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MODERN OR "UNMODERN"? UNDERSTANDING THE  
LANDSCAPE DISPUTES OF KYOTO TOWER  
AND KYOTO STATIONNOWOCZESNE CZY „NIENOWOCZESNE”? SENS  
KRAJOBRAZOWYCH SPORÓW O KYOTO TOWER  
I KYOTO STATION

## Abstract

Since the Industrial Revolution, the cities made strong historical transformations and had to face the challenge of modernizing their structures and systems of historic preservation. That has happened in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the same is happening today in Japan. When the city is subject to rapid development and the reduction of the spatial policies and strategies are too weak, there are conflicts between development and maintenance requirements. Local Economy-profit tends to promote development. Kyoto is a city in which the development of strong pressure from the 60s Twentieth century was the catalyst for a number of conflicts, and the urban landscape became the subject of controversy and debate. The paper presents two case studies related to the construction of two buildings: Tower Kyoto Tower and Kyoto Station Building Station. Both of these cases to provoke a discussion about the new architecture in the context of the historic environment, as well as the problems of temporality, the architectural style and fashion. Kyoto Tower is no longer fashionable example of the architecture, and even Kyoto Station also gets its ordinary character and stops making the controversy.

*Keywords: landscape dispute, Kyoto Tower, Kyoto Station*

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## Streszczenie

Od czasów rewolucji przemysłowej miasta historyczne podlegały silnym przekształceniom i musiały zmierzyć się z wyzwaniem modernizacji swojej struktury i konserwacji układów zabytkowych. Tak działo się w Europie w wiekach XVIII i XIX i podobnie dzieje się współcześnie w Japonii. Kiedy miasto podlega szybkiemu rozwojowi, a ograniczania ze strony polityki przestrzennej i strategii są zbyt słabe, pojawiają się konflikty między rozwojem a wymogami konserwacji. Lokalna ekonomia nastawiona na zysk, przejawia tendencję do popierania rozwoju. Kioto jest miastem, w którym silna presja rozwoju od lat 60. XX w. była katalizatorem kilku konfliktów, a miejski krajobraz stał się przedmiotem sporów i dyskusji. W artykule przedstawiono dwa studia przypadków związanych z budową dwóch obiektów: wieży Kyoto Tower i budynku dworca Kyoto Station. Oba te przypadki prowokują do rozważań o nowej architekturze w kontekście historycznego otoczenia, a także o problemach stylu i o przemijalności architektonicznej mody. Bo z dzisiejszego punktu widzenia Kyoto Tower nie jest już przykładem architektury modernej, a i Kyoto Station też z czasem spowszednieje i przestanie budzić kontrowersje.

*Słowa kluczowe: spory krajobrazowe, Kyoto Tower, Kyoto Station*

## 1. Introduction

Since the Industrial Revolution, historical towns have faced the issues of modernisation and conservation. In Europe, many of them muddled through in the 18th and 19th centuries. Pollak, in 1907, reported that beautiful and old Prague was being lost to make profits from development [13]. The historical towns of Asia and eastern Europe are facing the similar problems now.

In Kyoto, where the city has been under the pressure of developments since 1960s, a series of *keikan ronso*, which means "landscape disputes" or "cityscape conflicts", has been occurring. Although some of dispute cases, e.g. Kyoto Station, seem to be documented by many who were directly involved in the dispute, they are not collectively studied to analyse the underlying issues and find solutions from fair point of view. Sometimes even with misunderstandings. For example, Alex Kerr says, "at the time of the Tokyo Olympics in 1984, the city administration arranged for the construction of Kyoto Tower, a needle-shaped, garish, red-and-white building erected beside the railroad station" [2]. Karan also explains the disputes as a series of results of the decisions made by the municipal government: "the 'cityscape dispute' between the municipal government and Kyoto residents began in 1964 with the construction of Kyoto Tower, which stands in front of the JR Kyoto Station", by which "some people are worried that Kyoto's traditional landscape is damaged [3]." The fact is, in most cases, the city authority were not directly involved, because they were not empowered to make decisions. In fact, local authorities have been less empowered by the central government to promote development [4].

In this paper, therefore, several cases of landscape disputes in Kyoto will be studied. The purpose is not only to introduce each case separately, but to understand the common issues. To do this, we start by looking at who planned the development for what reason, who disputed against it and who was responsible for development control.

