MAEKAWA KUNIO AND THE EMERGENCE OF JAPANESE MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE

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CHAPTER 5: "TRADITION" REDUX

One of the most divisive debates within the architectural community before and during the war swirled around the issue of national identity. The need to allay anxiety about dependency on Western culture had only intensified as political tensions rose in the 1930s. The advocates of the so-called *Nihon shumi* style sought a public architecture that was technologically modern yet unambiguously "Japanese." To that end they appropriated architectural forms associated with premodern Japan and grafted them onto steel and reinforced-concrete structures. Modernism was attacked as "un-Japanese," but Maekawa and other modernists repeatedly affirmed their respect for Japan's architectural traditions: they differed from their opponents in how they interpreted Japanese tradition and its role in shaping contemporary practice.

Concerns about national identity and the significance of tradition for defining that identity were just as salient in the postwar period. Once the wartime government was removed from power, the debate became somewhat less desperate, but many of the underlying issues remained unresolved. Should there be something characteristically "Japanese" about architectural practice in Japan? If so, would this "Japaneseness" be manifested through architectural forms historically associated with Japan, through preferences in building materials, through proportional systems or spatial organization, or perhaps, as Maekawa had once argued, through an architect's resiliency and openness to new ideas?

In the postwar period, Maekawa frequently incorporated features associated with premodern Japanese architecture into his practice, just as he had done before the war. As we have seen, the traditional features in those earlier designs in part reflected shortages of many building materials: a reliance on wood led Maekawa to produce buildings that were closer to Japanese vernacular than designs in concrete might have been. After the war, Maekawa's connection with premodern Japanese architecture was most evident in his residential designs, primarily houses also of wood-frame construction. Yet the presence of these vernacular elements cannot be explained by their

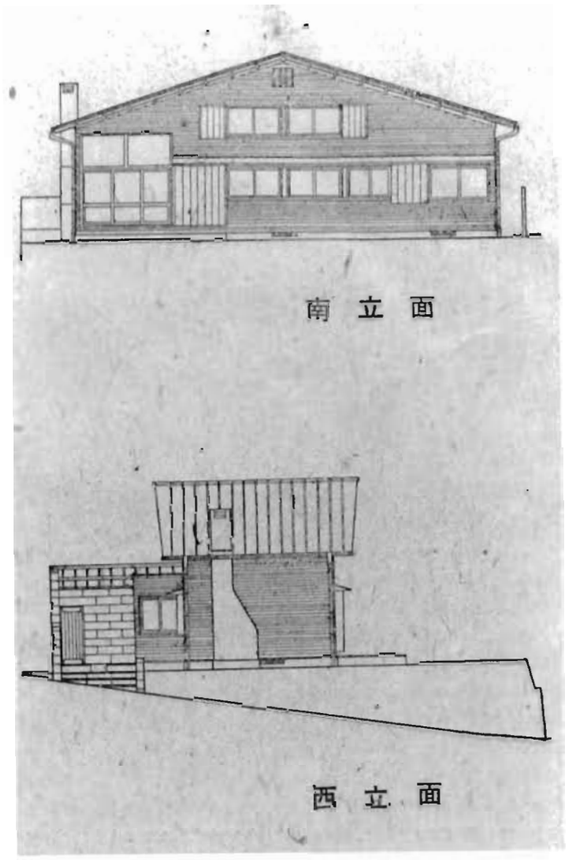


Figure 123.
Furugaki House, Meguro, Tokyo, 1948. South and west facades. Designed by Maekawa Kunio. From *Shinkenchiku* 23, no. 10 (October 1948).

materials alone; Maekawa used similar features in a number of major public designs built in nontraditional materials. Maekawa clearly continued to find these architectural elements compelling, even in the profoundly different cultural environment of postwar Japan.

A MODERNIST VERNACULAR

In 1948 Maekawa designed a house in Meguro that reiterated many of the traditional themes he had employed before the war (figure 123). The client, journalist Furugaki Tetsurō, hired Maekawa because he admired Maekawa's own house, which

Figure 124.
Prou House, Tokyo, 1952. South facade. Designed by Maekawa Kunio. From *Kokusai kenchiku* 20, no. 9 (September 1953).

was located in the same neighborhood (see figure 64).[1] In the Furugaki design, the south facade was similar to Maekawa's house, with a broad, sheltering gabled roof and a band of horizontal windows reminiscent of *gassho*-type farmhouses (described in chapter 3). Rain shutters (*amado*) and their storage cabinets (*tobukuro*)—features that have long effectively protected homes against Japan's rainy climate—hung prominently beside the windows. Sliding glass doors, which could claim either modernist or premodern Japanese parentage, led to front and back terraces. The interior retained a few hints of precedents from Japanese vernacular, such as the clear demarcation of the entry area (*genkan*) within the main hall and the use of *shōji* over some windows. Overall, however, the interior had a predominantly Western appearance. As in Maekawa's house, the living room was two stories high and enjoyed natural light from the south through sliding glass doors and clerestory windows. The house was provided with wood floors instead of tatami, Western-style furniture, and a Western-style toilet.

Maekawa completed a house for Leon Prou, the head of the Japanese office for the French news agency AFP, in 1952 (figure 124). Here the gently sloping gabled roof ran parallel with the entrance and garden facades, making the roof a far less emphatic feature of the design than at the Furugaki residence. The stained interior wood surfaces and the exposed rafters gave this city dwelling an informal, slightly rustic quality. All of the rooms had wood floors and Western furniture except for

the servant's bedroom, which was surfaced with tatami. Space flowed easily from the dining room to the living room and then to the study (figures 125 and 126). The house was equipped with a modern, tiled kitchen. Reminders of Japanese vernacular were present but understated: rain shutters were used once again, as were sliding glass doors. As with Maekawa's own residence, sliding glass doors in the living room opened up onto patios on both the north and south in a manner reminiscent of the openness of certain premodern Japanese houses.

