

An Ethnographic Study on “KODOMO-DAMARI”

(a child's place and space) created through

the Gaitou-Kamishibai(a street picture-story show)

Study on children who are drawn to particular parks in the
present-day world of diversity

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Abstract

This is an ethnographic examination of what draws children to particular parks in our present-day world of diversity.

“Chohn, chohn”, the beating sound of a pair of wooden clappers resounds. In prewar and postwar Japan from 1945-1965, when televisions were rarely seen in individual homes, children used to enjoy “Gaitou-kamisibai”, or a street picture-story show as part of their many kinds of amusements.

At present, few Japanese children go to parks to play because there are many other attractions, and they spend a lot of their time indoors. However, you can hear the sound of beating wooden clappers at some parks in Osaka. And children spend their after-school time, eating cheap sweets and having fun there. They are not forced to go out. They simply enjoy “kamishibai” which creates a common space for children to gather in the park. I call this - “KODOMO-DAMARI”, or a child's space.

In parks with “Gaitou-kamishibai”, children spontaneously relate to different age groups and learn important things for their play and lives. “KODOMO-DAMARI” is like water puddles where various children swarm together. It may look like a place left behind in the modern world, yet children are full of life there. This scene of children getting together has remained unchanged for decades. This is why I emphasize that “KODOMO-DAMARI” is essential to the present-day children.