

## Presentation 3



## International Cooperation for Safeguarding of Folk Tugging Rituals and Games in Asia

**Seong-Yong Park**

Assistant Director-General, ICHCAP

### 1. Introduction

Tugging rituals and games can be found all around the world, constituting a panhuman cultural phenomenon. Especially in Asia, tugging rituals and games are related to rice farming, with most instances located within the farming cultures of Northeast and Southeast Asia. The practice of tugging rituals and games is universal and widespread, held either as a prayer for rain or a good harvest, or to foretell whether the year's harvest will be good or bad; and while many similarities exist based on the climate or environment, there is also a distinctness, individuality and creativity specific to each region, making tugging rituals and games worth preserving as a common element of the intangible cultural heritage of Asia.

Due to rapid urbanization and industrialization, however, today the tugging rituals and games of each country are in danger of their transmission being suspended, and there is even a lack of awareness of how important it is to safeguard tugging rituals and games as a part of intangible cultural heritage that is closely linked with agricultural rituals. In addition, while there have been previous studies on some cases of tugging rituals and

games of Asia, they are mostly limited to specific regions or rarely provide in depth research, making it difficult to consider the connections between each region.

In response, the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (ICHCAP) in cooperation with the City of Dangjin conducted from late 2012 to early 2013 an Investigation into the Current State of Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games of Southeast Asia. Cambodia, the Philippines and Vietnam participated in the study, and important cases related to farming rituals were discovered. The research findings on the tugging rituals and games of Cambodia, the Philippines and Vietnam were presented at the International Academic Symposium on the Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games of East Asia held in April 2013 in Dangjin-si, South Chungcheong Province, and at the time reports were also made on the current state of the safeguarding of traditional tugging rituals and games in Japan.

The 2013 international academic symposium offered an important opportunity for Cambodia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Korea. At the unofficial meeting held after the symposium, the four countries shared an awareness of how important it is to safeguard traditional tugging rituals and games being transferred in each country and practiced throughout Asia, and came to discuss the possibility of pursuing a joint inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of UNESCO.

As a follow-up measure to the meeting, the Korean government, together with representatives of Cambodia, the Philippines and Vietnam, held intergovernmental conferences in October and December for a joint inscription. Intangible cultural heritage personnel and experts participated in the two intergovernmental conferences, and together they concentrated their efforts on preparing an application for inscription. This was the first time any of the four countries had participated in preparing an application for joint inscription, so the cooperation process was accompanied by extensive discussions and reviews.

The final draft of the application for inscription was submitted to the Convention Secretariat, along with supplementary materials including photographs and video files, before the deadline on March 31, 2013, based on the local time in Paris; the Secretariat sent a request that the application be further supplemented in November 2014; and the four countries of Cambodia, Korea, the Philippines and Vietnam once again worked together and submitted the requested supplementary materials in February 2015.

Currently, the application for joint inscription is under review by the UNESCO Convention evaluation agency, and the final evaluation is planned to take place sometime between April and June. Then four weeks prior to the intergovernmental conferences, the Secretariat will deliver the evaluation report to State Members of the Committee, and the report will be posted online so that the countries involved can participate. The final decision as to whether or not the joint inscription of tugging rituals and games will be realized will be made at the 10th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, set to take place from November 30 to December 4 in Namibia.

This report attempts to offer a detailed record of the efforts made until now based on international cooperation in order to safeguard the tugging rituals and games of Asia mentioned above.

## **2. Project to Investigate the Current State of Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games in Southeast Asia**

To excavate the common heritage of the Asian region promote a cooperative effort to ensure its safeguarding, ICHCAP and the City of Dangjin have pushed forward with a project to investigate the current state of the diverse traditions of tugging rituals and games in each country by collecting information and data. To this end, ICHCAP has launched a project to investigate the current state of traditional tugging rituals and games of East Asia, beginning by signing contracts with the governments of Cambodia, the Philippines and Vietnam, as well as with other organizations that specialize in intangible cultural heritage. From the planning stage, the project has been aimed at understanding the importance of the traditions of tugging rituals and games in the Asian region.

ICHCAP, together with the governments of Cambodia, the Philippines and Vietnam, selected specialized organizations in each country, and had them collect basic materials related to the traditional tugging rituals and games of each country, as well as conduct research through field studies. Each organization filled out a questionnaire designed by ICHCAP and submitted it in the form of a report; and especially, the countries that participated in the investigation each created a field study team that was dispatched for

one year to photograph, document, and study the diverse traditions of tugging rituals and games that take place.

