A STUDY ON THE HISTORY OF “CINEMA-CITY” IN ASAKUSA, TOKYO

— Analysis of land use and landscape transformations based on cadastral maps and photos —

東京・浅草における『映画街』の形成プロセスに関する研究
土地台帳, 地籍図, 地図, 写真に基づく土地利用と景観の変化に関する分析

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During the 20th century, Asakusa was known as “Eiga-gai” which means “Cinema-City”, since it was a place with the highest concentration of cinemas in Japan. Nowadays, few cinemas are still opened and the popularity of Asakusa, as an entertainment district, has fallen inexorably. The first step in doing this study was to perform a land use analysis through several periods, including the Meiji, Taisho, Showa, and the present. The second step was to collect all data and compare them to understand how the “Cinema-City” was born in Asakusa and how the area developed, changed, and declined over the past century. The results of this study make clear the following points: 1) The Cinema-City presented the highest concentration cinemas in Japanese history. 2) The Cinema-City experienced many changes in architectural styles, land use, ownerships, and landscape. These changes are carefully examined and reported in the present study.

Keywords: Cinema-City, Entertainment District, Asakusa, Rokku, Cadastral Maps, Land Registry

映画街, 歓楽街, 浅草, 六区, 地籍図, 土地台帳

1. STUDY BACKGROUND

Movies were first introduced to Japan in 1896 when the kinetoscope, invented by Thomas Edison three years earlier, was imported to Kobe. In February 1897, the cinematographe, invented by the Lumiere brothers, was imported to Japan¹⁾.

At the end of the 19th century, because most films were short, there was no need to build a permanent building in which to show movies. At the turning of the century, in the year 1902, Yoshizawa, one of the first companies to become involved in cinema, imported enough films from the West to allow up to two months of showings at one location²⁾. This helped pave the way for the opening of a permanent cinema in 1903. In the Asakusa area, a former X-ray clinic was equipped with a projector and turned into the “Denkikan” Movie Theater—Japan's first permanent movie theater³⁾. In this small area, in the 20 years that followed the opening of the first theater, another 20 theaters were built. All of the cinemas were positioned along one street called *Rokku*⁴⁾. Asakusa was the first cinema entertainment district ever⁵⁾, and it was commonly known as “Eiga-gai,” which means “Cinema-City.” Cinema in Japan originated in Tokyo and the entertainment area of the fourth and sixth district in Asakusa was changed into an urban space that stood out because of its modern atmosphere. This marked the beginning of the era of the cinema theaters in Japan.

2. REASONS FOR THE SELECTION OF ASAKUSA ROKKU DISTRICT AS AN AREA FOR RESEARCH

This area is particularly interesting for its long history as an entertainment district where starting from the beginning of last century cinemas prospered (See Table.1). What is now called the Rokku district was once called *Cinema-City*, and

Table.1 Distribution of Cinema Theaters respectively, in years 1920, 1960, and 2000. (Source: Taito Ward Reference Library, 1988 *Asakusa Rokku Show History*, Ministry of Commerce, *Film Yearbook Statistics 1961, 2001*).

Year	Japan	Tokyo	Asakusa, Rokku
1920	67	30	20
1960	7457	494	36
2000	2354	211	6

played a very important role in defining the Japanese cinema art and industry, since it was a place with the highest concentration of cinemas in Japan. Furthermore, this entertainment district is considered unique because of its spatial characteristics and because it embodied the spirit of great change, which was the aim of modernity.

The purpose of this study is to clarify three main features of the modern urban history of Asakusa area in Tokyo: first, the role played by temple precincts in the place where an entertainment district developed. Second, it critically records the modern history of the *Cinema-City*, a rare example of an entire area devoted to a high number of cinemas. Finally, the spatial identity of the *Cinema-City* is discussed in term of its landscape characteristics.

3. STUDY METHODOLOGY

This study is original in its approach because it clarifies the historical changes in buildings, land use, ownerships, plots boundaries, and landscape of the *Cinema-City* in the Rokku district of the Asakusa area in Tokyo. In order to measure the changes in the former Asakusa Park area, this study analyzed cadastral maps, photos, and archived documents from 1873⁶⁾ to the present. The data found were

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classified and organized to show evidences of three major changes that occurred in the area of study, the Rokku district. The authors recorded changes concerning 1) land use, 2) ownerships and 3) plots size using original cadastral maps edited by the local authorities in the following years: 1924 (Taisho 12), 1931 (Showa 5), 1965 (Showa 40), 1978 (Showa 53), 2007 (Heisei 19) and, 2008 (Heisei 20). All the maps are represented in 1:600 scale. The still existing cadastral maps show both land partitions, and plots numbers⁷⁾ from soon after the Great Kanto's earthquake (1923) to the present. The authors recorded and analyzed changes and transitions shown in the maps mentioned above.

The authors selected three cadastral maps -1924 (Taisho 12), 1965 (Showa 40), 2008 (Heisei 20) - to be used as a basis for redrawing new maps of the area of study. The data in the maps were connected with the only three existing land registry lists of past and present data by which the authors studied all the changes in the process concerning land use, ownerships, and plot sizes. The authors filled three new lists (Table. 2, 3, and 4) with data extracted from historical documents collected from the Tokyo Metropolitan Archive and the Taito Ward Lands Register, among others.

