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Changes in the Described Elements of Sensoji Temple following its Park Designation

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ABSTRACT

How the elements of a religious facility became recognized after its designation as a park was clarified in this study based on the changes in the descriptions of the facility in guidebooks and pictorial charts. Immediately after the facility was designated as a park, the image of a park was merely added to the idea of the temple. However, Kinryusan Sensoji Temple clearly became considered one of the park components only after the full-scale maintenance and division of the park in 1884. These changes were greatly influenced by the changes in the physical environment based on the institutional meaning of the park in addition to the background of the existence and use of the park becoming widely established from the period when it was designated as a park to the period when it was developed into a tourist attraction. While the extent of recognition of Sensoji Temple as a park increased, the extent of recognition of the site as a temple diminished and became limited. Tourists perceived that Sensoji Temple was composed only of Kannondo Hall and spatially considered the entire park as a collection of sections. As a result, the area recognized as a temple was limited to the central part of the Sensoji Temple precinct, while the spatial functions that Sensoji Temple originally possessed were divided and removed. Thus, the characteristics of the temple as a tourist site also changed.

Keywords: Park Designation, Sensoji, Temple, Entertainment District.

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry has now expanded globally. In Japan, the Basic Law for Promotion of Tourism Nation was enacted in 2007, and the Tourism Agency was established in 2008. The Tourism Nation Promotion Basic Plan formulated in 2012 advocates and promotes new tourism activities, such as eco-, cultural, and health tourism [1]. Thus, in addition to traditional mass tourism, tourism activities with new purposes and types have emerged, and various efforts have been made to transform religious facilities into tourism sites. However, the new meaning of religious facilities, e.g., the world heritage sites of churches in Nagasaki, has revealed problems such as commercialization [2]. The trend toward new meanings derived from the new roles set for these religious facilities is expected to increase in future. In the process of turning religious facilities into

tourism sites in Japan, the characteristics of the religious sites used as a site of worship must be described clearly, such as how they have been treated so far and what issues have arisen.

Considering the modern transformation of temples and shrines, although some sites have shown an overall trend [3] and some have seen an actual transformation [4], no studies have explored how perceptions have changed as a result of their designation as urban parks. With regard to Sensoji Temple, studies have been performed on the transformation of the temple grounds and its entertainment industry in the early modern period [5].

This study aims to clarify the changes in the recognition of the religious facility at Sensoji Temple, which was designated as an urban park in the Meiji era, and show how the facility and its surroundings were then integrated into a modern entertainment area.

METHOD

The study location is the Kinryusan Sensoji Temple in Taito-ku, Tokyo (Figure 1). A literature survey was performed based on guidebooks because they influence travelers' cognition about tourism sites. That is, travelers are influenced by tourism materials showcasing the attractions at the tourism sites. We extracted sentences and pictures from these guidebooks and analyzed the described elements using all elements and their compositions. The survey period comprises the period from the middle of the Edo era, when the Sensoji Temple began to be known as an entertainment area to the WW2 period immediately before the park designation was lifted. We divided this period into three periods according to the changes in the surrounding environment and observed the changes in each period.

Eshtablished in the 7th century, Kinryusan Sensoji Temple was the oldest temple in Tokyo and was known as an entertainment area during the Edo period. In 1873 (Meiji 6), the site and its surroundings were designated as an urban park by the Declaration of the Dajokan (Grand Council of state). The later construction of the Rinsenchi area (including many ponds) and development of the Asakusa 6 Ward transformed these areas into an entertainment district. Although Asakusa Park was delisted in 1947 and officially demolished in 1951 with its properties returned to all the old temples, Sensoji Temple is now a well-known tourism site visited by many domestic and foreign tourists. Thus, we considered Sensoji Temple as a site with meanings other than as a place of worship developed into an entertainment area as the subject of this study.

