

〔論文〕

Characteristics of ‘Shopping Districts’ from the Perspective of Pre-war and Wartime Shopping District Organizations (part 2)

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Abstract

The second section will raise some examples of positive business activities by the shopping districts' merchants association. This will confirm that these are not exceptions to the policy, but have central status as the major form of the merchants association. Furthermore, it will confirm how retail businesses and shopping districts have transformed under wartime regulation, and clarify the orientation found by the shopping district. There was not simply an economic identity by way of goods distribution, but a identity as a regional organization. This study notes the relationship between the *raison d'être* of a shopping district and local regions during such extreme conditions of a war as being the basis for the current relationship between shopping districts and community building.

Keyword: Shopping districts, machidukuri (community building), merchants association, shopping district activities

戦前一戦中期の商店街組織からみる「商店街」の特性（その2）

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要 旨

本研究の後編では、商店街商業組合として積極的な事業活動の代表例をとりあげる。ここでは、もはや政策対象の例外ではなく、商業組合の主要形態として中心的な位置づけであることが確認される。さらに戦時期の統制下において、小売業や商店街がどのように変質したのかを確認し、そのうえで商店街が見出した自らの方向性について明らかにした。それは単に物資を配給するという経済的な存在ではなく、地域組織としての存在であった。本稿では、戦争というある種の極限状況下において、商店街がその存在意義を地域との関係性で見出したことに、現在の商店街とまちづくりの関係の根拠があることを指摘する。

キーワード：商店街，まちづくり，商業組合，商店街活動

Summary of First Section

The first section described how the status of shopping districts changed in terms of policy. Next, it discussed the business activities in the aforementioned shopping districts that were established by the Merchants Association Law, in order to find the factors that became the main policy issues in the rebirth of shopping districts. It confirmed that not only were business activities being conducted proactively on the local level, but that the necessity of unionization was recognized.

3.2 Shopping Districts' Merchants Association's Initiative and their Establishment

As described before, the shopping districts' merchants association regards drawing customers to be the essence of joint enterprises. Taniguchi (1937a) indicates that the shopping districts' merchants association has a broader range of projects that can expand through it than industry associations, and that they can be more multivariate depending on the situation in the region and association. He then divides them into four major groups: "projects that passively contribute to economic regrowth by reducing retail stores' expenses and lowering costs", "projects that actively contribute to economic growth by attracting customers and increasing proceeds of retail stores", "projects that reduce burdens and conduct streamline management by strengthening retail stores' financial power", and "projects that indirectly contribute to economic regrowth while implementing national policies, by becoming an educational institution for managers and employees" (p. 17). The second category of project is the most essential in the shopping districts' merchants association, and its "core is the organic beautification and advertising service of the shopping district" (Iwasaki, 1937, p. 40). So what kinds of initiatives were actually deployed in the shopping districts' merchants association? Let us look at a number of cases.

Omatsu Street Shopping District Merchants Association – Proactive Deployment of Advertising Department, Out-of-Store Sales Department, and Retail Market Management

This section will describe the initiative of the Omatsu Street Shopping District Merchants

Association in Nagoya. This shopping district was unionized in December 1933 from its earlier growth association (voluntary organization), and was leading among the shopping district merchants associations around the country. This association's implemented projects are as follows. There is a broad range, including dispatching inspectors, research studies, lecture meetings, joint advertisements and sales, management of retail market, out-of-store sales departments, street light installation, irrigation, and savings (Aichi Prefecture Hall of Commerce, 1938). We will discuss the contents of the joint advertisements, out-of-store sales department, and retail market management, as characteristic projects of this association.

If attracting customers is the most essential project of the shopping district's merchants association, then the importance of joint advertisements is clear. This is the same in any association, and the association established an advertising division to place special focus on it (Matsuura, 1936; Inagawa, 1936a, I). The advertising department formed weekly Chindon teams, pedestrian teams, and automobile teams, and distributed thousands of flyers. The joint advertisement itself was performed in other shopping districts, and was not particularly rare. However, it was so strict in the Omatsu Street Shopping District that any absences in the weekly flyer distribution came with a 20-sen penalty. This shows how much effort was put into the joint advertising project.

