

## Using the Cultural Landscape to Represent the Village Identity: A Case Study of Soni Village, Nara Prefecture, Japan

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## Abstract

This study is part of “The Artist-in-residence program” initiated by the local Soni government to encourage creators, chefs, artists, and researchers from Japan and other countries to increase the artistic activities in the village, as well as creating a network between villagers and the global community. The Artist-in-residence program was held on February 2022 and the output of this project are included ten illustrations to represent the image of Soni Village. Thus, the objective of this study is to illustrate the identity of Soni Village through artworks: firstly, study the cultural landscape of Soni by using the classification guideline. Secondly, perceive the cultural identity for illustrating the significant of Soni Village. Therefore, this study focuses on the physical components of the cultural landscape in Soni and aims to discover the significant activities which play a role in the agricultural landscape of Soni. Therefore, the most distinct image of Soni relates to the activities resulting from the association between human activities and the unique natural environment of Soni Village.

**Keywords:** Cultural landscape, Agricultural village, Village identity, Soni village

# 1. Introduction

Soni Village is located in Uda District of the northeast part of Nara Prefecture, Japan. The total area is 47.84 square kilometers, with an estimated population at 1,353 (Soni municipal office, 2021). It has a cool climate with four distinct seasons. Its winters are very cold, *with December being the coldest month when the average temperature is 2.2 °C*, while August is the hottest month with an average temperature of 25.5 °C (Soni Municipal Office, 2021). Soni Village is a small village where is surrounded by mountains and consists of nine districts: (1) Igami, (2) Kazura, (3) Taroji, (4) Imai, (5) Konagao, (6) Nagano, (7) Shioi, (8) Yamagasu, and (9) Kake (Figure 1). Consequently, most of the dwellings are located near the valley for agricultural purposes.

Since Soni Village is surrounded by many mountains and the Shorenji River which flows through it, the natural scenery is characteristically beautiful. The Soni Highland is a significant place in the area, and home to the O-kame hot spring, which is part of the lacquer industry and agricultural life. The Soni Highland covers 40 hectares and sits at the foot of Kuroso Mountain, one of Japan's 300 famous mountains. The main characteristic of the highland is pampas grass which historically was cultivated for using as thatch to cover the roofs of traditional Japanese houses. At the beginning of spring each year, the pampas fields are burned to encourage new growth. The O-kame geothermal hot spring in Soni Village is located at the foot of Kuroso Mountain. Soni Village which is also known as the birthplace of natural lacquer (Urushi in Japanese), cedar and cypress forests have been established. According to ancient records dating back to the Heian Period (795–1185), Prince Oousu established a natural lacquer (Urushi) site in this area and the traditional craft of lacquer painting was developed. Consequently, the art of natural lacquer or Urushi has become part of the local wisdom and one of the main characteristics of Soni Village. Due to the village's cool climate (the average temperature is 13 °C) and the majority of agricultural area being higher up than normally the case for farming, insects are not able to damage the crops, resulting in high-quality agricultural products. Therefore, Soni Village has a significant natural resource that impacts on various aspects of agricultural life.

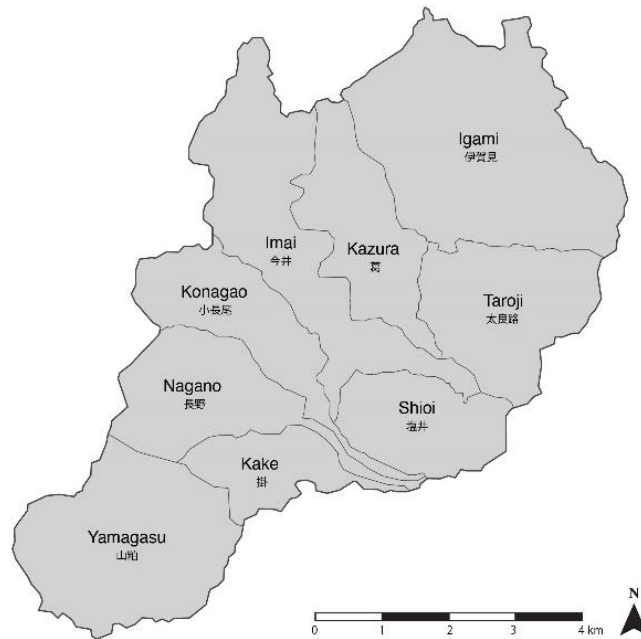


Figure 1 Map of nine districts in Soni village

## 2. Objectives

- 2.1 To study the cultural landscape of Soni Village by using the classification guideline for criterion.
- 2.2 To perceive the cultural identity for illustrating the significance characteristic of Soni Village.

