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## **1. Introduction**

San'ya is located in Taito District, which was part of the Asakusa District<sup>1</sup> – one of the oldest 15 districts of Tokyo. Historically, it was the area for the Japanese outcaste people. Post-war reconstruction brought its population to the peak as huge influx of day labor undertaking construction work chose San'ya as their night stopover. However, the 1989 bubble soon turned San'ya into slackness. The ten-year stagnation after the collapse of bubble economy put San'ya in long recession where in the meantime population ages dramatically.

Situation is significantly changed in the last decade. While most of the area in San'ya is still domed by slack air where shops and restaurants are closed all the year round without even signs for letting, newly completed constructions are scattered. The hostels that once mainly accommodated day laborers are refurbished and open to foreign backpackers and domestic tourists. Fresh new condominiums targeting on ordinary middle-income families/individuals are erected one unit by another. The day laborers once boomed the business are aging rapidly. Johoku Labour and Welfare Center whose door were used to be broken in by day laborers seeking jobs every morning at 6 o'clock, now only have less than 10 available positions to post and receive few visitors. "San'ya" (as a place associated with poverty and the homeless) will eventually disappear one day', a shopkeeper sighed.

The transformation taking places in San'ya is seemingly a spontaneous process of urban renewal responding to the demographic changes. Refurbishment and physical upgrading of the business facilities, and the new construction of condominiums are initiated and invested by dispersed individuals – mostly the original owners of the old Japanese Kanyu Shukusho who also own the land of today's new-born condominiums. However, whether this is the entire story?

What is the driving force of transformation that took place in San'ya in the past 10 years? It is caused by spontaneous market forces responding to the dynamics of demographic and ground rent changes, or actually a government-led process? Why a clear-cut answer cannot be simply chosen from the two options? As San'ya is a place that have long been associated with the low-class population and indignity in the Japanese society, its transformation could have different social/political significance comparing to many other urban renewal cases taking places everywhere around the

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<sup>1</sup> After the 1946 district configuration of Tokyo City, Asakusa District was then divided into two parts. They were respectively merged into Arakawa District and new Taito District.

world today. These questions nurtured the momentum for this research, and the research generated the argument for this paper that the transformation of San'ya is a strategic and systematic 'clean-out' process, though from the surface it is a spontaneous process driven by market forces.

Qualitative methods are the main tools to understand the transformation in San'ya in this research. They include literature review, observation, open interview, and photography. Literature review and interview help to give a panorama of San'ya', from its past to today, from socio-economic activities to built environment change. Observation helps raise and define questions from the built environment. Photography collecting the image of San'ya's today aims at visualizing San'ya's transformation by a comparison with its historical images. The city development master plans obtained through literature review as well to learn the possible development direction of San'ya. Historical quantitative data gives information for socio-economic and demographic changes. The combination of quantitative data and information derived from interviews helps identify the turning points in San'ya's history, and the hidden forces influencing the local development.

Information sources are composed of official institutions and individuals. The official institutions include Johoku (North of the City) Labor and Welfare Center, Taito Ward Office, Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Statistics Bureau of Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT). The individuals include the staff from the Welfare Center, Taito Ward Office, hostel's staff, residents, teachers from the local schools and some long-term day labors/homeless people. As San'ya historically was associated with many social issues, talking about San'ya with certain groups is often a taboo, such as the homeless, local children's parents, and so on. To breakdown the self-defense of the interviewees and collect valuable information, the researcher was sometimes disguised as a foreign tourist. Questions were asked in casual manner in these cases.

The subjectivity of information from interviews is among the major limitations of the methodology adopted in this research. Through the interviews, information conflicts among interviewees from different background are evident on certain questions. Further questions inquiring examples and details, and other complimentary information sources are used to derive less arguable information.

The following of the paper is divided into four sections. The second section reviews the literature discussing the driving forces of urban development and transformation, and discusses their unfitness to describe the transformation in San'ya. The third section gives the historical background of San'ya and an account of its ongoing transformation in the past 10 years. The fourth section explores the facts backing the argument of this paper. The last section concludes the research.

## **2. Breaking down the dualism in analyzing the driving forces of urban transformation**

Ever since Thomas Hobbes wrote *Leviathan* in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, scholars have never stopped wrestling with the increasingly powerful state and its role in society, in shaping every perspective of human life. Following the Industrial Revolution, many thinkers such as Karl Marx, Max Weber, and many others devoted themselves to what Karl Polanyi would later call the great transformation (Migdal, 1994). Some scholars, such as Hegelians, put the state at the center of the transformations in Europe. Others including Marx, looked elsewhere for the source of historical change, notably to the organization of production.

Not surprisingly, then, the underlying questions echo the classical debates about major societal transformations and the role of states. When have they succeeded in determining the parameters of everyday social relations? When and how have states been able to establish various agenda for their societies? And when have other social forces had their own way in molding the social and economic patterns? As in the classical debates, scholarship since World War II has seesawed between society-centered and state-centered theories to answer these questions.

State in this paper refers to an organized political community living under a single system of government (Thompson, 1995). Government here is used as the synonyms of states. Society, referring to a depiction offered by Liah Greenfeld and Michel Martin (1988), its 'only definitive characteristic is that it is the outermost social structure for a certain group of individuals who, whatever might be their attitude toward it, view themselves as its members and experience their identity as being determined by it.' It basically can be an aggregate of any individuals or organizations different from state or government.

At the level of cities, the arena's size is scaled down. But when the debates come to who shapes the cities, the wrestling is still between state and society. Sometimes society is replaced by market -- a concept that refers to many varieties of systems, institutions, procedures, social relations and infrastructure whereby parties engage in exchange, which emerges more or less spontaneously in the history of human society (Vanberg, 1986).

