New trends of conservation in Japanese historic town centers

2018.4.14
CIVVIH Asia-Pacific sub-committee, Beijing
FUKUKAWA Yuichi (Japan ICOMOS)
Introduction (1)

The limit of our conventional system

- In Japan, this year, some pioneering cities celebrated the 50th anniversary of conservation of the historical district.
- The basis of our system is to decide preservation districts and combine regulations and support within that area.
- However in order for historic conservation to truly take root in the society, it is essential that market value is formed in historic buildings.
- In Kyoto there remains forty thousand historic town houses, but they are not able to save in this way.
Introduction (2)

*New trends of conservation in Japanese historic town centers*

- Recently, in Japan, movement to raise the market value of historic buildings has finally become general.
- Today, I will report the new trends of conservation in Japanese historic town centers.
KURASHIKI Declaration, 2013
Recognition to the importance of enhancing the marketability of historical buildings was shown

At the Annual Conference of Japanese Association for MACHI-NAMI Conservation and Regeneration

The importance of multifaceted viewpoints such as real estate, distribution, fund procurement was pointed out to preserve the townscape, and new activity targets were confirmed.
KURASHIKI Machiya Trust
Specified Nonprofit Corporation with mission to utilize vacant traditional houses

• The local civic society organizing the meeting is the "Kurashiki Machiya Trust". The major mission is to revive and utilize the town house which became a vacant house.
• The right is a newspaper article reporting that the building which this group first worked was completed.
• This is a town house on the slope. The group negotiates with the landlord, borrows the building, collects funds, repairs it, and uses it as an accommodation facility.

Machiya=traditional town house (shop house)
machi=town, ya=house
an antonym of Noka (No=farmer, ka=house)
A Special Article of Nikkei
Ranking of accommodation facilities utilizing traditional houses.

• Facilities that can lend a single house and stay.

• The business that provides accommodation of this type is the first time that Alex Kerr started in Kyoto, an American living in Japan around 2003.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Facility Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>KYOTO STAY</td>
<td>嵐山</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>嵐山</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.36</td>
<td>嵐山</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>鏡音</td>
<td>嵐山</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>米子</td>
<td>嵐山</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>小倉</td>
<td>嵐山</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Special Article of Nikkei

Ranking of accommodation facilities utilizing traditional houses.
Recent Development of the Central and Local Governments Policy

2010: Cool Japan Policy
2011: Ordinance concerning preservation and utilization of historical building in Kyoto
2013: Utilization of historical buildings was taken up as one of the regulatory reform items to be considered in the National Strategy Special Zone
2014: Local Abenomix
2016: "Tourism development making full use of historical resources" is a feature of tourism policy
2017: Ordinance on conservation and succession of Kyo-machiya
2017: Residential accommodation business law
Kyoto's specialty and advancedness

There are 50,000 traditional town houses in Kyoto (currently reduced to 40,000), and citizen's organized preservation activities are flourishing. The following four organizations have networked up to today.

- **Kyo-machiya Revitalization Study Group (1992)**
- **Kyo-machiya Sakuji Group:**
  Group of experts such as architects, carpenters, plaster, construction companies
- **Kyo-machiya Tomonokai (1999):**
  Friends of Kyo-machiya, aiming to inherit the living of the Kyo-machiya and cultures, centering on people who actually live in town houses
- **Kyo-machiya Information Center (2002):**
  Make a bridge between people who want to live in Kyo-machiya and those who would like to lend. Established in collaboration with local real estate agents

**Kyoto has many traditional town houses, which are orders of magnitude**

Kyo-machiya=traditional town house (shop house) of Kyoto
Recent Development of the Central and Local Governments Policy

2010: Cool Japan Policy

2011: Ordinance concerning preservation and utilization of historical building in Kyoto

2013: Utilization of historical buildings was taken up as one of the regulatory reform items to be considered in the National Strategy Special Zone

2014: Local Abenomix

2016: "Tourism development making full use of historical resources" is a feature of tourism policy

2017: Ordinance on conservation and succession of Kyo-machiya

2017: Residential accommodation business law
Ordinance concerning preservation and utilization of historical building in Kyoto (1/4)

opened up a breakthrough in the series of actions

- This ordinance has opened up a breakthrough in the series of actions we have seen so far.
- Historical buildings, especially traditional wooden town houses, do not comply with the current Building Standards Act. Particularly problematic are two points;
  1) fire performance
  2) seismic performance.
- This ordinance paved the way not to apply these provisions of the Building Standards Law under some conditions.
Two reasons why such measures are necessary

1. With regard to the Building Standard Law, it has been possible to exclude applications within the conservation area. However, even in Kyoto, the area is only a small part of the city.

