Towards the 'Democratization of Urban Planning'

The Realities of Social and Urban Planning Change in Japan's Post-WWII Reconstruction Period

Naoto Nakajima

The University of Tokyo

Abstract

After the Second World War (WWII), urban reconstruction was a common experience in wartorn European and Asian cities. However, as a defeated country, Japan's urban planning had to do more than just physically rebuild its cities; it had to update the character of urban planning for the postwar society. The central idea behind the transformation of Japan's postwar society was 'democratization'. This study aims to clarify the 'democratization of urban planning' during Japan's postwar reconstruction period. First, mainly based on articles in the magazine Fukkō Jōhō, published by the War Damage Reconstruction Agency, it is confirmed that the main issues of 'democratization of urban planning' were criticism of bureaucratic self-righteousness in prewar urban planning and private sector participation in urban planning. The practice of 'democratization of urban planning' in the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's war reconstruction plan is summarised. Finally, the contents and reality of the Urban Reconstruction Exhibition, which was conducted nationwide in major cities, are discussed. In the conclusion, it is pointed out that while these attempts were made, there was no institutionalisation of citizen participation, no mechanism for utilising private sector urban planning proposals, and in general, the 'democratization of urban planning' remained just an ideology.

Keywords

Democracy, Media, Exhibition, Eiyo Ishikawa, Tokyo

How to cite

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INTRODUCTION

The relationship between war damage and urban planning has been the subject of numerous studies. In particular, there have been many studies on the post-war reconstruction of cities in various countries after the Second World War (WW II). For example, there are studies on Japanese cities such as Hein, Diefendorf, and Ishida (2003) and Koshizawa (2005/2014), and there are comparative studies on reconstruction in the UK. However, in Japan, a defeated country that was occupied after the war, post-war urban planning was not merely about the physical reconstruction of cities. The General Headquarters, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (GHQ), who occupied Japan, expected to reform and democratise the Japanese social, administrative, and political systems. Urban planning was also subject to such reforms. The democratisation of urban planning at that time did not mean only the revision of the City Planning Law. How Japanese urban planners at the time perceived the concept of 'democratisation' and what actions they took are yet to be comprehensively organised.

The purpose of this study is to organise the discussions and actions of urban planners in post-WWII Japan regarding the 'democratization of urban planning' and clarify the characteristics of these discussions and actions. After presenting the debate that occurred regarding the 'democratisation of urban planning' in publications of the time in the first half, the second half focuses on the 'Urban Reconstruction Exhibition' organised by the Ministry of Construction, which travelled around the country from 1947 to 1948, as an important means of realising the 'democratisation of urban planning'. Freestone and Amati¹ (2014) conducted case studies from around the world on urban planning exhibitions. Cases from the 1940s and the 1950s after WW II are also covered, but only from victorious countries such as the UK and Australia. The perspective of the analysis is instructive; however, the originality of this study lies in dealing with exhibitions during the post-war reconstruction period in defeated countries that were forced to undergo social change.

DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE WAR DAMAGE RECONSTRUCTION AGENCY AND ITS JOURNAL

After the war ended, democratic ideals rapidly permeated Japanese society. Intellectuals advocated 'democracy' and rejected prewar nationalism. They moved towards a critique of bureaucratic (and military) self-righteousness. The War Damage Reconstruction Agency (WDRA, Sensai Fukkōin), which was established under these circumstances to take charge of war disaster reconstruction projects, also welcomed a civilian, Ichizo Kobayashi, as its first president. In his opening statement, Kobayashi expected more from the private sector than from government authorities and insisted that local municipalities would play a central role in the unity between the private and public sectors². The WDRA's magazine $Fukk\bar{o}\,J\bar{o}h\bar{o}$ (Reconstruction Information) showed its approach to war disaster reconstruction. For example, the unsigned preface to the second issue of the magazine stated that war reconstruction must not be a monopoly or bureaucracy of the WDRA alone but a reconstruction that truly rises from the depths of the people's foundations, driven by their will³.

The editorial policy for Reconstruction Information was set out in the editorial postscripts for the first and second issues.

"At the wish of President Kobayashi, we have tried to avoid the rigidness of the official gazette style, and I hope to obtain contributions from the outside and from private sources and to play a lubricating role in the great task of reconstruction from war damage, with the help and encouragement of all quarters."

