Heritage management as an act of compensation—A new insight into knowledge transfer

Heritage and inheritance are not always examined in relation to the idea of Compensation. In the Japanese language, however, these ideas are closely interrelated. The verb “tsugu” means “succeed,” i.e. transmitting a heritage from one generation to another while the verb “tsugunau” means “compensate.” If “compensation” implies a loss, the idea of “succession” also presupposes a loss. Succession is an act of selection which inevitably excludes what one cannot transmit. Heritage management should be redefined from this insight: Knowledge transfer cannot preclude the loss of knowledge; on the contrary, the loss is the initial condition on which heritage management is to be constructed. The paper will analyze this preposterous condition by focusing on several cases of knowledge transfer in the field of “intangible cultural heritage.”

tsgunau: compensate, which implies transmission or succession.

utsusu, transitive verb: replace, copy, duplicate, transmit, translate, possess, haunt...

utsuru, intransitive verb: pass, change, move (in-out).

utsushi: “copy” in current Japanese as the opposite of the “original”.

utsushi-mi: “physical presence” in old Japanese; modified into “empty body” in medieval Japanese under the influence of Buddhism, originally utsushi-mi meant carnal body in the sense of in-car-nation; but in the medieval context utsushi also incorporated the notion of “transition”.

utsuro: void, emptiness, hollowness.

utsuke-mono: a person with emptiness in spirit, empty brain, i.e. stupidity, imbecility...

utsuroi: passage, transition, transience.

Utsuwa: recipient, container, vessel; originally meaning “circular empty container”.

Glossary Terms:
tsugu: succeed, transmit, inherit.