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Fernando Távora's Japan through books: a fascination with tradition in search of innovation

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Abstract

Amongst the private library of the Porto architect Fernando Távora (1923-2005), who is an obligatory figure if one wants to understand Portuguese architecture in the latter half of the 20th century, are several books on Japan and its architecture. Taken together, the books reveal a sustained interest in this subject matter, an interest which had begun when Távora was still a student of architecture and for which his visit to Japan in 1960 was to be decisive for its consolidation and deepening. In an initial phase, he became interested in contemporary Japanese architecture and the Western architecture that absorbed it, but traditional Japanese architecture was to become a more permanent object of interest for him. Here one can identify a fascination with tradition, whereby tradition is understood, in a broader sense, as permanence – of values and architectural practices. However, there is also undeniably a search for innovation, whereby innovation is understood in an equally full sense, as the creation of the new, a new way of architecture dealing with modernity.

Proceeding from Japan and its architecture as revealed in his books, a completely new approach, this chapter sets out to discuss the extent of Távora's fascination with tradition as a reflection of his search for innovation.

Keywords: Fernando Távora; traditional Japanese architecture; books on Japanese architecture; tradition; innovation

1. Fernando Távora's travels in Japan

> Now, Japan […] even though it manufactures automobiles, travels by jet, drinks Coca-Cola, dances the mambo, etc., etc., i.e., although it is a display case of the tastes of contemporary civilization, at the same time – still, but for how much longer? – has a thousand and one small/significant qualities of a man of the past. [...] Japan is, perhaps, unique in the world. (Távora, 2012, p. 344)[1]

In May 1960, Fernando Távora (1923-2005), a Porto architect who was to become an obligatory figure for an understanding of Portuguese architecture in the latter half of the 20th century[2], visited Japan. It was one of the most significant stages in a singular four-month-long voyage that had taken him to the USA and Mexico and was to see him travel on to Thailand, Pakistan, Egypt, and Greece[3].

The reason for his trip to Japan was to take part in the World Design Conference (WoDeCo), which was held in Tokyo. In addition to Tokyo, Távora also traveled to Nikkō, Kyoto, and Nara. In his *diário de "bordo"*[4] or travel logbook (Távora, 2012), Távora

[1] Our translation. Original text: "Ora o Japão… apesar de produzir automóveis, viajar em jactos, beber coca-cola, dançar o mambo, etc., etc., isto é apesar de ser vitrina gostosa da civilização contemporânea, tem paralelamente – ainda e por quanto tempo – mil e uma pequenas/grandes qualidades dos homens do passado. […] O Japão é porventura único no mundo" (Távora, 2012, p. 344).

[2] Fernando Távora (1923-2005) was born in Porto; he graduated from the School of Fine Arts of that city (ESBAP) in 1950. He became a stand-out figure in Portuguese culture and architecture for the way that he based the realisation of modernity on an ample understanding of the world, for which he considered a continuity with tradition to be fundamentally important. He was a professor at ESBAP, where Álvaro Siza Vieira (b. 1933) was a student of his, and later became a collaborator. He was also actively involved in the international debate on the regeneration of the Modern Movement and an impassioned traveller. For a deeper understanding of the man and his work, see Bandeirinha (2012).

[3] On the planning and realisation of the trip, see Mesquita (2007). For more on the significance of trip for Távora, see Maddaluno (2017).

[4] Fernando Távora kept a travel diary, to which he gave the title 'Diário de 'Bordo'' or Logbook, in which he recorded observations and made drawings, including also various

repeatedly stressed the affability and kindness of the people, their good manners and refined ways, how they preserved ancestral customs, even if he thought that that was a world that was already becoming extinct (Távora, 2012, p. 326). His assessment of the country's architecture was more heterogeneous in nature. He became manifestly fascinated with traditional Japanese architecture, highlighting the harmony of the whole that marked many of the constructions – be it of a building itself or buildings with their gardens and the surrounding landscape – and acknowledged that he took, in Katsura Imperial Villa, just outside Kyoto, a considerable interest as he encountered there all of what could be called modern (Távora, 2012, p. 330). He was, however, less enthusiastic when it came to contemporary architecture. Tokyo had a disastrous impression on him, causing him to write that practically none of it was worth anything (Távora, 2012, p. 306) and that the department stores and elevated streets revealed characteristics that were becoming universal, thus making the new Japanese architecture appear pretentious (Távora, 2012, p. 318).

