



### Section 3 Folk Custom and Ethnic Arts

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in 1993, had started to express concerns and promote for the protection of intangible heritage. And, on May 18th, 2003, UNESCO designated 19 intangible heritages, including Chinese Kun melody and Indian Fan drama, to be part of **“oral history and non-material cultural heritages”**. **Intangible Heritage** indicates the convention and overall presentation of the knowledge, skills, tools, historical objects, and locations of an individual or a social group. It demonstrates equality, continuity and respect between different cultural populations, and emphasizes the diverse nature of culture and creativity of humans. The field of intangible heritage can include every orally expressed forms, performing arts, cultural habits, legends, etiquette, rituals and ceremonies, handicrafts and other arts, building techniques, and nature-related facts and knowledge. Even the lifestyles existed in the modern cities can become a part of the intangible heritage.

The current “Cultural Heritage Preservation Law” in Taiwan sees ethnic arts as **“ethnic and regional art traditions”**. According to the explanation provided by the “Detailed Regulations of Cultural Heritage Preservation” of national arts, it states, “the traditional skills and techniques to demonstrate national and local features, including weaving, embroidery, pottery, jade carving, woodworking, painting, bamboo and wood sculpting, framing, block printing, paper making, stone inscription rubbing, ink and pen making, traditional opera, songs, dance, sing-and-tell, and juggling.” As for the definition of folk custom and its cultural objects, the statement from the current “Cultural Heritage Preservation Law” can be used as a reference. It states, “cultural items related to daily living of the citizens, including food, clothing, residence, transportation, ancestor remembrance, religion, holiday celebrations, leisure and other cultural habits”. “Detailed Regulations on Culture and Arts Awarding” states that folk custom skills indicate, “traditional skills and artistry that contain local characteristics, including sculpting, weaving, molding, painting, dancing, large-scaled drama, small-scaled drama, puppet show, sing-and-tell, and acrobats”.

The reason for preserving “National Arts” and **“folk art, handicrafts and related artifacts”** is to preserve important **“technology”** and **“art”** from traditional skill transferor that also have historical, cultural, artistic and even scientific values. Also, it reflects “intangible culture”, meaning the preservation of artistic events expressed spiritually, and social relationships, which hint at personal networks and mutualism between individuals. Therefore, the newly revised **“Draft Revision of the Cultural Heritage Preservation Law”** plans to combine traditional arts and folk custom together in one single chapter. Traditional arts means traditional performing arts and skills practiced within each race and locally. Folk custom and related cultural items refer to traditions related to lifestyles of the citizens, and social habits, beliefs, celebrations, and related cultural items exhibiting specific cultural meanings. As for cultural heritage preserving skills and skill preservers, they will be written into one independent



chapter. There are also systematic procedures for developing, utilizing, and assisting people in acquiring heritage-preserving skills.

The best way to preserve and maintain local culture is to receive voluntary efforts from the public, since traditional arts are originated from the local regions. At the same time, the responsibility of the government includes high-level respect for the voluntary development of local traditions and folk custom skills. The government should also be responsible for providing a practical and beneficial environment and system for the development of such skills, promoting preservation of traditional arts, and facilitating links with international trends. These are also the guiding principles of the involved organizations when they diligently pushed for the amendment of “Cultural Heritage Preservation Law”, the making and running of the National Traditional Arts Center, the expanding of the field of traditional arts and creativity, and the development of professional personnel for the last three years.


## **1. Preservation and Promotion of Folk Custom and Related Cultural Items**

The Ministry of the Interior is in charge of managing folk custom and related cultural items. In 1994, the Ministry of the Interior published “**Ministry of the Interior Guidelines for the Funding of Cultural and Folk Artifacts Preservation Activities**” to encourage and combine nongovernmental groups to promote local traditions, folk customs, and culture. The goal is also to enhance traditional folk customs. The major assisted targets include juridical persons, registered or legally registered temples, churches, or organizations. The categories for assistance consist primarily of investigating and collecting cultural objects that signify specific traditional folk customs, cultural conventions related to traditional folk customs, conducting folk custom activities, research and study events, and publications or recommendations regarding folk customs.

