Re-examination of the Relationship between World Heritage Site Designation and Local Identity

ABSTRACT: Jimura (2015) investigated the relationship between World Heritage Site (WHS) listing and local identity through the analysis of 14 Japanese WHSs, and identified three requirements WHS inscription must satisfy to contribute greatly to creating/enhancing local identity. First, the site must not be well-known to visitors before WHS designation but see a clear increase in the visitor number afterwards. Second, it must not have played a significant role in the local community before WHS inscription, but the community's awareness of the value of the site must have been enhanced subsequently. Third, it needs to be a definite area where local population resides. Five sites have been added to Japan's list of WHSs since the time of Jimura (2015)'s investigation, making it a total of 19 WHSs as of February 2016. Hence, this paper re-examines the association between WHS designation and local identity by exploring whether the three requirements are still valid.

1 INTRODUCTION

Building or enhancing people's identity has been increasingly challenging in the era of globalisation like today. This issue is not limited to the national level but also applies to the regional and local levels. For example, uniqueness which is peculiar to a certain nation, region or city is closely linked to a national, regional or local identity (Chang, 1999; Wilk, 1999); however, such uniqueness has been lost or damaged in this standardised world system where national, regional or local culture can be homogenised at least to some extent as globalisation progresses (Robertson, 1992; Scott, 1997). As for the interrelationship between globalisation and local culture, Arnett (2002: 774) argues that 'As local cultures change in response to globalization, most people manage to adapt to the changes and develop a bicultural or hybrid identity that provides the basis for living in their local culture and also participating in the global culture'. In light of this statement, it would be meaningful to re-investigate how local culture, including local heritage, and local identity are interconnected.

In the fields of cultural, heritage and tourism studies, the relationship between identity and heritage has been examined at the national, regional and local levels by diverse researchers (e.g. Anico & Peralta, 2008; Ashworth, 2013; Ashworth et al., 2007; Crowell et al., 2001; Goudie et al., 1999; Graham et al., 2000; Graham & Howard, 2008; Macdonald, 2013; McLean, 2006; Smith, 2006). However, the number of existing studies which refer specifically to the association between identity and World Heritage Sites (WHSs) is rather limited (e.g. Bourdeau et al., 2015; Labadi, 2007; Li et al., 2008; Shackley, 1998).

In order to be designated as a WHS, the site must have outstanding universal value and satisfy at least one out of ten selection criteria (UNESCO, 2016a). Needless to say, all WHSs need to be conserved in a sustainable manner for future generations, even if tourism develops further at the WHSs thanks to the brand power of World Heritage (WH) status and endorsement of authenticity. A certain number of WHSs, however, contain local communities within their core or buffer zone. Therefore, studying about the roles WH status plays for local communities and in

local people's minds is really important (Jimura, 2007; Jimura, 2011). The number of WHSs in the world as of February 2016 is 1031: 802 cultural, 197 natural and 32 mixed Sites in 163 States Parties (UNESCO, 2016b). New WHSs are added to the WH List every year. In addition, countless sites in various countries still aim to be inscribed as WHSs and are attempting to win fierce competitions at both domestic and international levels. This is especially prominent in some countries such as Japan. One of the main reasons why numerous sites desire WH status is that it can work as a global top brand in tourism, especially in cultural and natural heritage tourism. The strong impact WH status has as a top brand is also pointed out by Buckley (2004) and Ryan and Silvanto (2009). Hence, it can be stated that WHSs have prominent value as a tourism brand as well as outstanding universal value as heritage. Nevertheless, the implications of being a WHS to local communities have not been investigated enough, nor has the relationship between WHS designation and a local identity. Concerning this point, Jimura (2015) investigates the association between WHS listing and a local identity through the analysis and evaluation of 14 WHSs in Japan.

