100 years of the Meiji Revolution (1968) and the Beginning of the Global Diffusion of the Japanese Urban Design

Andrea Yuri FLORES URUSHIMA

Center for Integrated Area Studies, Kyoto University

In 1968, Japan celebrated 100 years since the opening of the country to exchange with foreign countries during the Meiji Revolution. In terms of architecture and urban planning, the specialized media and the central government issued a series of articles and reports related to the huge urban transformation that occurred throughout those past hundred years.

Effectively, the Meiji period aperture initiated a process of absorption of techniques and expertise acquired from pioneering industrial countries which permanently changed Japanese society's way of living and, consequently, represented an important moment in the history of the country's modernization.

In terms of urban planning, the intervention based on foreign models was adapted to the needs of cities in Japan, which was one of the most urbanized country in pre-modern period in Asia. Among others, the large scale modern urban planning methods and ideas, already used in some European countries during the early twentieth century, were experimentally put into practice by Japanese urban planners during the colonial period in China and Korea. Those ideas were barely implemented inside the Japanese territory.

In contrast, in terms of architecture, modernist experiments took place in the country and in the colonies, strongly motivated by the need to create a modern national identity. From the development of a Japanese modernist expression in architecture, especially during the early postwar period, the Japanese architects began to receive worldwide visibility.

The 1960s period in Japan witnessed an economic growth which resulted in the rapid increase of the urban population and expansion of existing urban centers. In architecture, as well as urban planning, it coincided with the period when the modern Japanese architectural design processes expanded into an urban scale, gained visibility and began to spread worldwide.

1. Modern urbanization in Tokyo and in São Paulo: a comparative preface

The original idea for writing this article was estimulated by a commentary from the Brazilian professor of urban planning, Regina Prosperi Meyer while organizing the symposium where this text was presented.

In a discussion about the relevance of the symposium and the topics to be addressed, prof. Meyer suggested that a possible comparison between the urban development of the two countries could be exemplified by comparing the historical development of their largest cities, Tokyo and Sao Paulo. According to data from the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics, in 2014, São Paulo's metropolitan region reached a population of 20.935.204[1] inhabitants, whereas it was estimated that Tokyo would have reached in 2015 a total of 13,490,558 inhabitants[2].

According to the professor, the rise of urbanization during the industrialization process in the second half of the nineteenth century was an important characteristic of the urban development of both metropolises. Another focal point was the interest in the European urban planning methods and ideas

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1 IBGE 2014. Estimativas da população dos municípios brasileiros com data de referência em 1 de Julho de 2014 (Nota técnica). Material desenvolvido pela Diretoria de Pesquisas –DPE, Coordenação de População e Indicadores Sociais - COPIS, Gerência de Estudos e Análises da Dinâmica Demográfica – GEADD. Sao Paulo

2 Tokyo Metropolitan Government. The monthly estimate of the population of the Tokyo Metropolitan Region. http://www.toukei.metro.tokyo.jp/jsuikei/js-index.htm [Acessed in November 16 2015]

recognizable in the processes of modern modernization taking place in the two cities.

Indeed, in the case of São Paulo, a relevant fact for understanding the metropolitan expansion was the initial construction of the rail system in 1867 with the opening of the first segment of the São Paulo Railway, linking the port of Santos to the city of Jundiaí[3].

The convergence of the infrastructure of distribution – specially, in terms of rail freight transportation – which lately included the transportation of passengers, supported the industrial progress which led to the growth of the city of Sao Paulo. São Paulo's urban development, stimulated during the nineteenth century by the coffee industry, continued to intensify during the twentieth century from an intense industrialization process that occurred due to the need of improvement of the local industries after the general lack of access to imported products that began during the World War I.

São Paulo's urbanization process had been characterized by a low population density and a rise in population resulting from internal migration, and specially, from the Asian and European migration which recorded 2.3 million immigrants arriving in the state of São Paulo from 1889 to 1930.

