

# UNESCO 'MEMORY OF THE WORLD' REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (MOWCAP)

## FIFTH MEETING MINUTES

14 and 16 May, 2012  
Bangkok

### 1. Introduction

**1.1** The 5th General Meeting of UNESCO Memory of the World Committee for the Asia and the Pacific [MOWCAP] was convened by the UNESCO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and the Bureau of MOWCAP and hosted in Bangkok by The Thai National Memory of the World Committee, the Ministries of Culture and Education, the SEAMEO Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts (SPAFA), on 14 and 16 May 2012.

**1.2** The objectives of the meeting were:

- i) to receive reports from the Bureau, national committees and the Goodwill Patron;
- ii) to consider the recommendations of the Register Subcommittee for inscriptions to the Regional Register and to announce the successful inscriptions;
- iii) to assist the development of national Memory of the World committees;
- iv) to advance awareness of and development of the Memory of the World” within the region;
- v) to develop the forward work plan;

**1.3** The meeting was attended by some 60 delegates, including representatives from 14 countries of Asia and the Pacific, 1 UNESCO official (UNESCO Bangkok) and 2 UNESCO interns. Please refer to *Appendix A* for the complete listing of participants.

### 2 Opening Ceremony: Welcome Remarks

#### 2.1 Remarks by MOWCAP Chair

Mr Edmondson paid special thanks to the hosts of the meeting – the Thai National MOW Committee, the Thai National Commission for UNESCO, the Ministries of Culture and Tourism, and SEAMEO SPAFA – for the provisions made for this meeting. He noted that at the best of times it is no light matter to take on the task of hosting a gathering such as this. Yet this time it is undertaken in the wake of recent floods and the strains that have placed on the resources of so many organisations and authorities in Thailand.

The Chair highlighted that Thailand has always been an enthusiastic player in the MOW program. Its national committee is an energetic body and Bangkok is also, of course, the home of the regional office of UNESCO, which provides MOWCAP’s formal link to the UNESCO structure. Thailand has previously hosted a MOWCAP Bureau meeting and now hosts a general meeting. Thailand has some deservedly famous inscriptions on both the Asia Pacific and International MOW Registers.

Mr Edmondson explained that 2012 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the MOW program and it is being celebrated in a number of ways around the world, this meeting being part of

that celebration. This year is also proving to be an occasion for taking a strategic look at the program and its future trajectory, in the light of increasing complexities in preserving and providing access to the documentary heritage, and the enormous technological challenges created by the move to digitisation. The Chair advised that a MOW “Experts Meeting” had just been held in Warsaw, which reviewed key aspects of the program, and there is the forthcoming conference in Vancouver on preservation in the digital age.

The Chair looked forward to the next three days when the meeting will review the Asia Pacific program, assess new nominations for the Asia Pacific register, network with friends old and new and welcome new national MOW committees to our family. The preservation symposium to be held on day two of the meeting will provide information about preservation using traditional methods. Finally, the Chair hoped that the delegates of the meeting will leave energised and with commitment to MOW’s principles renewed.

## **2.2 Welcome Remarks by Prof. Khunying Maenmas Chavalit, Chairperson of the MOW Thai National Committee**

The Chair of the Thai National MOW Committee welcomed all delegates to the opening ceremony. She explained that Thailand’s Ministry of Education and Ministry of Culture have long recognized the importance of national documentary heritage and Thai National Committee had been appointed in 2002. The MOW Programme in Thailand since then had been energetically implemented. Three Thai documentary heritage items have been registered in UNESCO MOW International Register and one in Asia Pacific Regional Register. Seven Meetings of National Network on Preservation and Dissemination of Indigenous Thai Knowledge Documentary Heritage took place in various provinces around the country. Eight working Seminars on the Thai National Documentary Heritage Register had already taken place in many provinces. Finally, the Chair of Thai National Committee wished all delegates would have a productive meeting and an enjoyable stay in Bangkok.

## **2.3 Opening Remarks by Ms. Churairat Sangboonnam, Deputy Permanent Secretary for Education and Secretary General for the Thai National Commission**

Ms Churairat Sangboonnam expressed that on behalf of His Excellency, Professor Dr. Suchart Thada-Thamrongvech, Minister of Education, Thailand and Chairman of the Thai National Commission for UNESCO, it was her great privilege and pleasure to welcome delegates to Bangkok for the 5<sup>th</sup> General Meeting of MOWCAP. She highlighted that all those attending the meeting share a common belief that our documentary heritage should be safeguarded and preserved both as national treasures and as important contributions to our world’s knowledge bank, history and development. The MOW programme and Registers have proved an effective way of doing this, making the listed items more visible to a wider range of stakeholders, assisting with the mobilization of resources to ensure their protection, and simultaneously facilitating universal access to them. The aim of the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting is to exchange information, add new inscriptions to the Asia Pacific MOW Register, monitor projects and help each other in working towards the programme objectives.