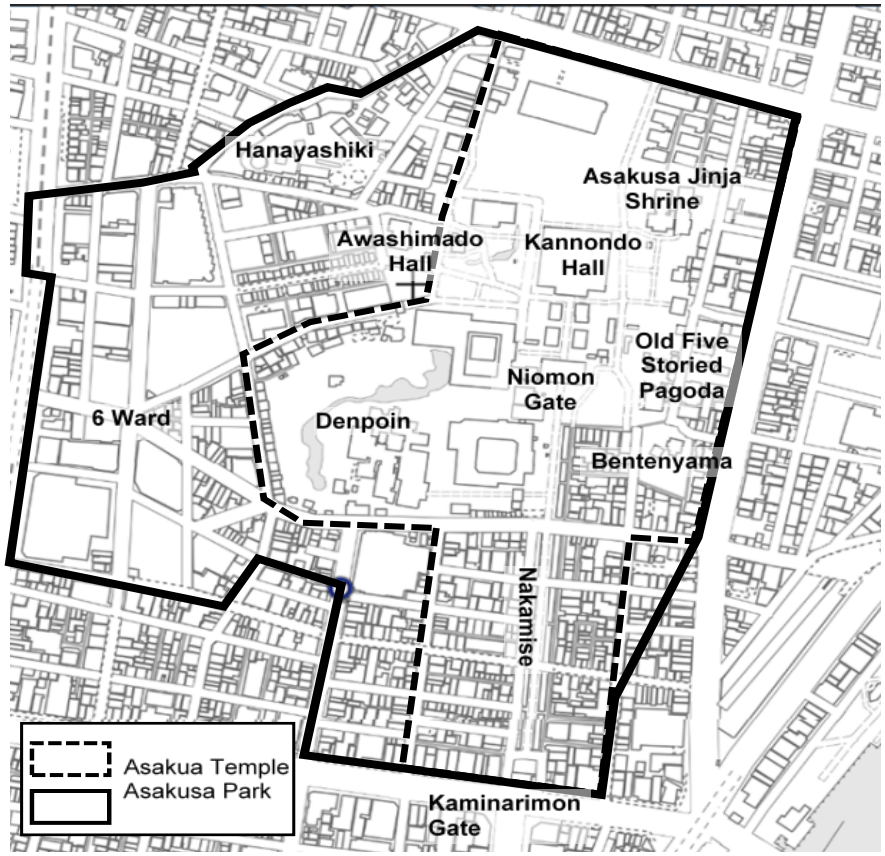

Figure 1. Kinryusan Sensoji Temple
Data Source: Prepared by the author based on a Geographical Institute map

RESULTS

Time division

There were no significant changes in the pictorial maps and topographic maps of Sensoji Temple's surrounding environment in the survey period immediately after the designation of the park during the late Edo and early Meiji periods. Many temples were built around the Sensoji Temple precinct and its branch temples lined both sides of the approach (Nakamise). When the park was fully developed and divided into zones, Rinsenchi was established in Hiyoke-chi (an open space for the fire prevention) on the west side of the precinct and the town was developed and later called Asakusa 6 Ward (see the map after 1884 (Meiji 17)).

Furthermore, the environment around Sensoji Temple changed drastically after the establishment of the park because the branch temples lining both sides of the approach were removed. The survey period was divided into three periods according to the park designation in 1873 and park maintenance in 1884, which significantly changed the environment surrounding Sensoji Temple. The period from the middle of the late Edo period to the park designation in 1873 was set as the "preceding park designation" period, the period from the park designation to the park maintenance in 1884 was set as the "park designation" period, while the period after the park development was set as the "entertainment district development" period.

A total of 24 collected materials were divided into these three periods: 2 in the preceding park designation period; 5 in the park designation period; and 17 in the entertainment district development period (see Table 1).

Space Use of Asakusa Park

Asakusa Park mainly consists of the Sensoji Temple precinct and the land owned by the old temple that became public land after the removal of temple and shrine grounds in 1871 (Meiji 4). The park designation for this land has enabled the government to receive tax activities from the areas that comprise a thriving entertainment area [6].