The authors also screened eight historical maps of the following years: 1657, 1673, 1779, 1859, 1876, 1886-88, 1892, and 1895 and residential maps published in 1962, 1966, 1980, 1986, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 2000, 2003, and 2007. Among the historical maps, the most relevant is the one published in 1886-88's (Meiji 18-20)⁸⁾, because it shows the Asakusa Park first partitions. The authors also screened the Fire Insurance Maps of the following years: 1949, 1950s, and 1958⁹⁾. These maps were used to find exact location of the cinemas, because they had to be listed as a special building category and registered and insured against fire.

One more book used to locate the cinemas was *Asakusa Rokku*¹⁰⁾, edited by the Taito Ward Education Commission. This book presented a collection of Asakusa maps from the following years: 1873, 1884, 1885, 1890, 1906, 1908, 1911, 1917, 1922, 1925, 1931, 1942, 1945, 1956, 1965, 1975, and 1987. The authors used maps from the years 1884, 1925, 1945, and 1956 of this book and residential maps from the years 1987 and 2007 as a basis for redrawing maps showing how the cinemas were positioned inside the area of study (See Fig. 4).

The authors have examined photo books related to the modern history of Tokyo to better understand the cultural atmosphere related to cinemas, spectators and modern lifestyle. Then, they have focused on books covering Asakusa's *Cinema-City*¹¹⁾. Among the photos screened by the authors, the ones from the library archive of the "*Longlife Learning Center of Asakusa*" are considered of historically valuable for their originality, and because many of them have not yet been published.

4. ASAKUSA HISTORICAL CHANGES AS A "CINEMA-CITY"

4.1 DAWN OF ASAKUSA

Sensou-ji origins are to be found as far back as to the seventh century, 645 A.D. when Asakusa was still an unnamed village on a cove of Edo Bay¹²⁾. Its genesis can be traced to the local worship of a statue of the goddess Kannon, which had been caught in a fisherman's net. After the Great Meireki Fire in 1657, the shogunal government moved one of Edo's pleasure quarters to the fields of Asakusa, which was still on the periphery of the city. These fields were called *Hiyokechi*, swamp lands used as open space for fire protection. From that time on,

Asakusa attracted an increasing number of customers to what was becoming known as an entertainment center¹³⁾.

In 1842, also Edo's theater districts were also moved to the city's periphery, to a place called Saruwaka-chou. It was surrounded by the Sensou-ji Temple on one side and water on the other. In 1873, the city of Tokyo and the Grand Council of State proclaimed Sensou-ji's precincts to be "park areas" (Yuen)¹⁴⁾. In such places, under the pretext of worship, Edo citizens enjoyed all the modern amenities presented in as entertainment and this area became known as a form of escapism from the daily constraints of their institutionalized communities and lives.

4.2 MEIJI PERIOD 1868-1911

In 1873 (Meiji 6), the precincts of Sensouji Temple were designated as a modern-style public park and named "*Asakusa Kouen*". In 1884, the park was divided into seven sections. Sensouji Temple was the first section (Ikku); Nakamise Street -the shopping arcade leading to the temple- constituted the second (Niku); the area with the pond next to the Denpou-in Temple area was designated the third (Sanku); Hyoutan Pond constituted the fourth (Yonku); the Hanayashiki amusement park was in the fifth (Goku); and the land to the southwest was designated as the sixth district (Rokku). The seventh district (Nanaku) was a residential area set apart from the previous six because it was used for housing.

As the modern Meiji state developed in the years leading to the beginning of the Pacific War, mainly the Asakusa's Rokku district was destined to become the most popular among all the entertainment districts at that time existing in Tokyo. In Asakusa one could find a huge variety of shows and entertainments among them there were: the Hanayashiki amusement park¹⁵⁾, the twelve-story tower Ryounkaku¹⁶⁾, the Panorama-kan¹⁷⁾, and the aquarium. All of these entertainment contrivances were considered to be "modern" because all of them made use of the most advanced mechanical inventions and were electrified. In a word, they embodied the spirit of the modern times and took part in the cultural trends of the time. Indeed, Asakusa was a place that was known for both the modernity of new entertainment features and traditional amusements.

In the spatial definition of Asakusa Park, the Hyoutan pond area played a determinant role. As photographs¹⁸⁾ of that period make clear (Fig.1), the image of the Asakusa's entertainment district was closely tied to the atmosphere created by the pond and its surroundings. The main approach to Rokku was a great avenue named *Kappabashi Dori*, which was an important artery of the city, running in a straight, east-west line between the temples of Kannon-ji in Ueno and Sensou-ji in Asakusa. At the southwest corner of Hyoutan pond (today's plot number 94-2, see Fig.7), the avenue arrives to a nether point, where it split into two main directions, forming a triangular corner that harkened back to its origins in the angled-corner technique used in the baroque architectural style¹⁹⁾.

In 1903, in the Rokku district, the opening of the first Japanese permanent cinema, called the *Denkikan*, which means the Electric Hall, anticipated the opening of many other cinemas in the same area. Towards the end of the Meiji period, the entertainment area of the fourth and sixth districts changed into an urban space that stood out for its modern atmosphere, and just after the first cinema opened, the *Cinema-City* spontaneously came to life, which was in perfect tune with the Meiji Restoration proclamations about enlightenment, progress and openness to new things.

Fig.1 View of Hyoutan pond and the Rokku district, Taisho Period. Source: Expo-city, 1993.

4.3 TAISHO PERIOD 1912-1925

Cinemas became the most popular entertainment during the Taisho period and the road on which the cinemas were located was called “Rokku”.

The cinemas were built using an architectural style imported from the West, and were decorated with architectural elements such as columns, spires, domes and arched windows, which presented a lively design that has been called as Japanese neo-baroque (Fig.2). In addition, the first and second stories of the buildings were covered with waving vertical banners, pending portraits of actors, and large movies posters. All of these devices were used in the tent theaters of Edo to heighten and excite the joyous and festive atmosphere.

