

Layouts and Layers: Spatial Arrangements in Japan and Korea

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to clarify spatial conceptions of Japanese and Korean aristocratic residences built during a 250-year period since 1600, in order to interpret meanings of these built forms. The first topics of discussion are the materials that surround the spaces and, second, the elements that are not only space dividers, but also reflections of social order. Finally, the layouts and spatial layers of Korean and Japanese houses are examined in terms of linguistic and 'non-verbal' aspects of the 'language of architecture' in both cultures. Throughout this interpretation, special attention is paid to the continuous space of Japanese and Korean architecture, in which of most importance are the distinctions of multipurpose rooms, 'inside' and 'outside', as well as private and public areas, defined by such features as behavior and language, besides architectural expressions.

Keywords: banga, buke, gan, ken, ma, module, oku, shoin, sukiya.

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Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2003, pp. 80-108.

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Prologue

For some time, scholars have been ‘unwrapping’ Japan and demystifying phenomena related to the cultural and ethnic ‘uniqueness’ of the Japanese. Personally, I have found the recent works of anthropologists in general, and those of Joy Hendry in particular, inspiring in ‘re-reading’ the ‘language’ of Japanese architecture—a field that, according to a widely held view, is especially unique. This sentiment, however, is to a great extent based on contrasting Japan and ‘the West,’ conducted by Japanese and Westerners alike. But if we compare Japan to other East Asian countries, the point of view changes, in a manner of speaking.

In many ways, buildings can be considered ‘packages’ or ‘boxes’ (as modern architecture is often referred to by laymen) which, like a gift and its wrapping or a locution, express such relations as politeness, power, and status between people and/or different social groups, in addition to aesthetic values. In Hendry’s words: “In the Japanese case, architectural style and the layout of domestic and religious edifices can be seen to use layers of ‘spatial wrapping’ in the way they enclose their inner sanctums, just as people use layers of ‘linguistic wrapping’ to express themselves.”¹ She also suggests that the Japanese ‘wrapping principle,’ which is a mode of indirect communication in one particular cultural milieu, could provide a model for cross-cultural comparisons, and, I would like to add, for interdisciplinary studies.

Therefore, this paper is an architect’s attempt to shed new light on the interpretations of Korean and Japanese languages of architecture from a ‘Hendryan’ perspective, in spite (or perhaps because) of many differences, as there are also similarities, above all linguistic affinity. Due to limited space, the examination does not include

Architecture, and is at present working on a forthcoming publication on the philosophy of Korean architecture.

1. Hendry 1995, p. 4. That is why Joy Hendry is the only person quoted here.

China, nor city layout, gardens, palaces, temples, and farmhouses, or geomancy and other related thoughts, which are important aspects of East Asian architecture. Instead, we focus on the spatial layers and their definitions in aristocratic residences, Korean *banga* and Japanese *shoin-zukuri* (below *shoin* for short), built between the early 1600s and mid-1800s.² Besides that these mansions of Japanese *samurai* elite and Korean *yangban* gentry reflect aesthetic, cosmological and sociological ideologies of their times, they are good examples of 'spatial wrapping.' They are also elucidative objects of comparison being designed for the upper classes during the same period in neighboring countries.

Spatial Wrapping Materials

Most probably, any discourse on space eventually leads us dealing with the elements that surround it, in order to grasp something as abstract as the concept of space. As Hendry has pointed out, the materials of Japanese houses are much the same as in gift-wrapping, and this applies to Korea as well. The main structure is built of timber and is an *objet d'art* in its own right, like the beautiful wooden boxes, in which the most precious Japanese and Korean artifacts are

2. The Japanese *shoin-zukuri* is a building type of *samurai* houses (*buke*), imperial residences, and abbot's quarters in temples. This style started to develop in the twelfth century, but was more common from the seventeenth century on, when it often included *sukiya* style semiformal rooms and rustic *sōan* teahouses or tearooms. To simplify, *shoin*, also meaning an individual *shoin* style formal room, indicates here the whole house analogously to *banga* that are specifically the residences of Korean *yangban* gentry (the *ban* of *ban-ga* and *yang-ban* being the same ideogram for 'nobleman') to distinguish them from *minga*, or 'peoples' houses.' It must also be pointed out that *minga* is not exactly the same as Japanese *minka* which refers to farmhouses, whereas Korean *minga* indicates houses in general, including the houses of the 'middle classes' (*jungin* and *igyō*) between the commoner classes (*yangin* and *chonin*) and *yangban* aristocracy.

packed. However, while almost all Japanese structures until the Meiji era were built of wood, by the middle of the Korean Joseon dynasty (1392-1910) there was shortage of good quality timber on the peninsula.³ Wooden buildings such as *banga* were hence 'status symbols.' In Japan, where high-grade timber was available in great amounts, wealth was demonstrated, for instance, by *shoin* style that was restricted from the lower classes till the late Edo period (1600-1868).

Accordingly, there were differences in the appearance of *shoin* and *banga*, the most obvious being the winding wooden members of Korean houses, contrasting to the extremely straight-lined and refined Japanese carpentry. During a recent field trip, it struck me that one only has to observe Korean forests with their bush-like trees to understand why buildings have more organic details than in Japan. Naturalism, on the other hand, is considered one of the most characteristic design principles of both cultures. In this context, it is not possible to delve into the culturally variable perceptions of nature, and I only mention two examples of this phenomenon in *shoin*. The first is the main post of a *tokonoma* alcove, preferably left in a 'natural' state, albeit carefully selected in the repository of nature and surrounded by a perfectionist framework of other structures. Secondly, the rustic style of tearooms (*sōan*, 'thatched hut'), which was inspired by humble farmhouses, ironically, became a part of highly elaborated and expensive art of the aristocrats, as 'linguistic wrapping' culminates in the ritualized language of tea ceremony.

