



Intangible Cultural Heritage



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Intangible
Cultural
Heritage



Intangible cultural

UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage proposes five broad 'domains' in which intangible cultural heritage is manifested:

- **Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;**
- **Performing arts;**
- **Social practices, rituals and festive events;**
- **Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;**
- **Traditional craftsmanship.**



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🔗 *The Kankurang, Manding Initiatory Rite, Senegal and Gambia*

🔗 *The Olonkho, Yakut Heroic Epos, Russian Federation*

🔗 *The Carnival of Binche, Belgium*

heritage domains

Instances of intangible cultural heritage are not limited to a single manifestation and many include elements from multiple domains. Take, for example, a shamanistic rite. This might involve traditional music and dance, prayers and songs, clothing and sacred items as well as ritual and ceremonial practices and an acute awareness and knowledge of the natural world. Similarly, festivals are complex expressions of intangible cultural heritage that include singing, dancing, theatre, feasting, oral tradition and storytelling, displays of craftsmanship, sports and other entertainments. The boundaries between domains are extremely fluid and often vary from community to community. It is difficult, if not impossible, to impose rigid categories externally. While one community might view their chanted verse as a form of ritual, another would interpret it as song. Similarly, what one community defines as 'theatre' might be interpreted as 'dance' in a different cultural context. There are also differences in scale and scope: one community

might make minute distinctions between variations of expression while another group considers them all diverse parts of a single form.

While the Convention sets out a framework for identifying forms of intangible cultural heritage, the list of domains it provides is intended to be inclusive rather than exclusive; it is not necessarily meant to be 'complete'. States may use a different system of domains. There is already a wide degree of variation, with some countries dividing up the manifestations of intangible cultural heritage differently, while others use broadly similar domains to those of the Convention with alternative names. They may add further domains or new sub-categories to existing domains. This may involve incorporating 'sub-domains' already in use in countries where intangible cultural heritage is recognized, including 'traditional play and games', 'culinary traditions', 'animal husbandry', 'pilgrimage' or 'places of memory'.



Photo © Department of Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Culture of Madagascar



Photo © Conselho Das Aldeias Wajapi

🔗 *The Woodcrafting Knowledge of the Zafimaniry, Madagascar*

🔗 *Oral and Graphic Expressions of the Wajapi, Brazil*



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Oral traditions and expressions

The oral traditions and expressions domain encompasses an enormous variety of spoken forms including proverbs, riddles, tales, nursery rhymes, legends, myths, epic songs and poems, charms, prayers, chants, songs, dramatic performances and more. Oral traditions and expressions are used to pass on knowledge, cultural and social values and collective memory. They play a crucial part in keeping cultures alive.

🔗 The Hudhud Chants of the Ifugao, Philippines

Some types of oral expression are common and can be used by entire communities while others are limited to particular social groups, only men or women, perhaps, or only the elderly. In many societies, performing oral traditions is a highly specialized occupation and the community holds professional performers in the highest regard as guardians of collective memory. Such performers can be found in communities all over the world. While poets and storytellers in non-Western societies such as the *griots* and *dyelli* from Africa are well known, there is also a rich oral tradition in Europe and North America. In Germany and the USA, for example, there are hundreds of professional storytellers.

🔗 The Palestinian Hikaye

Because they are passed on by word of mouth, oral traditions and expressions often vary significantly in their telling. Stories are a combination – differing from genre to genre, from context to context and from performer to performer – of reproduction, improvisation and creation. This combination makes them a vibrant and colourful form of expression, but also fragile, as their viability depends on an uninterrupted chain passing traditions from one generation of performers to the next.

Although language underpins the intangible heritage of many communities, the protection and preservation of individual languages is beyond the scope of the 2003 Convention, though they are included in Article 2 as a means of transmitting intangible cultural heritage. Different languages shape how stories, poems and songs are told, as well as affecting their content. The death of a language inevitably leads to the permanent loss of oral traditions and expressions. However, it is these oral expressions themselves and their performance in public that best help to safeguard a language rather than dictionaries, grammars and databases. Languages live in songs and stories, riddles and



rhymes and so the protection of languages and the transmission of oral traditions and expressions are very closely linked.

