

Front to Rear: Architecture and Planning during World War II

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Compromising Modernity: Japanese Monumentality during World War II.

Among the unwritten chapters on the architecture produced during World War II, the case of Japanese monumental architecture is representative of the ideological agenda of a whole generation of Japanese architects. The construction of war monuments started after the Japanese colonization of East Asia and was a critical issue at the end of the thirties. The creation of a Committee for the Construction of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere by the Architectural Institute of Japan after the start of the Pacific War catapulted the issue of National Architectural style to the forefront.

The discourses produced on the occasion of architectural competitions for the Memorial Tower for the Fallen Soldiers (1939), the Memorial of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (1942) and the Japanese Cultural Center in Bangkok (1943), reveal how modern architects participated in the invention of a national monumentality. How were such discourses on Japanese monumentality constructed theoretically? Firstly, they were rooted in the geopolitical context of the conflicted relationship between both Japan and its Asian "Orient" and the European-American "Occident". After assimilating western techniques, Japanese architects started to look back at Oriental architecture, thus engendering a perspective from which Japan could estimate its own degree of modernity. At this juncture, intellectuals were engaged in an ongoing debate regarding the "overcoming of modernity" and were looking for original forms of "Japanese" thought.

In the field of architecture, the critic of the Occident was funded in criticism of the so-called western forms of monumentality. Japanese (modern) architecture was mostly presented as an alternative to the westernization of Asian architecture. The Japanese occupation of East Asia was said to provide the opportunity to experiment with architectural and urban planning in Asia, and to develop a regional modern architecture.

The Japanese architects who took part in the birth of Japanese modern architecture in the thirties were particularly active during the war. These same figures later became major participants on the international architectural scene in the postwar era. This paper will focus on the fate of this generation of architects who, after carrying the ideals of modernization, contributed to the discourses on Japanese National architecture in the forties. We will also see how these discourses have been incorporated into forms of Japanese contemporary architecture.

Benoît Jacquet is Maître de conférences at the Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO, French School for Asian Studies) and Visiting Associate Professor at Kyoto University (Institute for Researches in the Humanities). He is currently the Head of the EFEO Research Centre in Kyoto. Architect (School of Architecture of Paris-La Villette, 1998), he studies landscape architecture (DEA, EHESS Paris, 1999), the Japanese contemporary architecture scene (Dr. Eng., Kyoto University, 2006) and the history of architecture, under the supervision of Jean-Louis Cohen (PhD, University of Paris-8, 2007). He has worked in the fields of architectural and urban design at the laboratory of architectural planning (Prof. TAKAMATSU Shin) at Kyoto University, since 1999. He completed a post-doctoral research (2006-2008) at the University of Tôkyô, laboratory of the History of Architecture, Urbanism and Technology in Asia (Prof. FUJIMORI Terunobu). His publications include *The Principles of Latent Monumentality in Tange Kenzô's Concepts of Tradition and Creation* (Architectural Institute of Japan, 2006), *The Influence of Milieu in the Residential Architecture of Shinohara Kazuo* (AIJ, 2006), "A Place of Immanence: Hiroshima's Ground Zero" (*Introduction to ArchiPhen*, Technion, IIT, 2008), "Tange Kenzô and the Issue of Japanese Monumentality" (*BEFEO*, 2009).

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