Posthistorical traditions in art, design, and architecture in 1950s Japan
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This article examines the discussions on tradition in art, design, and architecture in the 1950s Japan. It first explores the historical background of the discussions among artists, architects and art historians from the nineteenth century to the Second World War. The article insists that they attached to Japanese traditions various meanings and values including what should be overcome in the process of Westernization, the roots to which Japanese people felt compelled to return in the age of modernity, and the sophisticated sensibility of the Japanese comparable to Western modern aesthetics. The article then investigates the postwar situations. Following European artists’ interest in primitivism, avant-garde artist Okamoto Tarō advocated tradition to make it function as a key factor in the dynamism of the cultural order. Although discussions were not developed and deepened among designers, tradition was actively discussed in a field of architecture. Architects like Tange Kenzō and Shirai Seiichi elevated the tradition debate into the ideological issue, extracting the dichotomy of the Jōmon and the Yayoi and applying them to actual buildings and houses. The tradition debate in architecture meant a new departure in the postwar period, creating important discussions and movements on historical consciousness in the later period, such as the Metabolist movement in the 1960s and the ‘Ma: Space/Time in Japan’ exhibition in 1978. In this sense, the tradition conceived in the 1950s Japan is best regarded as posthistorical.

Keywords: Japanese art; modern art; modern design; modern architecture; tradition; Okamoto Tarō; Tange Kenzō; modernity

Introduction
The purpose of this article is to examine the discussions on tradition in art, design, and architecture in Japan in the 1950s. After the Second World War, Japan embarked on a project of democratization and demilitarization to construct a new pacifist state. Artists also longed for the reconstruction of democracy and liberty in their field. During the war, most artists had to

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cooperate with the military through the Japan Art Patriotic Society [Nihon Bijutsu Hōkoku-kai] and the Japan Arts and Crafts Control Association [Nihon Bijutsu Oyobi Kōgei Tōsei Kyōkai], controlled by the government. Some painters made war paintings to display the glory of the military and raise the morale of the nation, while others refrained from being critical of the oppressive activities of the government.¹ For this reason, in January 1946, the young painter Matsumoto Shunsuke made an appeal to establish an artists’ association ‘to create an art world that allows artists to freely exhibit works, promotes the natural emergence of schools and sects based on free discussion, and enables mutual support and encouragement among artists’ (Matsumoto [1946] 2012: 28). It embodied the start of new Japanese art, shared by many artists discarding their unpleasant memories of the past and looking to the future.

But in less than five years, their dream evaporated. The foundation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean War in the following year led Japan to act a bulwark against the spread of Communism, establishing in 1950 the National Police Reserve, which was soon reorganized as the Self-Defense Forces. With few exceptions, almost all artists who cooperated with the military never suffered harsh criticism.² Many artists’ associations, which were active in the prewar years but integrated into the Art Patriotic Society during the war, were restored soon after the end of the war, and the one conceived by Matsumoto was never realized.

It was around this time that discussions about tradition came to flourish in Japan. At first sight, they may look like a product of a reactionary period. But what should be noticed is that traditions were introduced as something positive by liberal and advanced modernists in their discussions. In this article, I would like to examine what tradition meant to them and how it functioned in the history of art and architecture in postwar Japan. To do so, I will first examine the historical background of the discussions on Japanese traditions among artists, architects and art historians, and then explore how they were developed after the war. Bringing together the discussions on tradition that have been considered separately in each area, I would like to reveal how they shared posthistorical interests in the 1950s, paving the way for the emergence of alternative activities in the 1960s and 1970s.