Like other forms of intangible cultural heritage, oral traditions are threatened by rapid urbanisation, large-scale migration, industrialisation and environmental change. Books, newspapers and magazines, radio, television and the Internet can have an especially damaging effect on oral traditions and expressions. Modern mass media may significantly alter or over replace traditional forms of oral expression. Epic poems that once took several days to recite in full may be reduced to just a few hours and traditional courtship songs that were sung before marriage may be replaced by CDs or digital music files.

The most important part of safeguarding oral traditions and expressions is maintaining their every day role in society. It is also essential that opportunities for knowledge to be passed from person-to-person survive; chances for elders to interact with young people and pass on stories in homes and schools, for example. Oral tradition often forms an important part of festive and cultural celebrations and these events may need to be promoted and new contexts, such as storytelling festivals, encouraged to allow traditional creativity to find new means of expression. In the spirit of the 2003 Convention, safeguarding measures should focus on oral traditions and expressions as processes, where communities are free to explore their cultural heritage, rather than as products.

Communities, researchers and institutions may also use information technology to help safeguard the full range and richness of oral traditions, including textual variations and different styles of performance. Unique expressive features, such as intonation and a much larger number of varying styles, can now be recorded as audio or video, as can interactions between performers and audiences and non-verbal story elements including gestures and mimicry. Mass media and communication technologies can be used to preserve and even strengthen oral traditions and expressions by broadcasting recorded performances both to their communities of origin and to a wider audience.

*The **Olonkho**, the Heroic Epos of the Yakut people of the **Russian Federation**, reflects Yakut beliefs and customs, shamanistic practices, oral history and values. The 'Olonkhusut' or narrator must excel in acting, singing, eloquence and poetic improvisation. Like most oral traditions, there are multiple versions of Olonkho, the longest of which totals over 15,000 lines of verse.*



Photo © UNESCO

*The **Palestinian Hikaye** is told by women to other women and children, and offers an often critical view of society from women's perspectives. Almost every Palestinian woman over the age of 70 is a Hikaye teller, and the tradition is mainly carried on by elder women. However, it is not unusual for girls and young boys to tell tales to one another for practice or pleasure.*



Photo © Rafi Safieh

*The **Hudhud Chants** of the Ifugao in the **Philippines** are performed during the sowing season, rice harvest and funeral wakes. A complete telling, which lasts for several days, is often conducted by an elderly woman, who acts as the community's historian and preacher.*



Photo © Renato S. Rastrollo / NCCA-ICH/UNESCO

*To safeguard the Art of Akyns, six studios have been established in different regions of **Kyrgyzstan** where recognized epic-tellers, the Akyns, pass on their knowledge and skills to groups of young apprentices preparing themselves to become modern Akyns in a few years. The teachers may use audio-visual equipment, recordings and texts, but the person-to-person form of learning remains intact.*



Photo © Kyrgyz National Commission for UNESCO



Photo © Sonomish Yundenbat

↳ **Urtiin Duu**
Traditional Folk Song, Mongolia and China



📍 *The Mask Dance of the Drums from Drametse, Bhutan*

Performing arts

The performing arts range from vocal and instrumental music, dance and theatre to pantomime, sung verse and beyond. They include numerous cultural expressions that reflect human creativity and that are also found, to some extent, in many other intangible cultural heritage domains.

Music is perhaps the most universal of the performing arts and is found in every society, most often as an integral part of other performing art forms and other domains of intangible cultural heritage including rituals, festive events or oral traditions. It can be found in the most diverse contexts: sacred or profane, classical or popular, closely connected to work or entertainment. There may also be a political or economic dimension to music: it can recount a community's history, sing the praises of a powerful person and play a key role in economic transactions. The occasions on which music is performed are just as varied: marriages, funerals, rituals and initiations, festivities, all kinds of entertainment as well as many other social functions.

📍 *Flautist at Charouine, Algeria*

Dance, though very complex, may be described simply as ordered bodily movements, usually performed to music. Apart from its physical aspect, the rhythmic movements, steps and gestures of dance often express a sentiment or mood or illustrate a specific event or daily act, such as religious dances and those representing hunting, warfare or sexual activity.

Traditional theatre performances usually combine acting, singing, dance and music, dialogue, narration or recitation but may also include puppetry or pantomime. These arts, however, are more than simply 'performances' for an audience; they may also play crucial roles in culture and society such as songs sung while carrying out agricultural work or music that is part of a ritual. In a more intimate setting, lullabies are often sung to help a baby sleep.

