

# **The Kurokabe**

## **— Analysis on its Corporate Function of Town Management in Town Center Revitalization —**

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'The Law on Improvement and Vitalization in City Center' was enforced in 1998 to help stimulate the commercial revitalization of town centers in Japan. The number of master plans in local governments for "revitalization of town centers" amounted to 600 or more, and about 400 Town Management Organizations (TMO) were established before 2005. However, it is rare case that the plan of town center revitalization is materialized. It is called for the change in the method and the mechanism of the coordination of organizations.

The purpose of this research is to analyze efforts of Nagahama City as a success case of revitalization in town center and of the Kurokabe Inc. that plays the core role of that case. Kurokabe has been paid attention to as a model case since its establishment. Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport selected to 'Sightseeing Charisma' from Nagahama City. More than 2000 groups came on a tour of inspection in Nagahama City. The reason is that their efforts have decreased the number of vacant shops in the shopping street and have increased the number of new shops in town center where Kurokabe expanded. The organization of Kurokabe and commercial policy of Nagahama City is analyzed in each chapter, with examining the other early studies on Kurokabe and Commercial Policy Theory. In Chapter 1 the function of Kurokabe in Nagahama City is examined. Chapter 2 introduces the commercial policy of Nagahama City in relation to Kurokabe. Chapter 3 shows that activities of various civic groups included Kurokabe and Nagahama City are related to commercial accumulation to the town center. Chapter 4 pays attention to two groups that have influence on the formation of philosophy of Kurokabe.

Chapter 1 pays attention to similarities between the activity of Kurokabe and the specific company, TMO approved by local governments under Law on Improvement and Vitalization in City Center. This Chapter makes clear function of Kurokabe as a TMO. Kurokabe has not only decreased the number of vacant shops through its activity as a TMO but also participated in making programs of revitalization of town center. Kurokabe encourages establishment of organization that executes the business. In a word, in addition to Nagahama Chamber of Commerce and Industry that is a formal agent approved as TMO by Nagahama City, Kurokabe plays role of TMO.

Chapter 2 focuses on the point that Nagahama City has supported Kurokabe and on the feature of the adjustment and promotion by the commercial policies of Nagahama City. Especially, this chapter explains that Kurokabe plays the substantial role of TMO in Nagahama City. The commercial policy of Nagahama City led Kurokabe to develop its business in the town center. This policy included supporting to the shopping street, preserving of the historical building, and making that street more attracted. In this plan, Kurokabe was regarded as core group going into partnership with Nagahama City.

Chapter 3 shows that the commercial accumulation in town center of Nagahama City is in good circulation, and that the union of shopping street of Nagahama, Nagahama City, Nagahama chamber of commerce and industry, Kurokabe, and other various organizations' activities are connected with each other. It is shown that two or more organizations have had the partnership for the commercial accumulation of the town center. In

addition, this chapter reviews the "Life cycle of a shopping street" theory of Takemasa Ishihara and Junzo Ishii asserting that the developmental stages of the commercial accumulation is defined by activities of an organization of shopping street. This study suggests that it is necessary to cover independent activities other than an organization of shopping street to explain the developmental stages at the life cycle.

In chapter 4, it is clarified that the 21shiminkaigi and the Koyu-club have had great influences on the establishment and activities of Kurokabe. The reason is that the 21shiminkaigi and the Kouyuu-club gave a great influence to the line-up of shareholders of the company and to the formation of managers' value system. The connection between Kurokabe's shareholders and participants of the above-mentioned two organizations are very closely. Some of the Kurokabe's corporate philosophy and managers' value system were got from the workshop of the thought of Tenkou Nishida held in the Koyu-club. Thus, Kurokabe did not appear spontaneously but was formed by two or more organizations.

In conclusion, Kurokabe is a main planner of town center revitalization, and also a dispenser of that plans. It has the enough ability of adjustment with various groups having concerns. This research makes clear that Kurokabe has the function as a TMO. Kurokabe has been given a role of TMO by the commercial policy of Nagahama City. Meanwhile, the commercial accumulation has been encouraged in the event, the maintenance of street's view, and the activity such as attracting a new shop held by various organizations including not only the shopping street organization but also Kurokabe. Kurokabe and Nagahama City shares a conscious of spatial division of labor to development of Nagahama; it is the most important points for partnership of the town center revitalization. At the end, various interpersonal relationships and managers' value system of Kurokabe has been constructed with the 21shiminkaigi and the Koyu-club in long time. This is the most important point for town center vitalization along with a city's TMO to make of the most of civic resources and activities of concerned local citizens and groups.