

BOTTOM-UP ORGANIZATION AND ACTIVITY TO SYNCHRONIZE HISTORICAL CITYSCAPES INTO ORDINARY LIFE AT SENBA-JOUSAI/HIMEJI AREA

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Abstract: Senba-Jousai Historic Cityscape Preservation Voluntary Body (SJM) was voluntarily founded in 2003 by the people who live in the west side of the rampart area of Himeji castle, where many historical houses are still in use and, at the same, on the brink of demolish. Since then, SJM has launched and became involved in many activities that make attempts to synchronize the historical houses and cityscapes into daily life. One of the major activities is to organize morning market in the old temple garden of the Hontoku temple. The market become busy each time and people start coming to the temple again. This paper presents SJM's recent activities and policy.

Keywords: Senba-Jousai Area, Senba-Jousai Historic Cityscape Preservation Voluntary Body (SJM), Hontoku temple, morning market

1. Introduction

The Senba-Jousai area is placed at the west side of Himeji castle as presented in Fig. 1. During the Edo era, a main road called "Saigoku kaido" ran through this area and connected west countries and Osaka where used to be the center of merchant in these days. This area had been the most active and vigorous commercial district in Himeji, with gathering many rich merchant houses and factories, and commercial boats going up Senba river from ocean. Fortunately, this area was escaped from bombing during World War II and thus many old houses are remained and still in use today.

There was Himeji Red-cross Hospital at the west side of Senba-Jousai area (the place is not included by Fig. 1) and they used a historical building that had been was renovated from an old local government house constructed at 1879. In 2003, accompanying with relocation and modernization of the hospital, a plan to demolish the historical building was surfaced. Due to presence of the hospital, many people visiting this area supported local business as well as causing heavy traffic and noises. Someone expected quiet peace after outgo of the hospital, while many were worried about reducing activity of the area. Several residents voluntary gather together to perverse such a historical architecture and propose how to maintain activity after relocate of the hospital. This is the bagging of Senba-Jousai Historic Cityscape Preservation Voluntary Body (SJM) and since then SJM have sought a way to preserve the historical houses and atmosphere in this area and to make this area attractive for both visitors and residents. This paper presents our brief history and principle.

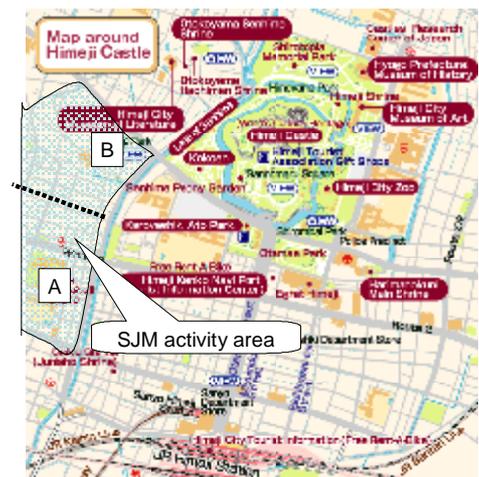


Fig. 1 Map of around Himeji castle and the main area of SJM activity. The dotted line indicates "Saigoku kaido" that used to be a main road connecting between Osaka and western countries. A: Hontoku Temple, and B: Keifuki Temple.



Fig. 2 The main cathedral of the Senba Hontoku temple.

2. Activities at Senba Hontoku Temple

Semba-Hontoku temple used to be a center of Himeji city and many people visited to the markets held on the both side of the approach to the temple. However, due to modernization and westernization, people stopped visiting and the temple precincts became deserted. The temple has a wide garden and we organized a morning market in the garden once every two months. It started on 2005 and at the first time about 20 markets opened the shops including local sweets, vegetable, rice ball, and hand-made ceramics. In the first year, about 500-1000 people visited. After 3 years, in the latest market, the number of the shops reached about 60 and 2000 people gathered and enjoyed the crowd in the temple garden as presented in Fig. 3. Once a year, a music concert covering from Wadaiko (Japanese transitional dram), Japanese folk songs, American jazz, and classical music is held on the main cathedral (Fig. 4). Just after the Meiji Restoration, Meiji emperor visited Himeji and stayed at an annex of Senba-Hontoku Temple in 1885. The annex is called “Anzaisho” and its rooms where the emperor stayed were decorated with beautiful paintings and still in good shape. The annex is not opened for public because due to the financial problem that the surrounding garden and roof have not been taken care enough for exhibition. We cleaned the annex by ourselves and organized tea ceremony and other invents in these rooms. These activity and others intrigue the temple to apply the cultural properties protection program of the local government.

Through those activities, people start coming the temple and realize again that the temple is the spiritual center of this area, although they do not belong to the Buddhism school of this temple.

3. Other Activities

SJM lunched other activities including publication of the free historical map of the area (Fig. 6), organization of historical working tours around the Senba-Jousai area (Fig. 7), research and evaluation of the historical asset hidden in this area by architect members (Fig. 8), and setting a plate to explain the origin of the place mane (Fig. 9). Since this area has long history, some of the place mane can go back to early 1500s or older.

4. SJM’s Policy

The Senba-Jousai area has a long history and many historical houses and monuments coexisting with our daily life. Since they have been for long time and look shabby, the most residents have never pay attention to them. SJM wants to remind their historical values and figure out a way to preserve them. In daily living, people can not stand for



Fig. 3 Clouded Senba-Hontoku Temple on the day of morning market.



Fig. 4 Music concert.



Fig. 5. Japanese tea ceremony at “Anzaisho” of Senba-Hontoku Temple.

inconvenience to preserve the historical assets, even though they are valuable. For example, enforced adaptation to live in an old house may not last long. We have to find a way to synchronize our life style and the assets. Each asset should have a different way and we have to find out the most suitable one.

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Professional clock smith and owner of a clock shop with long history, recently honored by the Emperor for his long dedicated contribution of fixing old clocks.

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Architect who loves the Senba-Jousai area.



Fig. 6 The historical map and translated into three foreign languages.



Fig. 7 Historical working tour.



Fig. 8. The architect members examined the old roof of a temple.



Fig. 9 Setting a plate to explain the origin of the names of the place.