

**Creating A Living Space
Adaptable to the Culture and
Tradition of Mankind and
Shape the Perpetuity of Culture**

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I. Naturalness Full of Life Is the Best Way to Represent the Intangible Culture

The pursuit for a beautiful life is the endless effort of mankind for generations. It is the most touching scene of human activity.

Walking into life and touching the history and culture is the feature of the Chinese Museum, a tangible living space adapted to the culture and tradition of mankind. In this enlightening cultural space, it is a real-time reflection of existence and personality. When visitors enter into the original living space of minority nationalities with natural and harmonious feeling, such unusual but familiar personal environment will lead people to pursue the fair, kind and truth in their heart. Experiencing the human cultural heritage in the natural environment is a waking up and rejuvenation of life. During this random tour of life, the museum is no more a preacher. It becomes a participant in the process of self-recovery.

Freedom is the highest award for the culture-rich tour in the museum. Visitors can freely, unconsciously and enjoyably walk into the culture. When their eyes and fingers touch upon the tender scene of bridge and brook, girls of Dai nationality will lead them to the subtropical jungle culture. Such a cultural space in the open air will wake up the subconsciousness of visitors and make them proactively enter into an imaginary reality. With the shaping of abstract concept into real objects and the making single introduction into a cultural environment, we have built a perpetual reflection of intangible culture.

From the gate of the Chinese Museum, we first come to the first district. A “pilgrims way” leading to the famous Tibetan Dazhao Temple will channel the visitors from modern life into a mysterious and huge granite jungle. Each of the granite here is several dozen or even several hundred times of human body, inscribed with legends and Buddhist scriptures. Following the zigzagging and ascending path, the visitors’ horizon is fully occupied with the tremendous rock jungle, with blue sky and the temple afar occasionally jumping in. Every visitor is like faithful Tibetans, climbing up despite of the lack of oxygen on the plateau. The path through the rocky jungle suddenly ends with an open square. A “Lahsa” appears in front of the visitors, with the majestic Dazhao temple and figures of Tibetan Buddhists chanting scriptures in crimson cassock and surrounded by traditional Tibetan architectures such as the Altar City, Eight Corner Street, Kangba-style folk houses and Rotating Scripture Corridor. The visitors are unconsciously overwhelmed by the living environment and the plateau culture of Tibet.

Following the Tibetan District comes the villages of 45 minority nationalities, including the people of Qiang, Jingpo, Hani, Wa, Miao, Yi, Buyi, Tong, Mongolia, Uygur, Elunchun, Korean, Taiwanese, Dai, etc.. All the villages are of 1:1 ratio, surrounded with brooks, small bridges, terraced field, stockade villages and dams. The visitors will experience both matrimonial society and slavery society, drinking joyful wines, listening the chattering of chickens and ducks and smelling the scent of paddy and flowers. It provides the visitors with the several-thousand year history of the Chinese nation, the history of development of human being and pictures of unique cultures and traditions.

Selecting a tangible and natural village community and harmonious living environment and making it a new carrier for culture will fully display the tangible and intangible human heritage in the new carrier.

The new carrier model is our reflection on human culture and revolution of the traditional cultural form. It is a creation of the living space for “new cultural relics”. The five thousand year history of the Chinese Nation is not only China’s asset, but the common heritage of the world. When the cultural activities such as living, production and religion are exhibited together, you will not consider the commune system of primitive society a bad culture. When the villages and thatched cottages are connected by their cultural links, the single cultural codes are turned into a thriving and moving intact social structure. All the common daily utensils, such as baskets, picul stick, pot, spoon, bowl, chopsticks or bamboo pipe, have now become the testimony for human history. In such a three dimensional space, the mind of the visitors will stop at each “society”, learning history and reflecting their own culture. In this sense, all the “folk objects” in the villages are valuable cultural relics, filled with sound cultural significance.

When we put “cultural relics” into the “society”, they have exceeded any historical interpretation or language and become irreplaceable by any written language. As “cultural relics”, their role in reflecting the time and space is indescribable by any written language.