Finally, Ms. Churairat Sangboonnam expressed thanks to their co-hosts, the Thai National Committee on the Memory of the World Programme of UNESCO as well as the Ministry

of Culture and Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts (SEAMEO SPAFA) for their collaboration to ensure the success of the MOWCAP Meeting. The 5<sup>th</sup> General Meeting was then declared open.

### **3. Opening remarks from UNESCO Regional Advisor, Dr Susanne Ornager**

**3.1** Dr Ornager, Regional Advisor for Communication and Information in Asia UNESCO Bangkok, welcomed the delegation of over 60 participants from 13 countries to the 5<sup>th</sup> General Meeting. Dr Ornager expressed her gratitude to the Thai hosts for their extensive preparations and hospitality in organizing the meeting. Dr Ornager reflected on the progress of MOWCAP over the preceding two years and the various efforts of the Bureau to promote the programme. She highlighted some of the major achievements including the new MOWCAP Facebook page and a unique website tool comparing complimentary approaches for safeguarding cultural heritage across the three UNESCO heritage programmes, both of which would be launched during the General Meeting. In closing, she expressed her hope that the meeting would contribute to the future development of MOWCAP.

### **4. Introduction of the MOWCAP Bureau**

**4.1** Mr. Ray Edmondson, Chair of MOWCAP, introduced members of the MOWCAP Bureau to the meeting, a voluntary group who serve in a personal capacity for the benefit of the whole, not as representatives or advocates of countries or groups.

MOWCAP extended Bureau Members present were:

Chairperson: Mr. Ray Edmondson (Australia)

Vice-Chairperson: Ms. Carmen Padilla (Philippines)

Vice-Chairperson: Mr Li Minghua (China)

Secretary-General: Ms. Helen Swinnerton (Hong Kong SAR, China)

UNESCO Regional Advisor: Dr. Susanne Ornager (UNESCO Bangkok Office)

Register Subcommittee Chair and Goodwill Patron: Dr. M. R. Rujaya Abhakorn (Thailand)

Special Adviser: Dr. Richard Engelhardt (Thailand)

Special Adviser: Mr Simon Chu (Hong Kong SAR, China)

Special Adviser: Ms Sarah Choy (Hong Kong SAR, China)

### **5. Establishment of Voting Status & Appointment of Rapporteur**

#### **5.1 Appointment of Rapporteur**

Helen Swinnerton, Secretary-General of MOWCAP, was appointed as the meeting rapporteur.

#### **5.2 Establishment of Voting Status**

Helen Swinnerton conducted the roll call for the meeting. She explained that each national “Memory of the World” committee was entitled to exercise one vote. Under MOWCAP statutes, delegations of UNESCO National Commissions who had responsibility for MOW matters and fulfilled the function of a MOW national committee in their country,,

irrespective of whether they were formally styled as “national MOW committee”, would also have voting status. Accordingly the following countries were confirmed as having voting rights:

Australia, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Iran, Japan\*, New Zealand, Philippines, Tajikistan, Thailand, and Vietnam.

\*Subsequently Japan advised that their participation in the meeting would be as observers only.

The participation of observer representatives from Myanmar, Singapore and India was also noted. The observer countries or territories do not have a right to vote.

Apologies were recorded from Vice Chairperson Setareki Tale (Fiji), the National Memory of the World Committee of Vanuatu and the National Archives of Papua New Guinea. These and others were unable to attend because of the reduced level of financial subsidy available from UNESCO on this occasion.

## **6. Adoption of Agenda**

**6.1** The draft agenda (*Appendix B*) was adopted. Minor amendments were made during the progress of the meeting: Agenda item 11 ‘Overview of international MOW programme’ was moved to Day 2 of the agenda due to time limitations.

## **7. Business arrangements and expectations of the meeting**

**7.1** The Chair gave an overview of the hospitality arrangements for the meeting including tours and dinners.

## **8. Review and adoption of minutes of the fourth MOWCAP General Meeting (2010)**

**8.1** The Chair reviewed the minutes of the 4<sup>th</sup> General Meeting of MOWCAP 2010. The MOWCAP Bureau had reported on their activities, as did National Committees. The meeting had conducted a Bureau election and reviewed the operational rules for the Bureau. Key issues in relation to the international and regional MOW programmes had been reviewed including the Asia Pacific region contribution to the International MOW Conference and the possibility of a MOW convention. After the presentation, the minutes were adopted without any amendments (proposed by Australia and seconded by Tajikistan.) The minutes are posted on the MOWCAP website.

