



MODULE ONE:

UNDERSTANDING NATURE-CULTURE LINKAGES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SACRED LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

Module One consisted of three days of intensive lectures, group discussions, and participants' case study presentations, from September 15 to 17 at the University of Tsukuba. The lectures dealt with the international framework regarding nature-culture linkages and landscape conservation, from the natural and cultural sectors' perspectives, covering the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention, the Protected Landscape Approach from IUCN, and the Cultural Landscapes Categories used in the World Heritage context. A total of sixteen case studies were presented in the three sessions: five World Heritage sites, one on the tentative list, three protected at national level, and seven related to processes of identification of sacred sites and community development with indigenous groups whose traditions are related to sacred places.

The first day, **Dr. Gamini Wijesuriya**, from ICCROM, presented the work being done by this organization, in the training of heritage practitioners and specialists in conservation techniques and management. He mentioned how the work of ICCROM, and other bodies related to World Heritage, are working towards a new paradigm, where nature, culture, and people would be integrated into a single concept of conservation, with no boundaries. He explained the basic concepts of the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention, and the pillars of the outstanding universal value (OUV): criteria, integrity, authenticity, and management plans. He also explained the concept of outstanding universal value, and the processes for nomination. He clarified the concepts of authenticity and integrity as well as the importance of management plans for nominating a site to the List.

Finally, he gave some examples of sacred landscapes on the List, such as the Okinoshima islands, a Japanese property recently inscribed in 2017. He explained how sacred landscapes are good examples of nature-culture linkages, how their importance is being discussed, and how these values need different management. Furthermore, he mentioned the initiative of "Heritage of religious interest", as part of ICCROM's efforts to recognize spiritual values of cultural heritage sites.

The next lecturer, **Ms. Jessica Brown**, the Executive Director of New England Biolabs Foundation and Chair of the IUCN Protected Landscapes Specialist Group, explained the Protected Landscape approach promoted by IUCN. She explained that the understanding of IUCN Protected Landscapes is that they are shaped through the interactions of people and nature over time and can be rich in biological diversity because of the presence of people. These are seen as living models. She gave many examples of landscapes and different ways to see them, from indigenous perspectives as well as artistic perspectives, which both captured their natural and cultural values. She also presented cases of sacred landscapes and how indigenous and community conserved areas may be the oldest protected areas on the planet. She clarified the IUCN definitions of protected areas and that management intends to establish a common language, a common framework, in order to exchange and define guidelines. Ms. Brown also said that the paradigm of conservation is changing: from national to international, run by people and not against, based on partnerships, developed as networks and not islands, seen as systems, managed in collaboration with scientific, economic, and cultural values, and are not only for visitors and tourists. Moreover, she explained that conservation is more effective at larger scales, based on connectivity, and working with all kind of stakeholders. She pointed out the importance of the fifth C in the context of the World Heritage Convention, including 'Community', such as the case of community-based protected areas, and that, currently, management is moving towards governance. She added the importance of safeguarding the interactions and not freezing the place in time. Ms. Brown also mentioned challenges, such as the integration of the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent, but also opportunities, such as the governance framework proposed by IUCN, and the progress in bridging nature and culture and participatory approaches as well as the recovery and use of traditional knowledge.



Left: Dr. Gamini Wijesuriya (ICROM) giving a lecture about the World Heritage Convention and its implementation. Right: Ms. Jessica Brown (IUCN/New England Biolabs Foundation) giving a lecture about Protected Landscapes.

After the lectures, the session was chaired by Ms. Carolina Castellanos and Professor Masahito Yoshida and five participants presented their case studies:

- 1) **Tu Vuong**, a researcher at the Institute of Ecology and Biological Resources (IEBR), Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology (VAST) in Vietnam, presented “**Nature conservation and protection of spiritual and cultural values in sacred landscapes in Vietnam: a case study of bats in the Huong Son Complex of Natural Beauty and Historical Monuments, Hanoi**”. He explained that the Huong Son area is on the Tentative List and it is managed by two governmental agencies because the site contains natural heritage, such as caves, and cultural heritage, such as temples and pagodas, as well as intangible heritage, represented by the religious festivals. He said that, currently, this site faces problems related to tourism management. Mr. Vuong stressed that tourism has negative effects in the conservation of natural heritage – specifically regarding the bats’ population and the maintenance of the caves. He mentioned that there is a threat of bat-borne disease and he reflected on how bats can be protected while maintaining cultural values. He considers educational programs, promoting the coexistence between nature and culture, to be important.
- 2) **Jun Cayron**, Assistant Professor at Palawan State University in the Philippines, presented “**The Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park**”, a World Heritage site since 2012. He explained that the park is appreciated for its natural values, such as the karst formations, and especially how it is promoted as a tourist destination because of the beautiful beaches. However, he noted that the area is considered sacred for indigenous groups, called the Tagbanwa and Batak. But, he said, that these groups have been evicted from the land and their practices banned. Mr. Cayron added that these groups consider the air as sacred and a whole component of living with the nature, the forest is viewed as a source of energy, and the land as burial grounds of the ancestors and archaeological sites. He said that tourism is a major threat to the site, menacing the caves, bringing pollution, contributing to the loss of traditions, and being a disturbance for local people. He suggested that the site be declared as a sacred landscape, getting additional protection, where both natural and cultural values, as well as traditions, are protected.
- 3) **Nara Chan**, deputy head office of community ecotourism development from the Department of Ecotourism, at the Ministry of Environment in Cambodia, presented “**Preah Chey Voroman Norudom ‘Phnom Kulen’**”

National Park”. He explained that Phnom Kulen National Park has natural values that are mainly represented by the diversity of species and habitats as well as cultural values connected to Buddhism. He said that there are places of pilgrimage and archaeological sites and that this area is very important for the conservation of the temples of Angkor Wat. He presented the situation of the population surrounding these areas and how these are dedicated to agricultural practices that generate deforestation. Moreover, Mr. Chan mentioned that there is forest degradation and loss, primarily due to illegal logging. The main challenge discussed for this heritage site was to find a balance between nature conservation and sustainable development for the communities surrounding or inhabiting the protected areas, as illustrated by the conflict between local agricultural practices and forest conservation.



Professor Jun Cayron, from Palawan State University, Philippines, presenting the case of Puerto Princesa National Park in the Philippines. (Photo: Maya Ishizawa)

- 4) Shamodi Nanayakkara, a Ph.D. student at the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka presented “Reinforcing conservation with faith and beliefs: the potential of Peak Wilderness Sanctuary in the Central Highlands World Heritage site, Sri Lanka”. She explained that this area is worshipped not only by Buddhists, but also by Muslims and Hindus. She said that the main cultural value of this place is that in the peak of the mountain there is a footprint that Buddhists believe is the Buddha’s footprint, while, for the Hindus, it is Lord Shiva’s, and for the Muslims, it is Adam’s and also why it is world-known as “Adam’s Peak.” She asserted that the stories surrounding these legends have maintained regulations about hunting, collecting, and fishing, and that these stories need to be remembered because they are useful as conservation strategies. She said that the Nature Reserve and Sanctuary in charge of the Forest Department became a World Heritage location in 2010. Currently, she explained, the threats to the site are over-visitation during the pilgrimage season, a lack of boundary demarcation, land encroachment, and furthermore, there is a hydroelectric plant and small-scale mining. Of these threats, the main challenge to this site is the seasonal pilgrimages and over-visitation.
- 5) Upma Manral, a Ph.D. candidate at the Wildlife Institute of India, presented “Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary: a Himalayan Jewel”. She explained that this protected area has villages inside and surrounding it, that are typical Himalayan villages, where inhabitants depend on natural resources. She said that, according to Hindus, the Himalayan landscape is a work of God and that Shiva is one of the principal deities. She explained that lakes are associated with stories and that there are sacred alpine meadows and forests. She does not think that people can be removed from these areas and community-based conservation is working better than governmental conservation efforts.

During this first day of the workshop, all case studies presented belonged to the nature sector. Challenges discussed were how to control tourism in places of pilgrimage and how to harmonize nature conservation and cultural values conservation in sacred natural sites. Moreover, an issue debated was how to maintain local practices and traditional knowledge that may be positive for conservation but may hinder the economic development of communities surrounding the protected areas.