## 2. Kyoto Tower

### 2.1. Historical Context

Until the end of WWII, modernisation was generally welcomed by the citizens of Kyoto, but its meaning was different than that used in Europe and America. In Kyoto, as the introduction of Western technology was considered as modernisation, they built new buildings with bricks and stones. The Heian Shrine, as the site of the Fourth National Exhibition, and whose design is based on the ancient imperial palace, was also considered modernism. However, until the end of the Second World War, the progress was very slow, and most of the city still held the traditional landscape. Kyoto also survived the Second World War, despite that most other large cities of Japan were burnt out during the war by carpet bombing. Kyoto is one of the few cities in which the historical landscape remained. In 1950s, the city restarted the survey to introduce the aesthetic districts (*bikan chiku*), which had already been introduced as local bylaw in many parts of Japan at that time. They also studied the landscape policies in Paris, Rome, Bern and Philadelphia by 1964. This new system was expected to contribute to improving the aesthetic aspects of the urban developments.

Meanwhile, in 1950, the new Building Standard Act (1950) was enacted. This replaced the pre-war building and planning laws and took out much of the city's right to control the developments. As most large cities were burnt out during the war, the primary objective of the new law was to rebuild fire-proof cities as soon as possible. More generally, Japanese politics were concerned with reconstruction, not conservation. The city of Kyoto was one of the rare exceptional cities in which many historical buildings are left. So, the national strategy and new building law were to enhance development, but it was not prominent until the Olympic came to Tokyo in 1964. The bullet train was being developed. Some major cities, such as Nagoya, Sapporo and Tokyo, built TV towers in the late 1950 and early 1960s to broadcast the games.

## 2.2. Kyoto Tower

In 1953, the Central Post Office of Kyoto moved out of the area in front of Kyoto Station. In 1958, Kyoto Chamber of Commerce started the discussion of a new building in this site and set up a company. Initially, it was planned to construct "a magnificent building", not with a tower. In 1960s, as the new bullet train was developed to convey the passengers from all over the country to Tokyo, quite naturally, people in Kyoto felt the need to build something at the vacant land in front of the station to attract the potential tourists. The maximum height of buildings were controlled to 31 meter. Later, inspired by Marine Tower in Yokohama, a 100 m tower was proposed on top of the plan, which would make the whole structure 131 m tall. At that time, the buildings in the city were dominated by two storey wooden houses with tiled roofs and looked like a sea of tiles from the sky. Therefore, the designer of the tower made the concept of a lighthouse to light the sea of tiled roofs. Kyoto Tower was also interpreted as a Candle of Higashi Honganji temple from its colour and shape.

Kyoto Tower was designed by architects Yamada Mamoru and Prof. Tanahashi Ryo. Yamada is a modernist architect who trained at University of Tokyo and attended CIAM in 1929. Yamada was considered as one of the best architects of the era, but now is more known as the designer of Kyoto Tower [9]. Tanahashi specialised in structural mechanics and was the dean of Japan Institute of Architecture. So, the two architects were the best combination of the tower.

When the tower plan was announced on Asahi Shimbun on 1 February 1964, the tower was already being constructed. There started protests. According to the available record, the first publicly written protest to the plan was posted to Asahi Shimbun Newspaper on 28 April 1964 by a French scholar, Jean-Pierre Gaston Hauchecorne, at Kyoto Notre Dame University, later a founding professor of Department of French, Kyoto University of Foreign Studies. Antonin Raymond, a Czech architect, also sent his protest to Japan Institute of Architects. It was followed by a number of opinions for and against the plan in various newspapers and magazines. In July, Osaragi Jiro, a novelist, posted his comment against the tower, which persuaded a number of readers to post their opinions to the newspaper. Soon, some protest groups, Kyoto wo Aisuru Kai (The Group of Loving Kyoto), Shufu no Kyoto wo Mamoru Kai (The Group of Wives to Protect Kyoto) and Kyoto Tower Kensetsu Hantai Seinen Kaigi (The Council of The Young to Protest Construction of Kyoto Tower) were established.

