

Report on World Heritage Forum 2012 [Summary Version]

Toyama's World-class Cultural Heritage



- **Date:** July 29 (Sun.), 2012
- **Venue:** Schönbach Sabo in Sabo Kaikan Annex (2-7-5 Hirakawa-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo)
- **Program**
 - Part 1: Current Situation and Challenges of World Heritage
 - Keynote Speech: Current Situation and Challenges of World Heritage
by Mr. Satoshi Yamato, Councillor for Cultural Properties, Cultural Properties Department, Agency for Cultural Affairs
 - Speech: Attractiveness of Tateyama
by Dr. Masanori Aoyagi, Director of the National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo
 - Part 2: Toyama's World-class Disaster Prevention Heritage
 - Speech: Toyama's Efforts for World Heritage

Steering Committee of World Heritage Forum

(Secretariats: Toyama Prefectural Governor's Bureau; Sediment Control (Sabo) Division of the Public Works Department; and Life-long Learning & Cultural Assets Office of the Toyama Prefectural Board of Education)

Part 1: Current Situation and Challenges of World Heritage

- Keynote Speech: Mr. Satoshi Yamato,
Councillor for Cultural Properties, Cultural Properties Department, Agency for Cultural Affairs

Current Situation and Challenges of World Heritage

- The aim of the World Heritage Convention is to establish an international framework for cooperation and assistance in order to protect the world's cultural and natural heritage and preserve it for a long time. Currently, the World Heritage List includes 962 properties (745 cultural, 188 natural and 29 mixed sites), and Japan has 16 properties (12 cultural and four natural sites) inscribed on the World Heritage List and 12 on the country's Tentative List.
- An increase in world heritage sites is revealing problems, such as a decrease in overall quality, limited management capabilities, and imbalances in what kind of heritage is selected and which region or culture they belong to. There are also discussions about criteria for evaluation. It is important to be able to continue to preserve properties after they are included on the

World Heritage List, too.

- Toyama Prefecture's world heritage "Gokayama Gassho-style Villages" was praised for its unique architectural style matching the surrounding environment and the residents' vigorous efforts for its preservation. As for "Modern Takaoka Cultural Assets," a candidate for Japan's Tentative List for World Heritage sites, experimental steps are taken, such as utilizing them for community development. It will be necessary to promote the value of the assets from an international perspective.
- The technologies used in and the historical value of the Shiraiwa Sabo Dam in the Tateyama Caldera, an important cultural property, are highly appreciated. How to promote them to people from different cultural backgrounds will have to be considered.
- Currently, UNESCO accepts only up to two nominations for inscription on the World Heritage List from countries that already have many properties inscribed on the list; the nominations must include a natural property. The World Heritage List needs to be trustworthy, striking the right balance and reflecting cultural diversity.
- Understanding what World Heritage should be and managing properties properly require tackling problems sincerely. Local people need to take measures to manage properties, such as preserving landscapes or townscapes and reinforcing their communities.



- Speech: Dr. Masanori Aoyagi, Director of the National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo

Attractiveness of Tateyama

- Toyama Prefecture has a unique terrain with a 4,000-meter difference in altitude over a distance of 50 kilometers; its annual precipitation is up to over 6,000 millimeters, and snow piles up as high as eight meters in Tateyama Murodou. Such a natural environment, created by steep mountains and a huge amount of precipitation, can be found nowhere else around the world. Mountain worship and beautiful landscapes, born out of the unique natural environment, and ingenious ways of life to coexist with nature are cultural characteristics of Tateyama, but there needs to be more to be outstanding in the world.
- The Shiraiwa Sabo Dam helps rationally control nature, which human beings look at with awe and respect. It represents the essence of civil engineering technologies to keep people living safely in the plains, and is a place where cultures, such as beliefs, erosion control and power generation, and a unique natural environment meet. There is no other facility like it, and it is important to understand such distinctive features before promoting them.
- The criteria for inscription on the World Heritage List are influenced by European values. When Horyuji and Todaiji in Nara Prefecture attempted to be included on the list, some European researchers pointed out that building materials of the Buddhist temples had been replaced as a result of restoration works. To prove that Horyuji was the world's oldest wooden building, an international conference was held in Nara in 1994, where the Nara Declaration was adopted, which confirmed that the replacement of building materials didn't deny the authenticity of a building.
- Europe is an "accumulating culture" that seeks material permanence, whereas Japan is a "recycling culture" in which restoration works are part of the preservation of buildings. Although such a unique Japanese culture is being recognized, more action needs to be taken so that it will be accepted as a concept of World Heritage.
- Through the process of campaigning for inclusion on the World Heritage List, local people tend to understand the natural and cultural characteristics of their communities, making comparisons with those of other places. So a certain amount of time should be spent so that they can pull together to have their assets inscribed on the list.



