



Title	Transnational politics and poetics in the revival of Chinese death rituals
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Citation	International Symposium on the Politics and Poetics of Asian Intangible Cultural Heritage, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, 16-17 October 2009.
Issued Date	2009
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/10722/130287
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Title - *Lak ga Kam* and Kam Intangible Cultural Heritage (China)

Presenter - Catherine Ingram (University of Melbourne)

Lak ga, literally translating as “bones of songs”, is the expression that Kam (in Chinese, Dong) people resident in south-western China use to refer to the lyrics of Kam songs. To Kam song experts and older singers, these “bones of songs” constitute the most important and meaningful aspect of Kam songs, and provide an important basis for judgements regarding a song’s quality. Kam songs are mainly sung in the Kam language, a predominantly oral Tai-Kadai language, and for centuries they have served as one of the primary means by which Kam culture, social structure, history, philosophy and aesthetics have been transmitted from generation to generation.

This paper begins with a focus upon Kam people’s perceptions of Kam song lyrics – their structure, complex rhyming system, ongoing creation, and musical and social significance – to illustrate how Kam people view a central aspect of their own cultural heritage. It then examines the role that this fundamental aspect of Kam musical culture has, to date, played in the context of the growing discourse on Kam Intangible Cultural Heritage, which itself focuses upon song.

Title - Transnational politics and poetics in the revival of Chinese death rituals

Presenter - Kuah-Pearce Khun Eng (University of Hong Kong)

Religions and religious rituals are being increasingly proclaimed as Intangible Cultural Heritages by UNESCO. Chinese death rituals can thus been conceptualised as significant intangible cultural heritages within the Chinese societies, both within Mainland China and the Chinese Diaspora.

Since the Open Door Policy in 1978, there has been a revival of death rituals within the villages of South China. This revival has led to the emergence of the death rituals that have not seen practiced in Mainland China since pre-Cultural Revolution days. This paper argues that the preservation and the practice of death rituals in modern China and the Chinese Diaspora are significant intangible cultural heritages because of their role in informing a group of its identity and in helping with identity construction within these societies. Here, these rituals have re-cemented lost kinship ties among the Chinese villagers within the village setting, between the Chinese villagers and their urban kin in China, and between these two groups and their kin residing in the Diaspora. By coming together and recreating an environment where different groups of individuals participate in the death rituals and pay respects to common ancestors, we are witnessing a rediscovery and reconfiguration of kinship

ties and social relationships on the one hand, and, at the same time, a surfacing of tensions and conflicts on the other. In this sense, death rituals, as a complex system of intangible cultural heritages, enables us to understand the dynamics of modern kinship ties and social relationships in contemporary Chinese societies.

Title - From habitus to heritage: The *Hudhud* and the *Tudubulul* epics (Philippines)

Presenter - Manolete Mora (University of Hong Kong)

Various operations and interventions go into producing World Heritage, such as, documenting, collecting, listing, curating, evaluating, and so on. These may be considered as metacultural, since they are cultural productions about culture. Indeed, Heritage itself is a form of metaculture and World Heritage is a form of metaculture that resides in a global public space (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004). The process that leads to a change of status from cultural practice or habitus, at the pre-Heritage stage, to cultural asset, at the Intangible Heritage stage, is more often than not a complicated one. It is characterised by various, often troubled, interventions that occur well before a given cultural practice is recognized and listed as World Intangible Heritage. This is particularly the case for cultural practices associated with stressed indigenous communities who struggle to deal with rapid modernization and an encroaching modernity.

It is my contention that the motivations and perspectives associated with interventions to cultural practices that occur at the pre-Heritage stage are essentially the same as those that occur at the Heritage stage. For these interventions are attempts to deal with cultural practices that are regarded as 'outmoded', in the sense that they are contemporaneous but not contemporary; they are of the past but they survive in the present; their form has outlived their function. From this perspective, the only possibility for the continued existence of the outmoded is in finding a new purpose in a metacultural sphere - in the sphere of World Heritage. I argue my case through two instances of intangible heritage from the Philippines, namely, the sung oral literatures of the Ifugao *Hudhud* and the T'boli *Tudbulul*. The former was declared by UNESCO in March 2001 as one of the nineteen 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity'; the *Tudbulul* is a possible candidate for future inclusion in the 'Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity'.

References:

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara (2004). 'Intangible Heritage as Metacultural