



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture

**Final Report**  
**Expert meeting 'Gender and Intangible Heritage'**

**8-10 December 2003**  
**Intangible Heritage Section, UNESCO**

This report was drafted by the UNESCO Secretariat, and revised and finalised with the participants in July 2004, following discussions which took place after the meeting.

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**Final Report**  
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**I Background of the meeting**

‘Women’ are a common priority target of the United Nations, and the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women is one of the UN Millennium Development Goals. In the course of the discussions at the meetings of intergovernmental experts preparing a draft for the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (September 2002-June 2003), various opinions were heard between two extremes concerning women; while there were voices that assumed women’s special roles in transmitting intangible heritage and emphasised the necessity to pay particular attention to them, other delegates did not want to allow any such attention because it might mean (positive) discrimination to women.

In the end, no particular mention of women was retained in the text of the Convention, and women are considered to be included in ‘communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit’ intangible cultural heritage (Article 15). Instead, emphasis was put on conformity with existing international human rights instruments for intangible cultural heritage to be eligible for assistance under that Convention (Article 2 (1)). The existing instruments would naturally include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) that explicitly targets ‘traditional cultural patterns’ as a major factor strengthening unequal social practice to women.

In contrast, during day-to-day operations in the Intangible Heritage Section, especially in the administrative evaluation of candidature files submitted by Member States for the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, we often encountered elements of intangible cultural heritage that showed apparent contradictions between the reality of traditional cultures and the notion of gender equality. In intangible cultural heritage, different roles, or division of work, between men and women are often observed. For example, there are many traditional rituals and performing arts where either men or women do not appear on the surface, while they may be playing important roles

behind the scene. Although such reality seems to be largely accepted by the community concerned, it sometimes raised arguments on the UNESCO side in connection with human rights.

After these experiences and the above-mentioned discussions by the intergovernmental experts, there was a clear need for UNESCO to tackle gender questions in relation to the Convention, which was adopted on 17 October 2003. To what extent does the intangible cultural heritage depend on gender-specific practice and transmission? Does recognition and encouragement of female transmitters of intangible heritage contribute to the empowerment of women in contemporary societies? Can the concept of gender equality always be compatible with the preservation of traditional cultures and lifeways? How can we accommodate gender issues in the field of intangible cultural heritage? Such questions were to be addressed to find realistic and meaningful solutions that could still be compatible with the notion of human rights.

The Intangible Heritage Section decided to organise an intensive meeting of experts to lay the groundwork to start off the discussions, with a view to later drawing up guidelines for Member States to deal with gender issues in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in the framework of the Convention. Ten experts, having different backgrounds, but all being deeply involved in the reality of various aspects of intangible cultural heritage, were invited to the meeting (See Annex 1). Some of them had specialist knowledge of gender issues; some did not. In the first instance, there was an idea to also invite UN gender specialists and lawyers who could speak about human rights instruments. However, this was postponed to a future occasion in order to concentrate, in this first meeting, on examining the reality of intangible heritage based on field-oriented experiences.

## **II Procedures of the meeting**

Before the meeting, the Intangible Heritage Section provided the participants with a preliminary position paper (See Annex 2) as the starting point of discussions, and requested them to identify one or more aspects to address in the meeting from respective points of view. As reference materials for preparations, the Secretariat suggested the text of the Convention as well as information about the first and second Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity together with some backgrounds of that programme.

In consultation with the participants, a provisional agenda was prepared by the Secretariat (See Annex 3). Professor Françoise Pommaret was asked to chair the meeting.

The meeting began with an introduction by Mr Riex Smeets, Chief of the Intangible Heritage Section, who gave the participants historical and political backgrounds of UNESCO's activities in the field of intangible cultural heritage, including the processes that had led to the adoption of the Convention. He especially touched upon the relationship between tangible and intangible heritage. He also explained the current activities of the Section and their imminent reformation to better fit in a context that is dominated by the newly adopted Convention.

Following the self-introductions of the participants, ten presentations were given on the first and the second days. Each presentation was followed by discussions; major arguments are summarised in the next section of this report. Central topics of the presentations were as follows:

#### Françoise Pommaret

first introduced the status of men and women in the Himalayan and Tibetan area. No real gender inequality is observed in people's lives in this area although one always finds pockets of discrimination. In Bhutan, more specifically, men and women basically share the intangible heritage and roles in its transmission, including the language education of children. Bhutan ratified the CEDAW in 1981 and presented its first report in 2004. However, in the religious (Buddhist) domain a clear gender disparity exists with preeminence of the monks and a certain bias against women.

