

# Railway Stations and Local Communities in Japan

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## Evolving Relationships between Station Buildings and Local Communities

When Japan's first railway was opened in 1872 between Tokyo and Yokohama, the nation was keen to absorb the culture and civilization of the West. Westernization was also seen as a way to ensure that Japan was treated as an equal among nations. At that time, East Asia was in a period of instability with the Western powers eager to secure a toehold in the region. The new Meiji government knew that Japan had to quickly achieve its own industrial revolution and prepare its defenses. Railways carrying large volumes of freight and passengers soon became essential to the development of the nation. They became a symbol of modernization promoted by a government that exerted centralized control over the country. More than roads could ever show, railways demonstrated that the regions were tied to the centre. The locomotives were powerful technological tools, inspiring awe, excitement, and sometimes disapproval.

Stations, too, became symbols and agents of the nation's modernization. In the early days there were no newspapers or radio, so stations became a conduit for information and news. The trains and stations showed people the advantages of a society based on technology and Westernization. Stations served as an interface between the central government and local communities.

Modernization led to growth in secondary and tertiary industries and new ideas of freedom and democracy. By the 1910s, members of the lower middle classes were quite common in large urban areas, and some began moving from overcrowded cities to the surrounding suburbs. This outward migration was similar to the trend in Britain. Private railways radiating from

the cities began developing housing projects to meet the growing demand for suburban homes.

The suburbs became a new type of local community and the relationship they formed with the railways was entirely different from the previous relationship between traditional communities and railways. The identity of the new suburbs was a class identity—a class of people whom the railway companies expected as their ideal customers. For suburban dwellers, the station was not a place extolling the advantages of Westernization, but a building that gave them their identity as a community. It was an interface promoting communication from the new suburban community to the outside world.

Stations are an interface between communities and railway companies (or the government). When one or both sides experience a change, the relationship changes too. By examining the changes in the architectural styles and functions of stations, we can better understand the evolution of relationship between communities and railways.

## Railways Receive Mixed Welcome

Japan's railway quickly grew into an extensive network across the country. The government built the first few lines, but due to the lack of funds, private companies were soon allowed to build and operate main-line railways, receiving varying degrees of favourable treatment from the government. Some high-ranking government officials resigned their posts to take important positions in private railways. The favourable business climate for railway construction saw the network grow, and at nationalization in 1906 and 1907, the government purchased 4540 km of 17 private railways to increase the system from 2500 to 7150 km. Important nationalized lines included a line from

Tokyo to Aomori, the northern tip of the Honshu main island, and a line from Kobe to Bakan (present-day Shimonoseki, the western tip of Honshu) as well as trunk lines in Kyushu and Hokkaido.

The location of early stations suggests how local communities reacted to the expanding railways. Years before the 1906–07 nationalization, when the private Nippon Railway was laying track toward Sendai (northern Honshu), influential merchants asked the company to build a station close to the existing business district and succeeded in changing the company's initial plan to locate the station elsewhere<sup>1</sup>. In old post towns along the Tokaido highway, some innkeepers encouraged the railway to build a nearby station, while others tried to keep them away, depending on how they thought trains would affect their businesses. Some regions did not want rail service because they disliked the central government dominated by powerful people from southern Kyushu and western Honshu<sup>2</sup>—a political alliance that overthrew the Shogunate and promoted Westernization. Many people objected to the steam locomotives because of the smoke and sparks.

But it did not take long for these negative feelings to give way to the realization that the train offered a very convenient way to travel. As people became accustomed to the new technology, they came to accept the train, just as they were coming to accept other Meiji government policies.

## Station Design and Local Communities at Westernization (1872–early 1900s)

Opened in 1872 as the terminus in Tokyo for Japan's first railway, Shimbashi Station (also known as Shiodome Station) was designed by the American architect R. P. Bridgens. From contemporary pictures, we know that the station was a neo-Renaissance design with two pavilions

joined by a central arcade. Unlike European stations, Shimbashi Station did not have the clock tower, but even so the design was distinctively European and must have seemed very impressive. We can easily imagine people's fascination at both the steam locomotives and the station architecture. In 1873, trains running between Shimbashi and Yokohama carried about 1.4 million passengers<sup>3</sup> but that was just the beginning. The influence of far-off Western nations spread from Tokyo along the railway lines, bringing the technology and architecture of 19th century Europe to the entire country.

The Meiji government had to promote modernization in many different fields at the same time. The first step to achieving a modern industrial and military base was to build railways. Due to a lack of funds, most stations were built in wood and given a non-Japanese touch through simple details, such as a Western-style gable or hipped roof, and arches and knee braces at entrances. In exceptional cases, imposing Western structures were erected. These included important stations in large cities where foreigners often boarded trains—for example, Shimbashi and Yokohama stations, and two brick stations with imposing clocks: the first Osaka Station (1874) and the first Kyoto Station (1877).

After the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), the increasing ridership made it necessary to rebuild stations in large cities. This time, Japanese architects designed the stations, even major ones. In 1898, the government railways adopted a classification system of five ranks for smaller stations and established design standards for each rank. These standards are set out in a publication called *Tetsudo Koji Sekkei Sanko Zumen—Teishajo no Zu* (Reference Plans for Station Design)<sup>4</sup>. The plans for all station ranks called for at least some Western design elements. Presumably stations were given a higher

