

The Historical Transformation of Poverty, Discrimination, and Urban Policy in Japanese City: The Case of Osaka

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Abstract: Osaka is a city that has pursued capitalist urban development most explicitly in Japan. Accordingly, this city has suffered inevitable urban and social problems caused by capitalist development. In order to cope with these problems, Osaka has promoted the most progressive urban policy. This paper discusses 1) the history of problems of poverty and discrimination in Osaka and 2) the development of urban policy in the context of such particular urban history.

I. Stages of capitalism and urban growth

The histories of cities have been intertwined with stages of colonialism, imperialism, and industrial capitalism. For example, the governing principle of capitalism has provided the urban space with a built environment composed of towns of laborers and bourgeoisie, factories, ports which send off various products, and streets and canals which connect these locations.

The built environment has two characteristics, which are 1) fixed capital and 2) consumption fund. Different groups of people have impacted these characteristics at different historical times. This has depended on who has initiated the collective consumption and who has enforced urban policy. Such distinct historical stages have been embedded in the urban space of various cities, while producing different kinds of cities. The diverse typologies of cities include an imperial capital (*Teito*), a capital of a nation-state, an industrial city, a colonial city, a metropolis, and cities of developing countries.

The competitive industrial capitalism in the nineteenth century produced the working class as an international social group. Cities represented places that generated the contexts for the coexistence of and the confrontation between the impoverished working class and capital.

In the twentieth century, cities were dominated by monopolistic capitalism intertwined with the structure of Fordist production. Within the structure of the wartime economy, total war regime, and New Deal planning policy before WWII, cities controlled by the state created the basis for the urban spatial development. After WWII, the state control of cities remained in the

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cities, generated through the welfare state system of mixed economy of Keynesianism.

The depression ignited by the oil crisis drove the Thatcher government of Britain and the Reagan administration in the United States to deny Keynesianism. In the context of neo-conservative competition, cities as places that draw functions of management, re-industrial urbanization, and spectacle consumption were appreciated.

II. Impoverished urban areas and urban social movement in the 19th century industrial capitalism

1. Poverty and discrimination in 19th century cities

This section first discusses the transformation of urban space during the period starting from the last stage of the feudal system and ending with the rise of industrial capitalism in the 19th century. In the cities of industrial capitalism, the poor shared the social status opposed to that of a small number of citizens who controlled the urban politics and economy. Urban poverty in the context of industrial capitalism represented 1) economic poverty and 2) feudal and classist marginality and poverty determined by social status and ethnicity.

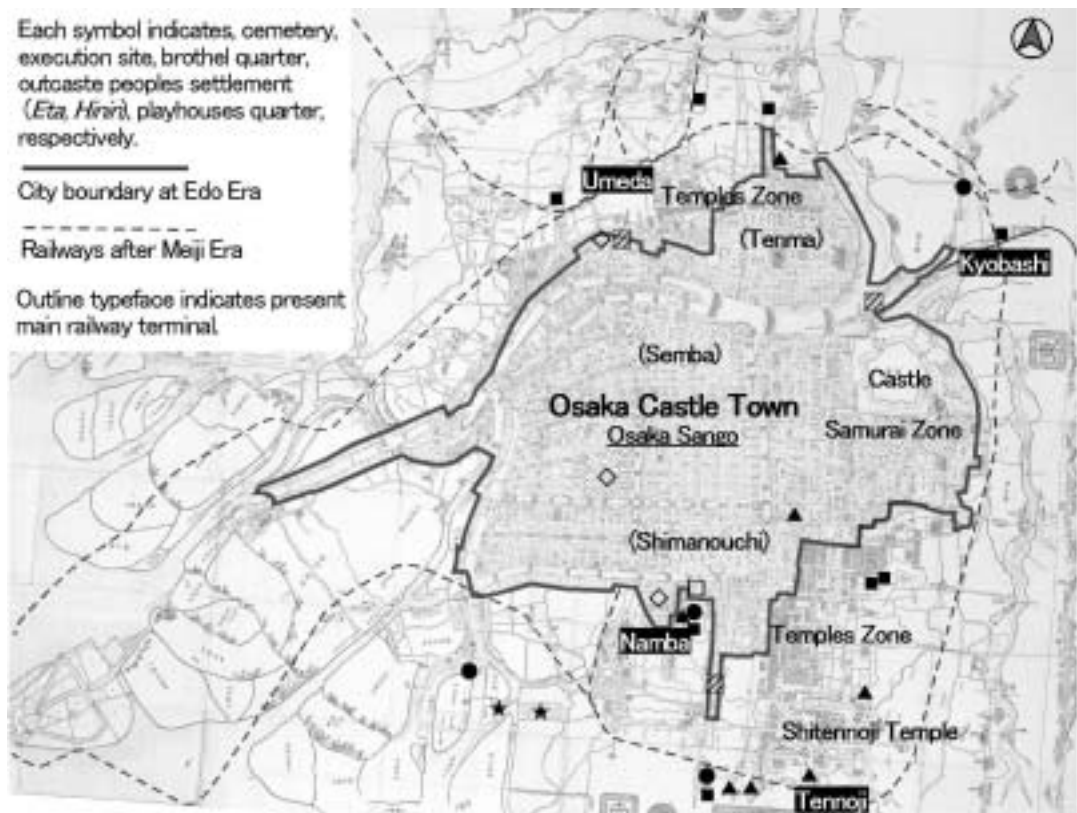


Figure 1 Osaka in the early 19th Century (Late Edo Era)

Source: base map is "Zoshu Kaisei Sesshu Osaka Chizu, 1806)

Poor urban residents placed at the bottom of the class stratification occupied particular urban space. Until the beginning of the 19th century when various commercial activities encouraged the urbanization, the residential segregation generated within the class structure was further intensified among the class of merchants and craftsmen. The class system and communities produced the poverty. We cannot calculate this kind of discrimination in monetary terms or within the criteria of poverty under industrial capitalism.