#### Dominique Sewane

spoke about the active roles played by women in the ceremonial life of the Batammariba, a people living in the north of Benin and Togo. Their land has been separated and protected from modernisation regardless of the colonial history. In this community, while men are associated with the notion of 'death' (killing), women are considered to connect the worlds of the living and the dead, and to play particular, maternal roles. Female initiation rites are especially important.

#### Tara Browner

discussed music traditions, native religions, female-specific crafts and languages in Native North America, where among some tribal groups up to seven different genders are differentiated in cultural practices and expressions. She stated that Western values have been imposed on native communities concerning the ways of understanding and

disseminating their intangible cultural heritage, and she mentioned the significance of its protection by insiders of the communities.

#### Lea Zuyderhoudt

made a presentation on oral traditions of Blackfoot communities in North America, where parts of older gender structures are maintained and constituent of local storytelling and writing practices. Blackfoot accounts have also been transcribed by outside scholars for non-indigenous audiences. She warned against the double male bias that can be detected in the course of such documentation, where women's stories have largely been ignored. She also mentioned that stories could be sacred and secret and that local protocols should be taken into account when considering publication and school education for safeguarding those stories.

#### Anita Heiss

spoke about protocols for protecting Indigenous Australian intellectual and cultural heritage rights, providing the participants with various texts that had actually been issued by the Australian Government and adhered to by governmental and non-governmental research and arts agencies. She stressed the recognition of ownership of cultural heritage by Indigenous people and the necessity of consultation with and permission of the owners of Indigenous stories (found in dance, oral literature, and performance) when 'outsiders' want to record them. Such a process ensures the authenticity, and if appropriate, the secrecy or confidentiality of the stories.

#### Yuka Toyoshima

presented her own experiences as a female performer of Nôgaku, which she no longer continues. In the world of Nô, though the gate is open for women, there are visible and invisible difficulties for them not only to practically perform as recognised professionals but also to gain a real sense of this art form that was invented and has been transmitted as a male tradition. While basically admitting and respecting this reality, she pointed out contradictions of the protection of traditional culture in today's changing societies.

#### Adriana Gonzalez

spoke on Mexican female migrants in New York facing extremely hostile conditions of life, as men are exploited outside and become more and more abusive to women at home. Migrants, especially women, typically have two different attitudes to their tradition; they want to safeguard it, and to get out of it. They are also creating a new culture mixing their tradition and elements of US culture, which constructs a remarkable example of transmission of intangible heritage in contemporary urbane lives, beyond the original

geographical borders. This being an extremely vulnerable population, organisations concerned with their problems tend to view cultural issues as secondary. However, there is a need to stress that cultural heritage has a survival value for migrants. Programmes should be directed to preserve and enhance those aspects of cultural heritage that are useful to keep the cohesion of the community and the agency of the migrants.

#### Mary Bouquet

first touched a question of geographical imbalance of the proclaimed Masterpieces, among which extremely few are from Europe. Citing an example of the tradition of cream tea in Devonshire, England, she raised the issue of (political) control of safeguarding, vis-à-vis ongoing transmission of intangible heritage. She also talked about family photography as a tangible medium for transmitting intangible heritage. Lastly, she mentioned the unexpected consequences of transforming men's institutionalised violence against women (New Guinea, Middle Sepik) into domestic violence with the fall of the Tambaran secret men's cult. This case showed ritual paraphernalia in the process of being transformed into 'heritage'.

#### Valentina Napolitano-Quayson

stressed the importance to see the entire course of transmission and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage as 'cultural processes', where the history of exploitation and destruction, including (hidden) history about women, should be captured. History of women, who are often bearers of morality of the nation, is normally seen on a different level from that of textualised, dominant history of men. She pointed out that UNESCO's activities made intangible cultural heritage 'public', and these activities are making ordinary things extra-ordinary.

#### Nélia Dias

analysed the past debates between universal and anthropological views on human rights, and the processes how 'gender' came into discussions of cultural heritage. Gender inequality was not a problem as regards tangible heritage, but it obviously exists in intangible heritage, though the definition of being 'intangible' is actually difficult. She indicated shortfalls contained respectively in universalism and relativism in relation with the nature of intangible heritage, and raised the argument of political recognition of gender issues in the act of preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

### **III Major arguments**

During the meeting on the first and the second days, discussions not always concerned gender/women issues in a strict sense. It became clear that gender questions were inseparable from other fundamental issues concerning the intangible cultural heritage. Major arguments raised in the course of discussions can be classified under four titles as seen below: Insider and outsider; tradition and modernisation; transmission and safeguarding; and finally, gender (in)equality in intangible cultural heritage. Although gender tends to be invisible in the following, it should always be considered as a crucial part of the situation discussed as a whole. Not all the debates led to final, generally accepted conclusion; the general feeling was that these should be noted as important topics for further in-depth discussions.