Spontaneous or market force and government forces are then often seen as the two fundamental forces shaping and transforming cities. Market forces basically work through ground rent system which internalizes the geographical differences in land price over time (Smith, 1996). It is the response by individuals, investors and developers to demographic and social changes over different locations (Kadi, 2009). Government forces work through planning, development approval or control over zoning. Planning is often the most direct force transforming a city. It generates development strategically planned and facilitated by the government for social/economic/environmental goal. It is often seen as a counterforce or compensation of government forces.

Generally speaking, who dominates the driving force behind the transformation of a city – market forces or government forces – depends on how strong and controlling the government is. In countries or the period that state has strong power dominates the

everyday life of people in the society, the shape and transformation of the cities are more likely determined by states. Classic examples are the capital cities in the ancient civilizations. For instance, the Epic of Gilgamesh, which is the earliest record of a planned city describes the cities in ancient Mesopotamia -- during the third dynasty of Ur – as such:

Go up on to the wall of Uruk and walk around. Inspect the foundation platform and scrutinise the brickwork. Testify that its bricks are baked bricks, And that the Seven Counsellors must have laid its foundations. One square mile is city, one square mile is orchards, one square mile is claypits, as well as the open ground of Ishtar's temple. Three square miles and the open ground comprise Uruk. Look for the copper tablet-box, Undo its bronze lock, Open the door to its secret, Lift out the lapis lazuli tablet and read.(Dalley, 1989)

In the modern time, Garden City Letchworth in the U.K. designed by Ebenezer Howard in 1899, Brasilia city designed by Oscar Niemeyer in late 1950s, are referred as examples of urban development backed by strong government.

Cities shaped by spontaneous forces include Mediterranean cities in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Leontidou, 1990), ‘urban village’ phenomenon in Chinese cities (Peilin, 2002), Tokyo cities (Sorensen, 2002), and so on. In Mediterranean countries, weak legal enforcement of land use under zoning control extended or densified cities (Leontidou, 1990). In Chinese cities, urban villages filled in the gray zone between urban and suburban areas where legal enforcement is weak. In Tokyo, Kenzo Tange proposed 1960 Plan visioning a European style city over the burned land of post-war Tokyo. The established private land ownership dismissed the plan soon for its expensiveness and limited government financial resources back to that time (Sorensen, 2002).

Referring to the above-mentioned examples, identifying the driving force of urban transformation whether is spontaneous force or government force definitely does a great favor for us to understand the cities. However, in many cases it oversimplifies the complex world. Also, it often leads to the ignorance of the crucial forces standing behind the screen. A presenter standing on the stage is not necessarily a key contributor of the presented project.

Among the urban theories, then, urban managerialism and urban entrepreneurship breaks down the dualism and enables the analysis of urban transformation seeing the market and government forces as interwoven forces. Urban managerialism, which was derived from the works by Pahl (1970), argues that the analysis of cities needs to be linked to a broad social process. It puts forward the idea that within cities, there were forces like managers or gatekeepers occupying key positions both in the public and the private sectors, affecting the access to scarce resources in cities, which conditions the everyday life of the residents. The managers, which are also conceptualized by Pahl (1970) as gatekeeping occupations, can be estate agents, local authorities, building society managers, and planners, and so on.

Urban entrepreneurialism mainly conceptualizing the new paradigm of urban development observed in late 1970s is another example. But different from urban managerialism, urban entrepreneurialism sees government in a leading position in urban development, rather than parallel to the other development agents. The

proponents of this concept argues that cities are transformed through 'public-private partnership in which a traditional local boosterism is integrated with the use of local governmental powers to try and attract external sources of funding, new direct investments, or new employment sources' (Harvey, 1989a:7). Blunkett and Jackson describe the experience in the U.K. in 1970s as such:

From the early 1970s, as full employment moved from the top of government (Britain) priorities, local councils began to take up the challenge. There was support for small firms; closer links between the public and the private sectors; promotion of local areas to attract new business. They were adapting the traditional economic role of British local government which offered inducements in the forms of grants, free loans, and publicly subsidized infrastructure, and no request for reciprocal involvement with the community, in order to attract industrial and commercial concerns which were looking for suitable sites for investment and trading... Local government today, as in the past, can offer its own brand of entrepreneurship and enterprise in facing the enormous economic and social change which technology and industrial restructuring bring. (Blunkett and Jackson, 1987, 108-142)

In different countries and cities, urban entrepreneurship appears in different forms. But the essence is the same that government withdraws from the role as a provider of everything, instead, only provides the vision, coordinates with the private developers to transform a city or a community, and the transformation does not need to conform to the needs of the original local communities. The urban development is done by market force but the typology still organized conforming to a unified plan.

In the case of San'ya, which force seems the one drives its transformation in the last decade? Market force? Government force? Or a mixed and coordinated force of the previous two? It seems a spontaneous process of urban renewal responding to the aging of the day labourers and the increase of foreign tourists. It has scattered new construction of condominiums, and also refurbishment and physical upgrading of business facilities at different pace. The fact that the renewal projects were initiated and invested by dispersed individuals may reinforce the judgment. However, the Tokyo 2000 city master plan and the redevelopment of facilities offering public services (ex. transport) also indicate the features of entrepreneurship where government forces mingle with market forces.

