

IRCI RESEARCH DATA COLLECTION FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND FUTURE

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INTRODUCTION

International research centre for intangible culture heritage in the Asia-Pacific region (IRCI) effectively implements and enhances the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in the Asia-Pacific region through instigating and coordinating research. This is to achieve the organisation's aim to promote the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the ICH. UNESCO has supported several programs to protect and preserve ICH (Cozzani et al., 2017). One of the programs in this regard is through research data collection, which has been implemented for about a decade. Up till now three projects are launched under this program namely;

- 1) Mapping Research for the Safeguarding of ICH in the Asia-Pacific Region, 2013,
- 2) Literature Survey on ICH Safeguarding Research in the Asia-Pacific Countries, 2015 and;
- 3) Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region, 2019.

DEVELOPMENT OF DATA COLLECTION PROJECTS

The objectives of these projects were achieved through impressive data collection as the primary outcome. Few positive aspects that can also be tabbed from these projects are like the awareness on "safeguarding" can be strengthened among the scholars/researchers. So, their future projects on intangible cultural heritage can enrich the body of knowledge of the ICH elements and compelling impact to the beholder of the ICH, the community, government and to the international society.

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1) Mapping Research for the Safeguarding of ICH in the Asia-Pacific Region, 2013

The mapping project was conducted for the Fiscal Year 2013 – FY 2019 entitled Mapping Studies on the Safeguarding of ICH (FY 2013 – FY 2019). This project is implemented since FY 2013 based on the collection and mapping of research information pertaining to ICH safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific region. The project aims to understand the status of research relating to the safeguarding of ICH, for promoting ICH research and contributing to the safeguarding of ICH in the Asia-Pacific region². Therefore, this project instigates research for ICH safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific region by analysing its current trends and challenges, the mapping project constitutes the core of IRCI's research activities.

This project also aims to identify the main issues that prevent ICH safeguarding and find solutions through research activities conducted by experts in the Asia-Pacific region. It has been implemented since 2016 with the mapping project and managed as an integration of three sub-projects comprised of international symposium/experts meetings, literature surveys, and the optimisation and use of research data with a research database.

Since the launch of the Data Collection project in 2013, IRCI has managed to conduct one of the subprojects, i.e., to organise the international symposium/expert meetings. As reported in the IRCI's news, the International Symposium/Experts Meetings has been organised as follows:

- 2013 Experts Meeting (Bangkok, Thailand)³
- 2014 Experts Meeting (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)⁴
- 2015 Experts Meeting (Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan)⁵
- 2016 Experts Meeting (Osaka, Japan)⁶
- 2017 International Symposium (Tokyo, Japan)⁷

The literature survey program that falls under this project has been extended as a project on ICH Safeguarding, which began in 2015 (discuss in item no.2, Literature Survey on ICH Safeguarding Research in the Asia-Pacific Countries, 2015). The mapping project is also intended to optimise and use research data with a research database. As a project's output, IRCI developed a research database in FY2014 to publish literature, experts, and research institutions related to

2 <https://www.irci.jp/research/research-data/>

3 <https://www.irci.jp/news/2014-0702/>

4 <https://www.irci.jp/news/2015-0325-2/>

5 <https://www.irci.jp/news/2016-0126/>

6 <https://www.irci.jp/news/2016-1130/>

7 <https://www.irci.jp/news/2017-0802/>

ICH safeguarding. Since then, the information has been updated with experts, national archives, libraries, and related institutions in the Asia-Pacific region. Subsequently, from FY2019, IRCI is working to establish a sustainable mechanism for data collection to further enrich the database by strengthening its collaboration with research institutions. This database can be accessed at IRCI’s website⁸.

2) Literature Survey on ICH Safeguarding Research in the Asia-Pacific Countries, 2015

The Literature survey project has been conducted since 2014 and ended in 2018. As of March 2018, data of 2097 reference materials, 111 experts, and 111 institutes has been collected. The details are as follows;

FY2014: Literature (255), Experts (111), Institutes (110)

FY2015: Literature (702), Institutes (1)

FY2016: Literature (833)

FY2017: Literature (307)

Overall, research trends in the collected data on the literature show an increase from the year 2010 onwards compared to previous years (2001–2009) based on the example of Malaysia (survey 2001–2016). An extensive literature on intangible cultural heritage was collected, consisting of (164) books, journal papers, chapters in the book, research reports, etc. Figure 1 below shows the ICH survey in Malaysia from 2001 to 2016.