2 THREE EXISTING REQUIREMENTS SUGGESTED BY JIMURA (2015)

As a result of Jimura (2015)'s research on the relationship between WHS inscription and a local identity through the examination and assessment of 14 WHSs in Japan, it is suggested that there are three requirements WHS listing must satisfy to make an important contribution to creating or enhancing a local identity. First, the site must not be a well-established destination amongst domestic as well as overseas visitors prior to WHS designation, but need to become well known and experience a distinct increase in the number of visitors afterwards (Jimura, 2015). This also signifies that after WHS inscription, local communities can rediscover themselves and their heritage through the discovery process of the site by outsiders like visitors (Jimura, 2015). Second, the site must not have played a vital role in the local community before WHS listing, WH status must have a positive impact on this, and the local community's awareness of the value of the site must have been enhanced after WHS listing (Jimura, 2015). Third, the site must be a definite area with clear boundaries where local people actually live and a local community certainly exists (Jimura, 2015). However, these findings are based on the list of WHSs in Japan as of March 2011 (see Table 1).

Table 1 List of World Heritage Sites in Japan as of March 2011 (Source: UNESCO, 2016b)

No	Name	Type	Year of Inscription
1	Buddhist Monuments in the Horyu-ji Area	Cultural	1993
2	Himeji-jo	Cultural	1993
3	Shirakami-Sanchi	Natural	1993
4	Yakushima	Natural	1993
5	Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto (Kyoto, Uji and Otsu Cities)	Cultural	1994
6	Historic Villages of Shirakawa-go and Gokayama	Cultural	1995
7	Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome)	Cultural	1996
8	Itsukushima Shinto Shrine	Cultural	1996
9	Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara	Cultural	1998
10	Shrines and Temples of Nikko	Cultural	1999
11	Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu	Cultural	2000
12	Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range	Cultural	2004
13	Shiretoko	Natural	2005
14	Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine and its Cultural Landscape	Cultural	2007

3 WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN JAPAN INSCRIBED SINCE MARCH 2011

Five Japanese WHSs, four cultural and one natural, have been added to the WH list since March 2011. Consequently, Japan has 19 WHSs, 15 cultural and four natural sites, as of February 2016. Therefore, this paper intends to re-examine the relationship between WHS designation

and a local identity by exploring whether or not the above-mentioned three requirements are still valid, focusing on newly added five WHSs. Table 2 shows these five recently designated WHSs and the following section discusses each of the three established requirements, referring to these new sites.

Table 2 List of World Heritage Sites in Japan inscribed after March 2011 (Source: UNESCO, 2016b)

No	Name	Type	Year of Inscription
15	Hiraizumi – Temples, Gardens and Archaeological Sites Representing the Buddhist Pure Land	Cultural	2011
16	Ogasawara Islands	Natural	2011
17	Fujisan, sacred place and source of artistic inspiration	Cultural	2013
18	Tomioka Silk Mill and Related Sites	Cultural	2014
19	Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining	Cultural	2015

4 RE-EXAMINATION OF THREE EXISTING REQUIREMENTS

4.1 *'How Well Known is the Site to Visitors before WHS Designation'*

This is the first requirement for WHS listing to make a critical contribution to shaping or heightening a local identity (Jimura, 2015). Jimura (2015) argues that WHSs in Japan can be divided into two categories by the level of recognition, development and visitor numbers before and after WHS inscription. Of 14 WHSs previously examined by Jimura (2015), some WHSs had already been well known and established tourist destinations or visitor attractions, attracting a considerable number of visitors even prior to WHS listing. Such sites include Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto (Kyoto, Uji and Otsu Cities) (No. 5 in Table 1) and Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara (No. 9 in Table 1) (Jimura, 2015). On the other hand, other WHSs had been less known and less recognised as tourist destinations or visitor attractions until WH status is given. The examples of such sites are Historic Villages of Shirakawa-go and Gokayama (WHS Shirakawa-go and Gokayama) (No. 6 in Table 1) (Asakura, 2008; Jimura, 2011) and Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range (WHS Kii) (No 12 in Table 1) (Jimura, 2014). After WHS designation, however, the sites applying to the latter case have become renowned and emerging tourist destinations or visitor attractions, seeing a clear increase in the number of visitors. The local communities in these sites can rediscover themselves and their heritage by being discovered and valued by external people (Jimura, 2015), and this process can lead to building or boosting a local identity. Hence, it could be stated that WH status plays a significant role in building or enhancing a local identity for these WHSs (Jimura, 2015).

