The Japanese architect Tetsuro Yoshida was a key mediator of architectural interchange between East and West through his travel in the West (1931–32) and *Das japanische Wohnhaus* (1935).

**Tetsuro Yoshida (1894–1956) and architectural interchange between East and West**

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‘I have long been dreaming a dream: that I am a drop of dew on the leaf of a nameless plant deep in the valley of some far-off mountain range. The dewdrop rolls down into a little brook and mingles with its waters; the brook flows into a river which in turn discharges into the sea, and the waves of the sea in their turn lave the coasts of all the countries of the earth. Thus I picture to myself the cultural interchange of all peoples, and it has been my wish to take part, even if only as one little drop, in this important work.’

(Tetsuro Yoshida, 1955)

Architectural interchange between East and West is no longer a new story. Not only was Western Modernism imported to the East, East Asian sources also provoked fashions in Europe such as Chinoiserie in the mid-eighteenth century and Japonisme in the mid- to late nineteenth. Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959) is considered to have shown this influence most clearly, but in European Modernism, too, the East Asian inspiration, especially the Japanese, was significant. European architects encountered Japan in various ways, but publications were the most common source, and among these Tetsuro Yoshida’s *Das japanische Wohnhaus* (1935) was especially influential. Its importance is shown by the fact that it was widely circulated immediately after publication and also that it was to a large extent written at the request of the leading Modernists Hugo Häring and Ludwig Hilberseimer, whom Yoshida met during his travels in Europe.

Tetsuro Yoshida has not had much exposure in the West. Richard Neutra’s articles in *Die Form* of 1931 included several photographs of Yoshida’s Electrical Laboratory (1930) and Baba Residence (1928), but these seem hardly to have been noticed. Reni Türdinger’s obituary of Yoshida in *Werk* (1956) and Udo Kultermann’s half-page description of him in *New Japanese Architecture* (1960) and the Epilogue to the Pall Mall Press English version (1969) of *Das japanische Wohnhaus* provide documentation but fall short of picturing him adequately. To the student of Japanese modern architecture, he is remembered, at best, as the designer of the Tokyo Central Post Office building as illustrated in Stewart (1987). Japanese researchers have accumulated several studies on him, but these remain unknown in the West because of the language barrier. More importantly, most studies deal only in passing with Yoshida’s role as a bridge between Japan and Europe, and fail to describe the effect of his appearance in the European context.

This paper sees Yoshida as an intermediary, who introduced Japanese architecture to the West as well as Western architecture to Japan. It accords with his life-long dream to be seen as ‘a drop of dew’ for ‘the cultural interchange of all peoples’. To illuminate this aspect, I will look at his career; consider the book *Das japanische Wohnhaus* and its impact; and then describe his contacts with European Modernists during his year-long travels in the West of 1931–32. I will follow up these explorations by considering what it was about his conception of architecture that enabled him to bring one culture to the other, and vice versa.

**The architect Tetsuro Yoshida (1894–1956)**

Born in Toyama Prefecture of Japan in 1894 (Meiji 27), Yoshida belongs to the same generation as the so-called ‘modern masters’ in Europe, being seven years younger than Le Corbusier and four years older than
Alvar Aalto [1]. He was the contemporary of 'Bunriha' or Japanese Secessionist architects like Mamoru Yamada (1894–1966), Kikuji Ishimoto (1894–1963) and Sutemi Horiguchi (1895–1984), and by the time he was born Japan had already westernised many parts of its social structure following the Meiji Restoration of 1868. The English architect Josiah Conder (1852–1920), who entered Japan in 1877, had played an important role in educating Japanese architects and establishing a Western-style architectural department in the College of Engineering, which was merged into Tokyo Imperial University in 1886. Many Western style buildings – mainly in historical revivalist and eclectic styles – were built by him, his pupils and by others.

On the other side of the globe, however, this was a period when interest in Japan increased dramatically. Philippe Burty used the term 'Japonisme' in 1872 to mean 'a study of the history, culture, and art of Japan' in response to Japanese arts pouring into Europe during the 1860s. In 1893 the famous Japanese Pavilion Hō-den was built at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, stimulating many visitors including the young Frank Lloyd Wright.

Consequent to the establishment of the architectural education system, Yoshida was taught architecture in a modern way at Tokyo Imperial University between 1916 and 1919. The curriculum comprised four thematic areas taught by different professors: construction and materials, architectural planning, seismatic structure, and architectural history. Among the professors, three were admired most – Yasushi Tsukamoto in charge of architectural planning, Tadashi Sekino who was expert on Japanese Shinto shrine and Buddhist temple architecture, and Chuta Ito who covered architectural history across Japan, Asia and the West. Especially, the erudite lectures of Professor Ito (1867–1954), the pioneer of Japanese architectural history, aroused the admiration of students.

