

## CULTURAL LANDSCAPE IN THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST: UNDERSTANDING ON THE GAP AND CATEGORISATION

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### Abstract

The imbalance of the number of sites listed as the cultural landscape in the World Heritage List is one of the major issues since cultural landscape was adopted in the World Heritage Convention in 1992. Though the List is supposed to adequately elicit the heritage diversity in the world, most of cultural landscapes in the List as well as the Tentative List are situated in Europe and North America region. To fill this gap, it would be useful to focus the analysis on the regions other than Europe and North America which would provide insights and understanding for the future strategy.

This paper points out that one of the major factors on preparation for the nomination which influences the imbalance in the list is the political and economic stability in each state party. As for the cultural landscape, this situation calls for attention from international action on heritage safeguarding. Moreover, the imbalance raises the question whether the existing guideline on cultural landscape identification is practical for the state parties. The landscape types proposed in this paper aims to add depth to the understanding on the existing categorisation of cultural landscape in the Convention. It focuses on the landscape setting based on the existing cultural landscapes in the World Heritage List. Seven cultural landscape types in both rural and urban setting landscape are discussed.

**Key words:** *world heritage, cultural landscape, imbalance, political and economic stability, categorisation*

### 1. Introduction

The cultural landscape, one of the recent categories of the World Heritage, has different characteristic in each region depending on the cultural background and geographic condition. Although the definition and categorisation has been clarified, the inscription of cultural landscapes in the World Heritage List is well applied more in Europe and North America region.

The issue on imbalance in the World Heritage List has been discussed among professionals for years. For example, in recent article by Jukka Jokilehto indicated that '...there is a need to try and ensure that the world heritage of humankind, in all its diversity and complexity, is adequately reflected on the List.'<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the report

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<sup>1</sup> Jokilehto, J., 2006. p.4

'The World Heritage List: Filling the Gaps- an Action Plan for the Future' published in 2005 by ICOMOS pointed out the difficulty on the different process of heritage nomination and protection in each state party. Towards the future of the World Heritage, it is also instructive to look closely to the major political and economic incidents and its influence on the heritage conservation. Another influence on the nomination could be from the difficulty on cultural landscape identification. The existing definition and categorisation of cultural landscape might not have been applied effectively to the preparation of nomination documents.

## **2. Cultural landscape identification in the context of World Heritage Convention**

### **Definition and categorisation**

According to the Report of the Expert Group on Cultural Landscapes, 'cultural landscapes represent the "combined works of nature and of man"'<sup>2</sup>. Cultural landscape reflects the story of people who shaped it not only in the past but also at present time. To identify the cultural landscape, both natural and cultural elements in place need to be considered as a whole.

Regarding the identification of the cultural landscape provided in the Convention, ICOMOS set up the International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscape to clarify the category of cultural landscape and to make basic guidelines to make inventory for the Tentative List. This committee provided a document called Worldwide basic inventory/register card for cultural landscape which the types of cultural landscape are divided according to the UNESCO Operational Guideline Annex 3.<sup>3</sup>

3. Cultural landscape category/ typology:
  - 3.1. A landscape designed and created intentionally by man (park, orchard, recreational garden, plaza, square, cemetery, promenade, yard,...)
    - 3.1.a. garden (type)
    - 3.1.b. parkland (type)
    - 3.1.c. gardens related to monumental buildings and/or ensembles
  - 3.2. Organically evolved landscapes.
    - 3.2.a. relict (or fossil) landscape
    - 3.2.b. continuing evolving landscape
  - 3.3. Associative cultural landscape: connected with religious/ cultural/ natural elements (other/ associations) <sup>4</sup>

### **Euro-centrism on cultural landscape inscription**

Euro-centrism in the World Heritage List is one of the common issues discussed in recent years. As shown in the report of ICOMOS in 2005, *The World Heritage List: Filling the Gaps-An Action Plan for Future*, one of the factors of the imbalance in the List could be related with the difference of time when the state parties ratified the World Heritage Convention. It referred to new state parties that have less inscribed properties than former members. However, there are some exceptions especially in state parties in Africa, which

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<sup>2</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS, 1992. in paragraph 35

<sup>3</sup> Electronic version is available in <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide05-annex3-en.pdf> , accessed 14 February 2006

<sup>4</sup> ICOMOS, 2006

have ratified the Convention for years but have very few sites inscribed as cultural landscape<sup>5</sup>.

