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The significance and the regeneration process of the Japanese built heritage

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Translation by Valerie Magar

Abstract

Built heritage is the result of a humanizing process, conscious and developed over time. From the moment that it acquires value it is impregnated with meaning. And, it is this significant condition that allows it to be eternal through history, myths or rites. This essay, in this specific context, aims at understanding the importance of meaning in built heritage regeneration, based on the Japanese heritage examples. Methodologically, a critical and morphological analysis of several examples in Japan, procedurally the Meiji Shrine and the Tokyo Station, is developed to identify the recreation processes of the built and cultural heritage. As a hypothesis it is stated that the built heritage is a product resulting from a creative process of invention. That is, it is a man-made physical and cultural identity that results from a constructive process, sedimented and never stagnant.

Keywords: *Morphology, morphogenesis, built heritage, significance.*

The sedimentation[1] of heritage and (un)consciousness

In the process of finding the sense of perfection or of purification in the materiality of time, man defines his own personality. It is a process of identity and cultural individuation.

And, by identifying and analyzing all the sedimentary layers of time, the individual has the ability to influence the next phase of the continuous regeneration process of the built heritage. Regeneration is thus a process of projecting from one element to another, a "transfer" (Jung, 1964: 12) of meaning, value judgment or idea.

The "transfer" results simultaneously from similar events between the past and the present, and the creation of myths, fables, dreams, visions or individual delusions. However, the process is always the outcome of somatic phenomena, conscious and unconscious.

Regardless of the sources of definition, the process is a changeable variation determined by the personality of the actors. The collective consciousness is often defined in the symbolic character, individual contents and collective symbols that define or help to understand its cultural and social dimension.

[1] The concept of sedimentation is a geological analogy regarding the progressive deposition of sediments over time. By similarity, it means a set of successive transformations of the constructed urban fabric, resulting from the imposition of cultural values of successive societies over time. These context factors come simultaneously from the superposition of new identity elements and from the appropriation of pre-existing architectural structures.

Man uses symbols as a linguistic expression or manifesto of what he wants to transmit (Jung, 2000: 20). It is a symbolic process, conscious, unconscious or spontaneous, of concepts representation through images.

These symbols are the active expression of man in his culture affirmation over time and, in part, of his aspiration to reach the divine or the transcendent. Man has the ability to extrapolate the "old values" sense in the creation, and not just inventing, new paradigms (Henderson, 2000: 152).

For Gustav Jung unconscious thought is the result of a conscious perception of real events. The relationship between dreams and their meanings with reality is the sublime action that leads the mind to a "subsequent realization of what must have happened" (Jung, 2000: 23). This perception of (ir)reality is based on elements permanently incorporated into the memory of man, often obvious desires but that are still an "illusory" fantasy.

In the drawing process, even if the performer does not have the immediate perception or memory of a past event, the unconscious will influence the concretion of an idea similar to another, nonexistent or existing. Although the conscious application of the concepts of copy and replication can also be applied.

Aniela Jaffé mentions that the object, copy, replica or creative invention, "is a form of 'sympathy,' based on truthfulness" (Jaffé, 2000: 235) that seeks to replace the original or anticipates an event. Substitution comes from the interaction of the actor with (his) image. However, Ascensión Hernández Martínez argues that copies or replicas can never reconstruct the history of the original because they are unable to transmit the events of their evolutionary past, "falsifying the complexity and historical truth of it". See for example the tourist "Little Edo", in the Japanese city of Kawagoe. This street was built in the 20th century, similar to the built typologies of the Edo period, "as a tradition created in the mirror of modernity" (Gluck, 1992: 263).

What are reproduced are the memories, and not history. The imaginary of the past is manipulated and accepted as an acquired fact in the present. Edo's memory is the narrative of a symbolism created to decode history and reinvent the concept of a new identity, a modern Japanese identity.

The built heritage, as a created cultural symbol, recreated, sometimes invented, is the deliberate and conscious result of the productions of man. In the process of transferring the object over time, common, uniform or globalizing values, or own previously acquired experiences, are reused.

