
National Diet Library Newsletter

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Western style architecture in the early modern period of Japan:
From small digital exhibition "Kaleidoscope of Books (16)"

*This is a partial translation of the small digital exhibition
"The Dawn of Modern Japanese Architecture
- focusing on architectural design competitions"
<<http://www.ndl.go.jp/kaleido/entry/16/index.html>> in Japanese of the same title.*

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◦ Introduction

After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, western style buildings designed by Japanese architects came to be seen as symbols of Japan's rapid modernization. This 16th volume of the small digital exhibition series "Kaleidoscope of Books" introduces materials relating to those architects, as well as competitions - their "battle fields." Additionally, guide books and photo books with images of modern architecture are also provided in this exhibition, and prove that those buildings were later regarded as famous.

◦ Chapter 1: "Architects" Were Born- Graduates of the Imperial College of Engineering

The history of Japanese modern architectures dates back to the last days of the Tokugawa shogunate. Naturally, there were people who engaged in construction before that, but Japanese "architects" - specialists who designed and oversaw buildings - were born in the early Meiji period, when the technologies and cultures of the western countries were introduced.

Chapter 1 shows the dawn of the world of architecture in Japan by describing people who formed the foundation of Japanese modern architecture and the education of the Imperial College of Engineering they went to.

1.1 Establishment of the "Kogakuryo" (later "Kobu Daigakko")

In 1871, the Imperial College of Engineering ("Kogakuryo," later "Kobu Daigakko") was established under the Kobusho (lit. Ministry of Industry), the central administrative organ to push forward the industrial modernization and supervise national projects, aiming to train "Kobusho" technocrats. After the reorganization of the Kobusho in 1877, Kogakuryo was renamed Kobu Daigakko and initiated the Japanese specialized education in the field of engineering, until the dissolution of Kobusho in 1885.

ex.1) Kyu Kobu Daigakko Shiryo Hensankai (editor) "*Kyu kobu daigakko shiryō*" Toranomonkai, Showa 6 (1931) [NDL call no.: 292-88]

*Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

This book was compiled by the "Toranomonkai" society of Kobu Daigakko graduates, and describes with historical documents the history of the college from its establishment to the redeployment to the College of Engineering at the Imperial University.

1.2 Foreign advisor CONDER - the Benefactor of Japan's Architectural World

Josiah CONDER, one of the foreign employees of the Japanese government in the Meiji period, played a major part in architectural education at the Imperial College of Engineering. Born in 1852 in London, he studied architecture at the University of London, won a competition held by the Royal Institute of British Architects, and then came to Japan as a promising architect at the invitation of the Meiji government. In 1877, at the age of 25, he was assigned to lecturer on architecture at the Imperial College of Engineering, while working for Kobusho as an advisor until 1884. He designed the official guest house for foreign diplomats and dignitaries, the Rokumeikan, and many other buildings.

One of his designs, plans of the merchandise showroom of the Kaitakushi are available in the [Bank of Japan Archives](#).

ex.2) Josiah CONDER "*Zoka hikkei*"

KATO Ryokichi, Meiji 19 (1886) [NDL call no.: 34-96]

*Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

This is an architectural technical manual made by MATSUDA Shuji and SONE Tatsuzo who took notes of what Conder said.

1.3 Pupils of Josiah CONDER

In Conder's architecture class at the Imperial College of Engineering, he gave systematic lectures as well as on-the-job training in some projects he was engaged in. Members of the first graduating class included the following architects who later played active parts in their fields of specialties.

1.3.1 TATSUNO KINGO

After graduating at the head of the class in 1879, he started to study abroad at Japanese government expense from the following year at the University of London and the office of William Burges at which his teacher Conder had also worked. In 1883, he returned to Japan and took over the class of Conder as a professor at the college, and taught there until 1887, and then became a professor at the Imperial University in 1888, when both the university and the architects society of Japan were established. He had served as the president of the society for a long time. Young Tatsuno was said to declare that he wanted to design three major buildings such as the Central Bank, the Central Station, and the National Diet building. Later with his dream coming true, he undertook the design of his first two hopes, the Bank of Japan headquarters and the Central Station (later Tokyo Station). As for the National Diet building, around 1907 when the construction project was

materializing, he insisted that the plan had to be decided through the competition. That led to serious antagonism toward TSUMAKI Yorinaka, his younger student at the college and also the central figure of the construction project on the part of the Ministry of Finance.

ex.3) TATSUNO Kingo, KASAI Manshi “*Kaoku kenchiku jitsurei dai 1 kan no zu*”
Suharaya, Meiji 41 (1908) [NDL call no.: 404-54]

*Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

The Tatsuno-Kasai architect office was co-founded by Tatsuno and KASAI Manshi in Osaka in 1903.

This book includes samples of written contracts and regulations as well as specifications, written estimates and plans of four projects the Tatsuno-Kasai architect office engaged in.

