

Support and Efforts to Cultivate and Revitalize Talented Craftspeople in Traditional Crafts

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Abstract

Since traditional crafts are the cultural roots of modern crafts, it is necessary to pay attention to the lives of traditional craftspeople and find a direction for nurturing future talents. In order to cultivate them in the field of traditional crafts, we should newly recognize the value of traditional crafts. Traditional Korean crafts are reflective of Korean people's practices of life and their minds and feelings, as well as their skills and artistic sensibility. For the nurturing of future generations in the traditional craft field, policy support for this field should be diversified, while craftspeople should also make efforts to revitalize traditional crafts. Policy support is needed for effective educational programs, increase of labor costs for craftspeople, production of traditional craftworks, development of utilitarian crafts based on tradition, and publicity to promote consumption of traditional crafts. Craftspeople should make efforts to practice the transmission and modernization of traditional crafts, produce teaching materials, write work diaries, operate educational programs, and provide their own certification system. In order to preserve the traditional Korean crafts in the era of reproduction technology and globalization, we must maintain the aesthetic value of handicrafts and revive the Korean aura through it.

Keywords: traditional crafts, cultivation of talented craftspeople, handicrafts, the era of reproduction technology, globalization, aura

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1. Why Pay Attention to Traditional Crafts Today?

Today we are surrounded by numerous objects, which are made or provided to meet certain needs in our lives. However, most of them are manufactured by machines at factories in huge quantities. When we purchase and use the objects, we seldom think about whose handwork they are imbued with. In the past, there were not so many things we possessed to use, and they were usually made by craftspeople.

The term “craft” means human activities of making utilitarian objects, and it also includes products that derive from such activities. Even if they are produced primarily for utilitarian purposes, they tend to be more appreciated when they have fine and aesthetic qualities. In this sense, crafts are generally regarded as objects which retain both utilitarian and artistic qualities. While utility and artistry cannot be clearly distinguished in crafts, the former certainly has a priority over the latter for objects of ordinary use. That is why Yanagi Muneyoshi 柳宗悦 remarks: “Crafts are utilitarian objects. . . . Craft has the idea of ‘something that is useful’ (所用) at the core of its concept. If not useful, it cannot continue to exist. Therefore, once a craft loses its usefulness, it no longer holds a meaning as such. . . . What is useful is the life of craft” (Yanagi 1994, 255-256). That is, a good craft is something that is suitable for use, is convenient to use, and can be used for a long time.

Unlike today, materials were rare in traditional society and craftworks were hard to come by because they were made in limited quantity. Craftworks were used to meet suitable needs without being wasted. Naturally, whether artistic or not, they were used sparingly and valuably, and it became a tradition. Under this situation, responding to the demand from consumers, craftspeople occasionally produced craftworks by displaying their artistic sensibility or by employing traditionally transmitted skills, forms, colors, and textures.

It was technological advancement, or more specifically, the development of machine-based reproduction techniques that brought about enormous changes to traditional crafts. In Korea, the Yi Royal Family Art Manufactory which was established in Taepyeong-dong, Seoul, in 1908, to make craftworks for the royal court, played a leading role in the flow of early modern

handicrafts. This allowed large quantities of machine-produced craft goods to be supplied to private consumers at a low price, laying the foundation for active distribution structure at an unprecedented scale. Inevitably, however, the quality of products went down greatly due to technological limitations in the early stage of mechanization (G. Choi 2008, 254-255).

German scholar Walter Benjamin points out that the aura of artworks collapsed due to reproduction technology (Benjamin 2007, 21). According to his book, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction), he claims that qualitative changes in reproduced works of art, which occurred with the emergence of photography and film owing to technological advancement, led to the loss of aura of the original works of art. The aura is associated with the unique existence of the work of art, its authenticity, and is also connected with the form of transmission which corresponds to its singleness and authenticity. Benjamin traces the magical factor of the aura to the ritual function, which is the primal function of art (Benjamin 2007, 21). In other words, believing that the work of art has its basis in the ritual, he argues that the aura in a work of art which is reproduced by technology decays.¹

Relying on Benjamin's theory, we can recognize the fact that reproduction technology allows to produce the work of art in large quantity using the identical material, size, and form, which is different in nature from what an artist creates by hand whenever there is demand. The same logic applies to crafts. With the use of modern reproduction technology, i.e., mass production techniques, large quantities of crafts having the same material, size, and form are churned out. Thereby, the aura emanating from handmade crafts vanishes in reproduced ones.

On Benjamin's assertion that reproduction technology brings about a qualitative change in the work of art, Frank Hartmann gets to the core by stating that possibilities are maximized via technologies unveiling the

1. However, Benjamin also believes that the aura is something that needs to be overcome, because it has mythological, ritualistic, magical, and mystic elements that tend to confine people to old conceptions. Furthermore, he expresses concerns about the possibility of unenlightening negative consequences in case it is abused for industrial or political purposes (See S. Choe 2014, 281).

unconscious, and the dissemination of cultural products is facilitated by minimizing production costs and formats (Benjamin 2007, 31). In this sense, it can be assumed that the use of modern reproduction technology in making crafts enables mass production and manufacturing cost reduction on the one hand, while granting a new contextual meaning to crafts which are made with manual skills instead of modern-day reproduction technique. That is, under the condition that mechanical reproduction is a dominant feature of modern crafts, handicrafts made in traditionally passed-down methods take on a different meaning from before. As Benjamin points out emphatically, the aura, which is destroyed in reproduced crafts, is kept intact in traditional handicrafts.

