

## Connecting Heritages and Memory: A Story of the Silver Mining Road (*Gin-no-Bashamichi*) in Hyogo

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**Abstract** : The Meiji period (1868-1912) brought the beginning of Japanese social modernization, and the latest technology as well as mining engineering techniques were implemented. *Gin-no-Bashamichi*: the Silver Mining Road is believed to be the first Japanese highway that connected prime silver mines in *Ikuno* to *Shikama* port in *Himeji*. However, this prominent road link was constructed only some 10 years prior to railway construction began and it's use began to decline with the expansion of railways which brought with them regional development.

After many years of the absence of this road link, recently, local communities and authorities have been showing their interest in re-discovering its significance and improve their own socio-cultural development in the face of regional aging trends and a shrinking economy. Arguably, it could be understood that this is a theoretical exploration of, and defines, *Living heritages* that have previously been treated outside of the conventional legal protection system and ways in which to connect them to each other that have not been attempted before due to existing policy frameworks and administration. This paper will discuss and analyze ways to connect heritages by establishing new approaches towards social revitalization.

**Keywords** ; Heritage Conservation, Categorization, Silver Mining Road (*Gin-no-Bashamichi*)

## 1. Legacy of the Silver Mining Road (*Gin-no-Bashamichi*) in Hyogo

### 1.1. Development of the Silver Mining Road (*Gin-no-Bashamichi*)

Development of *Gin-no-Bashamichi*: the Silver Mining Road reflects Japanese social modernization in the early Meiji period when the modern Japanese government took power from the feudal Edo government. The Meiji government understood the need for Japan to develop in line with her counterparts.

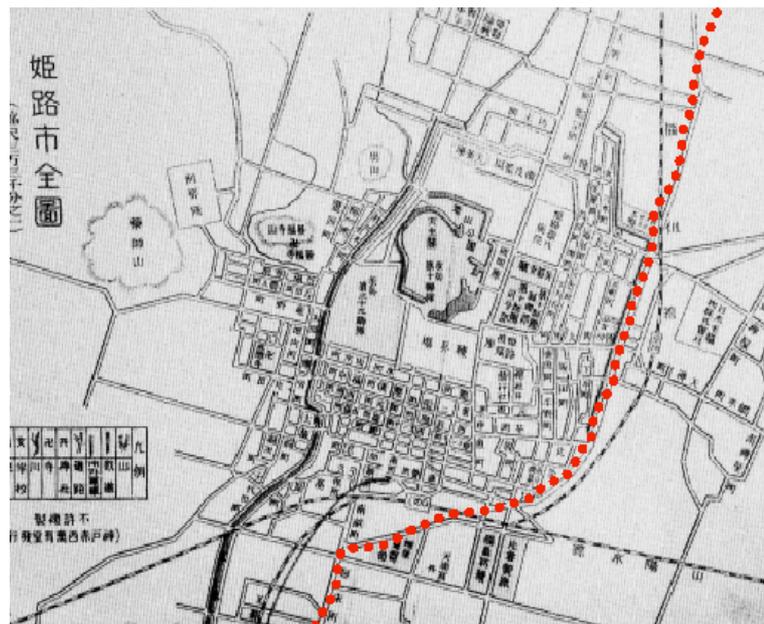
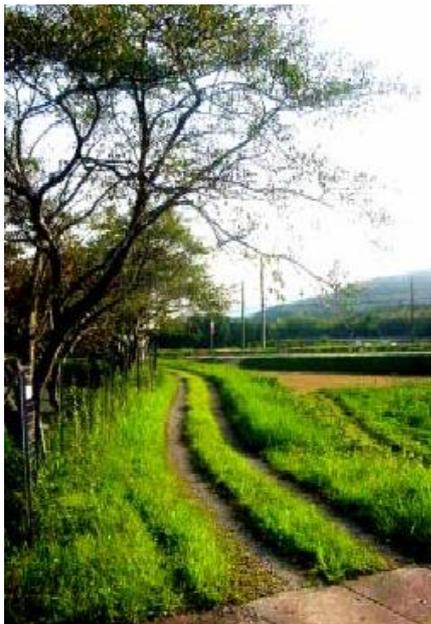
One of the most prominent silver mines in Japan, Ikuno Silver Mine was established during the Edo period in 1542. At that time mines were under the direct control of the Edo government. Despite this, they were operated by applying primitive mining methodology which resulted in low productivity. The Ikuno Silver Mine was no exception.