After the presentations, participants discussed the following questions in groups:

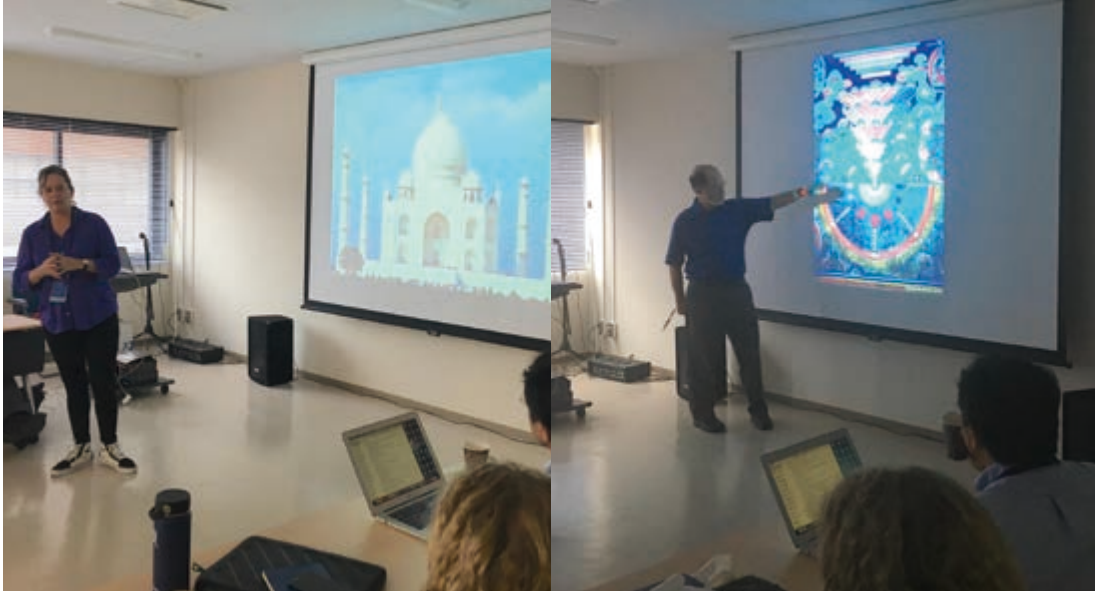
- Why are nature-culture linkages important to heritage conservation?
- How does this relate to sacredness?
- How does the existing international frameworks either enable or constrain holistic approaches that link nature, culture and people?

Each group expressed their ideas resulting from their discussion. They all agreed that heritage policies should aim for an integration of culture and nature, following an approach of sustainable development. In regards to sacredness, they reflected upon the importance of local traditions and systems of beliefs as mechanisms supporting identity and community life, sustaining the spiritual and religious values found in the nature and culture of places. Finally, they shared their thoughts about international frameworks, clarifying both benefits and limitations. They considered the idea that these frameworks provide general guidelines under the principles of human rights, but they cannot address each country's issues. In that sense, it is important to reflect on possible ways to build bridges between the international framework and national systems. Moreover, they expressed the need to listen to the voice of indigenous communities in order to bring alternatives for local management and nature-culture linkages.

On the second day of the workshop, Ms. Carolina Castellanos, an independent consultant and former World Heritage Advisor for ICOMOS, explained the work of ICOMOS in the context of the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. Furthermore, she presented the concept of Cultural Landscapes as it has been conceived in the Operational Guidelines of the World Heritage Convention. She discussed the concept of heritage and clarified that heritage is a social construction that is relative and changes over time. She explained how the concept of cultural landscape, accepted at an international level, may not have national or local legal frameworks that allow for the protection of cultural landscapes. Moreover, she clarified the concept of sacredness and mentioned that this is a concept that has been accepted by some indigenous groups but it is mostly related to Western, monotheistic religions. She also made participants aware that it is necessary to reflect on to whom the heritage belongs to, who are the decision-makers regarding it, who are the stewards, and to question if authenticity is a relevant issue. After this, she introduced the case of Rapa Nui National Park, formerly part of Chile, but located in Melanesia, closer to the Pacific Islands than to South America. She explained that this is one of the most remote islands in the world, a product of extinct volcanic cones. After introducing the geography of the site, the history, and socio-economic characteristics of the island, she presented the process of elaboration of a management plan for the archaeological park- a World Heritage site since 1995 under criteria (i), (iii) and (v)- involving the local people. Ms. Castellanos explained that even though the whole island contains cultural values, it cannot all be protected under the archaeological park system because this would implicate the eviction of the Rapa Nui population. Contrary to this understanding, she explained how the Rapa Nui understands the landscape as a whole, composed of many layers, that interact in a complex manner, and that the island is a biocultural system that implies agriculture, fishing, communal work, and sacredness. She introduced the resulting management plan conceived as a stellar map, a concept proper to the worldview of Rapa Nui population.

