

TRANSLATION INVESTIGATION

Proceedings of the
**Society of Architectural Historians,
Australia and New Zealand**
Vol. 31

edited by Christoph Schnoor
(Auckland, New Zealand SAHANZ and Unitec ePress;
and Gold Coast, Queensland: SAHANZ, 2014).

The bibliographic citation for this paper is:

Ari Seligmann, "Japonisation of Modern Architecture: Kikuji Ishimoto, Junzo Sakakura and other precursors," in *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand: 31, Translation*, edited by Christoph Schnoor (Auckland, New Zealand: SAHANZ and Unitec ePress; and Gold Coast, Queensland: SAHANZ, 2014), 177–187.

Published in

*Auckland, New Zealand: SAHANZ and Unitec ePress [ISBN - 978-1-927214-12-1];
and Gold Coast, Australia: SAHANZ [ISBN - 978-0-9876055-1-1]*

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Japonisation of Modern Architecture:

Kikuji Ishimoto, Junzo Sakakura and Other Precursors

This paper compares Kikuji Ishimoto and Junzo Sakakura's diverse efforts to translate various European approaches in their attempts to construct a Japanese modern architecture. Ishimoto was a founding member of Japan's first modern architecture movement the Bunri-ha Kenchiku Kai (Secessionist Architecture Group). He travelled through Europe and returned to propagate Japanese International Style architecture, upholding Hans Poelzig, Bruno Taut and Walter Gropius as role models. Ishimoto's Asahi Newspaper (1927) and Shirokiya Department Store (1928-31) projects exemplified his ambitions. In contrast, Sakakura worked for Le Corbusier for seven years and then designed the award winning Japanese Pavilion for the 1937 Paris Expo as a new Japanese International Style architecture. The Kamakura Museum of Modern Art (1951) further exemplified Sakakura's efforts to reconcile what form Japanese modern architecture should take. Examining writings and projects by Ishimoto and Sakakura illuminates the mediation and inflection of international modern architectural ideas in the concerted construction of a Japanese modern architecture. Both figures developed Japanese modern architecture in relation to the problematic adoption of Western styles that accompanied architectural expression of modernization during the Meiji Period (1868-1912) and in relation to native Japanese concerns and techniques. Ishimoto and Sakakura elucidate variegated influences shaping the articulation of modern architecture in Japan and set foundations for its postwar promulgation. Recognizing the evolution of modern architecture as a multi-directional transnational flow of ideas, the paper concludes with consideration of the transfer of ideas emanating from Japan including Taut's prewar and Gropius' post-war visits, which identified modern architectural ideals in traditional Japanese architecture. The flow of European architectural ideas incorporated into forming a Japanese modern architecture and Japanese architectural models taken and mobilized abroad to reinforce international modern ideas represent dialogues and exchanges that highlight the complex circulation of concepts contributing to the Japonisation of modern architecture.

In “The Japonisation of World Architecture” Reyner Banham claimed that prior to the 1950s there was scant international interest in Japanese architecture beyond Katsura Palace, Junzo Sakakura’s award winning ‘37 Expo pavilion, Bruno Taut’s book *Houses and People of Japan*, and Frank Lloyd Wright’s well publicized Japanese influences. Banham argued that the dissemination of Kunio Maekawa’s Harumi Apartments (1959) marked the point from which the Japonisation of Western modern architecture began. For Banham Maekawa’s project represented “a totally unexpected synthesis of Eastern and Western themes, full of profound suggestions that seemed to promise more for the West than for Japan.”¹ Banham continued to argue that the second phase of Japonisation was people powered as Japanese architects gained positions at prominent US universities and regular dialogues ensued between Japanese architects and members of Team-X, Archigram and other post-WWII avant-gardes. For Banham the Japonisation of world architecture represented Japan becoming “a full member of the comity of leading architectural nations” and continually introducing alternatives that challenged and expanded modern and post-modern architectural developments.² Yet Banham readily acknowledged that “the Japonisation of world architecture could not have been achieved without much Westernisation of Japanese architecture; the reciprocal nature of the process may be its most important aspect, historically and culturally.”³ This paper engages this reciprocal exchange, and provides some pre-history to Banham’s “Japonisation of modern architecture” through the efforts of Kikuji Ishimoto and Junzo Sakakura, who translated diverse European approaches in their attempts to develop Japanese modern architecture.

