



# Research on the Tourist Dilemma of the World Heritage -‘TOMIOKA Silk Mill’: From the Perspective of the Different Perceptions of Actors Related to the Heritage

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**Abstract.** Tomioka Silk Mill, located in Tomioka City, Gunma Prefecture, Japan, became the first Japanese modern heritage site listed on the World Heritage List as ‘Tomioka Silk Mill and Silk Industrial Heritage Sites’ in June 2014. Focusing on the phenomenon of the explosion and sharp decline in the number of tourists after the registration of the site as a World Heritage Site, this paper examines the causes from the perspective of the different perceptions of the various actors involved, as well as the dilemma between the ‘economic value’ and the ‘cultural value’ of World Heritage sites. At the same time, within the framework of urban planning, this paper studies the contradiction between ‘economic value’ and ‘cultural value’ of world heritage sites.

**Keywords:** Tomioka Silk Mill · Modernization Heritage · World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO) · World Heritage

## 1 Introduction

The Tomioka Silk Mill, the subject of this study, opened in 1872. In the past, it was a government-owned model factory established according to the reproductive industry policy of the Japanese Meiji Government. The name has changed over time, including ‘Tomioka Silk Mill’ in 1872, ‘Tomioka Silk Mill’ in 1876, ‘Hara Tomioka Silk Mill’ in 1902, ‘Tomioka Silk Mill Ltd.’ in 1938, ‘Katakura Tomioka Silk Mill’ in 1939, ‘Tomioka Plant of Katakura Industries Ltd.’ in 1946, and finally changed into ‘Tomioka Silk Mill’ in 1987. Tomioka Plant ceased operations in 1987, known as ‘Tomioka Plant of Katakura Industries Co’.

In July 2005, the Tomioka Silk Mill was designated as a National Historic Site with the name of ‘Old Tomioka Silk Mill’. In July 2006, the buildings built in the early Meiji period the factory were designated as an important cultural heritage of Japan. In June 2014, the site was inscribed on the World Heritage List as one of the ‘Tomioka Silk Mill and Silk Industrial Heritage Sites’, which is the first modern heritage in Japan to be listed on the World Heritage List.

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This article focuses on the ‘Tomioka Silk Mill’, which is not only the main part of the heritage, but also the centre of urban development. As a part of the World Heritage composition, ‘Silk Industrial Heritage Sites’ include, ‘Former Residence of Yahei Tajima (Isesaki City)’, ‘Ruins of Takayama Shrine (Fujioka City)’ and ‘Arafune Wind Cave (Shimonita Town)’ in addition to the ‘Tomioka Silk Mill’, but Tomioka Silk Mill is not within the scope of this survey.

In recent years, people’s expectations for the tourism benefits of World Heritage sites have increased. Especially in developed countries, the registration of World Heritage Sites has improved their popularity and promoted the number of visitors, which is a remarkable phenomenon. According to a survey conducted by the Agency for Cultural Affairs in 2016, the number of visitors gradually increased from before and after the nomination of the world heritage list. When it was probably decided to name the site a world heritage site, the number of visitors began to increase gradually, and the number of tourists increased explosively from the year before registration to the year after registration. Four to five years after registration, the number of tourists gradually decreases, which is common in all heritage sites [1]. In the case of Tomioka Silk Mill and Silk Industrial Heritage Sites, the number of visitors one year after registration was four times that of the year before registration, followed by a sudden drop in the number of visitors, which is a conspicuous phenomenon among World Heritage Sites in Japan.

## **2 Survey Overview**

### **2.1 Study Objectives**

The purpose of this study is firstly, to clarify the current position of the Tomioka Silk Mill in the Tomioka City Community Development. Secondly, we compare and provide an understanding of the views of relevant actors (city hall departments, tourism associations, commerce and industry associations, etc.) on the causes of the increase and decrease in the number of visitors since the registration of Tomioka Silk Mill in 2014. Thirdly, we analyse and compare how each relevant participant views the value of Tomioka Silk Mill. Fourthly, this paper strives to identify the current developments and future policies of relevant actors.

### **2.2 Survey Period**

The survey period was from 16 October 2020 to 4 November 2020.

### **2.3 Survey Targets and Survey Items**

According to the research objectives, interviews were conducted with each relevant participant in the form of common questions. The main aspects related to the questions asked were as follows.

- (i) Any thoughts about the increase or decrease in the number of tourists and visitors to the Tomioka Silk Mill since it was inscribed in the World Heritage List (for example, the causes, effects and reactions to the increase or decrease about the increase or decrease).

