

Awareness of the Intangible Value of Cultural Spaces

Kwon Huh

Professor, vice-President, Mongolia International University, Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia)

Keywords: intangible cultural heritage, cultural space, unesco.

Abstract: The paper was prepared to encourage the growth of an awareness of the intangible values of cultural space and the importance of their safeguarding, as well as the forming of networks between field researchers, NGOs and local communities. Asia and the Pacific region has long been a melting pot of cultures. However, the importance of intangible heritage has not well reflected in the cultural heritage policies. The UNESCO's World Heritage project starts from a tangible perspective, focused on the outstanding universal value of physical heritage. There needs to be an intangible approach, one that studies cultural spaces closely as a living heritage. The role of community in the safeguarding of heritage also differs in the tangible and intangible approaches. Community is a very important concept in the safeguarding of both tangible and intangible heritage. In the case of intangible heritage, communities are the actors that carry out its transmission and enactment, allowing the heritage to live on. One specific solution towards this end is the integrated protection of tangible and intangible heritage. The UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which emphasizes the inseparability of tangible, intangible and natural heritage, will play an especially important role. Cultural spaces are where history and culture comes together. First, areas with historical, aesthetic, folk culture and religious value need to be identified. This should be followed by efforts such as research, documentation and safeguarding of their intangible value. To this end, specific measures such as research on the available documents, creation of networks between neighbouring countries and information exchange should be carried out.

1 EVOLUTION OF CONCEPT OF HERITAGE

Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Irreplaceability is its nature. If it is damaged, it cannot be fully restored. Syria is one of the terrible cases whose heritages were sadly destroyed during civil war. Once the cultural assets are destroyed, it is impossible to regain their original form. It is natural that all nations pay close attention and put in efforts to protect their own heritage. This is because a nation's heritage represents its identity and contributes to the heritage of humanity.

Cultural heritage, which forms the basis of cultural identity and diversity, becomes crucial as a foundation for sustainable development and a source of creativity. Furthermore, as inter-religion, inter-ethnic conflicts intensify in the 21st century, the importance of cultural heritage as a bridge towards peace and inter-cultural understanding is coming under the spotlight.

In keeping with such changes in understanding and awareness, the means of safeguarding cultural heritage are also evolving to become more integrated and holistic. While preservation measures in the past centred on buildings, archaeological and historical sites, a more integrated perspective is being widely introduced with the enhanced awareness of the importance of natural and intangible heritage.

The target of protection in the past was focused on 'points/spots', in specific sites of heritage, but has since expanded to 'area'-based protection, comprised of core zone and wide buffer zones around the core areas, giving consideration to the surrounding environment and scenery. These two methods are the widely used approaches that most countries have been adopting to preserve their heritages. However, in recent, heritage safeguarding has moved beyond simple spots and areas to three-dimensional protection, with the value of intangible heritage being emphasized as the source of cultural development and creativity.

This change in heritage management was the result of some social and political factors:

- 1) Participation of local communities,
- 2) Expansion of governance system where the role of the private sector is emphasized,
- 3) Need for sustainable development for the future of the planet, and
- 4) Importance of cultural diversity and intangible heritage becoming the focus in conservation and management policies

2 EXPANSION OF INTERNATIONAL AWARENESS OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

With an increasing international awareness of intangible heritage, UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003 as the first international legal instrument in the field of culture. The convention was widely supported by countries particularly in Asia and Africa as soon as it was adopted and currently has 178 states parties since its birth. It is recognized as one of UNESCO's most well-known and influential cultural instrument together with the World Heritage Convention.

Intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history. It provides us with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. In accordance with provisions of 2003 Convention, the intangible cultural heritage means 1) the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – 2) as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith. The convention is classifying the ICH elements into five categories. They are oral traditions and expressions including language; performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and traditional craftsmanship.

In order to safeguard elements spanning across the above five categories of ICH elements, all measures have to be taken to ensure their viability. The 2003 Convention recommends the following nine measures- “identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage”.

3 INTANGIBLE HERITAGE AT RISK

According to the ICOMOS's report “Heritage at Risk”, damage to the intangible value of cultural heritage from the destruction of traditional values due to commercialization, rapid changes in lifestyle, destruction of community due to migration, aging populations, ghettoization, population declines etc. is becoming more severe with time. Of course, the top of physical destruction of heritage mainly caused by development, natural disasters and wars.

This is also true in Korea's traditional villages, designated as World Heritage sites. Village populations are dwindling as younger generations leave and residents grow older, making it difficult to maintain the traditional ways of life. The safeguarding and transmission of heritage is not the responsibility of a single nation or state but of the world as a whole. The UNESCO Medium-term Program and Budget, C/4 states the need to protect vulnerable intangible heritage very clearly as follows:

“...in discussing the safeguarding of cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage is an area that cannot be overlooked. Intangible heritage, including symbols and expressions transmitted through oral tradition, artistic and literary forms, language, way of life, beliefs and myths, rituals, value systems, traditional knowledge and various skills and techniques, are targets of safeguarding.

