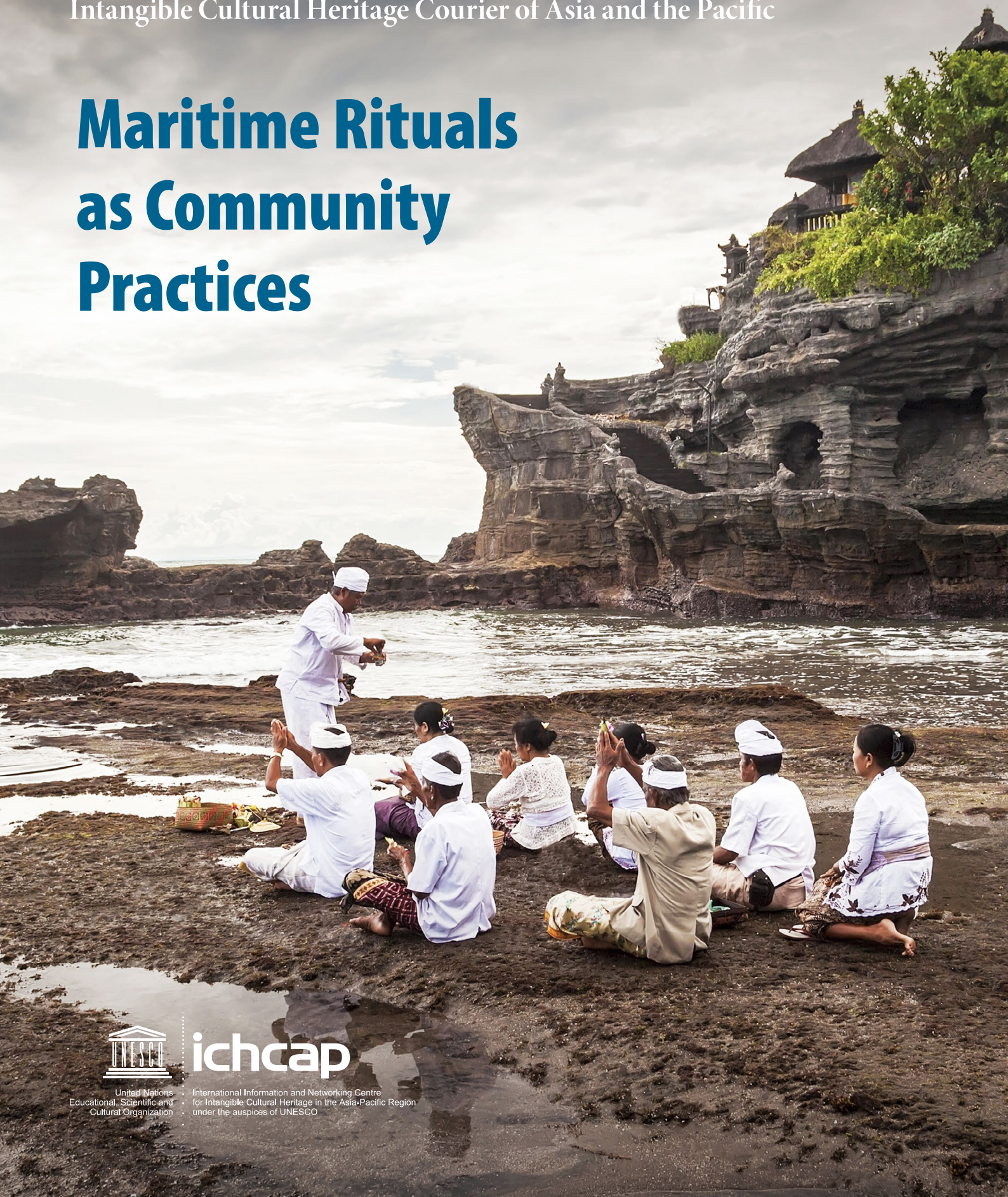


# ICH Courier

Intangible Cultural Heritage Courier of Asia and the Pacific

## Maritime Rituals as Community Practices



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

ichcap

International Information and Networking Centre  
for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region  
under the auspices of UNESCO





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# Editorial Remarks

KEUM Gi Hyung *Director-General of ICHCAP*

As the year moves forward and we enter the summer months, UNESCO-ICHCAP hopes all our readers stay well. With vaccines slowly becoming available, hopefully we can overcome the COVID-19 crisis and truly enjoy the summer.

The theme of the *ICH Courier*, volume 47, is “Maritime Rituals as Community Practices.” Human interaction with the sea goes beyond written history. And with these interactions, communities in the Asia-Pacific region developed myriad rituals to pay respect to the life-giving nature of the sea. In this issue, the “Windows to ICH” section introduces four different traditional rituals of Vietnam, Taumako of the Solomon Islands, Korea, and China. By examining these ancient rituals, we are also able to see how they are also applied to contemporary life in the communities that have sustained their ICH traditions until today. This idea of maintaining maritime ICH in the modern era is also explored in our “Expert Remarks” section, which explores the role of maritime ICH in the Decade of Open Science for Sustainable Development 2021–30.

Last year, ICHCAP held a webinar series on maritime ICH in which scholars, relevant NGOs, and practitioners of maritime ICH were invited to present cases and studies on the state of maritime ICH in the region as well as relevant safeguarding activities. Recordings of the expert meeting are available online at <https://webinar.unesco-ichcap.org/portfolio-items/expert-meeting-for-building-network-on-maritime-ich-2/>. In this way, ICHCAP continues to strengthen network building and information sharing to safeguard ICH virtually.

While the main theme of the volume revolves around maritime activities, we hope you also enjoy the variety of other topics explored in our other sections, which cover graphical databases, wood block printing, weaving, and other interesting topics.

Again, we cannot express how much we appreciate the efforts of our contributors as well as the interest our readers show. As we continue through the year, we look forward to delivering quality content that will be available both online (<https://ichcourier.unesco-ichcap.org/>) and offline. ■



## COVER ART

Balinese pilgrims at Tanah Lot temple on 2 April 2011, Tanah Lot, Bali. The temple has been part of Balinese mythology for centuries.  
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## EXECUTIVE PUBLISHER

KEUM Gi Hyung

## EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

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Michael Peterson  
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## COPY EDITOR

Joe Haining

## DESIGN / PRINTING

Designtoday / Ok Min

## INQUIRIES

### Address

ICH Courier c/o ICHCAP  
95 Seohak-ro, Wansan-gu,  
Jeonju 55101 Republic of Korea

### Tel

+82-63-230-9711

### Fax

+82 63 230 9700

### E-mail

[ich.courier@gmail.com](mailto:ich.courier@gmail.com)

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# Maritime Intangible Cultural Heritage:

## A Role within the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021–30

Athena Trakadas

Visiting Researcher, National Museum of Denmark / Co-Chair, Ocean Decade Heritage Network  
athena.lynn.trakadas@natmus.dk



Scene from a boat launch festival, Lompoul, Senegal  
© Athena Trakadas.

Cultural heritage, as defined by UNESCO, includes both diverse tangible and intangible cultural heritage (ICH).<sup>1</sup> In the maritime realm—that is, connected to human activity at sea—tangible heritage includes physical material such as shipwrecks, artifacts, and submerged archaeological sites found under water and in the tidal zone. A term more commonly used is underwater cultural heritage (UCH), as defined in the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. Intangible heritage encompasses five domains where heritage is expressed and maintained through contemporary practices (“living heritage”), as defined in the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

In an overlapping relationship, maritime ICH conceivably incorporates UCH, as the 2003 Convention also includes “the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith.” ICH also has a historical aspect, being “transmitted from generation to generation ... constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history.”<sup>2</sup> This includes built heritage on coastal land and in intertidal areas, maintained boats and ships, and heritage within museums, coastal architecture (“sea spaces”), and traditional and indigenous knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

ICH, perhaps because of its wide-ranging components, is importantly noted as compatible with requirements for sustainable development, and maritime ICH is no exception. Of the UN’s seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), one in particular, SDG 14: Life Below Water, addresses the conservation and sustainable use of “the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.”<sup>4</sup>

In 2017, UNESCO’s Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) laid the foundations for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–30) (“the Decade”). Between 2018 and 2020, the Decade underwent a preparatory phase, with the implementation phase beginning in January 2021. The broadest aim of the Decade is to build scientific capacity and generate knowledge that will directly inform solutions targeting the aims of a range of SDGs, including SDG 14. The initiative promotes a common framework for supporting stakeholders in studying and assessing the health of the world’s oceans. By design, the Decade fully recognizes that there needs to be a “paradigm shift” in how ocean science is obtained, and knowledge is generated.<sup>5</sup>

The Decade has been framed around moving from the “ocean we have” to the “ocean we want” by achieving the following societal outcomes by 2030:

- A clean ocean where sources of pollution are identified and reduced or removed.
- A healthy and resilient ocean where marine ecosystems are understood, protected, restored, and managed.
- A productive ocean supporting sustainable food supply and a sustainable ocean economy.
- A predicted ocean where society understands and can respond to changing ocean conditions.
- A safe ocean where life and livelihoods are protected from ocean-related hazards.
- An accessible ocean with open and equitable access to data, information, and technology and innovation.
- An inspiring and engaging ocean where society understands and values the ocean in relation to human wellbeing and sustainable development.<sup>6</sup>

Cultural heritage has been increasingly considered within the context of the Decade. In the call for action “Our Ocean, Our Future,” launched at the first UN Ocean Conference in 2017, member states recognized that the ocean “forms an important part of our natural and cultural heritage,” and a call was made for stakeholders to “develop comprehensive strategies to raise awareness of the natural and cultural significance of the ocean.”<sup>7</sup> Following this, the draft roadmap for the Decade—published in June 2018 and meant as stimulation for discussion—states that “‘Ocean Science’ should be interpreted broadly as encompassing: social sciences and human dimensions.”<sup>8</sup>

What these broad statements could mean for cultural heritage was clarified during the preparatory phase of the Decade, when planning meetings, stakeholder forums, and regional workshops were held to obtain feedback. Thereafter, the Implementation Plan 2.0 was published in July 2020 and ratified by the UN General Assembly in December 2020. In relation to cultural heritage, it states: “Ocean science is broad: it encompasses





Traditional craftsmanship with an aluminium version of a navette, a tool used since the Roman period to repair fishing nets. Here, a fisherman is using it with modern nylon line in Marina di Praia, Amalfi Coast, Italy © Athena Trakadas.

natural and social science disciplines, local and indigenous knowledge.” There are further broad references to maritime ICH as the plan:

- States: “Ocean Science recognises, respects and embraces local and indigenous knowledge”;
- Defines the transformation of ocean science that “embraces local and indigenous knowledge as a key knowledge source”;
- Endorses criteria for Decade actions to “Collaborate with and engage local and indigenous knowledge holders”;
- Addresses data management: “The data sources will include ... less-quantifiable insights, such as indigenous and local knowledge.”

