

# MODULE THREE:

## REFLECTION ON THEORY AND PRACTICE



Module 3 comprised of two days of reflection on the theory and practice gained during the workshop. Participants were divided into groups to work on key issues for the conservation of sacred landscapes, reflecting on both natural and cultural values of the places visited during the field trip. Finally, participants prepared one presentation for the whole group in order to give it during the international symposium.

The presentations were structured according to three core issues:

- The Significance and Sacredness of the Kii Mountains
- How the sacredness of the Kii Mountains reflects the Nature, Culture, and people interlinkages
- Management and Governance

The final reports were delivered as 20 minutes presentations followed by discussions with other groups, resource persons of the workshop, and guest speakers of the symposium. The resulting statements are reported below.

### Group 1

#### Members:

Jun Cayron- Philippines

Nara Chan- Cambodia

Shamodi Nanayakkara- Sri Lanka

Florence Revelin- France

Shoma Jingu- Japan

#### Reflections

Firstly, the group found that the landscapes of the Kii Mountains are considered sacred due to the values expressed and sustained by the concept of Chinju no Mori, the unique landforms, the place of rituals, and the antiquity of their history. They understood that sacredness is a notion that is continuously evolving.

Secondly, they recognized that the interlinkages of nature, culture, and people in this context can be identified in many forms, such as:

- Faith and protection: Respect for the kami (gods) as a source of protection for the community
- Beliefs and livelihood: Direct income sources, irrigation, and agriculture
- Practices and sustainability: Immortality and avatar forms, sponsorships from ancient times
- Aesthetic and sacredness: Architecture, landscape, human life and evolution

Thirdly, given the fact that the management, governance, conservation, and tourism are the core issues in the Kii Mountains, the group proposed a “stakeholders mandala” structured based on the following groups: 1) Local and regional government; 2) Priests and monks; 3) Local tourist companies, tourist bureau; 4) Tourists, the local community; 5) Local pilgrims and private owners.

In addition, they provided a list of main challenges identified at the sites. According to them the first challenge is the diversity of ownership in the Kii Mountains, since the area listed on the World Heritage List includes

territories in three different prefectures. The second challenge is disaster management and restoration work, as it was shown in the case of Kumano-Hongu shrine. The third challenge is tourism development, considering that the increasing number of visitors can cause the problem of seasonal frequentation, as well as affect the value of sacredness and the balance between people and nature. Finally, they emphasized that the fourth challenge is the depopulation of rural areas as seen in Kumano Sanzan.

## Conclusions

The group concluded that spiritual practices like Shugendo, dating back to ancient times, are essential for nature-culture-people interlinkages. They considered that in order to safeguard the diversity of values of the local heritage, natural or/and cultural, these practices involving an intangible dimension should be maintained. Moreover, they stated that, it is important to understand the religious practitioners' perspective when addressing management issues.

As for the issues raised by the site's inscription on the World Heritage List, the group established that the management of this World Heritage property should consider:

- Bringing together diverse stakeholders (local, national, and international levels) in a common stewardship system
- Reflecting on their perception about the meaning of sacredness and the heritage of the Kii Mountains for each one of them and for those coming from outside (the Glocal process).
- Evaluating the benefits and risks related to a nomination onto the World Heritage List. For instance, in the case of the Kii Mountains, on the one hand, there were benefits, as the pilgrimage routes were restored, but on the other hand there is a new challenge represented by the increasing number of visitors.

Finally, the group reflected on the process they engaged in as a team and the learning experience during the workshop, emphasizing:

- The value of diversity, given the international background and interdisciplinary approaches brought by each member of the group.
- The importance of fieldwork and meeting of local people to improve their understanding of the internal perspective and local challenges related to the site's management.
- The understanding of the interlinkages existing beyond the frame and categories of an international convention (the Glocal perspective).
- The notion of "sacredness" as context-dependent and evolving through time.
- Local commitment as a key for the management of the area.

## Group 2

### Members:

Nukila Evanty- Indonesia

Xavier Forde- New Zealand

Stephen Manebosa- Solomon Islands

Upma Manral- India

Claudia Uribe- Peru

Tokpah Yeanga – Liberia

### Reflections

Firstly, the group stated that the sacredness in the Kii Mountains cannot be understood without first considering its long history. They noted that when referring to this concept, it is important to go back to the ancient Japanese worship of the kami and nature, and to important figures, like Kobo Daishi, who developed spiritual centers in these mountains. Thus, they declared that in this area, the physical features and the symbolic dimension of nature sustain the notion of sacredness.

Secondly, they asserted that these sacred landscapes are reflecting the historical linkages between nature, culture, and people. They noticed that this relationship can be demonstrated by some characteristics in the places of worship like:

- Subject of worship (kami or deity): Natural elements and the representation of deities and their association with nature.
- The role played by nature (or natural elements) to communicate the sacredness, as occurs in the case of symbols (lotus buds, stupas, temple logos), ceremonies (fire ceremony), and spaces for worship (shrines, altars, or mausoleums in forests, routes).
- Cyclical inclusion of natural elements in cultural practices and rituals, as is shown by the use of incense sticks, tree barks, and the pilgrim's cherry trees planting tradition.

Thirdly, referring to the management and governance of this type of heritage place, they stated that, there are three core aspects to take into account:

- The active and diverse stakeholders' communities.
- The challenges, such as mass tourism (threat to sacred values), conflicting interests, migration of steward communities, and natural disasters.
- The merits of the World Heritage designation, as inspiring neighbor regions to promote the restoration of routes and to involve local communities in the conservation of cultural heritage.

