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SUBURBAN TASTE

Hankyu Corporation and its housing development in Japan, 1910-1939¹

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ABSTRACT

The cultural production of Japanese suburban housing between 1910 and 1939 was informed by changing perceptions of family and self in relation to domestic space and the everyday. This article focuses on the Hankyu Corporation, an Osaka-based railway company that presented itself as a cultural authority for middle-class families in a wide range of enterprises, including the construction of suburban estates. By revisiting its publicity, including a monthly magazine and housing catalogues, we demonstrate the complex process through which Hankyu narratively visualized and materialized an image of suburban life in its housing designs. We address the subjective nature of taste in influencing and shaping consumer choices around the spatial production of neighborhoods and the conduct of daily life in the suburbs.

KEYWORDS: housing, suburbs, modern Japan, taste, domesticity, material cultures

Well known for the color of its maroon rolling stock, the Hankyu Corporation is a railway company in the industrial city of Osaka, Japan.² Hankyu's founder, Ichizō Kobayashi, was a railway tycoon with business interests in housing development, the emerging leisure industry and department store retailing. These activities were focused on Japan's expanding middle classes and established a business model, centered on the role of the railway, that was to transform the lifestyle of Japanese urban dwellers and pave the way for other commercial competitors (e.g. Fujimori 2005[1987]: 197; Katagi 2006[2000]: 17-25). Thus in 1910, as central Osaka celebrated the opening of its new electrified railway, its periphery witnessed the arrival of the first inhabitants to a new residential quarter attached to Osaka by a station on the railway line. Designed by Hankyu, this exclusively residential community was named Ikeda-Muromachi and comprised the first suburban railway estate for private homeownership in Japan.

The suburb in modern Japan is viewed as a distillation of the civilizing consequences of the 1868 Meiji Restoration. Whatever its actual similarity, the pre-war suburbia erected by notable homebuilders like Hankyu has previously been examined in terms of the influence of the English Garden City Movement on its planning and design (e.g. Yoshida 2006a[2000a]; Wada and Terauchi 1997). Dwellings, not only of Ikeda-Muromachi but also of other suburban estates, comprised programmatic interiors distinct from the open-plan layouts of traditional Japanese housing. By interpreting Kobayashi's writings, Sand has explored the constructed notion of domesticity in a Japanese context that discloses novel, gendered compositions in a vision of "private" life in the suburban dwelling, segregated conceptually from the "public" realm (2003: 132-61). In the eyes of the inter-war middle classes, the suburban way of life could be progressive, as represented in the reformist visions of the ideal "lifestyle" in model houses displayed at the Tokyo Peace Commemoration Exhibition, 1922. Teasley (2001) focuses on the domestic architecture of these model houses, arguing that the

exotic design of the government-sponsored Culture Village was a product of the elites' search for national identity in response to recent encounters with the West. The inter-war suburbs, including areas along the Hankyu often became backdrops for Jun'ichiro Tanizaki's novels. By revisiting the domestic lives of the protagonists of his literary *oeuvre*, Chaplin (2006) implies that the adoption of Western material cultures, as proposed in the Exhibition, served paradoxically as a reminder of ingrained social practices concerning comfort and satisfaction, and, quite possibly, of the unique aesthetic senses of the Japanese. Conventional histories of house and home in modern Japan always presume a link between the endeavor to transform the country into a nation-state corresponding to Western nations and all forms of material changes materially taking place around the body and home. Yet, as Chaplin indicates, the material realities of constructed popular culture involving suburban dwelling seem to have been more epistemologically complex.

This article explores the suburban housing developments of Hankyu Corporation in their formative years, and is concerned with Hankyu's role as a tastemaker in shaping and architecturally materializing the "middle-classness" of pre-war Japan. We focus on the suburbs of Osaka in the period, 1910-1939, with a particular interest in the gap that Daniel Miller, in examining the phenomenological shaping of material culture through economic practices, describes as "between the subjects of public concern, political rhetoric or academic debate, and the experiences of everyday life" (1987: 6-7). In the field of material culture studies, the "experiences of everyday life" are largely associated with consumption, whereby individuals derive their own self-images through the assembly of selected ensembles of products and services (Slater 1997: 83-88). Taste acts not only as a basis for consumers' choices, but more collectively as a prism of modern consumer culture, representing a spectrum of differences in social, professional and educational backgrounds (Bourdieu 1984). According to Clammer (1997: 103-4), class in the Japanese context is less strategic in terms

of social mobility than Bourdieu's *Distinction* presumes; rather, it could be understood as a "field of practices" set up by certain patterns of economic and household practices, and perhaps framed by tastemakers. Whilst the decoration and furnishing of homes have been conceptualized as appropriation based on the tastes, self- and class-identities of households, as Buchli (2013: 119) discusses, "architectural form *per se*, its materiality, and the processes by which homes were built were relegated to the edges of consumption studies."

