Rise and Growth of Shopping Districts: Case Study on Senbayashi Shopping District in Osaka City

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In Osaka City’s central area, commercial districts with massed stores had been formed before the Meiji era. But in the districts urbanized in the late Meiji era and after along with the expansion of municipal limits, the formation of most shopping districts was realized in and after the Meiji era.

In this paper, the author picks up a case of Senbayashi Shopping District in Asahi Ward, which is the latest one among the most active shopping districts in Osaka City, and discusses its process of development and the relationship with its local community by referring pictorial materials.

Senbayashi Shopping District consists of about 220 stores at the present. There were, however, only 10 stores in the late Meiji era in Senbayashi Village, Higashinari County, where the present Senbayashi Shopping District locates, and adjacent two villages inclusively. The formation of the shopping district here was spurred by the establishment of a railway station following the opening of a private railway line in the Meiji era and the establishment of a public market in the late Taisho era. The incorporation of Higashinari County into Osaka City in the late Taisho era; the opening of a municipal street car line in the early Showa era and national road Rout I; and an increase in population as a result of land improvement and the opening of Johoku Canals; all of these helped Senbayashi Shopping District to lay its foundation.

It was in the first half of 30s of Showa era that the Senbayashi Shopping District became one of the most prominent shopping districts in Osaka City, greatly contributed by not suffering from way damage during World War II. Senbayashi Shopping District was thriving most in the late 30s of Showa era. Since a competition with large-scale supermarkets started within the shopping district from the late 30s of Showa era, the Senbayashi Shopping District body had to grope how to cohabit with large-scale supermarkets within the district.

With the peak population of Asahi Ward in the 30s of Showa era, it has been declining thereafter, reaching the same level of population as in the 20s of Showa era at the present. As a result, the customer attracting power of the shopping district has been getting weekend gradually, but it still is more vigorous than other shopping districts in Osaka City. The task of Senbayashi Shopping District for its further development is to have retail stores supported by younger generations and to breed successors of present store owners.