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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Textual heritage and digital archives – the case of the Hyakugo Archive in Kyoto

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Edoardo GERLINI

Department of Asian and North African Studies, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Venice, Veneto, 30123, Italy

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Abstract

What are the effects and significance of inscribing an archive or group of documents in a heritage list? In light of the positive effects of digital technology on archival science, should all archives and past documents be considered “heritage,” or are some more significant than others? What are the implications and benefits of a heritage archive? Is creating a digital database of a specific archive considered part of heritage conservation? Is the term "heritagization" or "heritage making" a synonym for preservation or conservation?

In this article, I will attempt to answer some of these questions from the point of view of premodern literature, drawing on recent researches in heritage studies, specifically in the subfield of "critical heritage studies. After briefly introducing the current state of heritage scholarship, I will present the definition of "textual heritage" that I developed during my most recent project. Secondly, to reflect on how the concept of textual heritage can affect our understanding of historical archives, I will present the case of the Hyakugo Archive of Toji Temple (Kyoto, Japan), a collection of 19,000 documents dating from the eight to the eighteenth century, which was inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World List in 2005 and has been fully digitized and made available to the public via the Internet. I will examine a particular historical event that occurred during the 17th century, which can be viewed as a re-birth of this archive as a cultural heritage and reflect on the implications of this event for the survival of the archive itself and its use today.

Keywords

textual heritage, digital archive, Toji Hyakugo Archive, Kyoto, cultural heritage, premodern Japan, Maeda Tsunanori

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1. **David Harvey**, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark
2. **Titia van der Werf**, OCLC BV (Ringgold ID: 58627), Leiden, The Netherlands
3. **Hideaki Akamatsu**, Beppu University, Beppu, Japan

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Corresponding author: Edoardo GERLINI (edoardo.gerlini@unive.it)

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Introduction

The rapid and exponential development of digital technologies in the first two decades of the twenty-first century has made it possible to access, share, and study premodern documents and texts in ways unimaginable before, opening the field to new scholarly approaches and methodologies commonly referred to as the "digital humanities". The digitalization and organization of documents into freely accessible internet databases has revolutionized the way in which researchers in the humanities, including philologists and historians, conduct their studies, leading to improved quantitative and qualitative results. The digitization of archives and ancient documents has also encouraged libraries and cultural institutions to open up their documentary resources, giving readers and students in remote or underdeveloped areas, as well as those not directly involved in scholarly activity fairer access to knowledge. This has led to the possibility of transcending physical, geographical, and political boundaries through the internet.

Many programs for the digitization of documents and archives, especially those funded by public organizations and governments, go to great lengths to demonstrate the positive impact that these initiatives have on society and local communities. The underlying concept is that equitable and transparent access to knowledge is critical for building inclusive, resilient, and better societies. This idea is based on the principle that everyone should have the right to explore, understand, and enjoy the cultural products of humanity, which should be understood as shared heritage. Also from a normative point of view, access to culture is now recognized as an integral part of human rights, as clearly stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 27): "Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits."

Equally connected to human rights and equitable access to culture is a concept that has gained popularity amongst scholars, media, and the public discourse surrounding culture in the past 30 years: "heritage." The label "heritage" is today attributed to a wide range of items, including tangible ones like buildings, artworks, and natural landscapes, as well as intangible ones like songs, dances, plays, rites, and craftsmanship. In the late 20th century, the label of "culture" was not necessarily applied to the latter, such as old factories, agricultural techniques, and food. In particular, the notion of heritage, especially the intangible variable, has enabled local communities and ethnic minorities to strengthen their cultural identity by giving social and symbolic meanings to their traditions. In doing so, they have challenged the authorized paradigms of cultural evaluation and artistic appreciation, which have been largely hegemonic and Western-centric.

The combination of digital technologies and the preservation and accessibility of cultural heritage are receiving increasing attention from institutional actors[1]. In 2003, UNESCO published a "Charter on the Preservation of the Digital Heritage," alongside the promotion of the well-known "UNESCO Convention for the safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage." In documents related to another important cultural program, Memory of the World, UNESCO also argues for the inclusion of an increasing number of types of digital documents in the category of "documentary heritage," for example, through a spin-off project called Software Heritage launched in 2018, which aims to preserve the source code of popular but outdated software as a specific kind of cultural heritage.

The incorporation of digital technologies and the theoretical notion of heritage into the humanities field appears to be imperative today in order to challenge and reassess traditional assumptions about culture, its representation, universal values, and the Western-centric viewpoint that influences the majority of academic disciplines in modern universities. What are the effects and significance of inscribing to an archive or a group of documents in a heritage list? In light of the positive effects of digital technology on archival science, should all archives and past documents be considered "heritage," or are some more significant than others? What are the implications and benefits of the heritage archives? Is creating a digital database of a specific archive considered a part of heritage conservation? Is the term "heritagization" or "heritage making" a synonym for preservation or conservation?

In this article, I will attempt to answer some questions as a premodern literature scholar, utilizing my recent research in heritage studies, specifically in the subfield of "critical heritage studies. After briefly introducing the current state of heritage scholarship, I will present the definition of "textual heritage" that I developed during my most recent project. Secondly, to reflect on how the concept of textual heritage can affect our understanding of historical archives, I will present the case of the Hyakugo Archive of Toji Temple (Kyoto, Japan), a collection of 19,000 documents dating from the eighth to the eighteenth century, which was inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World List in 2005 and has been fully digitized and made available to the public via the Internet. I will examine a particular historical event that occurred during the 17th century, which can be viewed as the rebirth of this archive as a cultural heritage and reflect on the implications of this event for the survival of the archive itself and its use today.

Japan is an ideal example when discussing digital archives and cultural heritage, as it has continuously produced an extensive collection of documents, books, and manuscripts since the introduction of Chinese writing in the sixth century,

[1] Economou M (2016) "Heritage in the Digital Age". In Logan W, Nic Craith M, Kockel U (eds) *A companion to heritage studies*. Wiley Blackwell, Oxford, pp 215–228

which is currently undergoing a significant digitization process and is stored primarily in archives and libraries throughout the country. Japan is also important because it has played a central role in promoting the concept of intangible heritage, redefining the meaning of terms such as "authenticity" or "conservation," often in contrast to the Western-centric paradigms that dominated the heritage discourse in the 20th century.

Reflecting on how archives are preserved, managed, and utilized in Japan can provide a novel perspective for globally reconsidering the significance and function of cultural heritage in the digitalized world of the 21st century.

Heritage studies and the "missing" textual heritage

The definition of "heritage" has undergone complex changes over the past three decades. The "UNESCO World Heritage Convention," which came into force in 1972, resulted in the emergence of a rich "heritage industry"[2] in the 1980s. This has led to mass tourism and economic exploitation of the listed cities and sites. The competition among countries to assert ownership over the most significant and rich cultural resources, a sort of "world cup of heritage," started, and "national heritage" became a favored way for governments to reinforce feelings of national identity and unity among their citizens.

However, especially since the 1990s and outside the institutionalized boundaries of UNESCO and other national and international agencies, cultural heritage has also emerged as a powerful tool in the hands of minorities and discriminated communities to demand social justice and civil rights[3–5]. This new idea of heritage "challenges its previous core function as a bedrock of monocultural nation-building projects, a continuation of elitist cultural canons, and as upholding Eurocentric cultural values"[6].

The rise of heritage in the academic world has encouraged and stimulated the birth of an interdisciplinary field known as "heritage studies", which crosses a wide range of disciplines such as archaeology, history, law, sociology, anthropology, geography, economics, management, and more. In the past two decades, theoretical definitions of "heritage" have increasingly rejected the belief that cultural properties are solely to be identified with their material components. Especially scholars embracing the paradigm of "critical heritage studies" support the "idea of heritage not so much as a 'thing', but as a cultural and social process, which engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present."[7]. Another point that is often stressed is that "alongside any intrinsic value heritage may have, ultimately meaning resides in the "intangible" relationships it provides between people and things."[8]

Even though this interpretation of cultural heritage may be too biased toward the 'intangible' side of culture, it also reflects a change in institutional discourse, as it has already taken place in the text of official conventions and declarations. The "Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society" (also referred to as the Faro Convention), which was adopted by the Council of Europe in 2005, provides a clear explanation.

> The Faro Convention emphasizes the important aspects of heritage, as they relate to human rights and democracy. It promotes a wider understanding of heritage and its relationship to communities and society. The Convention encourages us to recognize that objects and places are not, in themselves, what is important about cultural heritage. They are important because of the meanings and uses that people attach to them and the values they represent. (Council of Europe homepage).