## 3. Literature Review

This study focuses on the cultural landscape and the identity of Soni Village. Therefore, this literature review concentrates on the definition of cultural landscape and the urban significance of its tangible elements. The cultural landscape represents the association between human activity and natural environment, the modifications made by a cultural group, and the significance of the resulting scenery (Sauer, 1925). Accordingly, the characteristics of Soni Village have continually developed with the growth of cypress forestry for Japanese lacquerware and highland agriculture demonstrating how humans associate with the environment and the tangible things. There are several ways of classifying the cultural landscape's components and the Australian Heritage Commission uses the following terms: (1) Structure—the physical remains of intentional construction associated with humans such as architecture. (2) Complex—a number of features that relate to each other in some way. (3) Site—the location of an event where no above-ground physical evidence remains. (4) Feature—elements of the landscape, including man-made and natural features. (5) Linear—an urban network or circulation such as a transport route and its correlated elements, etc. (Lennon & Mathews, 1996). In addition, the cultural landscape overlaps with the townscape in accordance with a book entitled “The Image of the City” by American urban theorist Kevin Lynch, which

described the townscape by classifying the different elements of the city: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks (Lynch, 1960).

## 4. Methodology

This study focuses on the cultural landscape of Soni Village and the key role it plays in agriculture nowadays. To identify the significant characteristics representing Soni's image, the following aspects are studied (Figure 2): 1) the definition of the cultural landscape from literature reviews that mostly common used of this term and related theories to determine the criteria of the study area and identify the study's objectives, 2) visual surveys by using the physical mapping and photographic surveying to examine the appearance of the study area and activities involving local wisdom which have always been important and continue to exist, and the adaptation of activities to the current situation by conducting a site visit, data collection, and interviews, 3) summarizing the activities and study area for analysis in accordance with the study criteria, 4) analyzing the significant characteristics of Soni Village to illustrate its image and represent the relationship between local people and the spatial settings.

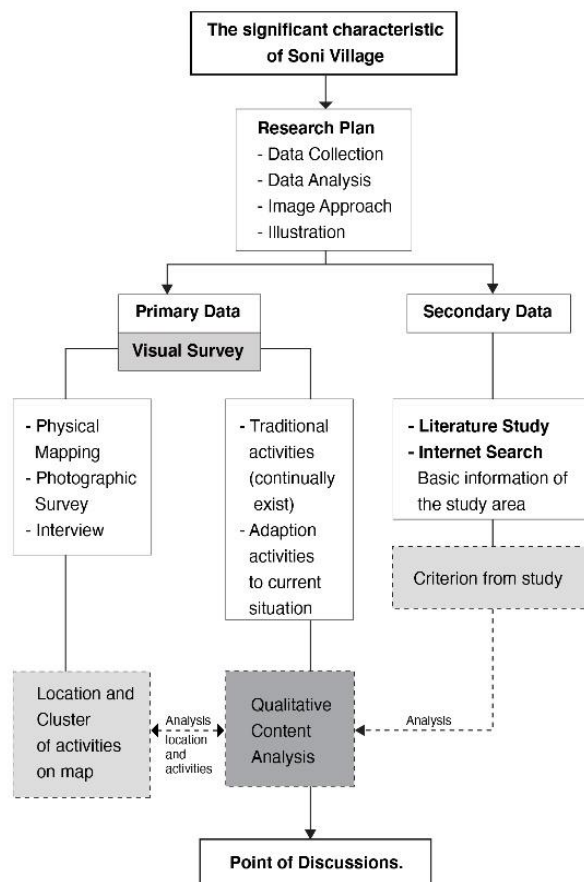


Figure 2 The summary diagram of methodology

## 5. Research Result

### 5.1 The theoretical framework

The human use of the local topography to create a distinctive physical pattern results in a cultural landscape (Lennon & Mathews, 1996). According to the cultural landscapes in the Australian Alps national park and the U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service, a cultural landscape can be defined as follows: 1) A place where the structure and human activities are associated with the natural site such as land use and the pattern of spatial organization in response to the natural environment, subsequently becoming a cultural tradition. 2) Complex physical components or the consequence of a land-shaping process according to the United States National Park Service, including buildings, structures, and objects or small-scale elements which serve human activities, functions, etc. 3) A location of importance and a place where physical evidence remains of an archaeological site demonstrating historical activities and vegetation. 4) Significant landscape components such as natural features, an environment created by humans, and the landmark of a village. 5) Linear urban networking, including the circulation of networks, boundary demarcation, and a group of buildings or other features demonstrating the cluster of a human settlement.