The best-recorded part of Yoshida’s university education is his graduation thesis and design. Entitled ‘Future House Architecture in our Country’, it criticised a materialistic tendency of the time caused by
scientific development, and argued for cultural expression of life’s ideal value in a reformed house, in which personal and social demands could be harmonised. The graduation design ‘Bijutsu Kyōkai’, or Art Association Building [4], reflects the contemporary Secessionist trend in the parabolic dome on the tower and entrance details, but the whole composition, with its symmetrical façade and plan, alludes to Classical taste. This eclectic gesture proves that he was still bound to nineteenth-century historicism. However, Yoshida’s work has a power in its austere and rigorous organisation, both in plan and in elevation, and the arrangement of windows in the front façade is compact and well-proportioned, anticipating the character of designs to come.

A week after graduation in July 1919, the 25-year-old Yoshida started working at the Buildings and Repairs Section in ‘Teishinsho’ or Ministry of Communications. Newly established, this ministry sought to pursue rationality and progressiveness in its works like the post, telegram and telephone services, and therefore it was appropriate that Teishinsho-related buildings should be the vehicles for ‘Shinkenchiku’ or new architecture. In this liberal atmosphere, Yoshida could produce a number of Modernist buildings. His early works show some north-German influence from Fritz Schumacher, as in Kyoto Central Telephone Office Shinkumi Branch (1922–24) [3], and also some Scandinavian National Romantic details as in Beppu City Auditorium (1926–28) [4–5]. However, Yoshida signalled his entry to the modern architectural stream with the completion of Tokyo Central Post Office (1927–31) [6–8]. Located just beside Tokyo Station, this white-tiled, five-storey steel-reinforced concrete building not only pursued the function of fast and efficient delivery of mail but also gave a symbolic image to modern Tokyo. Unlike the earlier designs, this building does not have any decoration, although the cornice-like horizontal line below the top storey still remains. The contrast of the white tile wall and the black-framed large window array in the facade represents the clarity and simplicity of modern architecture. Consequently, Tokyo Central Post Office became not only Yoshida’s first masterpiece but also one of the heroic examples that heralded Japanese Modernism in architecture.

Yoshida’s career as a progressive Modernist came into full bloom with the Osaka Central Post Office of 1936–39 [9–10]. Like its Tokyo counterpart, it was built beside the main station as a steel reinforced concrete structure covered with tiles – but grey ones this time, and with an open layout in plan. Yet its floors were rectangular thanks to the better-shaped site and, in elevation, the expression of structure is more lucid with minimised visible framework. In other words, Osaka Central Post Office illustrates a much more distilled Modernist image than the Tokyo office, and Yoshida is considered to have achieved his own mastery of Modernism with this building. Nonetheless, this Modernist architecture has many things in common with the traditional Japanese house in its principles, notably the clear post-beam structure that echoes Japanese timber-framed building and allows a maximum size of opening in the wall as well as a flexible division of floors. The façade is also devoid of ornament, an expression of frankness and rationality that Yoshida (1935) emphasised as a quality of the Japanese house. In addition, the overhang on the roof of Osaka Central Post Office is a unique design element reminiscent of traditional Japanese eaves. With this building, ‘Japanese modern architecture gave birth
to its own unique design beyond just a simple imitation of the West’ as Yakushiji (1968) argued. Following the Osaka Central Post Office, Yoshida designed several more Teishin buildings, like the Training School for Senior Mariners (1943) and dormitories for Lighthouse-Keepers (1943), but they were relatively small projects. Fewer works were accomplished in the early 1940s because of war-time retrenchment, which was one reason why Yoshida resigned from Teishinsho in 1944. However, two years later he obtained a professorship from Nihon University and proceeded with independent projects like the Niigata Branch of Hokuriku Bank (1950–51) and Mimatsu Bookstore (1953). Finally, in 1952, he submitted grand but unsuccessful designs to invited competitions for the Tokyo Municipality Government Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Office [12]. When he died of a brain tumour in 1956, he left almost one hundred designs, most of which were realised.

