The emergence of Western architecture

In the early days of the Meiji era, architects were invited from abroad to design Westernized buildings and townscapes. In 1871, the Institute for Engineering Studies (the predecessor of the Faculty of Engineering, the University of Tokyo) was established. This institute was renamed the Imperial College of Engineering in 1877, and architects who graduated from the Department of Architecture were active in regions throughout Japan. The first four students who studied under architect Josiah Conder graduated in 1879. Architects who will lead Japan’s architectural culture were born and Western architecture steadily appeared in Tokyo at that time.

Josiah Conder From the collection of the Department of Architecture, Graduate School of Engineering, the University of Tokyo.

Mitsubishi Ichigokan From the collection of Mitsubishi Ichigokan Museum.

Bank of Japan Head Office

Kingo Tanaka was the top of his graduating class, and followed in Josiah Conder’s footsteps to become a professor of the Department of Architecture. Tanaka’s designs were built by master carpenters and craftsmen carrying on the architectural culture of the Edo period. One of the early structures was the Tokyo Tsukiji Hotel Building, which was built in 1868 as a place for lodgings and trade by foreign visitors to Tokyo. Designed by Richard P. Bridgman, a foreign engineer who designed Shimibashi and Yokohama stations, it was constructed and also operated by the second generation Kisuke Shimizu (born Kyoshibichi Fujisawa) who had apprenticed to Kisuke Shimizu, the master carpenter patronized by the Edo government. Often depicted in colored woodblock prints, Japanese-Western eclectic architecture attracted the interest of the populace. As the era moved from Edo to Meiji, this style of architecture heralded the advent of a new culture while maintaining the culture of old.

Features of this hotel’s design reflect western concepts, such as its symmetrical plan, the tower in the central section, and arched gate. On the other hand, the gardens are Japanese, the windows of the tower section are the traditional yozakura kendo-mado, and the exterior walls are traditional namako kabe, with Japanese elements found everywhere.

Akasaka Palace (currently the State Guest House, Akasaka Palace) Designed by Tokuma Katayama. Katayama dedicated his entire life to designing palaces, museums and commemorative and other buildings around Japan. The Akasaka Palace was planned as the palace for the Crown Prince (who later became the Emperor Taisho), and was completed after 10 years of construction. In 2009, a century after its completion, it was designated a national treasure. Source: State Guest House, Cabinet Office.

Meiji-Ya Kyobashi Building

A Renaissance-style building designed by Tatsuzo Sone. It is the oldest existing private building that was integrated with a subway station. It was designated a Tangible Cultural Treasure of Chuo-ku in 2009.

First graduates of the Imperial College of Engineering From a private collection.

In the first graduation ceremony of the Imperial College in 1879, four men graduated from the Department of Architecture: Kingo Tanaka, Tokuma Katayama, Tatsuzo Sone, and Shichijiro Satachi. They made large contributions to shaping Japan’s culture of architecture. (Front row, first and second from the left: Satachi and Katayama; back row: third and fourth from the right: Sone and Tanaka.)

Bank of Japan Head Office

Kingo Tanaka was the top of his graduating class, and followed in Josiah Conder’s footsteps to become a professor of the Department of Architecture. The head office of the Bank of Japan was modeled after the architecture of ancient Greece and Rome, and still stands in Shinbashi, Chuo-ku (designated an Important Cultural Property of Japan and is one of the 50 Architectural Landmarks of Tokyo designated by the Tokyo Society of Architects and Building Engineers). Tanaka was also engaged in the design of the Tokyo Station Building (completed in 1914) and other important facilities not only in Tokyo, but throughout Japan. Source: Fujita Laboratory, Tokyo Institute of Technology.

Japanese-Western eclectic architecture: Tokyo Tsukiji hoteru-kan (Tokyo Tsukiji Hotel Building)

Enter the Meiji era, until Western technology was fully embraced, Japanese-Western eclectic architecture that mixed Japanese and Western designs were built by master carpenters and craftsmen carrying on the architectural culture of the Edo period. One of the early structures was the Tokyo Tsukiji Hotel Building, which was built in 1868 as a place for lodgings and trade by foreign visitors to Tokyo. Designed by Richard P. Bridgman, a foreign engineer who designed Shimibashi and Yokohama stations, it was constructed and also operated by the second generation Kisuke Shimizu (born Kyoshibichi Fujisawa) who had apprenticed to Kisuke Shimizu, the master carpenter patronized by the Edo government.

The emergence of Western architecture

【Chapter1】The Dawn of Modern City Construction-Spread of new technology and development of the capital (1860s-1910s)