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## A Triple Framework to Understand the Role of Cultural Heritage: Heritage, Identity and Literature

إطار ثلاثي لفهم دور التراث الثقافي: التراث والهوية والأدب

Faiza DEKHIR

University Center of Tamanrasset

[be.de.faiza@gmail.com](mailto:be.de.faiza@gmail.com)

### Summary:

It is interesting today in social and cultural studies to debate topics relating to cultural heritage. One reason for that could plausibly be a reaction to the hastening of globalization nowadays, in which the 'our' culture is at risk of being vanished and substituted for globally 'their' cultures. This work then highlights the usefulness of heritage in expressing one's national identity through literary works. It is appropriate then, to view national identity as one component of heritage through engagement and exposure to literary works by different authors like Kateb Yacine for instance. Thus, in order to clearly understand the association between cultural heritage, identity and literary works, it is important to go through their definitions.

**Keywords :** heritage, literary, identity, Kateb Yacine

مَلِكُ حُصَيْنِ بْنِ حَبِيبٍ

يبدو اليوم مشوقًا في الدراسات الاجتماعية والثقافية مناقشة الموضوعات المتعلقة بالتراث الثقافي. إن أحد أسباب ذلك رد فعل لسرع ظاهرة العولمة في العقود الأخيرة ، حيث تتعرض ثقافة "حياتنا" لخطر الاختفاء والاستعاضة عن ثقافتهم "العالمية". يدور هذا العمل حول فائدة التراث في التعبير عن الهوية الوطنية للمرء من خلال الأعمال الأدبية لبعض المؤلفين ككاتب ياسين مثلاً. قد يبدو من المناسب ، إذن ، اعتبار الهوية الوطنية أحد مكونات التراث من خلال المشاركة والتعرض للمصنفات

الأدبية. وبالتالي ، من أجل فهم واضح للعلاقة بين التراث الثقافي والهوية والأعمال الأدبية ، من المهم أن نمر بتعريفاتهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التراث، الادب، الهوية، كاتب ياسين

## 1 Introduction

Because heritage is a worldwide phenomenon, pieces of research regarding the analysis of the term are becoming more and more newsworthy. Heritage can be tangible and intangible: tangible heritage is the whole complex of organizations, institutions and practices devoted to the preservation of culture and the arts (Hovi, 2014: 15)<sup>1</sup>

Although most people, if not all, have a general understanding of what tangible heritage is, many cannot understand the actual meaning of intangible heritage. As an intangible concept, heritage is talked about, in Literature studies, as being the ‘past in the present’, or a model of the past. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that heritage is restricted to the past; it is inseparable from the interpretation of heritage in the present (Handler & Linnekin, 1984:276)<sup>2</sup>. Heritage is also a process of commitment, an act of communication and an act of making meaning in and for the present. The idea of heritage as an act of communication and meaning making (experience) is not something; however, that finds much interaction with the expert view of heritage (Bagnall, 2003)<sup>3</sup>.

## 2 Cultural Heritage, Identity and Literature

For the purpose of this work, we will refer to the definition of cultural heritage which is used in the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro, 2005)<sup>4</sup>: *[Cultural] heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions.*

As such, cultural heritage is highly important for everyone. In some countries, it is associated with indigenous people more often than other groups. However, places, objects and practices of cultural importance enrich the lives of all people by providing deep connections to places, nation states and/or cultural or ethnic groups. It provides connotations to lived experiences and is, therefore, a key element of individual and group identity for all people.

Thus, in the context of the analysis of the concept of cultural heritage, many authors complement this definition with the concept of identity. In this respect, Jokilehto (2005:34)<sup>5</sup> states:

*“Cultural heritage consists of the resources remaining from the past that evidence the passage of man through history; recognizing these resources, makes it possible to learn about the identity and the line of man's cultural evolution, and in this way to create a context for receiving lessons”.*

This definition gives us the analytical ability to pinpoint how heritage and identity are performed through written as well as spoken text production, for the discourse of heritage is a discourse of identity construction, promotion, recognition and acceptance that is created through the manipulation of both oral and written texts (Hallett & Kaplan-Weinger 2010)<sup>6</sup>.

More so, heritage has been referred to two words: ‘asset’ and ‘resource’. As for the former, heritage has the connotations of being kept untouched, unchanged, like money in a bank. As for the latter, heritage implies that the thing so described is to be used; even if in the process it might be eroded or even “used-up” if necessary. Besides, it acknowledges that there exist users who are supposed to benefit from the use, individually or collectively (Fairclough, 2009: 36-37)<sup>7</sup>.

According to Rizzo & Mignosa (2013)<sup>8</sup>, it is with and via heritage that people create or reinforce identity in different ways, but one of the strengths of heritage, perhaps especially intangible heritage, is that most heritage objects for instance stones or pyramids, tower houses or castles can be place-bound in the sense that it contributes to the identification of people with specific places, it becomes indistinguishably involved in local place images, identities and economic geographies.

