

# Protection of Non-material Cultural Heritages and Tourism Development

## PROTECTION DES HERITAGES DE CULTURE NON-MATERIELLE ET LE DEVELOPPEMENT DU TOURISME

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**Abstract:** As an ancient nation with a long history and civilization, China is abundant in non-material cultural heritage, which not only lays the cultural foundation for Chinese nation but also carries original gene of the Chinese civilization. Non-material cultural heritage, recognized as a form of culture as well as a source of tourism, arouses gradual concerns and focus from people involved. This paper firstly proposes the definition of non-material cultural heritage, its origins and features, on the basis of which the role it plays in tourism has been brought out. Meanwhile, great emphasis is put on the concerning problems in tourism. In view of these issues, suggestions and possible solutions have been offered to protect the non-material cultural heritage.

**Key Words:** non-material cultural heritages, protection, tourism development

**Résumé:** Ayant une longue histoire et civilisation, la Chine est un ancien pays riche en héritages très abondants de culture non-matérielle, qui non seulement ont jeté les fondements de la culture des chinois, mais aussi portent les gènes originels de la culture des chinois. Comme une forme de culture ainsi qu'une source de tourisme, la culture non-matérielle est reconnue de tout le monde de plus en plus, et aussi attire-t-elle les attentions et les réflexions des gens. Cet article explique d'abord le concept, l'origine et les caractères de la culture non-matérielle, puis démontre que la culture non-matérielle est une source importante de tourisme en mettant l'accent sur les analyses de ses problèmes dans le développement du tourisme, et donnant des propositions et des points de vue pour sa protection.

**Mots-Clés:** héritage de culture non-matérielle, protection, le développement du tourisme

### 1. DEFINITION AND CONNOTATION OF NON-MATERIAL CULTURAL HERITAGE

#### 1.1 Definition of non-material cultural heritage

Non-material cultural heritage refers to the manifestation and cultural space of traditional culture handed down from generation to generation by peoples of different nationalities, such as folk activity, performance, traditional knowledge and skills, and the concerned instruments, hand-made artifacts.

Non-material cultural heritage also ranges from oral and written language employed to convey these cultures, conventional performing art, folk play, ceremony, festivals, traditional knowledge of nature and universe and its practice in real life, artifacts to the cultural space to perform the above-mentioned activities.

#### 1.2 Features of Non-material cultural heritage

##### 1.2.1 Relativity

Every non-material cultural heritage has its unique value in relation to other heritages. It springs up from the roots of its own culture; therefore, the customs,

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\*Received 2 December 2006 ; accepted 6 March 2007

religions, folk music, and dance can only be valued by virtue of comparison with other cultures.

### **1.2.2 Aliveness and popularity**

Generally speaking, non-material cultural heritage refers to the existing cultural heritage, which is based on human activities. Non-material cultural heritage puts more emphasis on handing down its knowledge and skills, which, in turn, mirror the way of living of nations whose intelligence and emotion are best immersed in these living evidence.

## **1.3 Importance of protecting non-material cultural heritage**

### **1.3.1 The role the protection of non-material cultural heritage can play in harmonizing material civilization and spiritual one**

Since non-material cultural heritage not only involves material civilization but also spiritual one, it has its special role in teaching history, educating people, encouraging a nation's sense of pride in its own tradition, and purifying the soul and nourishing the hunger for culture.

### **1.3.2 The role the protection of non-material cultural heritage can play in stimulating the cultural communication and creation of the minority**

To protect non-material cultural heritage means to protect the variety of each culture that attributes to each nation, which is the source of creation of a new one. Creation of new culture owes its vitality to protection of the traditional one.

### **1.3.3 The role the protection of non-material cultural heritage can play in sustainable development**

Cultural heritage has double values: on one hand, it has the value for its own existence which includes material, researching, appreciating and educating value; the other is rather a branch of the first one. It consists of direct and indirect economic value, either of which is greatly influenced by the first value. So the protection of non-material cultural heritage can spur sustainable development in a long run.

## **2. NON-MATERIAL CULTURAL HERITAGE — AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF TOURISM**

As a comprehensive industry, tourism sets its deep roots in full use of cultural resources. Therefore, the uniqueness of a certain culture has its appeal to tourists.

Generally speaking, tourism can be classified into two types: natural scenery and humanity scenery. In China, the latter scenery has an increasing appeal to tourists, among which non-material cultural heritage has a vital proportion. In this sense, the appropriate exploitation of non-material cultural heritage can bring huge profits to tourism.

