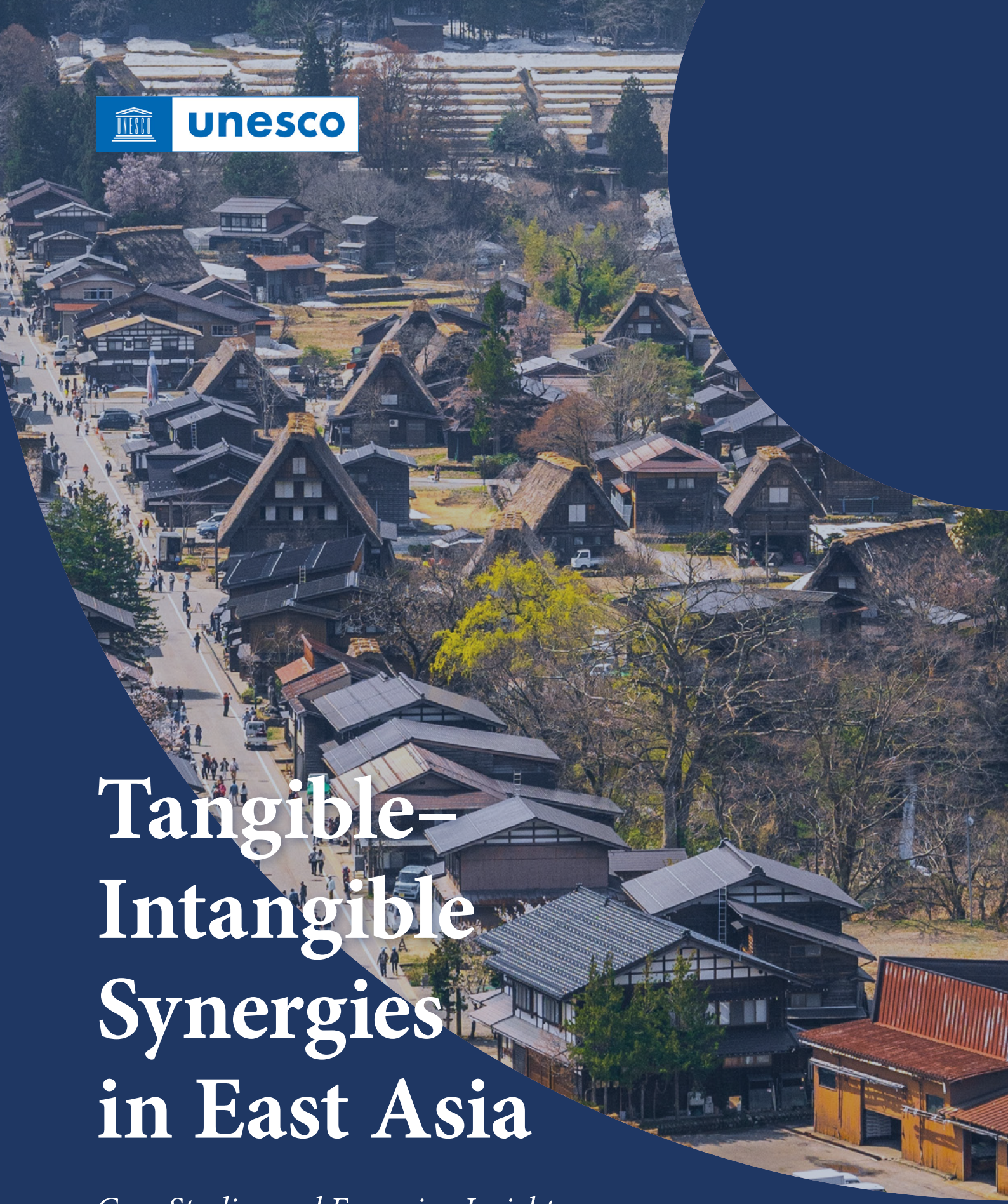


Tangible–Intangible Synergies in East Asia

Case Studies and Emerging Insights for Integrated Heritage Safeguarding

Tangible–Intangible Synergies in East Asia

Case Studies and Emerging Insights for Integrated Heritage Safeguarding

BEJ/2026/CLT/RP/3

Published in 2026 by UNESCO Regional Office for East Asia, Waijiaogongyu 5-15-3, Jianguomenwai Compound, Beijing 100600, People's Republic of China.

© UNESCO 2026



This publication is available in Open Access under the Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO (CC-BY-SA 3.0 IGO) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/igo/). By using the content of this publication, the users accept to be bound by the terms of use of the UNESCO Open Access Repository (https://www.unesco.org/en/open-access/cc-sa).

Images marked with an asterisk (*) do not fall under the CC-BY-SA license and may not be used or reproduced without the prior permission of the copyright holders.

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The ideas and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors; they are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

Cover photo: © Anshuman Kar/Shutterstock.com*
Design and layout: Hou Rui

Contents

Acknowledgements 7

Introduction 9

1.1. Background 10

1.2. Objectives of the study 10

1.3. Methodology 11

1.4. Analytical approach 12

Why Integration Happens: Motivations 13

2.1. Conservation need 14

The Classical Gardens of Suzhou and associated skills and techniques

Tomioka Silk Mill and related sites

2.2. Revitalization challenge 15

The Eastern Qing Tombs and imperial filigree craftsmanship

2.3. Development pressure 17

The Jiangnan **chuan quan** *(Boat boxing)*

2.4. Community aspiration 18

The Pantang Wuyue historic neighbourhood

The Pyongyang Raengmyon custom

Jinju Sword Dance (Geommu)

2.5. Technological opportunity 20

The Moonlight Blade game and Fujian Tulou

How Tangible and Intangible Heritage Interact 22

3.1. Heritage sustained through traditional knowledge and skills 23

Huatang Wang Ancestral Hall and its associated construction techniques

3.2. Landscapes shaped through traditional practices 24

Tashkurgan Pamir National Geopark and Tajik ecological knowledge

3.3. Heritage places as venues for practice and transmission 25

The Summer Palace and imperial bonsai

The National Programme on Mongolian Tsuur

Suwon Hwaseong Fortress as an inclusive venue for participation and transmission

3.4. Heritage supporting community livelihoods 28

Jingmai Mountain old tea forests and its people-centred, judicially enabled economic model

The tradition of kimchi-making in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

3.5. Heritage interpreted through stories, memories, and meaning 30

The Temple of Heaven and Zhonghe Shaoyue soundscape reconstruction

Okinoshima Sacred Island, Munakata Region, Japan

Transmitting identity and preserving community identity at Namhansanseong, Republic of Korea

Jeju Haenyeo *villages and the Ahn'gŏ'ri-Bak'gŏ'ri residential cultural landscape*

3.6. Heritage connected through digital technologies 32

Mount Huangshan and fish lanterns through online engagement by Douyin

What Makes Integration Successful? 34

4.1. Governance and policy innovation 35

Integrated governance at Xidi and Hongcun World Heritage Site

Legal protection and governance innovation for safeguarding the traditional practices of worshipping sacred mountains and ovoos *in Mongolia*

4.2. Cross-sectoral partnership 37

Huainan Town Ancestral House and Black Lion dance

4.3. Community-led initiatives 38

Gokayama Gassho-style Historic Villages, Toyama, Japan

Taliin Tvmen Aduu (Thousand Horses of the Steppe): A community-led winter horse culture festival in Mongolia

4.4. Knowledge holders as decision-makers 40

Asuru oral tradition in Inner Mongolia, China

4.5. Youth engagement and education 41

Dajing Village Heritage Education Project

Hahoe mask dance and the spatial pedagogy of conservation education

What Does Integration Achieve? 43

5.1. Continuity or resilience of tangible heritage 44

5.2. Vitality of intangible heritage practices 44

5.3. Institutionalization of integrated approaches 44

5.4. Strengthened cultural identity, memory, and belonging of the community 45
5.5. Increased participation in heritage management or decision-making 45
5.6. Socio-economic benefits linked to heritage activities 45
5.7. Contribution to biodiversity, ecosystem health, or environmentally responsible management practices 46
5.8. Strengthened social cohesion or resilience of communities 46

Emerging Insights from East Asia 47
Insight 1. Integrated approaches emerge from practical needs rather than theoretical models 48
Insight 2. Heritage functions as an interconnected cultural system 48
Insight 3. Community agency is a critical factor in long-term sustainability 48
Insight 4. Heritage places remain most meaningful when they support living cultural practices 49
Insight 5. Integrated approaches generate multiple and mutually reinforcing benefits 49
Insight 6. Digital technologies can extend but not replace place-based heritage relationships 49
Insight 7. Governance integration remains one of the principal challenges 50
Insight 8. East Asian experiences reveal multiple pathways toward integrated heritage safeguarding . 50

Acknowledgements

Sincere appreciation is extended to the heritage practitioners, site managers, community representatives, researchers and institutions that submitted case studies, responded to consultations, provided supplementary information and reviewed the texts relating to their respective cases. Their knowledge, experience and careful feedback provided the foundation for this publication.

- Liu Ke, Staff of Department of International Exchange, World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region (WHITRAP Suzhou)
- Ni Lexian, Vice Director, World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region (WHITRAP Suzhou)
- Wang Hua, Deputy Chief, Department of Archives, World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region (WHITRAP Suzhou)
- Administration Department of Cultural Relics in Eastern Tombs of the Qing Dynasty, Zunhua City, Hebei Province, China
- Chen Shuozhi, Curriculum Developer, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University Affiliated School, Wuzhong District, Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China
- Wu Qi, Tencent Public Affairs
- He Qingda, Senior Engineer/General Manager, Zhejiang Vernacular Engineering Design Co., Ltd.
- Wang Xinjun, Associate Research Fellow in Cultural Heritage/Director, Shengzhou Cultural Relics Protection Center
- Chen Tiantian, R&D Engineer, Zhejiang Vernacular Engineering Design Co., Ltd.
- Wang Shenwei, Cultural Heritage Officer/Deputy Director, Shengzhou Cultural Relics Protection Center
- Wang Zeyuan, Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto; Culinaria Research Center, University of Toronto Scarborough, Canada
- Beijing Summer Palace Administration, Beijing, China
- Ichinkhorloo Bayarsaikhan, Independent Consultant, Nomad Stories Lab, Mongolia
- Oh SeonHwa, Director, Hwaseong Management Office, Suwon Special City, Republic of Korea
- Zhu Cheng, Pu'er Jingmai Mountain Ancient Tea Forest Protection Administration, Lancang Lahu Autonomous County People's Procuratorate, Yunan Province, China
- Wu Jingwei, Professor-level Senior Engineer; Wu Di, Curator; Duan Chao, Senior Engineer; Bi Jia, Curator; You Qi, Senior Engineer; Chen Zhiqiang, Senior Political Instructor; Liu Yong, Engineer; Administration of the Temple of Heaven, Beijing, China
- Miki Okadera, Assistant Counselor/Archaeologist, World Heritage Division, Fukuoka Prefectural Government, Fukuoka, Japan

- Wonseob Song, Associate Professor, Jeju National University, Republic of Korea
- Zu Yifei, Brand Manger, Douyin ICH Program, ByteDance
- Yixian County World Cultural Heritage Affairs Center, Huangshan City, Anhui Province, China
- Yixian County Culture, Tourism and Sports Bureau, Huangshan City, Anhui Province, China
- Odonchimeg Enkhtuvshin, Specialist in legal implementation and inspection, Khan Khentii Strictly Protected Area Administration, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Mongolia
- Buyanbadrakh Erdenetsogt, Head, Association for the Protection of Altai Cultural Heritage, Moggolia
- People's Government of Huainan Town, Sanming City, Fujian Province, China
- Du Xiaofan, Professor, Department of Cultural Heritage and Museology; Director, Centre for Land and Cultural Resources Research; Chairholder, UNESCO Chair on Living Heritage and Community Development, Fudan University, Shanghai, China
- Xu Yishu, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Cultural Heritage and Museology, Fudan University, Shanghai, China
- Nagashima Seigo, Cultural Property Specialist, Nanto City Board of Education, Toyama Prefecture, Japan
- Uyanga B., Foreign Relations and Management Officer, Administration Office of the Burkhan Khaldun Mountain and its Surrounding Sacred Landscape, Mongolia
- Duurenjargal A., Research and Promotion Specialist, Administration Office of the Burkhan Khaldun Mountain and its Surrounding Sacred Landscape, Mongolia
- Erdenesuvd B., Head of the Collections, Registration and Research Unit, Khentii Province Museum, Mongolia
- Feng Xiaobei, You Jinju, and Feng Xiaolei, Feng Xiaobei Studio, Asuru Art Association, Xianghuang Banner, Xilingol League, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China
- Song Yilin, Dajing Village Heritage Education Project Team, Peking University Territorial Planning and Design Institute Co., Ltd.

The case studies were compiled and analysed by Liu Mingqian and Duong Bich Hanh, with the support of Zhou Limao and Li Yujuan. The collection also benefited from the review and suggestions of colleagues from the partner Category 2 Centres, notably Boyoung Cha and Haeree Shim. This collection of case studies was made possible with the financial support of the Korea Heritage Service.



1 Introduction

Source: © dfbsgml0619/Shutterstock.com*

1.1. Background

For many decades, tangible and intangible heritage have often been addressed through separate policy provisions, management systems, and professional communities. Tangible heritage has often focused on the conservation of monuments, historic buildings, cultural landscapes, and archaeological sites, while intangible heritage has focused on safeguarding living practices, knowledge systems, skills, rituals, and expressions. In practice, however, communities rarely experience heritage through such distinctions. Places derive meaning from the knowledge, memories, values, and practices associated with them, while intangible cultural heritage (ICH) often depends on physical spaces, landscapes, and material environments for its continued transmission and practice.