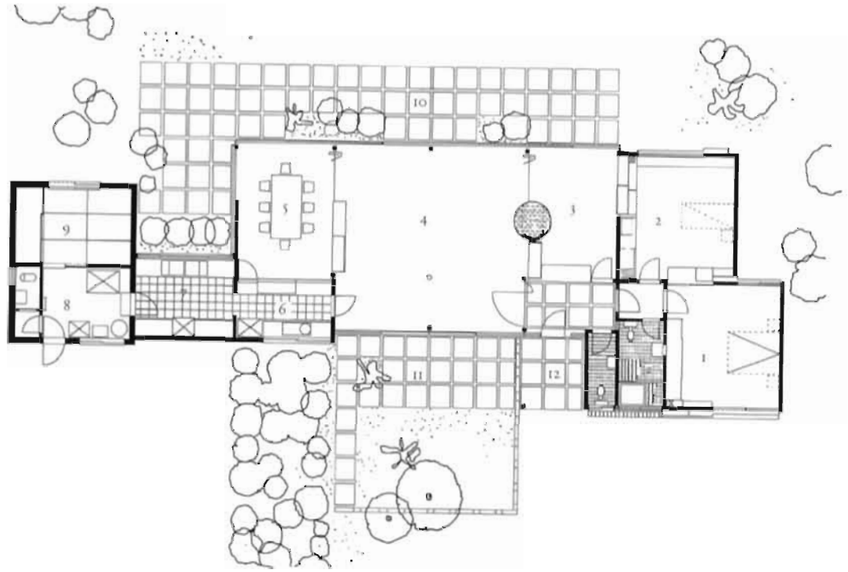
There is continuity in Maekawa's residential designs before and after the war. These houses often had loosely defined common areas that were closely linked spatially and visually with a garden. Several of his later houses were made of reinforced concrete, but the majority were of wood-frame construction with exposed wood surfaces on the exterior and interior. In some ways these houses resonated with premodern Japanese architectural practices, but they were a far cry from the self-conscious traditionalism of modern *sukiya* designs by Horiguchi Sutemi or Yoshida Isoya (1894–1974).[2] The Maekawa houses of the 1940s and 1950s were, however, similar in many ways to contemporary work by his colleague Sakakura Junzō.[3]

Maekawa's residential designs also share certain characteristics with the work of a number of architects outside Japan. Though not particularly close to Le Corbusier's regionalist work of the 1920s and 1930s, which often relied on masonry, his houses have suggestive parallels with contemporary designs by architects such as William Wurster (1895–1973), Charles Warren Callister (b. 1918), and Jack Hillmer (b. 1918).[4] These architects represented a significant regionalist stream within the modernist movement. That wood was one of the primary building materials in California vernacular construction directly affected their own uses of this versatile material, but they did not limit themselves to local practices. Some also studied Japanese vernacular design, and many admired Japanese wood craftsmanship. They sought to emulate the direct expression of structure in premodern Japanese wood-frame construction and believed that the flowing interior plans and the openness between interior and exterior in some Japanese residential design were especially appropriate in California's mild climate.[5] Maekawa and the Californians were, in effect, dipping from the same well. I doubt that they knew much, if anything, about each other's work,[6] but they were facing similar challenges and had at least some sources in common.

Maekawa's affinity for Japanese vernacular demonstrated not a narrow, parochial retreat from modernism but the continuing search among modernists worldwide to broaden their design vocabulary and to enhance the meaning of their work by drawing on various vernacular practices.

HUMANIZING THE MODERNIST CITY: THE HARUMI APARTMENT BUILDING

Maekawa combined his technology-driven approach with an appreciation of premodern Japanese architecture in his design of the Harumi Apartment Building, completed in 1958. Here Maekawa produced an aggressively modern steel and reinforced-concrete structure, while furnishing a portion of the apartment interiors in Japanese



1 Master Bedroom
2 Bedroom
3 Study
4 Living Room
5 Dining Room
6 Pantry
7 Kitchen
8 Utility Room
9 Maid's Room
10 Terrace
11 Patio
12 Front Entrance

Figure 125.
Prou House, by Maekawa. Plan.
From *Kokusai kenchiku* 20, no. 9
(September 1953).

style with tatami and *fusuma* (removable opaque sliding screens) in order to accommodate the well-established living patterns of tenants. He and his team also sought through their design to encourage interactions among the tenants that would build a sense of community. The Harumi Apartments met the demand for high-density urban development yet retained familiar architectural features that were both practical and reassuring in an increasingly stark concrete landscape.

A newly formed government agency, the Japan Housing Corporation (Nihon Jyūtaku Kōdan), invited Maekawa to design the apartment block in 1956. The Harumi project and an apartment building in Osaka were to be the corporation's first experiments with such a large-scale housing block. The apartments were constructed on the artificial island of Harumi in Tokyo Harbor. Harumi, part industrial and part residential, contains a major shipping pier, the Tokyo International Trade Center, and numerous apartment buildings. When Maekawa's apartments were completed, they were relatively expensive and were rented by well-established, middle-class tenants.[7] The location was attractive for many because it offered a convenient commute to downtown offices and stores. Over the years, as housing within Tokyo became increasingly expensive and people were forced to accept longer and longer commutes, the Harumi Apartments remained desirable despite their small size.

Figure 126.
Prou House, by Maekawa. View from living room toward study.
From *Kokusai kenchiku* 20, no. 9
(September 1953).

The firm designed the Harumi Apartments as a single, ten-story structure oriented roughly northeast by southwest (figure 127). The completed building towered over other buildings in the vicinity. A superstructure of steel and reinforced concrete created a framework to support the substructures composed of clusters of six single-story apartments (figures 128 and 129). Access corridors were available only on the third, sixth, and ninth floors. One entered the apartments above and below these corridors via small staircases. The design strategy of inserting major structural members only every three floors lowered the overall height of the building, thereby reducing the quantity of building materials required. Because there were fewer structural piers to plan around, the approach also offered greater flexibility within the apartment clusters. By reducing the amount of space set aside for public hallways, this "skip-floor" system maximized the living space within the building.

The 168 apartment units were available in three basic floor plans, ranging from 32 square meters to 42 square meters. Because access corridors were placed along the northwest side of the building, apartments on those floors were smaller and had windows only on the southeast side. Apartments on the other floors were able to extend the full width of the building. Windows supplied light and ventilation from