From the topographical perspective, human settlements are mainly based on natural factors. In a case of Soni Village, the majority of people have settled on a flat expanse of land between the mountains with the Shorenji River flowing through the village. The Soni Office, or the center of the village, is located in the northeastern part of Nara Prefecture, surrounded by mountains which have an effect on its accessibility and create a unique location. Due to the topography of the area and characteristics of the terrain, most villagers are involved in agriculture. In addition, Soni Village is surrounded by mountains with cypress forestry. According to the local government data, Soni Village is known as “the birthplace of Urushi” or natural lacquer (General Incorporated Association Soninowa Glocal, 2022 and the appearance of Urushi in many ancient Japanese legends shows that this local craftsmanship skill aligns with the unique natural landscape. Therefore, the structure of Soni Village demonstrates the association between humans and nature, with traditional activities such as the craft of lacquer painting becoming part of the valley’s cultural heritage.

The physical components and consequences of the land-shaping process, such as human activities, buildings, and other elements in Soni Village have resulted in the area being used mainly for agriculture and Japanese lacquerware (Urushi). Many findings reveal that the agricultural activities in Soni Village consist mainly of vegetable cultivation, rice growing, and rice processing. Furthermore, the natural lacquer from

pine trees in the cypress forests is used to create lacquer paintings, adding to the reliance on agriculture for Soni people in their normal daily lives.

Characteristically, the farming areas in Soni Village are mainly located near the foothills of the mountain, with transport circulation at a higher level than the cultivated area. Besides cultivation, there are other spaces for supporting agricultural activities such as a tomato factory and a shared kitchen unit called “Katte” where connects people with agricultural products as a processing unit. Traditional agricultural wisdom continues to be used and developed to align with current practices. In a case of Urushi, besides the cypress forests, there is also a related working space called “Urushi-based Soni” located in Uda District to promote the tradition of Japanese lacquer painting.

In addition to agriculture and Urushi painting, the physical components resulting from the land-shaping process, such as the local architecture, form part of the unique landscape of Soni Village. Significantly, the traditional houses in Soni have high ceilings in a trapezoid shape covered with pampas grass. According to the study datas, pampas grass is mainly planted in Soni and delivered to other areas in Japan. On the grassland located in Kuroso Mountain called “Soni Highland”, pampas grass foliage lasts all year round, turning gold in autumn when it is ready to harvest. At the beginning of spring, pampas grass fields are burned to encourage new growth, resulting in a unique scenery of burned mountain.

Soni Village is a place of historical importance since besides the cultivated area, the traditional “Shishimai” festival or “Soni Shishi Lion Dance” is held at the “Kadofusa” Shinto shrine in October every year. This tradition was established by Emperor Yuryaku in 1718 (General Incorporated Association Soninowa Glocal, 2022) and has continued for over 300 years. Therefore, this shrine is an archaeological site evidencing historical activity.

Characteristically, the terrain is a significant component of the natural landscape and unique scenery of Soni Village. The main reason for Soni Highland being such a significant landmark is due to the small village of Soni being surrounded by mountains. Physiographically, the mountains span nine districts of Nana Prefecture, covering more than 50% of the overall area with the pampas grass fields stretching up to Kuroso Mountain. After being burned in the spring to encourage new growth, the magnificent scenery has become a significant natural landmark. Another natural landmark in Soni Village is “Yoroidake”, also known as “Odake” which is a pyramid-shaped mountain with sheer rock faces and forested slopes 894 meters high and visible from afar.

The linear from classification guideline as an urban networking, focuses on community networks and the relative between transport routes and cultivated areas. The settlements located around the valley are

joined together by roads, and according to the aerial photographs (Figure 3), the village provides an expedient transport route. The characteristics of the town plan and transport routes include a sloping area for connecting communities and a cultivated area which aligns with the shape of the village. Furthermore, the characteristics of the cultural landscape are traditional, with the cultivated areas being mainly located along the transport routes and river.



**Figure 3** The aerial photograph of Soni Village (Apple Maps, 2022)

## 5.2 The cultural landscape of Soni Village

To find the identity of cultural landscape of Soni Village, this study uses the structure or land-shaping process of Soni Village as the criterion for identifying the components of the cultural landscape. The land-shaping process in Soni indicates that the topography conduces to agricultural development, e.g., farming, forestry, and forest farming. Therefore, a farming processing unit has been established to enhance agricultural development and the traditional culture of Soni Village. The cultural landscape of Soni Village is based on the land-shaping process criteria, consisting of five groups: (1) Structure—the physical remains of intentional construction associated with humans. (2) Complex—separated into two main groups, the first of which is food development units such as a tomato factory, a miso production unit called Ayukai and Byobu Sakura no Sato, and a shared kitchen space called Katte. The second involves traditional art and craft involving Urushi-based Soni and traditional house construction (pampas grass). (3) Site—home to the historical Shishimai Lion Dance at the Kadofusa Shrine. (4) Features—the unique village scenery which is a natural landmark and includes the mountains of Yoroidake and Kuroso (burned mountain). (5) Linear—characteristics of the community network. (6) The current activities occurring nowadays.



