

## Worksheet 5: Analysing Institutional Positions

### PURPOSE

Develop analytical tools for reading institutional documents as evidence of heritage governance in action. Learn to identify the gap between what institutions claim and what their processes produce, using the four-question framework introduced in Module 06.

► Aligns with Module 06: Reading Institutional Positions and Module 07: Positions & Perspectives

### Instructions

Select an institutional document related to Hashima's heritage governance. This might include: the Japanese delegation's 2015 UNESCO statement, an IHIC description, a Cabinet Secretariat report, a UNESCO World Heritage Committee decision, or correspondence from a heritage body. Apply the four-question framework below.

### The Four-Question Framework

#### Question 1: What is claimed?

- What does the document explicitly state? Identify the central claims in the institution's own language.
- What commitments, if any, are made? Are they specific or vague?
- What tone does the document adopt — conciliatory, defensive, authoritative, neutral?

#### Question 2: What evidence is engaged?

- What historical evidence does the document cite or reference?
- Does it engage with the scholarly literature on Hashima's labour history?
- Does it reference specific sources (archival documents, testimonies, archaeological findings), or does it make claims without evidentiary support?

#### Question 3: What is excluded?

- What perspectives, evidence, or historical periods are absent from the document?
- Does the document acknowledge the existence of counter-narratives or contested interpretations?
- Are there topics that the document conspicuously avoids — and if so, what might explain the avoidance?
- Does the document's scope or framing pre-emptively exclude certain kinds of evidence?

#### Question 4: What institutional interest might this serve?

- Who produced this document, and what institutional pressures shaped its content?
- What would the institution risk by saying something different?
- How does this document relate to the institution's other public statements and actions?
- Does the document protect the institution from accountability while appearing to engage with the contested history?

### Part 2: The Language of Governance

Institutional documents about contested heritage frequently deploy specific rhetorical strategies. For your selected document, identify whether any of the following are present:

**“Balance” language** — Demands for equal representation of perspectives regardless of evidentiary support. Where does the document invoke balance, and what does it accomplish?

**Passive construction** — Removing human agency from descriptions of historical events (e.g., “workers were brought” vs. “the company recruited forced labourers”). What disappears when agency is removed?

**Temporal narrowing** — Confining the relevant history to a specific period that excludes the most contested elements. What time frame does the document define, and what falls outside it?

**Procedural framing** — Redefining interpretive questions as procedural or technical matters. Does the document shift from “what happened” to “what process was followed”?

**Commitment without mechanism** — Promises to act without specifying how, when, or by whom. Are there commitments in the document that lack implementation detail?

### Part 3: Comparative Exercise

If possible, compare your institutional document with a source from a different type of actor (a media report, a scholarly analysis, a survivor testimony, or a statement from a different government). Consider:

- How does the institutional document read differently when placed alongside non-institutional sources?
- What becomes visible in the institutional language that was not apparent when reading it in isolation?
- Does the comparison reveal gaps between institutional claims and observable outcomes?

### Synthesis

*In 200–300 words, reflect on what this exercise reveals about how institutional language functions in heritage governance. Consider: Is institutional language designed to communicate or to manage? Can the same document do both?*

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#### EXTENSION

Apply the four-question framework to an institutional document from a different contested heritage case (e.g., a museum’s statement about repatriation, a government response to a memorial controversy, or a heritage body’s position on a colonial-era site). Do the same rhetorical strategies appear? What does this suggest about the generalisability of the “reading institutional positions” approach?