International discussions have recognized the need for more integrated approaches to heritage safeguarding. The Yamato Declaration on Integrated Approaches for Safeguarding Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage (2004) highlighted the interdependence of tangible and intangible dimensions of heritage. More recently, the Spirit of Naples Call for Action (2023) emphasized the importance of bringing tangible and intangible heritage into productive relationships that reinforce one another and contribute to sustainable development, social cohesion, cultural diversity, and community well-being.

East Asia provides a particularly rich context for exploring these relationships. Across the region, communities have long maintained dynamic interactions between places, practices, knowledge systems and belief traditions. Whether through historic buildings, sacred sites, cultural landscapes, traditional craftsmanship, performing arts, foodways, or community festivals, heritage is often experienced as an interconnected whole rather than as separate categories.

1.2. Objectives of the study

This publication examines how tangible and intangible heritage are brought into mutually reinforcing relationships through conservation, safeguarding, management, and community initiatives across East Asia. Rather than treating tangible and intangible heritage as separate domains, the publication explores how they interact in practice and how integrated approaches can contribute to both heritage safeguarding and broader social, cultural, environmental, and economic objectives.

The study seeks to:

- Identify the motivations that have led heritage actors to pursue integrated approaches;
- Examine the different ways in which tangible and intangible heritage interact and reinforce one another;
- Analyse the factors that enable successful integration;
- Assess the outcomes generated through integrated approaches; and
- Derive lessons that may inform future policy and practice.

1.3. Methodology

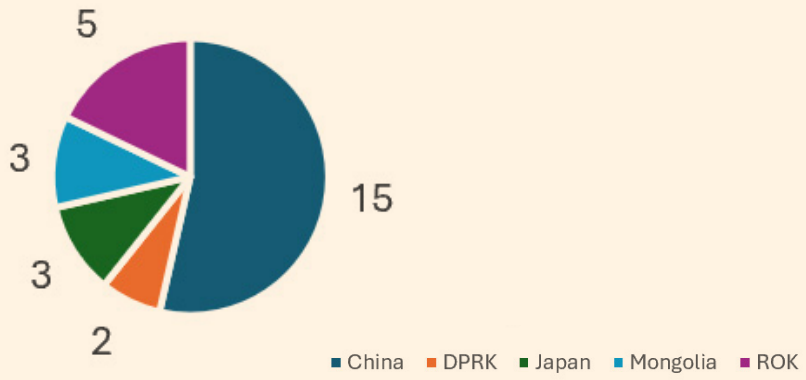
This regional collection of case studies examines the relationships between tangible and intangible heritage across East Asia. The objective was not to identify "best practices" in a narrow sense, but rather to document diverse experiences and explore how integrated approaches to heritage safeguarding are being applied in different cultural, institutional, and geographical contexts.

The case studies were collected through a combination of open calls, targeted consultations, and desk-based research.

An open call for case studies was disseminated through UNESCO networks and partner institutions across East Asia, inviting heritage practitioners, site managers, researchers, community organizations, and governmental bodies to submit examples demonstrating interactions between tangible and intangible heritage. The call sought cases from a broad range of heritage contexts, including UNESCO-designated sites such as World Heritage properties, Biosphere Reserves and Geoparks, protected areas and heritage sites of national significance, and intangible cultural heritage elements. Submitted cases were reviewed and shortlisted based on their relevance to the objectives of the study, geographical balance, diversity of heritage types, and the extent to which they demonstrated meaningful interactions between tangible and intangible heritage.

Figure 1

Composition of 28 case studies



To complement the open call and ensure balanced representation across different heritage contexts, targeted surveys were also distributed directly to selected World Heritage site managers, protected area authorities, intangible cultural heritage practitioners, community organizations, museums, and heritage institutions. These surveys gathered detailed information on the motivations, management approaches, stakeholders, challenges, and outcomes associated with integrated heritage safeguarding initiatives.

To ensure consistency in data collection and analysis, the shortlisted cases identified through the open call were subsequently invited to complete the same survey instrument used for targeted consultations. This allowed information to be collected in a comparable format across all cases and provided a common basis for examining motivations, relationship types, enabling factors, challenges, and outcomes associated with integrated heritage safeguarding.

Supplementary desk-based research was undertaken using project reports, management and safeguarding plans, academic publications, policy papers, and other publicly available sources. This research also helped

identify a small number of additional cases to strengthen the diversity of heritage contexts represented and ensure broad geographical coverage across the region. The resulting information was reviewed and organized using the same analytical framework applied to the other case studies.

Contributors to the case studies were consulted throughout the drafting process and invited to review draft texts relating to their respective cases. Their comments and factual corrections were considered in the preparation of the final version.

The resulting collection comprises case studies from China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Japan, Mongolia, and the Republic of Korea (ROK). The cases represent a wide range of heritage types, including cultural landscapes, historic towns and villages, sacred sites, industrial heritage, performing arts, craftsmanship, foodways, traditional ecological knowledge, and digital heritage initiatives. Together, they provide a diverse evidence base for exploring how tangible and intangible heritage interact and how integrated approaches are being developed and implemented across East Asia.

1.4. Analytical approach

The cases presented in this publication reveal that integrated heritage safeguarding does not follow a single model. The relationship between tangible and intangible heritage varies according to local contexts, heritage characteristics, community priorities, governance arrangements, and development conditions.

Rather than organizing the cases by country or heritage category, this publication adopts an analytical structure that focuses on the study's four key questions. The analytical observations presented under each section are derived from patterns identified across the case study collection, while the individual cases included under each subsection are intended as illustrative examples of the themes being discussed rather than the sole basis for the analysis.

Why does integration occur?
This question examines the motivations that lead communities, heritage managers, institutions, and other actors to pursue integrated approaches to safeguarding and management.

How does integration occur?
This question explores the different ways in which tangible and intangible heritage interact in practice, including through places, practices, knowledge systems, livelihoods, memories, and technologies.

What enables successful integration?
This question considers the conditions, capacities, relationships, and institutional arrangements that support integrated approaches and help sustain them over time.

What does integration achieve?
This question looks at the outcomes generated through integrated approaches, including their contributions to heritage safeguarding, community well-being, sustainable livelihoods, environmental stewardship, and cultural continuity.

This structure allows the publication to move beyond documenting individual examples and toward identifying broader patterns and lessons emerging across East Asia.

2 Why Integration Happens: Motivations

What motivates integrated approaches to safeguarding and managing tangible and intangible heritage?

Integrated approaches do not emerge in a uniform way. Different heritage actors adopt them in response to different needs, challenges, opportunities, and aspirations. Understanding these motivations is important because they shape how integrated approaches are designed, implemented, and sustained. A project driven by the need to conserve a historic site may differ significantly from one motivated by community aspirations, revitalization goals, development pressures, or technological innovation, even if both ultimately strengthen the relationship between tangible and intangible heritage.

The cases examined in this study demonstrate that integration is rarely pursued as an abstract or theoretical objective. Rather, it emerges as a practical response to real-world circumstances in which the tangible and intangible dimensions of heritage are closely interconnected. When heritage is managed in fragments, both dimensions can be weakened. Conversely, recognizing and strengthening these connections can contribute to the continued vitality of heritage places, practices, knowledge systems, and communities. The motivations identified in the following cases provide insight into why integrated approaches emerge and the different pathways through which tangible–intangible synergies are achieved.

Source: © Shoji Nakamura/Shutterstock.com*

2.1. Conservation need

Conservation need arises when the physical survival of a heritage place depends upon traditional knowledge, craftsmanship, skills, or management practices that are themselves at risk of disappearing. In such circumstances, safeguarding tangible heritage cannot be separated from safeguarding the intangible heritage that enables its continued care, maintenance, and transmission. The act of repairing a historic building, maintaining a cultural landscape, or restoring a traditional structure often requires knowledge accumulated over generations and embodied in practitioners, artisans, and communities.

Across the East Asian cases, conservation need emerges as one of the strongest motivations for integrated approaches. While this relationship is most visible in cases involving traditional construction techniques and restoration practices, it also appears in cultural landscapes, ritual spaces, and community-managed heritage sites where physical environments depend upon the continued practice of local knowledge. The cases demonstrate that conservation is rarely a purely technical exercise. Rather, it is a social and cultural process through which knowledge is applied, transmitted, adapted, and renewed. Integrated approaches therefore emerge not primarily from conceptual commitments to holistic heritage management, but from a practical recognition that the long-term conservation of heritage places often depends upon the vitality of living knowledge systems.

The Classical Gardens of Suzhou and associated skills and techniques



Source: World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (WHITR-AP Suzhou)

The Classical Gardens of Suzhou (China) illustrate how the conservation of a heritage place depends on the continued practice of traditional craftsmanship. As a UNESCO World Heritage Site comprising nine gardens widely regarded as the pinnacle of Eastern Garden art, these landscapes cannot be authentically maintained without the living knowledge embedded in multiple intangible cultural heritage elements. The gardens' core value — the concept of "man-made yet seemingly natural" — is not an abstract aesthetic principle but a material reality produced through specific, endangered craft skills. These include Xiangshanbang traditional architectural construction techniques, rockery stacking craftsmanship, Suzhou brick carving, wood carving, and Su-style *penjing* cultivation. Each garden restoration or maintenance intervention requires practitioners who understand not merely the visual appearance of historic garden features but the embodied knowledge of how to construct, repair, and sustain them using traditional materials and methods.

The Suzhou Municipal Bureau of Garden and Landscaping has recognized that conservation cannot be delegated to external contractors with no stake in craft continuity. Instead, the bureau has integrated intangible cultural heritage directly into the garden management system by establishing professional *penjing* teams, master studios, and structured apprenticeship programs within the heritage site administration. *Penjing* workers are employed as garden staff, not as independent artisans, ensuring that daily maintenance routines simultaneously preserve tangible garden features and transmit intangible skills. The restoration of garden buildings, rockeries, and

decorative carvings similarly requires the ongoing application of traditional techniques. Without this integration, the gardens would face a dual crisis: physical deterioration from lack of skilled maintenance, and craft extinction from lack of practical application. The conservation need of the tangible site thus provides the continuous demand that keeps intangible skills alive, while those skills ensure the gardens remain authentically preserved rather than replaced with inauthentic substitutes. This mutual dependency transforms conservation from a technical problem into an integrated heritage strategy.

Tomioka Silk Mill and related sites



*Source: © PixHound/Shutterstock.com**

The conservation of Tomioka Silk Mill and its related sites in Gunma Prefecture (Japan) provides a powerful example of how the physical survival of an industrial heritage site is intrinsically dependent on the preservation of traditional skills. Following the Silk Mill's closure in 1987, it was meticulously preserved by Katakura Industries and later by Tomioka City, culminating in its UNESCO World Heritage inscription in 2014. However, municipal officials recognized an important point: the silent, static preservation of historic buildings and French-imported machinery could weaken the site's operational and cultural meaning. The threat of cultural severance triggered the conservation needs. Without the living knowledge of sericulture and silk-reeling, the site's operational identity would be lost. To truly convey the mill's value, it was necessary to set up a system for the entire silk industry, from raising silkworms to reeling silk.

This understanding manifested in the creation of the Tomioka Silk Promotion Organization in 2008, dedicated to transmitting sericulture knowledge and techniques to future generations. Consequently, conservation efforts have included maintaining operational reeling demonstrations and developing the "Tomioka silk" brand to support local cocoon production. This approach ensures that the mill's brick walls and machinery are not merely artefacts, but tools within a living industrial ecosystem, demonstrating that the physical survival of the site and the safeguarding of the techniques that once gave it meaning are mutually constitutive.

2.2. Revitalization challenge

Revitalization challenges arise when heritage remains physically present but gradually loses its social relevance, visibility, or connection to contemporary life. Historic sites, monuments, traditional settlements, and cultural practices may survive in material form, yet become increasingly disconnected from the communities that once sustained them. In such situations, safeguarding requires more than preservation alone; it requires renewed efforts to reconnect heritage with people, meanings, and everyday experience.

Across the cases, revitalization often serves as a catalyst for integrated approaches. Communities, heritage managers, and cultural practitioners seek to reactivate heritage spaces through festivals, performances, inter-

pretation programs, educational activities, and other forms of cultural engagement that reconnect tangible places with living traditions. The cases suggest that revitalization is not simply about increasing visibility or visitor numbers. Rather, it is about restoring the social functions, cultural meanings, and forms of participation that allow heritage to remain relevant in changing contexts. Integrated approaches help transform heritage from a preserved remnant of the past into a living resource that continues to generate cultural value, learning, and community engagement.

The Eastern Qing Tombs and imperial filigree craftsmanship



Source: Administration Department of Cultural Relics in Eastern Tombs of the Qing Dynasty, Zunhua City, Hebei Province, China

In the Eastern Qing Tombs region (China), the threatened survival of imperial gold and silver filigree craftsmanship has prompted an integrated approach linking the craft to the historical environment of the tombs. This intricate craft, which originated in the Shang and Zhou dynasties and flourished during the Qing dynasty through demand from the Imperial Workshop, faces multiple existential pressures in the contemporary context. The craft requires a lengthy learning period and involves complex techniques — engraving, casting, filigree, and inlay — supported by dozens of processes requiring tens of thousands of meticulous carvings. Yet young practitioners are scarce, creating a genuine risk of "lack of successors." Modern mechanical processes have further eroded traditional manual work, with some craftsmen simplifying procedures for efficiency, leading to what the case study describes as the "alienation" of the craftsmanship. Additionally, insufficient intellectual property protection and an influx of homogeneous products have diminished creative motivation. Without intervention, this imperial craft would lose not only its practitioners but also its spatial, social, and economic context.

