Cultural heritage is a testament to humanity’s long history. We are responsible for passing on cultural heritage to future generations as an asset shared by all people.

Due to conflicts, natural disasters, environmental degradation, and changes in social structure that destroy cultural heritage, many treasures are in danger of not being passed on to future generations. This would be a great loss to all humanity. In June 2006, Japan enacted the Law on the Promotion of International Cooperation for Protection of Cultural Heritage Abroad. Japan is expected to contribute to the advancement of cultural heritage. In Japan, a wide variety of consortium members, including research institutions, administrative agencies, and private-sector corporations, are involved in international cooperation. We promote relations among the groups by conducting workshops and seminars, or using an interactive website. These enable our experiences/expertise to be shared, contributing to better coordination of international efforts.

Our Missions

- Promoting human relations among consortium members
- Expediting the collection and exchange of information concerning international cooperation
- Carrying out case studies and research on international cooperation in cultural heritage
- Publication and dissemination of activities on international cooperation in cultural heritage

Activities

- Network Building
  In Japan, a wide variety of consortium members, including research institutions, administrative agencies, and private-sector corporations, are involved in international cooperation. We promote relations among the groups by conducting workshops and seminars, or using an interactive website. These enable our experiences/expertise to be shared, contributing to better coordination of international efforts.

- Information Sharing
  We expedite the collection and exchange of information concerning international cooperation and provide a database of heritage preservation projects undertaken by Japanese organizations, both private and governmental.

- Research
  We conduct research on other countries’ international cooperation strategies. Using our findings, we act as the advisory body for Japan’s preservation projects. Recently, we responded to Mongolia’s and Federated States of Micronesia’s request for assistance in preservation. Moreover, in order to identify potential areas in need of Japanese assistance or cooperation in Bhutan and Armenia, we collected the information on the present situation as well as current problems with the existing conservation efforts. In addition, we studied other countries’ international efforts towards the recovery of disaster-affected cultural heritage.

- Public Advocacy
  We publish and disseminate information on international cooperation activities in cultural heritage. We also have a website, and publish cultural heritage preservation projects online. Through symposia, we share up-to-date information and discuss the importance of international cooperation.

Japan has played an active part in safeguarding the world’s cultural heritage through cooperation, human resource development, and joint research schemes for more than twenty years. To widely disseminate these efforts, the Japan Consortium for International Cooperation in Cultural Heritage presents an introduction to Japan’s international cooperation activities for the preservation of cultural heritage on its website (http://www.jcicheritage.jp/).

To date, Japan has engaged in over 1,500 international cooperation projects related to cultural heritage. These projects have taken diverse forms, such as the provision of equipment necessary for the preservation of cultural heritage; carrying out academic studies, value assessments, and restoration and conservation activities for specific heritage sites; and conducting specialist training programs and awareness-raising activities for local residents who are the bearers of cultural heritage. Financial assistance for these projects has also taken diverse forms, including ODA (Japan’s Official Development Assistance) funds, ministry and agency budgets, scientific research grants, and other funding from the Japanese government, as well as subsidies from private foundations and funds generated by corporate social action projects.

Implementing such projects requires the participation and mutual cooperation of people and organizations from various realms in both the public and private sectors. For example, people are needed to study the value and history of cultural heritage; to carry out actual restoration and conservation work on cultural heritage, and to study the techniques needed for such work; to promote institutions and policies for safeguarding cultural heritage; and to build capacities in local people to effectively utilize cultural heritage, develop their communities, and engage in conservation activities. Based on this awareness, the Consortium is committed to supporting and strengthening the partnership among all players involved in cooperation on cultural heritage, in order to facilitate effective international cooperation.

In this pamphlet we present some of the efforts made by Japan in the context of international cooperation for the safeguarding of the world’s cultural heritage.
A joint project between Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties and the Archaeological Institute of Henan Province
In search of a link between Nara Sancai and Tang Sancai

Background

Henan Province is situated on the lower basin of the Huanghe River. There are a number of important historical sites dating from the Paleolithic era to the time of Ming-Qing Dynasty, among which are sites related to ceramic production. In Gongyi City, situated between the provincial capital of Zhengzhou and the city of Luoyang in Henan Province, remains of kilns can be found within an area ranging over approximately 160,000 square meters. Remains of kilns for the manufacture of white and celadon ceramics, as well as Tang Sancai (three-colored glazed Tang ceramics), were known to exist in the villages of Da Huangye, Xiao Huangye and Baihe. Tang Sancai is known to have been carried not only throughout East Asia, but throughout the world, as the kilns in this area have attracted worldwide attention. The remains of the kiln in Gongyi, however, have been the subject of small-scale excavation and surveying only, thus a full-scale study is needed to shed light on the production of Tang Sancai as a whole. The kiln remains in this region are of great significance in explaining the origins of Tang Sancai discovered in Japan, as well as the evolution of Nara Sancai (three-colored glazed Nara ceramic). Therefore, the Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties (hereafter Nabunken) and the Archaeological Institute of Henan Province concluded an agreement in 2000 to undertake ongoing research on the remains of Gongyi kilns and the artifacts found at the site. Since then, researchers from both institutions have visited each other, and research on Sancai and related materials in China and Japan continues.