Next is the out-of-store sales department. This was a project that began in 1936 (Merchants Association Central Association, 1936; Inagawa, 1939). They initially regarded it as follows: "The out-of-store sales department the most important joint enterprise in our association's business plan", and "Its purpose is to plan for expansion of our sales channels and enhance the sales efficiency of all association members" (Inagawa, 1939, p. 249). Specifically, it was developed via a "joint roundsman" and a "joint passbook". First, the "joint roundsman" involved association members entrusting a specialist runner from the association office with the sale of their products, and their range covered the entire city of Nagoya. They would also distribute what we would now call a catalog, called the "out-of-store sales department's business bulletin", to every house, and have the runner perform travelling sales (Aichi Prefecture Hall of Commerce, 1938). The commission of sales was seven percent of the product's price, five which would go to the runner, and two to the association office.

Also, to better facilitate this project, a "joint passbook" was implemented simultaneously. The joint passbook was distributed to all consumers, and could be used at all member stores in the association. The joint passbook brought the consumers convenience, in not needing cash to do their shopping. Also, shopping district affiliates explained at a merchants' discussion meeting that developing this project increased the enrollment of association non-members (Merchants Association Central Association, 1936).

Lastly, the most characteristic project of this association is the management of the retail market by the association (Matsuura, 1936; Inagawa, 1936a, I; Aichi Prefecture Hall of Commerce, 1938). They set up a space in the corner of the shopping district and managed it as the "Omatsu Co-Prosperity

Market”. Opening a store the retail market was limited to association members, and membership was required for any store openers from outside. A store usage fee was paid to the association. Also, having a retail market allowed them to completely control not only the industry of store openers, but also the marketing methods, prices, and quality of products. Since retail markets were among the competitors of small-to-medium retail stores, along with department stores and industrial associations, this association proactively attempted to solve this problem by managing the retail market themselves.

Ningyo-Cho Shopping District Merchants Association – Organizational Reinforcement by Forming a Merchants Association

As stated earlier, the Ningyo-Cho Shopping district Merchants Association was founded in November 1936, based on the Shosei Kai. This association had proactively approached projects through a variety of services since their Shosei Kai days. They developed their joint ventures more actively after the association was established, and forming an association streamlined and reinforced them as an organization (Commerce Association Central Treasury Research Division, 1940).

82 of the 94 qualified businesses joined the association, but in fact the association accepted other businesses located within the shopping district without membership qualification, such as financial institutions and movie theaters, as cooperators.¹⁾ “A cooperator is a person who conducts business within the association’s region, or who possesses the title or custodial right to land, establishments, tenements or other facilities within the region, and whom the association can levy allocations on their profits similar to members, in cases where they provide common facilities for the shopping district” (*Ibid.*, p. 49”. In other words, cooperators are regional proprietors without membership qualification, but who can express their opinion and plan for the development of the shopping district region as a whole. The aforementioned cooperator system clearly shows how the establishment of an association reinforced the shopping district as an organization, compared to the patched-together store association days.

Not only that, but projects that were only made possible by a merchants association were also proactively developed. Over an approximately two-year period following the association’s establishment, they conducted a continuous hardware streamlining to attract customers. These operations will be listed below. They were installing a news exhibition stand (268 yen, 39% from Tokyo Prefecture), automatic traffic signals (1,500 yen, 30% from Metropolitan Police Department, 25% from Tokyo City), common shade facilities (2,126 yen, 45% from Tokyo Prefecture), lamp shade devices (750 yen), and replanting boulevard trees (1470 yen, 50% from Tokyo Prefecture).

These hardware projects were conducted continuously for approximately two years since the association was formed. The total cost of this project was about 6,000 yen, and about 40% of it was provided from public funding from the Tokyo Prefecture or City. It could be said that such a proactive

project was only implemented because of the funding, but the fact that they received this funding was because as a merchants association, they were a public organization, rather than a store association based on get-togethers. But on the other hand, about 60% of the burden fell on them, which was “the result of the common mentality of the members cultivated from the Shosei Kai days being actively concretized” (*Ibid.*, p. 51). In other words, forming an association reinforced their ability to implement projects to completion compared to the store association institution, but this was based on their previous store association of the Shosei Kai. And thus, “the old Ningyo-Cho [became] so unrecognizably fresh in two years” (*Ibid.*).