Of the five newly added WHSs (see Table 2), 'Fujisan, sacred place and source of artistic inspiration' (WHS Mt. Fuji) (No. 17 in Table 2) had been exceptionally famous and a well-established tourist destination even prior to its WHS designation in 2013 (Ivy, 1988; Josan, 2009). As for Ogasawara Islands (WHS Ogasawara) (No. 16 in Table 2), the WHS has seen some increase in the visitor number after its WHS listing in 2011, but this increase is not prominent compared to other three natural WHSs in Japan (No. 3, 4 & 13 in Table 1) mainly due to serious accessibility issues (Ministry of the Environment Government of Japan, n.d.). Regarding 'Hiraizumi – Temples, Gardens and Archaeological Sites Representing the Buddhist Pure Land' (WHS Hiraizumi) (No. 15 in Table 2) designated in 2011, Kahoku Shimpo (2015) reports that Hiraizumi Town has attracted more than two million visitors each year between 2012 and 2014 thanks to its WH status. Hiraizumi Town (2013) is convinced that such an increase would lead to creation of a reinforced local identity. Concerning 'Tomioka Silk Mill and Related Sites' (WHS Tomioka) (No. 18 in Table 2) inscribed in 2014, Tomioka Silk Mill, which has been open to the public as a charging museum since April 2007, saw a dramatic increase in the visitor number after WHS listing from 314,516 between April 2013 and March 2014 to 1,337,720 between April 2014 and March 2015 (more than 425%) (Tomioka Silk Mill, 2016). The Mill attracted 1,041,045 visitors between April 2015 and January 2016 (Tomioka Silk Mill, 2016).

Hence, it can be said that there has been a clear increase in the visitor number thanks to its WH status. Such an increase would also contribute to the growth in the visitor number to Tomioka City where the Mill is located and would be help revitalise the city (Gunma Prefecture, 2015). 'Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining' (WHS Meiji) (No. 19 in Table 2) was designated as a cultural WHS last year, in 2015. Thus, it would be too early to discuss about this WHS in terms of the changes in the visitor numbers before and after WHS listing.

The first requirement advocated by Jimura (2015) was that the site must not be well known before WHS designation and that its recognition is enhanced as evidenced by a sharp increase in the number of visitors after WHS listing. As the discussion above shows, there would be no reason to abolish or amend this requirement. Therefore, the first requirement should be kept as it is as one of the requirements WHS listing must satisfy to make a crucial contribution to shaping or enhancing a local identity.

4.2 *'The Value Ascribed to a Site by Local Communities before WHS Designation'*

This is the second requirement WHS inscription must meet to greatly contribute to building or heightening a local identity (Jimura, 2015). Jimura (2015: 86) notes "the value of the site for local people and its role before WHS listing are closely related to the difference in local people's recognition of the site before and after WHS inscription". This means that if a site has always been really meaningful for local people and already been playing an essential role in local communities prior to WHS designation, the impact of WH status on local communities would be highly limited [e.g. WHS Kii (No. 12 in Table 1) and 'Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine and its Cultural Landscape' (WHS Iwami) (No. 14 in Table 1)] or insignificant [e.g. 'Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome)' (No. 7 in Table 1)] (Jimura, 2015). Jimura (2014)'s study on WHS Kii, however, identifies that the value of the site has been much more recognised and appreciated by the local communities after WHS listing, although its value was already well understood by the local people as well as the Japanese public even before WHS inscription.