The authenticity of a built object can be affected by the memory of a past event, but it can also result from a completely new creative thought. The value of authentic must not be considered exclusively for a specific moment, but as a result of the accumulation of multiple experiences. Authenticity is an intention, a cultural expression and not a specific form.

For Yukio Nishimura, the concept of authenticity is an idea that changes over time; it changes rapidly along with society. The dilemma between preservation and the qualitative adequacy of time is a contemporary problem that reflects the difficulty in defining an idea of authenticity, especially in a social and cultural context as diverse as the Japanese (Nishimura, 1994: 175-183).

In Japan, the built and cultural heritage is a living element, a mnemonic image of the past, which is active and functional for society. The space corresponds to a purpose where the value of authentic resides in the initial form and meaning and not in the sedimentation of time. The change is accepted as a way to perpetuate the meaning that substantiates social and cultural value. Form and materiality are only receptacles to hold that purpose.

Man transforms objects or forms into symbols, he consciously attributes importance to them. And, in this way, he confers continuity, significance and emotion to the object.

Materiality and symbolism

The "natural" and urban landscape, cultural and built heritage, are covered with meaning and symbolism, vicissitudes of a concrete past that matter in the process of identity valorization of today's society, particularly in the context of Japanese heritage intervention treatments.

The transfer, the process of regeneration of the object, is based on an ideal of original that, by restitution or recycling of the traditional landscape or its single buildings, seeks to value a specific moment above any other. The choice of the moment is an attitude very similar to the processes used in Europe; Portugal and Spain are not an exception, especially in the first half of the 20th century.

However, for Junichirō Tanizaki, what separates the West and Japan is the method. In the West, transfer is a continuous sedimentary process, a "natural path" of contiguous secular events that allowed the construction of a single entity. In Japan, it is a consequence of the later and "bifurcated" introduction of new events. "But whatever it was the direction we had taken, it was undoubtedly the one that suited our own nature" (Tanizaki, 2008: 23). The process of action tends to the valorization of the meaning together with the utilitarian expression that the object has in its environment.

In the process of Japanese heritage intervention treatments, contrary to the context of Western preservation measures, the importance of the meaning and utility of the built heritage overlay its form. The form emerges only as a vehicle to achieve an ecstasy within itself and not a particular physical condition, although there are exceptions.

The exceptions are those that involve the musealization of built heritage instead of its "living" continuity. One can see, for example, the Sankeien Garden, in Yokohama, or the idea of beauty implicit in the experience of the *wabi-sabi* concept.

The Sankeien is a "Japanese style" garden built in 1906 and designed by Tomitaro Hara. The landscape was intended to display a "traditional" garden, composed by several examples of Japanese art and architecture, such as pagodas, houses and tea houses, brought for the most part from Kyoto and Kamakura. The gardens and buildings that had been damaged during World War II were restored to their original state between 1953 and 1958.

The other exception is the fascination with the beauty of the "imperfect, impermanent and incomplete" object (Koren, 2008: 7). The *wabi-sabi* is a Japanese concept that aims to define the beauty from the expression of time in an old object or building, from a fallen autumn leaf to an aged wooden door. Beauty is implicit in its meaning and in the experience of the relationship between it and man, in which the object is part of a life cycle. It is created, it lives and dies without being redone or transformed by an intentional human gesture.

This sensory, spiritual and metaphysical principle tries in some way to define the sense of the eternal found in the Buddhist culture: it is diluted in the renewal and purification of the form in the Shinto shrines, as will be seen as follows.

The cycle and the eternal

To understand Japanese traditional architecture it is imperative to recognize the influence of religion in social daily life, particularly the Shinto and Buddhist religions. The richness of the traditional landscape, buildings and public space, is a result a process of adaptation of concepts to time and social life. In these, the meaning is eternal and architecture starts from a cycle.