The Panlong Group, as the core inheritor, has responded through an integrated approach that re-embeds the intangible craft within the tangible heritage environment of the Eastern Qing Tombs. The objective is not simply commercial revitalization but the continued transmission of craftsmanship traditions and their cultural meanings. The tombs themselves — mausoleums of emperors Shunzhi, Kangxi, and Qianlong — provide the authentic spatial context: their decorative motifs, ritual regulations, and imperial aesthetic standards become both the inspiration and the quality benchmark for contemporary craftsmanship. The group has established a gradient spatial strategy: the core protection area (the tombs) focuses on relic conservation; exhibition areas (Silverware Street, Royal Product Street) host craftsmanship demonstrations; and the industrial extension area conducts production. This spatial linkage ensures the craft is practiced, witnessed, and sustained within its authentic cultural landscape. The 2024 Vocational Skills Competition, held on Royal Product Street with competition topics drawn from tomb decorative motifs, further demonstrates how the tangible site provides the stage and the intangible craft finds renewed purpose. Through "enterprise-supported transmission" — using enterprise resources to fund training, establish craftsmanship archives, and create market demand — the craft gains economic viability while remaining anchored in the historical knowledge, aesthetic values, and cultural meanings associated with the imperial tomb complex. In this way, revitalization serves not only economic sustainability but also the continued transmission and reinterpretation of the craft within its original cultural context.

2.3. Development pressure

Development pressure emerges when urbanization, infrastructure expansion, tourism growth, economic transformation, or demographic change threatens the integrity of heritage systems. Such pressures rarely affect tangible and intangible heritage separately. Changes to historic environments, cultural landscapes, and traditional settlements often disrupt the practices, knowledge systems, livelihoods, and social relationships that give these places meaning. Likewise, the decline of traditional practices can weaken community connections to heritage places and reduce incentives to maintain and safeguard them.

Many of the cases illustrate how integrated approaches have been adopted in response to these interconnected challenges. Rather than viewing heritage as an obstacle to development, they seek to position heritage as a resource for sustainable development, community well-being, cultural continuity, and local identity. The cases demonstrate that effective responses to development pressure require attention not only to physical conservation but also to the social, cultural, and economic systems that sustain heritage over time. Integrated approaches therefore provide a means of balancing continuity and change, enabling communities to adapt to contemporary realities while maintaining meaningful connections to their heritage.

The Jiangnan chuan quan *(Boat boxing)*



Source: Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University Affiliated School, Wuzhong District, Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China

The Jiangnan *chuan quan* case directly confronts how development pressure — urbanization, infrastructure projects, and tourism-driven commercialization — threatens the intimate bonds between heritage places and the communities, practices, and meanings that sustain them. The Jiangnan Water Town Cultural Landscape of the Taihu Basin (China), with its dense networks of waterways, stone bridges, ancestral halls, docks, and whitewashed dwellings, once provided the authentic spatial context where boat boxing flourished as a living tradition. Originating among boatmen working in narrow, unstable spaces, the martial art emphasizes balance, softness within strength, and the ability to flow with external forces — embodying the ecological rhythm and cultural temperament of Jiangnan itself.

However, the pressures of modernization have systematically disrupted this delicate heritage ecosystem. Urbanization and spatial transformation have replaced waterfront villages with modern infrastructure, detaching *chuan quan* from its original practice sites. The temple courtyards, docks, and riverside open spaces that once served as social and ritual arenas for martial arts practice have disappeared or been fundamentally altered. Simultaneously, commercialization has reduced *chuan quan* to what was termed "symbolic reduction" — performative tourism has transformed the art into spectacle, stripping it of depth and turning it into a cultural logo rather than a living tradition. Traditional waterfront spaces are gone; practice has increasingly become staged performance detached from its cultural ecology. Aging practitioners and generational gaps compound the crisis, as the fading master-apprentice system leaves few young people engaged in long-term learning.

Integrated management responds to these threats by resisting separation. The Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University-Affiliated School's project insists that conservation plans must include provisions for meaningful access and community habitation. Rather than allowing the water town landscape to be reduced to its physical form without the practices that give it meaning, the project re-embeds *chuan quan* within its authentic context through education-driven heritage management. Students conduct field research in remaining water towns, document oral histories from local practitioners, and learn the martial art directly from inheritors — not as museum display but as living practice. This approach ensures that conservation is not about freezing heritage as tourist spectacle but about sustaining the relationship between people, place, and practice against the eroding forces of development pressure.

2.4. Community aspiration

Community aspiration reflects the desire of communities themselves to sustain, reclaim, strengthen, or reimagine their cultural heritage and ways of life. Unlike motivations driven primarily by external threats, policy requirements, or development pressures, community aspiration originates from within the heritage community. It reflects a desire to maintain cultural continuity, reinforce collective identity, transmit values and knowledge across generations, and ensure that heritage remains meaningful in contemporary life. In such cases, integrated approaches emerge not because they are mandated by institutions, but because communities recognize that tangible and intangible heritage form part of a shared cultural system that cannot easily be separated.

Across the East Asian cases, community aspiration frequently serves as a powerful driver of integrated heritage safeguarding. Communities often perceive heritage not simply as a collection of sites, objects, or practices, but as a network of relationships connecting places, memories, knowledge, livelihoods, and social life. Whether expressed through the revitalization of historic neighbourhoods, the continuation of culinary traditions, the reactivation of ritual spaces, or the transmission of cultural practices associated with landscapes, communities consistently seek to sustain both the physical and living dimensions of their heritage. The cases demonstrate that integrated approaches are often most sustainable when they are rooted in community-defined values and priorities. In these circumstances, heritage safeguarding becomes an expression of cultural self-determination, enabling communities to actively shape how their heritage is maintained, practiced, adapted, and transmitted in a changing world.

The Pantang Wuyue historic neighbourhood

The Pantang Wuyue historic neighbourhood in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province (China) exemplifies a community-driven response to the loss of meaning, memory, and identity as the primary motivation for tangible–intangible synergies. Unlike cases driven by external mandates or regulatory requirements, this project emerged from local residents' recognition that their heritage was being preserved as physical fabric rather than lived as culture. As the oldest and most well-preserved traditional rural settlement in Guangzhou, Pantang Wuyue carries a unique cultural ecosystem: its "millennium-old water town" texture, stone-paved lanes, lake-water systems, Sanguan Temple, and Renwei Temple form the tangible foundation for intangible traditions including the farming culture of "Pantang Five Delicacies" (local aquatic foods), dragon boat rituals, and festival customs. These tangible and intangible elements are interdependent, jointly forming an "integrated cultural ecosystem."

Faced with rapid urbanization, residents saw their traditional agricultural and festival practices eroding while historic buildings stood preserved but hollow. The

deterioration of tangible spaces — polluted waterways, dilapidated public spaces, occupied community areas — directly threatened intangible heritage survival. Simultaneously, development pressure created conflict: real estate interests clashed with historical block protection, and younger generations' desire for modern amenities led to population outflow and community aging. Intangible heritage faced interruption risk. Rather than accepting this trajectory, the community mobilized. Guided by the localized Chinese concept of "heritage urbanism," which views historical and cultural resources as drivers for urban development rather than static objects to be frozen, residents insisted that conservation plans include provisions for community habitation, cultural use, and meaningful access.

The project innovatively revived the traditional *xiangyue* (rural covenant) governance wisdom, establishing a community planner system and multi-stakeholder Joint Creation Committee. This transformed residents from passive management objects into active participants throughout the entire process — from value recognition to implementation and maintenance. In this context, communities are not merely stakeholders in heritage but its primary custodians and core decision-makers. They are not simply participants in safeguarding activities; they actively define which heritage values should be maintained, adapted, and transmitted. The Pantang Wuyue case demonstrates that when communities reclaim agency over their inheritance, heritage transforms from a preserved specimen into continuously evolving, vibrant living space.

The Pyongyang Raengmyon custom



Source: © RYU Tok In, JO Il Gyong, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 2020

The inheritance of Pyongyang Raengmyon custom (DPRK) exemplifies community aspiration as a major motivation behind integrated conservation and management. The local population recognized that their culinary heritage was being reduced to recipe archives rather than sustained as living culture. The safeguarding framework of this intangible cultural heritage is not driven primarily by a regulatory mandate or tourism development target. Rather, representative cooks, housewives, and culinary associations in Pyongyang recognized that the cold noodle custom derives its meaning not from written documentation alone but from the functional, everyday spaces where it is practiced: restaurants such as Okryu and Chongnyu, family kitchens, buckwheat production areas, mills, and communal dining settings. Without these tangible environments, the intangible knowledge of broth making, noodle pulling techniques, and the social ritual of shared meals would lose its living context.

The community therefore insisted that conservation cannot mean freezing recipes in museums or archives. Instead, they reclaimed agency over their own inheritance by demanding that safeguarding actively maintain restaurants as heritage venues, preserve agricultural supply chains for buckwheat, and protect the professional livelihoods of cooks as knowledge holders. Multiple consultation rounds and participatory governance mechanisms help to keep this custom embedded in the heritage community's daily life. Integrated conservation serves as an act of cultural self-determination: the tangible spaces and intangible practices are sustained together as the community aspires to cook, enjoy, and transmit Raengmyon as a living element of the city.

Jinju Sword Dance (Geommu)

In Jinju (ROK), the Jinju Sword Dance project was driven by the local community's recognition that collective memory and cultural identity were weakening. The community recognized that the historical significance of Jinjuseong Fortress (tangible heritage) and the Jinju Sword Dance (intangible heritage) had weakened, with younger generations losing connection to the performing art traditions that once defined local identity. Rather than waiting for external mandates, the community actively sought to reclaim and recontextualize these heritage elements. A project was established around the concept of a "time-travel experience guided by the 1872 magistrate of Jinju," directly responding to the community's desire to reactivate the spiritual values embedded in the fortress walls. Traditional costume experiences, sword dance workshops, citizen-participatory drawing programs, and public performances were designed not as top-down tourism products but as community-led reclamation of meaning. The motivation was internal: the community understood that preserving the fortress as a silent monument was insufficient. They needed the *Gyobang* culture and sword dance — the intangible practices historically associated with the space — to restore the cultural meanings associated with the site. This aspiration drove the integration of tangible and intangible heritage as a single, living expression of Jinju identity, transforming a historic fortress from a preserved monument into an active cultural stage where citizens and visitors collectively remember, perform, and transmit.

2.5. Technological opportunity

Technological opportunity arises when digital tools and emerging technologies create new possibilities for documenting, interpreting, transmitting, and experiencing heritage. Rather than being viewed solely as a potential threat to cultural meanings or traditional modes of transmission, technology can provide innovative pathways for connecting heritage places, cultural practices, knowledge holders, and wider audiences. In this context, integrated approaches emerge not primarily as a response to risk, but as an effort to harness new tools to strengthen the relationships between tangible and intangible heritage.

Across the cases, technology serves as a bridge linking physical places with living cultural expressions in ways that were previously difficult to achieve. Digital platforms, virtual environments, immersive interpretation tools, online communities, and interactive media create new opportunities for learning, participation, and engagement, particularly among younger generations. They can help make intangible heritage more visible within heritage sites, extend access beyond geographical boundaries, and support new forms of transmission and interpretation. The cases also suggest that technology is most effective when it complements rather than replaces direct engagement with heritage. Rather than creating a purely virtual experience, successful initiatives use technology to deepen understanding of heritage places, stimulate interest in cultural practices, and encourage participation in heritage safeguarding. These examples demonstrate that technological innovation can become an important catalyst for integrated approaches by expanding the ways in which heritage is experienced, shared, and sustained in contemporary society.

The Moonlight Blade game and Fujian Tulou



Source: Tencent Public Affairs

Tencent's Moonlight Blade project uses digital tools to connect physical heritage with living cultural practices. Rather than separating building conservation from intangible practices, the project integrates them through a game engine that reconstructs the Yongding *tulou* (Fujian, China) as a playable, story driven environment. Players encounter Hakka mountain songs, family precepts, and tea processing rituals as in game quests, turning passive viewing into active cultural learning. This digital layer does not replace the real *tulou*; it creates curiosity and emotional connection that drive young users to visit the physical site. Once there, light and shadow technologies revive rituals such as the Spring Ox Ceremony inside the ancestral hall, making tangible heritage visible and interactive within the original physical space. Far from diminishing heritage value, technology enables a "virtual–real loop": online engagement funds offline restoration, while visitor data guides adaptive management. Moreover, the game's social features and e-sports events turn heritage into a shared, contemporary experience, breaking the stereotype that digital media inevitably commodifies or distorts tradition. By embedding ICH documentation, transmission, and performance into a popular digital platform, the project shows that technological tools can resolve classic tensions between conservation and development — attracting youth, generating revenue for maintenance, and training new inheritors — while seeking to avoid adverse impacts on the site's authenticity. Thus, technological opportunity here is not an external add on but the very mechanism that makes synergistic conservation scalable, participatory, and sustainable.