Now, regardless whether urban entrepreneurship or urban managerialism can be used as a formula to interpret the transformation of San'ya, comparing to the approaches analyzing the driving forces of urban transformation with dualism, they propose new ways of defining the role of government in urban development and transformation. It proposes that as a driving force of the transformation of a city, government does not have to be in the frontier, but can be in the backstage leading the process and paving the way. Market force can be introduced by the government to fulfill the vision. This widely opens the window for us to define government force in the transformation of San'ya, rather than frame it in the traditional understanding of government force. Basing on it, we then will be able to define the process of San'ya whether is a spontaneous process or a planned one.

### 3. San'ya in the past and today

Lying in the northeastern corner of Tokyo city (Taito-ku), San'ya has its northern and eastern boundary naturally lined by the Sumida River. It covers approximately 1.65km<sup>2</sup>, with its northern part – Chome 1-8 of Minami Senju – under the administration of Arakawa Ward, and the rest under that of Taito Ward covering approximately 0.69km<sup>2</sup>, composed of Chome 1, 2 of Nihonzutsumi, Chome 1, 2 of Kiyokawa, and Chome 2 of Higashi-Asakusa. Though the smaller portion of San'ya sits in Taito Ward, the center of gravity – the Namidabashi intersection lays here.

Map 1. San'ya Area



Its history as part of urban territory started from Edo period (1603-1868) of Japan, when Tokyo began to be the country's capital. All over the time, San'ya was associated with indignity. In the Edo period, it was an area assigned to the outcaste people in Tokyo. During the industrialization of Japan, San'ya concentrated day labourers. The homeless in Tokyo also took San'ya as their home place. The traces of San'ya of old time can still be easily identified, which continue influencing the shape of San'ya today. However, 'normalisation' which transforms San'ya from a place for low class population to accommodate the middle-class majority in the society has been taking place in the past 10 years. To present a full picture of the transformations in San'ya, this section starts from the beginning of San'ya's history as an urban territory, and ends with the transformation of San'ya today. It is expected to lay a foundation for further discussions on San'ya's transformation.

### 3.1. San'ya in Edo and Meiji

As mentioned above, San'ya was first turned into urban land in Edo period, when the city of Edo (Tokyo today) was occupied by the first Tokugawa shogun Ieyasu in 1590. Merely one decade before he consolidated the rule of the entire country, the city of Edo was little more than a tiny fishing village laid against what is today called Tokyo Bay (Fowler, 1996). The location where San'ya sits today, back to the pre-Edo time, was waterfront. Utagawa Hiroshige -- Japan's famous ukiyo-e artist from Edo period once pictured Nihonzutsumi – now the central part of San'ya -- of that time.

Picture 1. 'One Hundred Famous Views of Edo – Nihonzutsumi' by Utagawa Hiroshige



At where the Imperial Palace now stands – on a rise to the west of an inlet extending into the bay, Ieyasu constructed a castle (ibid). The highlands in the surrounding areas were resided by the affiliates of Ieyasu and other feudal lords (ibid). In Japan, these areas were called the Yamanote (Mountainsides) or 'High City', where was long associated with high social classes – the Nobles and the Samurai<sup>2</sup>. For the lowest class – the Chonin -- and the outcaste, Ieyasu drained and cleaned the flat marshland in the east of the castle. As these areas were lowlands, they were also called the Shitamachi, namely 'Low City'. The peasants who are in the between of the Samurai and the Chonin were the only class lived outside the city.

As the town was expanding along with the population growth, over time the Edo government relocated the residential areas of the Chonin and the outcaste further and

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<sup>2</sup> Feudal Japanese society was essentially divided into four different castes. The Nobles (the Emperor, Shogun and Daimyos) held the greatest status and influence. The Samurai were below the nobles, and the second most powerful caste, having significant influence and rights within society. The Peasant caste were below the Nobles and Samurai, legally bound to their landlord, whom gave them land to farm, and entitled to some civil rights. The Chonin caste were the lowest caste in society even though they were the craftsmen, artisans and merchants of Japan. The merchants were the most despised people in the Chonin caste due to the nature of their occupation. Although not considered a caste, below the Chonin were the outcasts, who were more than just mere beggars. With the introduction of Buddhism people associated with death- such as executioners, hide tanners and butchers- also became the outcasts of society

further into the periphery of the town, attempting to adapt to the population growth and sustain the decency of the Samurai class. In 1857, after the Great Fire destroyed half of the Edo City, the town's licensed quarter, entertainment zone were moved further in the east of the city where were mainly thinly populated marshland. It was half-a-day walking distance away from the northeast of the castle. The outcaste labor was used to drain the marshlands at that time. Soon brothels were erected (ibid). This licensed quarter was named Shin Yoshiwara (New Yoshiwara). Though the government attempted to keep the Samurai away from the indecent entertainment areas by issuing edicts, the effect was turning Asakusa, which was on the overland route, into a busy attraction for the pleasure seekers (ibid). As the northeast is an unlucky direction in Chinese geomancy, execution ground were located further in the northeast of Shin Yoshiwara, and temples traditionally guarding cities from ill spirits were erected (ibid). The outcaste ghettos were mostly located there too. The configuration of San'ya was first established. For around two hundred years till prostitution was banned in Japan, San'ya was known for cheap temporary accommodation and unlicensed prostitutes. It attracted the pleasure seekers who found the nearby Yoshiwara expensive.

