

## The Place and Importance of Intangible Cultural Heritage Elements in the Lives of Heritage Masters

Arş. Gör. Emre YAŞAR

Isparta Uygulamalı Bilimler Üniversitesi

emreyasar1852@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1573-0930>

Eda YAYLA

Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli Üniversitesi

edayayla96@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3949-715X>

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The primary purpose of this research is to determine heritage masters' intangible cultural heritage (ICH) production practices, motivations, and perceived values and to learn their problems about the ICH.

**Method:** The qualitative research method was applied in this research. The qualitative research method is also essential for the participant to connect the past with the present and the future. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to determine the importance and place of ICH elements in the lives of heritage masters. A semi-structured interview is a technique that starts within the scope of questions determined by the researchers and continues according to the participant's answers during the interview. The answers to the questions were analyzed through thematic analysis

**Findings:** In the research, interviews were conducted with 11 heritage masters. Five questions were asked of heritage masters. The main theme, sub-themes, and sub-headings of the research were determined by analyzing the data obtained. The main theme of the research is the ICH elements of the lives of heritage masters. The research sub-themes are the beginning of ICH production, the delicacy of ICH production, ICH production motivations, ICH value perceptions, and ICH production problems.

**Conclusion:** Because of local traditions, the knowledge and skills of the ICH are acquired mainly by boys at a young age. It demonstrates that masters have learned this art by transferring elements of the ICH from generation to generation. manual skill, creativity, and love for the work are essential in ICH production. It is crucial to propose different products not only with manual skills but also by adding creativity to the production. The main motivations of heritage masters are creating a new product, meeting people from different cultures, and gaining economic gain. Heritage masters stated that they relaxed psychologically with ICH production. They also pointed out that they devote an important time of their lives. For this reason, they stated that ICH elements are valuable for them. Lastly, they stated that they get to know different people through ICH production, which is why it is important for them. Heritage masters emphasize the increasing costs in ICH production, the lack of masters from the young generation, and unfair competition as the most important problems

**Keywords:** Intangible Cultural Heritage, Heritage Masters, Cappadocia, Tourism, Heritage

## Miras Ustalarının Yaşamlarında Somut Olmayan Kültürel Miras Unsurlarının Yeri ve Önemi

### Özet

**Amaç:** Bu araştırmanın temel amacı miras ustalarının somut olmayan kültürel miras üretim pratiklerini, motivasyonlarını, algıladıkları değerleri belirlemek ve somut olmayan kültürel mirasa dair problemleri öğrenmektir.

**Yöntem:** Bu çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemi uygulanmıştır. Katılımcının geçmişle hem bugünü hem de geleceği bağlaması açısından da nitel araştırma yöntemi önem arz etmektedir. Somut olmayan kültürel miras unsurlarının miras ustalarının yaşamlarındaki öneminin ve yerinin belirlenmesi amacıyla yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme, araştırmacılar tarafından belirlenen sorular kapsamında başlayan, katılımcının görüşme esnasındaki cevaplarına göre devam eden bir tekniktir. Sorulara verilen cevaplar tematik analiz ile incelenmiştir.

**Bulgular:** Araştırmada 11 miras ustası ile görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Miras ustalarına beş soru sorulmuştur. Elde edilen verilerin analiz edilmesi ile araştırmanın ana teması, alt temaları ve alt başlıkları belirlenmiştir. Araştırmanın ana teması miras ustalarının yaşamlarının somut olmayan kültürel miras unsurlarıdır. Araştırmanın alt temaları somut olmayan kültürel miras üretim başlangıcı, somut olmayan kültürel miras üretim incelikleri, somut olmayan kültürel miras üretim motivasyonları, somut olmayan kültürel miras değer algıları, somut olmayan kültürel miras üretim sorunlarıdır.

