

Proposal concept

① Asset name

Uji-cha Tea Cultural Landscape

② Potential Outstanding Universal Value of the Uji-cha tea Cultural Landscape

1. Japanese green tea, which today is categorized into three representative types—matcha (tea leaves are harvested at shaded tea fields and are pulverized into powdered green tea), sencha (tea leaves are harvested at ordinary unshaded tea fields and are steamed and rolled) and gyokuro (tea leaves are harvested from shaded tea fields like matcha and are steamed and rolled like sencha)—depends upon the tea production techniques that were invented at the Yamashiro region in the southern part of Kyoto Prefecture, including so-called oishita saibai (cultivation of tea leaves under shading screens to block direct sunlight). Practices and customs of steaming harvested tea leaves to stop oxidization, those of drinking powdered tea leaves in hot water and drinking the extract of green tea leaves by infusing them in hot water originally came from China, where steaming is no longer practiced and the tradition of imbibing powdered green tea disappeared a long time ago, and underwent a unique evolution in Japan to give birth to distinctive Japanese green tea. The Uji-cha tea cultural landscape illustrates the origins of Japanese green tea, the developments of distinctive cultural traditions associated with it, and the passing-down of its production techniques from generation to generation to the present.
2. While meeting the specific local natural conditions of the Yamashiro region, Uji-cha tea production has been developing unique land uses and landscapes, which mainly consist of tea fields, tea-processing factories, and tea wholesalers' shops, reflecting the way tea has been produced, distributed and consumed in Japan over time. The land uses and landscapes have been passed down to the present, while organically evolved through technology innovation and rationalization, to be the most representative of land uses and landscapes associated with tea production in Japan.
3. Uji-cha, or Uji tea, is deeply rooted in the daily lives of Japanese people through tea drinking tradition. It has also contributed to the creation and development of special forms of tea drinking culture that are unique to Japan: cha-no-yu (tea ceremony based on powdered green tea) and sencha-do (a tea ceremony based on brewed green tea), which have been playing potent social, cultural and philosophical roles.

As such, the Uji-cha tea cultural landscape is our heritage, which could potentially exhibit Outstanding Universal Value for inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List, because it bears an exceptional testimony to the origins of Japanese green tea as well as the invention and development of unique tea production methods, which have been passed down from generation to generation; it also showcases a full range of land uses and landscapes characteristic of tea production that have historically been developed in Japan; and finally it has tangible and direct association with special forms of tea drinking culture that are globally known as symbolic of Japanese culture and cuisine.

