

Thai group travels to Japan

November 7 - 17, 2003 (Tom's rough notes)

Who went?

1. Mr. Nopadon Thungsakul ("Tommy"), Architecture School, Khon Kaen University
2. Mr. Sakkarin Sae-Pu, Architecture School, Mahasarakham University
3. Ms. Panthip Buttad, Community Leader, Bangkok
4. Mr. Somchai Naktiam, Community Leader, Klong Ladprao, Bangkok
5. Mr. Somnuek Chanin, Community Leader, Ruam Samaki, Bangkok
6. Mr. Ruanyuth Teeravanich, NHA, Information Division
7. Mr. Sin Suesuan, CODI
8. Ms. Thipparat Noppaladaron, CODI
9. Mr. Palakorn Wongkongkaew, CODI
10. Mr. Nuntapong Yindeekhun, Community architect, CODI
11. Mr. Bunphot Wasugree, Community architect, CODI
12. Ms. Chelersri Radakool, CODI
13. Ms. Jantana Benchasub (Pui), CODI
14. Ms. Preeda Kongpaen (Pi Duang), Chumchon Thai Foundation
15. Ms. Phichaya Kaeokhao, Livable Cities Project
16. Mr. Thomas Kerr, ACHR

Our guides and companions in Japan :

1. Mr. Inamoto Etsuzo, Architect, Tokyo
2. Father Peter Shimokawa, Professor, Sophia University
3. Mr. Aoyagi Keitaro, Architecture student
4. Ms. Kakiuchi Akaba, Grad Student (research in Thailand, speaks Thai)
5. Mr. Nishiyama Yoichi, KDDI (Mami's Video guy, from Tokyo)
6. Ms. Nakamura Mami, Volunteer with ACHR/CODI
7. Mr. Tozaki Masanori, Grad Student, Kochi University, Shikoku
8. Mr. D.G.J. Premakumara, Grad Student at Nihon Fukushi University (from Sevanatha, Sri Lanka)

Saturday November 8, 2003

Thai group arrives in Osaka (Kansai International Airport) in the early morning, and after breakfast, Mami helps us to purchase our Japan Rail passes. Airport is a sea of gray vinyl, gray granite, brushed gray stainless steel and exposed gray concrete. The young people are hideous: lumbering, overweight, bleach-haired giants with golf-club bags. But the older people are lovely, mannered, dignified and with beautiful faces.

We take the train to AOTS (*The Association for Overseas Technical Scholarship*) in Osaka, where we will stay over night, and where we get our first exposure to the celebrated Japanese knack for *miniaturization*. We're allotted tiny individual rooms, where all the elements of a normal hotel room are in place, but shrunk to miniature size, and organized with brilliant efficiency. These rooms couldn't be larger than 2 x 3.5 meters. Only one very small pillow on the bed which seems to be made of foam pellets - is this tradition or masochism? All very intriguing, but heaven help the person of above-average size who has to sit on that tiny fiberglass toilet, or in that teacup-sized bathtub! And for these tiny cubicles we are paying \$60 a night! The Japanese are experts at fitting in a lot of things with great elegance into very small spaces: houses, toilets, advertisements, gardens, etc.

Public Rental Housing in the Asaka area : Inamoto takes us on a walk in the neighborhood. Local government develops a lot of rental housing in Japanese cities. For all classes, not just for the poor, also for middle class renters. In Asaka, which is a down market part of Osaka (looks snazzier than Sukhumvit to us!), a lot of this public rental housing we see, in soaring high-rises with lovely landscaping and big bicycle parks in front, is actually much cheaper housing. Housing is big business in Japan - big contracts for construction firms and involving big amounts of money in constructing it. But now the economy is down so the construction of this public rental housing has slumped. Japan's version of the NHA is called **HUDC (Housing and Urban Development Corporation)**.

Private sector condos in Asaka area : We visit the sales room of a new private-sector condominium in the same area. The Thais gasp and gawk to see the luxurious appointments of the model unit we are shown: 102 square meters, with a tiny tatami room, 2 or 3 bedrooms, electronic toilet seats, a very strange floor-plan. Cost US\$ 378,000. (*about 150,000 Baht per square meter!*) Inamoto tells us that this is much cheaper than during the "bubble" years.

Osaka old market area : Tiny shops downstairs, cheap rental rooms and flats upstairs. Very lively and human. Most people seem to go by bicycle - these narrow lanes laid out in a simple grid are mostly pedestrians and so

many bicycles - no cars or scooters. Lots of "100-Yen" and 99-Yen shops, where everything in the shop is 99 Yen (about US\$1) - groceries, clothes, prepared foods, household goods, gifts, everything. Inamoto says these places have proliferated since the Japanese economy has gone down. Inamoto says this is a very old area, the layout of lanes and streets is ancient, but all the buildings look squeaky new, or at least since the 1970s. All the shops seem realistic somehow, they are all selling what local people need - not touristy or fetish - bakeries, green groceries, tiny noodle shops, hardware stores, stationers, etc. A lot of estate agents! Realistic, local, but affluent feeling.

- **Well-behaved! Japan is the kind of country where pedestrians wait at the crossings for the light to change, even if it is past midnight and there are no vehicles in site!**

First visit to Asaka Buraku Community,

Evening : Explanation about Buraku Liberation Movement at Asaka meeting room :

*This is the Buraku Liberation League's Asaka branch. We are introduced to the Buraku movement by a man named **Kimura Masakazu** from the Asaka BLL. Kimura lives with his family in the Asaka public rental family. "I am middle class." He is in charge of the BLL's newly-organized NPO for welfare, and is working in a school for mentally handicapped.*

Like everything else in Japan, even poverty and social exclusion were highly organized! Tokugawa Shogunate's strategy to keep people in line included the creation of the Buraku.

History of Buraku discrimination : People say that Japanese people are one tribe, one single ethnic group, but this is not so. There are many ethnic groups in Japan. Besides Chinese, Korean and the main Yamato tribe, there are other ethnic groups. The dominant Yamato discriminated against Aind and Okinawa tribes. But Buraku are part of the Yamato tribe and discriminated against within the dominant ethnic group. Discrimination against Buraku started 1,300 years ago! 700 A.D. grew with imperial system and sense of "dirtiness" around the task of killing animals. Nobody wants to kill animals and deal with their carcasses and parts, so Buraku were pushed into doing this job and were henceforth labeled "dirty." Within the Yamato tribe, there were very high people, like the emperor, and very low people, like the Buraku. These people were pushed into separate communities because of this dirty work they were given to do. During the 1600s (400 years ago, during the Edo period), this was systematized into a hierarchical system, very much like India's caste system :

1. Warrior class
2. Farmer class
3. Artisan class
4. Merchant class

These four classes were considered as "human beings," while there were created a few "outcast" groups below these four, totally out of the system. There were "beggars from the dry riverbed", there were geisha and prostitutes, entertainers, and there were the Buraku (leather workers, butchers and garbage collectors). But they were called "Eta" at first (which means "filth"), or a much worse name "Hinin" (which means "not human").

1876 : the Tokugawa imperial period ends, and the new Meiji government was established, promoting modernization. But the discrimination continued. Government tried to stop discrimination, enacted law for "liberation" of *Eta* or *Hinin*, but discrimination didn't stop. System continued. Communities where Buraku lived were separate, clearly isolated like slums, on the outskirts of towns, cities and villages. Not integrated in any way. The work they were allowed to do was very limited - majority do jobs like killing or clearing animals, leather work or construction daily laborers. Some Buraku living in mountains were forbidden to cut wood, while Buraku near the sea were forbidden to fish! Even in daily life, forbidden to marry, to join in main festivals. If people wanted to move out of the Buraku, they could, but they would have to hide their identity and hide their past. **In 1867, there were 6,000 Buraku settlements in Japan.** The western side of the country had the most, not so many in the East. No Buraku on Hokaido, where it was a different tribe.

1922 : Buraku stood up against this discrimination. "We are human too." Formed group called "Sui Heza" (Horizontal). This was the fore-runner of the BLL. After that came Japan's great expansion period, invading other Asian countries.

1945 : Japan lost war and started the democratic period, under the American administration. In the new Japanese constitution, the Royal family and discrimination were officially left behind. But even after WW2, discrimination didn't stop. **Here is a dark example of how customs and practices are stronger than any law.**

1950s and 60s : Buraku people fight for rights. Finally in 1965, the Japanese government acknowledged for the first time that there exists discrimination against Buraku. Before, the government just thought it was natural and nothing wrong! This was the same time that the labor rights and student movements were growing, in the 50s and 60s in Japan. In the 1960s the economy started its climb, so the government had money, started to fund the upgrading of Buraku settlements. There were never evictions of Buraku people from their settlements, only restrictions and sealing these communities shut! Now in the new century, people find discrimination against the Buraku wrong.

Asaka History : Asaka's development happened during the period of 1960 - 2000. Very southernmost part of Osaka, on Yamato River. Asaka was a Buraku settlement along the river, part built on stilts right over the water. It is not common practice in Japan to build a settlement so close to a river - unsafe, danger of flooding

when waters rise, unhealthy, etc. It was not a good area, with serious yearly flooding problems - but no choice where to live for the Buraku. The river was moved to this location during the Edo period - used to be straight, but they made it curved (why?). Lots of people from all over Japan came to work on this huge project to change the course of the Yamoto River, in the 1600s. Among the people who came to work were some "Eta" and "Hinin" and after work, the government allowed them to stay only in this one very bad place on the edge of the newly located river. That was the birth of Asaka. All the rice fields nearby belonged to villagers, not to the Buraku of Asaka. At that time, the Eta and Hinin could not buy land or own land. So Asaka was the worst land.

In the 1960s, built the University and a big train yard on the West side of the river, near Asaka. Big yard to park trains. At that time, Asaka did not have the status of a "community", only a "village". It got cut off from Osaka by these two developments, no access. This increased their geographic isolation even more, people would say "*Don't go there!*" At that time, there were about 900 families (3,800 people) living in Asaka.

Daily life in Asaka back then: Deep poverty in the area in the 1960s. No jobs, so people did two things: daily laborers or recycling garbage. Salaries very low, uncertain income. When there was rain, no income. With no money, children could not go to school. Today, members of the community who are over 60 years old, mostly did not go to school back then. Kids have to stay home and take care of their younger siblings or go help their parents at the work site. And when kids did have a chance to go to school, they would be discriminated against at school, which was outside their area. Space was restricted in classes, kept a special area of the classrooms for the kids from Asaka, as though they had some disease! If anything bad happened in class, the Asaka kids would be blamed. In Japan, there is a tradition of teachers making visits to their pupil's houses, but even in the 1970s, teachers would not visit Buraku families in Asaka. This was a big worry for Asaka parents, because without school, no chance of better jobs, no way out of poverty. And even if they study, most companies won't hire Buraku kids.

Now it's completely different! 20 years of work has transformed this community.

- **Question from Pi Duang : Now you have a good community and good education. How do you show that you are Buraku?** Cannot tell from the face or from the name. But in the city, people know where the Buraku live, so where you live gives you away as a Buraku. In Japan, there is a system of identification called family registration, which includes present address" (which changes) and "Original address" (which never changes). This "original address" system is very formalized, related to where your birth is registered, like a birthmark which follows you around all your life, cannot change it or cover it up easily. Like a permanent stigma. Now the law allows people to change their "original address" with marriage, but still a problem. There was a book published in the 1970s of Buraku addresses (not names) which big companies used to have, and use it to look up the "Family register address" of potential workers and then reject Buraku applicants. Laws stopped this book, but some companies still put Buraku address lists on web-sites, so the information is still available. *In this way, Buraku discrimination is location based - a discrimination based on where you live and where you come from!* This stuff only comes up when you apply for jobs or marriage. Big problem in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. People believe that if you marry a Buraku, your blood gets dirty. Amazingly strong these ideas! Many girls and boys from Buraku cannot get married for this reason. Some get married to non-Buraku partners, who then find themselves being cut off from their relatives.
- **Question from Pi Duang : 50 years ago, did Buraku people feel ashamed of themselves, or proud to be human?** Many ways of thinking about this! Some don't wait to say, some feel the discrimination is wrong and they are proud, but some do feel lower and less human after all this.
- **Question: Attitude of the nearby university to Asaka?** Until the 1960s, no relations between university and Asaka. But now, after the 1960s, when the movement started, the students and Buraku started organizing joint meetings and classes. In academic field, there was also discrimination - previously there had been no research or study into Buraku history or culture. Japan has a *National Human Rights Commission*, but it's not working well.

1969 Law passed : The past 20 - 30 years, there have been special government projects trying to work with people, to "equalize" Buraku and rest of Japanese society. When the new law was passed in 1969 ("Special Measure for Dowa Projects") it was supposed to last for ten years. But the policy continues today, with only some small changes.

The BLL Movement : Moving from a rights-based to a more community-based movement :

This development of Buraku was happening at the same time that the whole country was becoming developed and growing economically so fast! Difficult to organize Buraku to become a movement - what concrete purpose? Discrimination is the thing the government left undone by the law. So it is the government's responsibility to support budget and programs to demolish this discrimination and to upgrade Buraku lives (Sounds like a "rights-based" approach!) Originally, Buraku Movement was a human rights-based movement, demanding change externally "*Who is responsible?!*" But through the work of improving Buraku settlements, the movement has taken on significant community based elements. Space was created for communities to do things for themselves, through these government programs and mechanisms. (*Peter Shimokawa says it is similar for Japan's Homeless movement, which started as a rights-based struggle, and is trying to introduce community-based elements - which is very hard!*)

Improvement of Buraku communities : Under the law, government budget is passed directly to the BLL branch in a given community, to implement improvement projects themselves in that community. Two-thirds of this money comes from the national government, and one-third comes from the local government. So each community does its own planning and negotiates with the local government itself to implement the improvements projects. Decisions are made by the Buraku people. Now, there are 6,000 Buraku Liberation League branches, each with its own history and style and way of operating. So each branch develops a variety of improvement projects and programmes. Some branches are very active (like Asaka and Chikushino), while others are not active at all.