In this regard, the underlying factors for the growing interest in traditional crafts today can be considered in several aspects. Traditional Korean crafts are reflective of Korean people's practices of life and their minds and feelings, as well as their skills and artistic sensibility. Made with natural materials mostly, the traditional Korean crafts represent the ways that Koreans have adapted to nature. Ensuring the value of cultural diversity in the age of globalization, traditional Korean crafts form an important part of cultural heritage which will be transmitted to future generations. Concerning folk handmade tradition, it is crucial to think that craft is a culture of life before it is an industry or art (Bae 2014, 32). In this context, the significance and value of traditional Korean crafts in contemporary society can be understood as follows:

First, traditional Korean crafts have been formed in a fashion that they are suitable for Koreans' way of living. Practical utility is a basic requirement of craftworks, but that utility is demanded and shaped to befit Korean lifestyle. Indeed, they are most harmonious with the contents and characteristics of the lifestyle of Koreans. In today's industrial society, the traditional mode of life oriented toward self-sufficiency has been replaced by an industrialized one, which is characterized by specialization, division of labor, and commodification (Bae 2017, 161). As Richard Sennett notes,

the form and usage of objects change from generation to generation,² and the usage of traditional crafts based on the lifestyle of pre-modern times cannot be maintained in industrial society. However, albeit the ongoing change of Korean society, traditional crafts stay attuned to the lifestyle of Koreans, compared to other societies. This is because the basic ways of life such as food, clothing, and shelter have developed along with most suitable craftworks.

Second, traditional Korean crafts emanate aesthetic and emotional feelings which are most natural to Koreans. As their aesthetic and emotional perceptions have been shaped through lived experiences for ages, the naturalness that Koreans feel in traditional crafts is associated with what is uniquely Korean. The familiarity that Koreans encounter in their craftworks for a long time is, actually, one of rudimentary functions of traditional crafts. From the cultural point of view, the naturalness Koreans feel in crafts is due to the fact that their usage has been based on the aesthetic perception which is connected with the life of Koreans over a long period of time. According to Yanagi Muneyoshi, crafts serve people's daily lives; serving their lives is the duty of crafts (Yanagi 1994, 258). Traditional crafts perform this intrinsic role with Korean aesthetic and emotional sensibilities at the base. Here lies the key to understanding Benjamin's idea of the aura of traditional crafts.

Third, traditional crafts are the cultural root of modern crafts. Just as all cultural phenomena change with various factors in action, traditional crafts have no way but to change according to the characteristics of modern society. However, there is a strong belief that traditional crafts should be made in traditional form and skills. In particular, concerning the designated holders of intangible cultural heritage, people tend to think that they are institutionally limited to make traditional crafts only. While it is their duty to make traditional crafts, no one can fault them if they also make modern creative works, as long as they do not call the latter traditional. This means that anyone can produce modern creative crafts and it would be only proper

2. The histories of objects follow a different course from an organism's lifecycle, in which metamorphosis and adaptation play a stronger role across human generations (Sennet 2010, 35).

and desirable to find the cultural roots of such creative crafts in traditional crafts.

Fourth, traditional Korean crafts are cultural resources which require efforts to establish their status in the world and disseminate them on the ground of the value of cultural diversity. Any country or ethnic groups have their own traditional crafts that have been accumulated through diverse experiences for a long period, thus holding the value of cultural diversity at the global level. If standardized traditional crafts are transmitted throughout the world, the value of cultural diversity will be lost. Despite the intensification of globalization, the planet will maintain diversity when transmitting and recreating traditional crafts unique to each ethnicity. Therefore, traditional crafts of each ethnic group are valuable cultural resources which can meet their needs while maintaining cultural diversity.

Fifth, local traditional crafts are important, because they are resources that help maintain and transmit the locality of culture within Korea. History of the past is passed on through relics and artifacts as well as written records. Traditional crafts offer clues for understanding how certain characteristics of historical events or culture of the nation are reflected in them. For example, in Tongyeong City of Gyeongsangnam-do Province, there was the Navy Headquarters of Three Provinces (Gyeongsang-do, Jeolla-do, and Chungcheong-do provinces), which were in charge of the naval forces during the Japanese invasion of Joseon (1592-1598), along with 12 workshops producing military supplies and offerings for the royal court. Today the city has restored the 12 workshops and installed an exhibition hall and traditional craft shops. Even though the city's traditional crafts may be similar in form and usage, they are differentiated from those of other places in that they bear a special historical and cultural value.

Sixth, as traditional crafts are the foundation on which future crafts are created, it is necessary to attend to the lives of today's craftspeople. Craftworks are products of craft, and many crafts are designated as national treasures. In terms of the laws on cultural assets and the general recognition of people, there is a tendency to attach importance to the crafts, but not the skills, workmanship, and lives of craftspeople. For instance, celadon from the Goryeo dynasty is praised highly, but relatively little attention is paid to

the skills, workmanship, and lives of the potters who made them during the period and those who recreate them today. It is important that we not only appraise the crafts itself, but also the skills, workmanship, and lives of their creators. We ought to respect the craftspeople as much as their products and ensure them to have a stable life.