**Historical background**

The modern discussions on tradition date back to the late nineteenth century. The process of Westernization caused the intermittent reevaluation of traditional art in the Meiji period. The 1880s saw a growing trend towards the revival of Japanese art, after the anti-Buddhist movement that had led to the destruction of Buddhist temples came to an end in
the early 1870s. Ernest Fenollosa, an American educator and later art historian, and Okakura Kakuzō, his assistant and also later art historian, conducted research on artworks in temples in Kyoto, Nara, Osaka and other areas in the early to mid-1880s. The resurgence of Japanese art led to the closure of the Technical Art School [Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō], the first art school to provide Western-style art education, which had opened in 1876; and in 1883, to the establishment of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts [Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō] to provide an education solely in traditional Japanese art in 1887, including Japanese-style painting, woodcarving and metalwork. But it was not long before the school added two courses of Western painting and design in 1896, and it finally expelled the principal Okakura two years later. Mediated by Fenollosa’s Western viewpoint, the revival of traditional Japanese art in the 1880s focused on the reevaluation and preservation of traditional artworks that would have otherwise been lost, followed by the development of Japanese art history, as demonstrated by a series of lectures on the issue given by Okakura in the early 1890s. In his lectures in 1891 (Kinoshita 2005: 62), he insisted that the study of art history was not limited to the records of the past but would form the basis of art in the future (Okakura 2001: 11). For this reason, he made every effort to train Japanese-style painters such as Yokoyama Taikan, Shimosura Kanzan, Hishida Shunsō and others at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and later at the Japan Art Institute [Nihon Bijutsu In], which he established after his expulsion from the former. The revival of traditional art was promoted in order to build the foundation of Japanese art, which provided Japanese-style painters with a springboard to launch authentic but new Japanese art.

In the 1920s, the decade in which Western-derived modern and avant-garde art flourished in Japan, there was a recurrent trend toward a return to tradition. Kishida Ryūsei, a painter who had been fascinated by Vincent van Gogh, Paul Cézanne, and then Albrecht Dürer in the 1910s, turned to Japanese ukiyo-e paintings [nikuhitsu ukiyo-e] and China’s Song and Yuan dynasty paintings. He made paintings of his daughter Reiko with the heterodox derori aesthetic, a repellent yet compelling density and vulgarity of expressions.³ Yorozu Tetsugorō, who had made a Fauvist painting Nude Beauty [Ratai Bijin] in 1912, turned to classical Japanese painting, studying and making traditional ink-wash paintings [suiboku-ga] as well as making oil paintings with indigenous features (Shimada 1997: 31–38). Sculptors such as Takamura Kōtarō, Satō Chōzan, and Hashimoto Heihachi made wooden sculptures based on traditional styles in Japan and China, while retaining an unabated interest in Western sculpture. It was around this period that Yanagi Muneyoshi of the Shirakaba-ha, a literary coterie that admired Western literature and art, began to pour his enthusiasm into Korean ceramics. In the 1920s, the understanding of Western art was developed and deepened by the increasing number of artists and
scholars who studied in Europe and the United States. At the same time, not a few artists turned to traditional art in Japan and other Asian countries after having studied Western art. For them, traditions were the roots to which they felt compelled to return, even though they were immersed in imported Western cultures.

It was in the 1910s and 1930s that the discussions on tradition took shape in the field of architecture. In the 1910s, Japanese architects began to review the process of Westernization in architecture that led to the construction of major public buildings in the Western style after the Meiji Restoration. In his address at the Institute of Japanese Architects [Kenchiku gakkai] in 1909,4 Itō Chūta (1909: 22–31), an architect and architectural historian who was the first to write the history of Japanese architecture, insisted on the creation of a national architecture that dispensed with Europeanism and eclecticism. In a public debate on the style of Japan’s future architecture in the following year, architectural historian Sekino Tadashi (1973: 33–48) insisted that Japan should create a new national style based on the spirit of contemporary Japan, rather than merely following Western buildings or using an eclectic range of forms and styles taken from Western and Japanese buildings. Both thus endeavored to find a third way, to go beyond the dichotomy of Western and Japanese styles at a time when people favored eclectic buildings made of reinforced concrete with features recalling Buddhist temples, as seen in the Nisshin Life Insurance Company in 1917 and the Meiji Shrine’s Treasure Museum in 1921.

After the end of the Taishō democracy, nationalist sentiments resurfaced in the 1930s, when architect Horiguchi Sutemi reevaluated a Japanese tradition based on Western modern aesthetics. He discussed Japanese tea houses in terms of asymmetry and Japanese residences in terms of the standardization of building materials, arguing that hundreds of years ago Japan had already achieved what Europeans had only attained just recently (Horiguchi 1978: 235–49). Horiguchi’s modernist but nationalist view of traditional Japanese architecture was not only an elaborated version of the general admiration of Katsura Palace by a German architect Bruno Taut, who contrasted it with the profusely decorated shrine Tōshō-gū in Nikkō (Isozaki 2011: 261), but also a new interpretation of Japanese-ness as already modern enough, which Itō and Sekine had not conceived of in the 1910s. And yet, as in that previous decade, many eclectic buildings were also constructed in the 1930s in the style later called ‘Imperial Crown style’ [teikan yōshiki], in which Western-style buildings have Japanese-style roofs, such as the Shōwa Imperial Coronation Art Museum of Kyoto (now Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art), designed by Maeda Kenjirō (Figure 1).