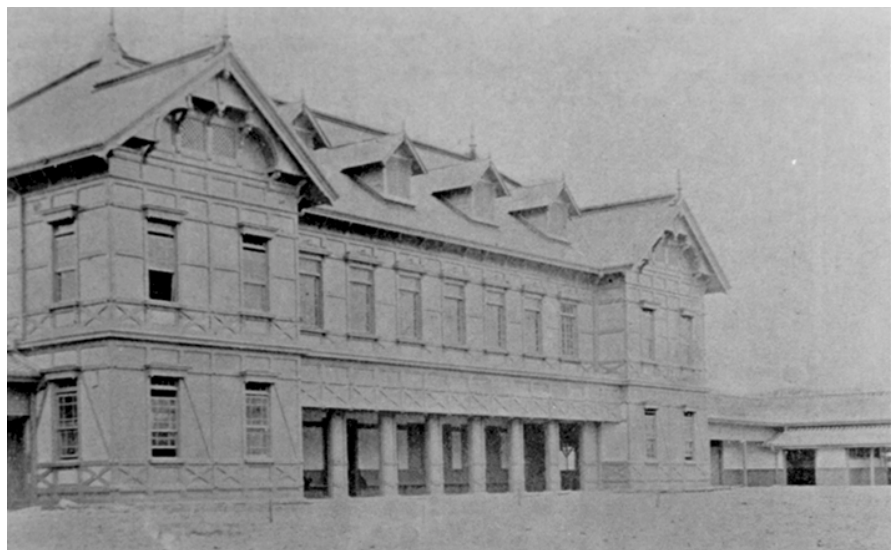
or lower rank depending on such factors as the number of users and whether the local community wielded influence with the central government. The design of small stations probably depended only on the number of users. Ranking stations, and therefore their communities as well, by this top-down approach shows that local communities were expected to follow the will of the state, and gives an idea of the relationship between citizens and the government in those days.

Major stations built in 1897 and soon after include: Bakan (Shimonoseki) Station, constructed in 1901 by San'yō Railway; the second Fukushima Station (1903, Nippon Railway); the second Nagasaki Station (1905, Kyushu Railway); the second Osaka Station (1899, government railways); and the second Nijo Station (1904, Kyoto Railway). Somewhat unusually, Nijo Station was built in a traditional Japanese temple style because it was used by the Emperor when travelling from Kyoto to the San'in region, and also because it is in Kyoto, which is known for its traditional architecture. On the other hand, Bakan Station followed the German half-timbered style, and the other three stations had Mansard roofs

with a French flavour. The exterior walls of Nagasaki Station also used half-timbering techniques. The Osaka Station was a government railways building with a solid, serious air to it, while the others were all owned by private railways with a freer design philosophy.

The Bakan Station was renamed Shimonoseki Station when the name of the city was changed to Shimonoseki in 1902, one year after the station opened. At this time, the first San'yō Hotel was opened as a two-story, wooden structure. The extant second hotel dates from 1924 and was designed by the architectural firm of Tatsuno & Kasai. Its four floors (including one basement) of reinforced concrete covered an area of 2858 m<sup>2</sup> and it had 30 guest rooms for 38 people, a restaurant and a salon where people waited for trains and ferries<sup>5</sup>. These figures show it was a large hotel with big guest rooms.

The hotel's claim to fame is that it was the first hotel in Japan to be constructed as part of a station. San'yō Railway ran ferries across the Kammon Strait to Kyushu, as well as four steamer services to ports in the Seto Inland Sea, and it also began ferry services to Pusan in Korea in



Bakan (Shimonoseki) Station built in 1909 by San'yō Railway

(Transportation Museum)

1905. Shimonoseki was a hub for passengers travelling by rail and sea, and the San'yo Hotel was a bustling stopover for members of the Imperial Family, government officials, film stars and foreigners on their way to and from the Asian continent. Passengers between Shimonoseki and Pusan numbered about 170,000 in 1911 and 814,000 in 1935. Shimonoseki Station was moved to its present location when the undersea Kammon Tunnel was completed in 1944. The ferries to Pusan stopped in 1945, leaving the San'yo Hotel with no business. Some historic buildings including the former station hotel still stand in the Hosoecho and Nabecho districts of Shimonoseki, attesting to the prosperity of those days. Perhaps the buildings are still standing because the site lost its business appeal when the station and commercial centre moved, showing how loss of prosperity can save a building from the wrecking ball.

Alongside the 1906–07 nationalization, which the Japanese military supported, the South Manchuria Railway Company was founded in 1906, and Japan proceeded to colonize northeastern China. The Sino–Japanese and Russo–Japanese (1904–05) wars signalled an end to Japan's eager absorption of Western culture, and a new phase of modernization.

The first group of Japanese architects graduated from National College of Engineering (Kobu Daigakko) in 1879. They had mastered Western architectural techniques and were soon designing and overseeing the construction of prestigious Western-style buildings in Japan. Three of these architects were Kingo Tatsuno (1854–1919), Tokuma Katayama (1854–1917) and Tamisuke Yokogawa (1864–1945). Tatsuno's Bank of Japan building was opened in 1896, while Katayama's Akasaka Detached Palace was completed in 1909. Notable station buildings of the period include the third Sapporo Station

(1908, Genjiro Furukawa); the second Hakata Station (1909, Tatsutaro Nakamura (1860–1942)); and Mansebash Station (1911, Tatsuno & Kasai). All these stations had high neo-Renaissance architecture and their archetypical Western style was in no way inferior to the second Mojiko Station (1914), which was designed by a German engineer and is now protected as an official cultural asset.

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**Tokyo Station as Interface for National Policy and Local Community**

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Tokyo Station was designed by Tatsuno and completed in 1914. It was practically the last Japanese station designed in the archetypical European style. Much has been written about the station, and there is disagreement on whether it announced the end or the beginning of an era. But here we would like to examine how



Tokyo Station designed by Tatsuno and completed in 1914

(Transportation Museum)

Tokyo Station fits into our thesis that stations of the Meiji period (1868–1912) were expected to persuade local communities of the wisdom of the government's policies of Westernization and modernization.

The Imperial Palace dominates the community surrounding the station, and there was obviously no need to promote government policies to the Emperor in the palace. Instead Tokyo Station had to face the palace with an appropriate design. We can try to guess at the motives of Tatsuno. Did he simply want to give full expression to his mastery of European architecture? Did he, perhaps, want to design a station that looked like a palace fit for an emperor? Or was his aim to design a building that came as close to perfection as possible?

