TITLE:

Cultural World Heritage Site Management - a Case Study of Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range

ABSTRACT**:**

   The research aims to examine (1) heritage management and conservation activities, (2) local communities and (3) tourism development in WHS Kii after its WHS listing. Primary data was collected though the visits to WHS Kii, observations of/ad hoc small interviews with stakeholders in the local communities, and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. According to the findings, overall diverse positive changes are confirmed in relation to the above-mentioned three fields. After its WHS inscription, for instance, people's awareness of conservation of WHS Kii has been raised and the actual level of conservation of the WHS has also been enhanced. People from outside WHS Kii as well as local people have been involved in the conservation of the WHS and tourism in the WHS. Local people have a higher level of pride in their living place thanks to its WHS designation. The number of overseas tourists has also increased after WHS listing.

1. INTRODUCTION

The research aims to examine (1) heritage management and conservation activities in a cultural World Heritage Site (WHS) in Japan, "Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range" (WHS Kii), after its WHS designation in 2004. This research also aims to investigate other related fields such as (2) local communities, and (3) tourism development after its WHS listing. The number of WHSs in the world as of September 2013 is 981: 759 cultural, 193 natural and 29 mixed properties in 160 State Parties (SPs) (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2013a). There are 17 WHSs in Japan as of September 2013: 13 cultural and 4 natural WHSs (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2013a). WHS Kii encompasses an extensive area and extends over several municipalities in three different prefectures, Wakayama, Nara and Mie. The above-mentioned three themes in WHS Kii are worth investigating with the following reasons. First, there are only three WHSs, which include pilgrimage routes, in the world; moreover, of these, WHS Kii is the only WHS whose pilgrimage routes have close links with Shintoism, Buddhism and/or Shugendo. Shugendo is a syncretism of Japanese ancient mountain worship. The routes related to such non-Christian religions have not been explored well in existing studies. Second, the significance of tourism for most WHSs in terms of their sustainability has been more and more recognised by UNESCO, ICOMOS, academics, and practitioners in recent years. This could be evidenced by an increase in the number of opportunities to share and exchange various ideas, views and practice at conferences, symposiums and workshops (e.g. ICOMOS UK, 2012).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Scared Sites, Pilgrimage Routes and Religious Tourism

Tourism is not a new phenomenon. In the West, some types of activities, which can be seen as tourism in a current context, already existed in the Greek and Roman eras (Page & Connell, 2009). Early tourism had various purposes such as leisure, trade and military. In the Western world, people began to travel to attend religious festivals and events, or for pilgrimages in the Middle Ages (the 5th– 15th centuries) (Page & Connell, 2009). During this period, the West saw the rise of Christianity, including the development of monastic orders and a feudal system. In this situation, most holidays were taken to attend religious festivals, though this did not always include movement to a different place. In the 16th century, in England, the most important holidays for people were still related to their religion (e.g. annual parish feast, wake or revel), and still did not always include movement. During the 18th century, the Grand Tour became very popular amongst young aristocrats in some Western countries (Page & Connell, 2009). Some of the activities taken in the Grand Tour can be seen as religious tourism. For example, Venice was popular around May and June for the Ascensiontide, whilst Rome was favoured at Christmas, both for the renowned festivities (Towner, 1996).

Generally speaking, Christianity and the Western world have been studied more than other major religions and the rest of the world in previous heritage/tourism studies. In fact, as far as the researcher is aware, there are not many heritage/tourism studies which deal with Shintoism, Buddhism and/or Shugendo, and Japan. In Japan, "okage-mairi" in the Edo period (1603-1868) can be seen as the oldest type of religious tourism. It is also 'recognised as a forerunner of modern-day Japanese

tourism' (Linhart & Fruhstuck, 1998 cited in Cooper et al., 2008: 111). Okage-mairi is the religious tourism to Ise Jingu (Ise Grand Shrine) in Mie prefecture (Traganou, 2004) made by ordinary people. This travel was regarded as an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for them, especially farmers; because they were not allowed to travel freely and the travel cost them a large amount of time and money. People travelled to Ise Jingu from all over Japan and it was believed that they could receive good luck or protection from the gods. The pilgrimage routes to Ise Jingu were also developed with the growing popularity of okage-mairi.