- **Hinode :** is another Buraku area in Osaka where Keke is working to develop a housing project. Inamoto is also working there, doing a physical survey of the area. Planning to do a Machi-zukuri project here? Also CASE-Japan is working on this. Patama later tells about the marvelous cafe that was planned as part of the project. Get this story from Patama.
- **Nishi Nari :** Another Buraku area, largest in Osaka, with 6,000 people (3,000 households?). Inamoto works with this community.

Several architects in Japan are working to support Buraku communities in their improvement projects :

- Yoko Hatakenaka (works in Shikoku, helped plan the Misaki Community project in Chikushino)
- Seiji Terakawa (works in Osaka)
- Keke
- Inamoto (based in Tokyo)

Sunday November 9, 2003

On a Japanese train : Bento and Yatsu-hashii : Morning, we take the Shinkansen (bullet train) to **Fukuoka**, then transfer to local train to **Chikushino** town. (*about 5 hour totals*) On the journey, we enjoy our first Bento (boxed lunches) which we buy from posh shops in the Shinkansen station. The Thais all share the various bento they have chosen, in the Thai style, with much praising and oohing and aahing. The Japanese looked shocked at this - here the idea is that everyone eats his own box! Individuality rules in this system. Bento cost between 900 and 1,200 Yen. We also try *Yatsu-hashii* - a Kyoto sweet made from rice flour and red beans, in different flavors (cinnamon, red bean, melon, green tea). We pass along almost the whole southern coast of Japan, going west, towards Fukuoka, on the island of Kyushu. The narrow space between the mountains and the coastline is filled with almost continuous houses and rice fields and cities, including Hiroshima. *In Japanese Trains, no use of mobile phones is allowed! Everyone follows the rules!*

Local train from Fukuoka to Chikushino : In the distance, lovely mountains, thickly forested, and in the foreground, rice fields lying fallow in the cold autumn. Seemingly endless stretches of small houses, built right next to each other, all carefully detailed and carefully kept up, but somehow conveying the impression of drabness.

Price of rice in Japan : High quality rice costs 600 - 800 Yen per kilo (US\$5 - \$7.50 per kilo!!!!) Maximum price for super high quality rice is 1,200 Yen per kilo (\$11).

Visit to Onsen in Chikushino : The Japanese public baths (*onsen*) next-door to our hotel in Chikushino. Sitting completely naked on little stools scrubbing ourselves off before we get into the super-hot baths. Next to us are two yakuza (Japanese gangsters) with their backs and arms completely covered in elaborate tattoos. One seems to have deep knife-wounds in his belly! The children running around, unashamed and pink from the hot water, splashing and giggling. After bathing, we get dressed and sit in the resting room out front, drinking blue cans of "Suntori" grapefruit juice from a vending machine. Most of the Thais are too shy to give the onsen a try, but George and I are game!

Visit to Misaki Community, Chikushino

(A new Buraku community improvement project in Kyushu Island)

This is an old Buraku community of about 150 families, established in this place about 300 years ago, during the Edo period. Like Asaka, it is also located in the swampy lowlands along a river (this is the Homang River, which means "bountiful" or "fulfilling wealth" in Japanese), on the edge of Chikushino town, Kyushu island. The area is physically separated from the town by a canal and bridge, now all new and fancy, but formerly very isolated and swampy place in the river banks. *"Don't go there!"* people used to say, just like in Osaka. Over the years, the surrounding areas developed, but Misaki remained in bad condition and isolated. People used to butcher animals, tan leather here to make their living. It was a very rural area back then. At first, there were only about 30 families here, other Buraku areas in Chikushino.

1993: City proposes a top-down style redevelopment plan for the Misaki community. People fight against it, finally persuade the city to allow them to do a participatory town planning exercise, using the *Machi-zukuri* facility. The project was so successful that it became a pilot project and was repeated in other (non Buraku) neighborhoods of Chikushino.

We meet Megu Matsumoto (woman) and Fujimoto Susumu (man) - they are two of the very active members of the Buraku Liberation League, Chikushino branch. Megu: *"Discrimination is the reason we came together and did our own town planning in our neighborhood."* Community movement changed the government's idea: community solves its own problems, and find their own architect to assist the process. The planning in Misaki got a government prize.

New name for Misaki: This area used to be called *Shitami*, which means "low place." But along with their community upgrading, they decided to change the name of the area to *Misaki*, which means "beautiful."

Development usually takes 10 - 20 years, but here the whole process of planning and building took only three years. Why? *"Because people participated!"*

- **Kunagasan (community member) speaks :** People do everything they can. Before, the roads in this village were very narrow, only we can go. Houses were crowded and dangerous - many fires which spread quickly from the wooden houses. Now, the situation here is very good. But building our Misaki town is not finished yet! We don't think of our development as finished. We keep on developing until we all think we are happy to be here. Especially the old and handicapped, all village people support them. This atmosphere is very important, and we want to develop that sense of mutual help and support. Finally, everyone here has to be respected.
- **Panthip from Thailand speaks :** My community faced eviction, nobody helped us, so we organized to fight by ourselves. Before we helped each other in the community, and now we have networks - large networks of many poor communities - to help each other in various places. A network is difficult to make, but now we realize the importance of this link between communities, so we work to build networks, little by little, and work with many community support groups. Do these support groups listen to us or not? CODI is a good outside supporter, it helps us to link with professionals, government officials and government programs and other communities. This type of organization will help us to stand on our own feet, so we can help ourselves. Our main problems? Education, housing, income. We've come to learn from Misaki.
- **Mr. Fujimoto** (community member, with mustache, seems to be an important figure in community here.)
- **Mr. Takemitsu speaks (Elderly BLL leader of area)**
- **Mrs. Tamari** (community member)
- **Mrs. Genta** (community member)
- **Mr. Tagawa Moriko** (leader of the old-age group in Misaki)
- **Mr. Yasunaga Mitsunori** (bearded facilitator of Misaki community, is a school-teacher, built his own "log home") - runs the Misaki children's group - lot of activities for kids.
- **The Administrative officer from the Municipal Government**, in charge of the Misaki area
- **Mr. Hatzue**, the Municipal officer in charge of giving compensation for land under municipal services

Mr. Fujimoto tells story of Misaki :

(Shows photo of Misaki from 80 years ago). 300 years ago, this community was forcibly located here, from other places, when this place was officially made a Buraku slum. Because our community was built near the river, lots of flooding every year. There was only one old, broken wooden bridge to get to this place - it was like an island formed by the river and the canal. Very bad conditions. Flooding and danger of fire. 60 years ago, one particularly bad fire got out of hand and all the houses here were burned down - we all had to rebuild from the ground up. After that, we built better streets, but they were still narrow and houses were still so close together that the fire danger persisted.

Many old people living in the community now, majority old people. **Out of a total 450 people living in Misaki (in 150 households), there are 100 who are elderly.** Why has the number of young people decreased? Used to be a place young people were ashamed to live, and wanted to move away, get out of the area. But now that we have built our new town, young people are coming back, now after development it is a good place to bring their friends and family. Everything is proper.

First the government developed their own plan for Misaki in 1991. (Shows a map of the area 12 years ago, before redevelopment) . At that time, all the surrounding areas were completely developed, residential middle class with standard urban roads and infrastructure. Only Misaki was left as a kind of untouched slum. But these plans ignored the ideas and feelings of people here - no consultation or participation. That's why the people rejected the government's redevelopment plan in 1991. But we were still afraid of flooding and fire.

How the old community was : The community center where we are meeting now used to be right next to the river, but by channeling the river into a narrower area, we got more land for our community. Reclamation from river bed. This was part of our planning! Then we built a proper river embankment to stop the flooding. In our old planning, we had three kinds of roads in Misaki: Blue roads (4 meters wide), Orange roads (2-3 meters wide) and green roads (1.8 meter lanes). Not possible for a garbage truck or ambulance to get into the community. Also, many of the houses faced outside, and we had to pass through other people's houses and yards to get to our own houses - which in Japan is not good. No privacy. People were very kind and this was not much of a problem, but it is Japanese law that this is illegal : in Japan, every house must have access from the

street. Many of us liked that the houses were so close together, it was friendly and neighborly. In the process of constructing walls between our new houses, there were some disputes, problems. Also, the community used to cultivate rice on a big piece of vacant land across the river - they didn't own the land though, just used it. Rice for their own consumption. Then, the government developed housing on that land and the people lost this benefit - big problem especially for poorer families, and this increased the urgency for the project.

New town planning (Machi-zukuri) : So we started to make our own plans, and held a series of planning workshops in the community. 12 workshops total. We divided our village into 10 groups, and every day each group had discussions about what they want in the planning, lots of discussions, what are the bad points and good points of our community as it is now: what do we want to improve, and what qualities do we want to preserve.

Example of the old Provisions shop : In the old community one family ran a small provisions shop where everyone used to gather, and where we could get goods on credit, pay once a month if we needed to. When people gathered at this shop, there was a lot of communication: this was clearly a good thing in the village. Good relations make for more safety, better security, and a kindly sense in people. We wanted to keep that, so the shop is still there in our new village. Our slogan is, "*The project is limited, but the development of our village never ends.*"

In the first workshop, we came up with four possible strategies for Misaki :

- Option 1: Make no changes at all, let the community be as it is.
- Option 2: Only improve drainage and road network.
- Option 3: Also make a park and playing area, along with roads and drains.
- Option 4: Full reconstruction, with roads, drains, parks, new housing to a high level of development.

Of course a majority of people wanted option 4! We voted by holding up numbers for the option we preferred. One man voted for number 2, only because his son had just gotten married, he had no money and he had just invested in improving his house! Then in the second workshop, we stayed in the 10 groups and discussed our dreams and expectations - each group then presented to the others. Little by little, we built hope that this would actually happen. We also afraid, because this meant big change - all our houses would have to be demolished. Everybody described their hopes for the new community on a map of the area. This became the basis for our new community plan.

It took about 6 months to develop our final plan, which everyone could agree to. Housing for 150 families. After we had developed our final plan, we submitted it to the government, which agreed to support us with budget for the infrastructure work. Next steps were to design the park, the community center, etc.

The park and play-gym: Because by now our experience of town planning was very good, it was easy to discuss and design this park. We got the children from the community to help design the big jungle-gym at the middle of the park. It's so fun that kids from other areas come to play on it. We also built a public toilet on the edge of the park for visitors to use, to show them that outsiders are welcome here. This is an open community, not a no trespassing place! The kids call this big, tent-like play-gym *tentoku*. It was very expensive, cost four times the cost of the houses! But the city government paid for it. Children from the whole district come to play on it (*but when we were there, all day not a single child could be seen in the park, only lots of elderly people sitting chatting on benches!*) We are told that in Misaki village, there are now only 20 children living. They also have a croquet yard, in another part of the community, with a beautifully constructed wooden shed to keep the croquet mallets and balls! This sport very popular with the elderly. *Incredible!*

Next we had to decide what to call our new village - good discussion about names. Children were again included. It was the suggestion of one high-school student to call our new community Misaki, and this was the most popular idea, so we used it. Misaki means "Beautiful blossom", and it is our hope to demolish discrimination with the slogan "New wind."

Public rental housing : We also had a special workshop to design the public rental housing that would be at the center of Misaki, where the poorer families in the community would stay. Of the 150 families in the community, 60% would construct their own houses, and 40% would live in public rental housing, which we design, but the government will build and manage. In the workshops, we looked at how to design the rooms, stairways, open spaces, balconies. Some have their own workshops inside for income generation. The architect helped us to make many models with the residents. The apartments were constructed by a contractor. Some units are 2-story maisonettes, some small one-bedroom. Different sizes and beautifully planned with small squares and private spaces and separate entrances and landscaping. A few units accessible to disabled people. The rent is subsidized by the local government and is about 7,000 Yen (US\$ 70) for small units, up to 13,000 Yen (US\$ 130) per month (for the big 2-story unit). *VERY cheap in Japan!* Some have 30-year leases.

Planning also included other activities and aspects of our lives : Besides designing the layout, we also had several town planning management committees to plant trees, to plan boat races on the river, to plan concerts and games and festivals and sports meets - this was all part of the town planning, not just physical! We also wanted to rebuild relations within the community. In the past, the discrimination had caused a lot of heart-break and troubles, and this had strained and spoiled relations between community members - and between us and other groups in the city. We want to rebuild relationships as part of the town planning process. Everybody is thinking what can they do for the village? And everyone was participating in the improvement of the village. In this process, everyone was a member! Our 150 families were like one big family. Every two months, they have some activity or other - there are yearly calendars of planned events, and these calendars include memorials for people who have died during the year. They also have women's group, a children's group.

They chose their own architect to help them : They worked with an architect (NGO) named Yoko Hatakenaka, from Shikoku, who specializes in community design workshops, etc. A great part of the Machi-

zukuri facility is that it provides funds for communities to choose and hire their own consultant designers and assistants.

How long did Misaki's redevelopment process take? Project took three years - 1993 - 1996. Design workshops with Yuko took six months. Construction took about two years. Fujimoto says there is a time limit of 3 years on the budget for design and implementation. Fujimoto: *"The limited time was very important, otherwise, if the project stretches out, we'd have to pay for it ourselves! Also, it keeps up the excitement, no time to get bored!"*

How was all the work organized? The community was divided into ten sub-groups, and one leader was in charge of each sub-group, for design and implementation purposes. Were there some people who didn't want to be involved? No force used! Just convinced them that the project would improve their status and their living conditions, we let them see the benefits! For example, one family had built a new house just six months before the project, and they agreed to break it down anyway. But another family didn't want to move from their house. We didn't force them, we just started work on other aspects of the project and let them be - and eventually they also agreed. All the tree-planting was done by the people.