Kami-Fukushima Shoten Street & Joshobashi Street Shopping District Merchants Association – Dual Effect of Uniform Remodeling of Rooftop Signs

This association was formed in October 1934, at an early stage prior to the status of shopping districts in terms of policy being specified. Also, it was representative as a shopping district's merchants association in Osaka at the time, along with the Juso Shoten Street Shopping District Merchants Association. The association chairman Kinjiro Nakamura was a person who made many important statements about the shopping district's merchants association in the business journal “Merchants Association”, and vigorously appealed to the necessity of shopping districts forming merchants associations. Therefore, it is easy to imagine that this shopping district actively engaged in business expansion. Below, I will describe the most characteristic project among the many developed by this association, which was the uniform remodeling of the rooftop signs (Inagawa, 1936a, II; Matsuura, 1936).

Prior to the establishment of an association, the shop signs in each shopping district were unregulated, some having vertical text and others having horizontal text. This greatly detracted from the aesthetics of the district. In response to this, they thought that “it is necessary to give the impression that this is our shopping district”, and that “we must first plan for a uniform presentation”, and engaged in unionization of the signs (Nakamura, 1938, p. 74). This was done in the wake of most of the signs being damaged by the Muroto Typhoon, which hit one month before the association was established. This project was also funded by a government subsidy of 4,844 yen. Also, this uniformity of signs not only “reinforced the external presentation of the shopping district”, but also “reinforced the internal sense of unity” (Inagawa, 1936a, II, p. 84). In other words, this brought about both internal and external effects for the association. Because of this, they evaluated it by saying “the uniformity of signboards had an unexpected effect” (Matsuura, 1936, p. 207). It was rare for shopping districts of the time to engage in such projects, and it is noteworthy for this association to focus on the beautification of their shopping district.²⁾

We have presented some cases of representative shopping districts' merchants associations,

and it is clear that all of them proactively expanded their businesses as associations. It is true that the cases presented in this manuscript are not enough to say that all shopping districts' merchants associations succeeded in proactively expanding business. There were still many shopping districts who could not establish a merchants association, or who could not effectively develop their association operations even if they did establish them (Kobe Economic Affairs Bureau, 1942). However, it is true that progressive shopping districts took proactive initiatives. This "at the very least resolves the traditional pessimism of shopping district associations based on the facts, upon scrutiny of the situation" (Inagawa, 1936a, II, p. 88). Also, the shopping districts' merchants associations "left no room for debate about whether this should be greatly encouraged as a promotion policy for retail store renewal" (Inagawa, 1936a, II, p. 88).

In this way, the proactive activity of shopping districts on the local level generated awareness in the government of the effectiveness of forming associations, as a retail renewal policy. The fact that the shopping districts were able to develop such proactive activities is because they were based on the voluntary organizations of store associations and development associations, which existed before the merchants association. These existed before the government recognized the shopping districts in terms of policy. In other words, the local-level initiatives taken to solve problems of small-to-medium retail stores, as units of shopping districts, had already existed before the merchants association was formulated as a renewal policy.

Therefore, the fact that the government gave shopping districts, which were not envisioned by the Merchants Association Law, status as the main format of the merchants association, resulted from the influence of local trends. In other words, the movements were generated on the local level. This is connected to the contents of the third and fourth general assembly of the Retail Improvement Investigative Committee. Furthermore, this brought about a revision of the law. This shows that the shopping districts' merchants associations were established and promoted by the mutual effects of local initiatives and governmental response.

4 Streamlining of Rationing System in the Distribution and Shopping Districts of Wartime Regime

4.1 Shopping Districts' Merchants Association Initiatives after the Incident

The shopping districts' merchants associations were established and promoted by the mutual effects of proactive local initiatives and policy. Since they were resolutions to small-to-medium business issues, they were centered on economic projects such as drawing customers. In this sense, associations were an economic group. But their nature changed after the Manchurian Incident in July 1937. As the Japanese economy entered a wartime system after the Incident, the effects extended to business (Tada, 1942). Naturally, this had a major effect on the initiatives of the shopping districts'

merchants associations. The contents of these changes will be explained below.