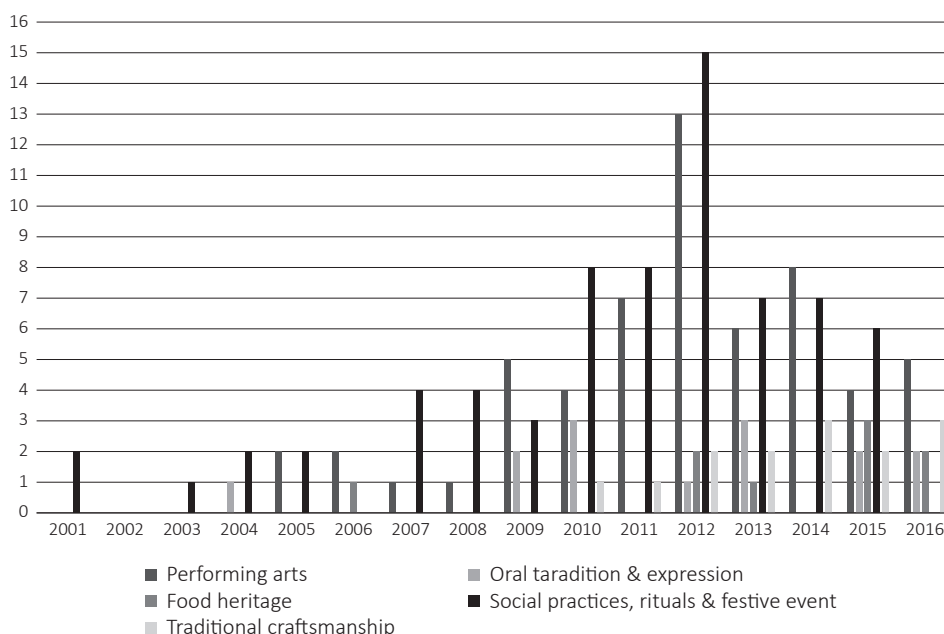


Figure 1 ICH survey in Malaysia (2001-2016) (Source: Hussin, 2016).

⁸ <https://www.irci.jp/ichdb/>

Many publications of ICH from Malaysia are published in international journals or books, as can be seen from 70 publications published in the international publication houses (43%). Figure 2 shows the segregation of these publications into local vs international publishers.

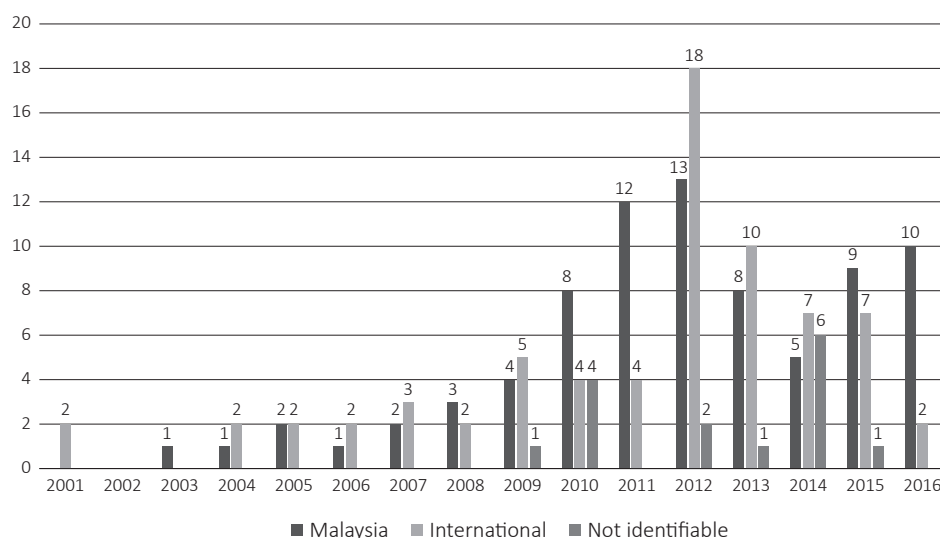


Figure 2 Publications of ICH of Malaysia (2001-2016) – local and international publishers (Source: Hussin, 2016).

Based on the analysis of the recent trend of research on ICH safeguarding in Malaysia and other countries like New Zealand, Palau, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Japan, Mongolia, Vanuatu, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Iran reported in 2016, IRCI Experts held a meeting on Mapping Project for ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region in Sakai, 18 to 19 November 2016. In that meeting, the importance and challenges on further promoting the ICH safeguarding studies in the Asia-Pacific region were emphasised. It also emphasised the necessity to lead participants to reacknowledge the significance of safeguarding ICH as an emerging research theme in the academic field and the need to promote further cooperation among researchers and research institutes where IRCI is expected to be a hub of the new stream of the ICH safeguarding studies (IRCI, 2016).

3) Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region, 2019.

In order to address the issues and challenges faced by the research data collection identified in the “Mapping Studies on the Safeguarding of ICH” projects, IRCI established a sustainable means of collecting information further to enrich IRCI’s research database⁹. IRCI established a new cooperating mechanism for data

⁹ https://www.irci.jp/research/research-data/sustainable_research/

collection with research institutions (such as universities, museums and research centers). This will ensure the sustainable collection of research data, will promote a better understanding of the Convention and research as one of the safeguarding measures, and promote ICH research in the region. IRCI has targeted countries in the Asia-Pacific region and designated one organisation for each country to become its counterpart. These partner organisations are working with IRCI to collect data and contribute to building a mechanism through which systematic data collection is possible (IRCI, 2019a).

The Sustainable Research Data Collection Project for ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region was discussed in the Second Working Group Meeting of FY 2019 (Tokyo, 4–5 February 2020). In FY2019, IRCI invited each partner organisation’s representatives and held a kick-off meeting in Tokyo to introduce this project. Currently, the national counterparts in each Southeast Asian country play a central role in collecting information in collaboration with their national counterpart institutions. In FY2019, six universities and research institutions from six countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam) has participated as national counterparts; in FY2020, a total of 11 institutions had participated in these activities.

In addition to this, international meetings and workshops inviting young researchers have been organised to discuss data collection issues and future plans. On 4 August 2020 a physical while on 29 November 2021, a virtual, the National Workshop on “Research on the Safeguarding of ICH in the Asia-Pacific Region: Establishing New Sustainable Mechanism for Systematic Research Data Collection” was held at the University of Malaya Kuala Lumpur which was co-organised by Universiti Malaya Cultural and Heritage Research Centre (UMCHRC) and IRCI. The progress and output of the running project was shared in the meeting, forum and symposium like Webinar on Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region the Third Working Group Meeting in FY 2020 (February 2021) and the IRCI Researchers Forum on ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region (29 October 2021).