"We are pleased that our magazine can play a role in this new way of planning and implementing projects together with the private sector, abandoning the traditional secrecy of government offices, and publishing proposals without delay for public criticism."

The WDRA's 'Outline of Administrative Reform', published in Issue 6 of *Fukkō Jōhō*, included an editorial policy which emphasized the tone of the newspapers and frank and prompt publication of opinions in response to private submissions, amongst other policies of thorough open administration⁶.

After the end of the war, by criticising urban planning in the prewar period for its governmental secrecy, democracy shifted from secrecy to openness in terms of information. This was achieved by listening to opinions and responding to them, and via official production to collaboration with the private sector in terms of planning. In achieving this shift, expectations placed on urban planning media were high.

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION ON THE TOKYO METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT'S WAR RECONSTRUCTION PLAN

The Tokyo war reconstruction plan is a prominent example of information disclosure. Unlike conventional planning processes, the content of Tokyo's war reconstruction plan was reported in the media right at the the early stages of its formulation, including in the $Fukk\bar{o}\ J\bar{o}h\bar{o}$. In the first issue of $Fukk\bar{o}\ J\bar{o}h\bar{o}$, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government published a 'Draft Outline of the Plan for the Reconstruction and Renovation of the Imperial Capital' in order to invite fair criticism from the public at large. In subsequent issues of $Fukk\bar{o}\ J\bar{o}h\bar{o}$, Eiyo [Hideaki] Ishikawa, who was responsible for planning as head of the Urban Planning Department, contributed the articles "Green Zone Planning in the Imperial Capital Reconstruction Plan" in Issue 5 and "Methodology of Cultural Construction City Planning" in Issue 10, in which he showed the concept to society.

Ishikawa considered ways to present the concept of the Tokyo Reconstruction Plan, which he had initiated more widely. In March 1946, *The Concept and the Construction of a New Capital* as part of the War Reconstruction Publication Series, was published in an attempt to take the opportunity to ask the masses of Tokyo citizens to obtain corrections from all sides, despite its circulation of only 1,000 copies? Ishikawa himself followed up in October with *The Principles and Practice of Urban Reconstruction*, published by a private publisher, in which he discussed the concept of Tokyo's reconstruction in more detail. In the Introduction, Ishikawa wrote:

"It was also advised that the city should seek to synthesise the opinions of the general public and build something splendid."

Ishikawa also produced a film, 'Tokyo after 20 Years', which was used to publicise the war reconstruction plan. After completing these steps and completing the urban planning decisions on street network and zoning, he published a lengthy article in the January 1947 issue of *Shinkenchiku*, 'Report and Commentary on the Urban Planning for the Reconstruction of the Imperial Capital', which occupied almost an entire issue of the magazine. The article concluded with the section 'The popularisation of urban planning', which summed up the media strategy. Ishikawa wrote:

"One of the characteristics of this plan is that it was democratised as much as possible in its formulation and implementation. The plan's basic policy was first subjected to repeated criticism from those involved in the reconstruction of the Imperial Capital and other academic experts immediately after the war. The authorities also produced pamphlets such as 'The Concept of the Construction of a New Capital' and publicised the outline of the plan through newspapers and radio from the outset."

As a result of this disclosure, Ishikawa's proposal to pursue his ideals as an urban planner was criticised by Kunio Maekawa, an architect and apprentice of Le Corbusier, who will be introduced later and opposed by various quarters, particularly the landowning class.

LISTENING TO AND RESPONDING TO PRIVATE SECTOR OPINION

The policy of paying attention to the will of the people in the WDRA was embodied in the establishment of the 'Voice of the People' contribution columns in $Fukk\bar{o}\ J\bar{o}h\bar{o}$. The columns read, 'Can't you arrange for us to get even a single blanket as soon as possible? ¹⁰Do the politicians know how we feel? If they do, why don't they do something about it?'¹¹ Various opinions were published, mainly criticising the WDRA.

Tadayasu Shigeta, who became Deputy Director of the WDRA in January 1946, attempted to respond to these public opinions in a series of 'Reconstruction Miscellaneous Thoughts' starting from Issue 6 of $Fukk\bar{o}\ J\bar{o}h\bar{o}$. In No.