### 5.2.1 Structure

From the description of cultural landscape components, the structure is referred to the physical remains of intentional construction associated with humans. Hence, in a case of Soni Village, the distinct structure is agricultural area. The aerial photographs of Soni Village indicate that most of the area is covered by mountains and forestry, leaving only a small portion inhabitable. The inhabitable area is mainly used for the cultivation of agricultural products such as tomatoes, rice, and various vegetables. Therefore, the significant characteristics of Soni Village are its agriculture and forests, comprising over 50% of the total village area, as well as the physical elements resulting from human association with nature, such as farming.

### 5.2.2 Complex

From the description of the component of cultural landscape, complex is a number of features related to each other such as structures associated with farming. Therefore, in a case of Soni Village, complex is the physical components resulting from structure and land-shaping process e.g., 1) food development unit which is the production of agriculture. 2) Traditional art and craft which is the creation from natural resources.

**A) Food Development Unit** - Firstly, the Soji Kogen tomato factory (曽爾高原トマト選果場), located on Narabi Soni Street in Uda District, uses tomatoes which have been cultivated in Soni Village. According to government data, the population in Soni is decreasing every year, resulting in the decline of agricultural wisdom. The Japanese government has implemented a policy to support a move by the new generation to rural areas in Japan. In a case of Soni Village, the Japanese government is providing scholarships for members of the new generation to study tomato farming with the objective of sharing traditional knowledge. After completing their studies, the participants may decide to continue working in Soni or finish the project. The Japanese government supports this project every year to promote the continuation of local wisdom.

Secondly, miso-producing units called Ayumikai and Byobu Sakura no Sato are agricultural processing units for delivering to other areas in Japan. The main product is Japanese seasoning, produced by fermenting soybeans with salt and koji (miso). According to the interview data, the Japanese government has approved a budget for supporting the move by Japanese designers to rural areas to work with local people in designing and developing products for each village. In a case of Soni, a designer works with locals to improve their products and packaging designs. The name Byobu Sakura no Sato refers to Byobu Mountain, which forms the backdrop of the village.

Thirdly, Soni nowa Katte or Katte is a shared kitchen space for food processing, cooking, and selling. According to the interview data, Katte operates an hourly rental system for space sharing. The majority of customers are business owners who occasionally use the space to make special products. For example, the owner of a sake factory rents the shared kitchen to produce sake-flavored ice cream during the summer. The shop provides space for selling food processing products from the community with the packaging designed and developed by a volunteer designer under the government project. In addition to promoting Soni Village to a new generation, Katte has established a website for promoting events all year round.

**B) Traditional arts and crafts** - The first tradition is Urushi-based Soni, known as “Nenrin,” a place for making Urushi paintings, located in Uda District near the mountainous pine forest. According to the historical records, Soni Village is the origin of the Urushi culture in Japan. The production of Urushi has long been in decline since it is made from the amber of pine trees which can cause a topical allergic reaction (Mountain and Lacquer Project Management Office, 2022). Until 2005, some villagers were dedicated to reviving the Urushi culture due to the fact that Soni village is the birthplace of Urushi. Therefore, Nenrin provides space for Urushi workshops and recording the knowledge of the craft.

The second craft relates to the traditional building of Soni houses, the main characteristic of which is a high ceiling in a trapezoid shape covered with pampas grass. Nowadays, the number of traditional houses is decreasing and mainly renovated using new materials, especially for the roof. Therefore, a real traditional house can rarely be found. According to the government data, the population is decreasing as the next generation tends to move to the big cities, abandoning their traditional houses. However, the local government is attempting to preserve the traditional houses by offering inexpensive rental. Soni Highland is a large-scale pampas grass field at the foot of Kuroso Mountain and covers an area of approximately 400,000 square meters. Pampas grass is cultivated to provide thatch for the roofs of traditional Japanese houses. At the beginning of spring, the fields are burned to encourage new growth, and the burned mountains became part of the magnificent Soni’s landscape.