The main beneficiaries of the proliferation of commodities and the new housing market in early-twentieth-century Japan were the middle classes. They were officials, professors, teachers and clerks, significantly better off than blue-collar workers. It is estimated that by the inter-war years this income bracket represented 7-8 percent of all Japan, with 21.4 percent of the working population of Tokyo engaged in office works and public services in 1920 (Minami *et al.* 1965: 183, 197). The middle-classes were generally a more economically dominant group in the large cities, including Osaka, where many white-collar jobs were centralized. Ronald ascribes the prevailing patterns of Japanese household economy to its consumer culture of the 1920s and 1930s, with a growing number of the urban middle classes enhancing their social-cultural status through consumption-oriented households detached from any business activities (2007: 165-92).

This article presumes that Hankyu negotiated and interacted closely with its clientele as a profit-driven private housing provider, serving as a cultural advisor in its attempts to appeal to and perhaps modify the tastes of what Teasley (2005) describes as "architectural consumers." We therefore use its marketing literature and sales catalogues to examine the exposure provided to middle-class consumers of an idealized suburban life. First, we illustrate how Hankyu imagined the suburbs and perceived life in the suburbs by revisiting its monthly magazine *Sanyō-suitai*, published between 1913 and 1917. Kobayashi is considered to have regularly contributed unauthored content to this periodical.³ Next, we examine the

context for Hankyu's architectural design output, outlining the projected images of suburban "private" life illustrated in *Sanyō-suitai* and the floor and estate plans published in Hankyu's housing catalogues throughout the 1910s. Finally, we discuss Hankyu's construction of suburbia in the period after the Culture Village, using the voices of its architects as they appear in its in-house newsletter, *Hankyu shahō*, and advertisements of the five estates it built during the inter-war years. We argue that the imagined homes and as-built houses marketed by Hankyu and consumed by their clientele were conceived as a commercial and aesthetic response to changing attitudes towards domestic life signified in government interest in everyday efficiencies and the emerging modernizing discourse of the period.

HANKYU AS AN AESTHETIC AGENT

The period in which Hankyu started railway services to Minō and Takarazuka witnessed an urban deterioration in Osaka, led largely by rapid industrialization (Figure 1). Growth in mass production ensured the inflow of newcomers: the population in the period 1900 to 1911 increased dramatically from 0.95 million to 1.27 million (TJHIC 1989: 315). Coal consumption per year rose likewise, doubling between 1897 and 1907, and the air surrounding this congested city became increasingly polluted (Yasuda 1992: 11). Thousands died from recurrent epidemic diseases despite growing awareness of public health amongst urban residents, and sanitary improvement works conducted throughout the city center (Yasuno 2010: 258-60).

Extending the railway had the effect of blurring the administrative and perceptual borders of the city, and a steady colonization of its outskirts was the direct response to overcrowding, pollution and poor dwellings. The national railway, open in 1874, had already connected peripheral lands stretching between Osaka and Kobe, and from the mid-1880s, coastal districts along Osaka Bay became accessible by private railway companies. There was

momentum in migration beyond the metropolis with changes in both working and living conditions making the well-to-do leave town houses with workshops and stores to seek a healthier life in the suburbs (TJHIC 1989: 355); this desire to move being also closely associated with the emergence of estate agents and a new custom of home ownership (Sakamoto 1997: 43). Alongside their main business, private railway companies first developed new holiday destinations on their lines, with seaside resorts particularly intriguing middle-class consumers with the promise of an unpolluted, virginal sea (TJHIC 1989: 348).

Ichizō Kobayashi followed this emerging trend of decentralized middle-class consumption and was proud to connect central Osaka to its surrounding hilly districts. In contrast with the waterfront resorts made accessible by his rivals, the Hankyu destinations were, he professed, full of poetic beauty varied by the seasons (MAER 1908: 32-35). Hankyu's monthly magazine *Sanyō-suitai* (translated as Mountain Scenery and Waterscape) provided a month-by-month calendar giving a range of local information on traditional events and festivals held at temples and shrines, and a commentary on the changing natural landscape including, for example, seasonal flowers. Implicit in the promotional publication was that suburban environments did not serve just as amusements but also cultivated social refinement.

Kobayashi's view of leisure differed substantially from a conventional attitude towards entertainment. A pastime was customarily perceived as the act of being healed and amused (TJHIC 1989: 282). But the "modern" concept of leisure, he endorsed, was more subjective, and conceptualized through attempts to make good *shumi* (taste) in the period between the second half of the 1905 and the First World War. The Japanese cultural elite, influenced by the Romantic arts and literature spearheaded this campaign, which lay implicitly in a non-indigenous value of individualism and a consciousness of the subjective behavior of ordinary people. They believed that refined *shumi* (taste) could be internalized through active

engagement in appropriate *shumi* (recreation), and that this remedied a sense of beauty at both individual and social levels and revived the arts (Jinno 2011[1994]: 10-11, 26). Kobayashi's endeavors closely reference this quest for *shumi* – in both taste and recreation. In fact, *Sanyō-suitai* aimed “to show you the peace of hills and waters, beauties of nature on Hankyu's network. It provides you with various articles on picturesque places with *shumi* and seasonal events for you make a visit quite worthwhile” (X 1913b).