In the Shinto culture, man, like nature, is part of a renewal and constant purification cycle. In the renovation process, the primordial design, taken somehow to be original, is perpetuated. An mediatic example of the renewal cyclic process is the Sanctuary of Ise, seen every twenty years (Figure 1).

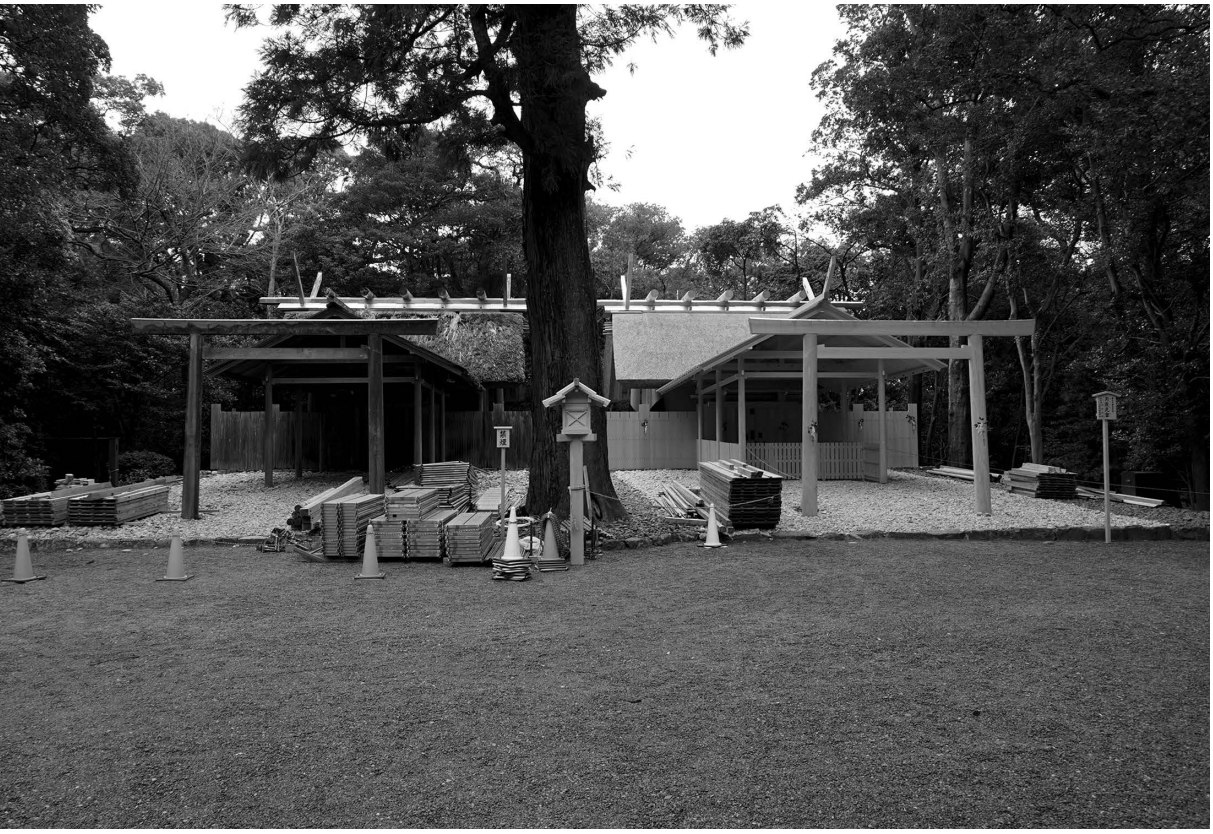


FIGURE 1. PROCESS OF CYCLIC CONSTRUCTION OF THE SHINTO SHRINES IN THE CITY OF ISE. Moment when the old and the new Tsukiyomi-no-miya Shrine remain built at the same time, 2015. *Image: José Miguel Silva.*

However, the old object – building, bridge or portico – does not disappear completely. It can be disassembled and partially reused in another context, or even be completely remounted. This is a relatively recent method invented in the Meiji period, in the second half of the 20th century (Breen, 2013: 3). In the Tokugawa period, with government influenced by the Shogun and Daimyō, the shrines were not dismantled; they lost their use but were allowed to remain until they collapsed of their own accord.

