

Session 3 Comments and Questions

Ritsuko Kurita:

Art is a means of reviving the traditional culture, reaffirming indigenous identity, and finding the connection to history in the past, to the ancestors, and also a means of passing down the traditional knowledge to the younger generations. And I noticed some Aboriginal art has political message. I just wonder if her work includes any messages of resistance to mainstream society by revealing the history of colonization. This is my first question.

And the second question is, so she provides workshops to people in mainstream society as well, and I would like to ask how her work is perceived by the audience. I asked this question because, in Australia, aboriginal art is very popular since it is seen as a part of national identity today. But it is always so-called traditional aboriginal culture especially traditional aboriginal art from remote Australia, for example, dot paintings from Central desert. How do people perceive an aboriginal art by urban Aboriginal artist like Ms. Maree? Also, how does she think her art contributes to her own community?

Where does the benefit go? I understand Ms. Maree does not necessarily see her art as a commodity, but it has been indicated in Australian media that in remote communities, although there are some very prominent aboriginal artists who make massive profit, it's not the artists who benefit from their work and their living situations haven't improved at all. So how does she think that her work can contribute to Aboriginal communities, and improve the socio-economic and political status of Aboriginal people in Australia?

Wade Mahoney:

Thank You! Those are great questions. Those are very big questions in some cases. I guess I want to probably start at the end of your questions around the value of aboriginal art and the contribution it makes to especially central aboriginal people. There is movement in Australia now, and has been for some time around I guess, for some protocols around the sale of aboriginal art as commodity that is central traditional art. In preparation of dot paintings from central Australia is another quite big issue because dot paintings are traditionally from within a small part of central Australia. However, the popularity of aboriginal dot paintings, and I guess the view from the rest of the world that aboriginal art is dot paintings, is actually quite correct. And unfortunately, the preparation of dot paintings has been used throughout various other parts of Australia to cash in on the commodities and that fixed how aboriginal art is seen by rest of the world.

There are some movements as I said around creating protocols for the sale of aboriginal art and the management of the sale of aboriginal art. However, I think it's quite some time away before we see the time when the aboriginal artists or a cooperative of aboriginal artists can manage the sale of their own commodity, their art. That is quite some time away. Because of their treatment of the art as a commodity, Central Australian aboriginal people have been thrown into the middle of the complexities of that business. A lot of people have become wealthy from aboriginal art, often not the artists. That is currently happening and it has happened for quite some time.

To the best of my knowledge, that's the only answers I would give to your questions. In relation to Aunty Maree in particular, yes, it is a commodity and she has known it has a commercial value of course, just like any other artist. However, her art or artefacts that she creates, and I call them art, are displayed and exhibited in a manner that is passed from, or exposing our history and our historical practices on us for all the scale. That has always been Aunty Maree's focus.

Most of her pieces are held by museums. They don't often sell to private collectors. It is often used in a Victoria National Gallery of Australia and etc. and various trusts in Melbourne who purchases her work for its historical value and displays it for its historical value. Of course, whether the viewer views it as an art or views it for its historical value, it is entirely up to the viewer. That's pretty much the purpose of the art that she creates.

Political statements, yes, it does make political statement not necessarily on purpose. I've never heard or seen Aunty Maree preparing work or talking about work in a way that says, "This work is to create a political message." But, of course, it does. Everything that we do as aboriginal people often creates and portrays a political message because we were colonized people. It's a political world in which we live. All our movements and our activities, I guess, raise the awareness of our situation within our country, our access to land and etc.

Aunty Maree's work have travelled all over the world for exhibitions. It raises awareness of cultural ceremonies lost, of cultural practices lost. If they create a political statement and causes some changes within our country, great, that's awesome! But I don't know if that's her intention. She wants to share her work with who wants to share her culture and our culture with the whole world but that's always difficult. I hope that answers your question.

Kurita:

Thank you, Mr. Mahoney. Now I'd like to comment on Fujito-san's presentation. Historically, it has been only Japanese scholars or travel agents who spoke about the Ainu culture in the

Japanese society until today but not by the Ainu people themselves. Especially since the establishment of the Act on the Promotion of the Ainu Culture in 1997, the Ainu culture has been winning the attention all over Japan. But the reality is that we Japanese are familiar with only such things like Ainu songs and dances. While such a dimension of culture provides a good opportunity for Japanese people to learn about the Ainu culture, it may at the same time reinforces a stereotype about the Ainu culture. In that context, I think it has an important meaning that an Ainu person speaks about the Ainu culture from her own viewpoint and shares it with so-called Wajin Japanese.

