

**Sub-Regional Experts Meeting in Asia on Intangible Cultural Heritage:
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The Method and the System for Safeguarding

Intangible Culture Heritage in China

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The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage has given the international standards to the various nationalities on the world for safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage. The Chinese government has been aware of the importance of safeguarding and preserving the national and folk traditional culture in the drive process of the modernization, has actively participated in the international preservation work of the intangible cultural heritage, has paid a great attention to the international communication and the cooperation and has fully drawn on the successive experiences of the various countries in the field of safeguarding and preserving the intangible cultural heritage. On August 28, 2004, the eleventh Session of the Standing Committee of the Tenth National People's Congress of China adopted a resolution that the Chinese government joined *the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. From then on, the Chinese government, the learned society and the social various fields have comprehensively promoted the preservation work of the intangible cultural heritage, and formed a set of the preservation system with the Chinese characteristics in the field of safeguarding and preserving intangible cultural heritage. We have done many fruitful work in the field of safeguarding and preserving intangible culture heritage. I'd like to introduce our outstanding work in the following aspects:

1. The Chinese government has strengthened the preservation laws and regulations for the intangible cultural heritage

China has the extremely rich intangible cultural heritage. How to speed up the process of the legislation of the intangible cultural heritage, providing the powerful legal protection for the intangible cultural heritage, is an important question for safeguarding and preserving the intangible cultural heritage. In the 1990s, some places of China such as: the provinces of Yunnan, Guizhou, Fujian, Guangxi and so on promulgated the preservation rule of the national and folk traditional culture, the provinces of Ningxia, Jiangsu also formulated the local laws to preserve the folk fine arts and the folk art. In 1997, the State Council of China promulgated *the Preservation Rule of the Traditional industrial art*. It stipulated the preservation standard for the traditional industrial art that "the handicrafts articles and the techniques enjoy the prestige both at home and abroad over one hundred years, with the long

history, the highly skilled, handed down from generation to generation, have the complete technical process, use the natural raw materials to manufacture, with bright national style and the local characteristics." After formulating the preservation standard of the traditional industrial art, the Chinese government established the evaluating organizations, named 200 masters of industrial art. This is an important method for properly safeguarding industrial art in China.

Since 1998, the education, science, arts and health committee of the National People's Congress of China has done the massive investigation and study work of the legislations. In November, 2003, it organized and drafted *the Preservation Method of the National and Folk Traditional culture of the People's Republic of China (draft)*, and submitted it to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China for considering. In August, 2004, the National People's Congress of China changed the name of the legal draft as *the Safeguarding Law of the Intangible Cultural heritage of the People's Republic of China*. After widely soliciting the suggestions and revising repeatedly, this legal draft has been in the plan to legislate by the National People's Congress of China.

On March 26, 2005, in order to fulfill the duty of the Chinese government to join *the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* adopted by the UNESCO, the State Council office of China distributed *the Opinions about Strengthening the Protection Work for the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Our Country*. In order to implement it and summed up the experiences of preservation intangible culture heritage, *the National Conference for Preservation Intangible Culture Heritage* to be held in Beijing on June 10, 2005. On the meeting, Zhou Heping, vice minister of Culture of China introduced the basic condition for preservation intangible culture heritage in our country and offered the some concrete requirements and measures for preservation intangible culture heritage.

On July 5 - 8th, 2005, the Ministry of Culture of China held *Suzhou Forum: the Preservation Intangible Cultural Heritage of China* in Suzhou. The subject is *the Theory, the Practice and the Method for Preservation Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Sun Jiazheng, Minister of the Culture of China attended a meeting personally and made the speech *Creating the Glorious Future for preservation Intangible Cultural Heritage in Our country*.

2. Implementing the preservation program of the national and folk culture

In 2000, the Ministry of Culture of China, the National Nationalities Commission of China jointly issued *the Suggestions about Further Strengthening the Culture of the Minority Nationalities*. They requested each place to pay special attention to the collection of the national inheritances of the culture and arts, preserving the elder singers and elder entertainers of the minority nationalities. At the beginning of 2003, the Ministry of Culture of China, the Ministry of Finance of China, the National Nationalities Commission of China and the Cultural Federation of China started the preservation program of the national and folk culture of China.

