Development of Architectural Documentation in Japan:  
Accelerated by DOCOMOMO’s Activities

Mari Nakahara, Ph.D.

Prologue

Europe and America have seen real growth in activity and value placed on preserving buildings and on archiving of architectural materials. On the other hand, while Japan has maintained a strong tradition of preserving its cultural legacies, architecture and related documentation was not given such priority, as evidenced by the lack of even a single architectural archive in Japan until recently.

Although this does not imply that there was no architectural documentation in Japan, it does show that they had been poorly preserved and were rarely accessible.

This paper is to report the development of architectural documentation in Japan, which especially has been accelerated by the activities of DOCOMOMO since its working group in Japan was formed in 1998 to establish its chapter.

Trend towards Archiving of Architectural Documents in Japan

To begin, let’s look back at the 1980s when Japan first began to pay attention to the maintenance of architectural documents. In 1984, a committee was set up at the Architectural Institute of Japan to consider the establishment of the first architectural museum in Japan. They gathered information from architectural museums, centers, archives, and libraries outside of Japan to construct the outline of a unique architectural museum and archive. In 1994, they reported their ten-year activities, proposed details of an ideal architectural museum and archive, and the committee dissolved. Any tangible follow-through on their report was made in the next five to six years. This could be attributed in part to the recession in Japan, partly to their unrealistic proposal, or partly to the lack of a head organizer for this project.

Establishment of a DOCOMOMO Japan Chapter

DOCOMOMO, which stands for the DOcumentation and COnservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the MOdern MOvement, was internationally founded in 1988. DOCOMOMO attempts to identify and promote the recording of the works of the modern movement, including a register, drawings, photographs, archives and other documents. They also try to bring the significance of the modern movement to the attention of the public, the authority, the profession and the educational community concerned with the built environment. Some Japanese scholars familiar with DOCOMOMO began to promote the establishment of a DOCOMOMO chapter in Japan in 1996. The working group for the DOCOMOMO Japan was formed in the Architectural Institution of Japan in 1998, which consists of scholars who are particularly familiar with Japanese modern architecture and architects who are positive towards building preservation. I was a core member of this group, and provided information
about the archiving of architectural documents, which I had acquired through an internship in the United States in 1996 and 1997.

**DOCOMOMO 20 Japan: Modern Architecture as a Cultural Heritage Exhibition**

Although the DOCOMOMO working group was launched with the purpose of establishing a chapter in Japan, the organization was first obliged to select twenty extant buildings in Japan for presentation at the DOCOMOMO biannual meeting in 2000. DOCOMOMO international planned on assembling representatives of modern architecture in each country by the meeting.

Through the investigation of documents related to the first twenty examples of modern architecture, DOCOMOMO Japan found more original drawings and other documents than they had expected. However, most of the documents were unfortunately not well preserved, and thus, an improved architectural repository was required.

DOCOMOMO Japan mounted an exhibition entitled *DOCOMOMO 20 Japan: Modern Architecture as a Cultural Heritage*, which traveled all over Japan. This exhibition brought a serious message to people in the architectural field that we need to save our treasures.

The Architectural Institution of Japan took this situation seriously and created a small repository and a gallery dedicated to architectural documents, especially related to the modern era. You may recall that the Architectural Institute of Japan was the organization where the committee had been set up to consider the establishment of the first architectural museum.

**DOCOMOMO 100 Japan Exhibition**

DOCOMOMO Japan was finally authorized as a chapter at the DOCOMOMO international meeting in 2000. It became the first DOCOMOMO branch in Asia. DOCOMOMO international also highly evaluated the *DOCOMOMO 20 Japan* exhibition.

Since the establishment of the chapter, DOCOMOMO Japan’s membership has been growing and they have been actively researching and attempting to preserve modern buildings and related documents.