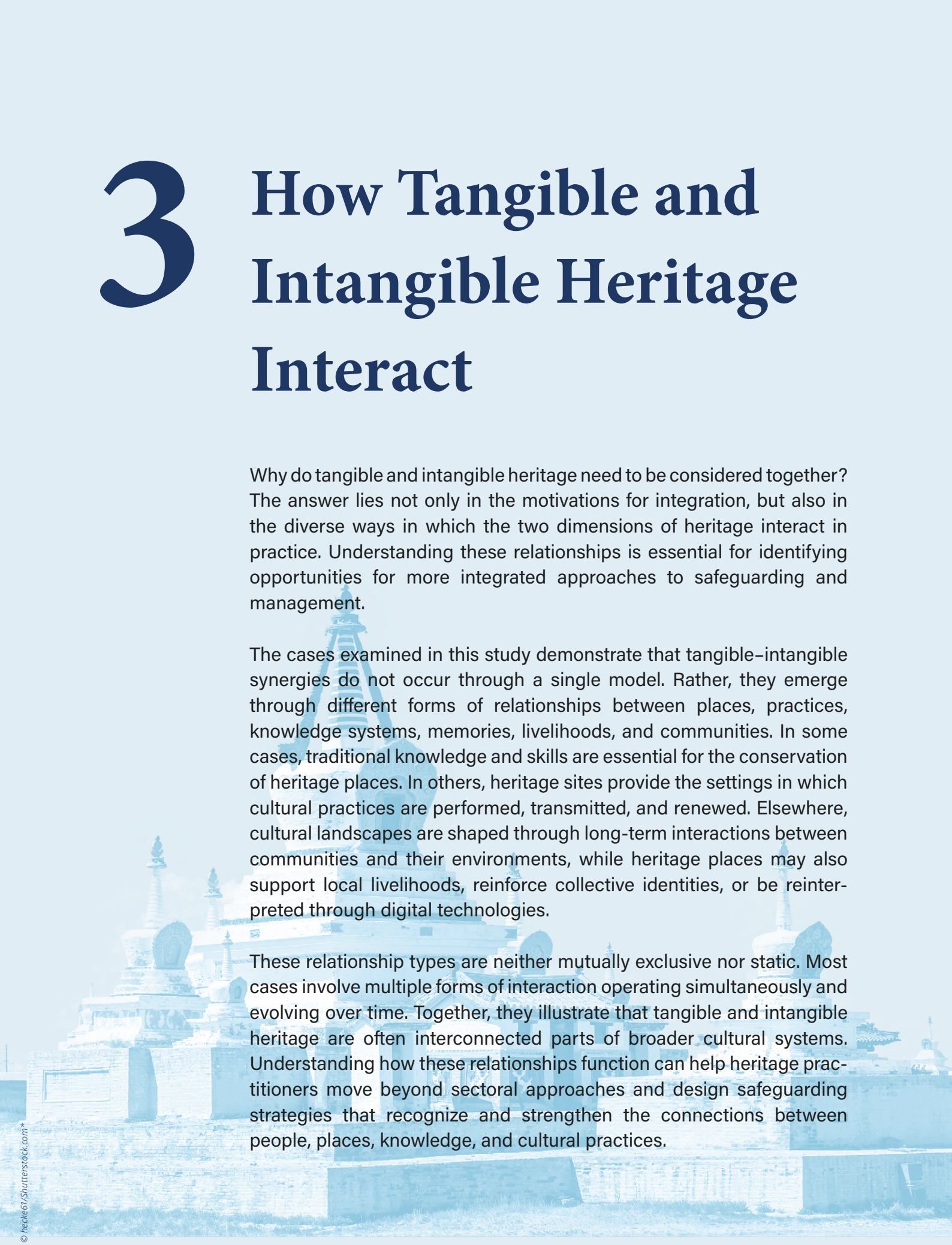
While digital engagement has expanded public awareness, the long-term vitality of Hakka traditions ultimately depends upon their continued practice within communities and family networks. Technology therefore complements rather than replaces community-based transmission.

3 How Tangible and Intangible Heritage Interact

Why do tangible and intangible heritage need to be considered together? The answer lies not only in the motivations for integration, but also in the diverse ways in which the two dimensions of heritage interact in practice. Understanding these relationships is essential for identifying opportunities for more integrated approaches to safeguarding and management.

The cases examined in this study demonstrate that tangible–intangible synergies do not occur through a single model. Rather, they emerge through different forms of relationships between places, practices, knowledge systems, memories, livelihoods, and communities. In some cases, traditional knowledge and skills are essential for the conservation of heritage places. In others, heritage sites provide the settings in which cultural practices are performed, transmitted, and renewed. Elsewhere, cultural landscapes are shaped through long-term interactions between communities and their environments, while heritage places may also support local livelihoods, reinforce collective identities, or be reinterpreted through digital technologies.

These relationship types are neither mutually exclusive nor static. Most cases involve multiple forms of interaction operating simultaneously and evolving over time. Together, they illustrate that tangible and intangible heritage are often interconnected parts of broader cultural systems. Understanding how these relationships function can help heritage practitioners move beyond sectoral approaches and design safeguarding strategies that recognize and strengthen the connections between people, places, knowledge, and cultural practices.



Source: © hecke61/Shutterstock.com*

3.1. Heritage sustained through traditional knowledge and skills

Heritage is often sustained through traditional knowledge, skills, and practices that enable its conservation, maintenance, and continued use. In this relationship, the physical survival of heritage places depends upon forms of intangible heritage such as craftsmanship, construction techniques, ecological knowledge, resource management practices, and other specialized forms of expertise transmitted across generations. The conservation of tangible heritage therefore becomes inseparable from the safeguarding of the knowledge systems that support it.

Across the cases, this relationship emerges as one of the most direct and visible forms of tangible–intangible synergies. Historic buildings, gardens, cultural landscapes, and other heritage places rely on traditional skills not only during major restoration projects but also through routine maintenance and adaptation over time. The cases demonstrate that conservation is rarely a purely technical process. Rather, it provides opportunities for practitioners to apply, transmit, and refine traditional knowledge in response to contemporary needs. In many instances, the continued existence of heritage places depends upon the availability of skilled practitioners, while the survival of those skills depends upon opportunities to put them into practice. Tangible and intangible heritage therefore sustain one another through a relationship of mutual dependence, making integrated approaches essential for their long-term continuity.

Huatang Wang Ancestral Hall and its associated construction techniques



Source: Shengzhou Cultural Relics Protection Center, Zhejiang Vernacular Engineering Design Co., Ltd.

At Huatang Wang Ancestral Hall (China), the restoration process became a vehicle for applying and transmitting endangered building crafts. When the ancestral hall underwent restoration and conservation in 2022, the project faced a critical choice: conventional restoration using modern materials and methods, or a deliberate reliance on traditional craftsmanship. It chose the latter, transforming the restoration work into an active vehicle for intangible heritage safeguarding. Recognized inheritors such as Yang Fengliang (timberwork), Qiu Shigen (murals), and Qiu Laihan (wood carving) were engaged not merely as consultants but as lead practitioners on the construction site. Together with their few remaining apprentices — only two or three of a dozen still practice traditional timberwork — they applied historic techniques including composite earth floor preparation using tung oil and glutinous rice, plaster moulding craft restoration following the "Bone Glue School" and "Tung Oil-Lime School," hemp-lime-organic paint process, and precise mortise-and-tenon joinery for damaged *dougong* brackets. Every physical intervention — roof tile replacement, paint craft application, decorative *chiwen* ornament restoration — simultaneously became a pedagogical act. The project systematically documented these processes through video recordings, photographic archives, textual descriptions, and by systematizing terminology and operational mnemonic formulas for Shengzhou's timberwork, transforming tacit, orally transmitted knowledge into explicit digital resources accessible via QR codes. A science education video on the working principles of

mortise-and-tenon joinery was made, using Huatang Wang Ancestral Hall as a case study, and it was published on public channels.

More critically, the on-site work provided practice-based training: younger team members learned by doing, mixing composite earth alongside masters and practicing plaster moulding under direct supervision. This approach directly addressed the transmission gap that threatens traditional Chinese building crafts, where extended skill acquisition, physical demands, and limited income have driven most apprentices away. By integrating skill transmission with employment, the project demonstrated that heritage restoration can be a sustainable economic incentive for craft continuation. The physical outcome of an authentically restored ancestral hall and the intangible outcome of documented, practiced, and transmitted technical knowledge became closely intertwined. The act of repairing a building and the act of sustaining a craft community merged into one integrated conservation process, showing that traditional knowledge is sustained when it is actively applied.

3.2. Landscapes shaped through traditional practices

Some forms of heritage emerge through long-term interactions between communities and their natural and built environments. In these cases, landscapes are not simply physical settings but the cumulative result of cultural practices, ecological knowledge, resource management systems, and social traditions developed over generations. Tangible and intangible heritage are therefore deeply intertwined, with landscapes reflecting both material interventions and the knowledge systems that sustain them.

Across the cases, traditional farming systems, water management practices, pastoral activities, ritual observances, and seasonal cycles have contributed to shaping and maintaining distinctive cultural landscapes. The cases demonstrate that many heritage landscapes cannot be understood solely through their physical appearance. Their significance lies equally in the practices, knowledge, and relationships that continue to shape them. Changes in traditional livelihoods or the loss of ecological knowledge can alter landscapes just as profoundly as physical development or environmental degradation. Integrated approaches are therefore essential for safeguarding both the visible characteristics of cultural landscapes and the living practices that have created and sustained them over time.

Tashkurgan Pamir National Geopark and Tajik ecological knowledge

At the Tashkurgan Pamir National Geopark (China), the entire plateau landscape — its glacial formations, biodiversity, Silk Road ruins, and Zoroastrian-related heritage — is inseparable from the highland Tajik living traditions that have co-evolved with it over centuries. Unlike approaches that treat a site primarily as a physical landscape to be preserved, this model recognizes that the landscape's cultural significance derives directly from ongoing practices: epic poetry recitations, eagle dances performed during festivals, embroidery patterns encoding pastoral knowledge, and wedding customs that reinforce community-land relationships. These intangible heritage elements do not merely inhabit the Pamir landscape; they actively shape how it is perceived, used, and sustained.

The project operationalizes this understanding through a "Cultural Landscape Protection" approach that integrates natural heritage conservation with Tajik cultural transmission. For example, 386 Tajik-style homestays were developed not as generic tourist accommodations but as living spaces where traditional architecture, hospitality customs, and seasonal rituals continue to function. Young people trained as guides and cultural interpreters learn to narrate an integrated story rather than separate natural and cultural histories, illustrating how Tajik ecological knowledge — transmitted through oral epics and craft

techniques — has enabled sustainable highland habitation for generations. The embroidery exhibition hall, which supports over 40 female artisans, produces designs that

reflect glacial valleys and pastoral cycles, giving visible form to the landscape's influence on local craft traditions.

However, this case also reveals tensions inherent to this mechanism: rising tourist numbers place increasing pressure on the fragile highland ecosystem and vulnerable material heritage, including sites such as the Stone City ruins, while also risking the compression of eagle dances and folk songs into "fast-consumed" performances and the loss of traditional techniques in handicraft production driven by market efficiency. This underscores that sustaining a cultural landscape requires not merely acknowledging the ICH–landscape link, but also actively defending the depth and cultural meaning of the practices that created and maintained the site. Conservation here is not merely about freezing the plateau in place; rather, it is about ensuring that the living traditions — epic, dance, craft, and ritual — continue to shape it meaningfully over time.

3.3. Heritage places as venues for practice and transmission

Heritage places often serve as the settings in which cultural practices are performed, transmitted, and renewed. In this relationship, tangible heritage provides the physical and social spaces that enable intangible heritage to remain active within community life. Temples, ancestral halls, historic neighbourhoods, public squares, performance venues, workshops, markets, and other heritage sites function not merely as places to be preserved, but as environments where knowledge, skills, rituals, and cultural expressions continue to be practiced.

Across the cases, many forms of intangible heritage depend upon continued access to particular places and environments. Rituals derive meaning from specific sacred sites, performing arts are linked to historic venues, and traditional practices often require physical settings that support social interaction and cultural transmission. The cases demonstrate that safeguarding intangible heritage frequently involves maintaining the spaces in which it is practiced, while the continued use of those spaces reinforces their cultural significance. This relationship highlights the importance of viewing heritage places as living environments that support ongoing cultural activity rather than as static monuments disconnected from contemporary life.

The Summer Palace and imperial bonsai



Source: Beijing Summer Palace Administration, Beijing, China

At the Summer Palace in Beijing (China), imperial bonsai practice transforms the royal garden from a preserved monument into an active platform for horticultural knowledge transmission. Unlike static displays of botanical specimens, the seventy-two century-old osmanthus bonsai are maintained using Qing dynasty techniques — water and fertilizer management rooted in organic practices, pruning shaped by imperial aesthetic principles, repotting guided by triennial cycles, and dual-directional flowering regulation that extends bloom seasons from

August to mid-November. These crafts are not performed as periodic demonstrations but as ongoing conservation work embedded in the daily rhythms of the Summer Palace. The site becomes a living classroom: the master-apprentice system, formalized through an Inheritor Training Plan aligned with national heritage policies, ensures that four generations of horticultural specialists have transmitted practical knowledge directly on the grounds where imperial gardeners once worked.

Annual festivals — thirteen consecutive Spring Festival Plum and Wintersweet exhibitions, twenty-four Autumn Osmanthus Festivals — provide public platforms where visitors witness pruning, repotting, and flowering regulation as living performances rather than archived techniques. The establishment of a Science and Education Base has enriched over 6,000 students through more than 80 workshops in primary and secondary schools, making heritage transmission a routine educational function rather than a special event. Crucially, the craft has been showcased at major international events — APEC 2014, the 2019 Beijing International Horticultural Expo, the 2022 Winter Olympics — demonstrating that this living venue extends its pedagogical role to global audiences. This approach presents heritage not as an isolated monument, but as a living space where knowledge is practiced, recreated, and transmitted across generations. The Summer Palace does not merely preserve bonsai; it sustains the horticultural intelligence that keeps them alive, showing that a site's vitality depends on the unbroken practice of the crafts that shaped it.