Results of excavation at the Sancai kiln in Gongyi

Between the years 2002 and 2004, we carried out an excavation of the Huangye kiln remains in villages of Da Huangye, Xiao Huangye, where we found a number of valuable artifacts and structural remains, including Sancai ceramics, pottery, and related tools, as well as a kiln and a workshop. The Sancai ceramic pillow discovered at this site showed patterns and production techniques identical to those of a ceramic pillow found at Daianji Temple in Nara, demonstrating that some of the Tang Sancai found in Japan was produced in the Huangye kiln. In addition to Tang Sancai, we discovered Tang Dynasty celadon and white floral porcelain, identical to that which had been found earlier at Yangzhou castle, and were able to specify the origin of this style of ceramic for the first time.

Subsequently, from 2005 to 2008, we carried out an excavation of the Baihe kiln in the village of Baihe. The first Tang Sancai horse to be found in Gongyi kiln was discovered in this excavation, increasing the possibility that this kiln was the site of production for the ceramic figures found in the tombs in Luoyang. Besides Tang Sancai, we discovered white and celadon ceramics, thought to be from Northern Wei Dynasty, which was a significant achievement in terms of identifying the origin of early Chinese white ceramics. White ceramics thought to have been produced in Baihe was discovered in Luoyang castle, the capital of Northern Wei, and further highlighted the connection between the two.

As a result of this research, we concluded that the majority of the Tang Sancai found in Japan most likely originated at the Gongyi kilns, which will bring us further insights regarding the development of Nara Sancai.

Joint project on Sancai in China and Japan

Along with the excavation, we have been carrying out archival research in order to evaluate the archaeological findings from the Huangye and Baihe kilns. We investigated materials held by various institutions in Japan and China, including the Archaeological Institute of Henan Province, and the Gongyi Museum. Researchers from Nabunken visited China, and, together with their counterparts at the Archaeological Institute of Henan Province, studied Tang Sancai and related materials in various institutions. Furthermore, each year academics from China were invited to conduct research on materials at Nabunken and other institutions in Japan. In addition, Nabunken organized a series of lectures by visiting Chinese researchers on the latest developments in archaeological research in Henan.

Detailed results of this research can be found in two illustrated publications: Gongyi Huangye Tang Sancai (2003), and New Archaeological Discoveries from the Huangye Tang Sancai Kiln (2006), and in An archaeological research leading report on the Hmian Gongyi Huangye Kiln (2019), which contains an excavation report and scientific findings. In addition, a special exhibition entitled Legendary Tang Masterpieces: New Archaeological discoveries of Huangye Tang Sancai was held at Asuka Historical Museum in the fall of 2008. Nabunken researchers also participated in conferences held in China, where they reported on the latest findings. We intend to continue our joint research, and have some forthcoming publications, an illustrated publication on the Baihe kiln, and an excavation report on the remains of the Huangye and Baihe kilns.
Mongolia-Japan Joint Research Project on Archaeological Sites related to Genghis Khan (“Shine Zuun” New Century Project)

Research and Conservation of Avraga, Capital of “The Blue Wolf”

The key to the mysteries surrounding the rise of the great empire

Genghis Khan was the founder of the vast Mongol Empire, which emerged in the early thirteenth century and dominated vast areas of the Eurasian continent. Avraga was the site of Genghis Khan’s stronghold. The remains of Avraga, known as the first capital of the Mongol Empire, are located in the grasslands of Delgakhara village, in Khentii Province, approximately 250km southeast of the present capital, Ulaanbaatar. The site is considered important for understanding the rise to power of Genghis Khan and the development of his empire, yet very few studies have been carried out to date.