The railway authorities wanted the design to be in the Momoyama Palace style (late 16th century) and asked the Meiji Emperor for his opinion. It is reported<sup>6</sup> that he said, 'Things like the station should be in the Western style,' using the English word 'station' while speaking in Japanese.

We know that Tatsuno was commissioned to create a Western-style building, but it is still interesting to speculate on his motives for choosing this specific design. One sure thing is that the government's aim to 'Enrich the Country and Strengthen the Military' had succeeded in changing Japan's industrial structure and promotion of the railway had made the population more mobile and initiated changes in every local community.

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### **Suburban Housing and Stations (early 1900s–30)**

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The 1906–07 nationalization did not eliminate all private railways. Many small local railways with little benefit to the nationwide network remained intact, and even after the nationalization, many

new private railways were built to meet growing demand in urban areas, especially in the Osaka region, as the economy expanded. For cheaper construction and operation costs, some of new private railways adopted tramway standards at the start.

Japan's wars with China and Russia as well as WWI brought economic booms that led to more industrial restructuring, and movement of population to cities. In this respect, Japan's experience was similar to that of Britain after the Industrial Revolution.

Britain's urban environment deteriorated in the second half of the 19th century, causing the middle class to move to the suburbs that were being developed thanks to convenient access provided by the railways. The suburbs created separate residential and working districts, as well as a new occupation—the housewife. Similar changes were going to take place in Japan in the early 20th century.

In Britain, mushrooming urban growth and deteriorating environments in cities formed the backdrop for Sir Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, published in 1902. Japanese government officials carefully studied the movement inspired by Howard (1850–1928), releasing their findings in *Den'en Toshi* (Garden Cities) published in 1907.

Howard offered his proposals as a way to stop urban sprawl and improve the living conditions of workers in large British cities. His vision called for a garden city that was restricted to a certain size, that combined the advantages of the country and the city, and that was autonomous, in the sense that both production and consumption would occur within its boundaries. Howard believed that developing numerous garden cities would help stop the continued growth of metropolises. His *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* gave detailed proposals for the construction,

maintenance, administration and financial management of a garden city, and influenced urban planners in Europe and the USA, where rapid urbanization was causing serious problems.

Japanese planners did not fully understand that a garden city was to be a self-standing community combining work and residential environments. As developed in Japan, the garden city was more like Bedford Park, a London suburb built in the late 19th century, where there was plenty of clean air and greenery but no work—residents had to commute about 30 minutes to the city.

In Japan, Minoo Tramway (later Hankyu Electric Railway and now Hankyu Corporation) promoted development of a garden city in the Osaka region. When the company opened its Takarazuka Line in 1910, it began building houses in a subdivision in the Muromachi district facing Ikeda Station. This was Japan's first suburban subdivision offering private homes for sale. The standard lot was about 330 m<sup>2</sup>, and the houses generally had two stories sitting on 65 to 100 m<sup>2</sup> of land. The housing development had a clubhouse in the centre and was intended for middle-class families wanting to leave the city.

In the project's early stages, the company distributed a pamphlet<sup>7</sup> entitled *Information for Prospective House Owners—Where Should You Buy Land and What Kind of House Should You Live In?* The pamphlet espoused modern ideals; each house would have electric wiring and plumbing and there would be a garden city environment with tree-lined roads, gardens and parks. The housing district would have facilities offering opportunities for personal interaction and leisure. In reality, however, the housing development did not mean creating an autonomous community with opportunities for interaction and leisure, but offering a modern living environment complete with greenery and streets laid

out in blocks as well as Western modern conveniences. The Muromachi (Ikeda) project became a prototype for suburban housing development in Japan, embracing principles that have not changed to the present.

Between 1910 and 1955, Minoo Tramway/Hankyu developed about 100 housing projects. The early projects including Muromachi were laid out on a grid plan. However, from the late 1920s, the tendency was to create a radial pattern of streets leading to a plaza in front of a central station. These examples include Senriyama and Kanzakigawa. The gateway to the residential district was the station and plaza<sup>8</sup>.

From 1910 to around 1920, Hankyu's main interest was to increase demand for its rail services by promoting middle-class housing projects near its stations. A few years later, the railway's projects began using some of the concepts embodied in Howard's garden city and similar plans for Letchworth, near London. In the British model, squares, parks and public buildings were central to the plan, but in Japan, the station was the focal point for the community. Unlike Howard's model, in Japan, the suburban community's identity was defined by the station, which was the gateway to the world beyond its borders.

The core of Japanese suburban communities lacked the religious and local-governmental functions that are common in Europe. Instead, they had stations as the core, serving as an interface with the world beyond. These features are perhaps characteristic of the typical Japanese city as well.

Starting around the time of their establishment, Minoo Tramway and Hanshin Electric Railway (both forerunners of today's Hankyu Corporation) were keen to publicize communities along their tracks. For publicity, they distributed their own magazines, *Kogai Seikatsu* (Suburban

Life) and *San'yo Suitai* (Natural Beauty), and placed advertisements in leading newspapers. This suggests that the railway companies no longer believed that station architecture was enough to publicize their message—station buildings were taking on another role.

For example, Hankyu's second Umeda Station in central Osaka was designed as the railway's most important image maker. The first Umeda terminal was of inconsequential design, probably because of a lack of funds but the second Umeda Station opened in 1929 included a department store with eight floors and two basement levels. Chandeliers hung from the ceiling of the station concourse and the arcade featured stained glass. This grand terminus announced itself as the gateway to Hankyu's services along the entire track. All stations along the 25-km line from Takarazuka (the home of the popular Takarazuka Girls Operetta) to Umeda were points of contact linking the general public to the railway company.

Another suburban housing project that well demonstrates the station–community relationship was conceived by Eiichi Shibusawa (1840–1931) in 1918. His 1922 Den'en Chofu project in Tokyo was similar to projects developed by Minoo Tramway in the late 1920s in the sense that the residential streets were laid out in a radial pattern from the centre with cross-streets forming concentric circles around the centre, much like a British garden city. The centre was dominated by the Den'en Chofu Station building with an exterior designed by Kintaro Yabe to resemble a European house.

