

Korea-Japanese NGO Opinion of 20th June 2018
on the State of Conservation Report by the Japanese government
on the ‘Sites of Japan’s Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding,
and Coal Mining’

by the Center for Historical Truth and Justice (South Korea) &
the Network for Fact Finding on Wartime Mobilization and Forced Labor (Japan)

On 30 November 2017, the Japanese government submitted to the World Heritage Center the ‘State of Conservation Report’ (the ‘Report’) on the ‘Sites of Japan’s Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining’, which was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List on 5 July 2015.¹ As this Report is related to the implementation of the recommendations contained in the decision of the World Heritage Committee for the nomination of the above sites (Decision: 39 COM 8B.14), we, the above NGOs, would like to express strong doubts and concerns about how faithfully the Japanese government complies with those recommendations.

We have so far criticized the Japanese bid for the nomination as an attempt to hide the history of aggressive wars and forced labor, in particular, while beautifying the history of modernization.² Lately, we published a booklet titled “Sites of Japan’s Meiji Industrial Revolution and Forced Labor: Korea-Japan NGO Guidebook”.³

Paragraph 4. g) of the World Heritage Committee’s nomination decision recommended that Japan give consideration to “preparing an interpretive strategy for the presentation

¹ Cabinet Secretariat, Japan, “State of Conservation Report - Sites of Japan’s Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding, and Coal Mining” (Japan) (ID: 1484), http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/sangyousekaiisan/pdf/state_of_conservation_report.pdf.

² See the below attached Korea-Japan Joint NGO Statement of 5 July, 2017.

³ https://www.minjok.or.kr/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2017_Guide_eng.pdf.

of the property, which gives particular emphasis to the way each of the sites contributes to Outstanding Universal Value and reflects one or more of the phases of industrialization; and also allows an understanding of the full history of each site". Together with the obligation to establish an interpretative strategy for the 'full history' of these sites, it is also important that the Japanese government made a promise as referred to in the footnote of 4 (g): the Japanese government stated that "Japan is prepared to take measures that allow an understanding that there were a large number of Koreans and others who were brought against their will and forced to work under harsh conditions in the 1940s at some of the sites, and that, during World War II, the Government of Japan also implemented its policy of requisition. Japan is prepared to incorporate appropriate measures into the interpretive strategy to remember the victims such as the establishment of information center."⁴ This promise by the Japanese government was to welcome as such. However, the current situation on how the Japanese government implemented the recommendations shows that it goes against UNESCO's goals and its work for peace and the preservation of the common heritage of mankind, questioning the *raison d'être* of UNESCO itself.

First, Japan's interpretive strategy does not explain the fact that people "were brought against their will and forced to work", on which the Japanese government pledged to take measures in its statement of 5 July 2015. In the Report, the expression "forced to work" was changed into the word "supported Japanese industries"(p. 51), which cannot be accepted even as a presentation of a half of the history, not to mention "full history". While, in 2015, the Japanese government mentioned the fact that people had been "forced to work" and that there had been a policy of requisition at the time of the nomination, they still strongly deny the existence of "forced labor". Yet it is to be noted that the International Labor Organization's Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations has held since 1995 that the issues of "comfort women" (sexual slavery) and "conscripted forced labourers" from Korea and China

⁴ UNESCO, World Heritage Committee, Thirty-ninth session, Bonn, Germany, 28 June – 8 July 2015, Summary Records, WHC-15/39.COM.INF.19, p. 222.