Furthermore, coastlines, which occupy a majority of the ICH interface, are noted as especially significant, especially in the “currently data poor regions such as ... coastal areas where much of the human interaction with the ocean is concentrated.”<sup>10</sup> Clearly, greater attention to the human dimension is essential to achieving the Decade’s aim of the “Ocean we want.”

In arguing for a paradigm shift in how ocean science is obtained and knowledge is generated, the Decade therefore presents an opportunity to improve the focus on the ocean’s natural and cultural heritage as well as an opportunity to highlight the intrinsic role played by intangible/indigenous/traditional culture. Maritime ICH not only can inform and contribute to this knowledge base but also assist in developing solutions for sustainable development. This topic was addressed at the meeting “Maritime Living Heritage: Building

Sustainable Livelihood and Ecosystems in the Asia-Pacific Region,” held in October 2020 and organized by ICHCAP and the UNESCO Apia Office.

One of the main points of discussion amongst cultural heritage stakeholders throughout the preparatory phase of the Decade has been to illustrate maritime cultural heritage’s role in, and large contribution to, informing the Decade’s seven societal outcomes. Stakeholders have sought to have the essential role of culture acknowledged in delivering sustainable development in our seas and oceans, noting the relevance to the Decade of UNESCO’s Thematic Indicators for Culture in the 2030 Agenda.<sup>11</sup> The stakeholder group Ocean Decade Heritage Network,<sup>12</sup> a partner of the Decade, proposed the following, in order to illustrate this point:

- A clean ocean: Cultural heritage can contribute to a clean ocean by enabling better understanding of the extent and risks of legacy pollution from shipwrecks, mining waste, and land-based sources. A clean ocean is also important for the long-term safeguarding of UCH and ICH.
- A healthy and resilient ocean: Cultural heritage is fundamental to understanding how many coastal and marine ecosystems achieved their present form, and to understanding the pressures upon them. Cultural heritage can be an important component of marine ecosystems.
- A predicted ocean: Understanding our ocean past—human interaction with the historic environment—is essential to understanding our ocean present and to forecasting change and its implications for human wellbeing and livelihoods.

- A safe ocean: Cultural heritage informs the understanding of coastal inhabitation and intervention in the past and present—including the impact of previous catastrophes—to identify risks, present examples of human adaptations, and to encourage resilience.
- A sustainably harvested and productive ocean: Cultural heritage is a major contributor to the Blue Economy, especially through recreation and tourism; increasing productivity should enhance—not damage—irreplaceable cultural heritage.
- A transparent and accessible ocean: Information about cultural heritage is also essential to understanding the past, present, and future of humanity’s relationship with the seas and oceans.
- An inspiring and engaging ocean: Information about cultural heritage is fascinating to the public and enables engagement with many topics of Ocean Literacy.<sup>13</sup>

Ultimately, the Decade is a vital opportunity to improve focus on the ocean’s cultural heritage, including intangible/indigenous/traditional culture that can be safeguarded to reach a sustainable future in the face of modernization and climate change. It is also an opportunity to ensure that cultural heritage can be acknowledged as a medium for engaging the public in addressing the sustainability of our coasts, seas, and oceans. The subject of this issue of ICH Courier specifically focuses on maritime ICH and festivals—not only as a way to promote a sense of identity and continuity but also as a way to engage communities and individuals in promoting respect for and ensuring the safeguarding of knowledge and traditions. The Decade has just started, and maritime ICH will certainly play a key role in reaching a sustainable future, locally and globally. ■

#### NOTES

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A wooden model ship hanging above the aisle in the Old Stordal Church (Rosekyrkja), Stordal, Norway, which dates to the late eighteenth century © Athena Trakadas.



Preparing to pull a traditional clinker-built wooden boat out of the water for the winter using draft horses during a maritime heritage festival in Roskilde, Denmark. © Athena Trakadas.

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# Pandanus Bank Blong Mi:

## Restoring Women's Weaving in Post-Disaster Vanuatu

Further Arts Vanuatu



Further Arts team, Rita and Viviane (wearing salusalu, garlands), with Northeast Ambae master weavers and participants of the Weaving for Peace workshop in 2020.  
© Gina Kaitiplel, Further Arts

### Ambae Island, Vanuatu: Home to more than 11,000 people, the people indigenous to the land.

In April 2017, Ambae's Manaro volcano, Mount Lombenben, rumbled continuously, spewing torrents of volcanic matter and gas from its crater, covering the majority of the island in thick layers of ash, hampering water sources, and destroying vegetable plots and gardens. The government of Vanuatu ordered a mandatory evacuation of the island and the people of Ambae were forced to relocate to neighboring islands—Pentecost, Maewo, and Espiritu Santo—leaving their homes, animals, and crops behind. The impact was devastating. Schooling was disturbed, livelihoods perished, and many people struggled with trauma and the challenges of integrating into new communities where they didn't have strong connections or access to land and natural resources.

Six months into the massive displacement exercise, Further Arts partnered with the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and UNESCO to conduct a post-disaster assessment of Ambae's ICH. Working closely with the Ambae Council of Chiefs, representatives of which were largely displaced to Santo, we received their endorsement to support the documentation of community stories to safeguard cultural knowledge and practices.

At this time, we found that women overwhelmingly spoke about the loss of cultural heritage and practice, and in particular their weaving skills, in light of their living conditions in relocation camps. Their cultural heritage was at risk. In partnership with the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, and with funding from the Peace and Conflict Studies Institute of Australia (PaCSIA), Further Arts was able to return to displaced Ambae communities in the following year to speak with community members and explore possibilities for how they could continue their weaving practices and transfer skills to younger generations.

*When we got to Santo, we didn't have any pandanus leaves to weave with. We were so unhappy. We worried that we would lose our customs and forget how to weave. It was so hard for us.*

- Esther Tari, weaver from South Ambae

Since 2018, Further Arts has implemented the Pandanus Bank blong Mi program to support resilience building, peacebuilding, and safeguarding of the ICH of displaced Ambaean weavers and artists. Rita Bill, Further Arts fieldworker in Santo, facilitated connections between the displaced communities and other communities in Santo to supply pandanus leaves to Ambaean women to continue their weaving activities in their temporary residence. More than twenty communities in Sanma Province donated rolls of dried leaves ready for weaving. We are indebted to the support toward this effort of key partners in Sanma, including the Sanma Council of Chiefs. Communities on nearby Malekula and Pentecost islands also contributed rolls of pandanus leaves.

With access to leaves, displaced Ambaean women were engaged and empowered to become more self-reliant, and their communal weaving activities became a force to build peace and bridge the divide between displaced and host communities. It has also been successful in diverting them from possible negative behaviors and patterns in the post-disaster idleness, such as crime, conflict, or gambling.





A woman from Northeast Ambae bundling dried pandanus leaf strips ready for weaving. © Gina Kaitipilel, Further Arts



Older women teaching younger women different mat weaving techniques during the Weaving for Peace workshop in South Ambae 2020. © Gina Kaitipilel, Further Arts



Young women weaving local mat designs during the Weaving for Peace workshop in South Ambae, 2020. © Gina Kaitipilel, Further Arts

Cutting a mat design into a banana tree trunk, which is used in the dyeing process to make the imprint on the woven pandanus leaf mat. © Gina Kaitipilel, Further Arts



### Importance of Pandanus Mat Weaving in the Community

Pandanus in Vanuatu is one of the most highly valued natural resources. Weaving in Vanuatu is sustained through customary beliefs and value systems that dictate how one should handle pandanus leaves, when and where one should weave, and so on. Weaving is likewise a strong part of the Ambaean identity; it is essential to their traditional way of life in the post-disaster contemporary context, and is an important resource to support sustainable rural livelihoods.

It is believed that pandanus leaf weaving originated with a man from Ambae called Boevudolue. The legend tells that Boevudolue was preparing to undergo a ritual ceremony to upgrade his rank. The custom required Boevudolue to perform a pig killing ceremony that required mats. In order for Boevudolue to reach the chiefly rank, he had to dress in a special mat called Tomangaga and also lay another mat, Tavuke, for the pig killing ceremony.

In 2019, after many Ambaean people had returned to their home island given the reduced volcanic activity, Rita and Further Arts General Manager Viviane Obed worked with local communities to support them to host a workshop for women weavers and artists in the communities of North and South Ambae. The workshop focused on elements that bind a society, promoting peacebuilding and empowering people otherwise disempowered by displacement and assumed deficit. During the seven-day workshop, discussions included strengthening the value supply chain for pandanus and other local materials used by women to create local products, whilst also exploring ways to establish safe local maker spaces for production, exhibition, learning, and market opportunities.

