양차 대전 사이 (1918-1939) 동아시아가 유럽 근대건축에 미친 영향

- East Asian Influence on Modern Architecture in Europe, 1918-1939 -

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한국인 연구자로서 근대건축 형성기에 있어서의 동아시아의 역할을 논할 수 있을까? 20세기 전반 우리 건축의 혁명이 세계의 대세에서 소외되었다는 사실, 그리고 당시 일본 주도적인 동아시아 권역의 틀을 이러한 연구에서 과감히 벗어버리는 것이 논혹치 않다는 사실은 우리로 하여금 이 주제로부터 소원케 한다. 일본이나 중국의 건축이 근대건축 발전에 기여한 바를 들추어내는 것은 한국 건축의 가치를 동반 상승시키는 것인가, 아니면 우리의 입지만 더욱 비좁게 만드는 불필요한 양여인가? 어쩌면 이러한 질문 자체가 철저한 민족주의의 그림자를 짓는 것일지도 모르다. 이와 같은 문제제기는 현재진행형으로 우리를 끝없이 다그치고 있다. 하지만 연구 근거지의 다음으로 인해, “양차 대전 사이 (1918-1939) 동아시아가 유럽 근대건축에 미친 영향”이라는 필자의 연구과제는 이러한 문제로부터 다소 자유롭게 진행되고 있다. 같은 제목으로 필자는 지난 4월 미국 SAH 연례학회의 한 세션을 맡아 진행하였고, 본 프로젝트의 후원단체인 영국 AHRC에 제출할 이에 관한 리포트/리뷰를 작성하였다. 국내 연구자들에게도 흥미로운 내용이므로 이곳에 실고자 한다.

Cultural exchange between East and West provoked fashions in Europe such as Chinoiserie and Japonisme before it influenced modern architecture. The American master Frank Lloyd Wright is usually considered to have shown this influence most clearly, drawing on the spatial concept of Laotse, organic features of Japanese architecture, and Korean underfloor heating (Wright, 1939 and 1954). There have been numerous studies of his architecture in relation to the Orient (e.g. Nute, 2000) and more generally about Japanese influence in the USA (Lancaster, 1963). But there have been no synthetic studies
of parallel influence in Europe, perhaps because "modern Western architecture was linked with faith in European civilization" as Chisaburoh Yamada (1976) stated. Evidence is accruing, however, that for leading modern architects in Europe, East Asian aesthetics was an inspiration. The "Japanese line" was a "salvation" to Henry Van de Velde (1910); the geometric urban plan of Beijing was considered an alternative example to maze-like European cities by Le Corbusier (1925); the Japanese house was cited as a model for Europeans by Gunnar Asplund (1931); the Austrian Josef Frank’s designs and book (1931) were remarkably indebted to East Asian models; Japanese design elements were adopted for Alvar Aalto’s own house (1934–36) and his Villa Mairea (1937–39); Chinese influence was acknowledged by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1937); and Hugo Häring’s writings from the early 1940s illustrate his strong interest in China and Japan. Such examples prompt the question of whether East Asian sources were essential or used only in passing, and this question became the initiative of my engagement in the research on "East Asian Influence on Modern Architecture in Europe, 1918–1939". Fortunately, Professor Peter Blundell Jones and I were awarded the AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) Research Grant for the study in University of Sheffield for two years from March 2006. As one strategy of this project, we decided to offer to take on a session in the Annual Meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians, the most authentic and regular conference of architectural history at an international level, and our session proposal was accepted for the 60th meeting in Pittsburgh this year.

We had two clear purposes in this session. One was to disseminate the research results achieved so far; the other was to gather ideas and information in this subject area and to see what other researchers in other places are doing. The latter was given more emphasis because we were certain to get a broader viewpoint from other speakers’ papers and also from discussions between the speakers and the audience. Among the various paper proposals which arrived by August of last year, three were selected. One was on Japonisme and the British Modern Movement focusing on Wells Coates (1895–1958) by Anna Basham, a PhD candidate at Chelsea College of Art & Design in London; another on Richard Neutra’s three-week visit to Japan in 1930 by Barbara Lamprecht from Pasadena of California, who is the author of Richard Neutra: Complete Works (Taschen, 2000); and the third was on Charlotte Perriand’s reception of Japan by Irène Vogel Chevrolet and Yasushi Zenno, PhD candidates respectively at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne and at the University of Tokyo. According to the initial plan, I was supposed to be another speaker in this session, on Alvar Aalto and Japan or on Tetsuro Yoshida’s year-long stay in the West (1931–32) and his publication of Das
japanische Wohnhaus (1935). However, after considering the balance of the theme - no subject above deals with Chinese impact, we decided that Blundell Jones would present a paper on Hans Scharoun’s and Hugo Häring’s perception of the East, especially of China, and I chaired the session.