Nevertheless, he did appreciate the Harumi Apartment Building in Tokyo by Kunio Maekawa (1905-1986) and Tokyo City Hall by Kenzo Tange (1910-2005), with its concrete enhanced by the marks of the wood used in forming it, thus showing itself to be more Japanese than other recent buildings in the city (Távora, 2012, p. 310). He also liked Tokyo's Imperial Hotel building by Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959), despite its somewhat run-down state, but was disappointed by Le Corbusier's (1867-1965) National Museum of Western Art, also in Tokyo, which he found to be smaller than the images he had seen suggested (Távora, 2012, p. 311). In Japan, as the observation in the title of this text reveals, Távora would seem to have confirmed a questioning coexistence of tradition with innovation.

On the eve of his departure from Japan, he wrote of how sorry he was to be leaving the country, saying that he would definitely have to go back there (Távora, 2012, p. 342). He was never able to do so again.

Távora's visit in 1960 gave him a unique insight into Japan through direct contact with its culture, its people, its territory, and its architecture. For him, that was the incomparable value of any journey (Maddaluno, 2018, p. 54). Nevertheless, his contact with Japan went much further, his visit revealing itself to be just one moment in a long relationship, perhaps a lesser-known one, which began when he was still a student of architecture in the 1940s and was to continue into the phase of greater professional maturity in the 1960s. It was a relationship that was established through the books that Távora collected about Japan and its architecture, as well as the Western architecture that had absorbed its influence[5]. In the fascination with tradition that marked that relationship, one should identify a search for innovation, a condition that could provide a response to modernity. So-called Modern Architecture was "the only Architecture we could sincerely practice" (Távora, 1993, p. 11), Távora argued, in 1945[6], when he began buying the first books that referenced Japanese architecture.

2. The first books

It is not possible, and indeed it is of little importance in this context, to pinpoint precisely when Távora first showed an interest in Japan and its architecture. However, it is plausible that the contact, at least with traditional architecture, was provided within the family context, which was indeed marked by his father's interest in the arts and by the experience of architecture itself (Ferrão, 1993, p. 23). As far as the purchase of his first books referencing Japanese architecture is concerned, this took place when he was still a student of architecture at the Porto School of Fine Arts (EBAP). There was little interest in Japanese architecture in Portugal at the time, and even less interest when it came to modern architecture. However, one should point out that Keil do Amaral (1910-1975), who designed the Portuguese pavilion for the *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne* in Paris in 1937, was well acquainted with the Japanese pavilion, a modern work by Junzō Sakakura (1901-1969). In Europe, however, knowledge of Japan and its architecture was more widespread, to which the visit of several European architects to Japan had contributed – the most well-known being perhaps Bruno Taut (1880-1938), who published the book *Houses and People of Japan*, in 1937 on the traditional architecture of that country, and which Távora was to purchase later (Taut, 1958) – as had the presence of Japanese architects in Europe, first and foremost Tetsurō Yoshida (1894-1956), who traveled Europe and the USA as part of a Japanese government mission and published the book *Das Japanische Wohnhaus* [The

types of paper records – business cards, travel routes, newspaper clippings, programmes, information leaflets, etc. (Távora, 2012).

[5] Fernando Távora's private library is now deposited at the José Marques da Silva Foundation Institute (FIMS) in Porto.

[6] The essay "O problema da casa portuguesa" [The Problem of the Portuguese House] was first published in 1945 in Aléo magazine. It was republished, albeit in a revised version, in 1947 in the first issue of the architectural journal Cadernos de arquitectura (Lebre, 2016, pp. 105-113). The edition consulted for this paper (Távora, 1993) is the text published in 1947.

Japanese House] in 1935 on traditional housing in Japan, of which Távora purchased a revised edition in English titled *The Japanese House and Garden* (Yoshida, 1955).

The first books Távora purchased that referenced Japanese architecture are: *The Modern House in America* (Ford & Ford, 1944), by James Ford (1884-1944) and Katherine Morrow Ford (1905-1959), housing specialists, which was first published in 1940; *Built in USA: 1932-1944* (Mock, 1944), the catalog to the exhibition of the same name which ran at the MoMA in New York in 1944, which was curated by Elizabeth Mock (1911-1998), then head of the MoMA's Department of Architecture; and *The New Architecture* (Roth, 1946) by Alfred Roth (1903-1998), a Swiss modernist architect, which was first published in 1940. The purchase of these books can be seen as an effort on Távora's part to expand the references that at the time dominated teaching at the EBAP, which was still very much marked by the end of Italian and German fascist architecture, on the one hand, and the emergence of Le Corbusier and the modern Brazilian architecture of Lúcio Costa (1902-1998) and Oscar Niemeyer (1907-2012), on the other (Ferrão, 1993, p. 25)[7]. It is plausible that the reading of these books, above all the first two, may have taken place at times very close to each other.