Paper is another parallel between wrapping and architecture as well as between Japan and Korea. Both in *shoin* and *banga*, rooms are separated mainly by papered panels, but Japanese *shōji* doors are

3. As one result of the timber decrease in Korea, the wooden members were smaller in size than before and were used primarily in the roof structures and in the details of doors, windows, and the kind. Even in temples, palaces, and aristocrats' residences, which had timber frames, the use of brick and stone increased and they continued to be the main building materials of thatch-roofed commoners' houses. Kim Dong-uk 1994, p. 65.

covered with paper on the outer side of the wooden framework, whereas it is on the inner side of Korean *jangji* doors. (The concepts 'inside' and 'outside' will be discussed below, but here the former refers to a room and the latter to anything around it.) This creates divergent appearances, accompanied by panels that have paper on both sides, or are built of wooden planks.⁴ Generally speaking, Korean interiors are more dominated by paper, since not only are the inner surfaces of the door / windows and walls papered, but so are also the ceiling and the floor of *bang* rooms with *ondol* hypocaust (fig. 1).⁵ Because it would be uneconomic to heat wider spaces than necessary *bang* is a small and low room for sleeping, sojourn, and working. These rooms are, naturally, used in wintertime, though also in the summer, as *ondol* is not heated then and the doors are hoisted on overhead hinges and hooks, or opened sideways. When they are closed, the atmosphere is almost sealed: Only paper is visible, and one truly feels as though one were in a paper box.

In addition, Korean houses have wood-floored *maru* rooms (see fig. 13). Contrary to *bang*, *maru* is a high space rising all the way to visible roof rafters, sometimes including a partial wooden ceiling, and the biggest parts of the walls are possible to open; in southern *bangga*, these areas do not always have exterior doors at all. In other words, *maru* functions in a similar way as Japanese verandahs or rooms that have porous *tatami* mats and sliding or removable wall/

4. By Western vocabulary it is rather difficult to define these sliding or pivoted elements, as they are either doors, windows, or walls depending on their adjustment, though in Korea and Japan there are also permanent walls and openings that are specifically windows. In general, *shōji* and *jangji* can be regarded as all of them because they do not only serve as passages when opened and partitions when closed, but also provide light and ventilation in the room and view to outside, which are the basic functions of a window.

5. In *ondol* method, the smoke from a fireplace either in kitchen or outside is conducted into the under-floor flues, where the warm air heats the floor until passing out the chimney. The floor is made of clay and stones that are covered by several layers of oiled paper.

Figure 1. A *bang* room (*sarangbang*) of Yun Hwang's house. Early 1600s, moved to its present site in the eighteenth century, Nonsan, South Korea.



door elements. Together with elevated floors and deep eaves, they create horizontal lines of the facades in both building types, except that Korean rooflines are more curved. Also, unlike the Chinese, the Koreans and Japanese continued living on the floor of these multi-purpose rooms with minimum furniture.

Straw is the material that dominates Japanese interiors due to the *tatami* mats (fig. 2). Originally *tatami*, literally 'to fold,' was a foldable carpet, similar to the Korean *dotjari*, still in use today. The thick straw mats were first portable daises for the most important people to sit on, and started to cover the whole room areas of *shoin* residences only at the turn of the fifteenth century. The reason for the popularity of *tatami* was, undoubtedly, its suitability for the sultry climate, but because the mats were (and are) expensive, they did not become widely used in commoners' houses until in the eighteenth century, alongside better living standards of the rising merchant

Figure 2. Interior of Katsura Imperial Villa. Seventeenth century, Kyoto, Japan.



class—thus, one way to demonstrate wealth.

As for other wrapping materials surrounding Korean and Japanese spaces, the roofs of *banga* and *shoin* are usually covered with tiles, especially side buildings also with straw, bark or shingle, while brick and stone are used in Korean fire-resisting walls (*banghwajang*); necessary between *ondol* fireplaces and wooden structures. The Japanese hearth is also normally in the dirt-floor kitchen, but in the middle of it, or

sometimes at the center of a *tatami* room, and walls are almost without exceptions made of plastered bamboo net between square pillars and beams, again, to improve ventilation. It is the method in *banga* as well, although the appearance is slightly different because the wall is of close to the same depth, if not thicker, than the frame structure, thereby providing insulation needed during the colder winters on the Korean Peninsula. For the same reason, *banga's* openings often have two layers of sliding or pivoted elements, occasionally even a third set of framed mosquito nets, and a papered built-in case for the extra pairs of panels.

To summarize, the innermost realm of Japanese *shoin* is mainly composed of straw floors, wooden ceilings, and walls with paper doors and plastered areas, both interspersed by wooden framework, creating the famous contrast of materials and colors. The interior of Korean *banga*, on the other hand, is characterized by the interplay of

bang and *maru* rooms. The former are dominated solely by paper and the latter by wood with plaster and paper between the wooden members, being reminiscent of verandahs, which are equally essential parts of *shoin* and *banga*.