There were altogether 25 parallel sessions in this meeting from "Thursday Morning Sessions" (April 12) to "Saturday Morning Sessions"(April 14), 5 sessions at the same time at different rooms in the venue Omni William Penn Hotel, Pittsburgh. Our session was held at the so-called Urban Room from 2:00 to 4:30 on Friday afternoon (April 13). One of the virtues of the SAH Annual Meeting must be, I believe, their organising skill. Not only did they announce "Call for Session Proposals" almost two years in advance – we submitted this session proposal at the beginning of January 2006 even before our AHRC Research Grant commenced – but they also let all speakers circulate their full papers in their session more than a month earlier than the actual meeting. Before arriving at the conference venue, all speakers know in detail what other speakers in their session are going to talk about. Deeper and more extensive discussions become possible on the stage. Another seemingly petty but actually remarkable arrangement by the SAH is "Speaker’s Breakfast" every morning. In the Friday morning, our session gang – except Mr. Zenno who could not attend in the conference – was already on the round-table discussion over Breakfast.

I made a simple plan for the 2.5 hour session. 10 minutes were allotted to the chair for the introduction to the session subject and 30 minute time to the four speakers for 25 minute presentation and 5 minute simple questions and answers, of which timetable makes a 20 minute discussion possible at the end. It is crucial in all kinds of conferences and symposiums to be punctual to secure an enough discussion time, but it is generally difficult to keep time. In worst cases, time is over in the midst of a last speaker’s presentation, to say nothing of a discussion time. In fact, the 30 minute time in our session is relatively generous to one speaker and we could have 30 minutes remain after the last contributor.

Professor Blundell Jones, the co-organiser and first speaker of this session presented a paper entitled "Scharoun and Häring: East-West Connections." As he confessed in the beginning of the presentation, it was not until his "recent exposure to Chinese and Korean architecture" that he realised the significance of the two architects’ connection with the East although he had researched on them for more than three decades. His argument
evolved out of Häring’s "Discussions about Chinese Architecture," the minutes of six meetings of Häring, Scharoun, Chen Kuan Lee and John Scott between November 1941 and May 1942, and he presented some parallels between this series of small seminars and the two architects’ designs and writings, not to mention the oriental allusions in designs like the ideal town plan “Chiweb” (1942) and the tiny garden-house "hermitage" (1941). Häring’s essay "Conversation with Chen Kuan Lee about some roof profiles" (1947) [Fig. 1] must be the most remarkable evidence of his appropriation of Chinese architecture for his architectural attitude. He acknowledged the Chinese roof as their "Wesen" or "beingness" but accused the modernist’s horizontal roof – especially that attributed to Mies – of "squashing the poor inhabitant". For Scharoun, one obvious product of the meetings was an essay on Chinese city planning (1945), of which concept was, Blundell Jones argued, perhaps "a catalyst" for his designs like Darmstadt School (1951), Berlin Old People’s Home (1952), Kassel Theatre (1952), Mannheim National Theatre (1953) and also for the Berlin Philharmonie (1956). However, it seems rather questionable to directly link the austere North-South axis of the traditional Chinese city to the varied and extremely complicated axes of Scharoun’s buildings even though both share "hierarchical axial thinking" in plan. Blundell Jones’s paper is valuable in that it opened up the unknown aspect of the well-known architects but it also deserves credit for drawing attention to the Chinese architect Lee’s role as go-between and for the excavation of Ernst Boerschmann’s books like Chinesische Architektur (1925) and Rudolf Kelling’s Das Chinesische Wohnhaus (1935), which were provided for the meetings by Lee.
The second speaker Basham delivered her treatise "At the crossroads of Modernism and Japonisme: Wells Coates and the British Modern Movement." In this work, she illustrated Coates' life-long interest in Japan, which was hugely indebted to his upbringing in Japan in childhood, and investigated Japanese resonance in his writings - "Inspiration from Japan" (1931), "Materials for Architecture" (1931), "Furniture Today–Furniture Tomorrow" (1932), and "The Living Room To–day" (1933) - and designs like Lawn Road Flat (1933–34). He extracted five points for modern architecture from the traditional Japanese house in the writings - frame construction; blurring the boundary of inside and outside; sliding screen; built-in furniture; and the concept of tokonoma, which he went on to apply to the minimum flat design [Fig. 2]. As she argued, however, the inspiration from Japan was not limited to his own work but spread wider, because he was one of the most influential architects in the British Modern Movement - a founder member of the Twentieth Century Group, Unit One and Chairman of the MARS, the British branch of the CIAM. His colleagues Raymond McGrath, Serge Chermayeff and Christopher Tunnard also showed interest in or adoption of Japanese themes in their works. If Basham’s thesis is fully accepted, certainly it fills gaps in the histories both of the British Modern Movement and of Japonisme. With this paper, she successfully revealed the largely ignored aspect of the former and its intersection with the latter.

