

"EGAWA STYLE"

Quasi-Western Architecture: Early 1900s Buildings by Saburohachi Egawa in Okayama and Fukushima

6 December 2019–18 February 2020

Foreword

An architect trained in his youth as a domiya-daiku (temple carpenter), Saburohachi Egawa (1860-1939) is best known for designing schools, police departments, and banks in the Gi-yofu (Quasi-Western) architecture style—buildings which outwardly resembled Western-style construction but relied on traditional Japanese techniques. Such designs he undertook as an architectural planner, first for his home prefecture of Fukushima and, later, for the prefecture of Okayama to which he was posted. His buildings in Okayama came to define the prefecture's distinctive style of modern architecture, known as the "Egawa Style." At its heart was his originally designed "Egawa Style roof truss" adapted from the Western bridge truss he first encountered in Fukushima. Giving play to his truss in the roof construction of buildings, he created breathtakingly large interior spaces. Then, his use of traditional Japanese building measurements and other attributes of domiya-daiku design—not to mention several striking decorative features of his liking he commonly employed—impart a special rhythm and warmth to Egawa Style architecture. Ultimately, by drawing from his early apprenticeships with foremost architects of the Meiji period (1868-1912), Egawa achieved a style entirely his own that transcended the Quasi-Western architecture genre.

This exhibition looks at nine buildings of the period when the "Egawa Style" came to fruition, through new photographs and commentary. Besides eight Okayama works, they include one Fukushima work thought to be prototypical. Actual materials—including four building models—are also displayed, along with impressive old photographs of Egawa buildings that no longer survive. Fortunately, many Egawa Style buildings still stand. It is hoped the exhibition will revive memory of early 20th-century Japanese townscapes and give visitors a feel for the substantial charm of Egawa Style architecture.

We wish to extend our deep appreciation to Shigeatsu Shimizu (Professor, Kyoto University of Art and Design), a leading researcher on Egawa Style architecture, as well as the Saburohachi Egawa Research Group in Okayama and everyone whose efforts have made this exhibition possible.

LIXIL GALLERY

The Charm of Egawa-Style Architecture, Born from Hidden Japanese Style Shigeatsu Shimizu (Professor, Kyoto Institute of Technology)

In the history of Japanese modern architecture, there are a number of design streams identified by a personal name. One is the "Tatsuno Style" referring to the buildings of Kingo Tatsuno, the father of modern Japanese architecture.

Another is the "Egawa Style." Although less well known, the Egawa Style has a distinctive character that, once experienced, can never be forgotten. With its well-ordered windows in lap siding walls, decorative diagonal (X) braces on wall surfaces, and dormer windows set on hipped and mansard roofs, it displays a powerfully authentic Western-style design. Its proportions, meanwhile, are stocky and humorous. Unlike refined Western-style buildings, the architecture seems to somehow deviate from the rules of the style, but this, to the contrary, invites familiarity.

Saburohachi Egawa, the designer of Egawa-Style

architecture, trained as a domiya-daiku (shrine and temple carpenter). While undertaking construction work for the Fukushima and Okayama prefectural governments, he learned the techniques and design of Western-style architecture and developed what would later be called the Egawa Style of architectural design. The process he followed was similar to the learning-by-imitating process by which Japanese carpenters in the early Meiji period (1868-1912) gave birth to quasi-Western-style architecture. In contrast to the quasi-Western style, however, which liberally mixes Japanese style with Western in both technique and design, the Egawa Style employs minimal Japanese-style detailing in limited locations. Saburohachi Egawa's bold structural method of using wooden trusses also shows his deep understanding of Western-style techniques.

Still, the Egawa Style is informed by an important element of Japanese style. This is its use of the ken (interval between two columns: 1,820mm) as a standardized unit of measure. All Egawa-Style buildings are constructed on the basis of the ken interval between two columns. The octagonal-plan tower and central volume are also designed on this basis, a factor giving a unique rhythm to the building's outer appearance.

This method is quite similar to kiwari design method employed by shrine and temple carpenters. Kiwari, a method of designing everything from wood members to

the intervals between columns based on a standardized unit of measure and proportion, was ingrained in Egawa's sensibilities as a shrine and temple carpenter. The distinctive character of the Egawa Style, in fact, derives from its hidden use of this Japanese design method in structuring a Western-style building. The Egawa Style is a quasi-Western-style architecture, intimately blending Western and Japanese styles, as could only be born in the climatic and cultural environment of Japan. In this sense, it is unlike either the immature quasi-Western style of the carpenters or the refined style of an individual architect. The Egawa-Style—a quasi-Western-style architecture transcending mere quasi-Western style.