The Chapter selected an additional eighty buildings and also mounted the exhibition *DOCOMOMO 100 Japan* in 2005. Along with the exhibition, gallery and site tours were also scheduled. The exhibition brought more attention and awareness of the preservation of modern buildings and documents to a broader audience including the general public. Even a weekly magazine which reports popular issues published a special volume on DOCOMOMO Japan’s activities.
Survey of Remaining Documents of Deceased Modernism Architects

DOCOMOMO Japan also attempts to survey the remaining documents of architects most of who worked for renowned foreign architects, who were afterwards dedicated to Japanese modern architecture, and who were recently deceased. Up to their deaths, this kind of survey was difficult to carry out. It was partly because most of the architects did not evaluate their documents as much as the buildings. Architectural documents were hidden materials that were barely shown except when displayed in exhibitions.

Knowing that it’s simply impossible to collect everything at one repository, DOCOMOMO Japan encourages the architects’ office or relatives to save the documents.

Kunio Mayekawa (1905-1986) worked for Le Corbusier in the late 1920s as well as for Antonin Raymond in the early 1930s. Late in 2005, the Mayekawa exhibition was held in Tokyo. This exhibition was to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of his birth. Approximately 34,000 people including the general public visited the exhibition during its 58-day-duration. Through this success, the exhibition organizers confirmed that general public has been regaining their interests and awareness to preserve modern buildings. Mayekawa’s documents are currently preserved and maintained in his office.

Kameki Tsuchiura (1897-1996) and his wife, Nobu, worked for F.L Wright in the early to mid 1920s. Tsuchiura’s own house was designed in 1935. Kameki died in 1996. After Nobu’s death in 1998, the Tsuchiuras’ documents were maintained by their life time maid for four years, and then donated to the Edo-Tokyo Museum in 2002.

Junzo Yoshimura (1908-1997) passed away in 1997. Some of you may know him as the architect for the tea house, Shofuso, for an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1954 and 1955. In 1958, the building was given to the City of Philadelphia and reassembled at its current site, Fairmount Park. Yoshimura also designed the Japan Society building in New York in 1971. He worked for Antonin Raymond for 10 years beginning 1931. The Yoshimura exhibition was held in 2005. Although Yoshimura’s office still exists, his documents were donated to the Tokyo National University of Fine Art and Music, where he graduated from in 1931 and later taught.
Yoshinobu Ashihara (1918-2003) worked for Marcel Breuer after his graduation from Harvard University. After his death in 2003, Ashihara’s documents were re-organized by his descendents. They created a website which includes his history, a complete list of his projects, images of some of his highlighted projects, interviews with his descendants, and so on.

Kenzo Tange (1913-2005) is one of the most well-known Japanese architects. He died in 2005, a few months after the death of Phillip Johnson. Tange’s death gave a feeling to people in the architectural field in Japan that the modern period is finally over.

After having worked for Mayekawa for four years, Tange returned to graduate school, and began his career as a professor at the University of Tokyo. He was both teaching at the University and working on his projects with his students at his University’s research lab. Tange finally founded his private design office outside of the University in 1961. His career flourished by working on projects in the 1960s when Tokyo was greatly reconstructed and was also nominated to host the Olympics. Tange became a globally well-known architect as he was honored to receive the AIA Gold medal in 1966.

There was a rumor that Tange never desired to save his drawings or documents. Therefore, it was doubtful if the DOCOMOMO Japan chapter could find any documents from Tange to include in the DOCOMOMO Japan exhibitions. Despite this rumor, Tange had preserved and maintained his documents well. Tange hired two staff members who were dedicated to maintaining his materials, which is unusual in Japan.

Prologue

Architectural documentation in Japan, especially on modern buildings, has grown with the support of DOCOMOMO’s activities. Additionally, some individuals or institutions have also been attempting to preserve original documents or create a digital archive. Our next goal is to create links between these individual activities. To train archivists is also essential.
Development of Architectural Documentation in Japan: Accelerated by DOCOMOMO’s Activities

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Trends towards Archiving of Architectural Documents in Japan

- A Committee to Establish the First Official Architectural Museum in Japan at the Architectural Institute of Japan from 1984 to 1994

Gathered information from architectural museums, centers, archives, and libraries outside of Japan to construct the outline of a unique architectural museum and archive.

