

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Cultural World Heritage Sites designate cultural sites of significant universal value around the world as decided by the United Nations. Of the 869 existing Cultural World Heritage Sites (UNESCO, n.d.-c), 9 are found in Canada (UNESCO, n.d.-a) and 19 are found in Japan (UNESCO, n.d.-b). The designation of Cultural World Heritage sites in Canada result from historical, religious/spiritual, and geographical significance based on a combination of Indigenous Canadian culture and foreign influences through colonialization. In contrast, the influences on the designation of such sites in Japan are primarily domestic. The cumulative cultural World Heritage sites reflect differences in modern-day culture and population observed in Canada and Japan. This historical review will analyze and compare the varying influences on the designation of Cultural World Heritage Sites in Canada and Japan, and it will discuss how these influences reflect the modern-day culture of each country.

### Canadian Sites Designated by Historical Influences

The historical influences in Canada were a combination of colonizing populations of Vikings, the English and the French peoples, and indigenous populations. This can be seen in the Canadian Cultural World Heritage Sites of

**Figure 1.**

*L'Anse aux Meadows, recreated long house*



*Note.* Photograph by D. Gordon E. Robertson (© Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported).

L'Anse aux Meadows, the Landscape of Grand Pré, the Historic District of Old Québec, Old Town Lunenburg, and the Rideau Canal, in order of chronological significance.

L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland indicates the first European presence in North America, and it predates British colonialism (UNESCO, n.d.-a; see Figure 1). This site features remains of a Viking settlement from the 11th century (UNESCO, n.d.-a). Wood-framed, feat-turf building remains that can be compared to those in Norse Greenland and Iceland have

been excavated in the region, indicating the Viking presence (UNESCO, n.d.-a). This site is significant in Canadian culture for two main reasons. First, these Vikings introduced iron working to Canadian soil (World Wonders, 1997), which has remained a significant part of Canadian industries today. This site also marks the first European settlement in Canada, and thus its first external historic influence. Today, the cultural significance of this site is represented by the many Canadians of European descent and the prevalence of Canada's iron industries.

The Landscape of Grand Pré is an homage to the Acadian people, the term given to those who immigrated from France to Nova Scotia in the early 1600s (UNESCO, n.d.-a). The landscape includes remnants of Acadian villages that is a testament to the way of life that they established, and it is a token of their later deportation by the British in the mid-1700s (UNESCO, n.d.-a). This site is also a representation of early agricultural techniques in coastal areas, such as hydraulic draining systems of dykes and aboiteaux, which have persisted until today (UNESCO, n.d.-a). This cultural heritage site

**Figure 2.**

*Vieux Quebec (Old Quebec) – Quebec City*



*Note.* Photograph by Yacosta (© Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported).

features fortifications such as ramparts and a citadel which were characteristic of European cities in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (UNESCO, n.d.-a). Much of the city has been preserved, including the fortifications and a number of original buildings, two of which date back to Champlain's colonization in 1608 (World Wonders, 1997). Old

represents the prominent French-Canadian culture in modern day Canada.

The Historic District of Old Québec is a fortified colonial city which was colonized by Samuel de Champlain in the early 1600s (UNESCO, n.d.-a; see Figure 2). It served as the capital of "New France," the name given to the Canadian territory colonized by the French, and it later served as the capital of the British colony, too (UNESCO, n.d.-a). Old Québec

Québec established a precedent for the construction of subsequent settlements across Canada, based on European architecture and lifestyle. This heritage site, similar to the Landscape of Grand Pré, is representative of the prominent French-Canadian history in Canada and its reflection in modern-day culture. Together with descendants of the English European settlers, French-Canadians comprise a significant part of the current Canadian population.

Old Town Lunenburg represents another Canadian town whose construction was greatly influenced by European settlement and architecture. This heritage site is a British colonial settlement, established in 1753 in Nova Scotia that features buildings with vernacular wooden architecture (UNESCO, n.d.-a). Its layout was modelled after British towns, which are based on a rectangular grid pattern (UNESCO, n.d.-a). The community was designed to rely on offshore Atlantic fishery, which it still does today (UNESCO, n.d.-a). The authenticity of the town and the original structures and architecture of the buildings have been largely preserved (World Wonders, 1997). This settlement is one of many British settlements that were erected following the colonization of Canada and their way of life have persisted to this day.

