

JAPAN

Appeal against the destruction of the fishing port Tomo-no-Ura (Fukuyama City, Hiroshima Prefecture)

The fishing port of Tomo-no-Ura is threatened by the project of a new road bridge which would cut right across the ancient harbour. With the following letter of 30 March 2006 the President of ICOMOS called upon the responsible State authorities and the Mayor of Fukuyama City, Mr Akira Hada, to prevent the destruction of this outstanding ensemble and to rethink the entire project:

As President of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) I am asking for your kind attention to the preservation of a historic harbour, Tomo-no-Ura, Fukuyama-city, Hiroshima, Japan.

ICOMOS had already expressed its organisational concern with regard to the outstanding historic and cultural value of Tomo-no-Ura as a result of ICOMOS's international conference organised by the Scientific Committee for Vernacular Architecture (CIAV) and held in Matsuyama-city, Ehime in October 2004. Furthermore, the resolution made at the ICOMOS General Assembly in October 2005 in Xi'an again raised public awareness to the state of its cultural value, which is under threat of the proposed development plan.

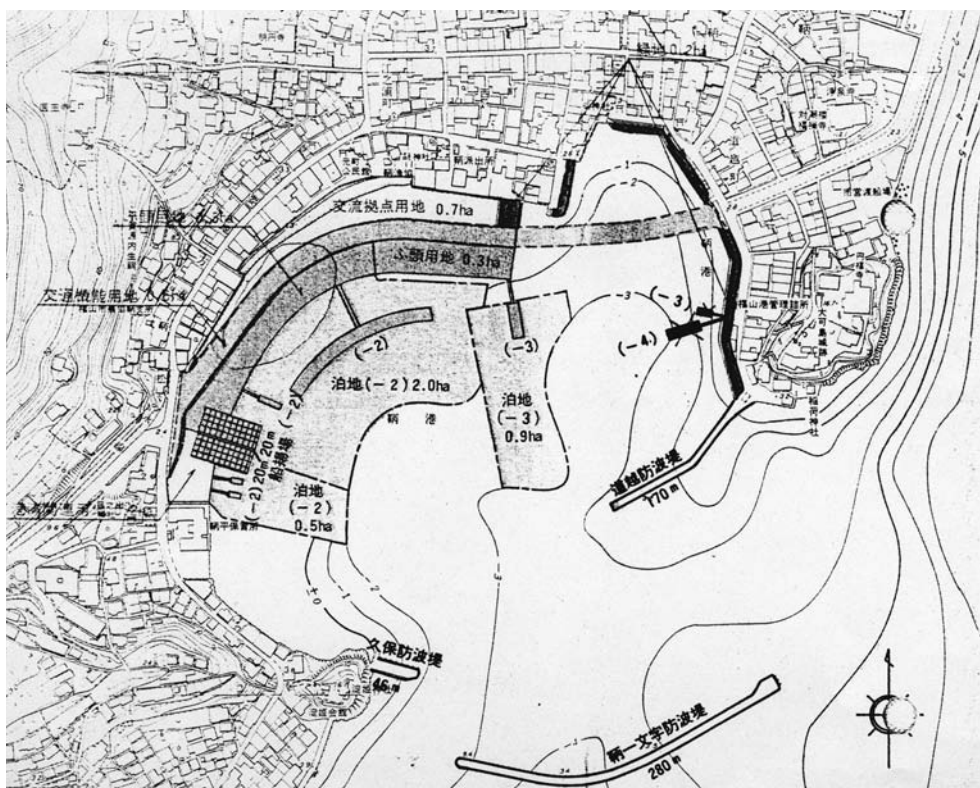
Understanding the above mentioned decisions, three ICOMOS experts from Germany, Australia and Korea paid a visit to Tomo-no-Ura on 27 November 2005. The delegation unanimously reconfirmed the unequivocal value of this historic harbour. On the following day the delegation made a presentation to the mayor of Fukuyama-city and the governor of Hiroshima prefecture, asking for the careful preservation of the harbour/city so that it can remain open to the historic sea route. The mayor of Fukuyama-city, even though being very

appreciative of the high evaluation by ICOMOS, ascertained that the decision to go ahead with the existing road-building plan, including bridging the bay, had already been made without any changes. The delegation was informed at the same time that the mayor had already turned down the petition asking for the consideration of a plan that can coexist with historic preservation and the upgrading of road traffic, including an alternative tunnel route plan near the mountain submitted by the local preservation group.

