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# **DIVERSITY, A SYNONYM FOR CULTURE**





Detail of "Mou-ak" (folk dance). By the Korean artist, Kim Ki-Chang, added to the UNESCO collection in 1982. Photograph: Patrick Lagès.

## DIVERSITY, A SYNONYM FOR CULTURE

A voyage from China to Iran, using calligraphy as a compass; an exploration of Parisian melancholy, guided by a Japanese photographer; a return to the origins of Kung Fu, now an international art; a trip around the world along strands of Thai silk; a Turkish escapade with background music from Brittany... This month the UNESCO Courier dedicates its pages to cultural diversity.

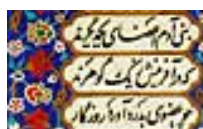
**EDITORIAL P3**



## THE BEAUTY OF THE SWAN

Art draws its inspiration from the perfection of heaven and earth. Culture, from the perfection of nature. This idea was

at the centre of a lecture entitled "Return to nature, return to our origins" given by the Chinese poet and calligrapher, Fan Zeng at UNESCO in May this year, as part of the International Festival of Cultural Diversity. **P 4**



## CALLIGRAPHY, THE ART OF MAKING WORDS SING

Persian calligraphy bears the imprint of a range of influences, while Chinese calligraphy remains deeply rooted in local tradition, explains Iranian painter, calligrapher and psychoanalyst, Hassan Makaremi. But, whatever its history, calligraphy embodies our sense of "being in the world". **P 7**



## THE PERSONAL EYE OF A FAMILIAR STRANGER

"This is not a photo of a merry-go-round, but of its reflection," explains Shigeru Asano, a Japanese photographer

fascinated by the light and shadows of Paris. He has been walking the streets of the city for 30 years. Nearly 10,000 kilometres from his native Osaka, he feels at home in the French capital, where he finds an atmosphere of melancholy more to his taste than "Tokyo's dazzle". **P 9**



## FOCUS

### Much more than "fish and ships"

The United Nations has decided to celebrate the first ever World Ocean Day on the 8th of June. **P 16**



## TRAVELLING MUSIC

The folk traditions of Brittany are making a remarkable comeback after being consigned to oblivion for decades. And, 2500

kilometres away, traditional song is returning to Anatolian homes, having almost disappeared. Today, a non-profit association called "A Bridge over the Bosphorus" is linking musicians from France and Turkey who share a similar passion and concerns. **P 11**



## THE WARRIOR MONKS OF THE YOUNG WOOD

The celebrated martial art, Kung Fu, was created fifteen centuries ago in China. We owe its origin to a

Buddhist monk from India. From there, it spread to Korea, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Japan ... to become, since the 1950s, a trend that has continued to fuel the dreams of teenagers around the world. But in this process of globalization, its intrinsic values are not always respected. **P 13**



## AROUND THE WORLD ON A SILK THREAD

By the first half of the 20th century, the silk tradition in Thailand was on its last legs, only to spring back in

the 1950s, thanks to an American, Jim Thomson. As an ally he had a young Thai woman - none other than Queen Sirikit. This secular art form, which, today, combines traditional craft and industrialization, is passed down from generation to generation and has contributed to the country's development. **P 14**

© UNESCO/Georges Malémprie



Young man from the Celebes Islands, in Indonesia.

**This year, UNESCO's celebrations of World Day for Cultural Diversity (21 May) were quite exceptional. Throughout the month of May, dozens of artists came from all over the world to demonstrate the wealth of humanity's cultural diversity, as part of the first International Festival of Cultural Diversity. The Festival was held simultaneously in several countries, as well as the Organization's headquarters, and was clear evidence of the fundamental bond between culture and diversity, as this month's *UNESCO Courier* shows.**

The relationship between culture and diversity is one of mutual foundation. Culture refers both to one's original way of being, recognizable through one's arts, one's signs, and the rightful pride one takes in being akin to no other. Yet culture is also a gateway to all that is profoundly dissimilar, to the enchantment of the unknown. And as such, it is at once enhancement of diversity and continual construction of universality, and in both cases always incomplete and inexhaustible.

Thus it is simply a function of diversity – the one which gives it its simultaneous explicitness and profusion. This is the sense in which one might say that there is no diversity without culture and no culture without diversity.

This thought seems all the more convincing as one gazes upon a world on the verge of becoming a space of integrated diversity. Fading are the juxtapositions of countless so-called differences. The Earth we live in today holds only one humanity, perhaps only one living kingdom comprising all the species. And the concept that enables us to reflect on the planet's critical state of affairs is that of diversity.

It alone derives from universality and accounts for all singularities, treating them as an ensemble – and thus offers to the “the minds of men” a novel approach to their shared condition: one that befits the reality of their common destiny and can replenish their intelligence of the world.

UNESCO has been devoted to this pursuit since the adoption of its Constitution and increasingly, of late, in the wake of the 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and of the 2005 Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The Festival of Diversity, launched this year simultaneously in various countries and at UNESCO Headquarters, is an opportunity to experience the primordial affinity between culture and diversity.

This issue of the *UNESCO Courier* echoes the Festival of Diversity and supports its aims.

**Françoise Rivière,**  
Assistant Director-General for Culture,  
UNESCO

# THE BEAUTY OF THE SWAN



"The joy of learning", by Fan Zeng, 1998.

Nature is more than generous towards humanity. Not only does it provide all the elements we need to survive – air, water and earth – but also regulatory forces, like the alternation of sun and moon or the beneficial passage of winds and rain, which have enabled living beings to prosper indefinitely, since the dawn of time.

Impatient humanity has returned this kindness with hostility. Last century, one biologist proclaimed that "we cannot wait for ever for the benefits of nature, we have to go and get them!" Like an insolent son raising his hand to his caring mother. Or a ferocious, wild crocodile, with gaping jaw, that does not know the extent of what the Earth can serve up to us.