2. The Status of Traditional Crafts in Cultural Heritage Policies and Laws

There are two representative policies or laws that greatly influence intangible cultural heritage. One is the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereafter referred to as the “Safeguarding Convention”) and the other is the Korean Act on the Safeguarding and Promotion of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The former is an international convention, and the latter is the legislation made in Korea in response to the Safeguarding Convention. Regarding the convention’s positive and negative functions, several points have been raised: i) a folk culture has developed into a national project (Chang 2008); ii) the nation has entered into global cultural politics to generate the political and economic added value of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (Jung 2015); and iii) entangled with the instigation of nationalism and the enhancement of regionalism, the convention causes tensions and clashes between countries or confrontations and conflicts between regions (Nam 2017).

Without losing sight of these points, let us take a look at the details of traditional craftsmanship in the UNESCO’s convention on the intangible cultural heritage (Bae 2009, 35-36). The 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was largely a revision to the Proclamation of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, which was adopted by UNESCO and entered into force in 1997. It defines five domains of the intangible cultural heritage in Article 2, Paragraph 2: (i) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; (ii) performing arts; (iii) social practices, rituals and festive events; (iv) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and (v) traditional craftsmanship.

This shows that traditional craftsmanship is defined as a domain of intangible cultural heritage. Without providing a precise definition for it, UNESCO describes traditional craftsmanship in various forms, including: (i) clothing and jewellery for body protection and decoration; (ii) costumes and props for festivals and performing arts; (iii) objects used for storage, transport and shelter; (iv) decorative works of art and ritual objects; (v) musical instruments and household utensils; (vi) toys, both for amusement and education; and (vii) tools for living and survival. The coverage is broad enough to include most of the objects made and used by people, which seems to imply that traditional craftsmanship permeates the process that people make those objects.

The concept of traditional craftsmanship as referred to in the Safeguarding Convention encompasses the knowledge, skills, and workmanship that are employed to make items needed for life in a society or community by using natural resources. Notably, it looks as if traditional craftsmanship is, in many aspects, a tangible cultural heritage pertaining to the domain where an intangible cultural heritage is expressed. This is what makes it rather difficult to define what traditional craftsmanship is. In this regard, the following aspects need to be considered for its conception:

First, conceptually, traditional craftsmanship is an intangible cultural heritage in itself, but it also includes the outputs made from its application. It refers to both the process of making artifacts needed for life and the resulting products. Traditional craftsmanship handed down in a society or community implicates not only the knowledge, skills, and workmanship which are put into practice in the process of making objects, but also the products resulting from it. In this sense, it is both an intangible and a tangible cultural heritage at the same time. Yet the former is more important, which is expressed and applied in making the latter, e.g., knowledge, methods, skills, and workmanship.

Second, the term “traditional craftsmanship” does not simply refer to the knowledge, methods, skills, and workmanship practiced in making useful things for the survival of members of a society or community. The term is also intricately connected with the cultural phenomena which reveal the characteristics of the overall culture of the community or society. In

other words, even if the knowledge, methods, skills, and workmanship are for making practical objects, they are deemed more highly when they harbor the history, characteristics, and lifestyle of members of the society or community. To take an example, the technique of making cloth fulling sticks and fulling blocks is a distinct craftsmanship, which also lets us understand Korean clothing custom, due to its close linkage with the structure, texture, and expressive beauty of traditional Korean costume.

This idea in fact affirmed in the UNESCO's definition of intangible cultural heritage: "The 'intangible cultural heritage' means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural practices associated therewith—that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage." As can be seen in this definition, instruments, objects, and artifacts are considered in relation with communities and their practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills.

Third, considering the above-mentioned points, traditional craftsmanship, which UNESCO emphasizes, can be highly valued when they are manifested as part of religious, ritual, festive and artistic expressions. Considering that the cultural identity of a society or community is revealed by religious, ritual, festive and artistic expressions, it can be understood that traditional craftsmanship retains the culture and identity of the society or community.

Fourth, in light of cultural sustainability, traditional craftsmanship is recognized as such not only when it meets the requirement that it has the value of conveying certain aspects of the old culture, but also when it is sustainable in the future. In other words, to presume that the knowledge, skill, technique and workmanship can be sustainable in the future implies that the objects will continue to be used and further, the culture of the society or community using the objects can have sustainability. In a previous study, I classified traditional crafts into four types based on the UNESCO's classification standards: utilitarian crafts (functional), ritual crafts (religious), decorative crafts (artistic), and crafts for social relations (social) (Bae 2009, 38). This was done based on my belief that the traditional craftsmanship is indeed the melting pot of practical life of Koreans, their rituals, decorating activities, and social relations.

Next, let us examine the description on traditional craftsmanship in the Act on the Safeguarding and Promotion of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which was enacted in 2015 after branching out from the Cultural Heritage Protection Act, and entered into force in 2016. The Article 2(1)2 of the Cultural Heritage Protection Act states that “Intangible cultural heritage: Among intangible cultural heritage which have been passed on throughout many generations, referring to those falling under any of the following items”:

- (a) Traditional performing arts and arts;
- (b) Traditional skills concerning crafts, art, etc.;
- (c) Traditional knowledge concerning Korean medicine, agriculture, fishery, etc.;
- (d) Oral traditions and expressions;
- (e) Traditional ways of living concerning food, clothing, shelter, etc.;
- (f) Social rituals such as folk religion;
- (g) Traditional games, festivals, and practical and martial arts.

Meanwhile, the Cultural Heritage Protection Act stipulates on folklore resources in Article 2(1)4: “Folklore resources are clothing, implements, houses, etc. used for customs or traditions related to food, clothing, housing, trades, religion, annual observances, etc. which are essential for understanding changes to the life of nationals.” Through this description, it can be inferred that even if they are not intangible cultural heritage, folk resources are inseparably related to it. Therefore, I would like to mention that in some cases, folklore resources need to be considered within the category of intangible cultural heritage.