The second presenter of the day, Dr. Edwin Bernbaum, from the Mountain Institute and Co-chair of the IUCN Specialist Group on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas, presented on the concept of Sacred Mountains. He explained his research on understanding why mountains have been chosen as sacred symbols by many religions around the world. He has proposed several categories to explain the spiritual values assigned to mountains: height, centre, power, deity or abode of deity, temple or place of worship, garden or earthly paradise, ancestors and the dead, identity, source, inspiration, revelation, transformation, and renewal. He illustrated these categories by presenting several mountains around the world that are considered sacred by different cultures, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and other faiths. Subsequently, he focused on the case of

Mount Kailash, which he considers to fulfill most of the categories previously presented, and the work that is being done in nominating this mountain to the World Heritage List. He presented the values of Mount Kailash and compared it to other similar sacred mountains of the world that are already on the List. He suggested the criteria under which it could be nominated and explained the steps to follow in order to achieve a nomination. Dr. Bernbaum said that one of the challenges is to have the three State Parties, namely India, Nepal and China, involved in this project. The area is not being protected at the moment, therefore, national legislation to protect the Mount needs to be put in place. Moreover, he mentioned that it is important to have the consent and support of the local communities involved in such a project.



Left: Ms. Carolina Castellanos presents the issues of the World Heritage Convention and the concept of Outstanding Universal Value. Right: Dr. Edwin Bernbaum presents about sacred mountains. (Photos: Maya Ishizawa)

After these lectures, the next session was chaired by Ms. Jessica Brown and Dr. Gamini Wijesuriya and six participants presented their case studies:

- 1) **Stephen Manebosa**, a senior field officer at the Solomon Islands National Museum, presented “**Ngaguenga (Pagan Temple Site) at Magama Ubea**”. He explained that the East Rennell island has been inscribed on the World Heritage List since 2013. He said that Christians arrived to this area in the 1900s and called the native deity “Pagan God” which is why the name of the site is Pagan Temple. He mentioned that Christian influence damaged the site and that the main challenges for conserving the location are subsistence farming, logging, and mining.
- 2) **Florence Revelin**, a pedagogic coordinator at the French National Museum of Natural History, France, presented “**Sacredness in Laponia mixed World Heritage site**”. She explained that this site had been inscribed on the List in 1996 by Sweden, even though the Laponia area, home of the Saami people, used to include territories in Norway, the Russian Federation, and Finland. She said that the Saami are the only indigenous people living in continental Europe. The area includes 4 national parks and 2 natural reserves, as well as a diversity of landscapes, and notably, it is home to the Saami reindeer. She mentioned that, while the whole area is sacred to the Saami, the concept of sacredness was not a core issue in the nomination process. She explained that this area was also occupied by Christians who prohibited the traditional shamanistic religion and banned the use of its places of worship. She asserted that, even though this area has been seen as natural heritage by the Swedish government, for the Saami, this is a cultural area. She mentioned that these issues were discussed in the management plan conceived in 2011.
- 3) **Emma Lee**, a research fellow at the University of Tasmania, Australia, presented “**Sacredness in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area**”. She explained how relationships and family are very important within her community, explaining the history of this area, where she comes from, and how it has been colonized and the local people mistreated. She presented how the community has been involved in the management process for the area, how the cultural values have been included in the statement of OUV

of this property, and how important it has been to create a joint management within the communities. She mentioned the importance of the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent of indigenous peoples living in World Heritage sites.



