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From Viable Industry to Cultural Heritage: Traditional Craft Weaving in Kyoto, Japan

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Venue: Room 221A, Fung King Hey Bld, CUHK

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Despite their seemingly genuine eagerness and sincerity, various efforts, on the part of the government and cultural activists, to revive the age-old craft industry of Nishijin silk weaving in Kyoto, Japan, are often met with an overall indifference or disparaging sneers of the actual producers – the weavers, the manufacturers and other auxiliary craftspeople who have tenaciously sustained the industry for hundreds of years. Many feel that the current revival movements are ill-oriented and there is very little hope to recover the industry's viability as in the past by such efforts.

While the government and those interested in the “revitalization movements” tend to emphasize the historical and cultural value of the craft and try to promote it as a part of multifaceted attraction of Kyoto as an ancient capital, those who have engaged themselves in the actual production of the textiles believe that incorporating the craft into the realm of culture would actually mean a public recognition of the fact that it would no longer be economically viable as an industry.

In this presentation, it will be attempted to analyze the nature of this adversity and its implications for the future of the traditional craft in modern Japan.



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