



Cultural Partnership Initiative

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Overviewing of current situation of Safeguarding ICH in Central Asia and activity of International Organizations

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Abstract

The experience of international cooperation in the field of safeguarding cultural heritage has shown its professional practice in the world.

Central Asian region (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) as a states stands at the crossroads of ancient civilizations. Its territory, crossed by the northern part of the Great Silk Road, constitutes an ensemble of cultural-heritage sites and monuments that express common historical experiences, as well as reflect an extraordinary cultural diversity dating from prehistoric times to the Islamic Period and beyond.

Ratification of the ICH Convention by the Central Asian countries creates new possibilities for effective implementing international projects on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the states and benefits of ratification is the overarching benefit of ratifying the ICH Convention 2003 is that of belonging to an international community of appreciation and concern for universally significant properties that embody a world of outstanding examples of cultural diversity and natural wealth.

The States Parties to the Convention, by joining hands to protect and cherish the world's natural and cultural heritage, express a shared commitment to preserving our legacy for future generations. The prestige that comes from being a State Party to the Convention and having sites inscribed on the Intangible Cultural Heritage List often serves as a catalyst to raising awareness for heritage preservation. A key benefit of ratification, particularly for developing countries, is access to the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund.

For the purposes of this Convention, international cooperation includes, inter alia, the exchange of information and experience, joint initiatives, and the establishment of a mechanism of

assistance to States Parties in their efforts to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage¹⁾.

This paper considers the overviewing and influence of activity of the international organizations of UNESCO Category 2 institutions/centres, national organizations in the developing and systematizing efforts in the field of safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in the CA region.

Introduction

For centuries, phenomenon of intangible cultural heritage was a key factor for transmission of indigenous cultural traditions for future generations as well as a matching point for intercultural dialogue in Central Asia – countries with unique oral and music traditions.

The process of socio-economic and cultural transformation observed in modern Central Asian states after becoming independent in 1991 had also affected the state of the intangible cultural heritage, including changes in funding, expertise and management.

With independence, serious challenges of safeguarding of ICH have come in the wake of these changes. Whereas under Soviet time the culture sector enjoyed state funding, together with an importance in state planning and a certain level of prestige, under free-market conditions this is no longer the case. Yet with these challenges have come new opportunities, particularly in such fields as revival of cultural traditions, sharing of expertise between international and regional experts and in better identification, inventory and safeguarding of cultural heritage of humanity.

After collapsing Soviet Union all Central Asian countries as independent countries joined the country-membership of UNESCO and participated in its international projects. This step created new possibilities of international cooperation in the field of and safeguarding cultural heritage and transmission to young generation.

In recent years UNESCO in close cooperation with international institutes, category 2 centres and Central Asian countries has acquired a great deal of experience as the coordinator of the often complex pilot projects for safeguarding and revitalization of Central Asia's rich intangible cultural heritage.

UNESCO Culture Related International Institutes and Category 2 Centres²⁾

Category 2 centres can play an important role in helping the UNESCO and country-members of organization achieve certain programme objectives for which sectorial expertise or resources are not sufficient, as in the case of certain specialized centres.

There are several Category 2 Culture related centres, in Norway, Mongolia, Peru, Colombia, Croatia, South Africa, Nigeria, Bahrain, Brazil, Mexico, Uzbekistan and etc., which are acting in various sphere of cultural heritage.

1) 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Article 19, Paragraph 5

2) <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/bureau-of-strategic-planning/resources/category-2-institutes/culture/>

In 2009 at the 35th Session of UNESCO General Conference approved the establishment of the three Category 2 centres, in the Republic of Korea, China and Japan under the of the UNESCO to promote regional cooperation in ICH safeguarding³⁾.

International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region, Republic of Korea – Information and networking to support safeguarding intangible cultural heritage;

International Training Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia and the Pacific Region, China – Training and capacity building for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage;

International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region, Japan – Developing and mobilizing research as a tool for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Except these three centres there are other category 2 centres which are responsible for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, these are:

Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Sofia, Bulgaria – Contribute to the implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in the South-Eastern European sub-region; enhance the capacity of the Member States in safeguarding ICH; coordinate, exchange and disseminate information and foster regional and international cooperation for safeguarding ICH.

Regional Research centre for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in West and Central Asia, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran - Contribute to implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in West and Central Asia; strengthen capacities and cooperation in the Region; further and coordinate scientific and technical studies; reinforce capacities in States of the Region that are Parties to the 2003 Convention for actively participating in its implementation on the regional and international level.

