HERITAGE STUDIES AS PUBLIC ETHNOLOGY: RECENT TRENDS AND THE ISSUES CONCERNED WITH INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

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FOCUS ON PEOPLE'S PRACTICES

I am an anthropologist working at the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, which is located at the center of the World Expo 1970 Commemoration Park, approximately 30 km north of the International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI). Most readers may regard a museum as a space for displaying tangible objects, unrelated to intangible cultural heritage. However, this is a misconception. To activate their space, many museums work directly with people, especially those who are more familiar with their cultural objects. In cases of ethnography museums like ours, people who manufactured or used the exhibited objects or source communities, are the key actors. Sharing their knowledge with the visitors at the museum who are not familiar with these objects involves a significant part of learning at the museum in this age of cultural and sociological diversity. In the current century, museology focuses more on exploring people's practices in the context of museum exhibits rather than on merely displaying objects (Alivizatou, 2016).

Similarly, heritage studies in this century focus more than ever on people's practices rather than monuments themselves. It is why cultural landscapes have become a significant category in the World Heritage scheme (Brumann & Berliner, 2016), and why UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003 (Smith & Akagawa, 2008). Furthermore, movable heritage, normally tangible but essentially different from monuments, is reconsidered in relation to people's values and practices, especially in issues of repatriation of looted objects in the colonial age (Silverman, 2011). Thus, people's practices are the most important topic in the trends of both museology and heritage studies.

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INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Essentially, intangible cultural heritage, which the Convention illustrates, such as oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge, practices concerning nature and the universe, and traditional craftsmanship, all relate to people's activities rather than monuments or museum objects. Unlike tangible objects, intangible heritage is safeguarded through incessant or continuous repetition of customary practices, but not through material reparation or replacement of parts. We will discuss this point later in this section, but before that, I will provide a quick review of the other two contributors.

Professor Sato reviewed intangible heritage in terms of human security. This topic is significant because intangible heritage is generally supported by groups of numerous people and that the achievement of SDGs is vital for the safeguarding of this heritage. Following my chapter, Ms Gurung will discuss the relation between intangible heritage and scientific research. This topic is quite interesting because it will act as a clue to the essence of intangible heritage. Before it is considered heritage, intangible heritage begins as a mere cultural practice. It becomes a target of safeguarding only after culture separates from daily life and participation in this culture becomes an individual decision rather than a necessity. The ultimate cause of "invention" of intangible heritage is modernity. Unlike culture in pre-modern settings, intangible heritage requires safeguarding supported by scientific research because traditional culture is no longer the only option for human life in a certain geographic or cultural condition. For example, a community can depend on commodities provided by overseas factories or services provided by global entrepreneurs. They can take lifestyle models from urban cultures or even modify those considering scientific findings. People therefore may continue to practice their cultural traditions, but their commitment to the intangible heritage is no longer what it used to be. Moreover, my conclusion relates to the scientific activities, but it concerns only in terms of people's participation.

To return from the digression, my topic is incessant or continuous repetitions on which intangible heritage is contingent. This interesting character of intangible heritage logically follows many issues particular to intangible heritage studies. In this short presentation, I would like to highlight only two issues: one is fluidity in contrast to solidity; and the other is communicativity in contrast to group identity. I would stress fluidity and communicativity rather than solidity and group identity; however, the latter two are also inevitable topics. After examining these two dyads of concepts, I will conclude that heritage studies should promote and facilitate conversations between researchers and practitioners and the general public. My title, "Heritage Studies as Public Ethnology," originates from this idea, which will be discussed later.

FLUIDITY VS SOLIDITY

The most significant difference between World Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage studies is that authenticity is essential to World Heritage, whereas it is not in Intangible Cultural Heritage. Because World Heritage monuments are preserved through material reparation or replacement of parts, the conservation project leaders naturally care primarily for its authenticity and faithful reproduction. However, we sometimes expect both tangible and intangible heritage to be authentic to an excessive degree (Bendix, 1997), i.e., not to change. However, the intangible heritage illustrated in the 2003 Convention, such as performing arts, social practices, crafting skills, and knowledge, are essentially processual phenomena rather than final products. Therefore, emphasis on authenticity or consistency could damage its vital and creative character. In the 2003 Convention, intangible heritage is regarded as "constantly re-created by communities and groups, in response to their environment, their interaction with nature, and their history." In other words, intangible heritage is not solid but fluid (Iida, 2022). It naturally resists fixation, freezing, and solidification.

The component practices of intangible heritage are not rigidly identical, although they are repeated countless times over several years, and usually by many people. Especially in modern settings, where societies and landscapes change at a fast rate, any cultural phenomenon can be a target of security. Hence, heritagization is a means to secure cultural continuity. However, we should bear in mind that heritagization is not a mere resistance to modernity, but, as Valdimar Hafstein (2018) argues, the concept of heritage is a natural consequence of reflexive modernity (Beck et al., 1994). Once the process of heritagization commences, heritage is exposed to backrush of over-solidification. In my opinion, all the primary heritage supporters and subsidiary professionals struggle to balance change and continuity, or fluidity and solidity. Resistance to such freezing of vitality is a major topic in heritage studies.