The Modern House in America (Ford & Ford, 1944) and *Built in USA: 1932-1944* (Mock, 1944) present the whole range of modern architecture in the USA at the time, affirming its identity through acknowledgment of the diversity of its regional expressions while at the same time demarcating it from the 'International Style' and modern European architecture. This demarcation was considered more radical in Ford & Ford (1944) than in Mock (1944), who took a somewhat more divergent stance[8]. Both books stress the need to achieve a humanized architecture that is capable of responding to the challenges and demands of contemporary life, an architecture firmly based on the honest use of materials and a sensibility towards local conditions, climate, and topography, free of predefined formulas. Vernacular architecture is singled out for praise.

Japan and its architecture are not given much reflection in these books. Mock (1944, p. 19) makes isolated references to Japanese architecture, but only to identify it as the occasional inspiration for the pitched roofs that emerged as a result of the structural logic and the demands of the designs in question, reflecting an attitude of greater freedom that co-existed alongside the equally free adoption of the flat roof. Ford & Ford (1944) do not refer to Japanese architecture. Nevertheless, both books feature one particular work of evident Japanese influence, reflecting the absorption of Japanese architecture into Western forms that characterized some of the architecture on the West Coast. That work is the house in Fellowship Park, Los Angeles, California, designed in 1935 by Harwell Hamilton Harris (1903-1990) as his own residence[9] (Ford & Ford, 1944, pp. 54-55; Mock, 1944, pp. 34-35). The house is a small wooden pavilion delicately set on a sloping wooded plot, with the interior being extended by the nature that surrounds it. The structural modulation of the house is based on a square of approximately 90 cm on one side, which is the equivalent of one half of a *tatami.* "Due to beauty of the site, dwelling was planned to appear as a mere incident in the landscape" (Ford & Ford, 1944, p. 54), writes Harwell Hamilton Harris in his description of the design, adding that "[h]armony with the rocks and foliage was sought, so floor, roof terrace, and other large planes are given uniform pattern and texture" (Ford & Ford, 1944, p. 54).

Távora marked pages in both books, primarily *Built in USA: 1932-1944* (Mock, 1944), with his appreciation of the reflections contained therein, even more than the selected works, confirming a search for principles for the sustainability of an architecture which, whilst necessarily modern, could incorporate more permanent values that derived from tradition, with that synthesis constituting an expression of the identity of its culture of origin[10]. Perhaps more unexpectedly, of all the works featured in the books, the house in

[7] Fernando Távora also acquired at the time the book Brazil Builds: *Architecture New and Old, 1652-1942* (Goodwin, 1943), which was published to mark the exhibition of the same name at the MoMA in 1943, which was curated by Philip L. Goodwin (1885-1958).

[8] Ford & Ford were of the opinion that the "[t]erm 'International style' is a misnomer when applied to the work of the leaders in the new architecture" (Ford & Ford, 1944, p. 10). Mock writes that "[r]ereading the catalog after twelve years is a nostalgic experience, as it brings back the European scene of the late 'twenties and earliest 'thirties, with its magnificent work in progress and its tragically unrealized promise of new and better possibilities in art and society" (Mock, 1944, p. 10). On the confrontation between the International Style and Regionalism in the US in the first half of the 20th century, see Lefaivre & Tzonis (2012, pp. 112-128).

[9] Harris was acquainted with the Rudolph Schindler (1887-1953) house in West Hollywood, Los Angeles, California, designed in 1922, which was based on principles of Japanese traditional architecture, although that was something that Schindler himself did not acknowledge (Smith, 2010).

[10] Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, one should highlight the convergence of Távora's observations in "The Problem of the Portuguese House" (Távora, 1993) with the arguments presented by Mock in the preface to *Built in USA: 1932-1944* (Mock, 1944) on the importance of vernacular architecture for the affirmation of a modern architecture informed by values that originated in tradition, even if the ways that said architecture was approached in Portugal and the USA were in strict

Fellowship Park was the only one Távora marked, in this case in *The Modern House in America,* highlighting the explanation of the design that was presented by Harris (Ford & Ford, 1944, p. 54) and how this was characteristic of his work (Ford & Ford, 1944, p. 125), in response to a request by Ford & Ford for a statement pointing out where exactly the practice in North America differed from European methods and could be "termed specifically American" (Ford & Ford, 1944, p. 123).