The instruments, objects, artefacts and spaces associated with cultural expressions and practices are all included in the Convention's definition of intangible cultural heritage. In the performing arts this includes musical

instruments, masks, costumes and other body decorations used in dance, and the scenery and props of theatre. Performing arts are often performed in specific places; when these spaces are closely linked to the performance, they are considered cultural spaces by the Convention.

Many forms of performing arts are under threat today. As cultural practices become standardized, many traditional practices are abandoned. Even in cases where they become more popular, only certain expressions may benefit while others suffer.

Music is perhaps one of the best examples of this, with the recent explosion in the popularity of 'World Music'. Though it performs an important role in cultural exchange and encourages creativity that enriches the international art scene, the phenomenon can also cause problems. Many diverse forms of music may be homogenized with the goal of delivering a consistent product. In these situations, there is little place for certain musical practices that are vital to the process of performance and tradition in certain communities.

Music, dance and theatre are often key features of cultural promotion intended to attract tourists and regularly feature in the itineraries of tour operators. Although this may bring more visitors and increased revenue to a country or community and offer a window onto its culture, it may also result in the emergence of new ways of presenting the performing arts, which have been altered for the tourist market. While tourism can contribute to reviving traditional performing arts and give a 'market value' to intangible cultural heritage, it can also have a distorting effect, as the performances are often reduced to show adapted highlights in order to meet tourist demands. Often, traditional art forms are turned into commodities in the name of entertainment, with the loss of important forms of community expression.

The Samba de Roda of Recôncavo of Bahia (Brazil) developed from the dances and cultural traditions of slaves of African origin but also incorporates elements of Portuguese culture, particularly the language and poetic forms. This local genre has influenced the development of the urban samba, which became a symbol of Brazilian national identity in the twentieth century.



Photo © Luiz Santoz / UNESCO

Kutiyattam, Sanskrit Theatre is one of India's most ancient traditions, a synthesis of Sanskrit classicism and local Kerala traditions. In its stylized and codified theatrical language, gestures and eye expressions are prominent, expressing the thoughts and feelings of the characters. Traditionally enacted in the sacred space of temples, Kutiyattam performances always include an oil lamp on stage to symbolise a divine presence.



Photo © Natanaikarai / UNESCO

Slovácko Verbuňk, Recruit Dances (Czech Republic) are traditionally danced by men of all ages. Rather than being bound to a precise choreography, the dances are instead marked by spontaneity and individual expression, and by acrobatic contests. Their structural complexity and variety of movements make Slovácko Verbuňk a cultural expression of great artistic value, expressing the cultural identity and diversity of the region.



Photo © The National Institute of Folk Culture



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Photo © Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts

The Royal Ballet of Cambodia

In other cases, wider social or environmental factors may have a serious impact on performing art traditions. Deforestation, for example, can deprive a community of wood to make traditional instruments used to perform music.

Many music traditions have been adapted to fit western forms of notation so they may be recorded, or for the purpose of education, but this process can be destructive. Many forms of music use scales with tones and intervals that do not correspond to standard western forms and tonal subtleties may be lost in the process of transcription. As well as music being

homogenised, changes to traditional instruments to make them more familiar or easier to play for students, such as the addition of frets to stringed instruments, fundamentally alter the instruments themselves.

Safeguarding measures for traditional performing arts should focus mainly on transmission of knowledge and techniques, of playing and making instruments and strengthening the bond between master and apprentice. The subtleties of a song, the movements of a dance and theatrical interpretations should all be reinforced.



Photo © Yamnick Jooris

'Master Classes', which allow students to work closely with master performers, may be organised, as has already occurred in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan with Shashmaqom music, in Guinea for the Sosso Bala and in **Bhutan** for Drametese Ngacham, a sacred mask dance.

In Afghanistan, the Mugam use the National Archives to ensure that recordings provide a source of inspiration, training and knowledge to future generations of musicians.

Transmission activities may also be strengthened by teaching intangible cultural heritage in schools, such as in **Cuba** where the Tumba Francesa is taught to children.

In **Ethiopia** an ambitious research and training project is underway to collect traditional music, dance and instruments across the country, and to support the creation of a university curriculum in the field of ethnomusicology.

