Traditional Japanese wood construction

Traditioneller japanischer Holzbau

Costruzione in legno tradizionale giapponese
Traditional Japanese wood construction

In the art of building, the Japanese selected wood as their main material, only using stone for the foundations. This choice lasted until the 19th century for geographical and climatic reasons, and also because of the strong cultural link that unites this people living in an archipelago stretching over 4,000 km.

The Japanese house is subject to exceptional constraints, from earthquakes and typhoons to rains and floods. It is a functional tool serving the Japanese lifestyle. Unlike in the West, the uniformity of the construction system does not imply repetition of models. Each house is different, for the occupants know how to express their needs while respecting the environment. Their main concern is to integrate - in the narrowest sense of the term - the building into the site so that it engages in dialogue with the surrounding space. This discipline leads to the definition of a constructed yet flexible perimeter made fluid by the treatment of consistently light façades. The landscape is used with discernment, leading to a wide range of ambiences. The occupant, as master of his constructed space, modifies its boundaries at will. He is sensitive to events, and can modulate his environment as the fancy takes him.

In Japan, the art of building shows that the form, arising from function, is still closely linked with the materials used. The structural components are clearly distinct from what fills the space defined, with a primary structure made up of the post-an-beam system and a secondary structure comprising partitions and movable components. The broad overhanging roof, a major component in the construction, is set on pillars creating an open-plan area thanks to which, between the garden and the interior, there is an exchange modulated by sliding panels, either opaque or translucent.

Traditional Japanese architecture arises from constant observation of nature, its rhythms and a concern with integrating the structure as a living entity. The constructed house is not a complete object to be maintained, but a collection of living spaces on which people imprint, with each passing day, their lifestyles and their efforts to engage in dialogue with their constructed setting and the materials it comprises. After the second great fire of Tokyo in 1658, the authorities established strict rules on types of housing according to caste using standardized components.

This was the origin of kiwarito, the "art of splitting wood". The harmonization of the dimensions of timber and building components made it possible to rebuild the city quickly. Artisans continued to specialize from the lat 17th century to the 19th century, so that in major urban centers such as Osaka high-quality prefabricated components were produce, then transported to remote provinces, where they enhanced the post-and-beam structures set up locally.

The Japanese house is a living entity, the expression of a civilization that has maintained remarkable unity in living spaces in tandem with the great architectural diversity. Through its presence, its availability and its flexibility, wood was the only material fulfilling this need, imposing on builders a discipline contributing to the harmony of these living spaces.

From the humblest home to the most sumptuous palace, it is in Japan that wood has most effectively demonstrated its ability to stay in tune with changes in a refined lifestyle that goes far beyond mere functional needs.
Traditional Japanese wood construction

HORIYU-JI, NARA

HOUSE AND GRANARY AT TORIO ISeki (200 BC)
Traditional Japanese wood construction

HOUSE AT UTSUNOMIYA - Jōmon Period (3500 BC)
Traditional Japanese wood construction

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HORYU-JI TEMPLE - NARA 7.c
KONDO ASUKA PERIOD (552-645)
KOFUZO REPOSITORY 8.c
Traditional Japanese wood construction

SHORO BELFRY 752 - REBUILT 1199

NANDAIMON GATE - TENJIKU STYLE - h: 29 m - REBUILT 1199
Traditional Japanese wood construction

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TODAI-JI TEMPLE NARA 752 - h: 48.5 m - REBUILT 1195 AND 1709

ISHIMAYA-DERA PAGODA TAHOTO 1190

KIJONIIIUGA PAGODA 780

TOJI PAGODA 790 REBUILT 1044 - h: 59m
Traditional Japanese wood construction
HIMEJI CASTLE 1613 MAINTOWER 46.46 m HIGH
Traditional Japanese wood construction

NISHI-HONGANJI TEMPLE - KYOTO - 1591 - MOMOYAMA PERIOD (1573-1603)
Traditional Japanese wood construction

NANZEN-JI TEMPLE - SANMON GATE 1628
Traditional Japanese wood construction
Traditional Japanese wood construction

KATSURA RIKYU - IMPERIAL VILLA 1620
FIRST PART 1624
EXTENSION 1658 - SUKIYA STYLE
Traditional Japanese wood construction
Traditional Japanese wood construction
Traditional Japanese wood construction

THE JAPONISHE HOUSE - HEINRICH ENGEL
Traditional Japanese wood construction

TOSHODAUI TEMPLE NARA 759 - REPOSITORY AZEKURA-ZUKURI STYLE

STOREHOUSE AT NAGOSHIMA - KIUSHIU
Traditional Japanese wood construction