The National Programme on Mongolian Tsuur



Source: © Yu. Boldbaatar, 2006

In Mongolia, the National Programme on Mongolian *Tsuur* transforms cultural spaces — from local cultural centres and Mongolian gers to the Altai landscape itself — from passive backdrops into active platforms where oral tradition, ritual knowledge, and musical skill are continuously practiced, learned, and passed across generations. Traditional music of the *Tsuur*, a three-holed wooden wind instrument, was inscribed on UNESCO's Urgent Safeguarding List in 2009. *Tsuur* produces a unique triple harmonic sound that combines throat singing and flute playing. The traditional repertoire of the *Tsuur* is divided into three main categories: melodies depicting the beauty of nature, melodies expressing the behaviour and character of wild animals, and melodies portraying the gait and movement of horses and camels — comprising more than 40 pieces in total. Its melodies are transmitted orally through memory and talent rather than musical notation, meaning that transmission cannot occur in archives or museums. It requires embodied, place-based, person-to-person instruction.

The National Programme on Mongolian *Tsuur* operationalizes this by conducting intensive daily training in local cultural centres across Khovd, Orkhon, and Bayan-Ölgii provinces, where masters like B. Naranbat (who has trained over 80 students) teach not only technique but also the environmental knowledge and cosmological meaning embedded in each melody. Critically, the *Tsuur* repertoire reflects specific landscapes: "Flow of the Eeven River" imitates the sound of a real river originating from Altai Tavan Bogd, meaning the natural site and the melody cannot be separated. Rituals such as Ovoo worship, practices for protecting livestock during harsh winters, and healing ceremonies are performed in tangible spaces like

sacred cairns, pastures, and nomadic routes, making the landscape itself a living venue. A planned apprenticeship training centre under the Mongolian National Cultural Heritage Center further institutionalizes this site-based transmission. The result is significant: from only a handful of players before 2006, today around 200 people can play the *Tsuur*. This demonstrates that when heritage sites are used as living venues for ongoing practice — rather than treated as silent monuments — the intangible tradition gains not only visibility but also active, intergenerational continuity rooted in the places that give it meaning.

Suwon Hwaseong Fortress as an inclusive venue for participation and transmission



Source: Hwaseong Management Office, Suwon Special City, Republic of Korea

In Suwon Special City (ROK), the "Reign of Peace" program transforms the Hwaseong Haenggung Temporary Palace from a restored monument into an active platform, where intangible heritage is continuously performed, learned, and transmitted. Unlike static preservation that treats historic palaces as relics to be viewed, this initiative activates the tangible spaces — Byeolju, where preparations unfolded for the legendary 1795 banquet, and Uhwagwan Guesthouse, steeped in King Jeongjo's governing ideals — as living stages for community-led practice. The "Walk through the Palace with Local Community Actors" program turns courtyards and halls into performance venues, where local actors rehearse, narrate, and dramatize historical stories connected to each building. This is an ongoing, recurring program that embeds theatrical interpretation into the daily rhythm of the heritage site. Similarly, the "Royal Court Tea Ceremony Experience" reenacts the 1795 banquet's ceremonial table settings within the authentic spatial context of Byeolju, accompanied by traditional Korean music. Participants do not merely observe artefacts. They experience the practice in situ, making the intangible values of "Reign of Peace" — harmony, benevolence, and festive spirit — tangible through direct engagement.

Crucially, transmission occurs through doing. Local community members develop scripts, prepare tea menus, and perform as actors, learning intergenerational knowledge not in classrooms but on the palace grounds themselves, actively shaping how heritage meanings are understood and transmitted. The four-stage cyclical methodology, including Education, Collaborative Research, Joint Operations, and Broadening Scope, ensures that learning is an ongoing, self-sustaining process rather than a one-time workshop. By welcoming both Korean and international participants, and extending complimentary access to elders and vulnerable groups, the site becomes an inclusive venue for multi-generational transmission. The palace is therefore presented not only as a preserved monument, but as a setting where historical meanings are actively interpreted and transmitted through the living practices it hosts. The significance of these activities lies not only in public participation but also in their capacity to reconnect contemporary communities with the historical meanings and values associated with the site.

3.4. Heritage supporting community livelihoods

Heritage can also contribute to livelihoods, economic activities, and community well-being. In this relationship, tangible and intangible heritage combine to support local enterprises, traditional occupations, cultural tourism, creative industries, and other forms of economic activity. Heritage is not treated solely as an object of conservation, but as a resource that contributes to the social and economic vitality of communities.

Across the cases, heritage-related livelihoods often depend upon maintaining both physical assets and living traditions. Historic environments provide the settings in which cultural activities take place, while traditional knowledge, skills, products, and practices generate distinctive cultural value. The cases demonstrate that economic activities rooted in heritage can create incentives for conservation and transmission when managed in ways that respect cultural values and community priorities. At the same time, they illustrate the importance of balancing economic use with safeguarding objectives to ensure that heritage remains a living cultural resource rather than becoming detached from the communities that sustain it. Integrated approaches can therefore help align cultural continuity, community well-being, and sustainable development.

Jingmai Mountain old tea forests and its people-centred, judicially enabled economic model



Source: Pu'er Jingmai Mountain Ancient Tea Forest Protection Administration, Lancang Lahu Autonomous County People's Procuratorate, Yunan Province, China

At Jingmai Mountain (China), heritage conservation is linked to sustainable livelihoods through a people-centred, judicially enabled economic model. The old tea forests — a UNESCO World Heritage Site — are not preserved as static relics but remain actively cultivated using the millennia-old practice of "understory tea cultivation," where tea grows beneath natural forest canopies. This tangible landscape is inseparable from the intangible heritage that sustains it: traditional management systems, manual processing techniques, and the tea ancestor belief system of the Dai, Blang, and Hani communities. The project operationalizes this interdependence through the "Triple Coordination of Tea" — tea culture, tea industry, and tea science and technology — creating products and experiences that derive value from, and contribute to, the continued practice of living heritage.

In 2024, the heritage site generated 368 million yuan in economic output, a 10.28% year-on-year increase, while villagers' per capita net income reached 23,900 yuan. Tourist visits surged 247% compared to pre-inscription levels. Critically, these economic benefits are channelled back into conservation through a community-based governance framework. The Public Interest Litigation (PIL) system, led by Prosecutor Li Tie and her PIL team, empowered local communities to co-develop Villagers' Conventions and benefit-sharing mechanisms, ensuring that 1,636 households across over 6,500 residents remain primary decision-makers rather than passive recipients of tourism revenue.

Stilted Blang architecture with "wide corridors" facilitates tea-related social practices; the Shankang Tea Ancestor Festival, revitalized by ICH bearers like Su Guowen and Nankang, reinforces cultural identity while attracting visitors. However, the case acknowledges the inherent

tension: economic development must serve cultural continuity, not displace it. The procuratories mechanism addresses this by providing legal oversight — preventing over-commercialization, managing pest infestations through adaptive pruning plans, and controlling invasive species — while keeping community welfare at the centre.

This demonstrates that sustainable enterprise, rooted in traditional ecological knowledge and protected by rule-of-law frameworks, can transform heritage sites from static heritage assets into living, thriving community assets.

The tradition of kimchi-making in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea



Source: © Ryu Tok In, Korea National Heritage Preservation Agency, 2013

The safeguarding of kimchi-making tradition directly links this culinary heritage to sustainable livelihoods across an integrated system of vegetable fields, greenhouses, kitchens, storage facilities, and commercial distribution networks. While rooted in long-standing traditions, kimchi-making continues to evolve through changing ingredients, technologies, household practices, and contemporary lifestyles. Unlike approaches that separate cultural preservation from economic activity, this case recognizes that kimchi-making cannot survive as a recipe alone. It requires functioning material environments, where communities farm, ferment, store, and exchange. The safeguarding measures actively protect vegetable farms, greenhouse complexes, forests, fisheries, and storage systems, while simultaneously supporting commercial supply networks, culinary industries, and food production infrastructure. This is not exploitation of heritage for profit but a deliberate integration where economic activity sustains cultural continuity.

Crucially, this safeguarding framework ensures that community members, particularly housewives, neighbourhood units, and women's unions, remain the primary beneficiaries and decision-makers. Women are explicitly recognized as the principal custodians and transmitters, and they are deeply involved in safeguarding governance alongside local committees, culinary associations, and educational institutions. Proceeds from kimchi-making activities, whether through family-level production, restaurant sales, festival exhibitions, or commercial distribution, flow back to sustain both the tangible infrastructure (greenhouses, kitchens, storage facilities) and the intangible practices (seasonal fermentation knowledge, ingredient selection, cooperative preparation methods).

The framework also links safeguarding to agricultural development, greenhouse construction, and local economic development, ensuring that economic growth serves heritage rather than displacing it. While industrial production exists, family kitchens remain the primary transmission space, demonstrating a conscious resistance to over-commercialization. The community enterprise model in this case is not tourism-driven but everyday-life-driven. Kimchi-making supports households, schools, restaurants, and local economies because the community itself decides how to market, share, and sustain its living heritage, keeping cultural continuity at the centre of economic logic.

3.5. Heritage interpreted through stories, memories, and meaning

Heritage places derive significance not only from their physical form but also from the meanings, memories, stories, and identities associated with them. In this relationship, intangible heritage provides the cultural frameworks through which people understand, experience, and connect with tangible heritage. Oral traditions, legends, rituals, performances, soundscapes, collective memories, and other forms of cultural expression help explain why heritage places matter and how they have been valued across generations.

Across the cases, this relationship emerges whenever heritage sites are interpreted through cultural narratives and social memory. The cases demonstrate that physical structures and landscapes often function as repositories of meaning rather than merely collections of material fabric. Their significance is continually renewed through storytelling, ritual practice, interpretation, and community engagement. Intangible heritage enables communities and visitors to understand the historical, spiritual, and cultural values embedded in heritage places, while tangible heritage provides visible reference points through which those meanings can be remembered and transmitted. Through this reciprocal relationship, heritage contributes not only to historical understanding but also to cultural identity, collective memory, and a sense of belonging. Integrated approaches therefore help ensure that heritage places remain meaningful cultural resources rather than becoming detached from the communities and traditions that give them significance.

The Temple of Heaven and Zhonghe Shaoyue soundscape reconstruction

At the Temple of Heaven (China), soundscape reconstruction reconnects the architectural complex with the ritual, musical, and narrative traditions associated with it. The physical altar complex — its Circular Mound, Altar, Imperial Vault of Heaven, and Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests — embodies the ancient Chinese philosophy of "interaction of heaven and humanity," and yet without its ritual context, it risks becoming a preserved shell with only architectural beauty, lacking the multi-sensory cultural atmosphere. The project addresses this through "soundscape reconstruction," reintroducing the Zhonghe Shaoyue rites and music into the cultural spaces where it once accompanied imperial heaven-worshipping ceremonies. Visitors no longer merely see stone altars and timber frames; they appreciate the solemn bells, chimes, and courtly dances that gave these structures their original purpose, making perceptible the abstract concept of "interaction between heaven and humanity."

Parallel to this, the Legends of the Temple of Heaven — folk narratives passed down among Beijing residents — are woven into exhibition interpretations and queuing-area storytelling, transforming wait times into cultural moments. A dedicated volunteer system trains docents to recount these legends, ensuring that oral traditions are present at every corner of the site. Together, rites, music and narrative infuse intangible meaning into tangible form: the altar becomes a stage, the echoes become scripture, and visitors transition from passive spectators to active listeners and story-receivers. This approach directly addresses the risk identified at the Naples Conference — heritage being preserved as physical fabric without the rituals, stories, and meanings that give it cultural significance — by ensuring that the Temple of Heaven is interpreted through ritual, music, and memory. It demonstrates that physical places achieve full legibility only when interpreted through the stories, sounds, and rituals associated with them. Indeed, "heritage as a whole" can only be protected through holistic and systemic approaches within its original cultural space. In doing so, the Temple of Heaven offers a replicable model for heritage sites worldwide to move from preservation of material fabric to renewal of cultural meaning.

Okinoshima Sacred Island, Munakata Region, Japan

At Okinoshima Sacred Island in the Munakata Region (Japan), the sacred island, shrines, and tomb groups are inseparable from the faith, taboos, and rituals that have defined Munakata worship for centuries. The island's physical preservation depends on transmitting its intangible values. Okinoshima remains largely off-limits to the public, meaning its material fabric is protected precisely because the living faith tradition prohibits entry. This inversion of standard heritage management demonstrates that the tangible site's continuity is a direct outcome of intangible belief systems. The conservation project communicates this inseparable connection through oral history interviews, video documentation, and digital archives. The ritual sites and artefacts are not interpreted as archaeological remains but as active objects of worship within a living faith rooted in ancient sacred-island veneration. The taboo against entry — an intangible cultural practice — continues to protect both the ritual sites and the natural environment. The annual Miare Festival, where the deities of Okinoshima and Oshima gather on the main island of Kyushu, physically re-enacts the myths and memories that link the scattered tangible components into a coherent sacred landscape. Losing the physical island would sever the community's connection to its origin narratives. Losing the taboos and rituals would reduce the island to a silent geological formation. The site thus carries not architecture alone but the entire spiritual identity of the Munakata faith community.

