Heritage Management as an Act of Compensation

From the Loss of Tradition to the Tradition of Loss
Across the Borders of the Living and the Dead

A New Insight into Knowledge Transfer?

Shigemi INAGA,
International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Nichibunken, Kyoto
School of Cultural Studies
Graduate University for Advanced Studies, Sokendai, Hayama

- 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 anomalous condition by focusing on several cases of knowledge transfer in the field of "intangible cultural heritage."
Desolated area, with only some buildings left standing, is what was left of Hiroshima, Japan, Sept. 3, 1945 after the first atomic bomb was dropped.

Smoke lingers over this scene of destruction in Hiroshima, Japan, on Aug. 7, 1945, a day after the explosion of the atomic bomb. In the far background right is the ruin of the old domed Industrial Exhibition building, preserved as a memorial in today's Hiroshima.

• The intense heat from the atomic bomb that hit Hiroshima, Japan on Aug. 6, 1945, left shadows of people and objects that were disintegrated.

A residential area in Hiroshima, 1300 meters (1430 yards) from the hypocenter. In mid-August 1945, several days after the bombing.

MATSUMURO Kazuo 松室一雄 (まつむろかずお)
A woman whose burned skin had peeled off and was hanging down. Year of Birth: 1913. Age at time of blast: 32

• Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum
2. Transfer of Knowledge or a Witness of Loss

- Any knowledge transfer by the human species cannot be exempt from this fate: what is transferred from one generation to another is like a shadow of the disappeared;

- It eloquently and cruelly shows the amount of the sacrifice that the transfer cannot help but make as its inevitable side-effect. What we can transfer as knowledge may well be no better than the by-product of the loss that it entails.

- This recognition of the inevitable loss allows us to regard human heritage as a struggle to compensate what we are not capable of compensating.
Defluentes amnes cursu non cessant, quorum aqua vero pristina non extat. In stagnante quae fluctuat spuma modo solvitur, modo creatur, nec diu remanet umquam. Hujus mundi homines habitationes que non alter esse constat.

- Eemitorium (Hojoki), e lingua japonica in latinam vertit Christophorus Ferrarius.
- edendum curavit Alexander Ricius, Lutetiae Parisiorum MMVIII.

Though the river’s current never fails, the water passing, moment by moment, is never the same. Where the current pools, bubbles form on the surface, bursting and disappearing as others rise to replace them, none lasting long.

In this world, people and their dwelling places are like that, always changing.

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- Tradition
- 伝統 transmission + lignée
- 伝燈 transmission + lanterne

Jardin du temps en Mutation
- sucession perpétuelle en double
- Régénération à la manière d’une reproduction de
- Double spiral d’ADN

The Old Structure of 1973 (left) and the New shrine (1993) in juxtaposition.
The Ship of Theseus Paradox: A Problem of Identity

Le premier escalier ou degré en « en fer à cheval » du château fut construit par Philibert Delorme (1510-1570) sous le règne d'Henri II.

L'escalier initial, fortement détérioré, est reconstruit en 1632 sous le règne de Louis XIII, par Jean Androuet du Cerceau (1585-1649).

Le marbre de Parthénon et le bois du sanctuaire d'Ise ont réalisé la glorification suprême de la Beauté. Mais le Parthénon n'est aujourd'hui qu'un monument sans vie commémorant l'Antiquité, même s'il n'était pas devenu la ruine que nous connaissons.

Mais la signification d'Ise ne se réduit pas seulement dans le fait que le sanctuaire est vivant et vénéré par la population entière du Japon; le sanctuaire manifeste une idée fort originale de l'esprit de construction, celle de l'architecture sacrée. Bruno Taut, La vie et le bâtiment au Japon (publication posthume, 1949).