The paper begins with the Meiji Period’s (1868-1912) introduction of Western architecture as a mechanism of modernization and the subsequent evolution of established Meiji precedents to propagate modern architecture in Japan in the 1920-30s. As a founding member of the Bunri-ha Kenchiku Kai (Secessionist Architecture Group) (1920-28), which was Japan’s first modern architecture movement, Ishimoto represented pioneering efforts to promote Germanic modern architecture and translate it into the Japanese context. Several generations later Sakakura represented a shift in approach as a disciple of Le Corbusier who sought to translate Corbusian principles into polyglot projects that echoed the Meiji era mantra *wakon yosai* (Western techniques, Japanese sensibilities). The paper concludes with consideration of additional precursors to Banham’s paradigmatic Japonisation moment, highlighting earlier instances of reciprocal exchange that reinforce the complex circulation of concepts shaping an evolving modern architecture through multi-directional transnational flows of ideas entering into and emanating from Japan.

1 Reyner Banham, “The Japonisation of World Architecture,” in *Contemporary Architecture of Japan 1958-1984* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), 18-19.

2 Banham, “The Japonisation of World Architecture,” 19.

3 Banham, “The Japonisation of World Architecture,” 25.

Architecture of Japanese Modernization

After ending international isolation, the Meiji Government embarked on an aggressive campaign to become a modern nation, establishing new institutions modelled on a variety of Western precedents. The government relied on *oyatoi* (honorable alien employees), foreign study tours and international information exchange as the primary conduits supporting adoption and adaptation from abroad. This process propelled the incorporation of Western styles, strategies, technologies and forms in order to construct the new imperial and commercial order of the modern Japanese nation-state.⁴

Architecture was a vital component of modernisation. As Jonathan Reynolds described, the Meiji government:

“...was deeply committed to transforming Japan into a modern nation. Architecture played an important role in that effort. The government needed modern office buildings to house a burgeoning bureaucracy and looked to the West for practical solutions. The Meiji leaders also embraced Western architectural styles, not to deny their Japanese cultural identity, but rather to assert that that identity now needed to be firmly rooted in modernity. Western Styles projected a contemporary yet dignified image, and were a tangible expression of these aspirations.”⁵

Beyond incorporating diverse foreign styles, the profession and discipline of architecture was instituted during the Meiji period.

The notion of architecture, translated as *kenchiku*, did not exist prior to Josiah Conder, an *oyatoi* from London, founding the Architecture Department at Tokyo Imperial University in 1876.⁶ The new course created an official distinction between craftsman builders and Western-trained professionalized architects. Conder had a large influence on shaping foreign architecture in Japan. He trained students to produce Western style buildings and produced commemorative buildings for the government. Conder helped establish an eclectic canon of European models for Japanese architecture and architectural education.

4 For example the Navy (1869), telegraph (1869), railroads (1870) and postal systems (1872) were adopted from Britain with Army (1869), primary school (1872), police (1874) and judicial systems (1872) from France. Countering common criticisms of imitation, Eleanor Westney maintained that incorporation of foreign models produced innovations due to imperfect information, selective emulation, scalar differences, the influence of alternative implicit models, and if the new environment lacks supporting organizations. She also demonstrated that that foreign models were translated to Japan based on access to information and on assumed prestige, not necessarily based on optimal compatibility. Eleanor Westney, *Imitation and Innovation: the Transfer of Western Organizational Patterns to Meiji Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

5 Jonathan M. Reynolds, “Japan’s Imperial Diet Building: Debate of Construction of a National Identity,” *Art Journal* 55, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 39.