Mats are used in all aspects of the lives of the people of Ambae. In South Ambae alone, we recorded over nine different types of mat, such as those used for traditional dressing, marriage, burials, blankets, trade, and other everyday purposes. Each tribe of Ambae have their unique mats and designs, of which they retain the knowledge regarding preparation, measurement, use, and value. There are also traditional songs for specific mats that are sung by the tribes, and different materials are used to create designs and motifs, and to dye the mats.

The unique patterns and designs of the mats are not given away freely by master weavers. Young weavers must earn the right to listen to stories of weaving and sing the traditional songs before actually learning how to weave a particular pattern. Efforts by local chiefs and communities are in progress to safeguard these customs, and ensure protection when passing knowledge to younger generations.

### Outcomes and Next Steps

*This is a significant milestone for both host island and Ambaean communities. Women building bridges through pandanus leaves preserves our traditional mats that were used in the ancient times for exchange and trade between islands.*

- Luganville Chief Representative of Malvatumauri,  
Chief Nathaniel Jones

Through this work with Ambaean communities in Ambae and Santo, Further Arts has been honored to learn from weavers and artists, and to raise their voices and stories in

national forums, providing input into policy development processes and disaster-recovery programming. This has included our participation in the Shelter Cluster and Gender and Protection Cluster, which have subsequently informed the National Policy for Climate Change and Displacement and National Recovery Strategy. Further Arts also strongly advocates increased support and attention to arts and cultural displacement, as we recognize that improved wellbeing is possible for people displaced by disaster through enabling cultural bearers to recreate and/or re-interpret their situation. Art can galvanize strength-based approaches and narratives that safeguard and boost cultural practices.

As part of the Pandanus Bank blong Mi program, Further Arts has developed a four-part video series featuring the stories of Ambaean communities, and women weavers in particular. These will be distributed in 2021 via online media and shared back to the communities involved for use and archiving.

For more information on the program and other Further Arts productions, visit the Further Arts website ([www.furtherarts.org](http://www.furtherarts.org)) or Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/FurtherArts](https://www.facebook.com/FurtherArts)).

A video documentary “Home Away From Home” was produced by Further Arts to amplify the voices of displaced people following the volcanic eruption and mandatory evacuation of Ambae in 2017. It can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/kANt4xMXwn8>.

Further Arts would like to acknowledge the Peace and Conflict Studies Institute of Australia for its ongoing support to this community work. ■

A dyed mat—the result of the design and dyeing process. This mat belongs to this young girl, Trisha from South Ambae. She wove this mat during the workshop and had the opportunity to dye it. © Gina Kaitipilel, Further Arts





# Maritime Rituals as Community Practices

The sea has long been a part of ritualistic life across many cultures. There is a special bond between humans and the sea that we depend so much upon for our lives. Recognizing the importance of the sea and associated rituals, this volume of the *ICH Courier* focuses on four maritime rituals of the Asia-Pacific region. In particular, we will explore the vast differences in how communities in Vietnam, Taumako of the Solomon Islands, Korea, and China practice their sacred rituals in relation to the life-giving waters that surround them.

A Balinese procession rests after walking with Hindu shrines to beach for a traditional water purifying ceremony, Melasti, before celebrating silence day, Nyepi. © dmosreg, kr.123rf.com





# Cau Ngu Festival of the Fishing Community

Le Phuong Thao  
Vietnam Association of Ethnologists and Anthropologists



## The Cau Ngu Festival

Ngu Loc is one of five coastal communes of Hau Loc District in Thanh Hoa Province, located in the Northern Central Coast region of Vietnam. This is the most densely populated place in Vietnam, with traditional fishing and seafood processing providing work. Daily life is shaped by long-standing customs and traditions with coastal characteristics. This culminates in the unique *cau ngu* (*cau* means “worship” and *ngu* means “sacred whale”) festival, held annually from the twenty-first to the twenty-fourth day in the second month of the lunar calendar.

Fishers believe the ocean is controlled by sea gods, and that the sacred whale will always rescue people in danger on the waves. The whale temple and the *cau ngu* festival are the clearest manifestations of fishers’ devotion to the sacred whale and the sea gods. This festival, the biggest for the fishing community, expresses the desire for a peaceful and prosperous year. It takes the form of community belief activities and a folk festival that sees the convergence of many cultural values. The festival has been performed since the village was established in the Later Le Dynasty (1428–1789); its events have been handed down for generations and it strongly influences the spiritual life and beliefs of the coastal population.

## The Most Important Offering

Among the many different ceremonies and offerings, the focal point of the *cau ngu* festival is the votive dragon-boat (*long chau*). It is a symbol of the fishery, expressing the special nature of the fishing community. This large boat is made of bamboo, colored paper, and styrofoam, simulating the function and power of the sea gods. It is also a place for people to put offerings with prayers to wish for peace and good luck.

Skillful and good men who are not in mourning are selected to make the votive boat, the procession taking about a month. After it is completed but before the procession rituals, a ceremony takes place to draw eyes on the boat, as it is believed that *long chau* can only see the sea road clearly if it has eyes. This eye-drawing ceremony is performed at 1 a.m. on the twenty-second day of the month. It also aims to increase the sacredness of the votive boat. After the ceremony, *long chau* is considered to have a human-like soul.

## The Ritual Performance

*Cau ngu* festival consists of both ceremony and festivity, of which ceremony plays the most important and meaningful role.

On the morning of the twenty-first day of the month, at the lucky hour, the celebrant (often a monk or a shaman) strikes a big drum three times, before twenty-four other large and small

drums are played. The celebrant begins to pray to invite the sea gods to come and witness the ceremony, receiving them at the main altar.

Two important ceremonies are performed at the main communal altar and at *long chau*. At the main communal altar, many people in groups, social associations, village dignitaries, and heads of different lineages gather at Thanh Ca Temple to begin the procession. The palanquin procession starts very early in the morning from Thanh Ca Temple to the “blessed” place—the main altar. The celebrant respectfully invites the gods to bless the villagers with happiness, fortune, good study and business, safety at sea, and bumper harvests. After performing the ceremony, people of different lineages and visitors come to worship and make offerings to the gods.

Meanwhile, the ceremony at *long chau*, the symbol of fishery, is reserved for seafarers only. Worshipers make offerings to the sea gods, putting them into the votive boat. At a selected time, the celebrant stands in front of *long chau*’s head; with one hand he performs a ritual gesture, while in the other he holds three burning incense sticks and writes with them in the air, before reading out the departure warrant. He then raises the incense sticks, reads the proclamation, and leads the procession to the beach; twenty young men follow him, carrying *long chau*. Villagers go after them along the main road to the end of the village. At the selected point on the beach, the votive dragon-boat is burned to convey the villagers’ wishes to the sea gods.

This festival has a great significance in terms of its spiritual aspect, expressing the uniqueness of the cultural and religious life of the fishers of Ngu Loc. So special is this time that during the festival period they do not go fishing. The festival is also considered a time to create balance in spiritual life for the fishing community in particular but also for local residents in general.

## Conclusion

*Cau ngu* festival keeps alive the traditional cultural space of a coastal community, their customs, rituals, games, as well as other folk knowledge. In addition, it expresses people’s aspiration to live in harmony with the sea. The festival also reflects maritime spiritual beliefs and cultural nuances that need to be safeguarded and brought into play in contemporary life. It is imbued with sacredness (associated with worship of the whale and sea gods), complexity (with many different aspects such as religious activities, rituals, customs, folk performance, food, etc.), and community cohesion. ■

Big votive dragon-boat (*long chau*) procession to selected position at the beach. © Le Phuong Thao



# Taumako Maritime Rituals

Simon Teave Salopuka

MD and Executive Director, Vaka Valo Association.

**T**aumako, one of the Duff Islands, is a Polynesian island within the Santa Cruz group in Temotu Province to the southeast of the Solomon Islands, in the south-western Pacific. Taumakoans speak the Veakau-Taumako language, which comes from the Samoic branch of Polynesian languages.

Taumakoans still practice ancient navigational techniques and are known for building a type of proa sailing canoe, the Tepuke, using local materials. They maintain traditional ways of living, relying heavily on subsistence farming and fishing. As a maritime island, Taumakoans depend upon sea transportation and marine resources to sustain themselves. They depend upon indigenous knowledge of island and ocean ecosystems, the use of plants and animals for food and medicine, and the annual and seasonal patterns of oceanic, climatic, and island phenomena. The people's close relationship with nature helps them adapt to the weather and other natural phenomena in their voyaging and everyday living.

Inter-island trading using their Tepuke canoes brings food and the Santa Cruz red feather currency to sustain the livelihood, wealth, and prestige of the tribal leaders called Te Alik. Food is distributed to the community during traditional feasts. The Tepuke is thus essential to the people of Taumako socially, economically, and culturally.

Children's maturation rites are celebrated as traditional feasts, accompanied by dancing and singing. These rites mark stages of the lifecycle of an individual from conception to death, chronologically, such as a mother's first pregnancy, an infant's first cry at birth, the falling off of the umbilical cord

stump (when the fishing party delivers the cord stump to a fish), taking a child outside of the house for the first time, and when an infant is taken to the houses of the close kin of the wife, opening the way for the child to their mother's kinsmen. Other rites observed include taking a child to bathe, cutting a child's hair, and the making of a flattering comment by a non-relative. Series of feasts, dancing, and singing acknowledge marriage and the birth of a child, and relief at the mother's safe recovery from the dangers of childbirth.