As of 2005, most of the inscribed cultural landscapes are situated in Europe and North America region. Considering the average number of cultural landscape inscription in each country, the imbalance is even more obvious than that of the whole List. (See Table 1) Especially in Arab States region, so far, only one cultural landscape is inscribed.

**Table 1:** Analysis of Euro-centrism in the World Heritage List

Region	Number of State Parties in region	World Heritage Properties*			Cultural landscape**		
		Number of World Heritage Inscription	Average inscription in one state party	Average inscription per average inscription in EN	Number of cultural landscape inscription	Average inscription in one state party	Average inscription per average inscription in EN
AF	26	77	2.96	0.34	6	0.23	0.33
AR	14	57	4.07	0.47	1	0.07	0.10
AP	25	167	6.68	0.77	10	0.40	0.60
EN	48	417	8.69	1.00	33	0.69	1.00
LC	25	112	4.48	0.52	3	0.12	0.17
Total	138	830	6.01	-	53	0.38	-

**Source:** T. Sirisrisak and N. Akagawa

**Note:**

\* based on the World Heritage List in 2006

\*\* based on ICOMOS, 2005a

AF = Africa region

AR = Arab States region

AP = Asia and the Pacific region

EN = Europe and North America region

LC = Latin America and the Caribbean region

Nevertheless, considering the pathway of heritage conservation movement in Europe and North America and the number of state parties in these regions, the imbalance in the World Heritage List would certainly happen. For example, around one third of the state parties which have properties in the List are in Europe and North America region and there were a number of important steps regarding conservation initially occurred in Europe.<sup>6</sup> Rather than asking why many World Heritage properties are situated in Europe and North America region, the question on why the inscription is not widely applied in other regions need to be raised.

**Obstacles from political and economic incidents**

The nomination for Tentative List and World Heritage inscription depends on the how much effort and interest each state party is willing to provide. In some cases, the interest on cultural landscape safeguarding is paused by some political or economic reasons. Since cultural landscape has been accepted in the World Heritage Convention in 1992, a number of chaotic situations have occurred in many parts of the world. The incidents involving the conflict or natural disaster brought the state parties into political and economic crisis and subsequently would affect the interest on the safeguarding of cultural landscape. Some of the major incidents occurred after the adoption of cultural landscape in the Convention could have affected the nomination for the World Heritage. (Table 2)

<sup>5</sup> ICOMOS, 2005b. p.89

<sup>6</sup> Read more in Chapter 3 The Age of Enlightenment in Jokilehto, J., 1999. A History of Architectural Conservation, Chapter 3 The Age of Enlightenment

Some parts of Africa have been suffering from a series of civil wars, such as Congo, Somalia, Mozambique, Angola and Ivory Coast civil war. The conflict can make the state party difficult to define national identity and therefore, heritage. As a result, a number of cultural landscapes are placed in a vulnerable situation and would even be more challenging to cope with their cultural properties. In Arab States and Asia and the Pacific, a series of war and terror in Mediterranean peninsula especially the war in Iraq (2003-present) and Afghanistan (2001) created great impact on both regions. One of the reminders is the cultural landscape and archaeological remains of the Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan where some of the landscape features were destroyed during the conflict. The site became the World Heritage right after the war and was registered in the List of the World Heritage in Danger.

Another threat on heritage is the natural disaster. Natural disasters have great impact on the social and economic stability. One of the recent serious natural disasters was the earthquake off the northwest coast of Sumatra on 26 December 2004. The magnitude of this earthquake measured approximately 9.0 in Richter scale which caused tsunami of about 25 meters wave height. The tsunami attacked South Asia, South-East Asia, and East Africa and killed more than 200,000 people mainly in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 2:** Major political and economic incidents and effects on cultural landscape inscription

Year of inscription	Cultural landscape inscriptions in regions				
	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean
1993	A..		C.		
1994					
1995					
1996					
1997			D..	•••	
1998	•	•		•	
1999				••••	•
2000				••••••	•
2001	••	B.	E.	•••	G.
2002					
2003	•		••	••	•
2004	•		••••	••••••••	
2005	•		F..	••	
Total	6	1	10	33	3