Dr. Emma Lee, University of Tasmania, presenting a case study on the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, Australia. (Photo: Maya Ishizawa)

- 4) Nukila Evanty, a scholar activist from the University of Mahendradatta, Indonesia, presented “**Cultural Heritage, Nature and Sacred Places of Talang Mamak Indigenous Peoples, Riau**”. She talked about the Talang group and their worldviews. She explained how they maintain their sacred places and how their cultural values and way of life are challenged by modernization.
- 5) Xavier Forde, a national coordinator for Maori Heritage Sites at Heritage New Zealand, presented “**Kapiti: Sacred landscape**”. He explained the story of this island, that is now a bird sanctuary, but also a sacred place, and home, for the Maori people. He said that, currently, there is tension between the government protected area management and the local Maori people, who live on the same island.



Dr. Xavier Forde, Heritage New Zealand, presenting a case study of the Kapiti Island, a sacred island for the Maori people. (Photo: Maya Ishizawa)

6) **John Kuange**, an assistant Country Director from the World Conservation Society in Papua New Guinea, presented “**Identifying sacred heritage sites in a very bioculturally diverse nation?**”. He explained how Papua and New Guinea is a very diverse country, with many different indigenous groups that use different languages and have different ways to express sacredness. He said that traditional knowledge and traditional practices are still carried out by the communities on the islands. However, Christianity entered in the late 19th century, with European missionaries, and this event created tensions with the local pre-established traditions, that the Christians described as “pagan”. He stated that, currently, the challenge is modern education which does not allow for the integration of the native’s ways of life because traditional customs do not bring material wealth. Furthermore, he explained how the diversity of beliefs and worldviews can make it difficult to identify large areas of a sacred site, for example, what is sacred for one group might be considered “mundane” by another.

Following the second day of the presentations, the debates focused on indigenous and local knowledge and its relation to sacredness. It was found that there has been a common practice in Asia and the Pacific, and also in Europe, of eviction and disdain for indigenous cultures and local communities. Moreover, one common situation encountered in the different case studies was the imposition of values from the government or a mainstream, foreign, religion over indigenous, and native, beliefs. This led to discussions over colonization and local communities’ identities and their empowerment through mechanisms such as the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent. It was discussed how it is important to recognize how modern education plays a role in the loss of traditional knowledge and how channels of intergenerational transmission of traditions and local beliefs need to be found.

Participants discussed the following questions in groups:

- What makes a place sacred? For whom is it sacred?
- Who defines and recognizes sacredness and what are the implications of this for the stewardship of a place? (note: management and governance = stewardship)

The groups considered “sacredness” as a concept validated by people through time and space, defined by social restrictions for accessibility, practices or behaviors, and certain unique physical aspects in nature. They concluded that the significance of the sacred places is sustained by the people, or communities, attached to them through traditions or spiritual beliefs. In that sense, they asserted that these systems need to be respected when implementing policies for the management of their local heritage. Participants also commented on issues related to the preservation of sacred places, resulting from colonization, and how legislation deals with minority religious groups.

During the third day of lectures, **Professor Masahito Yoshida**, Chair of the World Heritage Studies Program at the University of Tsukuba, explained the importance of the mountains and how nature is worshipped in Japan. He showed participants how the topography of Japan was formed and how this influenced the importance of certain mountainous areas, where the population decide to settle. He explained that in the Japanese archipelago there are many natural events, such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis, typhoons, and tornadoes, as well as floodings, that formed the terrain and influenced the relationship of the human communities with their environment. He said that Japanese people pray to waterfalls, giant trees, big rocks, and high mountains in order to avoid disasters. Professor Yoshida explained the formation of four World Heritage sites, namely, Yakushima island, Mount Fuji, Ogasawara islands, and the Kii Mountains. He argued how the Kii Mountains became a prominent sacred area for Japanese people and how the three major religions formed in the three sacred sites, inscribed as World Heritage: Koyasan, Kumano Sanzan and Yoshino and Omine. He presented the relationship between history and political changes in Japan that were also influenced by the development of the different religions: Shinto, Shugendō, and Shingon Buddhism. Later on, he talked about the mountains that are World Heritage sites in Japan and their management problems, such as Mount Fuji, and Yakushima island. He also pointed out the issues related to the Nature-Culture divide in the management of these sites at a national level.

