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**TO CATCH THE UNCATCHABLE/TO CAPTURE
THE INTANGIBLE. REFLECTIONS ON SELECTED
PROBLEMS OF SAFEGUARDING INTANGIBLE
CULTURAL HERITAGE. THE EXAMPLE OF THE
KONIAKÓW LACE MAKING SKILLS**

**Złapać nieuchwytnę/ uchwycić niematerialne. Refleksje
nad wybranymi problemami ochrony niematerialnego
dziedzictwa kulturowego na przykładzie umiejętności
koronki koniakowskiej**

Abstract. The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage has given impetus to intensive work on the disappearance of cultural specificity in many countries. As a result of taking safeguarding measures taken for expressions of intangible cultural heritage, the necessity to re-define existing practices in this matter has also shown up. The text refers to reflection on selected problems of documentation and popularisation of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), with particular regard to the example of the Koniaków lace making skills. This handicraft, despite the changing reality, has been an uninterrupted manifestation of the region's tradition for more than 100 years. Local lace makers adapt their forms to new emerging needs. The educational or commercial activity concentrated around lace makes these skills an important bonding element for the local community. The lively activity of dissemination

and promotion of the Koniaków lace brought an entry to UNESCO's National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2017.

Key words: intangible cultural heritage, safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, documentation of intangible cultural heritage, the Koniaków lace making skills.

Streszczenie. Konwencja UNESCO z 2003 roku w sprawie ochrony niematerialnego dziedzictwa kulturowego dała impuls do intensywnej pracy nad znikającą specyfiką kulturową w wielu krajach. W wyniku podjęcia środków zabezpieczających przejawy niematerialnego dziedzictwa kulturowego, pojawiła się również konieczność redefinicji dotychczasowych praktyk w tym zakresie. Tekst dotyczy wybranych problemów metodologicznych dokumentowania, archiwizowania i upowszechniania niematerialnego dziedzictwa kulturowego, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem umiejętności rękodzielniczych. Analizie poddane zostały najistotniejsze kwestie związane z metodologią utrwalania umiejętności wykonywania koronki koniakowskiej, obiektu który w 2017 roku został wpisany na Krajową listę ICH w Polsce.

Słowa kluczowe: niematerialne dziedzictwo kulturowe, ochrona niematerialnego dziedzictwa kulturowego, dokumentacja niematerialnego dziedzictwa kulturowego, umiejętności wytwarzania koronki koniakowskiej.

Introduction

A key issue in the heritage discourse in recent years is to emphasise the fact that heritage is not only in the form of tangible artefacts, which are easier to identify, capture, and describe, but it also has intangible dimension and is socially constructed (Ashworth 2015). This means that it is essential to develop new tools of analysis, which would allow for sound research and management practices for this category of heritage. Manifestations of intangible culture have a dynamic, temporal character, hence the necessity to analyse them in an individualised way, as a phenomena shaped in the interactive process of society's structure. Intangible heritage cannot be treated as a stagnant cultural artefact, frozen in its form,

which has been considered important and valuable – from the point of view of history, aesthetics, or national/regional ideology. Cultural heritage is not a dead set of symbolic meanings suspended in a social vacuum; on the contrary, it evolves and greatly influences regional and national identity (Smith 2006, 2016).

The importance of heritage in shaping contemporary culture has become the subject of research undertaken by many academics, including of ethnologists and anthropologists. Herological studies reveal the mechanisms by which heritage functions in local communities, while analyses of local examples reveal knowledge of global phenomena (Dziadowiec-Greganić 2020: 41-73). My research is part of this trend. For many years I have been conducting research in local communities in Cieszyn Silesia, focusing on the role of tangible and intangible cultural heritage in activities undertaken to activate a group, preserve the integrity of a group or form its identity. In recent years, one of the main factors determining the direction of the activities undertaken has been civilizational changes, including economic changes, especially the intensive development of tourism. The implementation of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of 2003 has also been an important factor influencing the activities undertaken in relation to the use of cultural heritage. In the text, an attempt is made to indicate the main directions of activities carried out in connection with the above-mentioned factors. It is analysed on the example of activities related to the making of Koniaków lace. The materials used were collected during field research. The phenomenon of Koniaków lace was explored using ethnographic tools – interview and participant observation. Interviews with the lace makers and their leader Lucyna Ligocka-Kohut, excerpts of which are included in the text, were conducted in Koniaków in 2021 and 2022.