In the 1940s, the discussion on tradition developed a more nationalistic overtone both in art and architecture. In May 1940, abstract painter Hasegawa Saburō, who had worked as a painter in the United States and Europe
in the early 1930s, declared that Japanese people had already arrived 400 years ago at an abstract art that Western pioneers had finally reached only recently, insisting that ‘the homeland of abstract art is Japan. Or, the homeland of the real “spirit of creation” is Japan’ (Hasegawa 1940). It was a more bombastic repetition of what Horiguchi maintained. In December 1942, modernist architect Maekawa Kunio, who had worked at Le Corbusier’s office in Paris in the late 1920s, emphasized the importance of tradition in the creation of architecture, arguing that Japanese people had ‘witnessed the end of modernity and entered upon a new historical era’ (Maekawa 1942: 923). This clearly reflects the discussion at ‘Overcoming Modernity’, the famous symposium published two months before and involving Nishitani Keiji, Kobayashi Hideo, Shimomura Toratarō and other scholars and critics. Maekawa even wrote that Japan should build a national architecture based on tradition and integrity, with which ‘we will enlighten Greater East Asia and the world’ (Maekawa 1942: 924), revealing how his fascination with universal modernism had turned into cultural imperialism.

Such nationalistic inclinations toward tradition can be also seen in the wartime designs by Maekawa’s top disciple, Tange Kenzō, for the Greater East Asia Memorial Building competition of 1942 (Figure 2) and the Japan Cultural Center in Bangkok competition of 1943. Depicted in a bird’s-eye view in a manner similar to traditional Japanese painting, the
former consists of the hall for the nation and the main building with Mount Fuji in the distance, as though the holy mountain were somehow observing the site. The latter depicts Japanese-style buildings with modern designs. The quiet, simple and sophisticated designs of these buildings are based on Japanese tradition, which was also intended to ‘enlighten’ Greater East Asia (Isozaki 2011: 15–20). It is not likely that Tange actually read the proceedings of the symposium ‘Overcoming Modernity’ when he applied for the Greater East Asia Memorial Building competition, which had a deadline of 15 September 1942 (Tange and Fujimori 2002: 82), but there is no doubt that he shared the overall reactionary sentiment of the time, which was evident in both the symposium and the competitions. In this way, traditional ideas and styles were overtly invoked in the architectural world during the wartime period in order to embrace the ideology of imperial Japan, as if they had consigned to oblivion their previous arguments about Japanese traditions vis-à-vis the imported Western cultures.

**Okamoto Tarō’s discussion on Jōmon pottery in the 1950s**

It was Okamoto Tarō who most overtly advocated the value of tradition after the war. He had been a prominent avant-garde artist since the
pream war period, but in 1952 he suddenly published an article on ancient
Japanese pottery of the prehistoric period called Jōmon, which had pre-
viously only interested archaeologists and historians (Okamoto 1952).
Okamoto perceived the vigorous movement of life in Jōmon pottery’s pro-
truding, flamboyant, and even magical decoration (Figure 3). Jōmon
culture, developed by hunting people, contrasted sharply with the follow-
ing culture in the Yayoi period, developed by agricultural people. Yayoi
pottery is known for its quiet, peaceful, and sophisticated shapes, but
Okamoto condemned it for its dullness.

