Sakariba, a Labyrinthine Space

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Sakaribas, or amusement quarters, represent one of the important features of the major cities in Japan. In this article, Sakaribas in Tokyo through each stage of their historical development are compared with each other, their distinctive characteristics are analyzed, and their significance as "labyrinthine space" is discussed. Asakusa, a representative Sakariba situated on the periphery of the capital in the previous era, comprised a concentrated "Topos" that were closely bound with nature and religion. Within the precincts of Sensoji temple in Asakusa was a showground created for various entertaining exhibitions. Ginza, which represents modernism in Japan, on the one hand, embodies a typical Western-style urban planning that has its avenues and streets neatly crisscrossed for shopping convenience, but, on the other hand, it shows at the same time a typical Japanese space with numerous alleys interwoven in a truly complex manner. Shinjuku, a town that symbolizes the Sakariba trends in the 1960's consists of three major zones: a shopping zone around the station, Kabuki-cho area with restaurants and bars, and behind the area a so-called "Love Hotels" zone for love-making purposes. Shibuya, representing Sakaribas in the 80's, uniquely identifies itself, from other towns with standardized planning, by its attractive town layout making use of its many slopes and curves. Cruising through the varied streets in the labyrinth excites the visitors. Daikanyama, a new 'uptown' leisure zone with more natural surroundings with trees and undulated hills, as well as Shibaura, a waterfront town with bridges and canals, are becoming popular with the youth indicating a new tendency for appreciation of natural labyrinths.