**Sonuç:** Bölgenin geleneklerinden dolayı özellikle erkek çocuklara erken yaşlarda somut olmayan kültürel miras bilgi ve becerilerinin kazandırıldığı fark edilmektedir. Miras ustalarının, somut olmayan kültürel miras unsurlarını nesilden nesile aktarılması ile bu sanatı öğrendiği görülmektedir. Somut olmayan kültürel miras üretiminde el becerisi, yaratıcılık ve işi sevmek önem arz etmektedir. Sadece el becerisi ile değil aynı zamanda üretime yaratıcılık katarak farklı ürünler sunmak da önemlidir. Miras ustalarının yeni bir ürün yaratmak, farklı kültürlerden insanlarla tanışmak, ekonomik kazanç elde etmeleri temel motivasyonlarıdır. Miras ustaları, somut olmayan kültürel miras üretimi ile birlikte psikolojik olarak rahatladıklarını belirtmişler. Ayrıca, yaşamlarının önemli bir zamanını ayırdıklarına dikkat çekmişler. Bu nedenle somut olmayan kültürel miras unsurlarının kendileri için değerli olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir. Son olarak somut olmayan kültürel miras üretimi ile farklı kişiler tanıdıklarını, bu yüzden kendileri için önem arz ettiğini belirtmişlerdir. Miras ustaları, somut olmayan kültürel miras üretiminde artan maliyetler, genç nesilden usta yetişmemesi ve haksız rekabeti en önemli sorunlar olarak öne çıkarmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Somut Olmayan Kültürel Miras, Miras Ustaları, Kapadokya, Turizm, Miras

### Introduction

Heritage is the values regularly transmitted and practiced from one generation to another (Aulet and Vidal, 2018). Passing on and maintaining heritage values from one generation to another is a cultural heritage (Khalid and Chowdhury, 2018). Cultural heritage comprises ICH (Lenzerini, 2011). As with cultural heritage, ICH also differs from one society to another (Khodjamkulov et al., 2020). Therefore, the ICH capability of each society is also different (Holtof, 2018). The factor that is as effective in differentiating this capability as the fact that the elements of heritage vary for each society is the masters of heritage (Sun et al., 2021). That is, heritage practitioners. Heritage Masters support ICH components throughout their lives and ensure their transfer to future generations (Lu et al., 2019). This way, knowledge transfer on ICH elements is delivered in many areas.

Knowledge transfer is the basis for the sustainable development of heritage elements (García-Almeida, 2019). With this transfer, the heritage element continues between generations. The process of knowledge transfer is dynamic. The process is completed when the next generations, who are the recipients of knowledge, assimilate the heritage elements (Gilbert and Cordey-Hayes, 1996). ICH knowledge consists of explicit and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is knowledge that is expressed formally and systematically, included in guidelines and easier to transfer and access. Tacit knowledge includes practical skills and special technical methods (Serban and Luan, 2002). Tacit knowledge is special knowledge that is embedded in the minds of heritage masters. This knowledge is important in sustaining ICH (Parts et al., 2011). Therefore, heritage masters are an important stakeholder in sustaining and protecting ICH and ensuring knowledge transfer (Su, 2019). UNESCO, on the other hand, stated the importance of heritage masters in the Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage (October 17, 2003) and emphasized human support in the protection of ICH. The main emphasis in human support is on the masters who produce heritage elements. These masters are individuals who produce and transfer heritage elements and share their knowledge with other individuals (Ekici and Fedakâr, 2013).

Despite their importance, studies on heritage masters are limited. These studies include determining the inventory of heritage masters (Küçük, 2019), learning the problems experienced by heritage masters (Deniz and Çelik, 2020; Öksüz, 2019), explaining the construction of heritage elements (Akyol, 2017; Çiçekoğlu, 2014; Kardaş, 2018), determining the tools and motifs used (Er and Gürel, 2020), learning the motivation and skills of the masters (Zhang et al., 2021). These studies were carried out emphasizing one aspect of heritage masters. No research that comprehensively addresses the importance of ICH in the lives of heritage masters has been found by the authors. In this context, the primary purpose of this research is to determine heritage masters' ICH production practices, motivations, and perceived values and to learn their problems about the ICH. For this purpose, information about the concept of ICH is presented, and then the research methodology, results, and conclusions are presented, respectively.