During that period, the city of São Paulo went through a significant overall modernization, having its physical-spatial appearance strongly transformed by the modern European references in urban planning and urban design.

In the case of Japan, a process of modernization of Tokyo took place in the nineteenth century, marked by the pioneering implementation of the railway infrastructure, quite similar to the case of São Paulo. However, in this case, the Japanese capital was already the center of convergence of a system of roads linking the city to provinces throughout the territory under the control of the feudal government. Moreover, the fact that Tokyo had alrady reached a population of over one million people during the eighteenth century demonstrates that the urban growth

taking place in Tokyo, had already began during the pre-modern period. Despite the several efforts to modernize the city, the most important initial burst of industrialization, historically first occurred in the city of Osaka. It was as late as the 1930s, that ocurred the deepening of the Port of Tokyo which resulted in the construction of the landfill of Kawasaki and in the creation of a canal for direct connection to the port of Yokohama. Since then, large industrial equipments needed for the installation of heavy industries in the region were brought, at the moment when the Keihin port complex within the Tokyo Bay started to be modernized[4].

Between 1930 and 1935 the urban population of the metropolitan area of Tokyotō nearly tripled as it reached about as many as six million inhabitants[5], and in parallel, the Osaka city lost part of its hegemony in terms of industrial production.

Regarding the interest for the European methods and ideas in urban plannig and design, in Japan although imported ideas served as a model to adapt the established urban centers for new modern needs, still the city making processes in Japanese cities tended to dismiss radical interventions on the physical and social organization of existing cities since before the eclosion of the World War II. The new ideas tended to be punctually and experimentally implemented inside existing cities.

The historical development of the two cities deserves a more detailed comparison which would serve as an initial step for understanding the larger framework of the urban transformation processes of the two countries. Factually, the process of industrialization that began in both countries during the mid nineteenth century had an important impact on the growth and modernization of the two cities.

However, the most important bout of urbanization in both countries occurred during the mid twentieth century when processes of industrialization and economic growth estimulated internal migration from rural areas and led cities to expand rapidly

3   Meyer, R. P. São Paulo Metrópole. São Paulo: EDUSP, 2004, 296 pp.

4   Mosk, C. Japanese industrial history: technology, urbanization, and economic growth, Armonk, N.Y. :M.E.Sharpe, 2001. 293pp.

5   Nihon tōkei kyōkai (ed.), Nihon chōki tōkei sōran. Tokyo: Nihon tōkei kyōkai, 2006.

during the 1950s in Brazil and during the 1960s in Japan. The process of assimilation of models based on modern ideas coming from pioneering industrial countries structured the permanent expansion of Brazilian and Japanese cities during the period followed by the end of World War II.

This article will briefly discuss the development of ideas in urban planning in Japan, since the modern period until the period of rapid urbanization in the country during the mid-1960s[6].

The assimilation of modern ideas in Japan served to prepare the institutions and experts related to urban planning for working to solve the problems posed by the massive rural migration that ocurred during the 1960s period. This process of development also coincided with the moment when ocurred a global spread of the urban design produced in Japan in a period that coincides with the celebration of the hundred years of the Meiji Revolution in 1968.

Indeed, it was during the 1960's and 1970's that Japan began to propose plans and ideas for urban design which were well received internationally, especially by newly-emerging nations that wanted to become modern[7]. To support this argument I will briefly review some relevant facts and features of the urban change in Japan since mid-nineteenth century, in the moment of the aperture of the country to the West until 1968.

2. Japanese cities and urban planning during the modern period

The aperture of the country to exchange with foreign countries was the historical moment when a massive introduction of new techniques, materials and ideas from pioneering industrial countries flowed into Japan.

