

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION 2

The Meaning and Value of Intangible Cultural Heritage Amidst of Transformation of Era

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Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Digital Era

UNESCO and institutions in each country have so far endeavored to understand and preserve values of all kinds of human heritage. In particular, since last several decades, they have recognized the value of intangible cultural heritage(hereafter ICH) anew, warned of the danger of its extinction and made various and systematic efforts to preserve it. As a part of such efforts, the cultural institutions of Korean government led to establish the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO(ICHCAP) in cooperation with UNESCO, and the National Folk Museum of Korea has published 『International Journal of Intangible Heritage』 over the past decade to seek for ways to preserve the value of ICH in each country around the world.

In a rapidly-changing global society, the preservation and utilization of ICH is taking a new turn. ICH is disappearing, particularly, in the process of accelerating development and spreading it to large areas. Meanwhile, cultural diversity is also demanded and such diversity is expected to provide

significant clues to find solutions to the racial issue and environmental pollution that the world is facing now. That is why expanding such values of ICH becomes a urgent task.

The new expectation in preservation and utilization lies in the process of universalizing the technological merits of global society, namely, technology of digital images and communication. The dissemination of such a modern digital technology will be able to provide an efficient tool in enhancing the value of ICH. On the other hand, it is thought that it is required to change the direction of cultural demands in the structural changes of the society caused by digitization and globalization. In this process, what we have to do here is exploring the meaning and the value of the existence of ICH from a new viewpoint and responding to such changes.

The Universal Value of Heritage of Humanity Beyond Time and Space

In a certain sense, intangible heritage can be said to be much closer to the original form of culture than tangible heritage is, or to contain unknown dynamic features or hidden cultural factors in tangible heritage. Because archaeologists often infer the production process of tangible heritage and deal only with the remaining tangible results, there are many cases that human sensibility or the qualitative aspect of the creation process can not be figured out. In that point, tangible and intangible heritage are two faces of culture, and when these two different types are complimentary or compositive, understanding of culture can be much more deepened. Intangible heritage is relatively vulnerable to social changes, however, the special value is needed to be placed on it in that it has practical, high receptivity at this time.

The meaning of cultural heritage in human society is so deep and profound that its true value is not often perceived realistically. Because the culture has accumulated and developed as time goes by, it can be difficult to understand its origin and the evolution process at some point. Also, according to the social development environment, it disappears or its utility decreases remarkably, which makes it difficult to know the value of the origin form. The culture was originally devised so as to play a buffering role between human and nature or between human and human so various cultures contain their own ways to solve facing problems of human society in each period. The cultural heritage is usually thought to be inappropriate for modern era as information on human life of the past. However, the future value of cultural heritage will depend on the degree of understanding and consideration of its availability because the principles of human life are actually repeated throughout the entire human history.

The Variability and Diversity of ICH

The fundamental values that make intangible heritage absolutely necessary for present and future generations can be said to be in its diversity and variability. For instance, there may be many ways depending on the environment in which each society copes with natural and social challenges. Exemplifying traditional techniques for making clothes, there may be various skills and methods in weaving and sewing fabrics. In the technology for producing material culture that adjusts to the environment, each society has its own technological culture, which indicates huge diversity of the entire human society. However, the diversity does not appear only in a cultural big pattern. In other words, the technology to build houses can be divided into wooden building technology in Korea, brick building technology in China

and masonry technology in the Western society but what the important thing is that the diversity has micro-variability by each intangible heritage practitioner's aesthetic preference and creative transformation. As a familiar example, such micro-variability can be seen in traditional performing arts. Each of the same performances can be distinguished by its characteristics. Just because the scores of Gayageum Sanjo(Solo instrumental music by Gayageum, traditional Korean string instrument) are fixed, does not mean that every musician makes the same sounds like AI music does. Every performance is different whenever performed and the feelings may be different depending on the situation. This is the diversity of ICH that anyone can understand, and this diversity is what makes the culture have absolute future value for the sustainability of a society.

What Is Needed in the Digital Era

As digital technology has developed, everyone realizes that human life style has been enormously changed and faces up to the fact that this technology provides a tool to unite human societies around world into one, and hugely patterns human behaviors. The global trend in the so-called soft emotional cultural genre or technological unity is taken for granted. For example, songs of BTS are sung all around the world and the electric vehicle technology of Tesla captivates the whole world. This is today's world. Nevertheless, today, such a big pattern formed in the modern society presupposes individuals' preferences shared by the times.

As a byproduct of digital technology development, humans can spend much more time in personal choices than ever before. The thing is, what we choose for our own sake? That is, it can be said that a society where the

range of choices eventually determines the quality of life is the very digital society. The social changes that we are facing and is going to be intensified in the future, namely, Digitization or AI society, and Globalization will inevitably have parallels with heading direction of modern civilization called 'Individualization'. This is because individuals instinctively try to find their own values, and feel difficulty in enduring the repetition of the same things. These features provide not only an opportunity for intangible actions to appear but also grounds that various things are necessary. The diversity and practical variability of ICH become materials to enable the range of personal choices in the digital era to be greatly expanded. Today, there are many kinds of Arirang on YouTube but the preference on each is different. In other words, the cultural diversity in a society, whether it is a big pattern or micro-variability, requires to be increased.

