

Nara Prefecture

Thinking deeper about World Heritage

World Heritage Journal



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Nara Prefecture, Japan

Talking about World Heritage

Part 1

Matsuura Koichiro, the 8th Director-General of UNESCO
Aoyagi Masanori, Director of the Archaeological Institute of Kashihara, Nara Prefecture, Former Commissioner of the Agency for Cultural Affairs
Arai Shogo, Governor of Nara Prefecture
Moderator: Tateishi Toru, Deputy Director General of Culture, Education and Creative Living Department, Nara Prefecture

There are currently three World Heritage properties in Nara Prefecture, and we are making efforts so that “Asuka-Fujiwara: Archaeological Sites of Japan’s Ancient Capitals and Related Properties” (inscribed on the Tentative List in 2007) will be newly inscribed on the World Heritage List. With this article, we would like you to know about the structure and significance of the World Heritage system. To begin with, regarding the fundamental query, what is World Heritage? Dr. Matsuura Koichiro, who promoted the inscription and conservation of many World Heritage properties as the 8th Director-General of UNESCO, and Dr. Aoyagi Masanori, who launched Japan’s World Heritage as a researcher and Commissioner of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, were invited to talk about these matters with Governor Arai Shogo.

1. What is World Heritage?

Tateishi: In order to publish the World Heritage Journal in Nara Prefecture, I would like to record your talks in two parts. The first half will be on World Heritage in general, and the second half will be on the theme of “Asuka-Fujiwara.” First of all, Dr. Matsuura, could you give us an idea of what World Heritage is, based on your experience as Director-General of UNESCO?

Matsuura: First, I would like to talk about UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the World Heritage Convention. UNESCO was established in 1946 after its Constitution was adopted in November 1945. One of the objectives of the Constitution of UNESCO is to reflect on the destruction of cultural properties due to World War II and civil wars and how to prevent it from happening again. The end result was the 1954 Hague Convention (Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict), which

prohibits the destruction of cultural properties in the event of war as well as civil wars and makes it a crime. The next step was the World Heritage Convention, which was created to pass on cultural heritage to future generations. In the 1960s, UNESCO called upon the world community to create a system to protect cultural heritage in order to save the Nubian Monuments from Abu Simbel to Philae from being submerged due to the construction of the Aswan High Dam in Egypt. The U.S., a leading member of UNESCO at the time, proposed “natural heritage” to include natural parks, and the World Heritage Convention was thus enacted in 1972.

However, at the time the meaning of “culture” was narrowly defined as “having artistic value”. Nowadays, “culture” is seen in a broader sense, such as “the way of thinking about things” or “way of life”.

In terms of cultural heritage, there are three types of objects: historic monuments, groups of historic buildings, and historic sites, and it is important that they are conserved in their original and complete form. Although Ambassador Hagiwara Toru was the first Japanese to chair the UNESCO General Conference, where the World Heritage Convention was adopted, and did his best to recommend it to Japan, World Heritage did not interest its government at first. It finally started to get attention from the public in the late 1980s, and the Convention was finally ratified in 1992. The first two properties to be inscribed on the World Heritage List were “Buddhist Monuments in the Horyu-ji Area” (Nara Prefecture) and “Himeji-jo” (Hyogo Prefecture). Unlike the stone culture of Asian countries, Eastern countries including Japan have a



Matsuura Koichiro,
the 8th Director-General of UNESCO

Born in 1937, Dr Matsuura Koichiro began his career at the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1959. He served as Ambassador of Japan to France from 1994 to 1999. He also served as the Chairperson of UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee for one year, until November 1999. Then he became the Director-General of UNESCO until 2009.

wood culture. The World Heritage properties are supposed to be conserved “as they were created” and “in their complete forms,” in order to conserve wooden structures, they are repaired using new wood or dismantled and repaired. These, too, have been recognized as World Heritage properties. This recognition was adopted in 1994 as the “Nara Document on Authenticity” (explanation 1). Since then, there has been a great deal of excitement in Japan, and inscription has been going on.