In 1897, Aluisio de Azevedo (1857-1913), one of the most important Brazilian novelists, participated as deputy-consul of Brazil's first diplomatic mission in Japan[8]. In his posthumous works first published in 1984 under the title "Japan"[8], Azevedo dramatically described the process of aperture in Japan known as the Meiji Era (1868-1912), a period that marked the end of the more than 200 years of isolation of the country in terms of foreign exchange during the feudal period.

In order to describe the process of aperture, it is worth to quote Azevedo's words:

> "*With the steam at the service of greed, the modern Phoenicians could approach the Japanese coasts and, without risk of damage, insinuate themselves among these quagmire and reefs to which it has entrusted Ieias in order to protect its fragile and human work against the harmful ambitions of the rest of the covetous world, enclosing it within that natural custody which to him seemed as invulnerable for being it made by the hands of God.*"[9]

The reference of the modern Phoenician suggests the arrival of the vessels from countries with imperilistic intentions that aimed at the colonial conquest of Asia. According to Azevedo, Japan at that time appeared as a fragile and human work for which protection the former Shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), counted only with the difficulties imposed by the natural geography of Japan. Azevedo makes reference to the impossibility of alternative protection of the territory, due to the lack of firearms and large armed caravels. According to his description, the Japan of the pre-modern period maintained its peculiar characteristics and demonstrated a lack of evidences of an imperialist greed that the industrialized world had fostered.

> "*Remained unnoticed in the national body the least sign of that implacable disease originating in the United States of North America - the Million Fever, from which delirious contagion any Western country has never escaped so far; money has been used only*

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6 About rapid urbanization in the period see Flores Urushima, A. Y. Réévaluation des modes de vie rural et citadin face à la degradation de l'environnement. Un débat national au Japon, de 1967 à 1972. Revue des Sciences Sociales 47: 130-9, 2012

7 Flores Urushima, A. Y. Urban Modernization from Far East to Eastern Europe: Tange Kenzō and the Reconstruction Scheme for the Centre of Skopje. In: The IXth International Conference of the European Association for Urban History: Comparative History of European Cities. Lyon: European Association for Urban History, 2008

8 Azevedo, A. O Japão. São Paulo: R. Kempf, 1984. 233pp.

9 This citation was translated by Andrea Flores Urushima from the original in (Azevedo 1984, 79-80)

to be consumed instead of being fomented in the multiplication table of the children of Israel; the capital was still not capital, it was a secondary matter, that had escaped from transforming itself into the living energy and the sprocket wheel that gears up, drags down, chews on and beslobbers the morality, the talent, the love and the character of the best lot of the modern world."[10]

Azevedo's discourse resonates the ideas from his time and reproduces the logic of a national historiographic discourse in Japan that supports an imperialist ideological system, associating nation to tradition. At the same time, his text tends to move away from an Eurocentric interpretation of history. Azevedo thinks over the central problem about the national identity apparent in both cases of Brazil and Japan : the need to avoid imitation and to assert the specificities of their own "people". The difference between the two cases would then be centralized on the topic of Brazil's amalgamation of races, whereas for Japan the characteristics mostly emphasized were that of a racial unity and the maintenance of an ancestral tradition. Azevedo denies the validity of an occidental universality and commits himself to an orientalist view that values the 'exotic', the 'diverse' and the 'remote'. His discourse tends to romanticize the 'exotic' in a way similar to that done by Western intellectuals, even though his discourse tends to approximate the experiences of Japan and Brazil in terms of the difficulties that both countries had in defining a national identity[11]. This text manifests a critical opinion about the influence on remote territories of the technical and industrial modernization, understood as a Western influence, against which, the exotic considerations of Azevedo included Japan among the countries saved from that influence still to be considered part of the best lot of the modern world.

Japanese cities, especially the old capital cities, are described in Azevedo's writings as magnificent and powerful, even if these were built with wood and bamboo. Especially in the description of Edo city, currently known as Tokyo, Azevedo praised the technical abilities of its builders, for example, as demonstrated in the construction of the ingenious canals that define much of the city's physical structure up until nowadays. Several of these urban features were established during the sixteenth century, or about three hundred years before Azevedo first arrived in the city of Tokyo.

