Thai Government’s Perspective on Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage

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Abstract
At present, it is undeniable that Thailand’s intangible cultural heritage has been threatened by such factors as globalization and social transformation, migration and urbanization, intrusive mass media, and the imposition of formal education systems that devalue traditional knowledge and skills. We are one the edge of losing them. To fight back in order to protect and preserve our intangible cultural heritage, Thailand has taken many actions including processing the ratification of the UNESCO 2003 convention for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, establishing the designation of the national intangible cultural heritage, and surveying and registering Intangible Cultural Heritage to the Intangible Cultural Heritage’s database inventory.

This paper will first compare Thai approach to Korean approach on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage: definition of intangible cultural heritage, policy framework, and regulation framework. Then, it will further lay out what have we done and what will we plan to do next regarding to policy formulation and implementation on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in Thailand. We hope that this paper will be beneficial to heighten people’s awareness of the importance and significance our intangible cultural heritage and make them realize and appreciate its value. We also hope that people will be encouraged to expand further study and research in order to increase knowledge and endorse creativity of Asia Pacific intangible cultural heritage.

Introduction
The beautiful country of Thailand is very rich in nature, art, diverse culture, traditions and customs. These appealing features have made the country famous since its past and both the government and the private sectors have been presenting these cultural resources as the selling points of the country in the tourism industry. As a result, many of our tangible cultural heritages
such as Sukhothai and Ayutthaya ancient remains and ruins have been visited by millions of travellers each year while our intangible cultural heritages such as kick boxing, local music, and traditional lifestyle are also admired by several millions as well.

However, at present, it is undeniable that Thai traditional culture has been threatened by such factors as globalization and social transformation, migration and urbanization, intrusive mass media, and the imposition of formal education systems that devalue traditional knowledge and skills. For example, young people in the Southern region of Thailand are more interested in learning ballet or jazz dance than Nora, the folk dance popular in the southern region. Meanwhile, in the northeastern region, K-Pop or J-Pop are more popular than Mo Lam Phuen, the narrative singing about folk tales and religious doctrines. As a result, these traditional cultural heritage practices have gradually been in the processes of the deterioration and disappearance. Thus, in order to keep the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) alive, Thai people, especially local leaders, must be deeply aware of safeguarding these heritage.

Therefore, The Ministry of Culture has been designated and implemented the safeguarding of our intangible cultural heritage. One of the important achievements is the establishment of the intangible cultural heritage as the national most valuable record and raising pride in the nation’s culture in order to protect and conserve the nation’s intangible cultural heritage. This ICH establishment is divided into 7 domains: 1) Performing Arts, 2) Traditional Craftsman ship, 3) Folk Literature, 4) Folk Sports, Games and Martial Arts, 5) Social Practices, Rituals and Festive Events, 6) Knowledge and Practices Concerning Nature and the Universe, and 7) Linguistic and communications tool. Furthermore, The Ministry of Culture puts emphases on the expansion of cultural networks to encourage the public members to realize the value and significance of culture.

**Chapter 1 Comparative study between Korea and Thailand in Cultural Policy and Culture Act**

**ICH Definition**

The 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage defines “Intangible Cultural Heritage” in article 2¹ as the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces. In addition, this convention allows each country to articulate a different definition depending on its cultural circumstance.

In Thailand, “Intangible Cultural Heritage” is defined as the practices, expressions, knowledge, skills, tools, objects, inventions, and the relevant cultural space that communities, groups of

people or, in some cases, individuals, acknowledge as a part of their cultural heritage. The intangible cultural heritage, which is usually passed on from one generation to another, is constantly recreated by the communities and groups of people in response to their environmental context. It is their interaction to nature and to their history. It gives them pride in their identity and a sense of continuity, which eventually leads to respect for cultural diversity and creativity.

Whereas Korea defines Intangible Cultural Heritage as intangible cultural works of outstanding historic, artistic, or academic value such as a drama, music, dance, game, ritual, craft skills, etc. which follows as Cultural Heritage Protection Act amended by Act No.1000 (Feb 4, 2010) This Act aim and aware of the importance of intangible cultural property artisans who have arts and skills. According to this definition, when Korea designated the national intangible cultural heritage, they categorize ICH domains in terms of 1) traditional ceremony consist of music dance play ceremony and martial arts 2) craft consist of ceramic metal wooden lacquer craft fabric leather paper and stone 3) food production consist of royal food ceremonial food and common food.

