

V. List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding

This piece highlights a number of ICH in need of urgent safeguarding and reflects the Solomon Islands rich underwater cultural heritage. Being underwater, they are in the process of being corroded and are vulnerable and hence, they are recommended to be protected by UNESCO's urgent safeguarding listing.

These include: 1) relics of a pre-colonial ship (van Tilburg, 2011); 2) war canoe of Georgia—the largest existing watercraft in the British Museum (Hess et al., 2009); 3) water caves and sacrificial sites for shark worship in Malaita; 4) historic colonial shipwrecks eg the Boussole, 1788; 5) well-known wrecks of the second World War between Guadalcanal and Savo and Florida Islands known as the Iron Bottom Sound.

There is protection also in local legislations like Protection of Wrecks and War Relics Act of 1980 and the Protection of Areas Act 2010.

The first one on Wrecks and War Relics restricts access including diving etc and interference with relics. The second on Protected Areas act also provides some protection but its provisions are not as strict as the first local act.

As there are no ICH list for urgent safeguarding, it is recommended that the above list be recommended for urgent safeguarding.

Like many other Pacific islands, Solomon Islands and its people have rich maritime heritage and these need urgent attention for special protection. Specifically, the rich underwater cultural heritage of the Solomon Islands needs protection.

Few underwater relics of pre-colonial vessels have survived, although, some examples of terrestrial relics exist (van Tilburg, 2011). A war canoe from New Georgia is the largest existing watercraft in the British Museum (Hess et al., 2009).

Other cultural heritage sites need protection, such as underwater caves and sacrificial sites used for shark or crocodile worship, in the coastal waters of islands, such as Malaita (Lidimani, 2011).

The most famous historic shipwreck in Solomon Islands is that of the Boussole, lost in 1788 off the island of Vanikoro. The well-known wrecks in Solomon

Islands are those of the Second World War. Numerous wrecks are located in the waters between Guadalcanal and Savo and Florida Islands and are known as Iron Bottom Sound.

There are some protection provided by the Protection of Wrecks and War Relics Act 1980 and the Protected Areas Act 2010. The Protection of Wrecks and War Relics Act of 1980 restricts access to (including diving) and interference with these vessels (and aircraft) and associated objects, subject to obtaining a license from the relevant Ministry (Corrin and Forrest, 2013). The license is only granted to a person who is competent and equipped to carry out excavations or salvage operations and can satisfy the Minister that the work will be done in a manner appropriate to the historical importance of the wreck.

The Protected Areas Act of 2010 provides limited protection of the underwater heritage sites. The Act provides protection over areas that possess significant 'cultural resources' or 'merits protection under the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage sites.

The examples of artificial islands of the Solomon Islands are listed as Sulufou, Adagege, Fuunaafou, Foueda, Niuleni, Ferasubua, Saua, Langalanga and Auki islands. These artificial islands play a significant role in the cultural history of the Solomon Islands and would need to be protected because of increasing sea level and climate change.

Solomon Islands is currently implementing a project on the knowledge of artificial islands building up in Langalanga on Malaita. This is seen as very timely and significant work given the issues of climate change and sea level rise. Some of these artificial islands might be contenders for such a list.

These islands would need protection as a living example to be passed on to younger generation as an adaptive strategy to deal with the issue of climate change and sea level rise.

Molea and Vuki (2008) have briefly described the history of saltwater people in the artificial islands (Fuunaafou and Niuleni) off the coast of mainland Malaita, in the Lau Lagoon area. In the ancient days of gathering and hunting, people migrated from the main island of Malaita to the artificial islands. The main reason of migration to the artificial islands because they were able to see and fight their enemies while on the islands of Niuleni and Fuunaafou.

Traditional fishing has long been part of the lives of the saltwater people of in the artificial islands in the Lau Lagoon area. In most of these artificial islands, fish caught are for family consumption (Molea and Vuki, 2008; Buga and Vuki, 2012) and to barter for crops and vegetables with the people of the main island of Malaita. Bartering and food exchange bring closer kinship ties between tribes and people living on artificial islands and those living on the main island of Malaita.

Traditional fishing, fishing methods and fishing activities on another artificial island (Foueda) have been described by Buga and Vuki (2012). The gender roles of men and women, their fishing activities and their traditional roles in fisheries management were also noted. Molea and Vuki (2008) also documented the subsistence fishing and consumption patterns of people living in the artificial islands of Niuleni and Fuunaafouu in the Lau Lagoon area. It may be worth considering safeguarding the Lau lagoon area in light of sea level rise and protecting the adaptive strategies developed by the saltwater people of artificial islands to fight diseases and other problems.