The purpose of the preservation program of the national and folk culture of China is to effectively safeguard the national and folk culture with historical, cultural and the scientific values which are in imminent danger, establish the quite complete protection system of the national and folk culture of China and basically realize the protection work of the national and

folk culture of China with scientific, standardization and legal system at the end of 2020. This preservation program is divided into three steps from 2004 to 2020. The first step from 2004 to 2008 is to make the general investigations, set up the grade system and preservation list of the national and folk culture, build the naming system of the successors, establish the preservation areas of the cultural ecology and train a big preservation team with the higher qualities.

Now this preservation program has established *the Promotion Peking Opera Direction Committee* and *the Promotion Kunqu Opera Direction Committee* and the Chinese government has set up the special fund for safeguarding, preservation and supporting the arts of Peking opera and Kunqu opera. At present, the preservation program has confirmed 40 state preservation test places in the whole China, among them there are 6 complex test places and 34 professional test places.

3. The Chinese government sets up the organizations for safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage

The Chinese government pays a great attention to the powerful leadership on the organization for preservation intangible culture heritage. The preservation program of the national and folk culture of China is an important component of the preservation work of intangible culture heritage in China. The state centre of the preservation program of the national and folk culture of China is in the Chinese Academy of Arts. Various provinces (municipalities and autonomous regions) have also established the leadership organizations and the working organizations for "the preservation program".

The Chinese Academy of Arts is a national comprehensive research institution in the arts theory, is the highest art research organization in China. It has made an important contribution to the construction of the discipline of arts in China, particularly the research in history and theory in the fields of Chinese local operas, Chinese fine arts, Chinese music, studies on the literature and arts, aesthetics etc. Since 1950s, it also did a lot of work and has achieved valuable results in excavating, safeguarding and preserving the marvelous heritage of traditional arts and the transmission in culture. In 1980s, the Chinese government organized to editor ten collections of the national and folk literature and arts in China, the Chinese Academy of Arts was hold the responsible for the three of them : "the History of Chinese Dramas", "the History of Chinese Acrobatics Art", "the collection of Chinese National and Folk dance " . The Chinese Academy of Arts has been pointed as one of the worldwide unites for the preservation and research on the traditional and folk performing arts. Owing to the rich collections of the Chinese music, the Chinese Academy of Arts was listed in the name list of *the Memory of the World* by UNESCO. The Chinese Academy of Arts now is becoming to be a representative operating mechanism in the work for safeguarding and preservation of intangible culture heritage. The Ministry of Culture of China has entrusted the Chinese Academy of Arts to be responsible to organize and practice the application of the masterpieces of the oral & intangible culture heritage of humanity. The Chinese Academy of Arts successively applied the Kunqu opera and Guqin as masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity proclaimed by the UNESCO respectively in 2001 and 2003.

From 2002 to 2004, the Chinese Academy of Arts has held the international symposium on safeguarding and preservation of the intangible culture heritage for three times.

In order to organizing and instructing the application work of the intangible cultural heritage, the Chinese Academy of Arts composed the first set of the intangible cultural heritage published in January, 2005 . On May 24, 2005, the Chinese Academy of Arts appointed 30 folk artists who came from the fields of the lunar new year's painting, the paper-cut, the clay sculpture, artistic profession ,Pi Ying , puppet, the facial makeup, kite, the brocade and so on as creating researchers for the folk arts.

At present, the Chinese Academy of Arts has completed the appraisal work for the third application of the masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity, set up the database of the intangible heritage in China, will invite 11 to 15 groups of experts on different subjects to grade culture heritage in specific geographical areas, and create standards for evaluation. The academy will also compile and publish books and dictionaries on Chinese oral and intangible culture heritage, and work out hi-tech methods to better preserve books and audio and video materials of artistic heritage.

Now the safeguarding and preservation work for the intangible culture heritage is entering into the universities of China. The Central Fine Arts Institute is taking the intangible culture heritage as the new discipline in the institution art education system. In May, 2002, this institute officially established "the research center of the intangible cultural heritage". It trains the teachers to do the research work on the Chinese folk fine art and enroll the students to become the professional talents of the intangible culture heritage. At present, the Central National University, Nanjing University, Southeast university, Hebei Normal University, Jilin Tonghua Normal Institute and so on have also opened the classes of the national and folk art, training bachelors, masters, doctors, the different level special talented persons for the intangible cultural heritage and they are taking an active exploration and bear the hardships in the construction of the university education discipline on the intangible culture heritage.