#### **1. Insider and outsider**

When we discuss the intangible heritage, especially its safeguarding, from whose point of view do we do so: insiders or outsiders? How do we see the relationship between the community and outside researchers? These were concerns that prevailed throughout the meeting.

Intangible cultural heritage is evolving, not static, and it is continuously re-interpreted and re-created. However, this is not always triggered by custodians of particular heritage, or by insiders of the community; it can be, and often is, re-discovered and re-institutionalised by outsiders, including anthropologists, governments or other institutions such as schools. This process can have effects that are contrary to the desire of the custodians of such heritage, who are often not the beneficiaries of such processes, culturally or financially.

As some participants indicated, there have been movements of archiving intangible heritage within Indigenous communities. These are carried out by and for the sake of custodians of the heritage who know its real value within the community, and are different from the (anthropological) research by outside scholars. However, such archiving also re-institutionalises the heritage, and can make it public and visible to outsiders. There was an opinion that the choice of materials to be put into the public domain should be in hands of custodians. Examples of projects in which sacred/secret stories were only to be accessed by community members, often chosen according to gender, were mentioned.

This issue is directly connected to the question of ownership of (Indigenous) cultures and their authenticity to be protected. If we admit that the intangible heritage is always in a process of recreation, what does its authenticity mean? Should older notions of authenticity that deny recreation be replaced or reinterpreted by new notions that allow dynamics? We often say that the outsiders, including UNESCO, have to consult with the community that owns the particular heritage when documenting it. However, does a consultation always satisfy the ownership? The discussion further led to the question of the possibility to differentiate individual talent, the collective heritage of community, and the national interests.

During the meeting, it became evident that ‘insiders’ have a clear identity within each ‘community’, as part of a lived-in-reality negotiated over time, especially in case of many Indigenous communities vis-à-vis their historical colonisers. However, in combination with current debates in academia, this requires us to restart by asking what insider or outsider is, and what the ‘community concerned’ is, referring to opinions of those for whom ‘community’ (and its dynamic and permeable boundaries) is a lived-in-experience.

For example, when outside agents/actors learn the skill of a particular cultural expression and emerge as good practitioners, to what extent could the original community accommodate them as ‘authentic’ custodians? Is it simply a matter of openness of the community or of the sharing of cultures? There was an argument that sharing information is not the same as giving people rights to own that information. A participant further said that it was genealogy that played a role in being a custodian. If so, if an outsider may be privileged with the role of ‘spokesperson’ for a particular group, can he/she never be a custodian?

There are also valuable heritages that could be shared by more than one community and be understood differently according to respective histories. In fact, the community to be consulted concerning a particular heritage can be identified in numerous ways. The decision in each case is part of local dynamics, and is often related to the economy of exchange of cultural images and to political processes, which always need to be discussed in the light of history and memory of people.

## **2. Tradition and modernisation**

The definition of ‘traditional’ is another question deeply related to the above-mentioned issues. Tradition can be regarded as some value transmitted from generation to generation,



but when societies change, we face contradictions contained in this term. To what extent can 'tradition' bear change, adaptation, or evolution, to stay as 'tradition'? Again, we encounter the problem of insider and outsider, as 'tradition' is often so defined by modernised outsiders' eyes.

One participant asked if intangible cultural heritage is not always modern, as it is living and always recreated. If a certain element of intangible heritage is popular among young people and well adapted to their contemporary culture, is it no longer traditional? From another point of view, it can also be said that the term 'traditional' seems to be caught up with the concept of 'past'; things can be traditional in a contemporary sense, and therefore young people's culture may become 'traditional'. Intangible cultural heritage should be preserved as practices not only related to the past but also to the present and even to the future. Having said so, where can the definition of intangible cultural heritage go?

This question, again, cannot avoid debates of 'authenticity'. We need to take into account that this term was used in the discussions in different ways. At times it meant the value of what was handed down through generations, but at other times it was about what was found significant, meaningful and/or representative for communities. While expressions of intangible cultural heritage that have an ancient source are valuable to each community, it was also recognised that there were newly sprouting expressions in today's world which could equally be valuable and in need of safeguarding as intangible cultural heritage. In this latter case, the 'authenticity' pointed to the significance of particular heritages for groups and subgroups.