The New Architecture (Roth, 1946), the third of the first books acquired by Távora that contained references to Japanese architecture, presents 20 works, all from the 1930s, most of them by European architects and built in Europe, constituting an overview that clearly shows a continuity with the 'International Style' codified by Johnson and Hitchcock earlier on in the same decade (MoMA, 1932; Hitchcock & Johnson, 1966). "The New Architecture in its present form is the immediate and clear expression of the meantime expanded consciousness of the times we live in," Roth declares (1946, p. 8). The book presents both works in which the most modern building systems dominated and others characterized by the adoption of more traditional methods, thus revealing an appreciation of the variation of architecture depending on the local circumstances. The understanding of modern American architecture, as formulated by Mock (1944), can be seen as a counterbalance to the European reading formulated by Roth (1946)[11].

In contrast to the two titles mentioned above, *The New Architecture* (Roth, 1946) features one Japanese design, albeit one built in Europe. This is the aforementioned Japanese Pavilion designed for the International Exposition in Paris in 1937 by Junzō Sakakura (Roth, 1944, pp. 165-172). The pavilion was indeed the only Japanese work included in Roth's book, so it acquired a status of being representative of modern Japanese architecture in the international architectural landscape. It was Sakakura's first built work. Sakakura had worked at Le Corbusier's office from 1931 to 1936; Le Corbusier was later to entrust him, together with Kunio Maekawa and Takamasa Yoshizaka (1917-1980), with the finalization of the design and supervision of the construction of the National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo. The Japanese pavilion was made up of several blocks that were linked by an elevated walkway, leaving the sloping site free. There was a close link between the architecture and the surrounding nature, and the boundaries between interior and exterior were diluted. The affirmation of the values of traditional architecture was very much in line with the affirmation of the values of modern architecture, concretizing Japanese identity in a single contemporary work.

It is possible that Távora already knew the Japanese Pavilion before purchasing *The New Architecture* (Roth, 1946). In the book, he highlighted the lines referring to the 'aesthetic aspect' of the building, precisely those which make it clear that the pavilion was rooted in traditional architecture, in this case, a tea house. They were the only lines he marked on the pages that Roth dedicated to the work (Fig. 1), the pavilion also being the only work he marked[12]:

> [t]he four essential characteristics of the traditional <u>Japanese tea house were to be seen in this pavilion</u>: 1) clear and open internal planning; 2) simplicity and clarity of construction; 3) natural qualities of the materials developed to the maximum effectiveness; 4) intimate relation between house and gardens. (Roth, 1944, p. 171) [13]

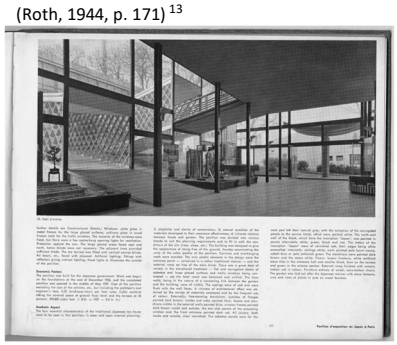

Fig. 1: Page 171 of the 1946 edition of Alfred Roth's *La nouvelle architecture: Die neue Architektur: The new architecture* owned by the architect Fernando Távora. FIMS/MONOGRAFIAS/FT/ 2123

His reading these books (Ford & Ford, 1944; Mock, 1944; Roth, 1946) was likely not determined by any specific interest in Japan or its architecture, but it would seem to be clear that Távora did see, in the Fellowship Park house and, particularly, the

opposition to each other. "The vernacular house will provide great lessons when it is properly studied […]. Today, studies of [the vernacular house] centre around the "picturesque" and it is *stylised* for national and foreign exhibitions", Távora complains (1993, p. 13); "Americans looked again at […] [vernacular buildings] and found them good. They were not interested in the picturesque detail of these buildings, but in their straightforward use of material and their subtle adaptation to climate and topography", Mock explains (1944, p. 14), whereby the latter is one of her observations that were highlighted by Távora.

[11] Mock was acquainted with Roth's book (1946), and her publication featured two works in common with his work.

[12] The fact that the Japanese Pavilion was the only work marked by Távora is all the more significant when one considers that Roth (1944, pp. 17-24) also featured in his book the Villa le Sextant in Les Mathes, France, a work by Le Corbusier from 1935 that was based on traditional building systems.

[13] The underlined parts correspond to the text that Távora marked in the book.

Japanese Pavilion, the realization of the possibility of modern architecture being fed by the values of tradition, which was, at the time, one of the objects of his study[14]. It is fair to argue that these works singularly challenged Távora.