involved the violation of the Forced Labor Convention.⁵

Second, the history of forced labor that the Japanese government must explain is now going beyond its concealment and treading on the path of a unilateral distortion. According to the Report, the Japanese government undertook to research and study on the “labor” and “requisition” at the sites of Japan’s Meiji Industrial Revolution and elsewhere. But this policy is to strengthen its argument that there had been no national discrimination or forced labor. The Report states in particular that “3) Given the focus on OUV[Outstanding Universal Value], the interpretation of industrial workers’ stories should focus on Japanese industrial workers during the OUV period, whilst the interpretation of those outside the OUV period may allow an understanding of the fact that the Government of Japan implemented its policy of requisition of workers under the National Mobilisation Law during World War II, and that there were a large number of those from the Korean Peninsula who supported Japanese industries before, during, and after the War”(p. 50). The victims of forced labor are transformed into the people who supported industries. Moreover, the National Congress of Industrial Heritage, which is responsible for such a research and study, operates thoroughly under the direction of the Japanese government, and the participation of relevant NGOs, archives, activists, and critical researchers is excluded altogether. A video, “Who Spread Misinformation across the World?: Gunkanjima is our homeland. It is not an ‘island of hell’”, that the National Congress of Industrial Heritage uploaded to the internet in October 2017, shows clearly in what stance the Japanese government deals with the “full history”. Further, Japan’s plan to establish a “World Heritage information center” in Tokyo is inadequate in that it is not only very far from the relevant sites, but also that the connection with the purpose of remembering the victims is inexplicable.

Moreover, it is impossible from the beginning to explain how those facilities that cannot

⁵ For instance, see the International Labour Conference 83rd Session 1996, Report III (Part 1A), pp. 127-131; Observation (CEACR) - adopted 1998, published 87th ILC session (1999): Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) - Japan (Ratification: 1932), para. 12, http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID:2172187.

truly be categorized as “industrial heritage sites”, particularly the private academy that spread an ideology justifying wars of aggression, can contribute to ‘Outstanding Universal Value’ for all humanity. The historical consciousness that glorifies the self-centered history of militarism is a frontal challenge to peace and human rights, which are also the cornerstone of UNESCO.

Other problems of the Report relating to the interpretive strategy include its sole focus on technical matters. It is also not clear what will be taught and trained in the relevant sites, and so on.

We could also verify through the on-site survey that the Japanese government does not give sufficient consideration to and put into practice not only the goals of UNESCO and the World Heritage Convention, but also the international standards regarding interpretive strategies. These standards include the 1964 ICOMOS Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites,⁶ the 2006 Nizhny Tagil Charter for the Industrial Heritage,⁷ the 2008 ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites,⁸ and the 2010 Joint ICOMOS - TICCIH Principles for the conservation of industrial heritage sites, structure, areas and landscapes⁹. In order for the Sites of Japan’s Meiji Industrial Revolution to become a genuine common heritage of humanity, the Japanese government must set up an interpretive strategy for the “full history” based on these international standards and fulfil its duty to explain it to the public. In other words, Japan must acknowledge through public communication that these sites are in the inseparable relationship with their history, and must present the genuineness of each site in the full richness. As will become clear from the 2008 ICOMOS Charter that “the choice of what to preserve, how to preserve it, and how it is to be presented to the public are all elements of site interpretation”, the recommendation of the World Heritage Committee on the

⁶ https://www.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf.

⁷ <https://www.icomos.org/18thapril/2006/nizhny-tagil-charter-e.pdf>.

⁸ http://icip.icomos.org/downloads/ICOMOS_Interpretation_Charter_ENG_04_10_08.pdf.

⁹ https://www.icomos.org/Paris2011/GA2011_ICOMOS_TICCIH_joint_principles_EN_FR_final_20120110.pdf.

interpretative strategy for the “full history” is made as this is indispensable for the nomination process of the World Heritage. As shown above, the Sites of Japan’s Meiji Industrial Revolution reveal a number of problems in the implementation process as well as in the nomination. We hereby call for the World Heritage Committee to urge strongly the Japanese government to keep its pledges, to resolve the problems raised above, and to submit a revised report, including the following requests:

1. The UNESCO World Heritage Committee assess and monitor the ‘State of Conservation Report’ submitted by the Japanese government on a continuous basis, to ensure its compliance with the Committee’s decisions, the pledges made by the Japanese government to the international community, and the international standards for the interpretation of sites;
2. The Committee make clear that the current interpretive strategy of the Japanese government is not adequate to present the “full history” of the ‘Sites of Japan’s Meiji Industrial Revolution’;
3. The forced labor of Koreans, Chinese, and Allied prisoners of war be included in the “full history”;
4. The role that the ‘Sites of Japan’s Meiji Industrial Revolution’ played in Japan’s wars of aggression in the Asia-Pacific region before and during World War II be presented as part of the “full history”;
5. The Japanese government ensure the transparency of the programs of the interpretive strategy and the participation of non-governmental organizations and other experts relating to forced mobilization/labor; and
6. The Japanese government be urged to take any other concrete measures necessary to implement the decision of the World Heritage Committee and the undertakings of the Japanese government in accordance with relevant international rules and standards.

About the NGOs

The Center for Historical Truth and Justice

Established in 1991 in succession to the spirit of the Commission for Special Investigation of Anti-National Acts which was dissolved abruptly by the pro-Japanese elements in 1949, and the will of the late Mr. Lim Jong-kuk who devoted his life in the research of the pro-Japanese problem. Activities include the research and explication of various issues and tasks in the Korean modern history, the movement to set distorted history aright through the settlement of the past between Korea and Japan, the publication of “Who’s Who of the Pro-Japanese”, “Dictionary of the Organs of Colonial Government of Japanese Imperialism”, and other books, the investigation of victims and their families of forced mobilization, the support for their court cases, the publication of their testimonies, the collection and archiving of related materials, the holding of exhibitions, and other academic researches and practice movements. It also prepares the opening of “Colonial History Museum” in Yongsan, Seoul.

zip-code 04310, 27, Cheongpa-ro 47 da-gil, Yongsan-gu, Seoul, Korea

TEL +82-2-969-0226 URI : <https://www.minjok.or.kr>

Network for Fact Finding on Wartime Mobilization and Forced Labor

Established in July 2005 with the participation of citizens from various parts of Japan nationwide to support the ‘Commission on Verification and Support for the Victims of Forced Mobilization under Japanese Colonialism’ in Korea. Activities include the investigation of victims’ remains and works in cooperation and solidarity with the Korean Commission, demanding on the Japanese government to reveal and explain the current situation of such issues and to disclose related information on such issues as the deposit of unpaid wages and postal savings. Issued two statements at the time of listing of the ‘Sites of Japan’s Meiji Industrial Revolution’ as the World Heritage.

zip-code 657-0054, Kobe Student Youth Center, 3 Chome-1, Yamadachō, Nada-ku,
Kōbe-shi, Hyōgo-ken, Japan

TEL +81-78-851-2760 URI : <http://www.ksyc.jp/sinsou-net>

Appendix

Translation of the Korea-Japan Joint NGO Statement of 5 July, 2017

Korea-Japan Joint NGO Statement on the occasion of the 41st session of
the World Heritage Committee in Krakow, Poland, 2 July-12 July

Japan should record the history on forced laborers' blood, sweat, and tears

On the current holding of the Krakow session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, the like-minded NGOs of Korea and Japan make the present statement to express concerns over the recent developments on the follow-up measures of the inscription on the World Heritage List of the Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining. The Japanese government is scheduled to submit a report outlining progress with the various recommendations of the World Heritage Committee by 1 December 2017. The government report is expected to include the question of 'the interpretative strategy' on the Sites, and will be examined by the World Heritage Committee at its 42nd session in 2018.

These industrial sites had been put on the List by the World Heritage Committee on 5 July, 2015 at its 39th session in Bonn (Decision: 39 COM 8B.14). In this decision, the Committee recommended also that Japan give consideration particularly to "[p] reparing an interpretive strategy for the presentation of the property, which gives particular emphasis to the way each of the sites contributes to Outstanding Universal Value and reflects one or more of the phases of industrialisation; and also allows an understanding

of the full history of each site”(paragraph 4.g).