Having said so, what happens if a group fabricates a new 'tradition' and believes in its 'authenticity', when researchers and other neighbouring communities dismiss the fabrication? Who can decide the value of such newly sprouting expressions? A typical example can be found in the case of transmission of intangible heritage in urban migrant societies. The nature of argument is clear here, as the transmission is not even from generation to generation and the intangible heritage is largely adapted to a new environment of migrants' life; however, it can still function as a strong re-claimer of cultural identity among people who want and try to safeguard it. It can be richly invested with meanings for those involved, and can be part of communicating and establishing gender-balances.

Apparently, re-claiming identity, often lost or damaged in the course of colonisation as well as globalisation, should be common keywords in discussing the core definition of intangible cultural heritage, or traditional culture, regardless of the level of its adaptation or

the length of time for which it has been transmitted. Whether or not a new ‘tradition’ is recognised by others has to do with social and political issues.

During the meeting, another type of adaptation was also mentioned, which was the commoditisation of traditional culture. When certain elements of intangible heritage are commoditised, it may imply some motivation to attract tourists and may be considered to damage spiritual functions, including the reclaiming of identity, of the heritage. It is actually true, however, that such commoditisation, especially in a framework of local economy, sometimes saves the heritage from extinction. Is the commoditised heritage no longer authentic or traditional?

We need to take into account that economically profitable selections of intangible cultural heritage can also enable community members to maintain, continue, and safeguard, within the community, other elements of intangible cultural heritage that are associated with sacredness and secrecy. However, at the same time, there was a warning that in reality, commoditisation of intangible cultural heritage is often at the hands of outsiders and is largely for the purpose of their financial profit.

### **3. Transmission and safeguarding**

It was indicated in the meeting that safeguarding or proclaiming (as Masterpieces) of intangible cultural heritage was largely a political process, since the identification of particular elements of heritage to be safeguarded and proclaimed could be a heavily political act.

An important argument that was raised was that the act of safeguarding, more precisely, documentation, inevitably made the heritage ‘public’. We can even say that safeguarding has aspects of making things that were ‘ordinary’ into the state of ‘extra-ordinary’. On one hand, this can have negative side effects to women; highlighting women’s intangible heritage may force women to embody the past and to confine them in their old position in societies. On the other hand, it can also have beneficial side effects; for example, if women’s intangible heritage within the community is paid attention and its status is elevated, it may lead to the empowerment of women. In any case, the situation cannot be the same before and after the safeguarding, if the transmission can continue.

There was also an opinion that the safeguarding measures would make intangible heritage tangible, if the safeguarding is done by means of documenting the heritage; in other words,

tangible heritage could function as a medium of transmission or safeguarding of intangible heritage. This relates to issues of exhibiting intangible heritage in museums.

If the safeguarding changes the nature of intangible cultural heritage to some extent, we have to ask for whom and for what purposes we safeguard the heritage. Do we have in mind the internal audience or the external audience? If the safeguarding is to make heritage public, how could the 'secrecy', which is often an important aspect of intangible heritage, be safeguarded? It became obvious that there can be a conflict between the requirements of scientific research and the wish of practitioners to keep elements private. This question needs to be addressed urgently especially in the case of intangible cultural heritage under threat of disappearance. Some participants also mentioned the necessity to re-examine the significance of 'gate-keeping' of Indigenous communities.

One answer about objectives of safeguarding intangible heritage may be 'for the well-being of the community concerned' (in the sense defined by the community itself), as one participant suggested. At the same time, at least from UNESCO's point of view, the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage should also contribute to the well-being of the whole world, by preserving and sharing in the enormous cultural diversity on the earth. In other words, it is considered that safeguarding what is important within and for the sake of communities can contribute to the safeguarding of worldwide cultural diversity; and therefore, these 'different' goals are mutually supportive.

With regards to gender issues, we may ask if and how these two 'well-being's can be compatible. Obviously, in many elements of intangible cultural heritage, different roles, or division of work, between men and women are observed. Even if it is accepted as a part of well-being of the community, it is sometimes problematised in the context of human rights, as a major criterion of the global well-being.

#### **4. Gender (in)equality in intangible cultural heritage**

What is gender (in)equality? Difficult is how we grasp different roles of men and women in relation to intangible heritage. If we only look at a particular cultural expression, a clear imbalance of the gender roles is normally found. Intangible cultural heritage is not necessarily expressed, transmitted, and safeguarded in the same ways by men and women. However, if we take a wider scope and view the social and cultural tradition and practice of a whole community, the relationship between men and women may be more balanced, if their exact roles are different. Is this inequality or equality, or neither of those?