6 See Terunobu Fujimori, *Josiah Conder*, (Tokyo: East Japan Railways Culture Foundation, 1997).



Fig. 1. Tokyo Station (1914) and Imperial Household Museum (1934).
Photographs by Ari Seligmann.

Kingo Tatsuno's British Gothic Revival Bank of Japan (1896) and Tokyo Station (1914), Yorinaka Tsumaki's Germanic neo-Renaissance Tokyo Industrial Club (1899) and Tokuma Katayama's French Second Empire Imperial Museum (1905) and Akasaka Palace (1902) epitomized Meiji era stylistic diversity.⁷ In contrast to native Japanese buildings, all the exotic foreign styles were thought of as Western and therefore considered modern.

However, the articulation of modern Japan through Western styles precipitated a series of on-going debates about 'appropriate' expression within the profession and around prominent projects such as the National Diet building (1917-36). For example, Riki Sano maintained that a developing nation like Japan could not afford a luxurious, romantic historicism and should concentrate on simple styles and innovations in technology while Chuta Itô argued that architects ought to be artists - progressive yet sensitive to native traditions.⁸ The Diet controversy extended from unrealized Western and hybrid schemes initially proposed by the German firm Ende and Bockmann in 1887 and an Orientalist scheme by the American Ralph Adams Cram in 1898. Fukuzô Watanabe with a neoclassical scheme and Kikutarô Shimoda with a hybrid style of neoclassicism and Japanese motifs labeled *teikan heigô shiki* (Imperial Crown synthesis style) were the finalists of the ensuing 1917 Diet competition. The two schemes were to be combined, but difficulties in resolving neoclassical and Imperial Crown styles resulted in a compromised stripped classicist building that was eventually described as "modern style".⁹ Modern style architecture was also drawn into related debates surrounding pre-war nationalism and its architectural expression exemplified by the Imperial Household Museum competition in 1931.¹⁰ The Meiji era set key precedents in conduits, approaches and contentions surrounding the Westernization of Japanese architecture.

Architecture of Japanese Modernization

Inspired by the work of the Vienna Secessionists, Ishimoto and his Tokyo Imperial University colleagues founded the Bunri-ha in 1920 as the first modern architectural movement in Japan

7 See Dallas Finn, *Meiji Revisited, The Sites of Victorian Japan*, (New York: Weatherhill, 1995); David Stewart, *The Making of Modern Japanese Architecture*, (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1987).

8 See Institute of Japanese Architects, "Wagakuni Syôrai no Kenchiku Yôshiki o Ika ni Subekiya" [What Style Should the Future Architecture Be], *Journal of the Institute of Japanese Architects*, 282 & 284 (1911).

9 Jonathan M. Reynolds, "Japan's Imperial Diet Building: Debate of Construction of a National Identity," *Art Journal*, 55, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 38-47.

10 See Jonathan M. Reynolds, *Maekawa Kunio and the Emergence of Japanese Modernist Architecture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 89-101.

and as a rebellion against the pervasive Western historicism previously formalised by Conder and his students. The Bunri-ha eschewed imitation of past Western architecture and sought new architecture reflective of the new conditions facing Japanese society. Based on accessible information and personally funded study tours the Bunri-ha members modelled their efforts on European counterparts and disseminated their ideas through seven exhibitions, five publications, and a host of projects. Ishimoto's contributions to the first exhibition and catalogue reflected his rebellious nature and poetic aestheticism, which were spurred on by contemporaneous social movements and his interest in German expressionist architectural trends. By the third exhibition and catalogue, in 1923, he was introducing his interpretations of contemporary foreign architectural experiments writing on "The Value of the Taut School" and presenting models modelled on Mies' 1922 skyscraper and Kazimir Malevich's *Arkhittektons*.¹¹