The focus of heritage scholars has transitioned from places and monuments to people and communities and from things to practices, and a distinctive aspect of critical heritage studies is indeed a keen engagement with the political implications of defining and managing heritage and culture. This shift is evident, for example, in the following statement from the editors's preface to the recent *A Companion to Heritage Studies* (Wiley Blackwell).

> Starting from a position of seeing "heritage" as a mental construct that attributes "significance" to certain places, artifacts, and forms of behavior from the past through processes that are essentially political, we see heritage conservation not merely as a technical or managerial matter but as cultural practice, a form of cultural politics.[9]

This connection between heritage and cultural politics has recently been emphasized by declarations of cultural diversity and human rights. For instance, Article 7 of the UNESCO

[2] Hewison R (1987) *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline*. Methuen, London

[3] Ashworth GJ, Graham BJ, Tunbridge JE (2007) *Pluralising Pasts: Heritage, Identity and Place in Multicultural Societies*. Pluto Press, London.

[4] Labadi S (2007) "Representations of the Nation and Cultural Diversity in Discourses on World Heritage". *Journal of Social Archaeology* 7(2): 147–170.

[5] Smith L (2006) *Uses of Heritage*. Routledge, Abingdon and New York.

[6] Tuuli Lähdesmäki, Yujie Zhu and Suzie Thomas, "Introduction. Heritage and Scale". In *Politics of Scale. New Directions in Critical Heritage Studies*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2019, p. 1.

[7] Ibid. Smith L (2006), p. 2

[8] Akagawa N (2016) "Intangible Heritage and Embodiment: Japan's Influence on Global Heritage Discourse". In ibid. Logan W, Nic Craith M, Kockel U (eds), p. 81

[9] Logan W, Kockel U, Nic Craith M (2016) "The New Heritage Studies: Origins and Evolution, Problems and Prospects". In ibid. Logan W, Nic Craith M, Kockel U (eds), p 1.

Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity, titled "Cultural heritage as the wellspring of creativity," states the following:

> Creation draws on the roots of cultural traditions, but flourishes in contact with other cultures. For this reason, heritage in all its forms must be preserved, enhanced, and handed on to future generations as a record of human experience and aspirations to foster creativity in all its diversity and to inspire genuine dialogue among cultures. (UNESCO, 2001)

The imperative to preserve heritage in all forms should not be confused with "any kind of heritage" or "heritage of everyone". Traditional rituals or customs that infringe upon human rights, although they may be perceived as cultural heritage by certain communities, do not necessarily align with the values espoused by UNESCO and, more generally, by Western democracies. Consequently, it is impossible to assign the same space, importance, and social value to each and every "heritage" or "memory." The emergence of "dissonant" or "difficult" heritage is simply a natural outcome of enabling multiple agents to utilize the concept.[10]

This difficulty was the cause of the suspension of UNESCO's "Memory of the World" (MoW) Programme for a few years. In 2015, the Japanese government threatened to stop funding UNESCO due to the inclusion of the "Documents of Nanjing Massacre" in the MoW. These documents contain information on war crimes committed by the Japanese army during their occupation in China. From the Japanese government's standpoint, the inclusion of these documents in the register harmed Japan's reputation as an impartial member of the international community.[11] In 2016, a request to include the "Voices of comfort women," namely the testimonies of Korean women forced to work as prostitutes in Japanese army brothels, met with similar opposition from Japan.[12]

It has been observed that governments are utilizing the Memory of the World Programme for political gain and recognition of past atrocities on an international level[13]. This trend has likely developed because of the program's focus on historical documents, which can be used to legitimize different versions of history depending on the reader's perspective and nationality. As a result, the program has become increasingly politicized, and therefore criticized for the risk of becoming a tool to promote specific interests and agendas rather than universal and democratic values.[14]

In addition to the MoW example, scholars agree that heritage today is no longer just a label for monuments of the past that have "outstanding universal value," as outlined in the 1972 World Heritage Convention. Instead, they should be viewed as a dynamic and multifaceted social, cultural, and political practice. It is a "verb"[15], that can change in significance and value over time, varying across societies and perspectives depending on its use.

Texts and archives as "heritage"

Given the previous reflection on heritage, what occurs when we reconsider an archive or collection of documents as cultural heritage? Is it feasible to reimagine archives and historical documents as a "social practice" or as a "verb"? Even if we acknowledge that the social, cultural, and political process of re-evaluation pursued in the present, known as "heritagization," is what truly makes something from the past a heritage, it seems that both the definitions of heritage given by official institutions such as UNESCO and by numerous scholars of heritage studies do not entirely apply to textual sources, documents, archives, or literary works. This is likely why, until now, few humanities scholars have directly engaged in heritage studies and why terms such as "textual heritage" or "literary heritage" have been used with nonchalance to highlight the value of specific documents or works from the past, or a literary canon, without a clear connotation within the heritage field. On the other hand, theories about heritage appear to have had minimal or no influence on the work of philologists and paleographers, who concentrated on the meticulous examination of ancient manuscripts.

Thanks to an EU-funded fellowship under the "Marie Sklodowska-Curie Action" programme, which I pursued from 2018 to 2021, I proposed to better define the boundaries and characteristics of what might be called "textual heritage" and to suggest new paths in the interdisciplinary dialogue between the humanities and heritage studies, with a particular focus on Japanese textual resources.[16] This project involves re-examining the concept of "text." Texts are a particular type of cultural products that can be replicated across various media without necessarily losing information or meaning. A text, particularly those inscribed on stone, can remain buried underground for hundreds or thousands of years. It may lie dormant and then

[10] Ashworth G, and Tunbridge J (1996) *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict*. Wiley, Chichester

[11] McCurry J (2015) "Japan threatens to halt Unesco funding over Nanjing massacre listing". *The Guardian*. 13 October 2015. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/13/japan-threatens-to-halt-unesco-funding-over-nanjing-listing

[12] Vickers E, Frost M.R (2021). "The Special Issue: The 'Comfort Women' as Public History". *The Asia Pacific-Journal*. 19 (5)1. https://apjjf.org/2021/5/Frost-Vickers.html

[13] Lee, H. K., Sørensen, M. L. S., & Zhu, Y. (2023). "The UNESCO Memory of the World Programme and claims for recognition of atrocities: The nominations of Documents of Nanjing Massacre and Voices of the 'Comfort Women'". *Memory Studies*, 16(4), 894-911. https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980221150889

[14] Nakano R. (2018) "A failure of global documentary heritage? UNESCO's 'memory of the world' and heritage dissonance in East Asia", *Contemporary Politics*, 24(4), 481-496, DOI: 10.1080/13569775.2018.1482435

[15] Harvey D.C (2001). "Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents: temporality, meaning and the scope of heritage studies". *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 7(4), pp 319-338, p. 327

[16] Horizon 2020 – Marie Sklodowska Curie Actions, grant agreement No 792809. Title: "World Heritage and East Asian Literature – Sinitic Writings in Japan as Literary Heritage" [WHEREAL]. Ca' Foscari University of Venice and Waseda University, 2018–2021.

be resurrected, ready for reading and analysis, owing to the efforts of archaeologists and philologists, thereby once again becoming part of our heritage. This was the case with the renowned Rosetta Stone.

What other heritage types possess this potential? What kind of heritage is "textual heritage"? This question revolves around reflection on the role and significance of digitizing documents and archives, and prompts consideration of the ultimate source of "heritage value," whether in the material object itself or in its content. The aspiration of archivists and scholars has always been to preserve and pass on any document, archive, or information from the past that could be utilized for novel research and inquiries to future generations. However, this goal remains virtually unattainable. A sad reality is that a large number of physical documents are disposed of due to the limitations of physical space and economic constraints faced by many libraries and archives on a daily basis.

Recent technological advancements may provide a solution to this conundrum by enabling the preservation of digital copies of every document produced by humanity in the last few centuries. Digitization practices improved the quality of digital copies of manuscripts or books to a level of detail unimaginable just a few years ago[17]. Not only has the resolution of the scans improved, but we also now have new techniques that gather data about the physical characteristics of the medium, such as transparency, reflections, erased inscriptions, chemical composition of the ink, and organic residues on the paper. It is difficult to determine whether these intricately detailed digital duplicates will ever surpass the value of the original. Physical items retain the potential to allow for new, as yet undiscovered methods of analysis. They also possess a distinct vibe of genuine authenticity and uniqueness, which cannot be reproduced digitally.

