

Notes on the Work of Heritage in the Age of Archaeological Reproduction

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This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. (Benjamin 1968a: 257–58).

I remember clearly conversations that I had in 1988 with tour guides, archaeologists, vender, and other “heritage workers” at Chichén Itzá regarding the efforts of the Mexican government to have Chichén named a World Heritage site by UNESCO. No one had any clear understanding of what these efforts consisted of, who was behind it, or what would result from it. Yet, it was evident that this negotiation was not at all a regional much less a local endeavor, but a high level state and, perhaps, private capital, endeavor. Nonetheless, we were all excited by the promise that this would not only bring more tourism, but maybe even funding for a variety of development projects that would make Chichén Itzá and the nearby Maya communities more respectable, attractive, modern, and protected. When the newspapers finally did announce the successful placement of this internationally famous ruins of a Maya city on the UNESCO list of World Heritage, the news effervesced like a freshly opened bottle of carbonated water. After a few days, however, the bubbles had dissipated and the news went flat with no tangible results to be seen or felt for many years — if at all! In fact, I am not sure that anyone who lives and works in Chichén Itzá would be able to identify with absolute certainty any direct tangible or material results of this proclamation. The exception may be those upper level archaeologists who had been involved in excavation and restoration at the site beginning about 1994 — that is, eight years after the initial listing — who have some knowledge of the how these projects and their funding are connected to the World Heritage listing as an expression of broader governmental strategies of maintaining Chichén on the list and further developing it as *heritage*. While there is very little evidence to the UNESCO status, there is, on the other hand, perhaps, not any “thing” there that is not in some way connected to the fact and process of Chichén Itzá being heritage. As for me, I hardly *see* heritage — neither Maya heritage, nor Mexican heritage, much less world heritage — when I visit the ruins. In fact, it is only in the last three years, have I begun to comprehend and to conceptualize the ruins of Chichén in terms of heritage, that is as a problem and process of heritage. Clearly, this raises the question, what is heritage?

This somewhat puzzling situation that I am sketching, and to which I return below, allows me to draw out some crucial characteristics of heritage that I believe are significant. More to the point here is that these attributes can help us, or at least me, make sense of the three distinct conceptualizations of heritage that are presented in the chapters of this section.

Smith argues that heritage is a mode of governmentality, that is, a strategy of control and management of “heritage.” This implies, even presupposes, that archaeology is deeply interconnected with heritage, even though (or, therefore) the force of the Smith’s argument is to analyze the tensions between archaeologically managed heritage and indigenous struggles to control heritage. Benavides is not at all concerned, as is Smith, with the management of material heritage; instead he focuses on discourses, symbolic value, knowledge, and meanings of heritage over which archaeology, archaeologists, the state, and indigenous groups struggle to shape and control. Although these two essays present overtly different conceptualizations of heritage to analyze quite distinct socio-ethnographic situations, their shared perspective and commonality in approach is revealed when contrasted to the chapter by Matthews and Palus, who assert that archaeology and heritage are antagonistically opposed and disjunctive. Underlying this proposition is the idea that heritage is like culture and is a part (manifestation, expression) of a culture. Heritage in other words is not at all a strategy but real, material, and meaningful relations that constitute a crucial aspect of particular cultures; further, any and all social groups must have, do have, and have a right to have *their* heritage so as to maintain the integrity of *their* culture and identity. In short this is the difference between heritage as tool of social sciences and as a practical materiality lived and experienced on the ground. This is not to say that there is not a “theory” embedded within this latter mode of heritage; in fact, UNESCO has devoted considerable energy in its various proclamations over the last three decades to identify, extract, adjudicate, and define this practical logic of heritage on the topic.

This divergence in conceptualizations of heritage should compel us to ask about the history of heritage. Specifically it is necessary to ask why has and when did heritage become such a widespread, necessary and compelling concept by which to investigate what had previously been understood and experienced as “culture”? A reading of UNESCO statements of tangible and intangible heritage quite clearly reveals that these international legal instruments define heritage as anything and everything that anthropologists have understood for more than a century as the elements, forms, pieces, building blocks and components of culture. The main difference is that UNESCO definitions quite adamantly exclude the results of 100 years of anthropological theorization of how these pieces are meaningfully, functionally, logically, or otherwise necessarily integrated into a whole. Heritage as constituted by UNESCO criteria is, instead, the fragments, splinters, and debris that remain after one removes any type of conceptualization of holism, integration, or unity (UNESCO 2003: Article 2 “definitions” (#1-2); 1972: Article 1, “definitions”).