The Meiji Government urged the implementation of new science and engineering policies, in fact, the mining engineering department was opened at the University of Tokyo, and many foreign experts were invited to Japan by the Meiji Government. At Ikuno Mining, it is believed there were over 20 French engineers who were employed to implement their knowledge of the latest mining technologies. For example, the French engineer *Jean Francisque Coignet* worked for Ikuno Mines for 10 years.

Foreign experts contributions to the mines improved mining production to such an extent that regional infrastructure needed to be improved. A road connecting the mines to the regional port of *Shikama*, south of Himeji, was required. *Gin-no-Bashamichi*: the Silver Mining Road was to become the first Japanese highway to connect these places.

During the planning and construction of the Silver Mining Road, (*Gin-no-Bashamichi*), records show us that locals were urged to accept the construction within their villages' territories. Some villages refused to allow the road to pass through the village center because of concerns about noise and pollution from the mine's wagons. However, others welcomed the road link because it would bring more visitors to their towns. Construction of the Silver Mining Road (*Gin-no-Bashamichi*) began in 1875 and was completed in 1878 with a wide and modern pavement to resist heavy traffic carrying silver ore.

**Fig1. Left: Remaining Section of Silver Mining Road (*Gin-no-Bashamichi*)  
Right: Old Map indicate the route of Silver Mining Road**





## 2. Connecting “2nd Class” Heritages: Beyond the Categorization

### 2.1. Theoretical Development of Japanese Preservation Policy

Japan has carried out cultural heritage preservation projects and established a sophisticated legal system since the Meiji Period when the society felt the need to preserve a Japanese legacy. In order to promote heritage conservation in contemporary Japanese society, the Cultural Heritage Preservation Law – the *Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties* was implemented in 1950. The Japanese government selects and controls the nature of designated properties (Article 27-47). Furthermore, this law strictly requires the authority’s permission for any renovation or change to listed properties, even though most cultural properties are privately owned. Site managers are recommended by the authorities to open their listed property to the public as much as possible, unless the property is at risk of damage. (Article 4). Thus, most of these listed properties have been established as tourist destinations and site managers face the struggle of preserving their listed property whilst also keeping it open to the public.

Listed properties receive subsidies for basic maintenance costs from official budgets. However, admission fees tend to cover a large portion of site management costs. Generally, site managers have to spend more of their budgets on visitor management; entrance management, cleaning toilets, exhibitions and event costs, etc, than on preservation. The site manager of one shrine said, “More tourists bring us more money. But then we have to spend more money to look after them properly”<sup>i</sup>.

Official statistics show us that the national agency officially *designate, select or register*<sup>ii</sup> properties ranging from tangible to intangible properties. Additionally, local authorities are independently established with preservation ordinances that promote and enhance the local culture and identity. Currently there are over 15000 listed properties and the number is increasing year by year. In fact, the preservation framework is expanding to include more categories such as the recent addition, Cultural Landscapes.

Recent development on heritage preservation in Japan includes the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, which was designated as a *Place of Scenic Beauty (Meisyou)*, and the Peace Memorial Museum which was designated as an *Important Cultural Property (Zuuyou Bunkazai)* under the supervision of the Japanese heritage conservation act – the *Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties*. This is the first case in which the *Important Cultural Property* moniker has been applied to a post-war property that was previously understood to be of lower priority for legal protection. Another property designated in the same year, 2007, is also located in Hiroshima: the *Hiroshima World Peace Memorial Cathedral* designed by the architect Tohgo Murano and constructed thanks to the donations of a believer.