This is especially true for works of art such as paintings or statues. But what about texts? If we view text solely as the written contents of a book, manuscript, or document, it is evident that it constitutes a unique form of cultural product that is quite distinct from a painting, a building, or even a song or a performance. Nobody can create an exact replica of Leonardo's Mona Lisa today. Even an apparently flawless copy will have some material differences that become apparent at the microscopic level. Consequently, any Mona Lisa copy will remain just that – a copy or fake. In contrast, copying a text meticulously – even a lengthy one like a novel – will not be considered a forgery, as the contents will be identical to the original.

This is even truer in the case of modern printed publications, which are, by definition, copies. Usually, readers do not need to read a novelist's handwritten drafts in order to feel a more authentic or correct "original." This is also because today, the original text of a novel or any other text is primarily written on a computer. In other words, anyone who can read and write can produce a perfect copy of a document or book with just a pen, sufficient paper, and time. The case of the manuscripts is apparently different. As long as I am able to read it, a copy can always be produced. Moreover, if a sufficiently high-quality scan or photo of the manuscript exists, it would be possible to read it with nearly the same accuracy even if the original were lost. Therefore, excluding the more truly "artistic" and analogical aspects of a document - as in the case of calligraphy in a Japanese or Chinese ink painting or scroll - we can say that in most cases a written text is just a sequence, a chain of signifiers (namely the characters) lined up on a surface. By recognizing each individual character, one can faithfully copy any text without loss of information, even if it is written in an unknown language.

I believe this is why the management and sharing of textual products differs from those of heritage sites or intangible performances. The ways in which a text can be accessed are virtually limitless, as the number of digital copies that can be made is boundless. Therefore, texts are not subject to spatial and temporal constraints, such as those experienced by the historical centers of cities such as Venice or Kyoto, which are crowded with tourists. Independent of the number of copies of the text produced or the number of people currently reading it, either in print or online, the original owners will always retain their ability to access the text.

Regarding texts, I contend that their relationship with the digital dimension runs deeper than that of other cultural products. This connection is embedded in the word "text" itself. We frequently overlook that the term "text" originates from the Latin "tèxtum" and the verb "tèxtere," meaning "fabric" and "to weave," respectively. Invited to reflect on the concept of textual heritage in Japan, scholar Inaga Shigemi proposed the loom as a metaphor for text production and its inherent "digital" nature. According to Shigemi, "the loom is the earliest digital tool created by humans."[18] This statement implies that the operator's identity holds no significance in weaving, as following the digital warp and weft pattern will produce identical fabrics regardless. Inaga extends his concept of the permeability of digital text and the natural world by proposing that the patterns on the skins of tigers and zebras, as well as the webs spun by spiders, may be deliberate outcomes of the information encoded in their DNA - a type of "digital text (*denshi tekusuto*)."[19]

[17] See for example S. Al Maadeed, S. Kunhoth and A. Bouridane, "Digitization and spectral analysis of Historical Manuscripts," *2014 World Symposium on Computer Applications & Research (WSCAR)*, Sousse, Tunisia, 2014, pp. 1–6, doi: 10.1109/WSCAR.2014.6916837.

[18] Inaga S (2020) "Ko no sōshitsu to bungakuteki jijō no seisei: Tekusuto isan no kengen to henyō o ōbei no manazashi kara ginmi suru (The loss of individuality and the creation of the literary magnetic field: examining the manifestations and transformation of Textual heritage from a Western point of view)". *Tosho Shimbun* 3461:8. English translation by the author.

[19] Inaga S (2021) "Kumo no su to shite no denshi tekusuto – Sono raireki to genzai (Digital text as a spider web – its history and present)". In Gerlini E, Kono K (eds) *Koten wa isan ka? Nihon bungaku ni okeru Tekusuto isan no riyō to saisōzō (Are Classics a Heritage? Uses and Re-creations of Textual Heritage in Japanese Literature)*. Bensei, Tokyo, pp 208–219. English translation by the author.

A part how much we stretch the definition and range of the word "text," it is undeniable that it is closely linked to the concept of "digital." Digital resources, such as audio and video contents viewed and heard on our computers and smartphones, consist of a complex sequence of data - strings of "0s" and "1s" that are decoded according to specific rules. These data are written on digital memory or streamed through the Internet, and are ultimately executed or read by our devices. Moreover, software source codes are simply texts comprising alphanumeric characters organized in a programming language that computers can understand.

Therefore, as Inaga suggests, the creation of "text" stands out as one of the earliest and most significant digital innovations in human history. The production and dissemination of texts through duplication began well before the advent of computers, operating under rules distinct from those governing other forms of analog cultural products. Therefore, it is essential to establish a clear definition for "textual heritage" to address compatibility problems between texts and current heritage definitions. Reimagining the text as a native digital product compels us to recognize "textual heritage" as an implicit aspect of "digital heritage."

As previously mentioned, the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme includes a specific initiative titled "Software Heritage" that aims to preserve software codes as a valuable series of digital texts. In contrast, the textual heritage referred to here encompasses both analog and digital textual sources.

Textual heritage, as a means of examining the utilization and recreation of texts across time, can facilitate connections between disciplines that analyze written works, from philology to historiography to paleography, and computer science and software-related fields. This approach offers fresh and innovative insights into the evolution of textual cultures, the impact of texts on society, and the changing relationships between human beings and written works over time and across geographical locations.

If we attempt to tentatively define textual heritage, the following can be asserted:

> Textual heritage refers to both tangible texts that have been transmitted from the past and intangible practices that were performed with and around them. For tangible texts, we refer to both physical embodiments, such as books, manuscripts, and steles, as well as digital backups, such as USB drives, containing the immaterial content (the code) inscribed on them. On the other hand, the intangible cultural practices of textual heritage refer to activities such as reading, writing, copying, collecting, translating, annotating, teaching, correcting, performing, collating, restoring, and more.
>
> Textual heritage pertains to both the transmission of the physical existence of written material, as well as the intangible knowledge required to utilize and replicate it. This knowledge creates new values, meanings, and interpretations in the text itself.

While my definition is influenced by critical heritage studies' emphasis on the intangible nature of heritage, my intention is also to assert the vital role of tangible texts in the cultural process of producing and reproducing textual works.

To put it simply, there cannot be "intangible" cultural practices of "reading" if we don't have a book to read. Likewise, books cannot exist without someone possessing intangible knowledge to write them. Thus, tangible texts and intangible knowledge are both integral to textual heritage, and they affect each other in a spiral. Alternatively, if you prefer it, written materials embody the diverse intangible elements of reading and writing while simultaneously informing and constraining new developments in the intangible practices around them.

In a previous paper[20], I examined the incorporation of intangible heritage into physical artifacts using Ian Hodder's entanglement theory[21,22]. I want to emphasize that the concept of textual heritage has the potential to stimulate further reflections on the essence of heritage more broadly, not just within literary studies. This could fuel discussions on how texts, documents, and archives function as cultural heritage.

UNESCO Memory of the World and the documentary heritage

Once we have tentatively defined what constitutes "textual heritage," we can then ask the question: what occurs when an archive or group of historical documents is designated as a textual heritage? What issues arise during the process of "heritagization" in relation to archival sources?

The Memory of the World (MoW) program I talked about before was designed to safeguard and raise awareness of the world's "documentary heritage," which is defined by UNESCO as follows:

> 3.1.2. Documentary heritage comprises single documents – or groups of documents – of significant and enduring value to a community, culture, country, or humanity generally, and whose deterioration or loss would be a harmful impoverishment. The significance of this heritage may only become clear with the passage of time.[23]

[20] Gerlini E (2022) "Textual Heritage Embodied – The utaibon of 'Aoi no ue' of the Hōshō School of Nō as an Entanglement of Tangible and Intangible Heritage". *Studies in Japanese Literature and Culture*, 5.

[21] Hodder I (2014) "The Entanglements of Humans and Things: A Long-Term View". *New Literary History*, 45, 1, pp 19–36

[22] Hodder I (2012) *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things*. Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester.

[23] UNESCO (2021) *General Guidelines of the Memory of the World (MoW) Programme*. https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/mow_general_guidelines_en.pdf

According to UNESCO, not every text of the past deserves the title of "documentary heritage": only those with a "significant and enduring value."

