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Protecting Intangible Cultural Heritage in Singapore: Identity and Identification

In fast-paced Singapore, where buildings do not outlive their architects, the sense of loss of heritage - tangible and intangible – is palpable. These sense of loss has led many Singaporeans to rediscover their roots and pasts in an effort to prevent the irreversible disappearance of those elements of identity that make us who we are. At the root of this desire to protect intangible heritage are issues of identity and self and this manifests in different forms which may or may not be susceptible to institutionalised protection. Everything from chilli crab to Singlish has been claimed as being part of Singapore's intangible cultural heritage. This presentation attempts to define what constitutes intangible cultural heritage in Singapore and considers what can or cannot be protected in a culturally diverse and dynamic society.