Along with Mamoru Yamada, whose Electrical Laboratory in Tokyo (1929) was included in Hitchcock and Johnson’s The International Style (1932), Yoshida is remembered as one of the leaders of ‘Teishin Kenchiku’ or Architecture of Teishinsho. He is seen as the architect of Teishinsho because his career started in the ministry, he established the architect’s position there, and a large percentage of his designs were for the ministry-related public works. Nevertheless, Yoshida’s position is not limited to that of official architect. Even when employed in Teishinsho, he undertook private projects including several villas for the Baba family [14–20]. That is to say, he must be placed within a broader scope, as a Japanese Modern architect. As a Modernist who learned from Western architectural development, he applied up-to-date rational building types on Japanese soil. But at the same time, he attempted to combine traditional Japanese architectural principles with what he learned from contemporary European architecture. However, Yoshida’s architectural work was just one aspect of his career: he was also a prolific writer.
Das japanische Wohnhaus and its impact

The first and primary route by which Yoshida introduced Japanese architecture to Western architects was the 1935 book Das japanische Wohnhaus. He also published two other books through the same publisher Ernst Wasmuth: Japanische Architektur (1952) and Der japanische Garten (1957), and these became his German trilogy [13], introducing Japanese architecture to the West. In reverse, he tried to introduce Western architecture to Japan by writing or translating books such as Sekai-no-Gendai-Kenchiku (World contemporary architecture, 1930), Hokuō-
As soon as it appeared, Das japanische Wohnhaus was widely read and reviewed and Kultermann later summarised its impact as bringing about ‘a considerable stir in Europe and America’,” while Manfred Speidel in a recent paper (2005) praised the book as ‘something like the solution to a thirty years long mystery about the Japanese House’. Owing to increasing demand, the revised edition (1954) and the English version, The Japanese House and Garden (1955), appeared two decades later, and the book was established as a classic on traditional Japanese architecture. But it was not the first. By the time of its publication, several books on Japanese architecture had already been published in the West, including Christopher Dresser’s Japan, its Architecture, Art and Art Manufactures (London, 1882), E. S. Morse’s Japanese Homes and their Surroundings (Boston, 1886), F. Baltzer’s Das japanische Haus (Berlin, 1903), and R. A. Cram’s Impressions of Japanese Architecture and Allied Arts (New York, 1905). Why, then, was Yoshida’s book so successful? Above all, it was written by a ‘Japanese’ architect who had been educated and practised in Japan, and actually built several houses. He digested over thirty references – most of which, naturally, were Japanese sources – and tried to describe the Japanese house as correctly and concisely as possible, from the historic background through to the structural and technical details. Also, it was published when interest in Japanese architecture was keenest among the European architects participating in the Modern Movement. He claimed in his preface that he was surprised at their strong interest in the ‘japanischen Wohnsburg’, or Japanese house building, during his travels in Europe between September 1931 and June 1932, and that he was recommended to write a book on this theme by Häring and Hilberseimer in Berlin. Publication by the internationally renowned Wasmuth may have doubled its impact.

However, the book’s content is no less important than the circumstantial factors. It is composed of nine chapters – I Introduction, II Historical development, III Plan, room allocation and interior design, IV Examples of plan, V Building timbers, VI Construction and constructional details, VII Ventilation, heating, lighting and water supply and drainage, VIII Garden, IX Problem of urban planning and housing – and an appendix of standardisation and workmanship. The organisation is very practical, and the whole composition and Yoshida’s literary style are clear and concise with high-quality illustrations [14–15], making it accessible to foreign architects and even laymen. Yoshida mentions various advantages of the traditional Japanese house: for example, the intimate relationship between architecture and nature, its flexibility, rationality, structural beauty, and standardisation. He emphasised particularly, ‘Sauberekeit (übertriebene Reinlichkeit)’ or purity (exaggerated cleanliness) as Japanese aesthetics, which corresponds with Bruno Taut’s impression of Japan. As well as introducing the Japanese house to the West, he argued that the merits of the traditional Japanese house should be synthesised with a modern life style as the European influence becomes stronger in the contemporary Japanese house. As examples of the ‘contemporary’ traditional Japanese house, he included over twenty photographs of his own designs – Baba Nasu Villa (1927) and Baba Ushigome Residence (1928). The implicit message of the book was that the values of the traditional Japanese house, such as ‘rationality’ and ‘standardisation’, could also be applied to modern architecture. So to speak, he aimed at the modern rational through the traditional Japanese.

Response to the book was not completely favourable. Some of the harshest criticism came, surprisingly, from Bruno Taut (1880–1938), who lived in Japan between 1933 and 1936 and praised Yoshida as the most excellent architect in Japan. His first objection was to the excessive descriptions of technical details: ‘Can there be any German architect that is going to build a Japanese house in Berlin on the basis of the size and detail of the Japanese architecture? Even if there is one, this book lacks descriptions of some important details like the ceiling structure or the roof construction method.’ He also criticised the inclusion of extravagant
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14. First image of Das japanische Wohnhaus (1935) and ‘Introduction’. The image, captioned ‘Reception room of a house in Tokyo, 1928’, is the interior of Baba Residence at Ushigome, Tokyo by Yoshida.