As previously stated, scholars often lament the lack and loss of archival documents and old writings, and are equally fascinated by the idea of preserving, cataloging, and passing on to future generations any kind of documentation about the past. This is because seemingly insignificant details, such as an advertisement page found in a magazine, can provide valuable insights into the values, goals, and cultural norms of previous societies. At present, it is unclear whether this scenario will materialize because of the digitization and management of big data. Nonetheless, it is crucial to emphasize that preserving data and texts does not automatically confer heritage status on them. This is also the stance of the MoW. It could be argued that every line written by a human is automatically part of the world's textual heritage, but this perspective fails to elucidate how cultural products are chosen, assessed, and disposed of. Heritagization entails more than simple preservation, as described by Rodney Harrison.

> Heritage is not a passive process of simply preserving things from the past that remain but an active process of assembling a series of objects, places, and practices that we choose to hold up as a mirror to the present, associated with a particular set of values that we wish to take with us into the future.[24]

Making something part of a heritage involves incorporating a set of knowledge, items, places, or customs into the living memory of a specific community, whether that community is local, national, or international. Simply recording a historical fact does not automatically make it present or active in the shared memory of a community. Past and memory are distinct, as are history and heritage, as often noted by David Lowenthal, a founding figure in the field of heritage studies. "Heritage is not history: heritage is what people make of their history to make themselves feel good"[25]; "History remains remote; personal immediacy is a heritage hallmark"[26]. The universalistic approach to heritage that characterized both the World Heritage Convention of 1972 and the Memory of the World Program eventually led to conflicts and criticism. The tension between memory and history is one of the more problematic aspects of the MoW programme, as its guidelines somehow conflate the words "memory" – typically individual and fragmentary – with "document" or "record" – that are supposed to be objective and historically reliable. When defining "memory institutions," the General Guidelines state:

> 3.1.3 Memory institutions may include but are not limited to archives, libraries, museums and other educational, cultural and research organizations.[27]

As Lowenthal notes, heritage, memory, and historical documents are not the same thing because they serve very different functions. While memory resides in the minds of living people, a document has the potential to remain unnoticed for centuries on a bookshelf or hidden in a cave. Heritage is a multifaceted social phenomenon that takes place in the present but relies on the past as evidence of its authenticity. The inclusion of an archive in a heritage list is primarily a political decision, similar to any other type of heritage listing. It occurs when a community - be it a small group of individuals or even a single individual- takes possession of a particular document or a group of documents as a whole and charges them with symbolic capital, usually for the purposes of self-legitimation and identity-building.

As one of the principal agencies of the United Nations, UNESCO's political goals are explicitly stated in its conventions and declarations. Regarding the Memory of the World Programme, its primary "political" objective is:

> Underlining the importance of documentary heritage to promote the sharing of knowledge for greater understanding and dialogue, in order to promote peace and respect for freedom, democracy, human rights, and dignity[28]

One could argue that this approach to memory and documentary heritage's role in solidifying international cooperation conflicts with the fact that heritage is also a tool for managing and utilizing the past to accommodate the present needs of different national and local communities. It is worth noting that this is a nuanced issue that requires consideration of the various perspectives involved. Heritage practices in certain communities or countries can lead to conflicts with others. This is particularly evident regarding the Memory of the World, as illustrated by past incidents concerning the "Documents of the Nanjing Massacre" and the "Voices of Comfort Women." The nomination of Hashima Island as a World Heritage site in 2015, a major site for coal mining and shipbuilding during Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution, received similar criticism because many Koreans were forced to work there under semi-slavery conditions.

[24] Harrison R (2013) *Heritage: Critical Approaches. Routledge*, London & New York, p. 4.

[25] Clout H (2018) "David Lowenthal obituary". *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2018/sep/27/david-lowenthal-obituary)

[26] Lowenthal D (1998) *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History.* Cambridge University Press, New York, p 122

[27] UNESCO (2021) *General Guidelines of the Memory of the World (MoW) Programme*. https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/mow_general_guidelines_en.pdf

[28] UNESCO (2016) "Recommendation concerning the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage including in digital form". UNESCO official site. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000244675.page=5

The solution to this conundrum might be to accept the idea that heritage is not universal, that it can generate conflict, and that it has been used and understood differently in different places and at different times. However, it remains an essential aspect of the cultural identity of individuals and communities.

Making textual heritage in the past: the Hyakugo archive of Tōji temple

Even if the word "heritage" in its contemporary sense is a product of Western civilization, directly linked to the history of the formation of the modern nation-state in the late 19th century, the political, cultural, and social processes that we now define as "heritagization" have a much longer history. As David C. Harvey has argued perceptively, "heritage has always been with us and has always been produced by people according to their contemporary concerns and experiences."[29] According to Harvey, it is therefore possible to create a "history of heritage […] by producing a context-rich account of heritage as a process or a human condition rather than as a single movement or personal project. […] Heritage resides in the here and now – whenever and wherever that here and now happens to be."[30]

In the case study I will present in the following pages, the "here and now" is 17th-century Japan, and the object of heritagization is the archive known as the Hyakugō Archive of Toji Temple (*Tōji hyakugō monjo*, in Japanese). This archive was inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World list in 2015, but even before that, it was the subject of a long process of assessment, preservation, restoration, digitization, and dissemination, which I think can be collectively called heritagization. I focus on one particular episode that gave the archive its actual name: the One Hundred Boxes (*hyakugo*) archive.

The Hyakugo Archive is a collection of nearly 19,000 documents (consisting of 25,000 items), originally stored at Tōji, a Buddhist temple in southwestern Kyoto. The documents span approximately 1,000 years, from the eighth to the 18th centuries, with the bulk of the collection dating from the 14th and 15th centuries. Today, the collection is owned by the Kyoto Prefectural Government, which purchased it from Tōji Temple in 1967 and housed it in a storage facility of the Kyoto Institute, Library and Archives. The Hyakugo Archive is one of the most important historical sources for the study of legal and administrative systems in medieval Japan, particularly in relation to the economic power of Buddhist temples. Because of its historical value, the Japanese government declared it a national treasure in 1997. The inscription in the Memory of the World Register in 2015 sanctioned the importance of this archive on an international level and acknowledged the quality of the digitization process that took place in the preceding years.

Most of the documents in the Hyakugo archive are written on Japanese paper (washi) and inscribed with India ink. Although washi is known to be a very durable material, it is made from the fibers of local plants such as the gampi tree, the mitsumata shrub, or the paper mulberry bush (kōzo); when the documents were acquired by the Kyoto Prefectural Government, approximately 9,000 required urgent restoration, which took seven years and was completed in 1973. At the same time, archivists at the Kyoto Institute, Library, and Archives spent about ten years cataloging the entire collection (the complete five-volume catalog was published in 1976). After the Japanese government designated the collection as an Important Cultural Property in 1980, another 1,000 or so documents were restored. The remaining 9,000 documents were left untouched at the time of acquisition[31]. From 1980 to 1983, the entire collection was photographed in 80,000 microfilm cuts, then printed, and archived in 485 photo albums that were used for daily consultation. Finally, in February 2014, the digitization of the entire collection was completed, and all of the more than 80,000 cuts were published online on the "Hyakugo Archives WEB" site under a "Creative Commons Attribution 2.1 Japan License" (CC BY 2.1 JP).

The name of the collection, "One Hundred Boxes (hyakugō) of Documents," comes from the number of paulownia wooden boxes in which the documents were stored at Tōji Temple. The story of these boxes is closely tied to the survival of this collection, and I argue that it can be seen as an important episode - if not the first - of "heritagization" in the history of this archive. This story is not only relevant to archivists, as it is intertwined with the history of medieval Japan and its administrative and political systems, as well as the changing values and attitudes toward cultural and written artifacts.

As noted above, the core of the archive consists of certificates attesting to the Tōji's ownership of lands and estates, as well as other certificates used in the day-to-day management of various properties of the temple. According to the so-called *shōen* (manorial) system introduced in the eighth century, temples and shrines, as well as members of the aristocracy, had the right to privately own large estates scattered throughout the country that were basically tax-free and self-governed. This system of landownership was guaranteed by the *ritsuryō* legal codes, which were based on the issuance and possession of documents regularly used to certify the ownership of a specific property[32]. High priests at Tōji preserved these documents in boxes called *tefubako*, which were used daily.

[29] Ibid. Harvey D. C. (2001).

[30] Harvey D.C (2008) The History of Heritage. In Graham B, Howard P (eds) The Ashgate research companion to heritage and identity. Ashgate, Aldershot, pp 19–36

[31] Kobayashi H, Shikata T, Ōtsuka K (2016) "Sekai kioku isan 'Tōji hyakugō monjo' to Shinsōgō shiryokan nit suite (About the Memory of the World heritage 'Hyakugō documents of Tōji' and the New General Archive)". *Archives* 59, http://www.archives.go.jp/publication/archives/no059/4672

[32] Torao T (1993). "Nara economic and social institutions". In Brown D (ed) *The Cambridge History of Japan*, volume 1. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp 415–452

As local feudal lords rose to power in the 15th and 16th centuries and with the beginning of the new unified administration of the Tokugawa shoguns in the 17th century, the *shōen* system ultimately declined, and all documents related to *ritsuryō* and estate administration suddenly became useless for claiming rights and privileges[33,34].

