Minamata, the Duplex Castle Town
in Modern Japan
—Transfiguration of an Urban Life—

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The reason why the author chose Minamata for a study on a city in modern times and at present days is not to unravel directly the complicated case of the "Minamata Disease". But because I believe that the case of Minamata Disease has become more acute and far widely problematical by the long-term discriminative structure of the urban space at Minamata and the conscience thereof. The author therefore attempted to pursue the transfiguration of the inhabitants in the two aspects of the urban spatial suructure and the conscience of these inhabitants.

1. We first of all find three phases in the transfiguration of the urban space in Minamata:
(1) a period when a castle-town like space was structured with Fukami clan, the powerful families since the medieval ages; (2) a period when the large-scaled modern chemical company, "Chisso" launched into Minamata to create a sort of castle town with the enterprise at the top; the Minamata disease occurred in this period. (3) now when the enterprise "Chisso" has fallen down, the Minamata Bay has been reclaimed within the general framework of sludge disposal project and a new Minamata is being constructed.

2. From Fukami's Castle Town Like Space inot Chisso's Enterprise like Castle Town

This tremendous transfiguration will be depicted in this paper on the basis of hearing from aged residents and ancient documents (literature and photos). One of the characteristics is that the midtown area in Minamata moved from the uptown down to seashore. We find then the process in which the old discriminative structural space (that is, segregation by social position) was succeeded by Chisso into a new isolation space, which was accompanied by changed conscience of the inhabitants. This led to the formation of the enterprise type "castle town"
unique in Japan. The Minamata Disease occurred among the fishers who were at the bottom of the social strata. In this background the patients were isolated as those giving a dreadful anxiety both to the load ("Chisso") and to the peaceable subjects (workers of Chisso and their related), and unsparingly persecuted as Minamata’s minority.

3. Transfiguration of ritual Space and entertaining Space in Minamata

There once existed a delectable popular life as in the "good old days" before Chisso took over the ruling power. The author tried to reproduce the image of such life all through their festivities and amusements.

Because the festivals and amusements are another original point for the local inhabitants to mass. When we attempt, from this viewpoint, to examine what was and is the urban life in Minamata, we realize sharply what was utterly and definitely lost by the modernization and in particular by the rule of Chisso. In this paper we introduce the dedicatory "sumo" wrestling match at the Hachiman-gū shrine and speedboat races in the ancient Minamata River to which all the inhabitants had participated as well as to the "Bina" shell gathering, sea bathing and other delightful get-togethers and describe how these were exterminated or altered by the Chisso’s investment, namely by their selfish, large-scaled urban renewal and environmental destruction.

4. Light and Shade of the "Flurishing Age" (1955 to 1965)

Here we tried to grasp the significance of the self-flattery "Flurisging Age" considering statistically the real status of the "modern", new life the Chisso related salaried men and women, merchants and their families enjoyed under the high economic growth. This side can be regarded as the "light" of the life in Minamata. Note that one the "shade" face, about 1% of the Minamata inhabitants suffered the fearful "Minamata Disease", who were compelled to live their miserable life (the "ten vacant years") under the double and even triple discrimination and oppression.

5. "Sōshi-Sha", the Center of Minamata Disease

Defeated in the "Environmental Pollution" trial in 1973, Chisso fell into bankruptcy due to his liability to reparation in huge amount. Upon their losing the suit, the number of damaged people increased violently. A commune of pateients
supporters newly born in Minamata at that time is the "Sōshi-Sha" where numerous young volunteers developed multiple activities to save the patients. We consider in this paper how they, the new comers from outside were received by the indigenous collectivity.

6. A Trial for New Ritual Space: "Otome-Zuka"

This is also a new phenomenon arising out of the fall and decline of Chisso Company. The enshrining mound, "Otome-Zuka" established in 1979 for the victims of the Minamata Disease brought forth a new ritual space. What friction and suspicion were produced by this sort of ritual space among the indigenous people? By introducing the evolution thereof and the intention of the founder ("Tsuka-Mori"), we attempted to analyze the thought of "Matsuri" (festival) implied.