However, it has been argued that to *designate, select or register*, may sometimes contribute to or enhance the substance of history. Peter J. Larkham, in his thesis upon the nature of preservation and the concept of ‘heritage’ writes;

*What is to be preserved? Closely allied to this is the question of who identifies the preservation-worthy buildings and areas, and whether this identification meets with the approval of the population living, working and recreating in these areas.<sup>iii</sup> ‘Heritage’ is neither history nor place; it is a process of selection and presentation of aspects of both, for popular consumption.<sup>iv</sup>*

Larkham suggests that there are political or ideological motivations in selecting sites, additionally, he focuses on the existence of un-selected ‘heritages’, sometimes categorized as unimportant.

One of the most influential Japanese philosophers *Shunsuke Tsurumi* (1922-) has written frequently on his perspective of the concept of history and time, based on his own experience and thought of war and postwar social

democratization. In a short article published in 1969 entitled *Wakiyaku – The Support Actors*, he reveals his question of described history;

*History is the product of an uncountable number of people's foot prints. However, history is generally attributed to the existence of 'big names'. Now, I would like to emphasize that the existence of almost all ordinary or nameless people are forgotten and neglected.*<sup>v</sup>

This philosophical assumption reveals indirectly, how much conventional 'heritage' conservation contributes to enhance the existence of so-called 'big names'. Of course, widening the category of unlimited listed properties is technically unfeasible. However, it is no doubt that these observations are important for experts involved in heritage sites.

## **2.2. Silver Mining Road (*Gin-no-Bashamichi*) and Listed Properties**

Along the route of the Silver Mining Road (*Gin-no-Bashamichi*), there are innumerable heritages.

Of course, to anyone who knows Japan, Himeji Castle is the most prominent and is an excellent example of heritage preservation policy in Japan, practicing *designate, select or register*. Himeji Castle has 3 pavilions with a 6 story main pavilion and a 23 million-m<sup>2</sup> compound. Himeji Castle was listed as World Heritage site in 1993, the first such case in Japan, site in Japan and is managed by an organization funded by the Himeji City government. The huge wooden pavilion at Himeji Castle has a thousand steep steps to the top of the castle.

At the northern end of Silver Mining Road (*Gin-no-Bashamichi*) there are abandoned silver mines and the Ikuno Silver Mines Museum that is operated by a private mining company. The historic mines are listed as "*Places of Scenic Beauty*" under the Japanese preservation enactment.

In Fukusaki Town located in the middle of the Silver Mining Road (*Gin-no-Bashamichi*), there are several museums with exhibitions related to the leading Japanese academic *Kunio Yanagida*. This region has been producing many of Japan's social leaders and thinkers, and is located at a strategic junction connecting important sea-routes and highways that contribute to regional economic, as well as socio-cultural development. The evidence for this can be seen in the uncountable number of stone monuments, old bridges, traditional houses, folklore, trees and streams, ghost stories, local specialties, and so on.

However, it is said that Silver Mining Road (*Gin-no-Bashamichi*) has limited tourism potential and it is difficult to attract more tourists to the area to revitalize the regional economy. Aside from prominent heritage sites such as Himeji Castle, approaches toward these so-called *2<sup>nd</sup> class heritages* are difficult.

Furthermore, immediately after the 'Showa Major Preservation Project' in 1964, the number of visitors to Himeji Castle was shown to be over 150 million annually, however, even though, the castle was listed as the World Heritage Site, due to the diversification of the available leisure activities in Japan and also due to the aging trend in Japanese society visitor numbers have been gradually decreasing year by year. In fact, in 2007, the number of annual visitors had dropped to 78 million.