In light of the number of visits, religious tourism still can be seen as one of most popular types of tourism in Japan as well as in the West. WHS Kii also can be regarded as sacred sites because of its historical linkage with Shintoism, Buddhism and/or Shugendo. Shackley (2001) developed a classification of sacred sites (see Table 1). In light of the categorisaion in Table 1, shrines and temples in WHS Kii would fall into Categories 4 and/or 10, and the mountains which have such sacred sites (Koya-san and Yoshino-yama) would fall into Category 8. In recent years, Kumano Sanzan (three shrines in the Kumano area) has been seen as one of "power spots". In Japan, some people believe that places acknowledged as "power spots" could give a spiritual power of the places to the people who visit there. Hence, they visit the sites such as Kumano Sanzan not to worship but to receive the power. In this sense, Kumano Sanzan would fall into Category 7.

2.2 Management and Conservation of WHSs (Research Aim 1)

To be inscribed as a WHS, first every candidate site needs to be listed on the Tentative List which is prepared within each States Party (SP) through consultation with local authorities, non-government organisations, members of the public, private owners (Leask, 2006). In fact, however, some

stakeholders such as the member of the public and private owners in a candidate site might not be involved enough in this process (Jimura, 2007) and these stakeholders are unlikely to fully understand the meaning of WHS even after its listing (Jimura, 2007, 2011).

The candidate site nominated by its SP must have a detailed management plan and a strong legal framework as part of the Nomination Documents for a WHS status (Jimura 2007, 2011; Shackley, 1998). This means that the management and conservation plan for the candidate site need to be improved or enhanced accordingly through the nomination process (Smith, 2002). In other words, central government of SPs need to develop the plan based on the advice from World Heritage Centre, advisory bodies within the SP, IUCN, ICOMOS, regional authorities, local government, local trusts and experts and consultation (Leask, 2006). The site also must keep improving their management and conservation plan even after it was designated as a WHS (Bianchi, 2002; Smith, 2002). However, having an excellent management and conservation plan is not always enough for the management and conservation of the WHSs. Jimura (2007) conducted the resident survey in WHS Saltaire, UK and WHS Ogimachi, Japan. In WHS Saltaire, 32.0% of the questionnaire respondents think the level of conservation of the site has increased since WHS listing in 2001, and only 2.0% think it has decreased. In WHS Ogimachi, on the other hand, only 12.6% of the respondents think the level of conservation of the site has increased, and 44.6% think it has actually decreased. Hence, it can be said that an increase in the level of conservation of the site cannot be fully guaranteed even after WHS designation. In case of WHS Ogimachi, a decrease in the level of conservation was caused mainly by rapid and extensive tourism development after its WHS listing in 1994 (Jimura, 2007, 2011).

The involvement of local communities in the management and conservation of the WHS as well as its nomination process is essential. In fact, to 'encourage participation of the local population in

the preservation of their cultural and natural heritage' is part of the mission of WHSs (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2013b). In addition to the management and conservation plan, Jimura (2011) suggests that a comprehensive tourism management plan is also required for WHSs in order to ensure the successful future of the site as a place to live, a WHS and a tourist destination.

According to UNESCO World Heritage Centre (2013c), 'The World Heritage Fund (WHF) provides about US$4 million annually to support activities requested by SPs in need of international assistance. It includes compulsory and voluntary contributions from the SPs, as well as from private donations. The World Heritage Committee (WHCommittee) allocates funds according to the urgency of requests, priority being given to the most threatened sites'. As pointed out by Jimura (2007) in his study about Saltaire, UK, the issue is that a WHS status does not guarantee any automatic funding. This is true to all the WHSs in the world except some exceptive WHSs which could obtain some automatic funding from national, regional and/or local government (e.g. Shirakawa-mura, Japan). This research investigates (1) heritage management and conservation activities in WHS Kii after its WHS listing, considering the themes discussed in 2.1 and 2.2.

