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## Discussion

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Among the five countries making up the North-East Asian region, four of them—the Republic of Korea (South Korea), China, Japan, and the Democratic People’s of Korea (North Korea)—have a lot of common cultural characteristics based on their historically agrarian lifestyles and the influence of Confucianism and Buddhism. Mongolia, as nomadic society, crisscrossing the vast grasslands with livestock, displays different cultural characteristics. In addition, even within the four nations that share common elements, each country’s natural environment facilitates cultural differences among them. This essentially means that the North-East Asian region is home to the simultaneous convergence and divergence of culture. So, in the process of cultural development in the region, the interaction between homogeneous and heterogeneous elements materialised into various forms intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and cultural expressions with unique features but similar origins.

However, as with other countries in the Asia-Pacific region, which is a treasure house of ICH, traditional cultural heritage of North-East Asians was in a crisis of extinction due to invasions by Western powers. In response, South Korea and

Japan introduced the concept of intangible cultural heritage in policies related to safeguarding cultural heritage more than fifty years ago. China and Mongolia, with the support of their respective governments, followed suit by establishing an institutional foundation for national ICH inventory making and ICH safeguarding after ratifying the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). Frankly speaking, it is quite difficult to get news from North Korea because of the present domestic affairs, so it was very useful to hear Mr Abhimanyu Singh, Director of the UNESCO Office in Beijing, offering news that an association for safeguarding ICH has been established and that it is actively taking on activities for safeguarding ICH in North Korea.

In this way, the five countries of North-East Asia recognised the importance of ICH safeguarding early on and endeavoured to undertake safeguarding measures. They also became States Parties to the 2003 Convention much more quickly than other countries. Korea, China, Japan, and Mongolia ratified the Convention before its effectuation, and North Korea ratified in 2008. Now, Korea, China, and Japan are members of the intergovernmental committee of the Convention and take an important role in structuring the Operational Directives for implementing the Convention and supporting inscriptions to the UNESCO ICH Lists. As of November 2011, committee members in the Asia-Pacific region consist of Korea, China, Japan, Indonesia, and Iran. Korea also works as a member of the Subsidiary Body of the Committee responsible for examining nominations for inscription on the Representative List.

Up to 2010, China inscribed 35 elements (7 elements on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding and 28 elements on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity); Japan inscribed 18 elements on the RL; Korea inscribed 11 elements on the RL; and Mongolia inscribed 9 elements (4 elements on the UL and 5 elements on the RL). Including 1 multinational element inscribed by China and Mongolia and 1 multinational element inscribed by Korea and Mongolia, there have been a total of 71 elements inscribed in North-East Asia region. Since there are 16 UL elements and 213 RL elements worldwide, the number of inscribed elements from North-East Asia makes up 33 percent of the ICH Lists. As North Korea hasn't inscribed any ICH element to the Lists yet, it is expected that North Korea may make national inventories and inscribe ICH elements in near future.

In relation to ICH safeguarding activities, UNESCO Category 2 Centres, which support ICH safeguarding activities, have been simultaneously going through the establishment process in Korea, China, and Japan. This is the first time to observe the establishment of three related centres in one region.

Considering that three countries have accumulated experience and know-how regarding the implementation of ICH safeguarding policies for last half century, establishing three centres is meaningful to the region. One-third of the population in the world is living in the Asia-Pacific region, and the region occupies one-fifth of the world's land area. Also, the Asia-Pacific region is the cradle of great civilisations and the places where a lot cultures appeared and disappeared. Considering these regional characteristics, establishing three centres brings the region bright perspectives in safeguarding its rich intangible cultural heritage.

The UNESCO Secretariat and representatives of the governments of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea met to discuss centre's main functions. Information and networking are the main functions in the Republic of Korea, training, in China, and research in Japan. We are aware that since the functions are related each other, it will be very difficult to separate them from each other. Therefore, the three Centres are making efforts to build a cooperative mechanism among themselves. Representatives from China and Japan have been invited to be Members on ICHCAP's Governing Board, and the three Centres have agreed to organise an annual working meeting. There will be a fourth ICH Category 2 Centre established in Iran.

In addition to establishing Centres, there has been a marked increase in the momentum of ICH safeguarding activity in the region. One of the efforts made in the region is the establishment of the ICH safeguarding system in Mongolia. Over the last few years, the government of Mongolia has implemented a series of activities to set up a legal system to safeguard ICH. The government of Mongolia has also drawn up a national ICH inventory and identified bearers as well. Moreover, an ICH guidebook introducing unique ICH was published to raise the general public's awareness. As a result of these activities, the government of Mongolia established an ICH safeguarding system at the national level, and seventy-one elements were inscribed on the National Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Mongolia and eight elements on the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding in Mongolia.