Spectators found themselves imbued with the spirit of a new age and surrounded by buildings radically new to them. At the same time, there was present the traditional spirit that was the quintessence of the Edo theaters floating world. An environment, with the same scale and tactile feeling of the theater districts of old Edo was developed in the modern city together with a new type of buildings. And even though the straight streets were lined with neo-baroque-style

Fig.2 Neo-Baroque style cinemas in Rokku, 1922, Taisho Period. Source: Expo-city, 1993.

buildings, because of the advertisements, they disappear almost completely, and the crowd of people felt they have entered in a new time²⁰. In the 1920 the *Cinema-City* counted the presence of 20 cinemas, out of a total of 30 in Tokyo and 67 in Japan (See Table.1), unfortunately all of them were burned in the 1923 fire that followed the Great Kanto Earthquake. This tragic event left plenty of space and empty ground for a different architectural style used in the construction of new buildings.

4.4 SHOWA PERIOD 1926-1988

Soon after the 1923's Great Kanto Earthquake, cinemas were built in modern architectural style that replaced the use of neo-baroque style. However, the habit of displaying large billboards, signs, undulating flags and colorful advertisements remained very popular and was utilized in the *Cinema-City* streets. Cinemas in that period were among the few types of buildings that expressed without reserve the spirit of a new age and of a new feeling of excited receptivity to ideas imported from the West (Fig.3). During the War World II Asakusa park and Rokku district were completely destroyed by American air raid bombings. Nothing was

Fig.3 Modern Style Buildings in Rokku, early Showa Period. Source: Expo-city, 1993.

left but ruins and rubble. In the Sensou-ji area at that time there were many homeless people who found illegal housing in the park. These disorders were due to the period of dislocation following the war, and they lead to the passage of a special law called “Sensou-ji Keidaichi Sochi²¹” in 1951, that abolished all the activities inside the park.

After the war, there was just a paradigm to be followed that prioritized every action: to reconstruct as soon as possible, and push growth as fast as possible. Sensou-ji Temple, as well, was badly damaged and in order to raise the huge sum of money that its reconstruction required, the temple magistrates had no choice but to sell the land of the fourth district that contained the Hyoutan pond. The area was first divided into two main lots. The southern lot was sold to the Koutou Rakutenchi Company, owned by Mr. Ichizo Kobayashi²². The north side of what once was Hyoutan pond became the property of The ShinSekai Company. In 1956, the Hyoutan pond was filled to provide more ground for the construction of cinemas. Asakusa entertainment district pursued this growth, and a few years after the end of the war, Rokku district hit its peak with 36 cinemas. This action produced two effects. On one hand, Rokku reached its maximum expansion in terms of construction ground. On the other the new spatial characteristics helped further the decline of Rokku as an entertainment area²³.

In the 1970s, Rokku was still a very popular place. In fact, there were still 28 cinemas there, and the *Cinema-City* was a place where people gathered in huge numbers, attracted mainly by the cinemas, but also by the amusement park called Hanayashiki, and the cabaret theaters. The *Cinema-City* was a place with a very energetic atmosphere loved both by commoners and by people looking for distraction from the constrictions of everyday life. However, a crisis was at the door, and a bad time for Asakusa cinema district was coming.

During the 1980s the general crisis that affected cinemas all over the world, hit

Japan and Rokku as well. Many cinemas closed or were turned into other business such as bowling halls, or pachinko halls. The number of cinemas in the sixth district fell to eighteen, the same figure found forty years earlier, before the beginning of the War. This event reflected the general decline the cinema entertainment industry was experiencing, and it seemed to be incapable of innovating after being damaged by the rapid spread of a media such as television.

4.5 HEISEI PERIOD 1989-TO PRESENT DAYS

During the 1990s, cinemas in the Asakusa were decimated, until there were just eight left. The previous glorious name of *Cinema-City* was changed into *Rokku Broadway*, underscoring that a radical change had occurred and that the cinemas that hitherto had defined the Rokku district were no longer important. The opening of a massive horse races betting place and many commercial malls where cinemas once stood showed that the peculiarity of the Rokku as an entertainment district had probably been lost forever. The height of buildings doubled and in some cases tripled, changing the pleasant theory of small unit buildings that had previously existed; the peculiar spatial conditions of Rokku were disappearing.

At the beginning of the third millennium, the closing of two more cinemas reduced the number of those remaining to six, and the popularity of Asakusa continued to fall inexorably. Commercial and entertainment activities were losing

their appeal and Asakusa changed its vocation from being an outstanding and popular entertainment district to being a commercial spot. Nevertheless, thanks to the presence of the very popular touristic area represented by the Sensouji temple and Nakamise Street, by the presence of many shops built in Showa style and the Shin Nakamise Arcade long nearly one kilometer, and of many food stalls Asakusa is still a very lively area. Although it is not as popular as it was during the cinemas district's heyday, the presence of crowds provides optimism that future economic investments will be made to restore Asakusa as an entertainment district. Currently, just five cinemas are still open and active: three of these are "pink cinemas", the other two show Japanese classic movies.