Foundations were made for the safeguarding, transmission and study of each case by investigating and filling out a questionnaire complete with an overview of the particular tugging ritual or game, its characteristics and current state of transmission, the performance process and the production of props, related ceremonies and events, transmitters and related groups, and the particular circumstances in each country including various protection measures. The field study teams recorded vivid and in-depth information by interviewing performers and transmitters of each tugging ritual or game, and have also secured audiovisual materials including still and moving images.

Later ICHCAP shared the collected data and materials with the participating nations and related organizations, and thereby established a basis for the joint inscription of traditional tugging rituals and games on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of UNESCO.

### **1) Vietnam**

Vietnamese site survey team composed of members of VICAS. The team investigated tug of war festivals in Huu Chap Village of Bac Ninh Province, Vinh Phuc Province's Tich Son Festival, Laco Cai Province's Long Tong Festival. Houg Canh Village was visited twice for investigation. Houg Canh tug-of-war festival in 2013 was held for three days from February 12th to 14th during which time the team visited, observed, performed interviews, photographed and filmed, and collected related literature. Collected information was substituted in the provided questionnaire after primary site survey to draw up the progress report. Secondary site survey of Houg Canh Village was made on the second week of March to receive community's authentication and supplement necessary information. Secondary site survey consisted primarily of in-depth interviews with tug-of-war athletes, village officials, and village elders to collect information that could not be obtained by mere participation of the event. Based on the two site visits, the team submitted the progress report to ICHCAP on the third week of March. Amendments were made based on the feedback from ICHCAP and the final report was submitted on the first week of April.

## **2) Philippines**

Site survey team of Philippines composed of members of NCAA, University of the Philippines, Cultural Centre of the Philippines, and etc. Traditional tug-of-war in the Philippines is performed as part of the Huowah Harvest Ritual in the

second half of the year which made site visits difficult during the duration of the Project. Therefore the investigation was centered on the Punnuk ritual performed during Huowah Harvest Ritual. Primary site visit was conducted on March 2013 to interview participants of Punnuk while collecting related materials.

Punnuk is the sole tug-of-war ritual performed in the Philippines as an agricultural ritual. Prior to the investigation, no in-depth investigation was performed on Punnuk apart from some photos and newspaper articles. As a result the Punnuk related material collected by the site survey team was extremely limited prior to the primary site visit.

The primary site visit of Ifugao province was conducted on March 16th and 17th 2013. Specifically those regions that still perform Punnuk and Huowah, Barangay Hapao Proper, Barangay Ba-ang, and Barangay Nungulunan, were visited. Interviews with Punnuk participants were conducted. The site survey team drew up a report based on the interviews and presented the report in the International Symposium on the Traditional Tug-of-War in East Asia held on April 11th. Future plans include secondary site visit of Ifugao province to participate in the Punnuk ritual to photograph and film the ritual. The supplementary information will be submitted to ICHCAP and Dangjin city.

## **3) Cambodia**

The ICHCAP came to an agreement with the Ministry of Culture and Fine Art of Cambodia. Site survey was conducted by a team composed of staff of Royal University of Fine Art and Ministry of Culture and Fine Art and headed by President of Royal University of Fine Art, Bong Sovath.

Traditional tug-of-war in Cambodia is performed during Cambodian New Year's Festival and Chlong Chet Festival in mid-April. Chong Chet celebrates the beginning of rice cultivation for the year and the team participated in the traditional tug of war performed during the festive period. However because most regions performed tug-of-war on the last

day of the New Year period, April 15th, and site survey team's participation in the International Symposium on the Traditional Tug of War in East Asia held in Dangjin City, participation by the site survey team was limited. Research on other regions apart from Siem Reap province was conducted through written and phone interviews and investigating existing literature.

The progress report was drawn up based on the site visit information and literature investigation. The report was amended and supplemented with the help of feedback from ICHCAP and the final report was submitted on May 24th 2013.

### **3. International Symposium on Traditional Rituals and Games in East Asia**

Based on the findings collected and studied during the investigation project mentioned above, the International Symposium on Traditional Rituals and Games in East Asia was held from April 11 to 14, 2013 in Dangjin-si, South Chunchong Province. This symposium was held during the 2013 Gijisi Tugging Rituals and Games Folk Festival held as part of the public performance of Gijisi Juldarigi, the tugging ritual designated as National Important Intangible Cultural Heritage No. 75. Therefore, both Korean and foreign participants of the symposium were also given the opportunity to participate in the Gijisi Juldarigi events.

