

Stage II: Protection of important natural and cultural Space

1930: The protection of Kyoto's surrounding natural space or 'natural genius loci', was started by the creation of 34 km² of Scenic Open Space, or (fūchi- chiku), basically the whole mountain range visible in the north, west and east of Kyoto. What remains of the original "Heiankyō", the Capital of Peace and Tranquility of 794 AD are not any individual buildings, religious or profane, or any social stratification, but its infrastructure, the rectangular street-grid still everywhere perceivable as the basic city-module of 120 m; also remaining is its original geomantic disposition, that is, its overall placement into nature and orientation to mountains, rivers and plains; thus, even today, the undeveloped wooded mountains are always the eyestops perceivable from any point within the city.

In addition, these naturally-kept mountains constitute the perceptual edge and boundary of the city as a growing and changing human artefact. Kyoto's urban scale can easily be read by the visitor or the local alike. This describes what has been called the 'natural genius loci' of Kyoto; it was started to be preserved for time eternal in 1930, and extended to about 145 square kilometers by 1981, that is approximately one quarter of the urban area of Kyoto. An addition to the Scenic Open Space were 8,352 acres of 'Suburban Green Protection Zones' created in 1969 mostly in the south-western part of the city.

1967 The main reason for the protection of Kyoto's surrounding cultural space or "cultural genius loci" lies in the fact that Kyoto is not only placed like an urban jewel into a surrounding setting of naturally-wooded mountains, but also into an even closer encircling setting of renowned historic spots, former palaces, temples, shrines, and pleasure sites nested by a gentle lake or river, or on a hillside.

Historic landscapes are art-nature, are landscapes where architecture and nature melt. They are part of Kyoto's 'cultural genius loci', guarding the accumulated collective memories of Japan's great literary figures, the pursuits of religious founders, and of many of the amorous fairy tales of Japan's emperors and princes. They are the goals of most cultural pilgrimages to Kyoto today. In fact, Kyoto hosted close to 40 million tourists in 1994 which included over 1/2 million foreigners. It was those areas which came under most severe attack by the rapid urban sprawl and suburbanization after World War II.

Therefore, based on the National Special Measures Law for the Preservation of Historic Landscapes in Ancient Capitals of 1966 (koto ni okeru rekishiteki fūdo no hozon ni kansuru tokubetsu sochihō) the city of Kyoto designated in 1967 60 square kilometers of Historical Landscape Preservation Districts (rekishi-teki fūdo hozon chiku) of which 15 square kilometers were singled out as tokubetsu, or 'Special' Historical Landscape Preservation Districts. In essence, this city ordinance is a 'space' rather than an 'object' oriented preservation measure.