### 5.2.3 Site

Site is the location of an event which is a remainder of historical stories. The main culture in Soni is “Shishimai” or the Lion Dance. This is an autumn festival held in October each year. This festival was originally established by Emperor Yuryaku in 1718 when the locals of Nagano District visited Ise and learned the sacred dance at the Ise shrine. Since then, the traditional dance has continued to be shared through the generations for over 300 years (General Incorporated Association Soninowa Glocal, 2022). The Lion

Dance is notable in upper-class society and performed only in ceremonies. In 1979, it was recognized as part of the intangible culture of Nara Prefecture.

#### **5.2.4 Feature**

From the description of the component of cultural landscape, feature is an element of landscape. This study focuses on significant natural feature in Soni Village which is the natural landmark. Landmarks are typically seen from many angles and distances over the tops of smaller elements (Lynch, 1960), and people can perceive them from the village paths. Soni is a small-scale village surrounded by mountains. Yoroidake Mountain is 894 meters high and located in the northern part of Soni Village, with its prominent shape being visible from the center of the village. Yoroidake Mountain has a characteristic forest slope; thus, it is a practical symbol and point of direction, making it one of Soni's significant landmarks. Furthermore, at the foot of Kuroso Mountain, which is 920 meters high, pampas grass is grown as a material for thatched roofs, known in Japanese as "Kayabuki." After the pampas grass fields have been burned in the spring to encourage new growth, the highland becomes a burned mountain which is a distinctive element of the village.

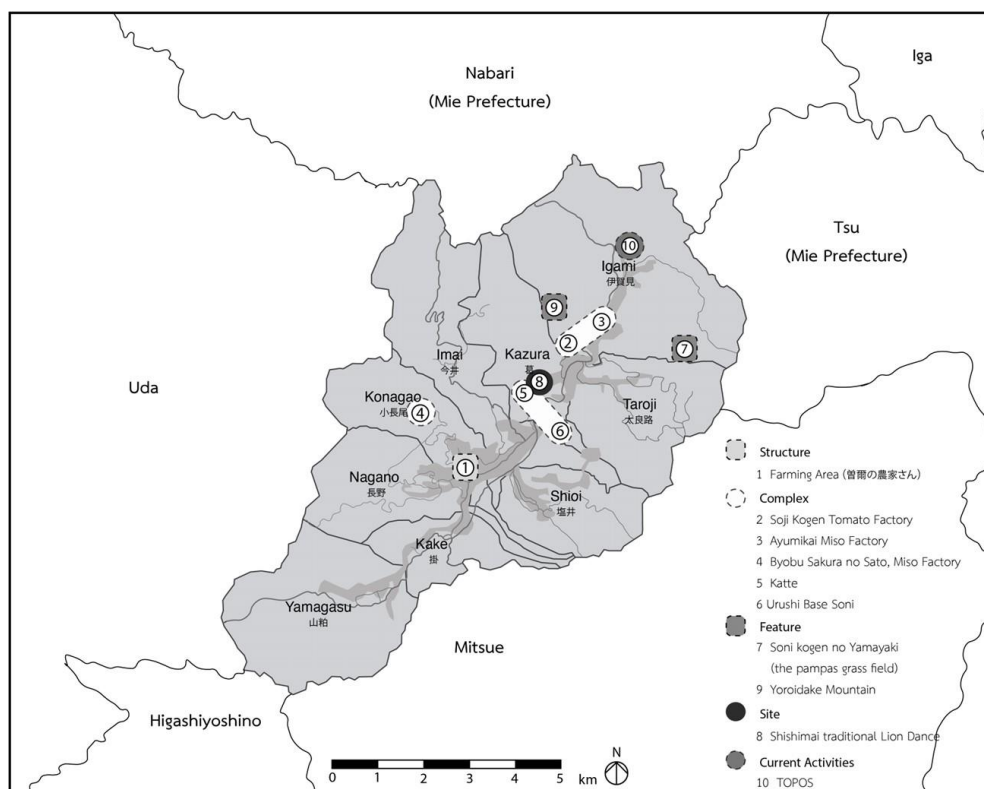
#### **5.2.5 Linear**

Linear is a network such as narrow landscape, route which associated with element. Therefore, this study focuses on the characteristic of community network in Soni Village. The main street along the western side of the Shorinji River is a major access line which follows the village shape. The street line connects to the cultivated area and provides access to the community cluster. The complexity of the street line is related to the community density. The village line is on sloping ground and the streets mainly located at a higher level than the cultivated area.