As Crouch and Parker (2003: 405)<sup>9</sup> show, heritage can give temporal and substantial authority to the construction of identities, especially if the heritage in question has been recognized as 'legitimate' through state-sanctioned heritage management and conservation practices, and/or through the research attentions of experts in the field.

It is worth stressing that literature serves as an important vehicle for the preservation of cultural heritage in relation to teaching people about many aspects of cultural heritage such as national identity. In this way, literature's aim is to educate the people about the conservation of traditions from the changes that occur as a result of colonization or any other Western influence (Kuli, 2012)<sup>10</sup>. So, literature is one of the objects of cultural heritage management. In essence it is about handling change, in that literature is actively a means to protect culturally significant practices in relation to the changes they face over time. These changes may be caused by operational activities, natural or cultural processes.

As stated previously, heritage is a symbolic representation of identity. Material or tangible heritage provides a physical representation of a thing from 'the past' that may be a place, a self of belonging and community. According to Graham et al. (2000)<sup>11</sup> the emergence of the heritage discourse has maintained that the primary form of identity often associated with heritage

is that of the nation. The association between heritage and identity is strongly reputable in the heritage Literature in the sense that substantial culture (regarded as heritage) is assumed to offer a physical representation and reality to the temporary concept of identity. As Graham et al. state: *'heritage provides meaning to human existence by conveying the ideas of timeless values and unbroken lineages that underpin identity.'* However, the way the link between identity and heritage is developed and maintained has not had much inquiry in the heritage literature (Urry 1996<sup>12</sup>; McLean 2006<sup>13</sup>).

Yet the usefulness of literature in exposing heritage is much dealt with; many playwrights keep on fighting for the preservation of their identity and the promotion of their culture and history. Their writings plainly show their need to display who they are and where they come from. Such writers are Kateb Yacine.

Unlike many famous writers, Kateb is above all a symbol-in his own life, in his positions, his contradictions, and his continuous refusal to imitate (Bonn, 1990)<sup>14</sup>. His interest was in the present but merely in the past. As shown by a number of scholars, both across space and time, historical consciousness and the admiration of the past have played and continue to play a decisive role in negotiating, maintaining, and creating group identity, and national prestige (Habermas, 1993)<sup>15</sup>.

Accordingly, Kateb's novels early reveal the emergence of both a personal and group identity, based on a community life which still exists (more than 50 years later) and which is presented as a perfect model of cultural preservation, although he acknowledged that he was caught between two worlds with two different cultures. Perhaps, the success an Algerian writer like Kateb lies on the fact that he applies literary strategies, in order to appropriate his Algerian identity through literary expression. Looking at cultural heritage as a foundation block of social organization and identity, one can see that *Nedjma* provides a

valuable insight into the way that cultural heritage (both tangible and intangible) is a core social need. In this sense, Kateb's writings are particularly those which show French murders towards the Algerians as well as those which pinpoint the experiences of the natives (Algerians).

We acknowledge that the relationship between national identity and heritage is complex and stays on a par with the demands of citizenship (Algerians) which tried to redefine a political and national identity as it suffered from French colonialism.

While allusions to the past are an important source for the recovery, creation, and amalgamation of a national identity, and constructing a combined sense of otherness and sameness. Eventually, heritage in the work of Kateb, can thus be seen as a fundamental basic in constructing group membership. According to (Eriksen 2001: 267)<sup>16</sup>, heritage creates a feeling of familiarity, escape, and legitimacy of a community's sociocultural interests in the present.

As Murdoch, A H. (1993)<sup>17</sup> explains Kateb is attempting to construct a new united commemoration of Algerian national identity by looking for references to Algerians from different narratives such as French documents and diaries, and release them from a Western historical discourse.

### **3 Conclusion**

In conclusion, we can say that perhaps despite the sufferings the Algerian writers went through and their small number, most of them managed to settle in Algeria and today, they keep on fighting for the preservation of their identity and the promotion of their culture and history. Their writings, movies or shows as well as their testimonies stand as heritage that reveals their growing awareness of the need to maintain who they are and where they come from to find their place in this world.

On a larger scale it is hoped that our study will cast light on how heritage and identity studies are more effective ways to understand the role of heritage in all human affairs, including economics and politics. In other words, heritage is an essential means by which the identities necessary to collective action can be taken.

Identities are formed along the lines of mutual benefit, and for that reason, an individual like Kateb or any other Algerian writer, may have multiple identities.

These multiple, community identities are persistently rediscussed (Biehl, P F et al; 2015)<sup>18</sup> because the benefits of accepting one or the other are constantly fluctuating as political and economic structures vary.

So according to Francis-Lindsay (2009)<sup>19</sup>, this challenge lies in the extent to which the local population is fully fortified to implement this role of heritage. The study postulates that it is an examination of the heritage value that will determine the extent to which societies can assume this level of participation from the local population. If community members, business leaders, policy makers and government agents themselves are not knowledgeable about and respectful of their heritage, a country's exertion to develop its cultural heritage product will be ruined seriously even before it is developed.

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