

**Identification**

<u>Nomination</u>	Himeji-jo (Himeji Castle)
<u>Location</u>	Hyogo Province
<u>State Party</u>	Japan
<u>Date</u>	1 October 1992

**Justification by State Party**

Himeji-jo is the finest surviving example of 16th century Japanese castle architecture, with highly developed defensive planning principles and ingenious devices for protection (criterion iv).

The castle enhances understanding of Japanese feudal culture at the beginning of the Shogun period.

The degree of aesthetic perfection reaches its highest point in its wooden architecture, of which Himeji-jo is one of the finest examples, both for its design and its decoration (criterion i).

**History and Description**History

Himeji is sited at an important communications centre and as a result the Regent Toyotomi Hideyoshi built a castle there in the closing years of the 16th century, part of the network of such fortresses that he created all over Japan to ensure its continued unification. The first castle was destroyed by Ikeda Terumas, who became the feudal lord of the area under the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1600, but he quickly erected a new fortress, most of which survives to the present day. It comprised two concentric enclosures defined by walls and moats, containing keeps and turrets as well as residences for his samurai (warriors). Part of the west bailey (Nishi-no-maru) was remodelled by Honda Tadamas, lord of the castle in 1617, as quarters for his wife, daughter of the Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu. It remained the centre of this feudal domain for 270 years and a town grew up around it.

With the end of the Shogunate and restoration of the Meiji dynasty in 1868, Himeji-jo was taken over by the new government as a military establishment, when part of the west bailey and the samurai houses were demolished and replaced by military structures. Unlike many other feudal castles in Japan, Himeji-jo was preserved in its original form, thanks to the intervention of army officers such as Colonel Nakamura Shigeto, and it was given

protection under successive monuments protection acts (see Legal Status below).

In 1945 the military facilities in and around the castle were demolished and replaced by public buildings for official use. The inner buildings were, however, not touched and retained their 17th century form.

### Description

Himeji-jo is an archetypal early 17th century castle complex in design and layout, comprising 83 buildings in total. Only the east gate of one section of the second bailey survives from the castle built by Hideyoshi: the remainder dates from 1601-9, plus the towers of Nishi-no-Maru (after 1617).

The centre of the complex is the Tenshu-gun, consisting of a main keep and three subsidiary keeps, with connecting structures. This is surrounded by a system of watch-towers, gates, and plastered earthen walls. Set on a low hill, it is visible from every part of the city. The main keep (Dai-Tenshu) has six interior storeys and a basement. The main access is from the southwest, through a covered corridor.

The striking appearance of this great wooden structure with its white plastered walls is the source of the name by which it is often known, the Castle of the White Heron (Shirasagi-jo).

### **Management and Protection**

#### Legal status

Himeji-jo was designated an Historic Site in 1929, under the 1919 Law for the Protection of Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty and Natural Monuments, and in 1931 it became a National Treasure under the National Treasures Preservation Law 1929. These statutes have been replaced by the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties 1950 (revised 1975). Of the 83 buildings, eight are now designated National Treasures and the remainder Important Cultural Properties. In addition, the whole complex is designated a Special Historic Site (Articles 17, 19). As a result, any actions that may bring about changes in the existing structure require Government approval, through the Agency for Cultural Affairs.

All the designated buildings are owned by the national Government. Ownership of the remaining portions is divided between Hyogo Prefecture, Himeji City, and private companies. The designated custodial body for managing the site is the City of Himeji, appointed under Articles 32.2 and 47.2 of the 1950 Law.

#### Management

Management of the castle complex has been the responsibility since 1930 of the City of Himeji, which enacted a City

Ordinance for its management in 1964. The work is in the charge of the Management Office for the Himeji-jo Area.

