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Participation of local population for preservation of historical surrounding

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PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL POPULATION FOR PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL SURROUNDING

Susumu Kurasawa

1. Characteristics of preservation of historical surrounding.

Historical surrounding is the product of long standing multiplying action between natural environment and human behavior. Therefore, its preservation houses more difficulties than the simple preservation of nature, which can be classified into following three points: First of all, the problem is caused through historical surrounding as an objective and its own nature. It includes nature such as greenery or scenic view on one hand and man-made structure such as buildings on the other while there is a third factor, a complex of daily life, habit and value which comes out of mutual interdependent relation between those two factors.

Historical surrounding prompts relating action between past human life and its value, and its present one using natural environment and man-made structure as an intermediary. This is the very reason for its importance.

The second is the problem of subjective organization for preservation of historical surrounding.

People who live in the surrounding directly and people in wider sense, or human being in general in far wider category. There are two factors.

Furthermore, local and national governmental bodies representing both level and groups of professional experts are also involved. Such subjective bodies are in contact with historical surrounding, preserving it or destroying it as the case may be.

Among people on different expanse and governments of various level and professional experts of specific field, contradiction on value assessment and on judgement on advantage and disadvantage can be noted naturally.

Thirdly, the problem of way of life lies between points one and two. Degree of land utilization differs according to the time difference between the day it was started and present. Way of life of local population supports historical surrounding at one end while it may often present opposing factor against preservation of surrounding. This presents very serious and yet very general case, specially in this country.

2. Problem of historical surrounding in Japan

Preservation of historical surrounding in Japan presents serious problem. It is caused by very high population density on available habitable area. Historical surrounding which requires preservation is very often situated in very good environment for human habitation, where it is still highly valued at present as housing area or other type of intensified utilization.

Four historical surrounding areas appointed according to the stipulation of Old City Law clearly indicates the fact. Kamakura, located within Tokyo-Yokohama metropolitan area, has all the characteristics of an excellent housing area. Inauguration of Old City Law was actually triggered by local population movement against destruction of historical surrounding by housing development there.

Other areas, older than Kamakura and all situated in Kyoto-Osaka-Kobe metropolitan area, are also exposed against substantial change on its historical surrounding.

In case of Kamakura, whole area from Kamakura-yama to coast line, for Nara and Asuka, entire landscape including Yamato Plain and surrounding mountain has to be considered for preservation, however, such area has already been closely populated or highly developed for commerce and traffic. Therefore, preservation of historical surrounding necessarily means substantial restriction on local community life as well as on land utilization within the area.

Accordingly, it becomes of absolute necessity to obtain consensus on local population level as well as on national level regarding development, preservation and value of historical surrounding.

3. System for preservation of historical surrounding in Japan

Progress has been made recently in our country on systematizing preservation of historical surrounding at national and local community level. For legislative action on national level, Special Disposition Law concerning preservation of historical surrounding in ancient cities (1966) and Traditional structure group preservation area system brought forth by rectifying cultural Assets Preservation Law (1975) are the major steps. Old City Law is most probably the very first legislature originated by people's movement. As for its background history, Mr. Hara, the leader of the movement and also the leader of Historical Surrounding Preservation Association, is scheduled to make a report later on people's movement against destruction of natural environment. In the process of Mr. Hara's movement against destruction of nature at Oyatsu, Kamakura and similar movement against

destruction of Narabigaoka, Kyoto, it became apparent that there is a certain lack in legislation in view of effective battle for preservation of historical surrounding and the special disposition law was brought forth.

The Old City Law applies only to limited areas, at present, Kamakura, Kyoto, Nara and Asuka areas. There has been some criticism on such area appointing system, however, the law is performing a certain useful role in preservation of most important historical surrounding in this country.

On the other hand, Cultural Assets Law had remained at individual protection level or museum type preservation level up till its rectification in 1975, when streets or villages themselves were included into its application to bring the preservation on to whole historical and cultural environment, marking an epoch in the progress of preservation system.