The tax revenues from the Sensoji Temple precinct and Asakusa Park support the management of all park areas in Tokyo Prefecture. No major maintenance was performed immediately after the park designation in 1873 and the right to manage the premises was simply transferred from Sensoji Temple to Tokyo Prefecture. The temple precinct was expanded with the irregular incorporation of the affiliated land; however, full-scale maintenance of the park began in 1884. The park administration removed street stalls from the park and demolished unnecessary buildings. In addition to removing and restricting the buildings and businesses throughout the park, the park was divided into seven sections. The construction of Rinsenchi in the former fire station site began in 1882 (Meiji 15) and was completed in 1885 (Meiji 18). The Nakamise was also remodeled in brick in 1885. At the time of these developments, the buildings including theaters and shops that were not suitable for the temple precinct, especially in Okuyama, near the center of the temple precinct, were relocated to the cleared site of the old fire station. These changes led to the construction of Asakusa 6 Ward. Immediately after the establishment of 6 Ward, the area was quiet because of the overpriced land rent and severe business restrictions.

However, after the number of available businesses increased significantly in 1886 (Meiji 19), the area immediately developed into an entertainment district. Asakusa 6 Ward is now a better known destination than Asakusa Park. While Okuyama declined, 6 Ward continued to prosper until the end of the WW2 after the demolition of the park, but the area declined gradually. From the designated period of the park to the development of the entertainment area, Asakusa Park was modeled after ideal Western parks, such as including a financial source within the park system to pay for itself. At that time, Japanese park administrations were modelled after ideal Western urban parks, such as those in Paris and Berlin. Hibiya Park, which was conceived around 1884 and opened in 1903 (Meiji 36), was the main example of these Western-style parks in Japan.

Table 1. List of Research Materials

Period	Research Material (Publication year)
Preceding Park Designation Period (-1872)	Edo Snago (江戸砂子, 1732) Edo Meisyo Zue (江戸名所図会, 1836)
Park Designation Period (1873-1884)	Tokyo Meisyo Zue (東京名所図会, 1877) Kaisei Tokyo Annai (改正東京案内, 1881) Tokyo Kenbutsu Meisyo Annai (東京見物名所案内, 1881) Tokyo Meisyo Annai (東京名所案内, 1883)
Entertainment District Development Period (1885- 1947)	Tokyo Manyu Hitori Annai (東京漫遊独案内, 1889) Tokyo Annai (東京案内, 1890) Tokyo Meisyo Kan (東京名所艦, 1892) Tokyo Meisyo Annai (東京名所案内　上, 1894) Tokyo Annai (東京案内：名・遊歩の友, 1894) Tokyo Meisyo Annai (東京名所案内, 1896) Shinsen Tokyo Meisyo Zue (新撰東京名所図会, 1897) Tokyo Marian (東京明覧, 1904) Tokyo Annai (東京案内, 1907) Saishin Tokto Annai (最新東京案内, 1907) Tokyofu Meisyou Zue (東京府名勝図会, 1912) Yuran Tokyo Annai (遊覧東京案内, 1922) Tokyo Kenbutsu staying home (居ながら東京見物, 1922) True Tokyo Annai (欺まされぬ東京案内, 1922) Tokyo Meisyo Annai (東京名所案内, 1928) Nihon Annaiki (日本案内記, 1930) North Tokyo Annai as a Hobby (趣味の北部東京案内, 1940)

The park system was financially independent during this time and the profits from each park were used for all parks operated by the Tokyo Prefecture administration. However, the income from Asakusa Park comprised about 80% of the income from all parks [7] and was later used to establish Hibiya Park [8]. The park administration promoted the development of Asakusa 6 Ward and increased the different kinds of businesses available. Thus, while Asakusa Park was formerly a famous site, it became considered a financial engine for the Tokyo Prefecture park system during the entertainment district development period.

Among the other parks in Tokyo Prefecture, the first National Industrial Exhibition was held in Ueno Park in 1877 in addition to the welcome party for General Grant in 1879 (Meiji 12). Various commemorative ceremonies and popular movements were also held in Ueno, Shiba, and Hibiya parks, in addition to other urban parks. Thus, parks were places for the public to express their will [9]. However, such ceremonies were rarely held in Asakusa Park, except for a gathering of people protesting the riots in the US in 1923 and a commemorative ceremony for the founding of the Socialist Alliance in 1919.