The professionals for the management of cultural monuments and sites recognise the significance of the Tomo-no-Ura layout in the way it has accumulated historical layers as part of the Seto inland sea route from ancient to modern times. With the surrounding cultural landscape preserved almost unchanged the site whose beauty was already praised by the Korean ambassador in the 18th century, this site is exceptional even from a world-wide perspective. The place shows rare and important historic evidence as part of East Asian history. Thus, this entire area should be viewed and protected in a larger context rather than just as a local historic district.

As described in the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, we understand that the sovereignty of the state party where a historic site is situated must fully be respected. However, the same Convention also states the importance of the protective duty of the international community as a whole to cooperate. I would like to take this opportunity to urge your thoughtful and prompt consideration of this matter. ICOMOS International, together with Japan ICOMOS, will be available for you anytime to provide earnest professional assistance for the preservation of Tomo-no-Ura.

*Yours sincerely,
Prof. Dr. Michael Petzet
President of ICOMOS*



Map showing the planned road bridge in Tomo-no-Ura



Protest against a high-rise building near Genbaku Dome in Hiroshima

The following letter of 16 May 2006 was sent by ICOMOS Japan to Mr Tadatoshi Akiba, Mayor of Hiroshima, to protest against the construction of a high-rise building ("First Residence Kamiyacho") close to Genbaku Dome. In that context ICOMOS Japan is also referring to the case of Cologne Cathedral (see H@R 2004/2005, p. 73f.):

On 26th March 2006, the Committee received a request for advice from the Association for the Protection of the Landscape of the World Heritage Genbaku Dome and the UNESCO Hiroshima Association, about the construction of a high-rise building within the buffer zone about 100 metres south of the Genbaku Dome. Taking account of this request, delegates of the Japan ICOMOS National Committee made a visit of the site on 9th April and held a meeting on 12th April regarding "the Landscape of the World Heritage Genbaku Dome". The Committee thus would like to report about opinions then expressed as follows.



Evaluation of the Genbaku Dome as World Heritage

On 6th August 1945, the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Located very close to the bomb's hypocenter, the former Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Exhibition Hall (Genbaku Dome) was hit directly and by this became the only built structure in the world to give direct evidence of the disaster which happened then. To avoid such an atomic tragedy to happen ever again and for Hiroshima city to keep telling this story for ever, it was decided on 20th June 1946 that this northern part of former Nakashima area should be conserved as a Peace Memorial Park: this Park was thus completed on 1st April 1954. In 1996, the Genbaku Dome was inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of cultural criterion (vi), as "the only structure left standing in the area where the first atomic bomb exploded (... It) has been preserved in the same state as immediately after the bombing. Not only is it a stark and powerful symbol of the most destructive force ever created by humankind; it also expresses the hope for world peace and the ultimate elimination of all nuclear weapons."

Views of Tomo-no-Ura (Photos: Christoph Machat)



Prayers of the world and the Genbaku Dome

The Peace Memorial Park is the very place where people wishing for peace gather from all around the world every year on 6th August. At 8:15 a.m. a silent prayer is offered at the Memorial Monument for Hiroshima City of Peace (Cenotaph for the A-bomb Victims) as a requiem mourning the A-bomb victims and asking for peace by praying towards Genbaku Dome, symbol of the wish for peace. This place, the Genbaku Dome, is thus the place where people from the whole world come to pray for peace. Any high-rise building standing in the line of view of this place of prayer should be visually lower than the Genbaku Dome; the current situation cannot be considered suitable for a place of mourning and peace.

