

【講演録】

27<sup>th</sup> November, 2020

# Tradition

Masaya IWASAKI

伝 統

岩 崎 正 彌

皇學館大学現代日本社会学部

日本学論叢 第11号

令和3年3月

# Tradition

Masaya IWASAKI

## Summary ●

---

What is “tradition”? This year, our faculty is celebrating its 10th anniversary, and it is expected that the tradition of this faculty will be inherited.

Therefore, as a scholar of tradition, and as an architect of tradition, I would like to discuss tradition about the following points *1. The Way of Understanding Tradition, 2. The Characteristics of Tradition, 3. Handling of Tradition, and 4. Voyages Embarking on Tradition.*

---

Key words : tradition, culture, inheritance, creation, wisdom.

---

## Introduction

---

What is “tradition”?

The “Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary” describes it as follows:

*“A belief, custom or way of doing something that has existed for a long time among a particular group of people, a set of these beliefs or customs: religious / cultural / literary / “*

The “Webster’s New International Dictionary of the English Language” describes it as follows;

*“1. Act of delivering into the hands of another: delivery. “A deed takes effect only from this tradition or delivery;*

*“4. The oral transmission of information, opinions, beliefs, customs, etc., from father to son or from ancestors to posterity: the handing down of knowledge through successive generations by oral communication and without written memorials.”*

*“6. More generally, any belief, custom, way of life, etc, which has its roots in one’s family or racial past; an inherited culture, attitude, or the like; somethings, a long-established convention.”*

According to a Japanese dictionary “Kojien, 7th edition”, “Tradition (*dentō*) means beliefs, customs, systems, ideas, learning, arts, etc., that have been cultivated and passed down by a certain race, society, or organization throughout its long history. and especially the mental attitude that forms their core”.

From these descriptions, if I were to redefine tradition, I would say, “tradition is the actual state of culture that a certain race, nation, society, organization, family, or individual has inherited from a certain period and from the previous period, and it refers to the spiritual thought contained within that state.”

I am a person who has been teaching Japanese traditional culture at Japanese universities for more than twenty years. I am a person who would like to learn about traditional British culture in Britain. And I was invited to SOAS (The School of Oriental and African Studies) University of London as a visiting researcher for one year from September 2021. And, I am a person who will study the education of the traditional cultures of the countries of the world, and explore the traditions of mankind in the universe, in the future.

Also, I am a person who has the soul of an architect. The architect is given the site, listens to the voices of the spirits of the Earth and Heaven, formulates

its concepts, devises its plans, supervises its construction, and is responsible for its finish. I am a creator of tradition.

My faculty will celebrate its 10th anniversary this year. The dean also wants to start talking about the faculty's "traditions". It is expected that many papers on this theme will be posted in the 10th Anniversary Bulletin.

Therefore, as a scholar of tradition, and as an architect of tradition, I would like to discuss tradition about the following points *1. The Way of Understanding Tradition, 2. The Characteristics of Tradition, 3. Handling of Tradition, and 4. Voyages Embarking on Tradition.*

## Section 1: Understanding Tradition \_\_\_\_\_

In this section, in order to consider tradition objectively and universally, I will point out that each tradition exists largely at the intersection of three axes; *(1) Person, (2) Time, and (3) Spirit.*

### (1) Person

In order to describe each tradition, it is necessary to specify which ethnic group, people, society, organization, family, or individual tradition it is form. The outline of each object will often be ambiguous. It will be difficult to clarify. However, a sense of distance based on shared traditions is self-evident for each.

And each person will eventually die. Therefore, people want to pass on the value gained through their experience to their future generations. That is what we call education today. Through education, people refine their traditions. People can believe that education helps to build a stable society in their future.

Ultimately, sharing one common tradition identifies that one society that is made from the people in it.

## (2) Time

In order to describe each tradition, it is necessary to specify which period it refers to. From the past to the present, from the present to the future, the times are changing and the spirit of the ages is changing.

On top of that, the spirit that has been passed down from generation to generation over many years is worthy of being called a tradition; even the spirit of a relatively short time, if it reaches a firm conviction. So even within families and individuals, there are traditions.

Past tradition is also empathized with and shared by people living, and it can live in the modern age beyond time.

## (3) Spirit

In order to talk about each tradition, it is necessary to start by looking at its reality. The spirit is in reality. Then, through literature or the like, you will understand the spirit contained in the language. We also need to gain insight into the trends and directions that it has and will pursue. This is the core of the tradition.

Furthermore, when we compare and study the core of the world's traditions and discover universal tendencies and directions, we can say that this is the universal truth of human tradition.

Therefore, when we discuss individual traditions in the future, we must pay attention to these three axes

## Section 2; The Characteristics of Tradition

---

More dynamically, when we discuss tradition, we must also consider the following viewpoints, (a) *Inheritance and Innovation*, (b) *Distillation and Crystallization*, and (c) *Respect and Influence*.

**(a) Inheritance and Innovation**

Tradition is always inherited and constantly innovated. Innovation is based on some inherited traditions. No innovation comes without tradition.

In general, as we seek a peaceful life, we want this highly traditional culture to continue today and tomorrow. In general, we are conservative.

However, the environment surrounding us is changing little by little every day. Technical innovation, information revolution, perceptions changing, and lifestyles imploding. We are curious about new things and we seek convenience. Sometimes unexpected conflicts and natural disasters occur. To overcome them, we have innovatively challenged change on the basis of inherited traditions.