Today's research on heritage admit the fact, that it occupies extremely important bond-forming functions for local communities, becoming the reason for the activities undertaken and the axis of their identity formation (Czerwińska 2016: 41-52). Moreover, giving commercial dimension to the cultural resources has made the heritage treated as a product, particularly for tourism. The commercial nature of activities using heritage resources

resorts to the manipulation of its qualities, which are coveted by customers looking for original things from the places they visit. Customers expect to discover and experience the specificity of places new to them, e.g. to listen to the speech of the natives, to taste their cuisine, to learn about their daily life (Mikos von Rohrscheidt: 2021). Originality and authenticity are the main offerings of heritage industry, as Robert Hewison pointed out (Hewison 1987: 67-80). These practices may reduce the cultural achievements of the past generations to reduction of their functions for mercantile purposes. To protect heritage from global unification processes, many state institutions and private entities take actions to protect heritage, which have multiple objectives and different natures. This dissemination of knowledge about the cultural resources located in a particular place or community fosters an awareness of the historical conditions of the experienced reality, which is the result of ethnically, religiously or culturally diverse human communities and knowledge about the natural environment, which largely determines the formation of this reality. The realised heritage is subject to value and only then to protection and maintenance of its vitality (Thurley 2005: 26-27).

Over the past few years, the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of 2003 has provided the greatest impetus for broad-based support for heritage conservation. This document focuses on intangible dimension of heritage, which under the influence of contemporary civilization processes, i.e. uncontrolled urbanization and destruction of rural areas, is particularly vulnerable to depreciation, and consequently to disappearance. The awareness of constantly progressing threats forces to take appropriate actions that would contribute to the preservation of uniqueness and cultural diversity in the perspective of global processes.

In the proclaimed document the following tasks were prioritised: identification and documentation of intangible cultural heritage creation, its safeguarding against the dangers of civilisation, popularisation and dissemination through the formal and informal education, which shows values of innate culture for the development and identity of both individual and society. Revitalisation of different aspects of this heritage was also considered essential.

Implementing the Convention, and thus providing balanced sustainability of the cultural heritage of the past, requires particular tasks. Essential for their realisation is the right communication between many entities, as well as proper cooperation that is the basis of any initiatives. Learning from the experience of others is helpful when launching new initiatives and implementing actions. Registers of “good practice” serve this purpose. It is essential to reflect deeply on the actions taken. (Brzezińska 2016: 8-21).

Among the many tasks resulting from the ratification of the Convention are those related to the documentation and dissemination (i.e. management) of intangible cultural heritage. As stressed earlier, heritage understood as a construct of social conditioning is a dynamic phenomenon, variable in its essence, and its manifestations have a temporal character, functioning as phenomena shaped by human interaction. They are not solidified like material objects, i.e. architectural object with specified form, shape, and symbolical meaning. It is the opposite – examples of intangible heritage exist or vanish according to the level of identity of the local group. Thus, even if they appear commonly and are typical for a given nation or majority group, they usually have their local variations.

This situation raises a basic question regarding concrete practical solutions – what kind of “tools” should be used in the indicated questions, and what should guide them? This task is not easy, mostly because of the lack of consistency in the tasks undertaken and because of a different ways of legal and financial capacity of organisations working in the same field. It is difficult to maintain a balance here, as entities of different natures – government institutions, local administration bodies and NGOs – participate in these activities. There is also an increasing activity of individual entities that initiate their own projects, using the heritage for commercial activities (Kobyłański 2020). At the same time, it should be remembered that the main implementers of the heritage safeguarding tasks are the bearers. As the Convention indicates, they are responsible for the actions taken.

Koniaków lace making skills as an example of intangible cultural heritage

Koniaków lace is the name of crochet lace, which for more than a century has been one of the most outstanding manifestations of the artistic culture of Cieszyn Silesia and Polish folk culture. It has made its home in the villages of the Silesian Beskids, especially Koniaków, which has attached its name to the local lace, indicating its origin on the one hand, and its original form on the other. Attractiveness and craftsmanship allowed Koniaków laces to survive the pressure of factory-made, urban products, and the mountains of the Silesian Beskids have preserved them from the onslaught of civilization, thanks to which they continue to enjoy uninterrupted vitality to this day. Unique motifs arranged in original compositions and intricate technique, perfected over generations, have become the pride of the local women and, more broadly, of the region's inhabitants. This allowed it to be included on the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2017.



Picture 1. Koniaków lace, 2019 (photo K. Czerwińska).