Over 2500 years ago, the great Chinese philosopher, Laozi, classified the components of the universe into five categories: first the visible, the audible and the tangible, then the invisible, that perfect existence named *dao*, a kind of Heavenly Law, comparable to Plato's Ideal, Hegel's Spirit or Kant's transcendental Finality; finally, beyond the *dao*, is nature, "perfect existence in itself, spontaneously and already so."

In Buddhism, the notion of "in itself" expresses absolute conformity to the meaning of things, concordance and relevance – all attributes of nature. This existence in itself endures, omnipresent, without limit, an incorruptible sign of the vastness of time and space. Ten billion light years would not be enough time to define it, ten billion years not enough to bear witness to its duration.

According to Dirac, only the most sophisticated mathematics would be able to describe it. Two hun-

dred years earlier, Kant gave pride of place to mathematics in his "Critique of Pure Reason", anticipating one might say, the inevitable supremacy of numbers which has gradually become established.

But nature is distinct from the rational but somewhat forbidding logic of numbers. It offers humanity the fullness of love and gentleness that are inherent in the beauty of Heaven and Earth. Let us recall the words of Zhuang Zhou, who lived in China 2300 years ago, in the "Spring and Autumn Period" - an unrivalled thinker, divinely wise, and comparable to Athena. For him, Heaven and Earth are of a perfect and silent beauty; the four seasons follow one another with a regular rhythm, without prescription; the ten thousand beings fulfil themselves tacitly, according to the order of things.

This existence in itself, stripped of any form of logos, embodies the excellence of Heaven and Earth. It gives free rein to the creativity of the human soul and a generous reception to the plurality of human talents and forms of intelligence. And the seeds of this perfect beauty, scattered across the planet, turn into the virtues of sincerity and truth, as well as aesthetic expression. Among man's inalienable rights there is, without doubt, the "right to aesthetic experience", even if it appears in none of the declarations and laws



"Zhong kui, hunter of demons", by Fan Zeng, 2007.

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(perhaps because it is considered to be implicit). The perfection of Heaven and Earth, from Antiquity to today, has been the open and inexhaustible source of beauty and the diversity of cultures in our world.

### **Surpassing nature? A vanity**

In the Zhuangzi, Zhuang Zhou describes a people called the Hexu who, in ancient times, lived without cares, ate well and lounged on a full stomach, in the company of plants and animals. Our imagination prospers in the same way. From Plato to Owen, and from Thomas More to Saint-Simon and Fourier, man has thrived on marvelous dreams. Otherwise, humanity would not be what it is. If we had to renounce our dreams, sterility and dreariness is all that would remain, and our entire lives would be turned towards death. A sad state of affairs.

Do you not think that UNESCO advocates cultural diversity precisely to open the way to inevitable universal agreement? So that this many splendored culture retains its beauty for millions of years.

“Return to origins” and “return to nature” are two expressions of the same idea. Culture has always drawn its inspiration from nature. Art and literature may try to imitate it, and the sciences may make their discoveries, but it is nothing but vanity to attempt to improve on nature. Technological progress, from a simple microphone to the aerospace industry, all comes back to a simple equation formulated by Max-

well in the 19th century. Yet Maxwell did not invent anything. Before him, and even before the Earth existed, this equation was already written somewhere in the universe.

It is said that art and literature are endowed with divine power. But these are just the words of artists in need of consolation. In reality, and whatever artistic license might have us believe, humanity can only apply itself to tasks that match its capabilities, while even the slightest movement of the universe can shake the planet with its majestic power. Hurricanes and tidal waves are just a taste of what nature can

deliver; and when its magnificence turns into terror, humanity appears very, very small. As Kant warns us: step back a little and the terrifying power of nature will become the object of aesthetic pleasure. But we do not necessarily need the terrifying force of nature to experience aesthetic pleasure – as this Cultural Diversity Day proves.

### **Greed devours the soul**

In the far, distant past, in Antiquity and the classical era, humanity lived principally from agriculture and livestock farming, it had faith in nature and was close to it. Man showed respect and affection for nature and was not arrogant towards it. But industrialisation has increased his desires and, in the post-industrial era, greed is devouring his soul.

In the early 20th century, in Britain and Germany, Toynbee and Spengler warned us of the risks of capitalism, which, alas, are being confirmed today. As these two eminent thinkers foresaw, technological progress goes hand in hand with gluttonous consumption, and the threat to our planet is growing day by day.

If we look back with respect to early cultures, it is because of their wisdom, their elegance, their authenticity and their simplicity. They are an expression of the purity of the souls of our forebears. Of course, they were later tainted with the colours of the sacred, but, to the extent that religion fulfils its mission of providing comfort to the human soul, it



“The song of a fisherman”, by Fan Zeng, 2009.

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can, fundamentally, be considered an art.

Cultures do not obey the evolutionary principles of Darwin or Spencer. A recent work of art is not superior to an older work. The moments of awakening, the efforts to promote greater confidence and harmony, that humanity as a whole has shown on this day of multicultural exchanges, will remain forever a moving and encouraging guiding light.

"In any society, whether of animals or of men, violence makes tyrants, while gentle authority makes kings: on Earth, the lion and the tiger, in the air, the eagle and the vulture, do not rule by war alone, they do not dominate by an abuse of power and cruelty; whereas the swan rules the water in all the ways that found an empire of peace: greatness, majesty, gentleness [...]" (Buffon, The Nat-

ural History of Birds , Vol. IX, "The Swan").

Let us pray together for peace and the greatest harmony among people, and may the swan preserve its noble beauty forever.

