Urban Landscape Planning of Palace Zone in Tokyo after Meiji Revolution

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It is seldom recognized that Tokyo has the huge open spaces in her heart of the dense city. The core area is Imperial Palace, however it is the complex of many different open spaces originated from the former land use of Edo period since 17th century. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the historical evolution of Palace Zone, considering the influence of landscape planning introduced through the modernization of Japan.

The four periods is classified. The first period is during 1868 to 1918, when the direct introduction of western architectural and urban design was taken place. Tokyo Civic Improvement Law was implemented (1888-1918). The basic structure of Palace Zone, such as the location of major land use and street pattern, was established. The second period is Pre Second World War (1919-1945), when the Landscape Beauty Ordinance was introduced. Civic Center Panning was established, influenced by the City Beautiful Movement. Imperial Outer Plaza was created as the symbol of the nation. The third period is after the World War Second (1946-1990’s). The Landscape Beauty Ordinance was not implemented and expressways were constructed, cutting through the forest and moat. The fourth period is Urban Redevelopment (1990’s to present). Tokyo interred into the city of Tower. This paper clarified the existing assets of remaining open spaces, and discussed how to re-excavate them as the cultural heritage of Tokyo.
1. Purpose of this paper

The characteristics of landscape in the capital city reflect the historical, cultural assets of each country. Tokyo has a huge open space in the heart of city. However, the public accesses to these open spaces are restricted, citizen in Tokyo hardly recognize that they have such a stock. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the historical landscape planning after Meiji revolution since 1868, and clarify the structure and problems of open space system in central Tokyo. Former Edo castle had two moats. Within the inner moat, Edo castle was located. Between the inner moat and the outer moat, there were mainly used as the residential district of samurai. In this paper, the research area was set up within outer moat, called Palace Zone. The Fig. 1 shows the historical changes of the improved areas by city planning. I focus the succession of open spaces and discuss about the landscape planning.
2. Introduction of Park (1868-1918)

Edo was called Garden City, since there were numerous gardens within samurai’s residence (Fig.1). Even ordinal citizen enjoyed flowers and trees in their tiny gardens and bonsai. After Meiji revolution in 1868, Meiji government rapidly introduced the western technology and social system. In 1873, the first park law was released. In feudal era, each city had their own recreational area where people could enjoy cherry blossoms, moon, and snow. This law said that each city should choose the appropriate site of the park and report the precise conditions to Meiji government for the designation. Based on this law, major parks originated from the feudal stock in Japan were secured.

In Tokyo, 5 parks were designated, Ueno, Shiba, Asakusa, Fukagawa, and Asukayama. These areas were the precincts of temples, and Meiji government forced to transform precincts into the public park. This caused the fundamental struggles between temples and government. However, all of these parks were designated outside of Palace Zone, since the location of temples was strictly restricted in Edo era.

In 1888, the first Civic Improvement Law was established, and the comprehensive master plan for streets, public facilities, sewerage, and parks were decided, and structure of civic center was created. Fig.2 shows the major axes of Palace Zone. Axis No.a connects between Edo castle tower and the inner moat. Axis No.b connects between Hanzomon and Koshu Road. Meiji Civic Improvement created other two axes, which connect between Tokyo Station to National Diet Building, and Imperial Palace(No.c, No.d).

Fig.2 Major Axes in Place Zone
As for parks, 49 parks, which covered 330ha, were designated. Within Palace Zone, Hibiya Park was opened as a symbol of civic center. In addition to this, two small parks, which were the precinct of shrine, and one small park for the memory of meritorious governor was opened. Huge open spaces within the inner moat were never opened to the public.

The part of the outer moat, from Tameike to Toranomon area was reclaimed by the stagnation of water and the construction of the major road. This was the first incident of losing the moat system in Place Zone (Fig.3).