- **"We have to think 100 years in the future, not only today!"**
- **"All these negotiations and all this working together built stronger relationships in our neighborhood - activities bring people together more than all the talk in the world!"**

Land tenure : Earlier, we all had individual land title, some small areas, some large. In most Buraku areas in Japan, there was never any land tenure system at all, but after World War 2, the land system in the whole country changed, and Buraku communities got legal land title to their land. There is no eviction problem - the land is secure. In the new village, the 60% families who built their own houses have individual land title to their plots. The renters do not, but their rent is subsidized and their tenancy is secure.

Cost : Project cost US\$ 7.2 million (\$48,000 per household). Includes roads and infrastructure, park, public rental housing, design process support, compensation for demolished houses and cost of city's buying land for public spaces. This does NOT include cost of private houses built afterwards.

Land and infrastructure system in new community: The settlement covers an area of about 66 acres (7 hectares). After replanning, the community "sold" all the public areas in the community (roads, public park, public rental housing) back to the local government. This is a typical arrangement in Japan, and is a key part of the Machi-zukuri facility. This gives communities money for their non-infrastructure development. The city constructed the roads, drains and park, using private contractors, and according to the city's norms and standards. But they agreed to follow the layout plans the people of Misaki had drafted, and allowed the community people to earn a little income by providing all the unskilled labor. A first for Fukuoka! Extremely high quality infrastructure - the Thais are all astonished! The bed of the Homang River used to be 15 meters wide, and part of the embankment planning was to channel the river into only 6 meters, so the community got an extra 6-meter strip of land for their housing development.

Some rich and some poor Buraku : All mixed together. Many of these houses are huge and elaborate, many with traditional Japanese construction details, elaborate tiled roofs and manicured gardens - look like villas of very rich and cultured elites! The poorer families and people live in the public rental housing, but it's certainly not as poor as anywhere else in Asia! Looks like prosperous middle class apartments in Europe! Yasunaga-san says that over the years, some people in Misaki have gotten rich and broken their relationship with their own community - they are still Buraku, but they've lost their need to join in the community, keep separate. He says that when you look at the community, it looks like there are no problems, at least physically. But deep social problems still exist here :

- 60% of Misaki's residents have **unstable incomes**
- **Study skills** of Misaki children are lower than average, the residue of centuries of poor education and a culture of backwardness which persists.
- There are **many single, elderly people living alone**, with nobody to look after them. There is a story of one woman who died in her house a while ago, and for two days, nobody knew she was dead! Now they have a system of checking on each other. (this is a problem of Japanese society as a whole, too)

Role of the Municipality in the Misaki Project : *(Chikushino Municipal official speaks)*

Before, the municipality practiced only the conventional top-down style of town planning in Chikushino. Initiative to make change came from people - this is a new style for us, something different. New relationship between the municipal government and the people who want to make their own development plans themselves. The first time we met with the Misaki people, we were hesitant. But kept meeting, and gradually, the relationship got more comfortable. Town planning is not only ideas, but involves money to implement. So the city, after talking to the people, has to negotiate with the national or prefecture governments for funding for such a project. Further, in order to plan, town-planning specialists are needed. So the planner (Hatakenaka), the Municipality and the people were all important partners in this process. Three sides of a triangle. Need all three! The municipality thinks that they don't have to always follow people's ideas, so the planning is not ideal. Sometimes have to reject people's plans. In the case of Misaki, the Municipal government provided a little money to support the participatory planning process, and to pay for Hatakenaka to be involved (*part of Machi-zukuri system?*)

Why change from top-down to this Misaki model of planning? Not only in Misaki. Other areas of Chikushino have done community planning. In this process, the most serious problem is time. First the

municipality made a plan and proposed it to the people. It took a long time to prepare that plan. Sometimes the municipal plan calls for temporary resettlement while the work is going on, and this takes a long time, lot of clashes between the municipality and people. When we started the Misaki planning, the government requested a shorter period for planning and implementation. This was the government's condition. In their experience, it was a very short time. So the municipality talked Hatakenaka and he proposed to do a participatory planning process. He helped facilitate the workshops and planning. Originally, Hatakenaka taught us these participatory planning methods, after implementation, and we realized their value. The complaints to the government almost completely stopped in these cases where planning was done in this way! Now people feel it is "their town" so maintenance is easy and cooperation is very strong.

How the project was financed : A lot of subsidies in this project! National government supports two-thirds of the cost and the local government supports one-third of the cost. Costs include construction of roads and infrastructure, and buying back land from community for roads, parks, public open spaces, public rental housing, etc. There is also a system whereby the government "buys" the old houses from the people (structure only, not land), destroys them and pays some money to the people, which helps them to build their new houses. A form of compensation for house reconstruction.

Yoko Hatakenaka (Misaki's planner) speaks :

(Yoko is an architect/planner who lives and works in the city of Kochi, on the island of Shikoku. He had earlier worked with another Buraku community at Kitagata to do a community redevelopment project which became a famous project. He is a benevolent-looking guy with steel spectacles and a straggly gray beard).

I worked very hard to help in the design process, but the key point of this success story in Misaki is the very good leadership in the community. The future of this area may be good because there is not just one good leader here, but at least ten good leaders! For other planners, the short time frame for planning that was imposed by the government would have been very difficult, but here it was no problem. For we professionals, our minds feel restricted by a short time frame, but for the people, a short time is no problem, they are ready to go, they have the enthusiasm, and they want change. *People want to do everything in that short time.* In my experience before Misaki, I worked on three other participatory town planning projects, involving some rebuilding and always lots of complaints! So I hesitated in Misaki, and proposed to the people to do a more limited plan, without total rebuilding. But the leaders were more ambitious, they wanted to do it all! So I asked the leaders to check everyone's opinions - *everyone's!* And we all agreed to change the whole plan.

Yoko speaks to Tom later : Mr. Fujimoto from Misaki knew Yoko from his work on the Kitagata upgrading project, which is in nearby Kitakyushu. That project was very famous among Buraku communities. So he invited Yoko to come to their study group at Misaki. At first, it was just personal interest that brought Yoko to Misaki. Eventually, the Municipality formally requested Yoko to assist in the planning process, after the community had officially selected Yoko as their planner. But the Kitagata project took too long! The process took ten years! Yoko actually lived there in the community for six years!

Planning and land-use in Misaki : How much of the land at Misaki is under public spaces (roads, sidewalks, parks, public open spaces and public rental housing)? (answers from Yoko) :

- **Roads** = 16.4% of area
- **Pedestrian walkways** = 4.6% of area
- **Park and public open recreation spaces** = 9.3% of area
- **Public rental housing** = 5.7% of area
- **Total public space** = 36% of total area
- Total space given to private housing and private rice fields = 64% of area

Main thing is that the area given to parks and open spaces is generous, and makes the community very open and comfortable and green - the big area given to the park is a special case, usually not so much area for park!

Yoko's other projects : Yoko's new project in his native Kochi is rental housing for 200 families, with lots of workshops and participation in the planning. He also worked on a project to upgrade old public rental housing, with lots of workshops in that.

Real and fake Machi-zukuri :

(Inamoto speaks) Local councils have some budget for community design, which is part of the Machi-zukuri facility. A lot of municipal projects are done these days which project a concept of "participation" under Machi-zukuri, but most of them are the usual stiff, top-down planning style, with only token involvement of the people who will live there. Misaki is a good example of the *real* Machi-zukuri.

Mr. Yasunaga speaks : First priority is improving income of Misaki residents. The average income in Misaki was only 60% of the Japanese average. How to conquer the problem of poverty is not just about improving living conditions. How to manage life with less money, improve education, improve jobs. These are issues for all Buraku communities, not just ours. The environment here is good now - lots of trees and birds, etc. We are aiming at having good natural scenery. Old and young people have a valuable heritage in this community, which is very old. Other environments in the city are very congested, but here in Misaki it is very comfortable. We are a big pioneer in Japan - every year, 20 - 30 groups come to visit us and see what we have done. **But the most important thing in town planning is keeping the human sense at the center, and mutual support to progress.**

- **Questions from the Thai group: Some people have very big plots, and others have very small plots - or no land at all (in the case of public rental housing occupants). How did this reblocking happen?** (Fujimoto-san answers) In Japan, there are many rules and laws and bylaws about reconstruction and redevelopment which make it cost a lot of money to implement redevelopment. No way around these laws, we all have to follow them, they apply to everyone, not only Buraku. For example, certain road widths must be built, (our old 2-meter roads had to be widened to 4 meters!) but how to get the land for these widened roads? Also, if we want a new park in our community where there was none before, how to get land for this public park? If there is vacant land already, then there is no problem. Sometimes, we can use a nearby rice-field, instead of taking land which has houses on it, but even a rice field belongs to someone. But if there is no vacant land for these things, we have to negotiate to "buy" the land for these things from people in the community, whose plots are then made smaller. In Misaki, the public park used to be a rice field, it was not vacant land! No houses, but a working rice field, so we decided it was easier to use the rice field than other land with houses on it. Before, we were crowded and there was no space for any park. So our professional helper (Yoko) calculated how much land we would need for the roads, park, open spaces and public rental housing, based on a standard percentage, which in turn comes from certain residential development bylaws.) Then, once we now how much land we need for these public uses, we start negotiating with various community members, planners and city government - very delicate and takes a long time to work this out.
- **Thai group asks question about how the Buraku network across Japan works :** Yasunaga says the network is very big, but we don't share information very well. *Why not?* The focus of the Buraku network in the past was on physical development, not human rights. Now the network's key word is "*Human Rights Community Movement.*" More focus on networking and human rights. (Yuko adds) : It used to be that some of the Buraku Settlements that had upgraded and got government money to do that just kept their mouths shut, out of selfishness, they didn't want others to do the same, to tap the same resources.

Walk around Misaki Community : Rainy day, but still very beautiful. River banks all complete with concrete embankments, walkways, and proper - hard to imagine flooding and problems. Beautiful gardens, houses, seems almost opulently wealthy in areas. Public rental housing is beautifully laid out, with lots of informal spaces and trees.

Gala Dinner and "cultural performance" with Misaki Community : We are served several delicacies of the region and of this community: *Motsunabe* (a vegetable clear soup made of vegetables grown right here in the gardens of Misaki), *Basashi* (raw horse meat). The elderly women's group perform the traditional Miyo fan dance, in beautiful kimonos, on the tatami mats at the end of the room. Also a dance called *Takara-fune*, which means "treasure boat." Then one woman sings a haiku poem, "Butterfly in the garden." Another man sings the sumo song. Then we are served Saki (rice wine) in big bamboo cups with hot water. Everyone around the round tables is by now flushed with good food and liquor!

Background notes on machi-zukuri in Japan :

The term machi-zukuri is derived from the noun *machi* (meaning the smallest administrative unit of a town, or a "community"), and the verb *tsukuru* (to build). Usually used as a deliberate contrast to the term *toshi-keikaku* (the conventional term for urban planning), rather than translating it literally as "town planning", a better translation might be "community planning". In a Japanese dictionary of urban planning terminology, the term machi-zukuri is defined as follows: "It refers to a variety of activities where local residents, working together or in cooperation with the local government, make the place where they live and conduct their day-to-day business into one that is attractive, pleasant to live in, and appropriate for the area." Watanabe (2000) documents that although the term was first used in the early 1950s, it was not until the early 1960s that it began to be used in the field of urban planning, and then not usually by itself.... Generally it indicated the presence of some measure of residents' / citizens' participation in local planning. The term began to be used quite commonly from the second half of the 1970s...

Until the late 1970s, the *machi* part of the phrase was usually written in *kanji*, but since then the compound has come to be consciously written entirely in *hiragana*. There is more to this than a mere style of writing. The use of the *hiragana* version came to symbolize a stress on the "soft" aspects of urban planning, what might be called "community building", while the old, and in some eyes discredited, *kanji* version represented an emphasis on "hardware" - the traditional physical planning of roads, bridges and waterways...

By the beginning of the 1980s, the term machi-zukuri was in quite widespread use, but a variety of factors had been influential in the evolution of the concept, between the second half of the 1960s and the end of the 1970s. The first of these was the influence of *shimin undo* ("citizens' movements") in the decade from 1965...

(From the academic paper by Neil Evans, "Machi-zukuri as a new paradigm in Japanese urban planning: reality or myth?" for the Japan Forum, 2002)

Afternoon Workshop with Thai visitors and Misaki community members.

Everyone is divided into a few discussion groups, with some Thais in each group, and lots of white paper and markers, spread out on folding tables in the "multipurpose room" of the Misaki community center. Amazing how this kind of "workshop culture" with all the usual rituals, is the same all over the world! Most of the Misaki participants are elderly folks. Megu, who looks to be in her fifties, is probably the youngest. Three discussion topics are identified :

1. **Image of the city and community?** Strong ideas about security, peace, greenery, local control (not central government who decides the rules and how things will go!), sharing and helping, good relations, environmentally friendly, clean, working together, creating livable place.
2. **How to connect this district with other areas nearby?** Better understanding between poor and rich.
3. **Management - How to develop sustainability in the community?** b

Mami's 4th Grade teacher comes to visit : A very humble, quiet, handsome man in a dusty coat, very touching. (He looks so young, which reminds us that Mami was a child a very short time ago!) He told his class about Buraku, and this inspired Mami to go outside Japan and work with the poor. He teaches at a primary school in Fukuoka, where Mami used to live.

