

Heritage Protection

Recently, heritage preservation has become a controversy and has sparked heated debates between the government and cultural heritage protectors. Basically, it is proved that preservation of heritage might not necessarily lead to hindrance of development, but a more thriving prosperity. However, we should not neglect the importance of intangible cultural heritage as this is equally important to the public. What's more is that intangible heritage is absolutely collective memory of the public. Instead of turning a blind eye to the problem, we should exert ourselves to protect the valuable events and memories.

To commence with, intangible cultural heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills and even cultural spaces that communities and individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. In general, intangible heritage can be classified into multifarious parts, covering oral traditions, expressions, performing arts and festival events. Intangible heritage is not something concrete. Therefore, it is easily ignored. Worse still, some of the craftsmanship and traditional performing arts are no longer extant. Each generation's craftsmen combined their wisdom and also effort to perfect skills that created crafts reflecting the aesthetic values and joy in life.

No doubt, it is true that intangible heritage is losing its colour as people act indifferently about the issue. As a result, fewer and fewer people know the history and the value of this kind of heritage. To remedy the situation, it is our responsibility to be more enthusiastic towards our past life form.

Take traditional Chinese performing art as an example, it is not popular and common compared to the past. Performing art is popular among the previous generation because they have few forms of entertainment compared with the present generation. Performing arts were created by different ethnic groups in China, which reflect the emotions and aesthetic values of these people. The style of performing arts varies greatly among regions. The rich, diverse and art tradition is deeply rooted in traditional culture and reflect unique values on life. These arts are definitely important elements of our intangible heritage.

Indeed, youths are tempted by computer games or the Internet. They know nothing about intangible heritage. More importantly, we have few ways to cultivate our interest to performing arts. It is understandable why teenagers show no interest to performing arts.

Apart from personal interest, schools seldom relate education to Chinese traditional life-style. Schools emphasize results more than practicality. There is no connection between lessons and this aspect of heritage. Despite a brief description in some subjects, students still acquire very little through lessons. Also, students spend most of their time on studying, not to mention finding information about this kind of heritage.

To rectify the situation, it is high time for both schools and government to arouse students' concern about heritage preservation. For example, school can invite officials of related organizations to give talks. It can help students familiarize themselves to their culture. Otherwise, the future of the intangible heritage looks gloomy.

Undoubtedly, intangible heritage is turning to be much commercialized. The evidence is that businessmen make profit during festival. Take Cheung Chau Bun Festival as an example, unscrupulous businessmen make profit by

selling plastic bun stuff at a high price to the foreigners. Originally, the festival was held to bring peace to the people living on the island. However, the nature of festival changes as people no longer emphasize the customs and tradition, but joy and fun instead. It seems that its original colour can't be maintained as the function of festival changes gradually

To conclude, we should face the problem squarely in order to protect our valuable intangible heritage. It is of utmost importance to keep the heritage intact and let our next generation to know the existence of such customs.