To help understand the nature of the issue, one participant stated that we should not take the term 'inequality' as a simple difference, not even as a matter of superiority/inferiority, but of 'power' to dominate and humiliate; inequality without domination or humiliation does not need to be problematised.

It was also argued that we have to be aware what type of inequality we are talking about. Is our problem about inequality observed in the contents of heritage, in the ways of transmission, or in the means of safeguarding? And, again, we have to ask who determines the existence of inequality: insiders or outsiders? We need to be careful of the tensions between different understandings of gender (in)equality: those of directly concerned individuals; those of authorities of the community; and those of external researchers.

The general observation by the meeting was that we were talking about the act of safeguarding, and that the safeguarding often includes documentation and analysis of heritage from strongly Westernised perspectives. The recognition or definition of gender inequality itself has also been influenced by European/American-oriented views and theories. Several participants touched upon negative, often dangerous, effects of Western gender roles and values on other gender systems, which are crucial cultural elements themselves in need of safeguarding. It was brought to the fore that the interpretations, within the communities, of what gender and gender balances are, need to be taken into account.

If the Westernised perspectives have been part of the safeguarding as a political act, another political effort may be needed to analyse the entire situation from various different places. It became clear that expressions of intangible cultural heritage may reflect gender differences, but do not always mirror them. It was agreed that UNESCO should, in setting its goals for safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage in conformity with human rights, evaluate cultural canon (see the footnote 3 of the Recommendation in p. 13 of this report) \* as a whole.

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\* One participant did not subscribe to the use of the term 'canon'.

## **IV Conclusions**

The third day (morning session only) was spent on drawing up several points of recommendations to UNESCO by the meeting. During the session, the participants decided to stay rather general than to go too much into details or into particular examples, and also to avoid re-defining terms already defined for the sake of the Convention.

It was agreed that the text produced in the room was still open for further proposals or revisions. The Recommendation appearing in the last page (p. 13) of this report is the final version confirmed by the participants, having taken into account the additional comments given by them since the meeting was ended. The Intangible Heritage Section will use the Recommendation in the preparation of manuals to explain the working of the Convention.

The meeting was valuable, not only having formulated the Recommendation, but also having opened up discussions of a number of difficult subjects. It would be important to participate, starting from the results of this meeting, in global debates on gender as well as human rights from a standpoint of intangible cultural heritage. It also seems indispensable to continue discussions, in various possible ways, of general questions concerning intangible cultural heritage such as those raised by the meeting and noted in the previous section of this report.

The interconnectedness of gender issues with other questions made it relevant to discuss a large number of subjects relating to the Convention. Gender proved to be a key in its constructive implementation. Interestingly, a major conclusion of the meeting alleged by ten female researchers and practitioners was that there was no universal reason to assume the existence of inequality for women in the pattern of transmission of intangible cultural heritage. It was also argued, however, that the consequences of the transmission could give rise to gender inequalities, especially when the local complexity of different gender roles could be exacerbated by newly introduced or already existing local, national and international agenda. Nonetheless, if these debates are seriously taken into account, the enactment and the preservation of different gender roles in the vast majority of cases could be, and should be, positively understood in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

**Recommendation to UNESCO**  
**by the Expert Meeting ‘Gender and Intangible Heritage’, 8-10 December 2003**

1. UNESCO should develop universal rules and regulations as well as a monitoring process for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage; however, regional and historical specificities should be taken into account.
2. The safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage includes understanding and respecting gender\*<sup>1</sup> practices and representations, as well as acknowledging the significance of contact zones\*<sup>2</sup> in these processes.
3. Gender inequality that an element of intangible cultural heritage may reflect should be evaluated as part of a cultural canon\*<sup>3</sup>, which, as a whole, can transmit and preserve an equal balancing of differences.
4. Decision-making at local, regional, and national levels is often male-dominated; ways should be found to address this situation.
5. Female custodians and researchers should be involved in identifying and documenting intangible cultural heritage, as well as in designing policies for the safeguarding of that heritage.
6. The safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage shall be a responsibility of custodians of that heritage, shared by researchers and decision-makers. The responsibilities of researchers and decision-makers include collaborative efforts with custodians in accordance with the Articles 11b and 15 of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

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<sup>1</sup> Characteristics, tasks, roles and identities associated with each sex as perceived and defined by the people involved. Some people recognise two gender groups associated with two sexes (male, female) others recognise more gender groups, for example, transgender and double spirited people.