During the Edo period in Japan, cities established their entities as castle towns (*joukamachi*) in terms of scales and functions. The closed-door policy caused the market to become isolated from the rest of the world. Active transportation of commodities at the domestic level, however, helped castle towns to construct a basis for growth as commercial cities as well as industrial cities that encouraged the development of manufacture and craft works. At the same time, in the context of the class system composed of four social classes – samurai warriors, farmers, craftsmen, and merchants –, castle towns operated the segregation policy which spatially isolated the outcaste communities. Planned land-use controlled the processes of discrimination and poverty inherent in a classist society. Urban poverty of the outcaste was created in the limited urban space produced through the classist social processes as shown in the Figure 1.

Poor vagrant laborers were spatially constrained within the cheap inns quarters in such big cities as Edo (Tokyo) and Osaka during the Edo period. In the Meiji Restoration period, urban space experienced drastic transformation along with revolutionary changes in the spatial and social structures. The living space shared by the factory laborers, the increasing number of urban miscellaneous jobs workers, and manufacturers unable to adjust to the progress of technology became the ‘slum’ area. Accordingly the view to the underclass, previously hidden behind the rigid class system, became more explicit in conjunction with the processes determined by the capitalist principle of competition in the Meiji period.

2. How did industrialization produce the space of poverty in cities?

In the case of Japan, the huge gap of political systems between the Edo and Meiji periods conveyed a unique transformation of the process of urbanization. At the end of the Edo period, the political leadership of the provincial government (*Han*) administration in the feudal age lost its power. At the beginning of the Meiji period, empty space in cities was enlarged because of the decrease in the population of samurai warriors. Empty space in the urban area was enlarged, and therefore, the scale of cities was reduced toward the 1890s. Beginning in the 1900s (the Meiji 30s), the population of cities started to grow. There were three main factors which promoted urban growth in the Meiji period. The first factor was administrative urbanization developed in prefectural capital cities. The second was industrialization initiated by private entrepreneurs. The third was urbanization, which supported the infrastructures for the military demands represented by the construction of army and navy facilities as well as those for the imperial expansion to East Asia regions.

How did urban poverty arise in the context of Japanese urban space? The emergence of urban poverty made the historical past of the marginalized societies in cities, previously hidden behind the feudal class system, spatially visible. The congregation of the urban miscellaneous jobs workers generated through the mechanism based on feudal classism which had kept the

marginalized population as well as the concentration of female laborers in dormitories built in the context of the development of large scale spinning industry, produced the residential space for the urban poor in various ways.

Gennosuke Yokoyama, with his remarkable reports of 1899 entitled *The lower strata of society in Japan* addresses the urban issues in this historical period. Other writers including Bungo Sakurada and Gengoro Matsubara reported their exploration into the ‘slums’. The expression ‘slums’ used here represents the mixture of perspectives of the lower class born out of modernization and images toward the traditionally marginalized societies in cities.

3. Discovery of ‘slums’ and social improvement movement

Osaka was a pioneering modern city that experienced industrialization at an early stage. Unlike other cities sharing the castle town origin, the industrialization promoted by the spinning industry and the rapid urbanization in the vicinity of the traditional city area emerged in the 1880s. According to Gennosuke Yokoyama, Nagamachi in Nipponbashi and Imamiya in its vicinity represented typical cases of rapid urbanization. This kind of residential space was established in close relation to the geographical concentration of middle and small-scale industries and diversified urban laborers.

The spinning industry, which formed the basis for the early development of industrialization in Japan was separated from the center of cities and built adjacent to the space of the lower class, as the female spinning workers lived in dormitories. Figure 2 illustrates this geographical situation.

Given such social, geographical and historical contexts, a local improvement movement emerged among the bureaucrats in the Ministry of Interior, who cared about the underclass people and societies. This local improvement movement originally aimed at dealing with the unstable local communities after the Japan-Russian War. Eventually, however, this movement made the problems of the underclass visible to policy-makers. They started pursuing urban social policy based on the survey that focused on urban societies and that was conducted in various areas, making it routine work in the Taisho period.

For example, city officials in Tokyo and Osaka carried out statistical research on underclass people in 1912. The social survey was conducted in Shitaya, Koishikawa ward, the cheap inns quarters in the whole city of Tokyo and the jurisdiction of Namba Police, towns of typical urban miscellaneous jobs workers and minor factory workers in Osaka as shown in Figure 2. Inspired by the 1912 study, many other urban social survey projects were performed later in the Taisho era. Surveys were focused on three types of underclass societies, including 1) outcaste Burakumin ghettos, 2) residential areas of minor factory workers, and 3) districts of daily laborers. The central and prefectural governments placed the underclass population under ‘surveillance’ through their urban social survey projects.

The residential space of the Japanese urban poor can be apparently divided into the following two categories: 1) ghettos historically occupied by outcaste Buraku people and 2) cheap inns quarters for day laborers whose tradition originated in the feudal era. As mentioned before, the urban built environment since the feudal age represented the core of the poor sections of cities in the modern period.

Since the Taisho period, people from colonized Korea migrated to the urban areas of minor

factories, neighboring these ghettos and cheap inns quarters, and giving them an additional characteristic of the spatial division among ethnic groups. Along with the concentration of certain ethnic groups was the collective migration of people from Okinawa.