Social Wrapping Elements

Most of the above phenomena are solutions to practical considerations and climatic conditions, yet, architecture always reflects also ideological currents. In that respect, Edo Japan and Joseon Korea departed from each other substantially, even if both were feudal societies. As is well known, the Joseon dynasty with its centralized imperial rule was an ideal Confucian state that strained to banish all other thoughts, whereas Confucianism was not rooted in Japanese soil of equal depth, but Buddhism and Shintoism cohered as influential religions. In the beginning of the peaceful Edo period, when the Tokugawa shogunate established control over the court, the Japanese *samurai* warriors became mainly bureaucrats who constituted their own elite, comparable to the Korean *yangban* gentry. These were local officials, or served the administration in Seoul, while other family members provided for the household *banga* in the countryside. Some scholars also built similar houses as 'hermitages,' where they retired (or were sentenced) to compose poems, practice calligraphy, and cultivate their mind by other activities suitable for Confucian gentlemen.

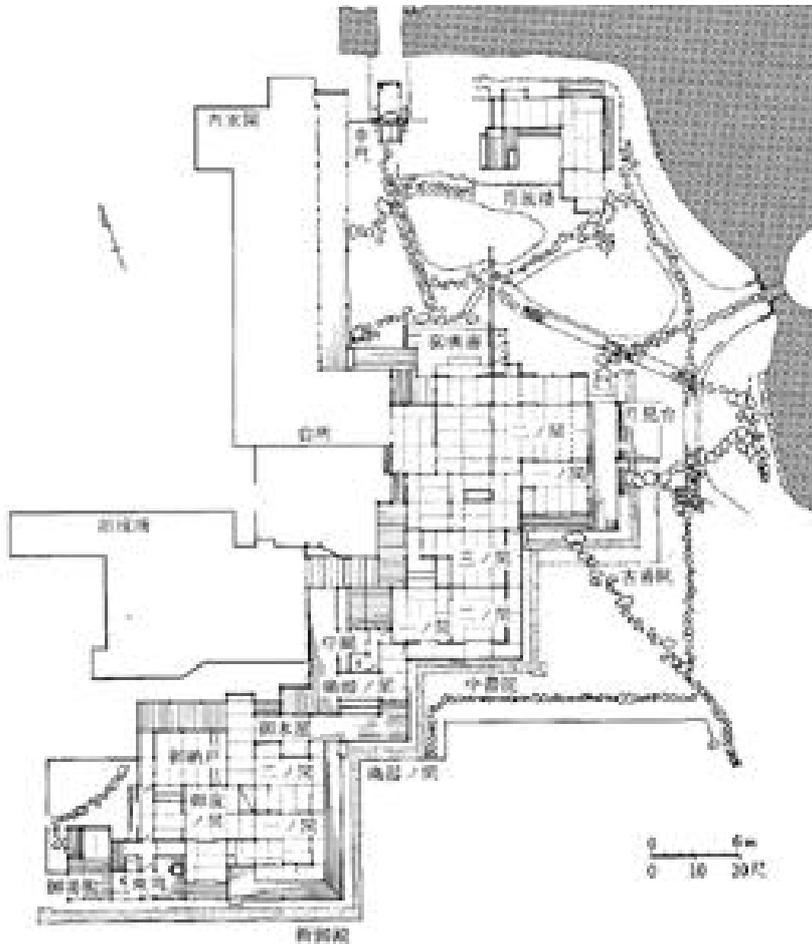
As a result of the 'alternate attendance' system, the Japanese *samurai* leaders, *daimyō*, had to spend years in the Tokugawa headquarters in Edo (today's Tokyo) maintaining residences there, in addition to the mansions and castles in their own domain, and often houses even in the imperial capital Heiankyō (Kyoto). Since their lifestyle required more rooms and partition between them, the buildings incorporated new elements, as sliding panels with decorated paper on both sides and less functional ornamental details that

indicated the prestige of the house. These features became constituent parts of the *sukiya* style of *shoin* residences, along the increasing use of earlier 'luxuries,' like *tatami* mats, ceilings, tea-rooms, and *tokonoma* alcoves with adjoined *tsukeshoin* desks and *tana* (or *chigaidana*) shelves. This was also the era when most verandahs got *shōji* doors in the outer colonnade, making these areas parts of the indoors—or more accurately, corridor-like intermediate spaces—due to the invention of wooden screens (*amado*, 'rain door') that protected the paper and when unneeded slid into a built-in case in the outer wall.

Besides *shōji* and *jangji* panels, characteristic of both *shoin* and *banga* are various kinds of adjustable space dividers, as folded screens (Jap. *byōbu*, Kor. *byongpung*), cloth curtains (Jap. *noren*, Kor. *munyeomja*), and bamboo or reed shutters (Jap. *sudare*, Kor. *bal*). Although the sliding elements that have paper on both sides (Jap. *fusuma*, Kor. *maengjangji*) as well as the latticed areas above the openings (Jap. *ramma*, Kor. *gochang*) are quite similar, the latticework of all types of dividers in a *banga* is usually more complex, and the doors that are pivoted above are a Korean speciality; though existed in Japanese *shinden* residences that preceded *shoin*. Also, because of *banga's* high foundations most of the verandahs that do not function as entrances have railings and appear more as balconies, similar to the Japanese elevated verandahs. There are differences in the layout of the houses as well. While the rooms of a *shoin* are often connected cornerwise in stepped blocks, a *banga* is generally composed of more rectangular buildings, but arranged much less symmetrically than the extremely axial Chinese courtyard houses (figs. 3 and 4).