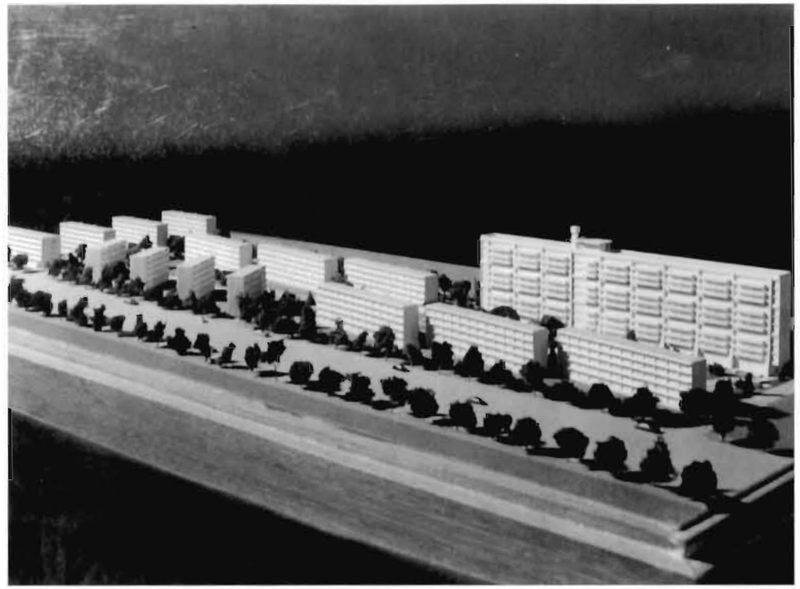


Figure 127.
Harumi Apartments, Tokyo, 1956–58. Model. Designed by Maekawa Kunio.
Photo by Eastern Photo.

both ends of each unit. The apartments were divided into two zones, a living area with a raised tatami floor and a wood floor area containing the bathroom, dining area, and kitchen (figure 130). *Fusuma* separated the tatami area into two or three rooms. Each unit had built-in closets, including a special storage closet for bedding (*oshiire*).

The Harumi design was closely related to Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles, which Maekawa had visited in 1951 (figure 131). Both structures have a long and narrow shape, and Maekawa similarly articulated the facade with deeply set balconies. The concept of filling a major structural frame with apartments independent of that structure undoubtedly came from Le Corbusier, whose example Maekawa also followed in extending apartments the width of the building to maximize natural light and ventilation. Harumi, like the Unité, had a roof garden, though one less elaborate. However, there were significant differences between the two buildings as well. The Harumi Apartment Building was much smaller than the Unité, and its individual units were smaller and on a single level (unlike Le Corbusier's two-story maisonettes). Nor did Maekawa emulate Le Corbusier's controversial decision to include a shopping corridor in his building.[8] Of course, the Japanese-style interiors were the most conspicuous departure from Le Corbusier's work.

Figure 128.
Harumi Apartments, by Maekawa. View from the northeast.
Photo by Hirayama Chūji.

The firm was aware of some of the social implications of building such a large-scale residential complex. According to Kawahara Ichirō and Ōtaka Masato, two of the architects in charge of the project, the firm's goal was to offer both privacy and a sense of community: "The density and confusion of the city of Tokyo give little hope for a new way of living together in a community. We can find some privacy in the residential section of the hilly section of Tokyo and a spirit of cooperation in downtown apartments where people live frugally with an open heart. Our purpose was to build an apartment where privacy and the spirit of cooperation coexist."[9] The designers were concerned that tenants might feel isolated. One of their greatest challenges was finding ways to encourage informal social ties among the inhabitants

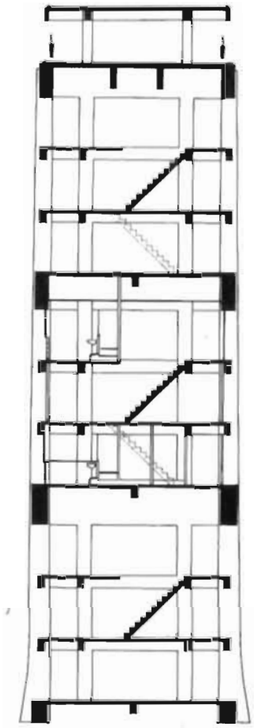


Figure 129.
Harumi Apartments, by Maekawa. Cross-section.
Archive of Maekawa Associates,
Architects and Engineers.

without impinging on their privacy. The access corridors on every third floor were intended to play an important role, acting as gathering places where children could play and adults could linger and talk (figure 132): the designers thus placed benches and public telephones along the corridors (at first, private telephones were not available to the tenants). The roof garden and the garden at the base of the building were also expected to act as "social spaces" where people would gather. With time, it was hoped, Harumi could nurture a community like those found in many older neighborhoods of Tokyo.

Maekawa's firm had to address the aesthetic preferences and established living patterns of the building's future residents. Within the confines of their own homes, people often resisted certain aspects of modernization. Kawahara and Ōtaka explained:

Figure 130.
Harumi Apartments,
by Maekawa. Apartment interior.
Photo by Sato Kimiharu.

Figure 131.
Unité d'Habitation, Marseilles, 1947–52. West facade. Designed by Le Corbusier. © 1999 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris/FLC.

Modern living was brought to Japan with the importation of Western civilization. But it is during the postwar years that modern living has been unified both in its way of expression as well as in theory. In spite of that, even people of higher social strata are reluctant to adopt it. As architects, we cannot help recognizing the beauty and merit of Japanese private homes with *tatami* flooring as opposed to modern living. With the existing social problems as their background, tradition and modern living live face to face in every-day life.[10]

Kawahara and Ōtaka graphically illustrated their objectives. At the top of one page in their article, they placed the plan and photograph of the interior of a Premos house, representing "modern living"; plans and photographs of a premodern town house and a farmhouse were placed on the same page. An arrow led from these seemingly dichotomous sources to Harumi apartment plans below.[11] The division of the apartments at Harumi into two zones, distinguished by their wood and tatami floors, re-

Figure 132.
Harumi Apartments, by Maekawa. Exterior hall
Photo by Sato Kimiharu.

called the plans of Japanese farmhouses, which were typically divided into a kitchen/service area with pounded earth floor and a raised living area (like the farmhouse floor plan that Kawahara and Ōtaka reproduced in their article).

The firm sought to resolve the tension between "tradition" and "modern living" by combining complementary elements in these disparate approaches. For example, although the use of tatami might, at first, seem anachronistic and somewhat

nostalgic in this reinforced-concrete environment, the tatami rooms and the living patterns associated with them were in fact very practical. Because the bedding could be stored during the day in built-in closets, rooms were made available for various other activities. Beds would have claimed an unacceptable amount of floor space in such small apartments. Sliding screens could be closed to provide at least limited privacy, and opened or even removed for more uninterrupted space. These "traditional" features were functional, economical, and made the interior spaces more comfortable for those who used them.

