

Idioms of Japanese Planning Historiography

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IDIOMS OF JAPANESE PLANNING HISTORIOGRAPHY

Carola Hein

Foreign planners and historians have long considered Japanese urban planning to be a practice and a tradition almost entirely separate from their own. Yet planning and planning history in Japan emerged in the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries, thus respectively at almost the same time as planning and planning history in Europe and America. And Japanese practitioners and scholars carefully observed foreign practices, and integrated aspects of them into their own work while building on long-standing Japanese traditions of urban form, and while also exporting their experience and knowledge of the East Asian region to both colonial and postcolonial settings. But rather than engaging with this emerging parallel planning system, foreign practitioners commented on transforming Japanese cities and interpreted them for inspiration and interpretation; they often focused on visuals, examining them from their own point of view and ignoring the Japanese literature and local debates. They did not consider Japanese understanding to be a parallel interpretation of planning, based on a different earlier tradition and specific local practices. As a result, planning in Japan intersected with foreign practices in a somewhat haphazard way.

Whether Western or Japanese, the historiography of Japanese planning similarly shows parallel trajectories that diverged according to specific language and cultural backgrounds, and also according to disciplinary or methodological interests and interpretations. Scholars have studied the history of Japan's urban form over the last 2000 years in the light of select themes, periods, or places, but also in regard to their own respective disciplines, methodologies, and language skills. As a result, the literature that engages with Japanese planning is rather diverse. There is a large body of writing in multiple languages, spread out over a variety of disciplines reflecting different foci and presented in a broad range of conferences, from the American Association of Geographers (AAG) to the European Association of Japanese Historians (EAJS), as well as the International Planning History Society (IPHS). Each discipline currently follows its own interests and methodologies. A comprehensive planning history would benefit from further integration. Studying the case of planning history in Japan allows us to question and challenge the established interpretations and their history, and to identify disciplinary specificities and diverse cultural backgrounds. It makes possible a richer planning history, one that acknowledges a broad range of different backgrounds.

Exploring planning history writing inside and outside Japan, we see different idioms that are related to specific interpretations, terminologies, and representations or perceptions of planning, but also to the use of planning primary materials, written and in imagery. These differences derive at least partly from the way in which planning gets established in a specific country. Foci and interests established in early years shape the development of planning as a discipline in the long term.

In France, for example, where urban transformations occurred at the behest of the king, we see a long tradition of urban design, representation, and competitions; here, historians have paid attention to urban visions and competitions, in addition to more technical questions of legal or technical regulations. Meanwhile, in Japan, the long history of urban form did not lead directly to modern practices. Pre-modern cities served as the foundation for modernization, but traditional forms of urban organization were pushed aside for almost a century as Western-inspired modern planning focused on providing the necessary spaces for national modernization and industrialization, and on engineering, with the goal of catching up and overtaking the West. The respective approaches to planning are thus in part a reflection of cultural differences.

The particular approach to planning versus urban design appears as an important distinction in the planning history of Japan. One part of planning intervention and historic literature—often by Japanese professionals and scholars—produces and studies planning as a top-down professional activity, concerned with laws, policies, and engineering for infrastructure (rapid railways, wide streets, and water supply), and as a set of tools, from land readjustment (*kukakuseiri*) to urban renewal (*saikaihatsu*). The other—often by foreign architects, planners, and scholars—produces and studies planning as a series of interventions by architect-urbanists, focusing on idealistic goals of changing societies, comprehensive planning, visionary design, and urban form. It considers planning a political activity with changing degrees of citizen participation.

The different perceptions of the role of planning are embedded in, and effectively partly result from, different idioms, both in words and visualizations. Several French scholars have provided an important foundation for a more inclusive planning history. A thorough investigation of idioms and City Words, as the sociologist Christian Topalov calls them (Topalov 2010), is a necessary first step. Such an investigation should go hand in hand with visual analysis. Given the difficulty of the Japanese language for outsiders, representations have become a major methodological tool, as captured by the philosopher Roland Barthes' (Barthes 1982) comparison of map drawing by Japanese citizens and foreigners. In addition, the geographer and philosopher Augustin Berque has explored the ecological and symbolical relationship between the Japanese and their urban spaces through the lens of space, time, nature, and history that also underlie planning practice (Berque 1993). All of these inquiries can add important aspects and approaches to planning history.

The historiography of traditional urban form and modern planning in Japan is vast and can't be reviewed here in full. Instead this chapter highlights three important strands of interpretation in Japanese planning history—one studying planning as a part of a general urban or architectural history, one focusing on planning as a discipline, and another emphasizing urban design. These strands of history writing speak to the difficulties of studying a country with a very different language, plus a long-standing and original culture. According to the interests and motivations of practitioners and scholars, these different types of studies vary in terms of consideration of physical structures, written documents, and drawings or plans, and in terms of the topics of research, sources, and methodologies. Japanese-speaking authors show greater interest in a broad range of sources, whereas non-Japanese-speaking commentators focus on visual sources, creating a body of literature that tells a story about Japanese urban form, often, but not solely geared towards practicing architects and planners, and their quest for inspiration.