1.3.2 KATAYAMA Tokuma

KATAYAMA Tokuma is often ranked as one of the three architectural giants of the Meiji period with Tatsuno Kingo and Tsumaki Yorinaka. After graduation from the Imperial College of Engineering, he started his career as an architect for the Court, engaging in the construction project of the Meiji Palace. He designed major buildings such as the Kyoto Imperial Museum (now Kyoto National Museum) and the Hyokeikan of Tokyo Imperial Museum (now Tokyo National Museum). Katayama's masterpiece is the Crown Prince's Palace (now the State Guesthouse, Akasaka Detached Palace), which is a gorgeous example of the neo-baroque style, showing his talent for adding Japanese traditional designs such as the pattern of medieval Japanese armored warriors Yoroimusha into the roof of this European style building.

1.3.3 SONE Tatsuzo

In 1890, he entered the Mitsubishi Company, and supervised the construction work of the Mitsubishi Ichigokan which Conder designed, then made the Marunouchi business district called "Itcho London (lit. one block London)." With NAKAJO Seiichiro, he co-founded the Sone-Nakajo Architects' office in 1908. One of their masterpieces, the library building of Keio University designed in 1912, still looks elegant with red bricks and white granite.

1.3.4 SATATE Shichijiro

After constructing many post offices while in the Ministry of Communications, he planned the housing of the Japanese vertical datum benchmark. In his later years, he became an advisor of Nippon Yusen KK and designed the Otaru branch of the company. The building is famous as the venue of the Russo-Japanese negotiation for settlement of the boundaries after the Treaty of Portsmouth.

1.3.5 TSUMAKI Yorinaka

Though he entered the Imperial College of Engineering in 1878 and attended the class of Conder, he left college in 1882 and transferred to Cornell University in the United States to receive the Bachelor of Arts in Architecture. In 1886, he entered the special bureau for the construction project of the central government district established by INOUE Kaoru, and was dispatched to Germany until 1889. He studied architectural design at the Ende-Boeckmann Architects' office, which planned the district. After the curtailment of the project by political circumstances, the bureau was broken up. So he moved to succeeding ministries, first the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and then the Ministry of Finance. From 1901, when he was assigned as the director of the Building and Repairs Division, he had a great influence in government architecture. The headquarters building of the Yokohama Specie Bank completed in 1904 (now the Kanagawa Prefectural Museum of Cultural

History) is said to be his masterpiece. The Newport Pier Tax Keeping Warehouse (now the Yokohama Red Brick Warehouse) was also one of his designs.

Chapter 2: Competitions - Contests by Architects

The history of the first real architectural competition in Japan dates back to the early twentieth century. Apart from the sense of values respecting court architects under the patronage of the privileged classes, competitions can be regarded as democratic attempts for architects to establish free and independent status through their own ability. This chapter illustrates the process of making a decision about architectural plans through competition with some accepted works.

2.1 The Competition for the National Diet Building - a Long-term Argument over the Plan: Tsumaki vs. Tatsuno

In 1906, the bill for the construction of the new National Diet building was introduced in the House of Representatives, followed by research on foreign parliament buildings and surveying the provisional site. Some said that a competition should be held for this construction, but Tsumaki, Director General for special constructions in the Ministry of Finance who had already played a major role in this project, objected and advocated forming a plan by a council of authorities, for if a competition was held, excellent architects could not take part in forming a plan because they had to be judges. (see Eizen Kanzaikyoku (editor) "*Teikoku gikai gijido kenchiku no gaiyo*" [NDL call no.: KA272-E15]) This means that the project was led by the bureaucrats at the time.

It was Tatsuno who opposed that and promoted the competition. In 1908, the group of Tatsuno and other architects submitted a written suggestion pushing the competition. Two years later, based on the suggestion, the society of architecture proposed the competition to the arrangement committee for the National Diet building construction set up in the Ministry of Finance, but only six members out of 21 voted for it. The government stood in opposition and commented that no topflight architect could enter the competition if they had been appointed as the judges (see Nihon Kenchiku Gakkai (editor), "*Kindai nihon kenchikugaku hattatsushi*" [NDL call no.: NA25-G24]). This story means that the method proposed mainly by the officials under the leadership of Tsumaki seems to overpower the committee. But the project was finally postponed when the KATSURA Cabinet resigned.

2.2 Carrying out the Competition

After Tsumaki died in 1916, Tatsuno proposed the competition again. In June 1918, a special bureau for the National Diet building construction project was set up in the Ministry of Finance, and then the competition opened in September, which Tatsuno had desired for a long time. He himself joined as a judge. The requirement included that the plan had to assume a dignified attitude as the National Diet as there is no limitation on the style. The first prize was ten thousand yen (equivalent to 5.4 million yen today). A total of 118 proposals were submitted by February 1919, and twenty passed the first screening and moved to the second round held in September of the same year, though Tatsuno himself had died in March.

Finally, WATANABE Fukuzo, a technician of the Ministry of the Imperial Household, won the first prize, and the bureau elaborated his proposal to the actual blueprint.