Now let me discuss more about traditional crafts in the contexts of the UNESCO Safeguarding Convention and the Korean Act on the Safeguarding and Promotion of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Before anything else, it is most important to consider them as the combined set defined in the two frameworks. In Korea, traditional crafts have a broad coverage including (b) traditional skills concerning crafts, art, etc. and (e) traditional ways of living concerning food, clothing, shelter, etc. (in Article 2(1)2 of the Cultural Heritage Protection Act) as well as folklore resources, i.e., “clothing, implements, houses, etc. used for customs or traditions related to food,

clothing, housing, trades, religion, annual observances, etc. which are essential for understanding changes to the life of nationals” (in Article 2(1)4 of the same act). Needless to say, traditional crafts of contemporary society can be listed on the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage and Korean folklore resources. This adds a particularly important value to contemporary artisans’ work process and the outputs.

One thing that I would like to point out here is the narrow approach of considering traditional crafts only within the scope of intangible cultural heritage. While it is reasonable to regard traditional crafts as intangible cultural heritage, we also should pay attention to practitioners of traditional crafts, among those who have been designated as “Master Craftsmen of Korea” under the Act on Encouragement of Skilled Craftsmen. According to the Public Notice 2017-94 of the Ministry of Employment and Labor, Master Craftsmen can be recognized in various fields of crafts: porcelain, stonework, wood and lacquerware, embroidery, seal, jewellery and metalwork, and flower decoration. Master Craftsmen create works of art in a variety of fields of traditional crafts, but their activities are basically treated as “technical skills” rather than “cultural heritage.” More specifically, in the case of Master Craftsmen, transmission genealogy and local character are regarded as less important, so they receive lower social awareness and less support from the central and local governments—compared to holders of national intangible cultural heritage for whom relevant legislations had been enacted and enforced early on. In the context of modernization of tradition, it is therefore important to acknowledge the role Master Craftsmen play for the continuation and modernization of traditional handicrafts. In fact, there is a considerable number of Master Craftsmen who produce traditional handicrafts across the country, and their efforts should be valued lower than the holders of intangible cultural heritage.

3. Direction for Cultivating the Talented Craftspeople in the Field of Traditional Crafts

The necessity and direction for cultivating the talented craftspeople in the

field of traditional crafts are interlinked with the question of how people think about the future prospect of this field. In other words, if this field is activated, it is much easier to identify and nurture talents who will carry on the tradition. Labor costs of traditional craftspeople are considerably low, compared to those of workers in other fields. This is why securing the next-generation craftspeople is always a challenge. No matter how much traditional crafts are cherished, their value and significance cannot be passed on, if craftspeople have to struggle for a living. Ensuring better compensation and secure livelihood will likely facilitate the process of identifying new talents and providing them with a systematic education. Thus, cultivating successors of traditional crafts primarily depends on the revitalization of the field. To this end, I would like to make the following suggestions:

First, active support for the effective operation of education programs on traditional crafts is essential. Craftspeople have internalized technical skills and artistic skills, whether or not they are holders of intangible cultural heritage. They themselves have no difficulty putting the skills into practice, but those who learn the skills find it rather tricky to grasp and understand the craftsmen's technical and artistic skills. However, the current structure of transmission education is not effective to solve this problem. Usually, artisans demonstrate and describe the work process. Trainees then learn the skills by watching it over artisans' shoulders, asking questions, practicing by themselves, after which artisans evaluate their skill levels and give further instructions. In other words, the whole learning process is based on apprenticeship which lacks any systematic education programs and even textbooks in many cases. To remedy this, local governments need to provide support for systematic operation of the education. Many craftspeople with superb technical and artistic skills sometimes feel awkward when explaining their skills verbally or putting in writing. In such case, the work process can instead be photographed step by step. With some written information added to the photos, a very useful textbook can be generated. Local authorities can support its periodic reprinting every two or three years.

Second, efforts should be made to increase the compensation for craftspeople so as to promote the nurturing of the following generation craftspeople in this field. The labor costs of Korean workers are known to

be high, but the ongoing rate for craft workshops remains low. The reality that traditional artisans are paid less than manual workers at construction sites hurts their pride. As such, low wage is a big barrier to a steady supply of the future-generation craftspeople, and it is urgent to raise their wage rates. However, this will not be feasible without invigorating the traditional crafts industry in general. Making all-out efforts to bring vigor back into the industry is thus critical.

Third, focusing on the production of utilitarian traditional crafts and adequate publicity for consumption promotion is crucial to revitalize the industry and the nurturing of the future generation. A shortcut to higher consumption is to yield utilitarian craft goods and promote their utility and cultural meaning. If their consumption becomes activated, the traditional crafts industry will naturally become revitalized. The first thing to do for better publicity is to create a website on traditional crafts at the level of local government, craftspeople association, and workshop. When the website (including mobile version) is open, consumers will visit the site by themselves, find products, ask questions, and purchase them.

According to the findings on the sale channels of traditional craftworks from the 2007 survey of holders of intangible cultural heritage, the distribution of 133 responses of the 69 craftspeople is as follows (64 multiple responses included): they made or produced only by order from individuals (61 responses, 45.9%); they sold at intangible cultural heritage shops (23 responses, 17.3%); they used department stores and/or tourist shops (19 responses, 14.3%); and they had their own shops (17 responses, 12.8%) (B. Choi 2007, 49). This result shows that about half of the holders of intangible cultural heritage are engaged in customized production, which suggests that running permanent shops is not very meaningful.