The presence of lace in the folk tradition is closely linked to the need for ornamentation of costumes, which had festive and prestigious functions, and were therefore characterised by richness and decorativeness of form. This need was extremely strong and stimulated by the decorations found in nearby cities, i.e. Cieszyn, Skoczów, or Jabłonków (currently Jablunkov in Czech Republic). Lacemaking has been known in Cieszyn Silesia since the Renaissance and is connected with manorial and bourgeois culture. Contacts of the rural population, including Silesian miners, with the city and possibility of imitating the urban way of dressing contributed to the development of Koniaków lace. The decorations were created thanks to the talented local women, who first imitated foreign designs to create their own style later (Dobrowolsky 1936: 99-113). Lace decorated such parts of the local costume as the cap and the women's shirt. These processes took place at the beginning of the 20th century. According to research and preserved archives, the skill of making crochet lace was supposed to gradually gain popularity among local girls, along with an increase in education in the countryside, and opportunities to sell lace to tourists (Czerwińska 2018: 245-269).

To make lace, local women used a simple crochet hook, usually self-made (the dialect name is heknadla), and thread – white, very thin cordon, imported from Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (especially from Vienna), after World War I from bordering Czechoslovakia. Technique of making laces, or crocheting, is known locally as heklowanie (crocheting). The workshop process consisted of preparing individual elements, mostly referring to floral patterns (and confirming its nomenclature), which in the next stage were combined into specific forms. Lace makers, especially those gifted with outstanding talent, developed their own patterns which over time became their trademark. As they say, “it is like handwriting, we will recognize who made what”. The secrets of one's workshop, like heritage, would be passed down to subsequent generations of creators.

Along with the development of handicraft skills, lace forms appeared, but were not directly connected with decorating rural women's clothing, but were gaining approval and, what is more important, a market in the



Picture 2. Łucja Dusek (the local leader, activist and folk artist) in traditional costume, Koniaków, 2019 (photo K. Czerwińska)

cities. We are mainly talking about napkins, runners, tablecloths, but also gloves, collars, baby caps, decorations for baby burp cloth, especially for christenings. Over time, a whole range of women's accessories began to be made from lace: blouses, skirts, dresses, and hats. There have also been special orders for wedding dresses or children's christening clothes. The development of other, urban forms intensified with the disappearance of traditional costume, which resulted in the "independence" of lace. New forms of lace were sold in towns, mostly in Wisła, where tourists came (Spyra 2007: 195-204).

The ability to combine crocheting with other family and farm activities became an important additional source of income for many women and their families as early as the inter-war period, especially as the local area was poor. This is why six- and seven-year-old girls learned to make lace from their grandmothers and mothers, hoping to earn extra money. After World War II, the viability of the Beskidian *heklowanie*, was undoubtedly strengthened by the activity of the Central Bureau of Folk and Artistic Industry Cepelia. In 1949, Maria Gwarek (1896-1962) an outstandingly talented lace maker from Koniaków, gathered around 200 women from Koniaków and the surrounding villages, with whom she started to cooperate with the Central Bureau of Folk and Artistic Industry Cepelia. The relationships which arose at the time shaped the Koniaków lace for many years and influenced its contemporary condition (Czerwińska 2018a).

The established reputation of lace from Koniaków was stable for years in the Polish People's Republic (1952-1989), constituting one of the most characteristic determinants of the region and even Polish folk culture. With their uniqueness and perfect execution, lace gained buyers among: officials, celebrities of the world of culture and dignitaries in Poland and abroad. Special lace "works" were prepared for popes or leading heads of state of Poland and other countries. In 1996 during a visit in Poland, an Indian princess, charmed by the execution of lace, invited several lace makers to India. A tablecloth (3 meters diameter, 3000 elements) made during their stay was acquired by the Museum of Folk Art in Pune. In the 1960s the Ministry of Culture ordered a tray cloth for Queen Elizabeth. This gift made of surgical silk thread was prepared by Maria Gwarek,

unfortunately, her sudden death made it impossible to finish the lace. Regular buyers were also clothing companies, film crews and regional bands. Remarkable works were also acquired by museums in Poland and abroad.

However, in the course of time the surfeit of “folk art” weakened the popularity of lace and after 1990 the rich market offer additionally contributed to the decrease of interest in traditional products. The lack of financial satisfaction and the loss of support from the institutions caused that lace makers were deprived of material support and social prestige. These conditions directly influenced the spreading among the younger generation unwillingness to continue local handicraft traditions.

The stagnation did not last long, because at the end of the last decade of the 20th century lace production was revived. This process began with the creation of the G-string (a model of women’s underwear). The appearance of this frivolous underwear triggered in Koniaków a chain of events that shook up the community of both lace makers and folk culture researchers. The main participants of the discussion triggered by thongs were ethnographers and cultural anthropologists who once again struggled with the phenomenon of cultural dynamics and discussed the necessity to recognize these changes or undertake the protection of national cultural heritage resources (Czerwińska 2018:78-81; Kuligowski 2007).