From a sociological point of view, the second series of maturation rites and food distribution and celebration is done by a contributor to the child's bride price, to maintain a certain relationship of kinship with the child and to publicly display their sponsorship. The second series of observances include piercing of the child's ear lobes, piercing of the nasal septum, piercing of the top of the ear helix (for the first child), and piercing of the top of the nostril for cosmetic purposes and decorative ornaments in traditional dancing, the donning of a strand of beads on the girl's waist followed by wearing their first adult-style clothing, wearing of garments appropriate to adolescence considering modesty and genital exposure.

At adolescence, children are expected to know the accepted kinship role behaviors and to show respect and exhibit sociological maturity. Commonly, several of these observances are performed on several children at the same time and sponsors combine to hold all-night traditional dances at which turmeric is smeared on the children's heads as a mark of honor and to indicate festivity. In another ritual, young men catch sharks and present bows and arrows (for fishing) and a traditional

basket, Tanga Khamu, filled with betel nut, to the younger boys and girls in order to demonstrate they are ready to get married and to feed their family and be self-sufficient. Bride price ceremonies and mourning rituals are also observed on Taumako. Religion and pagan worship are observed by clans and tribal members who are linked to certain deities and totems that must not be eaten.

Legendary ancestor Lata, a cultural hero, was the first person on Taumako to build and sail a Tepuke canoe. His story is long, funny, and provoking. Lata befriended the Teube bird (pigeon) who showed him the right tree to fell for his Tepuke. On the Tepuke is a carved image of the Teube bird where the boom is stepped on at the bow, and this implies Lata's presence as a guide and helper during voyages. Lata sailed away and never returned to Taumako when Hinora, the goddess of the forest, closed the passage to Teveni because she was annoyed when Lata gave her a conch shell that would not make a sound when blown.

On Taumako, Lata's story comes to life when women, men, and children work together to make a Tepuke canoe through the traditional concept of "Heihei lavo!"—living a peaceful and harmonious life in the community. There are no more Tepuke canoes on Taumako today, and there are only two older islanders still living who have the knowledge of Tepuke they could teach the young people. Taumako mariners are, therefore, appealing for help to build another Tepuke to perpetuate and safeguard the knowledge of sea voyaging for the next generation. ■



Children pounding *limu* (sea weed) into to paste like white calcium to paint the *vaka* (*tepuke*) to keep insects away and resist rotting. © Simon Teave Salopuka, ED, Vaka Valo Association.



Making foe ama. © Simon Teave Salopuka, ED, Vaka Valo Association.



A family returning home on their dugout canoe with food. © Simon Teave Salopuka, ED, Vaka Valo Association.



Food distribution to household in Taumako after a death mourning at Tetoli, Ngauta Village, Taumako 2021. © Simon Teave Salopuka, ED, Vaka Valo Association.



# Jeju Chilmeoridang Yeongdeunggut

So-jeon Kang  
Lecturer of Korean Language and Literature, Jeju National University



Yeongdeung Farewell Festival—  
Welcoming the Dragon King of the Sea  
(yongwangmaji). © So-jeon Kang

## Yeongdeunggut on Jeju Island

Jeju Yeongdeunggut is a shamanic ritual performed during the second lunar month to greet and see off the goddess Yeongdeung. Yeongdeung, the goddess of wind, is typically recognized in the form of *Yeongdeunghalmang* (Grandmother Yeongdeung). In winter, when the cold wind blows from the northwest, she brings prosperity to the land and sea. It was the custom for the Yeongdeung Welcoming Ritual to be performed to celebrate her arrival and the Yeongdeung Farewell Ritual to be performed fifteen days later to mark her departure. In today's Yeongdeunggut ritual, greater significance is placed on the farewell rite than the welcome. On Jeju Island, the Yeongdeunggut rites are mostly practiced between the twelfth and fifteenth days of the second lunar month.

People turn to Yeongdeunggut to offer prayers for safety at sea and bountiful fishing yields for fishermen and female divers (*haenyeo*), mainly in some coastal villages of Jeju Island, where this ceremonial tradition has remained relatively intact. This shamanic ritual, in times past, took place throughout Jeju as islanders prayed for prosperity in farming, fishing, and other livelihoods. It is closely linked to the ritual day at *bonhyangdang*, shrines dedicated to village guardian deities. With the passing of several eras, however, the role and function of Yeongdeunggut have increasingly diminished or even disappeared other than in coastal communities. In recent times, Yeongdeunggut has become known for its distinctiveness from *danggut*, which is conducted at village shrines, and in some cases it has expanded into a community ritual, as much traditional heritage of the past has disappeared.

Yeongdeunggut consists of two main ceremonies—*chogamje* and *yongwangmaji*—in addition to other observances such as *jidrim*, *ssidrim*, *ssijeom*, *aengmagi*, *seonwangpuri*, and *baebangseon*. *Chogamje*, a ceremony to summon multiple

gods, accounts for the first half of the ritual, while *yongwangmaji*, a key part of the second half, is a rite to greet and offer prayers to Yongwang, the Dragon King who presides over the sea, and Seonwang, the Lord of Boats.

During *jidrim*, pieces of several sacrificial offerings are torn, collected in the white traditional Korean paper *hanji*, packed with great care, and then thrown into the sea as a treat for Yongwang and the lonesome spirits of the drowned (*sujunghohon*). *Ssidrim* is a shamanic practice in which *haenyeo* roam around the sea and sprinkle millet seeds, praying for a bountiful fishing yield. *Ssijeom* is a ceremonial fortune-telling process to determine how well the seeds have been sown and whether many fish will be caught. *Ssidrim* and *ssijeom* are ultimately components that symbolize prosperity as the shared goal of the communal livelihood. *Aengmagi* is a rite to tell fortunes for the New Year and ward off bad luck. Lastly, *seonwangpuri* and *baebangseon* are the final steps that venerate and send Seonwang on his way by floating a miniature boat out to sea.

Yeongdeunggut can be viewed as a communal shamanic ritual that has the closest link to the community's livelihood. It is a part of the religious and spiritual culture practiced by Jeju islanders, who seek to understand and adapt their lives to the wind that dominates the island. In addition, it also represents their devout mindset to venerate deities when they resume their farming or fishing work in the New Year. A representative case that offers insight into the practice of Yeongdeunggut is Jeju Chilmeoridang Yeongdeunggut.

## Jeju Chilmeoridang Yeongdeunggut

Jeju Chilmeoridang Yeongdeunggut is a shamanic ritual held at Chilmeoridang, the communal shrine located in Geonip-dong, Jeju. Geonip-dong is a coastal village in



Yeongdeung Farewell Festival—*chogamje*. © So-jeon Kang

northeastern Jeju that was formed around the port of Geondeulga and the Sanjimul spring water. The villagers of Geonip-dong primarily lived on subsistence farming and fishing, with its main livelihoods consisting of fisheries and *muljil* (underwater harvest work) by *haenyeo*.

Chilmeoridang is Geonip-dong's *bonhyangdang*, a village tutelary shrine. The ritual site is level and relatively spacious, with no special facility other than three rocks regarded as spirit tablets, encircled by a stone wall. Chilmeoridang was initially situated on the side of a coastal hill called Chilmeori, on top of a plateau that overlooks the ocean with the wall surrounding it. It was later relocated to the east of the current Sarabong due to expansion work on the Port of Jeju and the development of neighboring areas.

Chilmeoridang worships the husband-and-wife deities Dowonsugamchaljibanggwon and Yongwangaesinbuin. According to *dangsinbonpuri* (Song of the Origin of the Village Guardian Deity), the god who rose from Gangnamcheonjaguk (Empire of the Son of Heaven) was an unrivaled military commander who made a significant contribution to his country in bringing a war to an end. He then entered Yongwangguk (the Dragon Kingdom) and married Yongwangaesinbuin, later arriving on Jeju Island and being seated as the god of the Chilmeoridang. He presides over all matters regarding the villagers, including their lives and livelihoods. Yongwangaesinbuin is the guardian of the village's *haenyeo*, fishermen, and descendants living in other provinces. Meanwhile, in addition to these two, Chilmeoridang also enshrines Yeongdeungdaewang (Great King Yeongdeung), Haeseonwang (Lord of Boats, God of the Sea), Namdanghareubang (Grandfather Namdang), Namdanghalmang (Grandmother Namdang), and other deities related to the sea. Their names are memorialized on three

rocks to be used as spirit tablets, each bearing inscriptions of the names of two deities.

The ritual is held on the first and fourteenth days of the second lunar month. Today, the Yeongdeung Welcoming Rite, a relatively small affair, is performed over a half-day on the first day at the fishery market run by the National Federation of Fisheries Cooperatives in Jeju. A Confucian-style bountiful fishing ritual is also performed during the event. In contrast, the much larger Yeongdeung Farewell Rite is held at the shrine with multiple ceremonial events that take place throughout the day.

In 1980, Jeju Chilmeoridang Yeongdeunggut was designated National Intangible Cultural Heritage No. 71. It was initially designated under the name of Jeju Chilmeoridang Gut at the time, before being renamed as Jeju Chilmeoridang Yeongdeunggut in 2006 as part of the effort to clarify its meaning. Its practitioner was the late *simbang* (senior shaman) Ahn Sa-in, who was succeeded by *simbang* Kim Yun-su. Meanwhile, Jeju Chilmeoridang Yeongdeunggut was also inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. An island blessed with a beautiful natural environment, Jeju was also consecutively designated by UNESCO as a World Natural Heritage and a Global Geopark.