In this cultural space, each grass or tree in the village has changed from their single identity into a information unit reflecting history and culture. The organic link and cultural characteristics among these relics are far beyond the value of a tangible cultural relic. In this sense, the living space in the village is not only the living conditions of human being. They have become the reflection of the spirit of mankind. It contains rich historical and cultural information. When they are put in the museum, the static

scenery is filled with humanity and the harmonious coexistence. They have replaced the cold exhibition counters and bring the visitors back home, to the history of human being.

Back to my home, the familiar home that I once had. This is the model our museum uses to displace the continuity and aliveness of human cultural heritage. It is also the comprehensive measures for the protection of intangible cultural heritage.

Protect our “home” and never let it disappear.

II. Vitality Comes from the Grassroot

Mass culture is the basic living culture, with wide and large amount of usage. The richness of the Chinese history makes mass culture extremely hard to control or depict, and thus unable to be displaced with traditional way of exhibition. We have created a “familiar” cultural space and let the cultural information freely organize itself in this space. With the integration of tangible heritage and intangible heritage, the mass culture has been fully displayed.

In order to enrich this tangible living space with clear-cut cultural consciousness and cultural identity, we have designed a dozen “homes” in the main exhibition hall, with each home representing a specific theme. These “homes” are not “families”, they are “homes” for a period of human life, such as “young girl’s bedroom”, “study”, “baby-nurturing room”, “ancestral room”, “post and dock”, “weaving room”, “farm courtyard”, etc.. The use of a period of life to reflect the phenomena of human life and the cultural conditions of that period can make the visitors reidentify themselves and reestablish their cultural and historical values.

For a large scale in-house cultural exhibition on the historical life pattern, production articles and intangible legacies, the first problem is how to deal with such a cultural space with too much “static cultural relics”. There is no such condition as the natural environment outdoor, which can ignite cultural imagination. The living condition full of vitality has been frozen by the cold articles and “dead” objects. An exiting and natural life has suddenly fallen into a quiet space that one can smell the history and death.

For such a “suddenness”, if the cultural environment is not dealt with properly, many valuable historical cultural relics will lose the true value and the cultural information imbedded in them. However, the cultural

background and cultural consciousness generated by this “deal” cultural space is irreplaceable by any other cultural spaces or cultural forms. This is the relationship between life and death and the relationship between past and present, which is the most daunting but mysterious place that men want to know most yet are most afraid to know.

We have readjusted the positioning of the exhibition and let people feel and experience themselves. We try to make the cultural information touch the sense and consciousness of the visitors with different identities, satisfy their spiritual enjoyment and make the visitors proactively adjust their mind, use their spiritual feeling to perfect it and affirm its value of existence. This is an effective cubic cultural space full of cultural reflection.

The use of a period of human life to create a cultural exhibition turns the “dead” and “past” cultural forms into “live” and “moving” cultural activities, making people reconsider and readjust their positions. It makes the dialogue with the past from something daunting and intriguing into a tangible, recallable and amicable event.

In the “Ancestral Room”, all the articles there are the sacrifices for the ancestors. They are from various families at different historical periods. If they are just put in the exhibition counters, besides a testimony of death, there is no more cultural information.

Ancestral Room – red

There is a traditional two-leaf door at the main entrance. All the visitors have to step over the door bank to go in. Such an arrangement symbolizes the history, past and distance.

The door is a gigantic one with fissuration and traces of serious wind-erosion. Some of the iron items on the door are missing, while the remainders get rusty. The frame, threshold, bank and plug of the door are still in place, speaking for the “tradition”.

The walls at the north and the south side are replaced by black chicken wire, with red cloth tapes tied on, calling for the blessing from the deity. Various fonts of traditional Chinese characters are written on the tapes, hinting the pious reverence for unknown mysterious forces.

The west side of the room is a weather-bitten and fire-smoked wall, patched by several old carved wooden wall plates. Various kinds of masks on the wall symbolize the power of death.

The whole room is decorated into a mortuary temple or the ancestral room of a family. Every feretory, inscription tablet, memorial tablet, sacrifice table, offering and the sculptures of the Buddha are restored according to the traditional sacrifice practice. Such a decoration has created the religious culture environment, featured by the reverence and belief in deity, ancestors and parents.