Apart from the details of the discussion, the key fact is that the lace gained a second life. Renewed interest in this skill contributed to the re-definition of its position in local culture. The wave of growing interest in the lace from Koniaków awoke the imagination of artists who started to offer completely new range of products adequate to challenges and trends in clothing and decorating fashion. An almost unlimited range of Christmas and Easter decorations appeared along with commemorative flowers, flower bouquets, dolls, key rings, beads, rosaries, “dream catchers” and many others. The wider offer resulted in the blurring of old, specific character of the lace from Koniaków which was characterized by, as I mentioned before, colours limited to white and beige and repertory of folk motifs. Hence, it seems important that traditional patterns, mostly tray clothes, still appear among modern lace works and if it is possible

decorative elements polished through generations are used (for example on Christmas balls). Apart from the presence of the lace in its traditional environment also its different modern face develops. The lace becomes an inspiration for artists and designers who work in ethno-design trends.

Another equally important element of the activities performed by the lace makers community was exceptionally intense educational activity consisting in the organization of workshops, trainings, shows and exhibitions. These initiatives are primarily aimed at the preservation of local culture but they often cross these boundaries, especially in recent years when the cultural policy of the European Union has been emphasizing the cooperation between regions (which in this case usually means cooperation with a Czech or Slovak partner).

A main promotional event is Dni Koronki (Lace Days) which periodically since 2013 has been organized in the middle of August from the initiative of the local community. The event with the “lace in the background” includes a range of diversified activities from exhibitions and fashion shows, through workshops, meetings with local artists to lectures not only on lace making but also folk art culture and native traditions. This event is a very important part of activities in the scope of the promotion of the region, therefore all entities dealing with this type of activities participate in it. These include: The Museum of Lace – the Memorial Chamber of Maria Gwarek, the Kubaszczyk-Kamieniarz Family Creativity Chamber, the and the Koniaków Lace Centre in Koniaków. The leader of this community is Lucyna Ligocka-Kohut. Among the activities undertaken by her, there are activities aimed at developing and spreading knowledge about local lace making and drawing attention to its not only commercial but also artistic and cultural value. Then, it is not surprising that one of the results of the actions was willingness to add the Koniaków making lace skills to the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO. A local community leader Lucyna Ligocka-Kohut and a group of the most active lace makers applied for the List. The application was approved and adopted in 2017 to the joy of the local community, but not only. The event was significant for the entire region.



Picture 3. The leader of Koniaków lace makers – Lucyna Ligocka-Kohut in the Lace Centre, Koniaków 2019, (photo K. Czerwińska)

How to “catch” intangible cultural heritage

One of the most difficult challenges which are associated with intangible cultural heritage is to “capture” and safeguard it. This task consist of “materialising” a world built on word, practice, and memory, so that the knowledge about consolidated cultural phenomena could be used by further generations. In the face of global processes, cultural heritage not only represents a local property of communities, but becomes the platform for economic, educational, and political action in a broader, non-local dimension. This problem also has an impact on the Koniaków lace making skills, which we identify first and foremost by its material form.

The necessity of remaining intangible cultural heritage for next generations is connected with taking actions that consist of three stages: documenting, archiving, and disseminating (Jełowicki 2020: 116). All three stages are bound together and interdependent. Those stages are both processes, because they comprise a set of activities that need to be taken, but also procedures according to which they should be carried out. The whole process must be thoroughly analysed to avoid its effect having an incidental or fragmentary character, which would disrupt “decoding” the knowledge about the described object of intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, the model solution of the process is to perform all three mentioned steps. Each of actions undertaken should take into account homogeneous treatment throughout process, both formal factors (i.e. identification of the tools used in documentations, or ways of consolidating obtained material), and methodological or ethical factors. A key feature of these activities is the position that intangible heritage can be researched, preserved or popularized without the full participation and consent of heritage-keepers (Jełowicki 2020: 115-126). Chronologically, the first and basic step for the whole phase of consolidating intangible cultural heritage is documenting it. It most often takes the form of ethnographic research, which we understand as information gathering about cultural phenomena, including possible props related to the practice being documented. These researches are mostly carried out *in situ*. Before documenting, it is very important is to specify the objective of the action: what and how we want to consolidate, and what will be the

final result. The starting point of taken action is identification of the cultural phenomena (object of the intangible cultural heritage), that we want to document and reaching people, who might be helpful in this matter. The important aspect is also obtaining knowledge about the phenomena we are interested in from the outside of local community, using the museum sources or ethnographic studies. This stage is extremely important in order to not lose the main object of documentation in the flurry of material acquired in the field. To create a consistent and ordered directory, the selection for acquired materials is important – not everything can be preserved. That is why specifying the effect of documentation is necessary – whether the materials acquired are to transfer a catalogue of contents or to become a basis for further research and popularisation activities.