The value and potential of Jeju folk culture, which has survived through understanding and adapting to its natural environment throughout history, are acknowledged all over the world. In this regard, Yeongdeunggut has proudly placed its name on the UNESCO Representative List for the benefit of future generations. ■



# Sending the King Ship Ceremony: Sustaining the Connection between People and the Ocean

Sarah Ward

Visiting Professor of Maritime Archaeology, History and Culture Centre for Maritime History and Culture Research Dalian Maritime University, China

Veronica Walker Vadillo

Postdoctoral Researcher Department of Archaeology Helsinki University, Finland

Cultural heritage is not limited to archaeological sites, monuments, and collections of objects. It includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as ceremonies, rituals, performing arts, beliefs about the world, and enactment practices. While these expressions may not be tangible, they are a continuously evolving form of living tradition, recreated and adapted in response to the environment around us. They provide us with a sense of identity, a feeling of belonging, and an inclusive, representative, collective way of expressing culture.

Sending the King Ship (sòng wáng chuán 送王船), a visual performance of the profound connection that exists between the people and the sea, is one such expression. Inscribed on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List on 17 December 2020, Sending the King Ship is a spectacular southern Fujian (Fújiàn 福建) ceremony that originated in China's Minnan (Mǐnnán 闽南) region and is now centered in the coastal areas of Xiamen Bay (Xiàmén wān 厦门湾), Quanzhou Bay (Quánzhōu wān 泉州湾), and Malacca (Malaysia).

Sending the King Ship is a ceremony in which coastal communities dramatically parade an intricately decorated traditional wooden sailing ship through the streets before it is burnt and sent to sea. Held once every three years, when the northeast monsoon arrives in autumn, the ceremony dates back to the Tang Dynasty (Táng cháo 唐朝, 618–907 CE), morphing into its current configuration during the Ming Dynasty (Míngdài 明代, 1368–1644 CE). This ritualized social practice aims to avert disaster, wish for peace, and provide comfort in the face of the perilous nature of ocean travel.

Fears over the dangers posed by the sea were ever-present in these maritime communities as typhoons, shipwrecks, sea bandits, and wars claimed countless lives every year. These concerns were widely shared, since in order to control the maritime elite in the coastal areas, the Ming Emperor conscripted sailors from the household register. This meant that every household in southern Fujian had family, friends, or relatives who took to the sea and had to face the dangers of traversing the treacherous Taiwan Strait (Táiwān hǎixiá 台湾海峡).

Current scholarship suggests that Sending the King Ship is linked to the worship of a class of deities collectively known as Wang ye (Wáng yé 王爺), the Emperor's brothers. Those lost at sea, called 'good brothers', ascend to this title only after death as a reward for acts of bravery in life, or as compensation for personal sacrifice—death being the ultimate

mate of those. The good brothers are liminal beings—earthbound spirits caught between life and death, and set to wander, lonely and homeless, for eternity because they have nothing left to sacrifice to release them from their fate. The chaos and havoc they cause is thus a result of their restlessness.

Enter Ong Yah, the brave and martial deity. Ong Yah is said to have the mandate to patrol the skies on behalf of heaven and protect seafarers from shipwreck and other disasters. The local communities understand that Ong Yah's ship, Ong Chun (the King Ship), will be damaged in stormy waters, so new ships are built for every ceremony. Thus, the King Ship is renewed every three years before being sent to sea. Ceremonial performances, including traditional Fujian opera (Gāojiǎxì 高甲戏) and clown opera (Gēzǐxì 歌仔戏), along with dragon and lion dances and puppet shows, head the procession and clear the path for Ong Chun. Performances recall the historical memory of the ancestors embarking on sea-going voyages; they reshape social connections in response to maritime emergencies and honor the harmony between people and the ocean through collective action.

To begin the ceremony, the community gathers at a local temple or clan hall to welcome Ong Yah. Tree lanterns summon the good brothers. They are invited aboard the King Ship to support Ong Yah's peacekeeping mission and make meritorious deeds. The good brothers are delivered from torment, and if their mission is successful, they are rewarded with reincarnation and are able to return to earth again as human beings. Those who participate in the ceremony do good deeds, an essential requirement for smoothing one's passage into the afterlife. These good deeds do not take the form of gifts of food and clothing, as one might expect, but rather are acts that assist the good brothers to become useful once more.

Recognized as a shared heritage by communities in China and Malaysia, the Sending the King Ship Ceremony embodies the sustainable connection between people and the ocean. The repeated performance of collective activities in specific cultural spaces helps alleviate the communal psychological pressure resulting from maritime disasters such as shipwrecks. It helps maintain community ties, rebuild community connections, enhance social cohesion, mitigate memories of disaster, and provide spiritual comfort. It has long played a crucial role in and bears witness to the intercultural dialogue among communities along the Maritime Silk Route and reflects the cultural creativity conforming to sustainable development.

In reality, the ceremony was born out of the need to make sense of a specific human–environment entanglement. Transmitting traditional knowledge and folk wisdom shapes the worldview and social practices of these living maritime communities. At present, when urbanization and social transformation are creating community unrest, the Sending the King Ship Ceremony promotes tolerance, peace, and reconciliation, fosters community and individual wellbeing, encourages humanitarianism, and contributes to ecological conservation and environmental sustainability. ■

Performances, including that of a dragon dance, clear the path for the King Ship to travel from the temple to the sea. © Centre for Maritime History and Culture Research, Dalian Maritime University



# A Graph Database for Performing Arts in Switzerland

Birk Weiberg,  
Project Manager, Foundation SAPA,  
Swiss Archive of the Performing Arts

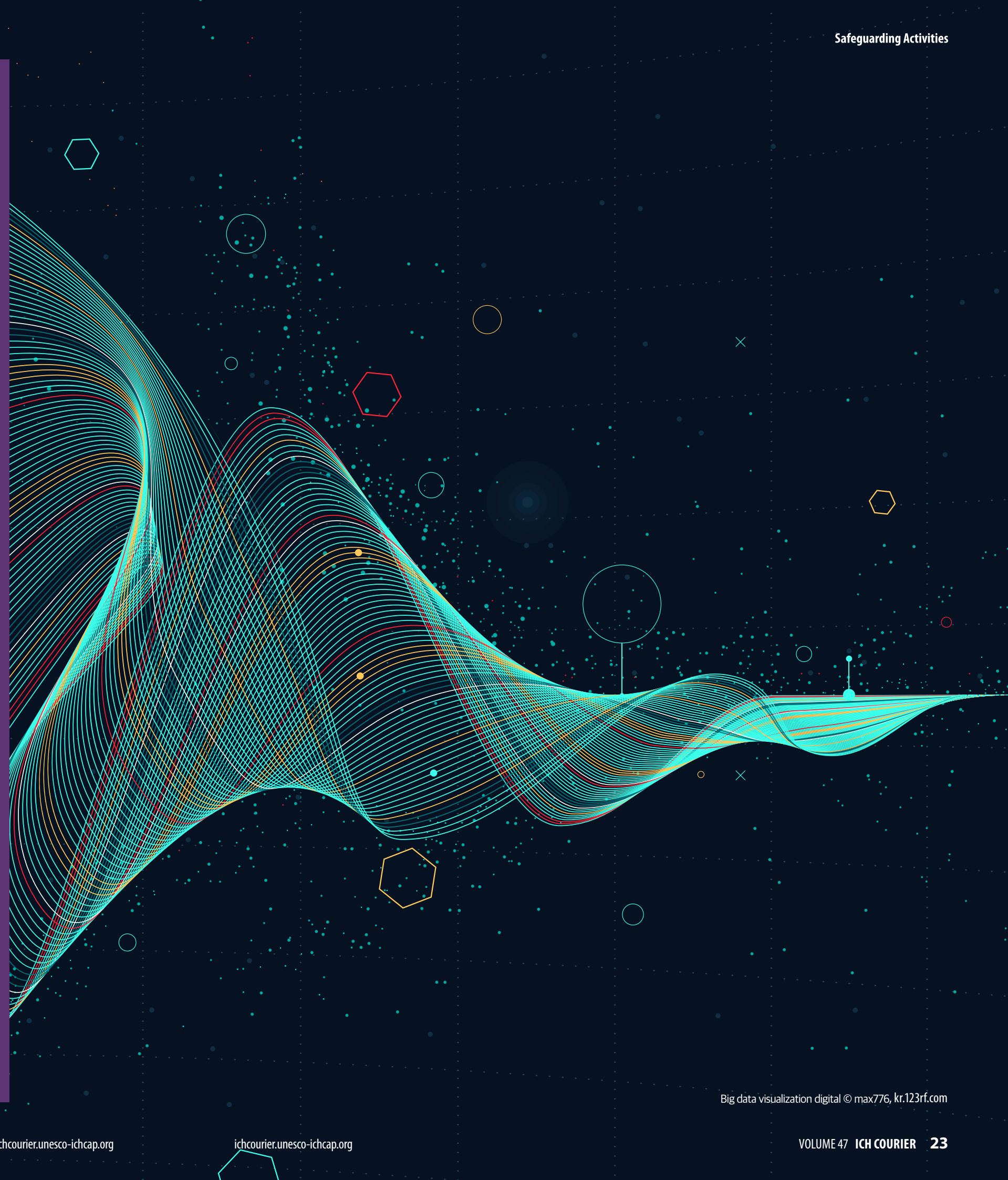
The Swiss Archive of the Performing Arts (SAPA) emerged in 2017 from the joining of three independent archives in Bern, Lausanne, and Zurich. The histories of SAPA's predecessors demonstrate the ever-developing approaches in documenting performing arts—a field that, like ICH in general, cannot be preserved in its original form. In our case, the documentary efforts started nearly 100 years ago with an initiative to collect books and other documents on theater culture in Switzerland. Later, objects such as stage design drawings and models followed and found their way into a small museum. The increasing usage of video in contemporary dance in the 1990s resulted in the establishment of the former Dance Media Library in Zurich in 2005, the youngest of the three SAPA predecessors.