Source: T. Siririsak and N. Akagawa

Note:

• represents an inscribed cultural landscape

■ refers to incidents and effects

**A. : Africa**

1990-present Somalia civil War  
1996-1998 First Congo War  
1998-2003 Second Congo War  
2002 civil war in Ivory Coast

**B. : Arab States**

2003-present War in Iraq

**C. : Asia and the Pacific**

1993-1994 inscription regarding indigenous peoples, subsequently, 1996-present Positive change of policy on indigenous in Australia and New Zealand

**D. : Asia and the Pacific**

1997-1998 Economic crisis, Asia

**E. : Asia and the Pacific and Arab States**

2001 War in Afghanistan  
2003 Bam earthquake, Iran

**F. : Asia and the Pacific**

2004 India Ocean earthquake and tsunami  
2005 Kashmir earthquake, Pakistan

**G. : Latin America and Caribbean**

2001-2003 Economic crisis, Argentina

<sup>7</sup> University of Washington, 2007. 'Department of Earth and Space Science – Tsunami', <http://www.ess.washington.edu/tsunami/Sumatra.htm>, accessed 10 February 2007

Many of the cities that were hit by tsunami depended on tourism industry as their primarily source of income. This made it even more difficult for the local people to re-establish their livings. This could be alarming for countries or cities which are over dependent on the tourism industry. Under this circumstance, the resource will be allocated for the immediate needs; to save the lives and secure the basic needs of people. The priority for the heritage conservation could be relatively low. As the UNESCO World Heritage Centre defines, 'Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritages are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration.'<sup>8</sup> The loss of heritage would mean the loss of sense of identity and the backbone to the individual who cares for it. International support in such situation is necessary.

### 3. Rethinking on the cultural landscape categories

Regarding the effort to fill the gap in the List, ICOMOS seemed to realise that the concept of cultural landscape is not yet well applied. 'And even in the regions that have a long tradition of heritage lists, it is still the case that these lists often do not include assemblies of heritage assets, cultural landscapes or intangible qualities, all of which are now seen to be valid aspects of potential World Heritage.'<sup>9</sup> ICOMOS believed that one of the reasons of the gap in the List came from the lack of knowledge and resources on the process of nomination, such as preparation of Tentative List and periodically updated inventory.

The three categories of cultural landscape have so far stood up well to ten years' use. There has been no great demand to change them, nor any apparent need. Almost certainly this is because they are conceptual rather than functional categories, dealing with the nature of landscapes rather than the uses which made them what they are. Discussions about whether they are agricultural, industrial or urban are therefore dealing with second order issues, for all or none such descriptors can fit inside one or more of 'designed', 'organically evolved' or 'associative' models. Although in practice many cultural landscapes have characteristics of more than one of the World Heritage categories, each can without much difficulty be ascribed to a principal category.<sup>10</sup>

The existing categorisation was written with carefully chosen terms which was hoped to be well adopted by the state parties. However, it seems there is a little discussion on the effectiveness of existing categorisation of cultural landscape in the Convention whether it is practical enough to be followed by state parties from different cultural background. Even though there is no evidence on the demand to amend this categorisation, it could be argued that the state parties that have less nominated sites might not have deep understanding to point out their difficulties on applying the convention. As a result, the gap in the List would come from not only the lack of knowledge and resource on the process of nomination but also the lack of understanding on the terms and categorisation used in the Convention.

The category of cultural landscape which could be promoted as the World Heritage focuses on the degree of the relationship between humankind and their natural environment. According to the report of ICOMOS<sup>11</sup>, most of 53 cultural landscapes in the World Heritage List (38 sites or 72 per cent) meet the Cultural Criterion (iv): to be an outstanding example of type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history. (See Table 3)

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<sup>8</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2007. In <http://whc.unesco.org/en/about/>, accessed 10 February 2007

<sup>9</sup> ICOMOS, 2005b. p.92

<sup>10</sup> Fowler, P., 2003. p.28

<sup>11</sup> ICOMOS, 2005a

**Table 3** Inscribed cultural landscapes<sup>12</sup> and criteria for selection

Selection criteria of World Heritage Convention (C= Cultural criterion, N= Natural criterion)	Number of inscriptions	Percent of total inscriptions
C (i)	4	8
C (ii)	20	38
C (iii)	29	55
C (iv)	<b>38</b>	<b>72</b>
C (v)	24	45
C (vi)	12	23
N (i)	2	4
N (ii)	2	4
N (iii)	4	8
N (iv)	1	2