Additionally, efforts should be made to expand the opportunities for targeted people to acknowledge the value of traditional crafts and purchase craft products. Traditional crafts are, in general, more expensive than modern reproduced ones, and have a limited clientele. Traditional craft consumers are in small number, usually being the so-called better-off people. If so, it is imperative to seek diverse ways to reach this small base of potential consumers. For instance, local governments can lay a bridge by arranging

promotion events at local business associations or national meetings of businessmen.

Fourth, the review system related to education needs to enhance the effectiveness of its management in order to achieve better results in nurturing the next generation in the traditional craft field. Currently, to learn traditional crafts of intangible cultural heritage designated by national or local governments, trainees are selected to attend a five-year education program. After this learning period, their capabilities are evaluated by the holders, and those who are proven to have attained a high level are recognized as "certified trainees." As of 2018, some metropolitan city governments did not offer scholarships to the trainees, causing difficulties for their program completion. When it is already challenging to attract willing trainees with a guaranteed scholarship, learning on their own without financial aid cannot generate good outcomes. It will be more reasonable for all local governments to adopt a policy to have the trainees receive the education with a scholarship for the full length of five years and then assess their capacities and issue the certificates of program completion. Needless to say, it is also important to recruit trainees through open channels, administer a curriculum- and textbook-based education, and establish the review system in which experts evaluate their skills before awarding the certificate.

Fifth, as is the case with holders of intangible cultural heritage, continuous support should be rendered to the Master Craftsmen of traditional crafts who have been designated by the Employment and Labor Ministry. Traditional crafts are not the field monopolized only by holders of intangible cultural heritage and their successors. Among the Master Craftsmen, there are also some dedicated producers of traditional handicrafts without being granted the status of holders of intangible cultural heritage even after completing the transmission program, or for the mere reason that their inheritance genealogy is not clear enough. That is, some of the victims of the intangible cultural heritage scheme still remain active in this field as Master Craftsmen. As they also make a great contribution to the transmission of traditional handicrafts, it is essential to extend support to them so that their artistic capabilities and expertise are passed on to the following generations.

4. Direction and Approaches of Support for the Field of Traditional Crafts

Institutional, economic, and administrative supports for certain activities in the private sector are generally provided when the activities are valuable, yet their situation or their very existence will likely be threatened if left unattended. Is the current field of traditional crafts at such a risk? While there are still people who dabble in traditional craft making to get some new experience, few people are actually trying to make a real career out of it. The successors of traditional crafts are, in most cases, the artisans' children who have helped their parents along the way and decided to follow in their footsteps. Without proactive intervention, this field is therefore bound to be a declining industry. Unless the central and local governments exert support in the following areas, it will be perilous to maintain the tradition:

First, local governments need to prepare and implement appropriate assistance programs to help craftspeople have a positive mindset and take pride in what they are doing. Across the nation, holders of intangible cultural heritage receive the transmission education subsidies and expenses necessary for holding demonstration events of their works.³ If there are still some metropolitan city governments that pay considerably less than others in transmission education subsidies, they should raise it to be on par. In general, metropolitan city governments give the transmission education subsidies to assistant instructors for successor training and scholarships (for five years) to trainees. However, some other governments did not even have such a system until 2018. Education and learning cannot be facilitated without some form of financial assistance to the assistant instructors and trainees.

Second, it is critical for the central and local governments to promote the traditional craft field by increasing financial support. According to the findings from the 2007 survey of holders of intangible cultural heritage in the area of traditional craftsmanship, the national financial assistance for the

3. As of 2018, some metropolitan city governments paid the holders 800,000 won per month in transmission education subsidies and an annual fee of 1.5 million won for holding public events to display their works. Yet the latter is too small to cover even the expenses for making banners, pamphlets, and brochures.

holders is at a similar level to what is offered to individuals under the welfare program. This suggests that the current awareness and appreciation of this field should be changed and improved (B. Choi 2007, 51). It is troubling that the holders who have expertise in traditional crafts are treated this way. More than ten years have passed since the 2007 survey, yet how they feel about their treatment by the government does not seem to have changed much. If the central government is unwilling, local governments should act, but there has been little effort. Therefore, it is necessary for local governments to develop complementary measures and implement them.

Third, traditional craft workshops are the workplace of craftspeople. Many are in a poor condition and need support to replenish the equipment and purchase tools for trainees. Depending on the items produced, some workshops generate a lot of dust and need dust collection facility. As the work involves a lot of manual labor, heating and cooling equipment is needed as well. Support for facility expansion and regular maintenance should be considered for those in need of it. A poor working environment combined with low wage not only undermines trainees' motivation to learn, but also their health is negatively affected. In addition, depending on the nature of the workplace, instruments may be needed on a per person basis. Where there are several trainees at work, several sets are needed, so sufficient supply is necessary.

Fourth, support for the development of not just traditional crafts but tradition-based utilitarian items is essential. Even for holders of intangible cultural heritage, if they are required to produce traditional artifacts only, sooner or later they will suffer economic hardships. It is important to take action to help them lead a self-dependent life. To achieve this, local governments should make institutional arrangement so that the holders can produce both traditional works and modern creative ones modelled on them.