5. ANALYSYS OF LAND USE IN THE CINEMA-CITY AREA

5.1 CADASTRAL MAP 1923-1929 (TAISHO 12-SHOWA 5)

The first cadastral map (Fig.5) analyzed by the authors presents both the original partition of the Asakusa Park that dates back to 1873 and the partitions added in the following years. The area of study comprises the fourth (Yonku) and sixth districts (Rokku). The Yonku district was then undivided, and the Hyoutan pond not yet existed. The Rokku presents a plan with plots partitioned according to the original enumeration that counted from 1 to 12. After the Great Kanto Earthquake, the land of the plot number 10 was used to widen a street to be used for safety purpose. For this reason in the Land Registry 1929 List (Table.2) there are no records related to the plot number 10.

The plots were large in size and not subdivided into small units. At this time, the sole owner of the whole area was the Sensou-ji Temple. The Sensou-ji Temple precincts were defined by the new Act of 1873 that recognized the temple as owner but assigned the park administration to the City of Tokyo. This fact represented a revolution in the history of administration of the city public space. The park was used for public purposes, such as gatherings, and festivals and entertainment activities.

5.2 CADASTRAL MAP 1965 (SHOWA 40)

The second map (Fig.6) presents a major change in the land partitions. In fact, from 1952 to 1959, as reported in the Land Registry 1965 List (Table.3) there were many changes in the fourth district (Yonku) ownerships. The Yonku district has been partitioned into two major areas: the first covers the northern side of what once was Hyoutan pond, and the second covers the southern side of the now filled-in pond. Plot number 66 was subdivided into 47 units until 1965. The northern side was first sold to the Shinsekai Company that soon after sold its properties, and the northern side was subdivided into 37 small plots. On the other hand, the southern side was owned by the Etou Rakutenchi Company and was divided into nine small plots. With Plot 66, the land changed from being used as a park to being used as "Residential" (Building Estate). Just one plot in this area, the 66-2, had a different land use. It was registered as a "street". Although it has been used as a public space, it actually was a Sensou-ji Temple property. It ensured the passage from the Rokku area to the temple precincts. Plots number 77, 78, 93 and 95 land use statements named them as Temple Precincts. Each of these plots were owned by Sensou-ji Temple, but were split in to two smaller plots.

In 1965, August, 1st, the Asakusa district became part of Taito Ward, and, accordingly, the addresses and enumeration of the plots changed as well. The Yonku district now belongs to the newly renamed Asakusa 2 Chome. The former Rokku now partially belonged to the Asakusa 2-chome, and partially to the

Fig.4 Cinema theaters present in the Cinema-City and their changes in time. Hyoutan pond is present in the 1884, 1925, and 1945 maps, afterward it was covered, therefore it does not appear anymore. Maps were redrawn using as a basis maps from "Asakusa Rokku, Kougyou no Machi no Utsuri Kawan", Taitoku Kyouiku Iinkai, 1987, Tokyo.

Asakusa 1-chome. In more detail, the plots numbered 69, 75, 76, 77-1, 77-2, 78-1, 78-2 belong to the 1-chome and those numbered 92, 93-1, 93-2, 95-1, 95-2, 96 belong to the 2-chome. The authors examined the original 1965 Cadastral Map and found that both the old and new enumeration were reported in the same map. The authors redesigned a map that shows the old and new plots number enumeration (Fig.6).

Table.2 Land Registry 1929 List (Showa 4) Updated from 1923 map (Taisho 12)

Address in Asakusa		Land Use**	Area*** Sq.m.	Land Owner
District*	Plot N.			
Rokku	4	R(BE)	1604.10	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku	5	R(BE)	2231.20	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku	6	R(BE)	4604.40	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku	7	R(BE)	2527.70	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku	8	R(BE)	2309.70	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku	9	R(BE)	1801.00	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku	11	R(BE)	1329	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku	12	R(BE)	2020	Sensou-ji Temple
ShinHatachou	5	R(B/E)	1114.10	Sensou-ji Temple

*The Yonku district land use was "Park" and the owner was the Sensou-ji Temple.

**R(B/E)= Residential (Building Estate).

***Measures on the original land registry were reported in Tan and Tsubo.

1 Tan= 997.1 Sq.m. 1 Tsubo= 3.30 Sq.m.

Fig.5 Map designed using as a basis the original cadastral map from 1923, updated in 1929 (Original map Taisho 12, updated in Showa 5).

Table.3 Land Registry 1965 List (Showa 40) Continued on the following page.