After this presentation, **Professor Nobuko Inaba**, from the World Heritage Studies Program, explained the management issues at the Mount Fuji World Heritage site and presented the process of nomination and the challenges it faced. She explained why Mount Fuji could not be nominated as a Mixed Cultural and Natural



Participants' report on the second day of group discussions. (Photo: Maya Ishizawa)

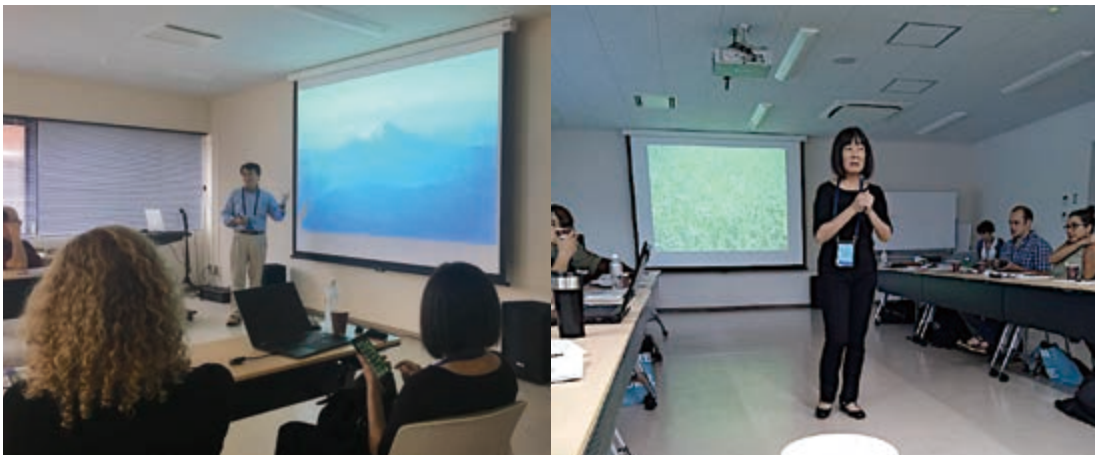
World Heritage site. She said that the natural criterion that could have been used was criterion (vii) that relates to natural beauty. However, the Ministry of Environment of Japan could not assure the sustainability of this criterion because of the proximity of Mount Fuji to Tokyo and the rapid urban development around the area. In order to conserve the integrity, the whole mountain should have been nominated and this was not feasible. However, she pointed out that Mount Fuji was already protected as a cultural property, as a Place of Scenic Beauty in charge of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, hence, Mount Fuji was inscribed as a World Cultural Heritage site in 2013. After talking about the management issues of this site, she presented the relationship of the heritage system in Japan and the development of heritage protection in Europe. Professor Inaba introduced participants to the Law for the Protection of Cultural Property of Japan and explained some of its categories, which includes the protection of Natural Monuments and Places of Scenic Beauty. She asserted that these categories imply the linkages between nature and culture. She also presented the categories of Preservation Districts and Cultural landscapes and how they relate to the Satoyama landscape, characteristic of Japanese rural areas. Moreover, she explained the relationship between architectural development and religious development in Japan and how this has been studied by historians and architects looking for Japanese original or indigenous architecture. Then, she clarified the different religions and their relationships, pointing out that Shinto is the local religion, indigenous to Japan, and Buddhism has been the foreign religion, adopted and adapted to Japan. She made it clear how these different currents of faith influenced the development of architecture and sacred sites in the mountains.

Dr. Maya Ishizawa, CBWNCL Programme Coordinator, explained the itinerary and content for the field trip to the Kii Mountains. She presented information about the area and mentioned the different layers of protection that converge at the site: a World Heritage Cultural Landscape since 2004, it overlaps with the Yoshino-Kumano National Park and the Mount Odaigahara and Mount Omine Biosphere Reserve. The sacred sites Koyasan, Kumano Sanzan and Yoshino and Omine contain National Treasures in their temples, as well as Important Cultural Properties, that are protected under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties of Japan.

Moreover, the area contains Historic sites, Places of Scenic Beauty, and Natural Monuments protected under the same law.

