

JAPAN

HIMEJI-JO

II.1 Introduction

Year of Inscription 1993

Organisation Responsible for the Report

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II.2 Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C i, iii, iv

Statement of Significance

- ❖ Proposed by the State Party:
“Examples of all of the essential components of Japanese castle architecture exist at Himeji-jo and all are well conserved; the major elements include many types of fortified buildings, walls and gates as well as stone ramparts and moats. [...] Himeji-jo is thus an important property in the sense that it can enhance the understanding of the Japanese culture of that time. [...] As the nickname of the castle, Shirasagi-jo (white heron castle), implies, the degree of aesthetic perfection in Japan is at its highest among its wooden structures such as Himeji-jo, and wooden architecture of this quality is very rare in the world. [...] These buildings, showing the typical elements of castle construction including the donjon, keeps, towers, gates and plastered earthen walls, are the best preserved and are appropriate examples to represent the cultural heritage of Japan.”

Status of Site Boundaries

- ❑ Borders and buffer zone of the property are considered adequate.

11.3 Statement of Authenticity/Integrity

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- ❖ World Heritage values considered to have been maintained, no changes are foreseen.

II.4 Management

Administrative and Management Arrangements

- The property is protected by the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, which prohibits alteration to the existing conditions without permission from the national government.
- The buffer zone is also protected through designations of Urban Landscape Formation Zone under the Himeji City Urban Landscape Ordinance.
- Himeji City, which is appointed as the custodial organisation by the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, is responsible for and has been implementing the management of the property on behalf of the several property owners.
- For management purposes, Himeji City has prepared a management plan for preservation and management of the Special Historic Site, Himeji-jo, in consultation with the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Hyogo Prefecture and property owners.

- A local ordinance was passed in 1964 to govern the management of the property. Management standards were established through a formal conservation plans adopted in 1969

Present State of Conservation

- ❖ On-going repair work is routinely carried out on all buildings of the property.
- ❖ Environmental improvement work was conducted from 1994-1997.
- ❖ Disaster prevention facilities (fire alarms, fire hydrants, security facilities etc) have been installed and improved during a programme running from 1997-2002.
- ❖ Dredging of the moats and repair of the stonewall were carried out from 1993-1998.
- ❖ Site administration and tourist facilities have been constructed on site 1998-2001.
- ❖ Archaeological excavations are ongoing.

Staffing and Training Needs

- There are a total of 59 persons involved with the preservation, conservation and interpretation of the property working within the Himeji City Government.
- In addition, there are more than 1700 active members of three local Himeji-jo “protection clubs.” These clubs mobilize community efforts in support of cleaning and conservation of the property.
- However, staffing levels are not considered adequate, and additional training for staff is envisaged in 3 areas: (i) training for conservation repair works by the Agency for Cultural Affairs and conservation bodies of designated traditional conservation techniques; (ii) training for excavation investigations by the National Research Institute for Cultural Properties; (iii) field training to municipal government officers on excavation investigations of Cultural Properties by Hyogo Prefecture Board of Education.

Financial Situation

- o “For the purposes of repair and maintenance of Himeji-jo and the Himeji-jo site, sufficient finance is constantly available from subsidies by the Agency for Cultural Affairs and Hyogo Prefecture together with admission fees and the budget of Himeji City.”

Access to IT

- There are 31 PCs available to staff responsible for managing the property, with access to email.
- Internet access exists on site.
- On-site fire alarms are connected to Himeji City’s fire fighting operations room by a dedicated IT connection.

Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics are kept for the site. The number of visitors is approximately 662,000 per year.
- The principal visitor facility is the Hyogo Prefectural Museum of History.
- In addition to signboards and pamphlets, voluntary guides serve visitors to the property.
- The need for an on-site information centre is acknowledged.
- Community seminars in support of the conservation of traditional skills are conducted on site, and have proven popular.
- Various publications in Japanese and in English exist for the property. In addition, substantial teaching material aimed at both elementary and secondary schools has been produced with specific reference to the history of the property and its significance as a World Heritage Site.

II.5 Factors Affecting the Property

Threats and Risks

- Fire is the greatest risk to the property.

Counteractive Plans

- Preventive maintenance and 24-hour continuous monitoring is the first line of defense.
- In addition, the property is equipped with a fire alarm system, ITV monitors and sprinklers.
- A risk preparedness plan exists.

II.6 Monitoring

Monitoring Arrangements

- ✓ A monitoring system is in place, consisting of an annual review of the state of conservation, based on a set of key indicators. This system is considered adequate.

Monitoring Indicators

- ✓ Monitoring is based on a series of “key indications for monitoring the state of conservation.”

II.7 Conclusions and Recommended Actions

Conclusions and Proposed Actions

- “Since the time of inscription of the property on the World Heritage List, its value as the World Heritage has been appropriately maintained through the strict implementation of procedures based on the domestic laws. [...]The buildings composing the castle such as castle towers, turrets, gates and eastern walls remain in a good condition of preservation”.
- “It is envisaged that, as the current trend of the decreasing number of skilled technicians continues, deficiency of those skilled technicians will be a serious problem in the middle and long term. It is therefore necessary to go beyond measures for the protection of tangible fabric of the property and to train human resources for the purpose of increasing experienced technicians with traditional skills and establish an educational facility in cooperation with citizens.” Although this observation is relevant to all heritage properties in Japan, in case of the Himeji-jo, the preservation and training of plastering and stonework techniques are especially important.

***State of Conservation Reports**

None