

# OPEN-AIR ARCHITECTURAL MUSEUMS: CULTURAL FRUITION, USE AND REUSE OF BUILDING TYPES IN JAPAN

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## Abstract.

The present paper studies the Japanese version of "open-air museum", an "exposition of architectures" that are alienated from their original sites. The "de-contextualization", related to the peculiarity of the Japanese architecture of being dismantled and reassembled without loss of material, operates in response to a particular conservative need, aimed to protecting building types that would tend to disappear in the flow of an unbridled modernization. For this reason, the "immaterial" museum rooms are designed to group these architectures according to typological or chronological principles. This museums create evocative "building fabrics" or different kinds of "ambiantation".

A type of building that is commonly the object of this form of musealization is the "*Gassho Zukuri*" style rural architecture, known for the UNESCO sites of *Shirakawa-go* and *Gokayama*. Over the past few decades, the focus on the *minka* (traditional houses) has grown to the point of creating a database, in order to encourage not only the reuse of entire buildings in open-air museums, but also the reuse of buildings, that are only partially preserved, as restoration material for other *minka*.

Through various examples, the paper analyzes such procedures of "use" and "reuse", where architectures otherwise destined to destruction are not only protected, restored and used in a "cultural" sense, as museum finds, but also they come back to "live" in as architectures. The purpose of this type of museum, in fact, is not the mere preservation of the architectural forms exhibited, but also the protection of that intangible cultural heritage, consisting of construction techniques and ways of using these spaces.

**Keywords:** *open-air museum, conservation, modernization, historical architecture*