In order to enhance the stereoscopic and spacious vision of this cultural carrier, we have intentionally changed the traditional way of simple depiction of the cultural relics in writing the foreword. Rather, we make the foreword a depiction of history and cultural events. The visitors' understanding will be elevated from a single article to a cultural platform, and then from the cultural platform to an intact cultural conception.

The foreword of "Ancestral Room" is as follows:

"'Ancestral Room' is a unity between the Chinese people and deity.

The belief, reverence and ideology of the Chinese ancestors formed over the past thousands of years have become an inseparable part of their daily life and the pillar for their spiritual life. Household sacrifice is something that cannot be missed in the representation of grassroot belief. It has fully demonstrated the people's psychology of hoping blessing from the deity. Visitors now can revisualize the dry and solemn notion of deity, making them more idealistic and closer to the life of common citizens.

With the deterrence of the nature and the ruthless struggle in the society, individuals in the ancient time are powerless. They count on the blessing from their ancestors and the blessing from the deity in the heaven. This comes from their basic need for survival. They offer incense, kowtow and pray for happiness. Good food and drink should be enjoyed by the ancestors and deities first. Otherwise, bad luck will come.

People wish their ancestors to live with them and help them to fight against hardship. That is why all kinds of feretory look like houses for human being. They have frames, eaves, doors and windows. Some of them even bear the characters of luck, happiness, longevity, peace and safety. In summary, only the ancestors and deities are made happy can the living have abundant food and clothing.

From ancestors to families, from families to households and from households to posterity, this is the cultural and spirit of family. Adults tell

their children not to forget about their ancestors and their words of wisdom.”

The decoration of the “baby-nurturing room” has highlighted another period of life and fully display the joyful atmosphere and parental love during baby-nurturing.

“Baby-nurturing Room”—light colors for children: red, yellow and green

The front wall is decorated by a pile of “month-old boxes”, which are gifts presented by the grandma when the child is month-old according to the tradition in Shanxi and Shaanxi Provinces. Each red box bears a different painting of “hundred children playing” or “chubby baby”, symbolizing the people’s hope of having more children and more happiness.

The walls on the north and south side of the room are decorated with all kinds of wind wheels. The rotating wheels fill the room with the happiness of children.

The door of the “baby-nurturing room” is a typical one of a traditional small family. On the door, there is a pair of Spring Festival pictures featured by chubby babies holding carps in their arms. The kites and baby masks hanging on the door are swinging with the breeze. Added by various baby-nurturing tools scattered around on the ground, beds and cabinets and a row of chubby bed stones for the purpose of keep babies from falling from the bed, it presents a peaceful and joyful environment and reminds the visitors of their lovely childhood.

“Raising children is the most important task for the folks. A celebration is due with the berth of a new baby. In the “month-old box”, the grandma has already prepared the cap, shoes and small coat for her grandson. On the month-old celebration day, the grandma will carry the red box decorated with pictures of “Five Tigers” and “Hundred Children Playing” and stride into the courtyard of her daughter with top happiness. All the young women and old grandma in the village will come and participate the celebration, praising the good craftsmanship of the box and richness of the family.

All the pictures in the room, such as “Golden Boys and Jade Girls”, “Five Children Winning the Academy Awards” and “Hundred Children with

Hundred Percent Happiness”, symbolize the hope of the people and prosperity of the family.

In the world of children, toys are their treasures. These simple, colorful and lovely folk toys, such as cloth tiger, mud money and golden lions, are both “heroes” in the heart of the children and the mascot for the adults. They can protect the growth and safety of their children. A piece of “bed stone” can both protect the baby from falling from the bed and resist the bad luck. When busy working in the field, the parents can only entrust their deer to the “stone Buddha”. When the baby is tired from playing, he can use the “stone money” as a pillow. In this situation, the bed stone becomes a partner and a reliable friend. The bed stones have witnessed the growth of generations of mums and dads. Life begins with the first conversation with them.”

With the gray colored decoration, “Post and Dock” symbolizes several thousand years of development of transportation. The visitors will experience the toughness as well as the tenderness of human life.

