

Fulfilling a mission to preserve the temple for posterity



(From left) Chief Abbot Nisou Sugahara and Chief Steward Taikou Akada Honno-ji Temple, headquarters of the Hokke Buddhist sect

It is our mission to ensure that the temple Honnoji, the main temple of the Hokke sect of Buddhism, and the icons it houses, are continually passed on to future generations. Honnoji is the main temple for over 50 branch temples in Hyogo Prefecture, including the island of Awaji, some of which were completely destroyed in the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. As we endeavored to recover, thanks to disaster-relief funding and other financial assistance, we contemplated protective measures against natural disasters. Ultimately we opted for earthquake-resistant renovations based on seismic analysis, to protect the temple and its icons from the effects of a major earthquake.

Our temple has been rebuilt seven times, but it includes structures that have endured for over 600 years and is thus considered a valuable cultural asset. Accordingly, some people were apprehensive about incorporating metal seismic isolation and damping devices into the temple's entirely wooden construction. Whether to take protective measures against a major disaster or preserve the original structure of a precious cultural property posed a very difficult dilemma, but after much testing and a great deal of debate we determined that incorporating seismic isolation and damping would not compromise the temple's status as a cultural asset. Quake-proofing and seismic isolation work was carried out as part of a renovation project begun in 2008 to mark the 600th anniversary of the founding of the temple. The entire main hall is now protected by THK seismic damping devices employing ball screws, while our icons are protected by seismic isolation devices employing LM Guides.

We hold sermons in our main hall for visiting schoolchildren, attended by as many as 500 people. We can now welcome all such visitors with greater peace of mind.



Honnoji: Seismic damping has been provided under the floor and roof, and seismic isolation tables support the statuary in the main hall.