2.3 WHS Inscription and Local Communities (Research Aims 2 and 3)

WHS listing can bring a wide range of changes to local communities and tourism in the area designated as a WHS (Jimura, 2007, 2011). In light of the nature and characteristics of WHS Kii, the following points should be prominent examples of such changes related to local communities and/or tourism development.

2.3.1 Local Culture

In their study on Bukhara, Uzbekistan, Airey & Shackley (1998) argue that WHS listing could revitalise local products, such as silk carpets, textiles and silver. Shackley (1998) also confirms the same kind of impact in Ninstints, Canada. Whilst, Bianchi & Boniface (2002) point out that negative changes such as degradation and commercialisation of local culture might be caused as a result of enhanced publicity of the site by WHS inscription.

2.3.2 Local Identity, Community Spirit and Local Pride

Shackley (1998) asserts that WHSs can be a centre of nationalism through the enhancement of identity. Jimura (2007) and Smith (2002) argue that WHS listing can enhance the ties among different agencies within the area designated as a WHS. This can be supported by the result of the resident survey conducted by Jimura (2007) in WHS Saltaire. 24.0% of the questionnaire respondents think the "feel" and spirit of the area has become stronger since WHS designation, whilst 12.0% think it has become weaker. However, the resident survey conducted by Jimura (2007) in WHS Ogimachi shows an opposite result: only 5.4% of the questionnaire respondents think the "feel" and spirit of the area has become stronger since WHS inscription, whilst 47.3% think it has become weaker. For example, weakened neighbourly companionship and rise of materialism are listed as the reason of this negative change (Jimura, 2007). It should also be noted that WHS designation can increase local people's pride in their culture (Evans, 2002; Shackley, 1998) and their place to live (Jimura, 2007, 2011).

2.3.3 Recognition and Image

The site can be more recognised by people after its WHS destination (Jimura, 2007; Shackley, 1998; Smith, 2002). The image of the site can also be enhanced by the designation (Bianchi, 2002; Jimura, 2007; Smith, 2002). Bianchi (2002) and Smith (2002) also note that a WHS status can be seen as a marker of authenticity and quality for overseas tourists.

2.3.4 Tourists and Visitors

'In principle, UNESCO places equal emphasis on the conservation and the use of WHSs' (Jimura, 2011: 291). However, it is clear that the physical environment of WHSs, especially those which are fragile and/or not well-managed, has been severely damaged by excessive visitation (Smith, 2002) and this issue is also linked with overcrowding of the WHSs. Regarding the relationship between a WHS status and the number of visitors/tourists, Hall & Piggin (2003) argue that a WHS status does not guarantee an increase in the visitor number. On the other hand, Asakura (2008) notes that the Japanese WHSs which were not famous amongst tourists before WHS inscription are more likely to see a huge increase in the number of tourists/visitors after the designation. Jimura (2007; 2011) concludes that in case of WHS Ogimachi in Japan, the number of domestic tourists has seen a much larger increase than that of overseas tourists. Shepherda et al. (2012) examine the tourists to Wutai Shan (Mt Wutai), China, as a WHS and a tourist destination; and conclude that the majority of tourists are domestic tourists with religious (Buddhism) intentions. For the above-mentioned points, it could also be said that not all the WHSs see a clear increase in the number of overseas tourists.

This research explores (2) local communities and (3) tourism development in WHS Kii after its WHS listing, considering the themes argued in 2.1 and 2.3.

3. METHODOLOGY

A methodological framework has been developed, considering the aims of this research. Saunders et al. (2007) developed a concept called "the research onion". It shows different layers (from "philosophies" to "techniques and procedures") and available options can be adopted. This concept can be used to outline the methodology for this research. Regarding research philosophies, the research stems from interpretivism. The research adopts inductive approach and a case study is its research strategy. It can be categorised as a cross-sectional research and examines mainly qualitative data to explore detailed backgrounds of the above-mentioned (1)-(3) and to have deep understanding of these three themes.