The current situation on cultural heritage is grave indeed. Industrialization, rapid urbanization, serious pollution, various signs of climate change and large-scale tourism are causing damage, destruction and loss of cultural heritage. Risk to intangible heritage is at a peak, as changes in the economic structures within societies are leading to the extinction of traditional ways of life.”

Summing up, intangible heritages are diminishing and being decontextualized in its significance due to changes in their natural setting or isolation from cultural spaces (development, migration etc.), rapid changes in lifestyle (elimination of cultural meaning) and over-emphasis on the material world (break from traditions).

Since implementing the Cultural Properties Protection Act in 1962, Korea has been putting remarkable efforts and investments into the protection of tangible and intangible heritage. Key factors behind the Korean policy were almost the same of global challenges and trends. They were urgent needs to 1) recover identity following liberation from Japanese rules, 2) overcome the side effects of rapid socioeconomic development, 3)

restore numerous heritage damaged and devastated during the three years of Korean War and 4) satisfy the rapid growth in public demand for cultural products.

4 REDISCOVERY OF SACRED CULTURAL SPACES

The Earth is compared to a mother as it cradles all things in its embrace. Within it are special places that are sacred and secret to specific individuals, groups and nations. Typically, such places hold special meaning in mythology, folk tradition, history or aesthetically, and play a huge role in establishing cultural identity and symbols. Sacred or forbidden places include the geographical and historical places of dynasties, tombs, spiritual and ritual centres such as temples and churches, spaces related to livelihoods such as the changes of seasons, rice farming and hunting, and spaces related to women, life and special natures of flora and fauna.

According to historical records of Korea, ritual area in Korean villages around the 3rd to 5th centuries AD were called “sodo” and were out of bounds to ordinary people. Even criminals who entered the area could not be forcibly arrested. The tradition of sodo continued to later generations which erected sotdae poles and sacred trees where ancestral rituals were held.

Sacred and cultural places can exist anywhere, from mountains to rivers, plains and even roads. Aside from the space itself, natural and manmade symbols such as stupas, towers, buildings, trees, forests and rocks could become the target of worship, or symbolic objects could become sacred together with the space. For places related to religion or history, there often is an elaborate process of sanctification.

Places have significance in traditional philosophy and culture. Physical space is a metaphor for nature. In oriental philosophy, the entire universe is made up of three elements- heaven, earth and people. This perspective deeply influenced how people viewed nature and the universe. The intangible value of space is not only unique to Asia. The relationship between nature and humans can be seen in cultures around the world as a universal theme.

5 UNESCO’S INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO CULTURAL SPACES

A cultural approach to places has been the UNESCO’s long held interest. The structural, organizational and social functions of physical space have been continuously studied, as they are the origin of human civilization and platforms for intercultural exchange. The various sectors of the UNESCO are currently conducting projects related to this theme. Under Social Science Sector are projects such as human HABITAT and urban planning, while the Natural Science Sector is conducting the bio-diversity and Man and Biosphere projects. The Culture Sector emphasizes the relationship between man and cultural spaces through the World Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity projects.

5.1 Man and Biosphere

Since their appearance on Earth, humans have engaged in a creative dialogue with biological diversity. They have elaborated and continue to maintain complex systems of knowledge and practice as a result of long-standing histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. In particular, indigenous and local communities have been playing a key role in safeguarding of cultural and bio-diversities. Rock painting of Altamira Cave in Spain, rock carvings of Tsodilo in Botswana which are both on the UNESCO World Heritage List, and Korea’s Bangudae Rock carvings are evidence of the relationship between man and nature.

Indigenous local communities occupy 24% of the world’s land surface. They are custodians of nature, whose traditional knowledge and ways of life are crucial intangible assets. Traditional agriculture, breeding, fishery and traditional medicines are important living knowledge of humanity. Some places such as the Kpassé Sacred Forest (Benin) are protected from logging and overuse as local communities protect them as sacred. The Royal Tombs of Joseon Dynasty, Republic of Korea could be preserved from the development initiatives for the long period because it was declared as a forbidden area.

UNESCO’s Man and the Biosphere (MAB), launched in the early 1970s aims through the ecological and social sciences, including the knowledge of indigenous and local communities, to reconcile humans and nature by promoting

sustainable development and human well-being. Biosphere reserves are under national sovereign jurisdiction, yet share their experience and ideas nationally, regionally and internationally within UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves. There are over 701 biosphere reserves in 124 countries. Asia and the Pacific has 157 sites.

5.2 World Heritage

In order to protect cultural and natural heritage with outstanding universal values around the world, the UNESCO established the 1972 World Heritage Convention and has inscribed 1121 properties in 167 states parties as world heritage. (869 cultural properties, 213 natural properties, 39 mixed properties, 53 endangered properties, 39 transboundary properties).

This convention is highly significant as the first to protect natural heritage together with cultural heritage. 'Cultural landscape' was added to scope of cultural heritage in 1992. The Tongariro National Park of New Zealand, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park of Australia, Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras and Agricultural Landscape of Southern Öland in Sweden are some cultural landscapes being protected under the Convention.

The World Heritage Committee values intangible aspects in the following ways according to the need for integrated heritage conservation.