Tuesday November 11, 2003

Morning : take Shinkansen train to **Kobe**, in Kansai area. (about 4 hours) Afternoon : **Visit Mano** (A strong, long-standing community movement for environmental improvement). Exchange with professionals and local people. Key person is Mr. Miyanishi, the planner who . Now trying to get the details about the group

Visit to Mano Community Redevelopment, Kobe

(A large neighborhood in the industrial heart of Kobe that was redeveloped and revitalized through a highly participatory community planning process, using the Machi-zukuri facility.)

We meet at the big community center in the center of Mano, walking by small factories and shop-houses on the way in. Several key Kobe Municipal officers are there. After a brief introduction by Miyanishi-san, we go on a walk around the Mano neighborhood, before it gets too dark to see. Afterwards, we come back to the community center, where the people have prepared a big feast for us!

Mr. Miyanishi speaks : (Mr. Miyanishi is the town planner who has been helping this community for many years in the on-going process of redeveloping itself, in stages. He is a robust, jolly, energetic guy with thick white hair and a big mustache and a booming voice! So enthusiastic! Speaks no English.)

Forty years ago, Mano was a big slum. Once upon a time, this area was all rice-fields! Then, 100 years ago, during the Meiji period, this became a leather-producing and shoe-making area. Later, Mano became an area of big iron foundries and iron-related industry factories. Lot of low-level workers from all these industries lived in the slums that sprouted up nearby, while the white-collar workers and managers lived up in the hills inland. There were big problems of pollution from the industries that had come up in the area, which is close to the Kobe port. A lot of people lived here. Lots of fights between residents and factories and local government. Hard struggle. People used to go themselves to the factories, there were no mediators. People wanted to find some common future - 40 years have seen so much experience here! In 1965, the planning activities in Mano began. Before the town planning project here, there was very heavy pollution in Mano.

1965 - 67, that was when Shimizu (the name of their community organization) was formed. Many activities. 1971 - 1980, more activities were organized, events, health-checking, making park. All this happened before I was asked to help develop a town plan for Mano. 25 years ago, I was hired to draft a new plan for Mano - proposed. After that, I had no official reason to keep contact with the people here, but he did - I don't know why! The strength of this community showed that the area had a lot of potential for future development. When we worked on this plan, I noticed this potential. The main point is that even before doing our plan (Machi-zukuri), it was important that the community people had initiated a lot of activities to build the people's process, otherwise, the people could not have made a plan together.

1971 : People started discussing their idea to redevelop the Mano area with the Municipality. At that time, no experience of making a participatory town plan in Japan at all! This was very new stuff. People had discussed the idea, and some professors in some universities had written about the concept, but no real experience with participatory planning yet!

1978 : The nearby area of Nagato (?) had organized some community meetings with the Municipality about town planning (Machi-zukuri). Many meetings, it was a pilot project in community planning with planners, people and the city working together. Pilot trial project. Mano decided to do the same. Miyanishi-san organized a discussion meeting with all the groups and organizations in Mano. Many steps were taken before the final plan. Large meetings twice a month - many meetings! Different sub-groups in the community made proposals for their areas, many proposals. Miyanishi-san worked with many small groups (some small with 5 - 15 people, some big with 70 - 150 people) to plan their areas. It wasn't done as a big plan, but lots of small plans patched together.

1980: Total population in Mano is about 7,000 people in about 2,000 households. Big meetings would involve about 300 - 400 people maximum (*this is the reality of this kind of participation, not 100% yet!*) The main

feature of this new plan for Mano was that at first, they planned without paying much attention to who owns what land! Only planned as they liked. So then when the first draft of the plan was finished, nobody could agree! It was only an exercise in **"pure planning"** without considering reality! So back to the drawing board, and a lot of adjustment to re-shape the plan around patterns of land ownership, very complex process!

1982 : How did each area do its planning? They organized a system of blocks in Mano, in which the entire area was divided into blocks, each with its own community committee. To break the project up into manageable smaller parts. The people and Miyanishi-san had finally produced a plan for the whole Mano area which they could submit to Kobe City, which then approved the plan. **So it took 11 years to prepare the plan: 1971 - 1982!** But the real, intense planning, in which people were very much involved and physical plans were actually discussed and worked on was only four years (1978 - 1982). Miyanishi-san says, *"People's process takes time!"*

1982 - 2002 : Implementation of plan, takes about 20 years! This is what Miyanishi-san calls the *"hardware"* of the project, constructing roads, new houses, infrastructure, community centers, etc. In Mano, nobody wanted rapid development. Everyone agreed to go slowly, bit by bit. We consciously chose to implement the plan slowly, with room to make lots of adjustments along the way. Nothing engraved in granite, but always room for adjustment, change, rethinking, renegotiating. People were clear about this point.

1995 : Big earthquake in Kobe. Some houses in Mano were destroyed. 60 houses in the community had been demolished as part of the redevelopment planning, but 600 houses were destroyed during the earthquake!!!! Because of the earthquake, there were a lot of fires in the city, a lot of houses burned down, especially old houses with lots of wood. In some areas of the city, all the houses were burned, all gone. In those cases, it was necessary to re-plan quickly! But in Mano, we decided to go slowly.

Community Center : The place where the Mano community center is was a factory. As part of the Machi-zukuri system, the municipality bought that factory from the owner, and it became public property, and was then rebuilt according to the community's designs. With a day-care center.

Collective housing : This is a place where single people or small families live together - it's like an apartment house, but there is a common dining room where residents take turns preparing meals for everyone, and common facilities. (rental or ownership?) Lot of elderly singles live here.

Mitsuboshi Company : One of the biggest factories in the Mano area for many years was the Mitsuboshi rubber belt company (rubber belts for car and vehicle engines). This company contributed to the community development process, in various ways, and has turned out to be a good neighbor. They also opened a restaurant for the community.

Elderly collective housing : Mitsuboshi company contributed the land that was used for the elderly people's collective housing, across the street from the community center. Built with government money, an gets government subsidy. Lots of single, elderly people in the area. Usually, elderly people are taken care of by their families, but in this place, people help each other, and the community looks after them, lots of community participation in running this place. Very high standard of housing and care.

Many old terraced houses. After earthquake, many houses were set back to make 4-meter lanes, according to planning bylaws.

Crooked roads: On our walk we come to one small lane which takes a very sharp double turn to go around one house which is clearly in the way of the grid of lanes. We learn that the negotiations are still going on with this house-owner to relocate and demolish the house to straighten the road. The Thais all protest, *"Why straighten the road, when it's fine the way it is, crooked? And the house is very good, why knock it down!"* The Mano people answer: *"Look, the house is in the way! Of course it has to go, but we don't want to force him to move, we can wait! The Kobe city government will provide the money to buy the house from him, which it will in turn try to get from the central government"*

Miyanishi has been working here for 20 years, and he is clearly a much-loved person. Everywhere we walk, people greet him and lots of bowing and smiling and exchange of news. They call him *"Miyanishi-sense"* which means, "Miyanishi master teacher"

"Hybrid Housing" in Mano

an interesting example of the kind of rich, complex, micro-scale planning that took place in Mano :

In one area we visit, a group of 43 houses were burned to the ground after the earthquake, and the reconstruction process was very interesting. 18 of the households came together to cooperatively build an 18-unit apartment block. But the interesting thing here is that only 5 of these families were house-owners originally, and the other 13 households had been renting small run-down houses and extremely simple rooms from these or other house-owners. (The whole area was, after all, a depressed, low-rent area!)

After the fire, some of the renters in this area went away, some moved to the suburbs. But some renters who wanted to stay negotiated with the house-owners to be included in the scheme to develop the apartment block. The house owners agreed, but when they costed the new units, they realized the market-rate rent would be much too high for them to afford (most had been paying about 10,000 Yen per month before, but the rent in the new units would go up 600% to 60,000 Yen/month).

So instead of becoming private tenants of those families again, they negotiated with the city to purchase their apartments in the new block, which would then rent the units to the families. Everything seemed OK, but when the renters began to negotiate with the city for their rent, the city offered them a discounted rent of 30,000 Yen per month, arguing that this was half the market value. But this was still too expensive for these families, so they went back into negotiations with the city, and in the end persuaded the city to officially buy these units as public rental housing, which then puts the rental rates under the control of Japan's national rent-control law, in

which the rent for low-income public rental housing is subsidized by the local government and is based on the salary of the tenant.

So this beautiful building, which looks very posh, and is organized around a small tree-filled courtyard, is actually a mixture of 5 privately-owned condominium units and 13 publicly-owned subsidized rental housing units, and all the units are different sizes, different designs! Miyanishi-san helped these 18 families to develop the design of their shared building, on their very cramped piece of land, which was in itself a long- complex human design process. At the opening celebration, families all shared specially-prepared dishes, and now communication between the parts of the building is very good. Once a year, they all meet to discuss what they'd like to do with landscaping, building maintenance and organize a party!

Miyanishi-san: *"They don't have to change their own history. The main thing we try to do is not to destroy the community. We just help people to do what they want to do in their place."*

Kobe City's City Planning Department (Redevelopment department) guy speaks : The role of the city in the Mano project :

- To support the construction of fire-proof buildings using non-burning materials, after the earthquake (i.e. brick, tile, steel, concrete!)
- to buy land for roads, parks and public spaces in Mano area, as per the community's plans.
- **About Machi-zukuri (Participatory Town Planning)** The Mano community made a specific request to do Machi-zukuri. Communities in all cities can do it, but very few do. But the idea is catching on, and projects like the one here in Mano is very well-known, and inspiring to other communities. All cities can support communities and neighborhoods that want to do Machi-zukuri, it's a facility that is available all over the country, but it's not a law or a common practice: just a facility which exists to support people want to do participatory planning in their areas. Now, a lot of groups come to visit Mano.

Mitsuboshi Belto Company CEO speaks : *(This is a distinguished-looking older man, in a dark-gray business suit, who has come to join our dinner! Everybody welcomes him warmly, though at first he looks a bit out of place and ill at ease!)* He tells about his company, which produces rubber belts for vehicles and has factories around the world, based here in Mano. In the beginning, Mitsuboshi's factories in Mano produced some pollution, and when local people complained, we tried to solve the problem. Now there are no complaints from the people. In the past, we cooperated with the Kobe City and the local people in Mano in several meetings. We've also got our ISO license, and we are always trying our best (hands out company brochures, with elaborate pictures and specifications for all their rubber belts!) Now we cooperate with the people, and no problem! *(he stays for the whole dinner, eats well of the lovely Japanese food, and gets completely drunk with the Mano people, and staggers to the subway station with us at the end of the evening to catch his train home! In the subway station, we see a big advertisement which reads, "MITSUBOSHI - The community and the company together in Mano" !)*

- **A Submarine Parts Manufacturer :** This factory produces no pollution at all, so the people love him!

We all sing "If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands" in Thai, Japanese and English! It is "GROUP KARAOKE" and even the Mitsuboshi executive in his gray suit is joining in!

Tour of Kobe's Harbor-Land : After saying goodbye at Mano, Inamoto takes us on a night-time walking tour of the Kobe water-front, where the city has developed a huge amusement park and shopping area. We ride on the big-wheel (800 Yen) from which we can get a good view of the city, and of the infamous man-made island built out in Kobe's harbor using landfill from the sacred mountain they demolished in the fringe of Kobe. At the time, this was acknowledged to be the most expensive public works project in the history of mankind - costing billions and billions of dollars. Done by a consortium of private developers at the height of the bubble craziness in Japan. The project created two new and extremely expensive real estate areas: one on the flats where the mountain used to be, and one on the new island. Inamoto calls this *"Kobe style development."* On the waterfront, there are a couple of men fishing - one tiny eel was writhing on the wooden boards, and I longed to throw it back in the water! It's only early November, but already all the Christmas decorations are up. It is remarkable how there are almost no people around here, and everything all lit up and beautiful!

Kumara from Sri Lanka says, *"There is nobody here! Our sea-face in Colombo is not so developed like this, but in the night, you will see hundreds and hundreds of people out enjoying the evening by the sea, the children running around, and people selling things to eat!"*

Homeless in Kobe :

We pass through a vast shopping mall on the way back to the hotel, all decorated with fabulous decorations for Christmas, blue and green glass balls and a million pendant crystal snowflakes winking in the lights. Peter Shimokawa discretely points out to us a few homeless men sitting quietly with their bundles in the warmth, waiting for closing time, when they'll have to make their way to the subway stations, to sit in warmth until 12:30, when they close also. At that time, the experienced ones will have places to go sleep, but the new-comers may sleep outside in the rain and get wet and sick. If these men go to the hospitals, the law says they must be treated, but in practice, the staff refuse them treatment, saying they are dirty and will infect other sick people there. He tells about how hard it is to stay clean when you are homeless - no access to showers and Laundromats are very expensive and often refuse service. Peter tells us that 2 years ago, when the Homeless March came to Kobe, they found about 100 homeless men in the city center.

Thais comment :

- *Communities and light industries can stay together quite nicely if the management is there. Mano is a good example of how a long tradition of Asian Mixed use neighborhoods have been able to come into the 20th century in a healthy way.*

Wednesday November 12, 2003

*After a short local train ride back to **Osaka** (about 2 hours), we all meet in the AOTS and Inamoto speaks :*

More about Machi-zukuri : There is a government policy, but the local rules about how it is implemented are made by each municipality. A centralized policy with a decentralized implementation. The national law is a basic policy about town planning, and the municipality can decide how to develop procedures to apply that law and distribute budgets. The national government does not implement this law directly. The implementing agency is the local government. What is this national policy? He says to get details from Hosaka and Professor Uchida on Friday. Interesting to compare two different municipalities and how they partnered with communities to do Machi-zukuri projects : Kobe is a very BIG city, and Chikushino is a very SMALL city!