At this time, a new way of using and valuing these documents began, as they were in danger of being forgotten and lost due to their lack of practical value. In pacified Japan of the 17th century, feudal lords loyal to the Tokugawa shogunate gained power, wealth, and land to govern. Consequently, they began to develop an interest in the study of letters and history, both for personal pleasure and as a way to acquire symbolic capital from their knowledge of the past. Many so-called *daimyo* (regional lords), together with the central government, actively promoted the development of Confucianism and the compilation of historical compendia, becoming sophisticated literati and patrons of culture. One such daimyo was Maeda Tsunanori (1643–1724), the fifth daimyo of the Kaga domain in northwestern Japan (present-day Kanazawa Prefecture), one of the richest regions owing to the presence of gold mines and other resources. Tsunanori sent his retainers to various parts of the country in search of books and personally borrowed a portion of the Tōji archives for his own consultation, partially copying them and compiling a catalog.

Upon returning to Tōji in 1685, Tsunanori donated 94 boxes, originally thought to be 100, of paulownia wood to the temple. The purpose of this donation was to safeguard documents from damages inflicted by time and bugs. They were called a "block" (katamari) by archivist and scholar Uejima Tamotsu because they helped keep the archive untouched and in its original shape since medieval times. Indeed, these boxes have protected the collection for over three centuries, closely guarded in the treasure chamber of the Tōji Temple until they were acquired by Kyoto Prefecture[35]. During the 1970s, recataloging the collection, the archivists at the Kyoto Archive adhered to the original document organization within each box. It was evident that the documents were grouped together based on clear rules, rather than being randomly added to boxes one by one[36]. The name of each box, which follows the two phonetic alphabets hiragana and katakana, and the sinograph kyō (capital city), is retained in the new catalog. This was a way of giving importance not only to the documents themselves, but also to the way in which they were managed and catalogued in pre-modern times, giving the macro-textual structure–the archive–a particular historical value *per se.*

Even in Tsunanori's time when those who had access to the archive were privileged elites, we can argue that Tsunanori himself looked at the archive as a whole and recognized in it a new meaning and value independent of the practical use the documents had had in earlier times. Although Tsunanori's purpose has almost nothing to do with the main goals of UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme, that is, international cooperation and human rights, I argue that the decision to donate the boxes to the temple in order to preserve this resource, as well as the re-evaluation and appreciation of outdated, useless documents, can be seen as an early example of heritagization, one of those pages of the "history of heritage" theorized by David Harvey. Tsunanori's selfless efforts to protect the archive allowed it to become, three centuries later, a "cultural heritage of the world" in the sense of UNESCO. The survival of the archive was not accidental or obvious, but the result of a reflection on the value of the past and its embodiment in written records and of an active preservation effort pursued by cultural and political elites. In other words, the cultural and social practice of meaning-making as it is theorized by scholars of critical heritage studies today. It is not clear whether Tsunanori donated the boxes with a view toward some kind of personal gain, such as the support of the still powerful Buddhist clerical class. However, it is undeniable that his donation made it easier for the monks of the Tōji Temple to take care of this tangible textual heritage. At the same time, this symbolic attribution of meaning and value, this attempt to preserve and care for the physical embodiments of the texts - as well as the process of borrowing, copying, and cataloging them - can be understood as an example of textual heritage, as I proposed in the definition above, namely, an intangible cultural practice that revolves around and upon texts.

This does not mean that in Tsunanori's actions we find the same ideals of "heritage" that we find today in UNESCO's conventions, such as "to promote universal access to documentary heritage" or "to increase worldwide awareness of the existence and importance of documentary heritage and thereby to promote dialogue and mutual understanding among peoples and cultures".[37] At the same time, it cannot be denied that Tsunanori's effort was a deliberate act of recognizing and transmitting the culture and memory of the past, just for the sake of future generations - not for Tsunanori's heirs or relatives - a fact that partially corresponds to the first objective of the MoW: 'to facilitate preservation, by the most appropriate techniques, of the world's past, present, and future documentary heritage.'[38]

[33] Furushima T (1991) "The village and agricolture during the Edo period". In Hall JW (ed) *The Cambridge History of Japan*, volume 4. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp 478–518

[34] Wakita O (1991) "The social and economic consequences of unification". In Hall JW (ed) *The Cambridge History of Japan*, volume 4. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp 96–127

[35] Uejima T (2006) "From the Toji Temple Hyakugo Archives towards archival science - A personal view on arrangement of Japanese medieval archives (in Japanese)". *Aakaibusu gaku kenkyū* 5, pp. 2–50

[36] Uejima T (1998) *Tōji – Tōji monjo no kenkyū (Researches about Tōji and the Tōji archives)*. Shibunkaku, Kyoto, pp. 156–157

[37] UNESCO (2021) *General Guidelines of the Memory of the World (MoW) Programme*. https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/mow_general_guidelines_en.pdf

[38] Ibid.

New value for useless texts: the prohibition order by Oda Nobunaga

There is not enough space here to discuss which documents Tsunanori Maeda was particularly interested in and why he finally sent the wooden boxes to the Tōji Temple. I want to emphasize how the processes of heritagization affect the survival and value of certain historical texts. I will give just one example of how one of the documents in the Hyakugo Archive acquired a specific symbolic and economic value, not only, one might assume, in Tsunanori's time, but even in today's antiquarian book market. One of the documents of the Hyakugo Archives often displayed at exhibitions is a prohibition edict issued by Oda Nobunaga in the ninth month of the 11th year of the Eiroku era (CE 1568) (Figure 1).

Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582) was one of the most important warlords who rose to power at the end of the 16th century and contributed to the reunification of Japan, which was completed by Tokugawa Ieyasu a few decades later. This document was written in the year Nobunaga first entered Kyoto with his army and contained three orders he gave to Tōji Temple (the second, third, and fourth lines from the right, respectively): prohibitions against assembling armies or occupying land, causing disturbances or setting fires, and cutting down trees.

These orders were intended to prevent any opposition from powerful temples in Kyoto during Nobunaga's occupation, and their validity was intended to be temporary. In any case, after Nobunaga's death in 1582, they had obviously lost any effectiveness. From a documentary point of view, this document is not particularly meaningful, as this type of order was regularly issued by feudal lords and Nobunaga himself signed many other documents addressed to various temples in Kyoto on the same occasion. It also does not provide any useful information or other details about the rise of Nobunaga. In other words, the historical value of this document is not so remarkable. Nevertheless, this document has been carefully preserved and is regularly displayed in exhibitions today, simply because it was issued and signed by Nobunaga, one of the most well-known historical figures in medieval Japan. Thus, a relatively trivial historical resource takes on a different meaning and value by being accepted as documentary heritage. People today, but also in the past, are fascinated by the fact that this document shows the authentic handwriting of one of the most powerful warlords who participated in shaping early modern Japan. Particularly appreciated is the presence, in the lower left corner of the page, of the vermilion seal with the characters *Tenka fubu* 天下布武, literally "to bring the martial (virtues) to the world," a sort of motto Nobunaga used when he began his military campaign to conquer Japan.

