



Housing in Postwar Japan - A Social History

Ann Waswo

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Radical changes in the design of housing in post-war Japan had numerous effects on the Japanese people. Public policy toward housing provision and the effects of escalating land prices in Tokyo and a few other very large cities in the country from the mid- to late 1970s onward are examined, but it is dwellings themselves and the slow but steady shift from a floor-sitting to a chair-sitting housing culture in urban and suburban parts of the country that figure most prominently in the discussion.

Central to the book is the author's translation of an account written by Kyoko Sasaki, an observant wife and mother, about the housing she and her growing family experienced during the 1960s, and subsequent chapters explore some of the issues that flow from her account. Chief among these are the small size and generally poor quality of the private-sector housing that Japanese of fairly ordinary means could afford to occupy in the early postwar years, the new design initiatives undertaken at about that time by public-sector housing providers and the diffusion of at least some of their initiatives to the housing sector as a whole, and the adjustments that the occupants of housing had to, or chose to, make as the dwellings available to them as renters or as owners changed in character. Attention is also paid to the structural requirements of dwellings and attitudes toward dwellings of diverse types in a country prone to earthquakes.

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