

ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

Our Ref.: TP/GJ/99

Paris, 3 September 2024

For the attention of:
The Hon Masahito Moriyama,
Minister of Education, Culture, Sports,
Science and Technology

Mr Shunichi Tokura,
Commissioner for Cultural Affairs

The Hon Seitaro Hattori,
Governor of Fukuoka Prefecture

Mr Masami Terasaki,
Superintendent of Education,
Fukuoka Prefecture

The Hon Kazuhisa Takeuchi,
Mayor of Kitakyushu City

Mr Tsuneo Tanaka,
Speaker of the
Kitakyushu Municipal Assembly

Ms Hiromi Tashima,
Superintendent of Education,
Kitakyushu City

Mr Toshihiko Aoyagi,
Chairman, JR Kyushu Railway
Company

Subject: Heritage Alert regarding the Archaeological Remains of the First Moji Railway Station Complex, Kitakyushu City, Japan

Dear Madam, Sir, Your Excellency,

In solidarity with the concerns raised by ICOMOS Japan and as a follow up to my letter of 25 June 2024, ICOMOS is issuing a worldwide Heritage Alert to highlight the imminent and irreversible threat facing the archaeological remains of the First Moji Railway Station Complex.

Moji was a small settlement until the late 19th century when its strategic location on the Kanmon strait, separating Honshu and Kyushu, led to its selection in the 1880s for transformation into a modern city and transportation hub. Construction of a modern port and railway began in 1889 and, following their completion two years later, Moji became one of Japan's most crucial coal export ports, establishing vital connections with Asian countries and driving modernization. The railway, directly linking Moji station and port with the coal mines, played a pivotal role in this transformation. Moji thrived as an international city, adorned with modern buildings, banks, and trading companies.

In 1914, 23 years after the first Moji Station was built, a new station building was constructed closer to the port. This second Moji Station still stands today, functioning as a station building and preserved as a national heritage site. It remains a source of pride and identity for the local community. However, the first Moji Station was forgotten until 2023 when remains associated with the original complex, such as an engine shed, were unearthed. This discovery is of significant historic value, marking the rediscovery of modern Moji's birthplace. The unearthed remains provide physical evidence of the building and engineering techniques of the time, showcasing the collaboration between Japanese technicians using

traditional pre-modern techniques and those trained in modern Western techniques. The historic, architectural, engineering, and scientific values of the site have been widely recognized by numerous Japanese scholars and academic associations, as well international associations and organisations, including the International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage (TICCIH).

Despite numerous petitions calling for conservation of the site submitted by academic associations and citizen groups since late 2023, ICOMOS understands that the City of Kitakyushu, which owns the land where the site is located, is intent on proceeding with plans to build public facilities, thereby neglecting the conservation of these remains. ICOMOS deeply regrets and is disappointed by the City authority's disregard for this cultural heritage of national and international importance.

We respectfully urge the following actions:

To the City of Kitakyushu:

- Suspend the ongoing salvage excavation and construction of public facilities within the area;
- Initiate immediate consultations with academics to fully assess the heritage values of the site;
- Engage in open dialogue with citizens, professionals and academics to discuss the site's conservation;
- Establish an academic/professional committee to develop a conservation plan for the site based on this values assessment and the outcomes of the open dialogue.
- Refrain from issuing permits for any construction activities within the First Moji Railway Station Complex site that may result in the destruction of archaeological remains.

To the Agency for Cultural Affairs and Fukuoka Prefectural Government:

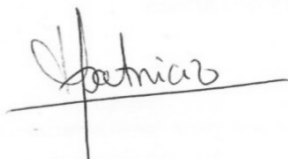
- Provide appropriate professional and technical advice and guidance to the City of Kitakyushu regarding the proper assessment of the heritage value of the archaeological remains of the First Moji Railway Station Complex.

To JR Kyushu:

- Suspend and review works within the archaeological site of the First Moji Railway Station Complex to ensure the preservation of the associated archaeological remains.

ICOMOS stands ready to offer its full expertise and support to the Kitakyushu municipal authorities, the Agency for Cultural Affairs, and the Fukuoka Prefectural Government in their efforts to conserve the remains of First Moji Railway Station Complex.

Yours sincerely,



Teresa Patricio
President of ICOMOS

Letter sent to:

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