Another problem in this stage is the choice of documentation method. During the research process, the following can be used: an interview with the bearers (based on prepared questionnaire), audio and video records, and photos. Each form brings a different kind of source material, which should be interpreted appropriately. Additionally, the choice of tools should be adapted to the possibilities of archiving and analysing the acquired material. The specific form of documenting the heritage might be inventory. It usually consists of a thorough and systematic inventory of all possible aspects, forms and objects belonging to the phenomena under study. Inventory of cultural heritage is often related to the activities of museums, or conservation of historical monuments. In case of intangible cultural heritage, inventory seems not to be an enough method, and a proper toolbox is needed to capture the processuality of heritage.

The second stage of consolidating intangible cultural heritage is archiving. Simply acquiring materials and artefacts does not make them a secure archive. Archive is structuring (ordering) acquired content (including objects) in the form of consistent and understandable archive (management and storage system), so that they can be used anytime (Kopczyńska-Jaworska 1995: 113). The storage system should be as universal as possible: materials should be catalogued by a simple scheme, in which the information needed is easily found. The second requirement is timelessness, which includes the possibility of using the collection in the future.

Archiving also has its stages. First is material selection. More important and/or not repetitive things must be chosen. Another activity is preparation and conservation of the acquired materials. Digital ones must be segregated in folders that should be logically constructed (i.e. geographically, by type of techniques, family-sorted), those tangible cleaned, foiled or boxed. Possible resources should be digitalised (scanning, photographing). The last stage of archiving is creating warehouse documentation. Until recently this information came in the form of cards or fiches. Nowadays, they take a digital form, creating databases. However, it is necessary to remember that databases are structured collections of data on a certain subject area, collected according to a specific method, following an internal logic, and at the same time organised in such a way that access to the data and its handling according to selected criteria is easy (Babbie 2004: 424-437).

The last stage of preserving the intangible cultural heritage, often considered to be “additional”, not particularly necessary, is its dissemination, understood as: transmission of knowledge (transfer) and popularising. Nowadays, this process occurs not only between generations, *face to face*, but also through a school or mass-media (Assmann 2009: 118-120). It is related directly to bearers of heritage, but also to people from the outside of the heritage community. These actions are meant to value the heritage practice and enhance identity and may indirectly bring financial benefits (i.e. cultural tourism development). Contemporary forms of dissemination of the intangible cultural heritage include: websites, repositories, and digital libraries, Facebook, Instagram, and animation and educational activities, i.e. exhibitions, demonstration lessons, workshops, publications, TV and radio shows.

Institutions implementing the cultural policy of a country play a huge role in the process of preserving the heritage. In Poland, in recent decades, reality has forced a reorganisation of practices related to management of cultural goods. In addition to government institutions financed directly from the state budget and implementing state policy, new institutions have been established. These are entities with the status of regional cultural institutions, financially supported by provincial or district administration.

This group also includes numerous non-profit non-governmental organisations, associations and cooperatives, focusing their activity directly on local communities, or indirectly, drawing inspiration from native culture.

Despite many difficulties mentioned earlier, an attempt was made to undertake systematic actions of documentary and promotional nature for Koniaków lace. The starting point of this process was the identification of the phenomenon based on the existing ethnographic and museum sources. A collection of in-depth ethnographic studies on Koniaków lace was discovered during the searching of these rich materials. The resultant studies go back to the 1930s and the authors of which were professional ethnographers, museologists and an amateur community of regionalists (Dobrowolsky 1936: 99-113). Research on the lace was carried out successively in the following decades of the 20th century and is still continued. These works are descriptive, ethnographic in nature, in which the phenomenon is described as an element of the traditional clothing of Silesian highlanders or in the context of an analysis of independent folk art, or they are in-depth anthropological studies on the role of tradition in contemporary culture (Kiereś 2012, Czerwińska 2011: 245-257, Kuligowski 2007: 37-74).

A precious source of inspiration for performed activities is museum collections that created in the interwar period and expanded with other exhibits after World War II. The basis of these collections are lace bonnets worn by women in Cieszyn Silesia, made in the 1920-30s. As mentioned earlier, the core of museum collections is bonnets, sometimes it is possible to find there women's shirts decorated with lace, lace used as decorative tape, tray clothes. The majority of collections come from the interwar period or early post-war period. New exhibits, if they enrich the collections, are usually individual examples that find their way there as a result of folk art competitions organized by the museum. Then the form of lace – traditional or contemporary, is dictated by the rules of competition. In this way, the new forms of lace that are acquired bear witness to the vitality of lace and to the contemporary forms of its development.

