

Committee: Environmental and Cultural Committee
Issue: The preservation of the cultural heritage of minority groups
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Position: Main Chair

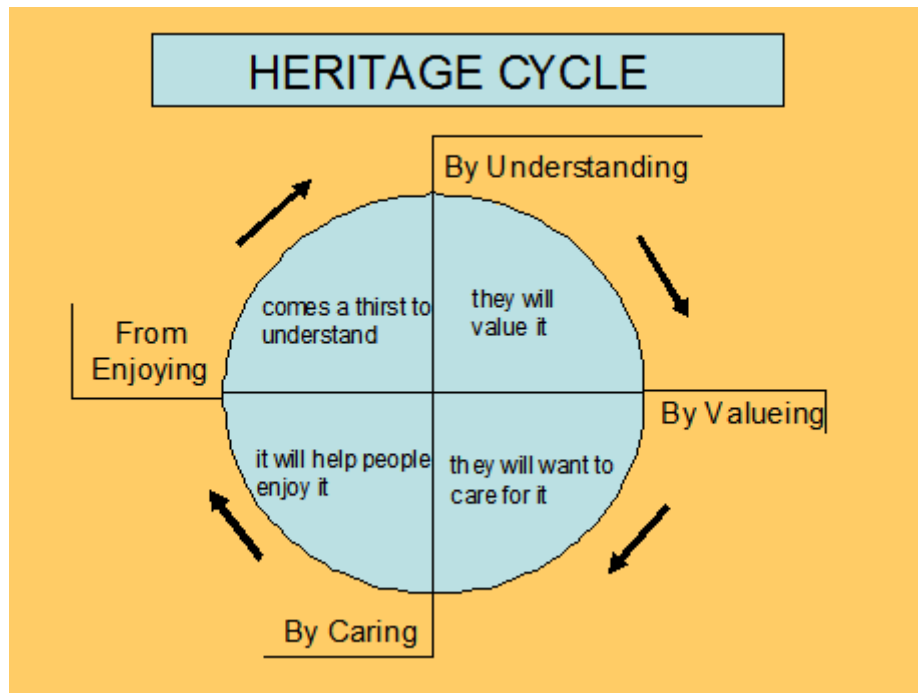
Introduction

Culture is the totality of the spiritual and material creation of an individual or a nation. Culture promotes creativity, diversity, memory and rituality and is considered as a basic element in all development strategies.

The topic of the preservation of the cultural heritage of minority groups is very crucial. Cultures, which have been created and developed by minorities face the threat of disappearing. This problem is caused due to the fact that the dominant groups prevail over the minorities, which means minorities are forced to intergrate into the dominant groups and to renounce their own way of living.



it is a human creation intended to inform (John Feather, 2006).



How can we make the past part of our future?

Definition of Key-Terms

Cultural Rights

Between each culture are many differences to be noticed. Cultural rights are the rights that people of every culture have in order to preserve and promote their culture.

Minority Groups

Minority groups are groups of people, which are forced to face prejudice and discrimination. The term does not make mention of the size of the group. These groups differ from the dominant groups in religious beliefs, customs and values.

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

The term intellectual property refers to the spiritual creations of an individual or a nation. On a legal level are rights to the creators recognized, which are called Intellectual Property Rights.

Ethnocide

Ethnocide is usually used as an alternative term for genocide. The difference between the two terms is that genocide refers to human beings while ethnocide refers to the destruction of social cultures through humans. Consequently ethnocide can be considered as cultural genocide.

Cultural Bigotry

The term bigotry means discrimination towards opinions, which differ from those one has. Consequently cultural bigotry is the intolerance against cultures, which differ from the supported ones.

Agenda 21 for culture

Agenda 21 for culture is a document, which refers to the recognition of cultural rights as basic part of human rights. It was the first worldwide to be written. Its aim is that governments take action in order that cultural development will be achieved.

UNESCO

The acronym UNESCO stands for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It was established in 1945 and its main goal is the promotion of world peace and security and human rights. In the foreground stands culture and its aim is the preservation of cultural diversity and the protection of cultural heritage.

Cultural Diversity

Cultural Diversity is mainly the existence of many and different cultures and human societies around the whole world. To a nicety is cultural heritage the ethnic, gender, racial, and socioeconomic variety. This phenomenon can be considered as crucial for the humankind as biodiversity is for the nature. It must be taken into consideration that cultural diversity faces the threat of disappearing due to the supremacy of the globalization.

