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## **Chinese storytelling tradition placed on UN list of intangible heritage in danger**



23 November 2011 –

A form of verse and prose storytelling from north-eastern China that has only five remaining masters was today placed on a United Nations List of Intangible Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

The Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage, meeting this week in Bali, Indonesia, inscribed Hezhen Yimakan storytelling on the list as it is danger of disappearing, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) reported.

Statistics indicate that while there were considered to be 20 outstanding Yimakan masters during the 1980s, now only five are capable of performing some cantos, or the main divisions in long poems.

Narrated in the language of the Hezhen people, the storytelling consists of numerous independent episodes depicting tribal alliances and battles, including the defeat by local heroes of monsters and invaders.

Yimakan performers traditionally improvise their stories without instrumental accompaniment, alternating between singing and speaking, and using different melodies to connote different characters and plots.

The storytelling tradition is one of 18 dossiers that have been proposed for inscription this week of the List of Intangible Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, according to UNESCO, which manages the list.

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