When the twenty works of the finalists were put on view, many of them received public criticism pointing out that they did not break through existing architectural concepts. Especially, an architect SHIMODA Kikutarō petitioned the Imperial Diet to change the blueprint, protesting that it was just copying the western style. Shimoda left Tatsuno's

class at the Industrial College of the Imperial University of Tokyo just before graduation, and moved to the United States and joined the Page Brown architects' office. As his office won the competition for the California State Pavilion at the Chicago World's Fair, he was appointed to supervise the construction, and became the first Japanese architect licensed by the American Institute of Architects. Coming back to Japan in 1898, he went through a hard time without any academic post or company architectural advisory position, since he had been a defector from Tatsuno's class. Being outside the mainstream of Japanese architectural world at that time, Shimoda petitioned with a rebellious spirit, and finally led to a discussion in the Diet session. He advocated the style of "Teikan Heigoshiki Isho (lit. Emperor's crown installed design)," representing Japanese style with some merits from different western styles. This said to be the origin of the word "Teikan" style, synonymous with Japanesque and oriental tastes.

The new Diet building construction started in 1920, was completed in 1936, and has been in use up to today.

ex.4) Koyosha "*Giin kenchiku isho sekkei kyogi zushu*" Koyosha, Taisho 9 (1920)
[NDL call no.: 422-13] *Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

This book contains twenty proposals that passed the first screening, and four those passed the second screening. Watanabe's first-prized proposal shows a building with a dome on top, though there is a square pyramid on the actual building.

In addition to the competition for the National Diet building, some other architectural competitions were held at that time.

ex.5) Osaka-shi Kokaido Kensetsu Jimusho "*Osaka-shi kokaido shinchiku sekkei shimei kensho kyogi obo zuan*" Kokaido Kensetsu Jimusho, Taisho 2 (1913)
[NDL call no.: 407-61] *Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

It contains proposals from thirteen designated architects for the competition for Osaka Civic Hall.

ex.6) "*Tokyo teishitsu hakubutsukan kenchiku sekkei kensho nyusen zuanshu*" Nihon Kenchiku Kyokai, Showa 6 (1931) [NDL call no.: Toku 254-563]
*Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

This book contains the first to fifth winning proposals for the competition for the Tokyo Imperial Museum and other works gaining honorable mentions. To meet the criteria of "an oriental style based on Japanesque," all proposals look Teikan style with Japanese traditional kawara roofing. It describes the stream of architectural design in Japan at that time.

As a result of the competition, WATANABE Hitoshi won the first prize, drawing in a typical Japanese traditional roofing style with a curved shape. The construction started in 1932 and was completed in 1937. This building is now used as the main building of the Tokyo National Museum.

- Chapter 3: Let's Take a Look at Modern Architectures in Japan!
- From the World of Landmark Guidebooks

The more Japanese architects with modern design skills grew, the more modern architecture got to be seen in Japan. People became aware of such buildings as new landmarks. This chapter introduces modern architecture shown in guidebooks published during the Meiji period or later.

ex.7) "*Tokyo meisho hitori annai*" Hoeido, Meiji 23 (1890)
[NDL call no.: Toku 57-207] *Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

This is a guidebook for landmarks in Tokyo including the first Kabukiza building.

ex.8) "*Nihon shashincho*" Tomoe Shokai, Meiji 45 (1912)
[NDL call no.: 408-51] *Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

Pictures in this photo book introduce landmarks in all parts of Japan, mainly those of temples and shrines, as well as some modern buildings built for government offices and schools.

ex.9) "*Sanichikan Tokyo annai*" Mitsukoshi Gofukuten, Taisho 3 (1914)
[NDL call no.: Toku 273-599] *Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

Meaning a guidebook to Tokyo for three days, it was published by the Mitsukoshi department store, with an introduction of its East building built in the year 1914.

ex.10) ENDO Sosen "*Shumi no Tokyo monogatari*" Nankai Shoin, Taisho 14 (1925)
[NDL call no.: 532-240] *Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

Published two years after the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, it recorded Tokyo under the recovery.

ex.11) "*Meiji taisho kenchiku shashin shuran*" Kenchiku Gakkai, Showa 11(1936)
[NDL call no.: 722-48] *Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

This photo book was compiled mainly from over 250 architectural pictures shown at the 50th anniversary exhibition of the Institute of Architects, and illustrates the architectural stream during the Meiji and Taisho periods.

ex.12) "*Daitokyo meisho hyakkei shashincho*" Seikaido, Showa 12 (1937)
[NDL call no.: Toku 268-104] *Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

It includes landmark pictures in Tokyo as well as some aerial photos.

For photographs of famous buildings and sights from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century selected from the photo books in our collection, please see the online gallery "[The Meiji and Taisho Eras in Photographs.](#)"

For landmarks in the Edo period, please see the online gallery "[The Landmarks of Edo in Color Woodblock Prints.](#)"