The magazine in addition called for poems, verses and paintings that described common sights encountered by the railway user (X 1913d). In other words, Kobayashi set out to alter perceptions via this cultural exchange such that Hankyu “leisurized” the image of lands along its railways for business purposes and in doing so enriched the pastoral *shumi* in the everyday lives of those passengers and residents who rediscovered the beauty of hilly terrains and waterscapes through Hankyu's publication.

The scientific and medical discourse within *Sanyō-suitai* boosted Kobayashi's argument, informing readers about the degree of cleanness in the air and water available in the outskirts of the city made accessible by Hankyu. Data repeatedly cited air quality and sampled well-water in many places including the areas along its network and central Osaka, to highlight the pureness of the railway suburbs (e.g. X 1915a). This implied that trips to scenic spots and suburban dwelling were not only culturally but hygienically favorable (Iwata 1913). In this respect, Kobayashi's project – imagining the suburbs – was rooted essentially on a rational and scientific understanding of space (e.g. X 1913a: 4).

Hankyu's appeal was always grounded implicitly on dichotomy. All kinds of writings in *Sanyō-suitai*, whether commentaries, short novels or even advertisements, invoked a juxtaposition of degenerate, infected urban centers and the wholesome, unpolluted suburbs. There were many fictional and non-fictional narratives of the everyday lives of those who moved to the lands newly accessible by train from central Osaka. These served to insinuate a

connection between the nature of habitus and mental and physical well-being. In one story, for example, sickly children became healthier as their family left the city and settled into a new suburban life (e.g. X 1915b). Likewise, the main characters of a short novel “The Sisters” were described living in different settings (Shimizu 1914). The elder married to a merchant of Osaka and living centrally, suffered persistently from neurasthenia; another, a wife of a university professor, was, in contrast, a suburban dweller in good shape. The story concludes with the younger sister recommending a change of air for the elder, stressing how salubrious her suburban life was.

The term “unhealthy” had a conceptually wider meaning to the contemporary Japanese than as a scientific vocabulary. In a view held by Kobayashi, and supposedly by most elites, the conditions of their living environment mirrored the dweller’s state of mind. The urban deterioration that Osaka experienced, he thought, was “a result of material greed,” and his particular attention to the fitness of dwelling came from anxiety about its impact on the younger generation (X 1914b: 12). The assumption behind his faith was a newly recognized awareness of the shaping of identity: it being conceived that personality was constructed through day-to-day interaction with the external world in early life.⁴ In *Sanyō-suitai*, the same concern was voiced often by its correspondents: mothers living along the Hankyu who were extremely sensitive to urban social conditions such as red-light districts and sordid shopping streets that were likely to morally harm their children. Their aversion to these corrupting influences made them abandon life in the center (e.g. X 1916a), and for them the suburbs were the representation of healthy *shumi*, vital in the sound development of body and mind.

The polarization of urban and suburban characters led Kobayashi to envisage the notion of “home” as a counter proposal against life in the polluted, distasteful environments of the city. He ascribed materialism to a lack of parental supervision of respectability, and his vision of modern family was rooted in delivering moral instruction within a haven of domesticity (X

1914b: 12). The concept of “home” had already become part of the knowledge of the Japanese elite at this time, influenced by Romantic commentators in the West (Mizushima 2008: 69-70). This implied a segregated domain from the unexpected public world and, in theory, a sanctuary for refuge and for pleasure unlike a typical “household” where domestic life and business practices coincided. A mere emphasis on affection among members of the family would not be powerful enough to persuade ordinary Japanese to take it into practice, however. This was because, contrary to family intimacy and in disconnecting private activities from wider social interactions, suburbanization intrinsically accelerated the compartmentalization of personal ritual according to gender and generational differences. The answer for Kobayashi, and the educators and home economists, was that a variety of *shumi* (recreations) were given not only as correctives of *shumi* (taste) as part of an implicit scheme of social cultivation, but also as shared pursuits to unite the whole family (c.f. Fuess 2005: 277-80).

Kobayashi particularly promoted domestic gardening and the playing of musical instruments. Gardens were traditionally a licensed practice through which ruling-caste warriors (*samurai*) and higher-ranked tradesmen and farmers felt gratification by being entertained with horticulture which represented their status or fame (Suzuki 1981: 155). This, however, began to lose much its feudalistic symbolism as the elite discovered a kind of DIY attitude towards domestic settings as well as to modern family relations (Mizushima 2008; see also Daniels 2008). Advice on gardening, which not only Hankyu but also other competitors in Osaka offered, was an accurate reflection of this semantic change; it was reinterpreted as a set of means to enjoy togetherness through which the whole family got satisfaction and pleasure from an endeavor to tend the garden (Yasuno 2010: 265-8). The instructions of *Sanyō-suitai* were diverse, covering both plantsmanship and garden design

(e.g. X 1914a). The habit of gardening was in this respect expected to serve as a modernizer to drive all members of the household to acquire pastoral and homely *shumi*.