**Comparing Cultural Policy of Korea and Thailand**

Korea has made effort to concern about arts since Shilla Dynasty and distinct in the invention of Korean alphabet that may represent the centralized and state-oriented attitude in cultural undertaking. The Second World War (1939-45) and the Korean War (1950-53) had an indirect impact on the formation of modern cultural policy in South Korea. Though there was no specifically pronounced cultural policy orientation, except for the ideological drift that any kind of activity that could be regarded as endangering democratic polity was to be curtailed. At that time building cultural infrastructure were undertaken such as the National Library, the National Museum, the National Theater and the National Korean Traditional Music Institute.

During the 1960s to the 1970s, the government put effort to refurbish national cultural identity and to restore cultural heritage which damaged during the colonial period. The first comprehensive legal provision to promote culture and the arts, namely the Law to promote Culture and the Arts (1972) was enacted in this period. The cultural policy followed the national format of formulating the intermediate cultural plans such as ‘Five Year Culture Promotional Planning’. At the turn of the 21st century, culture came to be seen as an important factor both in the life of human beings and as an economic means. Cultural industries gained substantial attention especially in online gaming, popular music (K-pop) and television dramas. This may suggest that despite being policy centralization, Korean policymakers had already accounted the people’s demand and lifestyle within its cultural policy. For Korea, culture can easily take part in our daily activities, which could be called cultural life.

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2 “Important Intangible cultural heritage,” http://english.cha.go.kr

Korea has developed its own system of protection and preservation of cultural heritage and the government plays the leading role of protecting and managing intangible cultural heritage. In comparison to the 2003 convention, the concept of the Korean system relies on some different features. While the 2003 convention focuses on practices and processes within community and group about their intangible cultural heritage, Korea focuses on intangible cultural heritage by person who is inherited through people also can be seen and heard when people perform them.

As Thailand is in the process of ratifying the 2003 convention, Thai government has active started to formulate and implement the intangible cultural heritage policy as a part of government cultural policy. The first Thai national cultural policy was formulated in 1981 in accordance with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand of B.E. 2521 (1978). In summary, this policy aimed at supporting the preservation and dissemination of the Thai cultural in order to create public awareness of Thai culture values, promote local traditions and ethnic culture, including to create coordination and cooperation among relevant agencies engaged in cultural activities both national and international levels.

Based on the government policy on culture in the Master Plan on National Culture (2007-2016) and the Cabinet Resolution, the Ministry of Culture has planned the following strategies in order to exercise Thai government policy actively. The strategies are designed and set forth in pursuance to the government policy: to respect and honor the monarchy, to nurture the religions, to conserve the nation's cultural heritage and Thai wisdom, and to develop the cultural heritage as a foundation of the creative economy.

1. Promotes national religions, art and culture and serves the requirement for major tasks of the country, religion and the monarch, fostering sustainable propagation and development;
2. Integrates religions, art and culture to the people and communities;
3. Develops socio-economics with cultural dimension, at community, locality, national and international levels;
4. Integrates co-operation in the administration of knowledge, art and cultural heritage for the benefits of the Thai people and the world community

With these cultural strategies, many projects will continuously be carried out. Such projects include conducting a survey, creating a database, restoring and enlisting the national archaeological sites. Thai Government is engaged in the promotion of networks and community to organize cultural events throughout the year such as the exhibition about the intangible cultural heritage and the folk music competition. The Ministry of Culture will also provide training and conducting campaigns that help raising public awareness relating to the value of the national heritage and wisdom. Other areas of emphasis will include the promotion of creative thinking, the support of the creative Culture-based economy, the integration and cooperation with cultural networks, legislative reforms, the development of management systems designed to preserve the
nation's cultural heritage against radical socio-economic changes, sudden technological shifts, unrestrained industrial development, and drastic increases in the number of tourists. To achieve these goals, the Ministry of Culture has set forth strategic plans to promote, and enhance public awareness on good values, morals and ethics with the aim of leading the nation towards the path of sustainable peace and quality livelihood.

In addition, the Ministry of Culture has actively taken actions in applying cultural capital to increase creative economic activities, and urgently implement the preparatory work on an advent of the ASEAN Community in the near future.