In the case of holders of intangible cultural heritage in the field of traditional crafts, their activity is bound by a fixed frame at the time of designation, from the production items to the producing techniques. As far as the designated items are concerned, they are supposed to use traditional skills and teach them to their trainees. The problem is, when they are dedicated solely to the transmission of traditional handicrafts, they have to

cope with the usually low demand for their products, and also neglect their role of developing crafts in tune with the contemporary era. Besides, they can hardly escape deprivation in life. Therefore, it is encouraged to establish a policy which can help counter their economic difficulties by allowing them to develop creative works in response to the demand of contemporary society. The only thing to note here is that they must not use their title (Intangible Cultural Heritage No. XX) on any modernized or creative crafts (Bae 2018, 92).

Fifth, it is important to enhance the transmission education by supporting textbooks, video productions, and documentation by traditional craftspeople. In the past, traditional artisans learned mainly by watching and listening over the master's shoulder without textbooks. This form of apprenticeship has strengths, but with textbooks, everyone can obtain an easy access and an objective view. In the simplest way, photographs with short descriptions about the work process broken down by each item will make a useful teaching material. Also, if an enlarged and supplemented revision is printed every two or three years, it will become an important reference book and even a good portrayal of the life history of the craftspeople concerned. In fact, the learning material does not have to be in a book form. It can be made in a video, or even personal documentation of the craft-making process by the artisan will do. In any case, it would be better if textbook production or other types of documentation can be completed by a university research institute or by academic experts. Realistically speaking, this very specialized work may be too challenging for craftspeople who are already occupied with craft making.

Sixth, it is important to develop easily accessible channels for the general public to have the opportunities to see and purchase artisans' works. Many people do not know much about traditional crafts, so they may not have the urge to buy them until they see them with their own eyes. In particular, detailed descriptions of the techniques, materials, usages, and artisans will enhance the understanding of the works. Also, as traditional crafts are made in small quantity honoring the hand-making tradition, wrapping without spoiling their value is a challenge. This is especially true for any work purchased online and needs to be shipped. For a possible solution, craftspeople associations can help by producing wrapping paper and boxes

with modular specifications.

Moreover, museums and local governments can encourage the production activities of traditional craftspeople by purchasing a certain number of their works on display at exhibitions and expositions. For museums, it can be a way to collect future display items in advance, and local governments can use them at cultural events or as gifts to their overseas sister cities. Since the enforcement of what is called the Kim Young-ran Act in Korea, public offices have stopped buying even small pieces of crafts to give out as gifts; this has made selling crafts even more difficult. It is deemed that some institutional complementary measures need to be taken.⁴

Seventh, in the age of globalization, it is necessary to not limit the traditional crafts market to the domestic and take advantage of the overseas market, and support such efforts. Foreign countries, too, have traditional crafts, so it is necessary to form an inter-country alliance and organize international events regularly. Supportive measures are needed to promote exchanges with foreign craftspeople and encourage joint exhibitions. Through these activities, domestic traditional crafts can be introduced to the external market. It is also desirable to provide support and consultation on the development of crafts appealing to overseas consumers.⁵

Eighth, it is important that the intangible cultural heritage committees of metropolitan city governments maintain their own specialized expertise on the field of traditional crafts. The Act on the Safeguarding and Promotion of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which was enacted in 2015 and entered

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4. According to the 2007 survey, 140 responses were obtained from 70 holders of intangible cultural heritage on their exhibition channels (70 multiple responses included): the responses of “exhibit through invitation or group exhibitions” (65 responses, 46.4%) took the largest proportion, followed by “exhibit through invitation from museums or art galleries” (48 responses, 34.3%), “set up an exhibition space on (my) own” (22 responses, 15.7%), “have no suitable exhibition space” (3 responses, 2.1%), and “(my) works are not (fit) for exhibition” (2 responses, 1.4%) (B. Choi 2007, 48).
 5. According to the 2007 survey, responses received from 71 holders of intangible cultural heritage regarding “whether they had the experience of working on site for their works sold to or ordered from overseas,” 43 respondents (60.6%) had the experience, whereas 28 (39.4%) did not. The countries craftspeople had the experience in were: Japan (29 respondents), the United States (20), Germany (5), France (4), Canada (3), China (3), Italy (2), the United Kingdom (1), Russia (1), and the Middle East (1) (B. Choi 2007, 49).

into force in 2016, was separated out from the preceding Cultural Heritage Protection Act, in order to be dedicated to the intangible cultural heritage. Intangible cultural heritage was singled out from cultural heritage in general, as it concerns, in nature, technical skills or artistic skills that living humans possess, which makes it distinctive from the tangible cultural heritage. Artifacts made by holders of intangible cultural heritage can eventually be designated as tangible cultural heritage after some time, so the former is more comprehensive in scope than the latter. The cultural heritage committees should move beyond demonstrating their expertise mainly in the area of tangible cultural heritage, and address and manage intangible cultural heritage in a broader perspective: this forms the logical ground to require their independent operation. The committees can help activate this craft field by maintaining their specialty and by planning the activities involved in the investigation, designation, and deliberation of intangible cultural heritage.

Ninth, for an efficient management of financial support, I would like to propose that a research institute(s) specializing in intangible cultural heritage administers and manages the budget with a goal of invigorating traditional crafts. Generally speaking, conflicts can arise over fund-related issues and financial aid may not bring concrete outcomes. As a way to avoid these problems and to vitalize traditional crafts, specialized research institutes and craftspeople can work together to draw up action plans and implement the budget. An activity is seen as fruitful and rewarding, only when the outcome is concretely manifested, be it a book, a work of craft, a photobook, or a video. Hence, I think, for the sake of effectiveness, craftspeople may as well leave this matter to the experts, yet making sure that the budget is executed in accordance with the fundamental principle of the vitalization of traditional crafts.