Why has heritage replaced culture? We can envision an answer to this question, if we position ourselves along side Walter Benjamin who envisions history through the figure of the Angel of History (see epigraph above). Benjamin construes history as a continuous catastrophe that keeps on accumulating wreckage which the Angel of History looks upon as “he” relentlessly moves into the future while facing backwards at the ever-growing pile of debris, i.e., the “past.” The “catastrophe” in this analogy is the continuous critique of the holism of culture, the irrefutable demise of essentialism, the endless hybridization of identity, the proliferation split and divided subjectivities, and the defrocking of multiculturalism as strategies of control and consumer diversification. What remains are fragments and shards of cultural wholes that have no unassailable transcendent or even immanent logic of re-integration. Heritage, emerges in other words, as a tactic for the re-

assemblage of cultural identity in the aftermath of postmodernism, postcolonialism, multiculturalism, and the New World Order.

Thus, if we substitute the holism, unity, essentialism, and so on of culture for the historical “chain of events” in the above quote, then a curious understanding is revealed: We might very well recognize that we seek to be “the angel [of Heritage who] would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed” (Benjamin 1969:258). When I say “we” I refer to all of us that participate in the activity of heritage management, dispute, litigation, claims, interpretation, protection — that is, all of us archaeologists, aborigines, UNESCO heritage administrators, cultural resource managers, anthropologists, indigenous groups, citizens of Eastport, international lawyers, and heritage NGOs — who would like to recuperate the “past” as heritage in order to re-establish the integrity, propriety, and proper ownership — if not also the integrative unity — of culture, identity, and belonging via the concept and diverse practices of heritage. Certainly, the archaeological impulse to investigate, know, and restore the historical pasts of humanity in general and of particular societies is evidence enough of this nostalgic desire to make the present whole by reunifying it to a resuscitated past.¹

Matthews and Palus explicitly acknowledge this motivation and ideal in their vision and use of heritage as the material expressions of proper identity that properly belongs to each unique cultural group versus to a universalized humanity. Thus, they oppose heritage and archaeology, which historically speaking, they rightly point out, emerges to transform the past as the legacy of a generalized human civilization; by so universalizing heritage it becomes part and parcel of modernity and no longer of particular cultures or social groups. An aspect of this antithetical or oppositional logic is also evident in Smith’s theorization of heritage as governmentality in Foucault’s sense of the term (Smith, this chapter; cf. Smith 2004)² when she places heritage as a strategy of power uniquely in the hands of archaeology as a tool of state control and technology of governance of cultural minorities through the shaping of identity-belonging. To extend her argument, building as it does from Foucault, we might suggest coining the term “heritage-power” along the lines of the Frenchman’s well-known notion of bio-power. Yet, despite the Foucaultian basis of Smith’s theorizing heritage, there is a lingering leftist-Marxian or Weberian assumption of domination whereby power, or more precisely, heritage as a strategy of power (governmentality), is wielded exclusively by the dominant and *not* by the subordinated. Foucault’s notion of power, and thus of strategies such as governmentality, eschews the idea that power is something that can be possessed and that it works only in a top-down fashion (Foucault 1980, 1991a, b, c; Gordon 1991; Rose 1989; Rose 1996; Hindess 1996).

It is in this sense that Benavides chapter is a refreshing and significant caveat: He carefully argues that the management of heritage discourses of identity is not a weapon of “the strong” that is only and always possessed and wielded by the state, science, or other hegemonic institutions. Heritage, as a strategy of power by which to manage the past and make it generate narratives of identity, is available for diverse social agents to exercise. Thus, in the Ecuadorian case that Benavides analyzes archaeological heritage is a resource for producing national discourses of identity by agents invested in the national project and by those involved in the indigenous movement. Of course, there are differential access to the use and effectiveness of the use of this heritage-power, but it is indeed available as a strategy for those that accede — willingly or with friction and resistance — to the conditions and dynamics of its deployment.