Among those groups, Kyoto wo Aisuru Kai published two books to protest [3, 4]. The group was led by Prof. Hauchecorne and Hashimoto Setsuya and was supported by Asahi Shimbun. Prof. Hauchecorne took an exclusive interview survey. City planners, such as Prof. Nishiyama Uzo, also joined the group. Not much is known about Prof. Hauchecorne. On the other hand, Hashimoto was from a well known painter family and was acquainted with artists and scholars, including Tanizaki Junichiro. Hashimoto's father studied painting under a French modernist painter Maurice Denis. Tanizaki is a Tokyo native novelist, a great supporter of both traditionalism and modernism and moved to Kyoto in 1946.

However, the landowners and developers of the tower claimed that the tower should be necessary to modernise the city. They also claim that the Eiffel Tower was protested but is now considered as one of the most beautiful landmarks in Paris. Although the height of buildings was limited to 31 meters in the area, as the tower was considered as a "structure" (*kosakubutsu*), not a "building" (*kenzobutsu*), there was no other regulation to control the tower unless it would cause any traffic, safety, or hygienic deterioration.



Photo 1. View of Kyoto Tower from Kyoto Station (photo: Yoshihiko Baba)

Fot. 1. Widok na Kyoto Tower z budynku Kyoto Station

The city government felt dilemma, but did not just see the tower being built [12]. When the national telecom company revealed a new 90 m tall radio tower near 60 m tall Toji Temple, the city officials negotiated and agreed that it would be built elsewhere. The Toji temple is one of the original temples since the Heiankyo plan in 794, and its pagoda is the tallest wooden structure in Japan. The radio tower, if built, would deteriorate the view to the pagoda. This implies that the city was concerned with construction of high rise structures, but was not authorised to refuse the construction of Kyoto Tower.

Before the Kyoto Tower was built, the city was in the course of surveying landscape policies in Japan as well as in other nations for their own local policies. Since October 1970, the committee was held to continue to discuss the new landscape regulations. This pushed the townhall to pass Kyoto City Urban Area Landscape Ordinances, the long-wanted ordinance for urban landscape conservation, which would include the height control of structures.

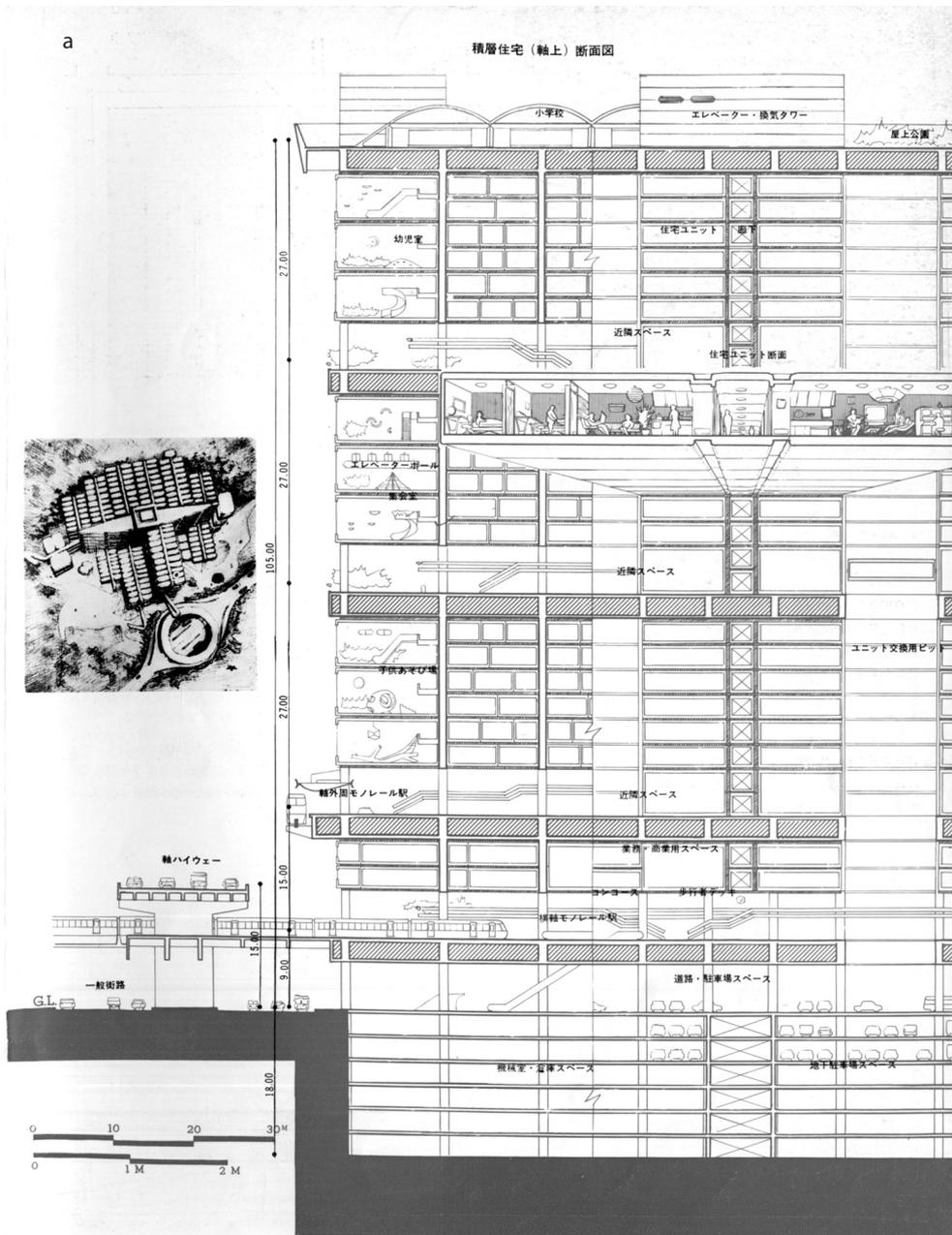
The tower was opened on 28 December 1964. In the following year 971 000 visited the observation deck. Today, the tower is one of the first structures people see when they visit the city. More than half a million goes up to the deck to see the city from above. Tawawa-chan, the mascot of Kyoto Tower, is a popular character and student group Tawaken run a series of performances to promote the tower.