## Conclusions

The group concluded that:

- The co-existence of religions- Kami worship, Shingon, and Shugendo- make the Kii Mountains a place of special and unique value.
- The involvement of steward communities in the management and conservation of the cultural heritage, as well as in tourism development, contribute to the sustainability of the sites.
- The ways people associate, assimilate, and use these sacred places are constantly evolving, and it is important to consider the possible conflicts emerging between international, or external, values and local practices.

## Group 3

### Members:

Ilia Domashov- Kyrgyzstan

Emma Lee- Australia

Tu Vuong- Vietnam

Mingxia Zhu- China

Paul Ayella- Uganda

### Reflections

The group said that the landscapes of the Kii Mountains contain a variety of natural and cultural values expressed in the geographical features and the historically developed systems of beliefs. They understood that some spiritual and religious key personalities shared a connection around the concept of sacredness in this area.

They considered that the governance, in this context, is measured on three levels: local, national, and international. They stated that at the local level, the key agents are the local communities and the religious institutions, at the national level, the government institutions and authorities, and at the international level, organizations like UNESCO. They found that the management has addressed the public's participation, the research, and the planning. Moreover, they recognized that the promotion has been geared towards the growth of tourism, the inscription of the site on the World Heritage List, and the balance between nature and culture.

They identified some of the challenges, such as the ageing population, the need of inclusive services in the heritage sites, and the prevention of the loss of customary skills against the commodification.

## Conclusion

The group concluded that all these concepts are interconnected in a system in which the nature, the cultural creations, and beliefs interact together, fostering the sense of sacredness.

## Group 4

### Members:

Portia Bansa- Ghana  
Mie Mie Kyaw- Myanmar  
John Kuange- Papua New Guinea  
Zhengli Liu- China  
Sonya Underdahl- Australia

### Reflections

The group understood that the notion of sacredness is related to people's cultural and spiritual responses to the natural environment with unique features. They said that sacredness is authenticated by people, their beliefs related to deities, places, and objects, restrictions and prohibition, practices as rituals, and pilgrimages, all of which are evidenced by historical records.

They realized that the link between nature and culture is expressed in a variety of ways, including: nature and culture in kami worship, sacred and mundane aspects in pilgrimage, as well as local and global processes. They considered that this long-term relationship has been grasped by modern societies, creating benefits like: publicity, socio-economic options, boosting nationalism and cultural identity, and management of the sites and environment.

In addition, they identified some challenges as:

- Finance
- Globalization
- Social Population Dynamics
- Additional pressures on the governance structures
- Increase in visitor numbers
- Environmental conservation
- Cultural adaptation and changes
- Preservation of spiritual values
- Socio-economic development
- Pressure on local community and resources
- Survival of sacred sites against risk of destruction
- Monitoring
- Natural disasters/reconstruction

### Conclusions

The group concluded that:

- ( i ) Sacredness may be, or could be, lost if tourism is not controlled or regulated.
- ( ii ) The relationship between nature, culture, and belief systems is inextricably linked. It cannot be separated.
- ( iii ) International frameworks for heritage legislation and policy-making should consider the different local cultures and traditional contexts in regards to sacredness.



*Mingxia Zhu (China), Iliia Domashov (Kyrgyzstan), Emma Lee (Australia), Tu Vuong (Vietnam) and Paul Ayella (Uganda) preparing their presentation during the working groups session. (Photo: Maya Ishizawa)*



*Portia Bansa (Ghana), Mie Mie Kyaw (Myanmar), Sonya Underdahl (Australia) and Zhengli Liu (China) preparing their presentation during the working groups session. (Photo: Maya Ishizawa)*



*Group photo of participants, resource persons, and symposium guest speakers after they received their Certificate of Completion of the Workshop.*



# MODULE FOUR:

## INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM



On September 26, 2017, the Second International Symposium on Nature-Culture Linkages in Heritage Conservation, Asia and the Pacific, Sacred Landscapes took place within the framework of the Tsukuba Global Science Week 2017, which general theme was “Science for Social Innovations”.

The President of the University of Tsukuba, Professor Kyosuke Nagata, gave an opening address and especially welcomed the honoured guest speakers Dr. Thomas Schaaf, Mr. Tim Badman, Professor Masataka Suzuki, Professor Amran Hamzah, and the roundtable guests: Dr. Mechtild Rössler, Dr. Gamini Wijesuriya, Ms. Carolina Castellanos, Dr. Edwin Bernbaum, Professor Christina Cameron, and Professor Michael Turner. He also congratulated the Certificate Programme on Nature Conservation and the World Heritage Studies Programme for the establishment of the UNESCO Chair on Nature-Culture Linkages in Heritage Conservation, which organizes the CBWNCL (Capacity Building Workshop on Nature-Culture Linkages in Asia and the Pacific). He pointed out that the University of Tsukuba is working closely with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, IUCN, ICOMOS, and ICCROM in the development of this novel curriculum.

Subsequently, Dr. Mechtild Rössler, Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the Division of Heritage, gave an opening address. She talked about the emergence of the nature-culture linkages approach in the context of the World Heritage Convention, explaining that this work has come a long way. She recognized the importance of the people working on the ground and she added that the UNESCO network of chairs supports this new endeavour, established by the University of Tsukuba. Furthermore, she acknowledged the contribution of this new UNESCO Chair for the World Heritage Capacity Building Strategy. She also congratulated Japan on the inscription of Okinoshima island onto the World Heritage List in July 2017 as a sacred landscape.



*Professor Kyosuke Nagata, President of the University of Tsukuba, inaugurating the International Symposium. (Photo: Fauziatul Fitriyah)*