#### **5.2.6 Current activities**

Besides the traditional and agricultural activities taking place in Soni Village, a contemporary lifestyle exists harmoniously with local customs. According to the study datas, the contemporary units were established for new lifestyles such as Katte and TOPOS. Katte is jointly referred to as "the complex," developed from agricultural life to connect people with farming products. TOPOS is a creative space for the new generation of Soni villagers, established in 2018 and located in the Igami area surrounded by mountains. It is a private campground reserved for group visitors to enjoy the natural surroundings. Since Soni Village is located in a beautiful natural landscape, TOPOS uses the potential of the landscape to create activities for a new generation of tourists.

From the location of landscape (Figure 4): the cultural landscape identities are scattered around the village. Due to the fact that the agricultural area is also scattered around the village and enclosed with mountain, it becomes a significant characteristic of Soni valley. In summary, the cultural landscape of Soni Village consists of the following: (1) a farming area (曾爾の農家さん Soni no nokakan), (2) the Soji Kogen tomato factory (曾爾高原トマト選果場), (3) Ayumikai, the miso factory, (4) the Byobu Sakura no Sato miso factory, (5) Katte, (6) Urushi-based Soni or Nenrin, (7) Soni kogen no Yamayaki, the pampas grass field, (8) the Shishimai traditional Lion Dance, (9) Yoroidake Mountain, and (10) TOPOS.

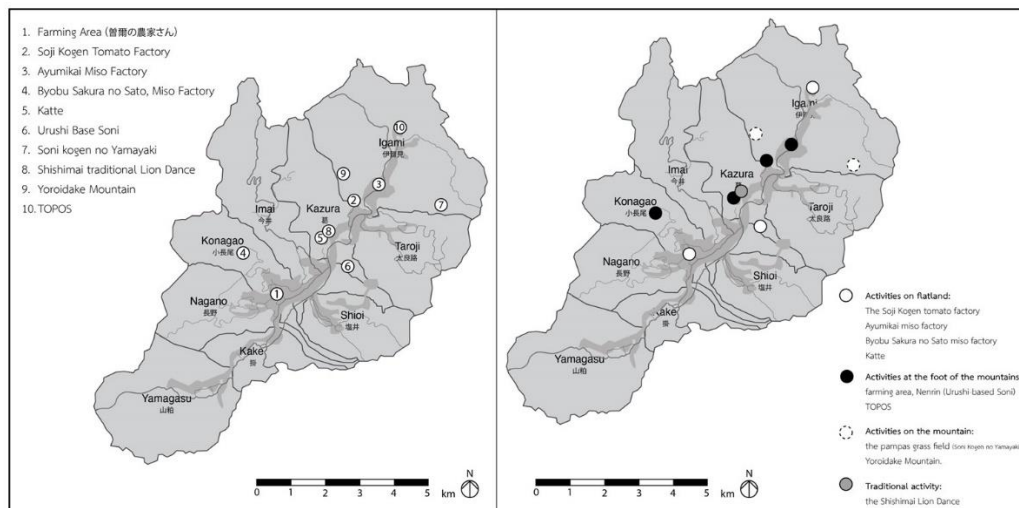


**Figure 4** The locations for conveying the interpretation of cultural landscape identity of Soni Village  
(Howtrakul & Chompoorath, 2022)

## 6. How the landscape is used for particular activities

The cultural landscape of Soni Village can be separated into four main features of land use. (Figure 5)

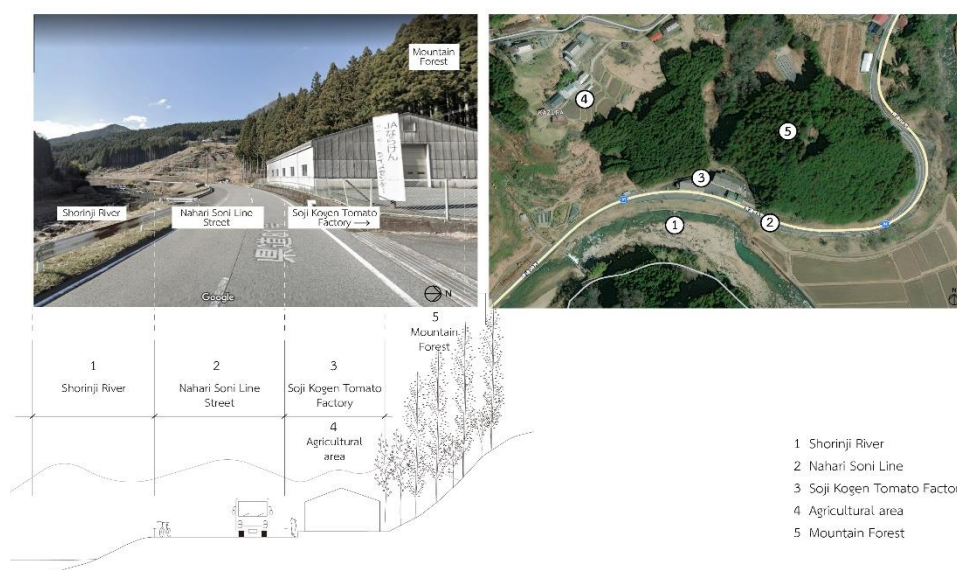
- 1) Activities on flatland: the Soji Kogen tomato factory, Ayumikai miso factory, Byobu Sakura no Sato miso factory, Katte.
- 2) Activities at the foot of the mountains: farming area, Nenrin (Urushi-based Soni), TOPOS.
- 3) Activities on the mountain: the pampas grass field (Soni Kogen no Yamayaki), Yoroidake Mountain.
- 4) Traditional activity: the Shishimai Lion Dance.