Musashi-Koyama Shopping District Merchants Association – Unification of neighborhood associations and establishment of youth schools

This shopping district was located in present-day Shinagawa Ward, and established a merchants association in March 1937 (Commerce Association Central Treasury Research Division, 1940). It was founded in the period where the formation of associations by shopping districts was being promoted in policy terms, as explained in the previous section. Therefore, this shopping district formed an association because “the formation of shopping districts’ merchants association was actively encouraged in Tokyo Prefecture, and they had adopted policies to promote the development of their association projects through issuing financial aid such as subsidies and grants” (*Ibid.*, p. 56).

The region where the association was located was a suburb at the time, and the density of the population in the region was increasing as a new residential area. Furthermore, the region was being formed through infrastructure maintenance. This meant that the region was flooded with neighborhood associations. For that reason, “each group conducted their projects individually, and the beautification of streets and lighting fixtures became cluttered, and there was sufficient risk that this would be unsuited for drawing customers” (*Ibid.*) and as such they sought to unify the neighborhood associations under the association, and take over these projects. The association and the neighborhood associations “exchanged rather serious debates, and aggravated in no time to the extent that there could have been a bloodbath” (*Ibid.*, p. 57), but they managed to unite by September of that year, and most of the officials held the status of association members. In this way, the association was able to engage in neighborhood association projects by extension, such as ceremonial occasions, New Year’s decorations, and sanitation, and reduced the burden of wasted projects and their costs, which was due to the flood of neighborhood association, by a wide margin.

This association also led the nation in establishing a youth school to educate store employees in August 1938. Public youth schools had existed prior to this point, but as these were administered uniformly without consideration to the special circumstances of the retail business, such as holding classes during the busy time of night, these ended in failure. Therefore, this association independently established a school authorized by the Tokyo prefectural governor in order to resolve this problem. This reconciled the public youth school’s discrepancy with the special circumstances of the retail business, and furthermore made implementation suitable for store employees possible.³⁾

Kitazawa Street Shopping District Merchants Association – Establishment of employee training hall and thorough management of stores

This shopping district was located in Setagaya Ward and formed a merchants association in February 1937 (Merchants Association Central Association, 1937; Fujino, 1937; Commercial

Association Central Treasury, 1939). This association was established at about the same time as the aforementioned merchants association, when the shopping districts' merchants associations were being promoted. Fujino, the chairman of this association, was aware of the difficulty of a shopping district's merchants association where "the industry associations' projects are positive and the shopping district's merchants associations' are negative" (Fujino, 1937, p. 93). For that reason, he emphasized bringing understanding to the association members about the significance of the association's projects, which did not seem to have direct profits. One concrete initiative was the employee training hall, established in November 1938. The purpose and contents of the employee training hall were essentially similar to the youth school, but it also added initiatives to more thorough employee education through boarding in the training hall.⁴⁾

The next remarkable feature of this association was the thorough control of stores. This implemented regulations about the number of similar business within the region, industries, and distances. According to these regulations, "The control of stores is conducted for the prosperity of the shopping district, having been passed by the business control committee, with the cooperation of landowners and homeowners in this region, or those who possess rights to these", and "require that the lessor of a house report his type of business to the association in advance, before the lease is signed" (Commercial Association Central Treasury, 1939, p. 7). Also, the opening of stores "is permitted only when there is no similar business within 5 stores to the left or right, or 10 stores on the opposite side; however, this limitation does not apply to those in the same industry as the previous proprietor" (*Ibid.*).

It is worth noting that all members of this association were given approval by the landlords, thought to be the greatest obstacle to such projects. In other words, by mixing stores in the association district, the association had about the same function of the "town-building society" conceptualized in the 1990s. In August 1938, this project's regulations⁵⁾ gained stronger binding authority upon approval by the Governor of Tokyo, but it is not difficult to imagine that this was later used by the wartime administration.

Sugamo-Jizo Street Shopping District Merchants Association – Distribution of Mealtime Ingredients and Streamlining of Life

This shopping district, still famous nowadays as "Tweezers Jizo", was an association established in December 1936, to cope with the extension of railway terminals and progress of department stores (Commerce Association Central Treasury Research Division, 1942). The most characteristic project of this association was the distribution of mealtime ingredients. This project was planned in 1938, but was set back due to their inability to acquire land for a communal kitchen. However, come 1940, the shortage grew graver and it became difficult for individuals to secure food, so they began with only distributing ingredients. A nutritionist from the distribution center delivered meals for a week to the

association members, and association members would place orders the day before.