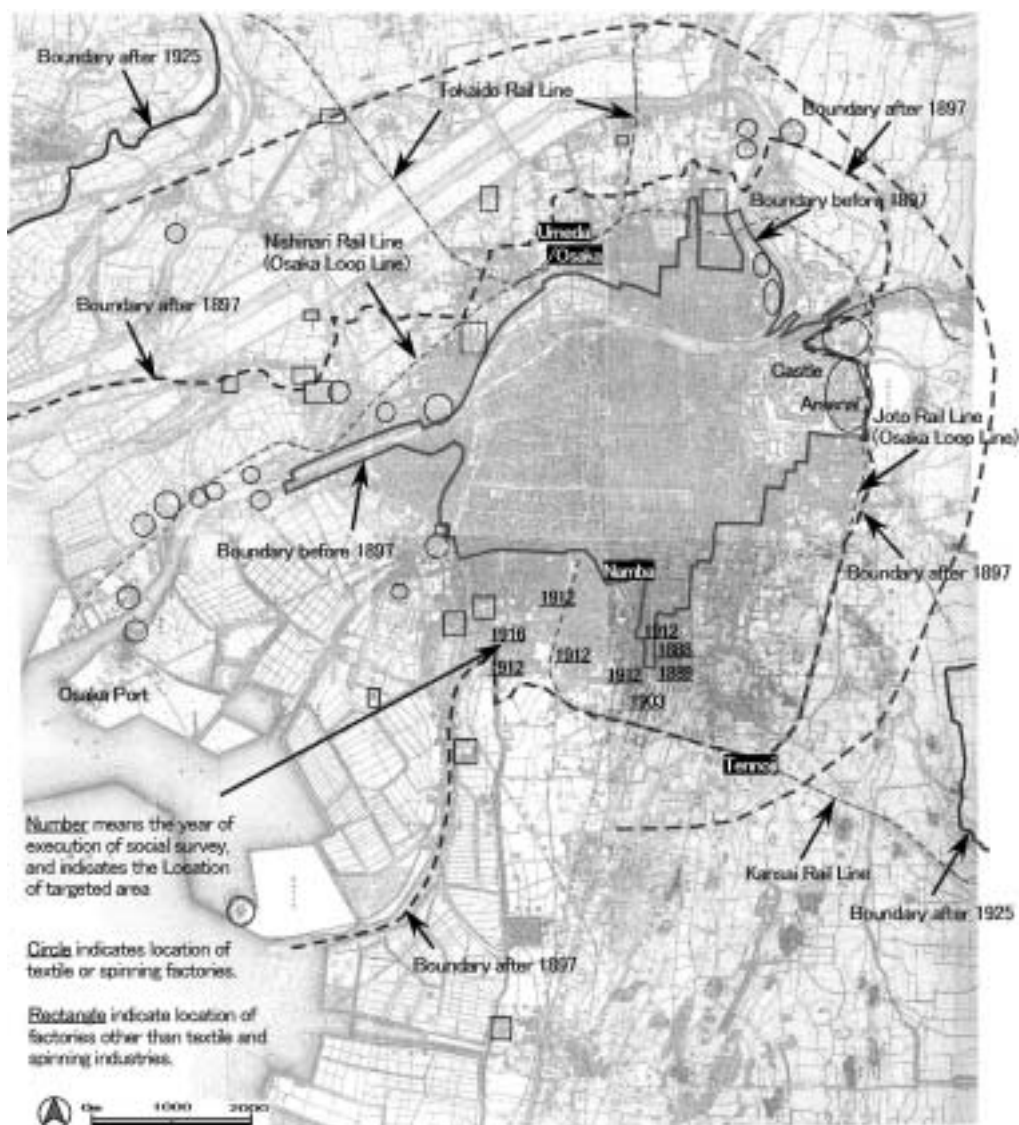


Figure 2 Osaka in the later Meiji Era

Source: base map was drawn in 1907-1909, by the Dept. of Army Ordnance Survey

The characteristics of the built environment in Japanese inner cities reflect the ‘dark’ age when urban planning was not institutionalized. Many areas, which used to be paddy fields and footpaths between these fields, were urbanized without planning. Accordingly, many of these areas were too small for hosting houses, whereas the widths of many roads, which used to be the

paths between rice fields, were too narrow. In the case of Osaka City (Figure 2 and 3), the area along the current JR Osaka Loop Line represents a byproduct of such unplanned urbanization. The urban built environment that surrounds the old castle town of Osaka city with the shape of a ring reminds us of the Burgess's concentric circle structure.

With the enforcement of the 1919 City Planning and Land Readjustment Act, the legislation of urban planning was institutionalized. Since 1919, urban suburbs that were to be institutionally planned gradually emerged along with the inner cities developed without planning.

Urban planning represents the state intervention into the urban processes. The advent of urban planning transformed the production of urban space in the context of industrial capitalism. This transformation took place during the period from the end of Taisho to the beginning of Showa. Before then, cities were formed under the control of 'invisible hands' of a market, dominated by industrial capitalism. In contrast, the state intervention in the form of urban planning constructed and controlled the urban built environment, which could not be fully managed within the structure of market mechanism.

4. Urban social movement in the pre-war days

The state intervention in urban planning symbolized the start of the above-mentioned urban social policy. At the same time, a rice riot, one of the largest urban social movements in Japan, took place throughout the nation in 1918. Urban residents participated in the movement on the streets, taking direct action and using force. Actually, urban social movement had already started when angry residents burned and attacked the mansions and facilities of the involved parties in order to express their opposition against the Japan-Russia peace contract and to demand the overthrow of the Katsura administration.

The growth of heavy industry encouraged by the wave of prosperity induced by WWI expanded the number of working class. As a result, the labor union movement became powerful, receiving support and guidance under the influence of Sodomei (National Trade Unions Confederation). Labor unions in the urban industrial areas of machinery and assembly processing factories and metal works initiated contentious labor negotiations concerning the wage increase, the rights of collective bargaining, and the shortening of working hours in the second half of Taisho. In 1921, workers in a shipyard of Kawasaki Heavy Industries and Mitsubishi Shipbuilding led the street type urban social movement in Kobe.

Moreover, the Zenkoku Suiheisha (National Levelers Association) aimed at the emancipation and liberation of outcaste Buraku people's ghettos (*Buraku*) and Buraku peoples was established in a Buraku in Kyoto in 1922. Since Buraku were growing around the poor-quality housing areas in cities, the Buraku liberation movement included characteristics of urban social movement. The impact of the Zenkoku Suiheisha was larger in the development of urban social movements in Western Japan than in Eastern Japan.