Indeed, before Meiji's opening, Japan was the most urbanized pre-modern society outside Europe[12]. Edo reached a population of about 1.3 million inhabitants in 1725[13], at the same time that cities such as London reached about 864 thousands , Paris 547 thousands and Berlin about 177 thousands of inhabitants in 1801[14].

The Chinese capital Chang'an of the Tang Dynasty (618-90) also reached about one million inhabitants about a thousand years before Edo. Nevertheless, for some authors, Edo undergone a social and a revolutionary dynamic process that make it differ from its Asiatic predecessors. Edo displayed features that characterised feudal cities in Asia and Europe. Edo concurrently stood for the city of the Shogunate, or the administrative city, and the city of the commerce[15].

The 'alternate attendance' or the daimyo's alternate year residence in Edo, called *sankin kōtai*, the system that obliged the feudal lords and their families to maintain a secondary residence in the capital was the ruling mechanism that supported the establishment of this characteristic in the city. During the Meiji aperture, with the cancellment of the 'alternate attendance' in 1862, the population in the capital city dropped down to about 500 thousand people in the same moment that the city of London reached a population of 3 million inhabitants.

This description confirms that Japan was relatively well-urbanized when the European architecture and urban planning models and ideas first arrived during the mid-nineteenth century. During the entire

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10 This citation was translated by Andrea Flores Urushima from the original in (Azevedo 1984, 78)

11 Ortiz, R. Aluisio de Azevedo e o Japão: uma apreciação crítica. Tempo Social; Rev. Sociol. USP, S. Paulo, 9(2): 79-95, 1997. p.84,87

12 Rozman, G. Urban networks in Ch'ing China and Tokugawa Japan. Princenton: Princenton University Press, 1973. 355pp.

13 Nishiyama M. et al. Edo. Tokio: Chikuma shobō, 1975. 169p. (Edo jidai zushi 4)

14 Coaldrake, W. H. Edo architecture and Tokugawa law. Monumenta Nipponica 36 (3): 235-84, 1981. p.246

15 Skinner, G.W. (Ed.) The city in late imperial China. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1977. 820pp.

pre-modern period guild system organized carpenters were the main responsible figures for the conception and construction of buildings inside cities. Moreover, the decisions about the physical urban structure of cities were mainly guided by the interests those related to the feudal administration and directly resulting from the hierarchical division of the feudal social classes[16].

The great majority of Japanese cities have historically developed after the establishment of feudal castles, usually located in elevated areas surrounded by alluvial lands. The feudal lords defined the location of castles and oriented the subsequent physical development of the urban core. They had also maintained a great influence on the decision processes related to the location of the religious facilities such as temples and Shinto shrines. Besides the urban centers that have arisen from the installation of feudal castles, two other major types of historic urban development took place: post-station towns and port cities. The introduction of Western techniques of control and production of the urban space resulted in breaking apart the traditional systems of space production in Japan.

3. Urban plans of foreign matrix: burdensome intervention for Japanese cities

The process of introducing modern techniques of thinking and producing spaces began with the intervention of European and North American specialists in Tokyo, followed by the action of bureaucrats who accumulated information about the modernization of cities taking place in foreign countries, and with the founding of departments of engineering and architecture inside Japanese universities. There was a time lag before the first architects and urban planners trained under the modern occidental educational models in Japan began to intervene in the existing cities, around the 1880's period .

Until the modern period began the access to culture

in general was an exclusive right of the upper classes, while the Samurais or 'the military' maintained an intermediary role of transmitting the high culture of the nobility to the common people. In the feudal period, as the process of power and inner peace control had been gradually centralized, the samurais had largely lost their warrior function and slowly gained a central role in the process of culture transfer from the higher classes to the rest of the population. The establishment of universities and the creation of new specialized departments and courses was an important step towards the establishment of the modern processes of cultural transference to the masses.