**Source:** T. Sirisrisak and N. Akagawa

This would imply that the recognition of cultural landscape focused on the rarity of type of cultural landscape. It reminds us the conventional evaluation of significance of monument that the rare type of building tends to be considered significant. This situation is understandable since cultural landscape is relatively new concept in the Convention which the evaluation of significance might have been shaped by the experts who are familiar with architectural conservation. However, the safeguarding of cultural landscapes in daily life or associated with living heritage, which were not necessarily considered as aesthetically and architecturally significant in the past, are gradually becoming public interest.

This situation is similar to the development of the concept of architectural conservation. In late twentieth century, comments to revise the Venice Charter on the application were raised. The architectural conservation approach in different cultural context such as the evaluation of authenticity has been discussed. The major concerns were the lack of definition of the terms used in the Venice Charter and the different interpretation of the Convention even among the native English speakers. Even though the Venice Charter has been criticised of being too general to be applied, the charter has been gaining respect for its value. The core philosophy of the charter has been applied and the necessary sections were extended through commentaries on the Charter or guidelines on the application.<sup>13</sup> As for the cultural landscape, it would be useful to consider additional guideline on categorisation that would contribute to wider perspectives on cultural landscapes especially in state parties in regions other than Europe and North America.

#### **4. Proposed types of cultural landscape for additional guideline**

Among inscribed cultural landscape in the World Heritage List, seven types of cultural landscapes in both rural and urban setting are proposed as below:

1. Rural-setting landscape: Design garden (RD)
2. Rural-setting landscape: Associated with spectacular natural setting (RN)
3. Rural-setting landscape: Associated with agriculture/ forestry/ fishery (RA)
4. Rural-setting landscape: Associated with human faith/ religion (RR)
5. Rural-setting landscape: Associated with indigenous group (RI)

<sup>12</sup> According to ICOMOS, Description of World Heritage Cultural Landscapes with a Bibliography of Supporting Documents

<sup>13</sup> ICOMOS, 1990. The electronic version is available in [www.international.icomos.org/venicecharter2004/lausanne.pdf](http://www.international.icomos.org/venicecharter2004/lausanne.pdf), accessed 18 February 2007

6. Urban-setting landscape: Historic urban landscape (UR)

7. Urban-setting landscape: Industrial/ Modern period landscape (UI)

Types of cultural landscapes divided by its setting would be useful for state parties to understand what kind of landscape would be inscribed as World Heritage. For example, the cultural landscape in Rural-setting landscape: Design garden (RD) would be possible to fit 1) Garden, 2) Parkland, or 3) Gardens related to monumental buildings and/or ensembles in the existing categories. (See Table 4) However, it would be difficult to apply this notion to Arab States since only one property is in the List (as of 2005).

**Table 4:** Categorisation by landscape setting comparing to existing categories

Proposed types of cultural landscape	Existing categories					
	Garden	Parkland	Gardens related to monumental buildings and/or ensembles	Relict (or fossil) landscape	Continuing evolving landscape	Associative cultural landscape: connected with religious/ cultural/ natural elements/ other associations
RD	•	•	•			
RN				•	•	•
RA					•	
RR			•			•
RI						•
UR					•	•
UI					•	•

**Source:** T. Sirisrisak and N. Akagawa

**Note:**

**Rural setting landscape**

RD = Designed garden

RN = Associated with spectacular natural setting

RA = Associated with agriculture/ forestry/ fishery

RR = Associated with human faith/ religion

RI = Associated with indigenous group

**Urban setting landscape**

UR = Historic urban landscape

UI = Industrial/Modern period landscape

Analysed by the proposed types of cultural landscape, most of the existing inscribed cultural landscape fall into three types, which are; 1) associated with spectacular natural setting (RN), 2) associated with agriculture/ forestry/ fishery (RA), and 3) historic urban landscape (UR). However, the distribution of each category is different in regions.

In Europe and North America region, most of the sites associated with agriculture/ forestry/ fishery (RA) and historic urban landscape (UR) are situated in Europe and North America region. As of 2005, Designed garden (RD) and industrial/ modern period landscape (UI) are only from Europe and North America region. This does not mean that there are less cultural landscapes in other regions but it could imply that the identification of cultural landscape is differently interpreted.