Common cultural ties across Silk Road regions

As I mentioned before Silk Road was not only trade route between countries but it was also very good experience for cultural exchange among people of Silk Road route.

Western, Central and Southern Asian regions, for example ancient Persia (Iran), Central Asian countries have similarity of historical and cultural ties for centuries. From VII century Islamic religion was widespread in these regions, and before the appearance of Islamic religion, Zoroastrianism religion was the common religion of these people and there are plenty of historical and cultural (traditions, holidays, music and etc.) similarities, which we can detect in Iranian, Central Asian countries, Azerbaijan and Turkey and here are some historically tied cultural heritages of these countries, for example:

3) Prof. Noriko Aikawa. Implementing the 2003 Convention and Its Safeguarding Measures. Proceedings of the 2011 Expert meeting Report "Building and Sharing ICH Information".

Nowruz marks the New Year and the arrival of spring across many countries of Western, Central and Southern Asia, the Caucasus, the Balkans and other regions. This celebration carries a message of peace for all peoples. This was recognized when Nowruz was inscribed in 2009 on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. It was reflected in 2010, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution recognizing 21 March as the International Day of Nowruz.

Fire Houses and Temples of the Zoroastrianism religion, until nowadays in some countries using the fair as a ritual element in traditional events.

Musical instruments: Dutar is very widespread instrument in this region (Persian: دُراتود, Tajik: дутор, Uyghur: دُراتتۇد, Uzbek: dutor) (also dotar or doutar) is a traditional long-necked two-stringed lute found in Iran, Central Asia and South Asia. Its name comes from the Persian word for "two strings".

A dayereh (or doyra, dojra, dajre, doira, dajreja) is a medium-sized frame drum with jingles, used to accompany both popular and classical music. The dayereh is one of the most famous frame drums in Iran and Central Asia, and in Azerbaijan, it is called ghaval and sometimes daf, and is played on festive occasions.

So, with these examples I tried to show briefly some similarity of the region's common culture. Of course, if we research more we can find plenty elements of tangible and intangible cultural heritages of these countries and Iranian centre could become one of the main and active UNESCO centre for ICH safeguarding in Central Asia as for its geographical scope in relation to the name of the Centre.

ICHCAP activity in Central Asia

Vigorous activity of ICHCAP is concentrated promoting Intangible Cultural Heritage of the people of Central Asia in international level.

ICHCAP initiated first sub-regional network meeting in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in 2010, the meeting was organized in collaboration with four member States of Central Asia and UNESCO Almaty, Tashkent regional offices. At the first meeting participants presented their country reports concerning the national inventory-making of intangible cultural heritage and determined how to cooperate in inventory-making of intangible cultural heritage at the international level⁴⁾.

One of the major obligations for states is to charge a specific national entity with developing action plans to safeguard its intangible cultural heritage.

The first such kind of action plan was adopted at the ICHCAP meeting which mentioned before. The adopted action plan entitled Central Asia and ICHCAP: Partnership for Sustainable ICH Safeguarding comprises useful measures to promote cooperation in regards to developing

4) Dr. Seong-Yong Park, Proceedings of the 2010 Expert Meeting on Safeguarding ICH and Inventory-Making for the Central Asian region.

multinational nominations for the Representative List, Urgent Safeguarding List, register of good practices, as well as studies on the harmonisation of national inventories of tangible and intangible heritage, networking between documentation centres in Central Asia and ICHCAP, and translation of the ICH Courier newsletter.

One of the ICHCAP partner in Central Asia is the International Institute for Central Asian Studies (IICAS), Samarkand, Uzbekistan - UNESCO institute category-2 was established in August 1995 in Samarkand (Uzbekistan). Specialized Coordination and promotion of multidisciplinary research in domains pertaining to Central Asia, and furthering regional, interregional and international cooperation in its areas of competence: tangible and intangible cultural heritage, archaeology, history, history of art, ethnography, history of religions, environments, historical geography, written and oral literature, social sciences.

During 1999-2007 IICAS published four volumes of the “Atlas of Applied Arts of Central Asia”, which are covering all elements of handicrafts and traditional arts of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and this was very important project in inventory-making of various elements of ICH in Central Asian.

These two category 2 institutes are continuing collaborating in implementing long-term ICHCAP’s project in Central Asia.