**Fan Zeng, poet and painter,**

is one of the most famous living

Chinese calligraphers. A book, entitled

*Le vieux sage et l'enfant* (2005)

is available in French.

### Citations, in order of appearance:

**Laozi,**

Chinese philosopher (between 604-479 B.C.)

**Zhuang Zhou,**

Taoist philosopher (4th century B.C.)

**Plato,**

Greek philosopher (5th – 4th century B.C.)

**Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel,**

German philosopher (1770-1831)

**Emmanuel Kant,**

German philosopher (1724-1804)

**Paul Dirac,**

British physicist and mathematician (1902-1984)

**Spring and Autumn,**

A period in Chinese history from 8th to 5th century B.C.

**Athena, Greek**

goddess of wisdom

**Gwilym Ellis Lane Owen,**

British philosopher 1922-1982)

**Robert Owen**

Social reformer and one of the founders of socialism and the cooperative movement, United Kingdom (1771-1858)

**Thomas More,**

English lawyer, historian, philosopher, theologian and statesman (1478-1535)

**Claude-Henri de Rouvroy, Comte de Saint-Simon,**

French economist and philosopher (1760-1825)

**Charles Fourier,**

French philosopher (1772-1837)

**James Clerk Maxwell,**

Scottish physicist and mathematician (1831-1879)

**Arnold Joseph Toynbee,**

British historian (1889-1975)

**Oswald Spengler,**

German philosopher (1880-1936)

**Charles Robert Darwin,**

English naturalist (1809-1882)

**Herbert Spencer,**

English philosopher and sociologist (1820-1903)

**Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon,**

French naturalist (1707-1788)

## A SCHOLAR-PAINTER

© UNESCO/Michel Ravassard



*Master Fan Zeng was born in 1938 in Nantong (China) and comes from a long line of scholars going back to the end of the 16th century. His great grandfather, Fan Dangshi, better known as Fan Bozi (1854-1905), was a celebrated poet at the end of the Qing dynasty.*

*Fan Zeng is an internationally renowned painter and calligrapher and a respected poet and thinker. He is today considered to be a grand master of Chinese classical art. His work, which is in harmony with nature, follows the tradition of "scholarly painting", an artistic movement that developed in China from the 10th century.*

*Fan Zeng is research director at the Chinese Academy of Arts and a professor at the University of Nankai in Tianjin. He was recently appointed advisor to UNESCO on cultural diversity..*

Persian calligraphy bears the imprint of a range of influences, while Chinese calligraphy remains deeply rooted in local tradition, explains Iranian painter, calligrapher and psychoanalyst, Hassan Makaremi. But, whatever its history, calligraphy embodies our sense of “being in the world”.

# CALLIGRAPHY, THE ART OF MAKING WORDS SING

*At UNESCO's International Festival of Cultural Diversity in May this year, Hassan Makaremi and the Chinese Grand Master Fan Zeng, gave a presentation entitled, "Dialogue on Calligraphy". In this interview by Monique Couratier for the UNESCO Courier, he explains how the Persian Nas'taliq style of calligraphy has enabled him to put his ideals into colour and movement, in a personal quest that combines poetic intuition and scientific rigour.*



"From rock art to human rights", painting by Hassan Makaremi.

## **What affinities do you share with Master Fan Zeng and how are you different?**

What Master Fan Zen and I share, above all, is our relationship to nature. We see the same things, and translate this through calligraphy. Don't forget that calligraphy is the art of stylizing the written word, which was invented by observing nature. In his inventory of visual forms, Marc Changizi, a researcher at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy in the USA, demonstrated some fifty elements that appear both in nature and in four families of script: cuneiform, hieroglyphics, Chinese and Maya. For both Master Fan Zeng and myself, calligraphy embodies our “being in the world”.

How do we differ? In our relationship to society. Chinese writing, which originated 4000 before the Christian era, remains deeply rooted in nature. There is a direct link between rock art and Chinese characters, which have hardly changed in six thousand years. That is why, across the ages, the line of ink cast by the Chinese calligrapher's brush continues, instantly, to take the form of a horse, ox or a tiger. It takes the skill of a Master to chant the rhythm of time.

But Persian calligraphy has assimilated a series of outside influences. I am thinking of the Arab-inspired kufi (angular and geometric) and naskh (supple and rounded) scripts, abandoned in the 14th century, as

the art moved closer to nature, from which it derived the gentle curves so typical of the nas'taliq style, which inspires my own work. To give you an example, in this script, the egg is symbolized by a voluptuous loop that seems to take flight, light as an eyelash.

This slow progression towards other visions – Mongolian, Arab, Turkish, Indian, etc. – which are reflected in body language and therefore also in the gestures of the calligrapher, means that Persian calligraphy also has a stylized view of [what French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan called] the “speaking being”, this “desiring being” that lives in the metropolis. Chinese calligraphy, on the other hand, remains confined to nature, which it distils or sublimates. Why is this? I am not a specialist of far-eastern philosophy, but I think the explanation may be found in the notion of detachment with respect to desire, as advocated by Buddhism.

**Your encounter with Master Fan Zen is more than simply the sum of your similarities and dissimilarities. Do you have the impression of having established a genuine dialogue?**

The very fact that we are present, side-by-side, is a form of dialogue – a dialogue between what is common to both of us, and what

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separates us. So what is the fruit of this dialogue? No less than life itself! Our commitment to use our brush to trace the curve of the universe is a message, which says that humanity, in all its diversity, is nevertheless one.

If I often use the tree as a metaphor, it is because humanity has common roots, which give it a unity, thousands of branches that provide its diversity (its people, who are both so different and yet so intermixed) and countless leaves, the undulating products of its creative genius. Without its roots, firmly anchored in the ground, without its branches – even if some die while others flourish – without its leaves, continually “started afresh”, the tree could not survive.