Reported their ten-year activities, proposed details of an ideal architectural museum and archive, and the committee dissolved.

Any tangible follow-through on their report was made in the next five to six years.
Establishment of a DOCOMOMO Japan Chapter

- **DOCOMOMO stands for:**
  DOCumentation and COnservation of buildings, sites, and neighborhoods of the Modern Movement

- **DOCOMOMO attempts to:**
  Identify and promote the recording of works of the modern movement, including a register, drawings, photographs, archives, and other documents
  
  Bring the significance of the modern movement to the attention of the public, the authority, the profession, and the educational community concerned with the built environment

- **The working group for the DOCOMOMO Japan was formed in the Architectural Institute of Japan in 1998**
DOCOMOMO 20 Japan Exhibition in 2000

Assignment to select twenty extant buildings

Discovery of original drawings and other documents

DOCOMOMO 20 Japan exhibition

Creation of a small repository and a gallery at the Architectural Institute of Japan
DOCOMOMO 100 Japan Exhibition in 2005

Gallery view

Gallery view

Gallery tour

Site tour of Palaceside Building

Photograph (top left): © Koichiro Kanematsu
Photographs (others): © Takeshi Kirihara
Modernism Architects
Kunio Mayekawa (1905-1986)

1928  Graduated from Empire University (currently Univ. of Tokyo)
1928-1930  Worked for Le Corbusier
1930-1935  Worked for Antonin Raymond
1935  Established Kunio Mayekawa Associates, Architects & Engineers

Photograph: © Haruo Hirota
Sketches: © Mayekawa Associates, Architects & Engineers
Modernism Architects
Kunio Mayekawa (1905-1986)

Tokyo Metropolitan Festival Hall, Tokyo, 1961

The Mayekawa exhibition was held late in 2005 in Tokyo. Approximately, 34,000 people visited the exhibition during its 58-day-duration.

Exhibition organizers confirmed that general public has been regaining their interests and awareness to preserve modern buildings.

Photographs: © JA
Modernism Architects
Kameki Tsuchiura (1897-1996)

1922 Graduated from Empire University (currently Univ. of Tokyo)
1922-1926 Worked for F.L. Wright
1926 Worked for Ohkura Carpentry
1934 Established Kameki Tsuchiura Architects

Kameki Tsuchiura House, Tokyo, 1935

Photographs: © Eiji Kitada
Drawing: © Edo-Tokyo Museum
Modernism Architects
Junzo Yoshimura (1908-1997)

1931 Graduated from Tokyo School of Art
(currently Tokyo National University of Fine Art and Music)
1931-1941 Worked for Antonin Raymond
1941 Established Junzo Yoshimura Architect & Associates
1945 Lecturer at Tokyo School of Art
1961 Professor at Tokyo National University of Fine Art and Music

Photograph (left): © Friends of the Shofuso, Japan
Photograph (right): © Beyer Blinder Bell Architects & Planners, LLP
Modernism Architects
Junzo Yoshimura (1908-1997)

House in the woods, Karuizawa, 1962

Gallery View, Yoshimura Exhibition, 2005

Photograph (left): © JA
Photograph (right) © Yasuhiro Nakayama
Modernism Architects
Yoshinobu Ashihara (1918-2003)

1942 Graduated from Empire University (currently Univ. of Tokyo)
1954 Graduated from Harvard University, M. Arch.
1954-1956 Worked for Marcel Breuer
1956 Established Yoshinobu Ashihara Architect & Associates
1960 Professor at University of Tokyo