The research deals with both primary and secondary data. The data collection methods for primary data are (i) visits to the WHS, (ii) observations of the WHS itself and tourists/visitors to there, (iii) scheduled in-depth interviews with the experts (regional and local governments, tourist associations and visitor attractions), and (iv) ad hoc brief interviews with the front-line staff of the visitor attractions which did not respond to the researcher's email to make an appointment for an in-depth interview. Of these, (iii) works as the main data collection method, and others work supplementarily. The data collection methods for secondary data are (v) collections of the resources for visitors and general public at the WHS and on the websites, and (vi) collections of the resources from the interviewees.

The fieldwork was conducted in August and September 2012. The researcher visited three key areas within WHS Kii: Kumano Sanzan, Koya-san and Yoshino-yama (i). Observations were conducted at the main visitor attractions and pilgrimage routes (e.g. Kumano Hongu Taisha, Kongobu-ji, Kinpusen-ji, and Daimon-zaka) (ii). Six in-depth interviews (iii) and two brief

interviews (iv) were completed. Through the process of (i) and (iii), a wide variety of secondary data was also collected [(v) and (vi)]. All in-depth interviews were recorded and the researcher transcribed each recorded interview for data analysis. The researcher took a note about the contents of brief interviews. The transcripts and notes are analysed manually through summarising the original data, coding by theme, and categorisation.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section shows the summary of key findings by theme [the above-stated (1)-(3)], and discussions based on these findings and Section 2.

4.1 Heritage Management and Conservation Activities after WHS listing (Research Aim 1)

(a) The awareness of proper management and conservation of the WHS, especially the pilgrimage routes, has been raised amongst tourists/visitors as well as local people.

(b) There have been some man-made disasters (e.g. fire by negligence and devilment), and some of them have been done without knowing that the area is a WHS. The latest example is that trees in Gongen Mountain, which are properties administered by Kumano Hayatama Taisha in Shingu, were cut down without permission in 2011.

(c) Conservation activities of the pilgrimage routes by individual volunteers and as CSR activities have been blossomed (e.g. the "michi-bushin" programme organised by regional/local governments and everybody can join it).

(d) Although living in a WHS is not the only reason, local people have begun to do whatever they can to support the heritage management and conservation (e.g. planting flowers and keeping the front of their houses clean).

(e) Ministry of the Environment have become more careful about the maintenance of the footpaths than before the WHS designation. What they are afraid of most is that the site may lose its WHS status if their management and conservation are regarded inadequate. New instalment of artificial objects is prohibited (e.g. a new bridge is not allowed to be built when a footpath collapsed. Instead, restitution of the footpath will be carried out).

(f) Regional and local governments have arranged various awareness-building activities. (e.g. special classes for young children, lectures by experts for local people).

(g) Rules for tourists/visitors, who enjoy walking the pilgrimage routes, have been developed; and the rules have been promoted amongst tourists/visitors via websites or leaflets.

(h) There is no automatic funding for shrines or temples from public or private sectors for being part of a WHS.

4.2 Local Communities after WHS listing (Research Aim 2)

(i) Local people have begun to be much more proud of their place to live and to have stronger attachment to their society and culture.

(j) Local communities have begun to be keener to revitalise their communities though active involvement in conservation/tourism-related activities.

(k) River Kumano is part of WHS Kii and it is the only pilgrimage route inscribed as a river. The traditional boat which was once used by local people has been rebuilt, and boat tours of River Kumano have been newly developed.

4.3 Tourism Development after WHS inscription (Research Aim 3)

(l) WHS designation triggered revitalisation of local communities though tourism development. Originally, the area inscribed as WHS Kii was full of rich cultural and natural tourism resources. Before WHS listing; however, there were limited opportunities to be recognised by people, especially foreigners, as the area is not easy to access and not well-known to overseas tourists.

(m) The number of domestic tourists/visitors, especially repeat domestic tourists/visitors, has increased.