The strands reflect approaches, or schools of thought, to the study of Japanese planning history that differ in their goals and tools. The historical literature is anchored in the academic tradition and methodologies of the disciplines of history, art history, and East Asian studies. It focuses on carefully chosen periods and specific cases with the goal of increasing academic knowledge, and carefully evaluates diverse sources notably on early urban form. In contrast, the comprehensive literature draws on the foreign and Japanese past to explain the development of the modern city. Publications in this group come from an interdisciplinary group of authors, often scholars with a background in geography, planning, or design—including practitioners—and an interest in past and present.

Among them are also Japanese practitioners who study foreign practice for inclusion in Japanese design. Third, the design literature, mostly by foreign practitioners without knowledge of Japanese language or culture, studies Japanese urban forms and visuals, with a marked tendency to deplore the disappearance of prior practices and the goal of learning for their own design practice without appreciation of original context.

Each of these approaches can be identified as dominant in the analysis of a specific period, but none is uniquely associated with one period. These approaches partially, but not always, overlap with the cultural background and language capacity of the authors and their use of textual or visual sources. The focus of historiography has changed over time, as demonstrated in the select historical periods—Edo area until 1868, Meiji period to 1945, and postwar period until today, with shifting attention paid to urban history, planning history, or urban design history. In doing so, the chapter positions the planning history writing on Japan in the context of global networks of planning historiography.

Historical Studies of Urban Form

Some excellent scholarship addresses early Japanese cities, their form and function, both by foreign and Japanese scholars. These investigations, often issued by well-known publishers with extensive illustrations and careful design, focus on the creation of urban form in the larger context of urban life and the formation of the built environment. Foreign scholars, notably with a background in East Asian studies, history, and art history, have explored the design of the grid-shaped long-time capital Kyoto, inspired by imperial Chinese plans (Steinhardt 1990, Stavros 2014, Fiévé 1996). Others have studied Japanese urban settlements that developed with the emergence of a feudal system after 1180, occasionally publishing entire books with the goal of understanding the past (Dore 1978, McClain 1980, McClain 1982, McClain and Wakita 1999).

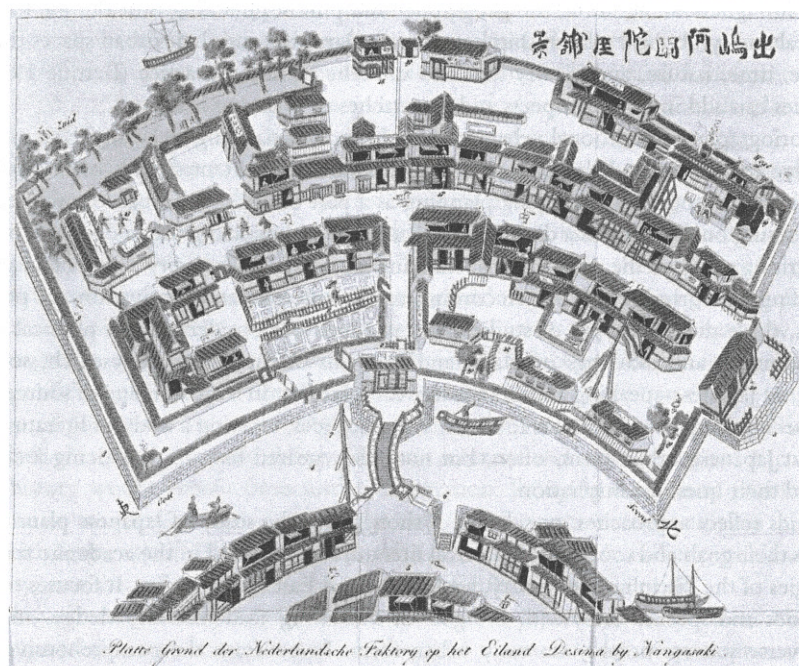


Figure 19.1 Isaac Titsingh, the Dutch Trading Post in Nagasaki, 1824–1825.
Source: Dutch National Library.

Life on Deshima, where the Dutch were present from 1641 until 1853, has been carefully documented. Imagery of the island displays the different impressions that the Dutch and the Japanese had of the form of the island (Figure 19.1). The treaty ports have also received close attention, in particular from foreign scholars, including the Dutch historian Leonard Blussé (Blussé 2008, Hoare 1971, Phipps 2015).

