

JKWIS Block1 Essay

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We have reached the conclusion that architecture itself truly reflects the lives of people, but how we recognize architecture, often hinders it from being the “truest” record of life. This is for the following reasons.

Firstly, we divided architecture into two types; symbolic and practical.

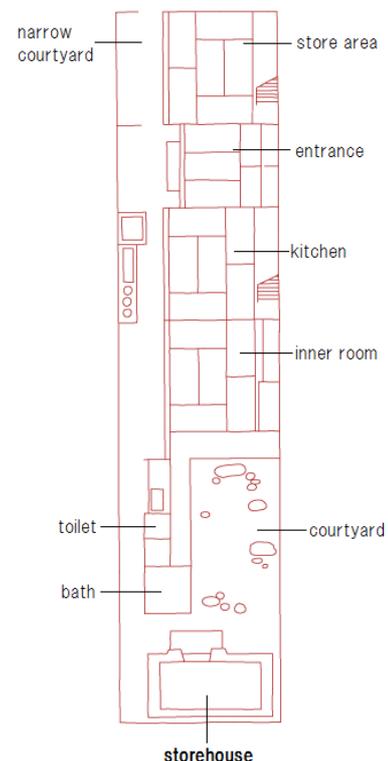
The former, they put emphasis on their design, and for that reason, if you look

at them from functional aspects, a few insufficiencies exist. For example, *Kinkaku-ji* Temple, which was built in the 14th century by the third *shogun* (president) of the *Muromachi-bakufu*, is the culmination of the Muromachi era's Kitayama-culture which is a combined culture of *kuge's* (aristocratic) and *samurai's* (warriors') as seen in its structure which is a combination of three types of structures. The first floor consists of *kuge's shin-den* style which was the standard style of Heian-era (8th



century) aristocrats' residences, the second consists of *samurais' sho-in* style which is simple and plain, and the third consists of buddhist *zen-temple* style which was introduced from China in the Kamakura-era (12th century). The *Kinkakuji*-Temple also includes other fruits of the *Kitayama*-culture and therefore it clearly reflects the culture of the era that it thrived in, but being only a symbolic building for demonstrating the *shogun's* power, it did not really have “practical” functions.

And as for the latter, more practical buildings' designs reflect the efficient and convenient ideal form of life in the extent that finance, status, social restrictions, and various other conditions permit. For example, the *Machiya* of Kyoto have unique characteristics such as a rectangular design which reflects the city planning of Kyoto in the 16th century, small, narrow courtyards that serve ventilation purposes, and also wooden grilled windows which lets in more light to the house in winter and less light into the house in summer by the exquisite angle of its bars. These made it possible for people to live comfortably in Japan's warm and damp climate. From knowing what was convenient for the people, we can assume how their lives were in the past when they had lived in these buildings.





However, when symbolic and practical structures are put together, as in the castles of Japan which are both beautiful and yet practical, the preferment of one leads to the detracting of the other, making the interpretation of the building a lot more difficult.

Secondly, we have to consider the problem that some architecture, especially historical, is completely dependent on the amount and reliability of historical evidence on the structure, including historical documents and the accumulation of architectural skills. Though European structures like the buildings of Rome that have survived in their original form from a long time ago do not have this problem, structures made from wood like the ancient temples of Japan are frequently rebuilt as they are burned down, left to rot, or sometimes destroyed through conflict, and if the historical evidence of these reconstructions is lost, everyone is left to misjudge the age in which the structure was built and when it thrived. This has actually happened, and there has been a continuing dispute over whether the *Horyu-ji* Temple in Nara has been reconstructed or has not been ever since the *Meiji* era (the late 18s), so there is no denying that architecture has a rather unstable aspect as a record.



And finally, we have to think whether architecture will continue to serve its purpose as a record of human life, or not. If technical innovation and globalization continue to accelerate, technology will see a global uniformity soon. High levels of common technology may lead to the uniformity of architecture all around the world and turn it into a mere record of the innovation of technologies, but at the same time it may make it possible for us to be able to afford to enjoy inefficiency and inconvenience, like traditional practices and styles of architecture. For example, there are movements to reuse old brick spinning mills from the Meiji era as facilities like hotels. In this way, it actually promotes uniqueness and architecture's significance as a record of lives. So in one sense, it could be said that our good sense holds the future of architecture as a record of the lives of people.



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Granted, architecture has been, is, and may well continue to be a reflection of people's lives, but we think that, in the way we recognize it, it cannot be said that something as unstable as this could possibly be the "truest" record of the past, present and the future.