#### **1) Dangjin Proclamation for the Safeguarding of the Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games of East Asia**

Prior to the symposium, the City of Dangjin issued the Dangjin Proclamation for the Safeguarding of the Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games of East Asia. In the Gijisi Juldarigi Museum Auditorium on April 11, 2013, the Dangjin Proclamation was successfully issued before an audience of around one hundred including cultural heritage experts from Korea and overseas, and persons concerned from Korean tugging rituals and games preservation associations, the central government and local self-governing bodies.

Through the Dangjin Proclamation, organizations solemnly swore before the audience gathered at the Dangjin Proclamation Ceremony held on the night before the main event:

the Gijisi Juldarigi Preservation Association promising to actively promote the safeguarding activities of the traditional tugging rituals and games of East Asia as part of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity through exchange between communities; the Gijisi Juldarigi Museum to actively carry out data collection and research activities in order to make clear the diversity and universality of the traditional tugging rituals and games of East Asia; the Gijisi Juldarigi Festival Committee to actively strive for the formation of a league among cities and among communities in Korea and overseas for the safeguarding of the traditional tugging rituals and games of East Asia; and the City of Dangjin to actively cooperate for the joint inscription of traditional tugging rituals and games that transcend borders and are shared among many countries in East Asia on UNESCO's Representative List.

## **2) International Symposium on the Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games of East Asia**

At the International Symposium on the Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games of East Asia, around 80 participants including scholars, experts and government officials from Korea, Vietnam, Japan, Cambodia and the Philippines, as well as members of Korean associations for the preservation of tugging rituals and games listened to presentations about the current state of the transmission of traditional tugging rituals and games in each country based on the findings of the Investigations into the Current State of Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games, and discussed ways to cooperate and form a consensus on the safeguarding of the traditional tugging rituals and games of Asia.

Held on April 12, 2013, at the Gijisi Juldarigi Museum for the purpose of increasing awareness of the traditional tugging rituals and games of Asia and fostering an environment for their joint inscription, the international symposium was filled with presentations and discussions that lasted the whole day on the theme of "The Diversity and Universality of Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games in East Asia".

The first session was conducted on the topic of "international cooperation for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, and the tugging rituals and games of East Asia". ICHCAP Assistant Director-General Park Seong-Yong made a presentation on "International Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage Under the 2003 Convention" which was followed by presentations by professor Bak Sang-mi, Hunkuk University of Foreign Studies,

on “the Plurality and Universality of an Intangible Cultural Heritage Shared Across Borders,” and Jeong Yeon-hak, curator, The National Folk Museum of Korea, on Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games as a Shared Intangible Cultural Heritage of East Asia.”

During the second session, researcher Nguyen Thi Thu Ha at the Vietnamese Institute of Culture and Arts Studies presented a case report on the “Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games Festivals of Vietnam Focusing on the Tugging Game Festivals of Huong Canh” (read in proxy by Nguyen Kim Dung, Department of Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Culture and Information, Vietnam); followed by presentations by lecturer Siyonn Sopharith from The Royal University of Fine Arts, Cambodia, on “the Current State of Distribution and Transmission of the Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games of Cambodia” by professor Norma Respicio at the University of the Philippines on “the Current State of Distribution and Transmission of the Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games of the Philippines” by honorary researcher Hoshino Hiroshi from the Department of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Japan, on “the Current State of Transmission of the Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games of Japan” and by professor Han Yang-myeong of the Department of Folklore at Andong National University on “the Diversity of the Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games of Korea and Its Significance”.

The final panel discussion was moderated by ICHCAP Director-General Lee Samuel, and the panel members included: Nguyen Kim Dung, Department of Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Culture and Information, Vietnam; Chey Rotha, Academic Affairs Office, The Royal University of Fine Arts, Cambodia; Cecelia Picache, Project Development Officer, National Commission for Culture and the Arts, the Philippines; Imaishi Migiwa, researcher, Department of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Japan; and Yim Jang-hyeok, professor, Chung-ang University. The two main issues discussed were “the possibility of joint inscription of traditional tugging rituals and games” and “the common feature of tugging rituals and games being based in a farming culture”.

Traditional tugging rituals and games constitute a shared heritage that is performed all across East Asia as part of farming rites, and depending on the culture, climate or environment display characteristics that are universal, distinct or creative. The discussions during the symposium were focused on examining those characteristics of diversity and universality. There was also time to better understand of the UNESCO Convention and



share cases from different countries about the current state of the distribution and transmission of traditional tugging rituals and games as a shared heritage of East Asia.

The International Symposium on the Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games of East Asia was highly evaluated for increasing cooperation and understanding between cultures for the joint task, and for providing a forum for discussing in detail measures for the safeguarding and transmission of traditional tugging rituals and games.