The third paper "Neutra in Japan" by Lamprecht explored Richard Neutra’s three-week visit to Japan in June 1930, before he participated in the Brussels CIAM. During the stay in Japan, which was possible through his friendship with Kameki Tsuchiura from Taliesin days and the sponsorship from Kokusai–kenchiku, he had delivered a lecture "Modern Architecture as an Idea and a Practice" in Osaka and Tokyo and visited a number of traditional and modern buildings in Japan. As a result, Lamprecht wrote, Neutra not only confirmed "his own belief that architecture and urban design could be standardized but tailored to the unique, and that by understanding the universal qualities inherent in each
human being, we can better address the individual," but he also published several articles on Japanese architecture in 1931’s issues of Die Form like "Japanische Wohnung, Ableitung, Schwierigkeiten" (Japanese Dwelling, Development, Difficulties; March) and "Neue Architektur in Japan" (September) [Fig. 3]. As the organ of the Deutsche Werkbund influential among European modernists’ circle, this magazine must have played a role in spreading the news from Japan to the West, but Lamprecht carefully concluded that "it is difficult to know what impact Neutra’s brief presence in East Asia had in Europe." Her conclusion reminded me of Manfred Speidel’s paper "The Presence of Japanese Architecture in German Magazines and Books 1900–1950" (Japan–Germany architectural exchange symposium in Kobe, 2005). In this paper, Speidel suggested that Häring and Hilberseimer could have known Yoshida’s Baba House (1928) which was illustrated in Neutra’s article in the March issue of the journal. This might have been one reason that the Berlin modernists encouraged Yoshida to write a book on "japanischen Wohnungsbau" – resulting in Das japanische Wohnhaus, one of the most influential books on Japanese architecture in the West. If Speidel’s assumption is correct, Neutra’s short visit to Japan was historically more significant than Lamprecht sketched.

Our final paper “Japan 1940–41: Imprint and resonance in Charlotte Perriand’s designs” was presented by Vogel Chevroulet. This research investigated Charlotte Perriand’s stay in Japan between 1940 and 1941, especially focusing on her visit in Kyoto to Ryoanji, Imperial Palace, Katsura, Shugakuin and Ginkakuji, and studied her travel diaries in Japan and articles published in France from 1946 to 1950 along with her interior design of the Japanese Ambassador’s Residence in Paris (1970). The invitation of Perriand to Japan as a Government designer was mediated by Junzo Sakakura, who got to know her during
his stay in Le Corbusier’s atelier between 1931 and 1936. In this paper, Vogel Chevroulet pointed out several Japanese features that impressed Perriand, such as "harmonious standardization," "juxtaposition of opposites," "temporality," and "mobility." Particularly, the standardisation matter seemed most attractive to Perriand – and clearly to Vogel Chevroulet, too, who deliberately juxtaposed Perriand’s "systematic dimensioning" indebted to Japan with her adoption of Corbusier’s Modulor. As Blundell Jones commented, however, not only doesn’t the Modulor fit into Japanese cases, but "at such an intimate scale" Perriand was also "likely to encounter the problems of trying to make it work." At any rate, it is true that Perriand found the modern in the traditional Japanese [Fig. 4]: "Moderns here can easily go on with tradition – one finds our principles" (diary of 1 October 1940). But Vogel Chevroulet was also clever enough to judge that "Perriand […] is clever enough not talking of influence but of meeting of Western architectural principles, Le Corbusier’s in particular, with those illustrated in the traditional Japanese house."