### 2.3. Traditionalism vs Modernism?

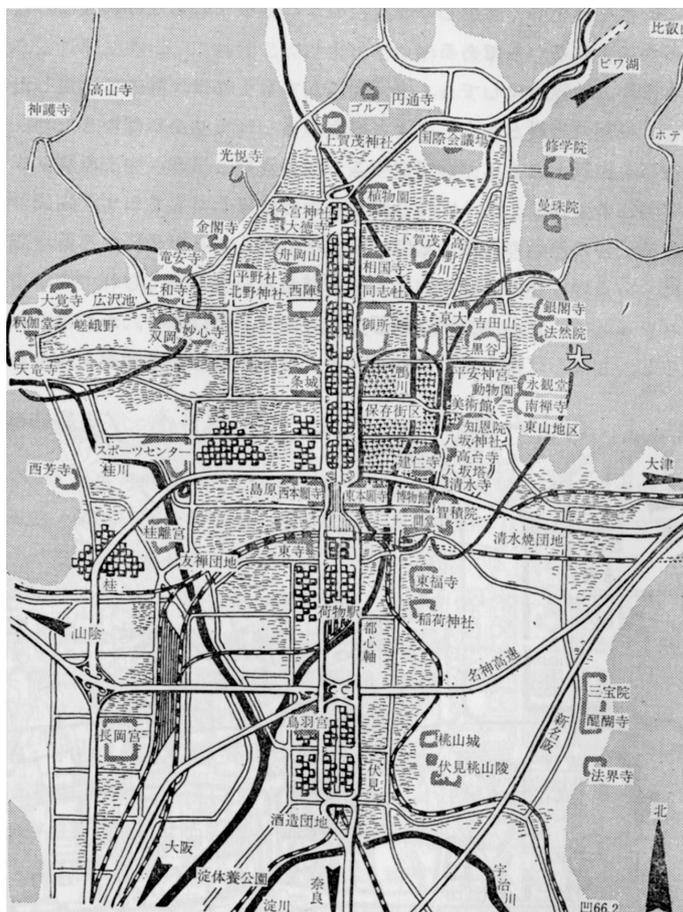
The modernism movement in Japan was, by and large, led by the architects in Tokyo. Some of them stayed in Europe in 1920s and 1930s and learned the modernism architecture. In 1960, Prof. Tange Kenzo of Tokyo University, after attended CIAM, announced the Tokyo Plan. The academic society in Kyoto was more confused. Prof. Nishiyama of Kyoto University, influenced by Tange, presented the concept of "lepolis" and proposed the Kyoto Plan 1964 in an architectural magazine *Shin Kenchiku*, which contained a line of 100 m tall buildings in the city centre. The plan is, in short, a typical Corbusian city in the context of Kyoto. It was publicised before the professor knew the tower plan.