## **2.1 Non-material cultural heritage— a cultural source of tourism**

As an essential constitution of culture, non-material cultural heritage has a significant impact on tourism. Ever since 1980s, with the economic development of our country, the marriage between economy and culture has been playing its role in influencing the society. Culture has soaked into many economic activities, which in turn brings huge profits to economy. As one of the most enduring beneficiaries, tourism based on non-material cultural heritage is and still will be getting more and more profits from the protection of it.

## **2.2 Non-material cultural heritage— an educational source of tourism**

The rise in material wealth calls for the rise in spiritual one as well. The harmony between the two brings about the health of human kind and full development of it. Many aspects of non-material cultural heritage belong to spiritual culture. It can play a rather important role in nourishing the spiritual demand of human beings. So as an educational source of tourism, non-material cultural heritage does contribute to raising people's comprehensive qualities.

## **3. THE PROBLEMS OF NON-MATERIAL CULTURAL HERITAGE EXISTING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM**

### **3.1 The disastrous destroy upon non-material cultural heritage by over-exploitation of tourism**

In order to gain financial profits, the plundering exploitation of non-material cultural heritage results in the great harm to cultures of many nationalities. Cultures of some minorities have disintegrated and disappeared before we have a full understanding them. Lack of protection of non-material cultural heritage leads to its gradual disappearance upon the attack and aggression of modern civilization. To meet the demand of market, some traditional artifacts and handicrafts lose their conventional design. Its unique quality and

materials give way to manufacturing at a large scale produced by machines, which, inevitably leads to the loss of cultural value. In a sense, limit should be imposed to the exploitation of non-material cultural heritage, which should not serve as a scapegoat of the pursuit of profits.

### **3.2 The ruin of the originality of non-material cultural heritage by over-commercialization**

In exploitation of non-material cultural heritage, owing to the pursuit of money, commercializing and vulgarizing non-material cultural heritage tends to stage now and then. As a source of tourism, the exploitation of non-material cultural heritage should pay its high respect to folk traditions; however, in some cases, tourism programs degrade the cultural value of certain minorities by decorating and imitating the scene with low-taste of art and artificial folk performance, thus depriving the true and unique local culture and misleading tourists to believe that the locality is lacking in cultural originality. As a relatively secluded region, these areas have their special advantages of attracting the outsiders to their original and manifold facets of tradition and culture. Yet, materialistic exploitation will not only ruin its true culture, but in a long run, will exhaust its value as tourist spot.

### **3.3 Integration of the local culture with the outside one**

Tourism, in its true essence, is a multi-culture communicating activity. The flood of the concepts, ways of living, and information into a target region from the outside tourists may unbalance the once-exclusive society, invade its own culture and endanger its originality. Moreover, the intrusion of the outside culture may clash with the local one, thus meeting tough confrontations in the course of merging in. As a serious result of it, it interferes and worse still, endangers the local culture. The once unique culture gives way to the more popular one in the following ways: the conversion of its sense of value; the judgment of fashion; the way of acting; the abandonment of its deep-rooted tradition and morality in pursuit of new fashion and the great change in celebration of folk festivals and ceremonies in memorial of traditional customs. All these reflect the integration of one weak culture with a strong one. The homogeneity of the traditional one into the new one mirrors the attack of the commercialized civilization on the national culture. In this way, loss of some precious cultures seem unavoidable unless measures are taken to protect them.

### **3.4 Loss of sense of mystery through blind imitation of non-material cultural heritage**

The distinctiveness of a local culture based on non-material cultural heritage is limelight that draws the eyeball of tourists to its place. However, some minority regions hold festive ceremonies every day to appeal tourists. These activities are carried out without careful study of the essence of folk culture. Therefore, there is a sharp contrast between the performance presented to tourists and the original one. The peculiarity of some culture has been erased and similarity of ceremonies, artifacts and handcrafts is evident wherever tourists swarm. The tourism based on non-material cultural heritage is a serious scientific study that calls for the protection of the originality of a culture. Only in this way can tourists be attracted to these regions.