One of the significant trends is the recognition on industrial/ modern period landscape (UI). In 2000, Blaenavon Industrial Landscape in United Kingdom, recognized as an exceptional illustration of social and economic structure of nineteenth century industry, was inscribed as cultural landscape. Since then, industrial sites and nineteenth and twentieth century sites became the common interest among state parties. Sewell Mining Town in Chile and Cornwell and West Devon Mining Landscape in United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland were recently inscribed in 2006. It is noted that a number of industrial/ modern period landscapes (UI) in industrialised countries have been recognised in national level and some are already included in the Tentative Lists.

This could be expected that the nomination would process smoothly if the concept of cultural landscape already exists in the conservation measure in national level, such as the registration system.

In Asia and the Pacific region, most of the inscribed cultural landscapes are in rural setting. Some sites already in the World Heritage List and in the Tentative List could also fit rural setting landscape types meaning they could be re-nominated and listed as the Associative cultural landscape: connected with religious/ cultural/ natural elements/ other associations. In 2001, Vat Phou and Associated Ancient Settlements within the Champasak Cultural Landscape, Lao People's Democratic Republic was firstly inscribed under this category that could fit the type of the landscape associated with the religion (RR). As of 2006, six properties in the List perfectly fit this cultural landscape type and half of them are situated in Asia and the Pacific region. (See Table 5)

**Table 5:** Inscribed cultural landscape categorised by the proposed types

Region	Proposed types of cultural landscape						
	Rural setting landscape					Urban setting landscape	
	RD	RN	RA	RR	RI	UR	UI
Africa	-	2	-	1	3	-	-
Arab States	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Asia and the Pacific	-	3	1	3	2	1	-
Europe and North America	7	6	8	1	-	10	1
Latin America and the Caribbean	-	1	2	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>

**Source:** T. Sirisrisak and N. Akagawa

**Note:**

**Rural setting landscape**

RD = Designed garden

RN = Associated with spectacular natural setting

RA = Associated with agriculture/ forestry/ fishery

RR = Associated with human faith/ religion

RI = Associated with indigenous group

**Urban setting landscape**

UR = Historic urban landscape

UI = Industrial/Modern period landscape

Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras in Philippines is the only one landscape associated with agriculture/ forestry/ fishery (RA) in Asia and the Pacific region. However, this site has been put in the List of World Heritage in Danger since 2001. Unfortunately, this kind of landscape which is directly related to the traditional agricultural society could be more vulnerable because of the social change. Owing to the fact that rice terraces recognized as a part of important cultural landscape exist in many countries in this region<sup>14</sup>, it is important to find out the appropriate safeguarding measure.

In Africa region where there are a number of different indigenous groups, however, only three cultural landscapes associated with indigenous peoples (RI) in Nigeria and Togo have been inscribed. As well as for the cultural landscape associated with spectacular natural setting (RN), there are only two sites recognised in the World Heritage List. Considering the rapid growth of population, urbanisation, and threat from continuing war in this region, the urgent action on cultural landscape identification should be taken into account.

In Latin America and the Caribbean region, there are two cultural landscapes associated with agriculture/ forestry/ fishery (RA) and one cultural landscape associated with spectacular natural setting (RN) in the List. Even though little information can be read from the existing List, there could be more potential sites under different types as well.

<sup>14</sup> Motonaga, 2003.

## 5. Conclusion

Nomination for inscription as the World Heritage depends on the effort of each state party. Considering the political and economic stability would help to understand the constraints in each region and would contribute to the further strategy of international organization on heritage safeguarding. This is also to effectively reflect one of the missions of UNESCO World Heritage Centre as well as to respect philosophy of the universal value of the World Heritage Convention.

The imbalance of the cultural landscape places listed in the World Heritage reflects the issues on the identification of cultural landscape. Most state parties have different heritage identification measure depending on their history and culture. The proposed types of cultural landscape aim to contribute to the better understanding and to facilitate the state parties on cultural landscape identification and nomination for World Heritage inscription. It is hoped that this notion would be utilised to add depth to the existing guidelines and to stimulate the awareness on cultural landscape conservation.

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