A conservation management plan was prepared in 1969, with policies for future action. This now forms part of the Basic Management Plan for the Himeji-jo Historical Site (1986), the long-term aim of which is to enhance the value of the buffer zone by recreating vanished structures and the former atmosphere of the outer walled zone. The Himeji City Urban Design Ordinance of 1987 exercises control over the erection of high buildings around the Historic Site. In addition, there is control over the use of the area around the Historic Site, along with building-to-land and floor-area ratios, by means of the Himeji City Plan of 1973.

## **Conservation and Authenticity**

### Conservation history

The feudal masters of the castle had kept it in good order, with regular repair campaigns in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, all of which are well documented. These involved the measurement of horizontal and vertical displacements, resulting in the insertion of reinforcements in the form of braces and supports.

Major conservation works were carried out under the direct supervision of the national Government between 1934 and 1964, following designation in 1931. The work began with a complete survey. Conservation architects were permanently stationed on site and their work was supervised by a committee of experts. This campaign involved the dismantling of the main keep, the second largest wooden structure in the world. It was realized that the soil beneath had insufficient load-bearing capacity, which resulted in continuous displacement, and so a reinforced concrete foundation raft was installed. In the reconstruction, the earlier wooden reinforcements were removed, being replaced by discreet steel elements. A full record of all the work was prepared. Subsequently, the ramparts to the south were restored to their original height and the outer moat was refilled as part of a reconstruction project in 1987-91.

### Authenticity

The conservation work between 1934 and 1964 was carried out using the advanced techniques developed in Japan for large wooden structures and in conformity with established principles of authenticity in design, materials, techniques, and environment. The only modern intrusion was the insertion of the reinforced concrete foundation raft, which ICOMOS considers to have been fully justified on the grounds that the process of displacement due to the weakness of the subsoil would inevitably lead to catastrophic collapse; it was also seen as a necessary precaution in a region of high seismic activity.

## **Evaluation**

### Qualities

Himeji-jo is an outstanding wooden structure of great complexity, strength, and mastery of the constructional use of wood. It preserves the interior and exterior characteristics of a 17th century Japanese castle perfectly, and its setting is superb. The conservation work carried out since 1934 has been of the highest quality, and protection of the property and its immediate setting is ensured by a series of overlapping national and local ordinances and plans.

### Comparative analysis

Many castles were built in Japan in the early years of the Shogun period. Most of these have subsequently been demolished and others were destroyed during World War II. Of the handful that survive, Himeji-jo is the most complete and unaltered, largely thanks to the efforts of Army officers after the Meiji restoration. The castles of the Ryukyu Kingdom, in Okinawa Prefecture, which figure on the Japanese Tentative List, are earlier in date, constructed in stone, and represent a different cultural tradition.

### Additional comments

Himeji-jo was visited by ICOMOS expert missions in September 1992 and April and August 1993.

