



UNESCO on the Ground: Local Perspectives on Intangible Cultural Heritage (Encounters: Explorations in Folklore and Ethnomusicology)

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For nearly 70 years, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has played a crucial role in developing policies and recommendations for dealing with intangible cultural heritage. What has been the effect of such sweeping global policies on those actually affected by them? How connected is UNESCO with what is happening every day, on the ground, in local communities? Drawing upon six communities ranging across three continents—from India, South Korea, Malawi, Japan, Macedonia and China—and focusing on festival, ritual, and dance, this volume illuminates the complexities and challenges faced by those who find themselves drawn, in different ways, into UNESCO’s orbit. Some struggle to incorporate UNESCO recognition into their own local understanding of tradition; others cope with the fallout of a failed intangible cultural heritage nomination. By exploring locally, by looking outward from the inside, the essays show how a normative policy such as UNESCO’s intangible cultural heritage policy can take on specific associations and inflections. A number of the key questions and themes emerge across the case studies and three accompanying commentaries: issues of terminology; power struggles between local, national and international stakeholders; the value of international recognition; and what forces shape selection processes. With examples from around the world, and a balance of local experiences with broader perspectives, this volume provides a unique comparative approach to timely questions of tradition and change in a rapidly globalizing world.



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