In this short chronology of evolving documentation practices, the establishment of SAPA as a joint cultural heritage institution for theater and dance in Switzerland falls together with an increased interest in collecting and combining different kinds of data as a more comprehensive mode of documentation. A central project of the persisting three sites' ongoing integration is the merger of various legacy databases into one shared graph database: performing-arts.ch.

SAPA's predecessor institutions followed distinct approaches in their usage of databases. In one case, a traditional archival database represented the holdings hierarchically according to their provenance. In another case, there were various specialized databases with custom fields to store domain-specific information. The information within these databases can be divided in two categories: some describe documents or artifacts in our holdings that are related to works or protagonists of performing arts while others describe works and protagonists of the field even if we do not have any archival material. Among the latter type of information are production details and credits of more than 60,000 productions shown in Switzerland since the late nineteenth century. This documentary part of the database also serves as an authority file that provides stable identifiers and basic facts about more than 30,000 persons, groups, and venues.

Our efforts to connect these different kinds of information coincided with a broader movement within the archival community to question the prevalence of the principle of provenance that preserves information regarding the origins of a collection and makes it the primary way of accessing it. The growing skepticism with this perpetuation of established narratives and also power structures utilizing archival organization is expressed best in the ongoing development of the new descriptive standard Records-in-Context (RiC) by the International Council on Archives (ICA) as a replacement for its current standard ISAD(G). As the name suggests, RiC will allow the identification of not only records and their creators but also subjects and other relevant properties by using unique identifiers.<sup>1</sup>

While this marks a significant step, RiC remains an archival standard that does not provide the means to represent domain-specific information. Thus, we combined it with the CIDOC CRM standard developed for museums, and its extension FRBRoo for bibliographic information. The FRBRoo ontology in particular has proven to be helpful as it provides classes for performing arts



Big data visualization digital © max776, kr.123rf.com



that distinguish between concepts, productions, and actual performances.<sup>2</sup> What makes both CIDOC CRM and FRBROO particularly suitable for ICH data is that they are event-centric—i.e., they conceive objects through the activities that have produced and changed them, whereas older data models have been restrained to the description of the physical objects in the custody of museums or archives.

The development toward data models with higher complexity and the expectation of a more detailed and thus realistic rendering of performing arts was also supported by the development of graph databases. Where the still-predominant relational databases are structured as a set of tables with highly uniform entries, graph databases contain data as virtually unlimited networks of nodes and edges. They are only delimited semantically by an ontology. As intended by the creators of RiC, this rhizomatic structure provides new perspectives on the data that overcome the one of provenance. The inherent multidimensionality of knowledge graphs can also help to transcend anthropocentrism—in a database where virtually everything can be identified and thus linked to its other occurrences, anything (e.g., a venue) can become the center of the network.

The migration of the legacy databases has been a slow and diligent process. This started with developing a data model that can describe the different artifacts and also contain documentary data regarding casting and production structures.<sup>3</sup>

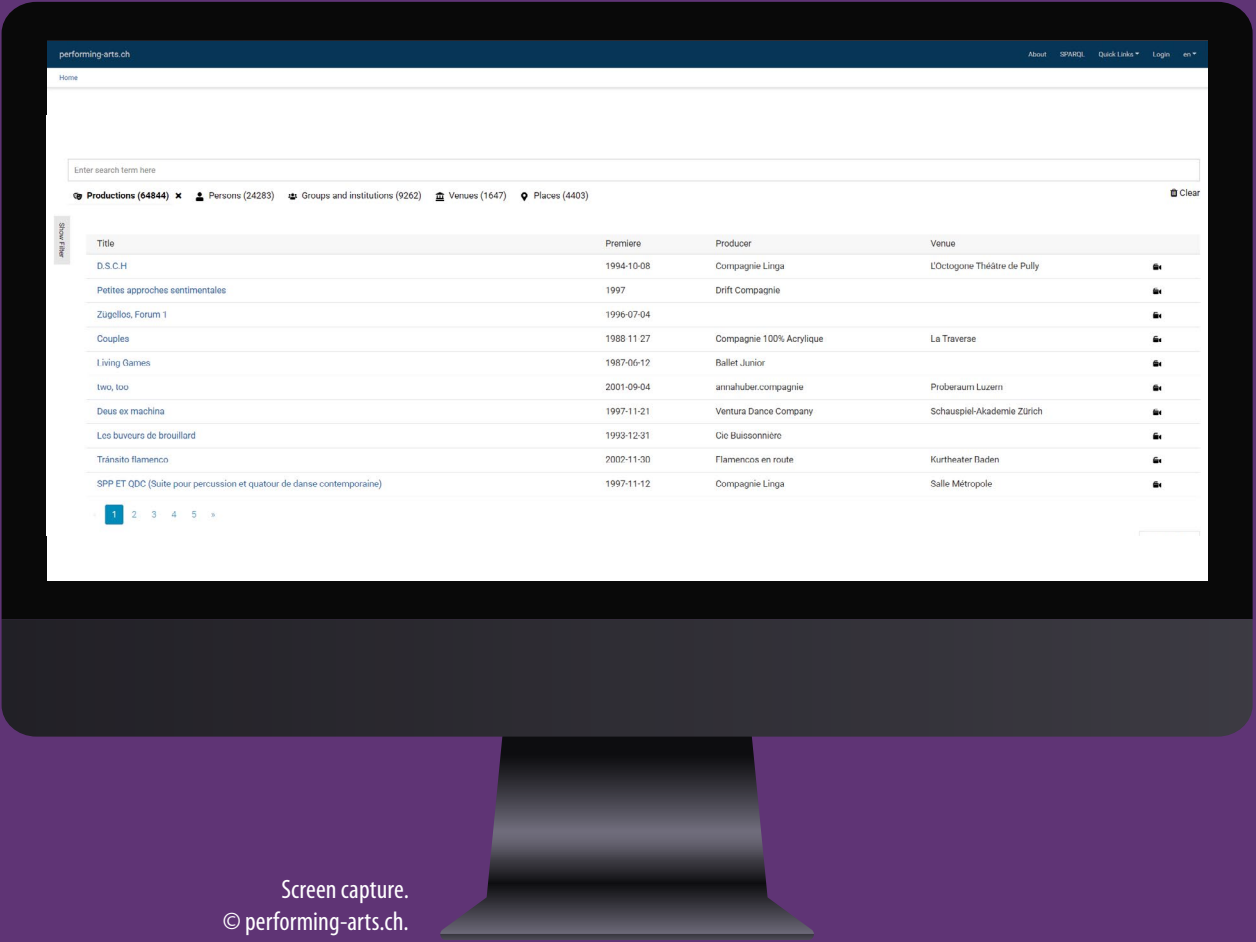
Information that so far was stored in free text fields needed to be cleaned and formalized to be able to reconcile the denoted entities. Finally, an infrastructure was needed to maintain and edit the data. While the first step simply asks for time and perseverance, the second requires a software that ideally stores Resource Description Framework (RDF) data natively and allows custom interfaces to be built according to the data model. Our database is built upon the *metaphactory* knowledge graph platform, a software that has become increasingly popular mainly for industry projects that work with complex data stored in triplestore databases but can also easily be used for cultural data.

The choice of a graph database with persistent identifiers for all relevant entities and a platform-independent ontology is relevant for a sustainable data management that follows the FAIR data principles. Entities such as persons, groups, or places, which are also described by other authority files, are widely connected with these, and the same applies to controlled vocabularies. To improve the findability, we have registered many entities with Wikidata, the structured data platform by Wikimedia, which is becoming increasingly relevant as a hub for connecting cultural heritage institutions. Missing entries are added to Wikidata and then can be enriched by other users or bots. Our users can retrieve the data they need from our database through a SPARQL-interface and use it under a CC BY-SA license. Interoperability of the data at the moment primarily means for us that we can provide high-quality data to aggregators like Memoriav, the Swiss network for the preservation of national audiovisual cultural heritage and its database memobase.ch, and the database performing-arts.eu, run by the Specialised Information Service (SIS) Performing Arts for Theatre and Dance Studies, a key information source for the German-speaking research community.

performing-arts.ch is an ongoing project, and we will continue to increase the quality of the data by identifying further protagonists, ingesting further legacy databases, and thinking about alternative interfaces that the knowledge graph approach can facilitate. ■

NOTES

1. Bogdan-Florin Popovici, “A Broader Perspective on Records as Seen by Records-in-Contexts,” *Comma* 2016:1–2 (January 2018): 189–98, doi:10.3828/comma.2016.19.
2. Martin Doerr, Patrick Le Boeuf, and Chryssoula Bekiari, “FRBROO, a Conceptual Model for Performing Arts,” in *2008 Annual Conference of CIDOC, Athens, 2008*, 15–18.
3. For the original data model, see Beat Estermann and Christian Schneeberger, “Data Model for the Swiss Performing Arts Platform” (Draft Version 0.51, 2017), available at <https://datahub.io/dataset/spa-data>. The current implementation is documented at <https://sapa.github.io/spa-specifications/>.



Screen capture.  
© performing-arts.ch.



# Wooden Blocks of Pethapur

Shalini Sabikhi  
Educator, Zydus School for Excellence

**B**lock printing is a technique to create patterns on fabric using blocks. Ink is applied to the wooden or brass block, which is then pressed onto the fabric by hand to impart the design. These blocks are customized and carved intricately, and can be used to print a design of between one and six colors. Block making has been practiced in India for the last 300 years.