Fears of the absence of a social basis for aesthetic experience extended to other activities and Kobayashi, in promoting these also extended the scope of his business to the entertainment industry. He, as well as the cultural elites who attempted to refine *shumi* for the populace, saw few opportunities for children learning piano, organ and violin in compulsory education to gain exposure to Occidental music elsewhere (KKER 1959: 140). A rich culture of traditional music persisted but this was customarily a channel for, in particular, higher caste women to express the nobility of their rank (e.g. Hayashi 2001: 284-7). Kobayashi presumably conceived that the exotic sounds emanating from Western musical instruments was not exclusive, but accessible to all as a novel genre of music to be consumed socially as a component of the new suburban “home” lifestyle. From his albeit gendered viewpoint, “a lovely performance by daughters makes the post-prandial company of family calm and peaceful” (X 1914b: 12). His idea to establish a girls’ operetta in 1914, the Takarazuka Revue, which continues today, was aimed initially at inculcating an Occidental aesthetic feeling although some of the plays it performed were in fact by Kobayashi (KKER 1959: 137-40).

Thus, in promoting his railway business, Kobayashi engendered a reform of *shumi* (taste) through modeling *shumi* (recreations), sought as a measure against urban deterioration and the compartmentalization of the daily routines of family life. All kinds of *shumi*, Hankyu discovered, could be attained in the outskirts of Osaka, involving a time-space conjunction of “modern” leisure behaviors ordered by the seasons. These were to be given a social architecture in the design and landscaping of the suburbs.

FAMILY AND HOME

The prescribed, instructed *shumi* – in both taste and recreation – that members of the family were urged to obtain were expected to make sense in Hankyu’s estates. Ikeda-Muromachi estate, created in June 1910, was capable of accommodating two hundred households within an area of 91,000 square meters (KKER 1959: 120). This flat land was equally subdivided in size; a 330-square-meter plot came with a two-story house consisting of five or six rooms and a garden. There were some variations among the houses with floor areas ranging from 66 to 99 square meters. About 18 hectares of land were designated for building lots the following year on former fruit farms close to Sakurai station (CoT 2010: 264). Sakurai estate, according to *Sanyō-suitai*, was “the most tasteful place of areas along the Hankyu due to its rustic and placid mood” (X 1914c: 7). Toyonaka estate was on sale from 1914, offering varying site and floor areas to accommodate a range of demands (CoT 1998: 268).

Whatever the size, Hankyu proclaimed that it never altered the “family-oriented” principle in designing a house (e.g. X 1914f). Spaces covered with traditional straw *tatami* mats continued as the normative appearance of the interior, but the elements that this canon of planning brought about were distinct from pre-modern dwellings and signified particular ways of life which were something “modern”. Open-plan arrangements were typical in the orthodox Japanese townhouses still dominant in urban centers of the period. Their plain, spacious interior reflected the conventional, interrelated roles played by all members of the household in transactions miscellaneously involving trades and domestic chores (Kōda 1930: 917-9). A set of movable furniture served to change the mood of the space, allowing occupants to use it as a workshop, dining room, bedroom and anything else they needed (c.f. Morse 1972). Whilst this unique material culture was morphologically modified and sustained, the “private” lives of the prospective residents of the new suburban Hankyu dwellings were no longer communalized amongst members of the family, rather compartmentalized by the different types of activities of father, mother and children.

Passages from “My Home,” a novella in *Sanyō-suitai*, offer a shrewd reflection of a middle-class view that the use of domestic spaces becomes “selective” according to more individualized needs:

When my family moved to the house [of a Hankyu’s estate], I made sure which room is for whom, so as not to bother each other. First I chose an eight-*tatami* floor next to the entrance as my bedroom. A small chamber adjoined the kitchen, and a maid was assigned to this four-and-half *tatami* space. My wife and children occupied six *tatamis* near the kitchen; this, at the same time, began to serve as the dining room at meals (X 1913e: 5).

“Family-oriented” planning was the methodology developed for organizing discrete milieus where members of the family pursued their own interests separately under the same roof (Kubo 2005[2002]: 80). Hankyu’s housing catalogues issued in the late 1910s show a variety of programmatic floor arrangements (Figure 2). This heterogeneity of room and corridor arrangement was different to the homogeneity of the traditional Japanese house plan. In these Hankyu houses, rooms were only referred to by their number in *tatami*, but this anonymity did not necessarily mean a lack of deliberation in purpose. Rather, the options drawn in the catalogues echoed a range of narratives of “private” lives that the novellas of *Sanyō-suitai* described and were products of delicate design considerations associated with the number of demands stemmed from a growing compartmentalization of everyday life.

The multi-functionality of the six-*tatami* room close to the kitchen was described in “My Home” still shaped by domestic routines of a conventional, production-oriented household, but this sitting-dining room became widely called *chanoma* and recognized as a sign of family gatherings at “home” (Koizumi 2002: 86-101, 123-4). At the mealtimes of a pre-

industrial family, a set of a tray and eating utensils was given individually according to rank in the pyramid of a feudal society (Figure 3). A scene of dinner described by another narrative of *Sanyō-suitai* no longer projected this symbolic manner of dining. Its middle-class audience was likely to feel empathy with less formal and more enjoyable meals conditioned by the emergence of a single large table called *chabudai*, which allowed all members of the family to take seats around it to share a meal together (Figure 4). After work, Jyūzō, the main character of the novella, was “sitting at the *chabudai*,” talking to his newly-married wife:

Wife: “Have you finished dinner on the way to the home?”