IICAS according its academic program implemented long term international project related to ICH inventory making in academically level and researching of the “Art of Central Asia 9th-15th centuries”.

The project is continuation of the previous program of IICAS on applied arts of Central Asia, which was mostly focused on period of 18th -20th centuries (four volumes on applied arts of Central Asia was published). Project oriented on complex studies and inventory of medieval arts of Central Asia (9th – 15th centuries). Research activities based on archaeological findings and museum collections in Central Asia. As a result of the project is publication of 5-volume monographs on medieval arts of Central Asia: ceramics (volume 1), glass (volume 2), bronze items (volume 3), architecture (volume 4), textile and bone-carving production (volume 5).

Documenting and Inventory making in Central Asia

Mr Tim Curtis (Chief in Culture Unit, UNESCO Bangkok Office) with co-author Mr Frank Proschan (Programme specialist, UNESCO) in their paper “Mobilizing communities to document their intangible cultural heritage” in the proceedings of 2009 Conference Report “Networking and Information for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage” pointing example of the picture of pipe painted by famous Rene Magritte, Belgian surrealist artist, he wrote in his painting of pipe that “this is not pipe”? And answer is because it is a picture of pipe, one cannot light it, one cannot smoke it, one can only, through representation, imagine it.

Documenting and Inventory making are two major obligations for identification of ICH element for preparing proper document for further safeguarding and systematizing.

These works should be implemented by individuals, communities again in close cooperation with international organizations.

In this regard serious efforts by ICHCAP were made through organizing international workshops for Central Asian countries. So far, four Sub-regional Network Meetings on the Safeguarding of ICH were conducted in Tashkent (Uzbekistan), March 2010 and in Dushanbe (Tajikistan), July 2011; Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) May 2012; Astana (Kazakhstan) May 2013 and one Expert Seminar on ICH Inventory-Making for Central Asia conducted in Seoul (Republic of Korea) in November 2010.

These meetings aimed to promote ICH safeguarding activities in the Central Asian region and the primary objectives of the meeting were to foster an understanding for the current status of intangible cultural heritage safeguarding activities, particularly inventory-making in the Central Asian sub-region, build a cooperative network between the States Parties of Central Asia and ICHCAP in the sub-region, enhance the implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention, and expand opportunities for cooperative projects between the Member States, UNESCO Field offices and ICHCAP.

Above mentioned trainings assisted to Central Asian countries to meet their national obligations under the Convention, in particular the inventory-making and other safeguarding measures, as well as to benefit from the mechanisms of international cooperation established by the Convention and to reinforce the national capacity in safeguarding intangible heritage and implementing the Convention.

International Workshop on Understanding of UNESCO ICH Convention 2003

In order to provide an overview of the Convention to help understand the place of the nominations to the Convention’s Lists in 21-24 November, 2012 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan was hold a very important Sub-regional workshop on “Elaborating Nominations to UNESCO Intangible Heritage Lists”. The event was organized within the extra-budgetary project “Strengthening the National Capacity on Safeguarding ICH in Central Asia” funded by Norway fund in close cooperation with Culture Section (CLT/ITH) at UNESCO HQ.

The workshop is the follow-up to the National Workshop “Implementing the UNESCO Convention 2003 at National Level” organized by UNESCO Office in Tashkent in close co-operation with Ministry of Culture and Sport of Uzbekistan from 3 to 7 July 2012, Tashkent. The main goal of the workshop is to strengthen the national capacity in the field of Implementation of the UNESCO Convention 2003, in particular provide a broad overview of the Intangible Heritage Lists as well as discuss the issues on procedures and preparation of the nominations for inscription of ICH elements onto the Lists.

Representative list of ICH of Central Asian Countries

There are five elements from the Central Asian region on the UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, namely:

- The Cultural Space of the Boysun District (Uzbekistan)
- Shashmaqom – Classical Music of Central Asia (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan)
- Katta Ashula (Uzbekistan)
- The Art of Akyns, Kyrgyz Epic Tellers (Kyrgyzstan)
- Nowruz (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, India, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey)

Policy and Legislations

Before appearance and ratification of UNESCO ICH Convention 2003 Central Asian countries were acting in national levels and following legislations were adopted in the states.