Pethapur, about 33 km from Ahmedabad, in Gujarat, is home to a community of artisans who have been involved in making wooden blocks for years. Blocks from Pethapur are considered to be the best and earned the Geographical Indication (GI) Tag No. 585 in 2017. I had the pleasure of visiting with Satish Prajapati, a skilled craftsman in Pethapur, when he shared the history and process of block making with me.

In the past, women became bored of wearing plain clothes, so they started printing them with designs made by dipping bangles in color. This gave the carpenters an idea, and they started making blocks featuring different designs. Thus began the art of block printing. Blocks in Pethapur were first made by the Gajjar Mistry community. Mr. Harjivandas of the Prajapati community learned this art from the Gajjar Mistris and became an expert. Later his son, Govindlal Prajapati, learned from him and became a master in this art. He is now considered the best in India in the art of block making.

Bagh printing, a dying art, was revived due to his efforts. He has made innumerable blocks for Bagh printers, and they have won both national and international awards for their prints. His son, Satish Prajapati, is the third generation of the family practicing this art. He learned the skills from his father, becoming really interested at the age of twenty-one, and at present has twenty-seven years of experience in making blocks for Kutchi prints.

In past times, craftsmen made blocks of from *sheesham* (Indian Rosewood), which was strong but expensive. Today they are made using *sagwan* (Teak), which is less expensive, easily available, and is not as susceptible to termite attacks. It is also soft, hence carving on it is easier. The wood comes from

various places, including Valsad and Gandhidham. Whenever a tree falls in the jungle of Valsad, it is auctioned. Some of the highest bidders sell it in Pethapur, where it is bought by these craftsmen.

They also get wood from the houses of merchants of Pethapur who have migrated to other cities.

Their houses have pillars made of teak, which the craftsmen buy to repurpose.

The wood is cut into slabs and kept immersed in water for some days to season it. It is then left to dry completely for six to eight months. This prevents the wood from warping later on. The wooden slabs are cut into small rectangular, square, or oval blocks. These blocks are seasoned again by keeping them immersed in groundnut oil for three days before they are dried completely. This process makes the blocks stronger. The surface is then smoothed with files and similar tools. It is polished by rubbing on a wet *khaara* stone, which is procured from Rajasthan. The surface is checked again and again with the help of a rule to ensure it is perfectly smooth. Even a slight roughness on the block will spoil the design when printed.

White poster color is then applied to the block, and the design to be carved is drawn on it with a pencil or needle, always in double lines, and in the mirror image of the design to be printed. Knowledge of geometry is very important when drawing the designs on the blocks. The design is colored to identify the difference between parts that are to be retained and those to be removed and discarded—the colored part is the part to be retained. The block is then carved with chisels, hand-drills, wooden mallets, and so on. Tools handmade by the craftspeople themselves are used to carve finer details on the block—this work requires a lot of patience and skill. Holes are drilled in the blocks to allow air bubbles to pass through so that color doesn't spread and the design doesn't get smudged while printing, and handles are attached. The block is now ready for use.

The blocks are sold to Ajrakh, Batik, Sanganeri, Kutchi, Bagru, Dabu, Bagh, and pigment printers. The price of a block can range from INR 300 to INR 25,000 depending on its size, the intricacy of the design, and the number of colors to be used in printing. Blocks are known by different names according to their function. These include the *rekh* block (used for printing outlines, sometimes with brass wires or strips attached in the grooves on the wooden block), *datta* block (to fill colors), and *gadda* block (to fill four colors).

One block can be used to print 5,000 meters of fabric, and the size of the blocks varies from 2.5 x 2.5 cm to 25 x 25 cm. After every use, the blocks are washed properly and dried indoors completely to prevent them from getting damaged. If dried in the sun, the wet wood can crack.

The artisans also use their skill to make *mehendi* (henna) blocks, jewelry boxes, gift boxes, door handles, furniture, and other decorative articles. In the past there used to be about 300 people practicing this craft in Pethapur. But now the figure is dwindling as the younger generation prefers to pursue other occupations. At present only about twenty artisans still practice block making here.

Local consumers avoid buying block-printed fabrics as they are expensive due to the hard work put into their creation. They prefer screen-printed fabrics as they cost less. Demand for block prints is higher in the international market, but there is now shortage of skilled artisans in Pethapur. To safeguard these skills and traditions, more products that make use of blocks should be designed and ways should be found to encourage more people to take an interest in and learn this art. ■

Wooden block made by Mr. Satish Prajapati. © Shalini Sabikhi



Wall-frame made by Mr. Satish Prajapati. © Shalini Sabikhi



Mr. Satish Prajapati pressing the block on fabric. © Shalini Sabikhi



Wooden block made by Mr. Satish Prajapati. © Shalini Sabikhi





# We Work among the Pamir Mountains

Qurbon Alamshoev  
Director, Kuhhoi Pomir (Pamir Mountains)



Wildlife Festival. General theme: Man, Culture, Nature. The place was chosen near the ancient fortress Kakh-Kakha. © Qurbon Alamshoev

It is not for nothing that the Pamir Mountains in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of the Republic of Tajikistan (GBAO) are called the “Roof of the World”—Ismoil Somoni’s peak reaches 7,495 meters.

Pamir is characterized by huge permanent glaciers and narrow mountain ranges with sharp snowy ridges, and large lakes sitting 5,500 meters above sea level.

The impenetrable mountain gorges go some way to explaining the emergence of an exceptional lifestyle, different languages, dialects, and monocultures. Currently, six of the oldest East Iranian unwritten languages are in use in the Pamirs: Shugni, Rushani, Bartangi, Yazgulami, Wakhi, and Ishkashimi as well as some Persian dialects and Kyrgyz languages. The folklore of the Pamiri people is passed on not only in local vernacular, but also in Tajik, the official language.

The Pamir highlanders have their own distinctive traditions. A person from this region has their journey from birth to death accompanied by all kinds of rituals, customs, and traditions. Life events such as maternity, family and household, wedding, marriage, holiday, and calendar production are marked, adding meaning to the highlanders’ daily life.

Each mountain dweller has the knowledge and skill of a particular craft: carving wooden cups and spoons or wooden galoshes, sewing sheepskin coats, shoemaking, erecting walls, weaving carpets, and producing woolen blankets or stockings. The inhabitants of the Pamirs are farmers and cattlemen, hunters, builders, musicians, singers, dancers, or otherwise connoisseurs of traditional culture.

Noticing the decline of such a wealth of culture, local scientists and journalists registered a public organization, Kuhhoi Pomir, in 2014 with the aim of studying and documenting the cultural heritage of Pamir mountain people and their philosophy of life.

Since the socio-economic life of the Pamiri for centuries was heavily dependent on their wild nature, the organization paid special attention to the conceptual triangle of Man–Culture–Nature. The researchers were interested in the culture of food, dress, home maintenance, traditional medicine, and concepts of the environment.

In this context, it was interesting to study the culture and peculiarities of the national hunting and gathering practices in the Pamirs, these being the first activities that saved people from hunger for centuries. Research on traditional hunting was carried out in six regions of the Pamirs. This project also sought to document knowledge and practices, customs, rituals, children’s and youth competitive games, and folklore reflecting the hunting craft.

The collected material was published as a book, *The Culture of Hunting in the Pamirs*, that was highly praised among experts in the field. Articles were published in media and academic journals; documentaries were prepared on the cultural aspects of the relationship between people and nature.

In 2015, Kuhhoi Pomir, in cooperation with the Christensen Fund, initiated a one-day ecological educational and cultural event, the Wildlife Festival, the aims of which are to convey intelligibly to the younger generations the collected

ancestral knowledge about nature, and to attract eco-cultural tourists.

The festival also aims to revive the culture of behavior in nature, folk songs and dances, national dishes, and organize performances by cultural practitioners and sacred people, poets and scientists, hold exhibitions of handicrafts, drawings on stones, national games, competitions, presentations, and quizzes. The festival is traditionally held in remote, sacred sites.

In 2018, the Environmental Committee of the Tajik Parliament recognized the *Wildlife Festival* as the best event related to culture and nature and awarded Kuhhoi Pomir with a cash prize and a memento.

Considering the effectiveness of Kuhhoi Pomir’s activities in the preservation of national culture, the organization was admitted to the ranks of UNESCO clubs in Tajikistan in 2016. Kuhhoi Pomir is the only public organization in Tajikistan to have received accreditation from the UNESCO General Assembly under the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (7GA-2018 NGO-90403).

Over centuries, the inhabitants of the Pamirs’ strong dependence on wildlife has strengthened people’s knowledge about the environment, climate, seasons, mountain rivers, wild animals, and grasses. In cooperation with district education departments through a pilot project, Kuhhoi Pomir opened clubs for wildlife lovers and local culture in four districts. School clubs were created to involve the younger generation in the challenges of protecting local biodiversity and bioculture, reviving folk eco-cultural knowledge.

Dedicated classrooms for clubs at schools were equipped with TVs, parabolic antennas, a laptop, photo camera, and about two hundred titles comprising books, brochures, and CD-ROMs about history, the Pamiri languages, ethnoculture, bioculture and biodiversity, and eco-cultural tourism.

The clubs have become platforms for discussions about traditions, safeguarding of local tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and historical, natural, and cultural artifacts.

The equipment allows schoolchildren to make short films and photo essays about nature, the history of the area, and the connoisseurs of culture. Club members and schoolchildren can also record national children’s games, document folk knowledge and traditions, conduct storytelling, and take an active part in various school competitions.

Recently, our organization has registered “National Dastarkhan of Pamir” with the International Slow Food Association. Our researchers are engaged in studies of the gastronomic culture of the Pamirs, the compilation of a database of the regions flora and fauna, and the recipes of national dishes.

