



Discussion





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Tasks and Prospects of Safeguarding the Traditional Tugging Rituals and Games for Sustainable Development

1. Foreword

A comprehensive discussion was held illuminating the role and the nature of a community in each individual nation following the presentation on the identity and the role of a community. As the modernization of society has brought with it many changes in national folklore through decontextualization and recontextualization, those changes were also discussed from the point of the inseparable relationship between a community and intangible cultural heritage. Overall discussion was chaired by the executive director, Jeong Hyung-Ho and the professors Kim Jong-Dae, Han Yang-Myung, Jeong Yeon-Hak, Ham Han-Hee were on the panel.

2. The meaning of a community and its changing aspects

Vietnamese researcher Do Thi Tanh Thuy has mentioned the reality in Vietnam that complete breakdown of a community lead to the change of the ritual itself due to a break from traditions since the war. According to his study, it became possible for female

members of a community to participate in the tugging ritual and game since 2006, which in the past was an exclusively male domain. In addition, it was also mentioned that some rituals have been disconnected due to the changes in their environments. In regards to the community performing tug-of-war, it was said that a steering committee for the festival was organized with the participation of senior members and the civil servants of the community since 1990s whereas the president of the local union was made the director of a festival in the 1990s. However, it was argued that those changes in intangible cultural heritage seemed inevitable characteristically in accordance with the changes in the conditions.

Professor Siyonn Sophiearith from Cambodia maintained that the basic nature of communal identity in each community remained the same even if there were regional variations of the tugging rituals and games in each community. He argued that the tugging rituals and games shared the same characters of those rites performed before and after an event wishing common prosperity. In order to support his claim he illustrated the basic codes commonly appearing in the rites and the tugging rituals and games. It was also mentioned that there have been changes in the tugging rituals and games in Cambodia caused by the large-scale massacre.

Professor Heo Yong-Ho argued that Zulnanjang (rope market) dates back to the early 20th century but does not go beyond the time after looking into the changing aspects of Korean tug of war tradition and putting together the memories and geneological information concerning Zulnanjang. He claimed that this debate on Zulnanjang reflected the underlying intentions, which were the discussion on market folk tradition and its history. As Byulsingut underwent a change to be Jangbyulsin in the course of time, there are similar viewpoints to look at Zulnanjang and its transformation it might go through in later generations considering the precondition for opening the market is the interaction between heaven and earth.

Professor Norma A. Respicio of the Philippines paid special attention to the specific village in the country. It was explained that the members of the community were able to keep the spirit of tug of war tradition in pursuance of preserving and protecting their agricultural environment since the village was an agrarian community and therefore their production was under the direct influence of the river. He also noted the difficulty in the preservation of tugging ritual and game because the number of people had been on the

decrease, whose role as a shaman called Mun Baque (Door wheels) was necessary to conduct the ritual, and it made the ritual somewhat exclusive. According to his research, only members of a community can take part in the tug of war performance and female members and children are excluded from the ritual in the Philippines. However, it was said that the aspects in the transmission of the cultural heritage differed from countries and regions.

Professor Kim Jong-Dae expressed his concern over the political empowerment of culture, the possible mistakes and errors from contorted analysis which might result from the exclusive ownership of intangible cultural heritage in the designated areas. Regarding a community, he argued that tugging ritual and game used to have the function of incantation and ritualistic quality originally but lately the formality and festivity of the tugging rituals seemed to have been prevalent. How tugging rituals and games are transmitted nowadays and how the changes made during the course are accepted as intangible cultural heritage could also be a concern for a community, he said. In addition, he posed a question of establishing the scope in the use of mobilized manpower in principle among members of the original community. Moreover, he pointed out the fact that students and soldiers were mobilized in case of Youngsan and Yongin tug of wars respectively, which he argued would undermine the essence by confining only the actual performers as community members.

Professor Park Sang-Mee stated that the tendency to put focus only on a designated cultural heritage would leave unsolved problem of supervising non-designated cultural heritage. As far as a community is concerned, she agreed upon the extensive definition which would include all the parties concerned with regard to not just the performance of tug of war but transmission festivals including those who were interested.