5. Practical Efforts Called for Traditional Craftspeople

I do not mean to make traditional craftspeople one-sided beneficiaries by proposing institutional and financial support for them. Even if they get the support, there are many things they should do for themselves to vitalize this

field. I am making the suggestions, because the current field is vulnerable to discontinuation or decline despite its immense value. I also want to add that we need to help them become self-dependent by extending consistent institutional and financial assistance, and it should be recognized that, even if they receive the support, they should exert voluntary efforts to achieve self-dependence. To achieve this, let me make the following suggestions to traditional craftspeople:

First, while traditional crafts should be passed down with their authentic characteristics kept intact, their modernization should also be sought in order to ensure security in the livelihoods of craftspeople. In other words, a two-track approach is needed that concerns both the traditional skills and methods and the modern skills and methods. The former are what craftspeople produce as part of their duty, and the latter are what they do for modern representation of tradition and its modernization in the spirit of “creating the new, based on the old.” Indeed, modernization of traditional crafts is an effective way to reach a wide range of consumers by allowing their supply at affordable prices. Each artisan should work for the successful realization of the two-tier scheme. One reminder here is that holders of intangible cultural heritage should not use the title of “intangible cultural heritage” for the products falling into the latter category.

Second, traditional craftspeople are asked to make efforts to produce teaching materials by themselves. With or without financial support, delivery of transmission education is what they are mandated to do. They should act to secure financial aid from the central and local governments for the production of teaching materials for training, and also ensure to include accurate and well-organized information, especially when they receive subsidies. They can make textbooks for internal use at their workshop. Assistant instructors can perform the work, but that will not be easy. If the holders of intangible cultural heritage make the effort directly, a fairly decent textbook can come out—even if it may not be something academic or systematized.

The responses obtained from the 2007 survey of holders of intangible cultural heritage seem to have great implications, although they concern intangible cultural heritage at only the national and metropolitan city levels

(B. Choi 2007, 44-46). For the question, “Are you involved in educating the next-generation craftspeople?,” 69 out of 71 respondents gave a positive response, indicating that 97.2% operated some type of a training system. In terms of the delivery format of the training, “in my workshop” was the most frequent response with 64 (68.8%) out of the 93 responses (24 multiple responses included), followed by “lecture at formal educational institutions such as universities” (13 responses, 14.0%) and “group instruction” (12 responses, 12.9%).

When they were asked if “they make and use teaching materials or a resource package for the education to foster the next generation,” 43 (60.6%) out of 71 respondents responded negatively, whereas 28 (39.4%) responded positively. These results show that in 2007 almost all holders conducted transmission education to foster the upcoming generation, but more than half of them (60.6%) did not use proper teaching materials or a resource kit for delivering the lessons, implying a limited effectiveness of their education. Even apprenticeship-style training can be much more effective when a textbook or a resource package is available. Therefore, production of textbooks is critical to improve the effect of transmission education funds.

Third, craftspeople are advised to keep a work diary for themselves. Accumulation of the work diaries written daily or by work processes can generate their own life history, the history of their workshop, and even a microhistory of Korea’s traditional industry. Indeed, these recordings may become the very history of the twentieth or twenty-first century Korean traditional crafts.⁶ Craftspeople should therefore understand such important meaning of recording their daily activities in person and be encouraged to do so. It will be even better, if their recordings cover a wide range of things,

6. For example, in the case of the Suwon Hwaseong Fortress registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List, the presence of *Suwon hwaseong seongyeok uigwe* (Records of Suwon Hwaseong Fortress Construction), the whitepaper on the construction of the fortress received a lot of credit. Needless to say, its magnificent beauty and strong fortification earned a good review. In addition to them, the records in the book on the workers’ names, working periods and wages revealed that the real-name construction work system was in operation at the time. Also, in case of damage or collapse, the fortress could be repaired based on the book, so its scientific value was highly appreciated.

including workers, role allocation, wages, purchase places and prices of raw materials, the volume of traditional crafts produced and sold, shops and prices of sales made, etc. It will be very meaningful to introduce supportive measures for people who keep a work diary voluntarily.

Fourth, education programs of traditional crafts need to be open regularly and adopt a certification system. Education is supposed to target people who lack relevant knowledge and skills. This means that the achievement of education and learning goes through several stages before reaching a certain level. The process that a boy grows into a seasoned farmer in agrarian society can be divided into four phases: i) watch over a farmer's shoulder and emulate; ii) ask questions and correct mistakes; iii) make independent judgments and practice repeatedly; and iv) learn the secret know-how and accumulate it (Bae 2003, 423-439). This learning process is no different in the field of traditional crafts. When learning takes place in a piecemeal fashion, it will take a longer period, whereas training that occurs for a longer duration at a time will require a shorter period. Each workshop can develop and operate a certification system for those who have reached a sufficiently high level, by working with devotion, investing a fair number of time, acquiring the know-how, and endlessly practicing. The specifics of the system can be differentiated by area of craft, by workshop, and by the amount of time the instructor and the learner meet and spend time together.