The process of moving an object from one place to another can be done according to two methods. The first is by means of decomposed displacement which implies disassembling the artifact and subsequently reassembling it, therefore, producing a kind of copy of the original. The second involves moving the object as a whole, without disassembling or demolishing it. Examples of this are the first Torii of the Hikawa Shrine in the Saitama district and the Yutenji Temple in Tokyo (Figure 2). The first was moved in 1976 from the Meiji Shrine; the second was moved in 2015 using traditional techniques: the building is raised and based on a timber board over steel cylinders, moving along a metal beam.

FIGURE 2. MOVEMENT AND ROTATION OF THE TEMPLE YUTENJI, MEGURO, TOKYO, 2014.
Image: José Miguel Silva.

The belief in the eternal life defines the process of restoration of Buddhist temples. The building in its initial form must, therefore, be eternal. Examples of this are the Hōryūji temple in Nara and the Rinnōji temple in Nikko, with more than a thousand years of existence.

However, the pathological effect of time on wood imposes the renewal of parts in its restoration process. The process involves the complete disassembly of the buildings (Figure 3), the replacement of damaged parts and their re-assembly. Through the process of repairing its parts, these religious complexes are continuously conserved[2].

Curiously, Takahiro Kito argues that it is impossible to make an exact copy of a wooden building, because the materials and carpenters are different from those present in its initial construction. For example, the Sanctuary of Ise is far from being a perfect copy of its original, not being in its entirety, but is close enough to understand that that small changes are added over time (Kito, 2004).

[2] Note that this processual type on built heritage in Japan in older than the creation of a Conservation Theory in Europe in the 19th century. And the longevity of this temple aims at proving this statement.

According to Shigeni Inaga, the process of renewal and recycling of the symbols and specific buildings is not recognized as a historical heritage value. The Sanctuary of Ise is a monument without monumentality, entirely constituted in time by a succession of copies, a replica of itself (Inaga, 2012: 114), a "historical falsehood" (Hernández Martínez, 2007: 61).

FIGURE 3. THE RINNŌJI TEMPLE, NIKKO, TOTALY DISMANTLED FOR ITS RESTORATION, 2014.
Image: José Miguel Silva.

Therefore, even before the reconstruction of the building, the space or any other physical structure, the restitution process is the (re)construction of an identity symbol. It is a creative form of the society to discover, and often restore, the symbols constructed during a recent past, as a visible space in the field of imaginative memory. The mythology that surrounds religion and the spirit seems to be, in some way, moldable according to the imagination of society, through the reflection of traditional symbols and rituals (Tange, 1965: 18).

Two particular cases

To better illustrate the topic under discussion, the Meiji Shrine and the Tokyo Station, two casuistic examples of the restitution of a symbol in Japan, can be studied. Their study aims to address issues such as the invention of a symbol, the diversity of the urban landscape and authentic value in the process of restitution of the "original".

A transversal and morphological reading of its space in time allows us, in some way, to understand how the urban fabric and the cataloged building were transformed and adapted to a new social and architectural context, recognizing the elements and the persistent or transformed parts in time.

Invention and restitution of the Meiji Shrine

The Meiji Shrine [Meiji Jingū |明治 神宮],[3] in Tokyo, is catalogued as a cultural asset and exemplifies a creative process of invention and restitution of an identity symbol in Japan. The process was based on a new method, form and spatial organization, rejecting the restitution or replication of its previous state.