Transformation taking place in the grasslands of Mongolia

The archaeological site of Avraga has been seriously damaged by the tracks of vehicles that travel back and forth at random across the land in order to get to the villages and scenic areas nearby. In addition, Mongolia is going through rapid economic growth, and its GDP has risen approximately 10% compared to the previous year, due to development of underground resources such as coal and rare earth minerals. The living standard of people in Mongolia is improving, but the gap between the rich and poor is wide, and infrastructure is insufficient, so there is little room in government budgets for cultural projects. Furthermore, not only is protection of cultural heritage always last on the list for funding, but mining and road construction are given priority, with the result that valuable cultural heritage is being demolished every year. Avraga is no exception, and development plans are now under discussion to exploit the potential of coal and petroleum reserves in the area. Detailed research and a conservation plan for Avraga are now urgently needed.

Globalization and regional contribution

International research team

The objective of the current project is to unravel the history of Genghis Khan and the emergence of the Mongol Empire. Given the scarcity of written artifacts, we proceed by applying an empirical approach based on archeological evidence. Researchers from Niigata University and the Institute of Archaeology of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences form the core members of the project, with participants from ten universities in Japan, as well as researchers from the United States and China.

Integration of research, conservation and dissemination

Excavation forms the major part of the project, but efforts are also made toward conservation and dissemination. After researching the site, and carrying out exhaustive documentation of the ruins, we refurbish everything as it was, to protect it from harm. This is very important in Mongolia, where severe weather conditions may cause serious damage to the remains. In 2007, we were able to build a steel fence around the site, which covers an area of 1200m by 500m, thanks to financial support from the Grant Assistance for Cultural Grassroots Projects administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. The fence protects the site from unrestricted car traffic. In addition, we established a museum near the site with financial assistance from the Government of Mongolia. The museum exhibits the artifacts excavated from the Avraga site, to inform the public about the site and its significance. We also offer field trips for local schoolchildren, who will be the bearers of the heritage in the future, so that they will better understand the site, and learn to protect and care for it.

From National Heritage to World Heritage

Mongolia’s Spiritual Homeland

The most significant discovery at the site of Avraga was the mausoleum of Genghis Khan. This mausoleum, constructed after Khan’s death to venerate his soul, is believed to be the original location of a sacred place known as the “Mausoleum of Genghis Khan,” now located in Inner Mongolia, in the Republic of China. Genghis Khan is a hero for Mongolians, representing their identity, and so his mausoleum can be said to be the spiritual homeland of Mongolia. There are many other historical sites in the area related to Genghis Khan that are indispensable to an understanding of his life. The region is home to legends of Khan, and to people whose traditional nomadic lifestyle, like the landscape, remains unchanged from the days of the Empire.

Integration of history, nature and tradition

Working in close coordination with the Government of Mongolia and local researchers, our project promotes the conservation of the Avraga site and surrounding area as an integrated cultural heritage site incorporating history, nature, and tradition. We have been striving constantly to develop measures to disseminate information about this site, not only to Mongolians, but to the world. The site of Avraga was designated as a Most Important Cultural Heritage in Mongolia, and was included on the country’s list of candidates for the UNESCO World Heritage list. Looking forward, we shall redouble our efforts to protect the site, and to have it inscribed on the World Heritage list.

(Noriyuki Shiraishi, Niigata University)
Conservation of Wall Painting Fragments in the Collection of the National Museum of Antiquities of Tajikistan

Kamei Nobuo
Director General, Independent Administrative Institution,
National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo

Period: April 2008- March 2011
Target Country: Tajikistan

Tajikistan, a treasure trove of wall paintings

Discovery of ancient wall paintings in Tajikistan

After World War II, the Soviet Union dispatched teams of archaeological researchers to the republics in Central Asia in order to carry out excavation works. In Tajikistan, excavation was conducted at Buddhist sites in the south as well as on the remains of the Sogdian city in the north. The results of these expeditions were remarkable, as the teams discovered colorful wall paintings in Buddhist and Zoroastrian temples and in private homes of the wealthy. The paintings attracted attention worldwide, and suggested new directions for study of heretofore puzzling aspects of religion and material culture in ancient Central Asia.

Conservation of the wall paintings

Researchers at the Hermitage State Museum experimented with new methods for conserving the wall paintings, that is, removing the fragile paintings from the wall, after fixing them with synthetic resin, and taking them to a laboratory for further restoration. Many of the wall painting fragments removed by this method were transported to the Hermitage State Museum for restoration.

In 1991, Tajikistan, along with other republics in Central Asia, gained independence from the Soviet Union. Excavations were still carried out by Russian teams, but the artifacts discovered had to be preserved within the state of Tajikistan. Consequently, preservation and restoration of the artifacts also had to be done in Tajikistan, but there was no system in place to do so, since all previous work had been carried out under the direction of the State Hermitage Museum, and Tajikistan did not have the resources to take on the task.