2. You can survive them as an existing disqualified building. However, when doing large-scale renovation or changing the use etc., confirmation of the Building Standards Law is required. In other words, at present, utilization of traditional town houses will not proceed.
Ordinance concerning preservation and utilization of historical building in Kyoto (3/4)

"Preservation & Utilization Plan" is required

- The ordinance obliges the building owners to prepare the "preservation & utilization plan"

- The contents to be prescribed in the plan are as follows:
  1. Survey on the current situation of buildings:
     Clearing degradation situation, seismic diagnosis, listing up parts and items not compliant with Building Standards Law etc.
  2. Plan to keep using while saving contents of expansion and use change:
     Improvement of safety against earthquake
     Improvement of fire safety
  3. Plan for maintenance
In order to operate this new system, Kyoto City developed manuals on designers' guidelines and manuals on how to calculate the structures based on the results of experiments.

Thus, the ordinance was constructed as a complete system. However, creating a preservation plan is a high hurdle for general building owners even if they gain expert assistance.

It is said that only 500 town houses can meet the standards of this ordinance. In fact at the moment there are only a few application cases.
Recent Development of the Central and Local Governments Policy

2010: Cool Japan Policy

2011: Ordinance concerning preservation and utilization of historical building in Kyoto

2013: **Utilization of historical buildings was taken up as one of the regulatory reform items to be considered in the National Strategy Special Zone**

2014: Local Abenomix

2016: "Tourism development making full use of historical resources" is a feature of tourism policy

2017: Ordinance on conservation and succession of Kyo-machiya

2017: Residential accommodation business law
Utilization of historical buildings was taken up as one of the regulatory reform items to be considered (1/3)

- In October 2013, the Government's National Strategy Special Zone Working Group decided six items as "Regulatory Reform Matters to be Considered", one of which took up "utilization of historic buildings".
- The basic goal is to revitalize the economy and therefore to reform the regulation that becomes obstacles when utilizing historic buildings as accommodation facilities. There, the Building Standard Law and the Ryokan Industry Law became the main targets.
- One town house rental violated the Hotel Business Act that accommodation facilities had to have a reception desk in front.

Machiya Stay operated by IORI company
Utilization of historical buildings was taken up as one of the regulatory reform items to be considered (2/3)

• The Results:
• Building Standard Law:
  The government decided that "relaxation of Building Standard Law is not on special zones but on a nationwide scale." In this way, it became possible to develop the ordinance of Kyoto into a more universal one.
• Hotel Business Law:
  Airbnb has already been adopted as a problem of the hotel business law, and it has been dealt with as a wider issue.

Machiya Stay operated by IORI company
Utilization of historical buildings was taken up as one of the regulatory reform items to be considered (2/3)

- The Results:
  - Building Standard Law:
    The government decided that "relaxation of Building Standard Law is not on special zones but on a nationwide scale." In this way, it became possible to develop the ordinance of Kyoto into a more universal one.
  - Hotel Business Law:
    Airbnb has already been adopted as a problem of the hotel business law, and it has been dealt with as a wider issue.

- Regarding the Building Standard Law, the direction was shown that it is not necessary to create a preservation utilization plan for each building.

- In response to this, some local governments began to establish ordinances similar to Kyoto. Currently nine municipalities ordinance is made, work on implementation is continued. However, there are aspects that greatly change the system of Building Standards Law so far, the road is steep.
Recent Development of the Central and Local Governments Policy

2010: Cool Japan Policy
2011: Ordinance concerning preservation and utilization of historical building in Kyoto
2013: Utilization of historical buildings was taken up as one of the regulatory reform items to be considered in the National Strategy Special Zone
2014: Local Abenomix

**2016: Tourism Agency set the goal of developing 200 tourist bases centered on cultural assets nationwide**

2017: Ordinance on conservation and succession of Kyo-machiya
2017: Residential accommodation business law
Tourism Agency set the goal of developing 200 tourist bases centered on cultural assets nationwide (1/4)

- Certainly, the tourism-oriented policy, which has been strongly promoted by the government, has been doing something reasonable.
- In Tsumago which celebrated the 50th anniversary of historic conservation, tourists coming over the pass from the neighboring Magome are increasing drastically. Tourists from abroad occupy a considerable part of it.
- In Tsumago, there are only an old-fashioned rustic inns, and it is interesting that tourists do not necessarily ask for accommodation with well-equipped facilities.
Tourism Agency set the goal of developing 200 tourist bases centered on cultural assets nationwide (2/4)

- The model is a project under the slogan "to the entire castle town as hotel" in the conservation district of Sasayama city, Hyogo prefecture.
- In this project, they use five traditional town houses scattered in the district as accommodation facilities. It is exactly what the Japanese version of Italian Albergo Difuso should say,
Tourism Agency set the goal of developing 200 tourist bases centered on cultural assets nationwide (3/4)

- One of the achievements of this mechanism. It was just opened in March this year in the attempt of Albergo Diffuso which began in Sawara district, Katori city, Chiba prefecture.
- This is the official guide distributed at the opening.
A Rule Book of MEIRIN community
Against the negative impact of excessive marketing of town houses

• While the utilization of the town house is expected, the adverse effect also became noticeable. Especially in Kyoto where the construction of hotels and diversion to housing accommodation are popular, noise, garbage disposal, infringement of privacy etc are problems.