In the statement made after the adoption of the decision of the inscription, her Excellency Ms Kuni Sato, ambassador of Japan to UNESCO, said that “The Government of Japan respects the ICOMOS recommendation that was made from technical and expert perspectives. Especially, in developing the ‘interpretive strategy,’ Japan will sincerely respond to the recommendation that the strategy allows ‘an understanding of the full history of each site.’”. She further added that “More specifically, Japan is prepared to take measures that allow an understanding that there were a large number of Koreans and others who were brought against their will and forced to work under harsh conditions in the 1940s at some of the sites during World War II, the Government of Japan also implemented its policy of requisition.” Concrete steps were also suggested saying that “Japan is prepared to incorporate appropriate measures into the interpretive strategy to remember the victims such as the establishment of information center” (the Summary Records, document WHC-15/39.COM/INF.19, p. 222).

Subsequently, Ms Koko Kato, who led to the inscription of the Sites, was appointed to the Special Advisor to the Cabinet. The Japanese government also initiated ‘the first investigation’ on ‘forced laborers’ mobilized in these sites during the war. Despite these seemingly positive measures, however, there are other developments of negative impacts on the World Heritage List related programme of Japan.

Prime Minister of Japan, Mr Shinzō Abe, emphasized ‘Great Japan’ in relation to the inscription of the Sites, saying that “Japan has become an industrial country through introducing western technology and nurturing people by means of its own strength” and “Japan has achieved industrialization in only 50 years by combining foreign technology and domestic traditional technology”. From the very next day of the inscription decision, the Cabinet members have made statements that “Japan do not recognize forced labor at the Sites”. These denial of the existence of forced labor and even national

discrimination has also been repeatedly made by the Japanese right-wing press. This nationalistic and revisionist perception of the Abe government is also alleged to be reflected in the guidelines for making Japanese history textbook which was announced this year.

The current situation in Japan shows that it is highly unlikely that the history of forced laborers will be included in the government program relating to the Sites. The said ‘technology’ has not been the only factor that led to the industrialization and development of Japan. The modernization of Japan should also be read in the context of the history of Japan’s aggression of Asia, including Korea, as well as the history of labor. There were slave labors of Koreans, Chinese, the Allied prisoners of war and countless others.

The strong connection between peace and the World Heritage List is clear as can be seen in the preamble of the UNESCO Constitution, which states that “a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind”. We do hope that the inscription of the Sites of Japan’s Meiji Industrial Revolution would be an opportunity to strengthen ‘the intellectual and moral solidarity’ among Japan and Korea, and other people in Asia and further build peace in Asia.

This peace building will not be possible without recognizing human rights of victims. They relentlessly fight for justice. Lawsuits have been brought for reparations against, Mitsubishi, Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal Corporation, some of the corporations which had operated in these Sites. The unending story of the victims’ sweat, tears, and blood should be heard in a comprehensive manner.

A sincere investigation by the Japanese government of the historical facts to ‘remember

the victims of force labor and prisoners labor' in relation to the Sites will be the first step in this direction. We strongly urge the Japanese government to implement sincerely the UNESCO and ICOMOS recommendation to unveil 'the full history' of the Sites. As in the process resulting in the recommendation, we will not cease our efforts in monitoring whether appropriate measures are taken in order to reveal the history of forced laborers.

5 July, 2017

on the second anniversary of the inscription of
Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal
Mining on the UNESCO World Heritage List

Korean participants:

The Center for Historical Truth and Justice

Korean Committee of Anti-Yasukuni Joint Counteraction

Forum Truth & Justice

The Korean Council for Compensation for the Victims of WWII

The Past Liquidation Committee of MINBYUN - Lawyers for a Democratic Society

The Supporting Citizens of Volunteer Labor Corps(Teisintai) Victims.

Japanese participants:

The Truth-Finding Network for Forced Labor

The Supporters of Trial by the Military & Civilian personnel attached to the Japanese
Imperial Army

The Supporters of Trial Nagoya Mitsubishi Female Volunteer Labor Corps(Teisintai)

Japan-Korea Joint Action for Legislation for Forced Labor Victims

The Supporters of Trial Japan Iron & Steel

No! HAPSA (NO! enshrinement with war criminals in the Yasukuni shrine