Jyūzō: “Yes, and you?”

Wife: “Not yet, because I’ve waited for you to come back. I was not so hungry and on top of that, I missed eating dinner with you.”

Actually he has dropped into a bierkeller with his colleagues and gorged himself with greasy food, beer and hard drink. But a request of his wife is absolute.

Jyūzō: “You must be starving then. All right, let’s start dinner from now on.”

(X 1913c)

To Jyūzō, his home was one of two worlds where he travelled back and forth. The two dinners he faced were a metaphor for the emerging trend of a distinction between public and private spheres. To his wife, the meal was an opportunity for pleasure involving the company of the whole family and interactions around the *chabudai*.

This exercise of “family-oriented” planning was coupled with public discourse on domestic hygiene to inform temporal and spatial arrangements for the whole family. Rooms serving as living spaces of Hankyu dwellings were ideally oriented to the south and southeast (X 1914g: 21; Figure 5). On the one hand, this plan arrangement was a means to reinforce a

link between the interior and garden – both spaces that were epistemologically “leisurized.” On the other hand, it reflected the growing awareness of public health. Commentaries in *Sanyō-suitai* implied that there was a close association between the circulation and spatial layout of a building and the onset of pulmonary tuberculosis with which, the magazine reported, nearly twelve percent of those living in the slum areas of Osaka were afflicted (e.g. X 1913f). The south-facing plan promised improved ventilation and access to daylight for the disinfection of rooms that members of the family inhabited the most. To adopt this scientific prescription, the reader was equally persuaded that this led to the same result as the Chinese tradition of *feng shui*, used conventionally for determining the configuration of space (e.g. X 1916b). Sanitary quality was a token of security and largely appealed to a middle class with a heightened awareness of health of the family (e.g. X 1914d).

Without the garden, the suburban house lost much of its *raison d'être*. This domesticated landscape was intended to serve as a place within which members of the family cultivated pastoral *shumi* (taste) and pastoral *shumi* (recreations) (Figure 6). In Sakurai estate, a search for unity within the existing orchard farms led to several fruit trees being retained in the garden of each plot. This environmental solution was also strategic to the projected disposition of the dwellings; “the blossoms and the fruits of the plants” were expected “to embody spring and autumn and give [the whole estate] aesthetic appeal” (X 1914c: 7). It is possible to consider that the setting of vegetation within an ecological cycle would act as a mnemonic for the seasons for various events and for the particular kinds of recreational activities that Hankyu “leisurized.” The front and back gardens were set out extensively and the magazine promoted a kind of DIY experience through gardening and growing vegetables was taken for granted as a means to enhance both the creativity and health of the residents (e.g. X 1914f).

The exterior of a typical Hankyu house erected in this period evoked that of vernacular architecture. Just like the ruling-caste dwelling in pre-modern times, it was fenced up by high walls (Figure 7).⁵ A long-lasting tradition of material possession conceded the *samurai* the exclusive rights to a “symbolic” gate and this was still a spatial component of Hankyu’s middle-class settlements (Figure 8).⁶ But building materials and ornaments were no longer emblematic of privilege in this post-*samurai* period. Instead the shell of this “modern” house contained a different message of practicability; for example the effect of weatherboarding that styled its appearance was seen, scientifically, as a means to lower room temperature during the summer months (Yanagi 1914). As such, Hankyu houses were primarily detailed architecturally to encompass a rational and anatomical perspective on the relationship between the body and space.

Arguably, the gridded landscape of these estates shaped by their road network projected a civilizing message to their residents on a daily basis (Figure 9). Behind the fences, the large garden, regularly placed on the south side of each house, promised healthy bodies and the refinement of *shumi*. That the streets were the only spaces accessible to all, manifested a clear distinction between the public and private spheres within the estates and the development of new social norms. It did not necessarily mean that there was no place to accommodate activities outside the home. Rather, clubhouses were erected in the Ikeda-Muromachi and Sakurai estates, intended to be gathering places where residences gained acquaintances and socialized with others through leisure pursuits (e.g. X 1913e: 6). The essence of the appeal of Hankyu’s estates was condensed into this meeting place; an overall harmony among people, who disliked the city on moral and aesthetic grounds and were in the relatively higher income bracket, bespoke respectability and the appropriateness in *shumi* (taste). Under refined *shumi*, good neighbors became good friends – in the course of the Second World War, the Muromachi, according to the record of its residents’ association (Muromachi-kai 1958: 22-

27), had evolved into webs of cultural ties grouped by various kinds of *shumi* (recreations), such as tennis, hiking, traditional song, board games, etc. Likewise residents reported enjoying hearing music emanating from the houses as they moved around this homogenized residential community, even if latterly the constructed idyll of such estates were corrupted by crime (1958: 19-20). These Hankyu projects from the 1910s were a testament to the “leisurization” of the suburbs revolving around separate togetherness and the concept of cultural refinement at “home.”