III. The public intervention in urban poverty through the production of space

1. Start of urban planning and social policy

The Ministry of Interior and large city governments reacted sensitively to the intense urban

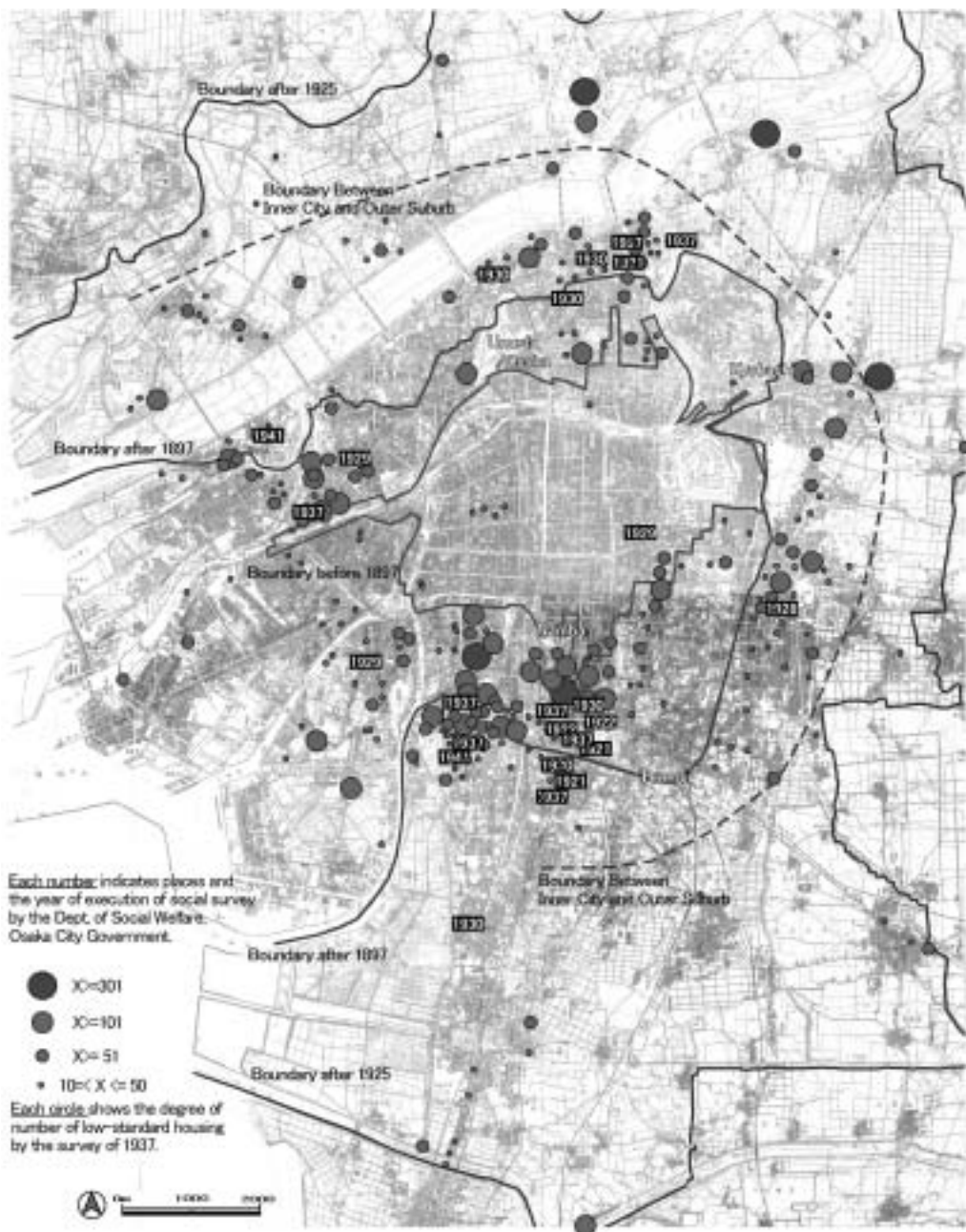


Figure 3 Osaka in the early 1930s

Source: base map was drawn in 1929-1932, by the Dept. of Army Ordnance Survey

social and labor movements. Osaka City published 260 issues of the famous 'labor survey report,' the later known as 'Osaka survey report of department of social affairs,' for twenty years from 1919 to 1942. The subjects of the report included salaried workers, teachers, merchants, factory workers and various city workers as well as the urban areas of law-standard housing and underclass residential areas. The survey clarified the general states of labor and

living and repeatedly conducted. These reports also addressed the low rent, and high percentage of poor quality housing and foreigners in the inner city, illustrating the residential segregation promoted inevitably through spatial processes dominated by industrial capitalism. Figure 3 typically shows the distributions of low-standard housing and target areas of these social survey.

Hajime Seki, then the celebrated Osaka Mayor, was a pioneering mayor for the introduction of urban social policies. He accomplished a great deal in locating public cheap inns, settlement houses, public housings etc. in the area, that were suffering from serious social problems. In other words, Seki tried to develop a built environment that would encourage the reproduction of the labor force. At the same time, the mayor planned the efficient construction of cities on a large scale, having a vision to establish high-speed transportation facilities such as subway and suburban residential districts.

In order to deal with the capitalist processes regarding the spatial production of cities, not only did Seki choose a passive method such as enlarging roads to reconstruct the city, but he also decided to pursue planning projects to develop the transportation network between the suburbs and inner cities. This would eventually turn the city into a healthy and good residential area for factory and white-collar workers. This policy was aimed at keeping the urban poverty, which was the cause of social unrest, within the inner city and not allowing it to reach the suburbs.

In order to deal with the shortage of housing in cities around the middle of the Taisho period, the central government started to supply small-scale public housing in the form of model projects. In 1924, the Ministry of Interior established *Donjunkai*, which actually played the role of a national housing corporation to resolve housing problems. The establishment of this public corporation established the public housing improvement for salaried and factory workers, while demolishing the 'slum' areas. This policy came to fruition with the enforcement of the Low Standard Housing Clearance and Improvement Act in 1927. The subjects of this law included fourteen low standard housing areas located in six major cities in Japan. These communities existed among the urban Buraku, the day laborers' area, and the residential area of urban miscellaneous jobs workers in inner cities. With the enforcement of this law, old and small houses were demolished and reinforced concrete apartment houses were newly built. This housing policy, however, did not resolve the fundamental problems of underclass structure, underlying the urban space.

The government enforced the Relief Act in 1932, while refining the system of district committee (case worker). As a result, the government encouraged the registration of the poor and the sick in communities, so that the individuals would be able to receive low-income subsidies and assistance from the national government. This project offered individual assistance to those who needed help.

The Amalgamation (*Yuma*) policy for Burakumin into ordinary Japanese people and district improvement projects for Buraku conveyed community based policy with spatial impacts. These projects specifically addressed the needs for settlement halls with meetinghouses, bathhouses, and nurseries as well as developed public housing construction and street widening programs. The government implemented these projects in approximately twenty Buraku, some of which were located in cities.