Inamoto explains Background about Kobe City Planning :

In the 1980s, during the height of Japan's economic bubble years, Kobe City was the place where a new style of town planning procedures were tried out, which they call the "Kobe Method." Famous, something that has been used outside of Japan as well. In this new town planning system, there is no master plan, as in the past. The project mainly involved innovations in financial procedures, and how to get finance for urban development projects. What is special about Kobe is that the city sold bonds to fund development, so anybody could buy, could become a share-holder in the city. Scale is very big. The city began to be run like a corporation, with shareholders who expected to get high returns on their bonds (shares), and a board which managed the city and was expected to generate profits for those shareholders from city development projects.

Usually, municipal governments (and all their departments) exist to serve the citizens of that city, they are not for-profit bodies, and they use taxes paid by citizens to do their work. But in Kobe, the municipality took on the role of a corporate developer - became "Kobe, incorporated". Sometimes, cities or governments sell bonds to raise money for big infrastructure projects, but the bonds are paid back only with a fixed interest - it's not the same as a share, which is expected to return big profits. So a series of very big, very expensive projects were undertaken under this system - like "Harbor City", using money from these bonds and from private investors, instead of tax revenues. It was a kind of privatizing of the whole city and its functions! This changed the priorities for investment in the city - not what is needed or wanted or for the public benefit or according to any municipal plans, but according to what is likely to generate a profit. Only profit-making investments are entertained! Public sector services are out! And they certainly didn't use any of this money for poor people, for public schools, for health care for lower-income people, etc.

The artificial island in Kobe harbor is one of these projects. By demolishing the mountain behind the city, and putting all that rock and earth into landfill to make the new artificial island in the harbor, they created two new pieces of real-estate for investment where before there had been no land available at all. Of course this new land was sold for middle and high-income housing and tourism and commercial developments - nothing social or for the poor! The companies that bought or rented this new land had to pay high rates, to pay back the investors who paid for the projects - all for profit only!

This was all in the 1980s, when the Japanese economy was at its highest. The Municipality thought this would continue forever! But in the 1990s, economy in Asia collapsed. And Kobe was left with big debts, and failed projects - couldn't sell those expensive apartments or that expensive commercial space, and the big harbor-side amusement park was empty. So since their big "Kobe Model" development failed, now they're trying to promote Kobe as a tourist city, as in the amusement center. Now they are planning to build another airport on another fake island. Despite the fact that Kobe already has two airports, and the Osaka airport and Kansai airports are just a short train ride away, in the same area!! Kobe people don't want this new airport, tried to stop it, but the city went ahead and is constructing the airport anyway. In this whole process, no consideration for the poor, only how to get money into the city.

Then in 1995, the big Kobe earthquake. 10,000 people died. But Kobe city used the earthquake as another opportunity for development and building contracts! Big fires after the earthquake cleared a lot of areas of the city, many of which had mostly wooden houses - this was a chance to start from scratch! The city promoted non-wood, fire-proof structures to replace these old neighborhoods. You can bet the cement companies were licking their chops!

In Mano also, there are many old wooden houses before the earthquake. There were a lot of vinyl factories in Mano - a material that was highly flammable. So fires started easily in these small factories. They made vinyl shoes and vinyl house slippers (which are ubiquitous in all Japanese houses!) here, mostly in small workshops and house-based factories, where they cut, stitched, glued, soled and finished these vinyl slippers. So houses burned easily when the earthquake fires roared through the area. Even before the earthquake the Municipal government knew that fire danger was high in Mano, but didn't know how to deal with the problem. The earthquake gave the city a chance to rebuild and deal with this danger. So the municipality was happy

because all this rebuilding of burned down wooden houses also meant that areas could be re-planned and could build new roads, etc.

40 years ago, the people in Mano first organized against pollution. Back then, there was very little recognition of the problems of pollution in Japan - especially in industrial areas like Mano. Everything was subservient to economic development and manufacturing. But in Mano, the air was stinking! Clean clothes hung outside to dry were black within a few hours. So people here first came together to do something about this bad air and dirty environment. The community's fight against the polluting factories went on for ten years! Community management and community involvement began here around the issue of pollution, and later went on to other things. Started with dealing with physical conditions, and this developed into better relationships with factory neighbors and with the city, and also strong unity among residents. They began to understand that they themselves have to decide how they want their community to develop - not the big factory-owners, and not the municipality. They also began to realize that if big companies want to have a factory in the neighborhood, they have to work with the people so not to cause pollution problems for the people here.

There are 16 zones in Mano. 7 committees, with people as representatives. (?)

Inamoto points out, it is the opposite of Misaki, where they started with the relationship, and then this led to physical improvements, not the other way around, as in Mano. But in both communities, they emphasized relationships as the main thing.

Second visit to Asaka Buraku Community,

Afternoon : Yamamoto-san explains more about Asaka BLL history and upgrading :

Visit Asaka (Yamamoto's community, to see how community-based enterprises were developed after settlement improvement in order to achieve real integration and sustainable liberation movement of Buraku.)

Buraku Liberation League Osaka Coalition Asaka Branch, 1-4-62 Asaka, Sumiyoshiku, Osaka

Tel: 06-6697-0971~4, Fax: 06-6697-9790

Chairperson: Morita Takahiro, Contact person: Yamamoto Yoshihiko(mobile: 090-3266-0129),

Kimura Masakazu (mobile: 090-1964-2839)

Yamamoto is the president of the Asaka Town Planning Promotion Association. Joined ACHR in 1985 in Seoul Korea. The Korean police thought he was a yakuza (Japanese gangster)! He introduces his colleagues :

- Mr. Shiyone - secretary general of Asaka Association
- Mr. Nazrul - Bangladeshi student researching slums in Osaka City University, nearby.

In 1971, Buraku discrimination officially demolished, but still we have discrimination until today. In 1922, our ancestors called "Horizon Organization" fought for the rights of Buraku people. Long struggle. 1965 - the government recognized discrimination existed, and even this took a big struggle. Didn't have freedom of education or where to live or whom to marry. **Asaka Branch of BLL was organized in 1965.** Before then, most people here could not get compulsory education. They took for granted being poor and not going to school.

1945, Yamamoto was born in 1945. Has been working since he was in 2nd grade. From early morning until late at night. Only learned to read and write when he was 22 years old! Back then, the younger generation could not go to high school or university, until 1965. In 1965, we organized a group, all lived in old houses and were very poor, problems of education, housing, jobs, discrimination, etc. Fight together to deal with these problems. Realized that the government is responsible for this discrimination - earlier we thought that it was the parent's fault! The important thing is to find the cause of the problem, and then to organize people to solve it - in this case the problem was discrimination.

Starting to deal with Housing problems in Asaka : We formed a special group to look at our housing conditions, studied and researched the laws and policies about housing upgrading (Machi-zukuri) and based on that law, we demanded the municipality to help us to upgrade our community.

Organizing strategy based on separating into different working issue groups : It's important not to just make lots of demands, but to make one demand per group. For example, we also set up an education group which studied education laws and demanded for schools, etc. This is a strategy to prevent groups from splitting when some people want to focus on one issue, and others want to deal with another. Instead of fighting, we can form separate groups and cover all the issues which concern, everyone can be involved and can work on what they want, but still be part of a larger whole. Plus, it is stronger when one group is making one clear demand. The municipality is good at splitting groups and this is a way of reducing their power to do that. It is also useful for the government, gives them a clear group to deal with and negotiate with. This same structure began in Asaka, but spread to other Buraku communities.

In 1965, there were two ways of thinking in Asaka :

- One group tries to stop discrimination and building the housing is a tool to diminish this discrimination.
- One group only proposed to improve the housing, but didn't think about the discrimination.

Lot of conflict between these two positions, for ten years, this was a big minus point in the Buraku movement. How to fight? How to stop the causes of being poor?

1974 : To clarify our situation, we invited professionals to come and research and collect data about Asaka, and the real situation. We invited professionals who stood on the people's side! But we also invited professionals who stood on the government's side.

Collected data on five areas :

- # households
- Who has education? up to what level?
- Occupation? What jobs? What incomes?
- Housing conditions
- Health conditions.

After collecting data, it took 1.5 years to analyze the data, and give feedback for everyone in the community to discuss. Three kinds of education we got from this data and analysis :

1. **The objective view** : the actual situation in Asaka
2. **The people-oriented view** - to create a common vision of our conditions now and a common vision of what we want to change and improve.
3. **Integrated overall view** : Work with professionals and people together, to scrutinize each element, and this then becomes the basis for our urban planning.

Nowadays, this participatory stuff is common, but in 1974 it was not part of any town planning - new stuff, especially in Japan.

1974 : Interpret and analyze the data. After that, we put a big bowl (?) of all we had learned in the center of the community. Why did this take so long? Who is the main actor in this process? Community people, professionals or municipality? Answer, community people - they are the main! So people have to come to this understanding, and that doesn't happen fast!

Next step to draft the first master plan for redeveloping Asaka : with help from professionals. Used this to negotiate with government. Whenever we go to talk to the government, we go in groups, strong leaders and less strong people, so everyone learns, get an education in negotiating, dealing with bureaucracy. People clap if they understand.

Improving relations with other people in the ward : Part of our struggle was to persuade other people living in the Sumiyoshi Ward (where Asaka is) to support. There were 160,000 people living in this ward then. We organized 84,000 people in the ward (Buraku and non-Buraku) to negotiate to remove the train yard (where they manufactured and repaired subway train cars) from the ward, which gave the ward new land for development. What had once been the edge of the city, was now inner-city Osaka, no longer appropriate for a big manufacturing operation like this, land needed for other more civic uses. The rail-car workers working at the yard supported the Buraku. Railway yard finally closed in 1987. Last car (number 3011) rolls off the track. It cost the government 189 billion Yen to move the railway yard to another area. Big festival for the removal of the yard, that's when the redevelopment really starts.

1978 : Our town planning starts. Then the subway train yard was empty, so to plan for that big area which is now free, and is public land. All Sumiyoshi ward participates in making a plan for this area. At the first negotiating meeting with the city for the master plan, there were 350 people from Asaka, and the meeting lasted 18 hours

1988 - 98 - a lot of facilities built in this area : The first building they built was a clinic, but no Japanese doctor would come to work there - they had to hire a doctor from Taiwan! Discrimination persists. (like AOTS, Junior high school for 450 students, elderly center, elderly housing, public bath-house, history museum, etc. All according to people's plans, and tapping various government subsidies and programs. The community designed the Jr. High school with architects, and the city built the people's plan for the school - beautiful. The planning for this area involved 6 surrounding communities in the ward (including Asaka) which all sat together to make the plan. **But the initiative all came from Asaka.** Before, Asaka kids had to walk 2 kms to the only school, which was closer to other communities and farther from Asaka. (Before late 1970s, only 64% of kids in Asaka finished junior high school - then the people organized a special study camp to prepare kids for exam, and after that, 100% kids went on to high-school!>)

We go walking along the housing side of the river : We see a guy practicing golf down in the dry river-bed (which is like a green golf-course) and see two ladies walking their manicured poodles along the embankment, which is all fancy and concrete! There are parks and tennis courts. Lots of sports in the river-bed and barbecues organized in the summer season. Before, the image of this place was so bad, now it's a lovely area, everything very proper!

Before redevelopment, there were 900 families living in the Asaka Buraku community (700 households on the land above the river, and 200 families staying in the river-bed itself) , prone to floods and very bad conditions. As part of the Asaka redevelopment plan, all the new housing was public rental housing, in nice flats in 3-story blocks. About half of the families stayed (and got the rental housing), and half left the area (they got some compensation and moving fee). Now, there are total of 600 people living in the community, all in the rental housing. In this year (2003) we started to accept non-Buraku people to live in the rental units, if one comes free, because now a lot of people want to come live here - very open and quiet and clean air and good facilities and view of river.

Next step for Asaka : Community businesses Now community management activities. The BLL Asaka branch gets some money from membership fees, but it's not enough to support all their activities. How to get more money?

1. **First company established in 1987 : "Asaka Personnel Relations"**, which takes building maintenance contracts and earns a profit, provides jobs for community members. The profits go to support Asaka BLL's activities - total profits about 10 Billion Yen per year go to Asaka branch. The company employs 100 people, of whom a third are from Asaka. Asaka also has a labor union, which helps negotiate labor conditions, salaries, etc for Buraku workers. The first purpose of the company was to give employment to Asaka community members, but this purpose got less as community members got older, so jobs to outsiders. Lots of buildings under contract. *Thais ask who owns the company?* Asaka Branch BLL owns the company, which used only 450,000 Yen capital to start, and is now worth 10 million Yen. Yamamoto manages the company on volunteer basis, no salary.
2. **Second company established "Krista Japan Mineral Water"** company - Started with capital of 10 million Yen. Use profits for Asaka BLL activities and to hire Buraku community members.
3. **Also started an NPO in 2001** : Many activities: deliver lunch boxes for 1,500 elderly people in area, run Japanese language school for foreigners in the area (14 lessons @ 16,000 Yen per month), organizes helpers for disabled people (24 hours - 3 people work for one person, on three 8-hour shifts).
4. **New company started in 2002** : Energy and light social worker organization" which manages the center for disabled people in Asaka, also another center for the disabled. From 2003, group home in the home for disabled - this place is in the land near AOTS where the train yard was.
5. **New project for this year is "Life-support advisor"** - this person helps elderly talk about what are their problems and gives advice - for elderly, disabled and kids.

Decision-making in Asaka : Asaka has a policy committee with leaders from various associations within Asaka. This is like a steering committee (10 people). All discuss and decide who will implement various activities. Then they have annual meetings, and every two years election of leaders. This is only Asaka's structure, not all BLL.

Thursday November 13, 2003

Morning : Short train trip to **Kyoto** (about 1.25 hours).

Visit to Higashi-9-Joho Machi-zukuri center in Kyoto

Another (partly) Buraku and (partly slum) area in Kyoto, immediately South of the Kyoto Station and Kamo-gawa River, where the community has done a participatory town planning upgrading.