'Namidabashi' -- the center of gravity of San'ya -- as a name, which means the Bridge of Tears, probably can more than accurately describe the historical image of San'ya in the heart of the local Tokyo people. The intersection was named after the spot where criminals in the Edo (1603 – 1868) and early Meiji (1868 – 1912) periods are said to wave farewell to their loved ones before being led to an execution ground. The no-longer existed execution ground was next to the Ekoin Temple, which today sits behind the bridge. In the following years after the start of Meiji Restoration, Tokyo went through industrialization, modernization, post-earthquake and post-WWII reconstruction, as well as 1964 Olympics. The configuration of Tokyo has changed dramatically after all these events, but San'ya's inferiority in the geographical hierarchy of Tokyo, and its association with poverty and low class was remained.

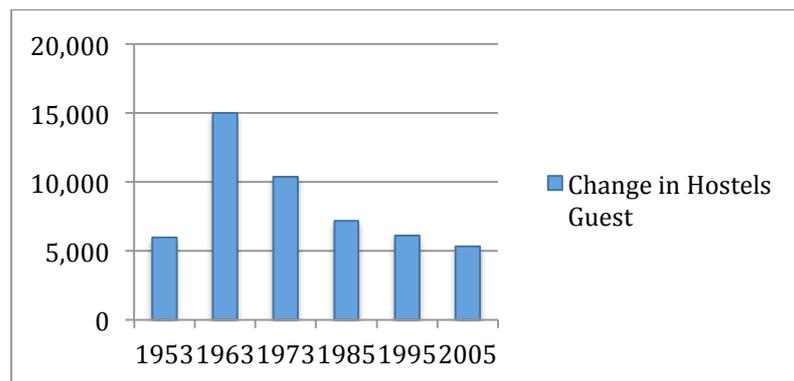
### **3.2. Post-war prosperity and recession in San'ya**

Japan's industrialization since Meiji periods created a huge amount of seasonal workers moving from rural Japan to cities for temporary jobs. Quite often, they work as day laborers on construction and manufacturing. In Tokyo, more than two thirds of the day laborers came from Japan's eastern half. As San'ya is located in the Northeastern corner of central Tokyo, it is a gateway for people to enter Tokyo. The geographical location turned it into a foothold for newly arrived migrants. Since then, there were generally two kinds of people living in San'ya: more or less permanent residents such as shopkeepers, low-income salarymen, and some light- and cottage-industry entrepreneurs; and highly mobile day laborers who usually live in the Kan'yi Shukusho (簡易宿所), which is a type of Japanese-style economic lodgings, or hostels.

Post-WWII reconstruction created a great number of construction projects, after more than two thirds of the central Tokyo area was destroyed by the American bombing in 1945. After 10 years of recovery when social and economic infrastructure is restructured, Japan's economy started to experience high-speed growth. Investment flooded into Tokyo. The large demand for business and residential spaces in Tokyo

area pushed the number of construction projects in this city to a peak. All these construction work generated large demand for labor workers. The needs from the other manufacturing soared in the same time. The rush to recover economy and the concentration of investment in the urban areas again drew farmers to the cities. Adding up the influx population from other backgrounds, population in San'ya reached its peak before the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, at around 25,000. 15,000 people – the majority were day laborers -- live in Kan'yi Shukusho (see Figure 1). Day labours as the majority in San'ya significantly influenced and prospered local economy.

Figure 1. Change in hostels guest over year



Source: adapted from the data from Taito Ward Office (2009)

Population of day laborers in San'ya started decreasing after 1964 Tokyo Summer Olympics, but it was not the time point symbolizing the downturn development of San'ya yet. Between 1960s and late 1980s, Tokyoists living in the other parts of the city might wonder whether they had entered another world when they encountered crowds of labor workers who often tied towel band over their heads. The mass violence between right wing labour unions further degraded the image of San'ya among the local people. However, businesses there were prosperous. Facilities serving the local residents and day laborers were new and up-to-date, which include restaurants, coffee shops, hostels, self-service laundry shops, and so on. Iloha Shopping Street was refurbished with a glass arcade in 1976, which is located at Nihonzutsumi 1 Chome, and had been the major shopping center in San'ya since 1922.

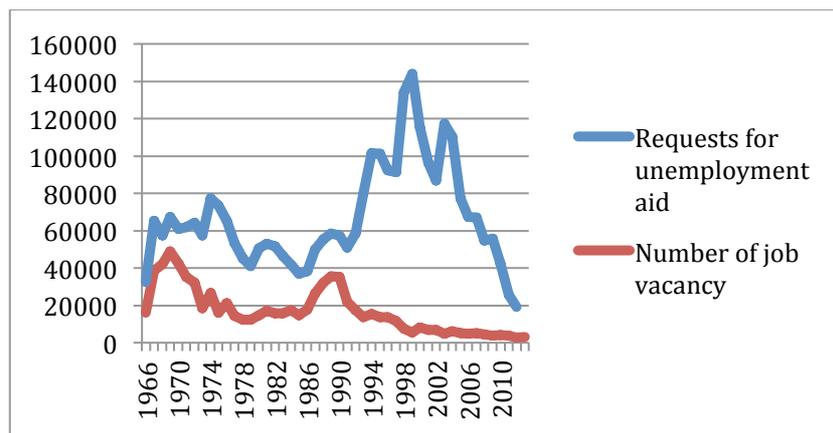
Though construction work in central Tokyo had been getting less along with the decrease of available space and skyrocketing land price<sup>3</sup>, economic prospect in general was still bright and demand from construction and manufacturing industries