Here, and in line with Foucault's notions of strategy and power, specifically bio-power, I refer to the necessary transformations in the mode of subject positioning and subjectivity of those who enter the field of contestation in which heritage is generated, managed, and disputed. It is this effectiveness in shifting aspects of subjectivity that Smith points to as a significant dimension of heritage as governmentality. This logic may also be underlying the brief, negative reference that Matthews and Palus make regarding how archaeology, via certain kinds of outreach and engagement with publics, implicitly seeks to convert stake-holders into archaeologists or archaeological subjects, that is, subjects with the proper responsibilities, obligations, viewpoints, attitudes, identities, and habits for the assumption of ownership and management of archaeological heritage. Studies such as Castañeda (2005), Castañeda and Castillo Cocom (2002), Castillo Cocom (2002), and Breglia (2006) discuss this dimension of the work of heritage in producing proper subjects of archaeology. Similarly, Benavides in his chapter details a case where the indigenous movement of Ecuador has already entered into the field of power to assert themselves as proper managers and interpreters of the meaning and messages of heritage.

In focusing on the conflicts of interpretation Benavides resolutely detours from questions of authenticity and validity of the contradictory narratives of Ecuadorian nationalism and Indigenous Ecuadorianism. This focus on discursive appropriation — via the narrative production of the meaning — of heritage in Benavides' chapter stands in contrast to the foci of the chapters by Smith and Matthews and Palus, who attend to the issues of the management of heritage materials (CRM) and the fieldwork negotiation of archaeologists with stake-holders, respectively.

This point of difference between the chapters allows me to return to Chichén Itzá and its elusive nature as heritage. In so doing, I want to situate “heritage” in history as a phenomena that is not at all independent of archaeology, but rather as something that exists in strict and intimate relationship to it. Indeed, I suggest that the work of heritage only begins to become what we now understand it to be in what I would call the “age of archaeological reproduction.” This notion borrows from Benjamin's (1968b) famous analysis of the work of art; he argues that the modern era's technological capacity to create identical or mimetic copies has a transformative effect on the aura of art, or what can be glossed as the attribute of uniqueness and authenticity. Many have cited his quotable phrase that the aura withers away due to this reproductive capacity. However, many studies have demonstrated that this is not actually or empirically the case; aura, authenticity, value of uniqueness thrives in modernity. Furthermore, Benjamin, in a less quoted section of his analysis argues, quite to the contrary, not that aura “disappears,” but that the basis of aura shifts from the holism of tradition and ritual to politics. Similarly, I suggest that the basis and nature of heritage in the age of archaeological reproduction has been undergoing a profound transformation in its conditions of possibility, that is, from relatively unproblematized “inheritance” based in relations of identity to tradition to politicized construction of identity and cultural ownership.

An interesting point about the etymology of the word heritage is that it references notions of inheritance, heirs, birthright, legacy, and tradition; in other words, that which is hereditary, but in a kind of metaphoric, not literal, sense. To clarify: As an heir of a will or of blood/birth, I am due to receive something materially discrete and tangible, e.g., property, juridical rights, socio-racial categorization, or biogenetic material. Heritage as sociocultural, historical, or psychological “tradition,” “legacy,” or “inheritance” is a mode

of property that is necessarily abstract, metaphoric, intangible, and symbolic. Thus, when heritage is questioned (or contested) in any number of ways, it requires concretization in discrete material and tangible forms. It is in this space of contestation that archaeology has intervened in order to concretize “the past” as heritage.³

As an ethnographer of archaeology — that is, as one who investigates archaeology ethnographically, using ethnography — I am fascinated by the way archaeology creates reality. Thus, I find it significant that there is a key difference however between the archaeological reproduction of the past and what Benjamin analyzed as the mimetic copying of modern technologies such as photography. Put simply, archaeology invents complex representations of the past that are not mimetic, but that only appear — and not always to everyone, of course — as if they were faithfully identical copies and transparent mimetic representations of the past. As I have argued elsewhere (Castañeda 1996) they are forms of hyper-reality and simulacra — and, we may add not “ruins” in Benjamin’s sense of that authentically unique presence in time and space to which he has recourse in order to define his concept of aura (Castañeda 2000).

