評論 ： 不在のものの現前ー廃墟・劇場・仮面

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Presentation of the Absent: Ruins, Theaters, and Masks

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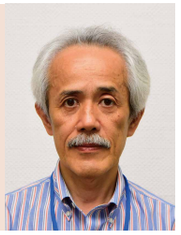

■ Archaeological Sites, Buried Underground or Remaining on the Surface

A campaign is now underway to promote a set of Jomon Period archaeological sites in Hokkaido and northern Tohoku for UNESCO World Cultural Heritage (WCH). After having rejected these sites for six consecutive years, the Japanese government has decided to recommend these archaeological sites to UNESCO as potential candidates for WCH. However, there will be a few hurdles to overcome for successful inclusion. In recent years UNESCO has been cautious about increasing the number of WCH. Besides that, there is another difficulty unique to Jomon archaeological sites. Typically, WCH sites are monumental stone-built buildings; however, no such breathtaking stone buildings stand on Jomon archaeological sites. Noticeable remains on the ground are scarce except for stone circles, which are rare. Apart from movable artifacts, the majority of Jomon archaeological traces are holes, pits, ditches, or sunken areas, which are usually made visible only after excavation. Reconstructed buildings are not to be considered archaeological remains, no matter how splendid they may look. For example, a reconstruction of a large tall six-pillared building on *Sannai-Maruyama* site is not eligible for WCH, while the pits for its pillars will be eligible, because they are from the Jomon Period.

Jomon archaeological sites need to be unearthed to the surface. On the other hand, there are places where ancient architectures are remaining amid present-day life. In Japan, ancient *Kofun* (mounded tombs) are among those kinds of remains. In Italian cities where the ruins from ancient Rome are still standing, (parts of) the buildings from ancient times are still present as *visible and tangible objects*. However, their value and meaning for the people have not remained the same, but have changed throughout their "lifetime". If Pompeii is a time capsule, then ancient ruins in other Italian cities are a sort of time recorders that document the ebb and flow of time.

Momo, written by Michael Ende, is a mysterious story about "time-robbers" and a girl who recovers people's stolen time. Momo, the protagonist, struggles on her own to retrieve stolen time from a band of "men-in-gray". She lives alone in the ruin of an ancient Roman amphitheater on the outskirts of a town. The place seems to be an appropriate home for a girl who tries to recover stolen time, since ancient ruins appear to exist outside the flow of daily time. However, the ruined amphitheaters from ancient Rome never transcend the currents of time. Their existence within time is what eventually turns them into ruins. But they are not useless entities as people from the neighborhood bring their goats to feed at the ruins, children come to play ball, and lovers use the place for secret meetings. In this way the ruins are an indispensable place in people's daily life.

■ 'Immanence' of the Ruins

In an essay entitled "Along the Decuman from Italy to Japan", art historian Rossella Menegazzo writes that the works by Italian artists in the 19th *Jomon Contemporary Exhibition in Funabashi* convey the idea of "immanence". In other words, they are the "fruits of this culture of 'presence', of the tangible trace of a past, or of several pasts that are still present on Italian territory as a stratification of history and stories". In using the word "immanence", she means that ancient buildings, as material objects, continue to exist as *visible and tangible* things amid the lives of contemporary Italian citizens, just like the amphitheater where Momo lives. Of course, that is made possible by the durability of the material used: stone. Here, instead of focusing on the material, I would like to pay attention to the fact that "immanence" is not identical to "invariance". That is, mere continuous presence does not assure the preservation of identity.

What is referred to as "archaeological sites" in technical terms are usually called "ruins" in ordinary English. Are their meanings the same? You may call "archaeological sites" whatever sites or buildings that forebears left behind, but in the case of "ruins" a special connotation is implied. Ruins are buildings or sites whose original appearance is still barely recognizable, but they can no longer be used for their intended purpose because of advanced fragmentation. Ruins can result over a short time period due to natural disasters or the calamities of war. But usually, they result over a long passage of time; they are the end products of an accumulated process of disintegration.

When we think about the ruins in Italian cities, especially those from ancient Roman times, it conjures to mind certain impressive images, such as a series of Giovanni Battista Piranesi's etchings of ancient Roman ruins still present in the city of Rome in the mid-eighteenth century. In those days ruined buildings from ancient Rome, that were scattered around the city, were not considered particularly valuable nor extraordinarily beautiful. But, Piranesi depicted them as the afterglow of a glorious ancient civilization. Thanks to his etchings, which were widely circulated around Europe, the beauty of idealized ruins was discovered or recognized. It obtained a newly found value, distinct from brand-new magnificent edifices or a rubble of collapsed buildings. Piranesi gave form to the ruins as the "presentation of the absent": something that reminds us of functioning intact architectures which existed before and do not exist anymore.

Ruination implies fragmentation. But for rare cases of intact survival, such as *the Pantheon* in Rome, fragmentation is an inevitable fate for objects associated with ruins. *The Venus of Milo* in the Louvre and *the Parthenon marbles* in the British Museum are famous examples. Artifacts not subject to natural decay are forced to remain *in situ*, even after collapse and fragmentation.