The beginning of conservation of cultural heritage in Tajikistan

Opening of the National Museum of Antiquities of Tajikistan

After independence, amid growing interest shown by the people of Tajikistan in their own culture and history, the National Museum of Antiquities of Tajikistan opened in 2001, exhibiting artifacts from the ancient and middle ages that had been discovered in the country. The museum holds a great number of wall paintings, yet only some twenty pieces are on display, while large numbers linger in storage awaiting restoration work. International cooperation is therefore urgently needed to replace the support formerly provided by the Soviet Union, and to train experts to carry out conservation work on these wall paintings.

Human resources training through conservation of wall paintings

In March 2008, an agreement was signed between the National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo (hereinafter “NRICPT”), and the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography, Academy of Science, Tajikistan, regarding cooperation on the protection of cultural heritage. With the aim of training conservation experts in Tajikistan, the two institutions conducted preservation and restoration work on the fragments of wall paintings in the National Museum of Antiquities of Tajikistan. This project was carried out as a part of the “Networking Core Centres for International Cooperation on Conservation of Cultural Heritage” under the Agency for Cultural Affairs, in conjunction with the “Cooperative Project for Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Property in West Asia” administered by NRICPT.

During the project, conducted over three years from April 2008 to March 2011, ten missions were dispatched from Japan, and seven young Tajik researchers eager to work in conservation took part in the program as trainees. Under the direction of experts with experience in conservation of wall paintings in Japan and Europe, the young trainees learned the process thoroughly, including sorting and numbering wall painting fragments, photography, assessing condition, cleaning, reinforcement, joining, filling, and fixation of fragments on new mounting. The trainees worked on ten wall painting fragments during the course, and these were later displayed in the National Museum.

In addition, a workshop on “Conservation of Wall Paintings From Central Asia” was held each year, with the participation of conservation experts from archaeological institutes in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan, as well as the State Hermitage Museum and Dunhuang Academy.

From Tajikistan to Central Asia

During the three years of training, participants acquired skills and knowledge necessary for the conservation of wall paintings. At the same time, they came to recognize the importance of the cultural heritage of their own country, and its international significance. In the future, they will be responsible for the conservation of cultural heritage in Tajikistan. Ongoing assistance and support is necessary, however, until they are established as experts in the field.

The workshop was not only effective in enhancing the knowledge and skills of professionals engaged in preservation and restoration of wall paintings in Central Asia, but also saw the formation of a network of researchers and professionals from various countries.

Following the conservation project on the wall paintings in Tajikistan, NRICPT is currently working together with relevant institutions in Central Asia to organize workshops on archaeological research. Taking the project in Tajikistan as a point of departure, we look forward to supporting various activities related to conservation of cultural heritage in Central Asia.

(Kazuya Yamashita, National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo)
The Project on The Archaeological Research Project on the Sites of Palmyra

Keyohide Saito
Deputy Director of the Archaeological Institute of Kashihara, Nara Prefecture
Period: 1990- Ongoing
Target Country: Syrian Arab Republic

The World Heritage Site of Palmyra, a Caravan City on the Silk Road

The Syrian Arab Republic (Syria), situated on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, is a small country about half the size of Japan. Syria was governed by several different powers until it gained independence from France in 1946. Its people, however, have considered the whole of the eastern Mediterranean region known as Sham (the area that covers present day Syria, Lebanon and Jordan) as Syrian territory. Situated in the center of the development of civilization, a unique culture was born in Syria, influenced by Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia, Greece and Rome. Artifacts buried in Syria attract the attention of researchers from around the world, and various projects, including ours in Palmyra, are being carried out thanks to the generosity of the Syrian Government.

Palmyra is located in the center of the Syrian desert. It was a city-state that flourished from the first century B.C. to the third century A.D. Balancing the powers of Rome in the west and Parthia in the east, Palmyra was the most prosperous of the cities along the Silk Road. Palmyra’s wealth came to an end in 274, with the failure of Queen Zenobia’s ambitious territorial expansion. The remains of Palmyra measure six kilometers from east to west, and eight kilometers from north to south. The city is composed of various buildings, centered on the Temple of Bel, the god who ruled the universe. Like ancient remains found in Greece and Rome, the city of Palmyra is surrounded by gravestones (necropoleis). Inscribed on the World Heritage list in 1982, Palmyra is an outstanding tourist site where visitors can walk freely around the area and experience the history of the city as it was at the height of the east-west caravan trade.