15. Inside of Das japanische Wohnhaus (1935). The top left image, captioned ‘Open veranda in a country house, 1927’ is that of Baba Villa at Nasu by Yoshida; and bottom left is an outside view of Baba Residence at Ushigome.

16. Site plan of Baba Residence at Ushigome (1, main entrance; 2, kitchen entrance; 3, front garden; 4, main garden; 5, tea-house; 6, tea-garden; 7, back garden; 8, light garden; 9, kitchen yard). Garden design by Tamura.

17. Outside view of Baba Residence at Ushigome (the reception room part) from the main garden, no. 4 in the site plan [16].
illustrations of Katsura and aristocratic villas to beautify a text mainly concerned with ordinary people’s houses. And further criticism followed against the idealisation of Japan, and the way it differed from the reality he had experienced. Despite their validity, Taut’s arguments did not suppress the book’s popularity, but even added to it. Alvar Aalto is one of the most notable architects to have been influenced by the book. Juhani Pallasmaa’s interview with one of Aalto’s assistants revealed that he referred to it for some details in the Villa Mairea (1937–39) – such as ‘the main entrance, the sliding door next to the main staircase and the glass door to the flower room’. In addition, Pallasmaa suggested similarities between the shelf of the Mairea flower room and Yoshida’s illustration of various ‘tana’, and also between the Mairea garden with its hillock and his illustration of ‘tsukiyama’ garden. I have proposed a further possibility that the art display concept in the house came from the Japanese tradition of the ‘tokonoma’ or picture recess. This argument is credible because Aalto’s adoption of this art display custom exactly corresponds with Yoshida’s explanation of the Japanese tokonoma tradition – displaying only one...
or a few pictures and seasonally changing them. Considering the importance of the art display function in the art collector’s house, this conceptual link is critical in the design. Another architect influenced by the book was Egon Eiermann (1904–70), who is usually regarded as ‘the most important German architect in the Miesian direction’ of the post-war period.

In his lectures as professor at Karlsruhe he mentioned it so often that his students said he must have slept with the book under his pillow. Arguably, Eiermann’s own house-cum-atelier (1959–62) in Baden-Baden was indebted to Yoshida from concept to detail. These are just two possible examples: many more architects were impressed by the book.

Yoshida’s travels in Europe
Before writing Das japanische Wohnhaus, Yoshida interacted with Western architects by meeting them personally. Mention of his stay in Europe and of the specific Berlin architects in the preface raises questions about his travels. Why was he there, where did he visit, and whom did he meet? Even more crucially, what was the effect of his travel in terms of the East-West interchange? Satoru Mukai’s Yoshida-Tetsuro-Kaigai-no-Tabi, a compilation of Yoshida’s diaries and letters with annotations, is the essential source. Yet, Mukai’s assessment was carried out to confirm what was inherited from Europe by Japanese modern architecture, not to ascertain what Yoshida brought to Europe, and it is unbalanced from the viewpoint of this research. Here we are concerned with the transfers both ways. Yoshida travelled around Europe and America for exactly one year, departing from Tokyo on 29 July 1931 and arriving in Yokohama on 28 July 1932, but he spent only September 1931 to June 1932 in Europe, as mentioned in Das japanische Wohnhaus. As a kind of civil servant, he was sent out to the West by the government, ‘ORDERED TO GO TO FRANCE AND CANADA (TRAVEL EXPENSES SEVEN THOUSAND YEN PAID) TEISHINSHO’. His official duty was to investigate Western broadcasting facilities. Indeed, he made a report entitled ‘Hamburg-Hööööökoku-Chōsa-Hōokusho’ (Report on Investigation into Hamburg Broadcasting Station) on his return. However, he seems personally to have been more interested in seeing European buildings and in meeting their architects. For almost a year before moving on to the United States he traversed Europe extensively from his base-camp in Berlin, visiting Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Austria, Holland, Belgium, England, France, etc. He met many prominent architects, including Werner Moser, Rudolf Steiger, Max Ernst Haefeli, and Sigfried Giedion (Zurich), Gunnar Asplund and Ragnar Östberg (Stockholm), Alfred Fischer (Karlsruhe), Richard Döcker (Stuttgart), Robert Vorhölder (Munich), Wilhelm Kreis (Dresden), Josef Frank (Vienna), Ernst Wiesener (Brno).