Japanese-speaking architectural and urban historians, writing mostly in their own language, their works occasionally available in translation, have closely read the development of the Japanese castle towns (*jōkamachi*), or settlements developed around fortresses, and other special function towns such as temple towns (*teramachi*) and towns next to ports (*minatamachi*) (Tamai 1986, Naitō 1966, Naitō 2003). The form and use of these developments is carefully mapped and documented (Takahashi et al. 1993/2008). Such reflections on the particularities of the traditional Japanese city and their impact on contemporary planning are important to understand the context in which planning emerged. As the American historian Henri D. Smith II has argued, studying traditional Japanese urban form is important as it is not squarely in line with European concepts of the city (as a visualization of political power, as a formal expression of utopian thought, or as an autonomous political entity like the medieval city) (Smith 1978). Other scholars have explained the concept of *machi*—a term relating both to neighborhoods and small towns—as a key to understanding traditional Japanese urban form with specific perspectives on urban living, density, transportation, and socio-economic structures (Hein 2008, Sorensen 2002, Sorensen 2005). The Japanese architect-historian Jinnai Hidenobu has notably demonstrated in his widely read and translated book the physical connection between Edo-time planning and contemporary Tokyo (Jinnai 1995). He noted, for example, that the highways were built over the old canal system, translating urban forms from the Tokugawa era, 1603–1868, into modern-day Tokyo.

The traditional Japanese city and its form have also attracted the attention of foreign practitioners, such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Bruno Taut, who took photographs and drew buildings as they traveled the country, and documented what by then had become a disappearing landscape of traditional buildings and practices that had also been depicted on traditional Japanese woodprints (Wright 1996; Taut 1937/1958). Both collected woodprints such as Ando Hiroshige's *One Hundred Views of Famous Places in Edo* and *Fifty-Three Stations of the Tokaido Road*. Taut's observation-based approach to the Japanese city would go on to characterize foreign practitioners' engagements with the country.

The History of Planning (*Toshikeikaku*) and the Modernization of Japan

Many Japanese scholars have written comprehensive studies (in Japanese) of the development of Japanese planning as a discipline since the Meiji Restoration. The Japanese planner and historian Ishida Yorifusa wrote the most comprehensive one: *Nihon Kindai Toshikeikaku no Hyakunen* (*100 Years of Modern City Planning in Japan*) and its expanded version, include a very detailed time line (Ishida 1987, Ishida 2004). Several other publications provide an overview. The writings of Japanese architect-planner Watanabe Shunichi, another key figure of Japanese planning history, have had more impact in the English-speaking world. Watanabe wrote a survey of Japanese planning history in 1980 calling for a relativized planning history that takes into account Japan's history of rapid modernization and urban transformation in light of foreign-language publications; he also called for planning history education in Japanese universities (Watanabe 1980a). Watanabe's American education (a MSc at Harvard) helped him bridge Euro-American and Japanese planning and planning history, and made him a key player in the attempt to discuss Japan's urban planning in an international context (Watanabe 1993, Watanabe 1980b, Watanabe 1984). Unfortunately, many of these works have yet to be translated.

In an attempt to place Japan's urban history into global context, the City Planning Institute of Japan published a bilingual and extensively edited volume on the centenary of Japanese city planning, using the year 1888 as the starting point (Fujimori 1988). Foreign scholars, most importantly André Sorensen, have added to that literature of the evolution of Japanese planning systems and urban form (Sorensen 2002). Hohn adds to this an even more detailed account of Japanese planning laws, theory, and praxis (Hohn 2000).

Within the larger theme of the development of Japanese modern planning, Tokyo takes a particular role. Scholars have demonstrated a marked interest in the exceptional developments in Tokyo, the capital, starting with the transformations provoked by the Meiji Restoration. Together with the historian Ishizuka Hiromichi, then director of the Tokyo Center for Urban Studies, Ishida published a careful analysis of Tokyo's Urban Growth and Planning between 1868 and 1988 (Ishizuka and Ishida 1988). Documenting the development of Tokyo from the Imperial Capital to World City from 1868, the text focuses on the emergence of planning as a discipline from its early steps to its establishment as a typical Japanese practice. The early years after Meiji Restoration have attracted extensive scholarly interest both by Japanese and foreign scholars as an important moment in the encounter of Western-inspired urban form and traditional Japanese practice, and thus as a prelude to the establishment of professional planning. The rebuilding of the former townsmen district of Ginza in Tokyo, where a fire destroyed a large area in 1872, allowed for a planned rebuilding with neoclassical architecture, pedestrian paths, and other Western style urban elements. The centrally located area that became the entrance gate to the new capital, linking the treaty port with the new national center, has been extensively explored in terms of specific planning techniques and urban design, and their foreign as well as local roots (Kōbunshokan 1955, Fujimori 1988, Okamoto 2000, Hein 2010) (Figure 19.2). The role of European practitioners, including the office of Wilhelm Böckmann and Hermann Ende, who projected a new center for Tokyo in 1887, has also found scholarly interest (Hein and Ishida 1998), whereas the work by James Hobrecht for Tokyo or by Franz Baltzer on Japanese railways still merits further research.

Other scholars have studied diverse aspects of Japan's modernization, ranging from questions of building lines, land ownership, and the development of property condemnation practices to the



Figure 19.2 The redevelopment of Ginza street in the early 20th century.