Looking at WHS Hiraizumi (No. 15 in Table 2), one of the five WHSs recently designated, WH status seems to have played an important role in the local communities since WHS listing as it has increased the level of the local people's pride in Hiraizumi Town (Hiraizumi Town, 2013). The religious assets and properties listed as the WHS were already closely linked to the local people's identity prior to WHS listing; however, the role they play in the local communities and the meaning they have for the local identity seem to have increased tremendously after WHS designation (Hiraizumi Town, 2013). WHS Ogasawara (No. 16 in Table 2) is a natural WHS, and the islands listed as the WHS are all desert islands except two inhabited ones (UNESCO, 2016c). However, it would be difficult for the local people to fully realise and appreciate its unique and valuable fauna and flora even after WHS inscription as the residential areas of the inhabited islands are excluded from the WHS. Concerning WHS Mt. Fuji (No. 17 in Table 2), its stunning shape and symbolic value is one of the essential factors which make it a sacred mountain for Japanese people. In fact, Watkins (1986: 12) states that "Mt. Fuji is a sacred symbol of Japan". Mt. Fuji extends over Shizuoka and Yamanashi Prefectures and it would be certain that most of the people living near Mt. Fuji have some degree of attachment to the mountain. In light of the points above, however, WH status of Mt. Fuji would not make a vital contribution to creating or enhancing the local identity, although the status would make some contribution to further enhancement of the national identity as Japanese. Each of the four properties constituting WHS Tomioka (No. 18 in Table 2) is a building or landmark, belonging to a different city or town in Gunma Prefecture. Hence, it is not clear how the local people see the property situated in their own city or town in relation to its link to a local identity. WHS Meiji (No. 19 in Table 2) is a very unique WHS as it was inscribed through a serial nomination. "A serial nomination is any nomination which consists of two or more unconnected areas" (UNESCO, 2016d). This WHS consists of 23 properties located in eight different areas from northeastern to southwestern Japan. Most of the properties are purely industrial heritage (UNESCO, 2016e) which received little attention from local people or visitors before WHS listing. This is mainly due to lack of recognition as heritage and absence of their positive image amongst people. Therefore, it would be presumed that WH status would make a contribution to

enhance the publicity of these properties, whilst it would be doubtful if WH status could play a significant role in creating or enhancing a local identity.

The second requirement suggested by Jimura (2015) was that the site must not have played an important role in the local community before WHS listing, WH status needs to have a positive impact on this, and the local community's awareness of the value of the site must be enhanced by possessing WH status. On the basis of the arguments above, there would be no reason to remove this requirement; however, it should be emphasised that the role WHS listing plays and the value the site was given afterwards needs to be at the local level rather than the national or regional level.

4.3 *'The WHS as a Place to Live'*

This is the third requirement for WHS designation to make a significant contribution to creating or heightening a local identity (Jimura, 2015). Of 14 WHSs in Japan as of March 2011, only WHS Shirakawa-go and Gokayama (No. 6 in Table 1) seems to totally satisfy this requirement. This is because the three designated areas within the WHS (core zones: one in Shirakawa-go and two in Gokayama) can be seen as places where local people live and local communities surely exist within each of the areas. Moreover, each area is relatively small and in the proximity of each other. Jimura (2014)'s study, however, found that WHS Kii (No. 12 in Table 1) could also be seen as local people's place to live due to the local people's perception of the site despite the fact that not a definite area as a whole but the religious assets and properties in its core zones are the components of the WHS. Nevertheless, the local communities seem to regard WHS Kii, including its extensive buffer zone extending over several different municipalities, as their own place and seem to feel that they live in the WHS (Jimura, 2014). It is a very intriguing and eye-opening finding of this research which triggers modification of the third requirement.