One function of a prewar suburban station on a private line was to announce to the outside world the unique identity of the surrounding community. Den'en Chofu Station fulfilled this function well. It is worth noting that in its early days, the second floor had a restaurant where local people gathered.

The station building was demolished to provide space for quadrupling Tokyu's Mekama Line into the Meguro Line, and the Tokyu Tamagawa Line, but it was rebuilt last year. However, the new building no longer functions as a station and gateway, because it is mostly underground. Instead, the building stands only as a landmark and symbol for the Den'en Chofu community. This possible destiny for a station makes an interesting case study.

Stations built in subdivisions from around 1910 to 1930 promoted the identity of the local suburban community. Their function was opposite to that of government-owned stations in an earlier time, which promoted the identity of the railway to the local community. But a station can only continue this function of the gateway to and from our community if the local community continues to maintain its identity.

During the years up to around 1930, people residing in suburban communities formed their identity based on their idea of themselves as members of the middle class, and people outside those communities thought of them in the same way. This point is relevant to our thesis of a station building being a boundary between a community and the world beyond.



Den'en Chofu Station designed by Yabe  
(Transportation Museum)



We believe that station–local community relationships are determined by two factors:

- The strength of the station’s function as an interface joining the local community to the world beyond.
- The relative abilities of the community and the outside world to formulate and communicate the community’s identity.

### Stations in Leisure Resort Areas (early 1900s–1930)

Railway development led to a number of other developments, one of which was leisure resorts. Before the days of rail travel, wealthy Europeans would ride in horse-drawn carriages to their favourite resort—perhaps a spa or the seaside—for their health. Aristocrats built mansions in these resort areas and would gather for social events in nearby cities. Resorts were for the exclusive use and enjoyment of high society, not for the masses.

But the advent of rail travel created opportunities for the middle class to visit these resorts and soon blue-collar workers were visiting resorts too. Resorts developed by railway companies also proved popular with the working classes, especially leisure areas by the sea, which were considered beneficial to health.

In Japan, areas along most private railways often did not offer a reason for leisure seekers to disembark. Only the two ends of the line were important destinations, perhaps a city and a holiday location. To change this model and to increase their revenues, private railways tried to promote suburban housing projects along their tracks. They also followed the example of European and American railways by developing spas, holiday facilities and seaside resorts near their lines.

Some early resort stations remain to this day. One is the second Hamadera-koen Station built in 1907 by Nankai Railway



Hamadera-koen Station built in 1907 by Nankai Railway

(Nankai Electric Railway)

a few kilometers south of Osaka and designed by Tatsuno, the future architect of Tokyo Station. Hamadera Park, Japan’s first government-established park, was founded in 1873. One year before the station opened, Nankai Railway developed the Hamadera district as a swimming resort; one year after the station opened, the company built Hamadera Public Hall. The railway was obviously keen to develop the area!

The station is in wood, but is nevertheless imposing with its dignified symmetry and good use of Victorian motifs. It was clearly meant as a showcase for Nankai Railway. The resort area around the station was a community in its own right, a community contributing to the railway’s prestige, and the station building contributed to this image. It is now an official cultural asset.

The neighbouring Suwanomori Station, serving a local suburban community, is also an important cultural asset. It was built in 1919 and its use of stained glass and other elements set it apart from Hamadera-koen Station, but the motifs are basically similar. These two stations give us an idea of the image Nankai

Railway was trying to create along its line. Karuizawa (140 km northwest of Tokyo) is one of Japan’s most famous highland resorts. It began as a summer retreat in 1888 when a British missionary who had built a villa there began recommending it to his friends. In 1893, the government railways’ Shin’etsu Line between Karuizawa and Yokokawa opened, complete with an Abt rack-and-pinion system, linking Karuizawa with Tokyo via Takasaki. Two years later the Mampei Hotel, designed specifically for foreigners, opened its doors. These developments sparked the construction of many luxurious villas, which became the summer homes of foreigners, members of the Japanese aristocracy, politicians and business leaders.

The second Karuizawa Station was built in 1912. The design reflects the ideals of the existing highland resort community—Western in style, yet rustic and restrained in appearance. The station building was held in high affection by the many people who passed through it over the years. It was demolished to make way for the recently built Nagano Shinkansen but was rebuilt last year and

reopened as the Karuizawa Station Memorial Hall. Like the old Den'en Chofu Station, it has become a landmark and reminds us of another era.

Some resorts, like Karuizawa, were communities developed by the upper classes before rail travel, with their own distinct identity. Other resorts, like Hamadera, were developed by railway companies. As we have seen, Hamadera-koen Station presented the image of the railway, while Karuizawa Station presented the image of the local community.

We turn now to another resort station, built in 1929, the first year of the Great Depression. This is Katase-enoshima Station on Odakyu Electric Railway's Enoshima Line and located on the Pacific coast 60 km southwest of Tokyo. The symbolic role this station plays is quite different from that of the other two resort stations discussed above.

Katase-enoshima Station was designed as a symbol for the seaside resort of Enoshima Island and the nearby beach. Actually, the design reminds one of the in the Japanese fairy tale of Urashima Taro and surely does not give an image of the railway company. Nor does it symbolize the local community, because almost no-one lives there. The station is like a gateway to an amusement park, announcing to visitors that they have arrived at a place that is anything but ordinary. Trying to use station design to equate the coast with the world of the Dragon King was not an effective way to communicate the messages of each side of the interface.

The station building reminds us of recently built stations, such as Kamenoko Station (on JR East's Tsuyama Line) which is shaped like a turtle, and Kizukuri Station (on JR East's Gono Line) which looks like a clay figurine. In all these cases, the local community and railway are poorly represented.