For example, the first architecture department of the country, the Department of Architecture of the Imperial College of Engineering (*Kobu Daigakkō Gakka Zoka*) was created in 1886. Its foundations are related to the continuous transformations of the courses taught at the former *Kaisei Gakkō*, which origins date back to the institutionalization of the Western learning and the teaching of foreign languages that resulted at last in the creation of the current University of Tokyo[17]. The first course of urban planning in Japan was created in 1923 at the Faculty of Civil Engineering of Kyoto University[18]. The course included three main subjects: urban planning, infrastructure construction and methods for the construction of civil engineering works[19].

Throughout the modern period the modernization of existing cities in Japan was partially implemented[20]. Among the first initiatives it is worth to mention the plans proposed by foreign specialists to modernize Tokyo's districts of Ginza and Hibiya proposed in

16 Ichikawa, H. The evolutionary process of urban form in Edo/ Tokyo to 1900. The Town Planning Review 65 (2): 179-196, 1994; Wendelken, C. The tectonics of Japanese style: architect and carpenter in the late Meiji period. Art Journal 55(3): 28-37, 1996

17 Yamamoto M. Kenchikuka to shokunō: kenchikuka no purofeshon to ha nanika. Tokyo: Seibunsha, 1980. 443pp.

18 Nishiyama U.; Yoshino T. Toshi keikaku gakusetsushi gaisetsu. In Kōno Y. (Ed.) Toshi jichi gakusetsushi gaisetsu: Tokyo shisei chōsakai 50 shūnen kinen ronbunshū. Tokio: Tokyo Shisei Chōsakai, 1972. p. 99-129

19 It is worth to note that, unlike in Brazil, the great majority of architects in Japan receive the undergraduate title of engineer, and finish their degrees from departments of architecture established inside the Faculties of Civil Engineering. Recently, in 2011, the pioneering establishment of two faculties of architecture in Japan took place inside the Universities of Kōgakuin and Kinki. In Japan, independent from the type of academic degree or the lack of it, the most important in order to become a professional architect is to pass the professional examination at the national level.

20 Fujimori T. Meiji no Toshikeikaku. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1982. 338pp; Ishida Y. Nihon Kingendai Toshi Keikaku no Tenkai: 1868-2003. Tokyo: Jichitai Kenkyusha, 2004.

1871. Then, it is worth to mention the urban improvements in Tokyo and Osaka during the early twentieth century. In Tokyo, the Tokyo City Improvement Ordinance (*Tokyo shiku kaisei keikaku*) included general and executive plans produced between the years of 1884 and 1902. In Osaka, due to the early industrialization, a plan for the extension of public roads was proposed in 1871 – entitled "Cases of interdiction of narrowing public roads" (*Doro wo kyōai narashimuru bekarasaru ken*) – in addition to subsequent surveys and urban improvement plans proposed in 1886, 1887, 1897, 1899. However, the concrete action towards widening public roads only took place in 1903 with the construction of the first section of the municipal tram from Hanazonobashi. Similarly, in Kyoto, from 1872 until the early twentieth century, urban improvement plans had been proposed but they only began to be implemented in 1907 during the execution of the "Three major projects of Kyoto" (*Kyotoshi sandaijigyō*).

In parallel to the urban improvements, ocurred the enactment of the first group of laws of urban planning and buildings in 1919, the rebuilding of Tokyo after the great earthquake since 1923, and the reconstruction period beginning in 1945 after the end of the war. During this hundred years process the proposals developed in Japan had always been updated to the innovations in urban planning in major foreign urban centers.