SHUMI IN ACTION

The social climate of the late-1910s made an impact on Osaka, Hankyu, and the ethics of inter-war society. While the middle classes had enjoyed their rising prosperity, the economic boom fuelled by the First World War created tensions in the accelerating pace of industrial success, population expansion and the condition of urban Osaka. A severe housing shortage amongst the laboring population in Osaka led to dilapidated shelters being erected that encroached upon the edge of its center (TJHIC 1989: 301-2, 320). A consequence of this *laissez-faire* urban development was that the elites started to take more seriously the quality of urban life and to seek social solutions through studying Western practices, particularly in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution (Uchida *et al.* 2009: 76-77). The government campaign for simplifying domestic routines was repeated over the 1920s and 1930s, a product of reformists’ enthusiasm for rationalization and the application of Occidental material culture (Yamaguchi 1999). Architects were increasingly keen to draw on the urban design of Western residential neighborhoods including the Garden City (e.g. Kishida and Takayama 1936). The 1922 Culture Village held at Ueno Park, Tokyo was indeed an embodiment of their ideals and *shumi*, luring crowds to the Occidental interiors and exteriors of the model houses.

A curvilinear road in a site close to Minō station on the Hankyu line was one of the initial cases in which the Western practices of picturesque treatment were employed. It was the main axis of the Housing Reform Exhibition held in the same year to showcase simplifications in the organization of domestic life (Figure 10). Sponsored by Hankyu, 25 model houses were built that displayed a variety of Western architectural motifs. These houses were targeted at middle-class households and designed to be sold after the closing of the exhibition (Yoshida 2006b[2000b]). Their floor arrangements can mostly be categorized as an “interior-corridor plan,” largely employed during the inter-war years (Aoki *et al.* 2009). This is defined as an east-to-west internal passage dividing the interior into south-facing rooms for living and north-facing service spaces including the kitchen and servant’s room. For example, a two-story house characterized externally by its “Spanish Colonial” architecture was by construction firm Obayashi Corporation and exhibited an interior filled with Western furniture (Figure 11). The plan proposed by Obayashi included a somewhat curious element appropriated from the West as part of its demonstration of family togetherness, incorporating a western fireplace as a quintessential component of English home culture. The living room thus contained a mantelpiece and chimney, echoing a view of the happy family circle as well as the *shumi* held by this anonymous architect. Such designs were simultaneously rationalized, “homely” and rooted in fetishistic assumptions around style.

Whatever the authenticity of their western treatment, the two exhibitions in 1922 exerted considerable influence on new housing developments that enlarged suburban tracts over the inter-war years. A jump in the number of people living within Osaka in 1925 resulted from its absorption of adjacent towns and villages, and in the following decade, the city’s population grew further from 2.1 to nearly three million (TJHIC 1989: 321, 325). The extension of Hankyu’s railway networks perhaps accelerated this urban growth. Kobe had already been

linked with central Osaka by the national rail and Hanshin, but Hankyu's new electric line reached the port in 1920 (see Figure 1). As a homebuilder, it gradually opened a total of 210 hectares across thirteen middle-class estates in the hinterlands stretching between the two cities (KKER 1959: 120-5). For example, adjoining Sonoda station, one estate created in 1936, comprised approximately 23.4 hectares of leveled grounds, subdivided into building lots including 180 housing units. The units with buildings designed by Hankyu varied in type and size with one of the smallest models, a two-story house of ¥9,350, occupying a 346-square-meter plot (HKER. *c.* 1937b). The house had a ground floor of 81.4 square meters, and about 77 percent of the plot was occupied by the garden.

Advertisements for Hankyu dwellings in this period reveal the principles in planning, as the design of the houses, according to its housing catalogues (HKER *c.* 1935b), was based on “architectural science” providing “elaborations of user-friendly housing, *shumi* and total economy” (HKER *c.* 1925). The design approach was to “simplify and streamline the mode of life” (HKER *c.* 1937a) and to create well-built environments to make life in the estate healthy and invigorating. The catalogue of Sonoda estate (*c.* 1936) claimed:

Wholesomeness and access to cultural amenities are above everything else in the ideal suburban life. [There are] freshness, clean air, running water, sewer system, spacious road networks and green spaces; what a [Hankyu's] estate has are the best embodiments of the perfection of suburban dwelling.

It is clear from *Sanyō-suitai* that Hankyu's marketing material had evolved from the experiential and phenomenological content of the 1910s popularizing modern family relations, to advertisements in the inter-war years that highlighted rational design and efficiency. Nevertheless, a material culture encapsulating more qualitative daily routines was incarnated

in the particularity of the “interior-corridor plans” employed by Hankyu. For example, one house, Plan 45 of Mukonosō estate indicated that the spaces to the south of the east-west corridor were expected to serve as *tatami*-floored *chanoma* and living rooms exclusively for kinship members of the household, with service spaces and a Western-style parlor across the corridor (Figure 12). Contrary to the Obayashi model house, a fireplace was not provided in the *tatami* rooms, but the parlor with its boarded floors included this exotic item as one setting for reception. The words of Hankyu’s architect Mr. Kihōin (1936b) in its in-house newsletter make clear that the concept of “home” was embedded in the use of functionally distinct and scientifically disposed *tatami*-floored spaces:

From a hygiene point of view, consideration on the sunny aspect was essential in planning, because the amount of daylight [entering a house] was associated closely with a way of arrangement. The south side of a house must be a place for living; a room for meals and one involving activities of younger members of the family be ideally situated on the south, or southeast and southwest. [...] A house presumes the homely conditions to be peaceful. These were secured by the centrality of living spaces [as private spheres] for family gatherings: chatting, recreations, rest, and so on. Each room with particular function needed to be fairly independent, and passages ensure it while connecting one with another.