3. The second books

The second group of books on Japan and its architecture purchased by Távora consisted of *Japanische Architektur* [Japanese Architecture] (Yoshida, 1952) and *The Japanese House and Garden* (Yoshida, 1955), both by Tetsurō Yoshida, a Japanese architect who traveled in the West on a mission for the Japanese government, as mentioned above, and whose work struck a balance between the values of traditional Japanese architecture and those of modern architecture; *The Lesson of Japanese Architecture* (Harada, 1954), which was first published in 1936, and *Japanese Gardens* (Harada, 1956), first published in 1928, both by Jirō Harada (1878-1963), an art historian who was head of the Tokyo Imperial Art Museum, now the Tokyo National Art Museum, and who lectured on Japanese art in the USA in the 1930s; and *Art Japonais: I. l'Art Religieux* (Lemière, 1958), the first volume of the *Art Japonais* tetralogy by Alain Lemière (1901-1984), a French art historian[15]. In contrast to the first group of books (Ford & Ford, 1944; Mock, 1944; Roth, 1946), the latter works exclusively studied the art and architecture of Japan, meaning that it was now possible to identify a consolidated interest on the part of Távora in that subject matter[16].

Japanische Architektur (Yoshida, 1952) and *The Japanese House and Garden* (Yoshida, 1955), which was the English-language version of the 1954 revised edition of *Das Japanische Wohnhaus*, first published in 1935, present a comprehensive and inclusive overview of traditional Japanese architecture, accompanied by a historical contextualization, explanations on the spatial organization and a description of the building methods; the overview presented at all times followed the philosophical and aesthetic principles on which the architecture was based. The books are illustrated with diverse photographs and plans and drawings. In his introduction to *The Japanese House and Garden*, Yoshida (1955, p. 9) enumerates the strong points of the traditional Japanese house – adaptability to the climate and the strong connection with nature, flexibility in the spatial organization, rationality and standardization of construction, to name but a few – arguing that said advantages should be adapted to the contemporary lifestyle. In other words, tradition should nourish modernity. Yoshida includes modern Japanese houses, some designed by himself. *Das Japanische Wohnhaus* was generally well-received when it was published in 1935; the fact that it was compiled by a Japanese architect who already had a significant body of built work in Japan, contributed a great deal to that.

The Lesson of Japanese Architecture (Harada, 1954), like the Yoshida books mentioned above (Yoshida, 1952; Yoshida, 1955), presents a comprehensive overview of traditional Japanese architecture, even if its looks are not as in-depth as the in others. Its approach is that of a historian who "aims merely to afford, by means of illustrations, a glimpse of the exterior and interior of buildings as they exist in Japan today" (Harada, 1954, p. 7), and to thus be able to contribute to the resolution of the housing problem. *Japanese Gardens* (Harada, 1956) contains an approximation to gardens that is similar to that done for architecture. It aims to divulge the gardens in question and thus provide a reference for the construction of new gardens. Both books reveal a particular effort in terms of the illustrations, which became independent of the text and, in some cases, take on an at times nostalgic dimension by showing buildings and gardens that had been demolished. The original editions of the books, from 1936 and 1928, respectively, were quite well received, for which the fact that the author was Japanese was an important factor. They can be seen as books designed to disseminate the traditional architecture and gardens of Japan in the West.

Art Japonais: I. l'Art Religieux (Lemière, 1958) features above all images of works of art and is more important as a work of dissemination than one of reflection. Its focus is on traditional art.

Távora made no marks in these books so that it is impossible to identify what exactly challenged him most to read them. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine Távora reading *Japanische Architektur* (Yoshida, 1952). More important than any conjecture as to the possible impact of these books would be to

[14] The Japanese Pavilion had an impact on other Portuguese architects. Celestino de Castro (1920-2007), a member of Távora's generation, albeit one who settled in Lisbon in 1940, mentioned that he was motivated by the pavilion with which he had also become acquainted through *The New Architecture* (Roth, 1946), which he purchased in 1947 (Nunes, 2007, p. 19), around the same time as Távora acquired his own copy of the book.

[15] The acquisitions of *Japanese Gardens* (Harada, 1956) and *Art Japonais: I. l'Art Religieux* (Lemière, 1958) are dated by Távora, whereby the former was acquired in 1957 and the latter was received as a Christmas gift in 1958. It is possible that the other three books (Yoshida, 1952; Harada, 1954; Yoshida, 1955) were also purchased not long after their publication dates.