Background Information

Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage is the legacy, which our ancestors have passed on from generation to generation and now we have the obligation to preserve it and pass it on to the next generation. It represents the past in the present. It informs about the way of living of the nations and the people, who lived before us, their beliefs and

values. Cultural heritage can be divided in two parts: the intangible and the tangible. The intangible cultural heritage can be characterized as spiritual heritage, for example literature, theatre, traditional performances and religious ceremonies; whereas tangible culture is the material heritage, for example monuments, statues and buildings. The tangible culture consists from the movable, which can be transferred and the immovable heritage, which cannot be moved.

Heritage can be distinguished as well. There is the natural heritage and the cultural heritage. The connection between culture and nature is crucial and undeniable. Culture is the product of the influence of the nature and the social values on the people and nations. There are some properties which include both the natural and the cultural characteristic. These belong to a category called "Mixed Heritage".

There are many reasons why the preservation of the cultural heritage is very important for the humankind and the progress of the societies.

- a) Historical background: Monuments, temples and other creations, which are usually under the protection of museums around the world, show people how the past generations lived, which their traditions, beliefs, behavior and values were. It is important for human beings to know their origin and their ancestors.
- b) Diversity: Although every culture was developed separately and with different characteristics, it is known that the one influenced in a way the other. This is the reason, why sometimes common elements are recognized between different cultures.
- c) Economic Growth: Cultural heritage contributes to the financial development of a country. Monuments, museums and temples are only some of the main attractions in a country for the tourists. It is widely known that tourism plays an immense role in the economic growth of a country.
- d) Uniqueness: Last but not least, the preservation and the protection of the cultural heritage are of a great importance due to the fact that they are unique and irreplaceable. Once a monument, for example, is destroyed, it cannot be fixed.

Cultural Heritage faced with the threat of disappearing:

There are series of factors that need to be taken into account in order to protect and save the cultural heritage of the world in general, but particularly of minorities. The evanescence of a heritage can be caused by either the nature or the humankind.

The natural threats can be:

- a) Climate: The sudden climate change by affecting the temperature and atmosphere can cause great damage to monuments and other cultural properties, for example.
- b) Pollution: Pollution can damage the properties by producing blackening or erosion.
- c) Earthquakes, floods and other dangerous natural phenomena.

Threats caused by human beings are:

- a) War
- b) Globalization- Urban development
- c) Tourism and Lack of awareness
- d) Ignorance towards the past and the value of the cultural heritage
- e) Vandalism- Fanatism

The Rights and the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage of minority groups

The existence of minorities in the whole world is widely known. These minorities have created and still try to preserve their own cultures, beliefs, values, monuments and traditions. Due to the dominance of the globalization and the urban development the cultural heritage of minority groups is in danger of disappearing.

Within the framework of cultural rights and the preservation of the cultural heritage fell the protection of the minority groups. By the time of 1919 until 1945 the equality between members of minorities and other nationals was recognized in many States around the world. Minority groups had the freedom of developing their own culture. After 1945 the protection of minority groups was included in the human rights. Since then States were obliged to promote not only the culture and the way of living of the dominant groups, but of the minorities as well. It must be taken into consideration that the preservation and development of cultural diversity was and remains until today a very important factor for the advancement of the societies and the whole world in general.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

List of World Heritage in Danger

Afghanistan

- Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley (2003)
- Minaret and Archaeological Remains of Jam (2002)

Belize

- Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System (2009)

Central African Republic

- Manovo-Gounda St Floris National Park (1997)

Chile

- Humberstone and Santa Laura Saltpeter Works (2005)

Colombia

- Los Katíos National Park (2009)

Côte d'Ivoire

- Comoé National Park (2003)
- Mount Nimba Strict Nature Reserve (1992) *

Democratic Republic of the Congo

- Garamba National Park (1996)
- Kahuzi-Biega National Park (1997)
- Okapi Wildlife Reserve (1997)
- Salonga National Park (1999)
- Virunga National Park (1994)

Egypt

- Abu Mena (2001)

Ethiopia

- Simien National Park (1996)

Georgia

- Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery (2010)
- Historical Monuments of Mtskheta (2009)

Guinea

- Mount Nimba Strict Nature Reserve (1992) *

- Honduras
- Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve (2011)