But in reality almost nothing about the Ainu culture is taught in today's Japanese schools, as Fujito-san said. So Fujito-san, you consider it's important in your activities in teaching about Ainu that people actually see and feel it, I want to ask how do you think about the form of education which is necessary to teach more widely about the Ainu culture in Japan from now. I myself have studied about the education of Aboriginal education in Australian schools, and what often becomes an issue is which Aboriginal culture they teach and who teaches it. So I would like to ask how you think the education about Ainu people should be for Japanese.

Hiroko Fujito:

I think, people learn almost nothing about the Ainu people at schools. As I have just said, people learn nothing means even teachers learn nothing for teaching about Ainu. Because teachers do not learn history of Ainu, their culture and tradition, and how they have been practiced, they do not have any resource to teach students about Ainu. It has been so, and it may continue to be so. That's why I think it is really important that us Ainu ourselves stand and speak in front of people.

Who teaches about Ainu is really a question. Scholars and researchers may have a plenty of knowledge. But I don't think they can talk about when in our daily life we sing our songs, dance our dances, and tell out stories. Our songs and dances are not to perform for the public. We sing and dance for the life and our ancestors. So I think anyone who have lived in the Ainu community have the right to teach about the Ainu culture and tradition. There are many people who can do so even without education. They are many who can do so not because they are researchers, but because they are Ainu. So it is not necessary for me to say who can teach about Ainu. Does it answer your question?

Kurita:

Yes, thank you. I agree that it's important to learn from the Ainu people themselves about their culture in order to understand more deeply about their view of life and death.

<藤戸報告へのコメント 日本語原文>

栗田:これまで日本の社会において、アイヌの人たちの文化というのは、日本の研究者であったり、あるいは観光業者によって一方的に語られてきたという歴史があります。そして日本では、1997年のアイヌ文化振興法によって、日本社会全体でアイヌ文化に対する注目というのが高まっているわけです。しかし、私たち日本人が一般的になじみのあるアイヌ文化というのは、例えばアイヌの歌であったり踊りであったり、そういったものに限られているというのが現状だと思います。そういった文化というのは、日本人がアイヌの文化について学ぶ良い機会を提供しているんですけれども、一面でステレオタイプ化されたアイヌ文化というものを推し進めているという点もあると思います。そういう中で、アイヌの方が独自の視点からアイヌ文化を語り、それを和人と共有されているというそのこと自体に、非常に大きな意味があると思いました。

そこで、質問なんですけれども、発表の中でおっしゃられたように、日本の学校教育の中では、アイヌの文化に対することがほとんど、全く教えられていないという現状があります。それで藤戸さんはご自身の活動の中で、実際に目で見て、自分で感じてというアイヌの教育を実践されているわけですが、今後日本でそのようなアイヌ文化を啓蒙していくためにも、教育を行うにあたって、どのようなかたちが取られるべきだと考えておられますでしょうか。私自身は、オーストラリアの学校で行われているアボリジニ文化の教育について研究してきたんですけれども、やはりそこでよく問題に挙がるのが、アボリジニ文化といってもどのアボリジニ文化を言っているのかという問題や、誰がアボリジニ文化を教える意味があるのかという問題が浮上してくるわけです。藤戸さんご自身はどういったかたちで日本人に対する教育が行われるべきかという点で考えを聞かせただけたらと思います。

藤戸:私たちアイヌ民族の教育なんですけれども、普通に皆さんが存じられている民族のことをほとんど学ばないと思います。先ほども私が話しましたように、教育がなされていないということは、教員になるための先生たちの教育がなされていないということです。それは、歴史もそうですし、文化や伝統伝承、それがどのように行われてきたかも教えられてこなかったから、先生たちが生徒に教えるという手段が得なかった、これは今までもそうですし、これからもそうかもしれません。だからこそ、私たちアイヌ民族当事者が登壇に立ち、話をするということが本当に大切なことだと私は思っています。

けれども先ほど言っていました誰が登壇に立つべきなのか、それは学者だったり研究者だったり先生という人たちが、それなりに知識はあるかと思います。けれども、日常的な私たちの歌がどのようなときに歌われるのか、踊りがどのようなときに踊られるのか、語りがどのようなときに語られるのかまでは、話すことはできないと思います。皆さんに見てもらうために歌ったり踊ったりするためではなく、私たちが伝えた踊り、それは命に対して歌うもの、踊るもの、先祖に対して歌うもの、踊るもの、それらを伝えられるのは、私たちアイヌ民族の環境で生活を

してきた、生きてきた人たち全てが教えられる権利を持っていると思います。学歴がなくても、伝えられる人たちはたくさんいます。研究者じゃなくても、当事者だからこそ伝えられる人たちがたくさんいます。だから、誰が権利を持ち教えるべきか、そんな言葉は私には必要ないと思います。答えになっていますか。

栗田:はい、ありがとうございます。アイヌの当事者から学ぶことによって、アイヌ文化のより深い部分であったり、その根底にある考え方や死生観について、より深く知ることができるのではないかと思います。