Asakusa Park remained a popular entertainment district before and after its designation as a park; however, the number of shows held in Okuyama (e.g., Enmado, Nenbutsudo, and Syakado halls) reached their maximum, especially during Meiji 12–14. The center of the entertainment district moved to 6 Ward after its establishment. Asakusa Park differs from other Tokyo parks because of

its roles as both an entertainment district and a financial resource for the Tokyo Prefecture park system.

CHANGES OF DESCRIBED ELEMENTS

Guidebooks

To clarify the influence on the recognition of Sensoji Temple following its park designation, we extracted and described elements from the guidebooks for Sensoji Temple, classified them in the context of temple or park, and clarified their distribution on the map. The classification was based on chapter headings. Contents without headings were judged from the preceding sentences and paragraphs. The main components of Sensoji Temple, such as Kannondo Hall and Niomon Gate, were described consistently at all times (Table 2).

There were no significant changes in the described elements in the context of temple in the preceding park designation and park designation periods, and almost all religious facilities in the temple precinct were described consistently throughout almost the entire area.

In the period immediately after the park designation, becoming a designated park was described as an event at Sensoji Temple. Nakamise was described in the context of Sensoji Temple. But while Kannondo Hall was described more frequently, other elements were mentioned less often. The described elements in the context of the park included just the natural environment, such as trees, in the Sensoji Temple precinct. However, the natural environment was ruined at that time because the area was now outside Sensoji Temple's control. The natural environment described as "Nature" in the guidebooks was not remarkable and the image of a Western park at that time, i.e., "getting close to nature in the city," was merely added to the image of a temple.

During the entertainment district development period, the major components of Sensoji Temple were still described in the context of park. A fewer materials described in the context of temple than those in that of park. The main elements, i.e., Kannondo Hall, Niomon Gate, and the Five-Storied Pagoda, were described as parts of both the temple and the park in many materials. The elements that were first described in this period had not previously been described in the context of the temple, although they did not have a special role or event. These elements were described in a comprehensive description of the park's characteristics. Many entertainment facilities were established during this period and described in many materials. As previously described in the context of the temple, many materials now described Nakamise in the context of the park.

During the park designation period to the entertainment district development period, the recognition of the objective area was reversed from the temple to the park because of the transformation of the described elements.

Table 2. Main Elements

	Main Elements	Preceding Park Designation Period (n = 2)		Park Designation Period (n = 5)			Entertainment District Development Period (n = 17)		
		Temple	Park	Temple	Both	Park	Temple	Both	Park
Religious Facilities	Kannondo Hall	2		5			1	9	7
	Niomon gate	2		1			2	5	8
	Five-Storied Pagoda	2		1			3	5	6
	Zuishinmon Gate	2		1			1	3	3
	Kaminarimon Gate	2		1			1	4	6
	Kyozo	2		1			1	3	4
	Denpoin							2	6
	Awashimado Hall	2		1			1		6
	Bentendo Hall	2		1				1	5
	Enmado Hall	2		1			1		4
	Nenbutsudo Hall	2		1			1	1	5
	Syakado Hall	1							3
	Asakusajinja Shrine	2							9
	Jusshagongen Shrine	2							
	Kumagaiinari Shrine	2					4		
	Gokokuden	1					2		
	Gomadan	2		1			1		
	Nishinomiyainari Shrine	2		1			1		
	Ichigongen Shrine	2		1			1		
	Rokkakudo Hall			1			1		4
	Zenitsukajizo			1			2		4
	Enmeijizo			1					4
	Sixty-six Jizodo Hall			1					5
	Kagurado Hall						1		3
	Mikoshido Hall								3
	Chikatsu Shrine								2
	Jinguinari Shrine								2
Entertainment	Nakamise				1		2		10
	Other Shops	2					2		7
	Hanayashiki						1	2	10
	Panoramakan			3					6
	Ryounkaku Tower								9
	Show Booth				1		1		13
	Aquarium								5
Nature	Big Pine Tree	1		1			1		3
	Big Ginkgo								3
	"Nature"					2			1
	Rinsenchi						1		7

Note: Number of Materials.