Outcome of Data Collection on Intangible Cultural Heritage Survey of Partner Countries

First Phase, 2019

University of Malaya researchers have published 12 Research articles relevant to intangible cultural heritage from 2015 to 2019. Among those 12 papers, 8 papers were related to oral traditions and language, 2 papers were relevant to social practices, rituals and festive events, and 2 papers were from the performing arts genre of the ICH. Research mainly concerned with oral traditions and language have discussed oral monophthong vowels of the Acehnese spoken Malacca

Portuguese Creole (MPC), Indonesian Acehnese, Malaysian Acehnese, their similar qualities and their differences (Pillai, Soh, & Yusuf, 2015). The main aim of these studies is to gain a picture of the sociolinguistic situation of the minority languages like Bidayuh and Mah Meri (Besis) in their rural homelands and to assess their ethnolinguistic vitality (Coluzzi, 2016; Coluzzi, Riget, & Xiaomei, 2017). High degree of endangerment of these minority languages and factors that seem to help in the protection of these local heritage languages have also been discussed, which include encouraging endogamy largely by means of ensuring the community that does not become too dispersed, upholding traditional values, widespread support for multilingualism, and maintaining religious beliefs that are distinct from the dominant ones (Hussin, 2020).

Research articles concerned with social practices include Malay gestures, which Malay speakers use for various manual pointing and other bodily actions involving gaze, torso and head movements, which communicate distinct functions, although some gesture forms and functions are shared among Malay speakers and other cultural groups, some direction-giving pointing behaviours are Malay specific (Mechraoui & Noor, 2017).

Research papers relevant to performing arts reveals the musical style of the Mak Yong, dating from the early 20th century to current times, noting the musical features of periodic formal structures, resultant rhythms and complex melodic content that bind this genre to aspects of an ancient Southeast Asian musical style (Matusky, 2015). These studies reveal the emergence of quite a number of festivals that veers away from the nature of traditional ones in the southern Philippines and East Malaysia. A review of the tourists' events of festivals of Sama/Bajau culture in the Kamahardikaan and festival of Bongao, Tawi-Tawi province, Philippines and the Regatta Lepa festival of Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia, in the southern Philippines and East Malaysia reveals the emergence of quite a number of festivals that veers away from the nature of traditional ones (Hussin & Santamaria, 2015).

It is also found that in many aspects of life, particularly traditional healthcare practices Javanese community still retains the ways to maintain their identity while at the same time keeping the Malay image intact (Rofil, Hamzah & Syed, 2015). These studies have also found that intangible cultural heritage, especially food and traditional performing arts, has significantly contributed to branding 'Malaysia Truly Asia' and tourism development (Hussin, 2018a, 2018b).

These research articles are related to the following academic fields; anthropology, ethnomusicology, ethnochoreology, folklore, heritage management (including heritage law), cultural studies, mythology etc. The main research focus of these collected data in the form of research articles is Language endangerment,

Heritage management (including heritage law), natural language protection, culture management, policymaking, tourism, documentation, heritage law, comparative studies of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippine and disaster prevention (Hussin, 2020).

In Indonesia, the most popular genres of ICH studied in the past three years are ethnomusicology, social practices and oral tradition. Traditional medicine/ ethnobotany is also considered important research to know about how local people use and the application of the traditional way of healing and treatment. Limited research related to ICH is conducted in Thailand due to the unavailability of funds from the government or any other agency. Among limited work related to ICH, the majority focus on identifying ICH reflecting the state of ICH-related development, interests, and studies in Thailand. Vietnam scholars focus on the concept, inventory, safeguarding, and management of ICH elements of ethnic groups in terms of aesthetic aspects and techniques, not much on how the expressions are seen as ICH elements for the custodian communities. The researchers have emphasised the role of museums, the role of the elderly people in a village in keeping the traditional cultures and their transmission to young people and the role of mass media in determining the direction and authority of the state agencies about raising awareness of people on the safeguarding of ICH to keep their heritage alive. Research work in Myanmar focuses on the genres such as traditional craftsmanship, social practices knowledge and practices concerning nature because of local societies' desire for their local culture to be included in the nominated ICH national list and UNESCO's list (Hussin, 2020).

From this collected data of Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Myanmar, it can be concluded that genres of ICH studied vary from country to country, but the most common genre studied in all these countries is about their social practices. Many ICH genres like knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; traditional craftsmanship; local knowledge, sports, local wisdom and performing arts are the neglected areas of ICH in these countries, so there is a huge gap between studying these dimensions of ICH for which collaboration can be built with other Malaysian universities. Similarly, the international level of collaboration is also required to do comparative studies of different dimensions of intangible cultural heritage to learn from each other's experiences. One country focuses more on one genre and other countries on another genre. For example, in Malaysia, oral traditions and minority languages protection, in Indonesia social practices, in Thailand performing arts, in Vietnam, social practices and Myanmar also social practices are widely studied areas of ICH. Through international collaboration, a mechanism can be developed to study the ignored genres of ICH and similarly can also seek help from each other from their expertise of genres studied that will help highlight the key similarities and differences among their cultures that will help take measures to protect endangered ICH genres (Hussin, 2020).

