

*Our Treasure Cultural Landscapes to Future Generations
- Cultural Landscape Conservation in Japan -*

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Japan Islands have formulated by quite active volcanic actions and earthquakes, which sometimes cause very severe disasters. All of the territory is surrounded by ocean and 75% is covered with forests, and Japan has very clear four seasons, as same as Italy. As a result, Japanese people has lived in good harmony with the nature, and developed quite distinctive cultural landscapes based on their land use.

For example, Kyoto is located in the middle of Japan. There are three mountain areas in the north, east and west of Kyoto, and there was a large lake where has already transformed to fields or residences in the south. Kyoto itself has a clear grid pattern, which and which surroundings represent the notion of nature in common with Eastern Asia Region. Kyoto has been developed on such natural characteristics, at first established as the first capital city in Japan in the late 9th century.

The history of landscape conservation in Japan dates back to 17th or 18th century when the lord



Figure 1. The grid pattern of Kyoto

gardens or street trees along the pilgrim routes had developed. However, some cases should be noted in this decade when the landscape act has established and the system of cultural landscape conservation has enhanced.

In 2004, two national laws in Japan have established or amended concerning the landscape conservation. One is the establishment of the Landscape Act which mainly controls the height, color, or materials of buildings and artifacts. The other is the amendment of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties to setting up the new system of cultural

landscape conservation.

In the amended law, cultural landscapes are defined as "Landscape areas that have developed in association with the modes of life or livelihoods of the people and the natural features of the region, which are indispensable for the understanding of our people's modes of life and livelihoods."

Among these cultural landscapes, Japanese Government may select an Important Cultural Landscape upon the request by the prefectural or municipal government, when the cultural landscape has been especially important and under the necessary preservation measures. At the early July 2014, 43 Important Cultural Landscapes have been selected all over Japan.

In this line, "necessary preservation measures" mean 3 conditions below; developing the conservation/management plan, establishing the ordinance based on the Landscape Act, and making consensus of stake holders.

During the evaluation of cultural landscapes through scientific researches, 3 characteristics of the landscape are taken into consideration. Firstly, it is natural characteristic such as geography, topography, geology, geomorphology, climatology and

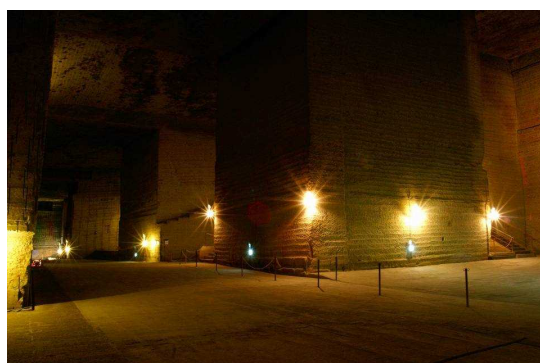


Figure 2. Quarry Fields in Oya, Tochigi Pref.

meteorology, or vegetation science, biology and ecology. It means that the scientific research clarifies under what circumstances the cultural landscape has been developed, or what ecological circumstances the cultural landscape has developed.

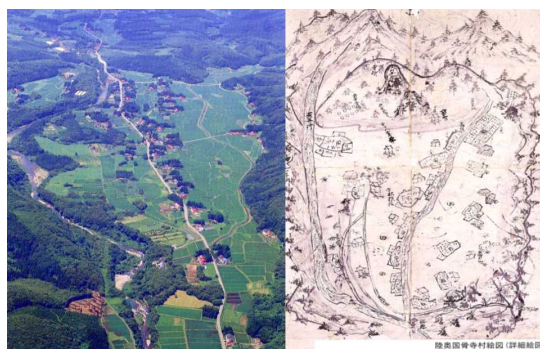


Figure 3. Land use of today / 14th century in Ichinoseki-Hondera, Iwate Pref.

Secondary, it is historical characteristic. Through the archaeological achievements or old documents and maps, the research clarifies the historical layers of land use, rather than the re-establishment of landscape in a



Figure 4. Landscape of Onta Pottery Village, Oita Pref.

certain period.

Thirdly, it is the characteristic concern about the lifestyle and the livelihood. The research clarifies how they have earned their living in the region and, as a result, what kind of land use, so to speak, what kind of landscape has been developed, thorough the geographical/ ethnological measures.



Figure 5. Cattle Ranges after Pioneering

For example, there is an important cultural landscape named “landscape of Saru Valley based on the Ainu tradition and the Modern Pioneering” in Hokkaido. Saru River is one of the largest rivers in Hokkaido, and floods with regularity have developed and renewed rich ground along the valley. Ainu people, who is the ethnic minority mainly lived in Hokkaido, has settled in this valley and brought the knowledge of floods down to the next generation by their mythology deeply relating with the surrounding geology. In 19th century, people from the mainland of Japan has settled here and developed mainly cattle ranges. This cultural landscape demonstrates the distinctive feature of cultural diversity in which the peculiar land use has developed by fusing the lifestyle after the pioneer days into the Ainu tradition.



