New Religious Culture Born by Registration as World Heritage:
From the Activity of Kasugayama Renseikai in Kasuga Taisha Shrine

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This article explains the process of the birth and the establishment of a new religious culture born from the inside of Kasuga Taisha Shrine, one of Japan's most famous and well-established Shinto shrines, after its registration as a World Heritage site.

Mt. Kasugayama had continued to be a sacred place historically important for the cult of Kasuga for many years and ordinary people were forbidden to climb it. After it became a World Heritage site, Kasuga Taisha Shrine started the Mt. Kasugayama climbing activity guided by Shinto priests for ordinary people. This is the origin of Kasugayama Renseikai. This activity marked its 10th anniversary in 2009.

The climbing route and manner were organized by the current Shinto priests of Kasuga Taisha Shrine based on the historical facts.

The participants of Kasugayama Renseikai do not belong to any social groups united by blood or territorial ties with people who have had a deep connection with the cult of Kasuga. Many of them have not had a connection with Kasuga Taisha Shrine. Most of them participate in the activity individually based on their personal interest.

For the situation of the current Kasugayama Renseikai, many people participate in the activity repeatedly, and some of them have participated in the activity 28 times. One of the presumable reasons is that Kasugayama Renseikai satisfies the feelings of participants who aspire to the spiritual.

The sacred Mt. Kasugayama climbing activity organized by Kasugayama Renseikai has something in common with the philosophy of World Heritage. This activity will continue into the future while being accepted by people who have not had a connection with Kasuga Taisha Shrine but aspire to the spiritual.

Key words: World Heritage, Kasuga Taisha Shrine, new religious culture, Kasugayama Renseikai, sacred place