Uno and Utaka are the community leaders. Uno has lived here for 20 years, working as a community organizer. This community had a lot of problems and they came together to solve them. This is a large neighborhood near the Kyoto station, along the Kamo-gawa River. Was made a Buraku area in the 18th century. This is not one community but a combination of several. Used to be a notorious slum area: thought of a Buraku and Yakuza, a no-go area for most Kyoto people! Compared to other areas of Kyoto, the housing situation in this area was quite bad. Especially in two areas nearest to the river. For example in the community center where are meeting, they have had seven fires in the past 22 years, in which 6 people have died. (shows photos) For Japan, this is very shocking and bad. (he shows photos of the conditions along the river before the Machi-zukuri. Near the river, people were mostly squatters living in wooden shacks, facing fires and problems of yearly floods. Very bad conditions, similar to Philippines river-side slums. 80% of this river-side area are Koreans, and also the biggest Buraku area in western Japan.

The inland area near the community center started to do many activities together 40 years ago. They began demanding Kyoto city to develop the area, but the city didn't help. Why didn't the city develop this area? It was difficult to organize here because it was such a mixed neighborhood - though a large Buraku neighborhood (and all cities in Japan have a policy to make redevelopment of Buraku settlements a high priority!) - it was difficult to organize people. Strong bias against Buraku and Korean-origin people. But because the situation was so bad, the city could not ignore it, especially after the fire and deaths. But the improvements they made were only "first aid" not solving the main problems, surface only .

Most problems in two areas within the Higashi 9 Joho area : (1) The Yongkacho area, to the north along the river, and (2) the Higashi 9 Joho 40 branch (the squatter area along river to the south, where they didn't have sewage, basic services or telephone.) Until 20 years ago, they had to depend on city to give water and electricity. Why wouldn't the city install services? Kyoto city said, if we give them services, it means we allow illegal squatters, so they don't give. As a result, people were forced to "steal" water from supply mains, so the pressure is very low in nearby areas - "just drip drip." They also learned how to steal telephone lines, but nobody every caught them!

The biggest fear was fire : A fire 9 years ago burned 50 houses. The fire originated in the community, but because they didn't have phones, they couldn't phone for help, so they shouted for help to people living across the river! There were no roads into the area, so they had to use river water to put out the fire. After this, they went to the public office to demand the area be developed. Staged a sit-in at the Mayor's office. Invited the

mayor of Kyoto to come see conditions. Why so many Korean-origin people here? No place else to live, they get discriminated against also, like Buraku, only can stay here.

Korean people in Japan : Another group facing discrimination : In Japan, people of Korean origin are called "**Zai Nichi**" - their ancestors were forcibly brought to Japan to work or as slaves or during wars, but now their descendents (many of whom speak only Japanese) have no citizen rights in Japan. They are stateless people. Most of them were born in Japan, speak Japanese but not Korean, but they don't have Japanese citizenship. In World War 2, many Koreans were forced to come to Japan and work as laborers in factories, without pay - forced labor. (we go for a delicious lunch in a Korean restaurant, eat kim-chee and hot-pot baked in stone pots)

What changed the formula? Skyrocketing land values and Yakuza! In 1990, price of land in city zooming. Earlier, land in this area was very cheap, nobody cared or wanted to invest here, so no real-estate pressure. But the area was right behind the Kyoto Railway station, which was redeveloped as a landmark city project, and the Yakuza started raising rents and evicting people.

Who owns land? Most of the people living in the area were land renters - owners were living outside the community. The Yakuza started buying up these land parcels cheaply from land-owners, but the renters didn't know. When the Yakuza started raising rents and evicting people, community people very angry and want to fight. Yakuza use a lot of scare tactics to scare people away.

Collected signatures and (?) to ask for help from Kyoto City. Stop gentrification and redevelop. So the city and the community people finally negotiated an agreement to redevelop the area. The government's plan included building public rental housing (158 units). A lot of elderly people in the area, so also included a facility for elderly to live and a park. The government made this plan (?) but no action as of now. The public rental housing apartments are only now under construction - took a long time. In many cases, the city had to buy the land for the public rental housing from the Yakuza.

The river belongs to three parties : the national government, Kyoto Prefecture and Kyoto city. So all three bodies have to be involved, and all three had to be requested to redevelop. Request sent in 1990. Only got the response a few years later. Why they finally got a response? Because 1994 marked the 1,200-year anniversary of the Japanese capital being moved to Kyoto - so big celebrations planned, wanted to solve this eyesore on the city. So lots of the squatters were cleaned out by moving them into public rental housing, which will be completed in 2004.

Now the physical side of development in these areas is almost finished. But many other social problems continue. But lots of good came out of the process. As a result of this struggle, everyone knows each other, relations are good, festivals are celebrated by everyone - Korean, Japanese, etc. This culture continues has suffered a lot after people moved from their informal into the apartment blocks. Now "hi-rise culture" is replacing the old community spirit. Also, they found that after they got what they were fighting for (secure housing and basic services) there was no struggle to unite them any more. People drifted apart, very difficult to organize - everyone is stable and their needs are met - no pressing need to come together. People realized this too late, and now they are working to create other ways of building the community relationship.

One pilot project : it is a public rental housing, but community people manage - they negotiated with the city and the city agreed to try. Formal organization established in 2000, with place for community people to meet and discuss.

Very different from Misaki and Asaka and Mano : Sounds like very minimal public participation in this area, no design workshops, etc. More like demanding and then letting the city design everything. People just moved into the new units.

We go walking along the river, past some recycling activities, empty lots, a few shacks of homeless people, a fancy new elderly housing block (60% of the people in the area are elderly - all get welfare support from the government, but some still do recycling activities in spaces along the river, as they did before the redevelopment.)

Visit to HOPE Association in Kyoto

Exchange with homeless people and this Homeless support group.

- (1) **The Hope Association**, 1-1-3-415 Minamimatsuoki-cho Higashikujoo, Minamiku, Kyoto 601-8023
Tel: 075-671-5143
- (2) **Kyoto Night Patrol Group** (Kyoto-Yomawari-no-kai) (*this is run by homeless people themselves*)
Contact person: Odagawa **Hanako** (home: 072-851-2812) (*She came to ACHR Eviction meeting*)

A man named Honda speaks: he is the main activist working with the homeless in Kyoto. There are 250 homeless men living along the River and in the train stations in Kyoto. The city's survey of homeless people was conducted in February 2003, counted 623 in the whole city, but HOPE people say this is under-counted.

HOPE association started their activities 19 years ago, when the number of homeless increased a lot. Organization was started by homeless themselves, and others later supported them. Back then, all the activities were done by the supporters, all the negotiations done by supporters. Didn't solve problems. But homeless people have to do themselves. Both the Hope Association and the Night Patrol are initiatives of the homeless themselves. That's why Peter Shimokawa proposed coming here - strongly people-driven, not just do-gooders.

Difficult to organize homeless men, because they are isolated and live individually - many like it that way. We go on a walk along the Kamo-Gawa River with a group of homeless guys. We talk to three of them :

- Takeshi Chuzuki
- Junichi Ota
- Kimota

Night Patrol : Every Thursday, they patrol the station, mainly the station areas. 50 or 60 homeless men meet and have dinner and talk together. Others are out working.

What kind of jobs? recycling cans and collecting used magazines to re-sell. How much do they earn? 2,000 Yen per day on a good day, 1,000 yen on a bad day. (a pack of cigarettes cost 280 Yen) Some municipal groups have proposed a city recycling system, which will take away the job or recycling from these men next year. Some want to go home but can't - maybe they face big debts or after they lost jobs they could not support their families and lost face, etc. Many sad stories.

Everyone tells us, "Don't ask them about their former lives! Don't ask them where they come from! Don't take their pictures!"

When you visit homeless groups in Japan, your guides will invariably ask you to keep your camera put away, or to ask people's permission before clicking. This is not because homeless men are particularly camera-shy, but because in the complex social code of Japan, impoverishment - and especially the incapacity to support your family - is for most men the greatest possible source of shame. Many homeless men have had to leave families behind, some because they lost jobs and couldn't provide, some because unpaid debts made it necessary to divorce and literally *disappear*. In Japan, debts are the responsibility of the next-of-kin, and so if a man defaults on a debt, his wife and family will automatically become debtors if he dies or disappears - unless he legally divorces. In Kyoto's homeless survey, 39% of the men described debts as being their main reason for becoming homeless.

"Origami houses" - Life along the Kamo-gawa Riverbed : We visit a couple of the beautifully neat little houses the men have built along the river edge - kept very tidily. Mostly made of blue vinyl tarpaulins, stretched over a light wooden frame. But it is VERY cold, wind blowing up the river. Big problem during the winter, when some freeze in these houses in the night. **Their priorities?** Need a place to move during the floods, need a place to bathe and wash clothes once a week, and need a place to keep warm during the winter. But most prefer to stay here, because they control their own environment. The simplest room to rent in Kyoto costs 25,000 Yen per month, too expensive. As we walk along and meet some of the men in front of their houses, Takeshi and Junichi hand out brochures with information from the Hope Association (next meeting time and place, news about negotiating with city, calendar of events, map to the HOPE office). One house we visit is hidden behind the pylon of a bridge crossing the river, so from the walkway you can't see it. Nobody home, but we admire the persimmons hung up to keep cool. Most of these houses have been here 1 - 5 years. The oldest ones 6 or 7 years. Most don't stay long, move every couple of years. In a few areas, the city has erected strange iron grille-work barriers under over-passes to keep people from building shelters. One man tells Tip that he washes his dishes in the river, where the water is quite clean, but the current is strong, so he has to wash them in a screen container, so they don't get swept away.

Besides riverbed, where to do homeless people stay in Kyoto?

1. **Rough Sleeping in the City Center :** Maida (homeless man speaks) : Shops on street all close by 9:00 PM. After, many put cardboard and make a shelter on the sidewalk in front of shops - especially in the lanes which have been covered and made into interior shopping arcades at the center of Kyoto. Safe from rain, and slightly warmer than elsewhere. In summer, only cardboard and a sheet for covering (when it's hot) but in winter, it gets very cold and need coats and blankets. By 6:00 AM, have to wake up, clean up and go somewhere else to pass the day.
2. **Kyoto Station :** (Ota and Kimoto, homeless men from station speak) in station, and around the station. We cannot build any shelters. Only cardboard and blankets. Last trains are at 12:30 at night, after that station closes. Can sleep only outside station. First train is at 5:00 AM, sleeping points depend on the day. Police know about the situation in the station bad - very limited sleeping time (only 12:30 - 5:00 AM) only 3 - 4 hours.

Nishida (Hope Association's leader) speaks. Says Hope association is only homeless people, with help from some supporters and a few ex-homeless people. One activity we do is a twice-weekly "Day service" where we negotiate with the city for a place for homeless people to come and have a bath and wash their clothes. Also once every two months, we have a hair-cutting activity. All these activities are listed on the calendar in our hand-out that we distribute around the homeless areas. Also, we organize a soup kitchen once a month, all cooking by homeless themselves, after dinner, everyone cleans their own bowl and chopsticks, and then sit around to talk, discuss problems and propose what to ask government for. Some of the vegetables we use to make the soup come from gardens outside the city where homeless men go once a month to for farming. Sometimes, the church organizes a bazaar where we can sell recycled materials or vegetables from this farming. Use money for Hope Association activities. Also many other small activities.

Thai Question : Why do people along river move after 2 years? Some find a job elsewhere, some have medical problems and go into hospital, some are evicted by shop-owners.

Thai Question : What is the future purpose of Hope? We want to finish street life, and get all these men out of homelessness. I don't want to be homeless as an old man - it's a very hard life and very unhealthy.

How many homeless in Kyoto? : 650 people. Osaka has 15,000 homeless people - there is some networking between the two cities.

Japanese homeless question Thais : In Thailand, are there any homeless families? Some, but very seldom. If children of homeless families, the government forcefully separates and pushes kids into children's center.

Question : In Japan, mostly it is the man who earns money for the family, and if he can't earn, he has to leave the family, he has failed. Same in Thailand? It depends on the family. Usually, no need to separate because the guy lost his job. Since the IMF crisis, women continue to work, even if men lost jobs. No big shame for losing a job in Thailand. Women in our culture are familiar with working, and in poor communities, most women are working to support their families just as men are. Maybe more non-working women in middle-class families, but not among the poor.

Question : Have you tried to negotiate with the government for land to build houses? No! If we did, the government would evict us all! We have a social security system in Japan - after 65 years of age, can access social security assistance, but must be alone in an apartment. Some don't like to stay alone and so don't take advantage of this scheme for elderly housing.

Question : any shelter for homeless in Kyoto? Yes, some homeless are willing to enter these government run places, but many don't like. Too many rules and restrictions. Only room for 48 persons in Kyoto's shelter, and people can only stay one week maximum, and can only return to the shelter after being away for 1 month. All 48 beds are always full. Some homeless men from Tokyo and other cities come to Kyoto because the welfare services are better here than in other cities. Like free service for hospital visits.

