



A Study on the Relationship and Interaction between Urban Festivals and Urban Spaces as its Setting

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Urban festivals, including their origination and development, cannot be discussed without considering the relevancy of urban spaces that have been utilized as the stage setting for the parade of miniature shrines (called “mikoshi” in Japanese), floats and traditional dance. It is highly suggestive for the study of urban design and conservation to reveal the relationship between urban festivals and urban spaces, which are intangible and tangible heritage linking to each other. This paper tries to grasp the overview of relationship and interaction between urban festivals and urban spaces as its stage setting, looking into the historical facts all over Japan which have been revealed by our own research and introduced in previous literatures.

As the result, two major types of relations have been found; one is that urban festivals have affected to urban spaces, the other is that urban spaces have affected to urban festivals. In the former case, the existence of festivals in urban area has been had strong influence to the physical characteristics of urban tissues such as buildings, roads, and squares, as well as the townscape on both festival and non-festival occasion. Therefore, many notable examples are found in many cities, which show conservation and redevelopment of urban spaces utilized as the stage settings for urban festivals. Reviewing them, it is certain that the impact of festival tourism cannot be ignored.

On the other hand, as to the latter case, the width of roads and the height of street furniture such as electric wire, utility poles, and traffic signs have been very influential to the elements of urban festivals. For instance, they affected the area boundary of festival, the route of parade, and the size of floats. Urban festivals have been changed flexibly corresponding to the changes of urban spaces whereas the principle of festivals has been kept unchanged.

With the framework above, this paper analyzed the relationship and interaction between urban festivals and urban spaces with several case studies. It includes the Lantern (Chochin) Festival in Nihonmatsu City that dated back to the Edo period (the pre modern age) as an example of Japanese traditional festival, and Awa-Odori Festival in the Central Tokyo which has started since the post war period as an example of nontraditional festival.

KEY WORDS: Festival, urban space.