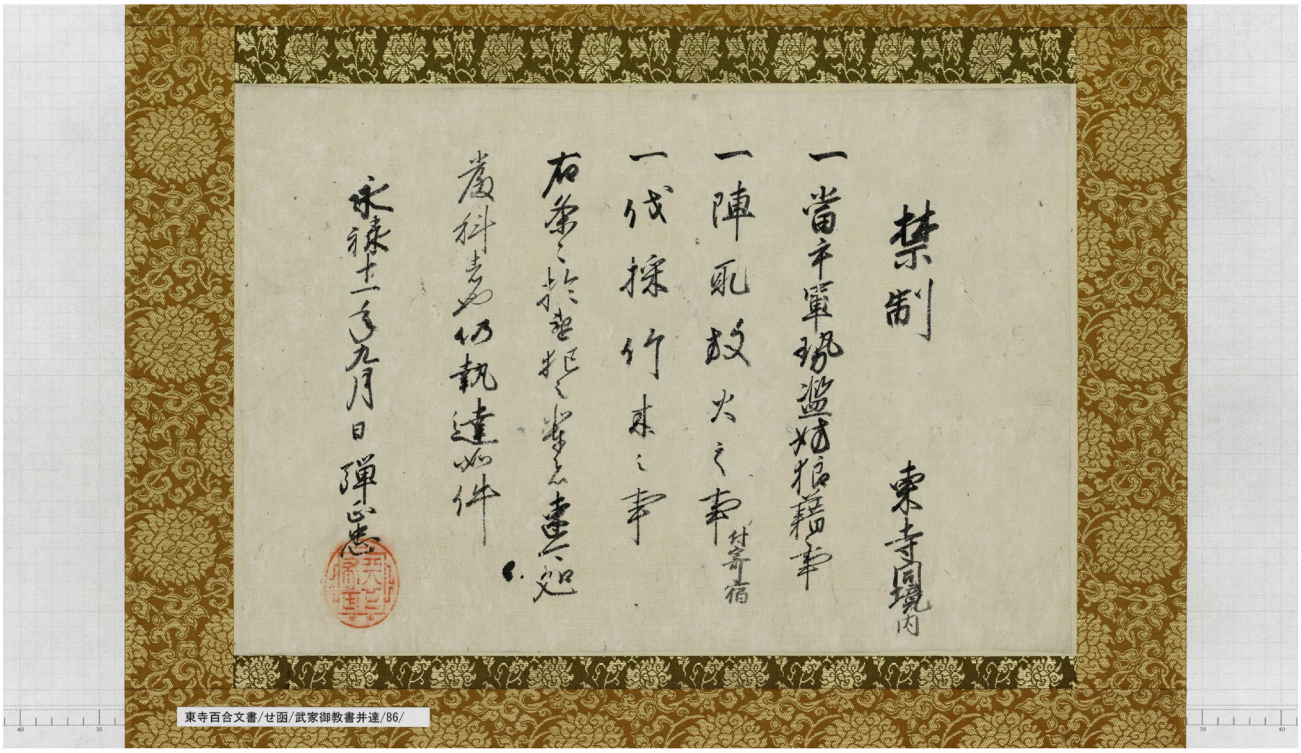


Figure 1. Box SE (Hiragana)/Documents for the education of samurai families/86. "Prohibition order by Oda Nobunaga." This image is taken from the Toji Hyakugo Archives website, operated by the Kyoto Institute, Library and Archives. Available online at http://hyakugo.pref.kyoto.lg.jp/contents/detail.php?id=28572&p=2. This image is under a CC BY 2.1 JP license.

Visitors to today's exhibitions engage with Japan's past through this manuscript, enjoying the sight of Nobunaga's brush and seal. However, we can assume that literati in early modern Japan, such as Maeda Tsunenori, also enjoyed a similar kind of "fetishistic" appreciation. This process of imagining one's past through a physical object or remnant is precisely what heritage scholars refer to as heritage. It is also interesting to note that this type of symbolic value has always had an economic counterpart. If we take as a measure the prices at which Nobunaga's writings are usually sold at auctions or antique book fairs in Japan, we can estimate that this single page, if sold, could fetch no less than five million yen (about $45,000).

This is to say that the vast collection of the Hyakugō Archive not only has inestimable historical value, but also has been and will continue to be the object of processes of valorization and meaning-making that can be better explained and understood through the theoretical category of heritage, especially with the subcategory of "textual heritage" that I theorized earlier.

Textual heritage today: the "Hyakugo archive WEB"

The inclusion of the Hyakugo Archive in the MoW Register in 2015 did not drastically change the way the archive itself is managed and preserved. As explained by Uejima[39], who was directly involved in the acquisition and cataloging process at the Kyoto Archive, the new catalogues, microfilms, and even the complete publication through an online database were completed before the UNESCO nomination and independently of the plan to propose it for inscription.

Perhaps UNESCO's designation of the archive as a "world" documentary heritage has further encouraged the archive's curators to make its contents available to the public. In an effort that might be called "public archival science," the "Hyakugo Archives WEB" site proposes a new story about a single document from the collection every few months. It also suggests fieldwork on temple properties, both in Kyoto and in the countryside, to follow the documents and maps in the database (Figure 2)[40]. In another "story," the site provides basic explanations on how manuscripts were protected from moisture and insects in medieval Japan. With a little delay, the stories are also translated into English to meet a larger international public.

[39] Ibid.

[40] http://hyakugo.pref.kyoto.lg.jp/eng/?p=288

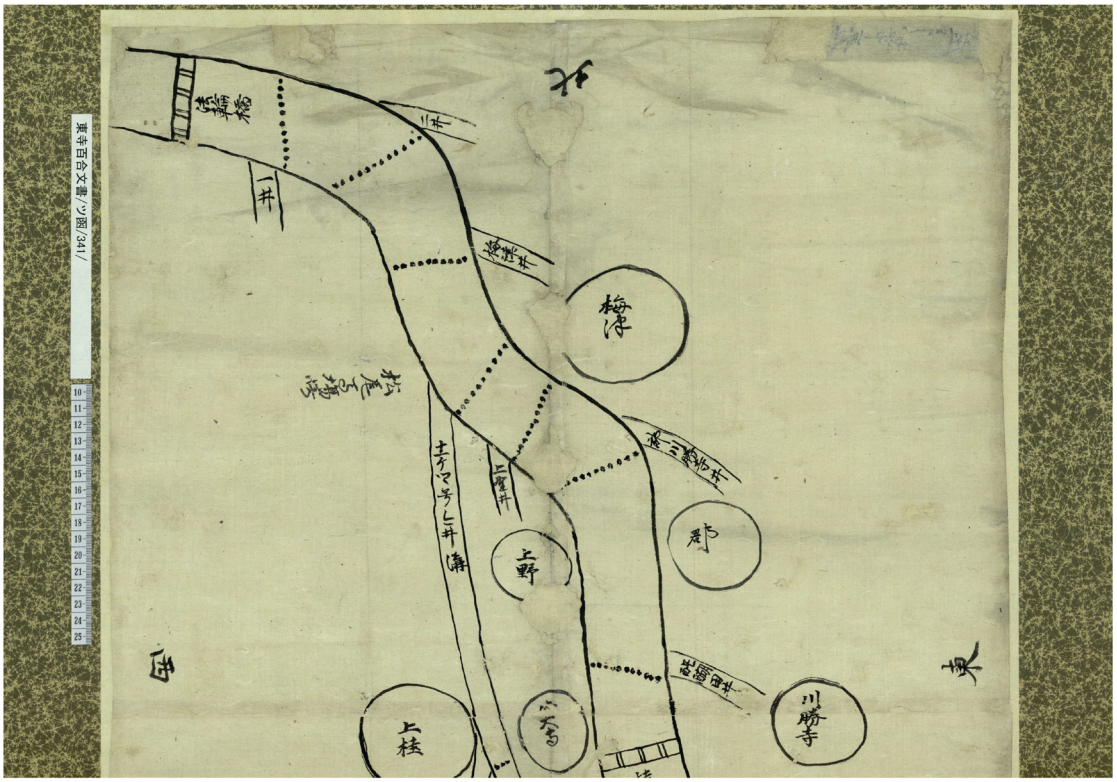


Figure 2. Box TSU(Katakana)/341, "Diagram of the use of water of the Katsura river in Yamashiro-guni". This image is taken from the Toji Hyakugo Archives website, operated by the Kyoto Institute, Library and Archives. Available online at http://hyakugo.pref.kyoto.lg.jp/contents/detail.php?id=7340

Digitizing an archive, making it available on the Internet, retrieving individual documents to provide explanations of how people lived in the past are all cultural and social, and in a sense, political practices that allow people to make sense of the past, and in this sense can be called "(textual) heritage." People who access the website and read these stories, as well as viewing the scans of the manuscripts, are given the opportunity to rethink or reinforce their cultural identity to negotiate a relationship with the past. This is true, of course, first and foremost for Kyoto residents or the Japanese in general, but also for anyone who accesses the site.

Even though donating wooden boxes and scanning documents seem to be two completely different practices, both Tsunanori and the Kyoto Prefectural Archives have in fact contributed not only to the material preservation of the Hyakugo Archive but also to the heritagization of both its material and immaterial being. In other words, they are two important moments in the "history of heritage" of the Toji Hyakugo Archive. Heritagization is not just a set of actions aimed at preserving an artifact but is part of the history of the artifact itself.