[16] The fact that *Art Japonais* (Lemière, 1958) was a Christmas present would seem to confirm a pre-existing and consolidated interest in Japan.

consider the fact that the books, particularly those on architecture, almost exclusively examined the traditional architecture of Japan. Only *The Japanese House and Garden* (Yoshida, 1955) includes modern works, albeit only a few isolated cases. This fact is all the more significant when one notes that these books were considered to be references for understanding Japanese architecture. Távora gradually gained knowledge of modern Japanese architecture both through the contacts he established with several Japanese architects in the course of the 1950s[17] and also, without doubt, through the gradual dissemination of that architecture in the international magazines that were then available in Portugal[18]. He became a prominent figure in advocating the study of Portuguese vernacular architecture, culminating in the Survey of Portuguese Regional Architecture from 1955 onwards[19]. However, this interest in traditional Japanese architecture seems to have gone further than exploring the possibility of its values nourishing modern architecture, which was the singular aspect of the Japanese Pavilion he had found so interesting in Alfred Roth's book (1946). For Távora, traditional Japanese architecture seemed to configure itself as an interest in itself, regardless of the significance that knowledge of it could have for his design practice; it was an interest in which a broader fascination for Japan and its culture was becoming identifiable. At the time, there were no plans for the trip to Japan that he was to make in 1960[20].

4. The books purchased in Japan

The third group of Távora's books on Japanese architecture is made up of *Houses and People of Japan* (Taut, 1958), originally published in 1937, by Bruno Taut who, as mentioned above, had traveled in Japan between 1933 and 1936; *Japanese Architecture* (Kishida, 1959), which was originally published in 1935 and then underwent several updates, by Hideto Kishida (1899-1966), a Japanese architect who had been in Europe between 1926 and 1927 as part of a mission from Tokyo Imperial University, and who was a professor to Kunio Maekawa and Kenzo Tange; and *Nature and Thought in Japanese Design* (Itō, 1960), edited by Teiji Itō (1922-2010), an architectural critic, which was presented at the WoDeCo conference in Tokyo in 1960, the reason for Távora's journey to Japan in the first place. The two previous books were purchased in Kyoto[21]. A few months after the trip, but indubitably as a result of it, Távora also purchased *Form and Space of Japanese Architecture* (Carver Jr., 1955) by Norman Carver Jr. (1928-2018), an American architect and photographer[22].

Houses and People of Japan (Taut, 1958) presents, in a way that is similar to its predecessor from 1935, *Das Japanische Wohnhaus* by Tetsurō Yoshida, a comprehensive overview of the traditional architecture of Japan, taking a particular look at how the Japanese people lived in the buildings. The simplicity, modesty, and respect the architecture had for tradition are all praised, even if the book also recognizes that said values were not always to be found in the recent architecture. Several photographs and drawings likewise accompany the text. The book was written in Japan, where Taut lived from 1933 to 1936, and it can be seen as a European – in this case, German – counterpoint to Yoshida's view of Japanese architecture. Taut (1958, p. II) indeed references *Das Japanische Wohnhaus*. His experience of Japan, however, led Taut to acknowledge the perhaps impossibility of ever understanding the culture of the country and thus his difficulty in incorporating values that were alien to him in architecture: "I must judge according to systematic European logic which prompts me to say: 'I can only perceive it in this way'" (Taut, 1958, p. 258).

Japanese Architecture (Kishida, 1959) is a guidebook for foreign visitors to Japan, covering both traditional architecture and modern

[17] Távora had met Kenzo Tange, Junzo Sakakura and Kunio Maekawa at CIAM 8 in Hoddesdon, UK in 1951. He was to meet Tange again in 1959 at the final CIAM in Otterlo, Netherlands, where he also met Takamasa Yoshizaka. In his travel diary he refers to Tange as 'my friend Tange' (Távora, 2012, p. 305). He likewise described as his friend Toshihiko Ota (1928-2008) (Távora, 2012, p. 306), a Japanese architect who was to become Director of the Shimizu Institute of Technology and whom he had met in Porto in 1958 on the summer course of the Internaional Union of Architects (UIA), which took place at the School of Fine Arts there.

[18] After World War II, Japanese architecture began to be disseminated by western architectural magazines, particularly from the latter half of the 1950s onwards (Nikola, 2015), e.g. *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, *Architectural Design*, *Arquitectura* and *Das Werk: Architektur und Kunst*, all of which were available in Portugal. Parallel to this, from 1952 onwards, the Portuguese magazine *Arquitectura* began receiving copies of the Japanese magazines *Sinkentiku* and *Kenchiku Bunka*.

[19] Távora advocated for the study of vernacular Portuguese architecture as early as 1945 (Távora, 1993). For more on the conduction of the Survey of Portuguese Regional Architecture and Távora's involvement in that project, see Cardoso & Maia (2015).

[20] Távora only decided in November 1959 on including Japan in his travels the following year, after, as a CIAM member, he received an invitation to take part in the WoDeCo conference (Mesquita, 2007, p. 32).

[21] The books are signed by Távora, who also indicated the date and place of purchase.