In all East Asian countries, the details and dimensions of buildings were restricted by laws according to the owner's social rank, based on the Confucian hierarchy. The Tokugawa government, for instance, prohibited commoners from using *sukiya* style, but a *samu-rai* house, no matter how small, always included a *tokonoma* and often a tearoom. At least *daimyō* and *shōgun* should also have had a *nō* stage, since tea ceremony and *nō* drama, among many other arts,

Figure 3. Floor plan of Katsura Imperial Villa's *sukija* style main building with old *shoin* (upper right corner), middle *shoin*, and new *shoin* (below left). Early and middle seventeenth century, Kyoto, Japan. Nihon kenchiku shizush 1980, p. 84.



were considered essential parts of *samurai* education. Even ornamental windows, such as *shitaji-mado* ('underground window'), imitating farmhouses' broken walls that disclosed the bamboo net structure, expressed social hierarchy because they were mainly used in tearooms, or were attached to *tokonoma*.

Figure 5. A guardroom of Ikedamon gate with *kara-hafu* roof. Late seventeenth century, Tokyo, Japan.



rank of the house and, not surprisingly, gates with elevated roof (*soseuldaemun*) were restricted for the *yangban*, while gates of the same height as the fence (*pyeongdaemun*) were used in the residences of lower classes, or in *bang*'s inner walls (fig. 6). Of particular significance was the *jeongryeo* gate with governmental tablatures awarded to a virtuous wife or an obedient son.

A somewhat less tangible divider between the spatial layers is the modular grid of the house. From a practical point of view, a module brought about an order in the building, but both Korean and Japanese modular methods, which drew their origins from China, were also means to express social order. The basic unit, depicted by the Chinese ideogram of 'sun' within 'gate' (*jian* in Chinese, *gan* in Korean, *ken*, *ma*, etc. in Japanese), was a length, square, and volumetric measure between two or four columns or their height respectively, and its dimensions varied on periods and areas,

Figure 6. *Soseuldaemun* gate of Dongnakdang house. Mid-Joseon period, Gyeongju, South Korea.



even in a building.⁶ Moreover, it distinguished the owner's social rank, as not only was the amount of units, but also the size of the unit itself controlled. For example, the length of *gan* was different for different social groups: for commoners 6-7 *cheok*, for *yangban* 8-9 (sometimes up to 11), and for the royal family 11-12 *cheok*.⁷ (1 *cheok* is ca. 30 cm.) This, in turn, means that the maximum of 10 'square *gan*'

6. There was also another Chinese module, *cai* (literally 'material'), a ratio of 15 by 10 between the longer and shorter side of bracket arm timber. In the Northern Song dynasty, it had eight, by the Qing dynasty eleven grades with different dimensions (though the same ratio) according to the importance of the building and the rank of the owner. As that type of bracket sets were not used in *shoin* and *banga*, this module is not dealt with here. More about the East Asian modules in my Ph.D. thesis, Sarvimaki 2000, pp. 161-185.

7. Courtesy of Dr. Kim Do-Kyoung (personal discussion).

(about 45 m²) in commoners' houses was much less than one third of the 30 *gan* (at least 170 m²) allowed for the lowest *yangban* rank.

The Japanese modular system, to which it developed during the Edo period and as we know it today, is more reminiscent of the contemporary method, though it must be pointed out that *ken* also had various dimensions, and still there are four main sizes of *tatami* mats that are intrinsically connected to the column distance. In simplified terms, all horizontal and vertical measures depend on a particular *ken* that is a multiple of *shaku* units (ca. 30 cm) and on its fractions into smaller intervals, as pillar section of 4 *sun* (0,4 *shaku*). Gradually this structural order was used in all residences, mainly due to the increasing popularity of *shoin* type buildings and the rising living standards in the late Edo period, when Japan, indeed, developed into a more egalitarian society than Joseon Korea. Yet the dimensions of *tokonoma*, *tsukeshoin* and *tana* were, and are, defined by the *kiwari* module, which is predominantly based on aesthetic ratios and was originally the proportioning method of *samurai* mansions, palaces, and temples.

Already in the beginning of the Edo period, however, wealthy merchants (the lowest Confucian social class of 'citizens') built large residences, such as the Nakamura House in modern Osaka, with formal *tatami* rooms and *tokonoma* alcoves. Also, even if the style of gates was limited and the guardrooms of lower *daimyō* ranks were to have single sloping roofs, they tended to ignore the prohibition and had curved *kara-hafu* constructions in their houses.⁸ And in Korea, where such details as round pillars and *dancheong* multicolor paint-