Performances may also be researched, recorded, documented, inventoried and archived. There are countless sound recordings in archives all around the world with many dating back over a century. These older recordings are threatened by deterioration and may be permanently lost unless digitized. The process of digitisation allows documents to be properly identified and inventoried.

Cultural media, institutions and industries can also play a crucial role in ensuring the viability of traditional forms of performing arts by developing audiences and raising awareness amongst the general public. Audiences can be informed about the various aspects of a form of expression, allowing it to gain a new and broader popularity, while also promoting connoisseurship which, in turn, encourages interest in local variations of an art form and may result in active participation in the performance itself.

Safeguarding may also involve improvements in training and infrastructure to properly prepare staff and institutions for preserving the full range of performing arts. In Georgia, students are trained in anthropological fieldwork methods as well as how to record polyphonies, allowing them to create the foundations of a national inventory by creating a database.



Photo © Comisión Nacional Cubana de la UNESCO



Photo © UNESCO

Rituals and Festivities

Social practices, rituals and festive events

Social practices, rituals and festive events are habitual activities that structure the lives of communities and groups and that are shared by and relevant to many of their members. They are significant because they reaffirm the identity of those who practise them as a group or a society and, whether performed in public or private, are closely linked to important events. Social, ritual and festive practices may help to mark the passing of the seasons, events in the agricultural calendar or the stages of a person's life. They are closely linked to a community's worldview and perception of its own history and memory. They vary from small gatherings to large-scale social celebrations and commemorations. Each of these sub-domains is vast but there is also a great deal of overlap between them.

Rituals and festive events often take place at special times and places and remind a community of aspects of its worldview and history. In some cases, access to rituals may be restricted to certain members of the community; initiation rites and burial ceremonies are two such examples. Some festive events, however, are a key part of public life and are open to all members of society; carnivals and events to mark the New Year, beginning of Spring and end of the harvest are inclusive occasions common all over the world.

Social practices shape everyday life and are familiar to all members of the community, even if not everybody participates in them. Distinctive social practices that are specially relevant to a community and help reinforce a sense of identity and continuity with the past are given priority in the 2003 Convention. For example, in many communities greeting ceremonies are informal while in others they are more elaborate and ritualistic, acting as a marker of identity for the society. Similarly, practices of giving and

*The Royal Ancestral Ritual, practised at the Jongmyo Shrine in Seoul (**Republic of Korea**), encompasses song, dance and music, all parts of a century-old ceremony worshipping the ancestors and expressing filial piety.*

*Twice a year, at the time of seasonal migration in the pastoral lands of the inner Niger Delta in **Mali**, the river crossing of the cattle marks the beginning of the Peul community's Yaaraal and Degal festivities. They include competitions for the most beautifully decorated herd, songs and recitations of pastoral poems.*

*The Carnival of Binche in Belgium, the Oruro Carnival in **Bolivia** or the Makishi Masquerade in Zambia involve colourful pageantry, singing and dancing, and various types of costumes or masks. In some cases these festive events are a means of temporarily overcoming social differences by assuming different identities and of commenting on social or political conditions through mockery or amusement.*

*The Vimbuza healing ritual, widely practised in the rural parts of northern **Malawi**, was developed in the mid-nineteenth century as a means of overcoming traumatic experiences but has become less prevalent over the last few decades. Safeguarding efforts create incentives for young people to learn about the Vimbuza healing dance and to foster dialogue between Vimbuza healers and government and non-government bodies dealing with medical issues through broadcasting panel discussions, training workshops and festivals.*

📍 *The Royal Ancestral Ritual in the Jongmyo Shrine and its Music, Republic of Korea*