6, he reproduced architect Kunio Maekawa's scathing criticism of the WDRA in the editorial 'The Folly of the 100m width Road', which appeared in a newspaper, and then gave a straightforward rebuttal to it. Maekawa's criticism was that the current situation, in which Tokyo's urban planning had been decided secretly in some sections of the government, unknown to all citizens, and fudged up to the last detail by officials who did not understand anything about architecture and civil engineering, was unbearable¹². In response, Shigeta wrote that this was a misunderstanding, and that they believed that urban planning should have been decided by the citizens themselves and that it should have been democratic in today's terms ¹³. He concluded that Tokyo's war reconstruction plan was not undemocratic, as it had been submitted to an urban planning committee comprising experts and members of the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly, with full input from the Assembly¹⁴.

Although the fundamental democratic view that the citizens were the main actors was expressed, his answers were positive about the status quo, not about reforming anything, with the viability of urban planning being guaranteed entirely through the functioning of the Assembly. The citizens who suffered from food and housing shortages after the end of the war and seeking to improve the status quo, responded further as follows:

"The Reconstruction Agency's officials don't think this is a good idea, even with bureaucratic irresponsibility, and would like a conscientious answer to be given in terms of measures and not just words". 15

There was a disconnect between official urban planners and citizens regarding their opinions.

WORKING WITH UNIVERSITY RESEARCHERS AND PRIVATE ARCHITECTS

Maekawa's article, introduced earlier, also called for collaboration with the private sector in the planning process. On 12 April 1946 ten days after Maekawa's article was published, the WDRA held a meeting to hear the opinions of architects on reconstruction planning, inviting Maekawa, Shozo Uchida, Toshikata Sano, Kameki Tsuchiura, Junzo Sakakura, and Gunpei Matsuda to participate. At this meeting, they stated that they requested the participation of private-sector volunteers in urban planning, as the current government structures alone were not capable of making plans, and private-sector volunteers should actively prepare and present concrete plans for reconstruction, to which government offices should provide the necessary materials and assistance. They believed that the public and private sectors should cooperate and pool their knowledge to establish an ideal city plan¹⁶.

Immediately after the war, architects, both public and private, showed considerable passion for urban reconstruction. The WDRA and Tokyo Metropolitan Government, led by Eiyo Ishi-kawa, attempted to capture the passion of these architects. Two articles in $Fukk\bar{o}\,J\bar{o}h\bar{o}$ No. 8 tell the story. The two articles were the 'Imperial Capital Reconstruction Plan, Shinjuku Area' and the 'Survey Report on Land Use in the War-Damaged City'.

The former was an article on the announcement of the winning entries for the 'Call for Prize Drawings for the Tokyo Reconstruction Plan', which was initiated in December 1945 by the Tokyo Commerce, Industry and Economy Association and Eiyo Ishikawa. This urban design competition targeted in other districts of Tokyo, and in $Fukk\bar{o}\ J\bar{o}h\bar{o}$, some prize-winning proposals appeared. The latter was an article on the draft of a land use plan under the WDRA commission system, which was established in April 1946, with the aim of further introducing the theories and aspirations that had been accumulated in the academic and private sectors for reconstruction planning. University researchers and private architects, including Eika Takayama, Kenzo Tange, Motoo Take and others, prepared urban planning proposals for local war-damaged cities, and reported on them a total of four times in $Fukk\bar{o}\ J\bar{o}h\bar{o}$.

However, no mechanism existed to reflect these proposals in actual urban planning, and the participation of private-sector researchers and architects in war-damaged reconstruction planning did not develop further.



Fig. 1. Article for the Shobun Uchida's winning entry for the 'Call for Prize Drawings for the Shinjuku Area, Tokyo Reconstruction Plan' in Fukkō Jōhō (August 1946)

PEAK OF THE DISCUSSION ON THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF URBAN PLANNING

Discussions at the April 1947 meeting of the Planner's Afternoon Meeting were published in the June issue of Shintoshi under the title 'Democratisation of City Planning'. The Planner's Afternoon Meeting was described as having a strong democratic flavour that was unique to the Society, as well as a lively atmosphere. The 12th issue of *Fukkō Jōhō* was published in December 1946, and was replaced by *Shintoshi*, the journal of the newly established City Planning Association.