2. Laborers movement, construction of urban space and residential segregation

The National Trade Union Confederation, in which big corporation labor unions took initiative, was reorganized as a moderate corporation union in the 1930s. Consequently, the union movement was isolated within the factories and companies without maintaining connections with urban policy. However, in the election of the House of Representatives which took the form of a popular election in 1928, leftist Diet men were elected, receiving support from the labor unions. Electoral zones where factory workers dominated the majority of the votes emerged in inner cities.

Thus, the prosperous working class represented by manufacturers established its status in cities in the 1930s. These laborers lived in relatively good tenement row houses, which were geographically separated from lower-class society.

With an increase in the white-collar workers, middle class people started living in the suburbs, which promoted residential segregation even further. More and more houses were built in the suburbs along the private electric railway lines, broadening the daily milieu of the cities. Thus the urban segregation among scattered suburbs, the densely built-up inner cities, and the 'slums' inhabited by the lower class, were intensified in big cities in Japan in the 1930s.

3. Urban built environment under total war

The 1930s brought the centralized local administrations, initiated by the Ministry of Interior and prefectural offices, under strong state control. The government initiated the management of intra city street networks and land readjustment with the urban planning techniques cultivated through the rehabilitation projects after the devastating Kanto Big Earthquake of 1923. Many municipalities followed the standardized planning manuals in Japan.

After the Manchurian Incident in 1931 and the Sino-Japanese War starting in 1937, Japan rushed into total war. The production of the urban built environment, therefore, was initiated in munitions cities that were pursuing new industrialized urban planning projects. In the Manchurian capital city, Shinkyō (literally meaning new capital, and currently called Changchun), and Haerbin, Japanese people became involved with urban planning projects in order for ideal planning, which could not be practiced in Japan to materialize.

The national land-planning project has emphasized the idea of decentralizing the urban population and industries since 1940. The above-mentioned new munitions cities were the first model cities to represent the new industrial towns outside large cities such as Sagami-hara, Kanagawa prefecture, and Hirohata, Hyogo prefecture. These cities followed the national land planning, developing standardized street blocks and housing projects. Moreover, the standardized corporation housing estate emerged around munitions factories in local towns.

The munitions facilities promoted the demand for a massive construction labor. Especially during wars, the Japanese labor force did not fulfill the needs of the military government and therefore, importing laborers from the Japanese colonies abroad became necessary. As a result, temporary lodgings and camps for Koreans and Chinese neighbored the factories and big construction sites all over the nation.

These lodgings and camps had tremendous impact on the postwar urban built environment

largely due to the failed postwar compensation programs and the political-economic disorder in the Korean Peninsula. After WWII, many of these laborers stayed in the existing camps, lodgings and squatting places, forming ethnic enclaves and causing squatter problems. In Uji-city, Kyoto, for instance, residents of a Korean enclave called Utoro, were to be evicted after more than fifty years since the end of WWII.

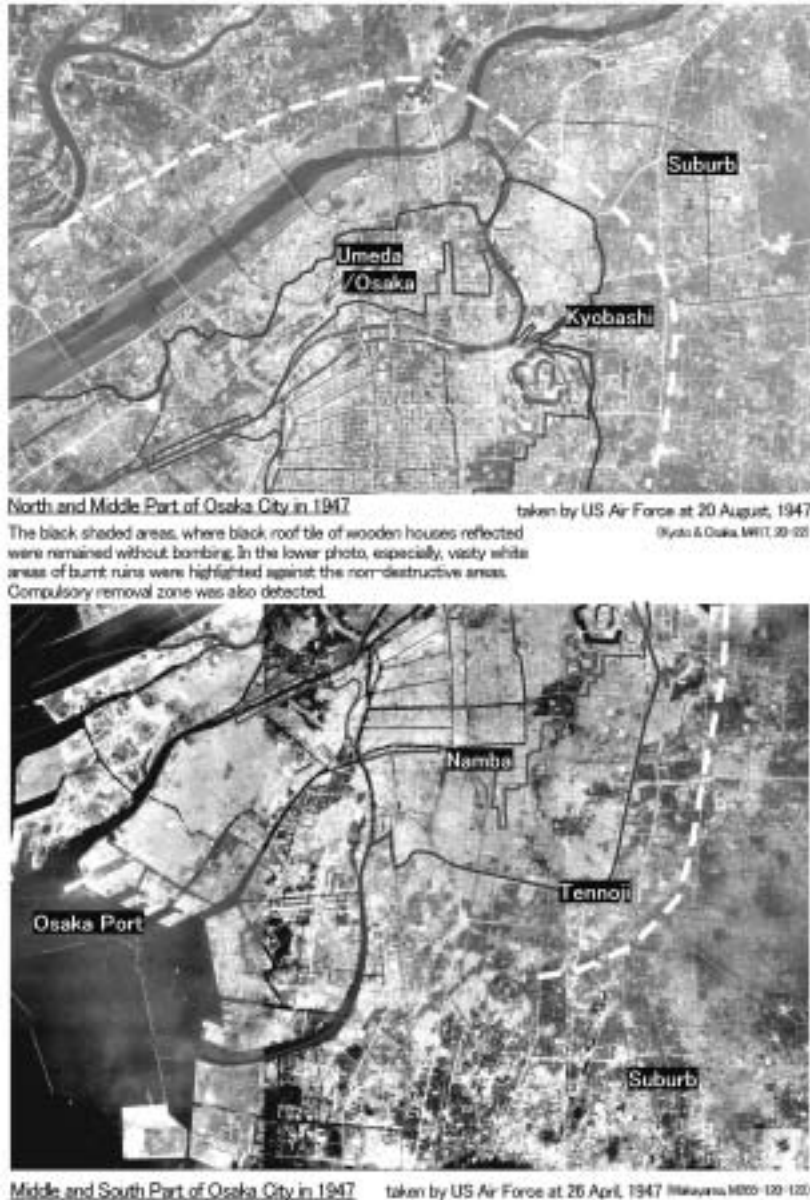


Figure 4 Disastrous damage after air bombing of 1945

Toward the end of WWII, buildings were transplanted by people out of the cities in order to avoid bombing and densely populated urban areas were developed. As a result of the intense bombings, residential segregation in the urban areas disappeared.