Sony Building, Tokyo, 1966

Photographs: © JA
# Modernism Architects

**Kenzo Tange (1913-2005)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Graduated from Empire University (currently Univ. of Tokyo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-1942</td>
<td>Worked for Kunio Mayekawa Associates, Architects &amp; Engineers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Graduated from University or Tokyo, M. Arch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Professor at University of Tokyo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Established Kenzo Tange Associates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>AIA Gold Medalist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photographs: © Kenzo Tange Associates
Modernism Architects
Kenzo Tange (1913-2005)

Hiroshima Peace Center, Hiroshima, 1952
(Currently Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, Hiroshima Peace Park)

National Olympics Stadium, Tokyo, 1964

Drawings: © Kenzo Tange Associates
Photograph (top): © Eiji Kitada, Photograph (bottom): © JA
Europe and America have seen real growth in activity and value placed on preserving buildings and on archiving of architectural materials. On the other hand, while Japan has maintained a strong tradition of preserving its cultural legacies, architecture and related documentation was not given such priority, as evidenced by the lack of even a single architectural archive in Japan until recently.

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Modernism Architect, Kunio Mayekawa

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Knowing that it’s simply impossible to collect everything at one repository, DOCOMOMO Japan encourages the architects’ office or relatives to save the documents.

Here is Kunio Mayekawa who worked for Le Corbusier in the late 1920s as well as for Antonin Raymond in the early 1930s.
[Slide 7] - Modernism Architect, Kunio Mayekawa 2

These photographs are exterior and interior views of the Tokyo Metropolitan Festival Hall designed by Mayekawa in 1961. Late in 2005, the Mayekawa exhibition was held in Tokyo. This exhibition was to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of his birth. Approximately 34,000 people including the general public visited the exhibition during its 58-day-duration. Through this success, the exhibition organizers confirmed that general public has been regaining their interests and awareness to preserve modern buildings. Mayekawa’s documents are currently preserved and maintained in his office.

[Slide 8] – Modernism Architect, Kameki Tsuchiura

Kameki Tsuchiura and his wife, Nobu, worked for F.L Wright in the early to mid 1920s. Here are interior photos of his house and its section drawing. The house was designed in 1935. Kameki died in 1996. After Nobu’s death in 1998, the Tsuchiuras’ documents were maintained by their lifetime maid for four years, and then donated to the Edo-Tokyo Museum in 2002.

[Slide 9] – Modernism Architect, Junzo Yoshimura 1

Junzo Yoshimura passed away in 1997. Some of you may know him as the architect for the tea house, Shofuso, for an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1954 and 1955. In 1958, the building was given to the City of Philadelphia and reassembled at its current site, Fairmount Park. Yoshimura also designed the Japan Society building in New York in 1971. He worked for Antonin Raymond for 10 years beginning 1931.

[Slide 10] – Modernism Architect, Junzo Yoshimura 2

The left slide is an exterior view of Yoshimura’s summer house. The right slide is a gallery view of the Yoshimura exhibition held in 2005. Although Yoshimura’s office still exists, his documents were donated to the Tokyo National University of Fine Art and Music, where he graduated from in 1931 and later taught.


Yoshinobu Ashihara worked for Marcel Breuer after his graduation from Harvard University. Here are the exterior and interior views of the Sony Building designed by him in 1966. After his death in 2003, Ashihara’s documents were re-organized by his descendents. They created a website which includes his history, a complete list of his projects, images of some of his highlighted projects, interviews with his descendents, and so on.

[Slide 12] – Modernism Architect, Kenzo Tange 1

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[Slide 13] - Modernism Architect, Kenzo Tange 2

Here are two projects by Tange – the Hiroshima Peace Center, 1952 and the National Olympics Stadium in 1964. There was a rumor that Tange never desired to save his drawings or documents. Therefore, it was doubtful if the DOCOMOMO Japan chapter could find any documents from Tange to include in the DOCOMOMO Japan exhibitions. Despite this rumor, Tange had preserved and maintained his documents well. Tange hired two staff members who were dedicated to maintaining his materials, which is unusual in Japan.

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