<sup>2</sup> The cultural, social, political, economic, linguistic and imaginary spaces and processes where two or more societies and cultures meet, overlap and are transformed by this encounter.

<sup>3</sup> A collection of expressions of tangible and intangible heritage including texts (spoken and written) of various kinds that are considered part of a shared heritage by its custodians. This may include stories, plays, songs, poetry, writings, and etc. that are known, read, told, written or performed by individuals or groups.

**Participants of the expert meeting ‘Women and Intangible Heritage’**

**8-10 December 2003**

**Intangible Heritage Section, UNESCO, Paris**

**Bouquet, Mary (U.K., The Netherlands)**

is a Cambridge-trained social anthropologist, currently teaching cultural anthropology and museum studies at University College Utrecht, the Netherlands. She conducted her Ph.D. research on women’s work in rural south-west England, subsequent research on museum collections, and she also has practical experiences in exhibition-making in Portugal (Melanesian collection from Berlin, National Museum of Ethnology, Lisbon), the Netherlands (natural history collection, including the Javanese *Pithecanthropus erectus* fossil, at the NNM, Leiden, Dutch colonialism as an issue of representation at the KIT Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam), and Norway (ethnographic collection and the Norwegian nation, University of Oslo, Ethnographic Collection).

Presentation:

Cream teas, photography, and violence: Exploring tangible aspects of intangible cultural heritage

**Browner, Tara (U.S.A.)**

is from the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, and is associate professor of ethnomusicology and American Indian studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. She is the author of *Heartbeat of the People: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow* (University of Illinois Press, 2002) and is currently working on a musical edition of pow-wow songs for the series *Music in the United States of America* (MUSA), funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. She is a pow-wow dancer in the Women's Southern Cloth tradition (and has also danced in the Women's Jingle Dress style), and does the traditional Native American beadwork, a skill passed down through generations of her mother's family.

Presentation:

Protecting the cultural knowledge of women in Native North America: Issues and concerns

**Dias, Nélia (Portugal)**

has been interested in the history of French anthropology of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries and its relationship with ethnographic museums; the focus has been put on the display of cultural difference through visual displays. In the wake of her previous research on ethnographic collections, she began to study physical anthropological collections and also medical collections in order to grasp how racial as well as gender difference was constructed and made visible through specific displays. Her current research deals with two topics - the creation of the Musée du Quai Branly

(Paris) and the issue of values (cultural equality and the equal worth of peoples) on one hand, and on the other hand, the imitation as a strategy of appropriation of alterity.

Presentation:

Why is intangible heritage more prone to gender inequality than tangible heritage?

**Gonzalez, Adriana (Mexico)**

received a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature at New York University ('Between Pederasty and Dandyism: Distressed Masculinities in Intellectual Circles of Mexico and Argentina (1920-1998)'). Her areas of specialisation are: Gender theory; Performance theory; Hispanic-American literature and intellectual history; Modern French and English literature. She has also written a collection of short stories ("Cuentos para ciclistas y jinetes", 1995, which received a national award) and an essay comparing the literary text and the visual arts ("Borges y Escher", 1998, which received the national award for literary essay). For two years she worked as a volunteer at Jacobi Medical Center, in Bronx, New York, with Mexican women migrants, assisting them to reach the needed services, teaching them basic English and providing them with the information about their rights. She has also collaborated with newspapers, literary supplements and magazines, as well as working as an editor and translator.

Presentation:

Mexican women migrants in New York and the paradox of modernizing their cultural heritage

**Heiss, Anita (Australia)**

is from the Wiradjuri nation of western New South Wales. She is an author, poet, social commentator and cultural activist. She specialises in Indigenous literature and publishing, and has lectured internationally on Indigenous issues and identity. She was the first Aboriginal student to graduate with a PhD from the University of Western Sydney, and her thesis on publishing Aboriginal literature was published in 2003. She has been published widely and in 2003 won the inaugural Australian Society of Authors (ASA) Medal for her contribution to Australian literature and community life. She holds the Indigenous Portfolio for the ASA, and also sits on the Indigenous Arts Reference Group for the NSW Ministry for the Arts. She has only recently ceased working as Communications Adviser for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board of the Australia Council. In 2004 she will be a Writer-in-Residence at Macquarie University.