This project garnered the attention not only from the Ministry of Health and Welfare and Tokyo Prefecture, but also from the mass media, “as a project that is rich with implications from the perspective of streamlining life and improving the health of citizens, in light of current affairs” (*Ibid.*, p. 30). Prior to this point, there were 600 people’s worth distributed per day, but this gave the association the intent to exert more effort, expanding the distribution center and constructing facilities that added a training hall for employees there. In this way, the joint enterprise of this shopping district merchants association eliminated inefficiency and streamlined the very lives of the association members.

We have discussed representative projects at this time, and we can tell that there was a change in nature from the initiatives described in the previous section. Their contents came to include social components, such as maintaining the region and educating the shopping district merchants, rather than economic projects. We will consider what these changes meant, and how the shopping districts were understood as the wartime system progressed, as we take a simple look at the conditions of the time.⁶⁾

4.2 The Deepening of the Wartime Regime and Guidelines for Streamlining of Rationing System in the Distribution

First of all, these changes were a response to the wartime system following the Incident. In other words, they held status as national policy institution, as “they were shouldered with the new duty of cooperating with enforcing national policy, in the distribution of goods and other areas, and so to speak, were given new public economic duties on top of their private economic duties” (Harato, 1939, p. 86).

As the nation plunged into wartime following the Incident, price regulation was the first policy to be conducted. Prices were the object of regulation because businesses still held possession of goods at the time of the Incident (Tada, 1942), and as a result, countermeasures against inflation due to expansion of military expenditures were central to the government. However, those goods began to run out, and the expansion of battle lines further increased the military demand. At this point, price regulation could not bring about a sufficient effect, and regulations had to progress to control consumption, in order to suppress demand (Japan Consulting Institute, 1979).

At first, this was conducted for raw materials, but the coverage expanded due to the enactment of the National General Mobilization Act in 1938. Since military demand was prioritized in the mobilization of goods, consumption control centered on civilian demand. Ration tokens were introduced for sugar and matches in 6 major cities in 1940, and the commodities that applied expanded sequentially. As seen here, the streamlining of distribution institutions became a major task for the

government in advancing the wartime system. In December of the same year, this directionality would be specifically expounded in the “Guidelines for Streamlining of Distribution Institutions”.

In other words, under “the principle that streamlined merchant institutions shall serve as distributors, to plan for the expansion of existing merchants as management units, and the streamlining of merchant organizations”, and that “organizations such as neighborhood associations, Buraku associations, and neighbor groups are not recognized as distribution institutions” (Ministry of International Trade and Industry, ed., 1980, p. 247), merchants associations were given the status as distribution organizations (Akabane, 1941; Kobe Economic Affairs Bureau, 1942). In other words, their aforementioned status as national policy institutions was specified. Originally, merchants engaged in free trading activity, bearing their own risks and responsibilities. But with a shortage of goods and distribution being determined by the government, traders were not allowed to conduct profit-centered business, and their only profits were the distribution commissions as simple agents of the state. At this stage, they ceased to be traders in the purest sense of the word.⁷⁾

Incidentally, merchants associations may have been the distribution institutions assumed by the aforementioned guidelines, but they were industry associations, not shopping districts.⁸⁾ In other words, shopping districts were not assumed in units of associations and this means that they were not given status as distribution institutions. Therefore, they once again lost their status as the dominant format. The characteristics of shopping district merchants associations indicated by Nakamura (1936b) are helpful in finding the reason. In other words, the management of shopping district merchants association centered mainly on sales across a variety of industries, and most stores were free in purchases, as it was difficult for them to address this as an organization. Industry associations were the ones that had purchases as a central project as an association, and from the perspective of the government that was controlling distribution, industry associations were more convenient as distribution institutions. In other words, the fait accompli of controlling the distribution routes made the industry associations into the state policy enforcement organizations (Akabane, 1941). And since “the shopping districts’ projects lacked in impact, as they did not touch on distribution projects” (Akabane, 1942a, p. 228), the interest of shopping district personalities had to turn to industry associations in order to become distribution organizations.

