

# Taku lida, *Heritage practices in Africa*, National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka (2022), ISBN 978-4-910055-02-2 C3030

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Following the UNESCO Recommendation on the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1972 and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003, the concepts of heritage and intangible cultural heritage have garnered global recognition for their pivotal role in promoting heritage preservation, cultural diversity and continuity. With its rich indigenous heritage, Africa has actively engaged in this global movement. However, the implications of heritage policies and discourses in non-Western regions such as Africa raise important questions. How do heritage practices integrate with local traditional ways of life and society? Do they present new challenges of colonisation, or do they offer possibilities of decolonisation through culture safeguarding and community building?

In *Heritage practices in Africa*, Taku lida addresses these questions through a cultural anthropological lens. Moving beyond the official discourses of UNESCO and other cultural policies, the book explores anthropological perspectives on the inherent value of cultural heritage and traditions.

In the book's introduction, lida offers a concise overview, providing clear explanations of essential concepts and terminology. The author defines heritage as 'the cultural products that were created in the past, and/or have been repeatedly used over time, as well as bodily sources, such as knowledge, memory, and body techniques' (6). Consequently, the book focuses on 'heritage practices' rather than solely on the official term of 'cultural heritage' (2).

In accordance with lida's perspective, this volume aims to deepen our understanding of cultural differences and the dynamics within modern communities. Throughout the three parts, contributors explore the inherent power struggles within cultural heritage, as identified by Smith (2006), thereby advancing the discourse on these critical issues. The chapters emphasise the significance of domesticating culture and heritage for 'the future of humanity and its diversity' (13),

The first part, titled 'Refurbishment of UNESCO heritage', comprises four chapters focusing on officially recognised heritage sites nominated by UNESCO as World Heritage or Representative Intangible Cultural Heritage. The heritage nominations have inevitably led to a transformation of community-based customs into audience-centred cultural performances aimed at attracting tourists. However, this transformation has also resulted in commodification and romantic consumption of these sites as exotic spectacles, posing challenges to their preservation (Zhu 2018).

For instance, Ryo Nakamura discusses the implications of tourism development in Kilwa Island (Kilwa Kisiwani), in Zambia, after its UNESCO nomination, highlighting the serious problems that have arisen. Tourists, without permission, have begun to enter cemeteries and graves associated with local beliefs, disrupting the local order (32–36). Similarly, exemplified by Taku lida's chapter on the Zafimaniry of Madagascar, the UNESCO nomination of Zafimaniry wood-crafting knowledge has increased demand for local woodcrafts, attracting more tourists. However, this

influx of tourism also threatens the survival of traditional Zafimaniry knowledge and heritage practices (87).

All four chapters in Part I also underscore the inherent tension between heritage authorities and local communities amidst the process of modernisation in Africa. The chapter authored by Oussouby Sacko explores the restoration of Djenné's Great Mosque in Mali in 2008. This preservation endeavour, spearheaded by foreign agencies and experts rather than the local populace, overlooked traditional intangible architectural practices. Similarly, Katsuhiko Keida's exploration of the spiritual and cultural significance of Kenya's Mijikenda Kaya forests reveals how these sacred sites are deeply ingrained in the identity and traditions of local communities. However, local authorities have failed to recognise adequately the sites' sacred significance, leading to their politicisation as a result of being inscribed on the Heritage Lists.

As argued by Iida (10), these chapters reflect the importance of developing a deep understanding of local society and history when intentionally attempting to preserve culture, whether tangible or intangible. Such preservation efforts necessitate the involvement of professionals and active collaboration from local communities.

Part II of the book, 'Globalizing local culture', explores how globalisation and colonisation have influenced the preservation of local heritage, often with significant impacts on primary heirs. Jacqueline Grigo's chapter focuses on traditional African medicine (TAM) in a rural Baoulé village in the southern Ivory Coast. Grigo highlights that efforts to integrate TAM into formal health systems often prioritise adherence to standardised international quality norms, overlooking TAM's social and cultural dimensions, such as its ritual and symbolic aspects (103).

Furthermore, Allen Roberts examines the construction of citizenship and identity in Senegal through visual imagery – in particular, emphasising cultural heritage. Roberts discusses the 'refabulation' of portraits depicting religious leader Sheikh Amadu Bamba, noting potential influences from foreign interests rather than grassroots initiatives (125). In her analysis of cultural heritage representation at the National Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., Mary Jo Arnoldi uncovers occasional conflicts stemming from these exhibitions. Nevertheless, these global human activities facilitate social connections, enabling individuals

to interact with and understand the continuity and change in local cultural values and practices.

Part III, 'Past in the present, present in the future', explores how cultures of marginalised groups maintain continuity despite challenges. Thomas Laely's analysis illustrates the enduring significance of the *bushingantaha* system of authority amidst political changes in Burundi, and its relevance in the contemporary era. Despite its latent existence in post-conflict society, the system serves as a 'moral and cultural reference point' (186). John Mack's examination of burial practices highlights the contrasting meanings of 'the past for the present' (13). Funerary rituals are crucial in community cohesion, addressing disruptions caused by individual deaths and fostering social realignment and recalibration.

Similarly, Kenji Yoshida's chapter discusses ongoing cultural movements in Zambia, characterised by the revival of traditions banned by colonial authorities. Rather than establishing new festivals, these movements focus on reclaiming old traditions as vital tools for affirming local or ethnic identities within communities (209–214).

In conclusion, this book provides a nuanced exploration of the implications of heritage nomination and the interaction between global discourse and local practices in Africa. It transcends conventional discussions of Western-centred world heritage and intangible heritage by prioritising local empowerment and preserving cultural diversity.

Taku Iida's insights underscore the significance of collaboration between communities and authorities in safeguarding heritage practices, highlighting the profound influence of marginalised groups on local heritage in Africa. With its focus on non-Western empirical data and rich ethnographic depth, this book is poised to make a lasting impact in heritage studies, prompting critical reflection on the consequences and possibilities of heritage as both a new form of colonisation and of decolonisation. 🇬🇧

## REFERENCES

- Smith, Laurajane. 2006. *Uses of heritage*. London: Routledge.
- Zhu, Yujie. 2018. *Heritage and romantic consumption in China*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.