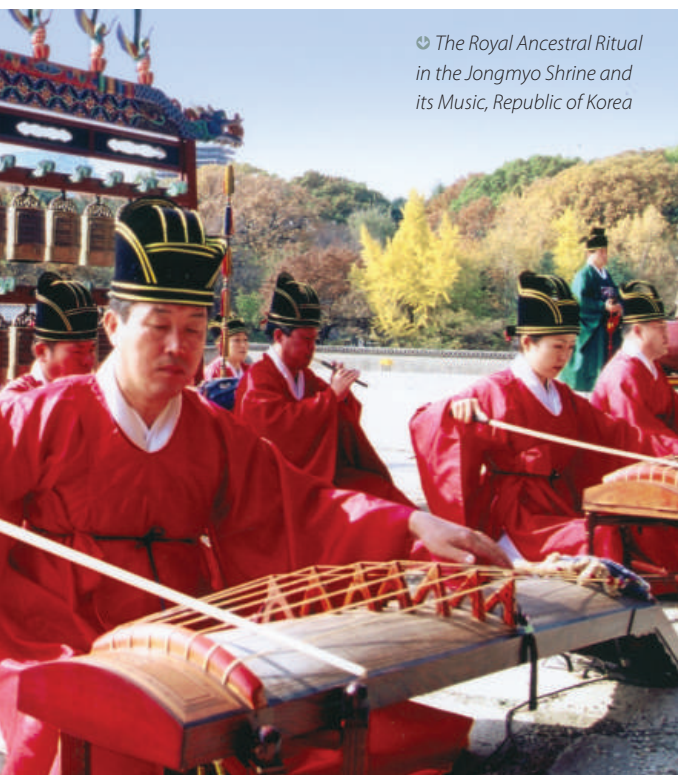


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receiving gifts may range from casual events to formal arrangements with significant political, economic or social meanings.

Social practices, rituals and festive events involve a dazzling variety of forms: worship rites; rites of passage; birth, wedding and funeral rituals; oaths of allegiance; traditional legal systems; traditional games and sports; kinship and ritual kinship ceremonies; settlement patterns; culinary traditions; seasonal ceremonies; practices specific to men or women only; hunting, fishing and gathering practices and many more. They also include a wide variety of expressions and physical elements: special gestures and words, recitations, songs or dances, special clothing, processions, animal sacrifice, special food.

Social practices, rituals and festive events are strongly affected by the changes communities undergo in modern societies because they depend so much on the broad participation of practitioners and others in the communities themselves. Processes such as migration, individualisation, the general introduction of formal education, the growing influence of major world religions and other effects of globalization have a particularly marked effect on these practices.

Migration, especially of young people, may draw those who practise forms of intangible cultural heritage away from their communities and endanger some cultural practices. At the same time, however, social practices, rituals and festive events may serve as special occasions on which people return home to celebrate with their family and community, reaffirming their identity and link to the community's traditions.

Many communities find that tourists are increasingly participating in their festive events and while there may be positive aspects to tourist involvement, the festivals often suffer in the same way as traditional performing arts. The viability of social practices, rituals and especially festive events may also depend quite heavily on general socio-economic conditions. The preparations, the production of costumes and

The rich variety of social practices performed at the Jemaa el-Fna Square in Marrakesh (Morocco) were threatened with gradual disappearance due to urban growth and development projects that produced heavy traffic and air pollution. In an attempt to resolve the conflict between urban planning and economic development and cultural and environmental concerns, authorities created pedestrian streets converging on the Square and reorganized motor traffic so as to decrease the number of cars and tourist coaches, for the safeguarding of the social practices.

To preserve the originality of and encourage participation in the Carnival de Barranquilla, a local foundation has created and supports a new event, the Children's Carnival, which has become a vital element of the carnival performed in Colombia. Practitioners received financial support for the production of handcrafted objects including floats, extravagant costumes, head ornaments, music instruments, animal masks and other artefacts. A micro-credit program made it possible for artisans to borrow small sums of money to produce items to sell for additional income, improving their life quality and stressing the importance of their involvement in the carnival.



Photo © UNESCO / Jane Wright



Photo © Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Colombia



Photo © UNESCO / Chimbidikai Mapfumo

📍 The Mbende Jerusarema Dance, Zimbabwe

masks and providing for the participants is often very expensive and may not be sustainable in times of economic downturn.

Ensuring the continuity of social practices, rituals or festive events often requires the mobilization of large numbers of individuals and the social, political and legal institutions and mechanisms of a society. While respecting customary practices that might limit participation to certain groups, it may also be desirable to encourage the broadest public participation possible. In some cases, legal and formal measures need to be taken to guarantee the access rights of the community to its sacred places, crucial objects, or natural resources necessary for the performance of social practices, rituals and festive events.

