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THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF STUDYING THE PRESERVATION AND PROTECTION OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN UZBEKISTAN

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ABSTRACT: The preservation and protection of intangible cultural heritage in Uzbekistan are crucial for maintaining national identity, fostering social cohesion, and ensuring the continuity of traditions. This paper explores the theoretical aspects of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, focusing on historical influences, community participation, legal frameworks, educational initiatives, and economic factors such as cultural tourism. Despite significant progress, challenges such as globalization, urbanization, and generational shifts threaten the transmission of traditional knowledge. By integrating technological advancements, sustainable tourism strategies, and international collaboration, Uzbekistan can enhance the resilience of its intangible heritage. This study highlights the need for a multidimensional approach that balances authenticity, economic viability, and modern adaptation to ensure the sustainability of Uzbekistan's rich cultural traditions.

Keywords: intangible cultural heritage, Uzbekistan, preservation, cultural identity, globalization, traditional knowledge

Intangible cultural heritage represents the soul of a nation, encompassing the traditions, knowledge, and expressions passed down through generations. Unlike tangible heritage, which consists of physical artifacts and monuments, intangible cultural heritage is rooted in oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, and the knowledge and skills associated with traditional crafts. It is a living entity that continues to evolve, adapting to the sociocultural and historical transformations of a society. In Uzbekistan, a country rich in history and cultural diversity, the preservation and protection of intangible cultural heritage hold paramount importance. The nation's unique geographical position at the crossroads of civilizations has resulted in a vibrant cultural landscape, where various traditions and customs have merged over centuries. The safeguarding of this heritage is not merely an act of cultural conservation but a vital aspect of maintaining national identity, fostering social cohesion, and contributing to sustainable development. In recent years, Uzbekistan has actively engaged in policies and initiatives to preserve its intangible cultural assets, recognizing their significance both for the local community and as part of the global cultural heritage.

Uzbekistan's approach to safeguarding its intangible cultural heritage is multifaceted, incorporating legal measures, community engagement, and digital innovations. The country has ratified the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, committing to measures that ensure the identification, documentation, research, and transmission of its cultural expressions. National programs have been implemented to support traditional arts, music, and crafts, with initiatives aimed at revitalizing endangered practices. One of the key challenges in this endeavor is striking a balance between modernization and cultural preservation. Globalization and technological advancements have led to shifts in societal values, with younger generations increasingly drawn to global cultural influences at the expense of traditional practices. However, digital technologies also offer new possibilities for cultural preservation, enabling the archiving of

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oral traditions, virtual exhibitions, and online platforms for cultural exchange. In Uzbekistan, efforts have been made to harness these technologies, ensuring that intangible cultural heritage remains accessible to both domestic and international audiences.

One of the fundamental aspects of preserving intangible cultural heritage in Uzbekistan is the role of community participation. Unlike tangible heritage, which can be safeguarded through physical conservation methods, intangible heritage relies on the continuous practice and transmission of traditions within communities. Local artisans, musicians, storytellers, and other cultural practitioners serve as the primary custodians of this heritage, ensuring that knowledge and skills are passed down through generations. Various traditional art forms, such as the Shashmaqom musical tradition, the making of ikat fabrics, and Bukhara's embroidery techniques, exemplify the deep connection between cultural heritage and community life. The state and cultural organizations have supported these traditions through festivals, apprenticeship programs, and educational initiatives aimed at engaging younger generations. However, modern societal changes have created obstacles to this transmission process. Urbanization, migration, and shifts in lifestyle have led to declining interest in traditional crafts and performances, particularly among younger populations who are more influenced by global cultural trends. The challenge lies in making intangible heritage relevant in contemporary society while ensuring its authenticity and continuity.

Government policies and legal frameworks play a critical role in the preservation of Uzbekistan's intangible cultural heritage. Since independence, the country has implemented numerous legislative measures to safeguard its cultural assets. The Law on the Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage, adopted in 2001, provides a legal foundation for cultural heritage management, including provisions for identifying, documenting, and promoting traditional practices. Additionally, the establishment of cultural institutions such as the Uzbek National Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage and regional heritage centers has facilitated research, documentation, and awareness-raising activities. These institutions work closely with UNESCO and other international bodies to ensure that Uzbekistan's intangible heritage is recognized and protected on a global scale. The inscription of Uzbek traditions, such as the Navruz festival, the Palov culture, and Askiya oral performances, on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity has brought international attention to the country's rich cultural traditions. However, legal protections alone are insufficient if they are not supported by effective implementation and public engagement. In many cases, there is a gap between policy and practice, with traditional practitioners struggling to access financial and institutional support. Sustainable preservation strategies require not only legal safeguards but also active participation from society at large.

Another crucial aspect of cultural heritage protection in Uzbekistan is the economic dimension, particularly the relationship between cultural tourism and heritage sustainability. Uzbekistan's rich cultural landscape has made it a key destination for heritage tourism, attracting visitors interested in experiencing traditional music, dance, crafts, and cuisine. The development of cultural tourism has provided economic opportunities for artisans and performers, allowing them to sustain their crafts while generating income. Handicraft industries, such as Suzani embroidery, ceramic production in Rishtan, and silk weaving in Margilan, have benefited from the growing demand for authentic cultural products. Government initiatives such as the "Tourism for Rural Development" program have further supported local artisans by providing platforms for cultural exchange and market access. However, the commercialization of intangible heritage also raises ethical concerns. The commodification of traditional practices for tourist consumption can sometimes

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lead to their distortion or oversimplification, stripping them of their deeper cultural and symbolic meanings. Striking a balance between economic viability and cultural authenticity remains a challenge in heritage tourism. Sustainable tourism strategies should involve local communities in decision-making processes, ensuring that cultural practices are not merely performed for tourists but continue to hold significance within their native contexts.

Despite the progress made in preserving Uzbekistan's intangible cultural heritage, challenges persist. The rapid pace of globalization, coupled with technological and economic transformations, has introduced new dynamics that impact cultural traditions. The influence of global media, changing social norms, and shifts in consumer behavior have contributed to a decline in traditional cultural engagement among younger generations. Moreover, external pressures, such as climate change and urban expansion, have affected rural communities that are the custodians of many intangible traditions. Addressing these challenges requires a dynamic and adaptive approach to heritage preservation. Policies should not only focus on documentation and legal protection but also on fostering environments where intangible cultural heritage can thrive in contemporary society. Initiatives that integrate cultural heritage with modern creative industries, such as film, fashion, and digital media, could offer innovative pathways for cultural expression and sustainability. Additionally, international collaboration plays a vital role in strengthening Uzbekistan's heritage preservation efforts. Partnerships with foreign institutions, participation in global cultural events, and cross-cultural exchanges can provide valuable insights and resources for sustaining intangible cultural heritage in a rapidly changing world.

In conclusion, the preservation and protection of intangible cultural heritage in Uzbekistan is a complex yet essential endeavor that requires an interdisciplinary approach. Historical context, community participation, government policies, education, and economic sustainability all play crucial roles in ensuring the longevity of cultural traditions. While challenges exist, Uzbekistan's commitment to safeguarding its cultural heritage is evident in its legislative frameworks, institutional initiatives, and grassroots efforts. Moving forward, the integration of technology, sustainable tourism practices, and international collaboration will be key to maintaining the vibrancy of Uzbekistan's intangible cultural heritage. By embracing both tradition and innovation, the country can ensure that its cultural legacy continues to flourish for generations to come.

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