Among the most important foreign models serving as reference for the establishment of the planning discipline in Japan, it is worth to mention the redevelopment plans promoted in the city of Paris by Baron Haussmann (1853-70), the movement for the renewal of American cities known as the City Beautiful (1890-1910), the ideas of Ebenezer Howard in his formulation of the Garden City (1898), the discussions of the City Planning Conference (1909) and the first law of urban control in the English Town Planning Act (1909), as well as the plans for London (1929) and Chicago (1919), and the zoning of the city of New York (1916)[21]. Even though these models were studied and debated inside the country, large scale plans that directly refered to foreign new models were received with opposition and were only partially implemented in major cities, including during the period of massive reconstruction of the city of Tokyo after the earthquake of 1923. Institutionalizing and implementing modern urban planning in Japan was a troublesome task because of the distrust from the central government and the elite on the relevance and practicality of modern and foreign urban planning ideas for cities in Japan. The process of importation of urban planning techniques from Europe and North America, which started in the Meiji period, were incorporated to existing cities within an adaptive process.

According to the historian Kenjirō Fujioka, in 1967 new cities established since the modern period represented a very small number. About two thirds of main Japanese cities developed from historical consolidated urban cores[22].

4. Architectural modernism, colonial planning and the emergence of the Japanese urban design

Effectively throughout the period of establishment of the discipline of planning, large scale modern urban plans remained as unrealized propositions in Japan. In contrast to the urban planning disicipline, because architecture had an influence at a smaller scale and it was produced privately and independent from government decisions, the foreign models refered attempts were widely experimented within Japanese cities.

In the 1920s period, the international modernism in architecture gained particular relevance among the Japanese intellectual elites in a context of the search for a national identity for the newly-emerging imperial power. During the first and second World Wars, large scale plans that aimed at experimenting with the creation of new towns were proposed by Japanese planners in the territory of Asian colonies.

It is worth to mention that the Meiji aperture also

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21 Nishiyama e Yoshino, cited in note 17; Ichikawa, cited in note 14; Watanabe S. Toshikeikaku no tanjō: Kokusai hikaku kara mita Nihon kindai toshikeikaku. Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobō, 1993. 294pp.

22 Fujioka K. Nihon no toshi: sono tokushitsu to chiikiteki mondaiten: meiji igo no henbō to gendai toshi ni kansuru monogurafu. Tokyo: Taimeido, 1968. p.13

ocurred in reaction to the fear of having Japan colonized by the western industrialized countries. The main interest of the Meiji government until the end of World War II was to equalize the socio-cultural-economical and technological conditions to that of the imperialist nations. By this way, it would become possible to escape from the forced subordination to the interests of industrialized and powerful nations. Catching up with these nations in terms of modernization of all aspects of the country became the main goal of that government, which also included the reorganization of cities.

Japan went through a Westernized process of modernization in order to avoid being colonized. Once part of that Western-style modernization processes were achieved, the country began to use the same mechanisms of subjugation used by Western powers to colonize parts of Asia, which included also forced military subjugation. Among the experimentations of that period, Japan used the modern cultural mechanism of invention of traditions and counter-traditions to support the forcible intervention over indigenous Asian cultures[23]. For the majority of European imperial powers, the moral premise underpinning the occupation of territories where different cultures existed was sustained with the argument that the modernization of these cultures was necessary and beneficial. As for Japan, ocurred a process of oriental exoticization of the Near East, which aimed at the search in the Japanese cultural and spiritual roots the elements that determined the differences between Japan from its Asian neighbors, especially China and Korea[24]. Japan, China and Korea maintain a closely related history of cultural development, and the Chinese influence is undeniable. However, differentiating and separating Japan's history from other Asian countries aimed at the establishment of the modern argument that justified the occupation of territories in China and Korea. Japan played a very peculiar role in the "colonial" relationship between East and West. According to the art historian, Hiroshi Yoshioka, the colonization process of the imagination and the culture in Japan was a secret process

of colonization[25]. Japan created a national identity through a Western view incorporated into the interior of its own culture, in order to confront the fear of colonial submission. A concrete example of this problem is recognizable in the 1915 promotion of the Korean Products Exposition, organized by the Japanese colonial government, officially known then as the General Government of Korea. The exposition was held at the site where is located the most important symbol of subjugation of the previous dynasty, the Choson Dynasty, in the grounds of the Kyŏngbok Palace in Seoul.