It remains uncertain whom Yoshida met elsewhere, because there is no diary for those days. But according to the schedule in his notebook, it is probable that he met Johannes Duiker in Amsterdam, Johannes Brinkman in Rotterdam, Gerrit Rietveld in...
Utrecht, Victor Bourgeois in Brussels, and F. R. Yerbury in London. Similarly, he did not leave a diary of his four and a half months in Berlin, but he noted the following architects’ addresses: Hans Poelzig, Walter Gropius, Bruno Taut, Franz Hoffmann, Hugo Häring, Erich Mendelsohn, Alfon Anker, Wassili Luckhardt, Hans Luckhardt, Hans Scharoun and Mies van der Rohe. Presumably, there were many more architects with whom Yoshida had a relationship in Berlin, as evinced by the case of Hilberseimer. Häring was the central figure among the Berliners for Yoshida to contact, not only because of his position as the secretary of Der Ring but also because of his intellectual interest in broad themes including East Asian aesthetics. He had already entertained Yamada two years before, whose travels became an inviting precedent for his colleague Yoshida.

In undertaking this trip, Yoshida knew what to see. He had perused many Western magazines in Japan and even published the book Sekai-no-Gendai-Kenchiku (World Contemporary Architecture, 1930), which deals with modern buildings in 13 Western countries. Also, he carried for reference his university lecture notes of Professor Itô. Yoshida’s diaries illustrate his opinions about buildings and architects that he saw and met. Most of all, he was obsessed with the beauty of Swedish architecture, especially Östberg’s Stockholm Town Hall (1909–23) [23], which was the reason for his visiting Stockholm for his first excursion (18–24 October 1931) after settling in Berlin. In the diary of 19 October, he described it in detail and praised its high aesthetic value that overcomes the contemporary functionalist ideology; and he vividly revealed his admiration for its designer Ragnar Östberg (1866–1945): ‘When I departed from Japan, I hoped to meet Östberg. After seeing the City Hall, however, I didn’t feel like meeting him because I was overwhelmed by the greatness of the designer and felt severely my own shortcomings. But […] I plucked up the courage […] to write him a letter.’

It is not clear what sparked his fascination with Swedish architecture, but his connection with the country could be traced back to his university graduation thesis referring to the Swedish feminist writer Ellen Key (1849–1926) in support of his argument about the house’s meaning. Influenced by Key but rejecting the American feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman, he noted that ‘as a container of family life, the home is the place of rest, of a woman’s residence and a child’s education on the one hand, and the place of the social round on the other’. Also in some of his early works like the above-mentioned Beppu City Auditorium, he showed a clear indebtedness to Swedish National Romanticism. In the preface of his posthumous publication Sweden-Kenchiku, he again expressed a deep affection for Swedish architecture, regarding it as his ‘mental pabulum’ and ‘spiritual home’. Another notable comment was on the Weissenhofsiedlung in Stuttgart (1927) [24]. Because it is composed of over a score of blocks by 16 different architects, it presents a good indication of Yoshida’s architectural leanings. He showed little interest in the houses by Le Corbusier, Taut and Poelzig, but he thought that ‘Gropius’s was very good as expected’ and Mart Stam’s also pretty good. Although Yoshida enjoyed cordial relations with architects like Häring and Taut, he clearly preferred the more rational direction in design. With its prefabrication module, Gropius’s block embraces standardisation, which Yoshida emphasised as a merit of Japanese architecture in Das Japanische Wohnhaus, while Stam’s simple and modular design appealed to him for the same reason. This tendency had already been evident in his early distinction from Japanese Secessionist architects, and it continued throughout his later work. His disregard for Le Corbusier is rather unexpected, but he fully respected Corbusier’s master Auguste Perret, whose reinforced concrete tectonic demonstrated affinity with Japanese timber-framed structure. The less eye-catching but lasting beauty of his work exactly corresponds to Yoshida’s personality. That was perhaps the reason for visiting Perret’s buildings in Paris but not Le Corbusier’s.

Soon after landing in Europe, Yoshida found that many Western architects were eager to know about Japanese architecture. In a letter to one assistant
architect in Teishinsho on 27 September, he reported this and asked to be sent some detail drawings of the Japanese house: ‘I met quite a few Swiss architects and was guided to their architecture, but all were keenly interested in Japan. Because they want the actual size of the (Japanese style) sliding window, please make various drawings of it with wheels and others, and send them to me’.