Fig. 2. Article for the Shobun Uchida's winning entry for the 'Call for Prize Drawings for the Shinjuku Area, Tokyo Reconstruction Plan' in Fukkō Jōhō (August 1946)

The title 'Democratization of City Planning', as this discussion conveys, was given by Kan Hideshima of the Japan Association of Planners on the day of the meeting. In response to the question about the current problems in urban planning, Hideshima answered that they needed to make planning known to the people. He then added that urban planning had, till then, been connected to landowners and bosses. In his vision, urban planning should originally belong to the people and its effects have not been well understood by the people until now. He insisted that it was necessary to make housewives, children, and businessmen understand it in their own way, and that the demand for better urban planning must be made manifest in a powerful way, as the voice of the people.¹⁷

Kazuhiko Honjo, a member of the WDRA, followed this statement by saying,

"The concept of community is not mature in Japanese society. I want to create a reconstruction committee within the city so that urban planning can be carried out by the power that rises from the bottom" ¹¹⁸.

He proposed a bottom-up urban planning system. In response, Hideshima agreed, saying,: "It is important to create a mechanism that allows citizens to participate" 19

He was referring to a participatory urban planning mechanism that would lead to democratic urban planning.

City	Priod	Venue	Sponsor	Newspaper reports	Major Air Raids during the War
Tokyo	May 10-17, 1947	Nihonbashi Mitsukoshi department store	Urban Planning Association Construction Bureau of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government	-	Tokyo Air Raid (March 9, 1945)
Yokohama	May 21-25, 1947	Sakuragicho Kyoshin department store	Kanagawa Prefecture Yokohama City Urban Planning Association	Kanagawa Shimbun (May 19 and 23,1947)	Yokohama Air Raid (May 29, 1945)
Osaka	June 3-8, 1947	Namba Takashimaya department store	Osaka City Osaka City Association	Asahi Shimbun Osaka (May 30, 1947)	Osaka Air Raid (March 13, 1945)
Fukuoka	June 16-19, 1947	lwataya department store	Fukuoka City Fukuoka Chamber of Commerce and Industry Urban Planning Association	Nishi Nihon Shimbun (June 14, 1947)	Fukuoka Air Raid (June 19, 1945)
Okayama	June 29- July 2, 1947	Tenmaya department store	Okayama Prefecture Okayama City Urban Planning Association	Godo Shimbun (June 28, 1947)	Okayama Air Raid (June 29, 1945)
Fukui	July 16-20, 1947	Textile Association	Fukui City	Fukui Shimbun (July 27, 1947)	Fukui Air Raid (July 19, 1945)
Hiroshima	August 4-8, 1947		-	Chugoku Shimbun (August 2, 1947)	Atomic Bombinh (Augusut 6, 1945)
Nagaoka	August 24-28, 1947	City Hall Tower	Unknown	Nagaoka Shimbun (Augusut 23, 1947)	Nagaoka Air Raid (Augusut 1, 1945)

Table 1. The Urban Reconstruction Exhibition Touring Japan

In March 1947, the Japan Planners Association (Nihon Keikakushi Kai) was established in Japan to include urban planners in the fields of architecture, civil engineering, and landscape design. Hideshima was appointed as the secretary general of the association. The Japan Planners Association first appeared in the media in the April 1947 issue of *Shintoshi*, which contained an enclosed article describing the establishment of the association. Hideshima stated,

"If the city belongs to the people, we must refrain from the conventional self-righteousness of planning that is secretly determined in the corner of a government office or imposed on the people from above and democratise it". ²⁰

Hideshima also insisted that it was important that the responsibility of the planners be clear and that people participate in the planning process. He went on to become an independent private urban planner, serving as an advisor to several cities and taking charge of planning large-scale housing projects for the Japan Housing Corporation.