The tourist industry is struggling to their revitalize itself under the pressures of a shrinking economy and social aging. Thus, the success of a plan intended to attract more tourists to the Silver Mining Road (*Gin-no-Bashamichi*) is relatively difficult to gauge.

### 2.3. Globalizing Heritage Conservation: The World Heritage Rhapsody:

In recent years, since the first Japanese World Heritage sites, Himeji Castle and the Buddhist heritage of Nara, were listed in 1993, the number of World Heritage sites, and related issues has continued to increase. In fact, in 2008 there were 14 World Heritage sites in Japan, 3 designated as natural and 11 as cultural.

Furthermore, there are over 50 candidate cities or properties aspiring to World Heritage status<sup>vi</sup>. It is said that local communities hope to obtain this status to aid tourism campaigns and cultural development. Because the population attaches a high importance to World Heritage nomination, not a small number of local authorities are directing promotion officers towards the goal of achieving World Heritage status.

However, sometimes efforts are pursued with only a basic understanding of the World Heritage system; for example, a group consisting of a young local comedian and scholar said that Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution could be future World Heritage<sup>vii</sup>.

People are discussing potential World Heritage sites- this site will be listed or that one will not be. Additionally, the opinions of not a small number of residents reveal that they are worried about the changes to their living environment that would be caused by an overwhelming explosion in tourism and the phenomenon of the “world heritage rush”<sup>viii</sup>.

### 2.4. Localization of Heritage Conservation: Heritages on Network

On the other hand, instead of striving for World Heritage status for big sites, many communities are focusing on placing emphasis on their local heritages. There are a large number of authorities and groups showing an interest in networking between different heritage sites.

An example is the case of Iwami Old Highway, connecting a silver mine in Shimane Prefecture to Hiroshima Prefecture, along which the local communities are establishing a network-organization between neighboring towns and villages where administrative power belongs to different authorities which have previously existed without mutual exchange.

In the Seto Inland Sea, a ferry service provides connections between the historic Tomo Port and Onomichi Port that was a former important sea route connecting Kyoto and other western Japanese provinces as well as to the Korean Peninsular. This is also a result of mutual tie-up among different local authorities, transportation and tour operators.

According the interviews with them, they are re-inventing the hidden potentials of so-called 2<sup>nd</sup> class heritages and re-discovering old connections between cities or towns.

**Fig 3. A Community Workshop on the theme of Iwami Old Highway (Pics: Mr. N. Uemura)**



### 3. Connecting Memories: Challenges for *Gin-no-Bashamichi* and future Heritage Conservation

Examining the situation closely, heritage conservation among 2<sup>nd</sup> class heritages is required to provide a new perspective for gauging their significance. Arguably, there are possibilities to create new approaches; (1) Memory Stepping Stones, (2) Catalyst of Memory, (3) Narrative and Space. Following are details of these hypotheses to develop these heritages as well as Silver Mining Road (*Gin-no-Bashamichi*) in Hyogo.

#### 3.1. Memory Stepping Stones: Enhancing the Significance of the 1<sup>st</sup> class heritage.



Fig 4. Schematic diagram of Memory Stepping Stone

Along the Silver Mining Road (*Gin-no-Bashamichi*), there are innumerable heritages without any *designate, select or register* under the legal heritage protection systems. However, these so-called 2<sup>nd</sup> class heritages are close to the locals' everyday lives, rather than simply related to the 1<sup>st</sup> class heritage.

Additionally, these 2<sup>nd</sup> class sites are also components of the back ground history and narratives of the 1<sup>st</sup> class sites. These young or 2<sup>nd</sup> classes will contribute as memory stepping stones to connect the history of a bygone time and the people living in contemporary society.