(n) The number of overseas tourists has increased. Koya-san had a large number of overseas tourists even before WHS listing. However, it has increased in other places as well as in Koya-san after WHS designation.

(o) It is fully recognised that Asia, especially East Asia, is a big market for WHS Kii. However, it has been confirmed that Western tourists tend to stay in the WHS much longer than Asian or domestic tourists. Moreover, they are keener to understand WHS Kii deeply. Hence, Western tourists have been set as the main target market segment for the WHS.

(p) In light of tourists' environmental and economic impacts on WHS Kii, not group tourists but individual tourists should be set as its main target segment. Regional/local governments and tourist associations try to limit the number of tourists/visitors, to extend the length of their stay, and to encourage them to spend more money.

(q)   Local tourist associations have arranged hospitality courses for local taxi drivers.

(r)   Although the number of tourists/visitors has increased, there has been no problem with rubbish or vandalism. However, there are some problems caused by irresponsible tourists/visitors [e.g. some bike through the pilgrimage routes. Three men climbed up the sacred falls (Nachi Falls)].

4.4 Discussion

As Jimura (2007) pointed out, having an excellent management and conservation plan does not always guarantee good management and conservation of the WHSs. For instance, a decrease in the level of conservation could be caused by rapid and extensive tourism development after the WHS designation (Jimura, 2007, 2011). In case of WHS Kii; overall, its heritage management and conservation activities are going well thanks to various positive factors [see (a) & (c)–(g)]. However, even WHS Kii still has some problems in its heritage management and conservation [see (b) & (r)]. It is not clear enough from the results of this research that who were actually involved in the nomination process of WHS Kii and to what extent. As Jimura (2007, 2011) argues; however, a lack of understanding of the meaning of a WHS status amongst some local people and tourists/visitors can be seen as one of the main reasons of such issues. As stated in 2.2, to 'encourage participation of the local population in the preservation of their cultural and natural heritage' is part of the mission of WHSs (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2013b). WHS Kii is also a successful case in this sense as evidenced by (a), (c), (d) and (f). Regarding funding, there is no automatic funding for shrines or temples in WHS Kii from public or private sectors for being part of a WHS [see (h)]. This situation is different from the owners of listed houses in WHS Ogimachi, Japan (Jimura, 2007). This is probably because of the difference in the nature of properties between WHS Ogimachi (ordinary house

owners) and WHS Kii (great shrines or temples which have financial resources and can obtain donations from followers and visitors).

WHS listing can revitalise local culture and products (Airey & Shackley, 1998; Shackley, 1998) (2.3.1). As (k) demonstrates, WHS Kii applies to such a positive case. As discussed in 2.3.2, WHS designation can enhance the ties among different agencies within a WHS (Jimura, 2007; Smith, 2002), and can increase local people's pride in their culture (Evans, 2002; Shackley, 1998) and their place to live (Jimura, 2007, 2011). As (i) and (j) indicate, all of these statements apply to WHS Kii.

As argued in 2.3.3, WHS designation could enhance the level of recognition of the site (Jimura, 2007; Shackley, 1998; Smith, 2002) and the image of the site (Bianchi, 2002; Jimura, 2007; Smith, 2002). Concerning WHS Kii, it can be stated that such positive changes have occurred as (l) demonstrates. It also could be said that WHS designation of WHS Kii has been regarded as a marker of authenticity and quality for overseas as Bianchi (2002) and Smith suggest (2.4.1). This would be one of the main reasons why the number of overseas tourists has increased (n). As for the relationship between a WHS status and the number of visitors/tourists, there are different views suggested by various researchers (2.3.4). In light of (l)-(n), the case of WHS Kii agrees with Asakura's (2008) opinion, whilst does not fit the cases of WHS Ogimachi (Jimura, 2007, 2011) and WHS Wutai (Shepherda et al., 2012) as WHS Kii has seen an increase in the number of both overseas and domestic tourists/visitors.