Address in Asakusa		Land Use*	Area** Sq.m.	Land Owner
Old	New			
Yonku, 1-1	2-chome 66-1	1951 TP	17.50	Sensou-ji Temple
Yonku, 1-2	2-chome 66-2	1956 Park 1963 Road	813.19	Sensou-ji Temple
Yonku, 1-3	2-chome 66-3	1951 R(BE)	3539.1	Sensou-ji Temple
Yonku, 1-4	2-chome 66-4	1945 R(BE)	3469.8	1952 Koutou Rakutenchi
Yonku, 1-5	2-chome 66-5	1945 R(BE)	74.38	Sensou-ji Temple*
Yonku, 1-6	2-chome 66-6	1952 R(BE)	71.51	1952, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-7	2-chome 66-7	1952 R(BE)	44.71	Sensou-ji Temple
Yonku, 1-8	2-chome 66-8	1952 R(BE)	52.9	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Shikazo Abe
Yonku, 1-9	2-chome 66-9	1952 R(BE)	9.9	Sensou-ji Temple
Yonku, 1-10	2-chome 66-10	1952 R(BE)	18.97	Sensou-ji Temple
Yonku, 1-11	2-chome 66-11	1952 R(BE)	90.75	Sensou-ji Temple
Yonku, 1-12	2-chome 66-12	1952 R(BE)	6.6	Sensou-ji Temple
Yonku, 1-13	2-chome 66-13	1952 R(BE)	196.64	Sensou-ji Temple
Yonku, 1-14	2-chome 66-14	1952 R(BE)	168.3	1952, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-15	2-chome 66-15	1952 R(BE)	50.98	1953, Shinsekai Co 1959, Shikazo Abe
Yonku, 1-16	2-chome 66-16	1952 R(BE)	50.98	1953, Shinsekai Co 1959, Shikazo Abe
Yonku, 1-17	2-chome 66-17	1952 R(BE)	50.98	1953, Shinsekai Co 1959, Shikazo Abe
Yonku, 1-18	2-chome 66-18	1952 R(BE)	101.97	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1955, Matsumoto H.
Yonku, 1-20	2-chome 66-20	1952 R(BE)	59.4	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-21	2-chome 66-21	1952 R(BE)	59.4	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-22	2-chome 66-22	1952 R(BE)	59.4	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-23	2-chome 66-23	1952 R(BE)	59.4	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-24	2-chome 66-24	1952 R(BE)	59.4	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-25	2-chome 66-25	1952 R(BE)	59.4	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-26	2-chome 66-26	1952 R(BE)	70.09	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-27	2-chome 66-27	1952 R(BE)	95.83	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-28	2-chome 66-28	1952 R(BE)	59.4	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-29	2-chome 66-29	1952 R(BE)	180.24	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-30	2-chome 66-30	1952 R(BE)	517.30	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-31	2-chome 66-31	1952 R(BE)	59.4	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-32	2-chome 66-32	1952 R(BE)	59.4	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-33	2-chome 66-33	1952 R(BE)	59.4	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-34	2-chome 66-34	1952 R(BE)	153.31	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-35	2-chome 66-35	1952 R(BE)	225.85	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-36	2-chome 66-36	1952 R(BE)	59.4	1952, Soushiyo
Yonku, 1-37	2-chome 66-37	1952 R(BE)	59.4	1952, Soushiyo
Yonku, 1-38	2-chome 66-38	1952 R(BE)	59.4	1952, Soushiyo
Yonku, 1-39	2-chome 66-39	1952 R(BE)	110.81	1952, Toshio Ishiyama
Yonku, 1-40	2-chome 66-40	1952 R(BE)	66.46	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-41	2-chome 66-41	1952 R(BE)	69.3	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-42	2-chome 66-42	1952 R(BE)	59.26	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-43	2-chome 66-43	1952 R(BE)	83.55	1953, Shinsekai Co. 1959, Mitsui Co.
Yonku, 1-44	2-chome 66-44	1952 R(BE)	200.17	1952, Soushiyo Co
Yonku 1-46	2-chome 66-46	1952 R(BE)	6.6	1959, May Mitsui Co 1959, Dec Soushiyo Co

Table.3 Land Registry 1965 List (Showa 40) Continued from previous page

Address in Asakusa		Land Use*	Area** Sq.m.	Land Owner
Old	New			
Yonku 1-47	2-chome 66-47	1952 R(BE)	7.06	1959, May Mitsui Co 1959, Dec Souchiyo Co
ShinHatachou,5	1-chome 69	1929 R(BE)	1116.03	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku, 4	1-chome 75	1929 R(BE)	1604.09	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku, 5	1-chome 76	1929 R(BE)	2231.22	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku, 6-1	1-chome 77-1	1929 R(BE)	1395.26	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku, 6-2	1-chome 77-2	1929 R(BE)	3105.38	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku, 7-1	1-chome 78-1	1929 R(BE)	765.97	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku, 7-2	1-chome 78-2	1929 R(BE)	1797.95	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku, 8	2-chome 92	1929 Park 1947 TP	2309.70	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku, 9-1	2-chome 93-1	1929 Park 1947 TP	900.00	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku 9-2	2-chome 93-2	1956 TP	900.00	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku 10-2	2-chome 94-2	1929 Park 1952 TP	609.00	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku 11-1	2-chome 95-1	1929 Park 1947 TP	628.00	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku 11-2	2-chome 95-2	1956 TP	627.00	Sensou-ji Temple
Rokku 12	2-chome 96	1929 Park 1952 TP	2020.00	Sensou-ji Temple

* Land use abbreviation R(BE)=Residential(Building Estate), TP= Temple Precincts

** Measures on the original land registry were reported in Tan and Tsubo.

1Tan=997.10 Sq.m. 1 Tsubo=3.30 Sq.m

Fig.6 Map designed using as a basis the original 1965 Cadastral Map (Showa 40). The Japanese address system changed August, 1st 1965 (Showa 40). The authors designed this map following the double enumeration present on the original cadastral map. On the upper-right part of the map is reported the old enumeration, while in the remaining part of the map is reported the new enumeration.