4. Dominance of poverty and the post-war recovery

US bombings from March to August 1945 burned more than a hundred towns, destroying the majority of big and medium sized cities. The US army conducted indiscriminate bombardment, emphasizing that these attacks would destroy the urban inner areas where the residential, commercial, and industrial functions were mixed. This, the US bombardment, thus, deprived the cities not only of the systems of production but also of the built environment for the residents. Indeed, many citizens lost their lives. The strategic bombings devastated nearly all of the inner cities as shown in Figure 4.

Ironically, however, the destruction presented the cities with opportunities to develop new land readjustment projects, to broaden roads, and to create parks. The city reconstruction became a project regarding the war rehabilitation in about 115 cities for more than ten years starting in 1946. The thorough standardization of streets and urban blocks encouraged the post-war economic restoration. These projects, however, were limited to war-damaged areas, and did not have direct connections with the subsequent large-scale industrial development on the waterfront and in the interior parts of the nation in the 1960s.

5. Postwar poverty in cities – the third nationals (victorious Koreans and Chinese), black market

Urban poverty gained new dimensions through the development of a project regarding the post-war recovery. Urban poverty produced black markets, houseless, homeless people, and street children. The concept of being illegal did not mean much because of the collapse of the safety net due to the political chaos and hyper-inflation. The residences and shops in urban squatters, built during the state of anarchy, represented the new elements of the urban built environment.

The enforcement of the Alien Registration Ordinance in 1947 reflected and intensified the deficiency in the post-war policy regarding the treatment of foreigners, impacting on the lives of minority groups in the context of urban spatial development. People originally from the colonized nations automatically lost their citizenship and rights to have access to the public sector. As a result, they could not participate on at all in the decision-making processes of urban policy. They lost rights to public housing as well as an access to the loan provided by the Housing Loan Corporation. In addition, the government did not officially recognize the schools and classes for Koreans and Chinese. While the liberation movement of the Buraku received large-scale public funds for the initiation of their own urban development projects, foreign residents in Japan were expected to work with self-reliance and self-help alone.

The operation of urban planning as a part of the project of postwar rehabilitation avoided the issues of ethnicity and poverty. The mass media reported the cities' eviction of black markets in front of the stations, explaining that the objects of the regulation were the third nationals. The government tolerated the temporary use of the squatter barracks as a space for the future streets that were developed through urban planning as a part of the postwar rehabilitation program. Consequently, the space for temporary markets and residence in front of the station demerged. The urban redevelopment policy in later years targeted these squatter barracks area

as a harmful environment to be evicted and renewed.

Osaka cities, for instance, tried to place a large number of homeless and orphans into temporary shelters. From the end of the 1940s to the beginning of the 1950s, these people were institutionalized under the name of protection. In this way, severe urban poverty seemed to be erased from sight. Some governmental projects dealing with problems of unemployment among the low-income population concealed the poverty, even though these projects were terminated in the 1970s.

6. Postwar rehabilitation project and painful experiences of city people

Urban planning represents the authoritative operation of the reorganization of urban space and built environment. Countless numbers of small landowners and tenants were forced to move under the land readjustment projects. This relocation of sites and blocks used to be centered around the physical readjustment of blocks, which did not include the management of buildings constructed on the block. The residents at that time, and even now, suffered from this project. In reality, the residents themselves were not allowed to participate in the city planning. In many cities, almost half of the land, owned by the residents who did not have sufficient knowledge, was merged into the public land under the land readjustment projects.

The dissatisfaction, distrust, and resistance among the residents did not grow powerfully into the postwar urban social movement. However, many years later, after the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of 1995, the government recognized the significance of the residents' participation in urban development in the context of the rehabilitation planning projects.

IV. Fordist urban development and the spatial resistance of urban societies

In the late 1950s, the postwar rehabilitation projects were almost over. Accordingly, urban development was promoted within the system of Fordist accumulation processes. The government provided the cities with selective and strategic funding for the urban built environment, and therefore, the urban space was further divided. The residential segregation in the historical context of prewar industrial capitalism led to an accumulation of housing and social problems in the inner cities. During the postwar high-growth period of the Japanese economy, these problems proliferated among the suburbs.

The well-zoned 'suburbs of hope' produced around the inner cities in the pre-war period in Showa represented the frontier of the production of cities before the bombings. Figure 4 apparently show the existence of well-planned area surrounding the city center and inner city where air bombing had severely attacked in 1945. The rehabilitation projects were focused on the redevelopment of inner cities. During the postwar high-growth period, urban sprawls were produced around the outside of Osaka city.

In the Osaka Metropolitan Region, the governmental funding for the development of an urban built environment was directed strategically toward the industrial complex of heavy manufacturing and new towns. In the civic center and sub-civic center of the cities, large-scale private capital allowed for the materialization of skyscrapers, which symbolize world cities. Private capital strength produced the well-organized urban built environment which covered a

wide range of cities. The Urban Redevelopment Act enacted in 1969 legally supported this process. In other places, however, the production of the small-scaled built environment depended on the 'invisible hands' of the small-scale market mechanism.

The phenomenon of relative poverty appeared to be expressed specifically in 1) inner cities for which the large-scale public and private investment was severely limited during the high-growth period and 2) suburbia within the urban sprawl which did not experience urban planning. The area for cheap wooden tenement houses in Tokyo was produced through the same mechanism.

1. Buraku and Dowa project

The temporal squatters' barracks quarters, which appeared as the byproducts through the processes of the postwar rehabilitation projects, were the cause of the most fundamental problem in urban spatial construction. In the 1950s, when people started to say that the postwar period was over, the problems of slum and squatter became apparent.

The enforcement of the Housing Clearance and Improvement Act in 1960 was aimed at improving the poor condition of urban housing. Accordingly, the squatter clearance and the construction of improved housing for the postwar rehabilitation were pursued. One of the most notable projects was an urban reorganization program known as a 'national' Dowa Project (assimilation project) in the protest and request movement among Burakumin. Burakumin, who had experienced 'poverty' and discrimination in the severest way, became empowered in the liberation movement and struggles against the government during the high-growth period.