In Stockholm, too, he was asked about Japanese architecture, particularly about the sliding window, by Asplund (22 October). According to Hideo Yahagi (1975), Yoshida carried with him some copies of his recently published Shin-Nihon-Jutaku-Zushō (Illustrations of New Japanese Houses, 1931), a private compilation of drawings and photographs of the two Baba residences ([17–20]. Probably, he showed or gave copies of this book to those expressing a strong interest in the Japanese house. This presumably raised further questions about the Japanese house among European architects, prompting them to ask him to write his book.

During his stay in Berlin, Yoshida visited the Dessau Bauhaus and delivered a short lecture there about Japanese architecture (7 November), but it is unlikely that many students attended because it was unscheduled and took place on a Saturday. The first direct effect of Yoshida’s contact with European architects was manifested by Asplund. About a month after his visit (10 November), Asplund gave his inaugural lecture on becoming professor at Stockholm’s Royal Institute of Technology. He emphasised ‘infinite space’, the conception of space in Oswald Spengler’s Der Untergang des Abendlandes (The Decline of the West, 1918) and concluded with the prediction that European architects would adopt the flexibility of the Japanese house: ‘Maybe we in Western Europe are coming closer to the Japanese idea of the house, as a not too fixed, heavy, and permanent object. Maybe we will adopt what has long been practised in Japan, changing our houses from one season to the next, from one inhabitant to the next, according to requirements. Remove entire walls during the summer for increased ventilation, just as the Japanese do.’ It is uncertain when Asplund started accepting these Japanese architectural characteristics so positively, but certainly his discussion with Yoshida encouraged him. Interestingly, when this lecture manuscript was published in the leading Swedish architectural journal Byggmästaren (1931), Asplund inserted as the opening illustration the veranda photograph of Yoshida’s Baba Villa at Nasu, which had been included in Yoshida’s Shin-Nihon-Jutaku-Zushō ([20–21])—Yoshida must have given his book to Asplund, and the same photograph was to be published again in Das japanische Wohnhaus ([15]). The inside-out and outside-in transition that this veranda photo symbolises exactly accords with the spatial concept that Asplund emphasised in the lecture, and the sliding door/window which he was so interested in is a practical tool for the spatial transition and for the flexible structure. Therefore, we can say that Yoshida’s role in Asplund’s lecture was critical.

Yoshida’s meeting with Josef Frank (1885–1967) in Vienna was also fruitful. The leading Austrian Modernist and disciple of Adolf Loos had carried out interiors for the Museum for East Asian art in Cologne (1912) and illustrated a Japanese atmosphere in his interior furnishings shop ‘Haus & Garten’ (1925). He had also shown a favourable attitude towards East Asia in Architektur als Symbol (1931): ‘Japan has freed us from the curse of monumentality, the earth embraces us again. Our house is our castle, but it no longer needs to be surrounded by wall and moat. The gifts of East Asia were dreams come true. The influence began with the smallest thing but finally led to a revision of the concepts of humanity, of nature and of art, which through this influence became something else.’ As Karin Lindegren has claimed (1996), Frank’s view of China and Japan was significant despite his somewhat romantic attitude, because it disclosed ‘his second confession of identity’. To Frank, the meeting with Yoshida (9–13 February 1932) became one more catalyst in his attraction to Far Eastern culture. When he emigrated to Sweden in 1933, he took with him ‘an understanding of Asian design’ according to Penny Sparke (1996).

Modern rationality and traditional Japan
Yoshida’s interaction with the West occurred both through travel and publication, but what was his underlying motive? There were perhaps two needs that he had to satisfy. One was to receive and to digest Western Modernism with its developed science and technology, and the other was to preserve the values of traditional Japanese architecture. These were the duties naturally assigned to Japanese architects of the time—also to all architects outside the West. This attitude might be comparable to the Meiji Japanese notion of ‘Wakon Yosai’, or Japanese spirit plus Western technology, but it was more positive in reflecting the latest social developments than the more passive former generation’s ethos. Considering
his career and personality, there seems little doubt that Yoshida was earnest regarding these matters. Educated in the modernised system, he had sought Shinkenchiku as other Japanese colleagues did, and he tried not to be out of date in international terms. He passionately studied Western models and applied the new architecture to his buildings. The one-year stay in the West was an invaluable chance for him to keep up with contemporary trends. At the same time, he took pride in his country’s architectural heritage and worked hard to publish the German trilogy about Japanese architecture. While most of his public buildings are presented as modern, he retained the traditional method of building for many private houses.