To supplement those two legislature at national level, there are numerous ordinances inaugurated at local and municipal government level, such as Cultural Assets Preservation Ordinance, Scenic Beauty or Environment Preservation Ordinance. Beginning in 1968, at Kanazawa, one of typical castled cities of Japan or at Kurashiki where British type industrialization took place in early Meiji era, Traditional Environment Preservation Ordinance and Traditional Scenic Beauty Preservation Ordinance were inaugurated respectively and 10 other cities followed the suit.

Such initiative taken by local government seems to have blazed a path for the birth of Traditional Structure Group Preservation System under Cultural Assets Preservation Law, although a very rare occasion in this country indeed.

Heavy concentration of such legislative action within the span of 10 years after 1965 is probably caused by following reasons: Firstly, since sixties, high level economical growth, or in another word, public works pushed by government and development by private industries, started to produce public nuisance and pollution, and eventual destruction of historical surrounding in general. Secondly, initiation of people's movement against such destruction of environment and recognition of rightfulness for such people's movement. Thirdly, not only the people directly concerned or participants of such movement, but also administrative personnel, governmental or parliamentary officers and people nation-wide began to form a silent consensus regarding the importance of historical surrounding. Fourthly, to this formation of public opinion, effect of international view from UNESCO to begin with, and also of professional experts and journalism in this country is added.

As already stated, people's movement had great effect on the birth of Old City Law or inauguration of ordinances by local government preceded the legislative action on national level, and local population groups played an important role in the introduction of local ordinances. Concerning the last item, various examples will be shown in this seminar at later stage. These are the fact indicating that movement within last ten years was backed by strong public opinion and was lead under the initiative of local population.

4. Rule of consensus

Support by public opinion and subjective participation of local population is being noted for preservation of historical surrounding, however, problems are still there, which can be categorized into following two points:

Firstly, the difference in value assessment between experts and laymen can be pointed out. In case of Old City Law, value of 4 old cities, Kamakura, Kyoto, Nara and Asuka, was almost equally assessed by both professional experts and general public to produce smooth application of the law. However, in various other areas, especially at archaeological ruins, preservation efforts are mainly paid by group of scientists other than local inhabitants, while local authority and population remain indifferent and cool toward it in many instance.

Some professional experts criticize that importance of four old cities are emphasized so much that other cities are being left neglected, however, there is also a risk of showing professional interest on to local population. This will be the completely opposite case to the streets preservation problem which requires initiative by local population first of all necessitating very close emotional relation with them.

Development of social program for the formation of consensus including process for participation of local population, distribution of knowledge and data, role of professional experts and administration, has become highly important.

Secondly, adjustment of advantage and disadvantage regarding daily life of local population can be mentioned. Preservation of historical surrounding, different from museum type preservation, necessarily includes daily life of local people. With already described condition of this country taken into consideration, substantial restriction over freedom of choosing jobs, business advantage or physical convenience of daily life is usually needed for successful preservation of historical surrounding.

Some of historical surrounding has been supported by local people and it can be properly preserved through their own initiative and effort. Integration with tourism can be considered desirable as long as no damage is produced against historical value of surrounding and pride of local people.

Some of historical surrounding has already separated itself from daily life of local population to carry significance only as national and cultural heritage. In this case, subjective body for its preservation is general public or administrative and professional experts. As already noted within the appointed area under stipulation of Old City Law, some conflict with local population seems unavoidable. Since any and all compensation is being funded by tax payers' money, public consensus becomes necessary for choice on object of preservation and content of dispensing.

When we study these two points, it becomes apparent that preservation of historical surrounding is a continuous process of creating new value within the structure of democratic society. I would like to invite your attention to the fact that such consensus of public opinion is not a permanent one. That is the reason why I advocate for the development of social program including citizen's education in wider sense for formation and guidance of consensus.