Transmitting identity and preserving community identity at Namhansanseong, Republic of Korea



*Source: © trabantos/Shutterstock.com**

At Namhansanseong, conservation and management of the World Heritage Site operate through layered historical memory. The mountain fortress, which served as a refuge for King Injo during the 1636 Manchu invasion and functioned as a temporary capital, carries the weight of both national crisis and resilience. Tangible elements such as the bell tower's bronze dragon, the stone walls, and the four gates are inseparable from the intangible stories of defeat, surrender, and survival that define the national identity. The fortress is also a site of living community memory, where residents who have guarded the forests through the Geumrim Cooperative for nearly 90 years, and family-run restaurants preserving the 40-year tradition of *dakjuk* (chicken porridge), demonstrate how community stewardship and culinary heritage sustain the site's meaning across generations. Through education programs and heritage interpretation workshops that centre on the fortress's historical narratives, Namhansanseong activates its tangible fabric as a medium for transmitting identity, showing that heritage sites become living heritage not through preservation alone, but through the memories, rituals, and communal practices they enable.

Jeju Haenyeo *villages and the Ahn'gŏ'ri-Bak'gŏ'ri residential cultural landscape*

In the Ahn'gŏ'ri-Bak'gŏ'ri residential cultural landscape (Jeju, ROK), the dual-house compounds are not merely architectural remains but material expressions of the intangible order governing *haenyeo* lifeworld. The Ahn'gŏ'ri-Bak'gŏ'ri layout — featuring separate kitchens, distinct courtyards, stone walls, and *olle* paths — embodies the "separate but together" settlement ethic that has structured *haenyeo* community life for generations. These tangible spatial arrangements become fully legible only when understood in relation to the intangible practices they once sustained: the coordination of different work and cooking rhythms between elderly mother-in-law *haenyeo* and younger daughter-in-law *haenyeo*, the mutual aid and safety networks centred at *bulteok* (communal resting places), and the life-cycle spatial exchanges that governed household relationships. The oral histories collected from *haenyeo* and elders do not merely describe these practices but interpret the meaning embedded in the physical fabric, explaining why separate kitchens existed, how courtyards facilitated daily cooperation, and how village paths connected houses, ports, and sea-fields into an integrated cultural landscape. Without these intangible narratives, the Ahn'gŏ'ri-Bak'gŏ'ri houses would risk being reduced to picturesque vernacular architecture, stripped of the social and spiritual values that made them meaningful. Conversely, without the tangible houses, the "separate but together" ethic, the memories of separate cooking, and the life-cycle spatial exchanges would lose their physical anchor, severing the community's connection to its inherited identity. The project responds to the loss of meaning caused by outmigration, nuclearization, and ageing by reinterpreting these spaces as *haenyeo* landward settlement heritage, ensuring that the dual-house compounds continue to carry the memory, identity, and belonging of the *haenyeo* community as a living cultural landscape rather than a frozen relic.

3.6. Heritage connected through digital technologies

Digital technologies are increasingly creating new forms of interaction between tangible and intangible heritage. In this relationship, digital tools serve as bridges that connect heritage places, cultural practices, knowledge holders, and wider audiences. Technologies such as digital documentation, virtual environments, immersive interpretation, gaming platforms, social media, and online archives provide new ways to experience, understand, and engage with heritage.

Across the cases, digital technologies extend the reach of heritage beyond physical boundaries while helping to strengthen connections between places and practices. They can make intangible heritage more visible within heritage sites, support new forms of interpretation, and encourage participation among younger generations and geographically distant audiences. The cases also demonstrate that digital tools are most effective when they complement rather than replace direct engagement with heritage. By linking physical places with stories, practices, and knowledge, technology can help create new opportunities for safeguarding, transmission, and public engagement while maintaining meaningful connections to living heritage.

Mount Huangshan and fish lanterns through online engagement by Douyin



Source: Douyin ICH Program, ByteDance

The Mount Huangshan–Douyin partnership (China) uses digital engagement to connect the 800-year-old Fish Lantern Parade of Zhanqi Village with wider audiences while maintaining its place-based roots. Rather than replacing place-based heritage, digital technology acts as a complement and amplifier. The initiative leveraged Douyin's social media platform to document every aspect of the craft: inheritors shaping lanterns against the ancient dwellings of Huizhou Ancient City, the parade winding through Chengkan Village's Ming-Qing architecture, and the folk blessing "Pet the fish head, no more dread" resonating across millions of screens. Video playbacks for the "Fish Lanterns" theme surged 812.4% year-on-year, with 85,000 user-generated videos creating a dynamic, public-driven digital archive that captures not just the lanterns' appearance but the emotions, participants, and festival context — a "socio-emotional archive" impossible through conventional documentation. Critically, this digital bridge drives tangible outcomes: 8 "Fish Lantern Trails" were launched, bundling ancient village exploration with hands-on ICH activities, while visitor numbers to physical sites surged. The hashtag #MeetTheMillennialFishLantern generated 640 million playbacks, and the campaign earned 28 spots on Douyin's trending chart, shifting Mount Huangshan's cultural identity from a natural wonder to a living cultural destination. The digital bridge also addresses core challenges: an aging ICH inheritor demographic was supplemented by 223 newly trained local creators (villagers, guides, media practitioners) through inclusive up-skilling programs, while 563,000 user-generated videos using the "AI paper-cutting" effect engaged youth on platforms they already inhabit. Technology here does not substitute place-based integration but ensures that intangible heritage — craftsmanship, folk blessings, parade choreography — reaches global audiences, provides archival redundancy for vulnerable traditions, and creates an intergenerational loop where online engagement drives onsite revitalization.

Increased visibility alone does not guarantee safeguarding. The continued transmission of fish lantern knowledge within local communities remains the foundation upon which digital dissemination depends. The skills of lantern-making, the organization of the parade, the associated blessings and customary practices, and the participation of local residents continue to give meaning to the tradition. Digital technologies can amplify awareness, create new opportunities for engagement, and support documentation, but they cannot substitute for the community-based processes through which heritage is practiced, adapted, and transmitted across generations.

4 What Makes Integration Successful?

Integrated approaches to safeguarding tangible and intangible heritage do not emerge automatically. Even where strong motivations exist and meaningful relationships between tangible and intangible heritage are recognized, successful implementation depends on a range of enabling conditions. These conditions help transform the recognition of heritage interconnections into practical approaches to safeguarding, management, transmission, and community engagement.

The cases examined in this study demonstrate that no single enabling factor guarantees success. Rather, integrated approaches are typically supported by combinations of governance arrangements, partnerships, community participation, knowledge systems, and educational initiatives that reflect local circumstances and priorities. While the specific configurations vary, several recurring factors can be observed across the cases. These factors help bridge institutional boundaries, support collaboration among stakeholders, strengthen community agency, facilitate knowledge transmission, and create opportunities for long-term continuity.

Understanding these enabling factors is important because they provide practical insights for heritage practitioners seeking to strengthen tangible–intangible synergies. Together, they illustrate that integrated heritage safeguarding is not solely a matter of technical expertise or policy design, but also depends upon relationships, capacities, and processes that enable different actors to work collectively toward shared safeguarding objectives.

Source: © michaelknoebl/Shutterstock.com*

4.1. Governance and policy innovation

Governance and policy innovation emerge as important enabling factors when existing institutional arrangements are insufficient to address the interconnected nature of tangible and intangible heritage. In many contexts, heritage management systems have historically developed along separate administrative, legal, and professional pathways, resulting in fragmented approaches to safeguarding. Integrated approaches often require new forms of coordination, policy adaptation, and institutional collaboration capable of bridging these divides.

Across the cases, governance innovation takes many forms, including integrated management plans, cross-departmental coordination mechanisms, revised regulatory frameworks, and locally adapted management models. The cases demonstrate that effective governance is not necessarily characterized by greater complexity, but by the ability to recognize and respond to the interdependence of heritage places, practices, communities, and knowledge systems. Governance arrangements can help align conservation objectives, support community participation, facilitate collaboration among stakeholders, and provide long-term institutional support for integrated approaches. As heritage challenges become increasingly interconnected, governance systems that enable flexibility, coordination, and holistic thinking play an important role in sustaining tangible–intangible synergies.

Integrated governance at Xidi and Hongcun World Heritage Site



Source: Yixian County World Heritage Affairs Center, Yixian County Culture, Tourism and Sports Bureau, Huangshan City, Anhui Province, China

At Xidi and Hongcun (China), the governance and policy innovations implemented directly address institutional fragmentation by creating integrated management structures that bridge tangible and intangible heritage. Historically, cultural heritage protection in China separated architectural preservation from living cultural practices, but Yi County established a high-level World Cultural Heritage Protection and Management Committee, alongside dedicated Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection units, forming a four-level network across county, town, village, and community levels. This broke the institutional silos by coordinating previously divided mandates under unified oversight. Policy innovations include the revision of the "Protection and Management Plan" and the formulation of enforceable "Protection and Management Measures," which mandate simultaneous consideration of both heritage types. Crucially, the county integrated funding streams — allocating over 500 million yuan from ticket revenues for physical conservation while securing over 8 million yuan in dedicated intangible heritage funds — thereby overcoming the financial separation that typically weakens living heritage.

The "grid-based" management system assigns specific responsibilities for both tangible assets and intangible practices to the same local personnel, ensuring that no heritage element is treated in isolation. Furthermore, community participation mechanisms, such as villager-led heritage councils and benefit-sharing agreements, embed policy implementation into daily social practice.

These governance innovations enable the restoration of folk activities like the Lantern Festival alongside physical building preservation, demonstrating that deliberate institutional redesign — rather than ad hoc cooperation — is the enabling factor for achieving tangible–intangible synergies in world heritage contexts.

Legal protection and governance innovation for safeguarding the traditional practices of worshipping sacred mountains and ovoos in Mongolia



Source: © Ayush Duurenjargal, Mongolia, 2007

The cultural landscape of Mongolia's Burkhan Khaldun Mountain and its surrounding sacred territory provides a compelling example of how governance and policy innovations enable synergies between sacred landscape conservation and traditional worship practices. Following the end of the Communist period, during which traditional practices of worshipping sacred landscapes and conducting mountain and ovoo rituals were prohibited, Mongolia undertook phased legal and institutional reforms to revive and integrate intangible cultural heritage with the protection of natural and cultural landscapes.

A key innovation was the adoption of the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage (2014), which explicitly recognizes World Heritage properties and prohibits activities that may negatively affect territories containing sacred cultural landscapes. The Criminal Code and the Law on Violations established legal mechanisms to impose sanctions on unlawful activities, including mining and other forms of development that threaten heritage values. Critically, the Law on Cultural Heritage introduced provisions requiring preliminary surveys and assessments by professional institutions specializing in palaeontology, archaeology, and ethnology prior to allocating land for urban development, infrastructure construction, and mineral exploration. Similarly, the Law on Environmental Impact Assessment established a legal requirement to conduct environmental impact assessments before granting rights to use natural resources or implement development projects. These legal measures represent a direct policy response aimed at reducing risks to both tangible heritage (petroglyphs, temple ruins, imperial burial sites, ceremonial *ovoos*) and the belief systems and traditional practices intrinsically associated with them.

At the governance level, responsibility for the protection and management of Burkhan Khaldun Mountain was transferred to a dedicated statutory management authority, creating an integrated framework that safeguards the property's Outstanding Universal Value alongside living traditions and ritual practices. Notably, the mountain was designated as a National Sacred Mountain by Presidential Decree, and the "Ceremony of Worshipping Burkhan Khaldun," traditionally organized every four years under Presidential Decree, demonstrates the interdependence between tangible and intangible heritage by integrating protection of heritage elements with broader environmental conservation efforts. Furthermore, Mongolia has incorporated intangible heritage safeguarding into national development policies and successfully inscribed the "Mongolian Traditional Practice of Worshipping Sacred Mountains and Ovoos" on UNESCO's Urgent Safeguarding List, with a national action plan encompassing educational programmes, publications, and awareness-raising activities. These legal and policy innovations have overcome institutional fragmentation that historically treated natural, cultural, and living heritage as separate domains, establishing an integrated protection framework that recognizes ecological significance and biodiversity values as inseparable from shamanic and Buddhist ritual practices maintained by local communities.

4.2. Cross-sectoral partnership

Integrated heritage safeguarding often requires knowledge, resources, and capacities that extend beyond any single institution or stakeholder group. Cross-sectoral partnerships therefore emerge as important enabling factors by bringing together different forms of expertise, authority, and experience. Such partnerships may involve heritage institutions, government agencies, academic institutions, community organizations, private-sector actors, cultural practitioners, and other stakeholders working toward shared objectives.

Across the cases, partnerships help address challenges that individual actors would struggle to manage alone. They facilitate knowledge exchange, mobilize resources, strengthen technical capacity, and create opportunities for innovation. The cases also demonstrate that effective partnerships are not defined simply by the number of organizations involved, but by the quality of collaboration and the clarity of roles and responsibilities. Successful partnerships often combine complementary strengths while maintaining a focus on community needs and safeguarding objectives. In this way, cross-sectoral collaboration can help create more resilient and adaptive approaches to heritage management that recognize the multiple dimensions of heritage systems.

Huainan Town Ancestral House and Black Lion dance



Source: Centre for Land and Cultural Resources Research, Fudan University, Shanghai, China

In Huainan Town, Fujian Province (China), the Ancestral House and Black Lion Dance project shows how community, government, and academic actors can work together while keeping community agency at the centre. The ancestral worship ceremony held in the ancestral house is the most important event of the year for the family. This occasion also serves as a catalyst for a wide range of performances to take place simultaneously. Over time, these intangible cultural heritage elements and the ancestral house have coalesced into an integrated cultural system. The challenge was systemic: ancestral houses were physically deteriorating and Black Lion Dance was losing practitioners and breaking away from the original cultural space because clan consciousness and cohesion had weakened under urbanization and population decline. No single sector could reverse this spiral alone.