## **9. Bureau reports 2008-2010:**

**9.1** Mr Ray Edmondson, Chair of the MOWCAP Bureau, presented a report on the activities of the MOWCAP Bureau 2008 – 2010 (*see Appendix C.*)

**9.2** Ms Helen Swinnerton, Secretary General MOWCAP, presented an administrative and financial report for MOWCAP 2008 – 2010 (*see Appendix D.*)

**9.3** The report of the Goodwill Patron was not presented verbally but is available in *Appendix E*.

## **10. Reports from National MoW Committees and UNESCO National Commissions**

**10.1** Mr. Ray Edmondson invited all participating countries to present on the structure and main activities of their MOW national committees. Presentations were given in the following order: Australia, Cambodia, China, Iran, Japan, New Zealand, Philippines, Tajikistan, Thailand, Vanuatu, Vietnam. Please refer to *Appendix F* for reports submitted to the Bureau, including reports submitted by countries not represented at the meeting.

**10.2** Activities of MOW National Committees included efforts to promote public awareness of documentary heritage through communication plans, websites, media engagement, exhibitions as well as frequent meetings with communities concerned with documentary preservation. Collaboration between countries in the region was a growing trend, with an increasing number of joint nominations being considered and also experience sharing between countries to support each other in MOW activities. A number of countries highlighted the challenge of promoting the continued preservation of materials on MOW registers and potential tools to help countries monitor the preservation of listed materials were suggested for sharing on the MOWCAP website.

**10.3** Countries that have not yet established national committees were also invited to briefly present their plans and steps toward doing so and a report was received from Myanmar. In addition, the hosts of the 4<sup>th</sup> General Meeting of MOWCAP, the Macau Documentation and Information Society, reported on their activities since the last meeting to promote documentary heritage.

## **11. “Memory” book**

**11.1** The Bureau reported progress towards the first major MOWCAP publication, “Memory” – a coffee table book journey through the heritage of the Asia Pacific region. Simon Chu, Special Advisor to the MOWCAP Bureau and the project lead for the Memory publication, advised that the publication is an awareness-raising enterprise to engage the general public. The publication will feature visuals and accessible narrative on 60 collections of documentary heritage from the Asia Pacific region that have been listed on the regional and international registers. Mr Chu emphasized the importance of including good quality pictures in the publication to engage readers. All institutions holding documentary heritage to be included in the publication have been approached for good quality images, however, not all institutions have responded and they are requested to do so promptly.

**11.2** Mr Chu gave special thanks to the project sponsors. Firstly to UNESCO and the Australian National MOW Committee who had contributed USD2,500 and AUS\$1,000.00 respectively, to finance the costs of a professional writer, Dr. Patrick Hase. Secondly, to China for contributing USD10,000.00 towards the publication costs. The remainder is to be covered by the publisher.

**11.3** The Chair advised that the target for publication is the end of 2012. The first edition would be 1,000 copies of hardback books. MOWCAP will distribute approximately 100 copies of the first edition to the contributing countries.

**11.4** It was agreed that a communication strategy for the book would be important to maximize promotion opportunities.

## **12. Country presentations of Register nominations**

**12.1** Countries and territories nominating heritage to the Asia Pacific Regional Register for 2012 were invited to give short presentations on their nominations. A presentation was given by Australia for a joint nomination with Papua New Guinea of the F. E. Williams Collection, which summarized the information in the nomination form and did not request supplementary information to be noted. China presented a submission from the Tibet Autonomous Region of China on the official records of Tibet from the Yuan Dynasty China, 1304-1367. In addition to the nomination form, China wished to note the uniqueness of these 22 archive pieces, which from a collection of 3 million pieces are the only identified pieces of the *Phags-pa* script and the oldest, known surviving written official records of China. China presented its second nomination of Qiaopi and Yinxin: correspondence and remittance documents. The presentation summarized the information in the nomination form with no supplementary information to be noted. Vietnam presented its two nominations of the Woodblocks at Vinh Nghiem Pagoda, Bac Giang Province, and the book “Poems on Hoa Lu Ancient Capital.” The presentations summarized the information in the nomination forms with no supplementary information to be noted.