**Figure 5** The locations of the particular activities on cultural landscape of Soni Village  
(Howtrakul & Chompoorath, 2022)

**6.1 Activities on flat land** - The activities on flat land take place along the valley, consisting mainly of a food production unit, which although not taking direct advantage of the landscape, is related to agriculture.

Soji Kogen tomato factory. The factory is directly connected to the main street (Nahari Soni Line), while the northern side is connected to the mountain forest, and the front is near the Shorinji River (Figure 6), providing a distinctive cultural landscape. Though the location is surrounded by nature, the activity unit is used for agro-industry purposes and the exterior space for transportation. Therefore, the landscape is rarely related to other activities.



**Figure 6** The location of Soji Kogen Tomato Factory shown the distinctive cultural landscape of Soni Village (Apple Maps, 2022; Google Maps, 2022)

Ayumikai, a small miso factory in Soni Village, is located near the Shinmei Shrine to the south of the Shorinji River and surrounded by nature with a cultivated area, forest, and river. The main building is connected to the main street with a parking unit. Ayumikai is a small food processing unit producing miso by fermenting soybeans with salt and koji, with the products then being sold at Katte. Byobu Sakura no Sato is a small miso factory located in the Nagano area of Soni Village and surrounded by a residential area. Byobu Sakura no Sato is a part of the community and operated by local people. Since these units are used for home industry purposes, the natural surroundings are insignificant.

Katte is located near the government office at the center of the community since its objective is to connect the local people with agricultural products. Katte provides space for food processing. Hence, the activities mainly take place in the indoor space, while the outdoor area is occasionally used for temporary events such as a flea market. Therefore, this activity is not directly related to the natural context.

Four activities, namely the Soji Kogen tomato factory, Ayumikai miso factory, Byobu Sakura no Sato miso factory, and Katte are not part of the cultivated area. (Figure 7)

Activities on flatland				
	the Soji Kogen tomato factory	Ayumikai miso factory	Byobu Sakura no Sato, Miso	Katte
References	<a href="http://maps.google.com">http://maps.google.com</a> 429 Kazura, Soni, Uda District, Nara 633-1203, Japan	<a href="http://maps.google.com">http://maps.google.com</a> 198 Taroji, Soni, Uda District, Nara 633-1202, Japan	<a href="http://maps.google.com">http://maps.google.com</a> 466 Nagano, Soni, Uda District, Nara 633-1214, Japan	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/katte.soninowakitchen/photos">https://www.facebook.com/katte.soninowakitchen/photos</a>

**Figure 7** Activities on flatland (Google Maps, 2022; katte.soninowakitchen, 2022)

**6.2 Activities at the foot of the mountain** - The particular activities occurring at the foot of the mountain relate to agriculture and forestry, with most taking advantage of the natural surroundings.

Farming activities cover more than 50% of the village area and are mainly located on the outer edge of the community or enclose the village and connect to the mountain. In particular, the majority of the area near the Shorinji River is used for cultivation due to the abundant natural terrain being appropriate for agricultural purposes.

In a case of tomato farming in Soni Village where famous agricultural products are cultivated called “Soni Nokakan,” the area has changed from forest to agricultural area due to a decline of the demand of timber and the forest industry. As a result, the villagers adapted their livelihoods to embrace the agricultural lifestyle. Furthermore, since the average temperatures tend to be cool in Soni, the villagers can competently

grow spinach and tomatoes. Therefore, this activity aligns with a landscape located on an abundant sloping site with a suitable climate.

Urushi-based Soni or named Nenrin, as the place the place for making lacquer, is located in Shioi and connected to the main street. The building is close to a mountain forest, with the space between the building and mountain used for outdoor activity. Nenrin provides space for Urushi production and the activities include planting, raising Urushi trees, and producing Urushi craft. Nowadays, the village has an agreement with local forestry association to preserve Urushi tree plantation by professional foresters. Therefore, the activities in Nenrin align with its surroundings.