📍 The Samba de Roda of Recôncavo of Bahia, Brazil

Nature and the universe

Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe

Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe include knowledge, know-how, skills, practices and representations developed by communities by interacting with the natural environment. These ways of thinking about the universe are expressed through language, oral traditions, feelings of attachment towards a place, memories, spirituality and worldview. They also strongly influence values and beliefs and underlie many social practices and cultural traditions. They, in turn, are shaped by the natural environment and the community's wider world.

This domain includes numerous areas such as traditional ecological wisdom, indigenous knowledge, knowledge about local fauna and

flora, traditional healing systems, rituals, beliefs, initiatory rites, cosmologies, shamanism, possession rites, social organisations, festivals, languages and visual arts.

Traditional knowledge and practices lie at the heart of a community's culture and identity but are under serious threat from globalisation. Even though some aspects of traditional knowledge, such as medicinal uses of local plant species, may be of interest to scientists and corporations, many traditional practices are nevertheless disappearing. Rapid urbanisation and the extension of agricultural lands can have a marked effect on a community's natural environment and their knowledge of it; clearing land may result in the disappearance of a sacred forest or the need to find an alternative source of wood for building. Climate change, continued

📍 *Nha Nhac, Vietnamese Court Music*

📍 *Vanuatu Sand Drawings*

📍 *The Indigenous Festivity dedicated to the Dead, Mexico*



Photo © Hue Monument Conservation Centre



Photo © Vanuatu National Cultural Council



deforestation and the ongoing spread of deserts inevitably threaten many endangered species and results in the decline of traditional craftsmanship and herbal medicine as raw materials and plant species disappear.

Safeguarding a world view or system of beliefs is even more challenging than preserving a natural environment. Beyond the external challenges to the social and natural environment, many underprivileged or marginalized communities are themselves inclined to adopt a way of life or a purely economic development model which are far from their own traditions and customs.

Protecting the natural environment is often closely linked to safeguarding a community's cosmology, as well as other examples of its intangible cultural heritage.

*In addition to a rich pharmacopeia, the priest doctors of Kallawayá in Andean **Bolivia** have developed a traditional medical system based on the knowledge of the indigenous peoples of the Andean area. Kallawayá women incorporate motifs from their community's view of the universe into the textiles they produce.*

*Nha Nhac, **Vietnamese** Court Music, provides a means of communicating with and paying tribute to the gods and kings, as well as communicating knowledge about nature and the universe.*

*In **Senegal** and **Gambia**, the legal protection of sacred forests as well as promoting protected areas management through training and replanting threatened plant species has helped safeguard the future of the Kankurang initiation rite of the Manding community.*

*In **Madagascar**, an action plan to safeguard the woodcrafting knowledge of the Zafimaniry includes legal protections by establishing patents on a national and international level. This will help to protect graphic designs and motifs that are closely linked to the identity of the Zafimaniry community. Rare tree species used for crafting materials are being replanted.*

***Vanuatu** Sand Drawings, Oral and Graphic Expressions of the Wajapi (Brazil) and the Woodcrafting Knowledge of the Zafimaniry (Madagascar) are diverse forms of visual or decorative arts, each inspired by and expressing the respective creation beliefs of their communities. New life will be given to the practice of sand drawing in traditional communities by organizing new festivals and other community events to allow artists to demonstrate and pass on the art form. Legal and commercial regulations are also being introduced to protect sand drawing's status. It will be included as part of the standard curriculum taught to school children and a trust fund will be established to allow artists to generate income from it.*



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Photo © Direction du patrimoine culturel, Senegal



Photo © J. Segur/ZED



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The **Indonesian Kris**, both weapon and spiritual object, is believed to have magical powers. A bladesmith, or *empu*, makes the blade in layers of different iron ores and meteorite nickel. *Empus* are highly respected artisans who are also experts in literature, history and occult sciences. Although active and honoured *empus* who produce high-quality kris in the traditional way can still be found on many islands, their number is dramatically decreasing, and it is more difficult for them to find people to whom they can pass on their skills.



Photo © Marc Soosaar

The most visible emblem of the Kihnu Cultural Space (**Estonia**) is the woollen handicrafts worn by the women of the community. Working in their homes using traditional looms and local wool, the women weave and knit mittens, stockings, skirts and blouses; many of the symbolic forms and colours adorning these striking garments are rooted in ancient legends.