[3] The Meiji Shrine is considered as an Imperial Sanctuary [*Kanpei Taisha*], the most important sanctuary in the hierarchy of the modern system of classification of Shinto sanctuaries. The sanctuary is composed by the *inner shrine* [内苑 | *naien*] and the *outer shrine* [外苑 | *gaien*], linked in the West by the *Omotesandō* [表参道] and in the northeast by the *Urasandō* [裏参道]. Both connections represent a *sandō*, with the *Omote* being the main approach, and *Ura* the back door of a secondary road.

Initially, the shrine was designed by Chūta Itō in a Nagare-zukuri style and built between 1912-1920. This style was considered as the "genuine Japanese flavor" (Imazumi, 2013: 34) and represent the spirit of the Meiji period (1868-1912). Its authenticity lay in the harmony of the design, between the native and Buddhist architectural forms, the ceremony and the structure, which characterizes the ancestral architecture of Chinese influence.

Symbolically, it is representative of the use of religion to induce, through built heritage, values of loyalty, patriotism and morality as national spiritual beliefs. The worship of the memory of Emperor Meiji and his wife, Empress Shōken, in the form of a religion was invented according to the premises of nature and Shinto rituals. The emperor is celebrated as a deity (Imaizumi, 2014).

The natural surroundings of the shrine were designed by Seiroku Honda in order to create an "eternal forest", which recreates and renews itself. The forest assumes, thus, a symbolic value that pretends to perpetuate in its nature the spirit of the Emperor.

The construction of the sanctuary on the outskirts of the city allowed the creation of a new centrality, the district of Harajuku, with its own spatial and cultural identity (Figure 4). Its relation with its urban context is carried out mainly through the *Omotesandō*. This primordial access was built from the division of rural plots, with agricultural uses and forest fields, evolving from a dispersed and small urban agglomerate to a densified set of large buildings aligned on the main roads.

The period of World War II corresponds to a deep discussion about the religious Shinto concept. The idea was to demonstrate the spirit of Shintoism as an "ancient religion", linked to the culture, history and identity of Japan, and not as a national "propaganda" of the state (Imazumi, 2013: 206). Consequently, this new ideal would influence the process of reconstruction of the Sanctuary between 1952 and 1958.

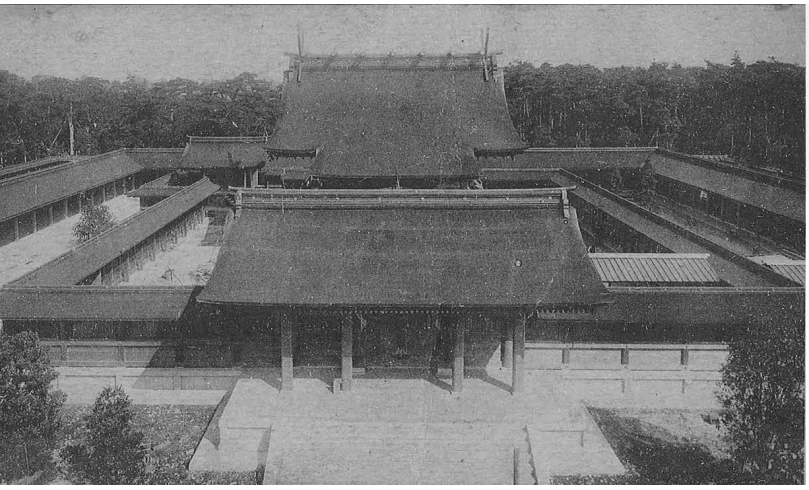
Partly destroyed by an allied military bombardment in 1945, the new Shrine was rebuilt according to the design of the architect Takashi Sunami. The objective was to restore a symbol, not by the replication of a past form, but by adapting it to new spatial arrangements and architectural forms (Figures 5 and 6). That is to say, its reconstruction was not only the reconstruction of the physical form, but also the transformation of its concept, enhancing the space in its spiritual plenitude and and as part of Japanese society.