In the intervening years between the first and third exhibitions Ishimoto travelled across Europe and America experiencing architectural developments and acquiring cultural capital for his promotion of related efforts in Japan. Ishimoto's tour, like those of his contemporaries Sutei Horiguchi and Togo Murano, contrasted with Meiji period study tours, which primarily provided 'finishing' or research for specific projects.¹² Upon his return the Bunri-ha published Ishimoto's travelogue, *Architecture Notes*, providing a pulpit for promoting European modern style architecture in Japan.¹³ In the text Ishimoto upheld Bruno Taut, Hans Poelzig and Walter Gropius, who he introduced to Japan, as pillars of contemporary architecture, while commenting on a range of architectural developments that legitimized the activities of the *Bunri-ha* and demonstrated the potential of their ideals.¹⁴

Complementing *Architecture Notes*, Ishimoto produced a series of essays historicizing the new modern style and articulating components of the new architectural aesthetics. For example, in "Concerning Architectural Beauty" (1924) he echoed European modernist maxims, advocating for achieving beauty through form, balance, proportion and the functional arrangement of elements not through decorative historicist application that was not integral to the form of the building. Ishimoto reinforced the *Architecture Notes* menagerie of admirable movements and personalities he felt were transforming architectural aesthetics – the Bauhaus, Constructivism, Le Corbusier, J. P. Oud, Willem Dudok, Walter Gropius, Erich Mendelsohn and Josef Hoffmann – and claimed: "it seems to me that they are expressing a new style with contemporary architectural aesthetics. I am

11 See Ari Seligmann, "Kikuji Ishimoto, Imagining Japanese Modern Architecture" in *Imagining. Proceedings of the 27th International SAHANZ Conference*, ed. Michael Chapman and Michael Ostwald (Newcastle, Australia: SAHANZ, 2010), 365-71.

12 For example, upon graduation, Tatsuno, and nine of his peers, received government scholarships to go to Europe. Following in Conder's footsteps Tatsuno studied with Roger Smith at London University and worked for William Burges. In 1888 Tatsuno embarked on a tour of Brussels, New York, Chicago, London, and Paris to study bank buildings in preparation for the Bank of Japan (1896).

13 Kikuji Ishimoto, *Kenchikufu* [Architecture Notes] (Tokyo: Bunri-ha Kenchiku Kai, 1924).

14 See Kengo Hirose, Hiroyasu Fujioka, "Taisho Makki kara Showa Syoki no Nihon no Kenchikukai ni Akeru Walter Gropius no Hyōka" [Opinions on Walter Gropius among Japan's Architects in the 1920s and 1930s], 9161 *Nihon Kenchiku Gakkaitaikai Gakujyutsu Koenkōgai Shu* (October 1986).

sure that from the mixture of those things an international architecture style will develop.”¹⁵ This statement prefigured Ishimoto’s creative combination of their ideas in his manifestations of modern architecture in Japan.

Across his publications, Ishimoto conspicuously neglected his native Japanese past, always locating his pursuits within a context of Western historical developments, but his mode of address evolved. Ishimoto’s “The Latest Architectural Styles” (1926) represented a shift from earlier passionate proclamations to pedagogical presentations, narrating a linear evolution of styles culminating in the current stage of international style architecture, which he promoted through his subsequent involvement with the Japanese International Architecture Association (1927-33).¹⁶ He addressed cycles of architectural style concepts, the germination of recent architecture before and after the Secession movement, and distinguished between functionalism and expressionism. In conjunction with moving from earlier poetics to a more didactic mode, Ishimoto clearly differentiated between two approaches to modern architectural articulation. The first involved the combination of function, structure and economy of means to create architectural expression. The second relied on material, form and composition using technological advances to facilitate artistic creations. Based on his early interest in expressionism (including Taut and Poelzig) and the Secessionists, Ishimoto was ultimately an advocate of the second approach.