The incorporation of Japanese-style interiors into apartment buildings utilizing modern construction methods was not new in 1958; buildings constructed in the late 1920s and 1930s by the semipublic agency the Dōjunkai often incorporated tatami rooms. But the scale on which the Harumi Apartments negotiated the apparent contradiction between high technology and premodern aesthetics was new. The strategy achieved a reasonable level of comfort within the constraints of publicly sponsored, high-density housing. As a result, this hybrid approach became a model for many of the large-scale apartment complexes that proliferated in the following years.[12]

JAPANESE MODERNIST TRADITION ON THE WORLD STAGE: THE JAPAN PAVILION, BRUSSELS

The design of the Japan Pavilion for the 1958 Universal and International Exhibition in Brussels is, perhaps, Maekawa's most complex examination of the meaning of tradition in contemporary practice. The pavilion offered a highly selective interpretation of traditional and contemporary Japanese culture within an architectural and historical framework that was confidently modernist.

The International and Universal Exhibition was the first world's fair since the war. Though it may not have been as architecturally important as some earlier fairs, there were some highlights. As J. M. Richards observed in a review at the time, the single characteristic the diverse pavilion designs most often shared was an interest in structure.[13] At the center of the Brussels exhibition stood the enormous Atomium, a 91.4 meter model of a molecule of iron. Edward Durrell Stone's showy United States Pavilion featured a sophisticated roof structure of steel cables and translucent plastic spanning 88.9 meters. Le Corbusier designed the Philips Pavilion to house the multimedia presentation that he described as an "electronic poem." The dynamic structure consisted of twelve hyperbolic paraboloids formed by reinforced-concrete slabs, suspended from cables anchored to great reinforced-concrete ribs that reached up 16.5 meters in the air.

Maekawa was invited to design the Japan Pavilion in 1956 by JETRO (the Japan External Trade organization), the Japanese government agency in charge of promoting Japanese trade abroad. Originally the organizers had planned to develop the pavilion around the concept of Japan as a bridge between east and west, but an airline's promotional campaign had already claimed the idea. Eventually Maekawa and his team settled on the theme "La Main Nippone et la Machine."[14] The project was

Figure 133.
Japan Pavilion, Universal and International Exhibition, Brussels, 1956–58. Main facade. Designed by Maekawa Kunio. Photo by Setgysels and Dietens.

a collaborative effort. Maekawa and his associates were responsible both for the design of the pavilion and for the organization of the exhibition it housed, with significant input from JETRO and the exhibiting manufacturers regarding the selection of objects on display. The photographer Watanabe Yoshio produced the photographs featured in the pavilion; Toyama Yusaburo of NHK, Japan's national broadcasting network, chose the Japanese classical, contemporary, and folk music that was played; and the pavilion even had two writers, Serge Dodat and R. H. Blythy, to assist with the texts in Western languages.[15]

Maekawa's Japan Pavilion was less gymnastic than were the contributions by Le Corbusier and Stone. Nonetheless, it shared their interest in the display of structure. Its most prominent feature was a light, butterfly-shaped roof whose thickness tapered gently from the center to the outer edges (figure 133). The roof was supported at the center by a substantial steel beam that rested on reinforced-concrete bipods in the form of an inverted V. On the narrow ends of the pavilion, thin steel columns, bound together with tensioning rods, stabilized the ends of the roof (figure 134). Clerestory windows extended from the roof to lintels set slightly above head

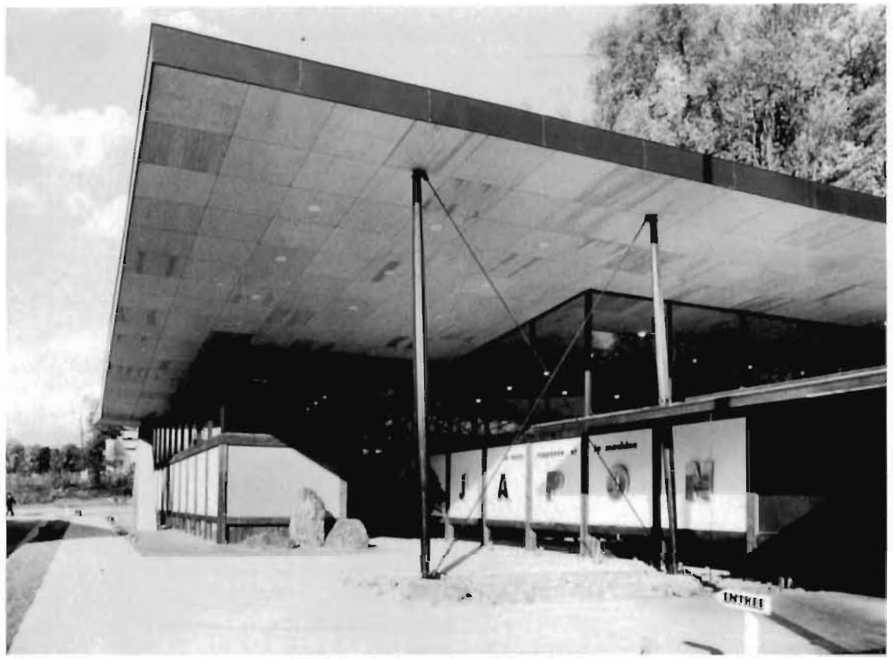


Figure 134.
Japan Pavilion, by Maekawa.
Main entrance. Photo by Setgysels and Dietens.

height, admitting natural light to the exhibition space inside. This glass-filled gap between the roof and walls also created the impression that the roof was floating above the walls. The exterior walls were framed with creosoted posts and beams. White masonite panels enclosed the pavilion from the lintel to about 45 cm above the ground; under them, glass reached to the ground.

At the heart of the main pavilion was a small garden—a welcome oasis for weary visitors—with seating, the shade of a few trees, and a small rock garden (figure 135). The space was open to the sky through a grid formed by the central roof beam and roof trusses of thin steel. Two of the reinforced-concrete bipods supporting the roof dominated the garden like powerful pieces of abstract sculpture. Along the long interior walls, exhibits blocked the view of the garden from the main exhibition space; but visitors could enter the garden from two-bay openings on the shorter sides. The garden was at once inviting and yet not so exposed to the main exhibition spaces that visitors would feel that they were on display themselves. The flooring in the exhibition areas flowed into the garden without interruption, encouraging visitors to move freely back and forth.

Figure 135.
Japan Pavilion, by Maekawa.
View from exhibition area to interior garden.
Photo by Setgysels and Dietens.