Modelled after European canals, the Rideau Canal is a 202km-long, fortified slack water canal that runs from Ottawa, Canada's capital, to Kingston harbor (UNESCO, n.d.-a; see Figure 3). Construction occurred in the early 19th century when the British and American people fought for control over this region (UNESCO, n.d.-a). It was built by the British people for military purposes, to defend the region against the Americans (UNESCO, n.d.-a). This geographical fight was a critical element in defining Canada's southern border. It is the only canal of its kind in North America that has retained its functionality and structures

**Figure 3.**

*Rideau Canal*



*Note.* Photograph by Shawn Kent (© Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic).

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(UNESCO, n.d.-a). Today, the canal is a hallmark of Canada's capital city, promoting fundamental Canadian recreation such as ice-skating and paddling.

### **Japanese Sites Designated by Historical Influences**

The designation of Japanese Cultural World Heritage Sites was not a result of historic colonization because Japan was never colonized by foreign populations. Japanese people developed an autonomous and unique culture, although its development was partially influenced by Chinese culture. The primary historical influences on the designation of Cultural World Heritage Sites in Japan are the monarchy form of government and its historical development, and Japan's involvement in war. This is exhibited by a number of Japanese Cultural World Heritage Sites: the Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara, Hiraizumi, the Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu, Himeji-jo, the Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto, and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, in order of chronological significance.

The Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara was the capital of Japan from 710 to 784 and spearheaded the development of Japanese culture during this time (UNESCO, n.d.-b; see Figure 4). These monuments include 78 buildings separated into eight component parts (UNESCO, n.d.-b). The property was designed based on the plans of Chinese cities, such as Chang'an (UNESCO, n.d.-b). The specific

**Figure 4.**

*Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara*



*Note.* Photograph by Vesna Vujicic-Lugassy (© UNESCO; Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO).

site of the monuments, called Heijō-kyō, was also selected based on Chinese geomantic principles (UNESCO, n.d.-b). This monument is comprised of a palace, Buddhist temples, Shinto shrines, public buildings, and houses that were erected in Heijō-kyō (UNESCO, n.d.-b). The presence of Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines illustrates the prominence of both religions in Japan as early as the 8th century. These preserved monuments exhibit

Japanese religion and culture of the 8th century, which created the foundation for the co-existing religions in modern Japanese society.

Hiraizumi is another example of a site that represents the history of the Japanese monarchy, Japanese Buddhism, and Japanese design, which have all shaped the development of Japanese culture. From the 11th to 12th centuries, Hiraizumi was the political center of the northern realm of Japan (UNESCO, n.d.-b). One of the families in power erected four gardens as manifestations of Pure Land Buddhism (UNESCO, n.d.-b). The gardens' temples were placed in accordance with indigenous Japanese principles concerning the relationships between gardens, water, and topography, and these gardens were the family's symbolic representation of the Buddhist Pure Land (UNESCO, n.d.-b). Since then, the Hiraizumi gardens became the basis of unique Japanese gardens that are characteristic of the country today (UNESCO, n.d.-

b). Hiraizumi represents the fusion of the foreign-introduced garden construction concepts, Buddhism, and the nature-worshipping concept of Shintoism (UNESCO, n.d.-b).

The Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu were also designated as a Cultural World Heritage Site because of their importance. These Ryukuan ruins, located on the Ryukyu Island of Okinawa, are comprised of two

monuments, five gusuku (fortresses), and two cultural landscapes including the Naha Shuri Castle (UNESCO, n.d.-b; see Figure 5). The Ryukyu regime existed for 500 years between the 12th and 17th centuries and Ryukuan farming communities began enlarging and protecting the buildings on their land, and their settlements

**Figure 5.**

*Naha Shuri Castle*



*Note.* Photograph by 663highland (© Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported).

eventually became gusuku (UNESCO, n.d.-b). heritage site commemorates the Ryukuan people, their culture, and their ancient religion that has persisted in modern-day Japan. It honors this era in Japanese history.

Himeji-jo, a castle in Himeji City shown in Figure 6 comprised of 82 buildings and was erected during the Shogun period (1603-1868; UNESCO, n.d.-b). Himeji-jo is an example of Japanese wooden architecture

symbolizing the significant reign of the shogunates and of feudalism in Japan (UNESCO, n.d.-b). This site represents another significant era in Japanese history, contributing to the unique development of modern Japanese society and culture.

The Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto spread out in the cities of Kyoto, Uji, and Otsu, included 198 buildings and 12 gardens, divided into 17 monuments (see Figure 7). The monuments, mostly constructed between the 10th and 17th centuries, comprised the imperial capital of Japan until the 19th century (UNESCO, n.d.-b). This is another example of the historic influence of Japan's different kingdoms on the designation of Cultural World Heritage Sites. These Monuments were modelled after ancient Chinese capitals (UNESCO, n.d.-b). Ancient Kyoto played a major role in developing Japanese culture because it was the center for the development of Japanese architecture and garden design until the 17th century (UNESCO, n.d.-b). These monuments comprehensively exhibit the evolution of Japanese culture throughout a significant period of time (UNESCO, n.d.-b). As such, this heritage site has contributed to the development of modern Japanese architecture and gardens, which are both trademarks of Japanese culture.

**Figure 6.**

*Himeji Castle*



*Note.* Photograph by Oren Rozen (© Creative Commons

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The Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotional Hall, the only structure left standing near the explosion of the first nuclear bomb on August 6, 1945, was designated the Hiroshima Peace Memorial after World War II (UNESCO, n.d.-b).

**Figure 7.**

*Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto*



*Note.* Photograph by Vesna Vujcic-Lugassy (© Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO).

As a reminder of the sheer destructive force of humankind, this is a somber memorial for the Japanese people; however, it is also a symbol of hope for world peace and the hope for the elimination of nuclear weapons (UNESCO, n.d.-b). The two nuclear explosions in Japan in August of 1945 devastated the population and as such they are a significant part of Japan's modern-day history.

### ***Summary***

Historic immigration and colonization reflect the variety of coexisting cultures of predominantly French-Canadians, European descendants, and Indigenous populations in modern-day Canada. European colonization has influenced Canada architecturally as well as socio-culturally, as seen in Canadian iron working, agricultural techniques, town models, fishery, outdoor ice-skating rinks, and paddle sports. Although modern-day architecture in Japan has been influenced by traditional Asian/Chinese architectural styles, a unique Japanese architectural style developed because of the lack of immigration or colonization in Japan. This has resulted in the homogeneous unique culture of modern-day Japan.

### **Canadian Sites Designated by Religious and Spiritual Influences**

In Canada, Indigenous spiritualities and beliefs have led to the establishment of numerous World Heritage Sites that are celebrations of said spiritualities and that commemorate the Canadian Indigenous people and their contributions to Canadian culture. Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump is a Canadian World Heritage site that

signifies around 6000 years of occupation in southern Alberta by Indigenous Canadians (UNESCO, n.d.-a). This site is located where the western Rocky Mountains meet the Great Plains (UNESCO, n.d.-a). It features undisturbed layers of bison fossils, exemplifying the traditional hunting practices of these Indigenous people, which involved taking advantage of natural topography to hunt as they chased herds of buffalos over precipices (UNESCO, n.d.-a). This site demonstrates the lifestyle and the values of Indigenous Canadians who lived off the land and respected the Earth above all else. Their spirituality was an influential factor in preserving this heritage site; its designation as a cultural World Heritage site commemorates the way of life of Indigenous Canadians. Today, Indigenous communities are still prominent and widespread throughout Canada.

The Canadian island of SGang Gwaay features the remains of a village of the Indigenous Haida people off the coast of British Columbia, which was occupied until around 1880 (UNESCO, n.d.-a). Here, carved memorial totem poles are manifestations of the

spirituality of the Haida people and they commemorate their culture (UNESCO, n.d.-a; see Figure 8). The ruins of 10 houses and 32 memorial poles have been preserved (World Wonders, 1997). In modern day Canada, totem poles on the West Coast are a trademark of Canadian culture and artistry. This heritage site honors their origins and the spirituality that they embody.

The Writing-on-Stone/Aisinai'pi is located in southern Alberta, in the Great Plains is a sacred site for the Indigenous Blackfoot people, who engraved and painted the sandstone walls of rock with spiritual messages (UNESCO, n.d.-a; see Figure 9). The oldest engravings may be dated as old as 1050 BC (UNESCO, n.d.-a). These engravings and paintings bear testimony to the cultural and spiritual ways

**Figure 8.**

*Haida totems at SGang Gwaay Innagaay, Gwaii Haanas*

*National Park, Haida Gwaii BC*



*Note.* Photograph by Brodie Guy (© Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic).



**Figure 9.***Writing-on-Stone/Aisinaí'pi*

Note. Photograph by John Novotny (© Alberta Parks)

of the Blackfoot people, who believed that spirits were present in the valley (Opp, 2011) and that the landscape provided them with a connection to these spiritual powers (UNESCO, n.d.-a). This site is framed as a place of continuing significance for the Blackfoot people and their culture, and it is through its designation as a World Heritage Site that this cultural display has been honored and preserved (Opp, 2011).