In Okayama—Encounters with Egawa Style Architecture

Saburohachi Egawa in 1902 was transferred to Okayama prefecture after working as an architectural planner for Fukushima prefecture. He was 42 years old and in his prime as a designer. For the next three decades he would steadily transform the Okayama landscape, employing a broad range of designs, with result that the prefecture's major buildings all came to be in the Egawa Style. Today, some 20 of those buildings still stand. In the 1990s, a self-authored personal history (Nama hi tachi no ki) was confirmed to exist, and details

concerning his architectural activities in Fukushima and Okayama became known.

Featured here is a varied selection of eight pieces of Egawa Style architecture. They include schools, a kindergarten, police station, bank, and shrine, with each building displaying techniques and devices suited to its particular function. The fun of discovering their charming elements—their stout proportions and diagonal (X) braces, for example—is also a part of the fascination of Egawa's architecture.

Main Building, Senkyo Elementary School 1907

At a glance, the former Senkyo Elementary School building overwhelms the viewer with its grandeur. The symmetry of its design is powerful, yet the building also displays cuteness, perhaps owing to the emblem on its dormer-window-style roof decoration, in the center of the façade.

Due to student overcrowding at the original Senkyo Elementary School, the school was relocated and this building erected on the new site in 1907. Used as an elementary school for 83 years, the building was retired in 1990. It has since been opened to the public as part of the public facility, KUSE ESPACE LAND.

The school building interior, with the beautiful grain of its aged wood components, preserves the atmosphere of the good old days. Of particular note is the broad auditorium occupying the entire central volume on the second floor, a broad, open space made possible by the Egawa Style roof frame. Then, the auditorium's double-coved ceiling (nijuu oriage goudenjou) is a masterpiece. Highly formal in appearance, it consists of a coved (recessed) ceiling with intersecting ribs framing recessed panels (coffers), with a second coved and coffered ceiling supported by curved ribs. The cove cornice of the ceiling, with its inverted curve, is truly elegant. The ceiling's cedar backboards are valuable straight-grain, knot-free boards, whose amber color, deepened with time, enhances the room's beauty. Facing south, the auditorium is a comfortable space with pleasant natural lighting.

Data

Constructed: 1907

Status: Nationally Designated Important Cultural Property

Address: 17-1 Nabeya, Maniwa-shi, Okayama Prefecture

Konko Junior High School Auditorium 1904

An auditorium still used for gatherings by students at Konko Junior and Senior High School. When the school was rebuilt on a new site in 1956, the auditorium was also relocated there from the site where it had originally been constructed (1904).

While a simple one-story wood building in appearance, it abounds with Western-style design features, such as the dormer windows (for light and ventilation) established on the ceramic sangawara (distinctive lightweight Japanese) tile roof and the half-timber-style diagonal braces installed on the transom. The upper part of the outer wall is crowned by a cornice (a projecting horizontal member along a ceiling or top of a wall) with Japanese-style corbels introduced at regular intervals between the cornice and soffit—a device skillfully fusing Japanese and Western styles.

Stepping inside, one is greeted by a splendid double-coved ceiling, constructed entirely of Japanese cypress, that contrasts with the orderly exterior design. The second coved ceiling strikingly resembles the hammer beam roof often featured in English Gothic architecture and creates a solemn space like that inside an English wood church.

Data

Constructed: 1904

Status: Nationally Registered Tangible Cultural Property

Address: 1350 Uramishinden, Konko-cho, Asakuchi-shi, Okayama Prefecture

Doi Bank Tsuyama Branch 1909

Conspicuously tall, this Western-style bank building stands out amid townscapes of traditional wood merchant houses along the old Izumo Kaido highway. Lacking lapboard walls and half-timber-style diagonal braces, it differs in appearance from the usual Egawa Style architecture. This owes, in part, to its having been renovated: its original appearance was similar to the Okayama Prefectural Assembly Hall designed by Egawa in the same period. The building is the most decorative work of Egawa Style architecture, which was not bound by a fixed style.

The façade is composed of towers on the right and left sides of a central entrance. The towers feature German siding in a masonry style, on their first-floor exterior walls, and a flat finish of plaster coating on their second-floor walls. Above each window, a window-width geometric motif is displayed, and below the eaves is a broken pediment, a design appearing in the Baroque period. On either side of the central entrance, Tuscan-style pilasters are established on the first floor and Ionian-style pilasters on the second floor. The second-floor pilasters are topped by a cornice (in this case, a projecting horizontal member established at the eaves) supported by corbels.