- (ii) How this entity (alternative entity names, see below) cooperates with other related entities (including citizen cooperation and, citizen cooperation, etc.).
- (iii) Views on the value of Tomioka Silk Mill (including the status of Tomioka Silk Mill Tomioka Silk Mill, its relationship with other local resources, or views on the negative history of Tomioka Silk Mill, etc.).
- (iv) Current activities of this entity and its future policy.

## 2.4 Method of the Survey

During the survey, telephone interviews were conducted with the heads of each relevant entity, and supplementary questions were sent and collected by e-mail. As face-to-face interviews could not be conducted due to COVID-19, all the interviews were conducted by telephone and recorded on a recorder with the consent of interviewers. The text data was transcribed with the addition of the email response data and analysed using text mining by KH Coder [2]. All responses from each relevant entity were analysed and compared in a Self-Organising Map (SOP). Due to character limits, only the results of SOP are displayed in this article.

## 3 Survey Results and Analysis

### 3.1 Changes in Tomioka Central Land Readjustment Project and Tomioka City Landscape Plan

In November 1988, the second year after the Tomioka Silk Mill ceased operations in 1987, the ‘Environmental Survey and Basic Concept Preparation (Survey A)’ was carried out on 35 hectares of the Tomioka Central Land site, and the Tomioka Central Land Readjustment Project was started. In 1994, 23.5 hectares of land was included in the ‘Basic Plan (Draft) Preparation (Survey B)’ implemented in 1996. The main focus of land readjustment before 2000 was the development of roads and other infrastructure.

The policy changed the region began to be registered as a World Heritage site around 2004. As a continuation of the original demarcation project, an opinion survey on the preparation of an image plan for town development was launched in June 2003 and the image plan was drafted in August 2004. In December of the same year, Chuo Dori Line, a city planning road, was abolished; local explanatory meetings and town planning workshops were held in 2001 and 2002. In March 2003, the basic plan for the revitalisation of the downtown of Tomioka City was submitted to the state government.

Meanwhile, in Gunma Prefecture, the Governor announced a project to list the Fukuoka silk factory as a world heritage in August 2003, and set up the World Heritage Promotion Office in April 2004. In August 2004, Katakura Industries Ltd. Decided to designate the site as a cultural property. In November 2004, Tomioka City established a committee to study the Tomioka Silk Mill.

In 2005, the former Tomioka Central Land Readjustment Project was suspended and the town development plan was reviewed; in 2012, a proposal to change the land readjustment project was submitted and publicly announced, and the land adjustment project was finally cancelled in 2013.

In response to the Landscape Law e promulgated in June 2004, the Tomioka City Landscape Plan was formulated in December 2005, which determined the landscape development direction in line with the characteristics of Tomioka City. In the landscape plan, the ‘specific landscape planning area around Tomioka Silk Mill’ was formulated. This area is positioned as ‘an area that is expected to take the lead in city-wide efforts by promoting priority landscape development’.

In view of the changes in the Tomioka Central Land Readjustment Project, the initial setting of the Fukuoka silk factory connected the tourist area, business area and catering area. The design of the tourist zone and business zone was based on red bricks and long storehouse, which is the characteristic of the silk mill. From the perspective of history and tourism value, people have similar views on the modern heritage.

In 2016, the Second Comprehensive Plan of Tomioka City put forward the future vision as ‘a town suitable for a World Heritage Site’ for the future of the city of Tomioka and called for the use of Tomioka Silk Mill as the ‘core of town development’.

### **3.2 Awareness and Movement of Each Relevant Actor**

The survey shows a self-organising map of the overall responses of each relevant entity to the question.

First, the City Hall Tomioka Silk Mill Section, showing the boundaries between the ‘Management and Decrease’ Part, the ‘Silk and Brand’ Part, the ‘Income and Visits’ Part and the ‘Investment’ Part. These parts are considered by the City Hall Tomioka Silk Mill Section to indicate the economic changes caused by the operating state. The boundaries between the ‘Modern/Organisation’ part and the ‘Citizen/Participation’ part, which are considered collaboration for citizen organisation cooperation.

Second, the Tomioka Silk Brand Council, which shows the higher association with ‘silk, Tomioka and brand’ and ‘certification and system’. We think this is the proposal of the Tomioka brand. In addition, the purpose of the council is for ‘branding Tomioka Silk’. Its functions focus on one brand.