As (o) and (p) display, WHS Kii has specific target market segments and recognise what types of tourism they should pursue in the future. Considering the backgrounds of their choice, it seems to be appropriate. (q) can be seen as a good example of activities which could please the tourists who spend relatively large amount of money (i.e. reserving a taxi for half or one day). (b) and (r) can be regarded as issues which have been caused by a lack of awareness, understanding and/or respect of

the significance of the WHS, cultural and natural heritage, and sacred sites amongst local communities (b) and tourists/visitors (r).

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, overall, diverse positive changes are confirmed in WHS Kii after its WHS listing in relation to (1) heritage management and conservation activities, (2) local communities, and (3) tourism development. This admirable situation would be thanks to good understanding, continuous efforts and appropriate activities of all the stakeholders, including local communities and tourists/visitors as well as regional/local governments and tourist associations. Any unique findings cannot be found in terms of religions related to WHS Kii (Shintoism, Buddhism and/or Shugendo) though the research. However, regional/local governments have organised unique and innovative approaches for the conservation of the pilgrimage routes (e.g. the michi-bushin programme). This is noteworthy as not only experts but also ordinary people can be involved in the conservation activities of a WHS as individual volunteers. Moreover, this opportunity is open to overseas/domestic tourists as well as local people, and private companies can also join this programme as part of their CSR activities. It should also be useful to enhance the ties amongst different stakeholders related to WHS Kii. As (b) and (r) demonstrates, there have been some problems in terms of heritage management and conservation activities. As discussed in 4.4, these problems have been caused by local communities (b) or tourists/visitors (r) due to a lack of awareness, understanding and/or respect of the meaning of the WHS, cultural and natural heritage, and sacred sites.

For the above-mentioned reasons, further awareness-building activities covering (1)-(3) for local communities as well as for tourists would be a key to maintain the current worthy situation of the WHS, and to achieve better and more sustainable future as a WHS, people's place to live and tourist destination. Needless to say, local people's daily life should come first; however, a certain proportion of economic benefits from tourism should be reinvested in heritage management, conservation activities and tourism development in a sustainable manner for the future of WHS Kii. Regarding tourism development, the WHS already has specific target market segments and recognise what types of tourism they should pursue in the future (4.4). As Jimura (2011) suggests, having a thorough tourism management plan could strengthen WHS Kii's tourism strategy further. All the stakeholders, especially tourists/visitors and local communities, need to fully recognise their roles and duties in the heritage management and conservation and tourism development of WHS Kii. In light of these points, for instance, representatives from each stakeholder group form a project team which aims to develop appropriate strategies with clear goals for a long-term success of the whole of the WHS. Each stakeholder would sometimes have different aspirations; however, they need to be reconciled at least to a certain extent in order to set up the goals can be shared by all. A holistic approach, which covers all of the above-stated (1)-(3), should also be taken to achieve these goals.

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Table 1: Classification of Sacred Sites (Source: Shackley, 2001)

Category	Type	Examples
1	Single nodal feature	Canterbury Cathedral, Emerald Buddha (Bangkok), Hagia Sophia (Istanbul)
2	Archaeological sites	Machu Picchu (Peru), Chichen Itza (Mexico)
3	Burial sites	Catacombs (Rome), Pyramids (Giza)
4	Detached temples/shrines	Borobudur, Ankgor Wat, Amritsar
5	Whole towns	Rome, Jerusalem, Assisi, Varanasi, Bethlehem
6	Shrine/temple complexes	Lalibela (Ethiopia), Patala (Tibet), St Katherine's Monastery (Egypt)
7	Earth energy' sites	Nazca Lines (Peru), Glastonbury
8	Sacred mountains	Uluru, Everest, Tai Shan, Athos, Mt Fuji
9	Sacred islands	Rapa Nui, Lindisfarne, Iona, Mont-St-Michel
10	Pilgrimage foci	Mecca, Medina, Mt Kailash, Compostela
11	Secular pilgrimage	Robben Island (RSA), Goree (Senegal), Holocaust sites