In relation to Mongolian projects, ICHCAP has accepted the recommendation from the UNESCO Office in Beijing and started working with the government of Mongolia by providing financial support and technical advice.

Next, I would like to draw your attention to the regional cooperation regarding ICH safeguarding in North Korea. Regrettably, cooperation issues with North Korea are influenced by a volatile political atmosphere between North and South Korea. In the early stages of ICHCAP's establishment, the Centre contacted ICH experts from the North Korea under the mediation of the UNESCO Office in Beijing, and in 2008, we invited experts from North Korea to join in with the regional meeting that took place in Hue, Viet Nam, which was co-organised by the UNESCO Office in Bangkok and ICHCAP. However, there was no interchange at all. Although, we were informed that Chinese ICH experts would be dispatched to North Korea, but we have not yet been updated about any meetings.

Having examined the current status of ICH safeguarding in the North-East Asia as an extension of ICHCAP's activities, I will now try to make suggestions on how to overcome some of the issues encountered, and then, conclude my paper.

The countries in North-East Asia have been very active in safeguarding, and their participation at regional and international levels should increase. Despite that, there is a small concern that such high expectations might lead to excessive competition. Therefore, countries in the region need to build trust and collaborative relationships in while safeguarding ICH at national, regional, and international levels.

Regarding the newly established Category 2 Centres, the tasks with the greatest priority involve setting up communication and cooperation mechanisms among the three Centres. In addition to this, the Centre should build cooperative relationships among UNESCO Headquarters and regional offices as well as Member States of the region. This will serve the region with the foundation of international cooperation in the ICH safeguarding field. Certainly, we must not forget the importance of cooperation among ICH experts, NGOs, and relevant organisations.

It is also essential to share information and promote effective communication among stakeholders. Member States, UNESCO Headquarters and regional offices, and Category 2 Centres should hold discussions more often so that they can share information and circulate ideas and visions for ICH safeguarding.

Last but not least, I would like to ask you to focus your attention on ICH in North Korea. As mentioned, it is foreseen that there may be many obstacles for full cooperation with North Korea. In particular, the deterioration of diplomatic relations between South and North Korea as well as Japan and North Korea affect the cultural sector as well, putting cultural field at a standstill. In relation to this, I expect the UNESCO Office in Beijing to take an active role, and I hope this situation can improve.

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# Discussion

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## I. Progress of Modernisation and Globalisation

Without considering the series of disasters that unfolded in northern Japan in 2011, it is notable that our intangible cultural heritage often sustains extensive damage from radical changes in the natural environment.

Even without taking natural disasters into account, in the North-East Asian region there are other serious risks that could transform or extinguish traditional cultures, especially the intangible cultural heritage handed down from generation to generation. One of the major causes of such risks may be the tendency toward modernisation, which involves changes in industrial structures.

The way of life in rural village communities and the foundation of cultures and traditions are drastically changing due to shifts in industrial structures and the population outflow of younger generations to urban areas, resulting in under population and reduced birth rates.

In short, the situation has become usual in the North-East Asian region, wherein aged people who have stayed in local communities have no successors to

take over traditional cultures. These changes to social composition continue to increase the risk of extinction of the intangible cultural heritage.

Furthermore, due to the waves of globalisation, the tendency of western/modern culture as represented in the mass media, especially television, may transform and dampen the traditional concept of values of cultures.

It may safely be said that challenges to the conservation of the intangible cultural heritage lie in all these factors.

## II. Survey Research and Data Collection

It is not uncommon that many traditional cultures succeeded to local communities are forced to transform as a response to political and economic changes, and in some cases, disappear forever. Therefore, it is crucial to collect historical records of the intangible cultural heritage handed down by tradition. Specifically, time-honoured document records and memories of the elderly as well as paintings, drawings, and photos that represent the cultures should, to the greatest degree possible, be compiled chronologically.

It may sound repetitive, but survey research is critical, in addition to collecting data including accurate records, memories handed down from person to person, and videos of the intangible cultural heritage surviving to date. This should be secured to ensure the basic data set that may assist in the reproduction of the deteriorating aspects of the intangible cultural heritage.

## III. Protection, Conservation, and Succession

In addition, for aspects of the intangible cultural heritage handed down from generation to generation, it is necessary to enhance financial and institutional support for the protection and succession of the cultural heritage within the framework composed by the central government and related municipalities.

Furthermore, the cultural values and significance of the intangible cultural heritage should be actively promoted and publicised through cultural policies and the education system.

Specifically, establishing programmes to familiarise students with the intangible cultural heritage would play a significant role in the modern education system, achieving many successful experiences all over the world nowadays.

Although I have some insights into the problems of and measures for the protection, restoration, and rehabilitation of intangible cultural heritage, I will speak only about a limited number of these insights.