Similar to other examples of textual heritage, the Hyakugo Archive is particularly interesting because it forces us to rethink the relationship between the tangible and intangible aspects of heritage. All the intangible practices that have been carried out so far in relation to the Hyakugo Archive - cataloging, studying, digitizing, and creating "stories" about it - have been made possible by the existence of a tangible heritage - the archive itself - that has survived to this day thanks to a continuous process of re-evaluation, a reflection on the importance of preserving traces of the past as much as possible. Most importantly, it does not matter whether those who carry out these practices are able to read and enjoy every document in the collection - to carefully read tens of thousands of documents is a task that even Maeda Tsunanori could not have accomplished - the value of heritage is recognized for the Hyakugo Archive as a whole. It is correct to think of heritage primarily as an intangible cultural practice, as heritage studies show us, but none of these practices regarding the Hyakugo archive would be possible without tangible documents. As I have discussed elsewhere[41], texts can be interpreted as tangible embodiments of intangible practices, but at least in the case of textual heritage, intangible practice alone is insufficient to transmit such a large amount of information and knowledge over such a long period. We know that there are many examples of oral transmission of traditional knowledge - stories, songs, and crafts - that have survived exclusively through the intangible practice of storytelling based on the memory of living people, but no human mind could store such a large amount of information as we have in an archive: only texts can assure us this potential while at the same time shaping, with their "digital" fixity, the way we can recreate memories in our minds based on them.

[41] Ibid Gerlini (2022).

Conclusions

The digital revolution has finally freed text from its material and ephemeral embodiments, from the cages of paper, ink, and stone, making it possible to copy and share texts and words indefinitely and to store information in virtually infinite ways. This does not mean that textual heritage has become infinite or broader than before. To be called heritage, an object must be vividly present in people's minds. This must be an active part of the process of negotiating contemporary identities, languages, and cultures. An archive is an extremely intriguing example to reflect on heritage and heritagization because, unlike other kinds of heritage, such as monuments or dances, it is rarely fully read and enjoyed by the community that recognizes it as heritage. Very few people in Kyoto, including historians and archivists, have had the time and opportunity to read every document in the Hyakugo Archive, yet the people of Kyoto and Japan know its name and are proud to have a product of Japanese civilization inscribed in a UNESCO register. The Hyakugo Archive is a heritage site in Kyoto and Japan, even though much of it has never been displayed in exhibitions or public lectures. Every page included in the archive can become an occasion for new practices - translations, publications and exhibitions - that will strengthen its status as a cultural heritage.

Thus, the digitization of archives makes available to the public an impressive amount of data about manuscripts and artifacts of the past, theoretically enabling new heritage practices based on them. How all of this can benefit public awareness of museums, archives, and cultural products in general, and how this can be functional to UNESCO's goals as stated in the MoW Conventions - to promote understanding and human rights - is basically up to those who are committed to making all of this information present and alive in the public debate and in the shared knowledge of a community, be it local, national, or international. Given the importance that the "heritage paradigm" has enjoyed since the end of the last century, I would suggest that archival science in the 21st century should not ignore the ways in which its object of interest - manuscripts, documents, and archives - and the knowledge of how to read and manage them can become - or not - textual heritage.

Ethics statement

Ethical approval and consent were not required.

Data availability statement

The data for this article consists of bibliographic references, which are included in the footnotes.

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✔ **Hideaki Akamatsu**
Faculty of Humanities Department of History and Cultural Properties, Beppu University, Beppu, Japan

This article explores the modern importance of archives as heritages, using the Toji Hyakugo Archive preserved at Toji Temple in Kyoto, Japan, as a specific example. This document was inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World list in 2015. The following is a brief summary of the article's contents.

Introduction:
In response to recent advancements in digital technology and discussions within critical heritage studies, Dr. Gerlini advocated for the examination of archives through a heritage perspective. He specifically highlighted the Toji Hyakugo Archive as the focal point of analysis.

Main Discussion:
Firstly, the article organized and presented an overview of discussions on the term "heritage" and various contemporary issues. Building upon Dr. Gerlini's discourse on textual heritage, the argument was made that the reproducibility of content is a characteristic defining archives as heritage. It was emphasized that heritage involves contemporary judgment and politics. The Toji Hyakugo Archive and preservation activities by Tsunanori Maeda were introduced, asserting that Maeda's actions represented an early instance of heritagization, encompassing not only the objects but also the activities of individuals. The example of *Seisatsu*, an order issued by Nobunaga Oda, a renowned figure in Japanese history, was cited to underscore the importance of such documents, even if they held limited historical value, due to their association with significant figures. Shifting to the present, the digitalization of historical document images and the sharing of Toji Hyakugo Archive-related stories on the "Hyakugo Archives WEB" were evaluated as initiatives contributing both to heritagization and preservation.

Conclusion:
The advancement of digital technology has enabled new approaches to archives. However, recognition as heritage is contingent upon historical and contemporary value being widely shared among many people. It is contemplated that the efforts of individuals involved in archives and

historical documents are crucial in this regard.

Reviewer's Perspective:
The reviewer is a historian specializing in medieval Japanese history, and has elucidated the history of *Shōen* (estates) ruled by Toji through the analysis of the "Toji Hyakugo Archive. Japanese historiography, especially the study of Japanese history, has developed independently by incorporating Western historical influences in the late 19th century, while based on the ancient tradition of historical writing. While influenced by Western influences, geographical distance and language differences have allowed Japan to build its own academic community. From the standpoint of such a Japanese historian, I would like to add my comments on the value of this research.

Evaluation Points for this Article:

1. The accomplishment of this article is that it focuses on Japanese archives, which do not receive much attention abroad, and discusses them based on the discussion of critical heritage studies, and clearly shows the value of Toji Hyakugo Archive as both tangible and intangible heritage.

2. For a historical researcher whose research theme is the content analysis of archival documents, the perspective of considering archives as heritage feels exceptionally innovative. From my own experiences, even when the Toji Hyakugo Archive was inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Heritage list in 2015, I understood their global recognition, yet I had not conducted further in-depth analysis. In contemplating the contemporary value of archives that historical researchers study and how these archives can be positioned as heritage, I find this article to be insightful and commendable.

Improvement Points for this Article:
While this article is highly valuable and requires no major revisions, attention should be paid to the following two minor points.

1. Archives are considered primary sources of information produced by various individuals and organizations regardless of time period or medium (Masahito Ando, 1998: "A challenge to archive science"), (Uejima, 2015, p.4-5). Human judgment is essential for the preservation of archives, but determining fair criteria for deciding whether or not to preserve them is an ongoing consideration. On the other hand, like archives, heritage are also selected by human judgment from tangible and intangible activities of the past. However, unlike the selection of archives, the selection of heritages is more subjective and involves political elements. Should researchers be more proactive than just studying and preserving archives? I would have liked to see further discussion on the role of the researcher with regard to heritagization.

2. Regarding the explanation of the Toji Hyakugo Archive (p. 9). It is a common understanding in current research on Japanese history that the *Shōen* (estate) system was established in the 11th century as an alternative social system to the *Ritsuryō* system, and that the *Ōnin* War in the late 15th century led to its collapse. The article states that the estate system started in the 8th century and disappeared under the Tokugawa Shogunate in the 17th century, which needs to be revised. I recommend reading (Toshikazu Ito, 2021) as an easily

accessible and important reference.

Is the work original in terms of material and argument?
Yes

Does it sufficiently engage with relevant methodologies and secondary literature on the topic?
Yes

Is the work clearly and cogently presented?
Yes

Is the argument persuasive and supported by evidence?
Yes

If any, are all the source data and materials underlying the results available?
Yes

Does the research article contribute to the cultural, historical, social understanding of the field?
Yes

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: History studies, particularly focusing on Japanese Medieval History

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard.

Reviewer Report 30 January 2024

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?

Titia van der Werf
Research, OCLC BV (Ringgold ID: 58627), Leiden, South Holland, The Netherlands

Gerlini's article is insightful and confusing at the same time. The author calls attention to textual sources, documents, and archives, that have been ignored by humanities scholars engaged in heritage studies. He proposes a definition for this missing category which he calls "textual heritage". He elaborates on the characteristics of this category and argues that text is a digital innovation, because it can be easily reproduced and transferred to other carriers, without losing information or meaning. Gerlini proposes to reimagine text as a native digital product and

recognize “textual heritage” as an “implicit aspect of digital heritage”. According to him, this new conceptualization of “textual heritage” has the potential to stimulate further reflections on the essence of heritage more broadly, and could fuel discussions on how texts, documents, and archives function as cultural heritage. He emphasizes that preserving texts does not automatically confer heritage status on them and explains how heritagization can become a long-term (political) process of valorisation. He proposes to examine “what issues arise during the process of heritagization in relation to archival sources”, on the basis of a case study of the Hyakugo archive. As the author demonstrates, this archive is a very good example of heritage, as evidenced by the long-term process of heritagization it has been undergoing in the past four centuries. Gerlini observes that the archive as-a-whole is considered heritage, even though it is rarely fully read. He also notes that digitization has allowed people to access this heritage, further amplifying the heritagization process and theoretically, enabling new heritage practices. The author concludes that “textual heritage”, such as the Hyakugo archive, allows scholars to reflect on heritage and heritagization in new ways. He specifically encourages archival science to look at archives through the lens of the new "heritage paradigm", in terms of how they can become - or not – “textual heritage”.