1. In the “boat” room, the background is decorated by fishnet, with “dragon head” of the dragon boat and helms from all kinds of boat hanging around. The surface is decorated with pebbles, symbolizing brooks and banks.
2. In the “carriage” room, all the carriages are arranged as if it is in a post. In front of each carriage, there is a trough of over a hundred years old, symbolizing the history of transportation and the busy atmosphere with the rolling of the wheels.
3. Among the row of carriages, there are some sedans. It tells about the process of evolution from human labor, animal labor to the machine labor.
4. Several dozen hurl barrows are hung on the beam column and sheep canoes and shuttle-shaped boats are put in the corner, highlighting the repairing and resting environment in the dock.
5. Some craftsmen are arranged to repair the boats and carriages in the room, symbolizing the continuity of life and the traditional craftsmanship.

When the visitors enter in the “post and dock” section, seeing real people using ax to chop the wood and hearing the noise of wood processing, they will be completely overwhelmed by their dexterous craftsmanship. While they attentively watch the rolls of wood shavings and smell the scent of original pinewood, the cultural atmosphere has already carried them into the past, with reflections on the history and culture.

This is a very good example of the exhibition arrangement of human cultural heritage. At this moment, both the tangible culture and the intangible culture have found their own language of expression. The cultural information carried by each of them fully float in this room and form a systematic cultural taste. When people unconsciously come into this cultural environment to experience the life and production activities of their ancestors, the “dead” and “past” experience revives in their real life. In this sense, there comes communication and dialogue between the history and the present.

Just as the foreword wrote: “The wooden wheel is firmly fixed by the hackly iron plate. The tough wooden axis bears the frame full of iron nails. Just like a weather-beaten old man, although with cracks of time all over, it still looks firm, robust and able to handle the heavy load and long distance. Although all types of carriages are made of wooden materials, they are the symbol of wealth and social status at the time. The decoration and size of the carriage clearly indicate the social status and wealth of the owner. The high-front and curtained carriages, wagon and carts, with different copper or iron decorations on their thills, are just like the cars running on the street at present, with division of labor among corporate cars, private cars and taxis.”

Through different cultural forms of “family”, we have tried to achieve the realization of the status of life and the spiritual civilization in the history, making the static and cold exhibition hall live and enjoyable, full of knowledge and information. “Study” is the world of men, while “young girl’s bedroom is the arena for women. In the “Weaving Room”, textiles identify the social status of their owner. The “Farm Courtyard” exhibits the hard working scene of the peasants. In the “Box Room”, the wealth of the people is demonstrated by their boxes. The “Courtesy Room” tell us that people value their “face” most and courtesy demands reciprocity. “Weights and Measures” shows the principle of transaction: fairness, justice and transparency. “Beds” is the core of a family, in which half of the life is spent. “Cloth Horses” are needed when we are back home. Even “Wash Stands” are indispensable in daily life and cannot be neglected, let alone “Dresses”, “Shoes, Caps and Bags”, etc..

These life and production articles relate to every aspects of our life and are basic living tools for every family. Though ordinary, they possess the strongest vitality.

These most ordinary and simple scene and articles of life are just our culture and history. This is something the visitors can hardly believe. However, they are really history, culture and cultural relics, which astonish the visitors. When the visitors conduct reevaluation on themselves and their cultures, they are also contributing to the comprehensive improvement of the understanding of mass culture and the enhancement of public awareness on cultural heritage. Through this “New Life” exhibition model, the visitors will have a tour of their own life, with a completely new cultural concept and the understanding of life. When the visitors walk into life, history and culture and acquire new understandings of them, this is the success for the cultural heritage protection professionals. The integration of the tangible with the intangible and the communication of the past and the present through the construction of “live” exhibition is our experience in the protection and utilization of cultural heritage.

III. Celebration and Sacrifice Are the Important Way of Displaying Intangible Cultural Heritage

The interest and enjoyment of the people is a manifestation of human life. It also reflects the concept and spiritual life of human being. In this sense, it is the true intangible part of human cultural heritage.

