
FOREWORD

It is truly a joy and an honor to be given the opportunity to write the foreword for the publication entitled *Intangible Cultural Heritage of Bhutan*, which contains broad and detailed information on the subject. This book is the product of the past four years of shared efforts between Bhutan's Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs and ICHCAP, which began in 2011. It is my belief that this work will provide the basis upon which the people of Bhutan and the international community in the field of ICH can understand and share an interest in the intangible cultural heritage of Bhutan as well as build a foundation for its effective safeguarding.

Intangible cultural heritage is the source of mankind's identity and creativity as well as the driving force for sustainable development, constituting a valuable wealth for all of humanity through which generations both present and future can come together to learn and experience the wisdom in the lives and thoughts of our ancestors. To recognize the importance of ICH and to safeguard it requires identifying and documenting heritage assets that each community and society recognizes as ICH.

Due to being located in the Himalayas, Bhutan has had relatively little contact with the outside world, and therefore has been able to create, develop, and preserve various forms of ICH from different communities within the country. Furthermore, the religious characteristics stemming from Buddhism and Hinduism have resulted in combining not only tangible but also intangible forms of cultural heritage with aspects of daily life, which has culminated in an abundant wealth of ICH.

Moreover, the philosophy of Bhutan as a nation seeks to navigate the current of materialistic civilization through the Gross National Happiness Index, focusing on the balance and harmony between the mind and the material with regards to human life. The way of life in endeavoring towards humankind's progress by recognizing the importance of immaterial wealth without neglecting it, and accepting it as a facet of life, is in line with the spirit in which the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage was concluded in 2003. However, various internal and external circumstances have created a wide range of difficulties and challenges, hindering the safeguarding of ICH in Bhutan.

Therefore, ICHCAP aims to support ICH safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific region by implementing a diverse range of international and regional projects revolving around the informational and networking functions of the Centre. The purpose of these projects is to support ICH safeguarding and relevant capacity-building efforts among the forty-eight Member States in the region. To this end, the Centre has provided support to publish *Intangible Cultural Heritage of Bhutan*, for which the Bhutanese government has directly conducted onsite research on communities across sixteen regions to systematically discover and collate information on three hundred ICH elements. It is my belief that this book will be a useful source of information for understanding and safeguarding ICH in Bhutan, promoting international and regional cooperation for the aforementioned purpose, and developing a cultural means of sustainable development in the country.

The publication of this valuable book was made possible through the work and efforts of a number of people in Bhutan and Korea. First of all, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude towards the Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea and the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs in Bhutan for their relentless support for the successful publication of this book and for recognizing the importance of this project. In addition, I would also like to express my utmost thanks and regard for the dedicated efforts from all those

at the Bhutan National Library and Archives—in particular, Director Dasho Harka B. Gurung, Dr. Yonten Dargye, and Mr. Sonam Tobgay—who persevered through difficult conditions, traversing dangerous mountain terrains, to visit ICH bearers and communities so that they could conduct investigations and later organize the collected information into a book. Further thanks go out to the staff at ICHCAP—Mr. Deoksoon Kim, Mr. Weonmo Park, and Ms. Minyung Jung—for their tireless efforts over the past four years to prepare for the publication of this book and seeking cooperation with Bhutan.

It is my hope that this book will become the first step towards raising the profile of Bhutanese ICH at home and abroad and an opportunity to broadly spread the importance of ICH safeguarding. Furthermore, I hope that this book will be effective in being used by various personnel within Bhutan in the field of ICH (policymakers, experts, researchers, NGOs, etc.) for the safeguarding and active transmission of ICH in Bhutan.

Huh Kwon



Director-General
International Information and Networking Centre
for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region
under the auspices of UNESCO
(ICHCAP)