All of these papers are seriously studied invaluable researches. The architects discussed in this session perceived modernity in the East Asian tradition though the extent might vary, and illustrated their positive acceptance of Chinese and Japanese sources. The term "influence" in the session title has a rather strong imposition to carry the intended stimulative nuance but it has some different levels of meanings. As Vogel Chevroulet’s remark on Perriand already implied, our speakers were very conditional in using the term but adopted other words depending on situation, such as "catalyst," "inspiration," "resonance," and "imprint." In these architects’ interaction with the East, we can corroborate an interesting point that people see what they want to see. For example,
Neutra’s and Perriand’s encounter with the Japanese standardisation was a vivid "confirmation" and "inspiration" for their design principles, but Häring exploited Laotze’s philosophy to tackle the "disease" of standardisation in his later article "The Craving for Standardisation" (1948). Also, while Neutra superimposes horizontal window bands of modern buildings with "historical horizontalism" of Asakusa Pagoda’s roof layers [Fig. 3], Häring made the most of the oriental roof profile to criticise modernists’ "obsession with the horizontal" as mentioned above [Fig. 1]. On the other hand, one thing that needs to be mentioned is the slight deviation of the papers from the initial session guidelines concerning the thematic period. Originally, I wanted to focus on the inter-war time, 1918 to 1939, firstly because it was the most critical period in European modernism, when the Modern Movement was formed, CIAM founded, and the International Style proclaimed and propagated; and secondly because C. Yamada (1976) jumped to the conclusion that the East Asian role in "the development of Western architecture prior to World War II was insignificant except in the United States." Basham’s paper exactly conforms to the chosen period but Blundell Jones’s and Vogel Chevroulet’s ones slightly overstepped the time limit. However, I believe that the chronological boundary fully completed its task as a hypothetical setting. As well their papers included some crucial events of the architects which occurred during the time and echoed in their later works – Häring’s meeting with Yoshida and Mamoru Yamada in the early 1930s and Perriand’s friendship with Sakakura; time and history is in fact not a thing that can be as neatly cut up as cheesecake. That is why the papers were acceptable for the session. Even through Basham’s Coates and other British architects alone, not to speak of the cases of Alvar Aalto and Josef Frank, C. Yamada’s judgement was proved irrelevant in the present historiography.

Initiating this session, Blundell Jones and I expected to open insights at several levels: to show a balanced view of the East Asian contribution to modern architecture in the West by exploring the European side as counterpart to the American; to illuminate a further aspect of a multi-faceted modern architecture; and to provide an example of "positive Orientalism" (Versluis, 1993) in contrast with Said’s negative "Orientalism" (1978). Now, I dare to say that we achieved the aim to a large extent with concrete evidence. To the architects studied in this session, the East Asian examples were not things merely exotic but what were more profound. Gropius’s late encounter with Japan adds further supporting proof: "Dear Corbu, all what we have been fighting for has its parallel in old Japanese culture. This rock-garden of Zen-monks in the 13. century – stones and raked white pebbles – could be by Arp or Brancusi – an elating spot of peace. You would be as excited as I am in this 2000 years old space of cultural wisdom!
The Japanese house is the best and most modern I know of and truly prefabricated.” (Postcard to Le Corbusier; 23 June 1954) ***

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* References except the four papers:
Richard Neutra, "Japanische Wohnung, Ableitung, Schwierigkeiten", in *Die Form*, vol. 6, h. 3 (March 1931), 92-97.
Chuan Wen Sun, *Der Einfluss des chinesischen Konzeptes auf die moderne Architektur*, IGMA Diss. 12 (Stuttgart: Karl Krämer Verlag, 1982).