Second Phase, 2020–2021

The second phase of the data collection was on the Intangible Cultural Heritage survey of the partner countries, Malaysia (40), Indonesia (50), Thailand (20), Vietnam (50) and the Philippines (10). This was the first-year data collection for the Philippines. The data was collected based on publications published mainly in journals (Figure 3). Therefore, most journal articles are relatively recent publications (Figure 4) because they are available online. The articles published in the journal are written either in English or in local languages (Figure 5) like Malay Language (Malaysia), Thai Language (Thailand), Vietnamese (Vietnam), Indonesian (Indonesia), and Filipino (the Philippines). The researchers gathered the local language data because the abstracts were translated into English. The researchers also translated into English if the abstracts in English are not available.

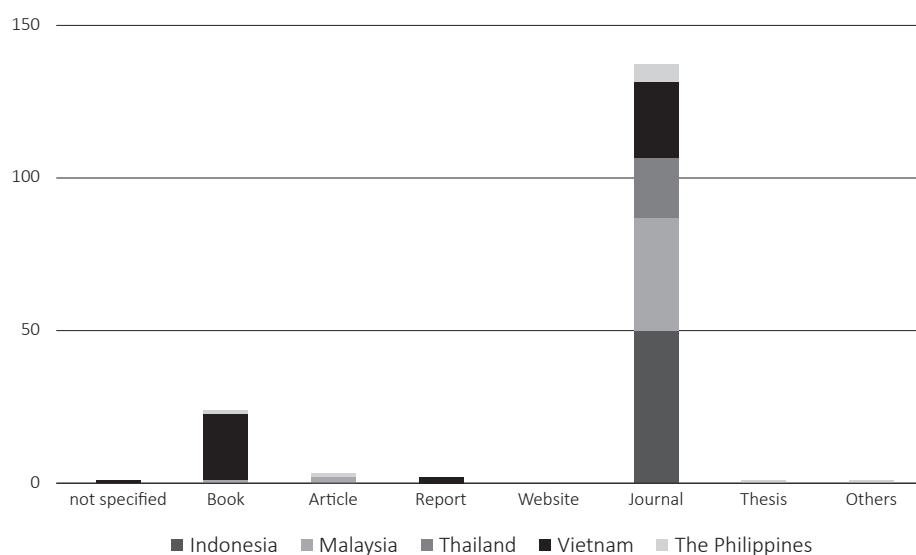


Figure 3 Publication category of the ICH data of Southeast Asian countries (Source: partner countries data, 2021)

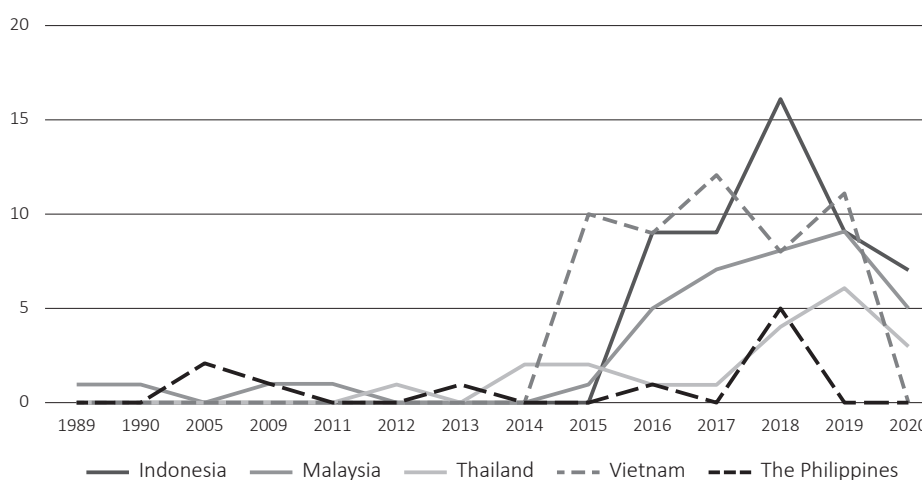


Figure 4 Year of publication of the ICH data (Source: partner countries data, 2021)

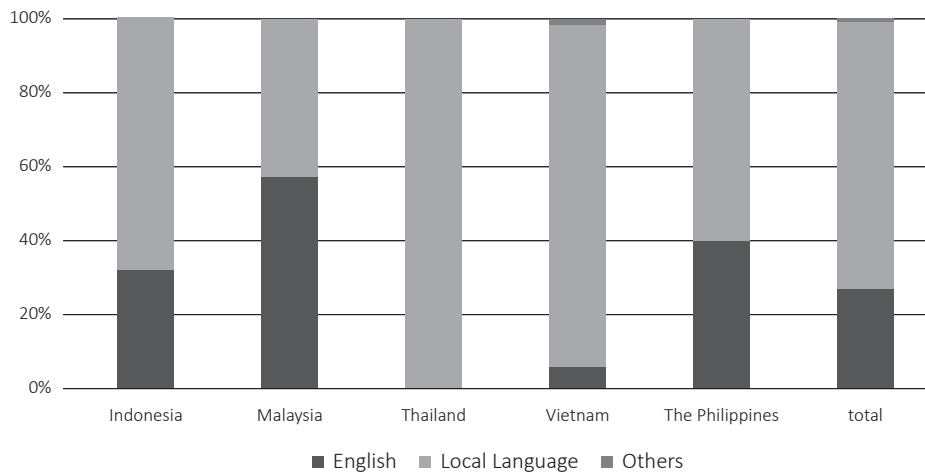


Figure 5 The language style of the published data
(Source: partner countries data, 2021)

The research trend or focus is based on the data collected in the report of the second phase of the project following the similar pattern of the first phase project. The focus of Southeast Asian researchers on ICH genres is found in their publications, as shown in Figure 6.