**Comparing Cultural Laws and Regulation of Korea and Thailand**

In Thailand, we have the amendment of the National Culture Act of B.E. 2553 (2010) whose original version was in B.E 2485 (1942) and in B.E.2489 (1946). This Act regulates the duties of the National committee and National culture council, when determining the qualifications of a National artist. The Act has been revised, as the previous Act was too antiquated and not related to the current time.

This Act provides for the promotion of awareness in the preservation of national culture, as well as the safeguarding and promotion of Thai Traditions.

1. Under this Act, the meaning of culture was revised as “lifestyle, thoughts, beliefs, values, traditions, the rituals, folk wisdoms, and social works, cultivating creative learning in order to achieve growth mentally and materially and reach the peace and sustainability.

2. The National Culture Commission, chaired by the Prime Minister or assigned Deputy Prime Minister, was established. The commission consists of members from related cultural organizations such as Minister of Culture, Permanent Secretary from various agencies such as the Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education etc. Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Culture is assigned as secretary of the commission.

3. The Council of Cultural Affairs was also established for the purpose of preservation and restoration of local and national cultures through the cooperation among cultural network. The Council of Cultural Affairs consists of the members from Cultural Council of Thailand, Provincial Cultural Council, District Cultural Council, and Sub-district Cultural Council.

4. The Cultural Promotion Fund was established to support art and cultural activities such as providing welfare for the National Artist and supporting art and culture researches and development programs.

5. The persons with outstanding in cultural work, were honored as National Artists.

Compare with Cultural Heritage Protection Act of Republic of Korea (Feb 4 2010) the
objective of this act is to promote, contribute, and utilize cultural heritage both tangible cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage. This act divides the structure into 12 chapters as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>General Provision for setting the basic principle of cultural heritage and duties of local governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Establishment and implement of protection policies for cultural heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Creating foundation for protection of cultural heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>State designated cultural heritage includes of process of designated both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, management and protection, making available to public and admission fees, and subsidies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Registered cultural heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ordinary movable cultural heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Special case concerning state-owned cultural heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Protection, investigate, research and support activities of cultural heritage located overseas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>City/do-designated cultural heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Cultural heritage trade business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Supplementary provisions such as expropriation or use of land, disaster prevention day for cultural heritage, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Penal provisions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the National Culture Act of Thailand is for promoting and preserving national heritage, the act does not distinct the practices for the tangible and intangible cultural heritages. In fact, prior to this act, Thailand has already specified the practices for the tangible cultural heritage through the Ancient Monuments, Antiques, Art objects and National Museums Protection Act of B.E. 2535 (1992), which classifies and regulates the principle of designation the Ancient Monuments, antiques, art objects and national museums. Nevertheless, there are several specific laws related to intangible cultural heritage in Thailand such as the Protection and Promotion of Traditional Thai Medicine Wisdom Act B.E. 2542 (1999), which provides for the safeguarding of traditional knowledge on Thai traditional medicines and the Boxing Act B.E. 2542 (1999), which provides for the promotion, support, preservation and safeguarding of boxing competitions viewed by Thailand as a national art.

At present, the Ministry of Culture is drafting the law on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage. This drafted law will provide a systematic management of ICH safeguarding in Thailand. It would create legal frameworks and effective ICH safeguarding and promotion
measures. There will be the Intangible Heritage Committee, which would perform the function of driving forward the safeguard and promotion of intangible heritage. The committee would comprise members from various sectors, e.g. the Minister of Culture, Permanent-Secretary, Director-General of the Department of Cultural Promotion, Chairman of the Culture Council of Thailand, representatives of communities and qualified members appointed by the Council, and various cultural experts.

ICH approach of Korea and Thailand in summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Korea</th>
<th>Thailand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICH designated domains</td>
<td>3 domains</td>
<td>7 domains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorize</td>
<td>Important ICH and Designator (individual, group, organization)</td>
<td>National ICH and National Artist (individual)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City/province designated</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>None city/province act as an inventorying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural policy</td>
<td>Centralize</td>
<td>Centralize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICH policy</td>
<td>Emphasize on designator</td>
<td>Emphasize on element</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture Act</td>
<td>Cultural Heritage Protection Act</td>
<td>National Culture Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific ICH Act</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ICH be as a part of Cultural Heritage Protection Act</td>
<td>ICH states in several specific laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>During drafted ICH Act</td>
<td>During drafted ICH Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratify 2003 convention</td>
<td>09/02/2005</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 2 Thailand Current status for ratify UNESCO convention

The intangible cultural heritage is a precious legacy from the ancestors, who created, accumulated, perpetuated and passed it on to the next generation. An intellectual heritage means the knowledge, thought, skill, and expertise expressed through language, literature, the performing arts, customs and traditions, rites and rituals, traditional crafts, and cosmological knowledge.

