

Mekong-Japan Symposium on Ancient Capitals (Nara, June 22, 2010)



Mekong-Japan Symposium on Ancient Capitals

— Let's pass on our common bonds from the ancient times to the future! —

June 22 (Tue), 2010 9:30 – 16:00 Venue: Nara Prefectural New Public Hall

Participants:

Japan: Mr. Osamu Fujimura, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Mr. Shogo Arai, Governor of Nara Prefecture

Prof. Kunikazu Ueno, Professor Emeritus of Nara Women's University

Prof. Yoshifumi Muneta, Associate Professor of Kyoto Prefectural University

Prof. Eiichi Kato, Professor, Dept of Tourism, School of Tourism, Tokai University

Mr. Takanobu Hirono, Director General, Culture and Tourism Bureau, Nara Prefectural Government

Cambodia: H.E. Mr. Sou Phirin, Governor of Siem Reap Province

Laos: H.E. Mr. Sombath Yialihir, Mayor of Vientiane Capital

Myanmar: Mr. Kyaw Oo Lwin, Director-General, Department of Archaeology, National Museum and Library

Thailand: H.E. Mr. Withaya Pewpong, Governor of Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province

Viet Nam: Prof. Nguyen Van Son, President of Co Loa- Thanh Co Hanoi Conservation Center

* More than 100 audiences, including 49 youths invited by the JENESYS Programme, participated in the Symposium.



- At the First Mekong-Japan Summit Meeting (Nov. 2009), then Prime Minister Hatoyama proposed the holding of the Symposium;

1) commemorating the 1300th anniversary of Heijokyo Capital, the 1000th anniversary of Hanoi (Thang Long) and 450th anniversary of Vientiane capital.

2) saying that there are many cultural heritages in the Mekong region, and that the cooperation for the protection of cultural heritages (including world heritages), which will lead to the exchange of tourism, culture and people, should be strengthened.

- It was the first time that government officials/experts/academics of Japan and the Mekong region countries related to the protection of cultural heritages, local governance and tourism gathered and exchanged their views.



Summary of discussion in the Symposium

Protection of Cultural Heritages and the Challenges for Local Authorities

● Importance of reacknowledging the value of cultural heritages

- Tangible and intangible things around you could become cultural heritages due to changing values.
- A good understanding on the cultural heritages and continuous efforts made by the local residents will eventually lead to the protection of cultural heritages.
- It is important to succeed the background and the history of the cultural heritages to the younger generation.

● Challenges that “ancient capitals” are facing

- Challenges due to the promotion of tourism (destruction of cultural heritages due to development, population growth, the use of groundwater, traffic, security, etc.)
- Destruction of cultural heritages by natural disasters.
- A lack of budget, technology and human resources, for the protection of cultural heritages.

● Efforts by each government and local authority, and international cooperation

- Establishment of laws and rules by each government and local authority for the protection of cultural heritages (limits on the building heights, urban planning by zoning, etc.)
- Technical and financial support for the restoration of cultural heritages by Japan and other donor countries.

Tourism and Development in Ancient Capitals

● Possibilities and challenges for tourism industry

- The potential of economic development in the Mekong region countries using the cultural heritages is high. Tourism profit needs to be connected to the improvement of life of the local residents.
- The challenges that each country faces differ (scale of tourism, gap of the receiving structure such as security and sanitation, reaction from the increase of “quantity” to “quality” of tourism, etc.).

● Tourism development with the participation of administration and residents of local communities

- For the appropriate protection of cultural heritages and sustainable development of tourism, the promotion plans with the participation of not only the administration but also the local residents, as well as taking their view into consideration, is necessary.
- Improvement of the awareness of the local residents and tour guides, led by the administration, will lead to giving right knowledge to the tourists and to prevent “tourism pollution.”

● Tourism development utilizing ties of the ancient capitals

- Promotion of Tourism with specific themes (E.g. pilgrimage to Buddhist temples, tourism with experience/participation, rallies, etc.).
- Possibility of joint surveys in the Mekong region and promotion of tourism with regional roundtrips.

For the Future

● Promote the dialogue and networking between relevant officials/experts of Japan and the Mekong region in the field of protection of cultural heritages and promotion of tourism.

● Promote measures and education to succeed the values of tangible and intangible cultural heritages.

● Support the efforts of the Mekong region countries to protect cultural heritages and to promote tourism with the participation of residents of local communities.