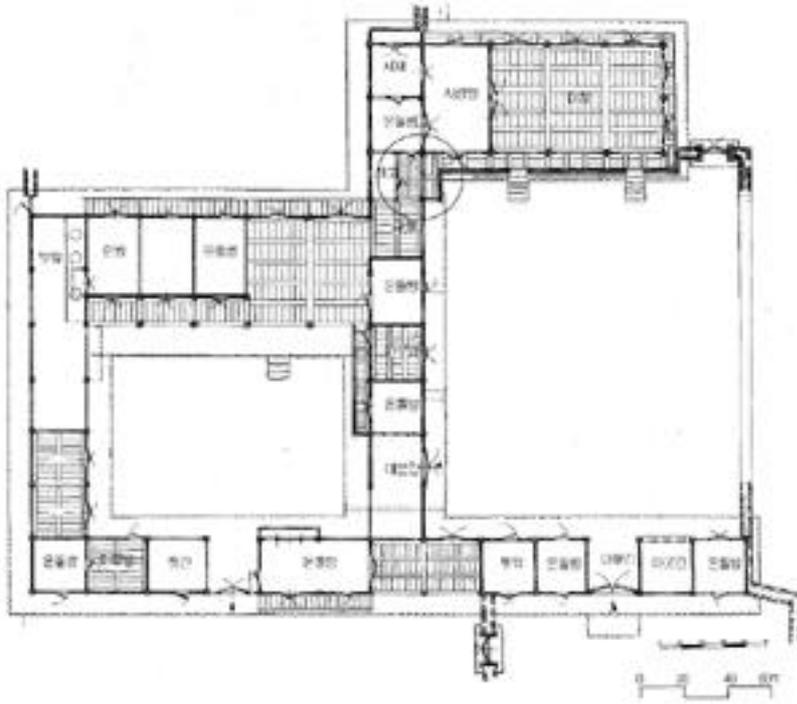
8. Particularly after the devastating fire of Edo in 1657, residences like the so-called row houses (*nagaya*) were controlled because of the scant resources caused by the rebuilding of the entire city. The compendium of regulations and etiquette for the members of the *samurai* class, issued by the Tokugawa shogunate, restricted the styles of houses and gates, among other rules. They also limited the width of the houses of the highest-ranking *daimyō* into three bays, whereas lower *samurai* leaders were required to reduce their *nagaya* into two and a half bays. Coaldrake 1996, pp. 193-207.

ings were permitted only in temples and palaces, some aristocrats, who were not as humble as Confucian scholars were supposed to be, did show off by having these forbidden elements in their *banga*. In many cases, their residences also exceeded the permitted size, simply, by not including the servants' quarters (*haengnangchae*) in the house area.⁹

Furthermore, due to the Neo-Confucian ideology that emphasized strict separation of genders—as it was interpreted by the *yangban* scholars—the Korean mansions had to be divided into men's and women's quarters, *sarangchae* and *anchae*, by high walls with a middle gate (*jungmun*) and some lesser passages in between. In reality, many *banga* have interesting unofficial routes or 'grey zones,' which connect the enclosures. Take the Yangjindang in Hahoe Village, where everything, at first, looks like the rules were followed (figs. 7 and 8). Had I prior to my visit not seen the floor plan, it would have been impossible to guess that a pair of doors veils an adjunctive *maru*, since the usual places for a visitor to examine the house are the courtyard or reception rooms of *sarangchae*. On the same trip in Andong, I spent four nights in a *banga*, where I experienced an analogous arrangement that observes the moral principles, but maximizes the functional efficiency. It was only in the evening,

9. For example, the Kim residence in Chongup had 87 *gan*, but was reported to the authorities to be 40 *gan* in size, which was the maximum amount of *gan* for the rank of the owner of this house and the total of only the main buildings. In principle, non-titled citizens were not allowed more than 10 *gan*, 'middle classes' 20 *gan*, third class aristocrats 30 *gan*, second class 40 *gan*, princes and princesses of kings' secondary wives 50 *gan*, and so on, ending in the 99 *gan* palaces. Chun et al. 1999, pp. 37-41. (Here, too, it must be taken into account that the size of a *gan* was bigger the higher the status of the owner.) By the late Joseon period, when the scrutiny of regulations became more lax, even rich farmers adopted features of *banga* in their residences and especially the 'middle class' citizens had *soseuldaemun* gates. Therefore, some *yangban* aristocrats opposed this decline of social order by not having *soseuldaemun* gates and rebuilt a *pyeongdaemun* main gate in their houses. Courtesy of Dr. Kim Seong-Do (personal discussion).

Figure 7. Floor plan of Yangjindang house with an adjunctive *maru* between *anchae* (lower left square) and *sarangchae* (upper right rectangle). Mid-Joseon period, Andong, South Korea. Contemporary Architecture 2000-1, p. 222.



while getting the bedding out from the cupboard, when I found a 'secret door' to *anchae* in the rear wall of the fixture and realized that it, in fact, made the space more a corridor than a storage (fig. 9).¹⁰

10. During my stay in this *bangja* (Jichonjongtaek, Cultural Properties Material No. 44), I also realized that a plan that allows privacy to the family and, at the same time, has separate area for the guests, is why the house works so well in its modern function as an inn. Because I was conducting research on traditional Korean architecture the hosts, Mrs. and Mr. Kim Won-Kil, kindly let me enter the *anchae* too. On that side, there was a highboy in front of the 'secret door' to block the passage that, naturally, is not meant to be used by the customers of the inn, since the owners live in the *anchae*.

Figure 8. The doors of an adjunctive *maru* of Yangjindang house seen from *sarangchae*'s courtyard. Mid-Joseon period, Andong, South Korea.



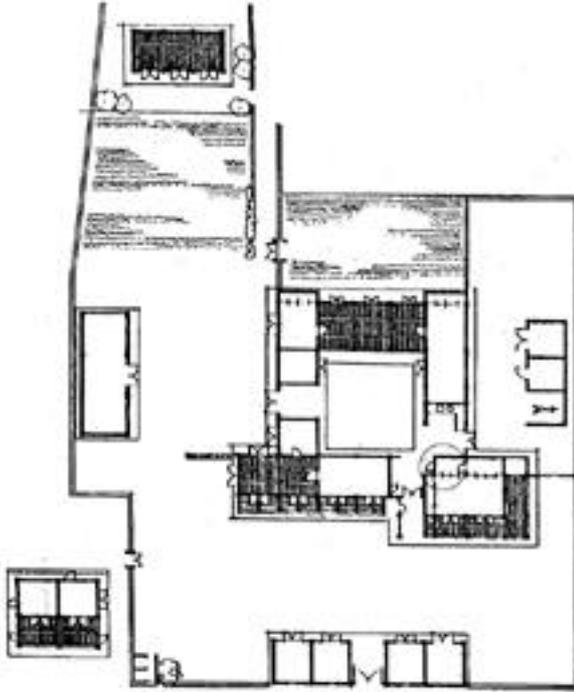
These types of informal passageways were, of course, needed for women or servants to serve the men entertaining their guests in the evening, when the middle gate was locked.

