The Use of "Territory" by Huckster-type Street Vendor Associations

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In this paper I shed light on the "territories" ("nawabari") of huckster-type street vendor associations and discuss how they are operated using an example from the eastern part of Tokyo. A territory is made up of individual "shoba", or street stalls. The "shoba" belong to the market itself. The territory is the area across which the "shoba" are distributed.

Because most "shoba" are jointly managed by a number of huckster-type street vendor associations several territories overlap one another. Jointly managed "shoba" and these several overlapping territories are called "ainiwa". The spread of these "ainiwa" is a feature of the territories of the huckster-type street vendor associations in the eastern part of Tokyo.

The overlapping of these territories has not occurred randomly. At one time there were clear occupational differences between huckster-type street vendor associations, whereby three types of methods were used for "segregation" depending on the type of occupation. This "segregation" has been passed down to the present day even though these occupational differences are no longer evident. The "ainiwa" and the "segregation" seen within them create a situation where a number of huckster-type street vendor organizations with different occupations must jointly increase the activity of a single "shoba". The result is the formation of a market featuring an abundant variety of street stalls.

If a single huckster-type street vendor association takes over one of these active "shoba", it is able to obtain all profits that are generated. But in order to obtain profit efficiently, it is preferable to create an appealing and bustling stall. It is thought that "ainiwa" came into existence as a compromise when conflict arose over which association to choose. As a form of stable territory, an "ainiwa" is a resource for the associations. Consequently, even when some kind of tension arises among huckster-type street vendors, they do not engage in arguing or fighting that would have an adverse effect on their bustling street stalls.