Originally built as the Tsuyama branch of the Doi Bank (now known as the Chugoku Bank), the building later became the head office. One of the few commercial buildings Egawa designed, it has important value as an example of his work in that field.

In 1992, Tsuyama City acquired the building and renovated it. It currently serves as a fork art shop and cafe popular among local residents.

Soja Police Station 1910

This police station stands adjacent to the approach to Bicchu-no-kuni Soja-gu, a prominent Okayama shrine. The only remaining Meiji period (1868-1912) building in the city, it is a well-known local landmark.

After the Soja Police Station offices were relocated in 1959, the building was used by local public unions until renovated as a folk museum in 1988. Thought to be an Egawa building owing to its exterior features, it provides an example of how widely the Egawa Style came to be used for public buildings.

The building is distinguished by an octagonal tower established on one corner of its rectangular plan. Towers in Western-style architecture were often used solely to house a staircase. This stout tower, however, has a stronger presence than the main building. Its distinctive proportions are the product of Egawa’ s stubborn adherence to the Japanese ken (interval between two columns) as a standardized unit of measure even in Western architecture.

On ascending the spiral staircase inside the tower, one reaches a room of octagonal plan filled with natural light. Three of five walls projecting outward feature halfwidth, double-hung windows providing a good view. A pleasant, comfortable space, it gave warmth to the police station.

An isolation cell and various other cells, formerly in the rear of the building, have been demolished.

Data

Constructed: 1910

Status: Nationally Registered Tangible Cultural Property

Address: 2-17-33 Soja, Soja-shi, Okayama Prefecture

Meiji Memorial Hall of Yakage Junior High School

This small one-story wood-frame Western hall was built at Yakage Junior High School (founded in 1902) in 1915 to commemorate the memory of Emperor Meiji. Initially located at the school’ s southeast corner, in 1968 it was relocated within the compound, in its current position across from the library.

Egawa took part in constructing Yakage Junior High School soon after his transfer to Okayama prefecture. Because of this, he is also believed to have played a role in designing this memorial hall, yet the hall displays few design features common to Egawa Style architecture. Instead, it displays many unique design features of its own, such as the decorative double wall, cut with a central semicircular opening, inset in the gable end of the entrance porch. The feature with greatest impact is doubtless the halfwidth double-hung windows arrayed at short intervals on three sides, including the entrance. Why install so many large windows in a building of less than 65 square meters? This was likely because the building’ s monumentality as a “Meiji Memorial Hall” took priority over rationality.

Data

Constructed: 1915

Address: 1776-2 Yakage, Yakage-cho, Oda-gun, Okayama Prefecture

Kyokuto Elementary School Kindergarten 1908

This unique kindergarten features a playroom designed on an octagonal plan and gabled rooms extending from four sides. Used as kindergarten until 1979, the building was dismantled and preserved due to its state of deterioration, and in 1999 was restored on its present site and opened to the public.

This building is the oldest of the numerous octagonal kindergartens built in Okayama from the late 1800s to 1930s before the war. As an early building incorporating an innovative, rational building plan of this format, it is considered to have great value to modern architecture history and kindergarten architecture history.

The playroom with its central pillar features an exhilarating open space with a high ceiling. Of the four rooms extending from the playroom on four sides, three are classrooms. The fourth is an office / drawing room connective with the entry / reception room. The advantage of this cruciform plan is that the entire interior can be seen from the office. When the school was built, this format was logical, as outdoor education activities were uncommon and the playroom was central to school life.

Data

Constructed: 1908

Status: Nationally Designated Important Cultural Property

Address: 56 Futsukaichi-machi, Kita-ku, Okayama-shi, Okayama Prefecture



Kurashiki Kindergarten 1915

With its prominent cherry blossom emblem over the entry hall, and roof crest in the form of a humorous drawstring purse, this kindergarten building makes an unforgettable impression. Despite the absence of the Egawa Style’ s characteristic half-timber-style diagonal braces, it is judged to be a work by Egawa based on features of its design.

While featuring the same octagonal-plan playroom as at Kyokuto Elementary School Kindergarten, completed seven years earlier, a measure of progress is visible in the plan’ s development. By placing the offices and classrooms in front and the playroom in back, the traffic line has been shortened and the static and dynamic spaces of the building separated. The building is valuable for the evidence it provides of improving child care methods.