Table.4 Land Registry 2008 List (Heisei 20)

Address in Asakusa		Land Use*	Area Sq.m.	Land Owner
District	Plot			
2-chome	66-2	Street	829.00	Sensou-ji Temple
2-chome	66-4	R(BE)	3475.93	Tokyo Rakutenchi Co.
2-chome	66-5	R(BE)	75.83	RyuSei Co.
2-chome	66-6	R(BE)	3131.21	Bussan Fudosan Co.
2-chome	66-8	R(BE)	53.05	Kintouka Co
2-chome	66-9	R(BE)	9.91	Sensou-ji Temple
2-chome	66-11	R(BE)	92.23	Sensou-ji Temple
2-chome	66-12	R(BE)	6.61	Sensou-ji Temple
2-chome	66-15	R(BE)	51.07	Kintouka Co.
2-chome	66-16	R(BE)	51.07	Kintouka Co.
2-chome	66-17	R(BE)	51.07	Kintouka Co.
2-chome	66-18	R(BE)	102.14	Heiwa Shioji Co.
2-chome	66-48	R(BE)	130.20	Tokyo Rakutenchi Co.
2-chome	66-49	R(BE)	16.20	Tokyo Rakutenchi Co.
1-chome	69	R(BE)	1116.03	Sensou-ji Temple
1-chome	75	R(BE)	1606.90	Sensou-ji Temple
1-chome	76	R(BE)	2235.14	Sensou-ji Temple
1-chome	77-1	R(BE)	1395.26	Sensou-ji Temple
1-chome	77-2	R(BE)	3105.38	Sensou-ji Temple
1-chome	78-1	R(BE)	765.97	Sensou-ji Temple
1-chome	78-2	R(BE)	1797.95	Sensou-ji Temple
2-chome	92	TP	2376.00	Sensou-ji Temple
2-chome	93-1	TP	919.00	Sensou-ji Temple
2-chome	93-2	TP	919.00	Sensou-ji Temple
2-chome	94-2	TP	624.00	Sensou-ji Temple
2-chome	95-1	TP	687.00	Sensou-ji Temple
2-chome	95-2	TP	684.00	Sensou-ji Temple
2-chome	96	TP	2049.00	Sensou-ji Temple

* Land use abbreviation R(BE)=Residential(Building Estate), TP= Temple Precincts

Fig.7 Map designed using as a basis the original 2008 Cadastral Map (Heisei 20).

5.3 CADASTRAL MAP 2008 (HEISEI 20)

The third analyzed cadastral map shows that the once very much partitioned, and fragmented northern side now belongs to just two owners. The major owner is the Bussan Fudosan Company that owns nearly 90% of the whole plot, now renamed 66-6, (See Fig.7). The Etou Rakutenchi Company (after some years re-named Tokyo Rakutenchi) is the major owner of the southern side of the land where the Hyoutan pond once existed. Concerning the land use there are no changes recorded in comparison with the previous survey.

6. LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS OF TEMPLE AREA AND THE CINEMA-CITY

6.1 LANDSCAPE AS TEMPLE AREA

Since old times, temples areas hosted not only religious functions, but a wider range of functions²⁴⁾. It was common for them to provide their sites for periodic markets and fairs. During the Edo period as well, it was not rare to have temples areas crowded with merchants and buyers, with booths and stalls full of every kind of goods. As previously noted, the Asakusa area developed into a popular entertainment district, where entertainers and merchants co-existed together with monks and pilgrims. The areas outside the temple gates was turned into a long street called *Nakamise* where on both sides there were shops selling every type of food. The area existent in front of the main gate is called *Monzen-Machi* which literally means “quarter in front of the gate,” a first transition towards the development of the whole area into an amusements quarter with tea houses, theaters and many other entertainment areas.

6.2 LANDSCAPE AS PARK AND CINEMA-CITY

The city’s need for a large green space where people can stroll, gather, rest and congregate was satisfied within the temples and shrines area²⁵⁾. In these areas people gathered for performances, festivals, and public activities in the midst of a large amount of plants and trees that made the atmosphere immensely enjoyable.

As stated above, some temple grounds were transformed into public parks in the early Meiji period. In Japan, however, even though temples and shrines fulfilled an essential role as urban open space, they were essentially private and religious spaces, and there was no tradition of public provision and maintenance of open park space in urban areas²⁶⁾.

The Tokyo city law passed in 1873 that instituted urban parks has to be considered a benchmark in the regulations concerning green space administration of the city. Asakusa Park, thanks to this new regulation, was a rich open space full of amenities. Among these was also the Hyoutan pond that with its water and refreshing atmosphere inspired a special feeling in the people, and was particularly well maintained, and preserved.

In the twentieth century, due to the rapid urban growth, the demand for urban parks grew considerably. Both temples and shrines continued to play a key role in offering green spaces to the urban population of Tokyo, though they could not quench the thirst for urban parks²⁷⁾.

Landscape characteristics in the Cinema-City are linked to three main features: the presence of the Hyoutan pond, the straight street of Rokku along which cinemas were built, and the main approach to the Cinema-City represented by the *Kappabashi Dori* avenue that ended and split into two main directions forming a triangular space dubbed as neo-baroque (See paragraphs 4.2 and 4.3). These three landscape characteristics physically intersected and merged into a space that can

be called a “pseudo-plaza²⁸⁾”. This point has to be considered the key element of this area because it defined a type of space completely new to Japan.

In order to achieve this spatial result, western design techniques were incorporated into Japanese urban context. The main characteristic of this open space was the co-existence of a spatial vibrant duality that produced a beautiful and original landscape. On one side, the green and open space in Sensouji’s precinct stretched out onto the wide Hyoutan pond with its blue water, utilizing an open perspective vista to generate a bustling feeling of liberation from space constrictions. On the other side, the space within the amusement area quite entirely blocked and defined the field of vision, producing a compact spatial compression that directed the masses toward the main street of the *Cinema-City*. This mixture gave life to both a theory of small-scale-unit temporary buildings lining along the pond water, and a theory of large buildings forming a mixed façade composed by buildings built both in Japanese and Western style.