### Station Buildings Before and After Great Kanto Earthquake (1916–34)

The 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake dramatically changed the face of Tokyo and surrounding cities. The layout of destroyed areas was revamped and taller buildings were constructed at high density. As already mentioned, new housing subdivisions were established in nearby suburbs and these attracted salaried workers and other members of the middle class. The result was the rapid development of suburban housing.

Another development of the time was the introduction of new mass media. Radio broadcasts started in Tokyo in 1925 and sales of newspapers and magazines increased around the same time, promoting the spread of popular culture. These events and social changes were reflected in station design. More stations were built using earthquake-resistant reinforced concrete. The economic boom after WWI and the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution led to a more liberal society, setting the stage for acceptance of new

architectural trends from Europe. These trends and the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959), the designer of the old Imperial Hotel in Tokyo (completed in 1922), led to station styles influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement, and by Wright himself, and later by the functional Bauhaus style.

The reinforced-concrete stations of the time often featured a central concourse that rose above other parts of the building on either side. Offices and other rooms were located in these lower parts. The effect was a balanced symmetry. This trend started with the second Shinjuku Station (1925), and continued with, for example, the second Okayama Station (1926), the third Sannomiya Station (1929), the third Kobe Station (1930), the second Ueno Station (1932), and the third Otaru Station (1934). If we ignore the interior features and examine only the exterior design, we see that in every case the framework is quite similar in its emphasis on structure and function, although certain details are different.

After WWI, the Japanese government adopted an expansionist policy, which



Harajuku Station built in 1921

(Transportation Museum)

led the country away from Westernization but towards further modernization. Modernization and centralized government control over the entire country became vital goals. Since these were national goals, there was thought to be little need to give each new station exterior a unique design—building in a modern, functional style was considered sufficient. We should also note that this was the time when salaried workers started making up a higher percentage of the urban population, and this group was more likely to approve these designs.

Stations built in smaller cities around the same time also tended to be influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement, by Wright and by the Bauhaus style. Suburban stations on private railway lines followed the same trends, as did government railway stations, especially those in middle-class residential districts. Good examples are the second Shibuya Station (1916), the second Kamakura Station (1916), the first Odawara Station (1920), the second Harajuku Station (1921), and the first Kunitachi Station (1926).

Many of these stations, with their use of half-timbering and other medieval European features, call to mind an era with a strong sense of community. These stations, like the station at Den'en Chofu (1923), presented the image of a united and uniform community.

### **Reconstruction after World War II (1945–55)**

Japan was placed on a wartime footing in 1937 when hostilities with China broke out, and remained at war until the defeat in August 1945. From 1945 until 1952, the country was occupied and under the control of the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP). War-damaged stations soon began functioning again as



Toyohashi Station built in 1949

(Transportation Museum)

makeshift buildings. In 1949, the government railways was reorganized as the public corporation called Japanese National Railways (JNR), setting the stage for a new way to finance station construction—outside bodies would pay a percentage of the construction costs, giving them the right to use part of the completed station for shops and restaurants. This facilitated reconstruction of stations in a number of major cities.

Toyohashi Station (1949) was the first so-called 'outside-funded station.' The cost of building the waiting rooms, main concourse and lavatories was split equally between the municipal government and JNR, while the shops and kiosks were financed by the city. This arrangement was agreed as a matter of financial necessity, and is noteworthy because it involved the participation of a local government (the local community) and the railway, the two entities on each side of the community–railway interface. This new type of station, which depended partly on outside funds, would soon lead to the public–private sector station described later.

Stations built soon after WWII, including the outside-funded stations, were often designed in an international style,

presenting an image of Japan's new democratic ideals. Stations in this vein include the third Tokushima Station (1951), Koriyama Station (1951), and the third Kyoto Station (1952). The design symbolized the new ideology of the nation and its railway (one side of the interface), and the common goals of the people (the other side of the interface). Other outside-funded stations were built, including facilities for the west exit of Ikebukuro Station (1950), and stations for Owari-ichinomiya (1951), Kokura (1958), Tennoji (1962) and Shinjuku (1964). With time, stations became larger and began incorporating hotels and department stores.

The early outside-funded stations were based on the democratic premise that they were built by the people for the people and would belong to the people. Did the new stations, which housed hotels and department stores, conform with this democratic premise? Rather than answering this question directly, we will just say that by 1964 the Japanese no longer shared common goals based on a common ideology, and the people using the huge stations of the day were no longer individual members of society but members of a mass culture.

Station buildings that included a



department store followed in the footsteps of the previously mentioned prewar Umeda Station built by Minoo Tramway. The entire line from the station served as a point of contact between Hankyu and the general public, and the question arises as to whether the new outside-funded stations did too.

At any rate, subsequent changes to JNR legislation made it possible for JNR to establish its own shops and kiosks in its stations. As a result, the outside-funded station was generally replaced by the station complex.

### Role of Stations in Changing Urban Society (1955–70)

The Korean War (1951–55) prompted Japan's economic recovery, and the economy continued to expand from 1955 until the first oil crisis of 1973, attracting many migrants from rural areas to the cities, and causing the population structure to change greatly for each industrial sector. Agriculture and forestry lost 6.02 million workers between 1955 and 1970, while the number of workers in other sectors rose to 18.87 million. The three metropolitan regions of Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya experienced a total population increase of about 10 million people between 1960 and 1970. Greater

Tokyo alone experienced an increase of 6.25 million. Many school leavers and university graduates moved to the large cities. These young workers left the traditional rural environment, with its three-generation families, and often went to live with relatives who had recently established themselves in the city. After marriage they formed nuclear families and then purchased homes in suburban subdivisions. This trend increased the number of short-distance rail commuters in the metropolitan regions and prompted railways to extend their networks and double or quadruple tracks.