[22] The receipt for the purchase, which was kept in the pages of the book itself, was issued in December 1960.

architecture, including, for example, works by Kenzo Tange. *Form and Space of Japanese Architecture* (Carver Jr., 1955) takes a look at traditional architecture through the medium of photography. *Nature and Thought in Japanese Design* (Itō, 1960) is an album of contemporary Japanese design.

Távora also added no marks to these books. However, it is important to note that once again, they were all primarily about traditional Japanese architecture, thus underlining the idea that Távora did indeed take a real interest in this architecture. Taut's book (1958) complemented those of Yoshida (1952; 1955) and Harada (1954; 1956), and the book by Carver Jr. revisited a number of the buildings featured in those books. The observations Távora made during his travels in Japan confirmed the fascination for traditional architecture, which was accentuated, in a way, even more by the conviction that the traditional represented a world that was already dying out, as noted above. At the same time, as also mentioned above, they reveal a certain degree of disappointment with contemporary Japanese architecture.

5. The last books

Távora was to continue purchasing books on Japan and its architecture throughout the 1960s. In particular, he acquired *Le Japon des Formes: Bois, Papier, Argile* (Nii & Richie, 1963) by Atsuko Nii and Donald Richie (1924-2013), an American writer and specialist in Japanese culture who was a curator at the MoMA from 1969 to 1972, the book being the French-language edition of the Japanese title *Katachi* of 1962; *Temples et Jardins au Japon* (Blaser, 1956), by Werner Blaser (1924-2019), a Swiss architect and publicist[23]; *The Japanese House: A Tradition for Contemporary Architecture* (Engel, 1964) by Heinrich Engel (1925-2013), a German architect who lived and worked in Japan from 1953 to 1956 and was a professor at the Offenbach University of Art and Design[24]; *Nuevos caminos de la Arquitectura Japonesa* (Boyd, 1969), the Spanish-language edition of the book in English *New Directions in Japanese Architecture* from 1968, by Robin Boyd, an Australian architect, writer and professor at the University of Melbourne; and *Japon* (Masuda, 1969), by Tomoya Masuda (1914-1981), a Japanese architect and professor at the University of Tokyo[25].

Le Japon des Formes: Bois, Papier, Argile (Nii & Richie, 1963) is a collection of photographs of Japanese traditional artisanal works, some of which have to do with architecture. The beautiful images were taken by Takeji Iwamiya (1920-1989), a Japanese photographer who worked in the fields of architecture, gardens, and Japanese crafts.

Temples et Jardins au Japon (Blaser, 1956) focuses on traditional architecture, in particular, its intimate bond with nature (Blaser, 1956, p. 26). Of particular interest here is the reference to Mies van der Rohe (1888-1969). Their collages of drawings and photographs were adopted by Blaser to create perspective views that expressed the relationship between the interior and the exterior that is characteristic of traditional Japanese architecture.

The Japanese House: A Tradition for Contemporary Architecture (Engel, 1964) (Fig. 2) – which can be differentiated from the other books in this group – is a study of the traditional house in Japan that presents a long and exhaustive examination of the dimensions that come together in the making of such a house; 'Structure,' 'Organism,' 'Environment' and 'Aesthetics' are the titles of the four parts into which the book is organized. At the root of this book's creation is the belief that the values of traditional Japanese architecture could also sustain contemporary architecture, as indeed the book's subtitle confirms; it seeks in the causes of the former, not just in its forms, those matters that are pertinent to the definition of the latter (Engel, 1965, p. 24). The book has a sense of ultimate synthesis on this theme, which is confirmed by the fact that Engel referred to it as a "treatise" (Engel, 1965, p. 24). It also privileges technical drawings, thus confirming the desire to be of use for future works. This book is a counterpoint, compiled in 1964, to the predecessor works of Yoshida and Taut from the 1930s.

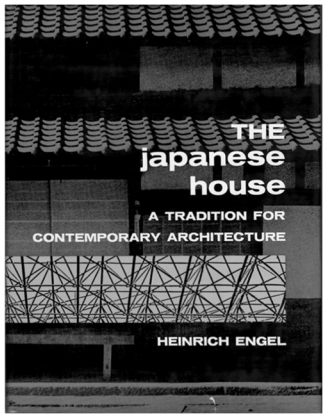

Fig. 2: Cover of the 1964 edition of Heinrich Engel's *The Japanese house: a tradition for contemporary architecture* owned by the architect Fernando Távora.

[23] The receipt for the purchase of the books *Le Japon des Formes: Bois, Papier, Argile* (Nii & Richie, 1963) and *Temples et Jardins au Japon* (Blaser, 1956) was issued in July 1963.