A grassroots movement started in Osaka in 1957, when the Burakumin in the squatter area in Nishinari-ward began demanding new housing for compensation for their eviction, because the restoration project was aimed at evicting them and using the area for roads and streets. Since the beginning of the campaign movement for the acquisition of business chance, which was aimed at supporting the economic independence of Buraku people, the Council for the Promotion of the Dowa Project had been trying to develop a better relationship with the government. The council made a clear division between the liberation movement and the processes of negotiation with the government. Consequently, the government decided to build apartments specifically for the Dowa district (Buraku) residents. The national movement aimed at solving Dowa problems was so successful that the government enacted the Law of Special Measures for Assimilation Projects in 1969. Accordingly, housing improvement projects in Dowa districts were promoted for the duration of 28 years. This was a unique case in which certain urban regions received a large amount of the national fund as the provision of consumption fund.

2. Yoseba and Doya towns

During the high growth of the Japanese economy, construction laborers who supported the basis for the production and distribution of the built environment, formed their residential areas called Doya towns (cheap inns quarter for day laborers). Doya towns was popularly known as Sanya in Tokyo, Kamagasaki in Osaka, Kotobuki in Yokohama, and Sasajima in Nagoya. Urban social movement accompanied by direct action as riot emerged in Sanya in 1960 and in Kamagasaki, Osaka in 1961. Although the government was aware of the existence of Doya and

the need to improve their conditions at that time, the appearance of these problems was different. Laborers in Doya towns initiated the urban social movement in the form of ‘riots’ on the streets which reminded the general public of the rice riots in the past.

With regards to Kamagasaki, Osaka, the city and prefecture governments established the ‘Airin’ policy in 1966 (Airin ironically means ‘lovely neighborhood’), which implemented specific program for each different local area. The main focus of the policy was to improve the conditions of labor, welfare, and public security. Ironically, however, the ‘Airin’ policy resulted in further isolating and pinning Doya town in one specific place of Kamagasaki (see Figure 6). A big construction boom just before the opening of the 1970 World Exposition in the Senri area, a northern suburb of Osaka, brought single male laborers from all over the nation into Kamagasaki. Facing the management of a large amount of day laborers, the Airin Labor, Welfare and Medical Center was established in 1970, and Kamagasaki became a town for these single male construction workers. As a number of riots occurred and the antagonism among mafia, extremists, labor unions, and police escalated, Doya towns rapidly grew and the population of single male workers dramatically increased.



Figure 5 Osaka Metropolitan Region in the 1990s

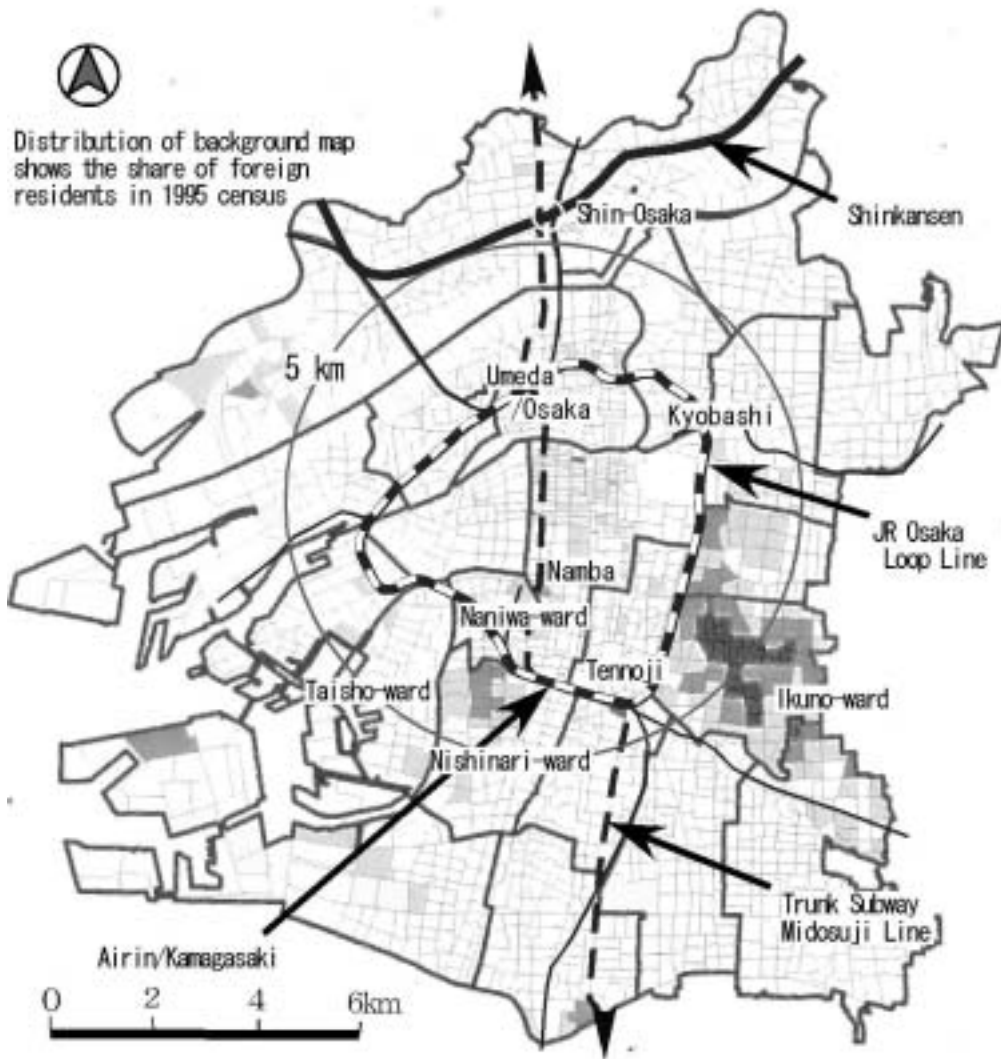


Figure 6 Osaka in the 1990s

3. The development and disappearance of the progressive local governments

The progressive local governments emerging in cities in the 1970s energized the anti-pollution and welfare movements. This epitomized the friction between the Liberal Democratic Party on one hand and the Socialist and Communist Parties on the other. This friction reflected the ideological opposition during the Cold War period on a global scale. Those who led the progressive local governments had a vision of increasing the number of such governments and reforming the Japanese economy and social system within a socialist regime.

