

Diversifying Heritage and Remembrance in Contemporary Japan

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Date and time: 27 October 2024, 9:30-15:30

Venue: Kanazawa university satellite office, 3rd floor (2 min. from
Kanazawa Station) <https://www.kanazawa-u.ac.jp/social-engagement/use/kanazawa-station-satellite>

While Japan tries to embrace diversity and inclusion as a main theme of a future society, significant initiatives have been already implemented by local communities, institutions, and civil society groups to cultivate an inclusive sense of heritage that accommodates and creates a common future for different cultures, ethnicities, gender identities, and generations. Just as in Western society, these endeavors to mainstream diversity can clash with entrenched values, leading to resistance or indifference, or intensifying social divisions. Against this background, we will explore various attempts to reconfigure heritage and remembrance in ways to serve the interest of a diversifying and diverse Japan. Contributors to this conference will examine various forms, content, and practices of remembering regarding the Battle of Okinawa, the struggle of LGBTQ+, natural disasters, and the ruins of Gunkanjima. Rather than a comprehensive survey of all the efforts and a variety of approaches contributing to a diverse culture of remembering the past, this conference aims to highlight new ventures in Japan for reconstructing and negotiating memories aligned with the theme of diversity and diversification.

9:00 Doors open

9:30 Opening remarks

Ryoko Nakano (Kanazawa University)

9:45-11:30 Session 1

9:45-10:05 Reimagining Heritage and Activism: Okinawan Youth Challenging Social Division

Misato Matsuoka (Teikyo University)

10:05-10:25 30 Years On: Remembering the Great Hanshin-Awaji-Earthquake Disaster in Education

Kohei Takahara (National Institute for Land and Infrastructure Management)

10:30-11:30 Discussion

Discussants: Edward Boyle (International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Nichibunken), Ryoko Nakano

13:00-14:45 Session 2

13:00-13:20 Significance of the Heritagization Process of Gunkanjima and Its Future in the Context of the Dynamics between Official and Unofficial Heritage

Shisei Kimura (Konan Women's University)

13:20-13:40 Excavating Queerness in Archives: Revisiting the Exhibition Inside/Out: LGBTQ+ Representation in Film and Television

Yutaka Kubo (Kanazawa University)

13:40-14:45 Discussion

Discussants: Edward Boyle, Ryoko Nakano

14:50-15:30 General discussion

Inquiry : Prof. Nakano

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Abstract of individual papers:

1. Reimagining Heritage and Activism: Okinawan Youth Challenging Social Division

Misato Matsuoka (Teikyo University)

This article examines how Okinawan youth, navigating a landscape of shifting political participation, are forging a persistent and evolving form of social activism through peace education and tourism. Centering marginalized voices, it investigates how they inherit the objectives of past social and political movements, including the memory of the Battle of Okinawa, while adapting tactics to address intensifying social divisions within Japan. By examining this approach, the article sheds light on the evolving nature of Okinawan activism and its potential to reshape collective memory and national narratives. Focusing on the case of younger Okinawans, it explores how marginalized groups can redefine historical narratives transmitted across generations and social boundaries. Through their activities, the article analyzes the challenges and opportunities presented by societal diversification in Japan. It investigates how a more inclusive approach to heritage and remembrance can foster social cohesion while navigating the complex relationship between a national identity and acknowledging the experiences of marginalized groups.

2. 30 Years On: Remembering the Great Hanshin-Awaji-Earthquake Disaster in Education

Kohei Takahara (National Institute for Land and Infrastructure Management)

In 1995, the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake devastated the area between Osaka and Kobe in southern Hyogo Prefecture, claiming the lives of over 6,000 citizens. In the immediate aftermath, local school teachers began to explore educational methods to comprehend the disaster and link it to the future. For teachers, parents, children, and the community at large, such an event was unprecedented. Teachers and students were tasked with finding meaning in the sudden and unjust destruction of their hometown, as well as in the deaths of friends and family—a mission not found in textbooks. This led to the creation of educational programs that communicated the lessons of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake to a new generation, focused on disaster prevention, and honored the deceased.

Approximately 30 years after the earthquake, what has this educational program, practiced within the schools of the affected areas, brought to the community? Moreover, children born after the disaster are now becoming the new generation of teachers. Are they capable of educating youngsters about the earthquake? And does an education program rooted in local disaster experiences possess a universality that can resonate beyond the region?

3. Significance of the Heritagization Process of Gunkanjima and Its Future in the Context of the Dynamics between Official and Unofficial Heritage

Shisei Kimura (Konan Women's University)

In response to the diversification of UNESCO's World Heritage List in the 1990s, the list in Japan has also diversified. Notably, since the 2000s, new categories of heritage, such as industrial heritage and cultural landscapes, have been nominated and inscribed. The expansion of these heritage categories results from a process where unofficial heritage, significant to individuals or specific communities but lacking legal protection, is transformed into official heritage. This transformation is marked by the state's recognition and authorisation, a critical institutional dynamic in the heritagization process (Harrison 2013).

When analysing the expansion and diversification of heritage in Western and Japanese countries today, it's crucial to understand the intricate relationship between official and unofficial heritage. This understanding is critical to bridging the gap and fostering interaction between official heritage at the national level in non-Western countries and official heritage at the global level, as represented by World Heritage sites.

This paper analyses the case of industrial heritage in Japan from this perspective. The recognition of industrial heritage in Japan was accelerated precisely by the influence of World Heritage. However, the officialisation of any unofficial heritage developed differently from the West. Why and how did this develop? The issues surrounding diversity in contemporary Japan should become clear by paying attention to these points.

4. Excavating Queerness in Archives: Revisiting the Exhibition *Inside/Out: LGBTQ+ Representation in Film and Television*

Yutaka Kubo (Kanazawa University)

Since the late 20th century, many attempts, regardless of size, to excavate, preserve, and display traces of memories left by LGBTQ+ individuals and communities they belonged to have been made in various fields. One such attempt includes a growing interest in practices of unveiling queer memories in (digital) archives, libraries, museums, and other private/public collections all over the world. While archival practices of queering have cultural, historical, and political significance of visualizing voices unheard before, what kinds of institutional difficulties surface? As a case study of queering an archive in Japan, this paper revisits the 2020 exhibition *Inside/Out: LGBTQ+ Representation in Film and Television* by the Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum at Waseda University. From an autoethnographic point of view, it reflects on institutional difficulties faced during the curation and preparation of the exhibition. Employing insights from queer studies, film (festival) studies, and archival studies, it tries to explore various aspects of curation as affective labor through which one may fail to digest an overwhelming absence of institutional support and care for LGBTQ+ individuals and their memories.