



## Article Review

## Analysis of the Spatial Distribution of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Order to Preserve and Develop Heritage in Iran

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## ABSTRACT

The Managing and Protection of intangible cultural heritage is done through the process of “identifying, evaluating, documenting and recording, raising awareness, reviving, promoting and transmitting aspects of heritage in all its manifestations.” Considering the richness of Iran in terms of the existence of intangible heritage, the purpose of this study is to investigate the spatial distribution of the protection of intangible cultural heritage in Iran. By examining the relevant documents and extracting information from them, a database of geographical locations of intangible heritage in Iran was formed, and the spatial distribution of intangible heritage was analyzed through the GIS. Findings indicate that a total of 1065 intangible heritage has been registered in Iran and the highest number recorded was related to “skills in handicrafts and traditional arts” and the lowest was related to “traditions and oral manifestations including language (heritage media).” Also, Semnan province, with 66 registered heritages (7%), had the highest number, and Qom province, with 14 heritages (1.4%), had the lowest number of registrations. In addition, in the intangible heritage type of “knowledge and behaviors related to nature and the universe,” there are three provinces. In the heritage type of “traditions and oral manifestations including language (heritage media),” there are 12 provinces that have not registered any related heritage. It can be concluded that the spatial distribution of intangible heritage in Iran was unbalanced, so managing and protecting intangible heritage is not a priority for policymakers in this area, and their approach is passive. Finally, theoretical and practical suggestions were presented based on the findings and results.

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## Extended Abstract

### Introduction

Although intangible cultural heritage creates many advantages for a region, policymakers ignore it, and their position is passive in this regard. Due to a lack of culture and heritage, some countries want to create, imitate, and even steal it from other countries to develop and stabilize themselves. In fact, "not having or lacking heritage" has become a challenge for them. On the other hand, some countries are full of heritage due to their ancient wealth and civilization, but this heritage has no place and importance in their development plans. In fact, "diversity of heritage" has become a challenge for them under the title of "accumulation of heritage." Our country, Iran, is in the second group and is facing the challenge of "accumulation of heritage." In closer regard, the accumulation of heritage in Iran is associated with "abandonment." Of course, the accumulation and abandonment of intangible cultural heritage in different areas of Iran are not the same, and there are differences. The lack of accurate understanding of this spatial distribution, both at the managerial level and at the community level, can be the source of neglect and ignorance, which results such as the gradual deterioration of intangible heritage, the lack of content production in accordance with the quantity and quality for education and social awareness in relation to With this heritage at the level of provinces and regions, and weakness in the link will be organized and complementary to heritage and tourism. The present research results can lead to the identification of the spatial arrangement (balanced/unbalanced - balanced/unbalanced) of intangible cultural heritage management and protection. Therefore, the main question of the current research is: What is the spatial distribution of Iran's intangible cultural heritage?

### Methodology

The current research is descriptive and quantitative in terms of purpose and nature, respectively. The statistical population of the research was the documents available

Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts in the section of the Register of Works and Preservation and Revitalization of cultural and Natural Heritage, where the list of intangible cultural heritage works of Iran's provinces was published. Therefore, the data used in this research were secondary data that were extracted from this document and classified in an Excel file. Then, this file was defined as a database in the geographic information system (GIS). Finally, using the database created in the system, the spatial distribution pattern of intangible cultural heritage was prepared in general and separately by types of intangible heritage. This distribution was compared based on location and type.

### Results and discussion

Based on the list of intangible cultural heritage works of Iran's provinces, 1065 works were registered nationally, of which 983 works were at the provincial level, 21 were at the regional level, and 61 were at the national level. According to the findings, the frequency and percentage of national-regional works, respectively, from more to less are related to "social customs, religious ceremonies and celebrations" (48 cases - 59%), "skills in manual and traditional arts" (16 cases - 19.5%), "traditions and oral manifestations including language (heritage media)" (7 cases - 8.5%), "performing arts" (6 cases - 7%) and "knowledge and behaviors related to Nature and Cosmos" (5 items - 6%). Examining registered works of intangible cultural heritage based on geographical separation (provinces) showed that Semnan province had the most works (66 cases) and Qom province had the least works (14 cases). In addition, the provinces of the country were placed in five groups, which in order of "most to least" registered works include the following:

Diamond group: Semnan, Qazvin, Khorasan Razavi and Khuzestan;

Amethystine group: Gillan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad, Mazandaran, Kurdistan, Isfahan, Kerman;

Golden group: South Khorasan, North Khorasan, East Azerbaijan, Yazd,

Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari;  
Silver group: Ardabil, Tehran, Fars,  
Bushehr, Hamedan, Illam, Markazi and

Kermanshah; and Bronze group: Alborz,  
Hormozgan, West Azerbaijan, Sistan and  
Baluchistan, Lorestan, Golestan, Zanzan  
and Qom.

### Conclusion

The distribution of spatial management and protection of intangible heritage in Iran is unbalanced, and the management and protection of intangible heritage is not the priority of the policymakers in this area, and their approach is passive. Considering the variety and abundance of intangible heritage in the country on the one hand and considering the society's low awareness of this heritage, attention to it at the national and regional management levels of tourism and cultural heritage has a high priority. The research findings show that different regions of the country have taken different paths in presenting, introducing, managing, and protecting intangible heritage with very different levels of concern and somehow in a divergent flow. It is certain that if the macro policy is to ignore the intangible heritage, this amount of it should not be included in the national register. Therefore, the damage should be sought in the regional management of intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, the suggestions of this research are presented based on the level of each province and in the form of a priority:

For the provinces of the Diamond Group: focus on the production of first-hand and luxurious content in the field of intangible heritage recorded in the national written, visual, and audio media;

For the provinces of the amethystine group: focus on recognizing and registering the existing intangible heritage in view of the significant amount of tangible heritage in these provinces, and in order to complete it;

For the provinces of the Golden Group: Emphasis on the competitive advantages of the tourism sector in these provinces to brand places and regions that benefit from a significant amount of intangible heritage;

For the provinces of the silver group: focus on and emphasize creating a value chain of

businesses based on intangible heritage in these provinces according to the border location and available cross-border markets

or the metropolitan location and suitable access to tourist routes;

For bronze group provinces: focus and emphasis on recognition and promotion of the intangible heritage of these regions, relying on the territorial succession of the peoples living in these provinces in neighboring countries, as well as creating a value chain of businesses based on intangible heritage in these provinces according to the location border and cross-border markets available;

With a holistic approach, launching an online geographic information system under the title "Mirath-Yar (Heritage-Helper)" is suggested. Individuals or groups enter information and documents related to heritage into the system in a process, and city experts perform the next steps for evaluation and verification.

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### Authors' Contribution

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### Conflict of Interest

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