The sources for the design of the pavilion are diverse. The white panels and the dark posts and beams closely resembled the dark wood and white plaster walls so characteristic of premodern Japanese architecture. Even the clerestory windows could be interpreted as an allusion to the open transoms, or *ramma*, that mark the transition between rooms in premodern Japanese interiors. The central garden was especially evocative of Japanese vernacular: small interior gardens (*tsuboniwa*) composed of moss and a few carefully selected rocks were common in Japanese residential designs.[16] Even the free flow from the exhibition area to the garden was consistent with the high degree of interpenetration of interior and exterior space that characterizes much premodern Japanese architecture. Yet these features were embraced within an assertively modern framework of steel, concrete, and glass. The forceful reinforced-concrete roof supports, the steel tension rods, and the dramatically upswept roof all emphatically declared the potential of modern building technology. What is more,

these materials were so prominent that they took on an important aesthetic role within the design. Maekawa had produced a contemporary design that reveled in its contemporariness. This was no historical replica.

A wall extending from the entrance of the main pavilion became the outer wall of a small restaurant, which opened onto a small Japanese garden at the back of the pavilion complex. Both side pavilions were covered with gently sloping, gabled metal roofs whose shape was reminiscent of premodern Japanese roofs. The large garden behind the pavilion featured a pond with a low stone bridge. The limited budget precluded large-scale replanting for the garden, and so the most was made of existing trees. As Richards commented, "Established Belgian trees have somehow been made to take on a Japanese aspect."[17] The critic was, perhaps, too eager to find signs of Japanese culture in every aspect of the exhibit; but whatever the cultural identity of the trees themselves, the garden as a whole did evoke premodern Japanese garden design.

Visitors progressed from the entrance on the main facade through the pavilion, following exhibits in a circle around the central garden and then going out into the main garden at the back. The exhibition was divided into three sections: history (*rekishi*), industry (*sangyō*), and life (*seikatsu*). On entering the pavilion, one was greeted by ceramic human figures (*haniwa*) dating from the Tumulus period (250–600 CE). The history section was dominated by premodern art objects such as the *haniwa*, early bronze bells, swords, and the reproduction of the head of a Buddha from the Buddhist temple Kōfukuji. Gagaku (classical court music) and drum music from Nō theater played in the background. Wall text introduced the underlying themes of continuity and change: "The Japanese Hand, which has worked throughout so many ages, weaving the threads of its destiny."[18] The visitor's reverie over early Japanese culture was brought to an abrupt halt by a large photograph of bombed-out remains of Hiroshima suspended above the pathway. After passing under this disturbing image, one then emerged into the postwar world of industrialized Japan.

A photograph of a group of miners was hung back-to-back with the Hiroshima photograph. As one turned the corner, one confronted a big red dump truck produced by the manufacturer Hino. Photographs of industrial machinery covered the end wall, and text proclaimed optimistically, "After the misery and destruction of the war, the Japanese Hand again begins to toil, unweariedly, and with renewed cheerfulness."[19] At this point in the exhibition Japanese classical music gave way to contemporary strains. The industry section displayed a wide array of advanced products, including lenses, cameras, electron microscopes, Geiger counters, and textiles. A dramatic photograph by Watanabe Yoshio of a finger stretching a single glistening textile fiber reiterated the trope of the hand shaping the thread of history.

The final display area, titled "Japanese life," presented woodworking tools, modern examples of textiles, ceramics, wooden dolls (*kokeshi*), and baskets, many of them in a traditional mode. The transition was aurally marked by Japanese folk music. In one corner of the exhibition area was a raised platform surfaced with tatami mats, and a low table resting on the tatami was arranged as if a meal were being served.

Here glass replaced the masonite on the exterior wall, and from the table an imaginary diner could enjoy an unobstructed view out into the main garden. The entire wall leading to the exits was given over to a photograph of smiling children with raised open hands to give visitors a cheerful send-off. Wall text stated: "And soon, all these children's hands too, in their turn."[20]

The exhibition represented a distinct interpretation of history. Japanese history before World War II was given an important place within this framework, but as a record of rich cultural experience and not a chronicle of emperors or military leaders. The war itself was addressed only through the disturbing photograph of Hiroshima and thus was represented simply as the cause of terrible destruction suffered by the Japanese, a choice undoubtedly intended to elicit sympathy from viewers and dissipate lingering hostility toward Japan. There was no attempt to glorify war, but there was also no exploration of the recent war's origins or attempt to assign blame. The display was orchestrated to emphasize that the Japanese wanted to put the war behind them. The break with wartime Japan was complete, and a new, peaceful Japan had emerged. The new Japan would rely on a legacy of diligent and skilled workers who would produce both traditional Japanese crafts and a wide range of advanced industrial products for world markets.

Maekawa had hoped that the final section of the exhibition would complement the industrial section by demonstrating how the ancient lineage of Japanese manufacturing could be continued through modern handmade products. It was meant to illustrate the theme, showing that "even in the machine age of today the hands of the Japanese would weave the thread of a new tradition (*atarashii dentō*)."[21] In the end, however, he felt that this portion of the exhibition was not entirely successful, in part because some of the crafts on display were not of high quality.

Since the theme of continuity in the midst of new beginnings informed the entire project, it is not surprising that the architectural design drew from premodern Japanese architecture. Kimura Toshihiko, one of the two architects in the firm who were sent to Brussels to supervise the pavilion's construction, described the firm's understanding of these historical precedents: "We avoided the so-called *sukiya* style, which came into being out of the Japanese people's seclusionist sensibility, because it was beautiful but lacked strength. Instead we refined a plan with which we hoped to express the atmosphere of a Japanese architecture from an age rich with an ancient spirit of progressive development, and to do so using modern methods."[22] Sharing a widely held belief that *sukiya*-style architecture of the Edo period was elegant but effete, Kimura and his colleagues looked back to an ancient period for a more vital model. Kimura remained vague, however, about exactly what time period he had in mind, and any historicist elements in the design itself were too diffuse and abstract to pinpoint. The design could capture the authority of the past without being bound to any specific style and its negative associations.

There is precedent for this kind of argument, not just in the "tradition debates" that were then preoccupying the profession but also in earlier pronouncements by Maekawa and other members of his firm. The impulse to transcend recent history

by enthusiastically embracing the more remote past is reminiscent of the inspiration that firm members found in the excavations at Toro immediately after the war. Kimura's vision of the distant past as a time of progress also harks back to Maekawa's characterization of Japanese tradition in his essay in defense of his 1931 Imperial Household Museum competition entry (discussed at length in chapter 3). Then Maekawa had argued that it was more in keeping with the spirit of Japanese tradition to embrace change than to cling rigidly to outmoded styles.