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# Discussion

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## I. The Necessity and Urgency of Developing Regional Cooperation in Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific and North-East Asia Region

Since the adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003, the importance and urgency of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage has been more and more widely recognised thanks to the joint efforts made by UNESCO and its Member States. To safeguard ICH effectively from being washed away and engulfed by the waves of rapid global economic integration, many countries have spared no efforts in their endeavours to enhance their safeguarding measures, and they have gained notable results. Nonetheless, as time and situations change so quickly, we are still fully aware of the grave shortcomings and enormous pressures on the task of ICH safeguarding, particularly such issues as capacity building for ICH safeguarding in this region, which beckons our immediate and enhanced attention. In the background of a new historical era, regional cooperation will be a necessary step to address the

abovementioned problems, open new vistas in ICH safeguarding, and help us make greater progress in this aspect.

It is the consistent position of UNESCO to develop extensive cooperation and exchange in the ICH safeguarding field. Regional cooperation can not only promote sharing best practices and exchanging experiences and mutual learning, but also address such realistic problems facing individual countries. Some of these issues include insufficient understanding of the concepts of intangible cultural heritage as well as a lack of professional personnel, practical experiences, and international vision. In so doing, it will be conducive to the goal of integral ICH safeguarding. And this might also be the ultimate purpose of the different mechanisms established under the 2003 Convention.

Intangible cultural heritage is the common assets of humankind. The practitioners and bearers of intangible cultural heritage hold features of a certain level of mobility, which is to say, they may migrate to one place to another for any number of reasons whether historical or political or for some other reason. In addition, during specific periods, the territory or borders of a country might also change; therefore such changing historical conditions give intangible cultural heritage certain levels of mobility as well, making it transcend the demarcation of countries, nations, and territories; moreover, these circumstances of mobility also give rise to some identical or similar features in the ICH of different countries, nations, and territories. These commonalities are the precondition and requirement for us to boost regional cooperation on safeguarding ICH.

## II. Prospects and Potential for Regional Cooperation in Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific and North-East Asian Regions

There are vast prospects and great potential for regional cooperation in the ICH field in the Asia-Pacific and North-East Asian regions. First, the Asia-Pacific region boasts a large variety of ethnic groups, large population, long history, splendid cultures, frequent cultural exchanges, and prolific ICH resources. The five countries in North-East Asia alone are home to over seventy plus ethnic groups, over two hundred languages, and more than one billion people, making up nearly

half of entire Asia-Pacific region. The abundant resources thus offer us enormous potential for regional cooperation.

Second, the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in North-East Asia, is an environment marked by closely adjacent geography, a constant population flow, and historical cultural exchange. And these factors have laid the foundation for many commonalities in ICH, some of which being identical or similar within this area; therefore, such ICH elements also face very similar opportunities and challenges. Such exceptional geographical relationship serves as a sound basis for successful regional cooperation.

Third, among the forty-eight Member States of UNESCO in the Asia-Pacific region, twenty-nine are States Parties to the Convention. Up to the end of November 2011, 267 items or best practices have been inscribed on the Representative List, the Urgent Safeguarding List, and the Register. Thirty-two Member States from the Asia-Pacific region have eighty-four items inscribed on the Representative List, ten items on the Urgent Safeguarding List, and one best practice on the Register. All five North-East Asian countries are States Parties to the Convention, and almost all have ICH inscribed on the lists and have gained experiences in ICH safeguarding and nominating. Even though, there is still a need to enhance capacity building to cope with realistic problems through mutual exchange, discussions, and joint collaborations. At the international level, it is still quite common that there is inadequate understanding of ICH's value, the significance of ICH safeguarding, and the different mechanisms established under the Convention. Professionals and professional organisations are limited. Many of them lack of experience in ICH safeguarding and research, especially in nominating ICH elements for inscription and community-based inventorying. These problems can be addressed via regional cooperation.

In brief, it is an irresistible trend for the Asia-Pacific and North-East Asian regions to strengthen regional cooperation, which is an effective approach to solve regional inadequacy in resources, ability, and experiences in terms of ICH safeguarding. It is also an effective measure to collectively withstand the impact of world economic setback and cultural homogenisation and to safeguard intangible cultural heritage of all humanity. Therefore, there are immense prospects and potentials in this regard.