The widely used translation 'men's and women's area,' nonetheless, is not quite accurate, as the Korean terms do not refer to sexes. *Anchae* could be better interpreted as an 'inner house' and *sarangchae* as an 'outer house'; in other words, the former is the private and the latter the public part of *banga*.¹¹ The male family members were allowed to enter *anchae*, though preferably with a permit of the household head (or in the night, when the ser-

vants did not see them), but *sarangchae*'s courtyard and reception rooms were the furthest a visitor could get. Often there was a commanding view from *sarangchae* to the middle gate, which allowed the control. No wonder, the official quarters for the household heir and his sons took on symbolic significance as the entire family her-

11. The ideogram *sa* means 'housing' and *rang* 'corridor,' whereas *chae* is a suffix indicating an independent building or group of them. It should also be noted that *an*, meaning 'inner,' is a Korean word and is not written by the Chinese ideogram *an* for 'safe,' 'peace,' etc., depicted by 'woman' under the 'roof,' although the etymology and connotation might lead to this concept.

Figure 9. Layout of Kim Banggeol's house, in which a 'secret door' in the cupboard of *sarangbang* (lower right corner of the main building) connects it with *anchae* (upper part of the main building). Mid-1600s (the house was moved from its original location in 1990s because of the Imha Dam project, but the floor plans of *sarangchae* and *anchae* are original), Andong, South Korea. Contemporary Architecture 2000-1, p. 245.



itage and authority of the patriarch—ideally receiving his guests by sitting in *numaru*, a pavilion-type *maru* that is erected even higher than the other rooms of *sarangchae* (fig. 10).¹²

12. Professor Joo Nam-Chull brought to my attention that sometimes the smoke from *ondol* fireplace is conducted to the holes in the podium, from where it fills the surface of the courtyard. Then, the *sarangchae* looks like it was 'floating on a cloud,' metaphorically indicating the superiority of the family patriarch. Professor Kim Dong-Uk, for his part, pointed out that many *banga* are also preserved till our days because the owners are so

Figure 10. *Numaru* in the corner of the Nakseonjae house's *sarangchae* and the pivoted doors of its *daecheong* hall hoisted on the overhead hooks. 1847, Seoul, South Korea.



In spite of the differences in the layouts and appearances of *banga* and *shoin*, there are similar perceptions. Also Japanese houses are clearly divided into private and public areas in the way people circulate in them. Just as Neo-Confucian ideology was not as notable in Japan as in Korea, nor was gender segregation. Consequently (along other possible reasons), *shoin* did not part into men's and women's quarters to the same extent as did *banga*. Even more obvious is that social hierarchy was indicated by the architecture of *shoin* and *banga*, as was the inside/outside distinction, though not always visually. Let us, therefore, proceed by 'looking at' what is less visible in the light of Hendry's statement of the tea ceremony: "The actual speech used is very sparse, extremely restricted, and we would learn very little if we looked only at the words."¹³

proud of their *yangban* ancestry (personal discussions).

Unfolding Spatial Layers

Without being “overly concerned with ‘unwrapping,’ with revealing the perceived essence of things,”¹⁴ as Hendry warns us, it is useful to consider the stages of entering a *banga* or a *shoin*. In many respects, it is reminiscent of opening a gift, which includes the element of surprise—real or pretended. All the way from the gate, the first transactional space between the ‘very outside’ and the first layer of ‘inside,’ the houses and routes in them are carefully designed by opening new views and revealing others. Between the entrance courtyard and the main buildings, there might be additional yards or gardens; in Japan, usually separated by hedges or fences made of wood, bamboo or other ‘light’ materials, whereas *banga* are dominated by split-levelled masonry or stone walls that have tile cover, creating an almost castle-like atmosphere. The buildings also have removable ‘covers,’ like bamboo or reed blinds, and the appearance of the facades greatly depends on whether the wooden shutters and other outer panels are closed or open.¹⁵ Actually, the Korean doors pivoted above, even better than the sliding ones, correspond to the ‘unfolding’ metaphor because first they are folded horizontally and then hoisted up vertically.

When entering a Japanese house, a split cloth curtain (*noren*) often partly conceals the entrance, and accompanied by formal greetings, one arrives in the porch (*genkan*) removing the shoes. While ‘climbing up’ (*agaru* or *noboru*) into the building, the host usually offers slippers to be worn in the corridors and other wood-floored areas, except for toilets and bathrooms, where special slippers are needed. No footwear is used in the following stage of the *tatami*-matted areas, of which the first is either *ozen*, meaning ‘front room,’ or a more elaborate *zashiki* reception room with *tokonoma*

13. Hendry 1995, p. 165.

14. *Ibid.*, 1995, p. 5.