4.3 Retail Industry’s Loss of Substance Due to Company Streamlining, and Shopping Districts as Regional Organizations

Now, as seen above, merchants associations were given the status of distribution organizations, but the consumption control and distribution regulation due to the shortage emphasized the excess of retail stores. As a result, there was a risk that the difficulty of retail stores to stay in business would result in large unemployment. In response, the government first promoted voluntary consolidation of retail stores. However, this did not develop as expected, and due to the expanding battle lines, the

government “changed its course to a proactive attitude, in encouraging traders to transition into key industries by their own volition, and by this promote the reformation of our nation’s industry as a whole” (Hirano, 1944, p. 22). This can be seen not just as a simple unemployment countermeasure, but as a source of supply for the labor that would accompany the expanding battle lines. Furthermore, the “Business Approval Order” was established in December 1941, which particularly prevented the start of new trading businesses.

As seen here, company streamlining of terminal distribution organizations were conducted with the purpose of strengthening the war effort, but the “Guidelines for Retail Streamlining” was announced in May 1942, as a basic policy. I would like to point out two things about these guidelines. The first is that these guidelines say, “If necessary for those including the convenience of consumers and suitability of distribution, the use of shopping districts or retail markets should be considered for the placement of stores” (Ministry of International Trade and Industry, ed., 1980, p. 252), identifying the shopping districts that were completely disregarded under the Guidelines for Streamlining of Distributive Institutions. However, the Guidelines for Retail Streamlining may have cited this, but specific policies “were not clearly indicated, and entirely left it up to the discretion of the traders” (Okamoto, 1943, p. 30). Therefore, since the distribution of controlled goods in the shopping district had to go through the industry association itself, executives’ interests still did not turn to shopping districts. In the end, the situation was unchanged from under the Guidelines for Streamlining of Distributive Institutions.

However, Okamoto (1943) noted the trend of stressing the fact that many traders were located in shopping district, and that they were “collaborating in both economic and livelihood aspects” (p. 30) in their countermeasures. We will discuss the significance of this later.

The second point is that in terms of company streamlining, existing business formats would “retain individual business formats as the retail industry” (Japan Consulting Institute, 1979, p. 292), showing that the policy had changed from the streamlining method of physically unifying businesses by unionization, limited companies, or industrial combination. However, this policy drew criticism from academics (Okamoto, 1943; Hirano, 1944; Muramoto, 1944). They said that “remaining separate as individual businesses causes the likes of black-market dealings” (Hirano, 1944, p. 19). Therefore, they claimed that they should have a more public quality through industrial combination to prevent this.

The Commercial Association Law was enacted in July 1943, and the merchants associations were reformed as associations with better control, through uniting with other associations, such as industrial associations (Matsui, 1944). Through this, the prior merchants associations that sought the improvement and development of trade, even just as a public stance, changed into the institutionalized commercial associations with the goal of “collaborative implementation of wartime national policy” (Commercial Association Central Association, 1944, p. 10).

While business streamlining caused a decline in the number of traders, they said “we must ensure the absolute minimum for our citizens’ consumption needs, and ensure streamlining does not go too far” (Hirano, 1944, p. 22). For that reason, they established a “composite distribution center” to unite the retail stores that were in a dispersed state due to streamlining (Hirano, 1944; Muramoto, 1944; Akabane, 1944b), but this was an institution proposed to implement so-called “reasonable” distribution control. What’s more, it was made up of the commercial associations. Traders were now regarded as no more than “distribution centers”, institutions that could realistically carry out the government’s distribution control. This gives a broad overview of the streamlining of distribution institutions from the mid-war to the late war, which has been regarded as the period of the breach. Not only did the retail industry not lose its *raison d’être*, but it grew as an institution in charge of distribution. However, at the same time, there was a process of dissolution and loss of substance of the retail industry, as traders.

On the other hand, what happened to the shopping districts amidst this process, and how were they understood? Firstly, similar to the retail industry in general, there was a process involving the loss of substance of the traders’ role in the streamlining of distribution institutions under the wartime system. Not only that, but the shopping district was losing its significance even as a distribution institution. As explained before, this was because the industry associations were given the status of responsibility for distribution by the Guidelines for Streamlining of Distribution Institutions, in order to appropriately implement distribution control. As such, shopping districts were losing their significance not just as a trade, but as a distribution institution. But the direction that emerged from amidst this was “the movement from traditional communities of interest to communities of livelihoods” (Akabane, 1941, p. 246).