Friday November 14, 2003

Morning : More discussion with the Buraku people at Asaka, in Osaka

Comments and questions from the Thai group :

- This is not only community development, but think of town planning beyond the settlement and planning that goes beyond the physical
- With the Buraku communities we have visited, the struggle for housing has led to longer-term development. Housing has been used as a tool to reduce discrimination, and use the housing development process to launch other development activities.
- In all the Buraku projects we have visited, people all say that human relations are more important than physical development.
- In these projects, too, people have gotten good information before doing any planning (survey of problems and situation). So the planning is based on reality, on what's really on the ground, not some in-the-air concepts. And in Japan, this planning approach is supported by government policy, when communities are strong and well-enough organized to tap those policies.
- *Thais ask : What is the meaning of community participation in Japan? Yamomoto spoke about the leader having to have foresight and seeing what's needed and then people support that leader's decisions. What about the role of community members in deciding what to do? (The Japanese are clearly uncomfortable with this question, and sort of re-write the question before answering, while the Thais very gracefully nod and say yes yes, and don't press the point.)*
- *Question : How to build up this sense of community in this capitalist, individualist society and in a system like in Japan? Is it possible?*
- *Question: In all the projects we have visited, there are a majority of elderly people as movers and shakers - a lot of silver hair in all these meetings. Are there any new generation participating in this community development process? How do you see the quality of change in the community development process - getting stronger or going down?*

Yamomoto-san responds :

The community solidarity we saw 30 years ago is getting thinner and thinner. Not the same kind of human relations these days. But pride is still strong, that we all built this community from such miserable conditions. But surely BIG changes in community and human relations have occurred - here and in the larger Japan. But we are not giving up - we are trying to revive, trying to motivate people of all ages to join in activities, offering many entry-points into community involvement, many activities. One aspect of this is our relations with older relatives, revive a sense of community by looking after the aging members of our community.

4 or 5 years ago, if garbage was left along the street, we used to scold the city, "It's your duty to keep the street clean!" This was the attitude. These days, trying to motivate people to join in these activities and take ownership of their own community and its condition. So now we have groups to clean the park, streets, river-bed, and post notices on a board about when the various clean-ups are scheduled. Reviving the community spirit is also about this kind of attitude.

Professor Uchida speaks :

Before the second world war, most communities in Japan controlled their own water supply. Traditionally, community-level systems to control people. After the war, the whole social system changed and discouraged community.

- In the process of democratizing Japan under the American administration and occupation, there was a big effort to wipe out these neighborhood associations, which were set up as part of the nationalist movement before the war and which were called the "Chonai-Kai System." The Chonai-Kai system was transferred to Indonesia under the Japanese occupation. What was the Chonai-Kai system? It was a kind of mutual-watching system within villages and communities, very nasty! People spying on each other, and ratting on neighbors who were not sufficiently nationalistic and getting them in trouble. This system had really broken down community trust and mutual anything in communities.
- The sense of community was also weakened by economic growth and the advent of a system of individualized everything.
- But the new trend, since the 1995 earthquake in Kobe, people became aware that we can't just rely on government and formal sector - so the important thing is to have community process like in Mano.
- Now there are big problems of social welfare in Japan - lots of aging people, and need for an effective way to establish a community system to take care of these people - the government system cannot do it.
- There is also a new movement for people to establish non-profit, community-oriented businesses, coming back to the new type of community spirit.

Professor Uchida on City planning in Japan :

(Professor Uchida was the first academic in Japan to work with the Buraku. Then he introduced Inamoto to Buraku) Japan's city planning system was organized about 100 years ago. Traditionally, it was very central-government driven, not local, and it emphasized big infrastructure development for industries. But in the 1970s, there was a change: serious industrial pollution begins, and more concern about this and the earthquakes. As a result of these problems, there opened up more room for community initiatives.

The Machi-zukuri "Town planning" movement grew in the 1970s and 1980s. In response to these initiatives by communities, some cities tried to institutionalize community participation. If Mano-style organization is recognized, it was increasingly acknowledged that communities have the right to put proposals to the government and appoint their own consultants and get funding to support this. This kind of institutional support for community-driven development is now spread across Japan. Which is not to say it's swept the country's planning, but it is like a facility that increasing numbers of organized communities are taking advantage of.

Yamamoto-san speaks :

Earlier, the Buraku Liberation League depended on the government for everything! The government should fund our movement, we said! But now we realize we can't expect this support to go on forever. So the idea of setting up these community-based companies, to get our own funding sources for our movement. Not only for individual profit, more community based management system in these new kinds of community businesses.

Buraku relationship with politicians : When a candidate wants to go for election, BLL makes a policy framework with him. There is a big bureau within city government to deal with the Buraku issue. That bureau will be the coordinating "window" and consolidates as city and government package for Buraku initiatives. This is all quite institutionalized now, and doesn't change much with different politicians coming and going.

Before, the BLL movement was not so strong. When we visited the city government offices, we got pushed around from department to department. Part of our movement for liberation was to negotiate with local government to get a special bureau established to act as a window for sorting out and coordinating with various relevant agencies - only once such a system becomes established can it be sustainable.

Relationship between stakeholders in the Asaka redevelopment process : Gathering survey info about problems in cities. In Asaka, because of our powerful movement, we could negotiate with local government and get support for the survey process, as a kind of municipal subcontract. Using that budget, they recruited their own consultants (like Yoko, and Inamoto). When the survey started in Asaka, invited BLL, local students and local government officials to participate as volunteers. Not only the survey. This is called a survey of Asaka, tried to use this opportunity to organize people and use the survey as a community organization process.

The planning process in Asaka : The idea was to make the planning team multi-stakeholder, to draft the initial redevelopment plan. When the first draft master plan was ready, big gathering organized, and the plan was discussed in small groups of 10 households each. Results of small group discussions were compiled and sent back to the planning team and incorporated into the second draft plan, which then went through the same cycle of large public presentation and smaller group discussion and adjustment.

Three principals of the planning Process in Asaka : (1) has to be logical and "scientific" based on analysis of real problems from survey (2) has to be democratic in the planning process (large space for women to be involved too), and (3) has to be comprehensive, involving people from outside, and plan should be fully checked and proper and okayed by everyone.

Those issues which could not be agreed upon were put aside, for the time being, so that the community could present a comprehensive and agreed-upon plan to negotiate with the city - to avoid divisions. Asaka is a strong case of how conflicting problems are resolved. But in other cases, these small issues can be very divisive.

Long Time frame : the first housing units were built in Asaka in the 1960s, and the latest units were being built just last year - 2003! Long time frame!

Baan Mankong versus BLL housing process - some discussion :

Fast or slow?

- **Pi Duang points out that a lot of these Machi-Zukuri projects** we have visited in Japan, the time frame has been very long - 10 to 20 years to plan and implement these projects! In CODI next year, we have to do 50,000 housing units in 1 year in 200 cities! Any suggestions?
- **Hosaka says: Go slow!** Need to learn from experiences.
- **Yamamoto says : Go slow!** Producing 50,000 units is one thing, but as a means to what end? The creation of community, what kind of change can be brought out of making those 50,000 units - what does this "unit" mean to the community? Upgrading can be a powerful means of making change and building communities and strengthening interaction and changing relationships in a city. If the "unit" is your only purpose, then the movement will end. This is just a step towards community addressing so many important issues. This is why so many Buraku housing projects are the end, and nothing happens after the reconstruction.
- **Buraku Liberation League has reconstructed 200,000 units in 1,000 settlements in the past 30 years**
- **Baan Mankong has a target to reconstruct 200,000 units in 1,000 settlements in 5 years!**
- **Pi Duk says : The concept of Baan Mankong is not new. Community-based housing development and community improvement has been done for a long time in Thailand. But what is new is the city-level process to deal with the whole city's housing problems at one time.**
- **Panthip says :** Also, our needs are urgent, our houses are very small and simple, it's not such a heavy project or such a heavy investment as with these projects in Japan.

Afternoon : "Okonomi-yaki" for lunch. Thai group walks North from Asaka and has lunch at a special kind of place called "Okonomiyaki" (which means *"whatever you like cooked on time"*) - with a griddle in the middle of the table, where the waitress bring eggs, vegetables, fish, etc, and makes fried assemblies of these things right in front of you.

Homeless in Osaka :

1. Homeless in Osaka Jo Park :

After lunch, we all take the train to visit Osaka Castle, a spectacular medieval castle with elaborate cascading roofs, built on top of a small hill in the middle of Osaka. You can see this landmark from around the city. Big tourist spot. Surrounding the castle is an extensive park, with forest land. There used to be about 1,000 homeless men living in tents in this park. A big recent eviction by the tourism authorities brought the numbers down to about 600 men. Mami, Peter and I walk through some of the areas where people have built shelters for themselves amongst the trees. Signs are posted along the public walkways in a grove of ancient cedars which Peter translates, *"Homeless People's Tents are Prohibited in this Area"* Peter says that the Osaka authorities are not "people centered".

2. Homeless in Kamagasaki :

Kamagasaki is Osaka's labor area - a big neighborhood of blocks surrounding the big Municipal Labor Center, where construction companies and others come to pick up daily wage laborers, who operate their own queuing system for getting jobs. Construction daily wage jobs usually pay about 8,000 Yen per day. 70% of the men in this neighborhood are 65 or older, and there are about 20,000 homeless people living in this area. Of this 20,000, 8,000 sleep on the streets outside. There was a big struggle with the city three or four years ago to get permission for homeless people to sleep under the shelter of the Labor Center (outside but covered) only at night time and during winter. The other 12,000 homeless live in very dodgy rooms and flop-houses and cheap hotels and welfare mansions.

Cheap hotels : mostly laborers living there in very tiny and dirty rooms or apartments, and most of those who can afford to rent these places are on social insurance, which you have to be 65 years old or older to get. Rooms cost 1,000 - 2,000 Yen per night. Most take their meals in the cheap restaurants and noodle shops in this area, where a simple meal cost about 300 - 500 Yen per meal. We also see men making little fires to boil water in a tin can to make instant noodles from the convenience store.

Lockers for rent : We pass many small locker places - like shopfronts, but all they have inside are self-service coin-operated lockers, where homeless men can safely keep the stuff they can't always haul around with them. But Peter points out that the rates for lockers are higher in this neighborhood (500 Yen per lock-up), where the demand for this particular service is so high. In Tokyo, he says, lockers are usually 200 Yen only. *Another example of how the poorest pay higher prices for basic services!*

Some of these hotels convert to welfare hotels or "group homes", under contract from the government social assistance system. The hotels are still privately owned, but the government pays a fixed rent of 120,000 Yen per month, per room to the hotel owner. It's like a guaranteed income for the hotel owner. People only become eligible for this assistance once they've turned 65. Before that, they can't get it. The owner has to provide meals three times a day, a common room. In most of these places, the rooms are individual (sometimes shared rooms?) but very tiny, with shared bathrooms. Pretty bleak places, and nothing "group" about them - it's lonely, isolated, often troubled and sick old men living in crowded conditions. The people eligible

for this social welfare assistance get the room free, plus 80,000 Yen per month cash. Half of this they have to pay to the group home, and the remaining 40,000 Yen is theirs for pocket money, cigarettes, drinks.

Reminds me of Skid Road in Seattle, in the days before boom. All the old men hanging around in the street, smoking, chatting or just looking lost. Sad little noodle shops, their doors hung with red lanterns and the half-curtains (nori?). People warming their hands over fires started in rusty oil-drums. It's very cold, and we can see our breath when we speak. Some men we see wearing the traditional Japanese laborer's pants, baggy but gathered at the ankle. Peter says he sometimes wears a pair of these when he goes to see the homeless.

Problems with Social welfare system : Peter describes problem with Social welfare system in Japan. For example, the system considers that a guy whose legs have been crippled in an accident to be unable to do construction work (for which he has skills), but able to do desk work (for which he has no skills and therefore cannot get a job). In theory, anyone who cannot work is entitled to social welfare assistance, under the law. But the government classifies this guy as "*employable*" and is therefore not eligible for social welfare assistance. Even though he cannot find a job he can do. Big problem of this "ability to work." Nojiren is pushing for :

1. Government to help find jobs for unemployed homeless people, and
2. when people really can't work or find work, should be able to get social assistance, according to the law.

Evening : Tom, Mami and Peter take Shinkansen to Tokyo.

Saturday November 15, 2003

Homeless groups in Tokyo - Shibuya Area :

Homeless in Shibuya Station : Shibuya is a very posh, busy district in Tokyo, with lots of department stores and restaurants and night life and upmarket housing. Shibuya Station is like a huge shopping center, with thousands and thousands of teenagers and shoppers and giant flashing billboards. Peter says about 30 - 50 homeless people sleep in or around this station at night.

Homeless in Miyashita Park and Nojiren: A few blocks away from the Shibuya station is Miyashita Park, where there are about 100 homeless people living here. There is only one woman living alone, and one Vietnamese couple (without kids - if they had kids, the authorities would take the kids and put them in a special home) - otherwise all single men of mixed ages. Most live in tent-houses built neatly on the edges of the long park, out of the way of the benches and central walkway. But some sleep on the benches. Nojiren is a group of homeless men who have organized themselves in Miyashita Park - Peter supports the activities of Nojiren. Every Saturday night they organize a "night patrol" to check on homeless men around the Shibuya area, and every Friday, the night patrol goes to other parks. We meet Mami at the park, and go sit in the little tent-structure the men have built as their community center (We sit on cushions on the floor around a table. They all built this room two years ago for their meetings, and for guests to stay. It is very cold! Mami has brought some sea-weed wrapped rice-cakes from home and offers these with the guys who come in.) Peter says there are lots of people involved in Nojiren, but this is the close group of 7 - 8 men.

- **Takahashi** is a carpenter by trade, comes from Hokaido, has no work now, has lived here in the park for 2.5 years.
- **Kashiwagi** is also a construction worker, is one of Nojiren's "field managers" and has a reputation as a fighter! Has lived here 3 years.
- **Oyama** is the youngest guy here at 32 years, has lived here 2 years, works at any daily wage work, nothing now.
- **Kikujan** is very shy ("moji" in Japanese) and won't say a word!
- **Onakasan** is the leader here.

Nojiren is a mixture of homeless men and non-homeless supporters, such as Peter, who has been a big booster of the group. Peter feels it is too much controlled by the supporters, but here in Miyashita Park, the homeless group is quite strong, so no need for much support from outside.