• In response to such a situation, residents of Ming-dong area where 3,000 people live together compiled a rule book. The rule book decides the rules of design and daily life and seeks appropriate management of accommodation facilities.
Recent Development of the Central and Local Governments Policy

2010: Cool Japan Policy
2011: Ordinance concerning preservation and utilization of historical building in Kyoto
2013: Utilization of historical buildings was taken up as one of the regulatory reform items to be considered in the National Strategy Special Zone
2014: Local Abenomix
2016: "Tourism development making full use of historical resources" is a feature of tourism policy

2017: Ordinance on conservation and succession of Kyo-machiya
2017: Residential accommodation business law
2017: New Ordinance of Kyoto

Civil action group proposed

- Name: Ordinance on Preservation and Succession of the Kyo-machiya

- This ordinance was born in the proposal of the above-mentioned citizen groups working on preservation activities of Kyo-machiya.

- They made recommendations based on the experiences of working on distribution of town houses with the Real Estate Brokerage Association of Kyoto Prefecture.
The background is the rapid decline of Kyo-machiya.

The brochure introducing this ordinance says:

According to the survey of 2016, the remaining number of Kyo-machiya is about 40,000, about 5,600 have been lost from the previous survey of 2008-09.

The proportion occupied by vacant householders is 14.55%, which is 4% higher than the previous survey.

It is demolished in 800 units a year, 2 units per day.

The brochure expresses this situation as "a serious crisis in Kyoto."
2017: New Ordinance of Kyoto

The ordinance set the following procedure for such a situation.
2017: New Ordinance of Kyoto

The ordinance set the following procedure for such a situation:

1) Kyo-machiya owner should notify Kyoto city as soon as possible when trying to destroy Kyo-machiya,

2) Demolition is prohibited for one year after notification.

3) During this time, Kyoto City will provide necessary assistance to preserve and inherit the Kyo-machiya. Such as, providing information on the support system, proposing how to utilize in cooperation with business operators, matching with applicants who want to use it.
As we have seen, the situation surrounding historical districts and buildings in Japan seems to be changing drastically.

The basic background is that the number of people who want to live in historic buildings and districts, want to run business there, and want to stay there has increased. In particular, young people who want to open stores tend to prefer buildings older than new buildings.

In addition, we can find the following changes in economy and society in Japan:

- Declining population: increase of vacant houses, decline of rural economies
- Transformation of industrial structure: from industrial society model to creative town model (Lifestyle Industrial Revolution)
- From flow to stock: renovation from new construction
Case of YANESEN in Tokyo (1/5)

A grassroots example representing the new movement

- YANESEN is an area spreading north of Ueno Park where museums and other cultural facilities concentrate.
- Escaping the air raid of World War II, the buildings and communities from before W WII remain.
- Ueno Park has Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and is a characteristic district where many artists have studio.
Case of YANESEN in Tokyo (2/5)

* A grassroots example representing the new movement

- In this area, a group of graduates of the university has been running community development for about 40 years.
- Initially, it was working on a community activity such as an art event, which was completely an annual event.
- For the past ten years, it has been doing business to utilize empty houses and stores.
Case of YANESEN in Tokyo (3/5)

The group reopened a closed cafe

- This is one of the cases. The group reopened a coffee shop where the shopkeeper became elderly and closed. The group borrows stores from the owner, raises funds, renews interior decoration and facilities, and continues to operate cafe.
Case of YANESEN in Tokyo (4/5)

Another example

- Three houses built by TSUKAKOSHI family in 1938.
- Opened as a complex facility where natural yeast's beer hall, handmade bread bakery, shops with salt and olive oil and vintage apparel shop, office of contemporary art, architect's residence gather together.
Case of YANESEN in Tokyo (5/5)

*Just opened the other day*

- A townhouse built in Taisho in 1996 and where a tin house was run for generations.
- The group borrowed the building, repaired, lent it as a research laboratory of Daimaru Matsuzakaya department store.
- A case in which such community based developer revitalize local economy utilizing historic buildings has started in Japan in Nagahama, Shiga prefecture 40 years ago and continues today. However, it has been in the last few years that it has come to be more common.
My Experience in Quanzhou, China

The movement not only preserves the historical environment but also encourages people's exchanges and definitely contributes to world peace.

Last September, I stayed at a accommodation facility that utilized vacant houses within the city wall of Quanzhou.

It was that young people borrowed vacant houses, renovated themselves and provided them as accommodation facilities. It is not high-class, but very beautiful and comfortable space was made.

I noticed that the same movement to utilize empty houses in historic areas is being practiced both in Japan and China.