### **Japanese Sites Designated by Religious and Spiritual Influences**

In Japan, many different Cultural World Heritage Sites have been designated as a result of religious influences. The Buddhist Monuments in the Horyu-ji Area is an example of such a site. This heritage site in Nara is comprised of two temples, with 48 ancient wood monuments between the two sites (UNESCO, n.d.-b). These Buddhist monuments were built shortly after Buddhism was introduced to Japan and they are the earliest Buddhist monuments found in the country (UNESCO, n.d.-b). Eleven of these structures, built in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, are still standing today; they are some of the oldest wooden buildings in the world (UNESCO, n.d.-b). Chinese architectural influences based on the Chinese post and lintel construction technique are seen (UNESCO, n.d.-b). These wooden structures represent the fusion of Buddhism, introduced from China, with pre-existing Japanese culture (UNESCO, n.d.-b). From these monuments, a subsequent distinctly unique Japanese architectural style emerged. This site marks the beginning of Japanese Buddhism, a religion that is as prominent and significant as ever in Japan.

The Itsukushima Shinto Shrine (see Figure 10), on the Island of Itsukushima dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century (UNESCO, n.d.-b). It is composed of 19 structures

that form two shrine complexes (UNESCO, n.d.-b). Japanese Shinto architecture typically features a natural element as the focus of worship from a shrine because the basis of Shintoism is polytheistic nature worship (UNESCO, n.d.-b). The Itsukushima Shinto Shrine embodies this; it is located next to the Seto Inland Sea with a backdrop of mountains (UNESCO, n.d.-b). Shintoism has been a prominent religion in Japan since the country's founding, and it has been influential in architecture and in the development of Japanese culture (UNESCO, n.d.-b).

The Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range includes the forested sacred sites in the Kii mountains of Yoshino and Omine, Kumano Sanzan, and Koyasan which are linked by pilgrimage routes that lead to Nara and Kyoto (UNESCO, n.d.-b). This cultural landscape is a reflection of the fusion of Shintoism and Buddhism in Japan because it includes both Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples (UNESCO, n.d.-b). These sites continue to welcome Shinto and Buddhist worshippers and they represent hundreds of years of pilgrimage through sacred mountains (UNESCO, n.d.-b). This site exemplifies the coexistence of Shintoism and Buddhism in early Japan, which has developed throughout Japanese history.

The Shrines and Temples of Nikko includes 103 religious buildings that make up two Shinto shrines and one Buddhist temple in the sacred Nikko mountains (UNESCO, n.d.-b). They bear testimony to the concept of linking religious practices to a natural site that is considered sacred (UNESCO, n.d.-b). The shrines and temple also demonstrate Japanese architectural prowess in harmoniously combining human-made architecture with its natural setting (UNESCO, n.d.-b). This site embodies the founding concept of Shintoism, polytheistic nature worship (UNESCO, n.d.-b). Some aspects of the site are symbolic of the first shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate, Tokugawa Ieyasu, who lived between 1543-1616

**Figure 10.**

*Itsukushima Shrine torii gate*



*Note.* Photograph by Joe deSousa (© Creative

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Dedication).

(UNESCO, n.d.-b). Worshipping and religious practices continue to occur at the Shrines and Temples of Nikko today (UNESCO, n.d.-b). In these regards, this heritage site is representative of Japanese history and modern Japanese religion, architecture, and culture.

Although Shintoism and Buddhism by far have been the most prominent Japanese religions, about 1.5% of Japanese people are Christians today (Plecher, 2020). Christianity has also been present throughout Japanese history. The Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region bear testimony to this. This heritage site is located on the northwestern part of Kyushu Island and it comprises 12 component ruins: 10 villages, a castle, and a cathedral (UNESCO, n.d.-b; see Figure 11). These sites show that Christian faith persisted among some secluded Japanese Hidden Christians in small, concealed communities despite the Christian prohibition in Japan between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century (UNESCO, n.d.-b). Had Japanese

**Figure 11.**

*Oura Cathedral*



*Note.* Photograph by Japan Heritage Consultancy Co., Ltd (© Nagasaki Prefecture).

modern-day cultures of both countries. The lack of religious influences in the designation of Canadian Cultural World Heritage sites indicates a lack of a dominant religious presence in modern-day Canada. Currently, there is a prominent mixture of Catholicism and Protestant, but around 30% of the population is religiously unaffiliated (Lipka, 2019). There is, however, a continued presence of Indigenous groups and spirituality in modern Canada. In contrast, there is a co-

Christians not retreated into hiding to continue practicing their religion throughout the prohibition, this religion might not exist at all in modern-day Japan. The Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki region exhibit the coexistence of Christianity with the more prominently practiced Japanese religions Buddhism and Shintoism in Japan (Kawashima, 2017).

