

The Intangible Value of the A-Bomb Dome

Before the opening of the workshop on World Heritage Sites Management, we asked Nassrine Azimi, the Director of the UNITAR Hiroshima Office, about the meaning of the workshop. Ms. Azimi put an emphasis on exploring the intangible value of A-Bomb Dome.

-The third annual workshop on World Heritage Sites is the largest in scale so far, isn't it?

The number of participants and countries they represent is increasing. UNITAR provided scholarships to 25 government officials and managers in charge of World Heritage Sites, chosen from among more than 100 applicants. There are also 10 participants who cover their own costs. Some participants come from war-torn Iraq. The team of instructors includes UNESCO officials and experts on World Heritage Sites. Two thirds of the team are in charge of World Cultural Heritage, which along with the Natural Heritage forms a subdivision of World Heritage.

- What is the meaning of holding the workshop in Hiroshima?

First of all, it is in the uniqueness of the A-Bomb Dome. Out of 812 World Heritage Sites, only the A-Bomb Dome and Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland represent the “negative history” of humanity. In particular, given the present nuclear threats, it is very important for the international experts to delve deeply into the tangible and intangible value of A-Bomb Dome.

- What about Itsukushima Shrine?

The participants are lucky to have Itsukushima Shrine – a beautiful building, preserved and maintained through the long history – near the site of the workshop. Of course, the value of the Shrine is not just in the building itself. The value of Itsukushima Shrine is also in its harmony with the nature of the island and people’s life, traditional arts, and people’s efforts to rebuild the shrine after natural disasters such as typhoons.

- From this point of view, don't you think that in addition to the A-Bomb Dome, we should seek World Heritage Site status for the Peace Memorial Park as a whole, including the Peace Memorial Museum and other memorials in the Park?

I agree. While A-Bomb Dome is mainly a symbol of the destructiveness of the nuclear war, the Peace Memorial Park embodies Hiroshima citizens’ efforts to rebuild their city, their desire for peace and elimination of nuclear weapons. A World Heritage Site designation of the Peace Memorial Park should also raise awareness among both Hiroshima citizens and visitors, so that nobody would litter in the Park anymore. I hope that the site of the Hiroshima Baseball Stadium, its redevelopment being now a matter of concern for many in Hiroshima, will hopefully become a place where both Hiroshima citizens and the Japanese and foreign visitors can feel with all their senses the meaning and significance of Hiroshima.

- What do you expect from the participants, who are to visit both World Heritage Sites on the first two days of the workshop?

For almost all the participants, it will be their first opportunity to observe the two Sites. I hope they will see Hiroshima’s World Heritage Sites from a fresh perspective, different from that of the Japanese for whom these Sites are already a familiar sight. In addition, as the participants discover the intangible value of the Sites, I would like them to frankly tell us if they feel there is something wrong with the surrounding scenic area or any other aspects of the Sites in Hiroshima. I believe this could become a part of our contribution to Hiroshima.

- On 16th UNITAR will hold a roundtable open to general public in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Hall.

We would like many citizens of Hiroshima to participate in the roundtable. We will have seven panelists who are top experts on the World Heritage Sites, some of whom participate in the selection process for the World Heritage designation. We would like people of Hiroshima to deepen their understanding of World Heritage Sites by learning experts’ perspectives and exchanging views with them.