The Japanese Government erected a building that blocked the ancient palace view. This building demonstrated an architectural expression that came as a result from the application of state-of-the-art modern architecture techniques brought from the West and studied at Japanese universities. The exhibition aimed to awaken the Korean people from the 100 years of slumber and allow them to realize the excellence of the new government[26].

In architecture, the validity of importing European techniques was widely discussed during the 1920's and 1930's, from the perspective of defining a Japanese identity, which was closely related to the strong nationalistic endeavors of the government throughout the interwar and the war period. This discussion resulted in a search for a modern Japanese architectural identity that produced, especially, during the Postwar period, architectural experiments which were successfully received on the international circles of architecture related specialist, for example, at the International Congress of Modern Architecture, headed by the renowned French architect Le Corbusier, among others. During the 1950's, a war affected the country with a total of 215 bombed cities, and the destruction of more than 63,000 hectares of urban area and more than 2 million households[27], this led to a massive reconstruction that

23 Hobsbawm, E.J.; Ranger, T. (Eds.) The Invention of Tradition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. 320pp.

24 Tanaka, S. Japan's Orient. Rendering pasts into history. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. 305 pp.

25 Yoshioka, H.Samurai and Self-colonization in Japan. In: Pieterse, J.N. and Parekh, B. (Eds.) The decolonization of imagination: Culture, knowledge, and power. London: Zed Books, 1995. p. 99-112.

26 Hong, K. Modeling the West, returning to Asia: Shifting politics of representation in Japanese colonial expositions in Korea. Comparative Studies in Society and History, 47:507-531, 2005. p.508

27 Hein, C.; Diefendorf, J.M. e Ishida Y. Rebuilding urban Japan after 1945. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

supported the establishment of a Japanese Architectural Modernism.

As for urban planning, unlike architecture, the reconstruction of cities after bombing followed the standards and references of pre-war urban planning and left scarce opportunities for the implementation of modernist large scale plans, although there was an accumulated experience gained during the planning process of new towns in colonized territories. During the 1960's, the rapid urbanization of the economic growth period resulted in the renewal of urban making mechanisms, when began the construction of entire new towns and large scale districts. In parallel, ocurred the appearance of private developers as main agents of urban change and urban development, and the strategic promotion of mega events like the Olympics in Tokyo (1964) and the Osaka International Exhibition (1970) .

These changes in the 1960's opened up the path for architects to start interfering on an urban scale, which led to the emergence of the discipline of urban design (*ābandezain*) that differs from urban planning (*toshikeikaku*), in the application of the architectural three dimensional techniques for the intervention at an urban scale. The discipline of urban design also emphasized the importance of visualizing or pre-imagining physical spaces – especially public spaces – during the processes of reorganization of cities, a characteristic that distinguishes this discipline from other specialties related to urban planning.

For the establishment of the urban design discipline were important the adaptation of the European urban planning techniques to the existing Japanese cities; the colonial experience of ruling new territories and the development of a Japanese architectural modernism in accordance with the international trends. To a large extent, the spread during the 1960's of the Japanese urban design on a global scale was the result of an international recognition of the quality of Japan's architectural modernism, added to the experience of colonial expansion planning. In this context, the experience of modern invention of traditions used in the process of cultural distinction between Japan and Asia was instrumental in the initial process of exporting ideas in the 1960s'

urban planning period. The technical abilities of some Japanese architects towards the creation of modern urban designs that also contained features of a regional identity, ressonated with the anxiety of young nations willing to express the modernity of their newly created national identities. Kenzō Tange was the first Japanese architect to propose urban large scale plans that were implement outside Japan, starting with plan for the city center reconstruction of Skopje, Macedonia, destroyed by an earthquake in 1963. The Japanese group led by Tange won an international prize against other eight projects proposed by specialists from various countries such as Holland, USA and Italy, among others. Since this pioneering Japanese participation in an international urban design competition, the Japanese architects began to intervene in various regions elsewhere including Saudi Arabia, Africa, Europe and America having as background, a historical context of democratic expansion and globalization[28].