The organization arranged for specialists from the State Institute of Culture and Information to conduct a seminar with researchers on the methods of conducting an inventory of ICH elements. Twenty-three people attended the seminar, including our volunteers from remote areas of GBAO. We are currently seeking funds for expeditions and compiling a catalog of objects and elements of the ICH of GBAO.

Today, our organization, together with the National Commission for UNESCO and the local government of the region, participates in initiating the process of nominating the traditional Pamiri house—*Chid*—as an element for inclusion in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The chid looks a little like a temple, and it contains important components of architecture, ethnography, religion, philosophy, ecology, hygiene, history, family, household, and social life.

The inclusion of the unique chid, a cultural space found only in the Pamir mountains, could preserve several traditions, customs, knowledge, experience, skills, and crafts. ■

Festivals held by Kuhhoi Pomir through the cultural traditions of locals to urge people to respect, value, protect, and preserve wildlife, especially the rare, wild, beautiful, and magical symbol of the Pamirs—the snow leopard. © Qurbon Alamshoev





## In Honor of UNESCO-ICHCAP's Tenth Year Anniversary

It is with great pleasure that UNESCO-ICHCAP celebrates its tenth anniversary on 1 July 2021. These past ten years have been filled with many activities for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific region, specifically through networking and providing information in the region. Of course, our myriad accomplishments would be meaningless without the cooperation of the many stakeholders, collaborators, funders, and others who helped us along with our journey, as safeguarding intangible cultural heritage is not a solo venture, but requires the teamwork of many—institutions, communities, groups, and individuals.

Throughout the years, our internet presence has developed alongside our real-world development. From our initiation phase until today, it is quite evident to see how much we have progressed in the many venues through which we operate. Today, unesco-ichcap.org is a streamlined site that provides easy access to information about intangible cultural heritage. In comparison to our early endeavors, our newest ventures, which includes ichLinks and ICH Courier Online in addition to our valuable news information that is also sent to subscribers via e-mail on the first and third Friday of each month, it

is clearly noticeable to see the evolution of the Centre in its information capacity over the years.

In terms of networking, the other major function of the Centre, we have experimented with online applications through a community site, a website template scheme, and other attempts. Today, learning from our previous experiences from the successful cases of the sub-regional networking in the Asia-Pacific, we are currently developing a new and exciting projects on Living Heritage in Education, Silk Roads Living Heritage, and Maritime Heritage. Our latest networking development for the Silk Roads Living Heritage will be launched in the autumn of 2021, and we anticipate a high level of cooperation and expansion over the coming years.

In the pre-COVID 19 era, our networking programs included many networking meetings annually. These events were held on the national, regional, and international levels. The value of these meetings cannot be underestimated, as it allowed UNESCO-ICHCAP to become better acquainted with experts in the intangible cultural heritage

field. As a result of making these connections, attendees to the meetings have been able to provide valuable information that the Centre has published as meeting proceedings, many of which are available online as downloadable archival publications.

As we look toward the future, we do not and cannot know what obstacles we may face; however, if we have the same level of support from our many partners and collaborators throughout the region, we are confident that we can experience many fruitful endeavors.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to everyone who has helped UNESCO-ICHCAP achieve the level of success that we have experienced over the past decade, and we look forward to your continued support. ■



ICHCAP logo © ICHCAP

## Two Preparatory Committee Meetings Held to Establish a Silk Roads Living Heritage Network



Meeting participants © ICHCAP

On 30 March and 26 May, ICHCAP, in collaboration with IICAS and the KF Korea-Central Asia Cooperation Forum Secretariat, has held two meetings for the preparatory committee for the upcoming Silk Roads Living Heritage Network, with the anticipation of

Strategic Meeting on Silk Roads ICH Networking. Last year's events spawned our intent to develop a networking system along the Silk Roads to promote related living heritage along the region. As such, ICHCAP and our partners are looking forward to launching the new

holding several more to ensure that the network launching is successful.

The preparatory committee was put together on the heels of last year's Webinar: Life, Environment, and ICH along the Silk Roads and

network later this year. These preparatory committee meetings are essential to iron out the details in developing the new network. Following the final preparatory meeting to be held later this year, the preparatory committee will be transformed into an oversight committee for the official network.

The network is scheduled to be officially launched in the autumn of 2021, and we look forward to wide participation of stakeholders from across the Silk Roads region, especially those along the steppe route. ICHCAP will make an official announcement when the network opens, and we welcome stakeholders throughout the region. ■

## Key Factors of the Success of ichLinks, a Platform for ICH Sharing

It is the majority opinion of experts that the success of ichLinks, ambitiously launched in last March as a platform for ICH information sharing in the Asia-Pacific region, depends on two key factors:

- Collaboration between participatory actors
- Contents Competitiveness to attract readers

On 27 May 2021, ichLinks' Official Launching Ceremony was held. Speakers and presenters congratulated the launch of ichLinks and gave advice for the success of this platform. Not only partner organizations from five countries participating in ichLinks but also experts engaged in cultural information sharing. A hundred and twenty pre-registered people from twenty-nine countries took part in the ceremony.

The first session included the following:

- Introducing the background and philosophy on developing ichLinks
- Demonstrating the ichLinks website and contents
- Screening an ichLinks film

In the second session, presentations on ichLinks continued under following topics:

- Users' feedback and suggestions from the first group of ichLinks partner organizations (Vietnam, Kazakhstan, and Malaysia) and discussions on the platform's direction
- Experiences and suggestions from cultural information organizations—Europeana and the Smithsonian

The third session was spent introducing the operation of ichLinks and future plans, including the main roles and responsibilities of partner organizations and an invitation for a second group of partners.

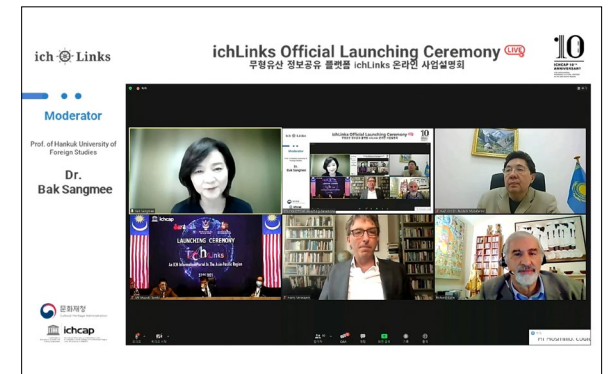
Dr. Bui Hoai Son, Director of Vietnam National Institute of Culture and Arts Studies, said, "The reason to participate in ichLinks is to develop new database and contents related with festivals, rituals and art of Vietnam. This project is expected to help to promote ICH of Vietnam and to develop its

cultural and creative industries." Dr. Rustam Muzafarov, Vice-Chairman of Kazakhstan National Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, said, "I would like to introduce local ICH elements of Kazakhstan on this platform, drawing the cooperation among various communities and interacting continuously with related communities."

Mr. Mazuki Tambi, Director of Malaysia Arts & Cultural Practitioners Association, also said, "It is planned to add up new elements on the ichLinks portal and database in Sarawak state, Malaysia and we will take part in this platform through a variety of activities related to crafts and folk arts of Sarawak, ICH education and training along with the development of intangible heritage-related human resources." Sarawak is the largest state in Malaysia, and the state government has supported various communities and NGOs to safeguard and promote ICH.

The partner organizations showed their will to participate on this platform not only to develop their own ICH information and contents but also to draw cooperation with ICH practitioners, related communities, and NGOs through ichLinks.

The experiences and advice from Europeana and the Smithsonian, which have drawn attention as international good practices of digital cultural information sharing, helped ichLinks to set a way forward for development. Europeana is a cultural information platform in Europe that has provided over fifty million pieces of information. "Europeana focused on the authenticity and accuracy of information from the first," said Mr. Harry Verwayen, General Director of the Europeana Foundation. "And most of all, networking is very important so this information sharing platform becomes a vehicle not a simple portal," he said. There are three main actors in Europeana. They are a foundation for technology operation, a forum composed of dozens of countries, and more than 4,000 institutions and organizations. Europeana's networking depends on the collaboration of these actors. Dr. Richard Kurin,



2021 ICHCAP Advisory Committee © ICHCAP

Interim Director of Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, said, "It is important to make the platform perceived as a 'digital forum' rather than a space for simply uploading data. And we should think about what the advantages of our website are in attracting users to this platform, as compared to Google."

Figures at home and abroad offered support messages on the growth of ichLinks with congratulatory remarks for this event. Mr. Ernesto Ottone, Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO, congratulated on creating an interactive digital platform to show ICH practitioners and information from various media outlets. Mr. Chun-hee Lee, Mayor of Sejong City of the Republic of Korea, also delivered a congratulatory speech, where he said, "Sejong City owes it much to the wisdom of our ancestors, who tried to record and preserve traditional culture, to inherit and develop artistic and cultural assets including King Sejong's spirit of love for the people. I hope to strengthen international solidarity for promoting human culture in cooperation with the International Centre for the Interpretation and Presentation of the World Heritage Sites, which is scheduled to be established in our city."

The Centre plans to further expand ichLinks partners and continue to make opportunities for communication. Director-General Mr. Gi Hyung Keum of ICHCAP expressed his hopes that ICH in the future will be alive as culture in our daily lives, not a heritage in danger of extinction, through ichLinks orienting decentralization, openness, and sharing. ■





**ICHCAP 10<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY**

FOR SAFEGUARDING  
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE  
IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

# **UNESCO-ICHCAP Celebrates its 10th Anniversary**



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

**ichcap**

International Information and Networking Centre  
for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region  
under the auspices of UNESCO