Cultural Factors in International Economy

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As the globalization is approaching, the major activities in economy are the ever-flowing capitals, with the formulated regulations and international laws, across the boundaries of different nations. With the guaranteed income in return, such international economic modes lie in the fact that the rules and regulations are formulated by the industrialized countries, which always guide and set the major principles in international economic activities. History has never been the same in different nations with different cultural background. During the process of modernity, the pre-modern countries have to face the problems as to strike the balance between development and environment while those already in postmodern era attempt to avoid certain problems appeared on their way in the modernity. Therefore the less developed countries have to encounter the cruel competition, obey the rules or regulations set by the international organizations or professional groups, with those countries that have far been advanced not only in its economic structures but also in the global network in business.

As it has shown, the international economy goes so far as the mono-in-
put of the developed countries into the developing ones or areas. The so-called mutual input and exchanges still remain as the ideal pattern. But the economic activities popular today have also demonstrated that almost all the international capital lies heavily on the use of the other culture. That is to say, because the whole world consists of many cultural patterns with colorful traditions, only by making best use of the culture in different areas could the economic activities be of comparatively success. Across national boundaries means across the cultural patterns. Any country, no matter how advanced it is, has to utilize the other culture, at least part of it, in order to make its own products better accepted and avoid cultural conflict. Together with the representation, such as advertisement, images in either movies or TV dramas, the economic benefit and interest are always implicit. By overwhelming representation models, people in other cultural areas would gradually accept certain images, with the ideology and productive profit implied. The fundamental purpose of such representation, therefore, is to make a general acceptance and agreement to accept willingly the material products by being influenced with ideologically representation. It is no doubt that cultural factors play a crucial role in the international economy today.

Take Chengdu for example. Chengdu is a city in Southwest China. Comparatively it is not so developed even in China. About a decade ago, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) invested in the market of this city. What they found was that there was no fast-food restaurant at all. All the local snack food restaurants were not good in settings. Chengdu, like some other cities in Mainland China, was ready for rapid development. KFC immediately invested its first chain restaurant in the downtown area. With its entirely new face, clean environment and clear prices, it turned to be among the most popular eating-places in the city. As the local people prefer the spicy flavor, KFC changed its food flavor in time. As the KFC was some-
thing exotic, younger generation followed the trend by choosing the dating place at the restaurant. As the One-couple-one-kid policy had been carried out, the kids became the centre of the family, and their parents always promise them to eat in KFC on weekend as a special treat. And the restaurant provided new programs particularly for the kids, like “buy one KFC, get a school bag free” before the new school semesters. KFC has rapidly developed, with more than 25 chain restaurants even in the single city in Mainland China today. People in the city take food no longer as the exotic one.

Since the cultural role has become more important, people in less-developed areas could also make use of the culture of their own. Strategies could include fair of cultural products, package tour with local cultural colors, counter-representation with cultural factors. All of these could serve as cultural attractions. Chengdu, the city in Southwest China, is actually in the different nationalities in this region. It is also the gateway to Tibet. With a history of more than two thousand years, historical resources could be utilized for its economic drive. In the city, there are several cultural parks, such as Tu Fu’s Thatched Cottage, the poet sage in the Tang Dynasty; and Wuhou Temple, the minister during the period of the Three Kingdoms; as well as Sanxingdui, an archeological museum, whose cultural uniqueness is entirely different from any other excavated archaeological sites in China. Those places of historic interest could not only serve as the tourist resource but also as the cultural productive bases. Another important factor in Chengdu is the environment as the giant panda living area is so near to the city. In order to protect such a rare animal, people here joint hands with international groups to make a better place for the giant panda and red panda. It would not only be an economic activity but more importantly, also the idea to be along with the globe be rooted. And since there are several places awarded by the United Nations around the city, such as
Jiuzhaigou, Leshan with the biggest sitting Buddha as well as Mount Qingcheng, the birthplace of Taoist religion, the city could make itself as the heart of communication and exhibition center. Sichuan food has already be world famous. As the original place with the ever improving and adapting food flavor, the city of Chengdu could make itself as the international food center as well.

Generally, the less developed countries or areas cannot wait for the mono-input. They should make economic development by recognizing the importance of the culture. By combination of different cultures, they could turn the input into the mutual exchanges. And meanwhile they could find a way to avoid the zigzag obstacles in the process towards their modernization. That is to say, they don’t have to blindly follow the modes of development of the other. Without the cost of the tradition and culture patterns of their own, those countries or areas could go with their own cultural priority, particularly in cultural uniqueness and the consciousness to make such a culture as the germ for its economic drive. It is also the important way to protect and renew the culture of their own.

In a word, within the context of globalization, the homogeneity and differences are the key issues for people to ponder the questions such as tradition and modernity, the native and the other.

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