Banham suggested “the main Japanese views on architecture have not been verbalized in scholarly prose but have been erected as buildings”, and despite Ishimoto’s prolific publications his early projects represent strong articulation of his ambitions and illustrate his strategic incorporation of European precedents.¹⁷

Echoing the need for novelty inherent in newspapers and department stores, Ishimoto’s Asahi Newspaper Building (1927) and Shirokiya Department Store (1928-33) encapsulated his version of the new modern architecture. Moreover, Ishimoto’s efforts resonated with Mille R. Creighton’s description of the broader role of department stores to domesticate foreign things, making them palatable and marketable within the Japanese context.¹⁸ In his writings and projects Ishimoto engaged in domesticating modern architecture.

15 Kikuji Ishimoto, “Kenchiku Bi ni Tsuite” [Concerning Architectural Beauty], *Shinkenichiku* (1/1929): 69, reprinted from *Kenchiku to Shakkai* (9/1924).

16 The *Bunri-ha* disbanded in September 1928. A year earlier, Ishimoto founded the Japan International Architecture Association (*Nihon International Kenchikukai*) with Seigo Motono, Isaburo Inoue, Seibun Ito, Kazuo Shinmyō, and Tamotsu Nakao. They sought an architecture applicable worldwide, devoid of ethnicity, nationality, and tradition, but based on ‘locality’, and even claimed Taut and Gropius as members. See Ishimoto Architectural & Engineering Firm, Inc. ArQ 16 (Napoli, 1997), 33 and *Gendai Kenchiku no Kiseki* (Tokyo: Shinkenichikusha, 1995), 37 & 84.

17 Banham, “The Japonisation of World Architecture,” 25.

18 Mille R. Creighton, “Maintaining Cultural Boundaries in Retailing: How Japanese Department Stores Domesticate ‘Things Foreign’ ” *Modern Asian Studies* 25, no. 4 (1991): 675-709.



Fig. 2. Postcard images of Ishimoto's Asahi Newspaper Building (1927) and Shirokiya Department Store (1928). Photographers and Publishers unknown.

The Asahi building was Ishimoto's 'debut' project and noted for its mustard and blue coloration, rounded windows, and geometric patterned stained glass windows. Reflecting Ishimoto's Germanic influences, the building echoed Gropius's Chicago Tribune entry (1922) in the horizontal banding of the balconies with further Bauhaus influence in the articulation of the theatre. The massing, rounded windows and curved corners of the project resonated strongly with Poelzig's Werder Mill (1906-08). Yet, the architectural press described Asahi as the first Japanese building modelled on Mendelsohn's style. However, Ishimoto countered the association with Mendelsohn characterising the project as a "proposal of passage from a general 1900s style to international architecture."¹⁹ The project exemplified shifts from Western historic styles prevalent in the Meiji period to Western modern styles.

Ishimoto's subsequent project for Shirokiya produced the first modern style department store in Japan and rejected the Western decoration that typified department stores, seeking a novel image through contemporary Western architectural motifs and architectural expression based on structure, form, composition and material.²⁰ Ishimoto employed a reinforced concrete structure expressed in the grid of the south facade and the cantilevered balconies, "revealing structure honestly" and illuminating architecture's "artistic values". Ishimoto set up a compositional dialogue between the articulated structure and the variety of glazing. Eschewing historicist decoration, he employed a variety of forms - grid, arches, clock tower, and fenestrated areas - in dynamic asymmetric relationships, which led Manfredo Tafuri to describe Shirokiya as an "attempt to link a Constructivist language rich in neoplastic allusions with certain modulations and figurative traditional elements."²¹ Ishimoto also utilized textures, colours, and patterns to embellish and enliven the building. For example, the exterior arches and interior atrium were rendered in an expressive geometric relief pattern. Consistent with his writings, Ishimoto created decoration through geometric forms and patterns rather than imitating past architecture. He combined expression, based on structure and function, with artistic expression, in a building replete with allusions to contemporary foreign architecture.

19 Ishimoto Architects. *Ishimoto Jimusho 50 Nendai Kiseki* (Tokyo: Ishimoto Architects, 1977); Takao Okada "Ishimoto Kikujishi no Sakuhin to Kenchiku Miru" *Shinkenchiku* (1/1929): 48-54.