Source: postcard, personal archive Beate Löffler.

construction of a railway network (Ishida and Ikeda 1984, Ishida 1991, Akimoto 2016, Sorensen 2010, Yamamoto 1993). The Tokyo Urban Improvement Ordinance (Tōkyō Shiku Kaisei Jōrei) of 1888 put into place 16 articles to transform Tokyo into an imperial capital. Its 1889 First Plan for Urban Improvement of Tokyo recommended building or widening 317 streets, and proposed creating 49 parks, markets, a central station, and rivers and canals. Osaka and other cities received comparatively less interest at the time; publications include the American historian Jeffrey Hanes's discussion of the urban planner Seki Hajime, and a text on Osaka by the city planning department entitled *Osaka machizukuri*—that is, using a term from community planning for a history of planned intervention from Edo time to the present (Osaka Prefecture 1991, Hanes 1989).

Japanese scholars have pointed to the importance of terminology during this early period of professional engagement with the West that makes the emergence of the profession of planning particularly recognizable. Professional engagement with Western concepts of the city after 1868 led to the creation of the term *toshi* by Japanese scholars to capture the new Euro-American concept of city. To translate the Western word “city” the Japanese coined the term *toshi* from the Chinese characters of capital city (*miyako*) and marketplace (*ichi*) (Mochizuki et al. 1994). The introduction of the new term paralleled the introduction of a new concept. As Watanabe has explained, in 1913, Seki was the first to use the term *toshikeikaku* (city planning) that marks the beginning of modern Western style planning (characterized by interventions such as land reclamation, urban extension, and national infrastructure such as highways and rail networks (Watanabe 1993).

The choice of terminology is also particularly important in regard to the next major event in Japanese planning history. As Shunichi Watanabe has pointed out, the City Planning Act of 1919, often called the Old Act, gave Japanese planning its distinct flavor. In contrast to the comprehensive planning at the root of North American and European planning, it focused on urban infrastructure, particularly streets, as the foundation for urban development. This made planning the domain of the engineer rather than the politician. It also placed the responsibility for planning at the level of the central government (Watanabe 2016, Sorensen 2002). As many authors have emphasized, the Old Act established the main practice of Japanese planning: land readjustment (*kukakuseiri*)—a technique to create continuous land parcels for development while sharing the project costs among landowners. Over time, land readjustment developed as the main Japanese planning technique, and it was fully established by the time of the 1923 Great Kanto earthquake, which also demolished the Western-designed Ginza district and led to another rebuilding. Scholars have come to call land readjustment the mother of Japanese planning (Nishiyama 1988, Watanabe 1993).

Since the very beginning of establishing city planning as a discipline in Japan in the late 19th century, the country's leaders had seen innovation not primarily as an issue of aesthetics but one of economic dominance and particularly transportation (which is why streets were important). They would go on to use this idea of planning in their own colonial endeavors, as Japanese planners and their concepts set up systems in Taiwan and Korea during the Japanese occupations from 1895 to 1945, and from 1910 to 1945, respectively. These planning systems would continue beyond the occupation period (Watanabe 2016); Manchuria, under Japanese control for 12 years, later abandoned its Japanese planning system, but many such systems are still in place. In contrast, architectural structures were symbolically demolished, such as the Government General Building in Seoul. Historians and planning historians both Japanese and foreign have explored colonial planning in light of Japanese visions, planning laws, and policies, and have considered their long-term impact on former colonies. Some publications explore this multifaceted theme by tying Japan into multiple Western and Asian networks (Koshizawa 1978, Koshizawa 1988, Hein 2003a, Hein 2016, Tucker 1999, Peattie 1988, Kuroishi 2014). Further investigation of these colonial plans and their main actors is particularly important as these influenced both postwar developments in Japan and long-term practices in the colonies. Integrating Japanese colonial and

later postcolonial planning into the Japanese, Asian, and global developments will also provide insights in transnational planning history.

By the 1930s, Japanese planner-theorist-historians were studying and commenting on the foreign past to link it to Japanese practice. Ishikawa Hideaki, the head planner of Tokyo Metropolitan Government before, during, and after World War II, and Nishiyama Uzō, a key figure in Japanese urban planning as an architect-planner and theorist-historian, are in this group. Their interpretations, including their introduction of Gottfried Feder and Walter Christaller into the Japanese planning literature, would become the foundation for textbooks on planning history for decades to come (Hein 2008) (Figure 19.3). At the time, these planner-scholars had translated and combined Western practices with their own local traditions to address the needs of their modernizing country. They first drew on the history of urban form and planning as a tool for planning as an academic activity. Their work maps the place that Japanese planners constructed for themselves in a global setting that included different European, American, and Russian traditions—and also the built forms and systems of Japan's imperial territories. Ishikawa, then an engineer in the Ministry of Home Affairs assigned to the town planning of Nagoya, had consulted Raymond Unwin during his trip to Europe in 1923 to seek advice on his city's master plan. He went on to produce extensive writings that cited foreign thinkers (Shoji 1993, Ishikawa 1942).