## Literature Review

The concept of culture is rooted in Latin and is used semantically as caring, cultivating, and in the agricultural form of cultivating the land and sowing something (Baykan, 2007). In other words, culture is a set of tangible and intangible values with a temporal history, adopted and learned by people and turned into a way of life (Fellows and Liu, 2013). Different values constitute culture. These values bring individuals together at a common point (Banja, 1996). These values usually have a long temporal history. At the same time, they differ in practice within each society. Therefore, they are essential in the formation process of a culture. One of these values is cultural heritage. Cultural heritage is the element that has existed for generations and constitutes the culture of a society (George, 2010).

Studies on ICH, an area that constitutes cultural heritage, have been on the agenda since 1973. Before this date, there was no interest in creating awareness on ICH elements. These elements were objects that started to exist spontaneously within the society and then experienced a process of spontaneous disappearance (Teke, 2013). However, the process that started with the discussion of the term ICH, which started under the leadership of UNESCO in 1973, was completed in 2003. At the beginning of the process, the term folklore was used

instead of ICH. As a result of the process and discussions, the term ICH was accepted with the Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage signed on October 17, 2003 (Oğuz, 2013).

ICH is the heritage memory of a society consisting of various elements such as knowledge and skill accumulations, practices, and everyday items that continue from their past lives to their present lives (Korkmaz, 2020). ICH is a cultural chain as a living example of cultural symbols and habits (Sun et al., 2021). ICH elements are objects and practices where talent and creativity are important (Tan et al., 2020). These practices are based on the production and life of all individuals in society (Guan, 2021). Therefore, they offer a benefit to the whole society (Khanom et al., 2019).

It is the heritage masters who are essential in accepting the ICH element as a feature of culture. Because the concepts of heritage, culture, and masters are seen as a whole. The main reason for this idea is that the masters associate a heritage element with tradition and transform it into different forms according to later changes (Ekici and Fedakâr, 2014). A master applies the heritage element, ensures its existence in society, and passes on their knowledge to the following masters. Therefore, attention should be paid to successfully maintain the relationship between heritage and master in terms of the richness and continuity of culture.

## Method

This research aims to determine ICH master's ICH production practices, motivations, and perceived values and to learn their problems about the ICH. In a general context, the main aim is to reveal the importance of ICH elements in the lives of masters. In line with the aim of the research, the views of the masters should be determined in detail. For this reason, the qualitative research method was applied in this research. The qualitative research method details the participant's thoughts on a subject (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). The qualitative research method is also essential for the participant to connect the past with the present and the future. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to determine the importance and place of ICH elements in the lives of heritage masters. A semi-structured interview is a technique that starts within the scope of questions determined by the researchers and continues according to the participant's answers during the interview (Oggioni and Kwok, 2018).

The interview questions were based on the ICH literature. The researchers re-examined the prepared interview questions before the application, and a preliminary interview form was prepared in draft form. The draft interview form was revised by taking the opinions of academicians in the field of ICH. In the semi-structured interview form, the feelings and thoughts of heritage masters about ICH were tried to be addressed comprehensively. The interview questions are as follows:

1. When and how did you start producing ICH elements?
2. What are the subtleties of realizing the production of ICH elements?
3. What are the factors that motivate you in the production of ICH elements?
4. Why value do ICH elements have in your life?
5. What are the essential problems in realizing the production of ICH elements according to you at the moment?

Purposive sampling method was used to learn the importance and impact of ICH elements in the lives of masters who produce ICH elements in the Cappadocia region and make a living

with them. Purposive sampling, which is frequently preferred in qualitative research, is the deliberate selection of participants according to their qualifications and situations (Bernard, 2002). In this context, 11 masters engaged in pottery and carpet weaving were included in the sample. In interviews conducted in qualitative research, the number of participants is sufficient when similar answers are obtained and the answers obtained reach a sufficient level (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Creswell (2013) explains that between 5 and 25 participants are sufficient in interviews. Marshall (1996) explains that the number of participants is sufficient when the answers reach a sufficient level and begin to repeat. For these reasons, interviews were conducted with 11 participants.

Interviews were conducted between March 30 and April 30, 2023, with masters engaged in pottery and carpet weaving in the Cappadocia region. Interviews were completed between 15-30 minutes. All interviews were conducted by the authors voluntarily. Voice recordings were taken with the permission of the participants. After the audio recordings taken during the interviews were analyzed, the recordings were listened to again, and the text was compared.