1) The participation and responsibility of local communities are emphasized for sustainable conservation. Conservation methods with expanded participation of local residents are stressed.

2) Two out of the 10 criteria for inscription are related to intangible heritage.

Criteria vi): "be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance."

Criteria vii): "contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance."

3) From 1992, 'cultural landscape' showing the interaction between nature and culture was added as a new category of cultural heritage. The definition of cultural landscape was reflected in No. 47 of the Operational Guidelines.

* Operational Guideline No 47: Cultural landscapes are cultural properties and represent the "combined works of nature and of man" designated in Article 1 of the World Heritage Convention. They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the

physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal (...) The term 'cultural landscape embraces a diversity of manifestations of the interaction between humankind and its natural environment.'

4) Sacred mountains were chosen as a theme in the Global Strategy, with a focus on regions with significance in folk culture, religion, literature and the arts, and in the ecological perspective.

Although the World Heritage Convention was established to protect immovable heritages there has been an increasing emphasis on the need to safeguard the historical and cultural environments and intangible value directly and indirectly related to immovable heritage in order to realize sustainable and effective protection. This integrated approach will be further escalated as the international community works to achieve the '2030 sustainable development goals.

5.3 Intangible Cultural Heritage

Intangible heritage projects have an emphasis on natural environments and history by nature. The text of the 2003 Convention states that there is a deep-seated interdependence between the intangible cultural heritage and the tangible cultural and natural heritage. Therefore, communities, in particular indigenous communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals, play an important role in the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage.

Intangible cultural heritage is deeply related to the spaces in which intangible elements are created and transmitted. The 2003 Convention defines the physical spaces in which the intangible elements exist as part of intangible heritage as well. Several cultural spaces such as the cultural space of Boysun District, Uzbekistan have been inscribed on the representative list, although the number is relatively small compared to other kinds of intangible heritage. There still needs to be more research on the relationship between intangible elements and spaces, protection methods and roles of local residents.

It is very important to maintain an interest in physical spaces viewed as sacred by communities and groups. The cultural heritage protection policies of Korea has long included cultural spaces by designating 1) natural monuments of great value to natural science and culture, 2) natural reserves for the protection of natural monuments, and 3) national scenic sites with outstanding natural and cultural value. The Ministry of Environment and the Korea National Park Service selected ecologically important

areas such as mountains and coastal regions for focused management. Many of these areas overlap with natural reserves designated by the Cultural Heritage Administration.

When designating natural monuments, the value of the monument in terms of scientific and cultural value is considered. Evaluation is conducted in 5 areas, 1) religious cultural value 2) folk traditional value 3) living cultural value 4) historical value and 5) uniqueness.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The UNESCO will continue to lead global efforts to enhance the sustainability of the planet until 2030, as part of the global agenda. One specific solution towards this end is the integrated protection of tangible and intangible heritage. The 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which emphasizes the inseparability of tangible, intangible and natural heritage, will play an especially important role.

Deep reflection and sincere research regarding cultural spaces and intangible heritage should be conducted. Cultural spaces are where history and culture comes together. First, areas with historical, aesthetic, folk culture and religious value should be identified. This should be followed by efforts such as research, documentation and safeguarding of their intangible value. To this end, specific measures such as research on the available documents, creation of networks between neighbouring countries and information exchange should be carried out.

Asia and the Pacific region has long been a melting pot of cultures. However, the importance of intangible heritage has not well reflected in the formation of cultural heritage policies. The World Heritage project starts from a tangible perspective, focused on the outstanding universal value of physical heritage. There needs to be an intangible approach, one that studies cultural spaces closely as a living heritage. The role of community in the safeguarding of heritage also differs in the tangible and intangible approaches. Community is a very important concept in the safeguarding of both tangible and intangible heritage. In the case of intangible heritage, communities are the actors that carry out its transmission and enactment, allowing the heritage to live on.

Preventative measures are in urgent need, before further damage is inflicted upon the cultural value of mountains, rivers, roads and forests. In the establishment of the prediction model, three stages

are fundamental: possible selection of the variables, the estimation of the coefficients of the variables selected and the validation of the model. Ideally, this validation should be done on different observations. But in most practical situations, the selection of the variables, the estimation of the coefficients and the validation are done using the same sample. Indeed, it is often difficult to have separate samples for the various stages of modelling, because the dataset available to the researcher is frequently too small to use part of it to establish the regression model and the remaining for its validation. Sometimes, the number of predictors is higher than the number of observations.

REFERENCES

- Machat Christoph, Introduction, Heritage at Risk: World Report 2014-2015, ICOMOS. 8-10.
- Gottler Monika, Ripp Matthias, 2017, Community Involvement in Heritage Management Guidebook, for the OWHC Regional Secretariat Northwest Europe and North America.
- Neel Kamal Chapagain, 2015, Traditions, materiality and community engagements with heritage, Revisiting Kathmandu: Safeguarding Living Urban Heritage, UNESCO Office in Kathmandu, 109-119.
- UNESCO, 2003, Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.
- UNESCO, 1972, World Heritage Convention.