While Prof. Nishiyama was protesting a 130 m tower, he was also proposing 100 m buildings in a very modernist way. Later, he had to excuse that the plan was an "inferno", that is, not a plan to be achieved, but a plan to be avoided. The city officials asked Prof. Oki Taneo, a Kyoto native and apprentice of Tange, to produce the Historical Capital Plan, a more practical counterpart to Nishiyama's plan [10, 11]. In addition, Prof. Tange Kenzo (Tokyo University) and Associate Prof. Ueda Atsushi (Kyoto University) made Kyoto Axial Plan and Kyoto Plan 2000 respectively.

Later, the professors persuaded UNESCO and Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs to hold a symposium for preserving the traditional culture of Kyoto and Nara in 1970. This time, Nishiyama was a conservationist.



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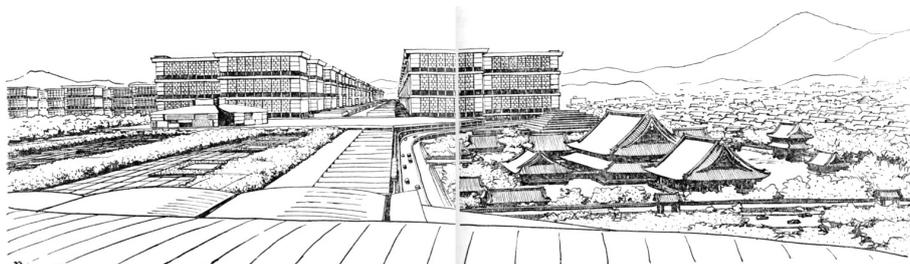


Fig. 1. Kyoto Plan 1964: a. source: Nishiyama (1964) *Kyoto Plan 1964, Shin Kenchiku*, January 1964, b., c. source: Nishiyama (1966) *Chiiki Kuukan Ron (Theory of Regional Space)*, Keiso Shobo

Rys. 1. Plan Kioto z roku 1964: a. źródło: Nishiyama (1964) *Kyoto Plan 1964, Shin Kenchiku*, January 1964, b., c. źródło: Nishiyama (1966) *Chiiki Kuukan Ron (Theory of Regional Space)*, Keiso Shobo



景観を損なう電線や広告が批判された



炎天の下、熱心に調査する参加者、於法隆寺



開会式、於京都国際会館

Fig. 2. UNESCO 1970 Symposium

Rys. 2. Sympozjum UNESCO w 1970 roku

Throughout 1960s, thus, a group of intellectuals successfully raised the development and landscape as an issue of the city. However, the professors were still following the shadow of modernism and failed to see the reality. As a result, the modernism was not yet shared among the intellectuals, local business and residents and a set of national and municipal regulations were made without a strategy or a philosophy, thus they were mostly limited to protect the suburban lands.

### 3. Kyoto Station

#### 3.1. New Laws, New Economy and New Government

In 1968 the new City Planning Act was promulgated. The new height control included the limitations 60 meters, 45 meters, 31 meters, and so on. In the case of central area of Kyoto, the city council insisted 31 meters because most existing buildings were, in fact, at 30 m or lower. But the central government told them to set to 45 meters along main roads. Even worse, during the bubble economy in 1980s, the central government introduced several planning schemes to allow developers to raise the height limit.

The first adoption of this awkward planning systems in Kyoto was given to Kyoto Hotel, sited at the corner of Oike Dori road and Kawaramachi Dori street, and opposite of the townhall building over Kawaramachi street. The Oike Dori is one of the widest roads in Kyoto, with its underground shopping mall and car parking. The Oike Dori was a result of wartime evacuation and supplies sufficient pedestrian space. The underground shopping mall is notoriously classified as one of the most unpopular underground shopping malls in Japan. Therefore, there was no reason that the site needed openspace by sacrificing the vista to the Higashiyama mountains.