Third, the Tomioka City Hall Urban Planning Division Part, we can see the highest association between ‘management, city, road, advance, project’ and ‘cooperation, current situation, citizen’, suggesting the cooperation with citizens in the process of infrastructure development.

Fourth, the centre of the Tomioka Tourism Association, expresses highly relevant ‘tourism, plan, strategy’ and ‘business meeting’, which are considered as suggestions for the tourism development.

Fifth, for the highly relevant ‘analysis, research and project’ parts and ‘think and communicate’ parts, the World Heritage Division of Gunma Prefecture believes that this indicates that the World Heritage Division of Gunma Prefecture should carry out and analyse the research project of Tomioka Silk Mill. The ‘Regional, Cooperation, Important, Efforts’ and ‘Registration, Many, Prefectural Citizens’ parts suggest that the prefecture attaches importance to the region. ‘Value’ and ‘World/Japan’ would suggest that the prefecture emphasises the value of Tomioka Silk Mill as a World Heritage Site.

Finally, the National Council for the Utilisation of the Heritage of Modernisation stated that it could not collect and provide information on the complete survey of modern heritage and the contents of this interview, because the purpose of the Council was to

exchange and transmit information ‘among members’ and because it was a ‘voluntary organisation and is financed solely by membership fees received from its members’. The request for an interview was rejected.

## 4 Conclusion

Obviously, the registration of Tomioka Silk Mill as a World Heritage Site was a catalyst for the urban renewal efforts of Tomioka City. From the initial land readjustment project, the city had high hopes for the tourist value of Tomioka Silk Mill from the very beginning. It was observed that with the registration of World Heritage, there is a dilemma between the ‘value as a World Heritage Site’ and the ‘tourist value’ of Tomioka Silk Mill. It is believed that the contradiction between ‘cultural value’ and ‘economic value’ of Tomioka Silk Mill existed from the beginning [3].

We consider that the city’s initial tourism development plan has changed due to the World Heritage registration, but more than 10 years have passed since the registration, and now the city has returned to the plan of giving priority to the development of tourism.

In the case of Tomioka Silk Mill, the collaboration between relevant entities can be considered from three dimensions: ‘above (government) and below (private sector)’, ‘inside (Tomioka Silk Mill) and outside (surrounding area)’, and ‘software and hardware’.

Regarding the ‘above and below’ dimension, in the case of Tomioka Silk Mill, we can see the cooperation between the government, citizens and private companies, but there are temperature differences between the actors. In terms of tourism development, the cooperation between city hall and tourism association, tourism associations and the private sector can be seen, but the cooperation between the city and citizens is relatively weak. It can be inferred that the ‘registration fever’ of World Heritage Site has disturbed the conventional ‘local social system’ of Tomioka City (the change of traditional lifestyle and the original commercial social system caused by infrastructure development, etc.). From the perspective of tourism development, the recognition of the tourism value of ‘Tomioka citizens’ is different, and they can enter free of charge.

With regard to ‘inside and outside’ dimension, the lack of cooperation between the inside and outside of the Tomioka Silk Mill became apparent after registration. ‘Inside’ are the facilities of Tomioka Silk Mill and ‘outside’ are the surrounding areas. Tourists visiting is a kind of income for Tomioka Silk Mill, but for the surrounding area, it is not only a positive aspect, but also a kind of pressure. The inside of the mill is maintained by the support of admission fees from visitors and subsidies from the State and UNESCO, while the outside of the mill is maintained by citizens’ taxation. However, while the maintenance of the facilities is important for the registration of the site as a World Heritage Site, it is important for town planning that all relevant parties concerned work together to create a regional identity. Once commercial activities such as ‘tourism development’ strongly intervene and involve profits, it is difficult to ‘come together’.

In terms of ‘software and hardware’, ‘software’ refers to the soft sections, such as the Tomioka Silk Mill Section of City Hall and the Tomioka Tourist Association, while ‘hardware’ refers to the hard sections, such as the Urban Planning Section of City Hall. In order to cope with the surge in the number of visitors to World Heritage Sites, it

is necessary to understand how many visitors are expected each year before the site is registered, and how the surrounding areas need to be developed in advance to deal with this problem. The annual number of tourists estimated by the Tomioka Silk Mill Section of the City Hall and the Tourist Association determines the expected income of the mill, but it is necessary to jointly formulate software and hardware plans in combination with the development of the infrastructure around the mill.

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