

positive or negative impact on viewers depending on the content. Considerable attention must be given to refinements in selection of program choice and conditions under which programs are viewed in order to extend the findings.

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SEVEN WONDERS OF THE JAPANESE HOUSE

Seven wonders or questions were obtained from a research concerning the characteristics of 145 individual houses built with the financial aid of the Government Housing Loan Corporation in 1978. These houses, sampled nation-wide, represent the typical plans of the contemporary Japanese houses. The Japanese way of living and housing construction are undergoing a continuous change with the onrush of western influences. The waves of westernization seem to have inundated every nook and cranny of our life and society. It is, however, quite miraculous that much of the original Japanese style of life and house design still obstinately survives under such onslaught.

1. Why do Japanese houses obstinately adhere to the traditional Japanese room ("Washitsu")?

It is amazing that each of the 145 houses surveyed has at least one traditional Japanese room ("Washitsu"). The "Washitsu" was derived from the "Shoin" which was the residential style of the priest origi-

nated during the "Muromachi Era". It was designed and planned using a certain module of measures as well as elements of space and was characterized by "Tatami". The "Tatami" represents the history of Japanese living space itself. It is a tightly packed stiff rice straw mat, 1.8 - 2.4 in. thick and approximately 3 x 6 feet in size. Originally it was used as a furniture that was a portable floor cover to accommodate two men sitting or else one sleeping. "Half a mat for sitting position, one mat for sleeping position" is a common Japanese saying. The statement clearly indicates the minimum area of personal living space. It was later spread on the wooden floor and changed into a building component.

Since the "Washitsu" permitted multipurpose uses it has been exceedingly popular among middle class houses of modest size and only a few rooms. This multipurpose function can be clearly seen in a "Tuzukima" which is a suit of rooms adjacent to each other and useally divided by sliding doors. The "Tuzukima" is instantly transformed into a single large room by simply removing the sliding partitions. The "Tuzukima" can provide a relatively large space considering the small size of the house. Our traditional custom of squatting on the floor also permits a higher room capacity than the western style. 65 out of 145 houses surveyed have "Tuzukima" plans.

The "Washitsu" permits multipurpose uses by the use of such removable furniture as "Futon" (a thick cotton bedquilt) and a "Zataku" (short-legged table used in the Japanese squatting position). Westernization of the Japanese life style, however, is gradually dictating a more fixed use of rooms, such a bedroom, guestroom etc., which increases the number of rooms as well as the amount of furniture. The "Washitsu" now lonely remains in the Japanese house not so much for its multifunctional characteristics or our nostalgia for traditional living mode but rather for the desire to harmonize symbolically our life with the space.

2. Why are the rooms small or are Japanese inclined to be agoraphobic?

Housing in society in general has historically been very small and poor in Japan. It is needless to say that it is due to economical reasons, but some other phylogenical reasons are also assumed. There are, I suppose, some large-space-phobia (agoraphobia) in Japan. As for the origins of why Japanese houses are small, I refer back to my previous statements. It is important to make a historical survey. About eight hundred years ago a celebrated Japanese poet named Kamo-no-Chomei lived alone in a simple, prefabricated wooden hut only ten feet square. Since then the idea of his dwelling has been one of basic underlying concepts in the structure of attitudes to living spaces in Japan. Moreover the squatting posture on the floor promotes smaller spaces since furniture is unnecessary and small spaces were psychologically adequate for the stationary body.

Also the standardization of room sizes and proportion by the use of the "Tatami" limited variety and created the standard 4.5, 6, 8, 10, 12 etc. mat rooms prevailed throught Japan till today. The largest, 18 mats, appeared mainly in the large residence of priests. Taking the "Tatami" as a module, the 4.5, 8 and 18 mat rooms of a rectangular shape are quite typical. The 18 mat room accommodate public ceremonies and is nearly as same area as the "Tuzukima" when two 8 mat rooms are adjacent.

The variety of room sizes in the 145 modern samples closely matches the age-old traditional module. Even if total area of the house is

increased, it is increased only by the number of the rooms since the size of a room will not change sharply. The Japanese love for small places and things and form of agoraphobia, may be considered rather innate to them.

3. Why is the "Chanoma" (dining room) used for family conversations?

After the World War II the Japan Housing Corporation developed a "Dining-Kitchen" type of dwelling. This type of plan, though limited in size, provided the separation for eating and sleeping, which until that time had been done in a single "Washitsu". The "Dining-Kitchen" plan was designed as a single room for both cooking and dining. This originated from the traditional farmhouse plan with a sunken hearth, where the family got together to talk and eat. The "Chanoma" is a more contemporary version of this plan, where though the hearth was replaced with a modern kitchen at the adjacent place, family conversations and dining were still conducted. The "Dining-Kitchen" is considered a combination of "Westernized sunken hearth" and "Chanoma" and was rapidly adopted in middle class houses. Its stainless steel tables and sinks, variety of electrical appliances and Western furniture such as dining table and chairs, all contributed to the modern brightness of the kitchen which had been until then quite dark.

Since the size of the house has gradually increased, living room separated from the "Dining-Kitchen" have appeared sometimes. However, because the habit of dining and conducting our family conversations in the dining room is very firm, a westernized "Chanoma", created by enlarging the "Dining-Kitchen" or just the dining room, is now prevailing.