Figure 6. Reconstruction of Traditional Residence

Through and after the selection of Important Cultural Landscape, various activities has launched to interpret or utilize, and to enhance the participation of people at the region. One of the activities is the reconstruction of Ainu residence as an exhibit of field museum, not only which has utilized as the memory keeper of Ainu tradition but also which itself constitute a part of the cultural landscape.

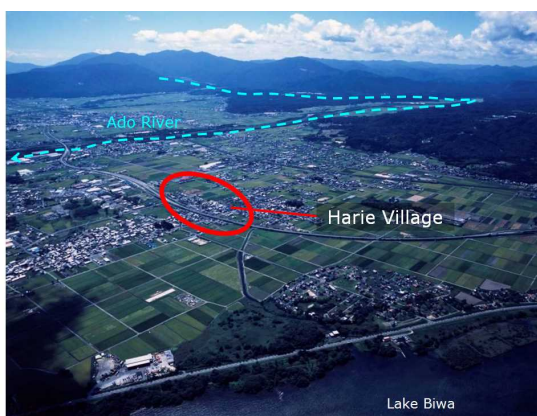


Figure 7. Location of Harie Village

Another example should be introduced. Next to Kyoto, there is an Important Cultural Landscape named "Coastal landscape of Harie and Shimofuri Villages", located on the coast of Lake Biwa, the largest lake in Japan. The villages of Harie and Shimofuri are blessed with spring water because they are located on the skirts of the fan formed by a big river. People have brought this water into their ground

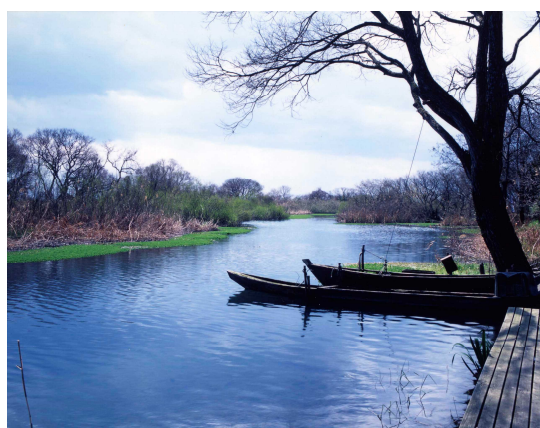


Figure 8. Inner Wetland of Harie Village

or their kitchen with special sink named "Kabata." After the utilization in the residence area, the water goes down through the waterways and little rivers with developing rich bio-diversity, into the rice paddy fields. After the cultivating crops in the rice paddy field, it goes down into Lake Biwa through rivers and inner wetlands where people live by fishery. On the other hand, fishes come up from Lake Biwa and lay eggs in the rice paddy field in spring when the crops begin to sprout. Young fishes grow up there, as if it were in harmony with the growth of crops through the summer season. And at the same time of harvesting, grown-up fishes go back to Lake Biwa. This water-mediated circulation could not be done under the purely natural environment, but it could be done under the man-made environment where there are rice paddy fields quite safe and

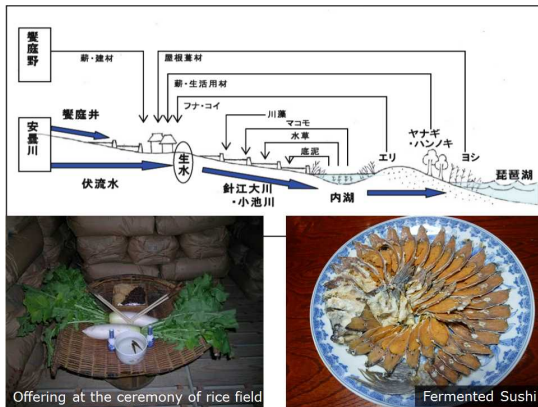


Figure 9. Water-mediated Circulation from Springs to the Lake Biwa

suitable for laying eggs. Because the people in this region consider such fish as a messenger of God in Lake Biwa who brings something good for cropping, young fishes appear at the ceremony of rice-field in spite of seemingly little relationship between the ceremony held on the ground and fish as a creature in the water, and sushi fermented with fish is regarded as a sacred food. After the selection of the important cultural landscape, so many people have come to these villages because they are located in about one hour by car or train from the urban area such as Kyoto or Osaka. People of these villages have organized a conservation group and made it a rule that every visitor is needed the reservation and the fee for guidance. The landscape is also good for the environment education and the playground for children.



Figure 10. Guidance by the people of Harie Village

Cultural landscape does not necessarily mean a “beautiful” landscape. Instead it could be considered as a medium through which we can conceive the feature, tradition, lifestyle, principle and milieu of the region. Therefore, it is difficult to capture the value of the landscape at a glance. The interpreter of the cultural landscape is needed. In this sense, cultural landscape has a strong affinity for museum which has the role of recording, interpreting, capacity building, participation, share and cooperation.

Cultural landscape can be considered as a symbol to reconfirm the way on which our ancestors have lived for a long time under the vernacular circumstances. At the same time, it can be considered as a milestone to seek the way to live at the region in the future.