20 This paper focuses only on phase one of Shirokiya, and does not include its subsequent expansion in 1931 and reconstruction after a major fire in 1933.

21 Manfredo Tafuri, *Arquitectura Contemporanea Japonesa*, trans. Rosario de La Iglesia (Barcelona: Editorial Pomaire, 1968), 42.

Extending Ishimoto's characterization of Asahi, according to the architectural press Shirokiya was "Japanese International Style." This was not International Style as canonized by Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, but Japanese International Style in the sense that it was a sampling of international production domesticated for a Japanese context.²² Ishimoto's structures, forms, and designs were inspired by a combination of foreign precedents by Mendelsohn, Sullivan, Poelzig, and Dudok with influences from Cubism, Constructivism, De Stijl, the Bauhaus, and Expressionism.²³ As expressed in his writings, it is through their mixture that Ishimoto sought a Japanese International Style modern architecture.

Sakakura: Creating Japanese Modern Architecture

Sakakura represented a very different approach and a 'second wave' of Corbusian inspired modernism that would exemplify post-WWII Japanese architecture. In contrast to Ishimoto connoisseurism, Sakakura trained for seven years (1929-1936) in Le Corbusier's atelier immersed in emerging principles of modern architecture.²⁴ Sakakura always viewed himself as a disciple, but as Kazuhiko Namba argued "he considered that it would be possible to 'Japanise' that [Corbusian] language by filtering it with his own, inherent Japanese sensibility."²⁵ In addition, Sakakura maintained a humanist perspective. For example, in one of his few writings Sakakura criticized Japanese architects for emphasizing the "machine" and its associated scientific-rationalism rather than the "for living in" in Corbusier's famous dictum. Sakakura advocated "although at the very least the new age of architecture had to be a rational form of architecture in which all the achievements of modern science could be marshaled, it also had to be something provided with what was absolutely necessary for people as physiological and psychological beings to able to live in."²⁶ Sakakura sought to integrate people and native predilections with Corbusian strategies in contrast to Ishimoto's emphasis on domesticating European aesthetics and styles.

Sakakura appreciated the introduction of Gropius inspired international architecture as a "crusading banner behind which a new form of architecture was established" and acknowledged it provided a valuable forerunner for his subsequent Corbusian era. However, he was critical of "various new

22 See Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson. *The International Style* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1975).

23 The Shirokiya massing, use of glass, and sweeping dynamic horizontals echoed Mendelsohn's Mossehaus and the competition for the Kemperplatz office building. The ground floor, corner condition, and horizontality echoed the Junkernstraße office building by Poelzig. Project architect Bunzo Yamaguchi's submission to the fifth Bunri-ha exhibition was likely the Constructivist and De Stijl seed for the Shirokiya design.

24 Sakakura initially assisted with several competitions and when his senior in the office Kunio Maekawa returned to Japan in 1930 Sakakura replaced him as a full time atelier member. While in the office Sakakura was in charge of part of the Palace of the Soviets competition (1931), the house at Mathès (1935), and the un-built agrarian reorganization plans (1934-38). While in Paris he may have had the opportunity to witness the completion of the Swiss Pavilion and the Villa Savoye, as well as the planning of the Ville radieuse.

25 Kazuhiko Namba. "Junzo Sakakura in Outline," *Process Architecture* 110 (May 1993): 29. Sakakura did not mystify his 'Japaneseness' as did subsequent generations Tange, Kurokawa, Isozaki et.al.