The international spread of a Japanese up-to-date urban design coincided with the celebration of one hundred years of the country's opening to the modernization under Western influence in 1968. Throughout those 100 years, the Western techniques of architectural and urban planning were widely discussed and adapted to local circumstances, in a process of hybridization that produced urban forms and ideas worth to be 'exported' within a constant process of cultural renewal.

Conclusion

To conclude this text, it is worth to expose a comment made in 1966 by the architecture and urban planning historians, Teijirō Muramatsu (1924-97) and Hiroki Onobayashi (1935-79), about the importance of the 100 years of the Meiji revolution for the Japanese architecture[29].

The hundred years since the Meiji revolution were obviously a 100 years of assimilation of the

28 Flores Urushima, A. e Jacquet, B. cited above in note 7

29 Muramatsu, T.; Onobayashi, H. Kenchiku Meiji 100 nen Joshō: Kyō ha ikanaru toki ka? Shinkenchiku , Tokyo, 41(6): 215-222, 1966. P. 215-6

Western civilization. The dream of national isolation had been broken up and then pushed away to the uncertain world of the Western civilization. It is a history of voluntary cooperation and commitment, harmony and outrage, in Japan, a newcomer to this world.

Finally, it is time to reflect and seriously evaluate these last 100 years of history.

Why do we have to engage in this reflection 100 years later and not 80 or 50 years after the Meiji revolution? Actually, the number 100 has no meaning.

(...) It seems to be a fact that the Western civilization is reaching a serious moment of reflection (...) This is a very serious issue for Japan that entirely promoted its modernization by following the Western models over the past one hundred years. The moment of an inevitable inflection for the future decision-making has come. Several articles that point out the impossibility of separating the West from Japan have emerged recently, such as "Ideology of meat diet", written by Toyoyuki Sabata [30].

There is now a tendency towards reaching a self-consciousness which realizes that the model is nothing more than a model, unable to replace the object itself. This trend may be considered as an effective proof that we have arrived to the moment of deciding which direction we should take for our own modernization.

A 100 years have gone by since the beginning of the modernization time when Japan's architecture discovered and rendered itself to the Western architecture. If this was a process of modernization or Westernization is a discussion that deserves to be developed in another occasion. Thousands of years of a Western architectural culture had been splendidly assimilated in Japan in a short period of 100 years. And although there are still many disciplines where imitation prevails, the international recognition of the value of several (Japanese) works is apparent since the end of World War II, and especially over the last years. However, an international recognition which means no reference to the copying of models has yet to be reached. Thus, the progress of the Japanese architecture and construction will still be confronted by a major inflection point still to arrive.

According to this text, the Western civilization was undergoing a moment of serious reassessment of its cultural hegemony and a growing awareness of the existence of a multicultural world. For Japan,

which so persistently sought ways to modernize itself after Western models, this reassessment meant a moment of rupture and reflection. Furthermore, the text emphasizes the idea that the Western model has always remained only as a model and that the achieved modernity of the country contained hybrid and peculiar features related to its own local characteristics.

In that text, the celebration of a 100 years since the Meiji revolution in architecture and urbanism in Japan coincided with the emergence of an awareness of the need to produce original and individual solutions in order to draw the attention at a global scale. Also, is worth to mention the fact that the imitation of models recurrent within the urban history of the country was part of a modernization process guided by inevitable decisions, misguided or not, that should be overcome.

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