Also explicit in accounts by Hankyu’s architects was that the connection between the inside and outside of the house was vital in suburban life conditioned by nature segregating urbanity. Garden arches, pergolas, low fences, stepping stones and other items around the house had the effect of blurring any interior-exterior boundary, and a veranda-like floor called *engawa* in between the *chanoma* and garden established a leisured family space

connecting both. The *engawa* constituted, according to one of the architects Mr. Nakagawa (1936a: 9), a “happy family circle,” and was expected to be “used like an indoor space for reception, chatting, reading, meal, games and napping” (Kihōin 1936a).

Whilst the *tatami* interiors of Hankyu dwellings continued to evoke continuity with traditional Japanese culture, Hankyu’s architects widened the scope of their external architectural expression articulating various Western stylistic references. The decorative patterns of Spanish Colonial and Tudor Gothic architecture were particularly learned and applied to differentiate one model of house from another (Nakagawa 1936a: 9). With a rational approach to design, the confidence of Hankyu’s architects was heightened by the discourse of western modernists including Walter Gropius and their emphasis on the ahistorical, systematic view of things (e.g. X 1934d). The impact of a wave of “mechanization of architecture” from the West was seen along the Hankyu railway lines imitating Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus on the estates built at the beginning of the 1930s (e.g. HKER c. 1933; Figure 13). But, the most popular exterior was Japanese, and perhaps the popularity of traditional designs echoed the clientele’s *shumi* (Figure 14). The variety of appearances of Hankyu homes became diverse, and middle-class customers could choose and consume styles of buildings signifying their identity like dresses and furniture.

Whatever the exterior, Hankyu’s architects had never lost elements of humanity in their designs. Their thoughts were prophetic in reaction to the well-known modernist doctrine – a “machine for living.” They perceived the incongruity between spatial, material compositions led by the design codes of the modernists and ones suitable for Japan’s humid weather (Shimomura 1935). “As the age of imitation of Wright’ and Corbusier’s architecture is gone,” a housing catalogue of Mukonosō estate (c. 1937a) proclaimed, designing a house “adaptable to Japanese weather is an idea whose time has come.” Adherence to its utilitarian approach, they suspected, would not create the conditions of domestic spaces by which the Japanese

discerned roominess and comfortableness (Nakagawa 1936b). Certainly the central tenet of Hankyu's housing was the notion of home, which, in their view, was a conceptually "leisurized" space full of enjoyment derived from family gatherings involving meals, chatting and recreational activities (e.g. X 1934c). In this respect, "simplification" in their words meant a project to systematize and formulate an environment within which members of the family were expected to appropriate a Romantic vision of family relations in a Japanese middle-class context. A quotation by Romantic writer Victor Hugo in the in-house newsletter was representative of what Hankyu, and undoubtedly other homebuilders, envisaged:

"A refuge from danger," which a French poet Hugo discovers at home, has become the principle of designing a humble house; such a peaceful dwelling manifests a sense of comfort and enjoyment, as opposed to a French architect Corbusier's *machine à habiter* (X 1934e).

This sense of refuge continued to translate into the site planning of Hankyu's estates of the 1930s (HKER c. 1937b). Illuminated boulevards running from southwest to northeast as the main axes to the stations, roadside trees and chamfered corner plots were newly employed as elements borrowed from the garden-city and Occidental ways of building suburbia (Figure 15 and 16). To Hankyu's architects, communal areas within these residential neighborhoods were still part of the refined realm of family life, transcended from the house. Open spaces at Sonoda included "a children's playground and parks serving as walkways," with decorative flower beds placed around streets and parks added color to the whole district (Nakagawa 1936a: 8). These conveyed the aesthetic standards which Hankyu's architects had in taste and leisure pursuits: subtle associations that continued to formulate pastoral *shumi* in everyday life.