<sup>3</sup> The Second World War destroyed most part of Tokyo, which allows land development at low prices during the reconstruction. Economic recovery then stimulated investment to flood into Tokyo, which created large demand for residential and business spaces. The sudden increasing demand and the limited amount of available land had Tokyo's land price soar. In Ginza – one of the growth cores in Tokyo, land was 45,000 yen/m<sup>2</sup> in 1947, but 350,000 yen/m<sup>2</sup> in 1953, and 1,100,000 yen/m<sup>2</sup> in 1961. In the following years, although Japan's economic growth continued slowing down, economic prospect for businesses based in central Tokyo stayed bright. Land price continued increasing until economic bubble blasted in 1991. The slump of land price led to dramatic devalorization of assets in the hands of investors. Further investment stopped. Unemployment rate increased. Economy in Tokyo region in general went into stagnation.

for day labourers were still big in Tokyo Metropolitan Area as a whole. From late 1960s, several suburban development projects were initiated. Tama new town development was approved in 1965 and started construction in the following year. This new town accommodated 16 university and college campuses. Several universities originally located in central Tokyo moved their main campus to the suburban new towns. Those include some of the top public and private universities in Japan, such as Keio University, Chuo University, Hitotsubashi University and so on. Day labourers may not be able to find jobs in central Tokyo which allows them to be based in San'ya, but they can move and find work to do somewhere else. The demand for day laborers reached another peak in 1989, after the boom in 1960s. Up to beginning of bubble economy, which was around 1989, San'ya's population was maintained at around 18,000 by estimation.

The collapse of economic bubble in 1991 is a turning point for Japanese economy, also for San'ya. The decline of day labour population started from the late 1960s, but the downward development of living environment in San'ya began from 1990. The job positions advertised by the Johoku Labour and Welfare Center<sup>4</sup> welfare center declined dramatically from 35,207 in 1990 to 22,966 in 1991 (see Figure 2). The number continued declining in the following years and never turned up again. The requests for unemployment aid soared from 22,265 in 1990 to 86,347 in 1994 (see Figure 2). Soared rate of unemployment among day labourers made significant contribution to the shabby appearance of San'ya then. As Fowler (1996) observed during late 1980s and early 1990s that the men who could not get work ended up drinking on the street during the day. Day labourers who could no longer afford Kan'yi Shukusho moved out and settled down in streets, parks, or riversides in San'ya area. 'San'ya then, might just as well be considered a state of mind as a slum'(Fowler. 1996:14).

Figure 2. Annual total of job vacancy advertised at Johoku Labor and Welfare Center and requests for unemployment aid



Source: adapted from the data from Johoku Labor and Welfare Center

<sup>4</sup> Johoku Labour and Welfare Center is a public welfare center which offers job and healthcare consultation for the registered unemployed people. It is located in the central area of San'ya.

Illoha Shopping Street, which was symbolic for San'ya's prosperity soon was turned to be the symbol of San'ya's downturn (see Picture 2). With its newly built glass roof, it became one of the major camping sites for the homeless people in the night, especially during winter and the rain season. The homeless scared away the not-much-left shoppers in the recession. Illoha soon slid into slackness. Up to 2008, there were only around 4,682 people living in Kan'yi Shukusho.

Picture 2. Illoha today at 17.38, 12 March 2015 (Thursday Afternoon)



### 3.3. Ongoing transformation

The core area and most of the rest where are far away or less accessible to train station are still shadowed under the languishment. In the daytime, some small wood-structured family-owned workshops may still be making shoes or papers. Streets, as well as Illoha are empty. Over 80% of the shops and restaurants are closed. Bicycles lining outside Kan'yi Shukusho can be the only indicators telling that a quite few of people are still living here. In the nighttime, the area can turn to be deathly still. The frequently encountered empty houses add more unpleasant and somehow depressing air into the environment.

However, the transformation 'normalising' San'ya to be a middle-class area is taking place quietly, but visible. It is generally agreed that the process started from around 2000. Three evident tendencies compose of the transformation: 1) increasing newly-built condominiums targeting on middle-income families; 2) decline in the number of old Kanyi Shukusho and increase in the amount of newly-built backpacker hostels; 3) day labourers and the homeless residing in San'ya ages rapidly and the number continues declining.

Well-equipped condominiums in San'ya were mostly built within the last 15 years (see picture 3).<sup>5</sup> The average rental price of each new unit is similar to the price of the same kind in the other parts of Tokyo, which is at around 60,000 ~ 100,000 yen for a one-bed en-suite studio of 16 ~ 35 m<sup>2</sup>, and 150,000 ~ 200,000 yen for a two-bedroom apartment of 40 ~ 80 m<sup>2</sup>.<sup>6</sup> Among the Kan'ya Shukusho, around 10% have been turned into economic business hostel for young Japanese people and foreign backpackers (Johoku Labor and Welfare Center). Most of them were open in the last 5 years, but 2002 FIFA held in Tokyo and Seoul was the event triggered the trend.

The business received the new round of investment are mostly reinvested by the original landlords or business owners, who have been in San'ya for generations. For instance, the land of the newly-built condominiums were mostly the assets belonging to the families that once run Kanyu Shukusho business for generations. After smaller families were separated from the big families, assets were re-divided, and some were redeveloped to for new profitable business in the local. The majority are located along Meiji Dori and Yoshino Dori, within 15 minutes walking distance from Minowa Station and Minami-Senju Station.

