



Allegories of Time and Space: Japanese Identity in Photography and Architecture

Jonathan M. Reynolds

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Allegories of Time and Space explores efforts by leading photographers, artists, architects, and commercial designers to re-envision Japanese cultural identity during the turbulent years between the Asia Pacific War and the bursting of the economic bubble in the 1990s. This search for a cultural home was a matter of broad public concern, and each of the artists under consideration engaged a wide audience through mass media. The artists under study had in common the necessity to establish distance from their immediate surroundings temporally or geographically in order to gain some perspective on Japan's rapidly changing society. They shared what Jonathan Reynolds calls an allegorical vision, a capacity to make time and space malleable, to see the present in the past and to find an irreducible cultural center at Japan's geographical periphery.

The book commences with an examination of the work of Hamaya Hiroshi. A Tokyo native, Hamaya began to photograph the isolated "snow country" of northeastern Japan in the midst of the war. His empathetic images of village life expressed an aching nostalgia for the rural past widely shared by urban Japanese. Following a similar strategy in his search for authentic Japan was the photographer T?matsu Sh?mei. Although T?matsu originally traveled to Okinawa Prefecture in 1969 to document the destructive impact of U.S. military bases in the region in his characteristically edgy style, he came to believe that Okinawa was still in some sense more truly Japanese than the Japanese main islands. The self-styled iconoclast artist Okamoto Tar? emphatically rejected the delicacy and refinement conventionally associated with Japanese art in favor of the hyper-modern qualities of the dynamic and brutal aesthetics that he saw expressed on the ceramics of the prehistoric J?mon period. One who quickly recognized the potential in Okamoto's embrace of Japan's ancient past was the architect Tange Kenz?. As a point of comparison, Reynolds looks at the portrayal of the ancient Shint? shrine complex at Ise in a volume produced in collaboration with the photographer Watanabe Yoshio. Reynolds shows how this landmark book contributed significantly to a transformation in the meaning of Ise Shrine by suppressing the shrine's status as an ultranationalist symbol and re-presenting the shrine architecture as design consistent with rigorous modernist aesthetics.

In the 1970s and 1980s, there circulated widely through advertising posters of the designer Ishioka Eiko, the ephemeral "nomadic" architecture of It? Toyo'o, TV documentaries, and other media, a fantasy that imagined Tokyo's young female office workers as urban nomads. These cosmopolitan dreams may seem untethered from their Japanese cultural context, but Reynolds reveals that there were threads linking the urban nomad with earlier efforts to situate contemporary Japanese cultural identity in time and space.

In its fresh and nuanced re-reading of the multiplicities of Japanese tradition during a tumultuous and transformative period, *Allegories of Time and Space* offers a compelling argument that the work of these artists enhanced efforts to redefine tradition in contemporary terms and, by doing so, promoted a future that would be both modern and uniquely Japanese.

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