Okamoto’s interest in Jōmon pottery stemmed from European artists’
interest in primitivism, with which he became familiar in the 1930s
when he studied ethnology with Marcel Mauss at the University of Paris
and interacted with abstract artists and surrealists in Paris until 1940,
when he went back to Japan. Just as European artists engaged with primiti-
vism to overcome European modernity, Okamoto introduced the Jōmon
to transform the situation of modern art in Japan. He distinguished it from
the previous modern reevaluation of Japanese tradition. He admitted the
achievement of Fenollosa, yet at the same time criticized the fact that his
revaluation did not produce any creative action, but merely a yearning
for the old days (Kamei and Okamoto 1956: 94–95). Okamoto emphasized
the difference between the Western approval of Japanese art and Japan’s
self-approval. He argued that because the Western avant-garde artists’
interest in Japanese art was made possible after their radical denial of
their own past, Japanese people also should deny and discard what they
already possessed in order to look for the heterogeneous and the unseen.
In other words, what Okamoto endeavored to do was to introduce the
very structure of European’s incorporation of other cultures for their
own sake, rather than just to accept the objects and styles they appreciated.
Okamoto’s project was a more elaborated version of Westernization in
which tradition functioned as a key factor in the dynamism of the cultural
order. In that sense, Okamoto’s perception of tradition was very Western in
spite of its very Japanese appearance.

The Japonica debate in design
Two years later, the arguments on tradition referred to as ‘the Japonica
debate’ occurred in the field of design. The design of Japanese traditional
architecture and industrial arts, sometimes called ‘Japonica’, was increas-
ingly popular in the United States in the early 1950s, as seen in the Shōfūsō
Japanese House and Gardens, exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in
New York between 1954 and 1955. Modernist architect Yoshizaka Takamasa,
who had just returned to Japan after his work at Le Corbusier’s
office in Paris, complained: ‘Among Japonica designs popular in Europe
and America, there are many forms which remind us of the repressed
Figure 3. Okamoto Tarō. Photograph of Jōmon earthenware excavated in Toyama Prefecture. 1956. Courtesy of Tarō Okamoto Museum of Art, Kawasaki.
people in the late feudal age. But Europeans and Americans do not know how the people’s lives were imbued with these forms’ (Yoshizaka 1954). Yoshizaka harshly criticized the way of evaluating Japonica designs, writing that ‘if we reimport Japonica designs just because they were highly appreciated in Europe and America, it should be of the gravest danger’ (Yoshizaka 1954). Like Okamoto, Yoshizaka criticized Japanese people for merely accepting Western applause; but unlike Okamoto, he was a typical modernist in that he regarded tradition as nothing more than a remnant of the feudal system. Against Yoshizaka’s criticism, Kenmochi Isamu, an industrial designer who was then the head of the Design Department at the Industrial Arts Institute [Sangyō Kōgei Shikenjo], argued that ‘Japanese modern design’ of good quality was different from Japonica, which he called ‘Fujiyama-geisha style design and fashion which exploits the American exotic taste for Japan’. Kenmochi insisted that Japanese modern designers respect tradition not in terms of its styles and forms, but rather as a method and principle. Taking Isamu Noguchi’s Akari Light Sculptures as an example, Kenmochi (1954: 7) thought highly of them as ‘an original modern design in its form that uses traditional technologies and materials as well as the principles of functions and effects’. Kenmochi thus expressed his modernist sensibility for more sophisticated design, which is quite the opposite of exoticism. Despite their apparent differences, there were quite a few ideas that Yoshizaka and Kenmochi shared. They both rejected the light-hearted taste for Japanese design in the West and had modernist aesthetic sensibilities for good design. But their shared arguments and their differences were never examined further in the field of design, neither at the time, nor even today.

