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"PRESERVATION OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE: TRADITIONS, LANGUAGES, AND PRACTICES"

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ABSTRACT

The preservation of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) presents a multifaceted challenge in the modern world, where globalization and technological advancements continually reshape cultural landscapes. This thesis explores the complexities and strategies involved in safeguarding traditions, languages, and practices that constitute the essence of cultural identity. It delves into the significance of ICH as a repository of collective memory, creativity, and social cohesion, emphasizing its dynamic nature and adaptive resilience in the face of contemporary pressures.

The thesis examines various dimensions of ICH preservation. It investigates the roles of communities, individuals, governments, and international organizations in protecting and promoting ICH at local, national, and global levels. Special attention is given to the role of digital technologies in documenting, disseminating, and revitalizing endangered languages and traditions, while also exploring the ethical considerations and challenges inherent in digital preservation.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage is a rich tapestry that includes not only material objects and monuments, but also intangible elements that define the identity and traditions of society. Intangible cultural heritage includes traditions, languages and customs passed down from generation to generation, plays an important role in shaping societies and fostering a sense of belonging to them. Preserving these intangible aspects is important for maintaining cultural diversity, promoting social cohesion and protecting the unique heritage of communities around the world.

MAIN PART

Customs and languages are an integral part of a society's cultural identity. Values, beliefs and traditions that have been honored and passed down over time are expressed in them. According to UNESCO (2003), intangible cultural heritage



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includes "traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants." Preserving these intangible elements is essential to celebrate cultural diversity and ensure that each community's unique heritage is recognized and respected. By protecting traditions, languages and customs, societies can preserve their identity and contribute to the richness of global cultural heritage. Intangible cultural heritage plays an important role in promoting social cohesion and inclusion within communities. Traditions and customs often serve as bonding mechanisms that bring people together and create a sense of unity and belonging. As a key element of intangible heritage, language facilitates communication and understanding between members of society, bridges cultural differences and promotes communication. By preserving and promoting these intangible aspects, societies can strengthen social ties, develop mutual respect and cooperation. Intangible cultural heritage includes a wide range of knowledge, skills and practices that are passed down from generation to generation. By preserving traditions, languages and traditional practices, communities ensure the continuity of valuable knowledge and experience. This transmission of intangible heritage not only preserves traditional crafts and skills, but also fosters intergenerational education and cultural exchange.

For instance, The Meros Paper Mill actively involves the local community to foster pride and a sense of ownership in its cultural heritage. They collaborate on educational programs, workshops, and cultural events that highlight the mill's historical significance and its role in shaping local identity.

Situated amidst picturesque surroundings—shady trees, the Siab river, and a quaint teahouse at the entrance—the mill offers tourists delicious Samarkand pilaf and fruits. A notable feature is Charhpalak, a water wheel adorned with ancient vessels that channel water. The mill owners emphasize the extensive effort, spanning a decade, to restore the traditional manufacturing technology of Samarkand paper. Through experimentation, they determined that mulberry bark is the ideal raw material for this distinctive paper.

Samarkand paper is recognizable for its characteristic yellow hue, achieved without chemical bleaching, giving it a remarkably extended shelf life—300-400 years compared to the 40-50 years of ordinary white paper. The mill produces an array of products including postcards, notebooks, masks, dresses, dolls, and handbags, all available at their shop.



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Today, Samarkand paper from the Konigil factory plays a crucial role in restoring ancient manuscripts, not only in Uzbekistan but also globally. The revival of production has enabled Uzbek artists to authentically reproduce ancient miniatures, contributing to the resurgence of Samarkand paper's renown both domestically and internationally.

By protecting these practices, communities can ensure that future generations benefit from the wisdom and traditions of their ancestors. Preserving intangible cultural heritage poses unique challenges such as globalization, urbanization, and cultural homogenization. To address these challenges, communities, governments, and organizations must implement strategies to protect traditions, languages, and practices. These strategies may include documentation, education, public participation, and policy advocacy. By raising awareness of the importance of intangible heritage and engaging communities in conservation efforts, stakeholders can ensure the continued vitality and relevance of these cultural elements.

Another tool that plays a crucial role in the preservation of intangible cultural heritage is digital technologies, which provide innovative tools and platforms for documenting, disseminating and protecting cultural practices. These technologies enable the recording and preservation of oral traditions, rituals, performances, and traditional knowledge in various formats, including audio, video, and text. Digital archives and databases facilitate systematic cataloging and preservation of intangible heritage, ensuring accessibility for future generations.

Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies can recreate the immersive experiences of cultural practices, rituals, and performances. Virtual museums and online exhibitions serve as platforms for showcasing intangible heritage to a global audience, transcending physical boundaries and reaching diverse communities.

An example of how VR and AR technologies recreate immersive cultural experiences can be seen in the "Tutankhamun: Treasures of the Golden Pharaoh" exhibition. This exhibition utilized augmented reality to bring ancient Egyptian artifacts to life in a virtual setting. Visitors equipped with AR-enabled devices could interact with digital reconstructions of artifacts such as Tutankhamun's sarcophagus, jewelry, and ceremonial objects. This immersive experience allowed people worldwide to explore the rich cultural heritage of ancient Egypt in a way that



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transcended traditional museum displays, providing a deeper understanding and appreciation of the historical significance and craftsmanship of these artifacts.

Digital storytelling platforms allow communities to share their cultural stories, myths, and legends in multimedia formats. Through interactive websites, podcasts, and social media channels, communities can effectively communicate their intangible heritage, promoting appreciation and understanding of their traditions.