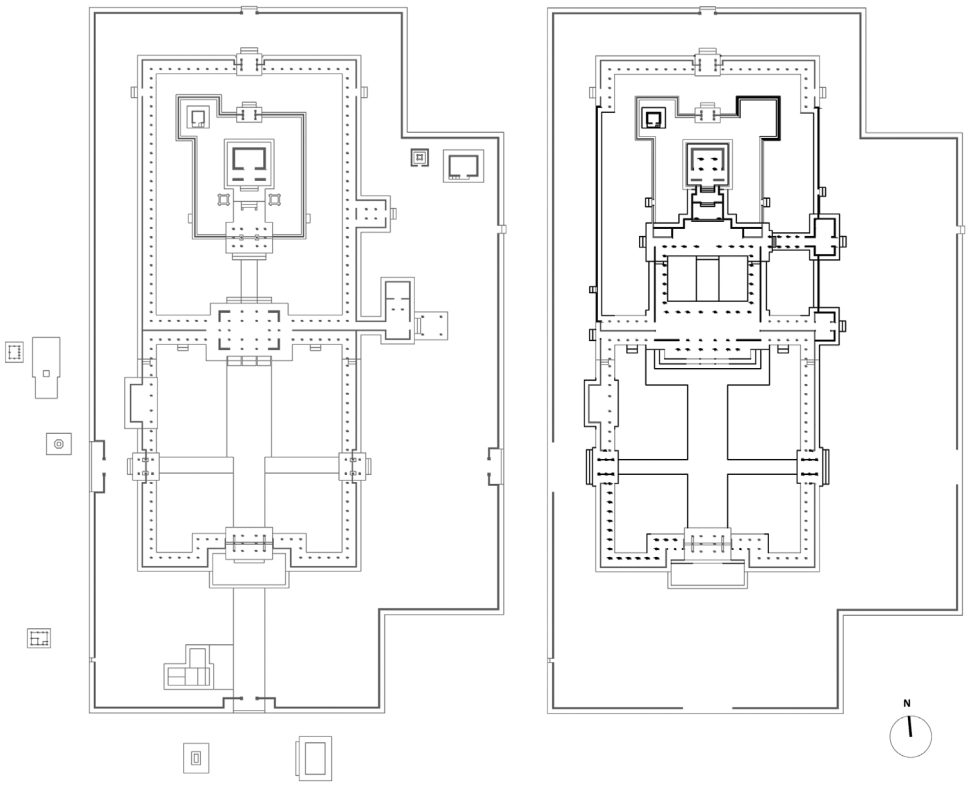
During the postwar occupation of the lands adjacent to the sanctuary, it was the Allies clear intent to superpose new ideological concepts to the Japanese national and cultural symbolism (Waley, 1984: 430). One can refer, for example, to the construction of the North American military barracks south of the sanctuary.

In 1964, with the organization of the Olympic Games in Tokyo, Japan sought to illustrate the strength of Japan's society in the process of growth and reconstruction of its nationality. In that process, the old military barracks were adapted for the Athletes' Village and the new stadiums designed by architect Kenzo Tange were built. After the sports event, the Olympic village was demolished for the construction of the current public park, the *Yoyogi Kōen*.

Thus, in this particular case, one can understand that the significance of the Sanctuary as a national symbol is the result of a cultural manifestation that has been created, recreated or even invented. Even without forcing the replica or the copy, the cultural meaning has been perfected in its essence as a spiritual and religious space, as well as adapted to a new material and, above all, social reality. The intention of the Meiji tradition is, in reality, a process of reconstructing its own tradition.

FIGURE 4. EVOLUTION OF THE MEIJI SHRINE AND HARAJUKU NEIGHBORHOOD: 1880-1909 –property on the outskirts of the city; 1909-1937 –construction of the Sanctuary and the surrounding forest; 1937-1945 –Military occupation; 1958-present –demilitarization, construction of stadiums and Yoyogi park. *Image: José Miguel Silva.*





FIGURES 5 AND 6. SANCTUARY MEIJI BEFORE AND AFTER ITS RECONSTRUCTION IN 1958.
Image 5: Courtesy images of the Meiji Jingu Intercultural Research Institute. Image 6: José Miguel Silva.