And you might say, what about violence? It arises from the fact that certain peoples or individuals

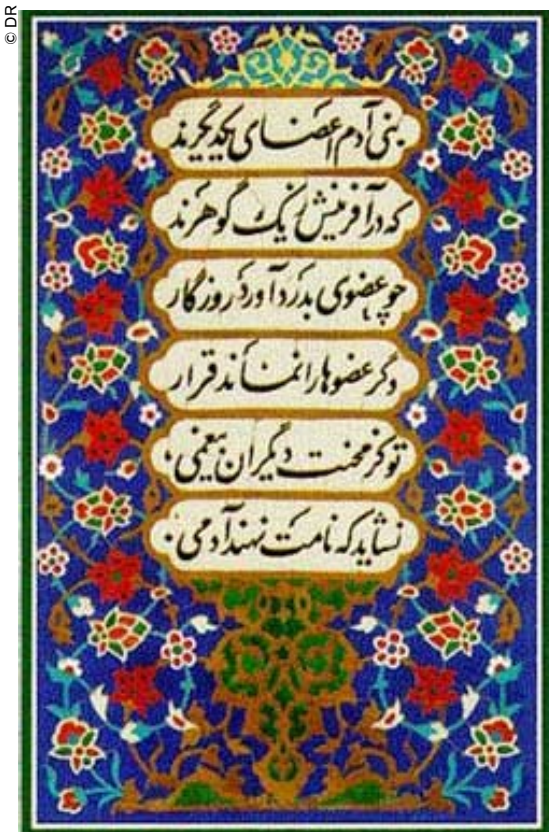
think that they exist apart from everything else, outside this common “décor” of our humanity. But, without the sentiment of belonging to the same species and without the recognition of diversity, humanity could not continue to survive. This is the message of our exchange between Chinese and Persian calligraphy. This is also the message of the United Nations, whose New York headquarters has a poem by the illustrious Persian poet, Sa’adi [see box] inscribed over the entrance to its Hall of Nations, and of UNESCO, with which I would be honoured to continue my collaboration to promote “cultural diversity in dialogue”.

**Why has calligraphy not flourished in the West?  
What can it give us today?**

In the West, since the 16th century, the choice has been made to

opt for rapidity and efficacy, notably by trying to gain mastery over nature. In the East, the preference has been to “tell it” to “write it”, in its fullness and looseness, in its curves and silences, by leaving the space for interpretation, for freedom ...

Far from my training as a scientist, there is this idea of renouncing rigour, clarity and concision. But I know that the computer keyboard will never replace the hand. And I reckon that, today, calligraphy represents added value. In a motion that is in harmony with nature, like a whirling Dervish, the gesture of the calligrapher-philosopher-poet turns the words of the Universe into song. That is nas’taliq calligraphy: the alchemy of life!



Poem by Sa’adi, celebrated 13th century Persian poet.



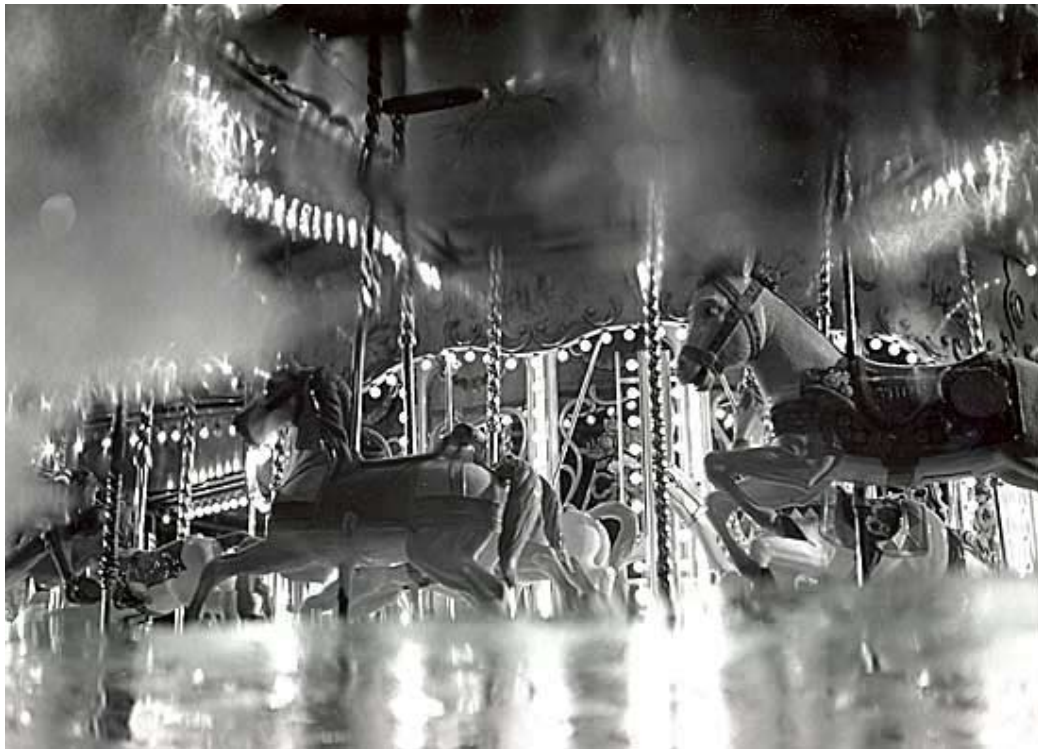
“Whirling Dervish”, painting by Hassan Makaremi.