Picture 3: The new condominiums in San'ya



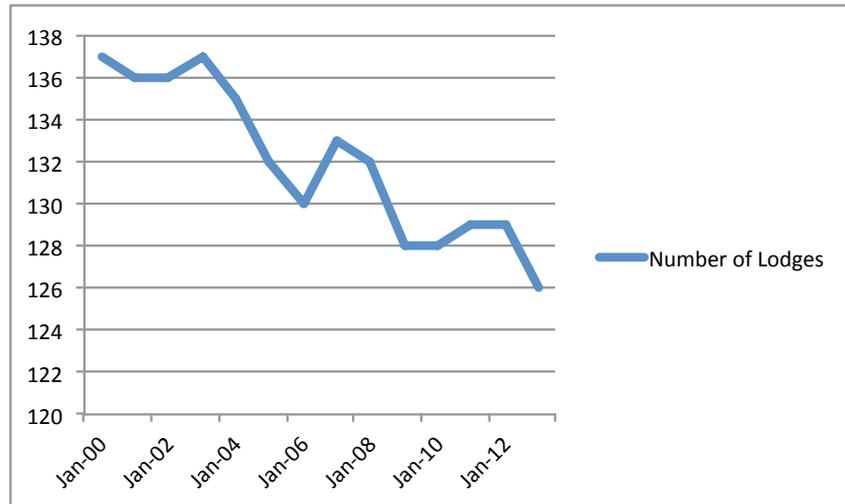
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<sup>5</sup> Search on suumo

<sup>6</sup> The estimation is based on the price information published on suumo.jp -- one of the largest Japanese online real-estate agent. The searching filter is set twice. The first setting has no narrow-down on year. The second setting narrows down to the last 15 years (number in bracket): 537(413) (kiyokawa, nohonzutsumi, higashi akakusa, ; 1352 (988) (minami senju).



Figure3: Changing number of Kanyi Shukusho in San'ya



Source: adapted from the data from Johoku Labor and Welfare Center

Population aging in this area is as visible as the rejuvenation observed from the built environment. Aged shopkeepers serve aged day labourers. People occasionally emerging in the street corner are more often in ragged wears, walking with stoop. Young people may find themselves the real minority in San'ya. Some public primary schools in San'ya has been closed in the recent years, due to the shrinking number of new students. Tanaka Elementary School once located in Nihonzutsumi 2 Chome is one of the examples, which was closed in 2001 and merged into Tōasakusa Elementary School. Daishizuiko Elementary School and Daigozuiko Elementary located in Minami-Senju were closed in 2002.

Statistic data appears to be more striking. Along with the population aging in this country as a whole, Taito-ku and Arakawa-ku where San'ya is located has respectively 23.5% (25.29% only Japanese) and 22.7% of the population are over 65 years old, which are among the top five most aged wards out of the 23 wards in Tokyo Metropolitan Area (Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Informal Affairs and Communication, 2013). Among the residents in Kan'yi Shukusho, the aged population hits 28.0% in 2012 (Johoku Labor and Welfare Center), namely one third of the hostel guests. The average age of the Kan'yi Shukusho residents reached 64.7. Several massive construction serving as nursing houses for the aged people have also emerged in San'ya in the last five years and been in service. They are mostly run by the government or NPOs.

#### **4. A 'mild' process of systematic cleaning out**

The scattered new development in different locations and the independent designs of the newly built buildings easy to give people the impression that the transformation in San'ya is driven by spontaneous market forces with no government coordination or guidance. However, a set of historical events indicates that the transformation of San'ya – as a place of 'indignity' in the society -- does not happen without government's intention. The whole process tends to be a strategic and systematic 'clean-out' process 'normalizing' and 'gentrifying' San'ya, though from the surface it is a spontaneous process driven by market forces responding to the demographic change in the area. The 'government force' appears to not have explicit purpose in gentrifying San'ya if the actions are looked at independently. They are not traditional way of shaping space at all. However, they turn to be strategic actions paving the way for 'normalizing' through influencing the population displacement process when all the actions taken over time were put together.

##### **4.1. The strategies for transforming San'ya**

This set of events include renaming of San'ya in the 1960s, and renovation of Minami-senju station, policy change in Johoku Labor and Welfare Centre and construction of temporary settlement for the homeless in the early 2000. Renaming of San'ya was done during the reconfiguration of Tokyo administrative districts in the 1965, one year right after the Tokyo Summer Olympic Games. San'ya as a place that people could find on map was renamed as Kiyokawa, Nihontsuzumi, Higashi Akasaka. In 2010, the renovation of Minami Senju Station was completed, following the opening of Tsukuba Line. The use of the Johoku Labour and Welfare Center was changed 2000. After the change, only the people holding registered certificate of social assistance can use the facilities in the center. In the same year, Tokyo Metropolitan Government initiated the program aiming at decreasing the number of the homeless people in Tokyo metropolitan area.

If looking at the effect of the set of strategies, they can be categorized into four: erasure of memory, population displacement and encouragement of new investment. All the three categories are oriented towards a 'clean-out' and 'normalizing' process. Renaming San'ya was a simple action but in fact has an effect of erasing the collective memory of San'ya as a place associating with the dark side of the society. It is not very clear that this effect is exactly the original intention, but there is undeniable reluctance of taking San'ya as part of the history in Tokyo, and a collective effort to forget the history of San'ya in the official venues can be found in local school's education. Public schools located in San'ya, which only accept students living in this area, see it a taboo to mention San'ya even simply as a name. The principal from one of the schools explained in an interview that it was to not let the student feel inferior in the society. Together with the following set of observed actions, the inference of this action here gets its root.

The effect of population displacement in San'ya seems accelerated by the policy change in the Johoku Labor and Welfare Centre and the Homeless Assistance Program. Policy change in the Johoku Labor and Welfare Centre – only assists registered social assistance recipients in 2000. This change is a de facto action

excluding the newly deprived people to use the governmental assistance facilities in San'ya. It reduces the 'pull factor' of San'ya that attracting the unemployed. The ones who cannot register as public assistance recipients can only live in a homeless way if they still choose to stay in San'ya. Through the interview, the staff from the center also acknowledged this fact.