Maekawa was deeply concerned that the Brussels Pavilion not end up mired in controversy, as had happened with his project for the 1937 Japan Pavilion in Paris. He had lost that commission because critics had not found his design "Japanese" (*Nihonteki*) enough. Unlikely as it might seem that Maekawa could have lost the pavilion commission in 1958 for the same reason, the possibility rankled him, as his comments in a roundtable discussion on the pavilion make clear: "What I absolutely could not stand was that previous problem about 'Japaneseness' connected to the Paris Pavilion. Somehow that problem just evaporated somewhere. The newspapers wrote something about it [the Japan Pavilion at Brussels] being Japanese, and people grumbled about the fact that the Iran Pavilion stood in the way of the Japan Pavilion so that one couldn't see it, but there weren't any Japanese who were opposed to the pavilion as architecture."[23] That Maekawa's worries remained so strong despite all that had changed in twenty years powerfully indicates how shaken he had been by the divisive cultural politics of the 1930s.

Hamaguchi Ryūichi's response to Maekawa's comments is revealing: "Perhaps [there was no opposition] because one could walk through various historical periods. Concerning the arrangement for the exhibition, it must have been very difficult to sew the thread of tradition [into the exhibition] in a modern way."[24] The carefully arranged displays of premodern Japanese culture within the pavilion may have placated critics who would have attacked an exhibit that was exclusively contemporary. At the same time, because these objects were placed in a particular manner, the exhibit was able to manage that contentious history. Premodern culture remained fixed and subordinate to the modern framework in which it was presented, rather than threatening to come back to life and overwhelm modern cultural practices, as it had in the 1930s.

Maekawa's 1958 design was somewhat more traditionalist in character than his design for the 1937 exhibition had been. Yet the Japan Pavilion for Brussels was in no danger of falling within the category of the proscribed *Nihon shumi*. Historical citations were abstract, consistent with the modern structure, and effectively woven into the conceptual fabric of the design as a whole. The pavilion affirmed its Japanese origins, yet maintained its modernist integrity.

THE DEBATE OVER TRADITION IN POSTWAR JAPANESE ARCHITECTURE

The authority of tradition, which had been deployed to preserve the status quo in the 1930s and 1940s, was co-opted after the war to challenge the discredited wartime political and cultural order and to advance new democratic social ideals. Architects now wrote of an alternative tradition centered on "the people" rather than on an authoritarian, "feudal" regime.[25] This significant shift was made possible by dramatic political changes. The Allied Occupation of Japan ended in 1952, and the Japanese political system quickly adjusted to its newly regained independence. In 1955 the two leading conservative parties formed the Liberal Democratic Party, which would dominate the government for decades. That same year, the Socialist Party healed internal rifts and consolidated its position as the most significant voice of opposition within the Diet.

As Japanese politicians reasserted their political autonomy, intellectuals in fields ranging from literature to psychology explored the issue of Japanese cultural identity. Victor Koschmann notes that the writings of intellectuals such as Minami Hiroshi and Katō Shūichi

> directed attention to what were thought to be the many historical and cultural particularities of Japanese society that the earlier "universalism" had ignored or cast in a uniformly negative light. They also directed attention away from the universalist categories that had characterized early postwar thought—such as humanity, the abstract individual, the working class, or the masses—toward distinctions among regions, national cultures, and historical experiences. The category of the nation particularly was greatly reinforced by perceptions of national-cultural peculiarities.[26]

The need to reaffirm the value of Japanese culture and repair the breaches caused by military defeat and occupation was widely felt. Many architects shared this concern and reengaged with their profession's long-standing preoccupation with what was distinctly Japanese about Japanese architecture.

Architects articulated a representative range of positions on the problem of the relationship between cultural identity and architectural practice at a symposium in 1953. The discussion was published in the architectural journal *Kokusai kenchiku* under two titles: "Kokusaisei, fūdōsei, kokuminsei" and "Nationalism vs. Internationalism."[27] The participants were the architects Yoshida Isoya, Tange Kenzō, Sakakura Junzō, and Maekawa Kunio, as well as three members of the magazine's editorial staff—Ikuta Tsutomu, Hamaguchi Ryūichi, and Tanabe Kazuto.

At the beginning of the symposium Yoshida Isoya, an architect best known for his modern interpretations of premodern Japanese architecture styles, argued that the architecture that had been called "international" was not truly international at all. Rather it was architecture that had taken form under the conditions existing in certain countries and then been adopted by other countries around the world. He expressed alarm at the popularity of the architect Oscar Niemeyer among his students; Niemeyer's work in the international style might be fitting in South America, but it was not appropriate for Japan.[28]

At some points during the discussion Yoshida seemed primarily concerned with the appropriateness of architecture for a given climate and building materials, but

these were not the only factors that affected architectural practice: he also conceived of the body as a critical site of cultural difference. Rugby, he suggested, was a sport perfectly designed for the English body type but unsuited to the Japanese body. He continued: "If something isn't [properly] absorbed by the body, exact imitation won't work. Doesn't it take an appropriate amount of time to make something one's own?" (p. 3). Returning later to the corporeal theme, he declared his belief "that Japanese blood flows in each Japanese, and that there are ways in which it is different than that of foreigners. This [blood] is undergoing a transformation [literally, 'fermentation']. . . . [Adaptation] cannot occur in just one generation. Perhaps someone [better fitted to internationalist architecture] could emerge in two or three generations" (p. 9). This notion that culture flows through the body and can be passed down physically echoes the insistence of Horiguchi Sutemi, thirty years earlier, that he and his modernist colleagues had "absorbed tradition deeply into our blood and muscle."[29] Yoshida did not elaborate on the nature of these differences of body and blood or on how they affected architecture.

Yoshida may have been speaking metaphorically; but even so, by lodging these cultural differences in the body, he was rendering them resistant to change. Knowledge transmitted through the body is necessarily intimate and inalienable. To be sure, he acknowledged that cultural changes could occur much more quickly than biological changes; nevertheless, his overarching message was that there were essential and fundamentally stable differences between Japan and other cultures. Yoshida was skeptical about the capacity of international architecture to successfully acclimate to Japanese conditions.

Tange was somewhat more equivocal. While he drew a distinction between internationalism, on the one hand, and an antithetical approach that emphasized localizing factors such as climate (*fūdōsei*) and tradition (*dentō*), on the other, he frequently seemed to blur the distinction between these two extremes. He advocated international architecture, but by this he meant an architecture that reflected the specific economic and technological level of each country. Because Japan could not match American technology, its architecture would inevitably have to be different (p. 3). At several points in the discussion Tange identified other characteristics that had distinguished Japanese architecture in the past and were likely to continue to do so. For example, Japanese construction in modern materials tended to be comparatively heavy to cope with the threat of earthquake. He also spoke at length about the potential usefulness of the elaborate proportional system used in premodern construction known as *kiwari* for improving the aesthetics of contemporary design (pp. 6–7). In effect, Tange was advocating an approach to contemporary architecture that fell between the two poles he had originally established.