**12.2** The Chair concluded the session by asking voting delegates to consider the nominations over the next two days and whether the nominations meet the criteria for listing on the Regional Register. On the 16 May, the Register Subcommittee would present its report and recommendations, based on the criteria for nomination.

## **13. Overview of international MOW program**

**13.1** The Chair gave a brief overview of the international MOW programme to the general meeting. The overview included reports on the 2011 IAC meeting and MOW International Conference, as well as plans for an international conference on MOW in the digital age in September 2012. The new MOW “Companion” was outlined as a user-friendly guide through the process of preparing a nomination to the International Register. The companion is available on the main UNESCO website, in several languages. The Chair also introduced a new international MOW project, which aims to encourage the inclusion of MOW in archival studies and library studies. To consider how the Asia Pacific region can contribute to this MOW studies project, the Chair will convene an email discussion group of individuals from countries that are interested to participate.

## **14. Report on MOW “Experts meeting” in Warsaw, and issues arising**

**14.1** The Chair reported that a meeting of experts had been held in Warsaw in May 2012 to conduct a strategic review of the MOW programme, including its legal status. The Chair recalled that the meeting had been convened, on a proposal from Poland and with the support and authority of the UNESCO Director General, to give advice to the Director General on the future development of MOW. The “experts meeting” was an outcome of the 2011 MOW International Conference, which had included a session debating the legal status of the programme and at which various views had been presented, including a proposal that the advantages and disadvantages of a MOW convention be researched. Following the Conference, MOWCAP had recommended to the subsequent International Advisory Committee (IAC) meeting that such a research project be commenced, and the IAC mandated a working group, led by MOWCAP chair Ray Edmondson, to undertake this task. The Working Group reported its findings to the “Experts meeting”, concluding that consensus had been reached on the need for a normative instrument to support MOW, giving it comparable status to UNESCO’s other heritage programmes, but divided in its preference for that instrument to be a Convention or a Recommendation.

**14.2** The Chair explained to the General Meeting the composition and role of the experts meeting, which included a number of participants from the MOWCAP region. He also explained that a UNESCO Convention requires country-by-country ratification and binds those countries to undertake the actions specified in the Convention. A Recommendation sets out an agreed behavioural standard for all UNESCO members but entails no enforcement mechanism and does not require ratification. The arguments for and against each approach are complex, but procedurally it is much easier to establish a Recommendation than a Convention. It is possible for a Recommendation to lead to a Convention at a later date if this was seen to be needed. In the event, the “Experts meeting” proposed that the UNESCO Executive Board begin work immediately on the development of a MOW Recommendation as the preferred normative instrument.

**14.3** Delegates of the General Meeting who had attended the “Experts meeting” were invited to comment on its proceedings, and noted that a Recommendation had been viewed as the more expedient outcome in terms of the time and resources involved, and the likelihood of its adoption by the UNESCO General Conference. Unlike a Convention, which requires ratification by a specified number of countries before being implemented, a Recommendation would have immediate effect and would be a tool for raising the status and visibility of the MOW programme. The “Experts meeting” agenda covered many other aspects of MOW’s operation, funding and promotion and its proposals were compiled into a single document for presentation to the Director General.

**14.4** The topic was opened to the delegates of the General Meeting for discussion. The majority of MOWCAP members present at the General Meeting expressed strong support for a MOW Convention, which has been MOWCAP’s policy stance for some time. It was stressed that Recommendations are used to guide professional practice in individual countries, and to assert a code of professional ethics, but they do not have a protective mechanism to safeguard documentary heritage. A Convention is a means of ensuring international cooperation and international safeguarding of documentary heritage, since it requires binding ratification by UNESCO member countries, and like a treaty would mean agreement to cooperate and help other countries with certain preservation needs.

**14.5** The General Meeting resolved that the MOWCAP Bureau pursue a statement that takes note of the experts meeting, endorses the need for a normative instrument but states that ultimately the MOW programme needs the security of a Convention. The Bureau would prepare a statement to submit to the UNESCO Executive Board and would circulate it to MOWCAP members for endorsement prior to submission.

## **15. Overview of regional Asia/Pacific MoW program**

**15.1** The MOWCAP Bureau presented an overview of the regional Asia Pacific MOW programme, including efforts to promote MOWCAP through communication and media. Helen Swinnerton and Ruben Cabezas Martinez, introduced and launched the new MOWCAP Facebook page, a key communication forum to engage the younger generation with future responsibility for our regional heritage. The Facebook page presages the redevelopment of the MOWCAP website to be much more user-friendly, useful and attractive, the plans for which were outlined by the project team Helen Swinnerton and Andrew Scarvell.