In the meanwhile, responding to the homeless issue in Tokyo, the Homeless Assistance Program (路上生活者対策事業) started from 2000 offers temporary shelters – or called 'self-assistance' center -- to the homeless, reduced the number of the homeless in San'ya. The homeless can stay up to six months with the condition of doing maintenance job in the center. The homeless receive skill training for employment during the first 2 to 4 weeks of stay. Every person can apply for the use of the center twice in his or her life. The whole Tokyo's 23 wards are divided into 5 groups. The locations of the temporary assistance facilities take rotation among the member wards in each group. For instance, as Taito ward, Arakawa ward, Kita ward and Bunkyo ward are in the same group, the location of the facilities would be in Taito ward for four years, and in Arakawa ward for the next four years. The homeless in San'ya between 2011 and 2015 should go to Kita Ueno to use the facilities there. After this measure, the number of the homeless seems rapidly reduced. According to the official statistics, the number of the homeless scattered around Tokyo in general decreases rapidly since the initiation of the program. So does in San'ya area. They were once one of the most visible existence adding negative scores in San'ya. But over the past 10 years, Tamahime Park and Iloha are getting less crowded.

The renovation of Minami-senju station completed in 2010 is a normal method that improves the city's image and creates good investment environment. It followed the opening of Tsukuba Line – the express train line connecting the center of Tokyo and its northern cities, which has a stop at Minami-senju station. This renovation opened Akuresuti Minami, which is a trendy commercial center containing various restaurants, shops, also a private clinic. The commercial brands that have entered in this building are mainly middleclass-oriented, such as Maison Souvenir, a French style desert shop. The poor population originally composed the majority here are not the target customers. It can be expected that this renovation would gentrify this area if population inflow to central Tokyo will keep growing in the following years.

#### **4.2. A less aggressive and slow process**

From the above analysis, the strategies of transforming San'ya can be generally divided into two stages. The early stage started from 1960s, when the approach is rather implicit. The second stage started from early 2000s, when more intensive measures were taken. Overall, it can be said that Tokyo government has long been intentional to transform San'ya, but it has never adopted an aggressive approach, which made the process less 'apparent'. Meanwhile, between the 1960s and early 2000, Tokyo Metropolitan Government did not take any significant measures to pull off the thorn in their eyes, though San'ya has long been associated with poverty and social problems such as violent conflicts between labour unions of the day labourers and the hotbed of yakuza. To explain this, we have to infer from some facts

mentioned and not mentioned in the previous parts, and take into consideration of economic and political factors.

To understand why after the Tokyo Metropolitan Government erased the name San'ya there were no other events related to San'ya taking place that were led by the Tokyo government until the early 2000, we should examine the economic significance of San'ya to Tokyo. Between 1960s and 1980s, San'ya had significant role for Tokyo's economic development. Post-WWII reconstruction created a great number of construction projects, after more than two thirds of the central Tokyo area was destroyed by the American bombing in 1945. After 10 years of recovery when social and economic infrastructure is restructured, Japan's economy started to experience high-speed growth. Investment flooded into Tokyo. The large demand for business and residential spaces in Tokyo area pushed the number of construction projects in this city to a peak. All these construction work generated large demand for labor workers. The needs from the other manufacturing soared in the same time. After Tokyo Olympic Games, though construction work in central Tokyo had been getting less along with the decrease of available space and skyrocketing land price<sup>7</sup>, economic prospect in general was still bright and demand from construction and manufacturing industries were still big in Tokyo Metropolitan Area as a whole. From late 1960s, several suburban development projects were initiated. Tama new town development was approved in 1965 and started construction in the following year. This new town accommodated 16 university and college campuses. Several universities originally located in central Tokyo moved their main campus to the suburban new towns. Those include some of the top public and private universities in Japan, such as Keio University, Chuo University, Hitotsubashi University and so on. For all these construction and city development projects, day laborers made significant contribution. San'ya at that period was actually crucial to the development of Tokyo city. In this sense, it is easy to understand that San'ya was preserved during that time. Only erasing the name of San'ya actually is a very smart and visionary decision.

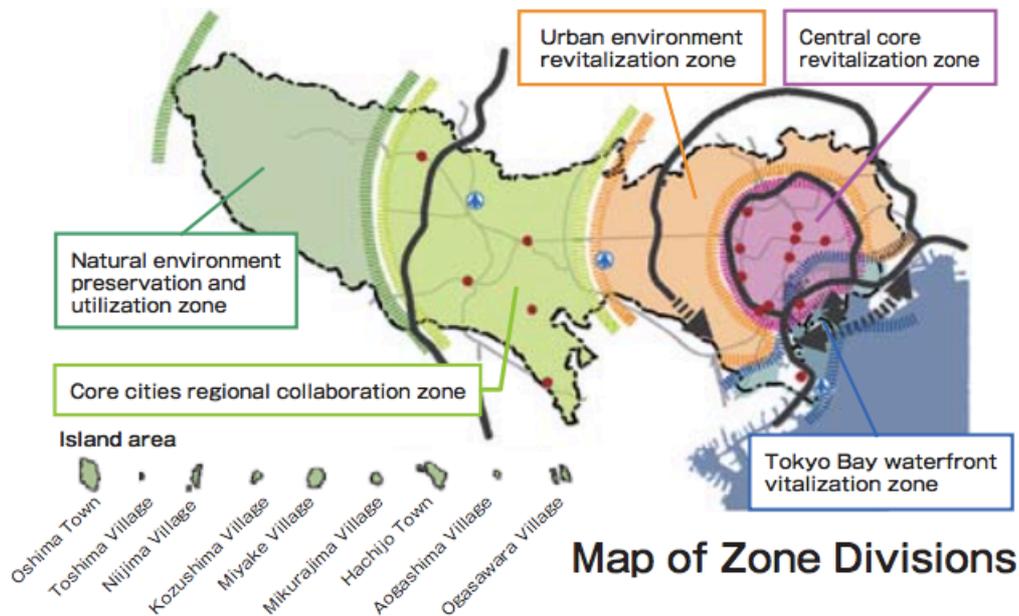
After 2000, there is one important factor helps us to understand why more intense measures were taken, that is the proposal of global city by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (2002 strategy plan). In this plan, a basic concept of 'creating an attractive and prosperous, environmentally-leading city that will serve as a model for the world' (Tokyo Metropolitan Government, 2011, p3) was proposed. Tokyo recognized 'the intensifying competition between international cities, and the growing severity of problems facing the global environment' (Tokyo Metropolitan Government, 2011, p2), and targeted to be a city that can create internationally competitive environment. Strategies followed up immediately for the city development goal, which includes 'revitalization of Tokyo as a place in which to live and work', 'development of urban infrastructure', 'building a safe and secure city',

