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Participing in the public  
movement

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By Minoru Hara

## PARTICIPATING IN THE PUBLIC MOVEMENT

## Foreword:

- The main function that plays role to preserve Historic Landscape is not laws, administration nor politics. It must be, above all things, the public. —

The above is one of the general principles of the Society to Preserve Historic Landscape of Japan of which myself is a member. The principle was made into its shape through our experiences in the public movement over last 10 years. Whether the definition of the landscape used in this symposium and its English translation, historical landscape, are the same, I am not sure. The word, historical landscape, became a common word since it was used in the "Special Law for the Preservation of Historic Landscape in Ancient Capitals" which was established in 1965. Our interpretation of the word is based on this law, i.e. historic landscape is used to describe the place where the historically significant buildings and sites in it are in good harmony with the natural environment that surrounds them. In 1964, citizens of Kamakura City protested against the construction of houses planned in the heart of historical city. The need for preservation of H.L. was thought less important then. However, citizens succeeded in suspending the planned construction. This influenced the government authority which, in consequence, established the above law which is aimed at preservation of places like Kamakura. It must be noted here that this law is the one that has been established by so-called citizen's power, and of course is a very rare case in our country. As this incident is the origin of the public movement and forms basis of idea originated in the movement, I would like to talk about the incident in detail.

— **The citizens of Kamakura who saved the mountain behind the Tsurugaoka-Hachimangu (Shrine) from destruction** —

This destructive plan to construct houses in the area was announced in January 1964. The residents of Oyatsu Valley at the foot of the mountain started a protest movement against this plan (Oyatsu is a honourable name given to the region related to the ancient history of the Hachimangu). After the incident was settled, the place was excavated and investigated and was designated a historic site. We, who were also protesting against the destruction of \*beautiful natural environment of Kamakura by construction of houses, founded "Society to Keep the Beauties of Kamakura" and took part in the movement. The society of this kind was the first to be formed in Kamakura. (\*As high as 55% of the area of city of Kamakura is maintained as a scenic zone by a scenic zone regulations of the

Kanagawa Prefecture.) But, we are only told that the builders had already submitted the application for the construction permit together with the mayor's approval letter which said the construction plan would meet the regulation of the scenic zone. So, we filed a petition to the mayor as a first step of our protest movement. However, I drew an indelible disbelief out of the law and administrative body as I proceeded with the negotiation.

1) The Mayor, upon our request, simply changed the words in the report to the Governor from "does meet the regulations" to "does not". His conduct was unexpected and was surprising and helped us proceed with our plan in more various ways. At the same time, he showed us that he was not interested in the matter and we became suspicious of him for his irresponsibility.

2) We also filed a petition to the city council. The latter adopted our petition with little difficulty. The Board of Directors and City Council and citizens all got together and it was the public who would come face to face with the authorities. At first, we talked over the matter with the authority in charge of construction. After several rounds of talks we finally got the following answers: "First of all, the construction plan cannot be banned. The regulation of the scenic zone allows every application for permit to be permitted because as the authorities are unable to stand against the builder's administrative law suit, which would be brought against them once the builder gets "a stop" for the plan. The reason is that there is no budgetary measure on the part of the prefecture to meet the claims of the economic damages from the builder once the latter gets the stop.

We were in no way convinced, and laid a complaint before the Vice Governor. He said, "Japan is a constitutional state. It is unlawful to do what the law says "No". Moreover, we cannot give priority to Kamakura only in this matter." He even said, "I am free to make decisions of the city I'm governing. It is against the constitution to meddle." His reply only made us become more doubtful of the administration. In the attitude of the administrative authority insisting on the justice of their explanation, I saw an image of Kamakura whose famous woods are being destroyed by number of bulldozers. In the name of steep economic growth, the society tended to be governed by money egoism, therefore, destroying the land and spirit of man, bringing nation into crisis and finally forcing Japan to become a ruined country. I appealed above crisis to a senior in the industrial world but only got following reply, "It is merely a sign of Japanese's vitality."

3) We protested to the Governor himself and the situation turned for the better. We requested him to inspect the place and this was realized before long. At the interview

which took place after the inspection with the presence of the press (they had been following the case enthusiastically), Governor said, "I am, as a citizen of Kamakura, against the plan." But we can't do better with the law and administration. Only Public opinion originating in the public movement can get over the difficulty we are now facing and this makes it able to protect the place from destruction."

I thought that the Governor was very wise and that this speech was of historic significance. Governor then was Uchiyama Iwataro. In June of the same year, the prefectural council, at last, adopted our petition and the plan was amended so as not to disturb the scenery and our battle ended.