In both the preceding park designation and park designation periods, the described elements were centered around Kannondo Hall at the center of the Sensoji Temple precinct. During the entertainment district development period, the elements that were mostly described in the context of the temple were limited to the central areas in front of Kannondo Hall. Thus, these elements were more limited than before and the temple area seemed to be shrinking. Nevertheless, almost all elements were described in the context of the park, even the approach (Nakamise) and Okuyama (at the rear of Kannondo Hall). This shows that the approach to the shrine and Okuyama were

separated from the temple context. The structure of the temple is to pass through the Sanmon Gate to approach the main hall; therefore, its spatial functions, such as the traditional entertainment district operating since modern times, were established by the arrangement and location of elements, and its mutual relationships were divided and removed.

ILLUSTRATIONS

We initially investigated 75 illustrations from the objective literature and then counted the frequency of appearance of components with an appearance frequency of ≥2. Components with an appearance frequency of 1 were collectively described as "other religious facilities" or "other entertainment facilities." Maps and bird's-eye views were excluded from the investigation because all elements were described in these illustrations.

As a result, Kannondo Hall, Niomon Gate, and the Five-Storied Pagoda were described in all periods. Thus, they were recognized as the main symbols of both Sensoji Temple and Asakusa Park (Table 3).

Table 3. Number of Materials and Illustrations

	Preceding Park Designation Period (1/11)	Park Designation Period (5/5)	Park Designation Period (14/59)
Kannondo Hall	1/1	1/1	10/14
Niomon Gate		4/4	10/16
Five-Storied Pagoda		5/5	8/11
Nakamise		5/5	6/6
Rinsenchi			3/3
Hanayashki			3/3
Ryounkaku Tower			3/3
Show Booth			5/5
Other Religious Facilities	1/9		2/12
Other Entertainment Facilities	1/1		2/10
Note: Number of Materials/Number of Illustrations.			

Preceding Park Designation Period

In the first period of the park designation, the only material surveyed was the Edo Meisho Zue (a map of famous places in Edo). Most illustrations were bird's-eye views and mainly related to events; thus, they were excluded from the survey. However, the overall description of the shops, theatrical performances, and the customers who gathered in these buildings was detailed and the characteristics of the modern-day Sensoji Temple tourism site as an entertainment district were well expressed.

Park Designation Period

During this period, three park components, i.e., buildings (mainly Niomon Gate), the Five-Storied Pagoda, and Nakamise (sando) were described in all five illustrations. In this period, everything was hand-drawn and painted using compositions that did not conform to the actual spatial arrangement. Kannondo Hall, the Five-Storied Pagoda, and Nakamise (sando) were described in the Tokyo Meisho Zue, which is the oldest illustration from this period. The space was clearly distorted and the Five-Storied Pagoda was described (Fig. 2). In the remaining four illustrations, the perspective receded and the three park components were described, in addition to Kannon Hall. The perspective is considered to have receded in line with the actual placement. The composition of the three elements rather than the individual components was preferred as a symbol of the temple.

Entertainment District Development Period

During this period, the previous composition was removed and the proportion of the appearance of Nakamise decreased, which is thought to be due to the development of entertainment facilities around the temple precinct during this period. Sensoji Temple's characteristic as an entertainment district (including Nakamise) became weakened when the center of the entertainment district moved outside the precinct (especially to Asakusa 6 Ward).