**Human beings  
are members  
of a whole,  
In creation of one  
essence and soul.  
If one member is  
afflicted with pain,  
Other members  
uneasy will  
remain.  
If you have  
no sympathy  
for human pain,  
The name  
of human you  
cannot retain**

*Poem by the Persian  
poet Sa’adi  
on the pediment  
of the United Nations  
headquarters  
in New York.*



“This is not a photo of a merry-go-round, but of its reflection,” explains Shigeru Asano, a Japanese photographer fascinated by the light and shadows of Paris. He has been walking the streets of the city for 30 years. Nearly 10,000 kilometres from his native Osaka, he feels at home in the French capital, where he finds an atmosphere of melancholy more to his taste than “Tokyo’s dazzle”.



## THE PERSONAL EYE OF A FAMILIAR STRANGER

*As part of the UNESCO World Cultural Diversity Festival, in May this year, Shigeru Asano exhibited his work at the Town Hall in the first arrondissement of Paris. He has generously allowed us to reproduce a selection here (© Shigeru Asano).*

Shigeru Asano's photographs, like shimmering skylights, only give a partial glimpse of reality - no more than a tiny puddle of water on a pavement can hold. Shigeru Asano is not the only photographer to be fascinated by reflection, but he is surely one of the very few to have used it as an aesthetic principle. These reflections stay surprisingly sharp, even when the wind whips up a strip of blur, or water forms a frame of shadow. In any case, the reflection is the only perceptible reality in his images.

“People sometimes come up to me and ask if I am feeling all right,” he says. “They are concerned when they see someone crouching in the rain under an umbrella, trying to stay dry. They don't see that this man is

trying to set up his camera on a tripod, aiming his lens a couple of centimetres from the ground. They can't imagine that he has spent months, even years, visualizing the photo he is about to take; or that he might use up thirty films before he gets the photo he has seen in his mind's eye.”

This gives an idea of how important time is in Shigeru Asano's approach as an artist. He avoids digital technology because he is not interested in the instantaneous. “With film, you have to wait ... and then the moment of truth comes - success or failure? Sometimes, when the film is developing, no image appears. Everything is black. So, I have to start again. It is like a perpetual struggle with the image.

It is very motivating.” In eight years, since he started his “puddles” project, Shigeru Asano has made only 60 photos he is satisfied with.

At the opposite end of the spectrum to his compatriot Nobuyoshi Araki, Shigeru Asano creates a parallel universe, woven with illusions and dreams. He counters violence with lyricism; uproar with silence; the crowd with solitude. His Paris is almost empty of people. “No it isn't,” he protests. “Look, there's a man.” And, it's true, a few rare silhouettes do cross the black and white scenes that Shigeru Asano composes on the Pentax 6x7 that accompanies him everywhere. But they are always alone. “For me, these photos are like a mirror”, he finally admits.

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And the photographer tells of his solitude. He lost his mother at the age of fourteen. He never knew his father. He has no brothers or sister, and no children of his own. "At least, not for the moment," he adds. In 1971 he moved to Tokyo to study design. Five years later he came to Paris on a short trip and returned in 1979 to live. In his first ten years, he turned his hand to everything – painter, mechanic, waiter – before discovering a Minolta and throwing

himself into photography. He spent the next ten years searching, taking hundreds of photos in flamboyant colour, some for fashion magazines. "Then, one evening, when I was feeling low, because the woman I loved had left me – which happens to everyone doesn't it? – I went out for a walk in the rain. My tears, mixed with the rain, misted my eyes, and I started to see images that were to become the photos you see today. I found my path."

Curious coincidences with the Stranger we encounter in Paris Spleen by the French poet, Charles Baudelaire: "Tell me, enigmatical man, whom do you love best, your father, your mother, your sister, or your brother? / I have neither father, nor mother, nor sister, nor brother [...] / Then what do you love, extraordinary stranger? / I love the clouds... the clouds that pass... up there... up there... the wonderful clouds!"

Jasmina Šopova





Hiking and singing in Rize (Turkey).

The folk traditions of Brittany are making a remarkable comeback after being consigned to oblivion for decades. And, 2500 kilometres away, traditional song is returning to Anatolian homes, having almost disappeared. Today, a non-profit association called “A Bridge over the Bosphorus” is linking musicians from France and Turkey who share a similar passion and concerns.

## TRAVELLING MUSIC

This summer, the fourth Green Pastures Festival in Rize (Turkey) will be featuring foreign musicians - from France. But not the France of the tourist brochures and embassy crusades that have taken over the Turkish media in recent years. They come from that other France, home to lovers of traditional music. A France that is trying to mend the fabric of a society torn apart by years of rural exodus.

The effects of urbanization, industrialization and celebrity culture are being felt in Turkey, just as they are in France. The art of song is being drowned out by excessive technology, the glitter of globalization and the glamour of stardom. But both countries have managed to preserve a few islands of authenticity, like Brittany, in the extreme west of France, on the Atlantic coast, and the province of Rize, in the far north-east of Anatolia, on the edge of the Caucasus.

### *The Breton renaissance*

Over the past fifty years, in France, Bretons have started to revive their traditional music, dances and festivals. Cut off from its past by urbanization, the new generation has been exploring its ancestral heritage. The trend started in parts of the region where Breton is spoken, and is now turning to another linguistic area, Gallo, which is closer to French. Meanwhile, theory and practice have evolved. In the past, “revivalism” was the preserve of researchers, whose principal goal was to collect, analyze, understand and publish. Today, as ethnomusicologist, Yves Defrance, points out, while continuing in this tradition, song and dance collectors also “want to claim back this repertoire and bring it up to date, without altering its character, turning it into a contemporary means of expression.”

Gallo songs were in danger of being forgotten, unable to find a place in today’s world. But with the renewal of interest they are leaving the archives, and are no longer esoteric party pieces, brought out on special occasions for a handful of culture buffs. Every day, new songs are re-emerging in annual contests, local gatherings in homes and cafes, village festivals, outings, schools and in music workshops in small villages and market towns. And, at the same time, in rural areas, young and old, those in work and the unemployed, both men and women, are renewing social bonds thanks to this revival of singing.

