TOKYO, THE MODERN DAY’S FLOATING WORLD

東京、現代の浮世絵

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture
on 14 December 2001
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Architecture

Abstract

All students of urban design and architecture know Siena, and its merit in urban
design. They might also know Piazza del Campo. However, few know about the
centuries-old tradition of Il Palio horse race carried out in Piazza del Campo each year,
which Siena held the earliest recorded Palio in 1238. The race lasted merely ninety
seconds, but its preparation has been the focus of all life in Siena, and in the night of Il
Palio, 25000 Sienese are eating in the streets of Siena. How many studying Siena know of
the significance of horse used to have to the city, to the extent that on most walls of the
Siena city iron brackets (for tying the horses to) were planted? Is the discussion of culture
- which explains why people build the city in certain way, and how the city is used – to be
divorced in the realm of architecture and urban design? Should the study of city be
limited to its physical layout and attributes?

This dissertation intended to demonstrate that culture and city are inseparable
entities. A city could be explained by its culture. City is the mental projection of its
inhabitants, where culture is its living manifestation. This work could be comprehended
as an attempt to expand the way urbanism and architecture can be discussed.

The city of Tokyo is studied, for the unique Japanese culture which is still
inscrutable to a large extent to the Western-oriented academics. The work also intended to
look at Tokyo apart from the Occidental view. Section 1 describes the present and past
conditions of Tokyo. Section 2 intended to surface the links between Tokyo and Edo in
terms of city-making and Japanese mode of thought. Section 3 looks into the
contemporary Japanese popular culture to demonstrate the similarity of present mental
conditions – and hence city culture- to its Edo precedent. Section 4 discusses the ‘hidden
orders’ of Tokyo and contemporary directions taken by Japanese scholars/architects in
theorizing Tokyo.