[24] The book is signed by Távora and dated 1965. Henrich Engel was later to use the name Heino Engel.

[25] The book is signed by Távora and dated 1969.

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Nuevos caminos de la Arquitectura Japonesa (Boyd, 1969) takes a look at Japanese architecture built after the Second World War, including works from the Metabolist movement. It is more a work of dissemination than one of reflection and is part of a series on the architecture of several countries.

Japon (Masuda, 1969) focuses on traditional architecture, noting the historical context, and analyzing the most iconic buildings. It is also a work of dissemination and not so much of reflection; it is likewise part of a series, in this case, on the architecture of different ancient cultures.

Távora did not mark any of these books, as indeed he did not with the previous group. Accordingly, what is important here is that these books were about the traditional art and architecture of Japan, thus confirming a continued interest on the part of Távora in this architecture. The fact that he also had a book on modern Japanese architecture (Boyd, 1969) does not mean that his interest in traditional architecture was not dominant. Indeed, a typewritten text with handwritten notes by Távora himself, titled "Reclusão numa habitação" [Reclusion in a House], which we believe is presented here for the first time, is confirmation of said interest (Fig. 3)[26].

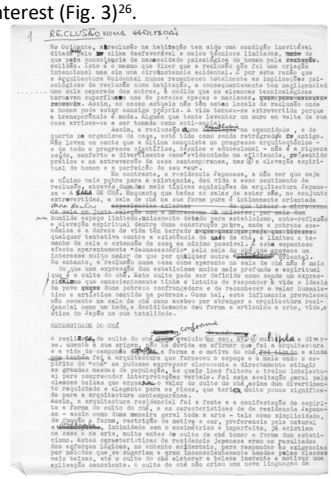

Fig. 3: Undated typewritten draft with handwritten notes by the architect Fernando Távora. FIMS/FT/ 5090-0001

The text ultimately is a translation of part of Engel's book in the sub-chapter titled 'Seclusion" (Engel, 1964, p. 218-301), which deals with the origins, significance, and defining characteristics of a tearoom and a tea garden. It is a detailed and expositional reflection, which Engel accompanies with several plan drawings, before finishing by underlining the value these spaces have for contemporary housing. Távora has made some changes to Engel's text (1965), both individual words and phrases. In this continuous desire to adjust and correct, one can discern a likewise continuous process of refinement of thought and expression – a desire to reflect on a subject matter more than a simple correction of what was written. In a way, the corrected pages of this text evoke his design sketches, the precision of which also becomes one with the permanence of the quest.

The choice of the theme and the extended approach to it confirm the solidity of Távora's interest in the traditional architecture of Japan. Instead of considering only its formal aspects, perhaps those that are easier to understand, he examines the essence of a tearoom, favoring an approximation to architecture based on its strict ties to culture and, thus, the distinctive values of the people who live in it. Somewhat revealingly, Távora finished the text by identifying the constitutive elements of the tearoom – the diffuse light from the small window; the pleasant smell from the incense burner; the suggestive sound of the iron teapot; the discreet colors of the flower and the artwork – before affirming that all these blends with the man and with his activity in a harmonious, integrated whole where thought can be set free (Távora, undated, p. 7).

In the 1980s Távora continued to purchase books on the art of Japan: *The Compact Culture: The Ethos of Japanese Life* (Mitsukuni, Ikko & Tsune, 1982) and *The Culture of Anima Supernature in Japanese life* (Mitsukuni, Ikko & Tsune, 1985)[27], both by Yoshida Mitsukuni (1921-1991), a teacher, Tanaka Ikko (1930-2002) a graphic designer, and Sesoko Tsune (1922-2008), an editor. They are work for the dissemination of Japanese culture in the West.

6. Fernando Távora's Japan through books

Fernando Távora built up a special relationship with Japan and its architecture, one that was nourished continuously by books. The initial challenge of the possibility of modern architecture merging with the values of tradition seems to have led to a lasting fascination with traditional architecture, which his visit to Japan in 1960 confirmed. But it is also necessary to recognize in that fascination Távora's constant search for innovation and ultimately the challenge he made to architecture, which took the form of his design practice, in which tradition was explored as a means of innovating.

The "action which organic reciprocity is difficult to

[26] The exposition extends over seven pages and is stored in the original protective box for Engel's book. The text was likely never published.

[27] The books are signed by Távora and dated, respectively, 1985 and 1986.

assess, enmeshed in holistic understanding of time and history" that Bandeirinha (2012, p. 120) encountered in his exercise of the design process and mastery of architecture, is perhaps the best way to understand in Tavora's approach to Japan his fascination for tradition and the simultaneous quest for innovation.

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