PLANNING THE URBAN RECONSTRUCTION EXHIBITION

The Urban Reconstruction Exhibition was held for a week from 10 to 17 May, 1947, at the Tokyo Mitsukoshi department store. It was organised by the Urban Planning Association and the Construction Bureau of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and supported by the WDRA, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Japan Planners Association, the Architectural Institute of Japan, and the Mainichi Newspapers. The purpose of the exhibition was to raise awareness and interest in the significance of war reconstruction and the project among the people in war-damaged cities and to encourage them to rebuild²¹. As Eitaro Ishikawa of the WDRA said in the Planner's Afternoon Meeting discussion referred to above, publishing law books, holding exhibitions and lectures, and so on, were effective in making people understand the value of urban planning in the democratisation of urban planning²²; this exhibition was also intended to educate citizens about urban planning as the first step towards democratising urban planning. After the exhibition was held in Tokyo, it toured major war-damaged cities across the country (Table 1). In many cities, exhibitions were held on the memorial date of the wartime air raids, in conjunction with memorial and reconstruction events. In other words, the exhibition was not held in isolation, but as part of various events related to the reconstruction of cities.

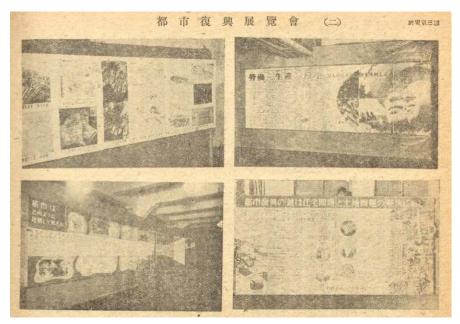


Fig. 2. Panels of Urban Reconstruction Exhibition in Tokyo (May 1947)

The exhibition was organised by a committee established in December 1946 by the Urban Planning Association, which was an offshoot of the government's urban planning department. Committee members came from each of the organising and supporting organisations, but the exhibition planning and structure were ultimately led by two young architects: Kenzo Tange, an associate professor at Tokyo Imperial University, who had returned to his alma mater as a graduate student after working in Maekawa's design office, and Motoo Take at Waseda University.

The project was conducted by graduate students from both universities and young urban planners from the Tokyo Metropolitan Government²³.

RECONSTRUCT THE CITY FOR ALL

The exhibition included nine main panels, seven illustrations related to the Tokyo Reconstruction City Plan, and more than 20 pieces of emerging alternative materials. The first panel depicted the strongest message of the exhibition:

"Labour - Production - Welfare Reconstruct the city for all!

People's lives are a constant activity of labour and welfare. Therefore, people need a balance of these activities. However, in cities of the past, which did not have uniform labour and welfare, life was always crowded and deprived, and this was the cause of all urban ills.

Many of these cities were burnt to ash by the war. People have lost their livelihoods, and

urban ills have intensified.

However, defeat taught us how to move forward as a peaceful country. And the country is being renewed through democratisation.

Now we are a city for all

Cities where labour and welfare have parity

And cities that would bring about improvements in production to make this possible. Let's rebuild these cities!"24

In the second and third panels, the historical view of urban development as the transformation of feudal cities into modern cities through the development of commercial and industrial activities was presented, together with urban maps and various statistical data. In particular, it pointed out that while modern industry developed in tandem with militarism, the remnants of feudalism were a heavy burden on rural areas and small- and medium-sized industries. It then proposed a direction for increasing labour productivity in agriculture and expanding the peaceful industrial sector. The fourth panel explained the policy of land-use planning in terms of the centralisation of work activities, equalisation and integration of welfare opportunities, and differentiation and socialisation of family life. The fifth panel argued that specific urban construction projects should focus on the supply of workers' housing, development of industrial zones, and construction of industrial roads, which were directly linked to production functions. The sixth panel introduced Le Corbusier's urban vision of La Ville Radieuse, in which healthy work, efficient production, and comfortable welfare were part of the ideal city. In the seventh and eighth panels, the urban planning legal system was explained to solve housing and land problems. The ninth panel explains land readjustment projects as a concrete means of post-war reconstruction. Finally, the tenth panel was a series of drawings by architects of concrete reconstruction plans, mainly works from the urban design competitions in the Tokyo districts mentioned earlier, in which Tange, Take, and others participated²⁵.

As described above, the contents of the panels were based on an understanding of the current situation in Japanese cities and an explanation of specific urban planning methods and systems to ensure the smooth implementation of urban planning for reconstruction following the war, as well as unrealised proposals for the future of the city based on the specific urban vision of architects who were responsible for exhibition planning.