As stated before, initiatives of “the establishment of communities between traders” that “improve the consumer lifestyle of traders” were given attention after the Incident (Inagawa, 1943, pp. 175–176). In other words, the shopping district was oriented towards “relationships of mutual assistance in a region” (Okamoto, 1942, p. 38). Therefore, the aforementioned post-Incident initiatives of the shopping district merchants association could be said to be early cases of this orientation.⁹⁾ Furthermore, “activities of town loyalty” became “one of the fundamental attitudes of shopping district management” (Akabane, 1942a, p. 230).

As seen here, the shopping districts were losing their significance not only as traders but also as distribution agencies. What they discovered out of this was a direction towards the shopping district as a local group. However, the business streamlining had physically dissolved the shopping districts. This is why the composite distribution centers were suggested to reunite the retail stores that had been dispersed, as already explained, but ironically, the streamlining of distribution institutions that had dissolved the shopping districts as the wartime control grew graver caused people in certain areas to seek organizations called “composites”, which had similar characteristics to shopping districts.

Their format was based on the existing shopping districts, and some advocated for the redeployment of stores to fill the houses that were emptied by business streamlining (Okamoto, 1943). Regardless of whether or not they were based on the existing shopping districts, they advocated for incorporating the regional components that shopping districts possessed (Akabane, 1944b). However, these claims that had the nature of these “shopping districts” in mind were in the minority. The majority at that time simply wanted a single state of management under a joint enterprise (Muramoto, 1944), and reflection on the shopping district itself was rare. Therefore, the actual composite distribution center was no more than a terminal institution responsible for distribution control, and while similar, it was distinct from the shopping district.¹⁰⁾

5 In Conclusion: The Direction Shopping Districts Took

This document took a look at the activities of shopping district organizations from the pre-war to late war periods. First, we looked at the birth and expansion of the shopping district merchants association. The establishment of merchants associations in the harsh conditions for small-to-medium businesses, due to the prolonged economic recession and department store and industrial associations, allowed them to attempt a breakthrough, but these were largely assumed to be industry associations, rather than shopping districts. At the time, shopping districts had almost no status in terms of policy. But on the local level, the shopping districts developed proactive initiatives before they were given status in terms of policy. Even in terms of merchants associations, progressive shopping districts formed merchants associations regardless of the law's agenda. They were able to raise awareness of themselves as a key form of merchants associations by developing their proactive initiatives. This led to the government recognizing shopping districts due to local movements, promoting the formation of associations, and finally to amending the law. In other words, the shopping districts did not simply demand government aid, but on the contrary, shopping district organizations that developed proactive actions on the local level already existed. As seen here, it can be considered that the mutual effects of positive action and government promotion established the shopping district organization.

But by then, the effects of the wartime system had already drawn close. To the government, streamlining the distribution institutions alongside the deepening of the wartime system was a major task. Therefore, the government granted merchants associations with the character of national policy enforcement agencies, but it was industry associations that bore this responsibility. On the other hand, the shopping districts' merchants associations had lost their key status once again, so soon after the law was amended and the movement was finally about to pick up steam. But amidst this, the shopping districts found their own orientation towards livelihood communities based on “town loyalty movements”, in other words, to regional groups. When the shopping district organizations lost their status not only as merchants, but also as distribution agencies, their aspect as regional organizations

rose to the surface.¹¹⁾ Akabane (1944b) indicated that the fact that “on top of serving in civil defense and other non-occupational activities”, “their love for their town as residents of the region, apart from being merchants, and their unity in achieving their functions, has many promising points” that ought to be considered (p. 24).

These things can be thought of as a result of the characteristics of shopping districts being based in a region, and spontaneously formed as a member of that region, but this is unique to shopping districts, and one possible reason that the shopping district is raised as a leader when community building is talked about nowadays. In other words, while militaristic colors may have been flown at the time, shopping districts were more than just simple merchants, but were equipped as a local organization whose functions involved more than buying and selling. By taking a look at the shopping district in wartime, which has not been addressed in the research so far, this document may have caught on to a part of what the “shopping district” itself is. This is something that rose to the surface when the shopping district could no longer fulfill the majority of its function as a trade.

