

Visual Characteristics of Landforms in the Seeable Near Area Surrounding Hon-do Hall at Zenko-ji Temple and its Approach Road

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A town that develops in the vicinity of a temple or shrine is called “Monzen-machi” in Japan, and the unique atmosphere of these towns attracts tourists. A “Monzen-machi” town in Japan challenges practical sustainable use while conserving the value of its unique atmosphere. The central section of Nagano city (Nagano Prefecture, Japan) is a “Monzen-machi” town in the vicinity of Zenko-ji temple. The locals believe that Zenkoji temple brings value to the town. However, the value has not been assessed to define the environment surrounding Zenkoji. Determining an evaluation method for Zenkoji will be helpful when considering the harmony between development and conserving other “Monzen-machi” towns in Japan. Discussing the setting is a way to harmonize the relationship between land use as the figure and landform as the ground. One previous study has focused on the approach road, whereas another study investigated the Zenko-ji-daira basin. The purpose of this study was to target the landforms in the seeable near area surrounding Hon-do hall at Zenko-ji temple and its approach road to clarify the visual and landscape characteristics.

The target area was a mountainous hill area within 2.4 km of Hon-do hall at Zenko-ji temple and its approach road. The ground precincts of the temple were formed due to erosion and deposition by the Yubuku-gawa River. San-mon and Nioh-mon gates were built on the approach road to the temple. Nioh-mon gate can be seen from Shinden-cho cross-point outside the Zenko-ji temple precinct.

This study defined the landscape as the space with visual meaning and structure. A survey was conducted to grasp the composition and display characteristics from a number of perspectives. Eight survey points, including objects on the approach road, buildings, the historic site, a culvert, and a cross-point were chosen. The perspective was set at a height of 1.5 m from the ground. A digital elevation model (DEM) with 5-m mesh intervals was provided by the Geospatial Information Authority of Japan. These data were last updated on November 25, 2015. Just for information, before this survey, features of the target area in the middle of early modern times are also arranged. The material used the map "Shinano-minochigamiwakejinjya-isekinozu".

We summarized the significance of the characteristics of the three visual perspectives of the landforms in the seeable near area surrounding Hon-do hall at Zenko-ji temple and its approach road. The Zenko-ji temple precinct is surrounded by mountains and hills, which formed a visual boundary. The Zenko-ji temple precinct is a visual “focus, center, and goal” because of these visual boundaries. The approach road to Zenko-ji temple generated a variety of views using the landform and buildings. The approach road to Zenko-ji temple is extended in the north-south direction where there are three buildings has a dynamic feeling. The outside of the approach road has landmark and vista feelings due to the landforms. Nioh-mon gate can be seen from Shinden-cho cross-point outside the Zenko-ji temple precinct. The visual “Domain” in this area can be divided into two visual types by the different perspectives of seeing Nioh-mon gate. The three perspectives summarized above suggest that the visual characteristics of the landform in the seeable near area surrounding Hon-doh hall at Zenko-ji temple and its approach road are composed of four elements: Boundary; Focus, Center, and Goal; Direction; and Domain. These four

elements describe the meaning of the space featured by the three perspectives. Our concept of four components based on a survey is consistent with previous studies.

Keywords: Visual Characteristics, Surrounding Environment, Zenko-ji Temple