Now, one of the crucial concepts of World Heritage is “Outstanding Universal Value” (OUV). “Universal” has two meanings. In addition to the meaning “true or right at all times and in all places,” it has the meaning of “global,” involving all the people in the world. In Japanese, “global” is missing. Anyone can see that Horyu-ji Temple is a World Heritage property. At the same time, it has global value, not only for Japan but also for humankind. I would like to emphasize that “Universal” has two meanings.

As the number of inscribed World Heritage properties increases, the number of properties that have “Outstanding Universal Value” on their own has become limited. Therefore, the process of selecting and grouping a series of monuments, groups of buildings, and sites according to the historical theme has progressed.

In addition, when the number of inscribed properties approached 1,000, some people began to argue that the screening process should be stricter, and it became more difficult to get them inscribed. This is a trend not only in Japan, but also worldwide.

Tateishi: Thank you very much. The “U” part of OUV contains two nuances, “true or right at all times and in all places” and “global”.

Aoyagi: After the adoption of the Convention in 1972, the word “Universal” that Dr. Matsuura just mentioned has come to mean, for example, “universal design” or design that is “safe for everyone.” We have to be careful because some people are starting to misunderstand the term.

2. World Heritage is a Huge Museum

Tateishi: Next, I would like to ask Dr. Aoyagi. You have been conducting research on ancient Roman archaeological sites, including Pompeii, which later became a World Heritage property. I think you have two different perspectives, one as a researcher and the other as the Commissioner of the Agency for Cultural



Aoyagi Masanori,
Director of the Archaeological Institute of Kashihara, Nara Prefecture (2019-)
Born in 1944, Researcher on ancient Greek and Roman Art History. Dr. Aoyagi served as Commissioner of the Agency for Cultural Affairs from 2013 to 2016.

Affairs. Either point of view would be appreciated, so please tell us your thoughts.

Aoyagi: The word “mouseion,” from which the word “museum” is derived, was created in Alexandria, Egypt in about 300 B.C. during the Ptolemaic Dynasty. When they thought about whether they could create something new, they could not possibly do anything better than the geniuses of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Aeschylus 100 years ago. So they gathered their knowledge and what they had and created something new like zoos, botanical gardens, museums, or libraries. This is the “mouseion.” They thought that if they could collect the things that their predecessors had created, they could combine them and innovate even more.

As you mentioned earlier about the history of World Heritage, I think that there was a concern that it would be difficult to innovate as dramatically as humankind once did. That is why we, as their successors, have to take care of the things that have “Outstanding Universal Value” by incorporating them into the conservation system. I think we had a vague idea that if we did that, we would be able to continue to create innovations.

There is also the concept of “structuralism” (explanation 2), which says that different cultures have something in common structurally. For example, Horyu-ji Temple in Japanese culture and the Parthenon in Greek culture may have the same value. I believe that they were combined to form World Heritage. World Heritage is a huge museum for cultural renewal and innovation for the future of humankind. In a sense,

World Heritage is for conservation, but in another sense, it can be said that it is a necessary foundation for the future of humankind.

For example, Pompeii is an archaeological site where we can see very clearly what daily life was like 2000 years ago. Since that time, even the common people had the desire to make their homes look like museums, and this is still evident in their homes.

In 1997, Pompeii became a World Heritage property because such a thing could be connected to our life goals. Initially, even though Pompeii became a World Heritage property in Italy, just like in Japan, it did not attract much attention. However, as the number of World Heritage properties increased and the screening process became stricter, Pompeii began to attract more attention. That's how Pompeii came to have a World Heritage flag at its entrance (chuckles). People say that the increase in the number of World Heritage properties may lower the brand value, while the synergistic effect has made World Heritage properties something that is valued worldwide. I guess we could say that this is a success of UNESCO's long-term strategy.