He needed a strategy to reconcile the two seemingly contradictory attitudes, and perhaps the way forward was theoretically to identify the modern rational architectural principle with the traditional Japanese. This point of view is confirmed most clearly by the preface of Sekai-no-Gendai-Kenchiku published one year before his travels abroad. Not surprisingly, Yoshida showed a favourable attitude towards modern rational architecture, which he believed ‘healthiest, most efficient and most economic’. To him, the decline of individualism and the rise of social consciousness in architecture after the First World War seemed very desirable, and his praise for the contemporary architectural stream in the West was coloured by the way he sensed traditional Japanese architectural principles there. He emphasised the simple and clear expression of rationalist architecture as ‘the traditional taste’ of Japan. Therefore, the gradual internationalisation of the trend was meaningful to him not only because it was healthy, efficient and economic, but also because it could be supposed to be Japanese in principle. The best example showing the parallel between modern rationalism and Japanese tradition is the post and beam structure, the former made with reinforced concrete, the latter with timber. This was the basis of Yoshida’s admiration of Perret, the pioneer of clear concrete structure in the West. But the more fundamental aspect in common that Yoshida wanted to see was the character of ‘jiyokusei’ or self-restraint. He (1942) defined this quality as ‘the attitude of harmonising with others by controlling the self’ and argued that it brings together all adjectives that harmonise with others by controlling the self’ and that he detected the same quality in the East Asian aesthetics that reflected the latest technology for modern architecture. He passionately studied Western models and applied the new architecture to Japanese architecture.

Conclusion

In research on East-West exchange in architecture, Yoshida’s position is important because he fills a void in history. Although there has been much research on Japanese contributions to Western architecture, most of it has focused on American architects, especially Wright, while studies concerning Europe have been limited mainly to Art Nouveau architecture. There is as yet relatively little material on what East Asia meant for European Modernists in the 1920s and early 1930s, during the time when the so-called International Style was formed and proclaimed. We can suggest two reasons for this lack of research. First, it was easy for European Modernists to neglect other cultural sources including the Japanese because they pursued an idea of universality that could be applied anywhere in the world, and valued a machine aesthetic that reflected the latest technology for its own sake. In this context, the story from a Far Eastern country might sound like a fairytale. Influenced by Nikolaus Pevsner, Chisaburoh Yamada (1976) judged that ‘the Japanese contribution to the development of Western architecture prior to World War II was insignificant except in the United States’ because modern architecture was born of ‘faith in European civilization’. But along with the increasing criticism against the narrowness of Pevsner’s view, this attitude has lost credibility. From another aspect, Japanese architecture was not new to European Modernists, for Japanese fashion had swept European art circles for decades around 1900. Coming through the Art Nouveau period, it was easily absorbed by European Modernism. Moreover, Western publications on Japanese architecture since the late nineteenth century had always reminded Europeans of the existence of Japan. In the meantime, the influence of Wright on Europe played an additional role in passing over to European Modernists the East Asian spatial concept that he had digested, so it was hardly possible to distinguish Japanese space from the modern one.

For these reasons, discussion about the Japanese role in European modern architecture between the two World Wars has been limited, and it seems that little evidence had been discovered by the time of Yamada’s remark. However, material is accruing to show that for leading modern architects in Europe, East Asian aesthetics was an important inspiration. Apart from the invisible Japanese sources already adopted by Modernism, we have found that the Modernists looked at Japan and other cultures time and again, inspired by what they found. Architects like Häring, Asplund and Aalto are prime examples, and again, inspired by what they found. Architects like Häring, Asplund and Aalto are prime examples, and behind them all was the hidden effort of Yoshida. Certainly, he was a key mediator of architectural interchange between East and West, which became possible through his travel and publications. Thereafter, it provided fertile soil to make possible a more active cross-cultural exchange in architecture. That was his dream.
Notes
2. This paper uses the opposition of ‘East and West’ to highlight cultural differences as well as geographical distance. Japan has represented the East (Asia) since late nineteenth century, just as Europe has been a cultural centre of the West, so in this research, the relation between Japan and Europe extends into that of ‘East and West’. I have adopted the term ‘East Asia’ rather than the Euro-centric ‘Far East’ to indicate China, Korea and Japan, and have been reluctant to use the word ‘Orient’ owing to its negative implications, as in Edward Said’s ‘Orientalism’ (1978). Notwithstanding, I hope this research will suggest one possibility of a ‘positive Orientalism’ (Arthur Versluis, 1993) that tries to find value in ‘the Other’ culture.
15. Ibid., p. 64.
19. For the first proper account of Yoshida’s works, see Yakushiji’s ‘Kaisetsu – Sakuhin-to-sono-Hensen’ (1968).
22. For the Baba family alone, he designed five villas at Ushigome (1928), Nasu (1928), Yamanote (1936), Karasuyama (1937) and Atami (1940).
23. He translated four books on Japan by Bruno Taut including Houses and People of Japan (1937); co-translation with Hideo Shinoda, 1949 and Steel Eider Rasmussen’s Nordische Baukunst (1940) into Japanese; wrote several articles like ‘Kuzukago’ (Trash can, 1950) and ‘Saikin-no-sekai-no-Kenchiku’ (World Contemporary Architecture Nowadays, 1954); and published Japanische Architektur (1952), the remarkably changed edition of Das japanische Wohnhaus (1954), Der japanische Garten (1957) and Sweden-to-Kenchiku (1957).
27. Among them, two Western