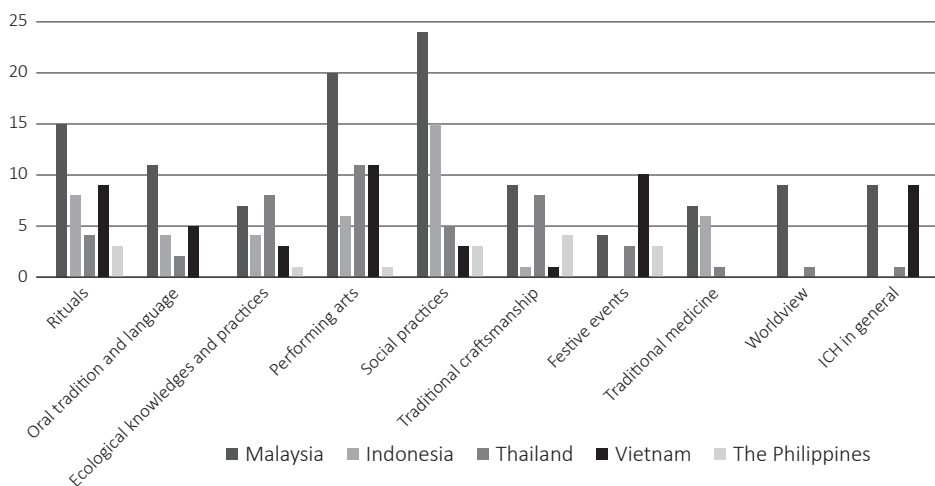


Figure 6 Comparison of partner countries focus on ICH Genres in their publication
(Source: partner countries data, 2021)

Among forty papers selected from Malaysia, seven papers are about the rituals performed during different religious events and food prepared during those rituals performed in the Iban community in Limbang (Sabak), Pakan (Leka Timang), Kapit and Betong (Miring). Four papers are about oral traditions and language of Bidayuh Language in Sarawak and Cantonese Hokkien dialect group

of Chinese in Klang valley and folklores Malay syair. Four papers are about ecological knowledge and practices of indigenous people of Malay, Orang Asli resettlement villages in the state of Terengganu and Bidayuh Bau-Jagoi community. Seven papers are about the performing arts like music and dance of Wayang Kulit Kelantan, Makyung dance, the tradition of performing Bangsawan in theatre, Gamelan Sarawak and Kuda Kepang dance of Malay-Muslim communities. Traditional Malay theatre 'Main Peteri' is believed to have healing effects on physical, psychological and emotional states, qualifying it as a form of drama therapy. Six papers are about the social practices performed by the Orang Asli, Javanese, Bajau and Malay Communities in the form of traditional herbal medicine derived from the traditional flora and fauna as an alternate way of treatment. Three papers are about the traditional craftsmanship of kelingkan embroidery on veils in Sarawak, Selangor, Kelantan, Terengganu and Negeri Sembilan, of Malaysia, kelingkan embroidery on veil in Pontianak, Ketapang, Daik, and Palembang, Indonesia and earliest textile technique of ikat tunggal and ikat ganda for weaving sulam and pakon. Wood carving on the hilt and sheath (taguban) of parang (machete) created by the Bajau craftsmanship in Kota Belud of Sabah is also discussed. Five papers are about heritage management of traditional communities of Sarawak and Sabah, other states of Malaysia, and the heritage legislation act of National Heritage, 2005. Four papers are about local wisdom in preparing traditional Malay food in Saribas and wisdom traditions in their thought patterns in Sarawak Iban pua kumbu.

Rituals that are covered in these papers are from the Peranakan Chinese community's belief in sacred spirits and deities that are performed in Kampung Pasir Parit, in conjunction with the Datok Janggut (sacred spirit) site transfer which took place on 5 January 2018 (Yan & Suboh, 2019). Rituals performed by Chinese communities in Malaysia, Broga in Negeri Sembilan and Machap Baru in Melaka. Rituals performed by Iban community in Limbang (Sabak), Pakan (Leka Timang), Kapit and Betong (Miring). From the Bajau, Sabah traditional ritual in the community of Bajau Semporna, which is Magombo, is the ritual that honours their ancestors' spirits (Marinsah & Ramli, 2017). Catastrophe rejection ritual practised by the people of Petalangan to avoid disaster either for individual, society, or the village. Then, this ritual was also called "village." The element of Islam was added in such a way which was wrapped by religious fiesta for the repulsive reinforcement. Due to the community's lack of understanding of Islamic teachings and low level of education and strong psychological relationship with the surrounding community, this ritual still persisted (Hasbullah, Toyo, & Pawi, 2017).

Languages that are included in these studies are Bidayuh language, spoken in Sarawak, East Malaysia and Hakka, Cantonese and Hokkien dialect groups who had successively become the leading forces among the Chinese in the Klang Valley from 1860 (Riget & Campbell, 2020; Wei & Tze-Ken, 2019). Traditional

knowledge of natural resources by the Orang Asli in Terengganu, Malaysia. Indigenous Knowledge (IK) within Bidayuh folk narratives or dondan is explored among Bidayuh Bau-Jagoi community. These two types of IK are analysed within the context of the Gawai which is the cultural celebrations of the Bidayuh community (Campbell, Ghazali & Sahuri, 2016; Abdullah et al., 2020).