Yet these and other key players of Japanese planning and planning history are still largely unknown outside Japan, and thus Western planners are missing an important link in the understanding of Japanese planning history in a global context. The few publications in English, or with English summaries or translations (City Planning Institute of Japan 1993, Nishiyama 1968, Urushima 2007, Nakajima et al. 2009), have not been sufficient to bring these major figures of Japanese planning into the realm of global writing of planning history, in contrast to major figures

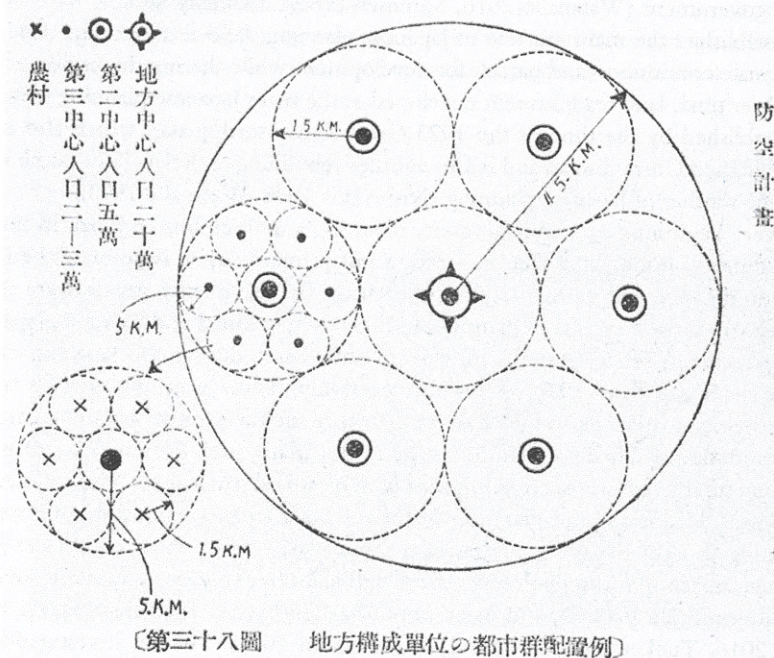


Figure 19.3 Ishikawa Hideaki, interpretation of Walter Christaller's theory of central places.
Source: Walter Christaller and Ezawa Joji, *Toshi no ritchi to hatten*, Tokyo: Taimeido, 1969, p. 79.