Among the singers travelling to Rize this year are some of those spearheading this renaissance. Some, like Charles Quimbert or Vincent Morel, come from the community of song collectors: they have university degrees and work at DASTUM,

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the regional cultural organization responsible for collecting and preserving Breton intangible heritage. In 1996 they launched the "Festival of Traditional Song", held in Bovel, a little market town near Rennes in Brittany, featuring folksongs from Brittany and elsewhere. Others, who have grown up with traditional song, are veritable living treasures - villagers who still carry and pass on local history.

It was torrential rain that brought them together, in the summer of 1997. The festival-goers were starting out on a hike in the countryside, singing as they walked, when a sudden downpour sent them scurrying to Bovel's only cafe. Here, they came across the generation of "Masters of the Tradition", gathered around the cafe's owners, Léone and Louis Bernier. For them the festival "was for young people." But when these 'young people' started to sing, they recognized their own songs. Since then, this little cafe has become the symbol of reconciliation between the generations. On the first Friday of every month, the cafe plays host to local schoolchildren, teenagers, teachers and a crowd of others from the region - and even Paris - who come to stay up all night singing.

### **Songs of every colour and flavour**

In Turkey, the first signs of a return to the homeland, in song, came from Birol Topaloglu, someone else in search of his roots. Combined, in his case, with a strong ecological awareness. As in other regions of the country, the very banks of Anatolia's overburdened rivers, flowing heavily towards the Black Sea, are in danger of disappearing if planned dams are built. Meanwhile, these lands are gradually being deserted by country folk looking for the promise of an easier life in town.

Once, community songs and dances echoed out in the magnificent wood and stone houses. Little by little they have fallen silent. So,



A night of songs at the cafe in Bovel.

when Birol started to collect, publish and revive the traditional repertoire, it was with a broad vision, simultaneously preserving cultural heritage, the land and oral tradition. And he makes no bones about using his fame as an established musician in Istanbul or the friends he has made abroad.

In Storm Valley, where white minarets rise above the luxuriant green slopes of Rize, the annual August Festival is aimed at everyone. As in Bovel, it hopes to bring together young and old, those who have left and those who stayed behind. Songs are on offer in every shape and size - while dancing, walking, or eating. But, out of respect for tradition, folktales are still collected, there are lessons in traditional cooking, and outings to gather wild plants. And there is little effort to mask the pride

of having preserved Laz, a rare language belonging to the Georgian or South Caucasian group.

The same passion, the same approach, but still an improbable meeting - after all, who has heard of Bovel, or Rize? But as they were made for each other, "A Bridge over the Bosphorus" has helped bring them together. This French not-for-profit association for cultural exchange with Turkey is responsible for a wonderful love story, told in song, and which shows all the signs of lasting.

#### **Françoise Arnaud-Demir,**

performer of popular Turkish songs and researcher/lecturer at the Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations (INALCO) in Paris, is president of the association *A Bridge over the Bosphorus* that she founded in 2004



Typical architecture of the Black Sea amid the tea gardens.

The celebrated martial art, Kung Fu, was created fifteen centuries ago in China.

We owe its origin to a Buddhist monk from India. From there, it spread to Korea, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Japan... to become, since the 1950s, a trend that has continued to fuel the dreams of teenagers around the world. But in this process of globalization, its intrinsic values are not always respected.

# THE WARRIOR MONKS OF THE YOUNG WOOD

*As part of the UNESCO International Festival of Cultural Diversity held in May this year, a delegation of monks from the temple of Shaolin (which means 'young wood') came to Paris to promote the cultural and spiritual values of Kung Fu. One of them, Abbot Shi Yongxin, explained to our colleague Weiny Cauhape, how the Shaolin temple is the product of cultural exchanges and why it is important to preserve the activities that have made it a sanctuary for the Chinese soul.*



© Temple de Shaolin

Shaolin kung fu is both a martial art and a spiritual quest.

## **What were the origins of the Shaolin temple and how did it develop?**

In the year 495, Emperor Xiao Wen of the Northern Wei dynasty built the Shaolin temple on Mount Song, in homage to the Indian monk, Ba Tuo

After that, two other Indian monks, Ratnamati and Bodhiruci, arrived in Shaolin and founded centres there for the translation of Buddhist scriptures, placing the temple at the very centre of Chinese Buddhism at the time.

Later, the Indian monk Bodhidharma settled there and, claiming to "trace his lineage back to the Buddha himself," placed the following thought at the very core of his teaching: "Chan goes straight to the heart of the mat-

ter; know thy true nature and become a Buddha". He founded the Chan school, in the temple itself. It is a school of Buddhism that adapted to the Chinese way of thinking, as Buddhism spread. [It became known as Zen in Japan. Ed].

Today, Shaolin has become the symbol not just of Chinese Buddhism, but also of traditional Chinese culture.

## **What is the origin of Kung Fu and what is its relationship to Buddhism?**

As an Imperial temple, Shaolin possessed considerable wealth. But, during the final years of the Sui dynasty (581-681), the country suffered considerably from successive wars. So,

some of the monks learned to practice martial arts to defend the Temple and its treasures.

Shaolin Kung Fu is nothing other than the path that the Shaolin monks followed to attain wisdom and a deep understanding of the Buddhist way of life, or "ch'an". It is a means to meditate on ch'an, by practising martial arts and letting the ch'an serve as a guide.

"Shaolin Temple" schools and associations seem to be opening up everywhere in the world. What can be done to protect the secular values of Shaolin Kung Fu in the face of this phenomenon?