Other than the Ministry of the Interior, the local government also assists and enhances specific folk customs within its jurisdiction by holding events annually, to help demonstrate the characteristics of such customs. Examples are Matzu idol carried throughout the land, Yilan Touchen Chianggu, the Feng firecrackers in the Township of Yanshui in Tainan County, Fried Ganchan in Taitung, the release of sky lamps onto Pin River, the Chongyuan festival in Jirong, and native festivals such as Beinan tribe Monkey Festival, Saisha tribe Ailin Festival, Silaya Night Festival, and Lanyu Flying Fish Festival.

## **2. Preservation, Development and Transmission of Ethnic Arts**

The Ministry of Education is the chief organizer of ethnic arts. In order to commend people and organizations that perform meritorious services towards the improvement and passage of traditional artistry, the Ministry of Education has awarded “**Folk Art Heritage Awards**” since 1985. Ten award



ceremonies have been carried out from 1985 to 1994. A total of 42 organizations and 132 individuals have been awarded. In 1989, the process of selecting essential ethnic artists has been initiated, and 13 skilled national artists have been nominated in two selection sessions. Also, to manage the inheritance of national arts, the Ministry of Education had organized six **“Plan for Encouraging the Handing Down of Important Traditional Arts”** in three years since 1991. Afterwards, the Council for Cultural Affairs developed a plan in 1994 named **“Plan for Promoting the Preservation and Transmission of Folk Arts”**. And, the Council for Cultural Affairs coordinated and negotiated with the Ministry of Education to incorporate the “Plan for Encouraging the Handing Down of Important Traditional Arts” into “Plan for Promoting the Preservation and Transmission of Folk Arts”. The Ministry of Education will continue to handle affairs such as the educational courses for ethnic arts, development of a second expertise and seeded training for the instructors, and consideration of implementing departments and institutes for traditional arts.


#### (1) Promoting the preservation and education of Regional Arts

In order to create a system and environment beneficial to the preservation and regeneration of cultural heritage, the Council for Cultural Affairs has established an affiliated organization called **“National Center for Traditional Arts”**. The goal of this center is to promote protection and research of traditional arts. The preservation, education, promotion of traditional arts is its major duties. And, it is involved with the following area: traditional music, theatrical arts, dancing, childhood toys, and folk styled acrobats. From its preparatory stages until now, the center has sequentially initiated plans for the preservation and education of the following traditional arts:

##### 1 National Arts Preservation and Education Plan

With the gradual change of the social structure, local arts have gradually declined in modern living. Thus, the artists and their artistry are faced with eventually becoming extinct. In order to save the regional skills and artistry from disappearing, resolve the problem of preserving and passing on these skills, and to drive the enthusiasm for regional arts, the Council for Cultural Affairs has developed and executed “Regional Arts Preservation and Education Plan” in 1995. The plan involves choosing a specific artists and professional experts related to that field, and works on preserving and passing on the artistry entirely. The content will involve recording the biography of the local artist, and depends on the art the artist practices. Different representative theatrical programs and literary and martial teaching materials will also be recorded.

From the initial execution until now, other than every subordinate project being processed, there are also 138 information runs and 115 paper booklets being published. Among these, **“A Biography of Chen**




**Wangcong - A Leading Figure in the Ilan Taiwanese Opera Tradition”, “Snow-covered Mountains and Sparkling Water - The Works of Pan Lishui, a Traditional Artist from Tainan”, “The Nose Flute and Mouth-blown Flute of the Paiwan Tribe”, “Chen Dengsan and the Gongle Association”** each is awarded **“Winners of the Golden Tripod book awards in 2000 and 2001”**. **“The Nose Flute and Mouth-blown Flute of the Paiwan Tribe”, “Snow-covered Mountains and Sparkling Water - The Works of Pan Lishui, a Traditional Artist from Tainan”, “Compendium of Traditional Arts (Volume Four)”** were awarded with **“2001 Research, Development and Evaluation Commission Awards for Outstanding Government Publications”**. The publications in 2002 and 2003 include: **“50 Years of Peking Opera in Taiwan”, “Golden Sound and Jade Vibrations - Hu Shaoan, a Master of Peking Opera”, “Hakka Ba-yin Music in Southern Taiwan”, ““Alone on a Sandbank” - the Peking Opera Mastery of Zhou Zhengrong”, “Zeng Zhongying - a Life in Music”, “Vocal Training for *Bei Guan* Music”, etc.**