## **Recommendation**

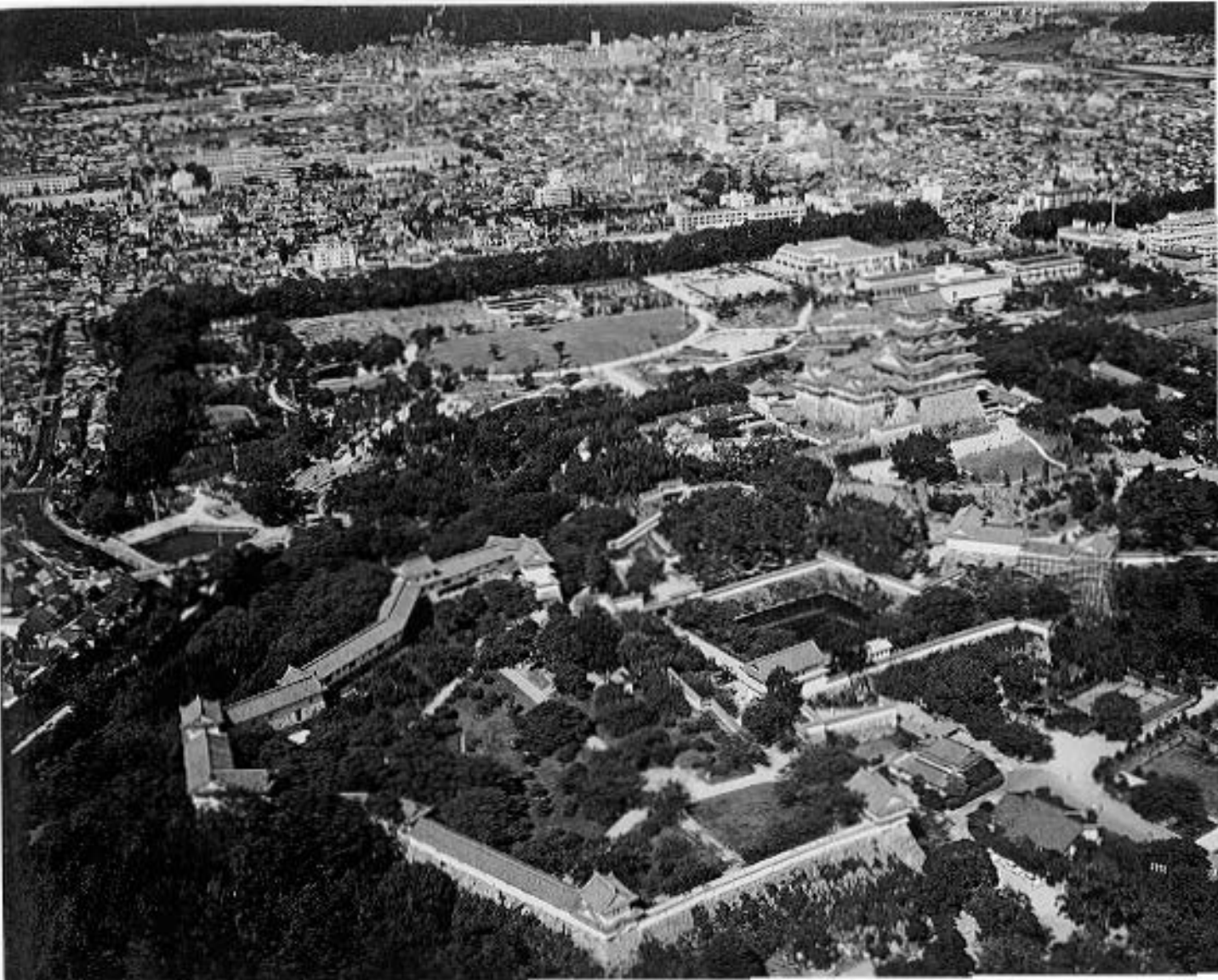
That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria i, iii, and iv.

- Criterion i Himeji-jo is a masterpiece of construction in wood. It also combines its effective functional role with great aesthetic appeal, both in the use of white-painted plaster and in the subtlety of the relationships between the building masses and the multiple roof layers.
- Criterion iii The castle is a powerful and evocative symbol of the feudalism that prevailed in Japan until the Meiji restoration of 1868.
- Criterion iv It represents the culmination of Japanese castle architecture in wood, and preserves all its significant features intact.