As many shopping districts nowadays are faced with the reality of being unable to cope with their “essential” functions of buying and selling alone, this can be thought of as a phenomenon that is practically shouting the necessity of community building which re-examines the role of the shopping district in the region. Perhaps this provides evidence for the critical position of the shopping district, understood as being responsible for community building.

Notes

- 1) Cooperators included not only unqualified association members, but also two store managers who had not joined the association. This idea can be said to be similar to the present Shopping District Promotion Association Act.
- 2) The urban planner Hideaki Ishikawa claimed that the work of a shopping district is not only to sell products cheaply and give convenience to consumers, but that they also require “enjoyment”. From that perspective, Ishikawa implemented the “city beautification movement”, to develop amusement quarters. From that perspective, the advantage of department stores at the time were in the luxuriousness of the buildings. On the other hand, Ishikawa claimed that shopping districts, which were seeking to be “sideways department stores” to oppose department stores, lacked the facilities to do so. Therefore, he indicated that “the only means for shopping districts to oppose these [department stores] buildings and facilities is to beautify the town”, and “they cannot oppose department stores if they are not considering the beauty of the town” (Ishikawa, 1936b, pp. 20–21). In this sense, Ishikawa focused on this association’s initiative to unify the signs, and highly appraised them.
- 3) These first scheduled class time in the early morning (6–8 AM in the summer, 7–9 AM in the winter), so they could deal with busy periods. Schooling content included general academics, such as Japanese and mathematics, as well as trade and music. Nearby trade school teachers and religious persons were delegated to teach, and tuition was as low as 50 sen per month. This caused a deep deficit, but this was

compensated by subsidies from Tokyo Prefecture. Also the number of students increased from the 47 at the time of the school's establishment to 173 in the next year.

- 4) Tuition to the employee training hall was 15 yen a month, leaving them with a large deficit like the youth training school, which was compensated by grants from the prefecture and city of Tokyo. However, this association did not rely on grants alone, and opened an insurance agency the month after the training hall was established, so that the association could fund its own expenses.
- 5) Also, regulations aside those cited in this document include "The opening of stores is only permitted to businesses that will not violate the lighting and facility installment policy", "Should the business control committee... deem the need to add regulations to specific industries, they will administer these upon discussion with the homeowner", and "The lessor must entrust the association with the collection of rent from association members that open stores under the store control" (Commerce Association Central Treasury, 1939, p. 7).
- 6) For details on the conditions at the time, refer to the Japan Consulting Institute (1979). The following content basically relies on this.
- 7) However, not all traders passively bore the duty of distribution as agents of the state. At the time, as the wartime system expanded, the black market expanded in parallel. The existence of the black market caused a great decline in traders' trust. Among this situation, some traders started a movement to practice honest business as righteous traitors, out of patriotism. This movement developed, and the Japan Trade Patriotism Brigade was formed in 1939 (Yamada, 1942; Japan Consulting Institute, 1979). But in the end, this voluntary movement "ceased to be a movement of traders, and instead became a movement driven by traders", and became engulfed by a government-made movement "that did not give the traders any sense of intimacy" (Akabane, 1942b, p. 59).
- 8) To be more exact, they were comprehensive industry associations that were based on industry association. As the adverse effects of multiple enrollment due to existing industry associations were emerging, these associations comprehensively unified industries with similarity of products to reconcile them (Akabane, 1942a).
- 9) Other representative shopping districts with similar enterprises include the Tokyo City Kamata East Exit Shopping District Merchants Association, Iida City Iida Ginza Shopping District Merchants Association, Nagoya City Main Street Wholesale Association, Okayama Shopping District Food Distribution Association, and Hiroshima City Main Street Shopping District Merchants Association (Inagawa, 1943).
- 10) What's more, though they called themselves "composite" distribution centers, there are indications that "business streamlining actually had the reverse effect of secondary business streamlining and specialization for each good" (Akabane, 1944b, p. 22).
- 11) But this did not just begin to emerge at this time. According to Nakamura (1936), the shopping district was "a place of individual connections with the customers. I consider the shopping district to be the model of management for retail stores because it places emphasis on this point. This characteristic of retail stores makes it a place with more social and economic significance and appeal than the department stores, the product of systematic and entrepreneurial management, and I think of it as a pure place" (p. 53), showing that awareness of the shopping district had already existed. Therefore, it could be said that it rose to the surface more vividly due to the wartime control.

Addendum

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