Changes in *Toka Ebisu* Festival at Nishinomiya Jinja Shrine in the Meiji and Taisho Period

HIRAYAMA Noboru

This article aims to examine how *Toka Ebisu* Festival — an annual prayer event held at Nishinomiya Jinja between January 9 and 11 — changed during the period from the Meiji era to the beginning of the Showa era, mainly focusing on the changes caused by the opening of a railway and the relation between the railway company and the shrine.

Soon after the dawn of the Meiji Period, due to the opening of a state-run railway, more and more urban dwellers joined the festival, which made the shrine interested in attracting them. However, what played a decisive role was Hanshin Electric Railway (HER), a private railway company which opened toward the end of the Meiji era. HER not only made the shrine more accessible to urban dwellers, but also, by making various attempts to attract as many people as possible, rendered the event dramatically more popular than ever before, which means HER was a developer as well as a transportation enterprise. In response, the shrine began to seek to be more prosperous in cooperation with HER.

However, the shrine and HER were not always on good terms because the former regarded both its prosperity and the preservation of its traditional rituals as essential, while all the latter hoped for was to increase its revenue. Thus there sometimes occurred a conflict between them.

Having the process above in mind, the author concludes that, in order to analyze the process in which annual prayer events in and around urban cities changed into the way they are at present, it is essential to focus on the following two aspects — (i) changes caused by the opening of a railway company, especially one which not only offered better access to shrines but also acted as a developer producing or arranging annual events. (ii) the cooperation/conflict relation between a shrine and a railway company, the former trying to preserve tradition and the latter only seeking to be economically successful.

Key words: modern times, worship, railway, city