Also, to accumulate professional research regarding the field of traditional arts, the Traditional Arts Center (affiliated with the Council for Cultural Affairs) has organized regional seminars on traditional arts focusing on the cultural characteristics of different regions throughout the country. From 1996 to 2003, seminars such as **“Conference on Traditional Acrobatics and Related Art-forms in Taiwan”, “Conference on Traditional Arts”, “Conference on the Traditional Arts of Kinmen”, “Conference on Traditional Arts in the Asia Pacific Region”, “Conference on Traditional Opera in Taiwan and Mainland China - Past Present and Future”, “Conference on Traditional Operetta in Taiwan and Mainland China”, “Conference on the Music of Traditional Opera in Taiwan and Mainland China”, “Conference on the Hakka *Ba-yin* Music of Southern Taiwan”, “Conference on the Traditional Arts of Penghu”, “Conference on the Traditional Arts of Tainan County”, “Conference on the Traditional Arts of Pingtung”** and **“Conference on the Music of Traditional Opera in Taiwan and Mainland China in 2002”,** and **“General Forum of Folk Arts”** have been organized, and research articles from these seminars have helped produce many publications.

## 2 Plans to Revitalize the Traditional Arts Environment

With the purpose of invigorating the traditional arts environment and livelihood, the Council for Cultural Affairs has designed a plan to connect professional academic research, succession and learning of art in schools with actual performance. It is meant to inject vitality into the life of traditional arts, and to ensure a tight link of theories, applications, and inheritance. Also, the plan has been used to strengthen the preservation, succession, and activity of traditional arts in order to enhance its vitality. The content of the plan and the effects from its execution are described as follows:

- (1) “Awarding Masters and Doctorate Students in the Research of Traditional Arts” operation



This plan has awarded 51 graduate school students since 1999 to research and write their theses on traditional arts. Among these, 16 theses belong to the category of traditional drama, six theses relate to traditional music, two cases belong to traditional dance, 22 theses are involved with traditional crafts, and five theses are listed as miscellaneous.

(2) “Recruitment of Traditional Artists to pass on their Artistry” Operation


This plan recruits individuals with expertise in traditional arts to teach their skills in a school setting. Using theoretical lectures combined with hands-on applications of the skills, the teaching method for traditional arts becomes livelier, and realistically presents the brilliant styles and features of traditional arts from classes. Students can more clearly and completely comprehend the beauty of each traditional art. From 1999 until now, the plan has assisted in 41 courses, and the involved topics are rich and diversified. The courses include traditional drama, traditional music, traditional dance, traditional crafts, native music and dance, ethnic acrobats, and regional arts. Employed instructors are senior artists, include Hong-Ming Chang, Chiong-Ji Liao, Bao-Chun Li, Lu-Hao Chu, Luan-Yin Lai, Chi-Guo Shie, Shue-Li Chen, Wang Hsu, Sian-Ping Chang, Zheng-Yang Shi, Yo-Lang Wang, Shin-Shin Wang, Yu-Guang Bai, Shia-Shen Chen, and Jin-Jian Shie.

(3) “National Nan Kuan Music Gathering” series

The purpose of this plan is to preserve and pass on traditional music and theatrical music. From its execution in 1999 until now, we have cooperated with the Cultural Bureau of Changhua County to organize a series of events called “Nanbeiguan”. Also, since 2002, an event named “**National Nan Kuan Music Gathering**” has been organized to isolate the topic of Nanguan. Memorials for the originator of the Nanguan, fifth generation Menghsu, and conferences have been held. Every year, more than 50 teams throughout the country are invited to participate in this event. This arrangement provides an opportunity for the teams to observe and compete, increases the skill level of traditional music performance, and achieves the goal of preserving traditional musical culture. It also helps build an information database for traditional North and South orchestras and string performances, and injects a source of power into traditional music.