ICOMOS, October 1993

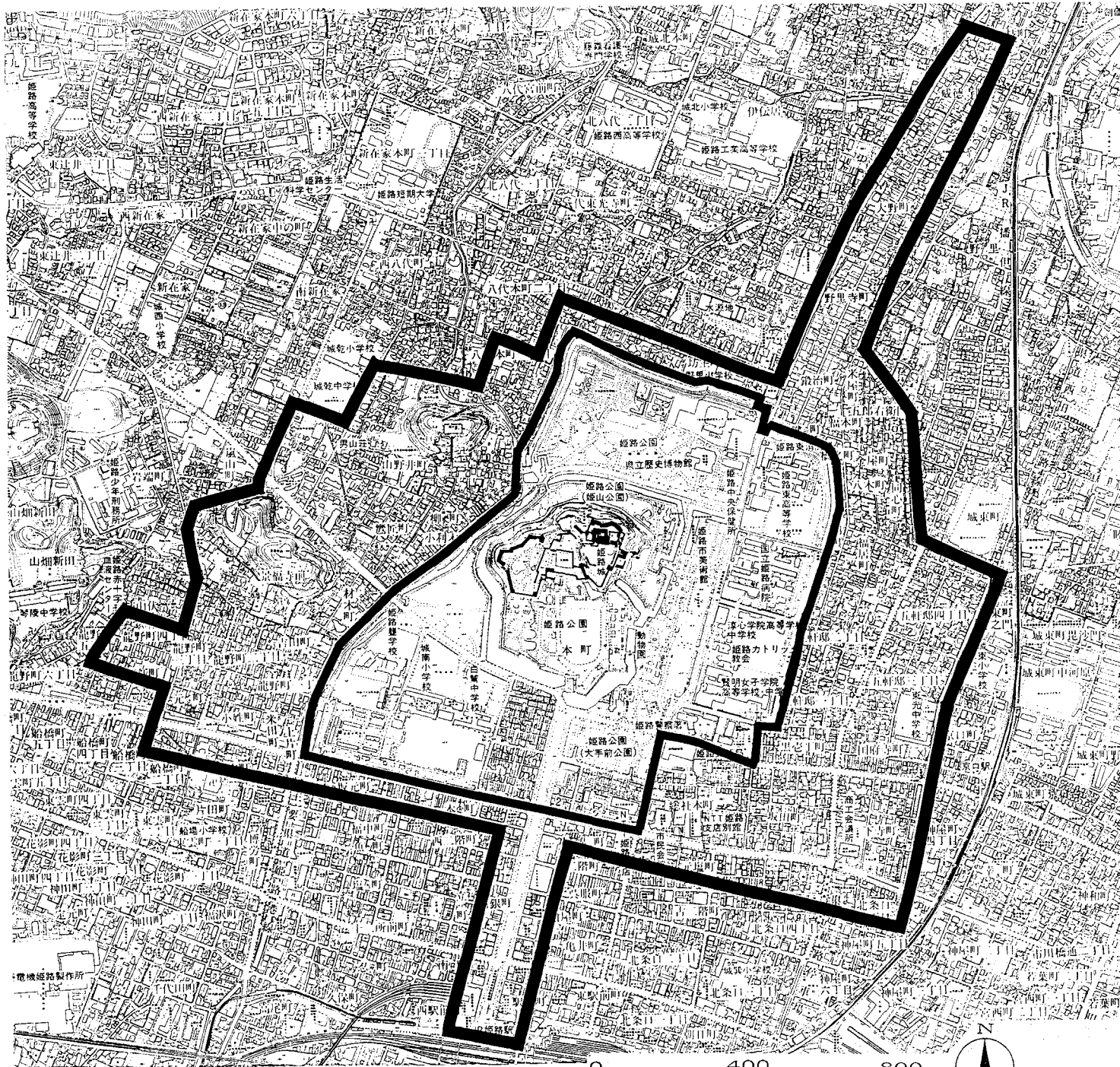
Himeji-jo : vue du donjon / view of the Donjon







Himeji-jo : vue aérienne de la zone principale du palais /  
(sud-ouest - nord-est) /  
aerial view of the Castle main area  
(southwest \_ northeast)

MAP INDICATING THE EXTENT  
OF THE PROPERTY



Himeji-jo : carte indiquant la délimitation du site /  
map indicating the extent of the property

Himeji-jo Nominated Area	107 ha
Buffer Zone	143 ha
total	250 ha

 NOMINATED AREA  
 BUFFER ZONE

1 : 10,000

0 400 800 M



JAPAN/HIMEJI-JO