Regarding the five WHSs listed after March 2011, the case of WHS Hiraizumi (No. 15 in Table 2) seems to be in between the case of WHS Kii (No. 12 in Table 1) and that of WHS Shirakawa-go and Gokayama (No. 6 in Table 1). Like WHS Kii, on the one hand, some religious assets and properties in its core zones are the components of WHS Hiraizumi whilst a large area containing other assets and properties are set as a buffer zone. The local communities seem to understand the whole of such a large area as their WHS and feel that they reside in the WHS (Hiraizumi Town, 2013). On the other hand, all of the listed assets and properties are situated within Hiraizumi Town (UNESCO, 2016f); hence, this physical proximity amongst the assets and properties is similar to the case of WHS Shirakawa-go and Gokayama. As stated in 4.2, WHS Ogasawara (No. 16 in Table 2) is a natural WHS mainly consisting uninhabited islands scattered over about 400 km from north to south (UNESCO, 2016c). Hence, it would be challenging for the local communities to well understand its exceptional and treasured natural resources in relation to a local identity. As for WHS Mt. Fuji (No. 17 in Table 2), overall it is not appropriate to see this WHS as people's place of residence. Furthermore, as also argued in 4.2, Mt. Fuji is a holly icon for the Japanese rather than just for the local people who live near the mountain. WHS Tomioka (No.18 in Table 2) and WHS Meiji (No.19 in Table 2) are the second and third industrial heritage sites which have been added to the WH list of Japan. The level of their industrial importance is the same as that of WHS Iwami, and such significance would be more related to a national identity rather than a local identity, considering the roles these WHSs have played in the historical industrialisation process of Japan. As examined in 4.2, each component comprising WHS Tomioka is a building or monument, situating in a different city or town in Gunma Prefecture. As they are modern industrial heritage sites, their historical link to the local communities would be shorter or weaker than other cultural WHSs in Japan. Hence, it would not be reasonable to presume that WH status of WHS Tomioka would play a vital role in developing or improving a local identity, although Tomioka Silk Mill, a main listed property, can be seen as an iconic structure, which is located in a residential area of Tomioka City, with a link to the city's history, the mill workers and their descendants. The same would apply to WHS Meiji, modern industrial properties, whose components are scattered about Japan, and their link to local communities would be even more limited than WHS Tomioka as each listed property does not seem to be well recognised by the local community. Thus, it would be even more chal-

lenging for WHS designation to make a critical contribution to building or heightening a local identity at WHS Meiji than WHS Tomioka.

The third requirement proposed by Jimura (2015) was that the site needs to be a place where local people live. In light of the discussion above, there would not be a sensible reason to eliminate this requirement; however, it should be more flexible. This implies that not only the sites where local communities surely exist (e.g. WHS Shirakawa-go and Gokayama) but also the sites where local people can feel a sense of belonging through listed assets or properties after WHS listing (e.g. WHS Kii and WHS Hiraizumi) should be considered as one of the requirements.

5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the three requirements WHS listing must satisfy to make a significant contribution to shaping or enhancing a local identity are still valid. However, the second and third requirements need amendments. Therefore, a new set of three requirements are identified based on the analysis and evaluation of the 19 WHSs in Japan as of February 2016. First, the site must not be well known to visitors before WHS designation, but its recognition is clearly enhanced and the site experiences a distinct increase in the number of visitors after WHS inscription. Second, the site must not have played a meaningful role in the local community before WHS listing, WH status needs to influence this situation in a positive manner specifically at the local level, and the local community's awareness of the value of the site must be enhanced by having WH status. Third, the site needs to be inscribed as a WHS as a definite area with clear boundaries where local people actually live. If the site is not an area designated as above, the site must enable its local people to foster a sense of belonging through the listed assets or properties within the WHS. Of the 19 WHSs, only WHS Shirakawa-go and Gokayama (No. 6 in Table 1), WHS Kii (No. 12 in Table 1), and WHS Hiraizumi (No. 15 in Table 2) seem to meet all of these three requirements. Hence, it can be stated that WHS listing play a key role in building or enhancing a local identity at these three WHSs. The main limitations of this research are that it only examines WHSs in Japan and that the conclusion has been drawn from the investigation of a limited number of WHSs in one country. Needless to say, however, it is essential to explore a wider range of WHSs located in different countries in order to develop more comprehensive and thorough requirements WHS inscription needs to meet to play a vital role in creating or enhancing a local identity.

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