Sakakura was less ambivalent about internationalism than either Tange or Yoshida and described the process that formed the international movement as a collaborative international effort, not as a foreign style imposed on Japan and other countries from the outside. When Yoshida asked Sakakura if he thought that the work of international style architects such as Niemeyer ever really fit into its location,

Sakakura replied matter-of-factly that there were times when it did and there were times when it did not (p. 3). And he commented on Yoshida's claim for the uniqueness of Japanese blood: "When I built the Japanese Pavilion for the Paris Exposition, I had confidence in the fact that I had Japanese blood. Or perhaps I should say that I was relaxed about the issue. In any case, it was on the basis of this self-assurance that I designed a new Japanese international architecture" (p. 4). As long as he was confident of his Japanese background, it would be reflected in his work. But that sense of national identity did not conflict with his commitment to produce international style designs.

Unlike most of the participants, Maekawa seemed deeply troubled about the question they were discussing. He pointed out that during the 1930s he had been criticized by many (including Tange and Hamaguchi) for his unwavering support of modernism and recalled a meeting of the Kenchiku Gakkai at which architects were scolded for not developing a distinctively Japanese architecture. He had responded to the criticism of insufficient "Japaneseness" by arguing that Japan's modern navy cruisers were "Japanese" (*Nihonteki*) because they had been successfully produced in the wake of the difficult conditions that prevailed in Japan at the time. In the same way, Japanese architecture was the direct result of its time and place and was, therefore, inherently "Japanese." Yet he was reluctant to embrace any particular Japanese style, and for this some of his colleagues had called him a "traitor" (*kokuzoku*; p. 4).[30]

Maekawa agreed with Tange that architecture had to respond to economic and technological limitations, but he denied that such responses necessarily translated into predictable architectural forms. In his mind the advocates of "Japanese taste" expected architects to begin with a specific program of ornamentation. When he started to work on a design, he focused first of all on the project's functional requirements: he thus began with floor plans (p. 5). It would undermine his entire design approach if he were expected to conform to a predetermined elevation in order to make a design look "Japanese."[31] He saw the "facadism" inherent in architecture in Japanese taste as a direct threat to his integrity as an architect.

More generally, Maekawa was disturbed by what he perceived as an "inferiority complex" felt by many Japanese in relationship to foreigners—a tendency to which, he admitted, he might not be immune. He urged Japanese to go about their business without worrying so much about how their work compared with practices elsewhere. Sakakura, picking up on this observation, suggested that this inferiority complex had interfered with efforts to create a suitable Japanese internationalism for the new age. Such insecurity explained not only the imitation of architects such as Niemeyer but also designs such as the National Museum (the former Imperial Household Museum) and Kabukiza (another example of *Nihon shumi* design). He, like Maekawa, urged more self-confidence about what Japan had to offer.

All of the participants, including Yoshida, were concerned about designs that seemed to be "too Japanese." Yoshida suggested, perhaps tongue in cheek, that if a design appeared to be "Japanese" (*Nihonteki*) to foreigners but did not seem to be Japanese to a Japanese observer, it would be just Japanese enough. If the work ap-

peared to be Japanese both to foreign and Japanese eyes, it would, perhaps, be too Japanese. Several participants were, for example, wary of the self-consciously Japanese features of the designs of the Japanese American sculptor Isamu Noguchi. This distinction between degrees of "Japaneseness" as defined by audience response even made some sense to Maekawa (p. 9). It seems that questions of self-recognition could be resolved only by referring to foreign observers whose eyes could reflect that self.

Over the next few years, the issues raised in this animated panel discussion came to absorb many associated with the profession. In articles and on panels, a diverse range of architects, architectural historians, journalists, and engineers addressed the same questions. Interest in Japanese architectural history seemed insatiable. Month after month, architectural journals published pieces on topics such as Ise Shrine, the Katsura Villa, the Taian Teahouse, and the Shōsōin Storehouse. Essays that appeared alongside the historical pieces situated contemporary architects in relationship to premodern Japanese architecture. These exchanges are now collectively referred to as the "Japan tradition debate" (*Nihon dentō ronsō*).[32]

Members of Maekawa's circle regularly participated in this debate. Hamaguchi Ryūichi, a journalist and former employee of Maekawa's firm, wrote an essay on *sukiya* style that clearly connected historical analysis and contemporary criticism. Expressing a deep ambivalence toward *sukiya*, a style that had developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, had recently gained international attention, and continued to inform contemporary design, he stated frankly, "I feel repelled, but at the same time drawn to it."[33] Hamaguchi argued that when *sukiya* originally developed in the context of the tea ceremony, it was marked by the social contradictions of its times. Advocates of the style, such as merchant-class tea master Sen no Rikyū, insisted on an aesthetics of humility and "poverty" and yet collaborated with the authoritarian military rulers. The style took shape as an expression of both resistance and passive submission to authority. Later manifestations of *sukiya* abandoned the aesthetics of rustic poverty in favor of an urban chic that challenged authority through an obsession with pursuing pleasure. Even in this phase of *sukiya*, Hamaguchi saw "something rebellious and resisting about it in regard to the architectural expression of authoritarianism."[34]

Hamaguchi approached modern *sukiya* style similarly. As he pointed out, Western architecture had, to a great extent, been imposed on people by the authority of the Japanese government. Within this context, one might choose a traditionalist style to signal rejection of the government's policies. Two of the best-known practitioners of *sukiya*, Horiguchi Sutemi and Yoshida Isoya, had studied Western architecture abroad but had later become disillusioned with it. Hamaguchi believed that they probably "felt disgust at themselves for always riding on the coat-tails of the Westerners and pursuing Westernization and modernization. For this reason it can be said that the inner spirit of modern *sukiya* is permeated by a certain racialistic and rebellious consciousness, and furthermore, that spirit of feeling of resistance is linked to the attitude toward life of the general public."[35] In Hamaguchi's eyes, the

traditionalism of modern *sukiya* emerged as a defensive response to Westernization. Though sympathetic to the impulse, he was critical of the "sentimental nationalism" that underlay this particular path of resistance.