## Findings

The answers to the questions were analyzed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis requires researchers to thoroughly scan the relevant literature and obtain data for different themes, sub-themes, and codes. This research developed themes and sub-themes using Braun and Clarke (2006) and Gavin (2008). Interview data were analyzed by following specific steps (Braun and Clarke, 2006). These steps consisted of recognizing the data, giving preliminary codes to the data to define the content obtained from the data, identifying frequently recurring themes in the content, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes, finishing the review, and preparing the report.

Some issues were emphasized in ensuring the data's reliability and validity. In-depth interviews with participants who produce different heritage elements are the most important aspect (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). In this research, interviews were conducted with masters who produce ICH in three different fields. The data were analyzed jointly by two authors. In addition, controls were also carried out by researchers who are experts in the field of ICH.

The demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1. When Table 1 is examined, it is noteworthy that the participants are male, older than 30 years of age, and the profession of the majority is pottery master. Their working period is more than ten years.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Profession	Working Time
P1	Men	51	Potter	32 years
P2	Men	60	Potter	50 years
P3	Men	49	Potter	32 years
P4	Men	63	Potter	50 years
P5	Men	48	Potter	30 years
P6	Men	63	Carpet Weaver	36 years
P7	Men	31	Ceramist	15 years
P8	Men	32	Potter	22 years
P9	Men	56	Ceramist	32 years
P10	Men	33	Ceramist	14 years
P11	Men	32	Potter	16 years

When we reviewed Table 2, the main theme of the research was ICH Elements in the Lives of Heritage Masters. Sub-themes and sub-headings are also shown in Table 2. Participants' views on the sub-headings are also given.

**Table 2.** Analysis results

Main Theme	Sub-Themes	Sub-Headings
ICH Elements in the Lives of Heritage Masters	ICH Production Start	From generation to generation (Family, apprenticeship)
	ICH Production Subtleties	Manual skills
		Being creative
	ICH Production Motivations	Creating a new product
		Economy to make a profit
		Meeting people from different cultures
	ICH Value Perceptions	Providing psychological comfort
		Important time allocations
		Providing culture interaction
	ICH Production Problems	Increased costs
		Failure to train apprentices
		Unfair competition

The first question asked to the heritage masters was, "When and how did you start producing ICH elements?" It is seen that 11 heritage masters started their profession in their childhood. For example, "I started with a master-apprentice relationship with my grandfather during summer vacations. It is a grandfather's profession; I learned this profession from them. Both of my grandfathers were interested in pottery" (P1). "It is a family business; therefore, our family business is pottery. 70-80 years ago, before the development of tourism, the region's livelihood was pottery. Boys were specially taught pottery making. We are two brothers. Since our family profession was pottery, my father taught me and my brother how to make pottery. It is up to the individual whether to do it as a profession, but especially boys are taught pottery making in the region. I also studied ceramics, but I first learned the business from my family" (P7). "I started as a child when I was 12-13." (P8). "I started at 12-13 with the master-apprentice relationship. My grandfather and father were also doing this profession." (P11).

Because of local traditions, the knowledge and skills of the ICH are acquired mainly by boys at a young age. It demonstrates that masters have learned this art by transferring elements of the ICH from generation to generation.

The second question asked to the heritage masters was, "What are the subtleties of realizing the production of ICH elements?" In their answers, heritage masters emphasize that ICH production is done with a particular skill and doing the work with love. The opinions of heritage masters are as follows: "What is important here is a manual skill, that is, art." (P1). "A product has its soul. It is necessary to make it by living that spirit and reflecting it to the person before you. It is more beautiful if the products are produced specifically and explained to tourists. Living the work is the subtlety of the work." (P3). "The answer differs, but I think doing this job continuously is practicing. The first basic construction is taught, and its development is left to you. Thinking and being a designer, creativity is one of the subtleties of this job." (P7).

