CASE STUDY 33

The World Heritage Convention and the Intangible Heritage Convention: the Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras and the Hudhud chants of the Ifugao in the Philippines[[1]](#footnote-1)

The Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1995 and on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2001. The terraces, used for growing various crops including rice, are located in the Philippine Cordillera mountain range on the island of Luzon, Philippine archipelago. The Hudhud chants sung by the Ifugao people who farm the terraces in this area were inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Heritage Convention in 2008 after having been proclaimed a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2001.

This is one of the rare cases where heritage properties and elements, inscribed on the Lists of the World Heritage Convention and the Intangible Heritage Convention respectively, are intimately linked. The Hudhud chants are an important element of the ICH of the people who cultivate and maintain the rice terraces; the terraces and the surrounding area provide the cultural space in which the chants are enacted. There are now management structures that allow for an integrated approach to the protection of the terraces and the safeguarding of the ICH of the Ifugao. This integrated approach may encourage the Ifugao to stay in the area and continue to cultivate and maintain the terraces, while practising and adapting their chants to changing circumstances.

In the future it is likely that in the implementation of the two Conventions, integrated approaches to tangible heritage conservation and intangible heritage safeguarding, will be sought for such cases at an early stage.

#### Inscribing the Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras on the World Heritage List

The Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras were inscribed on the World Heritage List as a cultural landscape because they met the following criteria for outstanding universal value:

* **Criterion (iii):** The rice terraces are a dramatic testimony to a community’s sustainable and primarily communal system of rice production, based on harvesting water from the forest clad mountain tops and creating stone terraces and ponds, a system that has survived for two millennia.
* **Criterion (iv):** The rice terraces are a memorial to the history and labour of ... generations of small-scale farmers who, working together as a community, have created a landscape based on a delicate and sustainable use of natural resources.
* **Criterion (v):** The rice terraces are an outstanding example of land-use that resulted from a harmonious interaction between people and its environment which has produced a steep terraced landscape of great aesthetic beauty, now vulnerable to social and economic changes.

While the historic terraces cover an extensive area, the smaller inscribed property met the criterion of integrity because it ‘consists of five clusters of the most intact and impressive terraces, located in four municipalities’. The authenticity of both the original landscape engineering and the traditional wet-rice agriculture was assured by the ICH practices associated with the terraces: a traditional management system ‘that balances climatic, geographical, ecological, agronomic, ethnographic, religious, social, economic, political and other factors’. This regime was passed down in the Ifugao community ‘[t]hrough ritual practices, chants and symbols’.

#### Conserving the rice terraces

Various steps have been taken to conserve the World Heritage site. In 2001 the terraces were inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger because, in the view of the Committee, people were moving out of the area and the irrigation systems were not being maintained; between 25 and 30 per cent of the terraces had been abandoned, with damage to some of the walls.[[2]](#footnote-2) (This analysis has subsequently been disputed: the terraces need constant repair and the local population always fluctuates.)

Various initiatives helped to ensure that by 2008, forty-two communal irrigation systems had been repaired[[3]](#footnote-3) and an Ifugao Provincial Council for Cultural Heritage had been created to oversee the safeguarding and promotion of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the province. Studies were undertaken on how to manage the infrastructure requirements and mobilize financial resources. A GIS survey in 2009 estimated that approximately 4 per cent of the rice terraces in the heritage area were damaged.[[4]](#footnote-4)

In 2009 the Committee noted ‘the efforts made in the valorisation and transmission of traditional practices which substantiate the Outstanding Universal Value of the property’.[[5]](#footnote-5) A joint monitoring mission consisting of representatives from the World Heritage Centre, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) reviewed the status of the property in 2011.

The property has been retained on the World Heritage in Danger List so that a sustained programme for the conservation of the terraces, irrigation systems and watersheds can be implemented and conservation policies adopted at the national level.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Proclaiming the Ifugao Hudhud chants as a Masterpiece and inscribing them on the Representative List.

The Hudhud chants, sung by the Ifugao during rice harvesting and weeding, funeral wakes and a ritual honouring the dead, were proclaimed a Masterpiece in 2001 and inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Heritage Convention in 2008. They met the criteria for proclamation as a Masterpiece because, among other things, they have ‘roots in the cultural tradition or cultural history’ of the Ifugao community and are ‘a means of affirming the cultural identity’ of this community. They were also found to be ‘at risk of degradation or of disappearing’. The few remaining narrators, who are already very old, need to be supported in their efforts to transmit their knowledge and to raise awareness among young people.

#### Safeguarding the chants

Since the proclamation of the chants as a Masterpiece in 2001, various safeguarding activities have been undertaken. A national Intangible Heritage Committee (NCCA/IHC), created in 2001, developed a work plan in conjunction with a local consultative Committee in Kiangan, Ifugao Province.

An Ifugao Intangible Heritage Sub-Committee (IIHSC), composed of practitioners of the Hudhud chants representing five municipalities of Ifugao, and representatives of the National Museum and the Office of the Governor of Ifugao, was created in 2004 to further develop and implement the suggested plan. The Ifugao Intangible Heritage Executive Committee now plans the transition, integration and institutionalization of ICH programmes into the provincial cultural programmes of the Ifugao.

The safeguarding measures implemented since 2001 aim to:

* encourage existing practitioners to continue chanting the Hudhud*;*
* provide occasions for this practice; and
* train new young Ifugao practitioners who could chant the epic.

The safeguarding measures implemented so far include:

1. Raising awareness by setting up chanting competitions for adults and young people. These competitions have been held at in the province since 2002; a Hudhud Festival at which the competitions are now held is an annual event.
2. Recognizing and honouring practitioners by giving selected culture bearers recognition awards.
3. Compiling (with the help of a team of Ifugao researchers) a directory of traditional culture bearers in the community, not only of the epic chanters, but also the ritual specialists, healers, soothsayers, genealogy tellers, *salvia* (genealogy) experts, musicians, craftspeople and artists.
4. Creating more opportunities for practising the chants: a Perpetual Hudhud Trophy Competition has been introduced to encourage performance of the chants during harvests, wakes and other traditional contexts. Municipalities and practitioners are awarded prizes for chants conducted in their traditional cultural and social context. Municipalities use their prizes to fund safeguarding activities relating to Ifugao ICH.
5. Training young people to learn the chants by setting up non-formal Hudhud Schools for Living Tradition (HSLT) in key areas, taught by the Hudhud practitioners. By 2011, HSLTs had been implemented in thirty-three schools by the provincial Department of Education.
6. Making the teaching of the chant, along with Ifugao dances, songs and traditional games and sports, a permanent feature of the elementary school curriculum. A Teaching Guide on the Hudhud has been developed for teachers and a Hudhud multimedia pack has been produced for distribution in libraries, schools, cultural organizations, local government units, etc. Children’s books have also been published to encourage the young Ifugao to learn the different versions of the Hudhud.

For further information:

* www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/00015
* http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/722
1. . Thanks are due to Cecilia Picache and Dr Jesus T. Peralta for their assistance with this case study; they are not responsible for any remaining errors herein. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. . See WHC-01/CONF.208/24 VIII.112: http://whc.unesco.org/archive/repcom01.htm#riceterraces [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. . See WHC 08/Decision – 32COM 7A.24: http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/1596& [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. . N.C. Bantayan et al., 2009, ‘Community-Based Mapping of the Rice Terraces Inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Component study of the project 65, See WHC 09/Decision – 33COM 7A.24: http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/1784 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. . See WHC 09/Decision – 33COM 7A.24: http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/1784 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. . See WHC 11/Decision – 35 COM 7A.28: http://whc.unesco.org/document/1071 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)