In today’s rapidly changing world, the intangible cultural heritage of the nation is threatened by the invasion of foreign cultures, the misuse of advance science and technology in copying, stealing, imitating others, the improper use of the ICH of a group of people in an unfairly manner. Dominated by these factors, the affected groups of people unknowingly lose their self-image and their body of knowledge that forms their wisdom. While no legal measure is available to protect Thailand’s ICH.

Thus, the designation of the national intangible cultural heritage might provide one way of safeguarding, and an important evidence of Thailand’s ownership of the intangible cultural heritage in various domains.
As the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) divided intangible cultural heritage into five following domains: (1) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; (2) performing arts; (3) social practices, rituals and festive events; (4) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and (5) traditional craftsmanship. Thailand’s domains of the intangible cultural heritage are slightly different from the UNESCO’s. The Ministry of Culture extended the five domains to seven domains by adding Linguistic and communications tool and Traditional sport which are in accordance with Thai cultural context. Besides, these domains are only a tool for helping to organize the information within an inventory.

**Why does Thailand should ratify this convention?**

Accordingly, in the future, if Thailand joins the other 161 countries (as of September 2014) as a state party to UNESCO’s Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, it will be a good opportunity to make known to the world community of Thailand’s prestige. Moreover, the joining of this convention will further strengthen the regional cooperation in promoting and preserving of the intangible cultural heritage within ASEAN as other ASEAN counties except Thailand and Singapore have already ratified the convention. Such action will reflect the sharing of similar value of intangible culture heritage and emphasize on the intercultural heritage among ASEAN community.

**Ground work for ratification**

At present, the process of ratifying the 2003 UNESCO Convention by Thailand is still on the right path as the draft awaits the approval of the cabinet and the senate. Nevertheless, Thai government and related agencies have already started to prepare other corresponding elements and actions to the 2003 UNESCO Convention. First, it has already followed the Article 11-Role of States Parties and Article 13-Other measures for Safeguarding in a national safeguarding level. Second, Thai government is also in the process of drafting the Intangible Cultural Heritage Act, whose principles of this draft law are consistent with that of the safeguard of intangible cultural heritage or traditional culture undertaken by UNESCO. Third, we set up the responsible unit for the national intangible cultural heritage. This unit is in charge of promoting and preserving Thai intangible cultural heritage through various means such as studies, researches, rehabilitation, development, dissemination of information and supports to government agencies, non-government organizations and the public engaged in cultural works. The office also handles affairs relating to cultural exchanges. Fourth, we have registered around 850 items of our Intangible Cultural Heritage to our database inventory. Lastly, under 7 domains, we also designated the national intangible cultural heritage of 218 elements (As of 2013).

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Number of National Intangible Cultural Heritages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain \ Years</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic and communications tool</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk literature</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing arts</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social practices, rituals and festive events</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional craftsmanship</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Sports</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 3 Process of Designating National Intangible Cultural Heritage in Thailand

There is a great necessity of the central government to designate the ICH because designation will make people realize and eventually be proud of their cultural heritage. The designation of the ICH has been operated since 2009 by the Department of Cultural Promotion, Ministry of Culture. A group of culture experts formed by the Department of Cultural Promotion will examine prominent or endangered ICH sent by provincial cultural offices across Thailand.

In addition, The Ministry of Culture has taken into account for the community participation in ICH inventory making. The participating communities will take the role in collecting their own ICH information as well as organizing the activities concerning ICH awareness rising and ICH safeguard programs. The Ministry of Culture expects that the implementation of community involvement in safeguarding their own traditions will strengthen capacities for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage of the nation.

ICH domains of Thailand

The Ministry of Culture has categorized all together seven domains of ICH’s, these seven categories are as followed:

- **Linguistic and communications tool** – a communication tool in form of verbal and non-verbal language that can reflect people way of life including their wisdom and culture. In Thailand, languages can be classified into 3 categories; formal language, dialect languages or forms of languages which are used in specific areas distinguished by pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary. The ethnic languages mean languages used by ethnic minority groups in Thailand which includes Austro Asiatic language family, Austronesian language family, Chinese
Tibetan language family, Hmong-Mien language family and Tai language family.