3. Creating the national civic center (1919-1945)

In 1919, City Planning Law and Urban Architecture Law were established. Soon after, the Kanto Big Earthquake was occurred. In Tokyo, 1,484,000 people were suffered and 215,000 houses were burned down. The reconstruction plan had a clear goal to build a safe city from the earthquake disasters. Parks and boulevards system (park system) as open space system for preventing the extension of fires was introduced, and until 1930, 52 major road systems, which covers 117,065m, was implemented and 3 big parks and 52 community parks were created within the burned area. As for Palace Zone, northeast area, Kanda, Iidabashi, were burned down, and land readjustment project was implemented.

Another characteristics of this era were that Landscape Beauty District was introduced surrounding Imperial Palace in 1933. The purpose of this ordinance is to secure the beauty in
the designated district. Mayor had a power, firstly, to ask the landowner to remove or improve inappropriate buildings. Secondly, if new building would regard as inappropriate considering the harmony of the designated district, mayor could ask to the landowner to change the architectural design. Thirdly, the maximum building height was decided as 31m, considering the view from Imperial Palace. Besides Palace Zone, two other Landscape Beauty District was introduced, one was Midosuji in Osaka, and the other was Ise Shrine. Before the World War Second, there existed no development impact surrounding Imperial Palace. Therefore, a lot of discussions about the definition of landscape beauty were done in Tokyo City and Regional Planning Commission, this ordinance was passed and approximately 294 ha area were designated as Landscape Beauty District.

The improvement of open spaces in this era was the formation of Imperial Outer Plaza. This plaza was located on the axis between Tokyo Station and Imperial Palace. Former land use of this area was the residence of Daimyo, and based on Tokyo Civic Improvement Law, major road system and plaza were implemented. During 1920’s, Dr. Hiroshi Hara introduced traditional, simple landscape design with only pine trees and lawns. In 1940, Tokyo Metropolitan Government proposed the reformation plan. The purpose of this plan was to create a noble imperial plaza by making the underground highway, since there existed the major road, which was cutting through in the middle of the plaza. Because of the World War Second, this plan had never implemented up until today.

4. Rapid Growth after the World War Second

In 1946, the Special Reconstruction City Planning Law for War Damaged Cities was established. The reconstruction plan of Tokyo was made based on the hypothesis to disperse the population to the satellite cities, and tried to control the population growth in inner cities. Green Belt was introduced to the fringe area, 30 km radius from Tokyo Station. The reconstruction plan contained, land readjustment area (20,130ha), major radius roads (34 lines), major circular roads (8 lines), 3 big parks (62 ha), 20 small parks (74 ha), city planning green spaces (3,034ha), green belt (18,010ha). However, rapid urban growth was taken place, and owing to the lack of financial background, the reconstruction plan was decreased, and uncontrolled urban developments were occurred both in inner and fringe areas.

As for Palace Zone, the outer moat between Shinbashi to Nihonbashi, and adjacent areas of Yotsuya Station were reclaimed (Fig.3). It was made a contribution for the improvement of traffic system, but the historical characteristics as a water city of Tokyo was disappeared. In 1959, Master Plan of metropolitan highway system was established. Based on this plan, express ways were constructed above the Nihonbashi River, and cutting through the inner moat, Chidorigafuchi, and Kitanomaru. Huge open spaces within the Imperial Palace were segmented into several parts.

In 1961, Special District Zoning was introduced. The height control system, which was designated by Landscape Beauty Law, was abolished, and instead of this, the volume control system was introduced. The first high rise building, Kasumigaseki was built adjacent areas to National Diet Building. This was the start of Tower era in Tokyo. Also, after the occupation by America Army after the World War Second was finished, the renovation project for the front areas of National Diet Building was implemented. National Diet Park and boulevards were created.

The most important improvement in this era was the opening of the part of the inner moat area as a public park. In 1964, the city planning park named Central Park, was designated to the inner moat area, Chidorigafuchi memorial Cemetery, and Hibiya Park. Within the inner moat
area, Kitanomaru area, which had been used for the military, was opened as a public park. Also, Imperial East Garden was opened under the control of the Imperial Household Agency. Fig.4 is the changes of green covered areas since 1945. It is clear that in the inner moat area, the green spaces were drastically increased.