Consequently, distinction between culture and cultural heritage might turn irrelevant. It is actually ambiguous, as I admit personally. Only when the speaker (or the author) realizes that some cultural phenomena in the present has recourse to the past (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1995, 2004), then it can be denominated as heritage; however, it is also culture at the same time. Both culture and heritage are flexible in shape and change in form over the long term.

COMMUNICATIVITY VS GROUP IDENTITY

The process of heritagization makes the cultural phenomena manipulatable for a variety of intended purposes, whether tangible or intangible. In other words, both World Heritage monuments and Intangible Cultural Heritage serve as

national or group symbols. The problem is that group identity and exclusion are two sides of the same coin. This issue is frequently argued in the discipline of memory studies in relation to monumental heritage, which are easily appropriated to express political status as nationalists or regionalists. The case is the same with intangible heritage. For example, Wu (2020) analyzes mainland China's heritage policy intending to win Inner Mongolia over to its side. The problem is not only a domestic issue but also a global one. Aykan (2016) describes food heritage of *keşkek,* contested between Turkey and Armenia, followed by other contestations over food heritage in West Asia. Although we lack a detailed monograph, some Japanese citizens were discouraged in 2016 when the culture of Jeju women divers, *haenyo*, was inscribed in the representative list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, for a similar culture is also found in Japan, and the two had historical communications beyond the national border. Thus, two or more countries can compete for exclusive recognition of a shared heritage, and successful inscription for one country can have negative meanings for the other.

In reality, one heritage does not correspond to one group and vice versa. A one-to-one correspondence model not only creates competition between groups but also may bring about another problem of internal exclusion, claiming "whoever does not respect our heritage should not be in our community." Although this kind of narrow nationalism or regionalism obviously opposes the UNESCO spirit, it can dominate some groups or communities because the process of inscription of Representative List is so extensive.

One solution is to exclude state parties from the nomination processes. It is a rational approach because intangible heritage is vitalized by people's will, while national policy has nothing to do with it. The 2003 Convention actually says that intangible heritage provides people "with a sense of identity and continuity," but says nothing about the benefit state parties receive from intangible heritage. If all the state parties interfere or disrupt local conditions, they should withdraw entirely from the processes of nomination and management. However, without state parties, UNESCO may not be capable of developing their processes. Therefore, it is not realistic that state parties completely withdraw from the heritage policies.

The second solution is a mere shift in ways of thinking, which should be followed by dissemination of a revised concept of intangible heritage. The new concept starts from the recognition that there is no human who is familiar with all the cultural traditions. In terms of dependency on particular traditions, all humans are equal. If all humans admit this unity in diversity, any cultural tradition and its related intangible heritage are respected by and interesting to all people. Then, whatever affection you have for your own intangible heritage, you will tolerate other cultural traditions and respect them. On the contrary, people from other

traditions may possibly find potential in the creativity of your culture. Then, intangible heritage is no longer an issue of contestation, but a resource for developing an understanding of other cultures. This is the new concept of intangible heritage emphasizing communicativity.

CONCLUSION: PUBLIC ETHNOLOGY

In conclusion, intangible heritage studies should concentrate on balancing the contradictory tendencies of heritage: fluid and solid, communicative and exclusive. To achieve this balance, the discipline should be developed through conversations with primary heritage supporters, or so-called groups and communities in the 2003 Convention. Even in building theories and concepts, ideas of researchers or practitioners should ideally reflect people's ideas and vice versa. When such a reflexive process is emphasized in an approach in the discipline of anthropology, the approach is called reflexive anthropology. However, this name still premises the dichotomy between leaders and followers. Therefore, some researchers now prefer the term "public anthropology" to include various actors involved in both theories and practices associated with this discipline. Similarly, researchers in human sciences are beginning to advocate public sociology, public geography, public archaeology, public history, and so on, as new approaches. In the same way, heritage studies should promote and facilitate conversations with various actors, as well as their free participation in theory building.

Heritage studies are akin to public sociology because they both concern incessant modification of group identity, whether communicative or exclusive, and corresponding redefinition of peoples' heritage, whether fluid or solid. This approach should be more important in intangible heritage studies than tangible because the former is based on people's involvement. In addition, as aforementioned in the "intangible cultural heritage" section, primary heritage supporters do not isolate from others. To enable smooth inheritance, they may be armed with theoretical backing of heritage studies. Here the theorizing process is not necessarily monopolized by researchers and practitioners.

I prefer the term "public ethnology" to "public sociology" because the former defines the arena more specifically. The term ethnology tends to be avoided among Anglophones because it gives the impression of studying past peoples. Therefore, ethnology became outdated before public ethnology could emerge. However, conventional ethnology has dealt with group dynamics, especially its ethnic aspects, just how sociology has done. Public ethnology can be distinguished from other public sociologies; in that the former refers to the past more frequently. In heritage studies, the past has no negative nuance or connotations. Rather, "past" is relevant as a referential resource to repeat the practice incessantly and continuously.

Conventional ethnology regards culture as a solid notion, which provides the base of group identity. If we accept recent achievements in cultural anthropology, both culture and heritage should be considered fluid notions, which reflect communication with cultural others. Public ethnology is consistent with new ideas, for new a concept of cultural heritage will inevitably be fluid and communicative. A focus on people, fluid notion of heritage, and communicative notion of heritage comprise the trinity of public ethnology.

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