However, it can be predicted that the question on how to relevantly increase the diversity will be raised in each society. In that today is an era that demands the industrial reorganization and new consumption-type job creation corresponding to the digital era, the utilization of ICH is necessary for acquiring creative knowledge and creating emotional experience. In the digital-global era, the best way for each society to respond to inevitable job losses, and expansion of leisure time due to the prolonged life cycle and working hours reduction is to systematically develop the utilization methods of ICH that can cover all cultural sectors in the past times, that is, from the techniques for survival to entertainment.

The Digital Technology for Preservation and Utilization

It was the problem that ICH was difficult to preserve. There was such a high

tendency to be reluctant to make an economic investment in preserving something that was no longer used socially. Of course, it can be seen that some countries make use of such intangible heritage as an important means to raise the sustainability of the society. But as digital technology develops, it makes it possible to record ICH through various techniques and to utilize it around the world through the Internet network. Consequently, the large amount of precise records of intangible heritage of humanity came to be preserved in the digital space. This enormous collection of materials on ICH is vivid and beautiful records on human history and future resources that humans can realize their humanity continuously.

Tangible heritage has been so far collected in museums and has been organized as a new intellectual composition but if the pool of ICH is built in the future, it is expected that ICH will become universal assets of humanity as materials for creative industries and be made use of much more dynamically than tangible assets that remain in each museum. It is obvious that this will become the most innovative storage of knowledge-sensitive information in human history, and this huge portal platform, which is free to input and use, will be contributory to creating new culture for various purposes. In particular, the modern version of intangible heritage reorganized by digital technology can be used and recreated for various purposes as intangible heritage materials of completely different level.

International Cooperation in Documentation, Preservation and Utilization

There still remain two problems in this work process. One is how to establish measures for utilization and international criteria for establishing them, and

the other is how to overcome the imbalance of materials between regions in terms of heritage of humanity. The former is a problem that cultural scientists should address, in the sense that the available system of cultural resources should be built for creative utilization of cultural heritage in the present and the future. Culture is composed of complexes of various, different cultural factors, so by separating such factors so as to make them different combination easily, the utility hidden in intangible heritage can be efficiently recreated. This kind of work should be conducted with global universality and, accordingly, many experts in the fields related with anthropology or culture in each country are anticipated to require to be mobilized, which can be said to be utilization of humanities-cultural human resources.

The latter is a problem, ultimately, on how to internationally defend the preservation of ICH that is disappearing in underdeveloped countries. UNESCO defines cultural heritage as universal heritage of humanity and, in this respect, efforts to enhance international cooperative strategy are requested in terms of human symbiosis. Even though many developed countries have made lots of efforts so far, international discussions and resolutions are still needed and will be in the future given that intangible heritage disappears much more rapidly in the digital industrial society than ever before. The justification of this work lies on which keeping the cultural diversity of the entire human society is the first step to strengthen the sustainability, and use of intangible heritages can not be restricted internationally even though it belongs to other regions. That is why international efforts for preservation of intangible heritage in underdeveloped countries as human universal future resources should be redoubled.

UNESCO and Strategy for Utilizing ICH

It is necessary to establish UNESCO-centered strategy in order to solve above mentioned problems, to create a global pool of intangible heritage and to share it together. And in order to accomplish these tasks, it will be essential to establish a strategy to expand the size of trained expert groups in developed countries, and to train young experts in underdeveloped countries so that they can perform the assigned tasks. In addition, it is thought that the academic promotion strategies are needed because the size of expert groups of intangible heritage are inferior to that of tangible heritage such as archaeological or architectural heritage worldwide, and experts' interest is centered on their own nation. The low academic achievements can be easily confirmed by the number of published journals or academic papers in this field. Even though many worldwide anthropologists are carrying out tasks all around the world, the access in the aspect of ICH studies is awfully limited. In this sense, UNESCO or international organizations interested in this subject have to agonize ways for promoting such academic international cooperation.

And it would be a prerequisite that UNESCO leads to build a digital platform that can be used as a global community, with persuading developed countries. It is necessary that UNESCO makes great efforts to draw active discussion with each government so that centers in each region, like ICHCAP currently located in Korea, can create a platform able to share through a single digital network and firmly build these future assets of humanity.

Opening up a completely different era, namely, the Anthropocene that humans have never experienced, humans can fall down due to their own weak points unless they unconditionally put their wisdom together.

Considering this point, we have to find the ways from the wisdom that human has kept since the past to overcome through the Anthropocene in the future. Having interest in ICH is not so long compared to that in other heritage. However, it is the ICH that is hidden behind tangible culture and it can provide the essential understanding of heritage, so ICH has great adaptative value to the human future.