The background of the rapid construction of highway systems and the improvement of public parks were the promotion of Olympic Games in 1964. The basic infrastructure in Tokyo after the World War Second was created in this era. But, the strategies for preserving the historical assets, and small green spaces of individual households were totally neglected. In Fig.4, we find clear that small green spaces, which were consisted of diverse buildings, such as schools, embassies, old houses, were disappeared rapidly from 1976 to 2001.


The most important trends since 1990’s are the local power for renovating the Palace Zone have occurred. As we have seen in the above era, citizen who lived or worked in Palace Zone had never involved directly in the preservation and improvement of landscape planning. In 1995, the first step was done by Chiyoda Ward, based on the citizen movement for preserving the historical assets in Palace Zone. Since Landscape Beauty Ordinance was never implemented, they set up the Landscape Commission of Chiyoda Ward to control the qualities of landscape. Precise researches were taken place and characteristics and remaining assets were clarified, such as, buildings, landmarks, viewpoints, waters, etc. The fundamental policy was set up, firstly, to succeed the historical assets to the next generation, secondly, to create noble landscape as an international city, and thirdly, to create a livable community. The characteristics of each community within Palace Zone are different, the district guide plan for the landscape beauty was proposed. The developers who are going to construct buildings within Palace Zone, it is suggested to follow this guide plan, and to incorporate the historical spirits of the target area.
to their plan. The discussion in the Landscape Commission is opened to the public. Another citizen participation was taken place by the big firms who has the main offices in this area. They set up NPO and started to provide information services, free bus, etc.

Entering 21 century, the urban revitalization policy became the leading project of the national government, and diverse controls for developments have been relieved drastically. The effect of this change will cause the essential changes on the structure of Tokyo. At this point, it is hard to see the real destination. There exist no basic policy for the location of high-rise buildings. Almost in everywhere of the central Tokyo, it is possible to build them. Most urgent problem in Palace Zone is the development plan behind National Diet Building, which is the symbol of the nation.

In June 2003, Marunouchi, Ootemachi area were designated as the Central Core Zone. For preserving the historical buildings in this area, such as Tokyo Station, special bonus for building capacities will be added. The transformation from the monotonous official district to the lively complex town is encouraged.

As for open spaces since 1990’s, more than 30 public plazas have been created through the urban redevelopments. However, the public parks are still divided by the expressways and suffered from the increase of the flow of daily traffic.

Conclusion

Fig.5 shows the present conditions of open spaces in Palace Zone. Core area is the Imperial Palace and it has been closed to public since Edo era, for 400 years. Owing to this segregation, the original forest in Musashino Plateau has preserved extensively, and now, this area becomes the ecological core of bio-diversities. Surrounding this core, there exist diverse open spaces. In this paper, I have been clarified that it was the result of the accumulation of landscape planning in each era.

In the first period after Meiji Revolution (1868-1918), the concept of public parks was introduced, and it was contributed to succeed the feudal stocks of open spaces. Also, modern public park was created in Hibiya, and popular use of Hibiya Park lead the nation-wide park movement. In the second period before the World War Second (1919-1945), Palace Zone was regarded as the symbolic area of Japan, and progressive landscape planning theories were adopted, such as the park system, zoning regulation, and landscape beauty ordinance. Influenced by the City Beautiful Movement and Civic Center Reformation in 1910’s, the master plan of National Diet Area was created but the process for the real implementation took a long time, up until 1960’s. The third period was a hard era, since Tokyo had to start from the burned down city. To build the major infrastructure for roads and highways, the historical assets of open spaces were sacrificed. Owing to the national basic policy to release the closed military spaces to the public use, and Olympic Game as a national event, open spaces within inner moat areas had opened to the public. Since then, public open space were not increasing a lot, but many small urban plaza were born from the urban redevelopment projects. Also, the citizen participation to secure the historical landscape and to create a new Palace Zone for 21st century becomes very active.

It is important that we recognize that there exist the most precious ecological, historical open spaces in the heart of Tokyo. Right now, they were segments of different isolated open spaces divided by expressways. Urban strategies for the next stage should be focused to recombine these assets.
Fig.5. Existing Parks & Open Spaces and Potential Area for Urban Greenery

References