In Performing arts Malay-Muslim communities Mak Yong and Kuda Kepang are studied as a medium of education, medication and worship. Therapeutic aspects of the traditional Malay theatre 'Main Peteri', which is believed to have healing effects on physical, psychological and emotional states is studied. Therapeutic properties identified in the Main Peteri are explored and described in terms of their effects as healing agents (Abd Rahman & Ahmad, 2017). The tradition of performing Bangsawan in Sarawak theatre's, stage structure, and other elements is also discussed (Abdullah, 2017).

Social practices studied in these articles are relevant to mantras among Bajau women's beauty in Sabah (Ghani, Ahmad, & Kahn, 2019), embroidered Tepak sirih used in wedding ceremonies of Kampung Seri Kedah, Sungai Leman, Sekinchan Selangor (Salleh & Kim, 2016), herbal medicine of Javanese and other Malay communities. Plants and herbs known to be medicinal to the indigenous tribes in Peninsular Malaysia and traditional knowledge and usage of medicinal plants among the Semai at a village in the state Perak, Malaysia are studied (Yunos, 2015, 2016). Traditional craftsmanship covered in these studies are the gold and silver embroidery on veils in Sarawak, Selangor, Kelantan, Terengganu and Negeri Sembilan, of Malaysia (Sarkawi, & Rahman, 2016), kelingkan embroidery on veil in Pontianak, Ketapang, Daik, and Palembang, Indonesia (Zainal Amri, Haron, & Samian, 2018) and Malay earliest textile techniques of ikat tunggal and ikat ganda for weaving sulam, weaving pakon (Ismail, 1990). Wood carving on the hilt and sheath (taguban) of parang (machete) created by the Bajau craftsmanship in Kota Belud of Sabah (Badaruddin et al., 2019).

The data collected shows that the performing arts and social practices are the major focus of researchers related to ICH genres. These genres were given attention because they are easy to access and widely practised by society or community. The other genres that are also getting attention from researchers in Southeast Asia are rituals, oral traditions and language, ecological knowledge and practices, traditional craftsmanship, festive events, and traditional medicine and worldview. This pattern is almost the same for the third phase in the data collected (example of Malaysia).

Third Phase, 2021–2022

Since the third phase of the data collection is still in the process, therefore, the available data was collected only from Malaysia, the University of Malaya as a

partner country and the national collaborators, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK). More than Seventy papers have been published on intangible cultural heritage from 2016 to 2020 by Malaysian researchers from UM, UNIMAS, UKM and UMK. The data mainly is collected from journal articles, some book chapters that cover intangible cultural heritage elements like performing arts, rituals, oral traditions and language, drama, traditional craftsmanship, social practices, textile, traditional medicine, festive events and ecological knowledge and practices.

Performing arts that are covered in these papers include Bangsawan art, which is categorised as an urban theatre; due to the rapid urbanisation in the cities the art form has been performed (Deenerwan & Said, 2021). Traditional Selangor Buginese “Poja” dance and its reconstruction are linked to the “Pakurru Sumange” dance in South Sulawesi, Indonesia (Zainudin & Samsuddin, 2021). Rituals and ceremonies of the Bidayuh tribes in Sarawak Borneo, which are taken from *Bajo asal* (traditional songs), *girite Bidayuh damba* (stories and legendary), are explored to authenticate manifestation of the Bidayuh culture and tradition in the numerous Bidayuh society areas in Bau, Padawan, and Serian division of Sarawak (Paw, & Ungang, 2021). Similarly, *Sayaw barong* is one of the traditional performances for the Bajau Sama ethnic in Kota Belud, Sabah. It is a symbolic performance that represents the war dance in Bajau martial arts locally and is used as an offensive and defensive technique (*buah/jurus silat*) that merges in different streams (*aliran*) of silat such as silat kuntau, silat sping/sprint, silat betawi, and silat Nusantara (Badaruddin et al., 2021).

Nobat, is the royal court musical ensemble performed in the Malay courts of Kedah, Selangor, Perak, Terengganu and Brunei (Halid, 2018). Traditional Kelantanese dance drama *makyung* or *Mak Yong* which was previously banned by the Kelantan state government and is recently allowed to be performed in public after adhering to the state’s Islamic code of performance (Chong & Azlan, 2018). *Dikir barat*, a popular folk art form and *ain pateri* or *main teri*, a healing ritual involving the use of music and theatre are also covered which are similar to *makyung* (Suan & Rudyansjah, 2018). The *kuda kepang* dance performance is covered which is practiced among the Javanese community in the state of Johor. Malaysian musical instruments also looked into the *sape*, a chordophone played by the *orang ulu* community in Sarawak. Musical instruments of *Dusun Tindal* in *Kampung Tinuhan* in Sabah. Are discussed which belongs to the larger *Kadanzandusun* ethnic majority of the state (Suan, 2016). *Lundayeh* dance forms performed in *Tenom*, *Sipitang* and *Long Pa Sia*, along the west coast of Sabah and the *Bisaya* dance tradition in *Beaufort* are studied (Chong, 2015). The *Kuntau* performance is a form of martial art of the Iban community in longhouses in Sarawak, performed only by the men called “*bujang berani*”. However, as the

years went by, the Kuntau is performed as a form of entertainment during festive seasons such as the Gawai Dayak festival (Gerry & Osup, 2021).