#### 3.2. Catalyst of Memory: Connecting with Bygone Histories

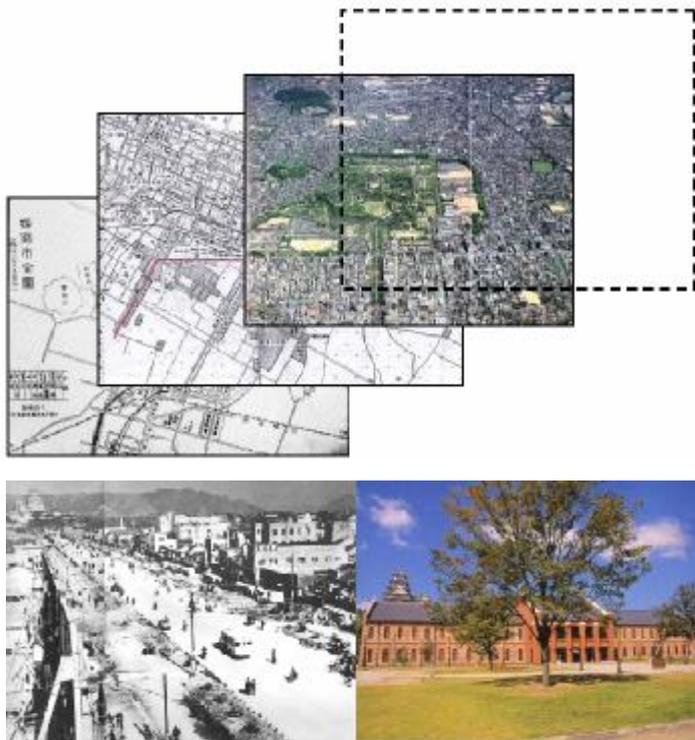


Fig 5. Schematic diagram of Catalyst of Memory (Pic: Himeji City Government)

Many young heritages are recognized for their significance. However, as discussed in the previous section, they are usually given lower priority in terms of legal protection. These young heritages, without any official designation, can easily slip from peoples' memories and their importance forgotten.

However, younger heritages and recent memories of them, could help people to develop an image of history as well as help to develop perspectives of the future.

An example in Himeji City is that of the development of Ohtemae Boulevard, a prime example of modern Japanese urban planning, (picture left), and a former military warehouse which has been converted into a municipal art galley (picture right). This building is evidence of the transformation of land use around the castle before/after social modernization in Meiji.

### 3.3. Narrative and Space: Story Tellers

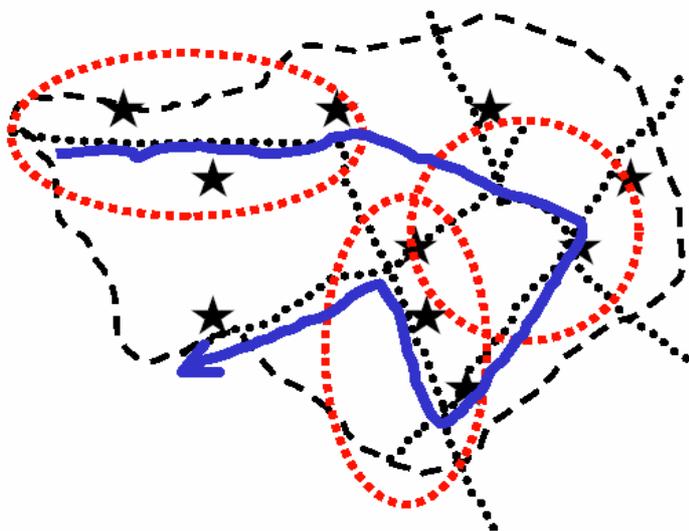


Fig 6. Schematic diagram of Developing Narrative and heritages

Eventhough, the heritages are categorized  $2^{nd}$  class, there exists the possibility to explain their significanse as part of a larger network of heritage sites. The networking process will provide an unified narrative of the area.

That could be understood that the cases heritage network in a several regions – Seto Inland sea and old highways in Hiroshima and Shimane Prefecture.