### **Society for Preservation of H.L. of Japan**

When the Special Law for the Preservation of Historic Landscape in Ancient Capitals was established in 1965, we welcomed the law with interest and anticipation. However, it was disappointing to find some defects in it as we were planning to organize nation-wide public movement with a help of the law. In 1970, we gathered at Asuka-mura, which is one of the Ancient Capitals other than three biggest ones, and we discussed what to do with the defects, and the followings were the findings.

Most of the defects were pointed out by the Kamakura citizens from the realistic point of view rather than of the system of the law itself. Firstly, after the region of preservation of historic landscape was appointed, the number of the constructions which was getting less at one time after the Oyatsu incident began to rise again in spite of the law, and the construction was allowed to the border line of the region. Town area was also suffering from construction of multi-storied buildings and from the increase in number of cars that were beginning to take priority over the people. Therefore, even if the effort to preserve region of H.L. (which accounts for only 24% of the area of Kamakura city) is undertaken ideally, it will be hard to achieve the overall aim as an appointed Ancient Capital, and the historic landscape itself which is already under "preservation" will lose its significance. Secondly, the significance of the preservation of historical landscape is such that it preserves things not only in the selected Ancient Capitals, but also in the historic places all over the country (symbolized by the grove of the village shrine as a core of the local society). The matter is quite serious because the land development is a boom today and in consequence forcing local society to its breakdown point. Hence the importance of the preservation of historic landscape as the basic policy for the nation's future. Upon such basis, the ancient capital and the historic landscape with the cultural assets in it will find their true significance.

Third, it must be the respective local residents themselves who realize these aims. Thus our Society for Preservation of Historical Landscape in Japan was established.

### **Citizens' Meeting for City Planning of Kamakura**

Next crisis we came across was to replenish the defects of the law. If the new law comes into effect, then H.L. and its preservation must be included in city planning. Ideas were already put into practice by the local residents of Kamakura. They protested against construction of highrise buildings, and against the policy that gives priority to cars on roads, and to the filling up of the sea with earth against the regulations. They succeeded in suspending above practices a number of times. This can tell that the people realized the need to preserve H.L. and Ancient Capitals. The local authority kept pace with the citizens and the "Meeting on City Planning for Kamakura" was organized in 1972 and "City planning by the citizens" was a slogan. It is worth-while to note that the originator of this meeting was a group of architects living in Kamakura. Their idea was as follows, "We are architects. Besides, we are the residents of Kamakura. We would like to practice our skill for the citizens side instead of the previous administrative or the enterprize's side." I welcomed their idea with little surprise. Here, public movement started to act in the positive direction, to create, instead of the passive one, to protest, and to preserve.

### **To the Basic City Planning of Kamakura**

#### **— to systematize the participation of citizens —**

At the same time with our establishment of the "meeting for city planning", the local authority started the total city planning. We requested the authority to accept our participation in the planning, and since 1975 we have been taking part in the basic planning. The planning is carried out in following ways. Firstly, the data collected on a survey of citizen's consciousness was arranged and was made public as a "draft vision." Meetings were held among various kinds of people and the explanation of the vision was made and opinions were collected and were arranged into a new material and was again made public. Finally, formal plan was made up and was taken up by the total city planning council, and was finally settled in September 1976.

As everything of this kind was new to both administration and us citizens, there were naturally some complaints from both sides. However, it was quite significant that it formed foundation for the (public) participation in the local administration in which public played an important role. Although it will not be easy to make good use of this democratic system in society of the present day Japan, we must inquire into the system by trial and error and must become conscious of our responsibility.

I have been using H.L. as defined in the Law for the Preservation of H.L. in Ancient Capitals. I have mentioned that main aim of our movement was to point out the defects

in this law. But it was this Law that has taught me the importance of preserving H.L. Things which are either related to or included in the preservation of H.L. are innumerable. It includes preservation of nature, of cultural assets. And socially, it is related to the innate importance of the district. All of them are related to the essence of man. Man is only a part of nature, and only man establishes society, cultivates his own culture and lives in the history. This is man's fate. One cannot disregard this. The feeling of anger, which I felt towards those who did nothing but destroying the beauties of Kamakura, is an element arose from the man himself! Preservation of historic landscape must be carried out in relation with this true character of man. Therefore, I say, it must be the citizens who preserve the H.L.

The public played an important part in establishing the said law, and because of its defects we have been driven to our actions. There are much to be remembered.

Kamakura city held 10th anniversary of this Law, and people from various fields related to the preservation of H.L. were invited. At the event, the significances of this law were again talked about, and a great deal was discussed. Memorial was set up at Oyatsu where all this started, and trees were planted as a symbol. We revised our movement of the past and promised to do our best to preserve our environment.