

Stage III: Protection of historically valuable urban Place.

The protection of Kyoto's architecturally valuable urban places, here named 'architectural genius loci', is the last stage in the preservation movement. In Stage I, one recognized preservation-worthy historic value in religious artefacts and buildings as isolated Objects; in Stage II, this concern was extended to valuable Space, that is, to mostly naturally green open areas surrounding the city in a horse-shoe fashion. In Stage III, expressing a new quantum leap in society's vision of culturally valuable heritage in 1970's, one suddenly felt a need to preserve central historic urban Places.

1972: Based on the 1972 local Ordinance to Preserve the Visual Townscape, (kyotoshi shigaichi keikan jōrei) the Kyoto City Government designated eight Areas of Urban Beauty, (bikan chiku) within the central city limits. Five of those more or less surrounded major historic building complexes which had already been selected as 'important' cultural properties by the State before. The other three areas are huge chunks of traditional urban fabric to the east of the Kamo River, around Kiyomizu Temple, and along both sides of the Kamo River.

Only in passing it shall be mentioned that at the same time more than half of Kyoto's central urban core was designated as a Zone for the Control over Large Buildings (kyōdai kōsakubutsu kisei kuiki) in which the height of any building was restricted to 31 meters. The central business district of Kyoto was put into a category of its own with a height restriction to 45 meters. Positively expressed, the inclusion of height restrictions in the general planning policy of the city truly reflect a consensus to preserve ideally the city as a whole as a place of historic value. And the central part of this argument is the realization that as in the past, so also in the future the cityscape should always be visually dominated by the surrounding natural mountain-range.

1976: In 1975 all previous national preservation laws were revised and consolidated in the new National Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties (bunkazai hogohō) This law added a new fifth category to the national register of cultural properties, namely 'Groups of historic buildings of high value which form a certain antique beauty in combination with their environs'. Admittedly, urban place or district preservation is the last stage and the most radical form of enforcing the preservation of cultural properties, as it allows the state to regulate the appearance of private property for the assumed benefit of a larger community. But the financial vicissitudes and the urban aesthetic implications are complicated. For the initiative for and cost of any major repair or reconstruction rests with the individual owner. He receives a financial subsidy only for a part of the actual construction costs of the street facade; its design, however, has to be approved by the preservation department of the city as a

condition for the subsidy. The use, design and financing of whatever lies behind this facade is up to the owner's discretion. The question arises whether in a democracy it is a legitimate right of local or state governments to architecturally freeze entire neighbourhoods in time, that is, to 'condemn' them to an existence as public urban museums. In this crucial fifth category of cultural property we obviously encounter more than preservation issues related to dead Objects, both sacred and profane, both as individual artefact and as building, or to Spaces, both simply green open space or spaces containing valuable buildings and monuments; we encounter problems related to no less than living human dwellings, yes, ensembles of human dwellings interdependent with the rest of the constantly changing urban tissue; they were called Places in this context. Beside the legal, the financial, and the human aspects of district preservation, there are also the urban aesthetic ones; far too often the careful and costly preservation of a traditional streetscape is very easily marred if not completely devalued by high-rise commercial buildings of little aesthetic appeal, which are situated outside the protected district proper, but unfortunately intrude everywhere into one's visual field of the protected street frontage. In 1976 the City of Kyoto established its first two Preservation Districts for Groups of Historic Buildings, (*dentōteki kenzō-butsumun hozonchiku*); those were Sanneizaka and Gion-Shimbashi. Sagano Torii Moto was added in 1979, Kamigamo no Shakkemachi in 1988.

1986: In 1986 Kyoto added a new category to its urban ensemble preservation, the so-called , the *kawai*, denoting to the normal Japanese areas of distinct urban atmosphere or activity. The first such place to be designated was the Sanjō-Street Scenic District of Western Historic Atmosphere (*sanjō-dōri rekishiteki kawai keikan chiku*). Besides a few traditional *Kyō-machiya*, Kyoto Townhouses, which have survived in the very center of Kyoto, this former Main Street of the city contains well kept specimen of Western style architecture erected during the Meiji, Taisho, and early Showa periods. (1868-1940).