Part 2: Toyama's World-class Disaster Prevention Heritage

○Speech: Mr. Takakazu Ishii, Governor of Toyama Prefecture

Toyama's Efforts for World Heritage

- The Tateyama Caldera area has much rain and snow, which easily causes mudslides; it is one of the severest natural environments in the world. The Joganji River, which originates there, is the world's steepest river, flowing 56 kilometers with an about 3,000-meter difference in altitude.
- Records show that in 1858 the Hietsu Earthquake caused Mt. Ohtonbi and Mt. Kotonbi in the Tateyama Caldera to collapse, triggering a massive avalanche of mud and rock that swept the Toyama Plain killing 140 people and injuring about 9,000. Since 200 million cubic meters of sediment remained in the caldera, people along the Joganji River suffered from frequent mud floods. To finance flood and erosion control projects, Toyama Prefecture separated from Ishikawa Prefecture in 1883. In 1891, 81 percent of its budget was allocated to flood and erosion control.
- When he saw the collapsed caldera, Mr. Johannis de Rijke, a Dutch engineer who was invited by the prefecture, is believed to have said, "The whole mountain will need to be covered with copper plates." The prefectural government started erosion control works in 1906, but they cost too much for a prefecture to bear. So the project came under the direct control of the central government in 1926.
- In 2007, Toyama Prefecture submitted a proposal to have the Tateyama and Kurobe area including the Shiraiwa Sabo Dam included on Japan's Tentative List for World Heritage sites with the theme of "Tateyama and Kurobe, Leading Model of Great Japanese Disaster Prevention System – Religion, Sabo and Power Generation." In 2008, however, the Agency for Cultural Affairs concluded that the Tateyama and Kurobe area was a candidate cultural property for the Tentative List and noted that the prefecture would need to do more with sabo facilities in particular. Following the remarks, the prefecture started to take action to verify and establish the site's international reputation, and has held the International Sabo Forum for the past three years, inviting experts. In 2009, the Shiraiwa Sabo Dam was designated as Japan's first important cultural property of its kind.
- In this forum, the prefecture will continue to report on the latest achievements and to try to get the international community to recognize the outstanding universal value of the Tateyama Sabo as a "masterpiece of human creative genius." Also, to have assets other than the Shiraiwa Sabo Dam designated as important cultural properties, the prefecture will conduct research and verification on the historical value of the Hongu Sabo Dam and the Dorodani Sabo Dam Group.



平成19年 世界文化遺産への提案②

砂防一山と水を治める資産

「深沢などの侵食をコントロールすることについて砂防(SABO)と呼ぶことを提案」

ベルギーのブリュッセルで行われた国際水文科学学会(1981年)での提案

W. C. ローダーミルク

「アメリカのホルマン大統領顧問の横山技術委員会会長、日本の治水事業を奨励のため来日」

国際語となった砂防(SABO)

H20審査結果を受けての取り組み

立山砂防の国際的評価の検証・確立と文化財指定に向けて

- 第36回国際水文地質学会 (平成20年10月)
- 国際砂防フォーラムの開催
- 国際砂防フォーラム2009
 - 平成21年10月16日(金)
- 国際砂防フォーラム2010
 - 平成22年10月7日(木)
- 国際砂防フォーラム2011
 - 平成23年10月9日(木)
- 会場: インテックビル スカイホール (高山市)
- 白岩砂防堰堤の重要文化財指定 (平成21年6月)

○Panel Discussion

Coordinator: Dr. Yukio Nishimura, Chairman of Japan ICOMOS

Panelists: Dr. Masanori Aoyagi, Director of the National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo / Mr. Andreas Goetz, Vice Director of the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment / Mr. Hidetomi Oi, former staff at the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization (currently OCHA), and former Advisor to the Japan International Cooperation Agency / Mr. Noriyuki Minami, Director-General of the Sabo Department, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism / Mr. Takakazu Ishii, Governor of Toyama Prefecture

Minami: Japan's erosion control has developed based on the spirit of the Tateyama Sabo, which is aimed at protecting the land and the people's lives from sediment disasters, and new laws and systems have been proactively introduced as technologies and times have changed. In the central government's sabo works along the Joganji River, which started after the Erosion Control Act was revised in 1924, various technologies have been actively utilized under harsh environmental conditions in a constant, long-term effort to reduce disaster risks. Effective erosion control requires both civil engineering and the forces of nature. This is exemplified by the Dorodani Sabo Dam Group. Today, various Japanese sabo technologies are utilized around the world, and most of them can be seen in the Tateyama Sabo.

