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## CULTURAL LANDSCAPES AND FORESTS IN KYOTO

Throughout its history of over 1200 years, the city of Kyoto has nourished a close relationship with its rich natural environment. The surrounding mountains and mountainsides, a large number of shrines and temples, the grid pattern of the city streets and the Kamo River constitute the frame of this old capital which has continued efforts to preserve its historical cultural heritage and the rich natural scenery that surrounds it. Green areas that play a major role in the traditional natural environment of the city include the forests in the surrounding mountains, the ancient old trees found in the proximity of shrines and temples, the trees and shrubs growing along riversides, farmlands adjacent to residential areas and, since more recent times, the trees and shrubs planted along roadsides or found in public parks. Many of the historical or religious festivals and events in the old capital are closely linked to some of the traditional green areas and could not be carried out in the traditional way without these green areas. Until the mid-1960s, forests in the environs of the city were mainly managed by private forest owners, and forest resources were used for profit in the wood and charcoal industry. Now, however, most of these forests and other green areas are protected by national or local governmental regulations and are designated as historically, culturally or biologically important natural environment preservation zones. Today, the city faces various issues resulting from changes in lifestyle. The decrease in the use of forest resources for industrial activities has led to problems such as uncontrolled expansion of bamboo groves and thick growth of vines. The withering of pines and an overwhelming expansion of evergreens are also problematic. Finally, Kyoto needs to connect the green spaces of any shape or scale in the urban center such as private or public gardens and shrine or temple forests to the green zones along its rivers and roads that serve as the city's axes. Preserving a rich urban ecosystem that allows urban space to smoothly connect with natural habitats in and around the city remains an issue that the city addresses on a daily basis.