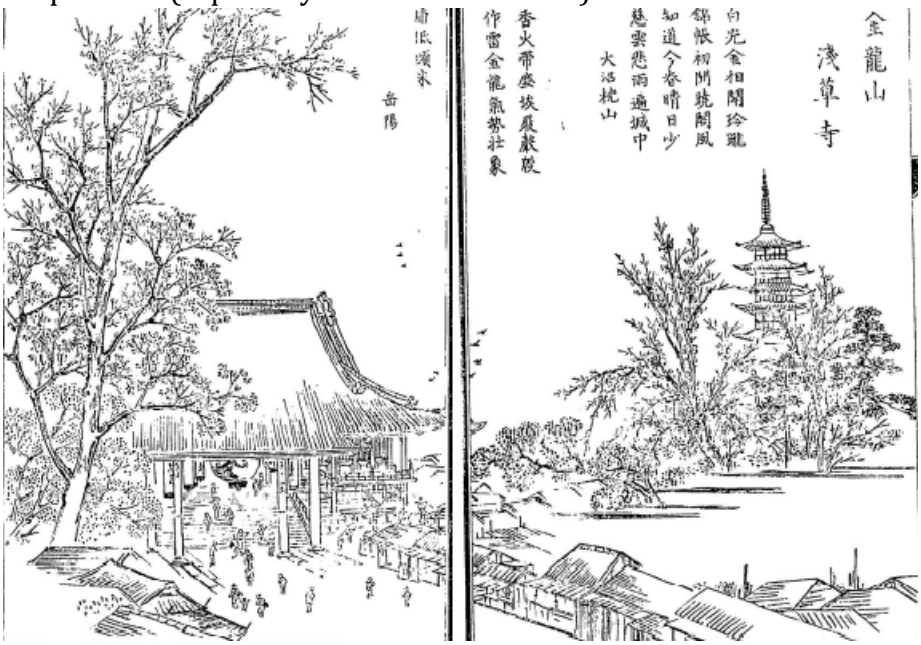

Figure 2. Kannondo Hall, Nakamise, and the Five-Storied Pagoda

Data Source: Tokyo Meisyo Zue; 1877

Instead of the composition of the three elements as seen in the previous period, there were two composition types: i.e., one in which an object is photographed in a large stand-alone image and another in which the range of the image is determined by the section of the park. Many compositions in both the hand-painted illustrations and photographs described the subject of the composition as a single large object, especially Kannondo Hall alone, or as the combination of the Niomon Gate and the Five-Storied Pagoda. Thus, the importance of Kannondo Hall increased and it came to be recognized as being separate from the surrounding religious facilities. For this reason, a transition to the recognition that "Sensoji Temple is composed only of Kannondo Hall" was made. At this time, Sensoji Temple was described by a composition based on a section of Asakusa Park, where each section was described as a whole from a small distance. The coverage area was determined by the number of sections from 1 to 7 in the park (Figure. 3). This change can be said to be the result of a more realistic view of Asakusa Park, in addition to the fact that this became the mainstream view of the park.

DISCUSSION

In this study, we analyzed the elements describing and illustrating a famous place of interest and clarified the changes and influences in the roles added to those of the religious facility at the temple site.

Immediately after the park designation, the image of the park as a place to "get close to nature in the city" was only added to the idea of a temple. However, after the full-scale maintenance and

division of the park in 1884, Sensoji Temple clearly became considered as one of the park components. These changes were greatly influenced by changes in the physical environment based on the institutional meaning of the park, in addition to the background of the existence and use of the park becoming widely established from the period when it was designated as a park to the period when it was developed into a tourist attraction. In addition, while the extent of its recognition as a park expanded, the extent of its recognition as a temple diminished and became limited. Visitors perceived as Sensoji Temple as being composed of only Kannondo Hall. They thought of the park space in terms of sections within the park and reconsidered the entire park as a collection of sections. As a result, the area recognized as a temple was limited to the central part of the temple precinct and the spatial functions that Sensoji Temple originally possessed were divided and removed. The entertainment facilities became seen as separate from the religious facility. The characteristics of the temple related to the entertainment facilities also changed the area into a tourist site.

CONCLUSIONS

A new function of an urban park was added to Sensoji Temple regardless of the original use of the space. As a result, the physical function of the religious facilities was diminished and the area has become regarded only as an urban park. In the case of adding new functions to the religious facilities, such as an entertainment district, these new functions should be added by following the physical functions of the original space of the religious facilities, including its location. In this way, tourists will experience a new kind of entertainment alongside the physical functions of the religious facilities.

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