

### Heritage as a Product

This module introduces you to the meaning of culture and cultural heritage. It also gives you a brief background of the UN's recognition of the relevance of indigenous culture and a brief explanation for the term, *Tawid Kordilyera*.

#### Learning Outcomes

1. define culture, intangible and tangible cultural heritage
2. identify and describe examples of the tangible and intangible *Tawid Kordilyera* that you viewed in Museo Kordilyera 3D Virtual Museum

#### Key Concepts to Understand

culture	cultural amnesia	intangible cultural heritage
tangible cultural heritage	Tawid Kordilyera	

**Culture** is defined by UNESCO (Tauli-Corpuz, Enkiwe-Abayao, & de Chavez, 2010) as “the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group that encompasses not only art and literature, but lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs.” In a multicultural country like the Philippines, the national policies of the government from the colonial to post-colonial period aim to assimilate the minority ethnic groups who are now called indigenous peoples (IPs), that is, to erode the IPs’ diverse cultures and integrate them into the culture of the dominant group or ruling class resulting in the varied forms of resistance by the IPs.

Pressured by the effective lobbying done by the organized IPs from varied countries, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended the following:

Recognize and respect indigenous distinct culture, history, language and way of life as an enrichment of the State's cultural identity and to promote its preservation;

Ensure that members of indigenous peoples are free and equal in dignity and rights and free from any discrimination, in particular, that based on indigenous origin and identity;

Provide indigenous peoples with conditions allowing for sustainable economic and social development compatible with their cultural characteristics;

Ensure that members of indigenous peoples have equal rights with respect to effective participation in public life and that no decisions directly relating to their rights and interests are taken without their informed consent.

Ensure that indigenous communities can exercise their rights to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs and to preserve and practice their languages. (Tauli-Corpuz, Enkiwe-Abayao, & de Chavez, 2010)

The UN report on *The State of the World's Indigenous Peoples* emphasized that:

Indigenous peoples have rich and diverse cultures based on a profound relationship with their land and natural resources. Dichotomies such as nature vs. culture do not exist in indigenous societies. Indigenous peoples do not see themselves as outside the realm of nature, but as part of nature, and they have their own specific attachment to their land and territory and own specific modes of production based on a unique knowledge of their environment. Nor do indigenous peoples emphasize a radical duality between the sacred and the mundane as happens in Western culture. In many indigenous cultures, social and political institutions are part of the cosmic order, and it is on the basis of their

worldview, beliefs, values and customs that indigenous peoples define their customary laws and norms. Another salient characteristic of indigenous cultures is that they are based on a collective perspective. In the same way that indigenous peoples consider their lands and resources to be collective assets, they see their cultural values and activities - as function of the group not individuals. (Tauli-Corpuz, Enkiwe-Abayao, & de Chavez, 2010)

In 2001, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) also recognized the value of IP culture. It declared that:

... indigenous cultures comprise a heritage of diverse knowledge and ideas that is a resource for the whole world. As UNDP pursues sustainable human development, attention has been placed on indigenous peoples largely owing to their sustainable development practices. This has led to an interest in indigenous peoples' ways of life, their cultures, sciences, land and resource management, governance, political and justice systems, knowledge and healing practices. **Recognition of indigenous peoples' assets and traditional knowledge** (such as terrestrial and marine ecosystems, naturally occurring medicines from plants and insects, cultivated plant varieties, and animal husbandry) can be helpful to national and international development. Furthermore, indigenous peoples' continued existence is a testimony to the sustainability and viability of indigenous economic production systems, and social and governance practices that should be supported and enhanced, and most importantly, incorporated into mainstream development practices. (Tauli-Corpuz, Enkiwe-Abayao, & de Chavez, 2010)

In the same year of 2001, UNESCO adopted the **Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity**, which establishes that the guarantee for cultural diversity to flourish is the respect of human rights. It also elaborates how the right to culture establishes an enabling environment for cultural diversity (Article 5), and clarifies that cultural diversity is one of the roots and a factor of development (Article 3) as well as a means to achieve intellectual, moral, emotional and spiritual existence. Furthermore, it stresses that "the defence of cultural diversity is an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity" and reifies "cultural pluralism" which should be promoted through intercultural exchange and dialogue. Therefore, a commitment should be made to respect the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples (Article 4). (Tauli-Corpuz, Enkiwe-Abayao, & de Chavez, 2010)

In 2002, the UN Commission on Human Rights, affirmed the preceding declarations, stating that :

- a) each culture has a dignity and value that must be respected and preserved; that every people has the right and duty to develop its culture; that states have the primary responsibility to promote the full enjoyment of cultural rights by everyone and the respect for different cultural identities is vital for the protection of cultural diversity in the context of globalization, and that all peoples have the right of self-determination (Stamatopoulou, 2007, as cited in Tauli-Corpuz, Enkiwe-Abayao, & de Chavez, 2010).