■ Ruins of Ancient Rome and Traces of Ancient Jomon

Modern Italy cannot remove itself from ancient Italy, because aged and debilitated ruins from ancient Rome are still present amongst today's everyday life. That is what Menegazzo's "immanence" is all about. In contrast, modern Japan is separated from the Jomon period, because the remains from the Jomon era are absent from the surface of the ground except for rare cases such as stone circles. In *Tôno-Monogatari* (The Legends of Tono), an anthology of folktales from northeastern Japan compiled by folklorist YANAGITA Kunio, there are references to places called *Ezo-Yashiki-Ato* or *Tachi-no-Ato*. No doubt that they are the remnants of prehistoric pit dwellings, but the only visible evidence of their existence are depressions in the ground. They are traces of something that has already disappeared, rather than still standing ruins. I would like to say that both ancient Roman ruins and the traces of Jomon cultures are cases of "presentation of the absent": the former displays the loss of grandiosity of newly constructed edifices while the latter displays the molds that "preserve" the shape of ancient buildings and earthworks.

When looking at various Italian artists' works at the exhibition, it is apparent that *Epifania delle rovine* (Epiphany of Ruins) explores artistic inspirations from fragmented remains. *Readymade Still Life* and *Vista* are photographs of fragmented relics and ruined architecture. *Mater* (Mothers) presents fragmented and decontextualized images of feminine divinities as somehow "ruined" photographs, printed using the salted paper technique. *Composizione metafisica* (Metaphysic Composition) are paintings of the last moment of the decomposing process of fragmented architectures and sculptures. *Cadmo e Armoia* and *Gerico* depict ruins and remains at the mercy of natural and temporal waves.

Compared with the durability of the stone architecture depicted in the works that travelled from Italy, the lightness and fragility of the materials used in the works by Japan-based artists are impressive: paper, wood, plastic, and paper clay. Even old iron which seems far more durable than other materials will "shortly" gather rust and return to the earth. It would be very difficult for objects made with those fragile materials to remain as full-fledged ruins for a thousand years or more. As was written in the caption of one artwork, *Dream and end of the ideal city 2019*, what those works make us feel is the "rise and fall of history", or the continual resetting process, rather than that of resilient ruins that resist disappearing.

■ Archaeological Sites and Masked Play

The title of the exhibition, *"teatro artistico del sito archeologico"* (artistic theater of archaeological site), suggests another theme, that is, archaeological site as theater and masks for play. Among the artworks on display are theatrical masks made by Amleto Sartori and Donato Sartori. According to the latter's essay published on the Internet, "New Roles for the Mask in 20th Century Theatre", the first decades of twentieth century Europe would see the birth of a renewed interest in the possibility of masked play in the theatrical world, and with it an experimentation of various techniques. As a participant in that movement, Italian sculptor Amleto Sartori began to make new types of masks for theater. One of the sources for his inspiration was, without doubt, *commedia dell'arte*, a popular improvisational theater which was born in sixteenth century Italy and spread throughout Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But other influences such as those from Japanese *Noh* theater cannot be downplayed.

Masked plays have been cultivated in various cultures including Japan. We can assume that the origins of those plays had some connection to rituals that were carried out to invoke "other-than-human beings". Clay masks from the Jomon era may have been used for a similar purpose. Even more interesting than that are several masked *Dogu* (baked clay figurine). The most famous masked *Dogu*, unearthed in the city of Chino (Nagano Prefecture) and nicknamed *"Kamen-no-Megami"* (The Masked Goddess), is considered a national treasure from the Jomon period. These *Dogu* are interpreted to be depictions of shamanic figures who wear a mask while participating in some sort of ritual. Here arises a question: if a masked shaman is being transformed into some "other-than-human being", then is it not more appropriate to make a *Dogu* representing that entity, rather than a *Dogu* depicting the masked shaman? I speculate that it is probable that, from the users' perspective, an "other-than-human" entity cannot be represented independently from the experience of the masked shaman who is impersonating it during the ritual. That is to say, a masked *Dogu* does not make visible an absent entity, but instead reproduces the scene where an absent entity is being presented as something absent and invisible.

An invisible absent entity will not suddenly be corporeally summoned to the scene once an actor wears a mask, but rather the audience is expected to perceive the presence of an invisible entity, who is still visually absent. In sum, masks are another instrument to make possible the "presentation of the absent"; something visibly present invites people to perceive that which is absent.

■ Presenting the Absent: Archaeological Sites and Masks

Archaeological sites, which may remain on the ground or may surface only after excavation, serve to *make present* in the middle of our daily lives, something that existed in the past but does not exist anymore. Masks, in a different way, serve to *make present* in the middle of our daily life something that exists or existed in other worlds, or never existed anywhere. "Presentation of the absent" brings an unexpected perspective to those present at the scene, if they are acutely attuned. This is not unlike what happens in *Mugen-Noh* (phantasmal *Noh*) theater when a travelling Buddhist monk arrives at a ruin in a deserted field and his spiritual acuity makes it possible for him to encounter a demon or a spirit (played by a masked actor) who has already departed the ordinary world but still has an important message to convey to the human world.