As can be seen from the answers of heritage masters, manual skill, creativity, and love for the work are essential in ICH production. It is crucial to propose different products not only with manual skills but also by adding creativity to the production. Particularly with Cappadocia being an important tourist center, creativity in ICH elements becomes even more critical. In the responses of heritage masters, the role of the tourism sector in developing pottery and ceramic production over time is highlighted. It was also reported that the purpose for producing pottery considered a craft, has changed over time.

Thirdly, the heritage masters were asked, "What are the factors that motivate you in the production of ICH elements?". The main motivations of heritage masters are creating a new product, meeting people from different cultures, and gaining economic gain. The answers of heritage masters are as follows: *"The appreciation of my work is one of the factors that motivate me. Of course, the financial return is also one of the important motivating factors. We can say art and money. The fact that the products I produce are beautiful also encourages me to produce more"* (P3). *"Obtaining a product with soil was proof of success for me. This also motivates me. The fact that a product stands in front of me is my most important source of motivation"* (P7). *"I left school for this art. My grandfather led me to this profession. Thanks to this art, I can meet different cultures and make friends with different people"* (P10).

The fourth question asked to the heritage masters was, "Why value do ICH elements have in your life?". Heritage masters stated that they relaxed psychologically with ICH production. They also pointed out that they devote an important time of their lives. For this reason, they stated that ICH elements are valuable for them. Lastly, they stated that they get to know different people through ICH production, which is why it is important for them. The answers of heritage masters are as follows: *"Making pottery is psychologically relaxing. It is good for stress, anger, sadness."* (P1). *"The art profession made our lives easier, we did not look for another profession. It is in the genetics of these places."* (P2). *"It constitutes 70% of my life because I am a man in love with my work. I spend most of my time on ceramics."* (P7). *"It has a value everywhere in my life. I am in cultural interaction with people coming from outside"* (P11).

Finally, the heritage masters were asked, "What are the essential problems in realizing the production of ICH elements according to you at the moment?". Heritage masters emphasize the increasing costs in ICH production, the lack of masters from the young generation, and unfair competition as the most important problems. The answers of heritage masters are as follows: *"The increase in costs is an important problem. Electricity is costly; putting the product in the oven to cook is costly. Everything is costly now. People who do not do this job or do not know art are trying to do this job just for trade. This is another problem."* (P1). *"The transfer of this profession to future generations is a problem. There are no apprentices. The price of materials has also increased, which is another important problem."* (P11). *"The most important problem in realizing this art is that there is no master from the new generation. If someone in the family does that job, it can only continue. Other than that, there are no masters anymore. Products need to be developed, and new products need to be produced rather than repeating them. There is unfair competition in the market. This is one of the main problems"* (P4).

## Conclusion

This research aims to comprehensively reveal the place and importance of ICH elements in the lives of heritage masters. Within the scope of the purpose of the research, heritage masters in the Cappadocia region were included in the research. Cappadocia region is a prominent destination with ICH elements such as pottery, ceramics, and carpet weaving. In the research,

interviews were conducted with 11 heritage masters. Five questions were asked of heritage masters. The main theme, sub-themes, and sub-headings of the research were determined by analyzing the data obtained. The main theme of the research is the ICH elements of the lives of heritage masters. The research sub-themes are the beginning of ICH production, the delicacy of ICH production, ICH production motivations, ICH value perceptions, and ICH production problems.

In the sub-theme ICH production start, all heritage masters state that they started ICH production skills during childhood. It is also noteworthy that especially boys gain ICH production skills. The fact that ICH production is practiced in the families of heritage masters is another influential factor in acquiring ICH skills at an early age. It is seen that heritage masters acquire a profession with ICH production and, at the same time, contribute to the survival of ICH elements in the region by teaching ICH production to their children. These findings are in line with other studies in the literature. Akengin et al. (2021), in their research conducted in Midyat, determined that heritage masters teach ICH production to their children. Deniz and Çelik (2020), in their research on heritage masters in the Safranbolu region, found that heritage masters learned ICH production from family elders. On the other hand, Eren and Bayram (2021) found that heritage masters learned ICH production by receiving apprenticeship training from childhood. As seen in the studies above, heritage masters in different destinations learn ICH production from childhood with the support of their families.