Excavations and restoration projects on the remains of Palmyra are being carried out by the Nara Prefecture. Our research project, which began in 1988, is called “Exchanges with Syria after the Nara Silk Road” and has been conducted with funds from the Sumitomo Foundation and other institutions.

New perspectives on research, restoration and reconstruction in the remain of Palmyra

In the first phase of the project, carried out from 1990 to 2000, we investigated two underground tombs and a house tomb, and completed restoration and reconstruction on one underground tomb (Tomb F). As a result, visitors to Palmyra can see the newly restored underground tomb, which contributes to tourism in the area. Furthermore, our research-based restoration and reconstruction method was adopted by our Syrian counterparts when the Palmyra Museum carried out its restoration and reconstruction project on the floor and entrance stairs of the Tomb of the Three Brothers.

In the second phase, we investigated two underground tombs and a pit grave containing a wooden coffin with a stone cover, and furthermore conducted restoration and reconstruction on Tomb H. In this project, an underground tomb restored by new and different techniques was added to the southeast necropolis of Palmyra which serves a field museum. Our research, restoration, and reconstruction project not only provided a resource for tourism, but also created employment for the local community, thus contributing, however slightly, to the economy of Palmyra. Today, international teams from countries such as Poland, Germany, France, USA, Italy and Norway are doing research in Palmyra. Their findings are made public, thus providing tourists with new and exciting discoveries to enjoy while exploring the site.

We began a new project in 2006 in the northern necropolis, in order to study the historical development of funerary practices in Palmyra. The focus of the project shifted from underground tombs to a house tomb (129-b), in order to get an overview understanding of funerary practices in Palmyra. Our goal is to restore and reconstruct House Tomb 129-b, so that the house, tombs, whose contents are largely unknown, can play a role in Palmyra’s tourism industry.

(Kiyohide Saito, Archaeological Institute of Kashihara, Nara Prefecture)
Restoration of Wall Paintings in a Tomb in the Republic of Lebanon

Background of project for restoration and preservation of tomb wall paintings

Beirut, the capital of the Republic of Lebanon, and financial center of the region, has been referred to as the “Paris of the Middle East.” The city, however, was devastated in the 15-year Lebanese Civil War, and in the ensuing Israeli invasion and occupation of the area south of the Litani River, which lasted until 2000. After years of war, Lebanon started to rebuild its infrastructure, including a highway that runs north-to-south through the country. Prior to construction, the Government of Lebanon asked the Japanese government for assistance in carrying out a preliminary archaeological survey on the planned site. The Japanese Society for West Asian Archaeology agreed to dispatch three archaeologists to Tyre, a city in the southern part of the country. The three archaeologists, Ken Matsunoto and Sumioyo Tsujimura from Kokushikan University, and Takuia Izumi from Nara University (currently Kyoto University), carried out a field survey in Tyre, and discovered a number of tomb remains in the Ramali district, a suburb of Tyre, where the highway interchange was to be built. Consequently, the government revised the plan in order to avoid this area.

The preliminary survey served as a starting point for further academic research by Prof. Izumi and Prof. Tsuchimura in the Ramali district beginning in 2002. Yoichi Nishiyama, a specialist in conservation science, also joined the project to deal with issues related to preservation of the underground tomb with wall paintings coded T04. As research progressed, it became clear that paintings on the walls and ceilings in underground tomb T04 were preserved in good condition in spite of severe damage in the chamber. We therefore planned a four-year project entitled “A Study of Restoration of Tomb Wall Paintings in the Suburb of Tyre, Republic of Lebanon” which focused on preservation and restoration of site T04. In 2008, we held a ceremony to celebrate the completion of the project with a number of guests in attendance, including the head of the Director-General of Antiquities, the Executive Director of the Beirut National Museum, and the Japanese Ambassador to the Republic of Lebanon.

In 2009, we began another four-year project for restoration of underground tomb wall paintings in T01, an archaeological site in the Bruj al Shamali district in the suburbs of Tyre.

Interdisciplinary research on the underground tomb wall painting gets underway

A team was put together composed of scholars from both the humanities and natural sciences, including representatives from conservation science, restoration techniques, archaeology, art history, anthropology, microbiology, and metrology. We carried out field research for five weeks each year from August to October. However, we were compelled to change our schedule to the winter season in 2006 due to the Israeli ground attack and invasion in the south of the country.

While restoration and conservation was the primary objective of this research, the project was in fact a comprehensive interdisciplinary survey of the underground tomb wall paintings in T04 of Ramali and T01 of Bruj al Shamali.