15. For more examples of Japanese dividers and transactional spaces, see Nitschke 1993, pp. 49-93.

alcove. Seldom is a visitor allowed any further. If one is, the relationship has become intimate enough that one is not regarded as a complete outsider anymore. At the same time, many of the linguistic honorifics are dropped, which Hendry points out: "Just as with language, layers of polite formality conceal (and occasionally reveal) an inner sanctum, and the nearer the outside one finds oneself, the more formal is the expected behaviour."¹⁶

A classy *shoin* house has several *zashiki* rooms, and the significance of a particular space is indicated by the height and treatment of the ceiling and the tiers of the floor from the lower level (*gedan*) to the middle level (*chūdan*), ending in the highest dais (*jōdan*) for the master of the house, or a more important visitor. If there are no different levels, the most honorable place is the *tatami* mat in front of the *tokonoma*. From this public area, a guest may get glimpses deeper into the house through the dividing elements, which 'wrap' the inner areas, or *oku*, having connotations of 'heart,' 'interior,' or 'depth.' Similarly to the phrases used, the movable elements conceal *oku*, when closed, and momentarily reveal it, when family members or servants pass the openings. Then, one possibly sees a next set of sliding panels, behind one more, and so on, creating the impression of depth. Besides, even when the panels are closed, the translucent paper does not completely separate a room from another—especially not acoustically—nor the interior from the exterior, although the amount of layers and thickness of paper allows the interplay of light and shade and/or transparency and opaqueness.

In the course of entering a Korean *banga*, one even more literally 'climbs up' (*oreuda*), as not only are the floors elevated, but the buildings are placed on podiums above the courtyards that themselves have terraces at several levels. The shoes are left on the podium's stepping stone, from which one climbs on a verandah, and a visitor ends either in the great *maru* hall (*daecheong*), *numaru*, or outer *bang* rooms of *sarangchae*. Like in Japan, through the layers of openings

16. Hendry 1995, p. 100.

Figure 11. A view through the *sarangchae* of Yun Jeung's house: in front *sarangbang*, then *marubang* (in between interesting *angojigi* doors that are both horizontally pivoted and sliding), and furthest behind the backyard is the wall of *anchae* (see also the floor plan in fig. 4). Late seventeenth century, Nonsan, South Korea.



one gets an impression of continuous space; in *bang*, by glimpses of the master's bedroom (*chim - bang*) and other *sarangchae*'s inner areas, while an outsider sees only the roofs of *anchae* behind the high walls (fig. 11). Hence, it is perhaps not too far-fetched to consider *anchae*, with *an* meaning 'inner,' the Korean equivalence to *oku*, and vice versa. The same is suggested by the words for 'wife,' which both in Korean and Japanese have connotations of 'inside person.'

Regarding Japan, the concept of 'empty center' has been widely speculated, and some scholars have been contemplating where the center of a Japanese house is—by

the hearth or the *tokonoma*¹⁷—though I do not find it necessary, or possible, to locate *oku*, the 'center of emptiness.' In a *bang*, the 'very inside' might be somewhere around the first lady's room (*anbang*),

17. In my opinion, and corresponding to the phenomena discussed in this paper, *oku* definitely is 'deeper' in the house than in the *tokonoma* of a reception room.

her sleeping room (*witbang*, 'upper room') and the daughter-in-law's room (*geonneonbang*, 'opposite room') that is on the opposite side of *anchae*'s *daecheong*. Rather than enclosed by permanent elements, the layers surrounding these 'centers' are defined by behavior like abandonment of shoes, the 'dirt of outside,' before entering the 'clean inside,' and the further borders are indicated by some sort of a step and/or change of flooring material when moving from one spatial level to another. Similar kind of temporal expressions are the East Asian terms for module, since the Chinese ideogram for the column distance also means both 'space' and 'time'—one more architectural perception that is usually regarded as uniquely Japanese, famous for the concept *ma*.

From our Hendryan approach, 'linguistic wrapping' is an alternative means in interpreting the spatial layers and their definitions, as discussed above. In that respect, Japanese residences have an interesting detail, the frieze rail (*uchi-nori-nageshi*) in the so-called 'honest wall' (*shin-kabe*), meaning that the construction system is genuinely exposed (fig. 12). Paradoxically, since the invention of concealed horizontal ties (*nuki*), it had no tectonic function except above the openings (even there only to strengthen the *kamoi* sliding track), but continued also to be used on the solid walls of high-class *shoin*, though disappeared in many houses of commoners and lower ranking *samurai*; among the latter, partly due to the appreciation of the semiformal *sukiya* style, associated with the 'way of tea' (*chadō*), the 'way of warriors' (*bushidō*), and other 'arts' (*dō*). This 'beam'—like a ribbon of a gift—could well be considered corresponding to the Japanese 'beautification language' (*keigo*), in indicating aesthetic values and status of the house. Similarly, public or 'formal' (*hare*) areas are defined by the formal *tatema*e speech, comparable to 'front' (*omote*) and 'outside' (*soto*), as opposing to private or 'informal' (*ke*), 'rear' (*ura*), 'inside' (*uchi*), and the real opinion, or *honne*. In short, calling the wall 'honest' is *tatema*e, while mentioning that the frieze rail is not a structural but an ornamental member is *honne*.¹⁸

The view from 'inside' to 'outside' is of equal importance,

Figure 12. Continuous space of Honmaru Goten, the *shoin-zukuri* residence of the lords at the Kawagoe Castle, and the *uchi-nori-nageshi* frieze rail above the openings as well as on the solid walls. 1848, Kawagoe, Japan.



though the perspective shifts in the cases of *shoin* and *banga*. Since the latter is ideally located on a hillside, the openings from *sarangchae* provide a wide command of the entrance courtyard (*sarangmadang* or *haengnangmadang*) and far-away mountains, while *anchae* opens to the inner yard (*anmadang*) and the rear garden (*dwitmadang*). That is probably why the Koreans pay so much atten-