CONCLUSION

If the designs of Hankyu dwellings that uniformly placed south-facing *tatami* rooms along gardens were physical embodiments of middle-class *shumi* in family life, the mantelpiece in the living room of the Obayashi model house lost its subtle nuance in translation. This gap mirrored the difference between fetishism underlying the campaign for life simplification and the intention of the Culture Village, with the views held by Ichizō Kobayashi and the architects of Hankyu; between “high modernism” and “low modernism,” as Scott Lash and Jonathan Friedman (1992: 2-3) have defined. By acting as an aesthetic agent rather than solely as a homebuilder, Hankyu was involved not only in the creation of consumer demand *per se*, but also in the epistemological transformation of suburbs into “home,” both of which were distinct dichotomously from “unhealthy” cities in a Ruskinian conception. The logic behind the commentaries and advertisements that comprised Hankyu’s publicity was not traditional, but rooted in scientific discourse, and its housing development was thus not completely irrelevant to “high modernism,” which espoused the elites’ view of rationality and modernity, culturally orientated towards the arts and a utopian vision. More significantly, Hankyu’s construction of suburban estates was a project of leisurizing “private” life in line with its pastoral *shumi* as well as materializing an architectural narrative around a persistent domestic imagery of “modern” family relations that the middle classes could afford to achieve and consume. In this respect, the imagination of Kobayashi (and the anonymous architects of Hankyu) was of “low modernism” and thus sought continuity between past and present with an emphasis on the reality of mainstream social practices, including the use of *tatami* mats and movable furniture. Whatever the resultant architectural product, it could be said that the cultural role of such pragmatic modernizers was to cultivate *shumi* for people at a more intimate and feasible level through the making of suburbia as a consumable object.

NOTES

1. This article is based on the doctoral research project of Shuntaro Nozawa, partly funded by the Obayashi Foundation (2013-2014). Hankyu's publications and visual materials are available at the National Diet Library, Tokyo, Ikeda Bunko Library, Ikeda and Amagasaki Municipal Archives, Amagasaki. All quotations from Japanese sources are translated by Nozawa.
2. "Hankyu" stands for Hanshin Kyūkō Electric Railway (HKER). It has used this name since 1918, but was originally established as Minō Arima Electric Railway (MAER). Between 1943 and 1973, it was temporarily renamed Keihanshin Kyūkō Electric Railway (KKER). This article entirely terms it 'Hankyu' even in referring to its enterprises before 1918.
3. Kobayashi is known for his active involvement in advertising through a range of literary works himself (Sand 2003: 152), but *Sanyō-suitai* does not allow us to identify his commentaries and short novels due to a lack of biographical information. Thus we regard articles and stories written in a didactic tone as manifestations of his vision.
4. From the 1890s onward, the new insight on childhood was seen in the advice manuals and textbooks that placed emphasis on individuality and on how it could be natured through upbringing (e.g. Shimoda 1893: 223).
5. In contrast to a townsmen's quarter consisting densely of a number of terrace houses, a *samurai's* premise was a detached house involving vastly open spaces. It was erected in a large block exclusively for the ruling caste; high walls encircling each plot were evidently illustrated in an American zoologist Edward Morse's sketch of the dwelling in late-nineteenth-century Tokyo (see Figure 7).

6. The sequence of a gate and vestibule was a representation of formalism that ordered rites and rituals of *samurai* society. Whatever the rank, it served visibly as a privileged item, and was uniformly part of the fixtures of their residences (Nishikawa 1974[1972]: 235; Suzuki 1981: 153-4).

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Captions

Figure 1 Osaka and Hankyu's network

Figure 2 "Floor Plans of Houses in Ikeda-Muromachi and Toyonaka estates" (MAER 1916).

Figure 3 Pre-modern dining (Ihara 1688: 19).

Figure 4 Family dinner and *chabudai* (Ōmori 1909: 160).

Figure 5 "Family-oriented" plan of a house in Ikeda-Muromachi estate (B: bathroom; E: eight-*tatami* room; F: four-and-half-*tatami* room; H: hall; K: kitchen; P: privy; S: six-*tatami* room; Th: three-*tatami* room; Tw: two-*tatami* room; V: vestibule; a: alcove; c: closet; d: *chigaidana* alcove; t: *tokonoma* alcove) (MAER 1916).

Figure 6 Garden of a Hankyu's house (X 1914e).

Figure 7 Front view of a house with the typical design for *samurai*'s family (Morse 1972: 54).

Figure 8 Front view of a house in Sakurai estate (X 1913a: 4).

Figure 9 "Map of Toyonaka estate" (X 1917).

Figure 10 Plot pattern in a site of the Housing Reform Exhibition (Ichikawa 1922: 5).

Figure 11 Model house of Obayashi Corporation displayed in the Housing Reform Exhibition (B: bathroom; D: dining room; H: hall; K: kitchen; L: living room; PL: parlor and library, S: servants' room, T: toilet; TB: *tatami*-mat bedroom, TN: *tatami*-mat nursery; W: Western room; c: closet; t: *tokonoma* alcove) (Ichikawa 1922: 11).

Figure 12 Floor plan and exterior of Plan 45 in Mukonosō estate (B: bathroom; C: *chanoma*; E: entrance; EN: *engawa*; H: hall; JG: Japanese-style guest room; K: kitchen, L: living room; N: nursery; P: privy; PO: porch; S: shed; SR: servants' room; SU: sunroom; WP: Western-style parlor; c: closet; d: *chigaidana* alcove; t: *tokonoma* alcove) (HKER c. 1937b).

Figure 13 Le Corbusier influenced house in Higashi-Toyonaka estate (HKER c. 1933).

Figure 14 Exterior of a House in Sonoda estate (HKER c. 1936).

Figure 15 “Map of Shin-Itami estate” (HKER c. 1935a).

Figure 16 Boulevard and roadside trees in Mukonosō estate (HKER c. 1937c).