In the sub-theme of ICH production subtleties, heritage masters state that manual skill is essential in ICH production. Creativity is stated as effective in ICH production as a manual skill. Because it is stated that tourists are interested in different patterns and embroidery in ICH elements in regions such as Cappadocia, where tourism is intense. Akyol (2017) states that heritage masters can create different products using their creativity in ICH production. Okca and Kabukçu (2020) mention that the creativity of heritage masters is essential and emphasize that the creativity of heritage masters should be supported. Solmaz and Oran (2020) state that heritage masters carry heritage elements to wider audiences with their creativity in ICH production. Demir (2020) states that ICH production develops according to the knowledge and skills of heritage masters.

In the sub-theme of ICH production motivations, the main motivations of heritage masters are to create a new product, to gain economic gain, and to meet people from different cultures. Heritage masters enjoy creating new products, even if they have produced ICH since childhood. They are happy and motivated in the process of producing new ICH elements. At the same time, gaining economic gain with these products is another motivation. Because the primary source of livelihood of heritage masters is the production and sale of ICH, in this way, they provide both their own and their families livelihood. Another motivation of heritage masters in ICH production is to meet people from different cultures. This motivation comes to light with intensive tourism activities. Heritage masters meet tourists and establish dialogue in selling the ICH elements they produce. In this process, they gain interaction with different cultures.

In the sub-theme of ICH value perceptions, heritage masters state that ICH production is valuable in terms of psychologically relaxing them, allocating significant time to ICH production and creating cultural interaction. These findings are consistent with the findings of the sub-themes of initiation to ICH production and ICH production motivations. In the ICH production motivation, heritage masters state that creating a new product is important for

them. Therefore, in the process of creating a new product, heritage masters relax psychologically. Their stress levels decrease as they move away from the outside world during the production process. Heritage masters also mentioned the importance of meeting people from different cultures in ICH production motivation. Meeting people from different cultures provides cultural interaction for heritage masters. Therefore, it contributes to increasing the value shown towards ICH elements. Heritage masters devote a significant part of their lives to this field since they continue ICH production starting from a young age. Therefore, ICH has a valuable status for heritage masters.

In the sub-theme of ICH production problems, heritage masters emphasized increasing costs, lack of apprentices from the younger generation, and unfair competition. Heritage masters state that their costs have increased due to the increase in the prices of raw materials and other expenses required for the realization of ICH production. Another problem in ICH production is the lack of apprentices from the younger generation. Heritage masters state that young people today do not show interest in ICH production and that families no longer teach their children ICH production as they used to. For these reasons, it is emphasized that no apprentices are trained. Unfair competition in ICH production is another important problem. Heritage masters state that they cannot fight against mass production with the support of machinery. Akyol (2017) found that heritage masters complain that there are no apprentices today. Deniz and Çelik (2020) draw attention to the lack of apprentices due to the lack of interest of young people. Eren and Bayram (2020) state that economic problems and the lack of skilled apprentices are important problems. Demir (2020) states that masters cannot find apprentices. Özdemir (2019), on the other hand, draws attention to the decrease in production based on manual skills with mechanization.

It is possible to make a few recommendations as part of the findings and results achieved. These recommendations consist of the following:

- In order for ICH elements to continue for generations, families should educate their children about ICH. As in the case of Cappadocia, children need to get acquainted with ICH at an early age both for the continuation of ICH elements and for the training of future masters.
- It may be useful for local government and the ministry to carry out training activities to develop the creativity of masters and apprentices currently engaged in ICH production.
- By preventing the reflection of the cost increase in ICH production on heritage masters, the stability of ICH production can be maintained.
- To train apprentices in ICH production, it may be encouraging to open courses by local governments and relevant departments of universities.
- To prevent heritage masters from experiencing disadvantages against machine production, measures to support masters should be implemented.

This research examined the ICH elements in the lives of heritage masters in Cappadocia. A qualitative research method was used to obtain ideas about the subject. In future research, the opinions of heritage masters in different regions can be learned. In this way, heritage masters' comprehensive knowledge about ICH can be obtained, and a comparison can be made.

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