Fifth, if traditional craft associations are organized at the levels of metropolitan or basic local governments, they should request the central and/or local governments to establish and implement long-term and systematic assistance measures (B. Choi 2007, 50). Requests made by individual artisans will face bigger obstacles and a lower likelihood of realization. To be more effective, the associations can act on behalf of their members, and specific requests should be made by categorizing practical difficulties confronting the field of traditional crafts and identifying concrete ways to improve them. It should also include explicit description of the characteristics and limitations of the intangible cultural heritage system, and the direction and extent of the administrative support required. This is because local governments tend not to be well aware of the realistic difficulties faced by traditional craftspeople.

6. Keeping the Aura and Beauty of Handicrafts in the Era of Mechanical Reproduction

How can we set out the proper direction to retain the cultural identity when transmitting the Korean traditional handicrafts in the era of globalization? For this matter, we can ponder on the following remarks made by Cheon Jingi: “The current actions to vitalize craft heritage are oriented towards the ‘glocal standards,’ but I hope to see that more serious attention is paid to the local standards than the global standards, which are primarily reflective of the characteristics of Korean crafts. That is because the local standards are, in themselves, the basis for a sound understanding of Korea’s craft heritage and its globalization” (Cheon 2017, 240).

Then, what are the local standards of Korean traditional crafts? Certainly, what is uniquely Korean may also remain as only a local standard at the global level. Yet, keeping the local diversity alive in Korea can also contribute to maintaining the local characteristics of traditional crafts, provided that it is recognized as a local standard at the national level. The assessment that technical and artistic skills of holders and successors of intangible cultural heritage are what they have acquired “by hand and eye, i.e., through the body” over a long period of time, armed with rigorous Korean creative spirit (Cheon 2017, 243), can be applied to the field of traditional crafts. When the imposing aura and pragmatic beauty of handicrafts remain intact, which have been accumulated through long experiences of not just holders of intangible cultural heritage but also the Master Craftsmen of Korea, we can invigorate national and local traditional crafts and pave the way for their entry into the world.

The artisan’s handmade craftwork has the aura which is certainly absent in a reproduced one, whether the craftwork, including modern works, aesthetically maintains or is based on traditional style and design. For Benjamin, the unique value of the “authentic” work of art has its base in ritual, the location of its original use value (Benjamin 2007, 111). In his view, the aura of the work of art originated from the secular form of the cult of beauty. But in modern society, the handmade craft has the aura, even if it has no ritual character, or has nothing to do with a ritual function to begin with.

As Benjamin correctly points out, in this age of mechanical reproduction, handicrafts are distinguished from reproduced ones in that they have the attributes of artistic uniqueness, authenticity, and singleness.⁷ This artistic nature of handmade craftworks should be retained and transmitted for the cultivation and invigoration of the talented craftspeople in the field of traditional crafts.

The modern industrial society is characterized by the division of labor, specialization, and commodification. The acceleration of the first two features through reproduction technology has made mass production possible. Before the appearance of reproduction technology, artists created handmade works of art one by one in their own style. But today, reproduction technology industrializes popular works of art—which are essentially different from handmade creations—through mass production of artistic works which are identical in material, size, and form. In the case of crafts, fabrication is a prevalent feature in a large part of the manufacturing process, which is dominated by mechanical mass production. The finishing stage is changing, however, so that the artists inspect the outputs and make the efforts to ensure the quality of the products. Despite these changes, reproduced crafts in the age of mechanical reproduction still lack the aura and can only convey a standardized duplicated beauty.

People who make reproduced crafts cannot be regarded as authentic craftspeople or artists. Their manufacturers simply repeat churning out a reproduced beauty as an image, and do not produce a creative beauty except when making a new form of model for reproduction. Aloof from handicrafts, reproduced crafts cannot attain uniqueness and authenticity which are grounded on creativity. Artisans who make *hakata-ori* (博多織), a famed traditional textile of Japan, often say that “one who wants to learn how to make *hakata-ori* should be made cry countlessly.” Ogawa Kisaburo 小川貴三郎, a Living National Treasure of Japan, interprets this as meaning that “children who are going to succeed family business should be taught sternly

7. Kim Seok-jin argues that in the digital age in which the work of art is reproduced over and over through the media, the aura is not destroyed, but transformed to be manifested in a new form (Kim 2011).

and severely so that they can make their way through the rough world” (Hwang 2014, 501). This illustrates the fact that the transmission of traditional handicrafts is impossible without the painful process of ensuring accuracy and preciseness. What comes out of this process is the aestheticism of the uniqueness and authenticity of traditional crafts.

In this regard, maintaining and reviving the aesthetic value of traditional crafts should be the direction for the cultivation and support of the future-generation craftspeople in the field of traditional crafts. To recover and transmit the intrinsic value of traditional handicrafts will form the ground to reinstate the status of utilitarian crafts, ritual crafts, decorative crafts, and crafts for social relations, in accordance with the UNESCO World Heritage classification standards. Referring to the Korean Act on the Safeguarding and Promotion of Intangible Cultural Heritage, this is the way to revive the value of cultural diversity in Korean culture on which traditional crafts must continue to flourish. There is more than just the “utilitarian beauty” and “decorative beauty” in traditional handicrafts, which have been widely discussed in this field for so long. There are also “ritual beauty” and “social beauty” in traditional crafts that have been shaped within Korean culture and form the unique Korean aura. Hence, to maintain and transmit the aesthetics and aura of traditional Korean handicrafts is the artistic premise and the objective for nurturing and supporting talented craftspeople in this field.

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