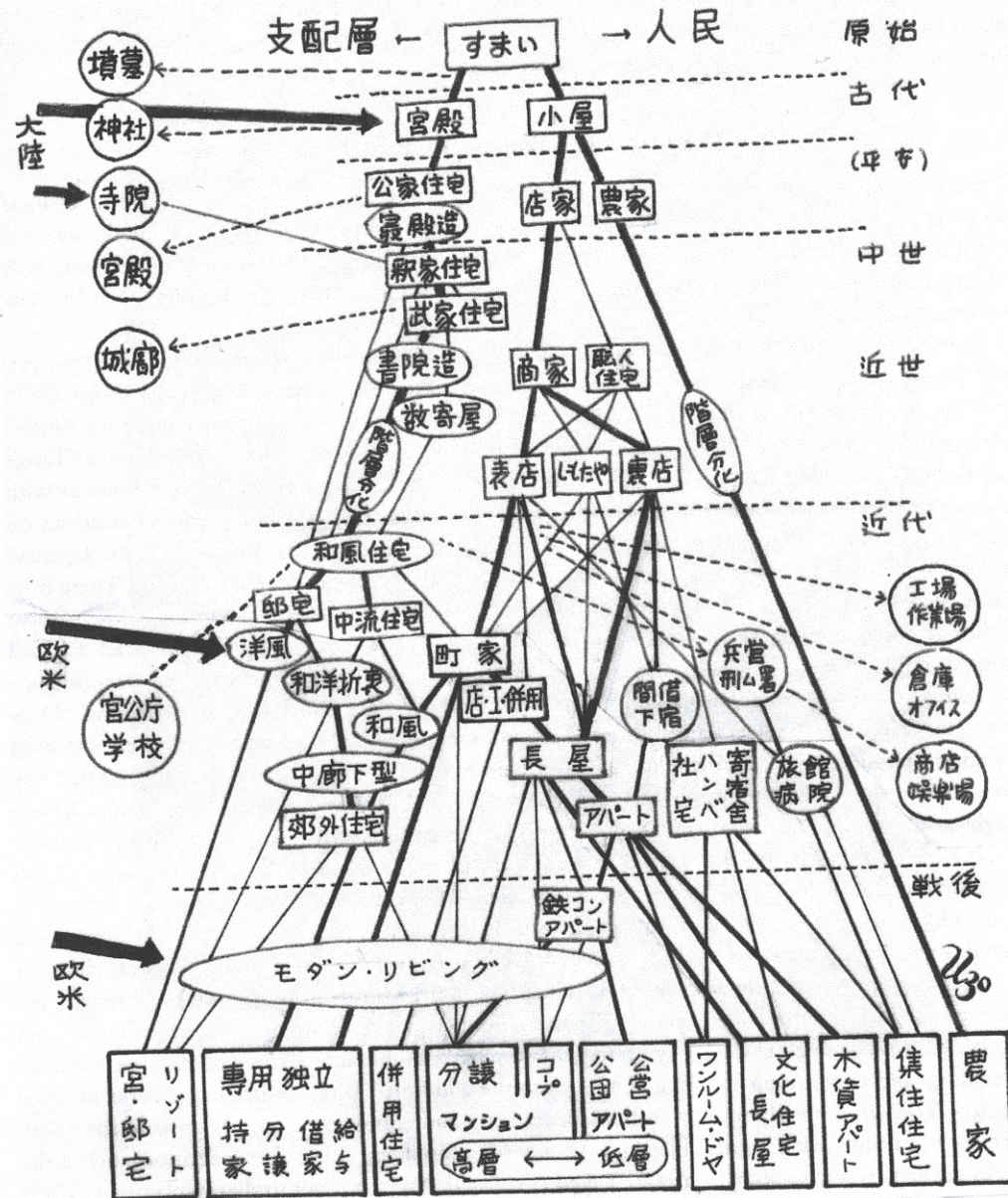


Figure 19.4 Nishiyama Uzō's analysis of the transformation of Japanese housing over time.
Source: Uzō Nishiyama Memorial Library.

of Western planning such as Robert Moses, Albert Speer, Patrick Geddes, and Ebenezer Howard. Nishiyama Uzō in particular has contributed outstanding and novel insights, indicated for example in his analysis of the development of Japanese housing in relation to building height, growth of population, and influences from Europe and the United States (Figure 19.4). The general absence of these major Japanese figures in the Western discourse is not surprising, but speaks to the disconnected lines in the Western writing of Japanese planning history. Other major planners who

were active from the 1920s to the 1940s and who also explored foreign and Japanese urban and planning history—Takayama Eika, Uchida Shozo, and Kon Wajiro—have only just started to get international coverage (Uchida 1969, Kuroishi 2016, Hein 2017).

Japan as Paradigm for Multifaceted Planning History

The rebuilding of Japan after World War II sees the predominance of another approach to Japanese planning historiography, one in which designers have long taken the lead, especially on the international floor. This new approach evolves, but does not fully integrate with historical and specifically planning-historical approaches, even though planning history is established as a discipline in Japanese academia at the same time.

In the postwar period, Japan entered the global stage of planning through the visionary projects of Tange Kenzo, an architect-urbanist: his projects for the rebuilding of Hiroshima (Hein 2002) and later for a megastructure on Tokyo Bay were published at the time by numerous professional journals in multiple languages and reprinted in book publications over several decades (Tange and Kultermann 1970, Riani 1970, Lin 2010). These publications provided Western scholars with non-Japanese-language source materials on Japan and a huge array of visuals. The publications on the young Japanese architect-planners inspired foreign scholars to ask questions about the Japanese postwar rebuilding and the emergence of this new approach to planning (Hein 2003b). These proposals and others by Tange's colleagues (including Maki Fumihiko, Maekawa Kunio, and Kurokawa Kisho) resembled visionary projects for the rebuilding of European cities that inspired a broad range of publications in multiple languages and from diverse vantage points from scholars (including Hartmut Frank, Jean-Louis Cohen, Niels Gutschow, Werner Durth, and Koos Bosma). Only in recent years have scholars started to look beyond seemingly Western principles to engage with planning's Japanese roots, their anchorage, and their connection to earlier Japanese planners. They have come to recognize the importance of Uchida Shozō (Yoshikazu) or Takayama Eika, who had taught at the architecture department of Tokyo University, and of the writings by Tange himself, notably his book *Nihon no Toshikukan*, that explores Japanese urban form over time, after a brief introduction that includes global urban design (Tange 1968) (Figure 19.5).

Much of this literature focused on urban form is separate from the literature on planning as a technical practice, discussions on the impact of the new constitution and land reform on cities, or the rebuilding of war-destroyed cities. The rebuilding itself, with its many planning challenges, has been studied by collaborative groups of Japanese and non-Japanese historians (Hein, Diefendorf, and Ishida 2003, Tiratsoo et al. 2002), tying together a range of disciplinary and cultural approaches to rebuilding, and opening up at least a glimpse into the additional Japanese-language works of some scholars. Western scholarly interest in the Japanese city and comparative studies grew in the 1960s with the translation into English of Japanese studies of the Japanese city and its formation, such as the works of the Japanese sociologist Yazaki Takeo (1963 and 1968), but not studies of planning. While intent on comparison and classification, Yazaki also pointed to patterns of change and continuity.