- Folk Literature – the oral or written literature that is transmitted through the folk way of life including folk literature, oral history, incantations, folk verbal scripts, idioms and adages, riddles, and treatise.

- Performing Arts – the expression of emotions, feelings, or stories by a performer through voice, instrument, body movements or in puppet manipulation

- Social Practices, rituals and festive events – the customary or traditional practices that have been commonly adopted by the people in a community and passed on from generation to generation as the auspicious way and that foster social peace and reflect the self-image of the community or ethnic group

- Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe – the body of knowledge, methods, skills, beliefs, practices, and expressions which are developed from the interaction between man and the natural and supernatural environments

- Traditional Craftsmanship – the knowledge and skills of a group in making handicrafts, in selecting materials and actual crafts methods that reflect cultural identity and social development

- Traditional Sports – games, sports and martial arts which are practiced in Thailand including the arts of fighting for entertainment or recreational purpose to develop the physical and mental qualities, all of which uniquely reflects the way of life, society and identity of the community. There are uniquely reflective of Thailand’s culture and way of life

**Objectives of Designation of Thailand’s National ICH**

1. To record the background history, wisdom and identity of the Intangible cultural heritage;
2. To provide important database on Intangible cultural heritage in Thailand;
3. To enhance the crucial role and the pride of the communities, groups, or individuals that own the Intangible cultural heritage;
4. To promote and develop the right of communities to conserve, perpetuate, restore, and safeguard the local and national Intangible cultural heritage;
5. To prepare the groundwork for Thailand to become a state party to UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

**Criteria for designated**

The ICH Committees of Experts have provided the criteria for intangible cultural heritage designation by describing the defining attributes of the items to be considered in each domain. Common criteria are as follows:
1. Having specific characteristics that attest to the cultural identity and self-image of the community;
2. Being transmitted and perpetuated to the present, or continuing to be practiced on specific occasions;
3. Having social and spiritual value and value to the community's way of life;
4. Being in urgent need of safeguarding, being at risk of disappearance, or facing threatening danger;
5. Having other characteristics that the Committees of Experts consider relevant.

These seven particular domains of intangible cultural heritages were selected because it could better accommodate the range of Thai cultural expression and was also better suited for our existing inventories. This has also set the stage for our move to becoming part of UNESCO, which uses a similar five domain of ICH categorization.
Process of national ICH designated

The ICH Committees of Experts

- Prepare and revise the criteria for national ICH designation
- Nominate the items to be designated as the national ICH
- Prepare key information for consideration of each ICH item to be designated
- Organize forums to gather public opinion on the nominated items

The Executive Committee of Experts for the ICH Designation

- Approves the list of items to be designated as the national ICH
- Endorses the result of national ICH designation

Department of Cultural Promotion, Ministry of Culture

- Submits the designation announcement to the Minister for signature
- Announcement and Publication the information through the printed and video media
- Promotes and supports the transmission and perpetuation of the designated national ICH
Case studies of Thailand’s ICH

The following are two examples of the inventory making ICH element which have been designated as the National Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2011. We record the background history, wisdom and identity of this intangible cultural heritage as follows:

Indigo Dyed Cotton (Traditional craftsmanship)

Cotton dyed with an extract from Indigo plants has a long history in Thai culture. Originally it was made for people’s own use but presently it is also produced as a major selling article. The indigo dyed cotton products originate from a few provinces in Thailand such as Sakon Nakhon Province and Phrae Province, etc.

Special features of indigo dyed cotton: protection against ultraviolet rays, mosquito repellent because of its lingering plant scent; effective release of heat; and the dye is harmless to the body.

Production processes of Indigo extract:

- Collect 3 – 4 months old indigo plant including the leaves and bunch the plants together in bundles of 500 gram;
- Immerse the bundles in water for 18 – 24 hours;
- Remove leave debris and add a small amount of red lime until the water turns to a strong yellow color with blue bubbles;
- Stir the water to increase the amount of bubbles and leave the water for one night;
- Remove the brown watery froth floating on the water;
- Store the indigo extract for further dying process;

Preparation of indigo dying pot

- Mix the indigo extract with ash in a 1 liter to 360 gram ratio and leave the mixture in a cool and sealed container;
- Stir the mixture in the morning and evening until it turns to a yellowish green color.
Dying process
- Dip a clean cotton cloth into the indigo extract;
- Squeeze out the cotton until it is uniformly colored. The cotton cloth can then be dyed both in cool and hot dying processes.