The multi-faceted investigation of the tombs included composition analyses of the pigmentation of the wall paintings and plaster, analyses of painting techniques using infrared photography, environmental measurements in the interior of the chamber (temperature, humidity, illumination, ultraviolet levels, air pollution, fungus, and microorganisms), scientific analyses on excavated artifacts such as glass bottles, lead artifacts, coins, mosaics, and bedrock, and application of scientific preservation treatments for artifacts made of steel, copper, and linen. In addition, the team cleaned the wall paintings, reinforced fragile parts of the walls, wall paintings, mosaics and bedrock, and carried out archaeological research on the artifacts and structures of the tomb in Ramali T04. The team managed to reconstruct the collapsed stone repository, and in Bruj al Shamali T01, we carried out carbon-14 dating on the human bones, deciphered the inscriptions on the mosaic, and took three-dimensional measurements of the artifacts and structures.

Based on the data gained from the research, we will continue our efforts to determine the year of production of the wall paintings in the tombs, and the identity, social background, and historical significance of the person buried. Restoration and preservation work on the wall paintings and tomb is ongoing, in order to ensure that this heritage is passed on to future generations.

Determining the owner of the tomb, and the year of burial, and securing a stable environment for preservation

The underground tomb of Ramali measures three square meters in area, and three meters in height, within which twenty-two repositories are located on the walls to the left and right, at the back, and on the floor. The research started, the stone structure of the repository had collapsed, filling the chamber with rubble. Nevertheless, the wave pattern on the side walls, paintings on the stone pillar, sconce, and floral patterned paintings on the ceiling preserved their bright colors. Stones were returned to their original position, the interior of the chamber was cleaned, and restoration was completed in 2008. We managed to control the temperature and humidity inside the chamber based on the survey data. According to our analyses, the red, brown and yellow pigmentation on the wall surfaces was iron oxide, the green was terra sigillata, and the blue was copper. Through a series of investigations including archaeological research on the earthware, the team determined that this tomb had been constructed in the first or second century.

The underground tomb of Bruj al Shamali T01 has six stone coffins buried in the underground repository, each of which measures 4.55 meters in width, 2.55 meters in depth and 2.55 meters in height. On the walls of the chamber are colorful paintings of peacocks, fish and urns. On the wall facing south is an inscription in Greek which reads XAIPE / ΧΑΙΡΕ TΩΝ ΦΩΒΗΤΟΝ, meaning “fear the Lord, all of you.” Together with a portrait of Lyricus, the mosaic floor was an inscription also in Greek which reads ΘΑΡΙΟΝ ΟΥΔΕΝΟΝ ΘΑΝΑΤΟΝ, meaning “we must all die, 322” signifying the year 322 in the Tyre calendar, equivalent to 196 or 197 AD. These inscriptions are valuable in terms of identifying the owner of the tomb and the year of its construction. From the neighboring rock cut grave H2, which remained undisturbed by thieves, an earthen mace of Pan was discovered together with a number of glass marbles and coins in their original condition. We intend to explore further the unique characteristics of this region, such as underground tombs that are built in a unique rectangular shape, as well as stone tombs both below and above ground, and the city of Tyre as it was under the ancient Roman Empire.

(Yoichi Nishiyama, Nara University)
Excavations at Kuntur Wasi and discovery of gold artifacts

Significance of archaeological site revealed through exhaustive excavations

In 1946 the archaeological site Kuntur Wasi were discovered in the north highlands of Peru at an altitude of 2300m, but the site remained unexplored for a considerable period of time. In 1988, the University of Tokyo Expedition to the Andes, led by Dr. Yosio Onuki, began excavation at this site. By 1997 the team had clarified that Kuntur Wasi, like the famous site of Chavin de Huantar, was one of the major temples during the Late Formative Period (800-250 BC) of the Andean civilizations. In 1998, the project team moved its base of operations to Saitama University. Exhaustive research and analysis of the data led to insights into the archaeological significance of this site, and a database was made to facilitate utilization of the research findings (director: Yasutake Kato). Based on these results, the team is starting a new research project in 2011 (director: Kinya Inokuchi). All of these ongoing projects are conducted with the support of the Japanese government's Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research.

Discovery of oldest gold artifacts in Andes presents urgent challenge

In 1989, when academic researchers discovered the tombs containing the oldest gold artifacts in the Andes, the event excited worldwide attention. Furthermore, the Project Kuntur Wasi not only changed the mindset of the village people, but also connected the village with the outside world, bringing more visitors to the area. The local people have experienced the remarkable development brought to their community as a result of utilizing the cultural heritage. Furthermore, the Project Kuntur Wasi not only changed the mindset of the village people, but also made a tremendous contribution in the area of academic research in terms of human resources. Numerous students from both Peru and Japan have been putting to use the knowledge, skills and experience acquired during the project in research activities being carried out in other regions.