Progress can also be seen in the plan the playroom’ s interior, where a span of more than 13m is achieved without the use of a central pillar. Having proved to be a hindrance at Kyokuto, the central pillar was eliminated here. The ceiling with its central flower-petal pattern is also more richly decorative than the ceiling at Kyokuto. Comparing the two buildings to discover how Egawa’ s design tastes changed, over time, is interesting.

Data

Constructed: 1915

Status: Nationally Registered Tangible Cultural Property

Address: 669 Nishinaka Shinden, Kurashiki-shi, Okayama Prefecture

In Fukushima—Finding the Origins of Egawa Style Architecture

Following his initial employment as a domiya-daiku (temple and shrine carpenter), Egawa from the age of 27 to 42 worked as an architectural planner for Fukushima prefecture. For him, it was a period of studying the fundamentals of Western architecture and pursuing the question, “How to make Western architecture my own.” In his approach to structure, after first working with Western architectural structure in his Fukushima Shihan School

Kiyama Shrine Worship Hall and Zenkaku Inari Shrine

Backed by a lush forest, Kiyama Shrine Worship Hall and Zenkaku Inari Shrine have a stately atmosphere. Both were relocated from the mountain’ s summit to their present location at its foot in 1962.

In a 2015 survey, Egawa was confirmed to have designed the Shrine’ s three facilities—Kiyama Shrine Worship Hall, Zenkaku Inari Shrine, and the roofed passage connecting the shrine and shrine office. Along with Nakayama Shrine and Sankun Shrine, the Kiyama Shrine complex is one of the only shrine buildings by Egawa in Okayama that still stands. Hence, it is a rare example of “Egawa Style” shrine architecture still in existence.

The Worship Hall, with its beautiful orthodox Japanese-style design, thoroughly displays Egawa’ s command of his home territory as a former temple and shrine carpenter. Meanwhile, it also incorporates Western-style design features normally not used in shrines, such as the elegant curves of the pillars’ stone footings, reminiscent of Greek architecture.

The Egawa Style roof-frame truss is employed in the attics of both the Worship Hall and Zenkaku Inari Shrine. A truss is a Western-style structure rarely used in shrine architecture. Egawa, an architect known for blending the essence of Japanese style with Western-style architecture, here has done the opposite. Kiyama Shrine—an eclectic Japanese-Western shrine displaying the true Egawa Style in both design and structure.

Data

Constructed: 1919

Status: Nationally Registered Tangible Cultural Property

Address: 1265-1 Kiyama, Maniwa-shi, Okayama Prefecture

(1889, no longer existing), he explored mechanical knowledge in his Sukagawa Bridge (1892) and obtained a foundation for the Egawa Style roof frame. In his approach to visual design, he groped for individual expression such as with half-timber-style diagonal (X) braces. Here, we look at a rare Egawa work, still standing today in Fukushima, that represents a compilation of his learning.

Kameoka House 1904

Originally located in Danzaki, Koori-machi, Date-gun, this residence was dismantled in 1986, and the main building only was relocated in Hobara Sogo Park in 1995. The original owner, Masamoto Kameoka, was a prominent local merchant who had served as a prefectural councilman. During a honeymoon tour of Japan in the late 19th century, he had observed several pieces of Western architecture and, inspired by this experience, undertook to build his own house in that style. Egawa’ s involvement is surmised from oral tradition, according to which the house was “designed by the design engineer of the prefecture’ s first prefectural assembly hall.” It was Egawa who designed the prefectural assembly hall, and features of Egawa Style architecture are apparent in the house’ s design, such as the half-timber-style diagonal braces and lapboard siding on exterior walls of its main volume.

In sharp contrast with the house’ s exterior, the interior is largely in the Japanese style. Its exquisitely crafted design features, such as the coved and coffered ceilings and ranma (transoms) are said to be the work of the master carpenter, Kunitaro Ogasawara.

As a result of the interaction between Egawa, an architectural engineer engaged in Western architecture, and Ogasawara, a regional carpenter, a distinctive piece of architecture was born, much like a Japanese residence enclosed in a Western hall. In both structure and design, it communicates to us the state of development of Egawa Style architecture just prior to Egawa’ s transfer to Okayama.

Constructed: 1904

Status: Nationally Designated Important Cultural Property

Address: 265 Miyawaki, Oizumi, Hobaramachi, Date-shi, Fukushima Prefecture