### III. Duties and Willingness of CRIHAP in Carrying Out Regional Cooperation for ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region, Particularly in North-East Asia

China has all along placed importance on safeguarding ICH. From the beginning of the last century, higher education institutions, with Peking University as the leading institute, established research institutes related to documentation and research, which has lasted all the way through to the founding of the People's Republic of China. During the 1950s, nationwide investigation and research on folklore and traditional cultural expressions were carried out by massive local cultural workers under the organisation of the central government. Since 2000, China has been particularly proactive in responding to the UNESCO initiative, the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, and witnessed the inscription of Kunqu Opera, Guqin Music, and other items. In recent years, the Chinese government has taken a series of measures for this purpose, including launching the Chinese Traditional & Folk Culture Safeguarding Program, establishing a special fund for intangible cultural heritage safeguarding, establishing a nationwide safeguarding system at various levels, setting up the Department of Intangible Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture, and establishing the National Center for ICH Safeguarding and local centres at the provincial level. Under the guidance and support of the government, relative research institutes and educational institutions as well as communities, groups, and individuals all over China have participated in the work of ICH safeguarding, including research, protection, inventory making, and nomination. The Chinese government proclaimed that starting from 2006, the second Saturday of June will be the Day of Cultural Heritage. In 2011, the Law of Intangible Culture Heritage of the People's Republic of China was promulgated. In general, the work on safeguarding, research, and inheritance of ICH in China is now in a new era marked by being more coordinated and comprehensive development. The implementation of all the above measures has greatly boosted the ICH safeguarding work in China.

Through these years of ICH safeguarding, China has accumulated quite a rich experience in this field. The rapid overall economic and social development in China and the in-depth expansion of international exchange and cooperation have formed

a sound background and solid foundation for China to actively participate in the regional cooperation in the field of ICH safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region.

In May 2010, the Chinese government signed with UNESCO the Agreement Regarding the Establishment of the International Training Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the Auspices of UNESCO (CRIHAP) to bear its share of international responsibility and jointly promote ICH safeguarding in cooperation with other countries.

CRIHAP will be an important international platform for the region to develop regional cooperation aiming to safeguard intangible cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific region. According to the Agreement between China and UNESCO, CRIHAP shall specialise in training, and its objectives shall be to

- (a) promote the 2003 Convention and contribute to implementing it in the Asia-Pacific region;
- (b) increase the participation of communities, groups, and individuals in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific region;
- (c) enhance the capacity of the Asia-Pacific Member States of UNESCO in safeguarding ICH, particularly by strengthening the capacities of concerned personnel; and
- (d) foster regional and international cooperation for safeguarding ICH.

To achieve the above objectives, the specific functions of the CRIHAP will be to

- (a) grant financial support to trainees in need of assistance and organise long-term and short-term training courses, including classroom training and field-based training on the following subjects:
  - the 2003 Convention and its Operational Directives;
  - different examples of policies including legal, administrative, technical, and financial measures fostering ICH safeguarding;
  - introduction to UNESCO publications on identification and documentation of ICH and their application in fieldwork; and
  - teaching ICH in formal and non-formal education, including courses of theory and practice training;

- (b) mobilise international and Chinese experts as well as scientific NGOs specialised in the different domains of ICH to work as instructors and advisors of the mentioned subjects; and
- (c) enhance international and regional cooperation with institutions active in the domain of ICH, notably those established under the auspices of UNESCO (Category 2 Centres).

In conclusion, it's the unshakable duties and missions of CRIHAP to promote regional cooperation in the field of ICH safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific region, to carry out bilateral or multilateral cooperation and exchange, to assist Asia-Pacific countries in building their capacity for ICH safeguarding, to improve the implementation of the 2003 Convention, and to make efforts in safeguarding the common cultural heritage of all humankind. This is not only in line with the objectives of CRIHAP, but also compatible with the commitment that Chinese government made to UNESCO. As we used to be, are, and will be willing to play an active role in the regional cooperation in the field of ICH safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific region.

#### IV. Recommendations for Strengthening Regional Cooperation in ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region, particularly in North-East Asia

To develop more effective regional cooperation in the field of ICH safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in North-East Asia, I'd like to make the following five suggestions:

1. Establish an effective mechanism for cooperation and exchange in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in North-East Asia. The three Category 2 Centres in China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea shall cooperate closely under this mechanism to make concrete implementation measures to foster regional cooperation.
2. Each country in this region should designate an institution in the ICH field as liaison organisation and a contact person, and it would be helpful to

create, publish, and update a correspondence directory.

3. Establish an effective meeting mechanism, such as regular meetings on regional cooperation, so that bilateral and multilateral exchange can be conducted and suggestions and tentative plans can be proposed.
4. Formulate regular regional safeguarding programmes to guide regional cooperation so as to promote the smooth development of regional cooperation and give substantiate impetus to regional cooperation.
5. Explore the feasibility of setting up a special regional fund for safeguarding ICH in the region or the possibility of incorporating ICH safeguarding into any existing regional cooperation framework, so as to provide a steady economic foundation for regional cooperation and facilitate the concrete implementation of the regional safeguarding programmes.