It is true that there are many establishments that teach Shaolin martial arts across the world. Some have been set up by the Mount Song Shaolin Temple, while others have received our authorisation after passing an examination. But most of these "Shaolin Martial Arts Centres" have just sprung up on their own.

As I have not visited most of these establishments, I cannot pass judgement on them. But one thing is certain: we are opposed to any abuse of the name of our temple that might undermine its traditions.

We work tirelessly to protect the cultural heritage of Shaolin. We have set up a special organization to regulate the use of the name "Shaolin Temple" and have applied to UNESCO for inclusion on its intangible heritage list. Inclusion would enable us to take legal action, to collect and archive documents, and therefore to help guarantee the living transmission of this secular art. The rules of transmission of the knowledge and practices of Kung Fu from one generation to another have been strictly controlled since the 13th century. They were laid down by Abbot Fu Yu. Since then, some 70 generations of masters have been trained at Shaolin.

# AROUND THE WORLD ON A SILK THREAD

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Mulberry cultivation and silkworm farming in Thailand have been recorded since the 13th century.

By the first half of the 20th century, the silk tradition in Thailand was on its last legs, only to spring back in the 1950s, thanks to an American, Jim Thomson. As an ally he had a young Thai woman - none other than Queen Sirikit. This secular art form, which, today, combines traditional craft and industrialization, is passed down from generation to generation and has contributed to the country's development.

On Easter Sunday, 1967, a young American businessman who had been living in Thailand disappeared in the jungle in circumstances that were never to be cleared up. The mystery caught the attention of the public and media in Asia, as well as the USA and elsewhere, because this man was by no means unknown. In those days, one only had

to address a letter to "Jim Thomson, Bangkok", and it would reach him, out of the three million inhabitants of the Thai capital

In the twenty years before his fatal trip to Malaysia, Jim Thomson achieved what others had been unable to in an entire life. Specializing in an art that he knew nothing about, he created a vast silk industry in Thailand. His house in Bangkok, itself a work of art, is filled with art treasures from the region.

His life story reads like a novel, not just for his personal accomplishments, but for the thousands of lives he changed. The name Jim Thompson is, today, synonymous with a booming Thai industry, known the world over, whose silk products fill the windows of leading stores and grace the best hotels and restaurants everywhere.

## **Bangkok silk**

Jim Thompson trained as an architect, discovering Thailand in 1945 when he was posted there as an officer in the US army. At that time there were few modern buildings or cars in Bangkok, and the canals still played a major role. Attracted by the markets and the smiling

people, he decided to settle there when he was demobilized.

As soon as he arrived in the country, Thompson began collecting pieces of Thai silk. He was seduced by the surprising combinations of colours and the uneven texture, which distinguish Thai silk from the softer Chinese or Japanese silk. The difference comes from the quality of the silk worms themselves.

A Chinese diplomat recorded the Siamese tradition of growing mulberry trees and breeding silk worms as far back as the 13th century. But it was the American architect who gave Thai silk its pedigree. When he settled in Bangkok, weavers were few and far between - the tradition was only being kept alive by a handful of Muslims in the Benkrua quarter. Thompson decided to market Thai silk and contacted them. Most were suspicious, but one head of family was intrigued, and decided to go into business with him. It was the start of a great adventure.

In 1947 Thompson left on a flight for New York, his suitcase stuffed with samples of silk. A fashion editor fell in love with the cloth samples and offered her backing straight away. Back in Thailand, he set up a company, becoming its director and holding the majority of shares. His management style was original, employing mostly women, and allowing them to work from home, so as not to disrupt their family life. He

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Scene from the Thai performance on 18 May at UNESCO, as part of the International Festival of Cultural Diversity.

(...)

introduced innovations in manufacturing techniques and replaced the old plant-based dyes with chemical colours, while respecting the traditional colours of Thai silk.

In the early 1950's Thompson opened a store in Bangkok, which was immediately a huge success. Soon after, he received a visit from Queen Sirikit, who was a tireless promoter of Thai crafts and cultural heritage. She became his most famous and influential client. On her official trips abroad, she would wear outfits made of traditional Thai silk, and did not fail to be noticed by the celebrated French couturier, Pierre Balmain. On the other side of the Atlantic, Irene Sharaff, costume designer for the musical comedy, *The King and I* by Walter Lang, decided to use Thai silk, the first of a whole series of films that helped spread its fame. Orders flooded in from all corners of the world.

### **Maintaining tradition**

From the 1970's, silk manufacturing became established in the province of Khorat, in the north-east of Thailand. It was while touring this hot and poor region of farmers that Queen Sirikit realized how difficult life was for the peasants there and offered to help them turn to silk weaving and traditional dying. In 1976, the queen set up the SUP-PORT foundation, which aims to develop craft activities in rural areas and to preserve ancient production techniques. Now, about a thousand families have their own mulberry plantations and breed their own silk worms. The cocoons, which take 23 days to mature, are then sold to Jim Thompson's farm.

Nowadays, weaving, which is the central step in the process of silk-making, is carried out by about 600 weavers, both men and women, who continue to pass their skills on from generation to generation. The cloth is printed using both wooden stencils and digital printers, reconciling traditional and modern practices. Great emphasis is placed on quality control and hand finishing,

ensuring a happy compromise between craft and industrial manufacturing.

The American businessman's vision turned out to be right – this great Thai silk adventure would bring prosperity to the country. Today, 90% of shareholders in Jim Thompson's company are Thai na-

tionals, a third of them the children and grandchildren of the first Muslim weavers from Benkrua.

From a presentation at UNESCO given by **Eric B. Booth**, of the "Jim Thompson Thai Silk Company", during the International Festival of Cultural Diversity, in May this year

## CHAMPAGNE ET SOIE : UN MARIAGE ROYAL



© UNESCO/Michel Ravassard

Despite industrialization, making Thai silk depends to a large extent on the nimble fingers of peasants and women workers.