## **4. MEASURES THAT SHOULD BE TAKEN TO BALANCE NON-MATERIAL CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.1 Adherence to the principle of combination of exploitation and protection**

In the process of exploiting non-material cultural heritage, priority should be give protection in guidance of all plans, proposals and management in avoidance of ruins of it. Short-sighted exploitation should be corrected in view of the great value of non-material cultural heritage as a cultural form and a precious tourism source. In possible and manageable regions, biological gardens of folk customs should be put into consideration where cultural of minorities are predominant and typical. Limits should be put on the opening of these regions to tourists in realization of the balance of economic profits and protection of them. In the meantime, over-commercialization can be avoided. Sustainable developmental policy should be carried out in these regions where once the culture dies out, it can never find its way to return. Only by adopting scientific method in exploiting non-material cultural heritage can its value be realized. In achieving this, appropriate measures should be taken in the process of exploiting it.

### **4.2 Protection of the nationality and authenticity of non-material cultural heritage**

As a reflection of the life of folk groups, non-material cultural heritage has its special appeal of its mystery and originality. The purpose to visit these areas is to experience a different life style and know a different culture. The feature and essence of these areas lie in its unique originality. Therefore, any man-made ornament and purposeful decoration is but the ruin of its special

culture. The choice of the place and date of national festivals and ceremonies should be in accordance with the respect and for the tradition of its local people, especially those which carry a profound meaning of culture and history. If these regions are popularized as frequent visiting spots where their unique and original cultures lose their shine, it will definitely lose its attraction to the outside world as well. At the same time, any draw of a farfetched analogy to its traditional culture in order to appeal to tourists would in turn ruin its reputation as a unique region where unique culture is abundant. Sufficient research and study should be undertaken in the process of exploitation of non-material cultural heritage. Its cultural and conventional originality should be preserved and maintained. It should be totally forbidden to imitate some conventions in a farfetched way. The mysteriousness of the culture of a folk custom determines its position in drawing tourists to visit these regions. In this way, studies of the historic features and change in the cultural sense in these areas should be carried out in making tourism policies. Only by channeling the local culture with the advent of the visiting one can its value be realized to full extent.

#### **4.3 Dealings of local culture and the alien one**

The strong crash and conflict between the local culture and the visiting one is not to be avoided in the process of non-material cultural heritage exploitation. It is wrong to hold the idea that the conventions of non-material cultural heritage should not be changed even to a small extent. On the contrary, it changes with the development of society and economy. Take folk custom as an example, some old customs give way to new ones bit by bit. So the protection of traditional culture does not necessarily mean the total refusal of another culture and discrimination against modern civilization. On the contrary, once enclosed and sealed in its secluded areas where touch with the outside world has been locked, this nation would not develop at all. The culture that is deeply rooted in one region and minority group does not contradict with the alien one, or rather, they complement each other in a way or two. In face of the alien culture brought about by tourism, the local one should adopt a positive attitude. On one hand, it should absorb the essence of it to develop its own; on the other, it should repel the bad influence of it. It should follow the general principles that we should hold a sensible judgment on a visiting culture— adopting the good and abandoning the bad. In the meanwhile, special pride should be attached to the traditional culture. Its unique and non-regenerative value should be paid special attention to. To the positive part of the traditional culture, measures should be taken to protect and develop it. There is no room allowing for the sacrifice of the traditional culture for the economic development. The traditional culture is the spiritual wealth handed

down by generations of people from the minorities. Even though there is something that does not get along with the development of modern society, the majority of it is still, and will still function well. So to preserve the traditional culture is to preserve the fruit of human civilization and history through which human activities can be traced. The right attitude towards the difference between the local culture and the visiting one is a vital point in making policies. Only under the right cultural guidelines can the localities form an objective view of the visiting culture. Only in this way can they stop imitating the foreign one blindly.

#### **4.4 Enforcement of laws to intensify the protection of non-material cultural heritage**

The proper and scientific measures of protecting non-material cultural heritage can only be ensured by related laws and regulations. This is the sole and most effective way to guarantee the sustainable development of non-material cultural heritage. Since the foundation of our country, many national laws and regulations have been established to protect the languages, characters, customs, and the cultural relics of the minorities. However, the laws and regulations concerned with the protection of non-material cultural heritage are relatively not sound at all. In a sense, it is safe to say that no specific laws and regulations have been drawn up to reasonably protect non-material cultural heritage. Even among the established laws and regulations, most only cover the protection of national characters and part of cultural relics, leaving the majority of non-material cultural heritage outside the laws. Since non-material cultural heritage ranges a large variety in its content as well as its kind, only by making specific laws and regulations which coincide themselves with each item of non-material cultural heritage can it be effectively protected.