26 Junzo Sakakura "Japanese Pavilion for the International Exhibition, Paris 1937" *Process Architecture* 110 (May 1993): 33. Originally published in Gendai Kenchiku, June 1940.

movements to demolish lifeless buildings and establish new ones [that] have arrived to please and inspire young Japanese architects” and doubted if they fully digested the implications and roles of new developments.²⁷ Without mentioning names, Ishimoto, involved in various movements, was clearly one target. While critical of the presumed superficial adoption of modern European approaches, Sakakura found “ultra-nationalist” architecture exemplified by the “Imperial Crown Style” of the Imperial Household Museum (1934) reproachable.²⁸ In marked contrast to pastiche of Japanese roofs and neoclassical bases, Sakakura’s exemplified his ideals in the Expo pavilion, which he described as “new Japanese International Style” and in the Kamakura Museum, which Namba claimed as “the first building which could unmistakably [sic] be called Modern Architecture to be erected in Japan after the war.”²⁹

Soon after returning to Japan Sakakura was sent back to Paris to oversee the Japanese contribution to the 1937 Expo.³⁰ The project was an early opportunity to synthesize and demonstrate his ideas while addressing the theme of “Art and Technology in Modern Life.” Sakakura reinterpreted Japanese motifs using contemporary materials and infused modern idioms with Japanese sensibilities. Echoing openness and landscape relations from Katsura, Sakakura harmonized the building and its circulation ramps with the sloped terrain and immediate environment. He composed the building from steel framing with glass and asbestos panelling. Despite the modernity of the materials, he incorporated several allusions to Japanese construction systems: the diamond shaped grid glass wall referenced a traditional wall patterning known as *namako kabe*, the garden wall suggested the stone construction of castle fortifications, and the concrete entrance canopy abstracted a *torii* gate. Furthermore, the proportions of the steel supports for the exterior ramp evoked a sense of Japanese wood construction. Sakakura utilized both forms of architectural expression identified by Ishimoto: economy of means and material and composition for artistic expression.

Sakakura launched the manifesto that accompanied the building, asserting that “the Japanese pavilion for the International Exhibition in Paris is an example of what the architect understands new Japanese architecture to be. The architect also sees the building as an example of how Japanese architecture should develop in the future.”³¹ WWII stymied Sakakura’s ambitions, which resumed with the Kamakura Museum despite being hampered by post-war shortages.³²

27 He highlighted concerns with the reception of Wright, Gropius and Corbusier. Sakakura “Japanese Pavilion,” 32.

28 He described such projects as “deformed architecture produced by those who have committed blasphemies against the culture of Japan.” Sakakura “Japanese Pavilion,” 34.

29 Namba, “Junzo Sakakura,” 29.

30 For a description of the pavilion’s development see Tadayoshi Fujiki “Tokyo-Paris 1936-37” *Process Architecture* 110 (May 1993): 33-38. Extracted from Oki na Koe- Sakakura’s Career 1976.

31 Sakakura “Japanese Pavilion,” 32.

32 This paper focuses on the first building not including Sakakura’s 1966 Miesian addition.



Fig. 3. Sakakura's Kamakura Museum (1951).
Photographs by Ari Seligmann.

Like the 1937 Pavilion, the Kamakura Museum reflected continued questioning of “what form Modern Architecture designed by architects here in Japan should take.”³³ Sakakura continued to explore synthesizing Japanese spatial configurations, native sensitivities to siting, proportions, material and detail and Western influenced abstract forms. Although Sakakura would have been aware of Corbusier's museum projects, Kamakura was a variation of Villa Savoye. A cubic volume clad in ashlar pattern asbestos panelling, floated on pilotis. The ground floor was defined through free-planned partitions of local lava rock, that sheltered a sculpture courtyard while maintaining visual connections to the natural surroundings. An architectural promenade was facilitated, with a grand stair piercing the primary façade and connecting to upper level enclosed painting galleries and an open lake terrace, which alluded to the spatial condition of open shoji screens. The upper floor extended beyond the lower floor fostering an *engawa*, under the eaves. The terrace side overhung the lake supported on steel pilotis, which terminated on stones reinterpreting the *tamaishi chigyô* detail. Sakakura skillfully combined Corbusier's five points and Shoin style spatial and environmental relationships, through modern and local materials and details. With the museum Sakakura set a trajectory for Japanese modern architecture.³⁴