Planning history as an academic discipline emerged in Japan the 1960s (Nakajima 2016) and became established in the 1980s in conjunction with similar developments in Europe and America. Japanese planners with an interest in history were the main drivers of this development of planning history as a field. Their work included analyses of planning in the economic growth era. They have studied the 1968 New City Planning Act that channeled the rapid growth of the Japanese city, creating urban control areas and urban promotion areas. Such studies are important to explain the rise of the modern Japanese megacities. They grew under a non-Western (and comparatively weak) planning system. Important factors included the new Floor Area Ratio (FAR) regulation, urban renewal (*saikaihatsu*) projects, and new town developments in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as comprehensive national development plans (Hatsuda 2011). Japanese scholars wrote extensively

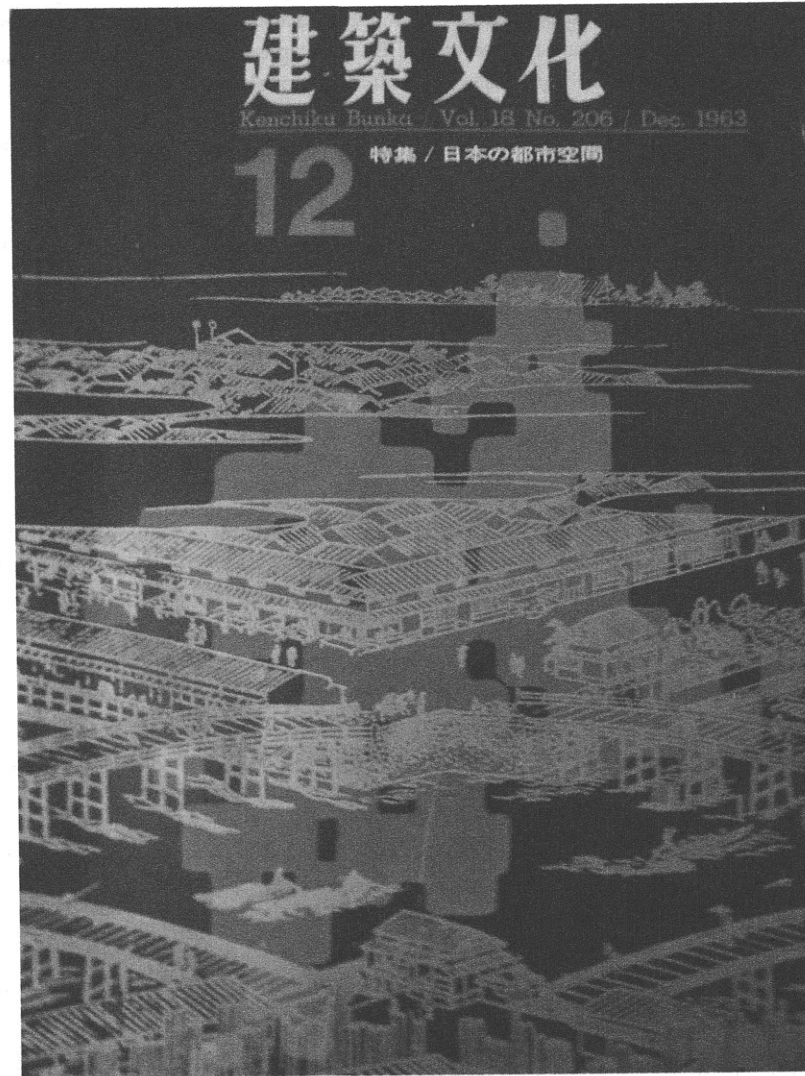


Figure 19.5 Tange Kenzo's reflection on Japanese space and megastructures.

Source: Tange, Kenzo. *Nihon No Toshikukan*. Tokyo: Shokokusha, 1968.

on these changes (as did a few foreign scholars), but these texts are either not readily available to non-Japanese-speaking authors, or those authors ignore them in favor of following megastructure debates through visual proposals without knowing much about Japanese language and culture, such as Koolhaas and Obrist (2009).

Planning historiography shifted in the 1980s, as Japanese design and art, including manga and anime, found recognition around the world, and as visuals of Japanese cities inspired planners globally (Waley 2006). From criticizing the city and its development, foreign scholars started to praise it. Architects and planners came to see the central districts of Tokyo and other large Japanese cities as lively urban cores. This reading of the city (known as *Tōkyōron* [Tokyo theory] and related to *Edogaku* [the study of Edo], as specifically Japanese) built upon literature from the 1930s, arguing for a specific Japanese identity due to a special link between nature, space, and Japanese society

(Befu 1993, Berque 1987, Berque 1999). By the 1980s, a number of publications celebrated a unique Japanese urban form—particularly visible in the capital, Tokyo—based on continuities between the traditional and the modern city: multi-functional neighborhoods, skyscrapers and low-rise neighborhoods, multi-story highways and tiny lanes, the intersection between public and private spaces. Instead of thinking of these dynamics as chaotic, many professionals now perceived them as inspirations for dense livable developments in the West, similar to the ideals advocated by movements such as New Urbanism. In fact, while Japanese planners had employed Western-inspired planning practices, tools, and policies for almost a century, creating new urban forms and large-scale connections, and implanting new functions (including government centers, industrial districts, schools, shopping malls), they had left other areas of the city untouched. Between the modernizing spaces, limited places remained for other forces, corporate or private, to intervene, promoting self-governing neighborhoods, small-scale land use, and new land ownership patterns.