The World Heritage Convention states that "Each state party (...) will do all it can (...) to the utmost of its own resources". Moreover, the General Assembly of ICOMOS held in Xian in 2005 discussed the importance of settings (settings for World Heritage): protecting cultural heritage and together with the "landscape" that contains it as a whole is thus the current trend



Hiroshima, view of the Genbaku Dome and the new apartment building

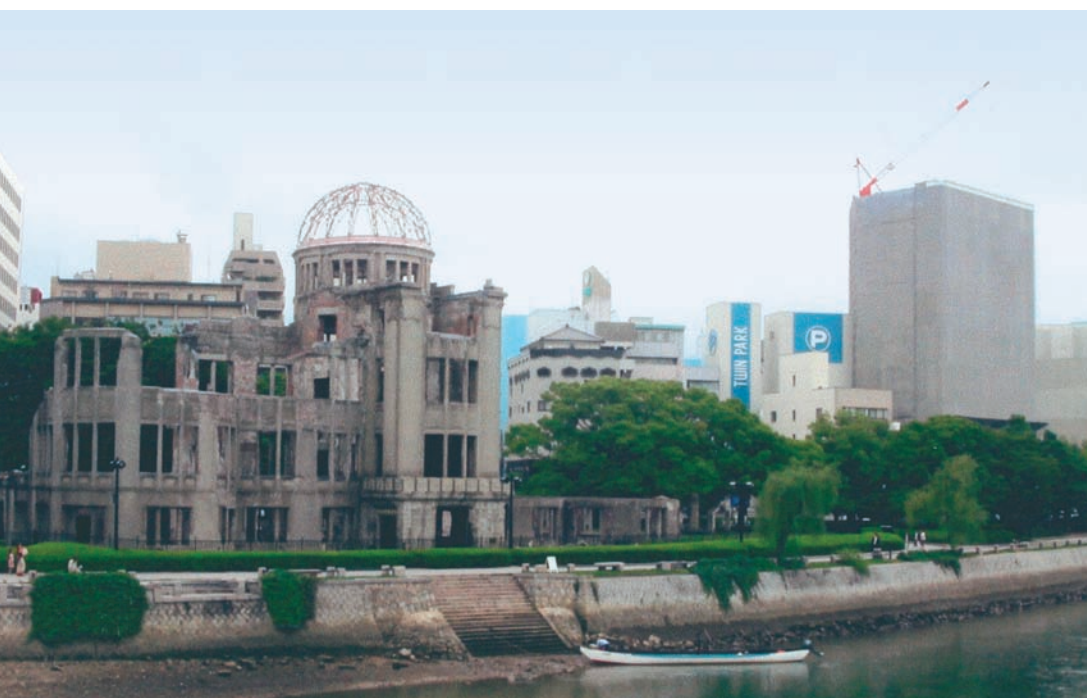
throughout the world. Any responsible institution is therefore requested to take measures that enhance the values of cultural heritage, and if the construction of an unsuitable building is planned, even though it may not be unlawful, it is of great importance that efforts are made to avoid such a construction. The recent example of the Cathedral of Cologne (inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1996) is to be mentioned, as having been inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger at the World Heritage Assembly of 2004, for the reason that "the construction of a group of high-rise buildings nearby the Cathedral as a part of town development plans damages the unity of space as World Heritage". It is our wish that through your good direction to the

entrepreneurs, the Genbaku Dome does not fall into a similar situation as the Cathedral.

With the above, the ICOMOS Japan National Committee wishes to express its concern regarding the construction of the "First Residence Kamiyacho" building.

*Masaru Maeno
President of Japan ICOMOS National Committee*

(Both sites are also discussed in the ICLAFI report, pp. 183-185)



View of the Genbaku Dome from the canal side