The traditional dance including the Ngajat, a traditional dance which synonym with the ethnic of Iban in Sarawak. This dance is usually performed in festive such as the Gawai Dayak and matrimony (Kiyai, Tugang, & Seer, 2020). In Sabah, an instruments and genres of Makiang group music suggest evidence of diffusion from Sama'-Bajau and Suluk musical practices, including the morunsai vocal dance genre and the performances of the ensembles sampasang no gabang and sampasang no kulintangan. It illustrates evidence for the processes of cultural convergences through which east coast Sama'-Bajau musical practices that have been absorbed into interior cultures and transformed over time (Pugh-Kitingan, 2019). The "usungan/tandu" parade is a unique traditional practice and is still performed by coastal communities of Sarawak at the "khatam" al-Quran event. It is a tradition to celebrate their children's success who have just completed the Holy al-Quran recitation (Mat, 2021). Another research is about musical compositions of Tazul Izan Tajuddin, the focus has mainly been on the musical analysis of the composition itself. Encapsulated within Tazul's *Kabus Pantun* (2018), it attempts to elucidate how John Rink's idea of a performer's creative process can contribute to the preparation of a performance on works that push pianistic possibilities to the limit, if not beyond (Kent, 2019).

Local wisdom and customs opted during the different activities, ceremonies, and in the rule of life including the rewards and punishments according to their respective offences. Local wisdom discussed in these studies include the practice of tahlil (recital ceremony for the dead) and tunggu kubur (grave waiting) from the perspective of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence. In the Malay community, tahlil is a form of psychological and emotional support to the deceased's family while the practice of tunggu kubur (grave waiting) is an approach to protect the buried corpses from thefts and mystical activities (Yusof & Ramli, 2021). Traditional knowledge regarding the usage of gunpowder is explored from the texts documented in the manuscripts. It provides a clearer picture of the textual dynamics of gunpowder knowledge to highlight its importance to enhance the understanding of Malay gun technology (Hasbullah, Hussain, & Balwi, 2021). Pemali (taboo) tradition of Indonesian people, which represents twelve different ethnic groups living in East Kalimantan Province of Indonesia, is studied for their safety, health, prosperity, marriage mate, and education. Rituals and taboos practiced in various life activities in the Iban community settlement in Sungai Passai, Sibuluan Sarawak are also discussed (Kaharuddin, 2021).

Customs opted during the British North Borneo Chartered Company, BNBB rule against the Dusun community in Kimanis, Sabah. Challenges faced by the Orang Asli community officials and preachers in carrying out the activities planned by

MUIP around Pahang Indigenous villages regarding the custom of Da'wah which is an obligation for every Muslim (Rahman & Mustapha, 2020). The evolutionary process of Malay clothes, especially the trend among men's Baju Melayu in Malaysia due to social change and transformation of a new trend among Baju Melayu (Zakaria, Aris, & Nawawi, 2020). The contradiction of Custom and Islamic Law in the Practice of Marriage in Murut Tahol Community, Nabawan District Sabah is the other research on custom (Min & On, 2021). Linguistic taboo is also a custom in which societies determine the verbal rules to be accepted as dogma in daily life. The creation of linguistic taboo is not an arbitrary decision but one based on two main ideas of the Relevance theory (Liddy & Wahab, 2021). The custom of 'Tepung Tawar' is also covered, which is believed for generations to provide well-being and happiness to the sprinkled individual (Bohari & Magiman, 2020). Another custom in Sarawak is a 'Ngayau'. Ngayau (headhunting) is a head-hunting practice based on the custom practiced by the Iban community and it is their legacy (Kiyai, 2021). Conservation of 'Jerat Sembat' of indigenous Temuan tribe in Kampung Gapam, Jasin, Melaka. 'Jerat Sembat' is commonly used to trap animals in living conditions. 'Jerat Sembat' must be maintained to uphold the local wisdom of the indigenous people (Rohir & Yusoff, 2020).

Craft traditions covered in these papers include creating blowpipe symbols regarding small businesses operated by the Orang Asli communities (Manaf & Salleh, 2021). Kelarai pattern designs found on woven mats and the philosophy used, to enhance understand and appreciate the art in mat weaving which has been gradually forgotten, and there is uncertainty on the fate of this Malay art heritage (Mariam & Marzuki, 2021). Boat-shaped coffin artefacts found in the Painted Cave of Niah, Sarawak. It discusses the past's design, function, and use of boat-shaped coffins (Kimwah, Ibrahim, & Arus, 2020). Techniques to produce creative design of traditional Malay handicrafts of batik and songket which are prominent in Kelantan and Terengganu, are discussed. The 'kelingkan' embroidery is also a traditional Malay art passed on from generation to generation, specifically in Kelantan and Malaysia in general (Rahman & Majid, 2021). 'Kain Telepuk' which is the most glorious Malay textile in the state of Selangor. Telepuk textile is a rich fabric usually worn by royalty and nobility members over 300 years ago. This study document and compile the aesthetic and philosophical values of treasure of the Telepuk textile as the Selangor Malay traditional royal court fabric. Philosophy of art motifs and design published about Bunga terung which are a symbol synonymous with the Iban ethnic group in Borneo. In Sarawak, the bunga terung is worn by Iban men who have attained puberty to signify entry into adulthood (Amin & Aziz, 2019).

These studies have explored traditional medicines and medicinal plants used by the Malay community, including medicinal plants in the Kampung Orang Asli Donglai Baru, Hulu Langat, Selangor, Malaysia and population status ethnomic-

inal plants in the home gardens of Kampung Masjid Ijok along with its associated traditional knowledge. These studies discuss the Malay heritage of making medicine, treating, preparing materials, acquiring knowledge from the range up to the cultivation of plants for medicinal purposes (Ramli et al., 2021; Ramli, Milow, & Malek, 2021). Role of fruits in curing diseases used by the Malay community is also discussed (Jelani & Muhammad, 2021).

