Urban Life in the Early Modern Period and the Development of Furuya

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This article deals with the history of furuya, which originated from urban festivals in medieval Japan, with special attention to its inheritance and development in the early modern period (kinssei). My recent interests lie in the area of reevaluating this process of inheritance and change by studying the actual urban festivals and customs in that period.

The inheritance of furuya extends to various fields, and its development provides occasion for extensive discussion. I will focus on urban life, which flourished conspicuously in kinsei, in order to describe various aspects of the penetration of furuya in the form of tsukurimono (properties) into every corner of the urban community, which transcends the festival space in the narrow sense. These tsukurimono penetrated community culture through a number of routes: sometimes through annual events and amusements, sometimes as artifacts and goods on exhibition in pleasure districts, sometimes even through hobbies such as gardening dedicated to the production of oddities.