At the same time, planners developed new planning tools and practices for small areas, to address local opposition or to deal with the lack of funding. Both Japanese and foreign scholars have engaged with these themes, starting to build bridges between different groups of observers. Several scholars have paid close attention to the histories of bottom-up planning in its various forms (community-based planning, the democratization of planning, community activism, and civic/civil society in the planning context), exploring community building and its limits, while acknowledging the complementary and competing influences of planning and community development (Watanabe 2007, Sorensen and Funck 2007, Sorensen 2001, Sorensen 2005, Brumann and Schulz 2007, Brumann 2012). Japanese scholars have written extensively on issues of *machizukuri* and community building, especially in regard to citizens' acceptance or rejection of city planning and the importance of urban tissues. Again, this was all happening at the same 20 years that urban history emerged as an academic field under the leadership of historians, social historians, and architectural historians (Tanaka 2006, Nakajima 2009, Nakajima et al. 2009, Hatsuda 2011, Matsuyama 2014, Ishigure 2016). The role of these community activities in the long-term rebuilding of communities after disaster remains to be fully explored, as several scholars have pointed out in regard to the reconstruction of Kobe in the wake of the 1995 earthquake and the assessment of the triple disaster in Fukushima in March 2011 (Hein 2001, Edgington 2011, Evans 2001, Evans 2002, Samuels 2013).

One part of engaging with local communities is engaging with questions of heritage. Going beyond issues of historic preservation and restoration, various planning historians have addressed controversies over the Kyoto townscape and questions of townscape preservation (Brumann and Cox 2009, Hohn 1997). Planners' use of urban heritage for tourism and cruise-shipping, tangible in Kyoto for several years now, and the views of local residents about this use, merits investigation from the perspective of planning history.

A number of other themes have emerged in Japanese planning history over the last decades that are also core themes for policy makers and planners in cities, including Japanese politicians. These are intimately connected to specific idioms and debates underway around the world, such as decentralization, sustainability, slow cities, urban branding, and heritage, and they are being debated by scholars both in and outside Japan. Many of these idioms captured the need to counterbalance the country's economic downturn, and to take the attention away from natural and man-made disasters, urban over-development, dramatic rural decline, and emerging social differences. Government policies officially promoted decentralization across the nation, as Japan's postwar-period economic growth led to urbanization, migration, and lifestyle changes. Yet centralization seems to have often been the result (Hein and Pelletier 2006). By the 1990s, urban branding ideas drove Tokyo's desire to be part of a network of global cities and found its expression in much-debated new projects such as a city hall, an international forum, and corporate towers. Mori Minoru and his Roppongi Hills development is an archetypal global/creative city project: a gleaming tower

with an elite contemporary art museum on top. Sustainable urban development is another of these idioms that captured the need to counterbalance the country's economic downturn. It also stands at the forefront of the 2014 long-term plan for Tokyo that includes the 2020 Olympics that are designated as Eco-Friendly Games (Tokyo Metropolitan Government n.d.).

Japan's cities are changing faster than most European or American ones. Its quickly shifting social patterns—such as aging population or more single-person households—produce spatial forms much more quickly. The ongoing socio-economic crisis, shrinkage of cities, demographic transitions, and population shrinkage are reflected in housing transformation (Ronald and Hirayama 2006, Sorensen 2007). New studies are particularly important, as trends observed in Tokyo are often examples for other East Asian urban centers with similar demographic trends, such as Taipei and Seoul.

Idioms and Positions: Towards a Comprehensive International Planning History

Historical relations within Asia continue to shape contemporary developments. Major Japanese architects and construction companies are planning urban cores, shopping centers, and residential complexes in China. This requires transnational perspectives on urban thought in Asia. Analyzing the role played by Japanese professionals and experts in shaping urban spaces outside Japan—such as pioneered in the prize-winning paper by Matsubara Kosuke on Gyoji Banshoya, a Japanese planner active in the Middle East and North Africa (Matsubara 2015)—allows us to discuss the impact of Japanese urbanism on city life elsewhere.

Planning can mean very different things, and planning historians are therefore following diverse foci. Discussing planning history from the perspective of Japan allows scholars to place Japanese planning in the Asian and global context, and to connect planning history with diverse interdisciplinary conversations on Japanese urban form. The International Planning History Society conference in Yokohama (2018) has provided a good opportunity to celebrate the 1919 City Planning Act, and to rethink planning history. This can lead to reappraisal of the constellations of ideas and policies that link Japan to other countries in the East Asian region and beyond.

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Note

In keeping with Japanese custom, Japanese proper names appear in this chapter with surname followed by the given or first name. Long vowels are indicated by macrons, but well-known place names, such as Tokyo, are written without macrons as is conventional in English.

Related Topics

Ward: Planning Diffusion: Agents, Mechanisms, Networks, and Theories

Kusno: Southeast Asia

Kusno: Postcolonial Southeast Asia

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