Against this backdrop, there were two notable changes:

- City apartment dwellers were so keen to move to their own house with a small garden that they happily accepted what was offered by private developers through the 1960s and 1970s. This explains why railway companies developing subdivisions rarely bothered to create conditions that would foster a strong community spirit. Housing projects in different parts of a region tended to be similar in appearance, and rising land prices led to considerable mobility in the housing market. As a result, it became difficult for a local community to remain stable and

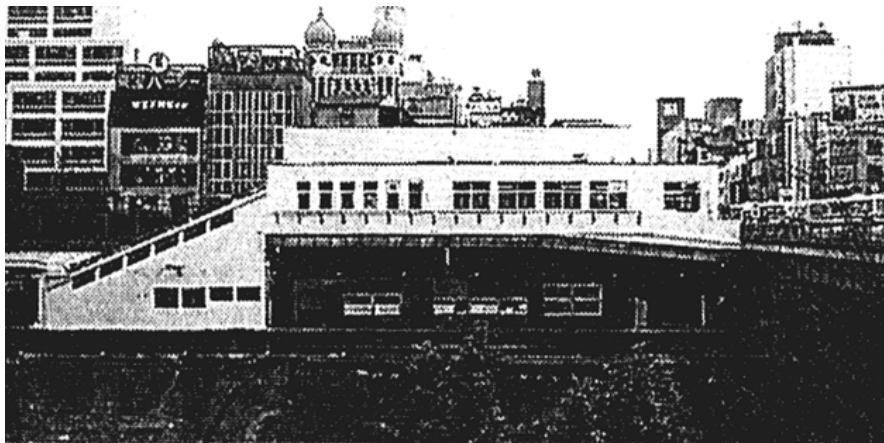
develop its own identity.

- Urban sprawl prompted the railways to extend their lines further into the suburbs. Between 1960 and the early 1970s, main lines radiating from central Tokyo were all quadrupled. Meanwhile, stations came to be viewed as little more than places to help masses of people get to their destination safely and quickly.

This limited role of stations had been espoused as far back as the late 1920s. Shigeru Ito, the architect of the second Ochanomizu Station, is known for his comment, 'There is no need to make a station interior look like accommodations for travellers resting on their way. A station interior is part of a travel corridor—that is its defining quality. The role of the railway industry is to ensure that rail travel is simple, orderly and fast. Therefore, station design should keep in mind the need for simplicity, order and speed.'

It is true that stations like Shinjuku, Ikebukuro and Shibuya are compulsory travel corridors for many commuters. But the increase in the number of passengers has resulted in a labyrinth of passageways that make it hard to know whether one is inside or outside the station. Such stations do not help make rail travel simple or orderly today.

Ito was correct in stressing the need for modern and rational designs that ensure safety. But a simple, orderly passage inside a station is not enough—the station and the community it serves should have a relationship that fosters an atmosphere of orderliness. In other words, a station should be more than just part of a travel corridor; it should also be a point of contact that fosters relationship between the local community and the outside world. Just as modern Japanese homes have abandoned the traditional entrance hall based on a false idea of what true efficiency is, so too have modern Japanese stations become travel corridors that do not serve as an interface



Ochanomizu Station built by Shigeru Ito

(Transportation Museum)

for the community.

These two factors—a lack of community spirit in new housing developments and the lack of a relationship between stations and communities—were the result of waves of migration to urban areas and the tremendous increase in the number of rail commuters. These quantitative changes led to a change in the way time and space are viewed. As W. Schwelbusche noted<sup>9</sup>, when trains began running in the 19th century, passengers found that the distance (space) between their point of departure and their destination became practically meaningless. The railway destroyed the traditional concept of the interrelationship of space and time.

Today, electric trains in Japanese cities may run as often as every 2 or 3 minutes, so people tend to think of time and space (distance) as separate entities. As a result, they think of the time spent waiting to get to their destination as valuable time wasted. Today, there is a strong tendency to think of time as being either profitably spent or wasted. The impulsive desire to spend time profitably grows as society becomes more convenient, and the shinkansen and car have stimulated this desire even more with a resulting impact on lifestyles.

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### **Early Shinkansen Stations (1960s)**

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The Tokaido Shinkansen opened in 1964 in time for the Tokyo Olympics. By that time, there were signs that Japan, too, would soon become a car-based society like America and Europe, and Japan's rail industry realized that there was no time to waste in developing high-speed rail travel.

Shinkansen development in the early 1960s occurred at the same time that the national government was promoting a comprehensive development plan for the entire country. This plan called for

strengthening the nation's heavy and chemical industries in the belt that spread west from Tokyo along the Pacific coast. The Tokaido Shinkansen was seen as a means to strengthen the Tokyo–Nagoya–Osaka rail network.

To ensure safe, high-speed travel, the shinkansen track was elevated. This meant that many shinkansen stations were above ground level too. The elevated station, complete with wind barriers, became the norm for station design. The new design was quite different from previous designs, and was also adopted for stations serving conventional lines connecting with shinkansen.

What significance does the shinkansen have for local communities along its track? Passengers on the high-speed trains can look at the scenery and buildings along the entire distance (space) from their point of departure to their destination, but they do not truly experience this space when travelling tens of kilometers in the time it takes to drink a cup of coffee. The shinkansen has further reduced our concept of space, and in that sense we can view it as a sort of pneumatic tube for sending people from A to B.

The message given by JNR (now the JRs) and national policy supporting high-speed travel is clear—stations offer rapid links from one community to another. If we think of a shinkansen system as the interface, we see one community on one side of the interface, and another community on the other, with the entire shinkansen line being the interface between them. The shinkansen advertises itself as a fast link between cities, promoting concepts of time and space that are quite different from the message local communities present of people going about their everyday lives. Shinkansen stations accommodate only high-speed trains, not the slower conventional trains. From this we can say that a shinkansen station only offers

access to and egress from an interface that extends the entire length of the high-speed track, not access to a local community. One exception is JR Central's Kakegawa Station (described below) that serves a small city where the community has a strong sense of identity.