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18. With regard to distinguishing spatial layers by movable and translucent elements, particularly interesting is psychiatrist Takeo Doi's view, to which Hendry refers: "Japanese people very often know precisely what the *honne* is in any situation, despite the formal expressions of *tatema*. [...] so that when people look at *omote* they see also the *ura* through it." Hendry 1995, p. 163. She discusses these levels of Japanese language in depth; regarding the usage of different types of *keigo*, translated in various ways (in the context of a structural element that is actually an ornament, I prefer the term 'beautification language'), see especially Hendry 1995, pp. 52-69, about *honne/ura* and *tatema/omote*, pp. 145, 167-8.

tion to the windows and their sills, on which one can rest one's elbow when admiring the scenery. Although Korean yards that have very little vegetation are not, as the Japanese gardens, considered to be viewed from indoors, I would argue that at least the 'flower stairs' (*hwagye*) in the garden definitely are (fig. 13). The general setting of the house surrounded by high walls and a forested hill in the background, in turn, is eyed from the direction of approach.

Japanese *shoin* is usually on a flat lot and the view from the rooms to the ground level appears to be more significant; an extreme example are the doors that have vertically sliding lower part allowing a scene solely to the surface of the garden, preferably recently covered with snow, which the doors' name *yukimi* ('snow viewing') *shōji* implies. Moreover, the deep and straight eaves greatly block out the upward vista, and Japanese openings that are specifically windows most often have latticework, so that even when the papered panels are open they provide more or less ventilation and illumination, but only glimpses of the surroundings. However, exceptions like Katsura Villa's elevated areas and *shoin's* corner rooms for moon viewing and other admiration of nature function quite similarly to Korean pavilions and *numaru*

Figure 13. *Anchae's* great *maru* hall in Yun Jeung's house with a view to the rear garden and its 'flower stairs' and the stand for *kimchi* jars. Late seventeenth century, Nonsan, South Korea.



(always in the corner of *sarangchae*), from where one sees a pond that is important element of both *banga* and *shoin*. The ‘borrowed landscape’ technique in Japanese gardens is also reminiscent of the Korean and Chinese way to use the wider panorama as part of the courtyards.

It is difficult to say where these houses ‘end.’ The Japanese verandahs that have colonnades on both sides (wood-floored *hiro-en* or *tatami*-matted *irikawa*), to some extent also the outer *tatami* rooms, as well as Korean *maru* rooms and porches (*aptoe* or *toetmaru*) can be seen as outdoors—not outside—when the doors are open, and indoors—literally—when closed. The outer verandahs that are normally narrower and on a lower level (Jap. *ochi-en*, Kor. *jjokmaru*) and various kinds of stepping stones are more clearly extensions of the garden, but even the ground level spaces under the eaves, in addition to courtyards, are regarded as part of the house. To put it otherwise, although not yet in the buildings, one is already either in ‘open-air insides’ or ‘roofed outdoors.’ And further in the garden there are side buildings, as teahouses that are integral parts of *shoin*, whereas *banga* has many types of annexes, like pavilions and separate houses (*byeoldang* or *ansarangchae*) for retired parents, married first son’s family, or secondary wife/s (figs. 14 and 15). Since Confucian ancestral worship (*jaesa*) was constituent part of *yangban* life, there is also a primogenitors’ shrine (*sadang*) or several of them in the rear end of the lot backed by pine trees.

From here we could, and should, proceed to geomancy and other relevant cosmological ideologies, though it is not possible to extend the scope of this paper to these interwoven topics, such as city layout reflecting the society at large. To just, once again, quote Hendry: “In Japan, the whole country was from 1600 to the middle of the nineteenth century closed off from the outside world so that the nation virtually wrapped itself entirely.”¹⁹ The same applies to Korea, the so-called Hermit Kingdom, even a few decades longer.

19. *Ibid.*, 1995, p. 116.

Figure 14. Shōkintei teahouse in the garden of Katsura Imperial Villa. Seventeenth century, Kyoto, Japan.



Figure 15. Hwallaejeon garden pavilion by the lotus pond of Seongyojang house. 1816, Gangneung, South Korea.



This is one more reason why juxtaposition of Jeoson Korea and Edo Japan is elucidative, as both were closed societies, in which very distinct cultures evolved. Indeed, I am not claiming that Japanese and Korean architectural expressions would always correlate, nor that the phenomena discussed above (especially division of houses into public and private areas, or connection between time and space) were something unique for Japan and Korea. What I do tend to argue is that the divergent appearances of *shoin* and *banga* are more a question of differences in architectural idioms than meanings—idiom itself being a linguistic term for a phrase that is typical for a dialect or a language, in this context, the language of architecture, including its ‘non-verbal’ modes.

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Acknowledgements

If otherwise not mentioned, this paper is based on my dissertation thesis *Structures, Symbols and Meanings: Chinese and Korean Influence on Japanese Architecture* (Sarvimaki 2000), on which I started to work during my studies at the Tokyo National University of Arts and Music in 1987-89 on a Japanese government *Monbusho* scholarship. The years-long study was further funded by several organizations, the most generous having been the Jenny and Antti Wihuri Foundation and the Finnish Cultural Foundation in Finland as well as the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies in Denmark. Most recently, and most importantly, I had the chance to delve into traditional Korean architecture during my post-doctoral research from March to October 2002, as a Korea Foundation Fellow, affiliated at the Korea University.