3. Symbolic meaning of the rope and regional cases

Senior Curator Jeong Hyun-Hak stated that taking an interest in the symbolic meaning of the rope, especially the act of severing the rope in Cambodia could be a good start to make oneself interested in tugging rituals and games. He asked whether there were cases

of performing tug of war in the mountainous regions whereas tug of war has been performed in areas adjacent to the sea in Korea.

According to professor Sophiarith concerning the above question, tug of war in Cambodia is not the symbol of an animal but a rope itself. It is said that tug of war can be performed many times but pulling and severing a rope three times means the announcement of the beginning of the ritual rather than it represents a dragon or a snake. It also symbolizes a beginning or an end and marks the beginning of a new season of cultivation as well as a new year.

Professor Chuchchai Gomaratut introduced tugging rituals and games in Thailand where tug of war can be performed anywhere possible by all members of a society for all kinds of purposes such as leisure, sport, or excitement but there are some cases of tugging rituals and games performed by community members with specific communal identity. In Thailand, there is a unique way of performing tug of war where community members and elephants participate in tug of war at a well-known venue. This way local residents are informed of the event on promotions and community solidarity can also be strengthened among the members. It was also mentioned that tugging rituals and games in Thailand could be used to create new opportunities and made use of for elections.

Professor Norma A. Respicio argued that it was difficult to locate cases of tug of war on land in the Philippines. In case of Ifugao with the participation of three communities tugging ritual and game was held in a spot where three tributaries of the river are met. Three communities would take positions towards and against the river facing one another and would never cross the dividing boundary line since performing tug of war meant taking a neutral attitude and crossing the boundary also meant defeat in a competition.

4. Approaches in preserving tugging ritual

Regarding approaches of preserving tugging ritual and game altogether based on the essential spirits, Professor Han Yang-Myung advised that researchers in the government and NGOs should be cautious about artificial intervention as the current tug of war is a staged performance rather than traditional ritual. Professor Kim Jong-Dae stated that

rituals in urban folklore belong to the domain of a myth. Professor Kim argued that urbanites are psychologically insecure due to the individualism and closedness basedness of a city. He argued magic is a measure to overcome psychological injuries and rituals resolve these problems. Besides, Professor Kim was concerned about the empowerment of rituals as religious rituals for the mountain spirit are politically involved in elections and events, and local governments hold festivals as a marketing strategy to promote agricultural products around the capital area. Further, Shin Sue-Sik, Researcher of Youngsan tug of war, mentioned that Youngsan tug of war is facing difficulties due to the chronological changes and it is important to attract public attention.

Professor Nah, Kyoung-Su in the Chonnam National University presented a unique opinion on the definition of tug of war in four countries. For example, in Cambodia, tug of war is performed in the form of pulling a wooden stick, and instead of pulling the stick to both ends they turn the stick in circle as if stirring the sea. Professor Nah argued whether Cambodian tug of war is not a game but a kind of labor as it was initiated in the sea. He also suggested that it is necessary to redefine the definition of the tug of war focusing on the nature of the game with a rope, which is more essential to him, rather than on the pulling action which is a mere means.

PARK, Seong-Yong, Assistant Director-General of ICHCAP mentioned that despite the negative aspect of the multinational nomination of the traditional Asian tug of war, there are positive aspects of the nomination as communities in six cities and four nations are co-operating for the nomination. Dr Park also pointed out that it is possible for other countries to join the nomination in the future and this procedure may enhance the traditional culture of Asia. In this regard, he argued that the nomination procedure of tug of war should be flexible and comprehensive. Besides, he mentioned that the concept of communities and rituals is very important and the vitalization of tug of war is an urgent problem.

Professor Jeong Hyung-Ho, the chair of the discussion, expressed his interest in communities and argued that the substance of the community in a contemporary society is very ambiguous. In tug of war, he said, there are many strata of participants depending on whether they participate temporarily or consistently, self-directed or against their will, and they are locals or outsiders. Therefore, he mentioned, this discussion is the beginning of safeguarding tug of war as common heritage and poses an important research question for comparative research of Asia.

Lastly, on behalf of the host organization, Huh Kwon, Director-General of ICHCAP, noted that the key word of this symposium is about the change and emphasized the importance of managing the change in advance. Further, regarding the relations between communities and intangible heritage, the Director-General passed along a request that it is important to address communities and value sustainability of human-centered culture such as classical philosophy. The Director-General concluded the symposium with complements to the Dangjin municipal government, heritage holders and professors.