The actual policy of the progressive local governments was designed to enhance the public welfare, utilizing the growing revenue of local tax during the high-growth period. Moreover,

this represented the Fordist urban policy as well. As the leader's slogan for the election 'protection of life and living' indicated, the standard of living indeed improved and the strict regulation on pollution resolved some urban environmental problems. At the same time, however, the issue of poverty became rather invisible. As the middle-class population increased under the growing Japanese economy, the majority of the residents became conservative.

Prospering Japan, in which the majority of the population could be categorized as belonging to the middle class, created a city landscape of suburbia. Bed-towns in the suburbs, where so-called 'business fighters' took a daily break, and expressways connected the central cities, were embedded in this stereotyped landscape. Ironically enough, the progressive local governments created social unity under the Fordist capitalism. At the same time, they received severe criticism from those who shared neo-conservative ideologies for not encouraging the efficiency of non-competition among cities.

4. Inner city problems

The government recognized the decline of the inner city as opposed to the homogeneous growth of suburbia in the late 1970s. The government considered the decline to be a part of the global-scale problems in relation to the decline of big cities.

The growing industry of processing and assembly in the inner city of Tokyo was strongly linked with the pioneering industry in the Keihin (Tokyo-Kawasaki-Yokohama) industrial region, playing an important role as a proliferating industry. Therefore, inner city problems were not given much attention. On the other hand, in Osaka and Kobe, where heavy industries and material manufacturing industry were growing in the waterfront area, policy makers recognized serious inner city problems. These problems included a decline in and aging of the urban population, de-urbanization and decrease in tax revenue due to the abandonment of factories and transferring of industrial capital out of the inner city. The policy makers tried to deal with individual problems independently, and therefore, they could not develop an agenda to resolve the underlying issues as a comprehensive urban problem. However, the inner city problems became invisible when the urban finance improved with the arrival of the bubble economy at the turn of the 1990s.

5. Protests raised by ethnic groups and their accomplishments

When Vietnamese refugee boats arrived in Japan in 1975, the notion of 'nation-state with a border' in relation to the global society became more visible. It disclosed the indifference and unconsciousness among Japanese people toward foreigners' rights.

The ethnic enclave was reproduced in Ikuno-ward as shown in Figure 6, Osaka city, that was traditionally dominated by 'zainichi' people; Korean residents in Japan. The wooden tenement housing for working-class people was there, while the number of public housing to which the 'Zainichi' people had no access had never been constructed. 'Zainichi' people in Ikuno-ward were mainly involved with the labor intense domestic industry in the production of sandals etc.. This situation was a clear contrast to that of the Dowa district; Buraku, located in a southwestern Osaka inner city, where large-scale national funding drastically transformed the residential environment.

While the first-generation of ‘Zainichi’ people tried to develop their own businesses without demanding rights as Japanese citizens, the second and third generation peoples insisted on their fundamental rights as permanent residents. Their movement addressed the severe reality regarding the violation of rights of foreigners who were permanent residents of Japan and they demanded institutional change. They refused to be fingerprinted not necessarily because of the ideological antagonism between South and North Korea, but because their demands derived from their daily lives. In the 1990s, ‘Zainichi’ people finally won rights for access to public housing and pension. Moreover, they are now entitled to become government employees.

The urban enclave in Taisho-ward in Osaka city, dominated by those who were from Okinawa, shared a similar situation. The Association of people from Okinawa prefecture used to convey conventional big-name politics, represented by the existing town council, city office, and dominant figures. This organization led the process of creating an Okinawa community in Taisho-ward (see Figure 6). Instead of this organization, however, in the 1970s under the influence of the reversion of Okinawa to Japanese administration, grassroots activists addressed the problems of Okinawan squatters and accomplished a successful housing movement in the same way as the one initiated by the Dowa district people. Although grassroots Okinawan activists learned tactics from the Buraku liberation movement, they emphasized their unique historical and social experiences of discrimination. At the same time, growing struggles to preserve cultures brought Eisa, a folk dance festival, to this district, attracting those who love Eisa from all over Japan.

The bubble economy gentrified inner cities, whose land represented an object of investment and speculation. Apartment and office buildings were built, changing the urban landscape previously dominated by gray and flat houses. In current Osaka, a global city, the areas of North and South Koreans and Okinawa people do not continue to produce stigma any more but symbolize something attractive because of their ethnic and cultural flavors. Furthermore, Dowa districts have moved into the public limelight, because they have developed pioneering projects and welfare for the aged and handicapped as an experimental example of the urban regeneration projects.

6. Rough sleepers and citizens’ autonomy

The rapid growth of the rough sleepers population in post-bubble Osaka reflects the fragility of economic prosperity in a global city. As the restructuring of corporations and firms has promoted the neo-conservative economy in recent years, homelessness is now prevalent by the urban space of Osaka, especially around city parks, along riverbeds, and under expressways. The fundamental cause of this problem is the flimsy safety net system, which has made urban poverty visible.

When rough sleepers started to live in Osaka Castle Park and Nagai Park, a controversy was developed. The discussion among the governmental and citizens’ organizations, whose visions were limited by the precedent and fixed ideas was going nowhere. It was apparent that a mature discussion that would seek a practical resolution would not develop.

Nevertheless, homeless policy was eventually developed. The local government conducted a survey on their living conditions, pursued various projects concerning tent-shelters, support

centers, and employment, and issued a special legislature. Finally, the Special Measures Act for the Support of the Independence of Homeless People was enforced last summer in 2002.

The debates on homeless problems raises questions regarding the goals of citizens' organizations that may potentially deal with issues that have not been taken care of by the government. Citizens should not simply claim their rights to receive the benefits of governmental assistance or to criticize the government. It is necessary that they practice the political processes of governance together with the government. While having independent visions, citizens should participate in the processes of producing urban policy and built environment. The time has come when citizens should develop the public sphere, which has been created and maintained by the government.

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