**15.2** Mr Ruben Cabezas Martinez of the UNESCO Bangkok Office also launched a unique website tool comparing complimentary approaches to safeguarding cultural heritage across the three UNESCO heritage programmes – World Heritage, Intangible Heritage and Memory of the World. The tool identifies common elements, which tell the same story, across the UNESCO programs in each country with the help of experts in Asian Cultural Heritage. The tool is available on the UNESCO Bangkok website at <http://www.unescobkk.org/communication-and-information/knowledge-societies/complementary-approaches-to-cultural-heritage-safeguarding/>.

**15.3** The Chair outlined upcoming changes in the structure of the MOWCAP Bureau. He announced that the UNESCO Regional Advisor, Dr Susanne Ornager, would retire from UNESCO in June 2012 and would be succeeded by Ms. Rosa Gonzalez in July 2012. Ms. Rosa Gonzalez is from Spain and has strong experience with UNESCO, having worked at UNESCO Head Office and now completing a UNESCO posting in Ecuador.

## **16. Facilitating national MOW committees**

**16.1** A discussion was held on how the MOWCAP Bureau can effectively facilitate the national MOW committees. The meeting recognized the potential use of the MOWCAP Vice Chair positions to connect members from the geographic sub-groups with each other. The Chair advised that an additional Vice Chair position may be needed to support the countries of the ECO area and that he would pursue this with the relevant countries in advance of the next General Meeting. National committees also raised the importance of the Bureau in supporting and motivating countries through the nomination process and in offering particular support to countries where documentary heritage is perceived to be vulnerable due to an absence of financial support or political instability.

## **17. Asia Pacific MOW register**

### **17.1 Presentation and discussion of RSC report and recommendations**

The Chair began the session by talking through the criteria for the regional register. Dr Rujaya Abhakorn, Chair of the Register Subcommittee, presented the report of the Register Subcommittee and recommendations of inscriptions to the regional register. Five nominations had been submitted and the subcommittee recommended the inscription of four of the nominations. See *Appendix G* for the full RSC reports and recommendations.

**17.2** The challenges of assessing the nomination documents were discussed by the General Meeting. Going forward, it was suggested that the RSC complete the assessment report for each nomination in a standard template. Also, any information supplementary to the nomination form that is considered by the RSC during the assessment process be clearly documented.

### **17.3 Decision on Inscriptions**

MOWCAP member countries with a voting right considered and voted on each nomination in turn by secret ballot. The meeting selected two non-voting participants to tally the votes and verified the outcome. For each nomination it was confirmed that the delegation from the nominating country had abstained from voting. The recommendations of the RSC were accepted by a majority and the following inscriptions were therefore added to the regional register:

*Papua New Guinea/Australia (joint nomination): F. E. Williams Collection*  
Glass plate photographs and negatives of Papuan society from 1922 to 1943, the period of ‘first contact’ with a culture hardly known to the West at the time.

*China: Qiaopi and Yinxin: Correspondence and remittance documents from overseas Chinese*

Some 170,000 items of personal correspondence tracing the fortunes of Chinese emigrants to South East Asia, Oceania and America in the 19th and 20th centuries.

*China: Official records of Tibet from the Yuan Dynasty China, 1304-1367*

The only records of their kind now extant, they are from the period of Mongol rule and are the oldest surviving written official records of China.

(In relation to the acceptance of this nomination on to the regional register, two voting countries noted the condition that any supplementary information considered by the RSC during the assessment process be clearly documented alongside the nomination form.)

*Vietnam: Woodblocks at Vinh Nghiem Pagoda, Bac Giang Province*

Over 3,000 woodblocks, engraved from 1871 to 1932, containing Buddhist sutras and other documents of the Truc Lam Zen sect in the Nôm script. This distinctly Vietnamese Buddhist tradition has spread to many countries.

## **18. Closing**

**18.1** At the end of the meeting, the Chair again expressed MOWCAP’s gratitude to the Thai hosts for their hospitality and the hosting arrangements for the meeting. He also thanked the MOWCAP Bureau for their contributions to the meeting preparations. The participants from different parts of the Asia-Pacific region were also thanked for their

active participation and were invited to join the next MOWCAP General meeting in early 2014.

**18.2** Finally the Chair made a special thanks to Dr. Susanne Ornager for her commitment to the programme, her guidance and steadying hand. Dr. Susanne Ornager also thanked Mr Ray Edmondson for his excellent chairmanship. Dr. Ornager expressed that she was pleased to have been with the MOWCAP programme almost since the beginning, she had seen the programme grow from a small committee and saw great potential for future growth and successes.