PEOPLE'S VOICES IN THE URBAN RECONSTRUCTION EXHIBITION

The Urban Reconstruction Exhibition was held at department stores, city halls and other locations in the central downtown areas of Tokyo and other cities where people were likely to visit. At the exhibition sites, a Building Consultation Office was set up where citizens could consult with the administration regarding housing reconstruction. An open suggestion board was also set up at the Tokio venue where visitors could freely write their impressions and opinions. Some of the opinions expressed on the suggestion board were included in the Shintoshi. The opinions on land ownership, which may reflect the intention of the organisers, include:

'Opening up urban areas to the people', 'Opening up unnecessarily large housing estates', 'The problem is land, for that we must first establish a democratic government', 'For Japan to become democratic, urban land and housing must belong to the people'²⁶. We can also see that there were opinions on urban construction in general, such as: 'Let our government build a city where people can live a life where production and consumption are managed rationally, and we will build it together with the government'²⁷.

One teacher who took his secondary school students to the exhibition as part of their education commented that this reconstruction exhibition was a little too upmarket for students in some respects²⁸. The open suggestion board also received a comment that the exhibition showed a contrast between theory and reality²⁹. In particular, the distance between the introduction of Corbusier's theoretical vision and the proposals for urban reconstruction plans influenced by it, and the labour, production, and welfare theories on which they were based, and the interests of those who were focused on immediate urban reconstruction, especially the reconstruction of their own homes, can be seen in the following recollections of Sachio Otani, an architect who was involved in the planning and preparation of the exhibition.

"The Urban Reconstruction Exhibition at Mitsukoshi was an exhibition for enlightenment and advocacy, and not for concrete proposals. For many of the participating architects, it seems that they were more interested in the antithesis of economic recovery, or in democratic revolution and urban planning. However, I had my doubts about the way it was communicated; in other words, I felt it wasn't reciprocated."

CONCLUSION

This confirms that the democratisation of urban planning was advocated and discussed during Japan's post-war reconstruction. Information on urban planning was made public through various media, and collaboration with architects was promoted in terms of private sector participation in planning. However, democratisation activities aimed at promoting the public's understanding of urban planning were always developed from an enlightened perspective and were more concerned with democratisation as an ideology than with concrete housing and urban reconstruction. It was always a democratisation movement from an enlightenment perspective and was not backed by the interests and actions of the citizens of the time. Revisions to the city planning legal system were also

considered during this period but were never actually implemented. No progress was made in institutionally guaranteeing citizen participation in urban planning. The first encounter between urban planning and democratisation in Japan ended at crossroads. The democratisation of urban planning remained an ideology that could not relate to the realities of the city. Those who were able to become aware of this point will continue to the next era of democratisation. The history of post-war urban planning in Japan will teach us once again that the democratisation of urban planning was not brought about top-down at a sudden turning point, such as in post-war reconstruction, but was gradually achieved as a sustained and continuous movement.

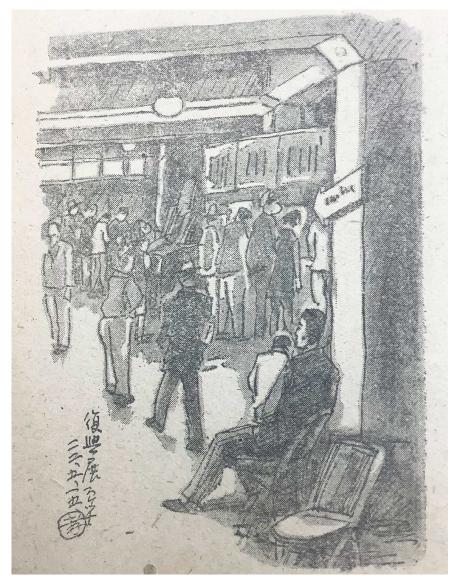


Fig. 3. Urban Reconstruction Exhibition scenery in Tokyo (May 1947)

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR

Naoto Nakajima is a professor at the University of Tokyo, Japan. He specialises in urban design, urban theory, and planning history. He chaired the 18th IPHS Yokohama Conference.

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- 9. Ishikawa, Shin Kenchiku, 22(1), 67.
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IMAGE SOURCES

- Figure 1 Fukkō Jōhō, 2(8), p.14.
- Figure 2 *Shintoshi*, 1(6), p.29.
- Figure 3 Shintoshi, 1(7), p.32.
- Figure 4 Shintoshi, 1(5), p.13.