After these lectures, the session was chaired by Professor Nobuko Inaba and Dr. Edwin Bernbaum. Five participants presented their case studies:

1) Mingxia Zhu, a researcher at the Tsinghua University in China, presented “Cave Heavens and Blessed Lands: Cultural Landscape of Taoism Worldview”. She introduced a case comprising of a circuit of caves in lands considered as sacred, according to local beliefs, for over 1,400 years. She explained that such places are integrated into a system of beliefs that, besides the influence of traditions such as Taoism and Buddhism, consider the mountains as tangible representations of deities and ancestors. She said that the caves are divided into major and minor caves, called “blessed lands,” which symbolize the gates of heaven and the lands for common people, respectively. She mentioned that this type of cave system, conditioned inside for sacred rituals, are also present in Malaysia and in Japan.



Left: Professor Masahito Yoshida, Chair of World Heritage Studies at the University of Tsukuba, explains the significance of mountains in Japan. (Photo: Maya Ishizawa) Right: Professor Nobuko Inaba, from World Heritage Studies at the University of Tsukuba, explains the Japanese system of cultural heritage protection and its relation to sacred and religious values. (Photo: Nukila Evanty)



Dr. Maya Ishizawa, CBWNCL Programme Coordinator, explaining the contents of the field trip to the World Heritage Cultural Landscape “Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes of the Kii Mountain Range.”(Photo: Sonya Underdahl).

2) Portia Bansa, a cultural heritage manager at the Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development (CIKOD) in Ghana, presented “Forikrom bio-cultural heritage”. First, she explained the categories of protected areas under the current system in Ghana. She said that the case of Forikrom is of a farming-based community, preserving their ancestral system of beliefs which are attached to sacred,

natural, sites. She described the complex of caves within the surrounding environment, containing the burial location of ancestors, royal chiefs, and queens, and how these have held a treasured, spiritual, **significance** for generations. She stated that these are considered the heart of the community and that there are also access restrictions. She also explained that, even though there is a bio-cultural protocol protecting the landscape, the sacred places of Forikrom are facing the problem of desecration due to the influx of tourism.

- 3) **Zhengli Liu**, a researcher at the Yading National Nature Reserve in China, presented **“Sacred Landscape of Yading Nature Reserve”**. He explained that this site, located in the Tibetan Autonomous prefecture of Sichuan, is related to Buddhist narratives, reflecting the sacredness of the mountains. He said that in the last 100 years it has been seen as a mythical place, inspired in the conceptions of the “Shangri-la”. He stated that the main challenges he has identified for the management of the site include commercialization, the loss of traditional values, and exogenous influences. Yet, he asserted that, in order to preserve its sacred values, two layers of civil participation have been actively working for the continuity of the local traditions, sustaining them: on the one hand, the academic endeavors of the Buddhist institutions and on the other hand, the local community.
- 4) **Mie Mie Kyaw**, a lecturer from Mandalay University in Myanmar, presented **“Effective assessment on cultural and natural values, and socioeconomic development of Indigenous Group; Kayan race”**. She introduced her experience working on the Upper Paunglaung Hydropower Project, in which she conducted a heritage impact assessment of the area. She said that the main challenges she has identified are related to the preservation of sacred elements in the environment, the sustainability of natural resources, and the conflicts between stakeholders.
- 5) **Iliia Domashov**, a senior lecturer at Kyrgyz State University in Kyrgyzstan, presented **“Sacred Natural World Heritage ‘West Tien Shan’. Kyrgyz National Component”**. He talked about the case of a Serial Natural World Heritage site, featuring a transboundary partnership. He explained that the Western Tien Shan mountain range is home to a long-standing oral tradition of epic narratives, transferred for generations, centered on figure of the Kyrgyz hero, Manas. He said that desecration, or even new forms of sacralization, as well as the disconnection between nature and culture affecting the land use, are some of the main issues he has identified in the area.

At the end of the day, participants reflected on the following question:

- How does this (sacredness and previous reflections on stewardship, management, and governance) relate to the specific context of the Asia-Pacific region?

After reflecting upon all the case studies presented and the core topics, the participants came up with their final remarks, characterizing the Asia-Pacific context. They pointed out that the region shares the particular feature of having long-standing spiritual traditions attached to sacred natural sites. They considered that, although these sacred places are safeguarded under legal protection systems applied at different levels by each country, their management should not overlook the relationship with the local or traditional communities, as they are the primary actors sustaining and treasuring the spiritual values. They added that since these realities are connected to the effects of globalization, policies need to handle these problems, such as modernization and generational changes, and at the same time, they need to ensure that the local people are able to meet their needs and rights.