Kazakhstan⁵⁾ ratified ICH Convention 2003 in December 2011

- Law on safeguarding and usage of historical and cultural heritage objects (1992);
- Governmental Act on Public Fund of Support of Culture and Arts In the Republic of Kazakhstan (1998);
- Governmental Act on the Concept of Craftsmanship Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan (1998);
- Law on Culture (2006);
- Law on Local Government and Self-government in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2001);
- Governmental Act on Adoption of the Procedures on Handling the State Registry of the Objects of National Cultural Heritage (2007);
- Regulations on Safeguarding and Keeping the Historical and Cultural Monuments, Public Natural Sites Recognized as the International and National Objects of Cultural Heritage (2003);
- State Registry of Historical and Cultural Monuments of National Significance (2008);
- Regulations on Compiling, Keeping, Inventorying and Utilization of the Documents at the National Archives Fund, and Other Archive Documents by Public and Special State Archives (2011).
- Two programs are provided: National Program on Development and Function of the Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2011-2020 (2011) and National Program on Development of the Physical Culture and Sports in the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2007-2011 (2007).

5) 2012 Field Survey Report, ICH Safeguarding Efforts in Kazakhstan

Kyrgyzstan⁶⁾ ratified ICH Convention in 2006.

- Law on Establishing Nooruz as a National Celebration Day (1991);
- Law on Protection of Historical and Cultural Heritage (1999);
- Law on Culture (2009) and Law on Museums and Museums Funds (2000).

Tajikistan⁷⁾ ratified ICH Convention in 2010.

- Governmental Program for development of culture on 2008-2015 (No.85, 2007)
- Governmental Program on development of arts and crafts on 2009-2015 (No.513, 2008) are important instruments for the protection and promotion of traditional culture.

Uzbekistan⁸⁾ ratified ICH Convention in 2008,

- Law on Preservation and Utilization of Objects of Cultural Heritage ([2001]2009) defines the ICH objects of intangible cultural heritage;
- A long-term (2010-2020) National Programme on preservation of ICH has been drafted. Variety of events, festivals, meetings and promotional activities on ICH has been implemented.

Problems and Lacks

There is, around the world, a real lack of study and assessment of best practices in ICH field. Central Asian states lacks are, experienced experts, professional organizations, lack of financing and systematizing of Safeguarding of ICH.

Offers and Tasks in Future

- Translation into common language for Central Asian countries and dissemination of the ICHCAP publications and proceedings of international workshops and dissemination in Central Asian countries national institutes;
- Attracting more local and international representatives of scholars, specialists (anthropologists, sociologists, folklorists, linguists and etc.) in order to researching scientifically skills of tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the people of Central Asia;
- Elaboration and adoption of National Concept of the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Central Asian states;
- Ensuring promotion of the intangible cultural heritage in society through programs in education, awareness and inform the public, particularly young generation, promoting intangible cultural heritage of Central Asian countries through the mass-media;

6) 2011 Field Survey Report, ICH Safeguarding Efforts in Kyrgyzstan

7) 2010 Field Survey Report, ICH Safeguarding Efforts in Tajikistan

8) 2009 Field Report, ICH Safeguarding Efforts in Uzbekistan

- Organizing publication of ICH Bulletins of CA states with international and local articles reflecting diversity, unity and comparing analyze of ICH elements of the people of Central Asia and other countries;
- Provision of qualified human resources for the preservation and development of the intangible cultural heritage of the peoples of Central Asia;
- Expansion of international cooperation in the field of intangible cultural heritage of the peoples of the world;
- Organize Exchange Cultural Program for staffs of ICHCAP, IICAS and other relevant ICH and cultural international and national organizations of Central Asian countries;
- Organize inter-institutional cooperation with Iranian ICH centre, ICHCAP and IICAS for future new projects in Central Asia.

Conclusion

Current situation of ICH Safeguarding in Central Asian countries is on the way of systematizing and developing.

In this regard role of communities, groups and individuals are very important in the safeguarding and re-creation of the intangible cultural heritage helping to enrich cultural diversity and creativity.

Adoption of UNESCO ICH Convention 2003 by the CA countries and active collaboration with international organizations, funds and UNESCO category 2 centres is serving as a mechanism which is putting into place at the international level, they can play significant role by establishing an effective information system which could link Central Asian countries and support financially and practically using with international instruments and experience.

UNESCO ICH Convention 2003 as a Constitution for Safeguarding of ICH in the countries ensures the works of International organizations integration and cooperation in educational and economic development efforts, so that culture retains vitality and dynamistic.