The collection's inventory cards complement the museum's artifacts, where you can find laconic descriptions indicating the type of exhibit (for

example bonnet), its origin (for example Silesian highlanders, Silesian Beskids, Cieszyn Silesia) and the time of creation (1920-30s, early post-war period). While assessing the usefulness of the museum collections for the phenomenon identification, dynamics of development and especially including it in the context of intangible heritage manifestation, it is difficult to claim whether these materials were useful. First of all, the collections reflect old artifacts not taking into account the many development phases of this creativity, hence, the continuity of phenomenon. Detailed descriptions of production techniques are also missing, which, in the perspective of documenting the abilities that constitute an intangible heritage impact, is crucial. For a researcher who does not have the appropriate specialist knowledge it will be extremely difficult to define if an exhibit is a real lace from Koniaków. Not exact localisation given in the inventory card can also be misleading because lace executed with another technique appeared in Cieszyn Silesia in several local centres.

It is worth noticing that lace works mostly remain anonymous. The artist remains collective, which resulted from treating folk art as a commune activity. Signing works by folk artists and the use of copyright is still an interpretative difficulty today. It is an actual issue also in the case of lace makers from Koniaków. In literature and local community eminent representatives of this art are known by their name and surname for example late: Maria Gwarek (1869 – 1962), Zuzanna Gwarek (1937-2015), Helena Kamieniarz (1931-2006), Zuzanna Ptak (1945) and representatives of younger generation Beata Legierska (1971) or Mariola Wojtas (1984). Knowledge and memory about these artists do not result from their masterful skills of lace making but firstly from their activity in the field of the promotion of lace beyond their region. This fact means that behind a few recognizable women there are hundreds of anonymous lace makers and thousands of unsigned works, the authorship of which will never be established.

It is therefore not surprising that documenting lace itself – new designs, shapes, techniques – seems to be a ‘natural’ task. Like L. Ligocka-Kohut says:

Thousands of laces are made. All the knowledge, skills and techniques are in these patterns. It is a masterpiece of talent, creation, the effect of creative work, thoughts and ideas. At first I wanted to photograph them all, because the patterns are unique, each one is different. And when we sell the lace, those patterns are gone. I feel that if I don't photograph them, it's going to get lost. But with so many laces, it is impossible to photograph them. And that is the problem. I have to choose which ones I am going to document. Another problem is that there are so many of these photos that I'm starting to get lost. I also don't have a place where I can do any kind of archiving. Another problem is that it's only when I have access. This is the kind of collection that only I have control over.

This is a task that we will have to sort out. But we don't have enough time for all activities.

Another issue is community priorities. And for the lace makers who work with Lucyna Ligocka-Kohut, earning money is the most important thing. She says:

It was a surprise to me when I started, but the most important thing for lace makers is to make money. Making lace has always been an additional way of earning money. And this is still actually today. They just need to make money. For a long time, there was very little appreciation for their work, so the cost of lace was very low. People like lace, but if they have to pay a lot for it, there is a problem. I have shown them that we can make a good living from lace and that it has value for them.

An important stage of the whole process is its evidencing, the nature of which raises further questions – is the photographic documentation a suitable evidence? Is a photo of lace a satisfying carrier of the knowledge about intangible heritage? The answer to this question should be – no. Photographic documentation only records the finished form of the lace, so it is not the most appropriate way to record the process of making it. At the same time, the emerging commercial catalogues or esky – online

shops mainly use photographs. This is the most popular form of documentation, but it does not capture the essence of the intangible heritage.

It seems that film recording would give better results, however, it is difficult to imagine the films capturing this hours-long complex process. There are also some concerns about recording the lace making process. This is a very interesting situation to be in. There is an ambivalence in this situation between the need to portray authenticity and the obligation to preserve a secret that belongs to the local community – an intangible heritage. One of the lace maker tells about it in this way:

I understand the need to pass on our traditions. But it has always been a problem for us. The lace makers didn't want to show how to make some of the patterns. It was a secret, and it still is for many women. We were always heard: you have bread in your hands. Nobody could see us working, only family members.

Now, we make promotional films to show what we want to show, so that we don't show too much, so that no one can steal the technique. To show that we are doing something. Others would be instructional videos, the kind where we show the whole process. Films that, when we are gone, can be used by our children.