(Yasutake Kato, Saitama University)

Search for an effective means of protecting the valuable cultural heritage discovered during the academic research

The construction of a museum in the local village

With strong desire from the local people, it was decided to build a museum within the village in order to preserve the artifacts discovered in the excavations at Kuntur Wasi. Construction of the museum was funded through donations collected from the public at exhibitions held in Japan. In addition, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs also provided subsidies for various other facilities. The museum was completed in 1994, and donated to the village by the Japanese research team. Management of the museum was entrusted to the Kuntur Wasi Cultural Association, which was established by the village.

Electricity and water were obtained later through the efforts of local government. As a result of ongoing excavation projects, the museum had more artifacts in need of storage, and the Japanese side once again provided support to expand the museum. A police station and research facilities were later added, so that the museum, with the approval of the Peruvian government, is now fully functioning.

Restoration of the temple and establishment of heritage park

The temple of Kuntur Wasi, which had been buried for three thousand years, was revealed in its entirety after a decade of exhaustive excavations. The archaeological site, which is of great scholarly significance, should be appropriately restored and preserved, and displayed to the public. Widespread recognition of its value as cultural heritage would prevent further destruction and deterioration. Establishing a heritage park on the site, along with a museum, would contribute to the revitalization of the local community. Our plan was adopted by the UNESCO Division of Cultural Heritage, Culture Sector, and in 2000 an international research team (leader: Yasutake Kato) was organized at Saitama University. Together with the existing research team they launched a project entitled “Preservation and Restoration of the Historic Temple of Kuntur Wasi, Peru” funded by the UNESCO Japanese Trust Fund for the Preservation of the World Cultural Heritage. The construction of the heritage park was completed in 2003.

Outcome of the cultural heritage conservation project

Cultural heritage conservation project jointly organized by the academic research team and the local community

The objective of this project was not construction of the museum or establishment of the park; rather, these were necessary measures for conserving the valuable cultural heritage discovered through the research. Almost all local residents took part in the excavation work, and were involved in decision-making concerning the construction of the museum and park. The research team and the local residents came to share the idea that the conservation of cultural heritage is a holistic project, with academic research as its core; as a result, the local community actively took part in the construction and maintenance of the museum.

Passing down cultural heritage leads to community development and of human resources

During the course of the Project Kuntur Wasi, which has lasted for over two decades, a museum and a heritage park were established, and infrastructure was improved and enhanced. Transportation routes connected the village with the outside world, bringing more visitors to the area. The local people have experienced the remarkable development brought to their community as a result of utilizing the cultural heritage. Furthermore, the Project Kuntur Wasi not only changed the mindset of the village people, but also made a tremendous contribution in the area of academic research in terms of human resources. Numerous students from both Peru and Japan have been putting to use the knowledge, skills and experience acquired during the project in research activities being carried out in other regions.

(Yasutake Kato, Saitama University)
An investigation of the Nan Madol archaeological site of Pohnpei

Tomomi Haramoto
Japan Consortium for International Cooperation in Cultural Heritage

Nan Madol, Ancient City in the Pacific

Giant Ruins Shrouded in Mystery

Pohnpei Island, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, is one of the islands that form the Federated States of Micronesia. On this island are the ruins of Nan Madol, a megalith composed of 95 artificial islets made of basalt, covering an area approximately 1.5km by 0.7km. The islets are the ruins of an urban complex, constructed over the course of 1,000 years beginning in 500AD. The islets serve various functions, and include palaces, temples, royal tombs, and residential areas. It is thought that people used to travel between the islands by canoe, leading it to be described as the “Venice of the Pacific.” Nan Madol is one of the most extensive and spectacular cultural heritage sites in Oceania.

Today, Nan Madol remains shrouded in mystery. For instance, no one has explained how the basalt stones, estimated to weigh as much as 90 tons, were transported from a site more than ten kilometers away, and piled on top of one another.

Conservation of the site and inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List

Although Nan Madol is an important site both in terms of academic significance and as a resource for tourism, there is no system in place for its protection. As a result, there have been concerns regarding the adverse impact of the plants that flourish around the ruins, and about the collapse of some of the structures. Oceania, despite its vast size, covering approximately one third of the earth’s surface, has very few sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The Government of the Federated States of Micronesia therefore requested the support of UNESCO in its attempt to have Nan Madol inscribed on the World Heritage List.