The local community provided the essential foundation: traditional knowledge of ancestral rites, social organization through Clan Committees, labour for restoration, and the cultural motivation to continue clan traditions. The town government contributed regulatory support, policy interpretation, financial incentives for selected restorations, and, crucially, expanded performance channels beyond the village — organizing Black Lion dance at municipal and provincial events, promoting "going out" while maintaining cultural roots. The government also established long-term cooperation with sports academies to innovate performance techniques for modern audiences. Fudan University and Fuzhou University supplied intellectual support, including comprehensive heritage surveys that identified key values related to clan systems and production models underlying tangible–intangible heritage, proposals for the cultural basis for synergies, restoration guidance to prevent distortion during safeguarding, and innovative pathways for synergistic transmission.

This partnership was not top-down imposition but catalytic facilitation. The project used ancestral house restoration as the entry point — but the deeper intervention was rebuilding the community's organizational capacity to manage its own heritage. Clan Committees, revived through the restoration process, now manage houses, organize rituals, and sustain Black Lion dance transmission. The university documented tacit knowledge; the government provided enabling policies and broader visibility; the community retained ownership and decision-making authority. This distributed model transformed heritage from a state-led technical exercise into a community-owned living practice, suggesting that sustainable tangible–intangible synergies require building a multi-stakeholder framework that ultimately benefits the community.

4.3. Community-led initiatives

Community-led initiatives emerge as a particularly significant enabling factor because communities are often the primary bearers, users, stewards, and transmitters of heritage. While communities participate in many heritage projects, community-led initiatives are distinct in that local actors play a central role in shaping objectives, decision-making processes, implementation strategies, and expected outcomes. Rather than being consulted on externally designed interventions, communities actively define how heritage is safeguarded, used, and transmitted.

Across the cases, community-led initiatives demonstrate that integrated approaches are often strongest when they are rooted in locally defined priorities and values. Communities frequently possess detailed knowledge of the relationships between places, practices, livelihoods, memories, and social networks that constitute heritage systems. Their involvement can therefore contribute not only to safeguarding outcomes but also to legitimacy, continuity, and long-term sustainability. The cases suggest that community leadership helps ensure that integrated approaches remain responsive to local realities and capable of adapting to changing circumstances while maintaining cultural continuity.

Gokayama Gassho-style Historic Villages, Toyama, Japan



*Source: © Nor Gal/Shutterstock.com**

The Gokayama Gassho-style villages case provides a powerful example of community-led initiatives where the survival of tangible heritage (the thatched roof houses) is inseparable from community-managed intangible heritage (grassland management, spring festivals, fire patrols, and collective maintenance known as *Sōbushin*). The conservation of tangible and intangible heritage is primarily carried out by the village residents. The tangible heritage requires maintenance through traditional knowledge and skills, specifically the harvesting of thatching grass from nearby grasslands. However, the challenge is acute — aging populations and labour shortages threaten the grass harvest, which would force the community to buy externally produced thatch, leading to the abandonment of local grasslands and a serious disruption to the self-sufficient cycle that defines the villages' Outstanding

Universal Value. The landscape of the villages, including the surrounding grasslands, has been shaped and maintained for centuries by the seasonal rituals of grass cutting, the social organization of *Sōbushin* (general community work, village management activities by residents), and the religious observance of *Hōonkō* (religious ceremony / memorial service).

Community-led initiatives are the enabling factor because local groups initiated, shaped, and benefited from the work. Government support (subsidies, adjusting purchase prices) is acknowledged as a trigger, but the project explicitly warns that if support is excessive, the autonomy of heritage conservation may be lost. The outcome is not massive economic transformation but something more fundamental: the vitality of intangible heritage practices, specifically the transmission of grassland management to the next generation and the recruitment of new collaborators. The respondent notes that while labour shortages persist, community cohesion is maintained through festivals and collective activities, which in turn sustain the motivation to preserve the landscape. This case demonstrates that community-led initiatives are not about solving every problem but about preserving the autonomous capacity to adapt, transmit, and care for heritage according to internally defined values—even under conditions of demographic pressure.

Taliin Tvmen Aduu (Thousand Horses of the Steppe): A community-led winter horse culture festival in Mongolia



Source: Administration Office of the Burkhan Khaldun Mountain and its Surrounding Sacred Landscape,, Mongolia, 2022

The Taliin Tvmen Aduu (Thousand Horses of the Steppe) cultural event in Khentii province, Mongolia, is conceived, led, and implemented by local communities themselves, such as herder households, cultural heritage bearers, traditional artisans, and local institutions. The community treats horse culture not merely as a festival or performance, but as a living heritage system intrinsically linked to steppe ecosystems, nomadic traditions, and customary practices. Within this self-determined framework, local actors focus on revitalizing and transmitting horse-related intangible heritage, including traditional breeding and training methods, blessings and praise poetry, *morin khuur* music, folk long songs, hunting and falconry practices, and traditional ecological knowledge of landscape observation. Simultaneously, they actively promote associated tangible heritage elements — traditional saddles, stirrups, bridles, whips, costumes, and the renowned Batnorov silver craft — recognizing these material expressions as inseparable from the living practices that give them meaning. Crucially, the community shapes how this integrated heritage is safeguarded and used. One of the event's key objectives, determined by local stakeholders, is to develop revitalized heritage elements into environmentally sustainable cultural tourism products aligned with sustainable development principles. This community-managed approach has generated tangible benefits: increased local interest in horsemanship and environmental stewardship, revitalization of traditional practices in contemporary life, support for local livelihoods, enhanced participation of knowledge holders, and strengthened intergenerational transmission to younger generations. By promoting intangible heritage, the initiative simultaneously safeguards associated tangible heritage and demonstrates the inseparable relationship between traditional knowledge, nature conservation, cultural memory, and the steppe landscape. As such, it represents an effective, community-determined model where tangible and intangible heritage are mutually reinforcing, directly contributing to cultural resilience and sustainable development.

4.4. Knowledge holders as decision-makers

Integrated heritage safeguarding depends not only on community participation in a general sense, but also on the recognition of specific individuals and groups who possess specialized knowledge, skills, and cultural authority. These may include master artisans, ritual specialists, performers, practitioners, elders, tradition bearers, and other knowledge holders whose expertise is essential for the continuation of both tangible and intangible heritage.

Across the cases, successful integrated approaches frequently involve these knowledge holders as active contributors to planning, decision-making, implementation, and transmission. Their knowledge helps guide conservation practices, interpret cultural meanings, maintain continuity of traditions, and adapt heritage practices to contemporary circumstances. The cases demonstrate that recognizing knowledge holders as decision-makers rather than merely sources of information can strengthen safeguarding outcomes and support more inclusive approaches to heritage governance. Their participation helps ensure that management decisions remain grounded in cultural knowledge and lived experience, while also reinforcing the social processes through which heritage is transmitted across generations.

Asuru oral tradition in Inner Mongolia, China



Source: Feng Xiaobei Studio, Asuru Art Association, Xianghuang Banner, Xilingol League, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China, 2023

In Inner Mongolia (China), the Asuru case positions traditional bearers not as consultants or performers-for-hire, but as decision-makers in conservation strategy, transmission, and benefit-sharing. The project faced a classic transmission crisis: younger generations, pressured by education and employment demands, showed limited willingness to learn Asuru's vocal-instrumental suite form, while master-apprentice pedagogy risked collapse. The response was not to extract knowledge from elders for external preservation but to embed inheritors as active decision-makers across the three-tier model. Fifteen core inheritors, including national-level bearer Airibu, each mentor two to three young musicians, with the government providing annual teaching subsidies by inheritor rank — directly compensating knowledge holders for their pedagogical labour. The master-apprentice pairing is not symbolic: it shapes repertoire selection, technique documentation (including the Chakhar-region perfect-fifth tuning method for *morin khuur* and breath-holding performance for Mongolian flute), and performance innovation. Inheritors also participate in multi-stakeholder deliberation bodies — the Asuru Association and Master Studio — alongside government, residents, and scholars, collaboratively deciding on grassland restoration (2,000 mu maintained), yurt renovation (expanded from 3 to 12 sites), and repertoire reconstruction. This is not consultation but co-governance.

The pastoral mentor program trained 286 herders as field-study instructors, enabling "employment at their doorstep" while ensuring that transmission remains grounded in the grassland ecology that gives Asuru its meaning. Critically, the benefit reinvestment mechanism channelled 1.2 million yuan of cultural tourism revenue back

into community programs including inheritor training, creating a self-sustaining cycle where knowledge holders' expertise directly shapes both conservation outcomes and economic distribution. As the Yamato Declaration affirms, communities are at the very centre of ICH safeguarding — and within communities, traditional bearers play a central role. The Asuru case demonstrates that recognizing bearers not as subjects but as decision-makers transforms intangible heritage from a documented object into a living, adaptive, community-owned practice.

4.5. Youth engagement and education

Youth engagement and education emerge as important enabling factors because the long-term continuity of heritage depends upon future generations. Integrated approaches often create opportunities for young people to engage with both the tangible and intangible dimensions of heritage through formal education, informal learning, apprenticeships, community activities, digital platforms, and participatory safeguarding initiatives.

Across the cases, youth engagement contributes not only to knowledge transmission but also to innovation, adaptation, and renewed relevance. Young people often bring new perspectives, skills, and forms of cultural expression that help connect heritage with contemporary society. The cases demonstrate that educational activities can strengthen understanding of the relationships between heritage places, cultural practices, community values, and sustainable development. At the same time, meaningful engagement helps foster a sense of ownership, responsibility, and connection to heritage among younger generations. By supporting both continuity and renewal, youth engagement and education play a critical role in sustaining integrated approaches over the long term.

Dajing Village Heritage Education Project



Source: Dajing Village Heritage Education Project Team, Peking University Territorial Planning and Design Institute Co., Ltd.

At the Dajing Village Heritage Education Project in Guangdong Province (China), heritage education is embedded directly into the school curriculum, enabling students to document, interpret, and engage with their own community's heritage. Located in Guangzhou's Nansha district, Dajing faces the pressures common to traditional villages undergoing renewal: historic buildings like the Zhang's Ancestral Hall are deteriorating, clan-based residential structures are disrupted by relocation, and living traditions risk losing their community anchor. The project, a partnership between Peking University Planning and Design Institute and the newly established Tieying School, was guided by China's National Social Science Fund Special Project for Research on Cultural Heritage Protection and Inheritance ("Research on the Mechanism and Pathways of Public Participation in Cultural Heritage Protection"). It designed a two-phase, one-academic-year heritage curriculum that integrates on-campus instruction with on-site fieldwork. In the first phase, the *Qilin* Dance course brought recognized inheritor Zhang Yixian into the school as a regular instructor,

establishing a club with dedicated spaces and performance opportunities — transforming an endangered folk tradition into an everyday extracurricular practice.

The second phase, designed for middle school students, comprises three components: classroom lessons introducing heritage concepts and multidisciplinary research methods (integrating Chinese, history, geography, and art); guided fieldwork where students document the oyster-shell walls and courtyard layouts of Zhang's Ancestral Hall while conducting oral history interviews with villagers about their memories and perceptions of renewal; and a student-curated thematic exhibition that presents findings to the school, parents, and the broader community. Critically, most students are themselves Dajing residents, meaning their kinship and locality ties provide direct access to family memories and community consensus. The educational design explicitly teaches tangible–intangible synergies as content: students learn that the Zhang's Ancestral Hall derives value not only from its architectural fabric but from the collective emotions and generational memories it carries. This approach directly responds to the Naples Call for Action to engage youth as heritage champions. The outcome is not merely knowledge transmission but the formation of a new generation equipped to understand, respect, and participate in conservation — transforming heritage preservation from a short-term intervention into a long-term, community-owned future.

Hahoe mask dance and the spatial pedagogy of conservation education



*Source: © Sobeautiful/Shutterstock.com**

In the Republic of Korea, the integrated conservation and management of Hahoe Village (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) and the Hahoe *byeolsingut tallori* (mask dance drama) — inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity — demonstrate how education enables synergies through site-based spatial pedagogy. The village's tangible heritage — traditional *Hanok* houses, the Nakdong River setting, and the Hahoe masks (a designated National Treasure of the Republic of Korea) — becomes educational material when integrated with intangible heritage transmission. In addition to Andong International Mask Dance Festival, daily mask dance performances take place at the heritage site itself, enabling students and visitors to experience the living tradition within its authentic environmental and cultural context. This spatial pedagogy is reinforced through Andong City's "edu-tour" programs, which combine World Heritage Site exploration with hands-on experience activities. The Dosanseowon Confucian Academy offers residential education programs ranging from one-day to three-day formats, integrating traditional etiquette and character education.

Additionally, innovative educational tools have been developed, including a traditional culture education board game based on Hahoe mask symbolism and Hahoe *byeolsingut tallori*'s social satire functions, allowing learners to naturally understand community values and hierarchical structures through cards, dice, and QR codes. Research confirms that such play-testing enabled learners to easily grasp the symbolism and historical meaning of the mask dance, demonstrating interest and concentration. Furthermore, students have presented Hahoe *byeolsingut tallori* performances learned directly from practitioners, illustrating how the heritage site functions as a living classroom. This integrated conservation approach — where the physical village and intangible performance traditions are taught together in situ — activates heritage as a carrier of memory and identity for younger generations, ensuring continuous transmission while preserving both tangible heritage and living practices.