Tokyo Station and the restitution of a past ideal

The Tokyo Station, surrounded by the Marunouchi neighborhood, is an urban element with symbolic character that it shares with the Imperial Palace; its importance lies in the definition of urban centrality in the city's composition or layout and the surrounding urban fabric, as well as in the heritage context (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7. EVOLUTION OF THE TOKYO STATION AND THE MARUNOUCHI DISTRICT: 1880 –regular urban layout and daimyō parcel structure; 1909-1937 –stabilization of the layout and construction of the Station; 1958-2000 –Reconstruction in the postwar period; 2000-current –densification of the urban fabric. *Image: José Miguel Silva.*

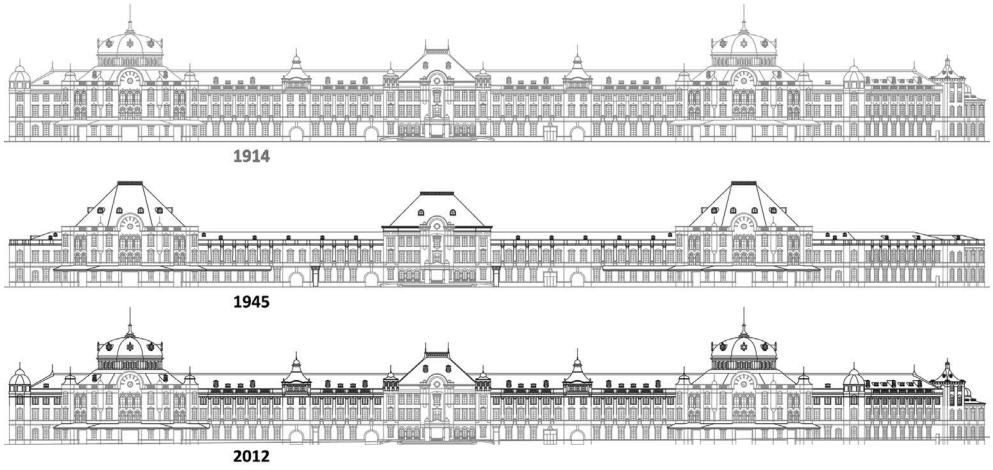
The Meiji period contributed to the definition of a new Japanese culture, a sense of architecture that became a reference in the transformation of the urban space. However, it was obtained from the transcription of a Western style, a reproduction that in the case of the station became an identity symbol.

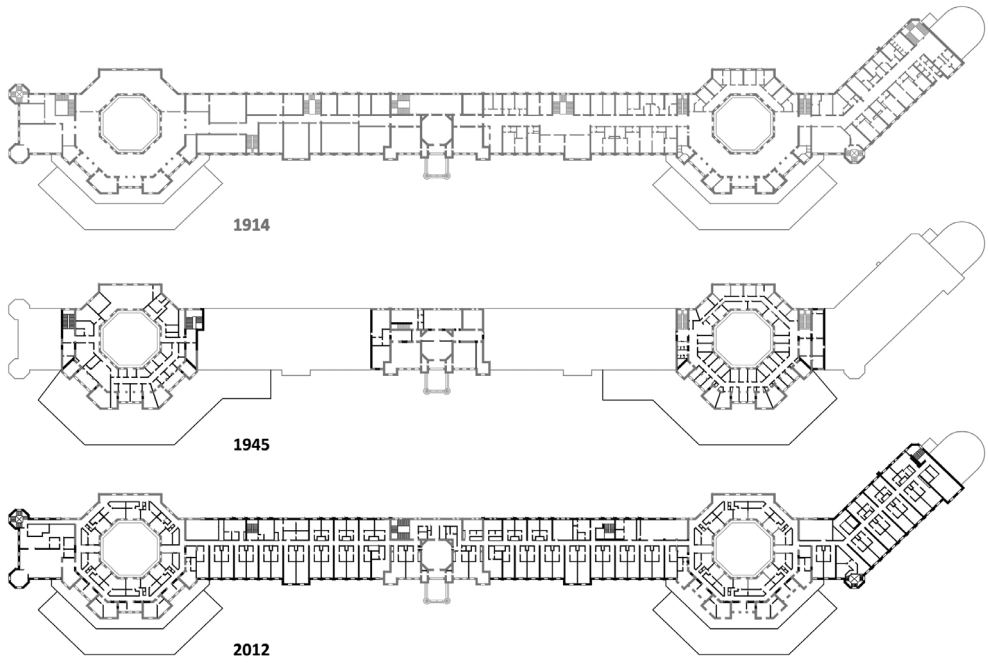
Its construction in 1914 was assigned to the architect Kingo Tatsuno, and is popularly known as the Red Brick Station Building (Waley, 1984: 34). This British style has eclectic characteristics very similar to the station in Amsterdam (1889), the former seat of Scotland Yard (1906) in London, the Shenyang Station (1910) in China and the later Seoul Station (1925) in South Korea. They are not exact copies, but it is possible to identify the replication of small parts that are similar.