Presentation:

Protocols for protecting Indigenous Australian intellectual and cultural heritage rights



**Napolitano-Quayson, Valentina (Italy)**

is a socio-cultural anthropologist with a regional specialisation in urban Latin America (and Mexico in particular). She is particularly interested in the understanding of gendered subjectivities and how those relate to cultural processes, racial, ethnic and migrant formations. Her areas of research interests also fall in urban Mexico and urban Latin America, medical anthropology, transnationalism and phenomenology of migration, and Latino transnational migration to Europe. Her working experience is mostly as an academic in the U.K. and the U.S., and she has a strong interest in engaging with anthropological and interdisciplinary methodologies to think through cultural and gender processes in the light of historical and current geo-political orders.

Presentation:

Invisible cultural heritage and gendered subjectivities

**Pommaret, Françoise (France)**

is an ethno-historian specialised in Tibet and Bhutan, Director of the CNRS Unit 'Languages and cultures of the Tibetan area', and lecturer on Tibetan culture at l'INALCO, Paris. She has been associated with Bhutan since 1981, living in the country for 10 years at a stretch and working for the Tourism Department and then the Education Department. Since 1991, she spends several months a year in Bhutan and works on different projects in tourism, cultural and higher education fields. She has a MA in History of Art and Archaeology (Université de Panthéon-Sorbonne), and a diploma in Tibetan (INALCO, Paris). Her PhD dissertation (EHESS, Paris) was a historical and anthropological study on women who come back from death in the Tibetan world. She has written numerous articles, and given lectures throughout the world on Bhutan. She has been the guest-curator for several exhibitions on this country in Europe, the U.S. and India.

Presentation:

Are women of Bhutan custodians of their country's Intangible Heritage?

**Sewane, Dominique (France)**

is Doctor of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (sciences religieuses), Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (Centre d'Etudes Arctique). She is a historian, philosopher and ethnologist. Since 1980, she has been specialising in the initiation rites and burial rituals of an African agricultural community having a strong tradition of warriors and hunter-gatherers, that is the Batammariba (or Tamberma) of the north of Togo, renowned for its mud-built fortifications. In 1999, she completed her doctoral thesis with honours, concerning their initiation rites. She has recently published three important books about the initiation and the death philosophy of this population: *La nuit des grands Morts - l'initié et l'épouse chez les Tamberma du Togo*, 2002 (collection Afrique Cultures, ed. Economica); *Le souffle du mort - la tragédie de la mort chez les Batammariba du Togo, Bénin*, 2003 (collection Terre Humaine, éditions Plon); and *Les Batāmmariba - Le Peuple voyant - Carnets d'une ethnologie*, 2004 (éditions de La Martinière). She is a founding member of the Comité de Défense du Patrimoine Culturel des Batammariba du Togo.

Presentation:

The active role played by women in the ceremonial life of the Batammariba

**Toyoshima, Yuka (Japan)**

started to practice Nôgaku (a Japanese traditional performing art, proclaimed as one of the first Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2001) at the age of eight, and studied it at the National University of Fine Arts and Music in Tokyo. She also studied, in Paris, from 1998 to 2002, notation of danse, contemporary danse and music, and stage direction, at Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris, La Schola Cantorum, and IRCAM. Having obtained a fellowship of the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs for artists, she has been based in Paris since 2002, and has created the company HELENA that produces films and performances, re-interpreting the concept of Nôgaku and transporting it into the context of contemporary urban life. While organising artistic projects in Paris and Tokyo, she is representing the Paris Office of Danse and Media Japan.

Presentation:

Tradition as it is?: Women and Nôgaku (a Japanese male-dominant traditional performing art)

**Zuyderhoudt, Lea (The Netherlands)**

is a researcher and lecturer at Leiden University, researching narrative practices in Native American communities of the Blackfoot confederation. She was trained at Leiden University (history), Leuven University, Belgium (Cultural anthropology) and the University of Minnesota, USA (Native American Studies). Since 1995 she has done extensive fieldwork in communities of the Blackfoot confederation (Montana, USA and Alberta, Canada). Her research focuses on Blackfoot perspectives on the past and present as expressed in oral and written accounts, and investigates how these are part of Blackfoot ways of life and at interplay with non-indigenous writings on Blackfoot history and culture.

Presentation:

Engendering Blackfoot Oral Tradition

Preliminary position paper for the meeting 'women and intangible heritage'

Unesco is in the process of adopting a convention for the safeguarding of intangible, or living, cultural heritage. The broad definition of intangible cultural heritage, that was prepared for the purpose of this convention, is followed by an enumeration of a number of fields in which this heritage manifests itself:

- (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;*
- (b) the performing arts;*
- (c) social practices, rituals and festive events;*
- (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;*
- (e) traditional craftsmanship.*

An important criterion for an element of intangible cultural heritage to be protected under the future convention is that it should be traditional, i.e. handed over from generation to generation. From the text of the convention, it is clear that the international assistance and the future lists of intangible cultural heritage, one containing representative items of intangible cultural heritage, the other, items that are seriously endangered, should target living social and cultural practices and representations. The convention does not aim to freeze elements of intangible cultural heritage; it rather wishes to secure the conditions that enable communities and groups to further develop their intangible cultural heritage.