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<sup>7</sup> The Second World War destroyed most part of Tokyo, which allows land development at low prices during the reconstruction. Economic recovery then stimulated investment to flood into Tokyo, which created large demand for residential and business spaces. The sudden increasing demand and the limited amount of available land had Tokyo's land price soar. In Ginza – one of the growth cores in Tokyo, land was 45,000 yen/m<sup>2</sup> in 1947, but 350,000 yen/m<sup>2</sup> in 1953, and 1,100,000 yen/m<sup>2</sup> in 1961. In the following years, although Japan's economic growth continued slowing down, economic prospect for businesses based in central Tokyo stayed bright. Land price continued increasing until economic bubble blasted in 1991. The slump of land price led to dramatic devalorization of assets in the hands of investors. Further investment stopped. Unemployment rate increased. Economy in Tokyo region in general went into stagnation.

‘creating a comfortable urban environment’, ‘promoting better living conditions’, and so on. In this plan, San’ya is circled in the central revitalization zone. It would then be easy to understand that there are more governmental actions against a shabby area filled with deprived population.

Map 3. Map of Zone Division



Source: Tokyo Metropolitan Government (2011)

However, as pointed out before, in this period the Tokyo government still did not take aggressive actions such as forced eviction against the ‘undesired’ population, which is a common practice in many developed and developing countries. The reason is probably not because the Tokyo government is benign enough to not think about this option. In fact, the displacement of the homeless in San’ya to the other areas was once proposed but denied in implementation, as the other wards do not want to have the problems spread to their districts. The political and economic cost should be the real reason of not conducting evacuation and eviction in San’ya. Aggressive intervention such as forced eviction would in fact have high cost on Japanese society. Meanwhile, the population aging of day laborers allows the ‘soft approach’ to work though it takes a bit longer time, as population displacement eventually will be completed itself as long as the new influx of ‘undesirable’ population is discouraged. ‘Soft approaches’ which coordinate with the aging of day laborers, improve infrastructure (transportation) to signal development and encourage private and individual investment, in this sense, is a more sound approach.

## VI. Conclusion and implication

The transformation of San'ya appears to be driven by spontaneous market forces with no government coordination or guidance. However, historical events indicate that this is a 'clean-out' process strategically and systematically 'normalizing' and 'gentrifying' San'ya, along with the trend of population aging. These events include renaming of San'ya, renovation of Minami-senju station, policy change in the use of Johoku Labor and Welfare Centre, and construction of temporary settlement for the homeless. Categorizing by their effects, these events can be grouped as erasure of memory, population displacement and encouragement of new investment.

Looking through the timeline, these events took place in two periods, which also reflect different policy orientations. The first stage (1960s) has the approach with rather implicit purpose. The second stage (from early 2000s) has the purpose more explicit than the previous one. The transformation also has a tendency of speeding up during this period. Tokyo government is considered as having long been intentional to transform San'ya, but not opted to an aggressive approach, which made the process less 'apparent'.

Between the 1960s and early 2000, Tokyo Metropolitan Government did not take any significant measures to deal with San'ya which was seen a problematic area in Tokyo. The economic significance of San'ya between 1960s and late 1980s helps us understand this nothing-was-done period. The making of 'global city' strategy re-activated the government force to speed up the transformation of San'ya. Aggressive approach were not adopted during this period either. Economic and political cost, as well as the natural aging of present day laborer population gives an alternative of explanation.

It is difficult to conclude whether the adoption of 'benign' approach can justify the redevelopment or renewal of an 'undesirable' place in the city core like San'ya. The good side of the story is that the existing population does not have to be relocated and cut off from their original social connection, while redevelopment can still proceed and add land value to the area, as well as improve the general image of the city. But on the other hand, the transformation has to be on the expense of excluding the newly deprived population, taking away a possible way of surviving in place where is close to various resources, and also increasing the living cost of the present poor population.

At the center of the issue probably should be the attitude of the elites, the city governors and planners, as well as the ordinary residents, toward the deprived population and deprived areas. Whose city? What does a good image mean? Whether a city should be more tolerable to its flaws to accommodate everyone and open its resources and opportunities to everyone? Whether a less 'desirable' place is a bad place that must be converted to feed the taste of middle class? Whether they really have to be incompatible with the rest of the city and rest of the population? These are questions that this research raises for more discussion in the future.

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