3. Diverse Cultures and World Heritage

Matsuura: While calling for a broader view of culture, the major countries that promoted the World Heritage Convention focused on immovable heritage. Other elements were treated as those associated with it. In Japan and Asia, intangible cultural heritage and



Arai Shogo,

Governor of Nara Prefecture (2007-)

Born in 1945. He joined the Ministry of Transport in 1968. He served as the Japan Coast Guard Commandant from 1999 to 2001. He was elected to the House of Councillors in the Diet of Japan (national legislature) in 2001.

immovable cultural heritage are parallel, aren't they? So I proposed a new Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, and it was adopted in 2003. It is now called the two major cultural heritage conventions of UNESCO. Based on both of these Conventions, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) was created in 2004, because it was necessary to create a new culture with both "immovable" and "intangible" cultural heritage. The Network covers seven creative fields: Crafts and Folk Art, Media Arts, Film, Design, Gastronomy, Literature, and Music. The number of cities is now over 200. In 2005, the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions was adopted. This is also a base for creating new cultures. It is important for Japan not only to cherish the culture of the past, but also to create a new culture. This is important.

Tateishi: Governor Arai, what are your thoughts about what they have said?

Arai: There is a difference between natural heritage and cultural heritage, isn't there? With natural heritage, we don't often say which is better, so I think one of the trends of value pluralism is to treat cultural heritage in the same vein as natural heritage. I have always wondered why national treasures can be national treasures. When explaining these things outside of Japan, I wonder how the Japanese would fare.

I think it is cultural pluralism (explanation 3) that each has its own measure that each can tell what "Outstanding" is. I don't think we are in the habit of saying with confidence that it is okay that each has its own measure.

At the same time, we need to have evidence if it is universal, that is, if many people think it good. We need to be able to say that good things have something in common, a standard that everyone can agree on. It should be of equal value even if it is of a different kind, whether it is made of stone or wood, tangible or intangible.

And from the stage of finding a good thing, I wonder how I could evaluate it for myself. I feel that it is very difficult in Japan to have one's own measure. It's hard to develop universalism. The strength of the appeal to the basic emotions of sadness, happiness, and fun, that is, the primal emotions, may be the "Outstanding". Emotions, the fact that people are alive, the fact that they are in contact with objects and cultural assets, the desire to get their brains and blood flowing, and the stimulation of these feelings are cultural assets. I think



one of the ideas of “Outstanding” is that it is not superior or inferior, but powerful and impactful.

Aoyagi: When the Venice Charter (explanation 4) was adopted, UNESCO began to say that only the original materials should be used for restoration. So, in the case of the Greek archaeological sites, it was fine to build the temple by attaching the materials that were lying around, but if there were not enough original materials, they had to add as little concrete or reinforcing steel as possible.

Wooden buildings in Japan and other Asian countries cannot be conserved with the same idea. In order to overcome this, the Nara Document was created in 1994, and it took a large international conference to finally get the document approved, saying that as long as the original form of the structure was conserved, it should be recognized. In that sense, the World Heritage was not relativistic in the strict sense when it was first established. Now, it is gradually becoming relativistic. Another thing is that when we group World Heritage properties together, we can understand the uniqueness of each human culture, and as a result, we can recognize diversity. It is the diversity of life and culture that guarantees the sustainability of humankind. This is the promise of the future of Japan and the world, but it is empiricism and empirical science, isn't it? That's why, although science has advanced so much, in the end, what is the most important thing at the time of the pandemic is to “go back to Hippocrates” and live with immunity, in other words, empirical science.

In a sense, we recognise the value of empirical science in the World Heritage List, because the diversity of

human culture is important for the sustainability of the human race, and the World Heritage List makes it available for everyone to see. Therefore, on one hand we are making improvements in advanced sciences, on the other we have to make it coincide with the idea of empirical science. The hybrid of the two is very important for humankind. I think that's why World Heritage is so valuable.

Arai: In the days when the West was absolute, they said they were superior, and when it got a little shadier, they said that everyone was not equal, but each had their own way of being. It seems to me that China is beginning to say, “I am superior”. This could become a kind of cultural China-centrism. Japan has been immersed in cultural China-centrism. Now, it may quickly change from Euro-centrism to China-centrism. At that time, I think it would be shameful to change too much. We may not be able to be in the centre, but we can have a good view from the edge, and we can get a clear view of Europe and China. I think it would be better to say, “We know a lot about history.” This kind of message may be effective when we talk about a World Heritage property.