**If champagne is the king of wines, Thai silk is the queen of silks - this could be the motto of a new partnership between the Inter-professional Committee for the Wines of Champagne (France) and the Queen Sirikit Institute for Sericulture (Thailand). Both are powerful symbols of their respective countries, yet, both are also victims of their own success - counterfeiting and misappropriation of the name are the major threats that this partnership hopes to defeat.**

What do champagne and silk have in common? An aura of charm, a long history, a close link to their land of origin, strict rules of manufacture and ... counterfeits.

French champagne is protected by a whole series of laws, which come under the collective title of the "Champagne Code", which precisely defines its origin and methods of production. But the Inter-professional Champagne Committee has to fight tooth and nail to avoid its Geographic Indication\* being used illegally. The organization, which dates back to 1930 and the Commission for Propaganda and Defence of the Wines of Champagne, has to ensure that no sparkling wine anywhere in the world can benefit from this name. It is a difficult task, because the prestigious name of "Champagne" is a superb sales feature and is therefore very attractive to counterfeiters.

Meanwhile, the relatively young Thai Institute of Sericulture, established in 2002, aims to obtain legal recognition of the Geographic Indication of Lamphun province as producer of traditional Thai silk. The renowned Lamphun silk brocade, traditionally woven on handlooms in a complicated process from a combi-

nation of silk thread and gold and silver thread, is much sought after by leading couturiers and interior designers throughout the world.

Despite its industrialization, Thai silk making still depends to a large extent on the nimble fingers of peasants. Silk farming and unwinding the silk, thread by thread from the cocoons are still the preserve of a myriad of small producers. And most of the weaving workshops that buy the silk thread still use wooden looms and other traditional techniques.

In 2007, the Champagne Committee responded positively to an invitation from the Queen Sirikit Institute to form a partnership and has since become an advocate for Thai silk. Thanks to its support, the Geographic Indication (GI) of Lamphun silk is in the process of being registered with the European Union. This collaboration, it is hoped, will draw the public's attention to the notion of Geographic Indication and help preserve the authenticity of these products, which have become icons of French and Thai culture.

**Katerina Markelova,**  
*UNESCO Courier*

## Much more than “fish and ships”

**The oceans are suffering. The main source of food for two billion people, a key element in climate control and a largely untapped reserve of vital resources, they deserve to be managed better. This is why the United Nations has decided to celebrate the first ever World Ocean Day on the 8th of June.**

© UNESCO/Dominique Roger



The Great Barrier Reef, off Australia's north-east coast. The world's largest coral complex is under threat of disappearing.

**W**hen the ocean makes the headlines, the news usually concerns a threat to biodiversity, a crisis in the fishing industry or an oil-spill accident. These are important issues, but are only part of the much bigger story that needs telling.

As our understanding of the climate system improves, we realize the complex yet essential role of the ocean plays in its regulation. Because of its capacity to store heat, the ocean is not only the engine of weather but also the memory of climate. Life on earth originated in the margins of the primordial ocean and for millions of years evolved in this aquatic milieu. The ocean is the ultimate global commons providing essential ecological services that make life possible on our planet. Humankind has strong fundamental reasons to revere the ocean, as ancient civilizations intuitively did.

But our everyday behavior falls far short from this serene ideal. As the current piracy crisis has revealed - and despite the 1982 United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) - there are many gaps in the governance in this unique international space. UNCLOS provides an integrated legal framework on which to build sound and effective regulations to the different uses of the ocean, which have been implemented by the UN specialized agencies and programs over the last 30 years. Nevertheless, severe limitations exist for

monitoring and enforcing these regulations. National and international institutions are fundamentally weak. They are usually compartmentalized on a sector by sector division of duties and responsibilities, leaving little room for integrated policy-making addressing issues that cut across several domains.

Thus, despite progress, many major challenges remain to be addressed. Regulation of High Seas or trans-zonal fisheries is one of them. There is also increasing concern that many fisheries practices are unsustainable and that global fisheries generally are facing a major crisis.

### **Major challenges**

Unsustainable uses are posing a danger to many special habitats as well, especially in the coastal environment and including mangroves, estuaries, coral-reefs and underwater mountains, which are hot-spots of marine biodiversity. The illegal traffic of people, arms and drugs via the High Seas is increasing.

Absorbing millions of tons of CO<sub>2</sub> every year - one third of total annual emissions - the ocean has already spared us from catastrophic climate change. But in doing so, its own intrinsic balances are being altered: it is becoming more acidic and has taken the largest fraction of the additional heat generated by climate change, something that might eventually alter the normal patterns of ocean circulation that are so essential for keeping CO<sub>2</sub> out of contact from the atmosphere.

Because of these alarming trends, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 decided to keep the oceans under permanent review via global and integrated assessments of the state of the seas. This is the most comprehensive initiative undertaken by the UN system yet to improve Ocean Governance. In 2005 the UN General Assembly through resolution 60/30, requested UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to take the lead in getting this process started. The report of three years of work is ready and has been distributed to the United Nations Member States and the general public. Later this year, in the emblematic UN Headquarters building in New York, a Working Group of the whole composed by all members of the UN will consider this report and propose a course of action to the 64th Session of the General Assembly. A positive endorsement will open the way for the first Global Integrated Assessment of the Ocean to be conducted by the UN system for 2014-15, the two years when the Commission on Sustainable Development will conduct a review of oceans and coastal issues. Given the high stakes, failure to do so is not an acceptable option.

**Patricio Bernal,**  
Executive Secretary of the  
Intergovernmental Oceanographic  
Commission (IOC), UNESCO.





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