Indonesia

- Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra (2011)

Iraq

- Ashur (Qal'at Sherqat) (2003)
- Samarra Archaeological City (2007)

Jerusalem (Site proposed by Jordan)

- Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls (1982)

Madagascar

- Rainforests of the Atsinanana (2010)

Mali

- Timbuktu (2012)
- Tomb of Askia (2012)

Niger

- Air and Ténéré Natural Reserves (1992)

Palestine

- Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem (2012)

Panama

- Fortifications on the Caribbean Side of Panama: Portobelo-San Lorenzo (2012)

Peru

- Chan Chan Archaeological Zone (1986)

Senegal

- Niokolo-Koba National Park (2007)

Serbia

- Medieval Monuments in Kosovo (2006)

Solomon Islands

- East Rennell (2013)

Syrian Arab Republic

- Ancient City of Aleppo (2013)
- Ancient City of Bosra (2013)
- Ancient City of Damascus (2013)
- Ancient Villages of Northern Syria (2013)
- Crac des Chevaliers and Qal'at Salah El-Din (2013)
- Site of Palmyra (2013)

Tanzania, United Republic of

- Ruins of Kilwa Kisiwani and Ruins of Songo Mnara (2004)

Uganda

- Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi (2010)

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

- Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City (2012)

United States of America

- Everglades National Park (2010)

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

- Coro and its Port (2005)

Yemen

- Historic Town of Zabid (2000)

People's Republic of China

China can be characterized as a multi-ethnic country due to the fact that there are in China approximately 55 ethnic minorities. The three major ethnic minorities in China are a) Gesar of the Tibetan, b) Jianggar of the Mongolians and c) Manas of the Kirgiz. The government has taken on some great initiatives concerning the promotion of the cultural heritage of these minorities, for example the organization of programmes and events or the publishing of books which describe and inform about the differences between the cultures and their unique characteristics.

African Continent

The African continent is very rich site concerning the cultural sector. There were created, developed and preserved some of the today's most popular cultures. However, the existence of minority groups, which have advanced their own way of living and cultural heritage, is quite certain.

ICCROM

The acronym ICCROM stands for the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property. Its goal is the preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage of each country, region and nation. Its obligation and duty is to improve the conditions and the mechanisms, which are necessary for the protection of either the tangible or the intangible heritage.

ICOMOS

The acronym ICOMOS stands for International Council on Monuments and Sites. It is a Council founded in the UK, which is an official adviser of UNESCO.

The World Heritage Committee

Its responsibility is to observe whether the requirements of the World Heritage Convention are being implemented in the States, which have signed the Convention.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1992	UN Declaration on Minorities
1993	Draft UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
1994	The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
1972	The World Heritage Convention
2 nd of November 2001	UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity

Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events

The World Heritage Convention

The Convention points out the obligations of the Member States. The States, which have signed the convention, are forced to protect the cultural heritage on a national basis. The Convention was adopted in 1972.

UN Declaration on Minorities

In 1992 was adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic Religious and Linguistic Minorities (UN Declaration on minorities). It requested the organizing of educational, cultural and linguistic institutions. The aim of the Declaration was to form a fertile ground for the promotion and development of the characteristics and cultural heritage of the minorities.

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

Until 1994 there is no legal organ within the European Union, which focuses on the minorities and their legal protection. However, in 1994 was adopted the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by the European Council.

Possible Solutions

1. The promotion of the cultural heritage of minority groups through:
 - a. The mass media
 - b. Governmental initiatives, which means that it will be the government's responsibility to promote equally the cultural heritage of the dominant groups and the minorities.
2. The battle against various forms of violence, for example vandalisms, wars or expressions of discrimination. These forms have caused in the past the destruction of memorable and unique monuments and buildings, which will never be created again.
3. Funding of Cultural Organizations:

This factor is as important as the abovementioned. There are many Cultural Organizations already existing, which have as main goal the protection of cultural heritage. Therefore there is no need of creating even more. However, these organizations need funding in order to satisfy their needs and be able to act in favour of the culture.

4. Contribution of the museums of every country or nation: In every country is vital the existence of the museums, so that exhibitions and events for the promotion of cultures take place. Museums are great tourist attractions. Therefore museums could be urged to get involved in the preservation of the cultural heritage of minority groups.

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