The Kyoto Hotel, which opened another aesthetic discussion period in 1990s was planned in the centre of the city. The plan was a 60 meter tall building in a 7200 square meter site with height limit of 45 meters. With the comprehensive design system, the maximum height allowed was raised by one rank to 60 meters.

#### 3.2. Kyoto Station

The height control of Kyoto Station area was even lower at 31 meters. When the JR West company decided to make an appointed competition for its design as 1200th anniversary of Kyoto city, the president of JR West announced that a building of any height, be it 100 m or higher, is welcomed, which is 40 m higher than Kyoto Hotel plan. Among the seven competitors, two actually proposed building of 100 m height, two of 60 m and two in between. All the plans ignored the height control.

Kyoto Station was rebuilt in 1997. The plan of 60 m height designed by Hara Hiroshi, after the competitions of seven, was opposed by the academics and others. But more importantly, the process of competition was criticised. The committee members for the competition were Professor Kawasaki Kiyoshi, Isozaki Arata (architect), Uchii Shozo (architect), Prof. Sasada Tsuyoshi, Hans Hollein (architect), Renzo Piano (architect), Tsukamoto Koichi (Kyoto Chamber of Commerce), Professor Umehara Takeshi and several JR West



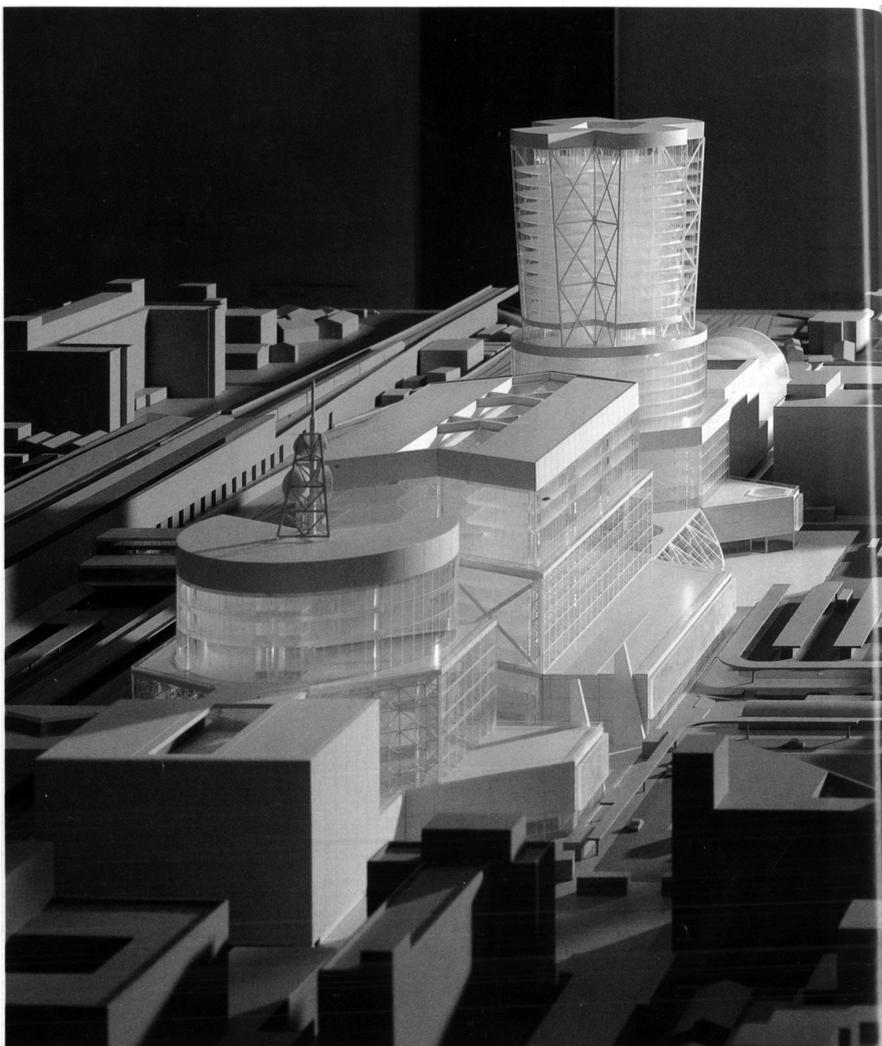


Fig. 3. Kyoto Station and Plans for Kyoto Station: a. Kyoto Station (photo: Yoshihiko Baba), b. Ando Plan, source: *Shin Kenchiku*, 1991 June, p. 200, c. Sterling Plan, source: *Shin Kenchiku*, June 1991, p. 208