Digital tools and applications also contribute to language preservation efforts by digitizing endangered languages and creating online dictionaries. Language revitalization projects leverage digital technologies to document and teach indigenous languages, ensuring their preservation and transmission to future generations.

Online platforms and mobile applications support crowdsourcing initiatives to collect and document intangible heritage. Community members can contribute their knowledge, stories, and memories to collaborative digital projects, fostering a sense of ownership and participation in heritage conservation efforts.

Digital technologies provide interactive learning resources such as online courses, webinars, and digital workshops, offering opportunities for students, researchers, and practitioners to deepen their understanding of cultural traditions and practices.

Furthermore, digital manufacturing technologies like 3D printing and laser cutting help preserve traditional crafts by duplicating and preserving artifacts, tools, and materials. These tools enhance the documentation and replication of complex craft techniques, ensuring the continuity of craftsmanship.

In essence, by harnessing the power of digital technologies, communities and cultural organizations can effectively preserve and promote their intangible cultural heritage, celebrating their rich traditions and practices for future generations.

Individuals play a crucial role in raising awareness of their cultural traditions by actively participating in community cultural practices, ceremonies, and performances, ensuring the continuity and transmission of intangible heritage. By learning from elders, practitioners, and cultural experts, people acquire traditional knowledge and skills while preserving their cultural identity and heritage.

Individuals can document and record oral traditions, songs, dances, stories, and rituals using digital tools such as cameras, audio recorders, and smartphones. By archiving intangible heritage, individuals contribute to its preservation and dissemination for future generations.



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As an example of the active role of individuals in the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, it is possible to show the annual "Memorial Day" in Uzbekistan. During this cultural event, families and communities come together to honor and remember their ancestors through various rituals, including cooking food in memory of the deceased and reciting prayers for him.

Individuals play a crucial role in this tradition by actively participating in the preparation of food, learning traditional recipes, creating elaborate decorations, and sharing stories and memories of their loved ones. Through these events, the young generation not only acquires practical skills, but also deeply understands the importance of honoring one's cultural heritage and ancestors.

By actively engaging in these cultural practices and passing down their knowledge to future generations, individuals contribute to the continuity and transmission of intangible cultural heritage. They also play a vital role in promoting intercultural understanding and respect for diverse traditions, ensuring that these living expressions of culture remain vibrant and meaningful for years to come.

Sharing cultural knowledge and skills with family, friends, and community members through stories, workshops, and demonstrations allows individuals to pass on their heritage to younger generations, fostering pride and connection to cultural roots. Participating in cultural events, festivals, and celebrations that showcase intangible heritage, as well as contributing to performances, exhibitions, and workshops, helps individuals appreciate and promote their own cultural traditions, facilitating intercultural communication and understanding.

Individuals also play a role in the recognition and protection of intangible cultural heritage at local, national, and international levels. By raising awareness about the importance of preserving cultural diversity and traditions, individuals support policies and initiatives aimed at safeguarding and promoting intangible heritage. Volunteering, collaborating, and supporting community-led projects and initiatives contribute to the sustainability and vitality of cultural practices and traditions.

Respecting and valuing the diversity of cultural expressions within and outside their communities, individuals promote inclusiveness and contribute to preserving intangible heritage as a source of creativity, identity, and social cohesion. Recognizing the dynamic nature of intangible cultural heritage, individuals contribute to its preservation by ensuring that these living expressions of culture remain relevant and accessible to future generations. Preserving and transmitting



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Intangible cultural heritage involves safeguarding its elements to ensure continuity and relevance in a rapidly changing world. Conservation efforts require comprehensive strategies that include field research, documentation, public participation, education, and the promotion of traditional knowledge and practices. By implementing effective measures for its preservation, individuals can contribute to maintaining the traditions, languages, and customs that enrich human culture.

The preservation of intangible cultural heritage is a shared responsibility that demands cooperation and commitment to ensure these precious expressions of human creativity and tradition flourish for generations to come. Individuals can actively engage with their cultural heritage, document traditions, support local communities, educate others, advocate for preservation policies, and use digital tools to promote and share intangible cultural heritage. Through these actions, individuals help sustain the vitality and continuity of these valuable cultural expressions.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the preservation of intangible cultural heritage through active community engagement, traditional knowledge transmission, and innovative approaches such as digital documentation and cultural events plays a vital role in safeguarding cultural diversity and identity. The case of the Meros Paper Mill in Samarkand exemplifies how collaborative efforts can revive and sustain traditional practices, fostering pride and ownership within local communities.

By actively participating in cultural practices, ceremonies, and performances, individuals ensure the continuity and transmission of intangible heritage to future generations. Digital tools such as cameras, audio recorders, and smartphones facilitate the documentation and dissemination of oral traditions, songs, dances, and rituals, thereby contributing to their preservation in a rapidly changing world.

Moreover, individuals and communities play a crucial role in advocating for the recognition and protection of intangible cultural heritage at local, national, and international levels. By raising awareness about the importance of cultural diversity and traditions, they support policies and initiatives aimed at safeguarding and promoting intangible heritage.

The dynamic nature of intangible cultural heritage requires adaptive conservation strategies that respect cultural expressions while promoting inclusiveness and social cohesion. Through education, community-led projects, and sustainable development



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practices, stakeholders can ensure the vitality and relevance of cultural traditions in contemporary societies.

In essence, the preservation of intangible cultural heritage is a shared responsibility that demands cooperation, commitment, and respect for diverse cultural expressions. By valuing and actively preserving intangible heritage, societies can celebrate their cultural richness and ensure that these invaluable traditions continue to thrive for future generations.

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