Photo © J.K. Walusimbi

Barkcloth Making in **Uganda** involves some of humankind's oldest knowledge, a prehistoric technique that predates the invention of weaving. Barkcloth is mainly worn at coronation and healing ceremonies, funerals and cultural gatherings, but is also used for curtains, mosquito screens, bedding and storage. With the introduction of cotton cloth by caravan traders, production slowed and barkcloth's cultural and spiritual functions diminished, until its revival in recent decades.



Photo © Alexis Lecomte, Ministère de la Culture, France

In **France**, the 'Maîtres d'Art' system recognizes dozens of exemplary craftspeople in fields as diverse as musical instrument-making, textile arts and bookbinding. The aim of the system is to support the transmission of their knowledge and skills to others.



Photo © Lithuania Folk Culture Centre

In the **Lithuanian** city of Prienai, a centre and workshop have been set up to promote the area's cross-crafting traditions. Here apprentices can learn cross-crafting from masters to meet the orders of local towns and private customers, both domestic and international.

Traditional Craftsmanship

Traditional craftsmanship is perhaps the most tangible manifestation of intangible cultural heritage. However, the 2003 Convention is mainly concerned with the skills and knowledge involved in craftsmanship rather than the craft products themselves. Rather than focusing on preserving craft objects, safeguarding attempts should instead concentrate on encouraging artisans to continue to produce craft and to pass their skills and knowledge onto others, particularly within their own communities.

There are numerous expressions of traditional craftsmanship: tools; clothing and jewellery; costumes and props for festivals and performing arts; storage containers, objects used for storage, transport and shelter; decorative art and ritual objects; musical instruments and household utensils, and toys, both for amusement and education. Many of these objects are only intended to be used for a short time, such as those created for festival rites, while others may become heirloom that are passed from generation to generation. The skills involved in creating craft objects are as varied as the items themselves and range from delicate, detailed work such as producing paper votives to robust, rugged tasks like creating a sturdy basket or thick blanket.

Like other forms of intangible cultural heritage, globalization poses significant challenges to the survival of traditional forms of craftsmanship. Mass production, whether on the level of large multinational corporations or local cottage industries, can often supply goods needed for daily life at a lower cost, both in terms of currency and time, than hand production. Many craftspeople struggle to adapt to this competition. Environmental and climatic pressures impact on traditional craftsmanship too, with deforestation and land clearing reducing the availability of key natural resources. Even in cases where traditional artisanship develops into a cottage industry, the increased scale of production may result in damage to the environment.

As social conditions or cultural tastes change, festivals and celebrations that once required elaborate craft production may become more



[Barkcloth Making in Uganda](#)

austere, resulting in fewer opportunities for artisans to express themselves. Young people in communities may find the sometimes lengthy apprenticeship necessary to learn many traditional forms of craft too demanding and instead seek work in factories or service industry where the work is less exacting and the pay often better. Many craft traditions involve ‘trade secrets’ that should not be taught to outsiders but if family members or community members are not interested in learning it, the knowledge may disappear because sharing it with strangers violates tradition.

The goal of safeguarding, as with other forms of intangible cultural heritage, is to ensure that the knowledge and skills associated with traditional artisanry are passed on to future generations so that crafts can continue to be produced within their communities, providing livelihoods to their makers and reflecting creativity.

Many craft traditions have age-old systems of instruction and apprenticeship. One proven way of reinforcing and strengthening these systems is to offer financial incentives to students and teachers to make knowledge transfer more attractive to both.

Local, traditional markets for craft products can also be reinforced, while at the same time creating new ones. In response to urbanization and industrialization, many people around the world enjoy handmade objects that are imbued with the accumulated knowledge and cultural values of the craftspeople and which offer a softer alternative to the numerous ‘high tech’ items that dominate global consumer culture.

In other cases, trees can be replanted to try and offset the damage done to traditional crafts reliant on wood for raw materials. In some situations, legal measures may need to be taken to guarantee the access rights of communities to gather resources, while also ensuring environmental protection.

Further legal measures, such as intellectual property protections and patent or copyright registrations, can help a community to benefit from its traditional motifs and crafts. Sometimes, legal measures intended for other purposes can encourage craft production; for example, a local ban on wasteful plastic bags can stimulate a market for handmade paper bags and containers woven from grass, allowing traditional craft skills and knowledge to thrive.

[The Indonesian Kris](#)



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Intangible
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Intangible
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Intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.