(2) Development of teachers specializing in native education

“**Traditional Arts**” are well hidden throughout Taiwan. The most important and most fundamental aspect of bringing forth new ideas and creativity for traditional arts lies upon the production of a system to educate and develop “**talents**”. The Ministry of Education has newly arranged the educational materials to be continuous for nine years (from the first year of elementary school to grade nine in junior



high school), and consist of seven areas: **“Languages”**, **“Health and Sports”**, **“Society/social development”**, **“Arts and humanities”**, **“Mathematics”**, **“Nature, Science and Technology”**, and **“General Activities”**. Also, the Ministry of Education authorizes the schools to combine all teachers and resources of the communities to develop a set position for the courses. Native education is, through the learning of traditional arts, for students to better understand the local communities, to appreciate tradition, to care for our culture, and to acquire self-confidence towards and acknowledgement of tradition. The students get to learn our tradition and communities in a sensitive and beautiful way, and as a result, will be able to inject new energy into the innovation of traditional arts and culture.

Due to the execution of consistent, nine-year arts and cultural science education of the elementary and junior high schools, and the application of native arts teaching, the teachers are in need to further their studies in the field of various arts. The National Traditional Arts Center understands this situation, and has started a series of academic seminars focusing on traditional Chinese festivals, including **“Traditional Arts Camp for Primary and Junior High School Teachers (1) Traditional Bamboo Weaving Arts”**, **“Traditional Arts Camp for Primary and Junior High School Teachers (2) Traditional Lantern and Kite-making”**, 2003 Winter **“Traditional Festivals, Folk Customs and Handicrafts Camp”**. There were four camps for the **“Summer Vacation 2003 Traditional Arts Camp”** series: **“Wooden Furniture Making Camp”**, **“Taiwanese Traditional Bamboo Weaving Camp”** (beginner and advance classes), **“Taiwanese Traditional Lantern-making Camp”**, and **“Taiwanese Traditional Lacquerware Camp”**. The seminars are designed to introduce festival-related traditional native arts. Through the efforts of teachers of various grades and enthusiastic supporters, the learning, teaching, and practical producing of the traditional festival arts can take place, the preservation skills for such arts can be learned, and Taiwanese traditional festival culture can be expressed abroad.

### (3) Projects to publish traditional arts related materials

Publications related to traditional arts in this country are usually done by non-governmental sources. Non-governmental publications have two concerns. First, they are usually not systematic enough. Secondly, these publications are usually only introductory in nature, and lack completeness and academic value. Thus, this deficiency of traditional arts publications needs to be fulfilled through careful and complete planning and organizing. Publications should be developed to conform to the different needs of different users. On one hand, such publications should provide an introduction as well as an appreciation of national traditional arts, and drive the understanding and passion for traditional arts. On the other hand, they should also be able to be perceived as research materials, which can be used to increase the level of academic proficiency in related fields. The publications include **“The Marionette Theater Tradition of Southern Taiwan - an Ecological Study”**, **“Kun Opera Dictionary”**, **“The Study and Appreciation of Traditional Taiwanese Music”**, **“Vanished Glory - The Si Ping Opera of**



Taiwan”, “An Illustrated History of Kun Opera”, “The Hunan Opera Academy of Hunan Province”, and “Vocal Training for Bei Kuan Music”.

### **3. Expanding International Exchange for Traditional Arts**

“Traditional Culture” is another valuable source for international competitions, especially after the blossoming of **“technology development”**. The Council for Cultural Affairs, since the year 2000, has been active in organizing many types of traditional arts events internationally. Local organizations are strongly encouraged to participate in the activities involving international exchange of artistic skills. It is hoped that an exchange network between countries can be established, traditional arts in Taiwan can be expanded to the world, and the qualitative and quantitative values of traditional culture can be increased. It is expected that the artistic lifeline from our traditional culture can be vitalized, and that traditional culture will develop deep roots among the citizenry. Also, it is hoped that these events will help project our traditional arts on to the world stage. The large-scale events for traditional arts exchange internationally include: **“The 2000 Asia Pacific Traditional Arts Forum – the Rebirth of Traditional Arts”**, **“International Conference on Ethnomusicology – the Place Occupied by the Music of Taiwan's Indigenous Peoples Within the Austronesian Culture Zone”**, **“A Hundred Years of Songs – 2001 Traditional Chinese Opera Development and Exchange Conference of Taiwan and Mainland China”**, **“2002 International Ethnomusicology Forum”**, and **“2003 Asia Pacific Traditional Arts Festival - Encouraging the Development of the Traditional Arts Industry”**.