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### **Station Buildings and Local Communities (1971–87)**

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In 1971, amendments to the Japanese National Railways Law permitted the construction and management of shops and offices inside a station, the management of restaurants and hotels inside a station complex, and the management of bus terminals, parking lots and other facilities attached to a station. This meant that JNR could build its own stores, hotels and commercial outlets in its stations, rather than share costs with outside entities under the outside-funded station method.

The first station JNR constructed under these new rules was Hiratsuka Station Building (1973). This was soon followed by Sendai Terminal Building (1978), Yokohama Terminal Building (1980), and Morioka Terminal Building (1981). These buildings appear to straddle the interface between station and community but are they part of the station or part of the community? The psychological boundary line between the inside and outside of a station is not determined by a key or door, but by a sense of architectural order. A station building with a sense of total order that it communicates to the local community outside has its psychological boundary line at its exterior façade. In Japan of the past, many so-called station buildings were actually separate from the actual station because of land space restrictions, so they were no different from other buildings in the vicinity, except that they were closest to the station.

Most European stations present a more

orderly appearance. For example, Liverpool Street Station and other terminals in London have a façade that clearly sets them apart from their surroundings. There are shops and hotels inside the station buildings, but they are recognized as being inside, not straddling some blurred boundary line. In Japan, the new Kyoto Station (1997) also has a façade that is instantly recognizable as such. When inside, looking at the Grand Staircase, department store and hotel, one feels that these functions are well situated inside the station building. We will return to this point later.

**Changes in Transportation and Society (1965 to present)**

Motor vehicles became a common form of personal transport in Japan from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, and huge sums were invested in roads during the same period. The changing transportation landscape changed the lifestyles and makeup of local communities.

In the 1960s, typical suburban housing developments had a good selection of shops clustered around the station where housewives and office workers on their way home from work would shop for daily necessities. In the newer suburbs, too, stores were built near stations. But the widespread use of cars led to construction of bypasses around these suburbs and the bypasses soon attracted fast-food outlets and supermarkets seeking lower land prices. The trend continued as some stores in well established shopping districts followed the supermarkets, and became even more pronounced after the 1992 revision of the Large-Scale Retail Store Law.

Commuting by train or car during the week, and driving to the suburbs to shop on the weekend was becoming part of the Japanese lifestyle, following patterns established in the USA. This trend affected not only the suburbs of some major Japanese cities, but older residential cities and smaller regional centres as well. The decline in downtown shopping districts was

becoming a general phenomenon.

Rail transport suffered as motor vehicles increased. Rail freight began a precipitous decline around 1965 because of the rapidly expanding trucking industry. Rail passenger ridership peaked in 1974, then started to slump. The 1980 Law for Special Measures to Promote JNR Rehabilitation led to the closure of some unprofitable local lines. JNR was privatized in 1987, and the new JR's formed from JNR restructured their operations and seem to have halted the drop in ridership. Downtown shopping districts are still in decline, but current indicators show that the transportation sector is moving towards equilibrium, with each mode holding its market share. As the economy expanded, the shift away from rail transport caused more pollution and made local communities more mobile. But citizens have not remained passive in the face of these problems—even as far back as the early 1970s, voices were raised in strong opposition to the comprehensive development plan being promoted by the national government. Serious pollution in Yokkaichi, Minamata and other cities, together with the 1973 oil crisis raised public awareness of environmental conservation and sustainability.

Reacting to negative social change and the problems associated with increased mobility, citizens throughout Japan have begun calling for conservation of cityscapes and community improvements. These citizen-inspired movements focus on environmental conservation, promotion of local industries, development of specialty products, tourism and industries to revitalize local economies. All these goals promote protection of and improvements to local living conditions, and emphasize production, distribution, communications, leisure activities, educational opportunities, etc. The current wave of changes impacting



Liverpool Street Station in London with shops inside the building

(Author)

communities and disturbing their stability make such efforts a necessity.

Railways and stations have a vital role to play in helping communities protect their living environment and promote sustainable lifestyles.

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### Public-Private Sector Stations and Local Communities (1983 to present)

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One type of station that can contribute to community improvement is the public-private sector station. This type of station is constructed jointly by a railway company and a local government, and houses both railway and municipal facilities. It bears a conceptual similarity to outside-funded stations, but the background against which outside-funded stations were built is different from the present situation that has led to public-private sector stations. Outside-funded stations were built when local communities enjoyed stability, whereas public-private sector stations are built to preserve the viability of local communities. In rural areas, the station offers a much more public environment than even the local town hall can provide. The station serves commuting students and workers; it has a waiting room and kiosks used by people, perhaps elderly shoppers, who have come to town by bus. The public nature of the station can be strengthened even more by adding space that offers municipal services.

Here we should ask what the public nature of a station entails. The original function of a station was to serve as a public interface offering a link between a community and the world beyond. The interface also formed a link between the local community and the railway company. Thus, the station was not just a part of the community, nor was it just a part of the world beyond the community—it was open to the community and the world beyond,



Iwaki Hanawa Station designed by author Kuniaki Ito

(Author)

available to all who wanted to use it. It was a gateway to the community and the outside world, and the centre of the local community as well.

The public-private sector station takes this concept of public space a step further, because municipal services are offered within the boundary of the station. But hopefully these services will be suitable and relevant for a station. An article<sup>10</sup> written in by one of us explains that the design of station buildings should represent the heart and soul of the local community. Hopefully, services offered by the municipal government in the station building will also represent the community's identity. This was our concept in designing the station building for JR East's Iwaki Hanawa Station.

Another station building relevant to this discussion is HottoYuda Station on JR East's Kitakami Line. Leisure seekers go there to bathe in the hot spring and relax in facilities inside the station building. Users do not necessarily come by train, and the gathering place in the station has

become more a symbol for the surrounding community than anything else, but this is not to say that the atmosphere of the station is one that does not welcome train passengers.