### **3) Information Session Prior to the Intergovernmental Conference for the Joint Inscription of Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games**

On April 13, 2013, on the day after the symposium at the same venue, the Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea, together with the participants of the symposium from Cambodia, Japan, the Philippines and Vietnam, held a meeting for the joint inscription of the traditional tugging rituals and games of East Asia. During the meeting, which was held in the form of an information session, the Cultural Heritage Administration first explained its proposal for the joint inscription of the traditional tugging rituals and games of East Asia. A contact network was formed among countries participating in the joint inscription of the traditional tugging rituals and games, focal points were selected, and a prior arrangement was made on how the application form will be filled out, and how related materials such as photographs and video clips will be produced.

### **4. Intergovernmental Conferences for the Application for the Joint Inscription of Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games**

The Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea tried to reach an agreement with Japan and the three Southeast Asian countries of Cambodia, the Philippines and Vietnam on the joint inscription of the traditional tugging rituals and games, and after two intergovernmental conferences with the three Southeast Asian countries that expressed their intention to participate in the joint inscription, the application was completed. The first conference took place at the Grand Hilton Seoul for the three days from October 22 to 24, 2013; the second at the Millennium Seoul Hilton for the three days from December

21 to 23, 2013. A total of 25 persons participated in the conferences: 8 government representatives, 2 from each country; 10 persons concerned from the Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea and ICHCAP; and 7 experts of intangible heritage and international cooperation from Korea.

### **1) The 1st Intergovernmental Conference**

Hosted by the Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea in October 2013, The 1st Intergovernmental Conference for the Application for the Joint Inscription of Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games was held in order to mediate the differences of opinion between the governments and complete the application form. ICHCAP reported on how the joint inscription project was launched and how it had since progressed, explained the process of applying for joint application and the schedule they were to follow from then on. During the intergovernmental conference, an agreement was reached for making the first draft of the joint inscription application to introduce the basic information and definition of each tugging ritual or game, raise awareness and foster discussion for the safeguarding of tugging rituals and games.

The main structure of conference was: first, a discussion on the composition and operation of intergovernmental conference (reporting on how the joint inscription project was launched and how it had since progressed, reviewing the process of applying for joint application and scheduled plans, agreeing on the composition of intergovernmental conference and the different roles of each country); second, presentation of the current state on the transmissions of traditional tugging rituals and games in each country (the current state on the transmissions of traditional tugging rituals of Cambodia, the current state on the transmissions of traditional tugging rituals of the Philippines, the current state on the transmissions of traditional tugging rituals of Korea, the current state on the transmissions of traditional tugging rituals of Vietnam); and third, creating a first draft of the application for inscription (basic information about each tugging ritual or game, including a definition and introduction, raising awareness and fostering conversation, safeguarding measures, community participation and consent, other matters).

The 1st Intergovernmental Conference was evaluated as to have served an opportunity to learn about the current state of traditional tugging rituals and games, a

shared intangible cultural heritage of the Asia-Pacific region, in each country; to share information among countries to apply for joint inscription; and to create a stronger the network. The participating countries were also able to reaffirm that their tugging rituals and games were all properly listed under their country, and that the related communities, local self-governing bodies and the central government in each country supports the joint inscription.

The official name of the element for joint inscription application was agreed as “Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games,” emphasizing that the element is not a mere performance but a ritual as well as a game, raising the possibility of joint inscription. The participants from every country agreed to each submit a first draft of the joint inscription application to their own government, and ask for it to be reviewed and supplemented, and a set of guidelines was adopted to submit an application for joint inscription.

## **2) The 2nd Intergovernmental Conference**

In December 2013, two months after the 1st Intergovernmental Conference, the 2nd Intergovernmental Conference for the Joint Inscription of Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games took place. Following the first draft of the joint inscription application at the 1st Intergovernmental Conference, requests had been made for each country to submit a revised draft, so the goal of the conference was to review the second drafts and agree upon a final draft. Agreements were also made on the domestic and international administrative processes to apply for the joint inscription including pushing forward with the approval process in each country and submitting the application to the UNESCO Secretariat. The purpose of the 2nd Intergovernmental Conference was to meet the increasing demands of persons concerned in Korea and abroad about the element’s inscription on the UNESCO list, and seek an alternative that meets the UNESCO Secretariat’s restriction on the number of elements per country that can be inscribed.

The main structure of conference included: first, review the revised drafts of the application of each country (presentations on the revisions made by each country in the first draft at 1st Intergovernmental Conference’s where ICHCAP had distributed guidelines for making revisions); second, inspection of domestic and foreign procedures regarding joint inscription (inspection of domestic and foreign procedures and schedules regarding

joint inscription, the deadlines for submitting the application for inscription to the UNESCO Convention Secretariat, requests made for each country to report the approval procedures for the inscription application in each country); and third, selection of moving and still images for the application (selection of video clips (10min. or shorter) and photographs (10 images) for the application currently being produced by external companies and reviewed by the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage).