**Discussions on tradition in architecture**

It was in architecture that the issue of tradition was discussed most avidly in the 1950s. Against the background of the discussions in art and design, the argument in architecture was directly triggered by an article by a Hungarian communist politician József Révai. Translated as ‘The Tradition of Architecture and Modernism’ by a leading art critic Hariu Ichirō and published in prominent art magazine *Bijutsu Hihyō* [Art Criticism] in October 1953, it discussed how to evaluate traditional architecture from a communist viewpoint (Révai 1953). Révai criticized Máté Major, a Hungarian communist architect, for his argument that architecture in class society only displays the power and influence of the ruling class over the repressed people whereas a new architecture based on socialism ‘serves human beings’. Révai insisted that buildings in a class society may represent such things but at the same time do contain ‘progressive efforts in the contemporary society’, advocating ‘the use of progressive national tradition’ that should be found in buildings of the past.
A month later, a Japanese architect happened to express a socialist attitude to traditional architecture. Nishiyama Uzō, a leftist architect who taught architecture at Kyoto University, published an article titled ‘Ethnic Tradition and National Issues in House Planning’ (Nishiyama 1953). Nishiyama insisted that national culture and architecture were different from what the ruling class conceived when they embellished themselves with past assets such as the buildings of temples, shrines and houses in the style of tea-ceremony huts, arguing that ethnic traditions resided in the people’s current houses. For Nishiyama, tradition was not seen in buildings made in the past, but rather was evident through current lived experiences, which had inherited an accumulation of past cultures. He thus wanted to be ‘an architect for the people’ and researched the actual conditions of the people (Nishiyama 1955), establishing himself as a leading architect on the house issue in postwar Japan. Révai and Nishiyama were both Marxists and interested in tradition in architecture, but their conclusions were quite different. Nishiyama, who does not seem to have read Révai’s article, dismissed the past architecture, which resembles Major’s doctrinaire insistence. It was Révai’s tolerant attitude toward the architecture of the past that Japanese architects followed when they discussed the issue of tradition, as we will see below.

In 1954, when the International Conference of Architectural Students asked architecture students in Japan to participate in their conference in Rome, the Japanese students compiled a report on ‘contemporary architecture and the national tradition’, one of the subjects of the conference. What should be noted is that it obviously referred to the arguments by Révai and Nishiyama. They wrote: ‘even if [buildings] are constructed upon the exploitation of the people, with the change of the times and the social conditions, they must have a strong effect on them as a legacy of the past’ (Nihon Kenchiku Gakusei Kaigi 1954: 45). This argument corresponds to Révai’s respect for the progressive aspect of architecture in a class society. The report also states that ‘legacies that firmly live on in the lives of the people are also a great tradition for the people’ (Nihon Kenchiku Gakusei Kaigi 1954: 45), which rephrases Nishiyama’s interest in the contemporary house as an inheritor of traditions. This report was a survey of how tradition was conceived by architects in Japan, which necessarily became slightly too inclusive, but it clearly shows that tradition was already one of the major topics among architects in Japan by 1954.

Probably taking into account these arguments on tradition, Kawazoe Noboru, an editor-in-chief of the magazine Shinkenchiku [New Architecture], asked architects to write on tradition in architecture. In January 1955, Tange Kenzō published an article, ‘How to Understand Modern Architecture in Japan Today: For the Creation of Tradition,’ in which he wrote, ‘the tradition in modern architecture does not reside in its spirit as has been said evasively, but is created in its expression by the practices
of architects through the interplay of the modern and the traditional’ (Tange 1955: 18). The traditional expressions that interest Tange are not unique elements of Japanese houses and buildings but relate to their overall quality of form and structure, for instance ‘the unlimitedness of space’ in the shinden style of palace architecture (Tange 1955: 16). In the same article, Tange famously declared that ‘Only the beautiful is functional’. This indicates his distinction between formalism and modernism and the priority he gave to the former over the latter, which made it possible to discuss both traditional and modern buildings from the same perspective.

Soon after he published this article, Tange came to consider tradition in a dialectical framework. In 1956, he wrote:

> When we live with the realities of Japan and embark on creation with an advanced attitude with which to overcome them, we awaken to Japan’s tradition. [...] Tradition is what exists inside and outside. When we say ‘overcoming tradition’, it should mean overcoming what is outside and also what is inside. It is to overcome the self. (Tange 1956: 31)

Tange insisted that tradition should be used for new creation instead of the preservation of the past, which is parallel to Okamoto’s argument in his Jōmon article. In fact, in this article Tange referred to Jōmon pottery. He identified the distinction between the Jōmon and the Yayoi with the dichotomy between the Dionysian and Apollonian, as articulated by Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*. He did not consider that these two terms were equal. He regarded the Jōmon or Dionysian as a negative agency to be sublimated for the Yayoi or Apollonian glory. In fact, notwithstanding his growing interest in the Jōmon or Dionysian, Tange’s architecture remained Yayoi or Apollonian from the prewar period onwards, as is seen from his plan for the Greater East Asia Memorial Building to Hiroshima Peace Center, for which he won the competition in 1949 (Figure 4).