Furthermore, under this convention, only such heritage will be protected that is in conformity with generally accepted human rights instruments and that contributes to respect between communities, groups, and individuals.

During the discussions that have led to the present-day version of the convention, roles of women/gender were often mentioned; it was claimed by a number of participants that women plays special roles in the transmission of intangible cultural heritage and that those roles are to be taken into account when programmes and projects are designed for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

Some delegates, raised the equality principle emphasizing that items of intangible cultural heritage, in which gender inequality is observed, should not be accepted for protection under this convention. Other delegates propagated a more relativizing approach, and advocated, for instance, different approaches for different regions of the world. There already exists a human rights instrument propagating the elimination of customary and other practices that involve stereotyped roles for men and women.

The Intangible Heritage Section of Unesco will be asked to produce one or more handbooks that will provide the Member States with background information and guidelines for the identification, the documentation, the archiving and the protection of

intangible cultural heritage. We want to base the articles and recommendations in these manuals on expert opinions, and on recent and reliable data, and we want to pay, among other things, proper attention to gender issues.

For this purpose, the Section wishes to organise a meeting of experts who, based on extensive field-work experience and on own research, are able to contribute to discussions of various matters related to the accommodation of gender issues in the context of the safeguarding measures envisaged by the future convention. The section may also wish to develop a programme 'Women and Intangible Cultural Heritage' in order to implement a number of pilot projects that may help to find a realistic and meaningful approach to gender issues in the field of intangible cultural heritage.

**Provisional agenda**  
**Expert meeting ‘Women and Intangible Heritage’**  
**8-10 December 2003**  
**Intangible Heritage Section, UNESCO**

**Monday, 8 December**

<Morning>

10:00 Opening Rieks Smeets (Chief, Intangible Heritage Section, Culture Sector, UNESCO)

10:15 Introductions and procedures

10:30 **Session I: Roles of women in intangible cultural heritage in different communities**

Presentation **Françoise Pommaret**  
*Are women of Bhutan custodians of their country’s intangible heritage?*

Discussion

Presentation **Dominique Sewane**  
*The active role played by women in the ceremonial life of the Batammariba (a people in the north of Benin and Togo)*

Discussion

11:30 Coffee break

11:45 Discussions

13:00 Luncheon organised by the Intangible Heritage Section

<Afternoon>

15:00 **Session II: Protecting women’s intangible cultural heritage**

Presentation **Tara Browner**  
*Protecting the cultural knowledge of women in Native North America: Issues and concerns*

Discussion

Presentations      **Lea Zuyderhoudt**  
*Engendering Blackfoot Oral Tradition*

Discussion

Presentation      **Anita Heiss**  
*Protocols for protecting Indigenous Australian intellectual and cultural heritage rights*

Discussion

16:30 Coffee break

16:45 Discussions

17:00 Closing of the day

## **Tuesday, 9 December**

<Morning>

10:00 **Session III: Women and intangible cultural heritage when societies change**

Presentation      **Yuka Toyoshima**  
*Tradition as it is?: Women and Nôgaku (a Japanese male-dominant traditional performing art)*

Discussion

Presentation      **Adriana Gonzalez**  
*Mexican women migrants in New York and the paradox of modernizing their cultural heritage*

Discussion

11:00 Discussions

11:30 Coffee break

11:45 Continuation of discussions

12:30 Lunch break

<Afternoon>

14:00 **Session IV: Transmission, recognition and safeguarding: Inside and outside of the intangible cultural heritage**

Presentation      **Mary Bouquet**  
*Cream teas, photography, and violence: Exploring tangible aspects of intangible cultural heritage*

Discussion

Presentation      **Valentina Napolitano-Quayson**  
*Invisible cultural heritage and gendered subjectivities*

Discussion

Presentation      **Nélia Dias**  
*Why is intangible heritage more prone to gender inequality than tangible heritage?*

Discussion

15:30 Coffee break

15:45 Discussions

17:30 Closing of the day

**Wednesday, 10 December**

<Morning>

10:00 **Session V: Conclusion**

Discussions

11:30 Coffee break

11:45 Concluding discussions

13:00 Closing of the meeting