Folks beliefs and customary rituals covered include berburung, a belief of animism that existed in the Iban community before the advent of Christianity and Islam. In the birding belief, the Iban people use seven types of birds named as Ketupung, Beragai, Bejampung, Pangkas, Papau, Embuas and Nendak (Mulok & Osup, 2021). The “Miring” ceremony plays an important role for Sarawak’s Iban community. Miring ceremonies held during the annual festivals, paddy cultivation, early phase of house construction and any activities that are considered need to be carried out the ceremony by the practitioner’s group in Sarawak (Echoh, Gapor, & Rahman, 2020).

Folklores grow from generation to generation and are conveyed orally until they are known as archipelago folk narrative literature. The folklores included in these studies are folklores at Mukim Bebar Pekan, Pahang and oral stories of Jakun Orang Asli in Rompin, Pahang. The oral stories that exist among the Jakun Orang Asli community are declining, gradually disappearing, and threatened with extinction. This will affect the continuity of oral stories as part of the oral traditions that shape the identity of the Jakun Orang Asli community, so it need conservation (Hanipah, Jamal, & Abdillah, 2021; Yusoff et al., 2021).

The social practices of the Kampung Malay community regarding the garden elements and their landscape abide by the Malaysian Garden Concept’s (MGC) basic guidelines. Highlight that the elements of landscape and garden seem unattractive to the designers and are no longer a priority for the homeowners to inherit. Findings also indicate that most of the ‘kampung’ landscape elements do not significantly impact supporting guidelines by the National Landscape Department (NLD) (Zakaria, Hussein, & Dali, 2021).

OUTPUT (DATABASE)

IRCI has been publishing information on literature, experts, and research institution related to ICH safeguarding through the IRCI research database since 2014. This database aims to enhance research pertaining to ICH safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific region. The Partnership Programme supports this database for Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan¹⁰. In FY2018, a

10 <https://www.irci.jp/ichdb/>

survey of universities and libraries in Myanmar was conducted to investigate the needs for the database functions and their current situation. In FY2019, the database's data and functions have been reviewed and improved.

The database can be retrieved at the IRCI's website which divide intangible cultural heritage element as "ICH GENRES", i.e, oral tradition, performing arts (music, dance, drama), social practices, rituals, festive events, ecological knowledges and practices, worldview, traditional craftsmanship, sports/games, food culture, traditional medicine, ICH in general and others. Currently (as of March 2021), the database contains 2,453 items of data¹¹.

ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND FUTURE

Since 2013, three projects have faced a few challenges in their implementation, such as difficulty grasping the whole picture of research activities in the Asia-Pacific region because this is a new domain. A basic understanding such as the definition of ICH has not been popularised thoroughly among the research institutions and government officials and the legal system is yet to be streamlined.

Second, the outcomes are published in the local languages and/or not distributed widely (IRCI, 2019b). Third, researchers are also confused and misunderstand the "safeguarding" concept and the importance of ICH. Fourth, The ICH research output data is scattered and not properly documented (Hussin, 2016).

Other challenges also affected the quality of the data output. Uneven distribution of research resources at the local level, variation in the quality of collections due to different understandings of ICH, limited information sharing among the research institutions and a high risk of loss of archived research data due to poor storage conditions and limited access.

Some improvement in Data collection (with new guidelines)

This will ensure research data collection process, promote a better understanding of the ICH Convention and research as one of the safeguarding measures, and further promote ICH research. After the first phase of the project, each Counterpart is expected to function as the focal point in their own country to expand the cooperating mechanism.

It is expected that the collected information will widen the focus of the research, thereby contributing to the region's safeguarding through academic activities and promotion of the ICH Convention. The collected information will be added to the

¹¹ <https://www.irci.jp/ichdb/>

online “IRCI Research Database” that aims to share the multilingual literature information widely.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the report presented to the IRCI regarding the second phase of the project, there are a few suggestions from the counterpart (Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines) on 1) areas that need to be explored by the Southeast Asian researchers, 2) Improvement on methodologies, 3) collaboration (national and international) in aspects on genres for ICH research, documentation and safeguarding.

1) Southeast Asian researchers need to explore ICH areas

Table 1 Common recommendations by the participants: Areas that need to be explored by Southeast Asian researchers (Source: countries partners-meeting, 2021)

No.	ICH Genre	Malaysia	Indonesia	Thailand	Vietnam	Philippines
1	Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe	√				
2	Traditional craftsmanship	√	√	√	√	
3	Local knowledge	√				
4	Local sports	√	√	√	√	√
5	Festive events	√	√	√		
6	Worldview		√	√	√	√
7	Ecological knowledge and practices		√		√	√
8	Oral traditions and language			√		
9	Social Practices				√	
10	Traditional medicine				√	√
11	Performing arts					√

2) Improvement on methodologies

Assessment research on the safeguarding initiatives through the database, collaborative work by all researchers, government and non-government agencies and academic institutions to produce comprehensive data.

Documents should also include audio-visuals, which will help and support the conservation, protection and safeguarding of the ICH.

3) Researchers are encouraged to explore collaborations with different countries for comparative studies

Explore the further intangible cultural heritage genres at local, regional and International Universities, example Malaysian universities collaborate with local collaborators and also working together with international collaborators in doing ICH research and safeguarding.

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