In contrast to the substantially Apollonian approaches of Tange, the architect Shirai Seiichi boldly advocated the supremacy of the Jōmon. In his article titled ‘Jōmon-ness’ in August 1956, Shirai, who had understood the aspects of cultural tradition in Japan as the conflict between the Jōmon and the Yayoi, thought highly of the over-400-year-old Egawa residence in Nirayama, Shizuoka (Figure 5), as a brutal house indicative of ‘the potential of the Jōmon’. Shirai placed a higher priority on the Jōmon than on the Yayoi, insisting that ‘there are important moments of the future creation in Japan in the inheritance of the silent Jōmon potential that has permeated the cultural spirit of the nation’ (Shirai 1956: 4).

As architectural historian Fujimori Terunobu insisted, Shirai’s candid support of the Jōmon changed Tange’s indecisive attitude (Tange and Fujimori 2002: 187). In his text in *Katsura: Tradition and Creation in Japanese Architecture* (1960), Tange began to praise the Jōmon. In his

Figure 5. Egawa residence in Nirayama, Shizuoka, C. 1600. Photo: Ishimoto Yasuhiro, 1956. © Kochi Prefecture, Ishimoto Yasuhiro Photo Center.
previous article in 1956, Tange had given equivocal evaluation of the Katsura Palace (Figure 6). For Tange (1956: 33), the palace included ‘animist divinity, emotion of pathos, and the symbolism of elegance and antiquity’, which he believed could not be integrated in a creative way. But he changed his evaluation in 1960:

The shoin of the Katsura Place belongs fundamentally to the aristocratic Yayoi tradition as it developed from the shinden-zukuri to the shoin-zukuri style. Accordingly, the building is dominated by the principles of aesthetic balance and continuous sequence of patterns in space. And yet there is something which prevents it from becoming a mere formal exercise and gives its space a lively movement and a free harmony. This something is the naïve vitality and ever-renewed potentiality of the Jōmon tradition of the common people. (Tange 1960: 35)

As architect Isozaki Arata (2011: 40) points out, Tange’s attention to the Jōmon in Katsura Palace seems inappropriate for one of the most aristocratic buildings in Japan. But it shows the degree to which Tange became fascinated with the Jōmon at that time. In fact, he came to incorporate the Jōmon into his buildings, such as Kurashiki City Hall, made in 1960, which Tange regarded as the expression of Jōmon tradition in Japan in concrete.
For Tange, tradition is not what we preserve but the means for new creation in the present. He regarded the Jōmon and the Yayoi not so much as historical origins on which contemporary cultures should be based, but rather as creative principles for art practitioners and architects. For this reason, he was able to make Yayoi-style buildings and Jōmon-based buildings. In Tange’s perception, tradition did not develop in a linear way but rather was selected according to the changing discussions of the time. Here we can see Tange’s non-historical approach to tradition.

Conclusion
This paper has considered how traditions have been discussed in the fields of art, design and architecture in the 1950s. To do so, we have first seen the historical background against which traditions were conceived by artists, architects and historians from the late nineteenth century to the Second World War era. Japanese traditions were interpreted in various ways. They were sometimes regarded as phenomena that should be overcome in the process of Westernization; sometimes as representing the roots of Japanese people, to be recalled in the age of modernity; sometimes as sophisticated aesthetics comparable to those of Western modernism. With the influx of Western cultures, Japanese art practitioners and historians have associated Japanese traditions with different meanings and values, resulting in diverse artistic and architectural expressions, from Japanese-style painting and Japanese modern design to the Imperial Crown style and the dialectics of the Jōmon and the Yayoi.

The discussions about tradition were most successful in the field of architecture. Casting doubt upon simple dichotomies between the West and Japan, and between modernity and tradition, Japanese architects came to refrain from discussing issues of forms and styles in those terms. Architects like Tange Kenzō and Shirai Seiichi elevated the tradition debate into an ideological issue, extracting the dichotomy of the Jōmon and the Yayoi and applying it to actual buildings and houses.