Presently, the government tries to encourage local people in some target areas with good indigo dyed cotton production potential to take up this traditional process again. It will not only preserve Thailand’s cultural heritage but also increase the local people’s income. Unfortunately, the knowledge and transmission of indigo dyed cotton is decreasing as new generations are not interested in it at all. Besides that the production costs are high and the indigo plant is much rarer now as in the past.

The best practice that we learned about the efficiency transmission of natural dyeing can be found at The Naju Natural Dyeing Cultural Center, Republic of Korea. As flash back to the Goryeo period (918-1392) the government had recognized the importance of the dyeing industry and set up public factories called jabjikgabbang to produce dyed fabric for commercial sale. After that imported artificial dyes from Japan and the west began to replace traditional techniques. However, the natural dyeing has come back when The Naju Natural Dyeing Cultural Center was established in 2005 consists of two buildings; an exhibition space in front explained the history of natural dyeing, the dyeing process, the sources of dye materials. This place also has a small workshop in the back where visitors can try their hand at natural dyeing. The operation of The Naju Natural Dyeing Cultural Center run by Jung Gwan-chae, which was designated as important intangible cultural property of Korea number 115 in 2001 also has kept the traditional work of dyeing about 30 years. He has worked hard for teaching dyeing skills. It is shown that one of the most important for transmission is the bearer selected

Pia(Performing arts)

The Pia is an originally one-stringed musical instrument which dates back as far as the Phraya Mang Rai Dynasty (1296 A.D.) during which Chiang Mai City was occupied. The shape of Pia is derived from a one-string gourd lute and is similar in shape to the Kasae Deo lute from Cambodia. Evidence affirms that the ancient one-string gourd lute originated from Indian civilizations and was found in many areas throughout India and Southeast Asia. Depictions of it are found at the Angkor Wat in Cambodia, Borobudur Pagoda in Indonesia and stucco designs in Ratchaburi Province.

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More strings were added during the reign of the Lanna Kingdom (1292–1558 A.D.). Also its string binding peg-heads, usually of wood, were made of bronze and beautifully decorated.

Pia music nearly disappeared from the former Lanna Kingdom and it was the American Gerald P. Dyck, an ethnological musician, who assumed that no Pia players were active anymore in Thailand. Also several articles published during 1967-1971 assumed that the Pia and its music were disappearing from Thailand. However during that same period, Dyck discovered active Pia players in Thailand. In later years (1979–1987 A.D.), Pia music became more popular as four former Pia players transferred their knowledge and playing skills to new generations of musicians.

To play the Pia properly, it is necessary to learn the unique resonant playing technique. It is more difficult to learn than any other technique but it produces a resonant sound which is very pleasing for listeners. The soothing sound can be compared to the sound of bells ringing from afar which grabs people’s fascination immediately upon hearing it.

Presently most of Pia players are people who received higher education and possess excellent musical background. Some of the players are experimenting with different and more uncommon styles and using the Pia together with other instruments. This modern practice is not wide spread yet and only geared towards the interest of specific groups. The Pia is a typical example of the diverse Thai cultural heritage and further development and future should be safeguarded for the enjoyment of next generations.

Therefore, the implementation of ICH projects or activities enhances groups of bearers and practitioners’ performances in public and their communities. ICH bearers and practitioners are persons who possess to a high degree the knowledge and skills required for performing or re-creating specific elements of the ICH. The talented tradition bearers and practitioners should receive grant from the local and central governments for their performances.
Chapter 4 Urgent needs for safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage

Many endangered ICH are only represented through practice and/or spoken, but no written texts or visual audio exist. Therefore, it is important to act quickly in order to preserve them before their disappearance. Since documentation is the key to preserving endangered ICH, The Ministry of Culture should in corporation with the experts to document them by using technical instruments.

Inventorying the ICH can be done by documentation involving the use of various recording means and formats, such as collected books, archives, websites, pictures or photos, samplers and etc. It is crucial that ICH owner communities, tradition bearers and practitioners must be brought to drawing up inventories. The central government also publishes and updates inventories which are open to public access.