As an anthropology museum established at the end of the 20th century, we have to be equipped with challenging spirit and set up a completely new concept for the development of museum. Our objective is to use the intangible cultural heritage to reflect the spirit, thinking and activities of human being.

“Intangible culture” refers to the cultural activities and cultural information existing in a cultural environment without a fixed form. Such cultural information without fixed form contains innumerable cultural genom. These “genes” will get arranged according to the need of existence. When there is a fission, they will reorganize themselves according to the new requirement. This is the characteristic of the nucleus of a cultural disseminule and the basic information within this cultural form.

“Intangible culture” also refers to the creativity and liveliness of culture. Only with life is there a reproducible “intangibility” or an “activity” that can be continuously disseminated.

Intangible cultural heritage must have the trace of life, the ability of development and spiritual connotation. Otherwise, it cannot be called “intangible culture”.

For the realization of “intangible cultural heritage”, we have to set up a tangible living space. Only with this tangible living space can we grasp the form of intangible heritage and freely exhibit the intangible culture. Such a cultural carrier must have enough cultural elements and cultural information so as to concretize the form of intangible culture. Here, we need the participation of human being as a cultural entity to help the transition from intangibility to tangibility. Only with the participation of people can we provide intangible culture with a foundation and grant it life. “life” is the theme for intangible culture.

Activities challenging the nature are the most valuable spiritual heritage of human being. Those still “alive” are mainly concentrated in some isolated regions and the people there. These minority people consider each celebration and sacrifice activity a serious and complete exhibition of “cultural relics” and a complete process of concretization of spiritual culture.

In the fight against nature, the solar terms are the first incubator of the thinking of human being. The independent sacrifice activities are linked to the life cycle of spring, summer, autumn and winter, making the climate change of nature into a carrier for the manifestation of culture. It also concretizes the intangible spiritual activity into tangible activity of thinking. Although climate change belongs to natural activities, it can never be separated from the existence of human being. It is actually the first natural activities that stimulate the thinking of human being. Through the integration of nature and mankind, the connection between thinking and spirit and the emphasis on the climate change as an element for the incubation of human culture, we try to make people today understand the thinking and psychological situation of their ancestors and the culture reflected by such thinking.

When our museum began receiving visitors for the first time in 1994, we designed a series of celebration and sacrifice activities of the Chinese minority people with the theme of “new life” and featured by liveliness and participation. This cultural carrier full of vitality has consciously and stereoscopically revived the intangible cultural heritage of human being.

Based on the principle of “walking into life, history and culture”, we have integrated the climate change and the change of botanies in Beijing each

month into the “life’ of human being, so as to make the visitors touring the Chinese Museum feel like walking into a cultural space with great vitality and high information content. Each visitor can freely interact with information and absorb the essence of the intangible cultural heritage of human being.

The history of human being is the history of fighting against nature. The celebration activities passed through generations are the “declaration of war” to the nature and the coexistence with nature. Before the rainy season, people must build dikes. In this occasion, the “Sacrifice to the Mountain” has to be offered. When spring comes, people should praise the recovery of lives in the world and celebrate the “March the Third” festival. Autumn brings harvest and the hope for the next year. In this occasion, “Harvest Sacrifice” should be offered. When snow falls and winter comes, people celebrate the “New Year” and the “Spring Festival”, hoping to peacefully coexist with the “god”. All these activities are not only natural rule or psychological balance of human being. They are the spirit and culture brought by the integration of human being with nature. Negligence of them is negligence of the existence of human being.

We have designed a series celebration and sacrifice activities of the minority people adaptable to the solar term of each month:

January: New Year Brings Luck and Betokens A Harvest Year

The activities include Tibetan new year, tasting ghee, watching Tibetan drama, praying,
driving “devil” and entertaining “god”, elimination of disaster

February: Spring Festival

The activities include antithetical couplet writing, door-god pasting and celebration of the
festival by all nationalities.

March: Sister Festival of Miao Nationality

The activities include exchange of love-promise gift, drinking road-blocking wine, playing
traditional music instrument, kettledrum dance and sister dinner.

April: Water Sprinkling Festival of Dai Nationality

The activities include water sprinkling, praying the Buddha, playing the elephant-leg drum,
peacock dance, incense bag throwing and tying of red thread.