In his essay on Tange, one of the main writings in the debate, Kawazoe Noboru emphasized ‘the tragedy of Japan’, by which he meant that architects had to explore modern architecture in a society that was not modernized (Iwata 1955: 71–72). When Kawazoe started the tradition debate, he must have had in mind not only how to deal with Japan’s tradition but also with its unsuccessful modernity, which resulted in Japanese militarism and its defeat. The perception of failed modernity distinguishes Kawazoe from previous practitioners and historians who had discussed traditions in the progress of modernization. In this sense, the war experience was a decisive factor in the tradition debate. It deals not only with tradition vis-à-vis modernity but, more importantly, with the history of how tradition was conceived in modern Japan. The tradition debate thus
meant a new departure in the postwar period, creating important discussions and movements of historical consciousness in the later period.

Among these were the Metabolist movement in the 1960s and the ‘Ma: Space/Time in Japan’ exhibition in 1978. Kawazoe (1960), a chief member of the Metabolist movement, which contemplated Architectural megastructures in terms of organic biological growth, ascribed the movement to the Japanese idea of ever-changing nature that encompasses cities, buildings and human beings. Kawazoe recollected that the Metabolist movement was an extension of the tradition debate in its Japanese conception (Yoshimitsu 1997: 29). In 1978, when Isozaki Arata, one of the most important disciples of Tange, organized the exhibition ‘Ma: Space/Time in Japan’ at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris and other venues, he insisted that the Japanese term *ma*, meaning both ‘interval in time’ and ‘distance in space’, was a unique concept not found in Western culture where time and space are strictly divided. The 1960s and 1970s saw recurrent discussions on traditions by architects who were directly or indirectly involved in the tradition debate. As Eric Hobsbawm has argued, despite the fact that many traditions were invented in modern times, they can still be used to insist on historical lineage (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). But postwar Japanese architects did not care about such historical lineage. In this sense, the tradition they referred to is best regarded as posthistorical. In Japan, that situation took shape in the 1950s, decades earlier than the emergence of postmodernity in the 1980s.

**Notes**

1. For Japanese artists’ activities during the Second World War, see Kawata (2015) and Hariu et al. (2007).
2. Almost the only exception is Fujita Tsuguharu; see chapter 4, ‘Saraba Nihon’, in Kondō (2002).
4. Kenchiku Gakkai, or the Institute of Japanese Architects in the then official English name, renamed itself as Nihon Kenchiku Gakkai and changed its English name to the Architectural Institute of Japan in 1947.
5. The symposium was published in *Bungakukai* 9, no. 9 (September 1942): 6–51 and no. 10 (October 1942): 2–112. It was reprinted in Kawakami and Takeuchi (1979).
6. See Nagao (1972) and Matsumoto, Saiga and Tsuji (2010). Architect Hara Hiroshi also mentioned the popularity of Révai’s article among architecture students at the University of Tokyo in the mid-1950s; see Hara, Tsuji and Oshima (2012).
7. The ‘NDK model’, the layout scheme used in postwar Japanese public housing, derived from the wartime surveys of Nishiyama; see Sand (2003: 375–6).
8. This report was edited by Isozaki Arata, a first-year graduate student in the department of architecture at the University of Tokyo. An earlier version
was published as ‘Nihon gendai kenchiku ni okeru dentō no mondai’ [The problem of tradition in contemporary architecture in Japan], Kenchiku to Shakai 35, no. 7 (July 1954): 21–24.

9. The International Conference of Architectural Students prompted Japanese architectural students to organize the Japanese Association of Architectural Students. The first issue of the association’s magazine Kaku includes an article by Ogura Tomoo, which was a pseudonym of Isozaki Arata, and the second issue published an article arguing against it by graduate students who were studying with Nishiyama at Kyoto University. See Ogura (1954) and Shin Nihon Kenchiku Shūdan Kyōdai Daiagakuin Gurūpu (1955). Both articles were reprinted in Nihon kenchiku gakusei kaigi jūnen shi [Ten years of the Japanese Association of Architectural Students] (n.p.: Nihon kenchiku gakusei kaigi, 1965), 79–94. As far as my research has been able to uncover, Isozaki’s article is his earliest published work. I would like to express my gratitude to Isozaki Arata for confirming the authorship of this article, to Shin Misa and Someya Rie for their help in contacting Isozaki, and to Hino Naohiko for his suggestion of the Uzō Nishiyama Memorial Library, where I found the article.

10. Kitazawa Noriaki insisted that the tradition debate went against the wartime discussion on tradition in particular (2007: 104–05).

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