The researching and documenting activities carried out so far primarily refer to material artifacts, and do not reflect the essence of intangible heritage. Therefore, it seems that the latest measures taken can change the current situation. The initiation of cooperation between the lace making community and The Centre of Community Archives with the support of the National Heritage Institute, should be pointed out here. In October 2022, in Cieszyn the workshop was organized for stakeholders and bearers from the Upper Silesia region, aimed at training in archival methods and methods of interviewing bearers and recording them. This co-operation includes not only professional assistance in the documentation of cultural heritage, but also the possibility of loaning equipment and depositing collected material in the Archive. Initiated activities have given rise to preserving the oral history of the community of lace making skills in Koniaków.

Concluding the current findings it needs to be assumed that the bearers and especially their leader face exceptionally difficult tasks to decide on what should be documented and how to document in order to include the essence of intangible heritage which is the making of lace from Koniaków. A person who archives the phenomenon is also responsible for the selection of documenting the skills of lace making. Therefore, a question should be asked on which quantifiers should this selection be based on?

Answers to these questions are extremely important because they constitute the foundation of the community archive that documents extremely relevant activity of local and in broader sense also national community. Considering the activity of local artists the database is enormous.

Koniaków lace making skills – further challenges for safeguarding

The entry on the list obliges to take specific actions that arise from the adopted UNESCO Convention, and involve among others the necessary archiving of the phenomenon, its promotion or organization of activities that safeguard its vitality. This job is mostly the responsibility of the local community – bearers of intangible heritage with the support from external institutions. Therefore, when applying for an entry on the UNESCO List, one of the basic questions that must be asked is the choice of the main contractor for the tasks and taking the role of representative of the bearers' interests. This task was undertaken by Lucyna Ligocka-Kohut, who at the time of submitting the application was an employee of the Commune Cultural Centre in Istebna. However, it was clear to the Leader that combining current and new responsibilities would be difficult. Therefore Lucyna Ligocka-Kohut resigned from her job and offered private initiatives to start the Koniaków Lace Foundation and the Koniaków Lace Centre in Koniaków (13 September 2019). The aim of the activities is the constant concentration of all activities related to the Koniaków making lace skills and the centralisation of the artists' community.



Picture 4. The Lace Centre, Koniaków, 2022 (photo K. Czerwińska)

The recent period of activity of the lace community coincided with the difficult Covid-19 pandemic situation, which caused many institutions to slow down or stop functioning. Lace-making, usually done at home, did not cease. In addition, the widespread and obligatory lockdown favored lace making, and instead of limited tourism, work on the Internet – promotion and sales – took off intensively. Lace makers joined the social campaign to protect themselves from Covid-19, for example lace masks were made. Despite this, a wide variety of complementary activities were undertaken, complementing each other. Among them can be mentioned: the organization of permanent and temporary exhibitions, demonstrations of lace making skills combined with workshops, active participation in European Heritage Days (the first edition in 2019, the next annually).

Educational activities, such as organizing a summer school for children (first in 2021), are an interesting new development. Children has the opportunity to visit selected lace makers in their homes and listen to how lace makers learned skills from their mothers or grandmothers in the past. The summer school concern learning the skills of lace making, but this time is also an occasion to link generation and to learn about the local culture – dialect of the language, folk costumes, food and other elements of tradition.

A permanent element of the activities to popularize the Koniaków lace is the organization of workshops, that are very popular. Workshop activities are directed to a very diverse target group: for all ages (children and adults), for locals and visitors, tourists, handicraft enthusiasts. An important aspect of these activities is the organization of workshops also for lace makers to improve their professional competence. Depending on the age group and where the participants come from, the workshops are designed to teach lace making skills. At the same time, the workshops are an opportunity to build relationships with other participants. Stories are told about old ways of life. This is of particular interest to young people and visitors. And the workshops, attended by local lace-makers, are not only an opportunity to improve lace making skills. They are also a time to share life experiences and memories, perpetuating the collective memory of the past. These activities take place at the Koniaków Lace Centre.

Another branch of activity is promotional events. This action is being developed all the time. The lace makers participate in numerous local campaigns of a tourist promoting the region. These include programs on radio, television and the Internet. Extremely active is the fanpage of lace makers on Facebook. Every year in August, Lace Days are organized in Koniaków, which combine exhibitions, workshops, concerts and fashion shows. An interesting event was participation in the Polish TV show “I’ve Got Talent” in 2022, where a representation of lace makers presented their talents.

Among the numerous activities are also those of a commercial character. The Lace Center has a store where lace is sold, but also other products with “lace in the background”, such as chocolates, lollipops, a memory game, ceramics with lace motifs by local artists. An interesting popularization idea was a project to write a detective story for children. The author of the book entitled “Lace work like a formula for a detective story” is the popular writer for children – Grzegorz Kasdepke (Łódź 2022).