Tange Kenzō, Kawazoe Noboru, and others often made direct, literal connections between premodern Japanese architectural practices and contemporary design. At least some of the architects around Maekawa were skeptical of this strategy. In an article discussing the Fukushima Education Hall, MID Group member Adachi Mitsuaki warned that

> the trend toward discovering in the *kiwari* proportional system at Katsura a blend of the modern and the traditional and then illogically applying this system even in buildings in reinforced concrete will freeze architectural expression (one can see good examples of this trend in two or three of Tange's designs). I do not want to deny the beauty of *sukiya* architecture as expressed at Katsura. By the same token I do not want to deny the beauty of Gothic churches. Tradition is not contained in our cultural inheritance in a set form. Nor is it contained within the artist. Is tradition created by responding to the style and form of life, or is it, as I believe, to be found in the actual conditions of life in which it is created?[36]

While not wanting to revive specific techniques such as *kiwari*, Adachi embraced the spirit of builders of the past and expressed a romantic faith in the creative vitality found in the "robust life of the people."[37] His article was accompanied by photographs of Japanese farmhouses, structures he viewed not as sources for building techniques or formal models but as manifestations of the strength and resourcefulness that had sustained "the people" for centuries. Tradition would flow into contemporary practice as a process. Like the farmers who built their houses in accordance with the conditions of the past, modern architects should respond resiliently to the real conditions of daily life in the present.

Maekawa was a regular contributor to architectural publications throughout this period, yet he avoided these themes in his writings even as his associates were addressing them directly. Maekawa claimed that in response to suffering repeated nationalistic attacks over the issue, he had developed an "allergy to tradition" (*dentō arerugī*) in the 1930s.[38] This discomfort clearly lingered into the postwar period. In some accounts, he has been labeled an opponent of tradition because of his avoidance of the tradition debate and his strong identification with technological innovation in construction. When, for example, Tange emphasized the importance of subjectivity in creative design and warned against too much reliance on technology, some interpreted his comment as veiled criticism of Maekawa.[39] As Maekawa's postwar designs demonstrate, however, one would be wrong to cast Maekawa as a narrow technologist or to suggest that he rigidly resisted traditional Japanese architecture in his practice.

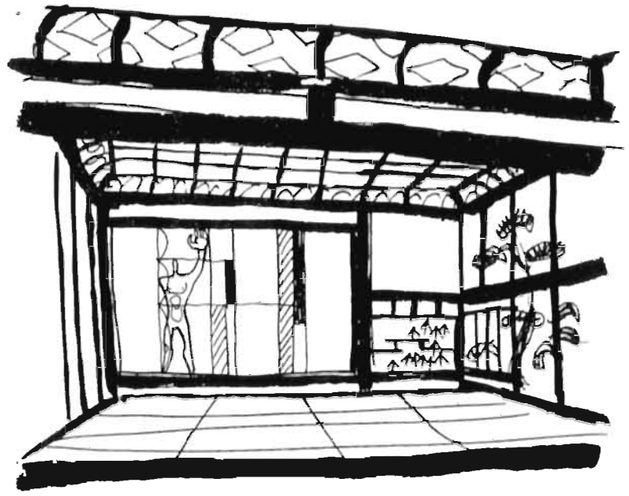


Figure 136.
"Nijō Castle: *Tokonoma* by the Brush of Le Corbusier." Cartoon by Hozumi Kazuo. From *Kenchiku bunka*, no. 200 (June 1963).

In 1963 the architectural magazine *Kenchiku bunka* published a set of cartoons by the architect Hozumi Kazuo titled "A History of the Unexpected in Japanese Architecture."[40] Cleverly lampooning the profession's obsession with tradition, the cartoonist reversed the architects' strategy of appropriating premodern forms by imposing modern elements onto designs chosen from the canon of Japanese architectural history. In one cartoon, Hozumi placed solar panels on the roof of the main sanctuary at Ise Shrine, a shrine dedicated to the sun goddess. The famous sand-and-rock garden at Ryōanji in Kyoto was embellished with Isamu Noguchi's garden sculpture from the Reader's Digest Building, and a bulldozer raked the sand into geometric designs. Hozumi picked up on contemporary architects' interest in the proportional systems used in premodern design, presenting the seventeenth-century formal audience hall of the Nijō Castle in Kyoto with Le Corbusier's modulor man drawn on the back wall of the decorative alcove (*tokonoma*) (figure 136). Now instead of adopting the *kiwari* system to contemporary building, a twentieth-century proportional system sized up the earlier design. The modulor man is especially intrusive because of the special aura associated with the *tokonoma*. All the interest in the Katsura Villa made this icon irresistible to Hozumi. His version of Katsura was constructed with a lightweight steel frame reinforced with diagonal steel braces across the facade (figure 137). A caption states, "In the end, a lightweight steel frame doesn't create the same feeling, does it?" The cartoon vividly demonstrates just how incongruous modern construction methods could be when transported into the seventeenth-century context of Katsura.

Figure 137.
"Katsura Villa: In the End, a Lightweight Steel Frame Doesn't Create the Same Feeling, Does It?" Cartoon by Hozumi Kazuo. From *Kenchiku bunka*, no. 200 (June 1963).

Nevertheless, a wide spectrum of the architectural profession believed that "tradition" was not as strikingly out of place in modernist architectural practice as the cartoonist suggests. Even Maekawa, who was as strongly committed to technological progress as any of his colleagues, selectively appropriated premodern architectural elements in certain designs. For Japanese modernists the engagement with tradition had powerful attractions. Tradition provided a conduit through which to tap the "spirit of the people" and thereby became a weapon to slay the dragon of the wartime authoritarian government. By embracing tradition, modernists could shield themselves from nationalistic charges that modernism was "un-Japanese." At the same time, associations with Japan's premodern architectural legacy imbued Japanese modernist design with an exotic quality that was very appealing to Western colleagues.

Yet tradition also presented certain risks. The danger of falling into the traps of academic historicism and nationalistic chauvinism as reflected in *Nihon shumi* design clearly haunted Maekawa and other architects of his generation even as they attempted to integrate their selective visions of the past into their work.

During the 1950s certain monuments in Japan's architectural heritage acquired extraordinary potency with both modernist architects and historians alike. As already mentioned, the Katsura Villa was particularly important; in 1956 the architectural historian Ōta Hirotarō commented on a veritable "Katsura boom" (*Katsura būmu*) in the field.[41] Various interpretations of the seventeenth-century complex transformed it into a reassuring symbol of continuity. Yet at the same time, Katsura's presence also acted as a disturbing reminder of historical discontinuity and lost cultural identity. Katsura functioned as an architectural fetish, becoming the site of unresolvable tension generated by the need to perpetually reproduce the past as a way to deny its loss.[42] Perhaps these powerful undercurrents explain why Katsura and the debate about "tradition" in which it played such a central role so fascinated the architectural community.