Matsuura: In terms of culture, I think it is important to protect pluralism. Western culture has its good points, but it is not the entirety of world culture. The same can be said for China. For Japan, cultural pluralism means that each country should protect its own traditional culture. Based on this, we should not exclude other cultures, but promote exchanges. This is something that needs to be firmly established.

4. COVID-19, Glocalization and World Heritage

Aoyagi: Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the term “glocalization” was used to describe the idea that it was good to assimilate or make something one's own by putting one's feet down in a region in relation to something of global value.

Nowadays, glocalization means that it is okay to have conflicts between the global and the local. The COVID-19 pandemic is creating new influence and concepts, isn't it? Therefore, we haven't fully sorted out this area yet, and I think we need to think about World Heritage as well.

Arai: When the COVID-19 pandemic is over, who can be said to have won? Looking at past examples, we say that these people had a good time, or that those people had a resilient lifestyle to cope with natural disasters like COVID-19. As was the case with the Inca Empire, diseases would happen and kill people, like wars and weapons. It appears that those having resilient lifestyles by resilient people are relatively tough. Japan may be relatively tough, because it has traditionally been striving to protect its way of life.

Aoyagi: One more thing. Although the universal value that World Heritage properties hold is being looked at by ICOMOS (explanation 5) specialists, for example the Palace of Versailles in Paris was built in the middle of the 17th century, around the same time the Taj Mahal was built in India, and the Katsura Imperial Villa was built in Japan. Of these, Katsura Imperial Villa is not included on the World Heritage List.

Matsuura: The “Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto (Kyoto, Uji and Otsu Cities)” have 17 components and were inscribed in 1994, without Katsura Imperial Villa and Shugakuin Imperial Villa, which are under the jurisdiction of the Imperial Household Agency. Later, the Emperors' mounded tombs were included in the “Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group: Mounded Tombs of Ancient Japan” under the jurisdiction of the Imperial Household Agency. However, we cannot enter an Emperor's mounded tomb. Then there was a worry that it would not be inscribed, because no permission was given to enter into the mounded tomb. However, if we had excluded the Emperors' mounded tombs, the “Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group” would not have been able to be inscribed as a World Heritage property. “Kyoto” could be inscribed as a World Heritage property, even if Shugakuin Imperial Villa and Katsura Imperial Villa

are not included, but the “Mozu-Furuichi” cannot.

Aoyagi: The reason Katsura Imperial Villa is not included presently is that the management and administration that meet the global-level requirements cannot be guaranteed at the local level. However, in terms of “Outstanding Universal Value,” the Palace of Versailles has no greater artistic value than Taj Mahal or Katsura Imperial Villa, which has value that anyone can literally see. But Katsura Imperial Villa is not on the World Heritage list.

This shows how even OUV is affected by negative conditions at the local level. The Hagia Sophia in Istanbul (explanation 6) is a World Heritage property as the Greek Orthodox and Byzantine Empire's Hagia Sophia, but in the future, when it is converted into a mosque and Christianity is completely denied, there will be a local problem of how to think about it.

(To be continued in the next issue)

Explanations

- 1. Nara Document on Authenticity:** Adopted in Nara City, Nara Prefecture, in 1994. Conservation of cultural heritage should be interpreted in the context of the natural, cultural, and historical conditions of each region, and it highlighted the possibility of dismantling, restoring, and re-constructing wooden buildings using traditional techniques.
- 2. Structuralism:** The idea that there is a common structure or mechanism underlying social and cultural events in human activities.
- 3. Cultural Pluralism:** The idea of recognizing, respecting, and coexisting with the cultures and ideas of ethnic and other culturally diverse groups.
- 4. Venice Charter:** A Charter for the conservation and restoration of buildings and monuments adopted in 1964. The Charter states that the methods and materials used at the time of construction should be respected in restoration.
- 5. ICOMOS:** International Council on Monuments and Sites. It is an international NGO working for conservation of monuments and sites. As an Advisory Body to the World Heritage Committee, it evaluates cultural heritage nominations for inscription on the World Heritage List and makes recommendations to the World Heritage Committee concerning their inscription.
- 6. Hagia Sophia:** One of the components of the “Historic Centre of Istanbul.” It was a Christian cathedral, but after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, it was converted into a Muslim mosque. Since modern times it has become a non-religious museum, but the decision to turn it into a mosque again in July 2020 is causing a stir.