The Westernization of Japanese architecture that reciprocally fed the Japonisation of modern architecture began in the Meiji period. Japonisation began in conjunction with Ishimoto's adaptation of Secessionist and Bauhaus approaches and increasing international networks. Ishimoto's Japanese International Style paved the way for Sakakura's subsequent variation mixing native sensibilities with Corbusian modernism. In the pre-WWII period, the new architecture they advocated opposed both Meiji motivated Western historicism and nationalist motivated “Imperial Crown Style” pastiche, offering new combinations of domestic and international architectural developments. Sakakura's synthesis of architectural ideas gained recognition on a world stage through the 1937 Pavilion and provided a prelude to Banham's Japonisation. This paper focused on Ishimoto and Sakakura's efforts in Westernising Japanese architecture and their translations from Europe to Japan. Recognizing the development of modern architecture as a complex network of exchanges, the paper concludes with cursory acknowledgement of several additional precursors in the Japonisation of modern architecture producing translations from Japan to the West. Together these reciprocal exchanges reinforce the fertile circulation of ideas feeding the evolution of modern architecture. For example,

33 Junzo Sakakura “Kamakura Museum of Art” *Process Architecture* 110 (May 1993): 46.

34 This combination also established a longstanding trope for evaluating Japanese architecture in terms of its mix of traditional and modern elements.

Hermann Muthesius worked for Ende and Bockmann in Japan (1887-91) on Meiji era government buildings and subsequently influenced the Deutsche Werkbund.³⁵ Frank Lloyd Wright lived and worked in Japan including designing the Imperial Hotel (1923).³⁶ Richard Neutra visited Japan in 1930 and found strong affinities while on tour with Ishimoto and others. Neutra subsequently introduced the work of Mamoru Yamada, one of Ishimoto's Bunri-ha colleagues, to Hitchcock and Johnson resulting in Yamada representing Japan in the International Style exhibition and catalog.³⁷ Ishimoto interacted with Bruno Taut while he lived in exile in Japan (1933-38) and through several publications Taut upheld traditional Japanese architecture, with its emphasis on planarity through simple forms and materials, as a model for Western modern architecture.³⁸ Walter Gropius was introduced to Japan by Ishimoto and eventually visited Japan for three months in 1954. Like Taut, Gropius found kernels of modernism enabling him to mobilize Japanese architecture in attempts to reinvigorate post-war modern architecture.³⁹ These cursory snapshots confirm that architectural influence was transported and translated transnationally.

Even though Banham cites a precise moment, the process of Japonisation began prior to Maekawa in 1959. It has evolved through reciprocal exchange from the institution of architecture in the Meiji period to Ishimoto and Sakakura's contributions to international connections and conversations. The exchanges feeding Japan's escalation to a key node in global networks of architecture contest both simple centre-periphery models of dissemination and (critical) regional modernist approaches. Alternatively, they illuminate the complex circulation of ideas, people-powered propagation and Japanese perturbations of an evolving modern architecture.

35 See Neil Jackson, "Found in Translation: Mackintosh, Muthesius and Japan," *Journal of Architecture* 18, no. 2 (2013): 196-224.

36 See Kevin Nute, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan* (New York: Routledge 2000); Margo Stipe, "Wright and Japan" in *Frank Lloyd Wright Europe and Beyond* ed. Anthony Alofsin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

37 See Richard Neutra, "New Architecture in Japan" *Die Form* (15 September 1931): 333-40; Barbara Lamprecht, "From Neutra in Japan, 1930 to his Southern California Work" *Southern California Quarterly* 92, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 215-42.

38 See Bruno Taut, *Fundamentals of Japanese Architecture*, (Tokyo: Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, 1936); Sandra Kaji-O'Grady, "Authentic Japanese Architecture after Bruno Taut: The Problem of Eclecticism," *Fabrications* 11, no. 2 (2001): 1-12; Manfred Speidel's publications on Taut and Japan.

39 See Walter Gropius, "Architecture in Japan" *Perspecta* 3 (1955): 9-21, 79-80, and introduction to *Katsura Tradition and Creation in Japanese Architecture* (1960).