangible cultural heritage' and includes it in its redefinition of cultural heritage.

1982

UNESCO sets up the Committee of Experts on the Safeguarding of Folklore.

1989

The Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore is adopted by the General Conference.

1994

UNESCO launches the Living Human Treasures programme, following a proposal by the Republic of Korea.

1996

The report "Our Creative Diversity", after remarking that the 1972 Convention is not appropriate for the kinds of heritage most common in regions where cultural energies have been concentrated in other forms of expression such as artifacts, dance or oral traditions, calls for the development of other forms of recognition to match the true range and wealth of heritage found across the world.

1997

UNESCO and the Moroccan National Commission organize an international consultation on the preservation of popular cultural spaces in Marrakesh in June.

1997/1998

UNESCO launches the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

1999

UNESCO and the Smithsonian Institution jointly organize the Conference: "A Global Assessment of the 1989 Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore: Local Empowerment and International Cooperation", in Washington DC, USA.

2001

The First Proclamation of 19 cultural spaces or expressions takes place in May. UNESCO's Member States adopt the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, together with an action plan.

2003

The 32nd session of the General Conference adopts the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in October. In November, the Second Proclamation inscribes 28 new Masterpieces.

2004

Algeria deposits its instrument of approval on March 15, thus becoming the first State Party to the Convention.

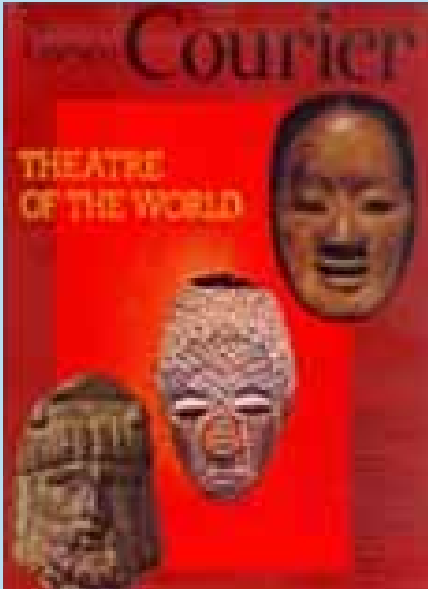
2005

The Third Proclamation of 43 Masterpieces brings the total to 90.

2006 - The Convention enters into force on April 20. Forty-seven Member States have so far ratified it.

The Courier looks back

Since it began publication, *The UNESCO Courier* has devoted many articles and issues to the intangible heritage. Here is a brief trip down memory lane.



Issues

Great epics – Heroic tales of man and superman September 1989

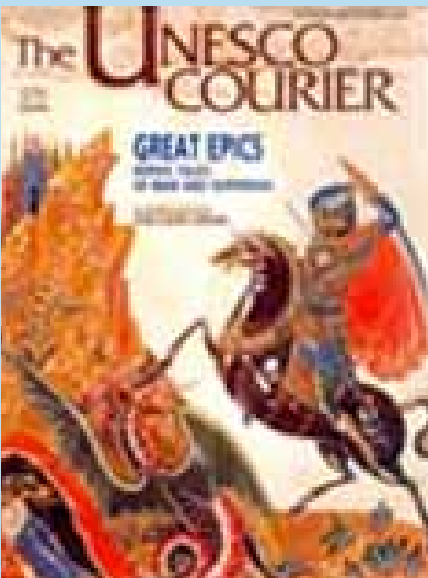
Whether composed by unknown poets, or transmitted orally and reshaped from century to century, epics relate to the birth of a culture, an empire, or indeed the universe, maintained in the national memory of one generation to the next. The epic has thus survived the vicissitudes of history.

Theatre of the world April 1983

From African rituals to the kabuki of Japan, world theatre covers an immense canvas, the “concentrated expression” of a culture. It draws on popular myths and customs, historic ways of life and experiences, and assimilates all forms of art, human expression and communication.

Music of the centuries June 1973

Music is associated with life itself and with human society. Even in the early stages of every culture, sung recitation is a vehicle for historical narrative and the teaching of philosophical and moral concepts. This issue examines the place of traditional music in the world of today.



Articles

“The rebirth of Kunqu opera” November 2005

This traditional Chinese art, once threatened with extinction, is now the object of renewed interest.

“Jongo’s rebirth” December 2004

Thanks to certain communities, this blend of song, dance and magic, brought by slaves from Angola and the Congo, is again in the spotlight in Brazil.

“Preserving the magic” September 2001

Defining the intangible cultural heritage is far from simple, as UNESCO’s efforts to safeguard endangered masterpieces go to show.

“A prince embroiderer without a kingdom” July 2001

Among the last of a dying breed of gold embroiderers from Laos, Tiao Somsanith is trying to save this vanishing art without resorting to commercialism.

“Jemâa-el-Fna’s thousand and one nights” December 2000

The oral traditions of Marrakesh’s famous square are unique in the world for their richness and variety.

“The past is not just made of stone” December 2000

The world’s heritage is not just monuments and natural wonders—the intangible ideas and beliefs that make up our collective memory also have their rightful place.



Sanskrit theatre from the province of Kerala, the Kutiyattam (India).

José Banaag



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