TOPOS is a campground for creation purposes, located near the mountain forest in Soni's northern area. TOPOS is enclosed by the mountain, creating a private valley and provides space for relaxing with nature. Therefore, this activity takes advantage of its natural surroundings and aesthetics.

Hence, in a case of Soni, the early occurrence of activities relates to the topography, ultimately creating a culture. In contrast, TOPOS is a contemporary activity established for tourism purposes in accordance with the recent change in lifestyle. (Figure 8)

Activities at the foot of the mountain			
	Farming Area	Nenrin (Urushi-based Soni)	TOPOS
References	<a href="http://maps.google.com">http://maps.google.com</a> Kake, Soni, Uda District, Nara 633-1215, Japan		

**Figure 8** Activities at the foot of the mountain (Google Maps, 2022; Oupkam & Akutagawa, 2022)

**6.3 Activities in the mountains** - The activities taking place in the mountains are mostly forestry-related due to over 50% of Soni's terrain being enclosed by mountains. Therefore, the mountains are significant natural elements of Soni, especially since they comprise a pampas grass field (Soni Kogen no Yamayaki) and the Yorodake Mountain, which is a natural landmark of Soni Village.

The pampas grass field (Soni Kogen no Yamayaki) known as "Soni Highland" is used to provide thatch for the roofs of traditional Japanese houses called "Kayabuki"; therefore, it is an important site in pampas grass cultivation for delivering to other areas in Japan. The physical components of Soni Highland are characteristic of the terrain and historical periods resulting in the natural features being modified for human activities. (Jane Lennon and Steve Mathews, 1996)



Yoroidake Mountain is a point of reference for the village and serves as a symbol for practical purposes rather than subsistence. To perceive the identity of Soni Village, its image and characteristics must represent its natural features such as Yoroidake. (Figure 9)

**6.4 Traditional Activity** - Shishimai or the Lion Dance is part of the cultural landscape due to its traditional association with the natural elements and the cultural heritage of Nara Prefecture. This tangible tradition is expressed by the unique ceremony that takes place every year. (Figure 9)



**Figure 9** Activities on the mountain and Traditional activity (Oupkam & Akutagawa, 2022)

## 7. Conclusion - The cultural landscape representing Soni's image

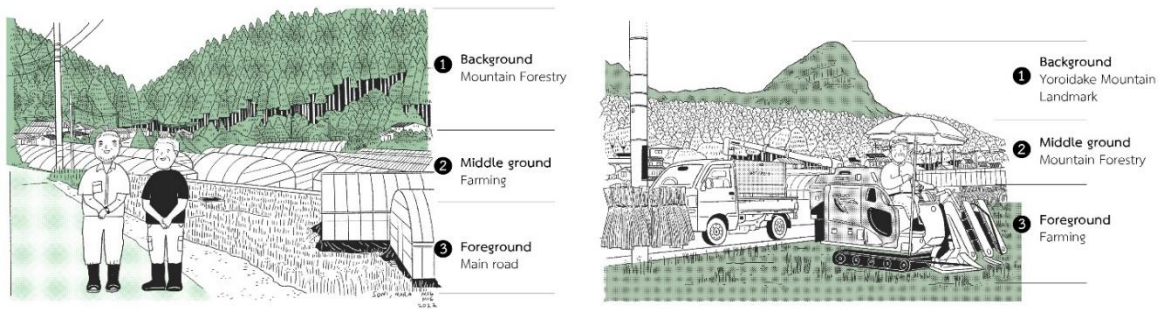
To represent the significant image of the village, this study focuses on the activities relating to its physical geography such as agriculture, forestry (pine forest) for Urushi craft, and a pampas grass field. Hence, the formation of agricultural life aligns with Soni's terrain and has become a part of the cultural landscape.

Therefore, the illustration of an agricultural lifestyle is most representative of Soni. However, to illustrate the image of Soni, the characteristics of the farming area should have at least three layers (Figure 10): farming as the foreground, mountain forestry as the middle ground, and the natural landmark Yoroidake as the background.

The most distinct image representative of Soni Village is the farming area (rice field) in Kazura which perfectly comprises of cultural elements such as an agriculture area, mountain forestry, and Yoroidake Mountain, which is a significant landmark of Soni Village.

Activities which are not considered to be within the natural context or related to basic functions are interior units which do not accurately represent the image of the village or its cultural identity.





**Figure 10** The characteristics of the farming area in Soni Village consist of three layers

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