At the 2nd Conference, each country agreed to change the official name of the element to “Tugging Rituals and Games” to apply for joint inscription. For reasons that the term “tradition” is being negatively evaluated based on discourses on postmodernism, it had become a burden to use the term, and it was thus omitted from the name of the element. At the 2nd Intergovernmental Conference, the four countries including Korea created the revised second draft of the application for joint inscription, and agreed to submit a final draft to ICHCAP by January 20, 2014, and complete all preparation for application such as receiving all necessary signatures from each country by March 15. Also at the Conference, a preview was held of the 10-min. video clip produced with advice from the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage.

It was made clear that the two intergovernmental conferences held by the four countries of Cambodia, Korea, the Philippines and Vietnam, were of great significance in that a regional cooperation system was established through solidarity between countries for the safeguarding of intangible heritage. The application form filled out by the four countries was submitted online on March 31, 2014 (based on the local time in Paris) by Korea as the representative participant to the UNESCO Secretariat for the International Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage Under the 2003 Convention.

Since then, in November 2014, the Convention Secretariat sent a request that the Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea to submit supplementary materials, and in December of that year, the requested materials were prepared and submitted. Also, there had been a lack of explanation due to the insufficient space to fit in all information from all four countries, requests had been made to submit additional explanation, upon which the four countries once again formed a close network and in response submitted a supplemented application in February 2015.

## 5. Joint Inscription of “Tugging Rituals and Games” and Future Tasks

The application for the joint inscription of tugging rituals and games is currently being evaluated. Due to the rapid increase in application cases between competing countries, the Convention Intergovernmental Committee decided at the 6th Committee (2011) to limit the number of applications capable of evaluation to 60 a year. The number was then lowered again to 50 applications per year at the 8th Intergovernmental Committee. It was also decided that the evaluations be based on a list of priorities with applications from countries with no inscribed elements and for the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding being of first importance; joint inscription applications of second; and applications from countries with fewer inscribed elements of third.

With priority given to joint inscription applications, the application for Tugging Rituals and Games submitted in March 2014 was, based on the evaluation criteria of 2015, was placed as the 26th element to be evaluated. In the meantime, the application for the element “Jeju Island Culture of Women Divers” which was submitted by Korea alone, was placed as the 56th to be evaluated, failing to make the evaluation list for 2015.

In the past, evaluations of applications for inscription on the Convention’s Representative List, since the Convention Operation Guidelines were adopted in 2008 at the 3rd General Assembly, were carried out by a “supplementary organization” composed of 12 representatives, two from each of the six countries based on the regional divisions for elections at the Convention. However, beginning this year, the evaluations will be carried out by an “evaluation organization” of twelve members—six experts elected from six groups and six nongovernmental organization representatives. Therefore, the methods of evaluation are expected to change more or less.

Regarding the schedule from here on, as mentioned above, whether or not the joint inscription of tugging rituals and games will be realized will be announced on the UNESCO website four weeks prior to the 10th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, set to take place from November 30 to December 4 in Namibia, and the evaluation results will be placed on the agenda at the Committee where the final decision will be made regarding inscription.

Many organizations in Korea that specialize in intangible heritage are currently preparing for several memorial projects in hopes that the elements are successfully

inscribed. First, the National Intangible Heritage Center, in hopes that the Tugging Rituals and Games of Cambodia, Korea, the Philippines and Vietnam is inscribed, is preparing to hold a special exhibition and participatory events on the theme of the tugging rituals and games of the four countries. Also, the Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation and the City of Dangjin, with the cooperation of ICHCAP, the Royal University of Fine Arts in Cambodia, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts in the Philippines, and the Vietnamese Institute of Culture and Arts Studies, are planning to publish books on “the Tugging Rituals and Games of Cambodia, Korea, the Philippines and Vietnam” in English and in Korean, as well as hold an international academic symposium.

Through the application process, we have learned that the intangible cultural heritage referred to as Tugging Rituals and Games that exist in a wide variety based on different historical and cultural backgrounds, despite their differences in form, are identical in that they are performed for the greater purpose of praying for the prosperity and harmony of the community. The work put into applying for the joint inscription of the Tugging Rituals and Games of Cambodia, Korea, the Philippines and Vietnam on the Representative List not only raised visible awareness of the need to safeguard the tugging rituals and games of Asia, but also has served as an important opportunity to experience the necessity of international solidarity for the safeguarding of intangible heritage