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41. Travel record dated 1 July 1931. Yoshida-Tetsuro-Kaigai-no-Tabi, p. 5. (Author's translation.)


43. According to Yamada, Japanese architects of the time looked through Western magazines every month, to keep up to date with the latest developments. Yakushiji, p. 9. and this was especially the case for Yoshida, though it is not known which magazines he had read.

44. This book, which he edited under the pseudonym of Tetsuro Shima, is a compilation of pamphlets that had been published every month since the year before. It deals with modern architecture in Germany, France, Holland, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Czechoslovakia, America, Russia, England, Belgium, Denmark, and Sweden in that order.


46. Concerning his graduation thesis, ‘Wagakuni-shorai-no-jutaku-kenchiku’ (Future house architecture in our country), see Mukai, pp. 88–89.


50. Guided by Richard Döcker (5 December 1931), the designer of two houses and the site architect during the construction, he was clearly well informed. Yoshida-Tetsuro-Kaigai-no-Tabi, p. 64.

51. I didn’t care about Corbusier. Gropius’s was good as expected. Mart Stam’s was quite good, too. I don’t care about Taut’s and Poelzig’s. Anyway, I was interested in houses, of which exterior colour was good as a whole.’ (Diary of 5 December; author’s translation.) Yoshida-Tetsuro-Kaigai-no-Tabi, p. 64.

52. Yoshida-Tetsuro-Kaigai-no-Tabi, pp. 122–123. Yoshida’s view of Perret was well described in his article ‘Kuzukago’. After comparing architecture with music, he describes: ‘If you seek after the genuine architecture like this genuine music, in contemporary architecture, I cannot but raise Auguste Perret’s architecture as the best.’ (Author’s translation.)

53. Yoshida-Tetsuro-Kaigai-no-Tabi, p. 20. (Author’s translation.)

54. I met Mart Stam at his office for the first time. ‘[… We talked about the new architecture in Germany and Sweden. He was interested in Japanese architecture, especially the sliding window, and asked me various questions about it.’ (Author’s translation.)


59. Though Frank’s role in this interior design was rather limited, his play with ‘spare black wooden moldings’ in some rooms was clearly reminiscent of the traditional Japanese interior. Christopher Long, Frank: Life and Work (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 27–31.

60. After visiting the shop (13 February), Yoshida wrote in his diary that ‘it imitates Japan very much’. Yoshida-Tetsuro-Kaigai-no-Tabi, p. 108.


64. In the nineteenth-century modernisation period, the other East Asian countries also had the similar ethos, ‘Zhongtī Xiyoung’ in China (Chinese essence and Western function) and ‘Dongdo Seogi’ in Korea (Eastern spirit and Western instrument).

65. Yoshida constructed his theory of Japaneseess in architecture on the premise that Westerners are inclined more to conquer nature than to accommodate themselves to it: ‘According to Western philosophy, nature does not have any value in herself. It is the thing that man has to conquer to form culture and the thing that should be used. ‘Yoshida, ‘Kenchiku-Yishō-to-jisokusuisu’, (Author’s translation.)


68. One simple example can be found in Giovanni Bernasconi’s Futurist writing, ‘Messaggio sull’architettura moderna’ (1914): ‘[…] we must resolve the problem
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Hyon-Sob Kim

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Hyon-Sob Kim completed his doctoral thesis on Alvar Aalto’s Villa Mairea at the School of Architecture, University of Sheffield, in 2005 and is currently researching ‘East Asian influence on modern architecture in Europe, 1918–39’ at the same institution on a research grant from the AHRC.

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Tetsuro Yoshida, Das japanische Wohnhaus (Berlin: Verlag Ernst Wasmuth, 1933), 14–15

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