«(In Ise) There is nothing to see and they [the Japanese] won’t let you see it. »

« (A Isé) Il n'y a rien à regarder, et ils (les Japonais) ne veulent pas vous le laisser voir. »

(伊勢神宮には)見るものなど存在せず、それ等(日本なんども)は、それ等の目には触れることができるなどとは思っていない。

Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850-1935)
« Quant au maître (...) son visage est offert à la lecture des spectateurs. Mais ce qui est soigneusement, précieusement donné à lire, c’est qu’il n’y a rien à lire. »
Roland Barthes (1915-1980), L’Empire des signes, Skira, 1970, p.81°

Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007)
« Simulacre sans original »
« Simulacre et simulation »

Alexandres Kojève (1902-1968)
« pur snobisme »

« Ainsi, à la limite, tout Japonais est en principe capable de procéder, par pure snobisme, à un suicide parfaitement gratuit ».
Introduction à la Lecture de Hegel, 1947

Kuki Shūzō (九鬼 周造 Kuki Shūzō?, February 15, 1888 – May 6, 1941)

Kuki Shūzō « La Notion du temps et la reprise Sur le temps en Orient », (1926)
Propos sur le Temps, Philippe Renouard, 1928

Die Ewige Wiederkunft des Gleichen ist ein zentraler Gedanke in Friedrich Nietzsches Philosophie, dem zufolge sich alle Ereignisse unendlich oft wiederholen. Dieses zyklische Zeitverständnis ist für Nietzsche die Grundlage hochster Lebensbejahung

Thus, knowledge transfer turns out to be inseparable from the sense of irremediable loss. Succession and transfer of knowledge is nothing but the reverse side of its impossibility. What we can transfer to posterity is no more than the empty residue of what we wish to transmit in vain, the traces of loss indicating the failure of our endeavor to transmit. Ruins are the physical memory of such unsuccessful transfers. We call “ruins” such debris and remains which have lost their raison d'être and practical value (be it utilitarian, political, heuristic or religious, etc.), despite the fact that our ancestors have put all their wisdom, intelligence and energy in their realization and maintenance.

What kind of ruins can Japan of the 20th Century transfer to the posterity of human beings? Will it be the Atomic Bomb Dome in Hiroshima (1945) on the one hand, or the abandoned nuclear reactors of Fukushima (2011) on the other? And must we wait for the day when Fukushima Strasse will be installed side by side with Hiroshima Strasse in the Capital of the Bundes Republik Deutschland? Is it still allowed for us to cherish the optimistic hope of a Sisyphus in front of these nuclear disasters?

A satellite of the Fukushima nuclear power plant after it was damaged by an earthquake and tsunami. (Photo: Getty)
Let's stop worrying about the probability of our own survival rate. For the last one who can happily survive is not the "I" who am alive. It is only where the not-survived have given their place to the survivors, That the sunlight reaches, and the darkness is wiped away to nurture new lives. Just like the stump of a cut-down tree which puts forth the new crimson buds, Just like the carbonized stubbles nourishing the green sprouts on the burnt field.

Death is not the enemy of Life; it is a seedbed, a cradle for Life, The dead provide us with the vigor, blessing us with the chance to live. The mindful thought of the non-survivors is bestowed upon our lives. It is our duty to accomplish this entrusted life, a gift sent from the dead. And let us share our suffering of Life, in token of our respect to the Dead.

Facing the calamities beyond description, words fail us, we are kept voiceless. Yet the voiceless silence gives birth to vision; words are spun again into a yarn of stories. Yet the reanimated words will one day fall on the ground again, like the dead leaves.

And the leaf mold heaps up slowly and silently at the bottom of an unknown lake. The soil accumulates annual sediment, while the trunk of a tree ages year by year. The layers preserve the traces of climate mutations & earth-tectonics of the millennium. Like the archival documents, the sediment of soil composes the chronicle of the planet. The patterns of Lives are woven in the layers of fossilized terrain to record The irreplaceable Chain of Being for eternity. Crossing the animated and the inanimate. The dignity of a soul lies in its transmigration, beyond individual Life & Death.