The main street of the *Cinema-City* presented for half of its length buildings on both of its sides, and the remaining half presented on one side cinema theaters, and on the other the Hyoutan pond. These spaces, at a certain moment, compressed and jammed the traffic flow and at others dispersed it toward the articulated space of Rokku. According to Jinnai, “Such ingeniously contrasting presentations produced dramatic transformations of space²⁹⁾”. Space and people operated together and filled the entire district with vibrating energy, putting them in tune with the flickering amusement shops that surrounded the pond water, and the cinemas area.

6.3 LANDSCAPE AS CINEMA-CITY WITHOUT HYOUTAN

As stated above, after World War II, the magistrate of Sensouji Temple sacrificed part of the park and the Hyoutan pond, selling them to procure an adequate sum of money by which start to restore the heavily damaged Sensouji temple. In a poem called “Sayonara Hyoutan”, Soeda Satsuki, a Japanese poet compared the selling of the widely beloved pond and its water to the Japanese medieval custom of a daughter who sells herself to save her parents³⁰⁾. After that this change happened, the landscape characteristic of Rokku dramatically changed. In particular, the fundamental relation with the water and the open vista were lost. As the authors show in detail in Chapter 5, the plot formerly occupied by the Hyoutan pond was now divided into two parts that added ground on which to construct more buildings.

From 1956 on, the main street of Rokku presented buildings on both sides. On the one hand the constructions made it possible to have a maximum number of cinemas registered in the area, but on the other hand, a key factor, the pond, was irreparably lost. The landscape of the Cinema-City without the visual openness provided by the pond, now resembled any other street because now it lacked the particular features it once had. In terms of cultural values, this loss is hard to estimate, and it would be impossible to tell how it would look today if its original beauty and uniqueness had been preserved.

In the end, the idea of a public park instituted in 1873 during the Meiji Restoration was fractured by the new constructions where Hyoutan pond had once been. The once seamless spatiality of the Cinema-City finally changed its form. Once a complex and articulated landscape it became just a street, though a very lively one, separated not only from its former landscape aspect but from its very original spirit.

7. CONCLUSION

This paper investigates the history of the Cinema-City from its origin to the present day. The results of this study make clear the following four points.

First, The Cinema-City developed an already existing amusement area inside the Sensou-ji Temple precincts that have served for a long time as an entertainment area, and it presented the highest concentration of theaters that showed films in Japanese history. In 1920, in this area there were 20 cinemas out of 67 in Japan, in 1960 the number of cinemas hit its peak with the presence of 36 cinemas.

Second, Rokku's architectural style changed according to the trends of the time. The architecture of the Cinema-City varied thanks to the fact that cinema buildings represented the spirit of modern times. Their architecture has been a precious testimony of neo-baroque, and modern architecture in Tokyo.

Third, changes in land use, ownerships, and boundaries were carefully examined and reported. The results show that the institution of the Asakusa Park in 1873 represented a modern achievement in the division of responsibility between the public administration of Tokyo city and the Sensou-ji Temple. Until 1952, the only owner of the Asakusa park had been the Sensou-ji Temple. Then, changes are recorded in the land use, plots partitioning, ownership, addresses, and general usage of the park system. Because of the war, the Sensou-ji Temple was heavily damaged, the monks were forced to sell part of the property to pay for the temple reconstruction. Soon after private companies took possession of the area with Hyoutan pond, consequently, the land use changed as did the park grounds.

Finally, it is described why the Hyoutan pond was a key element in the landscape of the *Cinema-City*, and how its presence characterized a spatiality new to Tokyo. In the late 50s, albeit the number of cinemas peaked, when the area containing Hyoutan pond was sold, its loss dramatically affected the uniqueness of both the Asakusa park and Cinema-City's landscape features.

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Notes

- 1) High, P. : The dawn of Cinema in Japan, Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 19, No. 1, Historians and Movies: The State of the Art: Part 2, pp.23-57. 1984.1
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- 4) From now on in this study the authors will refer to Rokku as the area that covered the fourth and six districts. Rokku in Japanese language means the sixth district. Since the fourth district was entirely covered by a pond, it did not have clear boundaries, therefore formed a seamless space with Rokku that was popularly synonymous of Cinema-City.
- 5) Jinnai, H. : Tokyo, a Spatial Anthropology, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, p.108, 1995.
- 6) The year 1873 is taken as the starting point of this research, because that was the year when 5 urban parks were instituted in Tokyo, one of them was Asakusa Park.
- 7) By relating the plots number with archive ownersgips documents was possible to record the changes in land use and ownerships.