Also the accumulation of new narratives will invite an alternative style of tourism – eg, history tourism, rather than mass tourism.

## 4. Concluding Remarks – An Alternative Vision: Student Project at the University of Hyogo

After the launch of Gin-no-Bashamichi Project, initiated by *Nakaharima Regional Office of Hyogo Prefectural Government*, a student team from the University of Hyogo proposed to re-discover and reinvent the significance of Gin-no-Bashamichi.

They attempted to capture the significance of young or  $2^{nd}$  class heritages as a part of the local history. As an experiment, they adopted a technique to capture an alternative vision of the heritages – pinhole camera photography. The Pinhole Camera is a simple device, a paper box with a small hole and ordinal negative film. This camera is usually only able to capture a picture which is out of focus and quality is largely dependent on the climate and timing of manual shutter.

However, they re-invented this simple camera to provide them with more familiarity with and appreciation of the landscape. Despite these young students growing up as a part of Japan’s digital-high-tech community, in which everything is instant with no delays, no new technologies came between them and the spaces being photographed.



Fig 7. An example of hand made Pinhole Camera

Through experiencing picture field work on the Silver Mining Road (*Gin-no-Bashamichi*), students obtained an alternative vision of the targeted landscapes as well as their own daily lives, which they have sometimes described as tasteless or boring, living in their twenties in the quiet historic city of Himeji.

Of course, this experimental phase has not shown the future of the Silver Mining Road (*Gin-no-Bashamichi*) development. However, there are indications that visitors and residents could explore the significance of the  $2^{nd}$  class heritages.

**Fig 7. Examples of Students Work with the Pinhole Camera on the Silver Mining Road (*Gin-no-Bashamichi*)**



Indeed, preserving heritages does not only require us to look back at and reflect on the past. Through the process, it is encouraging to imagine and develop ideas which look towards future socio-cultural development. Furthermore, re-inventing the significance of living heritages will contribute to the development of an enhanced sense of local identity and pride in the community which go well beyond the theoretically fragmented categorizations. Small seeds of development planted along the Silver Mining Road (*Gin-no-Bashamichi*) will provide opportunities for further development, despite the difficulties being faced to sustain the local community.

Again, a quotation from Tsurumi's *Wakiyaku – The Support Actors*<sup>ix</sup> with which to end this paper;

*There is no person who is considered nameless in their own home. All of us are famous and it makes us feel comfortable and satisfied. I don't think it is right, if we ask more than this (to be famous). We need to be more conscious to keep this invisible property*

\* The ideas presented this paper were originally delivered as oral presentations on several occasions such as at the Graduate Institute of Art History, National Taiwan University, 12 Dec, 2007.

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## Notes

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- <sup>i</sup> This section is originally presented in the following paper; Yushi Utaka 2005, *Tourism and Barrier Free Aspects of Heritage Sites: Case Study on the World Heritage Sites in Japan*, Asia Pacific Tourism Association, Annual Conference in Korea, July 2005, CD-ROM
- <sup>ii</sup> Cultural Heritage Preservation Law – the *Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties* use officially use *designate, select or register* properties under their assessment.
- <sup>iii</sup> Peter J. Larkham, 1996, *Conservation and the City*, Routledge, p.5
- <sup>iv</sup> Peter J. Larkham, 1996, *Conservation and the City*, Routledge, p.14
- <sup>v</sup> Shunsuke Tsurumi, 1969, *Wakiyaku- Support Actors*, Osaka, Yomiuri Newspapers; re-edited as *Complete Works of Shunsuke Tsurumi*, Chikuma Shobou Publications, 1991, Vol. 6
- <sup>vi</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 4.12.2004
- <sup>vii</sup> Hikari Ohta and Shinichi Nakazawa, 2006, *Make the Japanese Constitution Article 9 World Heritage*, Shueisha Publication (In Japanese)
- <sup>viii</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 15.7.2005
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