Rys. 3. Budynek Kyoto Station i jego plany: a. Kyoto Station, b. Plan opracowany przez Tadao Ando, źródło: *Shin Kenchiku*, June 1991, s. 200, c. Plan James Sterlinga, źródło: *Shin Kenchiku*, June 1991, s. 208

executives. The competitors are Ikehara Yoshiro, Bernard Tschumi, Kurokawa Kisho, James Sterling, Hara Hiroshi, Peter Busmann and Ando Tadao.

When the competition was held, one of the JR West executives welcomed plans with tall buildings, something as tall as the controversial Kyoto Tower. In fact, they expected a building much taller than that. Despite the JR's initial intention, in making decision, the height became a negative factor. Among the seven plans, two were of 60 m tall, another two of 120 m, the rest in between. Although the committee members suggested Ando's plan, the plans of Hara (60 m) and Sterling (120 m) were the final candidates by the JR. The committee seemed to fall in disrepair when the JR adopted Hara plan despite the committee members' suggestions. Piano, Tsukamoto, and Umehara were furious about this: allegedly, Piano left the committee and did not attend the reception ceremony; Umehara explicitly complained the committee later in a magazine [1]. It was not only the committee members, but also a number of academics criticised the plan and the procedure. *Kenchiku Zasshi*, one of the journals of Japan Institute of Architecture, edited a special issue on Kyoto's landscape in June 1992 [7]. The professors from universities in Kyoto and elsewhere criticised the plan, some philosophically, some with three dimensional computer models. Kawasaki, a committee member, however, replying to the special issue of the journal, said that generally the competition was very open and successful [6]. However, on the contrary to the academics and active citizens, a development of commercial complex to the station seemed generally to have been welcomed by the local residents. Here, we can see the discrepancy between the advocacy and local residents, just like the case of Kyoto Tower.

#### 4. Modern or Unmodern?

In this paper, we studied two landscape disputes that attracted a wider discussion. There are many other disputes recently in a similar fashion, but at smaller scale. Although disputes usually occur at a local scale, the two cases were discussed by a great number of architects, writers and others. The phenomenon can be understood by "modern" v.s "unmodern" [2]. Brod, in Prague, seeing many buildings becoming obsolete, such as the Kettensteg bridge, Praha statni nadrazi (Prag Staatsbahnhof) and Kleiner Bazar, he doubted the concept of modernism. Modernist buildings will soon become "unmodern".

The Kyoto Tower was built as the lighthouse to cast light to tiled roofs, but the traditional townhouses are being lost rapidly (see: Anna Staniewska's chapter). Some people express nostalgic feeling on the tower. It has given up to be modern and become unmodern. Soon, Kyoto Station may follow the same path. The tower is also the reason that high-rise buildings are built in the city. When JR West rebuilt its station, they claimed a building of 100 meters because it is still shorter than the tower.

As is prominent in Kyoto Tower case, the disputes are often instigated by outsiders. Many of the design proposals come from Tokyo, and the protests come from Tokyo and foreign countries. But the modernism, or any other philosophy of architecture, did not develop well during these periods in Kyoto. This is partly because of strong traditionalism, but can be also explained by the nature of Kyoto people. In Kyoto, people think they should be concerned with their own lands, and do not talk about their neighbours' buildings,

unless they directly affect their environment. When the tower was planned, some people might have felt inappropriate, but they did not explicit it.

In the case studies, the points of the disputes was design and height. As the time goes, the disputes have converged to the height. If the height really matters, the most “modern” building in the world is Burj Khalifa, not Kyoto Tower has never be modern in the history. The matter of design has been left to the individuals’ preferences. In fact, many have discussed “*Kyoto rashisa*”, literally the nature of Kyoto, but none has successfully defined it. In Poland, Krakow group have holded “polskość” [16], Kyoto group tried to follow the shadow of modernism, and simply failed to catch it. This way, Kyoto Tower and Kyoto Station represent the “unmodern” of Kyoto.

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