

# The process of the reconstruction based on the relationship between the symbolic riverbank space and its surrounding community - A case of 'THE DEV DIWALI' Festival in Varanasi (INDIA) -

## 1. Background and purpose of the study

The unfitness between the existence of the human and environment caused by the destructions of the environment due to developments after the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has not been resolved yet. One of the issues here is the construction of the methods, devices, systems and ideas as an alternative method for the revival of the community environment. It is considered that an environmental skill, in addition, the intended wisdom that can be reconstructed for the modern time between the human and environment is mentioned from the view of the Environmental Folklore Society. It is required that the wisdom of folk customs that has existed in a traditional society as an alternative method for the issue.

In Asian cities that often described 'chaotic' and 'organic' in recent years, ecological thoughts as the environmental culture have been immanence in the form of cosmology. In this study, the relationship between the human and water that is immanence in Asian cities is focused by studying Varanasi, a holy place of Hindu, that has the history of 3000 years and close relationship between the religion and water as the study site. The purpose of the study is to grope the method to reconstruct the relationship between the human and environment for the modern time based on the relationship between the symbolic riverbank space and its surrounding community through the Dev Diwali festival.

## 2. Summary of the study objects and methods

### 2-1 Study objects

Holy city 'Varanasi'

The largest holy place of the Seven Indian holy places that tourists and pilgrims gather from inside and outside of the country.

Symbolic river space 'Ghat'

A stair-patterned site at the riverbank of the holy Ganges that is 6.4 km long.

Surrounding community 'Mohalla'

A general term for the smallest social organization of

Varanasi, a local community. Only those adjoin to the ghat are considered to be the surrounding community in this study.

Festival 'Dev Diwali Festival'

A festival that oil lamps are decorated at ghat. It was originally a small festival celebrated at Panchaganga on the full moon (**Purnima**) of **KARTTIKA** in Hindi Calendar. It became a large-scale festival approximately ten years ago and is one of the largest Varanasi festivals.

### 2-2 Research methods

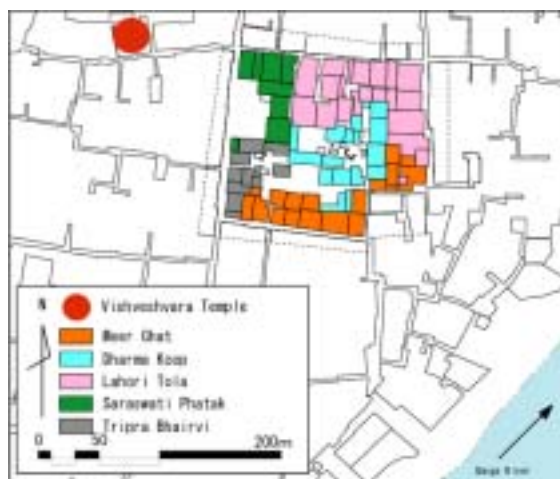


Fig.1 Hearing Research Site (city area)



Fig.2 Hearing Research Site (Ghat Decoration)

A hearing research to the residents of the city area, and observation study of the structure of mohalla and nature of the Dev Diwali festival (decoration, participation method etc...) were conducted by using a detailed map of the area for two months from October to November of 2000 and November to December of 2001. The study consists of the data obtained through these research and documents regarding to Varanasi.

### 3. Results

#### 3-1 Relationship between the riverbank space and its surrounding community at usual time

First of all, composition elements of 'mohalla' and the effect of it to the residents were analyzed. Based on the analysis, it was proven that mohalla was specified by its composition elements (ghat, hometown of the residents etc...). In addition, it could be classified into 1. street type 2. symbol-street type 3. symbol type.

Secondly, activity analysis of the residents at ghat was conducted. It was indicated that the activity of the residents were largely influenced by the characteristics of ghat.

As the result, ghat could be defined as 'local-tight ghat' and 'unlocal-loose ghat' based on 'local-unlocal' axis and 'tight-loose' axis.

#### 3-2 Dev Diwali Festival –social structure of Varanasi at unusual time

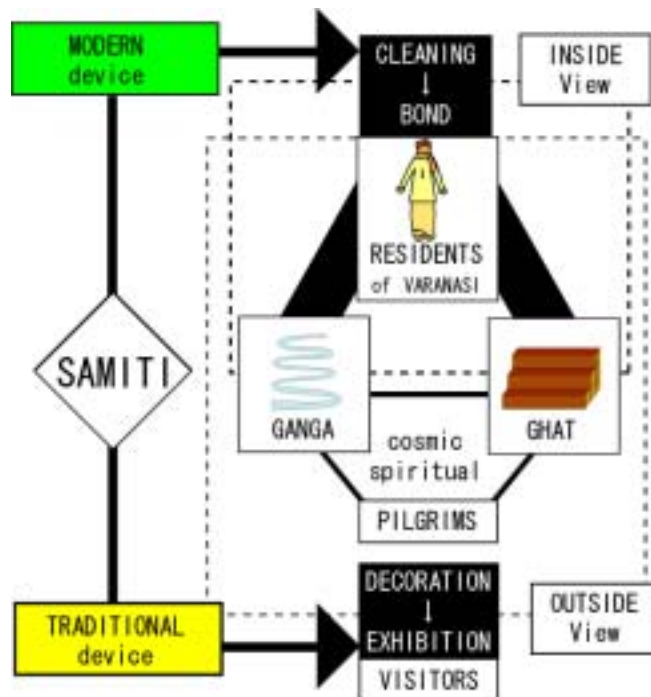


Fig.3 Structure of Dev Diwali Festival

The structure of Dev Diwali Festival is shown in Fig.3. Varanasi has the relationship among the residents of Varanasi, ghat and Ganges, and the relationship among pilgrims, ghat and Ganges at usual time. On the other hand, 'TRADITIONAL device' and MODERN device' are given by Samiti that is organized at the Festival. Phenomenal unification by the former produces the consciousness that they are observed by the tourists and 'OUTSIDE view' becomes effective on a daily basis. The latter gives 'INSIDE view' that enables the residents to bond to ghat and the river.