### *Summary*

The spiritual and religious influences that have led to the designation of Cultural World Heritage Sites in Canada and Japan exhibit the differences in the

existence of Shintoism and Buddhism in modern-day Japan. In fact, about 70% of the population identifies with Shintoism, and about 70% of the population identifies with Buddhism – indicating that many Japanese practice a combination of both religions (Plecher, 2020). This co-existence and co-importance of Shintoism and Buddhism is reflected in the many Japanese Cultural World Heritage Sites that implicate both religions.

### **Canadian Sites Designated by Geographical Influences**

Often correlated with the prominent spirituality or religion of the region, geographical factors are also prominent in the designation of Cultural World Heritage Sites. In Canada, the three geographically designated sites are the region of Writing-on-Stone / Aisinai’pi, Head-Smash-In Buffalo Jump, and SGang Gwaay, which were introduced earlier as spiritually designated sites. The indigenous Canadian beliefs founded in geography is reflected in the topography of the region of Writing-on-Stone/Aisinai’pi, which is dominated by a valley, ravines, and hoodoos, which are spires of eroded rock (UNESCO, n.d.-a; see Figure 12).

Similarly, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump indicates how Indigenous Canadians used the topography of the land in this region to their advantage in hunting. These Indigenous groups would use communal hunting techniques and their knowledge of the region’s topography to funnel herds of bison over a precipice, resulting in the death of bison (UNESCO, n.d.-a). The geography of the region enabled these communal hunting techniques, which became an integral part of the Indigenous cultures honored through this heritage site.

One of the most notable elements of the Haida culture was their relationship with the land and the sea, which they expressed through their creation of memorial totem poles (UNESCO, n.d.-a). These poles were carved out of enormous logs on the island of

**Figure 12.**

*The Writing-On-Stone / Aisinai’pi Visitor Centre overlooks the hoodoos of the Milk River Valley*



*Note.* Photograph by John Novotny (© Alberta Parks).

SGang Gwaay (UNESCO, n.d.-a). An island is an ideal setting to further one's relationship with both the land and the sea; as such, the island supported the Haida culture. In these ways, the geographical elements of SGang Gwaay island enabled the erection of these culturally symbolic totem poles.

### Japanese Sites Designated by Geographical Influences

In addition to its geographical significance as the tallest mountain in Japan, Mount Fuji is a Shinto and Buddhist Japanese symbol (UNESCO, n.d.-b; see Figure 13). The foundation of Shintoism is the animist belief that spirits are found in elements of nature, including mountains (Lidz, 2017). Many pilgrims believe there are spiritual powers residing at the peak and effectuate Shinto and Buddhist practices once they ascend (UNESCO, n.d.-b). For others, ascending the mountain signifies rebirth, and the mountain is a symbol of unification, serenity, and power (Lidz, 2017). Shinto Shrines and Buddhist structures have been built at the base of the mountain and along pilgrimage routes (UNESCO, n.d.-b). In this regard, the geography of Mount Fuji coupled with religious beliefs rooted in nature lead to the designation of this heritage site.

The Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region and the Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range mentioned earlier are also designated as a result of the region's geography as much as their religious significance. The island setting of Hidden

#### Figure 13.

*Lake Kawaguchiko Sakura Mount Fuji*



*Note.* Photograph by Midori (© Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported).

Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region allowed for the seclusion of Christians during the prohibition (UNESCO, n.d.-b). The island enabled them to live safely and to continue to practice Christianity despite the forced deportation and execution of Christian religious specialists, such as priests and missionaries, during the Christian prohibition (Kawashima, 2017).

#### *Summary*

Canadian and Japanese Cultural World Heritage Sites are similar

in that populations in both countries have designated certain geographical features of their land as sacred and, as a result, geography has helped shape cultural significances and heritage sites in Canada and Japan.

### Final Comments

The factors that have influenced the identification of UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Sites in Canada and Japan are numerous and varied. The factors associated with the designation of Canadian heritage sites have been influenced by a combination of domestic and foreign factors, whereas those of Japanese sites have been predominantly domestic. The differences in these influential historic, spiritual and religious, and geographical factors in each country reflect each respective country's unique modern culture, as well as each country's distinguished historical past.

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