What's World Heritage?

The term "World Heritage" was introduced by the World Heritage Convention (Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage) adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 1972. It refers to irreplaceable assets that have Outstanding Universal Value and are common to all of humankind; cultural heritage created by human history, including historic monuments, groups of historic buildings, and sites; natural heritage that shows the formation of the earth and the evolution of plants and animals, including landforms, landscapes, and ecosystems.

Cultural Heritage

Historic monuments, groups of historic buildings, and historic sites, including cultural landscapes that have Outstanding Universal Value.

Natural Heritage

Natural features, geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas that have Outstanding Universal Value.

Mixed Cultural and Natural Heritage

Heritage that have both the values of cultural heritage and natural heritage.

World Heritage in Figures (As of March 2021)

Number of World Heritage properties: **1,121** Number of World Heritage properties in Japan: **23**
 cultural heritage:869 natural heritage:213 mixed properties:39 cultural heritage:19 natural heritage:4

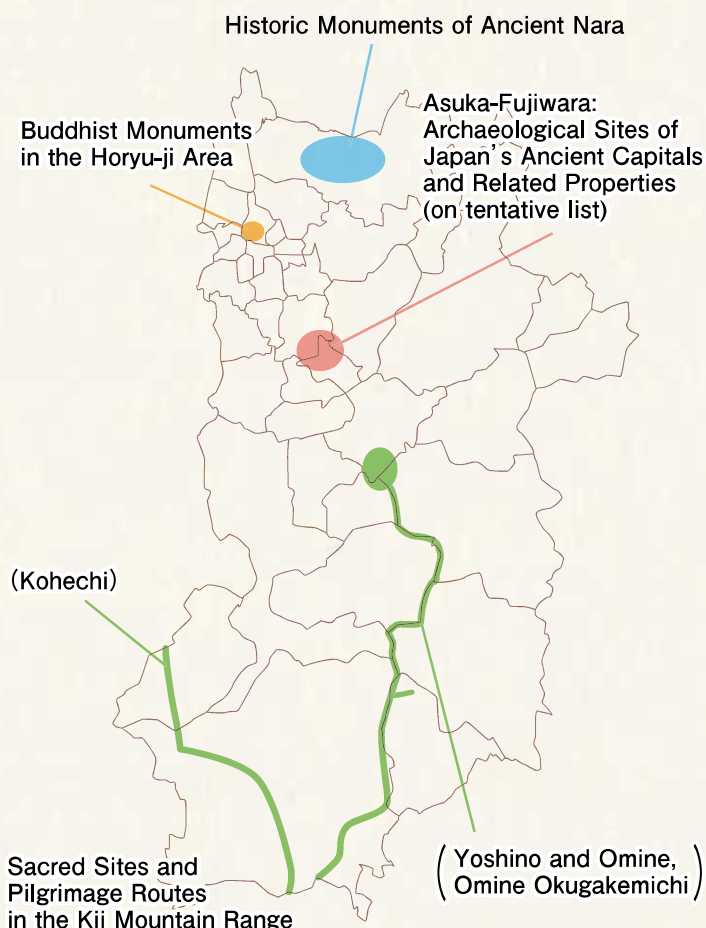
The countries with the most properties are Italy and China (55 properties), followed by Spain (48 properties) and Germany (46 properties). Europe accounts for about 40% of the total number of properties (531), which is about twice as many as the number of properties in Asia-Pacific countries (269). Cultural heritage tends to be inscribed mostly in Europe, while natural heritage, mostly in Africa, America, and Oceania. Japan ranks 12th in the world with 23 properties. The percentage of cultural heritage is relatively high, and there is no mixed property in Japan yet.

