

Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution

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Abstract

In 2014, I had the privilege to evaluate the Japanese Government's World Heritage nomination for the sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Kyushu-Yamaguchi and related areas (1850s-1910), in terms of the requirements of integrity, authenticity, protection and management prescribed in the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.

Japan's nomination comprises of a singular ensemble of industrial heritage sites that represent the first successful transfer of industrialisation from the West to a non-Western nation. From the middle of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, Japan achieved rapid industrialisation founded on the key heavy industry sectors of iron and steel, coal mining and shipbuilding.

The nominated property consists of 23 components across eight areas of Japan which are the best, and often the only, surviving examples of the key attributes that represent iron and steel, coal mining and shipbuilding industries

<http://www.kyuyama.jp/e/index.html>. The property demonstrates the three-phase sequence of the first transfer of industrialisation from the West to a non-Western nation with the industrialisation of Japan:

- Phase 1 – Trial and error experimentation
- Phase 2 – Direct importation of Western technology
- Phase 3 – Full-blown industrialisation

The presentation will focus on the challenges, requirements and opportunities for conserving and presenting this ensemble of industrial heritage sites including:

- the implications of World Heritage status for the conservation, management and presentation of a diverse range of sites which are all underlined by the constant threat of natural disasters
- the contributions that this industrial ensemble can make to the local communities particularly in terms of culture, education and economy

Japan's nomination will be assessed at the upcoming World Heritage Committee meeting in June 2015 Bonn, Germany.