To get at the significance of this, consider one of the primary truisms taught in introductory archaeology classes: Archaeology destroys the past in its process of investigation; that is, the possibility of retrieving information and even the materiality of the past is destroyed through specific methodologies of knowledge production. We may note, therefore, that this is one among several reasons why that even in cases where there is restoration, the resulting ruins — which often take form as life-size, scale model “replicas” of cities or settlements — are never identical to any actual past. The creation of archaeological sites, whether or not restored for visitation, is always fashioning of a contemporary vision of the past that seeks to transparently represent that past. More to the point of this commentary is the following: The premise that archaeology destroys the past even as it salvages specific elements of that totality, even as it may create a material representation of that past, leads to a concept that is fundamental to the scientific agenda. Specifically, to operationalize the production and accumulation of knowledge on the basis of methodologies that contaminate and/or permanently destroy the materiality of the past and the possibility of further knowledge, requires the concept of “archaeological record.” The archaeological record comprises not just the raw, material remains of the past, but also the full gamut of fieldnotes, drawings, photographs, measurements, descriptions, analyses, and recordings created by archaeologists as data. It is this record, the unity of materiality and first level discursive production about this materiality that is presented as the object, data, to be explained and analyzed by archaeological interpretations.

Without in any way suggesting a philosophical opposition between mind and matter, I suggest the need to recognize, investigate and engage these three levels of materiality, data, and interpretation as three fundamentally distinct modes of heritage. Even in cases where there is overlap and intersection of these three modes, each presents rather distinct fields of power, contestation, knowledge, and practice. By way of illustrating this point, we can consider, once again, differences in the three chapters. Each of these I suggest can be viewed as having analyzed the field of political contestation formed by the problem posed by one of these modes of heritage: Smith’s analysis of the management of cultural resources as governmentality is situated in the problem of the control of the materiality of the past. Matthews and Palus’ discussion of the fieldwork negotiation between archaeologists and stakeholders emerges from the problem of the status and constitution of archaeological data;

Benavides' attention to the competing narratives and discourses by which the past is interpreted as meaningful directly targets the problem of heritage as the politics of knowledge (production). By starting

Each of these focal points and their attendant analyses emerge from the empirical situation itself. By this I mean to say that the logics of these analyses are not imposed and, therefore, I am not suggesting a top-down model or "theory" of heritage. Rather, this discussion seeks to identify the immanent logics of these three analyses, i.e., three strategies of analysis, that start with one of three specific modes of heritage. In tracking these three modalities of the problem of heritage, these strategies cut transecting lines into issues that relate to problems in the investigation of the other modes, but always with a distinction trajectory of investigation and questions. To put it simply, the conflicts over the meaning and production of historical interpretations of the archaeological past do not have any necessary relationship, perhaps none at all, to the management of recourses or the negotiation of archaeological data. The negotiation of data does not connect in any predetermined way to either the control and production of broader interpretive narratives nor to governmental strategies of controlling the materiality of the archaeological record. The regulation and refashioning of subjectivities and identities in relation to the management of the material past does not correlate to any particular type of conflicts in either the interpretive production of narratives of the past or the constitution and status of archaeological data.

This last point brings this commentary back around to its point of departure, the status of heritage at Chichén Itzá. My early research (Castañeda 1996, 2001) was designed as an ethnographic and historical study of the invention of Chichén Itzá as an archaeological site and as a tourist destination. One focus of the study was the discursive and textual content of knowledge produced about the Maya and Chichén in order to link anthropological understandings to particular discourses of identity, belonging and visions of the Maya, specifically, and México, generally. Another focus of my research was the study of the on the ground activities and practices that constituted the politics of tourism at the site. From the hindsight of today, one can recognize that two distinct yet intertwined objects of study, neither of which at the time did I ever conceptualize as "heritage" per se or heritage as currently conceived public and academic parlance. I want to use the Spanish word *patrimonio* to identify and conceptualize this double object: *Patrimonio* translates into English as either "patrimony" or as "heritage" depending on context and the particular meanings one wishes to convey.