May: Sacrifice to the Mountain of Qiang Nationality

The activities include inviting the mountain god and praying for flood control, offering sacrifice

to Dayu, a legendary figure who led the people successfully fight against flood, repairing

channels and flood discharge.

June: Dragon Boat Racing in the Dragon Festival

The activities include offering sacrifice to Qu Yuan, making glutinous rice dumpling, igniting

arsenical sulphide, tasting the glutinous rice dumpling and digging and drying herbs.

July: Rodeo Festival of Tong Nationality

The activities include bull fighting, fireworks and singing in antiphonal style.

August: Torch Festival of Yi Nationality

The activities include torch lighting, praying for harvest, offering sacrifice to the ancestors

with bulls and celebration dinner.

September: Munao Singing Festival of Qingpo Nationality

The activities include offering sacrifice to the ancestors with martial art, playing music and

singing.

October: Harvest Festival of Wa Nationality

The activities include the processing and tasting of the newly harvested rice, tasting the

crabs, inviting the harvest god and having bamboo dance.

November: Buyi New Year of Buyi Nationality

The activities include fetching “golden and silver water”, tasting glutinous rice cake, playing shuttlecock and spinning top.

December: Snow Betokening A Harvest Year

These festivals of northern minority people include: ice hockey and ice cart riding of

Dahaner Nationality, deer cart riding, birch barking and basket making of Elunchun

Nationality and ice fishing, fish skin stitching and fish clothing making of Hezhe

Nationality.

In the above celebration and sacrifice, the cultural activities of different minority people naturally integrate with each other in one cultural atmosphere. The intangible cultural heritages within them are naturally and easily displayed and the visitors can feel the pulse of ancient times. The grasses, trees and objects from the nature have become tangible cultural carriers in these activities. In the hands and mouths of the minority youth, they have become the symbol of new life, a new way of life and a new culture.

It is still quite cold in the early spring of March in Beijing. The Miao girls, with spring flowerers all over, hold bull horns full of rice wine and await the visitors outside their village. Each visitor will be welcomed with a shot of rice wine. When the girls bring the shoe pad and colorful dinner, which are symbols of love, and walk towards the visitors they are interested, the visitors chosen must participate in the love game. When a girl picks up a pine needle, she means that the lovers need more time to get acquainted with each other. In this case, the man should give the girl a weaving needle, which symbolizes the weaving of a bright future. When a girl picks up an incense bag, she is saying that she is satisfied with her lover and agrees to marry him. At this moment, the pine needles, peppers and garlic in the colorful rice have already spoken out the love of girls. The men win the love are surely very excited, while those fail should not feel depressed. They can come next year. Spring is the season for lovers and the beginning of love.

A new form of culture has been set up with the integration of life and nature. The participants of the game will truly understand the nature and its relationship with men.

When the original songs come through the mountains without any artificial modification, you will not suspect that it is fake or artificially modified. Urban dwellers are more than familiar with the artificial tones. No matter for the great musicians or singers, or those revolutionary pop singers, none can be free from the rule of music artificially made by human being.

In the Chinese Museum, all the representatives of minority people are from mountainous areas. Their fathers have no idea about what city is like and what modernization is. They speak in their dialect and wear their traditional clothing, with sun-tanned color on their skin. These 16 year or 18 year old young people come to the city with hope and anticipation for

a different life style from their fathers. Their presence brings purity, happiness and kindness to the museum, with beautiful love and inartificial originality.

They know nothing about “real” music or dance. However, since their first day, they know how to smile, how to use their voices to express love and how to use their gesture to express their thinking. These most primitive instinct of existence is the form of their songs and dances. They call the museum their home, a home of thousand miles away from their family. Here, they can still find familiar yard, familiar spinning wheel and familiar stove. From the traditional-styled building, their songs can penetrate mountains and travel dozens of miles, expressing their thinking and the experience for thousands of years.