The dissemination of the ICH information to the public via various sources of media such as printed publications, radio and television programs, movies, and the internet is encouraged. Additionally, it keeps the public informed of the dangers threatening such heritage. The Ministry of Culture should produce short-documentary films related to ICH. The Ministry also is urged to set up a Culture Channel on television and radio for informing festivals, customs, and other cultural knowledge to the public.

One of effective ways to safeguard ICH sustainably is to transmit the special knowledge and skills to younger generations. As the ICH is created and re-created by its bearers, elements of the ICH have been evolved continuously. The viability of intangible heritage practices thus relies on the ongoing transmission of the knowledge and skills of the bearers. The transmission process should be developed by the bearers and practitioners themselves, which would rather be learning by doing than reading from written texts.

Furthermore, Training is a process ensuring recognition of, respect for and enhancement of the ICH in Thai society. The training courses including educational, awareness-raising and information programs should be established. Such courses should be organized by Department of Cultural Promotion and aimed at young people and local administrative officers. Furthermore, the local leaders propose specific educational training program within the communities and groups concerned.

In order to safeguard ICH, the local leaders suggest that the relevant NGOs and GOs should implement projects or activities reflecting its concrete manifestations, such as a dance performance, a song, a music instrument or a craft. Moreover, the local leaders encourage the ICH owner communities fully take part of organizing events, such as religious rituals or celebration, cultural festivals, and traditional performances.

Thus, to facilitate Thailand's ICH management in systematic and continuous manner, to promote an awareness in the communities of the value and identity of their ICH, to bring about the pride in their ICH, and to encourage the younger generations to learn and perpetuate the ICH
in their communities, the Ministry of Culture should lay down the operational directives and regulated the procedure for safeguarding of Thailand’s ICH as follows:

1. ICH policies must be included in annual policies of the relevant governmental organizations at all level. ICH should urgently be pushed for a national agenda.

2. The Ministry of Culture should consider the result of public hearings on the list of items to be designated as the national ICH and endorse the result of national ICH designation as much as promote and support the transmission and perpetuation of the designated national ICH.

3. The local and central governments are the most important supporters of promoting the ICH. The governments should provide financially support the ICH projects or activities carried out by local communities, traditional bearers and practitioners, and NGOs.

4. The ICH drafted law should provide a systemic management of ICH safeguarding in Thailand. It would create legal frameworks and effective ICH safeguarding and promotion measures. There will be the Intangible Heritage Committee, which would perform the function of driving forward the safeguard and promotion of intangible cultural heritage.

5. With the aim of being sustainable intangible cultural heritage, establish culture network among groups of tradition bearers, communities, relevant NGOs, and GOs will systematically exchange ICH information and good practices in the management of the ICH. The establishment of culture network should be nation-wide and could be cooperate with international network.

**Conclusion and Suggestion**

Whereas Thai government aware of the importance of culture as the Thai way of life and state the cultural policy also adopt the culture act more than sixty years. The government has set up an agency for designated and inventorying in charge of safeguarding national intangible cultural heritage. Meanwhile, safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the international level is the issue that we should work urgently. Criticism of modern technology as well as cross cultural then young generation overlooks their traditional and intellectual heritage. It is the fact that this current situation appears almost every country. The main lesson that can be drawn from the experience of the state party of 2003 convention is that it has an effective network and cooperation in sustainable intangible cultural heritage. Thus the government should play an important role in increasing proud of Thailand intangible cultural heritage by initially conceive as a policy and adopt an appropriate act for assuring the step forward.

To meet that challenge, intangible cultural heritage with Thai identity that can be sustained and exist in harmony with the changing time does not rely only on the Ministry of Culture. It relies on every person in the entire nation, regardless of sex, age and social status. The Ministry serves as a mirror that provides reflections to the people in the country of internal and external changes affecting culture. It also suggests as to how to cope with such changes. To maintain,
preserve, and hand over our existing culture and to incorporate it with appropriate effect a vast number of streams of new and foreign culture in the way that keeps our intangible cultural heritage and wisdom intact requires co-operation from every person in society, in the analysis of the weak and strong points, benefits and disadvantages, opportunities and signs of danger aiming at Thai culture. Intangible cultural heritage is a part of our culture with desirable characteristics, capable of supporting and encouraging sustainable national development.

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