Goetz: After large-scale disasters happened one after another in the 1850s, Switzerland didn't experience a major disaster for the next century. So we were caught off guard when an unusual disaster happened in 1987. I had been in charge of erosion control since 1980. Hundreds of mud and rock avalanches



happened in mountainous areas, causing floods, inundation and rockfall in many downstream areas. Hit by such a disaster, I started wondering if our country's strategy was right, and as the man in charge, I headed for Japan. Japan has a denser population, steeper terrains and more precipitation than Switzerland. I thought the same technologies that had solved Japan's problems could help protect the Swiss people.

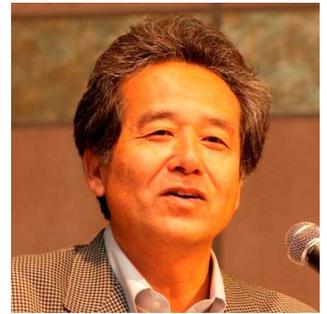
What I found in the Tateyama Sabo was that there were sustainable ways of reducing disaster risks. I was impressed to find that Japan adopted very eco-friendly, efficient ways of construction. What is important is sustainability, and striking a balance between social, environmental and economic aspects. The Tateyama Sabo keeps a perfect balance.

Nishimura: Do you think there is any similarity or difference between the Tateyama Sabo and erosion control in Switzerland?

Goetz: The Tateyama Sabo treats the basin as a whole and sees it from the perspective of not just points, but lines and planes as well. In the old days, the Swiss people had the mindset of fighting against nature. On the other hand, the people in Tateyama accept nature, paying respect to it. This was a new idea to me.

Nishimura: The Japanese idea of looking at the basin as a whole could be exported.

Oi: Among the 26 agreements reached at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), held in June this year, was disaster risk reduction. This indicates that more attention is being paid worldwide to disaster risk reduction. In his speech at the conference, Foreign Minister Koichiro Gamba stated that Japan would aim to achieve a sustainable society and think about how society and civilization could be in harmony with nature; he also pledged to raise worldwide awareness of disaster risk reduction and to help build resilient societies and



Ishii: The International Sabo Forum has been held for the past three years, and we heard Mr. Stuart B. Smith, Secretary of the International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage, say the Tateyama Sabo was a masterpiece of human creative genius, and Mr. Goetz say it was a comprehensive system seeing the whole basin as a flat surface and was so excellent that there was nothing comparable to it elsewhere in the world. We want to let many people know that the Tateyama Sabo embodies both disaster risk reduction and coexistence with nature.

Nishimura: That is true. It is amazing to see nature recovering around the Tateyama Caldera. The international community pointed out the Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine, a world heritage site, had no silver and few historical buildings left, and that it was hard to understand its importance. Nevertheless, in the Iwami Ginzan, people had never suffered from pollution, and nature remained intact. They sold these as advantages. What is needed is a compelling logic.

Aoyagi: After the Hietsu Earthquake in 1858, many people in the region worked hard to make their communities more stable than before the earthquake. This is why the Dorodani, Shiraiwa and Hongu sabo dams were built. It is important to have the local people recognize such historical backgrounds, or to raise their "sabo consciousness." And if the three challenges Mr. Nishimura pointed out are overcome, I'm confident the Tateyama Sabo will be inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Minami: It is said that a disaster happens when people have forgotten about it. And if no disaster happens, people tend to forget. In recent years, sediment disasters hit many areas across the country, causing many people pain. The Tateyama Sabo protects the safety and security of people in Toyama, who went through such painful experiences. We will provide as much assistance as possible to have it inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Goetz: From an international perspective, the biggest hurdle is that few people in Europe know the word "sabo." I explain to my colleagues that sabo is a way of comprehensive risk management, but people hardly understand what sabo means if no explanation is given. How to describe sabo is the key. It is very difficult to talk about risks with the general public in Switzerland. This is because memories of disasters in the past don't last very long. It is said that Swiss people don't remember natural disasters that happened more than seven years ago.

Oi: Sabo is the most resilient and sustainable way of disaster risk reduction. The more sediment flows in a disaster, the more mud and rock will be controlled, or the more effectively erosion will be controlled. Sabo aims for sustainable disaster risk reduction, including the recovery of nature. This should be emphasized when sabo is promoted.

Aoyagi: Many Japanese words are adopted as technical terms in seismology. Since it is obvious that Japanese technologies and ideas are advanced in the area of sabo, too, effective public relations strategies will be needed from now on.

Ishii: Last year's Great East Japan Earthquake reminded the whole world strongly of the importance of disaster risk reduction, which is a theme of the times. In this sense, the concept of the Tateyama Sabo as a "Leading Model of Great Japanese Disaster Prevention System" has become more significant than when it was developed five years ago. In terms of enthusiasm in local communities, there are excellent groups called Tateyama-Kurobe Dream Club and Tateyama Sabo Ladies Salon. We will work with them toward inclusion on the World Heritage List.

Nishimura: If people in the international community are told that sabo will be able to contribute to the world, they will be convinced of the significance of sabo.