**Cultural heritage**, as defined by UNESCO (n.d., para. 1) is "both a product and a process, which provides societies with a wealth of resources that are inherited from the past, created in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations." It is a "process" – a selection process – which entails that the members of the community are creators and transmitters of their own culture. Responding to the changing times, they are continually engaged in selecting which elements of their culture are worthy of preservation for the present and future generations. This is why cultural heritage is considered "our bond to the past, present, and future."

Cultural heritage as a product refers to the tangible and intangible creations of human beings. These two aspects of cultural heritage are defined by UNESCO (n.d.), as follows:

**Tangible cultural heritage** refers to: a) monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings, and combinations of features that are of outstanding value from the point of view of history, art or science; b) groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings, which because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding value from the point of view of history, art or science; c) sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites, which are of outstanding value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view. (para. 16)

**Intangible cultural heritage** refers to those practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. These are manifested in the following domains: a.) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; b.) performing arts; c.) social practices, rituals and festive events; d.) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; e.) traditional craftsmanship. (para. 19)

UNESCO explains why it promotes the study, preservation, and management of cultural heritage.

The notion of heritage is important for culture and development insofar as it constitutes the 'cultural capital' of contemporary societies. It contributes to the continual revalorization of cultures and identities, and it is an important vehicle for the transmission of expertise, skills, and knowledge between generations. It also provides inspiration for creativity and innovation, which result in contemporary and future cultural products. Cultural heritage holds the potential of promoting access to and enjoyment of cultural diversity. It can also enrich social capital by shaping an individual and collective sense of belonging, which helps supporting social and territorial cohesion. Moreover, cultural heritage has acquired great economic significance for the tourism sector in many countries, while at the same time engendering new challenges for its conservation. (para. 3)

**Cordillera Heritage or Tawid Kordilyera.** Cordillera refers to the region that is composed of the provinces of Abra, Apayao, Benguet, the chartered city of Baguio, Ifugao, Kalinga and its component city of Tabuk, and Mountain Province. The ethnolinguistic groups that reside in the region are called Cordillerans, their regional identity. While the Cordillerans are composed of diverse ethnolinguistic groups, the term **Tawid Kordilyera is conveniently adopted to refer to the shared history and similar tangible and intangible culture of these diverse groups. As Yangyang, Ngohayon, and Anduyan, Jr. (2023) explained, Tawid Kordilyera is “the knowledge systems, practices, settlements, and institutions that have been developed since time immemorial, that may be advanced ... that are safeguarded for the future by the people who ascribed themselves as Cordillerans.” (p.7)**

Studying cultural heritage does not only help us become aware of our cultural roots as Filipinos but also will help us combat **cultural amnesia** which Harvard.edu (2021) defines as: ... the abandonment of tradition, heritage, community, and landscape that occurs when societies have their history and heritage manipulated and targeted by groups that have the ability to exert a certain sense of power or control over them. It is the loss of

collective memory that once bound a community or a people together and strengthened their bonds and sense of identity...

Cultural amnesia can permeate a society's social structure following the destruction or repurposing of sacred and culturally significant sites/relics. The Material culture of a country, religion, ethnicity, or other social grouping is foundational when it comes to the preservation and protection of tradition, practice, and real heritage. By hijacking the visual and material culture of a group, governments and other entities hold the power to manipulate or even erase values and symbols that may have been held by a community for countless generations. (para. 1, 4)

For you to appreciate examples of the tangible and intangible *Tawid Kordilyera*, visit Museo Kordilyera in this link: <https://museokordilyera.upb.edu.ph/>

Click **Collections** and then **Exhibitions**. Learn from the photos and videos. After this, move your cursor to the bottom part of Museo Kordilyera's homepage and click **View More** under **Museo Kordilyera 3D Virtual Museum**. Enjoy your virtual visit. Click each item to read the description.

#### Reflection

1. Significance of cultural identity
2. Tangible and intangible cultural heritage of your ethnolinguistic group that are worth preserving
3. Forgotten or lost tangible and intangible cultural heritage of your ethnolinguistic group and the effects of such loss on your community