4. Why is the living room furnished with a stereotyped furniture and is there no sign of life in it?

A house with "Tanoji"-shaped plan had two distinctly separated rooms, one of which was for guests and other which was for dining and having a family conversations. 99 among the 145 houses surveyed have westernized or traditional Japanese rooms adjacent to the "Dining-Kitchen", which implies that each house has a living room of some sort separated from the other rooms. Such living rooms tend to be very westernized and are usually furnished with a stereotyped sofa and a table. They are largely left unused, which is attributed to the Japanese custom of not being able to fully relax on a chair or a sofa. Moreover, recently the space used for dining and family conversations are in many respects quite-diversified, so much so that there is now some confusion on the spatial relationship of the dining room, kitchen and the living room.

5. Why do Japanese take off their shoes at the entrance?

All the examples analysed, even those which are completely in the western style, require the removal of shoes at the entrance. The main floor area is slightly raised above the entrance area. Upon entering the main floor, slippers are used over modern flooring except for the "Washitsu", where slippers are removed and one enters bare footed. The "Washitsu" is thus regarded as a house within a house. We can almost envision the interior composition as a nest of boxes.

The Japanese floor was raised above the ground from ancient times. It is believed that at one time Japanese lived bare footed inside and

outside their houses, but later when foot wear was used, it was taken off before entering the main floor. The interior raised floor was a direct living surface which was always kept clean. They lived directly on the floor using it as a squatting, eating and working surface. Thus the raised floor became an extension of the human body. Walking bare-footed and squatting on the floor are the two characteristics of Japanese life-style.

Therefore, the taking-off of shoes means that we enter a private space from a public space. The lowered entrance area is a necessity to every house since this is where shoes are left before entering the house proper. In minimum dwellings such as student lodgings whose area is only 2.7 x 2.7m, thus creating a very tiny harbor of shoes. The entrance is actually one end of the spine in Japanese dwellings.

We have excellent floor materials such as cypress, cedar etc., the texture of which are keenly perceived by the sole of a foot, the palm of the hand and occasionally even the face. In spite of continuing our custom of taking off our shoes inside the house, our feet are now covered with socks or slippers, therefore we will gradually lose this sophisticated sensation of the skin. It also means that we might lose our traditional Japanese life-style. So "Washitsu" is able to be called here again as the last fort.

6. Why do Japanese like to soak in hot water in the tuck position?

Similar to the habit of taking off shoes, the Japanese bathtub still prevails over the Western tub today. Even in houses completely designed in the modern style, the Japanese bathtub is an important part. It is deeper but shorter than the western one. Economy of water is often said to be the main factor in such a configuration. The most Japanese do not empty the water each time one bathes, instead the water is constantly reheated. In Japan one bathes completely outside the tub, then enters the hot tub to soak.

On the other hand, this custom is also rooted in the skin sensation of the Japanese. Edward S. Morse who visited Japan in 1877 was deeply astonished to see that the Japanese often live almost naked. Japanese love to soak in a natural environment exposed to the wind and humidity or even in a sheltered environment like a public bath. In such places we can almost say we wear our own atmosphere and nothing else. To Japanese the environment is their clothing. Everyday we revel in the bathtub which is many times the only private place in the dwelling.

7. Why is it so important to indicate a presence of other people in the house?

For many years we have strived for individualism or a self-identity. Thus in the design of houses, the physical, social and psychological independence of each room had top priority. Just a few years ago, one architect claimed a coming age in which the dwelling would be composed from a composite of bed rooms. However, it is now shown that this nonintervention which is caused by the separation of rooms have had a bad influence on children and lead to misconduct or distraction. Recently another architect claimed that such a house plan that children are able to go their own bed room without passing through the main area of family-living, would promote to confine themselves to their own rooms. He further confessed that he would be very troubled if his child wanted the key of his room's door.

The simple square plan divided into four parts such as that of the traditional farm house named "Tanoji"-shape is very interesting. Each room is continuous and adaptable for various functions, but delicate considerations are given to compensate for the physical lack of privacy or independence of each room. In this plan, that the movement of individuals along the diagonal lines becomes longer, gives a psychological separation of rooms.

On the other hand, in such a traditional structure of space, sound and even air or light from transoms passed through all the rooms, so that each person's behavior was governed by the social norm of the family. The sensation of a presence of family was very important in our houses. It's tradition, in other words collectivity in a family still survives to some degree. Each Japanese seems not to be able to bare the confinement in a strictly isolated or physically separated room.

The design methodology used in housing design now falls somewhere in the middle of individualism and collectivism. This dichotomy is analogous to the West and Japan in that order.

In conclusion, contemporary Japanese houses have seven wonders in common; nevertheless they are getting more and more ambiguous. It seems an endless compromise between different patterns is being in progress, such one as between the way of living by squatting on the floor and by sitting on the chair. It is now widely mentioned that this is the age of diversity. However, the planning patterns in Japanese popular house design can be classified by only a few types. Perhaps regrettably, we can also see in these patterns, an unconscious conflict of various cultures.

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SEMIOTIC STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL CLASS DISTINCTIONS

The most personal of all people's physical surroundings is housing. All individual actions seem aimed at securing comfort through home and family. Very little has been written regarding the semiotic relationship between architectural designs in private housing and social class, action and organization. This study addresses the didactic quality of semiotic structure in terms of architecture, design, housing and social stratification.