5 What Does Integration Achieve?

Why do integrated approaches matter in practice? Beyond motivations, relationship types, and enabling factors, it is important to understand the outcomes the integrated approaches generate for safeguarding and management. While integration is often promoted as a desirable principle, its value ultimately lies in the benefits it can bring to heritage places, living cultural practices, communities, and sustainable development.

The cases examined in this study demonstrate that integrated approaches can generate multiple and mutually reinforcing outcomes. These outcomes extend beyond heritage conservation itself to include institutional, social, economic, environmental, and cultural benefits. Although not every case demonstrates every outcome, together they illustrate the diverse ways in which tangible–intangible synergies can contribute to the long-term sustainability and relevance of heritage systems.

Source: © michaelknoebl/Shutterstock.com*

5.1. Continuity or resilience of tangible heritage

This represents one of the most direct outcomes of integrated approaches: physical structures, landscapes, and heritage places are maintained, restored, or adaptively used in ways that preserve their significance and integrity over time. Integration contributes to this outcome by ensuring that conservation is not a one-time intervention but an ongoing process supported by living knowledge, traditional skills, cultural practices, and community stewardship. The cases demonstrate that tangible heritage is often more resilient when conservation is linked to the cultural systems that originally created and sustained it. Conversely, sites managed without such connections may experience a gradual erosion of authenticity, integrity, or social relevance, even when their physical fabric remains intact.

5.2. Vitality of intangible heritage practices

This outcome reflects the continuity of living heritage traditions. It can be observed through the regular practice, transmission, adaptation, and continued relevance of cultural knowledge, skills, rituals, performances, and other forms of intangible heritage. This outcome is the mirror image of tangible continuity: integration helps sustain intangible heritage by providing the physical, social, economic, and cultural contexts in which it can continue to be practiced and transmitted. The cases demonstrate that living heritage is often strongest when it remains connected to the places, landscapes, institutions, and communities that support its continued practice.

5.3. Institutionalization of integrated approaches

This represents a systemic outcome: the establishment of durable management plans, governance arrangements, policies, funding mechanisms, or institutional structures that embed integrated approaches within heritage practice. Such outcomes help ensure that tangible–intangible synergies continue beyond individual projects, funding cycles, or leadership changes. The cases demonstrate that integration becomes more sustainable when it is reflected in formal systems of governance and management. Institutionalization can therefore provide the long-term foundations necessary for integrated approaches to endure, evolve, and be replicated in other contexts.



Source: Beijing Jingshan Park, Beijing, China

5.4. Strengthened cultural identity, memory, and belonging of the community

This outcome addresses the human and cultural significance of integrated heritage safeguarding. It is often reflected in strengthened community pride, renewed attachment to place, greater awareness of cultural heritage, and stronger connections between past and present generations. While difficult to quantify, the cases demonstrate that integrated approaches can reinforce the meanings, memories, and values associated with heritage places and cultural practices. As recognized in the Spirit of Naples Call for Action (2023), integrated conservation contributes not only to safeguarding heritage itself, but also to strengthening cultural identity, social meaning, creativity, and community well-being. Heritage becomes not simply something that is protected, but something through which people understand who they are and where they belong.

5.5. Increased participation in heritage management or decision-making

This outcome concerns the distribution of agency within heritage governance. Integrated approaches often create new opportunities for communities, traditional bearers, practitioners, local organizations, and other stakeholders to participate in decision-making, planning, implementation, and management processes. Increased participation can be observed through broader representation in governance structures, more inclusive consultation processes, and greater community influence over safeguarding decisions. The cases suggest that participation functions both as an outcome and as an enabling factor: meaningful involvement in heritage governance often generates stronger commitment, ownership, and continued engagement over time.

5.6. Socio-economic benefits linked to heritage activities

This outcome captures the economic dimension of sustainable development. Integrated approaches can contribute to local livelihoods, employment opportunities, cultural enterprises, tourism activities, traditional occupations, and place-based economic development. The cases demonstrate that heritage can generate tangible benefits for communities while simultaneously supporting safeguarding objectives. However, they also highlight the importance of maintaining an appropriate balance between economic use and cultural values. The objective is not economic growth alone, but the generation of socio-economic benefits in ways that support the continued vitality and integrity of heritage.



Source: © keungchopan/Shutterstock.com*

5.7. Contribution to biodiversity, ecosystem health, or environmentally responsible management practices

This outcome reflects the recognition that cultural and natural systems are often closely interconnected. Integrated approaches can contribute to biodiversity conservation, ecosystem health, sustainable resource management, climate adaptation, and environmentally responsible land-use practices when traditional ecological knowledge informs decision-making. The cases demonstrate that cultural practices, seasonal cycles, customary management systems, and long-standing relationships between communities and their environments can contribute positively to environmental sustainability. This outcome highlights the potential for integrated approaches to support both cultural and ecological resilience.

5.8. Strengthened social cohesion or resilience of communities

Integrated approaches can strengthen the capacity of communities to respond collectively to social, economic, demographic, and environmental challenges. This outcome is reflected in stronger social relationships, shared responsibility for heritage, collective action, and increased ability to adapt to changing circumstances. The cases demonstrate that heritage can function not merely as an object of conservation, but as a resource that brings people together, reinforces mutual support, and sustains community networks. In this sense, heritage becomes an active contributor to resilience, helping communities navigate challenges such as demographic change, economic pressure, environmental stress, climate change, overtourism, and social inequality while maintaining continuity with their cultural values and traditions.

*Source: © pink stockers/Shutterstock.com**

6 Emerging Insights from East Asia



Source: © PixHound/Shutterstock.com*

Insight 1. Integrated approaches emerge from practical needs rather than theoretical models

Across the cases, integration was rarely pursued as an abstract heritage management objective. Rather, it emerged as a practical response to concrete challenges, including conservation needs, revitalization efforts, development pressures, community aspirations, and technological opportunities. The cases suggest that tangible–intangible synergies are often strongest when they respond to real needs experienced by communities, practitioners, and heritage managers.

Insight 2. Heritage functions as an interconnected cultural system

The cases consistently demonstrate that tangible and intangible heritage are rarely experienced or managed as separate domains by communities themselves. Places, practices, knowledge, memories, livelihoods, and identities form interconnected cultural systems in which changes to one dimension often affect the others. Integrated approaches are therefore most effective when they recognize and strengthen these relationships rather than treating heritage categories in isolation.

Insight 3. Community agency is a critical factor in long-term sustainability

Across diverse contexts, community agency emerged as one of the strongest predictors of successful and sustainable integration. Communities are not only beneficiaries of heritage safeguarding but also active custodians, knowledge holders, decision-makers, and innovators. The cases suggest that integrated approaches are most resilient when communities retain meaningful influence over how heritage is managed, transmitted, and adapted.



*Source: © stefanophotographer/Shutterstock.com**

Insight 4. Heritage places remain most meaningful when they support living cultural practices

The cases repeatedly demonstrate that heritage places derive significance not only from their physical fabric but also from the cultural activities, memories, and social relationships associated with them. Sites that continue to function as spaces for practice, transmission, gathering, and cultural expression often exhibit stronger links between conservation and community well-being than sites managed primarily as static monuments.

Insight 5. Integrated approaches generate multiple and mutually reinforcing benefits

The outcomes observed across the cases extend beyond heritage conservation alone. Integrated approaches can simultaneously strengthen cultural continuity, support social cohesion, contribute to local livelihoods, enhance environmental stewardship, and reinforce community resilience. These outcomes suggest that heritage can serve as a catalyst for broader sustainable development objectives when tangible and intangible dimensions are considered together.

Insight 6. Digital technologies can extend but not replace place-based heritage relationships

Digital tools are increasingly important for documentation, interpretation, transmission, and public engagement. However, the cases suggest that technology is most effective when it complements rather than substitutes for direct engagement with heritage places, communities, and practices. Digital innovation can strengthen heritage relationships, but it cannot fully replicate the social, cultural, and experiential dimensions of place-based heritage.



Sources: Yixian County World Heritage Affairs Center, Yixian County Culture, Tourism and Sports Bureau, Huangshan City, Anhui Province, China

Insight 7. Governance integration remains one of the principal challenges

Despite growing recognition of the importance of tangible–intangible synergies, many governance systems continue to reflect sectoral divisions between different heritage domains, institutions, and policy frameworks. The cases demonstrate that integrated approaches often require new forms of coordination, partnership, and institutional innovation capable of bridging these divides.

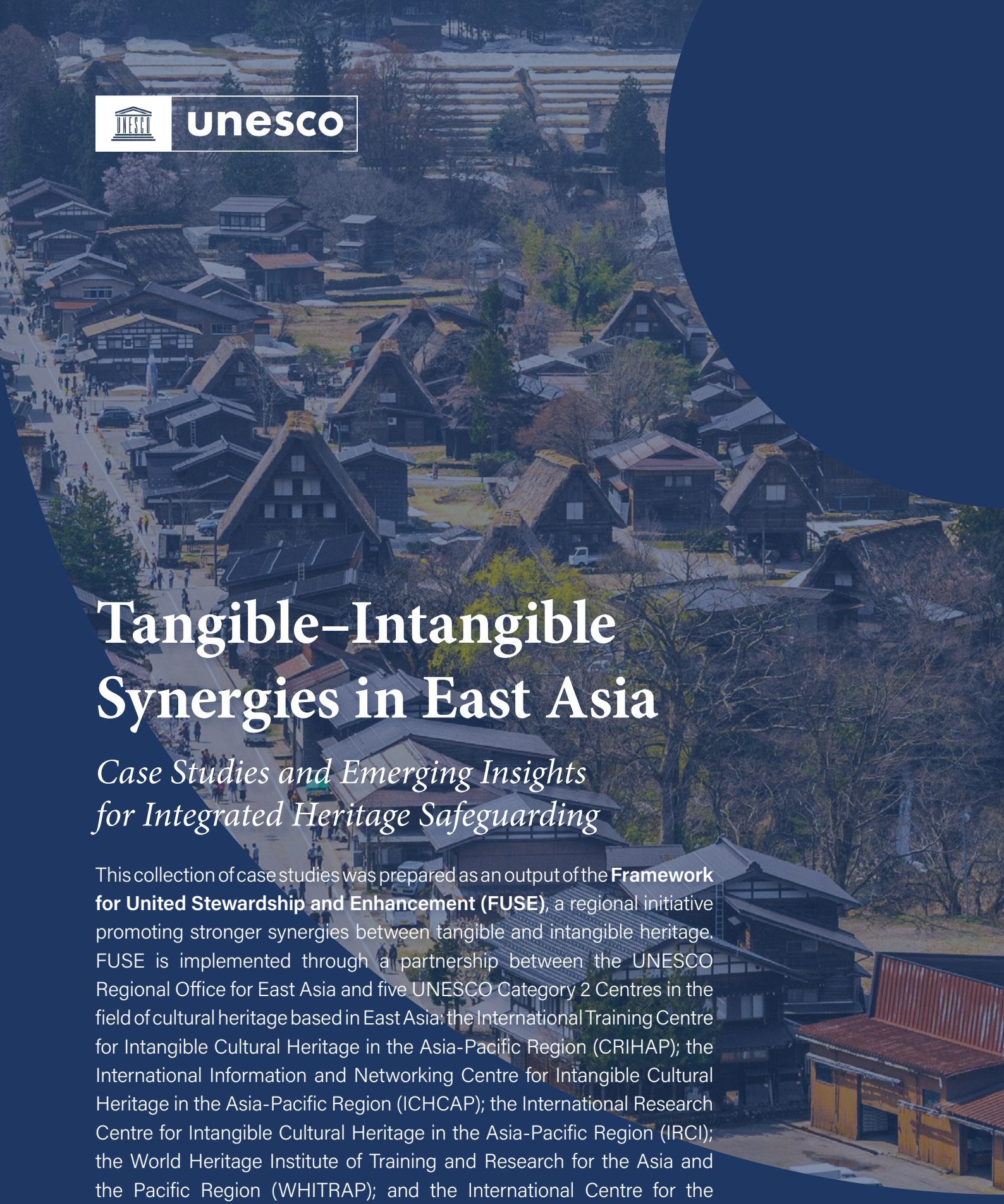
Insight 8. East Asian experiences reveal multiple pathways toward integrated heritage safeguarding

The cases demonstrate that there is no single model for achieving tangible–intangible synergies. Integration can emerge through conservation processes, cultural revitalization initiatives, community-led actions, livelihood strategies, educational programs, technological innovation, or combinations of these approaches. This diversity of pathways highlights the importance of context-specific solutions while reinforcing a common principle: heritage is most effectively safeguarded when its tangible and intangible dimensions are understood as interconnected and mutually reinforcing.



Source: Yixian County World Heritage Affairs Center, Yixian County Culture, Tourism and Sports Bureau, Huangshan City, Anhui Province, China

Taken together, these cases show that integrated heritage safeguarding is not a single method, but a way of recognizing how people, places, knowledge, practices, memories, and livelihoods sustain one another. The East Asian experiences presented in this collection demonstrate that tangible–intangible synergies can strengthen heritage conservation, support living cultural practices, and contribute to more inclusive, community-centred and sustainable approaches to heritage management.



Tangible–Intangible Synergies in East Asia

Case Studies and Emerging Insights for Integrated Heritage Safeguarding

This collection of case studies was prepared as an output of the **Framework for United Stewardship and Enhancement (FUSE)**, a regional initiative promoting stronger synergies between tangible and intangible heritage. FUSE is implemented through a partnership between the UNESCO Regional Office for East Asia and five UNESCO Category 2 Centres in the field of cultural heritage based in East Asia: the International Training Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (CRIHAP); the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (ICHCAP); the International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI); the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region (WHITRAP); and the International Centre for the Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites (WHIPIC).