On the one hand, my research implicitly formulated the study of Chichén as a mode of what Geertz long ago called "primordial origins," that is, resources for imagining nation and building national unity; note, however, that whereas Geertz conceived of these origins as forms of raw materials given by history, religion, geography, tradition, etc., (archaeological) patrimony as a mode of primordial origins is actively created, i.e., concretely materialized and generated, in the present via the sciences of archaeology and anthropology (with ancillary help from associated sciences). Interestingly, from this viewpoint, Geertz' primordial origins are what we can recognize as heritage in the metaphorical sense noted above and patrimony is the recent, historical emergence of heritage in the contemporary, "literal" senses used today.

On the other hand, my research tracked the politics of tourism in relationship to community and state politics in which it was embedded. This focus on tourism as the object

of study through the lens of politics was not conceptualized as the study of the politics of heritage. It would be easy and tempting (perhaps, even congratulatory) to say that on hindsight I was in effect studying heritage. Here I return to my opening anecdote to suggest instead that Chichén was not yet *patrimonio* in the mode of “heritage.” The politics that I ethnographically studied — that is, the struggle of different agents of differing scale (handicraft vendors, tour guides, community organizations, local entrepreneurs, private capital, state and federal government institutions) to control, use and regulate the archaeological and tourism site of Chichén — was a politics of *tourism*, not *heritage politics*.

As noted, the period of my fieldwork was the time when the federal government was negotiating with UNESCO to obtain World Heritage status for Chichén; that negotiation was definitively a heritage politics. However, the struggles of community groups, state agencies, private capital, and others was a struggle to control tourism — the flow, trajectory, spaces, timetables, messages, and consumption of tourists and tourism. These diverse negotiations provoked crises that in fact triggered the emergence of heritage in the sense of governmental strategies of management that previously did not exist. In fact, it is clear that these struggles and the ongoing crises in which they have culminated were enabled by the fact of the near absolute absence of on the ground strategies and practices for the management of the ruins as heritage (Castañeda 1996, 1998, 2000, 2005a, 2005b).

What my study thereby documents in some measure is the historical emergence of heritage as a governmentality in the management of Chichén. This process is, however, rather incomplete: Consider that as recently as late fall of 2005, a new position was created by México’s National Institute of Anthropology and History to oversee all dimensions of tourism, archaeological excavation, restoration, conservation, and facility management at Chichén. On July 12, 2006, Dr. Eduardo Pérez de Heredia Puente was appointed to this position; and, in an interview (personal communication, July 14, 2006) he expressed that the fundamental priority of his role as Director is to create and implement a strategic vision and set of practices of site management. To accomplish this agenda, he is specifically pointed out the urgent need to incorporate and adapt tools of CRM as developed in such as the USA and Australia.

This fieldwork material suggests a few key guidelines with which I close this commentary. First, heritage can be used in an untheorized and generic way to reference anything which comes “from the past” and is currently claimed as part of one or another groups’ culture and identity. Or, heritage can be theorized as a conceptual tool that allows for rigorous analyses of and active engagement with “heritage” issues, stakeholders, and diverse publics. Second, assuming the second inclination, we must therefore note that not everything that appears on the surface as “heritage” is indeed heritage nor heritage in the same way, with the same stakes, with the same value, and with the same politics. Third, I have suggested, in qualified agreement with the authors of these chapters, that heritage be understood as a mode of governmentality, as a strategy of managing “the past.” I have also suggested that we differentiate between two series of the dimensions of heritage: Specifically one of these is comprised of three kinds of fields of power in which the materiality of heritage exists (ruins, data, discourse). The other conceptualization, differentiates heritage into two modalities, one is a mode of primordial origins that I have called “patrimony” and the second a mode politics that seek practice and manage heritage materials. I offer these concepts as methodological and analytical tools that may assist in refining and further developing heritage studies.

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Endnotes

¹ See Benavides (2005) on the work of nostalgia in archaeology.

² In my own recent investigations of the disputed claims over the archaeological patrimony of Chichén I have also come to the idea of heritage as governmentality independently of Smith's (2004) more extensive and elaborated contribution (see Castañeda 2005).

³ It may be necessary to emphasize that this materialization is indeed disputed by stakeholders who contest one or more of the means, process, meanings, methods, and results of recreating the past. This is what I reference when I call this field of reconstruction a space of contestation. However, this contestation I suggest consolidates around one of the three modes of heritage that I discuss in this paper.

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