In May 1945, during World War II, the building was partially damaged by an aerial attack, destroying the vaulted roof and the third floor entirely. The reconstruction project was overseen by Hajime Takayama, and its aim was to recover the station's functionality. This purpose, together with budgetary problems (Nakata, 2012: 3), imposed the suppression of the damaged floor and the design of a new trapezoidal roof.

Despite the fact that the 2003 heritage cataloguing process recognized the cultural importance of its postwar shape, the 2012 reconstruction process suppressed part of the sedimented time, and the building was perpetuated its initial image (Figures 8 to 10).

FIGURE 8. EVOLUTION OF THE TOKYO STATION: 1914, 1945 AND 2012. *Image: Tahara (2013: 1209).*





FIGURES 9 Y 10. PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION OF FLOOR 3: 1914 –initial construction; 1945 – demolition and construction of the new roof, 2012 –restitution of the Station to initial image.
Image: José Miguel Silva.

The reconstruction was integrated into the *Preservation and Restoration Plan of the Marunouchi Station Building*, with the authorship of Yukio Tahara. The plan had a dual fundament, simultaneously proposing the restitution of a symbol to the city, by returning the building to its "original" state and the preservation of preexisting parts as a framework of time (Tahara, 2008: 1). In other words, in the same process of intervention treatments, criteria of preservation of the postwar form were applied as a testimony of the history of the building, as well as its importance in the affirmation of identity and culture and promising time in Japan.

Likewise, in the perception of the veracity and authentic value, the parts added over time, considered "non-original" or whose originality "was not clear" and that affected the overall image of the project were removed (Tahara, 2013: 1210).

The station represents the ideal of a times past that is intended to be an integral part of the political and cultural identity of Japanese society today. The building was restored to exalt what was considered remarkable in its history, although always as a functional element.

This monument represents the parallel affirmation of a historical meaning with the restitution and perpetuation of a contemporary symbol. It is the creation of an urban landscape "full of innovative and avant-garde symbolism. (...) The station becomes a city" (Suzuki, 2012: 179).

The significance and creative expression of time

Thus, in this specific context, one can affirm that the meaning of the built heritage is an expression created by man over time. It is a manifestation that varies according to the perception of am epoch and, consequently, of man's own transformation. That is, during the creative process, man (in)consciously uses and reuses an idea or ideal from his past, common values or previously-acquired experiences that are meant to exalt some moments of its culture above others.

In short, the Japanese built cultural heritage is simultaneously a living symbol and a representation of the past in a technological time that is rapidly evolving. Through the (re) creation of the heritage of the past, Japan preserves what it believes to be an ideal of its culture, using monuments as symbolic capsules of time ready to be revived. These capsules of cultural, architectural and urban heritage do not crystallize in time, but they are renewed structures that exalt the purity of form and their "original" meaning.

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