This article gives an insightful overview of the concepts, main ideas and perspectives on cultural heritage from the subfield of critical heritage studies. The supporting references to relevant literature provide good starting points for the (non-expert) reader who wants to delve deeper into the subject. Coming from a libraries and archives background –where special collections and historical records are considered cultural heritage-, it surprises me to learn that these types of heritage are not studied in heritage studies. Drawing attention to this gap is a valuable contribution to advance research in this area. There are a few interesting interdisciplinary initiatives -like the critical archival and digital humanities studies cluster at the UCL’s Centre for Critical Heritage Studies–, worth mentioning in this context. Engaging archival scholars and digital preservation experts in critical cultural heritage research can bring fresh perspectives and lead to fruitful cross-pollination. As Gerlini suggests, it could trigger heritage custodians to think of their curatorial role as a form of intangible heritage and a function of heritagization. Cross-pollination would also help straighten out the use of terminologies across disciplines. This leads me to my next point.

I find Gerlini’s reasoning for the need for a new category “textual heritage” confusing. The section titled “Text and archives as heritage” -in which the author explains why text is different from other content types and more similar to digital- is problematic because of its confusing use of terms and concepts, at least from the perspective of archival management and digital preservation. This section makes assertions that are debatable and raises questions and doubts about the argument made, leaving the reader unsure as to why processes of valorisation and meaning-making around archives can be better explained and understood through the theoretical category of "textual heritage". This section is up for debate.

I would recommend discussing the category of documentary heritage more in-depth in the section on “UNESCO Memory of the World and the Documentary Heritage” and help the reader understand why this concept is not adequate for the purpose of this paper.
The case study of the heritagization of the Hyakugo archive is perfectly understandable with the concept of documentary heritage and it is not obvious how talking about this archive as “textual heritage” makes the heritagization process more understandable. It would be very helpful if the author could clarify this.

Besides addressing the above, there are a couple of other opportunities for improving the rigour and understandability of the article:

1. In the introduction, the author proposes to answer “some” of the questions listed, and in other sections, he proposes to answer additional questions. It would improve the reader’s understanding of the article’s intention, purpose and contribution to the field of research, if the research questions answered in this article were clearly defined, from the start. I recommend making the answers to the questions more explicit as well, relating them more clearly to the questions.
2. The article builds on previous work by the author, in which the concept of “textual heritage” has been used before. Because this concept is central to this article and its argumentation, I recommend providing a short overview explaining how this article relates to previous own work and what this article is adding to it.

The suggested clarifications and additions should make the article more robust and better equipped to engage with scholars from archival sciences, digital humanities, digital preservation, and cultural heritage studies on the research questions it addresses. I look forward to this conversation!

Is the work original in terms of material and argument?

Yes

Does it sufficiently engage with relevant methodologies and secondary literature on the topic?

Yes

Is the work clearly and cogently presented?

Partly

Is the argument persuasive and supported by evidence?

Partly

If any, are all the source data and materials underlying the results available?

No source data required

Does the research article contribute to the cultural, historical, social understanding of the field?

Partly

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Digital libraries, digital preservation, archival management

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.

Author Response 30 Jan 2024

Edoardo GERLINI

Thank you very much for your review. The points you raised are entirely agreeable, particularly concerning the lack of clarity in defining theoretical terms such as "text" and "heritage." I will strive to be more convincing in the textual heritage section, providing better clarification for why the category of tangible heritage alone is not sufficient to appropriately describe the historical and cultural processes that have developed around historical archives. It's true that the various questions I raise in the introduction might confuse the reader about what the article is really about. However, since the primary goal of the article is to offer an interdisciplinary and (possibly!) innovative view, I thought it would be helpful to present a range of questions that other scholars might find interesting. One solution could be to move these unanswered questions to the end of the article...? In this way, the introduction will be more aligned with the rest of the article, while in the conclusions, I would address the comment from the reviewer who asked for examples of how archival studies and heritage studies can collaborate I will also add a very short description of how I applied the concept of textual heritage in my previous works.

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

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David Harvey
School of Culture and Society - Department of Archeology and Heritage Studies, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark

This is a well written article which explores the relationship between 'heritage' and 'text', specifically with respect to seeing 'digital archives' as 'heritage' - whether digital archives can be considered 'heritage', and (if so) what the implications of this are, both for critical heritage studies digital textual studies. In this respect, it speaks to two of the key themes (trends?) that humanities scholars are interested in right now: 'heritage' and the 'digital humanities'!

The basic issues and questions are set out clearly in the introductory sections, which also sets out some interesting links to issues of human rights - the right to cultural life - which is how the author gain traction on the subject matter through the Faro Convention (on cultural heritage and society), and the Memory of the World (MoW) digital collection. On first glance, I pondered whether some clearer definitions (of 'heritage' and 'text') would have been more usefully laid out earlier, but in practice, I think the paper works well through a slightly longer meditation on/unpacking of the terms in a manner that highlights the gaps and points to the opportunities - as to what thinking about (digital) 'texts' does for critical heritage studies, and what processual ideas of heritage does

for thinking about digital texts. The wider literature cited all makes sense, but I did wonder whether the author would benefit from looking at the work of Liz Stainforth:
Stainforth, E (2020) 'Distruptive forms, persistent values: negotiating digital heritage and "the Memory of the World"', in T. Carter et al *Creating Heritage: Unrecognised Pasts and Rejected Futures,* (Routledge) p. 32-45. Or, Grincheva, N and Stainforth, E. (2023) *The Geopolitics of Digital Heritage,* (CUP)
I don't know much about the Hyakugo archive (or the wider topic of Japanese literature), but I can vouch for this paper being clear to a non-expert reader who is approaching this material for the first time. It is really interesting to see how my own previous work on the 'history of heritage' has encouraged these types of study, which explore the potential of this 'historical-biographical' approach. Indeed, the author might find Chris Siwicki's work useful on this - he looked at Roman ideas of (something that might be called) 'heritage' (*Architectural Restoration and Heritage in Imperial Rome*, OUP, 2019).
The conclusions are brief - perhaps being a bit more clear (and developed) on how work on 'critical heritage' and 'digital texts' can be mutually enabling, might be good? Indeed, I think the last line is a bit tantalising and also (perhaps) negative - rather than suggesting that archival science 'should not ignore' the field of 'textual heritage', perhaps the author can lay out more confidently, what such a reflection might enable... how those interested in digital archives (and those working in critical heritage) have something to gain, by thinking about 'textual heritage'.

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2. T, Carter D, Harvey R, Jones I, et al.: Creating Heritage: Unrecognised Pasts and Rejected Futures dust. *Routledge*. 2020.
3. N, Grincheva E, Stainworth: Geopolitics of Digital Heritage dust. *Cambridge University Press*. 2024.

4. Siwicki C: Architectural Restoration and Heritage in Imperial Rome. 2019. Publisher Full Text

Is the work original in terms of material and argument?

Yes

Does it sufficiently engage with relevant methodologies and secondary literature on the topic?

Yes

Is the work clearly and cogently presented?

Yes

Is the argument persuasive and supported by evidence?

Yes

If any, are all the source data and materials underlying the results available?

Yes

Does the research article contribute to the cultural, historical, social understanding of the field?

Yes

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Heritage studies, historical and cultural geography.

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard.

Author Response 30 Jan 2024

Edoardo GERLINI

Thank you very much for the encouraging comment and the useful suggestions you gave me. I agree that the way I exposed slippery concepts like "text" and "digital" may result too shallow and somehow imprecise, but because these terms underwent so many interpretations, I tried to keep my assertion simple and straightforward. I will try to improve this part. The references you suggested me will sure make my argument more reliable. Thank you very much. I will also expand the conclusions too, even if speaking from the standpoint of a philologist in the so called area studies, I am not so much credited to speak for archivists or heritage scholars.

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.