Another station that comes to mind is one we visited in Inverness, Scotland. A hotel added to the station building in 1856 was once a mecca for high society, but today it welcomes not only hotel guests but also local people who come at certain times of the day to chat over tea. A similar relationship between hotels and stations can be seen at Tono Station on JR East's Kamaishi Line. The station was built in 1950, before the days of public-private sector stations, and was designed along the lines of Bad Urach Station on the outskirts of Stuttgart, Germany. The area formerly used as locomotive depot office was rebuilt as a hotel in 1995. The breakfast lounge on the hotel's ground floor is open to the local community for meetings, and the hotel has a small bar serving locally brewed beer. But the hotel refrained from building a restaurant so





JR Kyushu's Kokura station building

(Author)

as not to take business from local restaurants. Indeed, hotel staff tell their guests to visit nearby restaurants and bars. From their rooms overlooking the town, guests have the impression they are staying not in the town but at the point of contact between the town and the world beyond.

At any rate, we can surely say that all three types of station complexes—outside-funded stations, station buildings and private–public sector stations—should look and act like stations, and should offer opportunities to enjoy a public space in a place that straddles the here and the beyond.

### Autonomous Station Buildings and Neighbouring Shopping Districts

The Grand Staircase at JR West's new Kyoto Station creates *par excellence*, opportunities for ever-changing perspectives. The addition of so many functional elements has created an autonomous interface that is different from other station buildings. This autonomy is based on the fact that so many urban functions have been brought inside the building that the local

community becomes practically irrelevant, and the station building reminds one of a theme park.

The same type of autonomy can be seen in JR Central's new Nagoya Station with nine restaurants offering recipes from around the world, and a bar. This station building, like the one in Kyoto, appears to be autonomous from the surrounding community.

JR Kyushu's Kokura station building is smaller than those in Kyoto and Nagoya, but should be mentioned here because its design emphasizes an openness to the general public. The monorail penetrates into the interior, seemingly wrapped around by a huge corridor open to all. A hotel and stores have also been constructed here, but they are not what gives the station building its cachet. Rather, due to the open effect, the stores and hotel appear to be inside the space occupied by the station itself. However, although the corridor—the main element making up the public space—is open to all, and although it provides a link between different parts of the community, it does not offer many opportunities for people to gather and has little charm as space *per se*, so it lacks an autonomous atmosphere.

The three stations in Kyoto, Nagoya and Kokura have a distinctive façade that is easily recognized as such, announcing most definitely their presence as stations to the local communities. This is especially true in the case of the first two, since their presence has an overpowering effect on neighbouring buildings and their interiors offer a full range of services. An important feature of the three stations is their ability to attract huge numbers of visitors. According to the Kyoto Municipal Association of Industry and Tourism, in 1998, Kyoto Station Building attracted almost as many visitors as Kiyomizu Temple, the city's premier tourist destination. We can assume that this is partly due to the attraction of the space defined by the Grand Staircase, and the fact that the station is used by so many tourists. It has also been reported that the attraction exerted by Nagoya Station has expanded the shopping area patronized by visitors to the city. Another important feature of the three stations is that they house hotels, department stores, offices, etc. In Nagoya, the area around the station had few stores because the main shopping district of Sakae is about 2 km from the station. After Nagoya's new station building opened in 2000, department stores in the Sakae district suffered a decline in revenue but there are signs of recovery 1 year later. A report from the Kokura Terminal Building Corporation states that the stores in the station building cater to shoppers who are not inclined to patronize stores around the station. In other words, both types of stores can co exist.

Their ability to attract customers is due to the public nature of stations with a wide range of facilities in a unique urban environment, and the opportunity to buy consumer goods and take advantage of services that are in demand. This second factor must be taken into account when considering whether a station and local

community could end up competing for the same customers. The possibility of competition can be determined by examining first, whether the size and scope of new building is appropriate for the surrounding community, and second, whether the new building will attract the same type of consumers as those who currently patronize existing nearby businesses. Of course, competition can arise between new and old businesses even when there is no station building. Therefore, if the new station building blends in well with the local community and is built to an appropriate scale, the attraction it exerts can actually benefit the existing local retailers.

Downtown shopping districts fell into a slump after consumers began using cars to shop. However, downtown can regain its appeal if station buildings create a vibrant atmosphere and offer shopping opportunities that make people want to live within walking distance of the city centre. This would add to the attraction of urban environments.

Railway companies and local communities should work together to ensure that a station building's facilities respect the nature of the community. A case in point is Kakegawa Station on the Tokaido Shinkansen, which was built by collaboration between JR Central and the local community to meet the community's needs. One shop in the station building sells local products, while a rest area offers leisure space for everyone. The building creates bonds between citizens and the station. Cooperation between railway companies

and local communities will become even more essential in the future.

Another notable example is a pilot shop on the new Southern Terrace near the south exit of Tokyo's Shinjuku Station. It sells local products from Hiroshima and Miyazaki prefectures to test market reaction. Perhaps such shops could be built in stations to promote products from rural villages as well.

There are many future opportunities to take advantage of the station's interface function to boost the economy of communities and create closer bonds between people and their station.

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### Conclusion: Future Stations and Local Communities

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We have discussed the relationship between local communities and stations from the historical perspective of the station as an interface linking a community to the world beyond. We have seen that the local community and railway company can develop a good relationship provided that the community has a strong sense of identity.

However, few communities today can maintain a strong and unswerving sense of identity. And communities with such identity must work to maintain and develop it. One way to protect this identity is to conserve and improve the railway station.

When we view the station as interface, we see that one of its important functions is to offer public space for all. This public space is unique to stations and offers great benefits, whether in the form of a waiting

room in a small country station or the Grand Staircase in Kyoto's new station building. The common characteristics of the community and the public nature of the station offer much potential.

Railway companies and local communities are linked together through the public space of the station. If both parties understand the common characteristics of the community, and if the station's public space is used to best effect, both parties can ensure that the local community develops to its full potential. ■

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