Any evictions here? No evictions of homeless men in the Park or in Shibuya Ward. Two years ago, though, their wood and vinyl houses here in the park were bigger, and their community center was bigger. But the Ward Office said that unless you break it and make it smaller, we'll break it. So the men living here voluntarily made their houses smaller. The Ward Office also stipulated that no more tents were allowed, no new-comers, and it was the men's responsibility to keep others out. The Ward Administration comes every night to check: if there is a new tent, they'll kick them out, and if they find a tent with nobody in it, they'll take it away.

Surviving in the park : Those who have work and money use the coin laundry to wash their clothes. Water supply in the park is OK for washing dishes, but too cold to take a bath in winter. Going to the *Sento* (Public bath houses) is a luxury and you really get clean and warmed up, but it costs about 400 Yen in Tokyo (only 80 Yen in Kyushu!), so it's a luxury few homeless men can afford. Plus, some *Sento* refuse entry to homeless men. They used to have a common shower room which the men built themselves, but it was too big and the Ward made them take it down. Now have a smaller one. Main problem everyone says is JOBS! One guy is 67 years old and enjoys the life in the park. Later, if he gets sick, he can go into the social insurance

system and live in a group home, but would prefer the park if he's healthy. Many, he says, don't like the idea of depending on the government and are proud to be independent, to do for themselves. Many of these men have bad history with their families - troubles, debts, estrangements, money problems. **Earning** : Recycling cans and magazines can earn 1,000 - 2,000 Yen per day.

Mami's homeless friend Teranishi :

We meet Mami's friend, a very quiet, soft-spoken, sweet-natured homeless man named Teranishi Katsuya. Must be in his thirties. He stays in a different part of the city and has been friends with Mami for years - she made her own video about his life. He comes around with us for two days as we visit homeless groups in Tokyo. He earns about 2,000 Yen per day with his recycling work. It used to be possible to earn 5,000 Yen per day, he says, but now there is a lot of competition for the cans and magazines around so it's hard to make that much. He gets most of the things he needs to eat from the 100-Yen shops - bread, vegetables, fish, bento. He doesn't go to the noodle shops for meals - they're too expensive. Once every two months or so, he goes for a proper bath at a *sentō* (cost 420 Yen). Otherwise, he gives himself sponge-baths with cold water in the public toilets. He sleeps outside, on park benches or on the pavement, on cardboard padding. Wheels around his belongings in luggage carrier. Teranishi has got beautiful red cheeks, but his hair is very thin and his hands look swollen from the cold. It's not hard to tell that this man's health is not going to last, living outside as he does, but he says vehemently that he could never stay in a homeless shelter - he'd try to escape immediately.

Houses : Most have built their own houses. The Shibuya Ward Office has a rule that all the houses have to be made of the same bright blue vinyl tarpaulins, which cost 85 Yen for a big sheet. One sheet lasts about one year, before it starts to deteriorate and has to be replaced. Houses look like big gift boxes - the bright shiny blue plastic, and the ropes binding them together, often on wooden packing bases.

Soup Kitchen every Saturday (Wednesday?) Night : Nojiren also organizes a soup kitchen every Saturday in Miyashita Park. Peter says they use the weekly Soup Kitchen more as a chance to gather, to meet each other, talk, exchange news of evictions, invite government officials for dialogue, disseminate news about the new homeless law. They don't do it every day because they don't want to create reliance on this so it's like a giveaway, or charity. Don't want homeless men to lose their independence, so it's more an occasion to gather. Nojiren produces hand-bills which they distribute to homeless people in the Shibuya area - with news about the soup kitchen, map to find the park and the local social welfare assistance office.

The night we visit, they are preparing two huge cauldrons of a savory dumpling soup called *Suiton Jiru* - The dumplings are made of wheat flour and rice, rolled into balls and then dropped to boil in the soup. This is a one-pot recipe from World War 2 days when rice was scarce and had to be supplemented with imported wheat flour.

Meeting the amazing Yamomoto at the Soup Kitchen : I help chop leeks as part of the preparations for the weekly soup kitchen. A friendly group stands around a table made of plywood put up on trestles, where everyone is chopping and talking and cracking jokes. It's a strange mix of people: young do-gooders from University, affluent older women and homeless people. One homeless guy is the real scene-stealer at the table, telling funny stories in a booming voice - he tells how he got into a welfare hotel only after being diagnosed with Hepatitis C, but then despite his poor health, he's managed to become the big boss in the 20-bed room.

I meet a guy named Yamomoto. Mami helps translate and I first thought he was a supporter, because he's very plump, well-dressed, wears stylish rimless glasses and has read the complete works of Thomas Mann! Looks like a school-teacher. It turns out he lives in front of the Shibuya Station at night, and the wheelie-carrier behind him has almost everything he owns in it.

We talked about Thomas Mann, one of my favorite authors, and he confesses that he couldn't understand *Magic Mountain*, but kept reading because apparently Thomas Mann has exerted a big influence on many Japanese writers and Yamomoto wanted to understand the connection. He showed me the tiny halogen reading light he carries around with him - it clips to the book so you can read in the dark without disturbing people sleeping nearby. He's 44 years old. Used to work as a prep-cook in a restaurant in Shibuya, so he chops the onions with great skill and speed! But he lost that job when the place closed down, and then couldn't find another. Later, he found himself unable to pay rent, and drifting into being homeless. He says he prefers not having to work, though, because it gives him more time for reading. Something different about this man - his ending up being homeless seems to come from something else than being unable to find a job - maybe some estrangement from his family? Maybe some inability to fit in to the conventional routines of working life? Maybe some deep and uncompromising desire to do things his way?

How does he get books? He collects tin cans and second hand magazines, as many others do, to make a little money. And a lot of what he makes he uses to buy books from the second-hand book and magazine dealers. You'd be amazed what kind of books people throw away, he tells me! I ask him can he get books from the public library? But he says no, he can't get membership because he has no address, but he sometimes borrows books using a friend's card. Also, he says that books are always due in two weeks, and because he's always reading 4 or 5 books at a time, it's difficult for him to finish a book within two weeks! (*I could have talked to this man for hours, but poor Mami got tired of translating after a while...*)

Homeless groups in Tokyo - Sumida River, Sanya Area :

- **Sumida River Banks** : There are about 1,000 blue-vinyl houses along the embankments of the Sumida River. One person per house. Most houses are beautifully crafted, very neat and cleverly put together, designed to be moved and taken apart easily. We come on a day when some NGOs are running several activities for homeless people. There is a flea market. Peter says that there are 7 organizations working with homeless people in these Taidoku and Sumida Wards. They cooperate a lot with each other to coordinate their efforts. "Too big for one NGO!" Some individuals also join to help, not only NGOs. Once a month, they have a clean-up operation where all the blue-vinyl houses have to be moved up for the afternoon, while the pavements are swept - it's like a one-day eviction, and notices are posted ahead of the time. There are sometimes floods from typhoons. Toilet facilities? Many just pee into the river (there are funny signs along the railing forbidding this!) or in the bushes in the park above. Long walk to public toilets in the park above.
- **Monthly medical camp along the Sumida River** : Once a month (third Sunday every month - today) they run a medical service, with a doctor who sees homeless men in a simple encampment made up in the park near the riverside. Long queue of men to see the doctor, with assistants pulling things out of the trunkfuls of medicines they brought. Two years ago, some group did a survey of homeless people here and identified their two most pressing needs: jobs and medical services - they decided to start with medical care. Homeless people are entitled to go to private hospitals for care, even if they can't pay, but they are not welcome there and get the runaround. So the idea was for this NGO to arrange the medical care to come to them, "to get closer to the people." Only one doctor comes today - usually there are three, all volunteering their time. There are homeless people also helping to organize the queues and assist the doctors and help the sick men fill out forms. When medical problems are more serious, there are networks to help bring those men to the hospital. There are also free lunches being distributed (rice, two bananas and green tea). Seems like a real charity-style event, one senses.
- **Park Bench Dividers : No sleeping allowed here!** Peter shows me the several ways that the park managers have designed (or altered) the park benches so that nobody can sleep on them. Some benches are designed as single backless stools, far apart from each other. On the old-style wood-and-iron park benches, they have added barriers in the middle that make it impossible to stretch out and sleep. Even so, we see lots of worn-out looking men with their bundles asleep in sitting-up positions on the benches.
- No pictures!
- Another 300 people sleep in the **Asakasa Station in the arcade**. Famous shrine nearby, the Asakasa Shrine.
- **Another 300 tents in Ueno Park**.
- **Sanya is the Daily workers area of Tokyo** (like *Kamagasaki* in Osaka, *Kotobukicho* in Yokohama or *Sasajima* in Nagoya). About 5,000 - 6,000 people living in this neighborhood in cheap hotels (about half of them on Social Assistance). Peter says that about 100 sleep outside and are truly homeless. Each ward has a big labor market (called *Yoseba* in Japanese), but Sanya is like the biggest labor market area of all for the whole city.
- Taidoku (Sanya) and Sumida Wards have Tokyo's greatest concentration of homeless people, with between 3,000 - 5,000 homeless people.
- **Sanya Labor Workers Social Welfare Center** : We visit this place in the middle of Sanya, a tall-4 or 5-story building on a very small corner plot. Run by a Christian organization - the guy was earlier haranguing the homeless men near Sumida River with a bull-horn. In 1990, they bought this land and built the building - cost 200 million Yen. Strange place. This is one of the 7 organizations working with the homeless in the area, and helps with the soup kitchen.
- **Sanya Soup Kitchen** : held every Sunday, just like the Miyashita Park soup kitchen, but the cooking seems to be for a much larger number of people - 300 or 400 people. Some of the soup they cook here will be served in this area, and some will be loaded in big pots on trucks and taken to the weekly soup kitchen in Shinjuku. Cooking on wood fires - many stoves set up to cook at least 20 giant pots. They get the vegetables from some rural area project which employs homeless men, started in 1994. The cooking is happening in the road in front of the Social Welfare Building, to make a statement. Kids from the local Junior High school come to help, black smoke swirling up, looks more like a Dickens novel than modern Japan.
- **AWN (Asian Workers Network)** : Started in August 2002. (AWN is a cooperative worker's society by homeless people. This is one of pioneering activities in Japanese homeless movement. Income generation. This office is near Sanya. Organizers trying to create jobs by running a "recycling" shop - which is a kind of second-hand shop, selling old clothes, dishes, knick-knacks. Arakawa (a woman) manages the recycle shop, which started a year ago. At first, very few customers, but it increased fast. Lot of factories in this area, with workers from Philippines, Bangladesh. 4 people run the shop - two of them get social welfare and live in their own apartment. Rent shop for 13,000 Yen per month (?). AWN also runs Benriya : a convenient work collective by homeless people to do odd jobs in cleaning, moving house, cutting trees, garden maintenance, cleaning pigeon poop, washing house external walls, cleaning inside fridge, etc. They negotiate with local communities about cleaning houses. So far, there are six staff (4 very poor, and two support staff - all six people get 30,000 Yen per month salary). They also link with the Food Bank Network.

- **In Sanya area, AWN organizes night patrols** every Saturday night to link with people sleeping in the streets, pass out information about medical camps, etc. On Wednesdays, they help applicants for social welfare at the Ward Office. AWN also helps homeless men with address registration for when they apply for jobs (have to have an address, so they can use the AWN office). Nakamurasan is one of the founding members. He says that Homeless people feel isolated, ostracized from society - they have no physical space and no social space either. Even if they get jobs, they work individually. - So jobs and places to live are the main issues, which can't be separated. Try to create work by themselves. The idea is not just to support the creation of jobs, but to strengthen the community and link with other homeless groups, network with people living in poor conditions in other cities.
- **Evening: visit Shinjuku Station area and Shinjuku Park across the street :**
 - 1. NPO Shinjuku (former "Resource Center for Homeless Human Rights")
 - 2. Coalition of the Homeless in Shinjuku
- **Shinjuku Soup kitchen :** The 600 men have to sit on the freezing pavement through a series of long harangues from various do-gooders before they can get their plastic bowls of stew, which are passed along the rows politely by these ragged, hungry men - nobody begins eating until everyone is served. Then, a Christian group brings in a huge tray of fried cakes and puts it down on the ground in front of the crowd, and then starts singing songs about Jesus, with a guitar. If anyone wants to stay and get a sweet cake, they have to sit quietly and listen to all the songs about Jesus first. I ask Yasue if this is always how these things go, and she expresses surprise, doesn't know who these people are. A young, hot-shot French academic comes up and talks to us - he's doing his Ph.D. thesis on the homeless problem in Japan, and is working closely with Yasue. Even he is shocked at the evangelical cake-givers. Seems like something out of Victorian England, the whole miserable event.
- **Talk to Yasue about her NPO's work.** They run 9-day training courses in getting drivers license, fork-lift operator, handicapped person helpers, publishing workers. She says there are 7,000 homeless people in Tokyo. She shows me around Shinjuku Ward Park, where there are lots of clusters of vinyl houses, but seem much more ragged here than Sumida, and darker. Her NPO does a lot of advocacy work about homeless issue: seminars, press releases, publishes books ("Homeless People's Rights"), and works on laws, educating the public about homelessness. They have surveyed the Shinjuku area several times. Now the Ward has asked Yasue's group to cooperate with social work and in applying the new law about homeless. Peter says this is one group that is working with government (instead of against) on the new homeless law. Peter obviously doesn't approve of this strategy and considers Yasue a sell-out.
- **Sleeping in Shinjuku Station :** Station used to have interior arcades where people could sleep inside - and they set up cardboard communities along these pedestrian walkways. But there was a big fire of cardboard houses in 1998, most houses burned down. Afterwards, big eviction. Now, those areas are closed at night, from 11:30 to 5:00 AM. Shinjuku Homeless People's Association.