In this mission, we clarified the physical issues surrounding the site, and identified the following five areas for further research: 1. move the stones of the site for the other purposes; 2. adverse impact of plants that flourish in the ruins; 3. propagation of mangroves caused by changes in water currents due to construction of the sightseeing trails; 4. wear due to visitor traffic; 5. deterioration due to age. In the absence of a master plan, all of these issues remain unresolved.

Towards the conservation of Nan Madol

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In order to create a master plan, it is essential to establish an agreement among the stakeholders, including the local traditional society and the national and state governments, and to draw up a cooperation framework regarding the conservation of the site. Although all the stakeholders are strongly committed to conservation, our survey revealed a mutual lack of trust that had prevented cooperation among the parties.

Forming of a master plan based on the agreement of all stakeholders is a prerequisite both for inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List, as desired by the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, and for receiving international assistance for conservation of the site. The JCIC-Heritage, therefore, will promote cooperation between Japan and the Federated States of Micronesia by dispatching Japanese experts to workshops aimed at creating a master plan.

The results of the above mentioned mission were used not only in the report, but also to create a pamphlet illustrating the state of conservation of the site. We hope that these pamphlets will be used to explain the current state of conservation to the local people, and as reference material when requesting assistance from the international community.

(Tomomi Haramoto, Japan Consortium for International Cooperation in Cultural Heritage)
Developing a disaster risk management plan through collaboration between experts in cultural heritage conservation and disaster mitigation.

International training course launched

In response to the Recommendations adopted at the aforementioned session on cultural heritage risk management at the UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) held in Kobe in 2005, the Research Center for Disaster Mitigation of Urban Cultural Heritage at Ritsumeikan University launched an international training course entitled “Disaster Risk Management of Cultural Heritage” in the following year.

An outline of the international training course

The objective of this international training course is to provide the trainees with an efficient knowledge and sufficient skills to draft a disaster risk management plan by taking into account the values of the cultural heritage and recognizing the specific challenges facing respective countries. The program announcements are posted on the websites of UNESCO, ICCROM, and other international organizations, and the candidates are selected by Ritsumeikan University and ICCROM. From 2006 to 2011, we have received 270 applicants from 37 countries. Instructors of the training course include experts working in relevant fields at Ritsumeikan University and various institutions such as the Agency for Cultural Affairs, the municipalities of Kyoto and Hyogo, Kyoto City Fire Department, as well as specialists from international institutions such as UNESCO, ICCROM, and ICOMOS (International Committee on Monuments and Sites).

The program brings together experts in the fields of cultural heritage conservation and disaster mitigation who have not had the opportunity to work together before. The trainees would assemble at the Research Center, and after attending lectures, they share knowledge and exchange their ideas from their respective fields to identify and address the problems concerned with cultural heritage disaster risk management in their respective countries. During the course they are also expected to formulate Disaster Risk Management Plan for specific cultural heritage sites in their home countries.

Participants from twenty countries, and joint research projects

Participating countries until 2011

Until now, 53 participants from 20 countries have attended our program, including those from Indonesia, Korea, China and the Philippines from East Asia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan from South Asia, Iran and Turkey from the Middle East, Kenya and Uganda from Africa, Peru, Jamaica, Colombia and Mexico from South and Central America, Palau from Oceania, and Serbia and Moldova from Europe. After completing the program, participants return to their organizations and share what they’ve learned by giving feedback to their colleagues and organizing workshops for site managers. As a result of the program, a joint research project for the development of Disaster Risk Management Plans for Cultural Heritage in Kathmandu Valley, was launched through collaboration between Ritsumeikan University and Institute of Engineering, Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

A joint research project at the world heritage site in Kathmandu Valley

The Research Center for Disaster Mitigation of Urban Cultural Heritage at Ritsumeikan University serves as the base for the university’s Global Center of Excellence program established in 2008, entitled “Global COE for Education, Research and Development of Strategies on Disaster Mitigation of Cultural Heritage and Historic Cities.” The Center supports an international joint research on disaster risk management of World Heritage Sites of Kathmandu Valley, Nepal as one of its on-going field studies under the G-COE Program. In this study project, researchers in the fields of building construction and urban planning are working together on issues related to cultural heritage in the Kathmandu Valley for developing a Disaster Risk Management Plan for Cultural Heritage. Activities including the international training course and the research on disaster risk reduction of cultural heritage have received international recognition, which is proven by the fact that Center’s Professor Rohit Jigyasu has been elected as the President of the International Scientific Committee on Risk Preparedness of ICOMOS (ICOMOS-ICORP).

(Kenzo Toki, Naoko Ibayu Ushitani, and Minsuk Kim)
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