The “flying songs” of Miao people, the sentimental “love songs” from Wa people, the “high songs” of Tibetans, the “eagle songs” of Mongolians and the “choir song” of Tong people will bring the visitors back to the origin of their life dated back thousands of years ago. The past experience of human being will come out from their blood and the cultural information in their cells will revive. With such pure cultural experience, pure experience of life and the integration between the museum and the nature, we provide the visitors a sense of home and familiarity.

When the visitors, no matter adults, children or old people, all forget about their “social status” and sing and dance happily with these teenagers, who can believe that this is a group consisting of people from across the country with different experience. The dance is so simple, yet so exciting. The dancers are really serious. Thousands of people dancing in the same way, heart with heart and hand in hand. This is the minority group dance with the theme of “New Life”. Youth from all minority nationalities, wearing colorful traditional clothing, repeat the ancient movement of their ancestors, while visitors from modernity learn and imitate with top attention. Joyful songs and dances echo in the villages, mountains and brooks.

With satisfaction and tiredness, the visitors go back to their “culture of modernity” along the muddy path, smelling the scent of nature. However, bear in mind that when they are “tired” again and feel empty in their thinking, they will definitely come to this “pure nature”, their warm and lovely “home”. Here, there are amicable brothers and sisters and hard-working people, with beautiful mountains, green brooks, rocks and grasses.

IV. The Universality, Truthfulness and Popularity of Culture Is the Integration between Tangible Culture and Intangible Culture

From the perspective of anthropology, the importance of a culture, whether it is tangible or intangible, does not lie in its form, but in the vitality of the information vested in this form.

From the perspective of inheritance, if a cultural information can be passed through generations and is still productive today, it is a cultural gene with life. The instinct of existence of human being does not need to be generated by study. The living condition and cultural quality of a man at his birth is a result of life gene and cultural gene.

The theory of cultural gene is not only applicable for human being, but also for any organism, including plants on the earth. As a higher animal, the difference of men from other animals and plants is that the cultural gene of human being can surpass the real material condition and enter into a spiritual world. This is the six dimensional space of thinking. The dissemination of cultural information under this spiritual condition is the most precious and mysterious part of human being.

Single unit culture is a tangible culture formed by the organization of information according to the need of its own existence. Once there is a new cultural demand or new round of information revolution, there will be a new cultural form. Such interaction will lead to the formation of a second form of tangible culture. Just as the fission of cells, through this repeated process, the latest new culture will be far different from the first cultural system. However, the cell nucleus of the new culture still retains the traces of the original culture. This is the heredity and vitality of culture. Once a culture is formed, the cultural information in it will not totally disappear. It will penetrate imperceptibly into the new cultural system.

For the forth generation of the Chinese immigrants in the United States or Europe, no matter how long they have been integrated into the local community and how “foreignized” they looks, the fact that their ancestors are Chinese will manifest itself during their lifetime. The power of individual is impossible to get rid of the cultural heredity and cultural specialty that comes upon his birth. For a culture, except it is dead completely, so long as it still retains basic cultural information, heredity will take place.

Culture is divided into “dynastic culture” and “continuous culture”. “Dynastic culture” refers to the cultural system of human ancestors dated back several thousand years. Since the date is too far for modern people to decipher and completely accept this cultural system, we can only view this system as a historical cultural system and cannot treat it as a dynamic cultural system. However, as a cultural crystallization of a certain historical period, it still contains a lot of cultural information. These information still have vitality. Once these information contents are deciphered, we can understand some of the cultural situation at that time. If we cannot decipher them, we can only understand this period of history from the perspective of modern cultural and modern thinking. Even if it is of no immediate use for interpretation, the long history of the culture and the aesthetic of the vessels can still arouse the curiosity of modern people on this period of culture.

For the “dynastic culture” in history, the value of tangible and intangible heritages cannot be judged by the number of unearthed cultural relics. We can count the number of discovered vessels and judge the delicacy of their art, but we cannot measure the value and quality of the culture. Today, there are much cultural difference between the people in Hubei Province who belong to Chu Culture and the people in Suzhou who belong to the Wu and Yue Culture. These differences penetrate into every aspects of life and the quality, manifestation and dissemination of the two cultures are totally different. Faced with such hugely different cultures in two adjacent regions, can we say the cultural systems of Chu Culture and Wu and Yue Culture of two thousand years ago have been completely dead? The tangible objects, such as city walls, houses, roads, vehicles, clothing and decorations have all disappeared with the development of history. However, the intangible cultural elements have been imperceptibly passed through generations. A girl from Hubei is such a different cultural carrier from a girl from Suzhou. One cannot help exclaim the beauty of cultural heredity and cultural difference when seeing a northern girl standing together with a southern girl.