However, the most important event for the lace making community in recent years was participation in EXPO 2020 in Dubai, Emirates, from January 27 to February 2, 2022. Koniaków lace popularized the potential of the Silesian province – its natural and cultural values. The design of the arrangement of the Silesian pavilion was based on showing the traditions of the place and its cultural heritage. Among the things prepared for the occasion were demonstrations of lace making skills, an exhibition of lace and art installations inspired by lace by Nespoon, and two collections of clothing by Beata Bojda (Ethno by B. Bojda and Flowers of Koniaków). The Polish pavilion was a spectacular success and was very popular among participants of EXPO from different countries.



Picture 5. Koniaków lace makers during EXPO, Dubai 2022, (photo L. Ligocka-Kohut)

The described activities implement the goals of the UNESCO Convention for the dissemination and promotion of lace making skills, but not all. Among many undertaken obligations, which resulted from the entry on the National ICH list, there was also a task concerning the documentation of the phenomenon. Considering the before mentioned general principles of heritage safeguarding in the context of the lace from Koniaków, there were many challenges to face. This task seems to be one of the most difficult and requires taking into account many aspects: methodological, formal, organizational, including the development of appropriate tools for the documentation of the phenomenon and the adoption of a specific, systemic task plan so that the results obtained are not incidental and inconsistent. On this occasion it needs to be considered that the process of documenting the phenomenon depends mostly on the leader of the lace makers community and constitutes one of many elements of activities realized by her. The implementation of tasks can only be carried out if the Centre has liquidity. The Centre is privately owned by L. Ligocka-Kohut. Its operation is possible thanks to grants she receives from external sources and the margin from the products sold in the shop. Observing the Centre's activities, it is clear that the economic factor influences both the initiation of new tasks and their implementation. Consequently, this affects the development or loss of lace making skills among local women and thus the viability of the heritage. This means that the process of documenting lace making skills in Koniaków (and beyond) depends largely on the success of fundraising for the Centre's activities. Fundraising, however, involves the search for sources of funding, the time-consuming development of proposals, applications and grant approvals.

So far the stage of promotion has seemed to be the best carried out stage of the safeguarding. Carriers of news about the phenomenon are extremely rich and include websites such as the website of the Koniaków Lace Foundation, social media (Facebook's page of Koronki Koniakowskie), documentaries and radio broadcasts. As mentioned earlier different types of activities related to the lace are constantly undertaken for different groups of recipients. Also intensive activities aimed at the creation of lace as the region's brand are performed.

Conclusions

Ordering the reality around us is a universal human need. Segregating things and social practices is an internal existing beyond time and place. A problem appears when the limits of what one wants to represent are unknown, when it is not known how many things are discussed, and it is assumed that their number, if not infinite, is astronomically large; the problem also arises while dealing with a reality which essential definition cannot be given. Then, to talk about it, to make it understandable, in some way perceivable, its properties are enumerated (Eco 2009: 15). Organizing is therefore a continuous process that requires efforts of a different nature and intensity. The first initial stage begins with identifying, naming and enumerating things, and the next stages involve combining them into various types of constellations based on the similarity of forms, or not always conscious, mutual relations (Eco 2009: 254).

Referring to the words of Umberto Eco, capturing the intangible cultural heritage is a difficult, internally complex task that each time requires sensitivity and openness to its phenomenon. In the context of the described example of the Koniaków lace making skill the complexity in question is extremely visible and requires consideration of many factors and engagement of many communities not only bearers. In my opinion, undoubtedly the most important aspect of activities aimed at systematic documentation of works is the attitude of the stakeholder leader. The Koniaków Lace Centre is a private initiative and must provide the owner with income and other non-commercial activities of educational or documenting nature depend on obtaining financing and the approach of the stakeholder leader. Sourcing funds for documenting and popularizing activity (material and personal support) also depends on her. In this case promotional activity which is extremely intense is strictly related to the achievement of commercial goals.

Undoubtedly, in order to carry out the assumed tasks, it is necessary to provide support from other institutions for example through appropriate grants or through participation in ministerial programs such as Folk and Traditional Culture Programme. Initiated cooperation with The Centre

of Community Archives seems promising to help preserve the intangible heritage of local community from Koniaków.

In conclusion, grassroots initiatives managing local heritage are valuable and crucial to maintaining its vitality. However, they may not be sufficient. The safeguarding of local heritage is the foundation of social capital. It should therefore be supported by the institutions that implement the state's cultural policy.

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