- 8) This historical map shows the partitions of the Asakusa Park and it is the first map where Hyoutan pond is recorded.
- 9) The 1950s map shows changes not of a single year, but of a decade.
- 10) Published in 1987, the full name is Asakusa Rokku, Kougyou to Machi no Utsuri Kawari, edited by the Taitoku Kyouiku Iinkai, Tokyo.
- 11) At the moment, it does not exist a comprehensive architectural story about Asakusa Cinema-City. Sparse data on it can be found in many books and studies.
- 12) Taito-ku, Tokyo, Taito-ku-shi, Tsushi-hen 1, Jyo-kan, Gihoudon, p.178, 2002.
- 13) Prof. Mitsui Wataru's study "Kinsei Cyuki Ikou ni Okeru Toshinai Jiin Keidai no Henyou", analyzed the relations between Sensou-ji Temple precincts and entertainment activities from the medieval period until the end of the Meiji restoration.
- 14) Tokyo Shiyakusho : Yuenhen, Daiyon, Rinkawa-shoten, Tokyo. p.489, 1974.
- 15) It was the first park in Japan with a roller coaster.
- 16) The first tall modern building ever built in Japan, it was also the first building equipped with an elevator.
- 17) The first permanent theater built for watching panoramic photos.
- 18) "Tokyo Expo-city" is a book about expositions and entertainment areas in Tokyo, published in 1993 as the exhibition catalog.
- 19) Jinnai, H. : "On one sharply angled corner lot the landmark Opera Hall was erected in the form of a cylinder topped by a dome. It created a baroque urban space, an attempt at visual effects". p.108
- 20) Jinnai, H. p.109
- 21) Taito Ward Reference Library, Asakusa Rokku Show History, Taitoku Shitamachi Huuzoku Shiryoukan, Tokyo. p.451, 1988.
- 22) Kobayashi served as minister, and was the founder both of the Hanshin Osaka baseball team and the Takarazuka Theater.
- 23) According to Jinnai, H. "the filling in of Hyoutan Pond, [...] must have accelerated the postwar decline of Asakusa as an entertainment center". p.111
- 24) Sorensen, A. suggests that this was because the rules of the temple magistrate were more lenient than those of the city magistrates. At any rate, the districts near temple areas frequently developed into popular entertainment districts (sakariba), which were the main centres of the development of popular culture in the Edo era. p.132
- 25) This was the place where the citizens gathered and enjoyed those actions associated in the West with urban parks.
- 26) See Sorensen, A. p. 33
- 27) See Sorensen, A. : "The western idea of the urban park never did take strong roots, and it was remotely considered as an effective planning option. Urban parks did not expand at the same rate as the urban areas they served" p.33
- 28) See Jinnai, H. : The notion of a plaza, following examples from the West, was introduced to Japan during the 1910s and took root after the 1923 earthquake. p.190
- 29) See Jinnai, H. p.92
- 30) Soeda Satsuki : TaitoWard History, Sayonara Hyoutan, Tokyo-to, Taitou-ku Education Committee Printing, p.88, 2002.

和文要約

第1章は研究背景について、1896年に日本に映画が紹介され、1902年に日本で初めて映画館が建設されて。以来、高度成長期に至る過程まで映画街が形成、発展したことを説明している。

第2章は本研究の対象について、日本における映画街の景観形成に着目し、日本で映画街が歴史上最も集中した「浅草六区」を取り上げ、研究対象地域として定めた。明治期から現代に至る浅草六区の映画街の

土地利用及び景観の変化、市街地の形成プロセスについて明らかにことを研究目的とする。

第3章は研究手法について、歴史的な地図、火災保険地図、写真を用いて建築物の立地、様式、景観の変化を調べるとともに、歴史的な土地台帳、地籍図を用いて土地利用（地目）及び土地所有者の変化及び不変化について調べる方法を示した。

第4章において、映画街の建築物の立地、様式の変化について取り上げ、4.1 江戸時代まで、4.2 明治期（1868-1911）、4.3 大正期（1912-1925）、4.4 昭和期（1926-1988）、4.5 平成期（1989-現在）、の5時期に区分して説明している。明治6年に浅草公園の指定を受けて以来、洋風化が進み、大正期にはネオ・バロック様式の洋風の町並み景観が形成され、戦後1956年までに、浅草六区はピーク期を迎え、モダンで最大の映画街が形成されたことを明らかにした。

第5章において、浅草六区の映画街の土地について調べた。地籍図及び土地台帳に基づき、土地利用（地目）の変化と土地所有者の変化について調べるため、現在東京に残されている資料から、5.1 地籍図及び土地台帳（1923）、5.2 地籍図及び土地台帳（1965）、5.3 地籍図及び土地台帳（2008）を分析した。特に、戦後の浅草寺の再建の目的で、境内の一部であった「ひょうたん池」の土地（浅草四区の一部）を売却し、浅草六区の映画街に編入、映画街が拡大した経緯を明らかにした。現在まで、売却された土地はこの「ひょうたん池」の部分（現在の住所で浅草1丁目66）の2つの街区のみで、その他の映画街、商業施設の土地の所有は、浅草寺のまま（地目は宅地または境内地）であることもわかった。

第6章において、映画街の景観の変化について、6.1 江戸時代の浅草寺境内としての景観、6.2 浅草公園（遊園）指定を受けた公園の景観と映画街の景観の両方の特徴の共存について、6.3 戦後浅草寺の再建のために、「ひょうたん池」を売却後に埋め立てられ、映画街の拡張として市街化した景観と空間について、それぞれ解説している。

特に、戦後に街路型の映画街が拡大形成される以前、「ひょうたん池」と洋風の映画街が形成されていた頃の景観は、オープンな公園の空間が美しかったこと、隣接した映画街の閉じた屋外空間も、西洋の広場のように賑わいの景観を形成していたことを解説している。さらに、戦後のひょうたん池を埋め立てて、映画街を拡張することで公園としての景観を失い、街路型の閉じた空間のみとなったこと、景観の特徴の変化を解説している。

第7章で結論として、第一に、日本の最大の映画街であった浅草六区は、浅草寺の所有する境内の歓楽街を基に形成したものであったこと、先進的な建築技術である洋風近代的な建築様式を導入してまちづくりがなされたことを明らかにした。第二に、映画街のピーク期は、ホールの数から見て1960年時点で36あったことを明らかにした。第三に、土地について、1873年から浅草公園として東京市の制限を受けながらも浅草寺が土地の所有を続け、1952年に公園指定を解除、戦災を受けた浅草寺を再建する目的で、境内の一部である「ひょうたん池」の土地が売却された過程を明らかにした。第四に、「ひょうたん池」を売却後、埋め立てによって、美しかった映画街の水辺景観は、街路型の映画街の町並みへと様変わりしたことを明らかにした。

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