Perhaps only ethnicities, nations, societies, families and individuals who have succeeded in properly integrating tradition, succession and innovation can achieve future prosperity.

**(b) Distillation and Crystallization.**

However, there are some traditions that disappear in the changing times, just like fragrance. Some, like brandy, survive. Some, like diamonds, shine more.

Something of superior value, for example, truth, goodness, and beauty, true justice, are eternal values which are called the “wisdom” of a nation, people, society, family, or individual.

It would be wonderful if the “wisdom” they have experienced through their long history could be distilled, crystallized, and used to help modern people choose their way of life.

Over a long period of time, we will learn the “wisdom” which is incorporated into literature, performing arts and architecture called “classical” and we will pave the way for the future.

Perhaps it is for the use of its “Wisdom” that traditions are recorded, preserved and passed down.

In particular, it should be noted that traditions have told so much of virtue. Much “wisdom”, backed by years of experience, has taught us the importance of virtue. Traditions have been full of epigrams and anecdotes that specifically show us how important virtue is for us. Tradition requires a virtuous attitude, and, as a result, it guarantees a life full of virtues with one’s happiness. Tradition will remain truly educational.

### (c) Respect and Influence

The respect of the people to their distilled and crystallized tradition of “wisdom” will be questioned. In other words, “Wisdom” is important to respect the traditional “wisdom”.

Those who think only of revolution, innovation, invasion, and pillaging, are not promised eternal prosperity. They do not receive true respect from others. The important point is whether they have an attitude that says, “Wisdom” in search of truth, that they will respect it and hand it to posterity with pride.

If a true “wisdom” is handed down to posterity with dignity, then the tradition has an influence on others. Others learn and even try to incorporate it with respect and admiration.

Perhaps the propagation of true culture to others is driven by the great influence of its traditional “wisdom”.

## Section 3. The handling of Tradition

---

Here are some things to keep in mind when discussing tradition;  
*(p) Right and Wrong Traditions, (q) Lost and Revived Traditions, (r) Intact and Ideal Traditions.*

*In other words, this section is an explanation of how to treat tradition as medicine or poison.*

**(p) Right and Wrong Traditions,**

In many cases, the right values can be found forever in their traditions. However, there are traditions. However, there are traditions that were thought to be right at that time, but are judged to be wrong through the passage of time.

So, in tradition, what are the right values that should remain, and what are the wrong value that should not? It is difficult to judge this. However, in order to live better in the present, we always judge the right and wrong of many traditions and continue to improve them. For example, legislative changes taking place in national administrations and legislatures represent changes to tradition.

Judgments of right and wrong go beyond human wisdom and are left to the judgment of each God. By judging right and wrong, we shall have an opportunity to reflect on what is the eternal truth, an opportunity to receive revelation from Heaven.

**(q) Lost and Revived Traditions,**

In history, a country could be conquered by another country. In many cases, its tradition was then destroyed by another country. Or, in many cases, several countries were integrated into one country. Over generations, all memories of past traditions are sometimes forgotten.

On the other hand, the conquest may be withdrawn and the original state restored. At that time, the tradition of the original race becomes the driving force of the new country. Therefore, the revival movement of the tradition of the original race sometimes leads to the political independence movement.

Excessive traditional reconstruction movements can lead to the disintegration of states that have been integrated. For this reason, in many of the world's federations, the central government is paying the most up-to-date attention to the excessive revival of individual traditions.

**(r) Intact and Ideal Traditions**

Therefore, a simple revival of past tradition is neither ideal nor desirable. Times are changing, and values in society are changing drastically. It is therefore important to restore good traditional values and appropriate traditions that will help build a modern and ideal future. The ideal way to deal with tradition is to honor, refine, and inherit good traditional culture that leads people to eternal values.

These three points can be regarded as important factors in dealing with tradition.

**Section 4. Voyages Embarking on Traditions** \_\_\_\_\_

As mentioned above, for us, traditions contain important values, a sensitive understanding of them is important, and good sense is necessary in handling them.

It could be said that for each race, people, society, organization, family, and individual, the growth of each is determined by the value of the tradition that has been handed down, the recognition of each tradition, and the way in which one modifies it.

What will happen to them if they lose interest in their tradition? In the wild storms of the moonless night, they have no confidence, no sense of right or wrong, and they will do nothing but behave.

There is no tomorrow for those who do not care, respect, and make sensible corrections to their tradition. It is part of mankind on Earth.

Tradition is a past wake, a modern compass, and a lighthouse for the future.

Times will change greatly from now on, and new changes will naturally occur in society. There are those who drift, depending on the tide and the wind. However, there are also those who will create their own traditions and pave the way for them.

As long as we continue to seek eternal truth, I am convinced that there is a bright future for mankind. And those who seek eternal truth will be able to live with the eternal value in their tradition.

I pray for the further development of people's awareness of each tradition. That is my mission.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

**Special thanks for the review.**      SI-UK (Tokyo)

# 伝 統

岩 崎 正 彌

**抄録：**

伝統とは何であるか。今年は、私たちの学部も設立 10 周年を迎え、学部の伝統の継承が期待される。

そこで、伝統を研究している者として、これより、[1] 伝統の捉え方、[2] その特質、[3] その取り扱い、[4] 伝統とともに旅する航海、について論じた。

---

**Key Words** : 伝統, 文化, 継承, 創造, 智慧.