World Heritage in Japan

Categories	Years	Properties
Cultural	1993	Buddhist Monuments in the Horyu-ji Area
Cultural	1993	Himeji-jo
Natural	1993	Yakushima
Natural	1993	Shirakami-Sanchi
Cultural	1994	Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto (Kyoto, Uji and Otsu Cities)
Cultural	1995	Historic Villages of Shirakawa-go and Gokayama
Cultural	1996	Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome)
Cultural	1996	Itsukushima Shinto Shrine
Cultural	1998	Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara
Cultural	1999	Shrines and Temples of Nikko
Cultural	2000	Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu
Cultural	2004	Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range
Natural	2005	Shiretoko
Cultural	2007	Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine and its Cultural Landscape
Natural	2011	Ogasawara Islands
Cultural	2011	Hiraizumi - Temples, Gardens and Archaeological Sites Representing the Buddhist Pure Land
Cultural	2013	Fujisan, sacred place and source of artistic inspiration
Cultural	2014	Tomioka Silk Mill and Related Sites
Cultural	2015	Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining
Cultural	2016	The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement
Cultural	2017	Sacred Island of Okinoshima and Associated Sites in the Munakata Region
Cultural	2018	Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region
Cultural	2019	Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group: Mounded Tombs of Ancient Japan

Nara Prefecture

WorldHeritageproperties / Property on the Tentative List



Making “Asuka-Fujiwara” a World Heritage Property!

We are aiming for the inscription of “Asuka-Fujiwara: Archaeological Sites of Japan’s Ancient Capitals and Related Properties”.

“Asuka-Fujiwara: Archaeological Sites of Japan’s Ancient Capitals and Related Properties” was inscribed on the Japan’s Tentative List in 2007. It consists of 20 components, including the remains of two palaces that were the centre of ancient Japan; Asuka Palace and Fujiwara Palace Sites. Nara Prefecture, together with Kashihara City, Sakurai City, and Asuka Village, where these components are located, established the World Heritage Inscription Promotion Council to make concerted efforts so that the property will be inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2024.

From the 7th to 8th centuries, a cultural sphere centred on the Chinese Sui and Tang dynasties was formed in East Asia. Various exchanges took place via the Korean peninsula, and the countries in the vicinity followed the example of the Chinese dynasties in establishing their own ancient states.

“Asuka-Fujiwara” is a unique cultural heritage that can prove the process of exchange as well as fusion with advanced East Asian cultures and the birth of the “ritsuryo” (the legal code of ancient Japan enacted under the influence of the Chinese law) state through archaeological remains of palaces and government offices, Buddhist temples, and mounded tombs (kofun) are well preserved underground.



Proposed Components of “Asuka-Fujiwara” (as of March 2021)

1 Asuka Palace Site 2 Garden Remains of Asuka-kyo Capital 3 Asuka Mizuochi Site
4 Sakafuneishi Site 5 Asuka-dera Temple Site 6 Tachibana-dera Temple Site (within the precincts of Tachibana-dera Temple) 7 Yamada-dera Temple Site 8 Kawara-dera Temple Site
9 Hinokuma-dera Temple Site 10 Ishibutai Tomb 11 Shobuike Tomb 12 Kengoshizuka Tomb
13 Fujiwara Palace Site and Suzaku-oji Avenue site of Fujiwara-kyo Capital 14 Yamato Sanzan (The three mountains of Yamato)(14-1 Mt. Kaguyama, 14-2 Mt. Unebiyama, 14-3 Mt. Miminashiyama)
15 Daikandai-ji Temple Site 16 Moto Yakushi-ji Temple Site 17 Mausoleum of Emperor Temmu and Empress Jito 18 Nakaoyama Tomb 19 Kitora Tomb 20 Takamatsuzuka Tomb



We will be featuring Asuka-Fujiwara in the next issue.