### **5. THOUGHTS UPON THE PROTECTION OF NON-MATERIAL CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

As a cultural form, non-material cultural heritage is, at the same time, a national cultural tradition handed down by generations of people. China is well-known for its multi-nationalities. Therefore, as a manifestation of national culture, non-material cultural heritage has its significant role in its own sense. In order to develop the kind of tourism based on non-material cultural heritage, our country must put its emphasis on preserving the variety of non-material cultural heritage. To balance the protection and development, the key lies in the

recognition and mastery of tourism and national culture. In a sense, the protection of non-material cultural heritage is a test on the ability of self-approval of its own culture of a country. On one hand, improper measures can weaken and disintegrate the traditions and worse still, the self-approval and self-pride in its own cultural heritage, while, on the other hand, if reasonably handled, they strengthen such senses of spirits. So in the process of national tourism, the acceptance of the local and national culture plays an equally important role, that is to say, in the exploitation of non-material cultural heritage, the most significant point is how to strengthen the value of the acceptance of different national cultures. As known to all, tourists expect to view and experience an authentic alien culture when traveling. This is the core to appeal these tourists to the minority-dominated regions. This attraction in turn is determined by its difference from other cultures and its varieties in its own manifestation. To understand why tourists flood to their regions and to view clearly the intention behind the exchange of culture and economic profits, the minorities would gather an external as well as an internal one to stimulate its self-development of its own unique tradition and culture. Once recognizing the peculiarity of its own culture which the others don't process, these regions will set up a cultural confidence and spur its tourism development for its own cause.

Another issue should be paid attention to when dealing with solving the contradiction between preservation of non-material cultural heritage and tourism development. That is, in the process of modernization, the minority regions can easily abandon its own traditional and culture while our mission is to protect these valuable respects from the viewpoint of biological varieties. The delicate problem lies in the impasse that on one hand, we can not deprive these regions of their legitimate right for development, while on the other, this call might in turn erase their uniqueness of their tradition and culture. Is there a way to balance these two forces. Is there an effective model that we can reflect upon and copy? An official in the UNESCO says : " The traditional cultural expression must find its way to adapt into this modern world for its survival. The challenge lies in seeking a positive, cooperative and society-based approach to guarantee its freshness and future of the intangible cultural heritage. Cong Jiang County, Gui Zhou Province pops out as an example of success by following a cooperative method. The government counts the local in their share of the profits in the social development and cultural progress brought by tourism there; and at the same time, it aims at preserving the variety of its traditional culture. The

measures involved in achieving this win-win effect are developing the original national tourism. At present, the residents in Cong Jiang County such as Xiao Huang and Ba Sha have the confidence of their own culture in mind boosted by the development of tourism in those areas, which not only brings them economic profits but also the pride they take in their nationality. As a consequence, the folk song in Dong Minority, the tribal culture of Miao Minority and the Civilized child birth culture of Zhan Li all make their prestige around the world. Instead of losing their originality as tourist spots, they gain their rejuvenation from tourism. As a case in the win-win policy and model of the success of cooperation, Cong Jiang County stands out in how to solve such problems. Therefore, not all development will lead to the loss of traditions when tourism is boosted in such areas; on the contrary, encouraged by tourism, the local people come to realize their unique culture, revalue it and eventually protect it for their own sake. The multi-cultures enrich our national culture on a whole, and rejuvenate it to a great degree. In this sense, these multi-cultural regions should be put under scientific protection.

It is our sole responsibility to determine the future of these national cultural resources. The protection of the variety of non-material cultural heritage runs parallel to tourism development. The protection of the wholeness and distinction of the national culture will pay off in its attraction of swarms of tourists who, in turn, will bring huge profits. These benefits will further spur the investment from the local government as well as local people to preserve the non-material cultural heritage to a great extent. The more efforts they put into protection, the more appealing these areas will be, the more tourists will flood there, the more profits they will get from them. This serves as a virtuous circle as well as a mode for sustainable development. As we all know, the sustainable development is the only way for social development of human kind. It is the mutual ambition of preservation of various cultures and tourism development as well. Either the preservation or the development, its final purpose lies in promoting the harmonious and ever-lasing development between mankind, nature and society. As the soul of the development of tourism, tourism culture calls for the immediate measures to preserve the variety of minority cultures whose core is the protection of non-material cultural heritage. Only in this way, non-material cultural heritage can complete its historic mission as a form of culture; and only in this way can tourism be developed in a harmonious and sustainable way.

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