The “dynastic culture” is also called “living culture”, meaning the whole cultural system still retains the complete functions of life and is still the cultural form in a region. This “living culture” cannot be simply divided into tangible culture and intangible culture and its value is hard to evaluate. As an existing cultural system with vitality, it is a balance for the modern people and the cultural system of modern society. It is the “ecological resources” of human species and the “eco-environment” of human spiritual civilization.

The living cultures are widely preserved in the daily life and production of the folks. We cannot adopt a discriminatory method for the protection and protection of this form of cultures for ethnical, political or aesthetical reasons. Such discriminatory way of preservation and protection will cause the erroneous dissemination of information. For the professionals of cultural protection, we have to protect, take care of and preserve all the different cultures, no matter what their forms and carriers are.

All the cultures developed by human being represent the corresponding period of the history, thus making the cultural relics valuable. In this sense, all the periods of history, all the cultures and all the activities and articles relating to these periods and cultures should be treated as “cultural information”.

The cultures with vitality and information are the objects of our protection effort. The key and most effective action for us is to use all traditional and modern means to preserve and protect them.

The principle for the collection of our museum is “fishing everything, no matter they are big fish, small fish or only shrimps”. Some articles may only be a common household tool with little importance for today, but they may become national treasure or first degree cultural relics in hundreds or a thousand years. The five thousand year old stone knocking tools unearthed today is also only a small article in daily life. When we encountered different styles of spindles and thread-wrap boards in the regions of minority people, we purchased all of them with no hesitation. Our acquisition covers a wide range, including: yak skin rafts used at the origin of the Yellow River, the dragon boats of Miao people, horse carriages, furniture, mud whistle, needle barrel, blast box and puff pipe for cooking, molds for making moon cakes, pot and bowl mending tools, door locks, etc.. In summary, we collect all possible cultural activities and all articles related to the cultural carriers. It might be confusing for the compilation of collection list, but it is the authentic cultural collection when we collect everything relating to the culture.

“The grassroot people- our history and our root.”

This is the spiritual guidance for the pursuit for human cultural heritage in the Chinese Museum. It is also the definition on cultural relics that makes us different from other museums.

The foreword in the main exhibition hall is written as follows:

“History is created by the people. However, the culture and cultural relics that are used by the mass and naturally reflect their life are often neglected. In the classical cultural relics exhibition, what we have seen most are the seals and jade ware of emperors, kings, senior officials. For the articles used by the people, since they were not buried underground, most of them have disappeared in the flow of history. However, these production and living articles that do not enjoy the title of cultural relics are actually the depiction of human life and culture. They are the history and root of our own.

Our root is the history of the people. They are content with whatever they have, but when there is oppression, they will also engage in struggle. The history of the people follows the main stream and the nature. That is why we do not use the classical and chronological way to exhibit them. Our exhibition is featured by naturalness, flexibility and enjoy. The guideline for our exhibition does not emphasize on “academic value” or “elaborate works”. We focus on the universality, truthfulness and popularity.”

When we have set up the principle of popularity and universality for the study, collection and exhibition work of our museum, we have to think what the concept of life and life culture in the mind of ordinary people is, what the visitors expect to see and what they have seen and what is the evolution, dissemination and continuity of the culture of life and the life of culture. These questions from different angles will make us build a cultural background that suits the way of thinking and observation of modern people. In the core of this cultural background, the carrier of culture is just a symbol or an experience. In another word, it is just like the corridor that information have to pass through. A carrier is a must for whatever culture with whatever form. It is only for the purpose of expressing its culture and is not absolute. In this sense, so long as the carrier suits the need for the culture, it is an effective dissemination platform. Once the need changes and requires for another way of expression, the information corridor the carrier bears will change accordingly.