The Work of Gyoji Banshoya in the Middle East and North Africa

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ABSTRACT
Gyoji Banshoya was a Japanese planner whose life’s work was urban planning in the Middle East and North Africa. The purpose of this paper is to provide a full picture of his work, which still remains unknown.

Examining the works of Gyoji Banshoya in Japan, the first part of this paper considers his ideas about history in his youth. Analysis of “The Square House (1953)” shows that the influence of Kiyoshi Seike brought about a concept of reconstitution of historic spatial composition to realize width and convertibility in low-cost houses. This concept was introduced as a symbol of the transformation of Japanese housing and accepted in international architectural trends at the time. His translations of post-war Italian town planning documents found similar concepts and motivations which confirmed his planning methods.

The second part of this paper clarifies his work in Algeria. After studying at seminars by Kiyoshi Seike, Banshoya studied under the supervision of Gerat Harim and George Candillis at ATBAT. His experiences at ATBAT in Paris led him to Algiers where housing policy permitting Muslims and Christians to cohabit had been introduced. Banshoya engaged in the study of an innovative housing system. Jean-Jacques Deluz testified that he was a genius of drawing. As micro scale and macro scale were clearly unified in French-Algerian architecture and urban design, Banshoya started to work not only on housing design but also on urban design in Algiers. In fact, he participated in the Les Annassers, Mahieddine, Champ de Manceuvres, Chateauauneuf and Frais-Vallon projects. Though none of these projects can be solely credited to Banshoya, the fact that Mayor Jacques Chevalier listed Japanese at the top of his list of member nationalities at the Agency suggests that Banshoya performed some important tasks.

The third part of this paper considers Banshoya’s work in the Middle East. As a UNDP expert, he started to work in Beirut, Damascus and Aleppo with Michel Ecochard in 1962. In fact, they were responsible for the elaboration of master plans for these three cities and that of Damascus still remains as a legally active master plan today. Referring to CIAM policies, they tried to preserve the old cities by way of activation and introducing modern roads. In Aleppo, Banshoya’s policy was to limit modern construction in the old city. However, development pressure was so strong that some roads from the René Danger period in the 1930s were finally adopted despite his conservative plan. Coupled with Syrian political struggle in the 1980s, there were some movements against their modernist policies and Banshoya’s plans were suspended. Banshoya retired in Beirut. However, his works are still regarded as great even today and should be revaluated through a detailed examination of his planning policies.

In the conclusion, I suggest that the urban planning history of the Middle East and North Africa should be updated and rewritten based on the works of G. Banshoya.

1. Introduction
Historic cities in the Middle East and North Africa are said to be thousands of years old. Most of these cities experienced European colonization in the 20th century and modern urban planning was introduced under these regimes. From the viewpoint of urban planning history, the Middle East and North Africa is an important area in which to consider how modern urban planning has dealt with urban issues such as conservation and modernization for these historical cities. However, the question of how to estimate spatial change in these cities, especially after independence, is still open.

In order to do this, we can focus on the work of a Japanese planner in this area. Gyoji Banshoya (番匠谷 克二 1930-1998), a student of the Japanese architect Kiyoshi Seike, rediscovered the importance of this area through some French modernist colleagues and continued as a principal urban planner in this region for the rest of his life. For example, one of his projects, a master plan for Damascus elaborated in 1968 with Michel Ecochard, is still an active official master plan approved by the Damascus governorate. His master plan for the city of Aleppo also remained active until recently. However, little is known about Banshoya and his work. Banshoya’s life remains nothing more than a myth in Japan, France, the Middle East and North Africa.

The purpose of this paper is to give an overview of the work of G. Banshoya as primary information with a view to activating research into urban planning history in the Middle East and North Africa. As I will mention later, the physical appearance of some of Banshoya’s work has been the object of both praise and criticism, so it will be necessary to analyze and evaluate each of his
projects in detail in the future. However, Banshoya's career as a Japanese planner is quite rare in itself and cannot be separated from the history of French urban planning overseas. This is a biographical study which focuses on organizing the projects he worked on throughout his life. It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze each project with the exception of some case studies. In this paper, I would like to single out each project and position it in an overall picture of the history of urban planning.

An overview of Banshoya's projects is summarized in Table 1. The approaches employed in all chapters in chronological order are: 1) Data collection such as urban planning documents, articles and surveys as primary sources, and 2) Analyzing and positioning this data in background history with some geographical information based on previous studies(1). Quotations from original documents in French are quoted in French.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Principal Projects or Activities</th>
<th>J</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>S</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Born in Tokyo</td>
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<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Graduated from the Tokyo Institute of Technology (studied under Kiyoshi Seike)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Architectural Piece: &lt;Maison de plan Carree à Tokyo&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Trainee at ATBAT as a scholar with the French government</td>
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<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Assistant Manager at &quot;Agence de Plan&quot;, City of Algiers</td>
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<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>District Plan: &lt;Plan d'aménagement de la centre ville d'Alger&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Met Kenzo Tange and Michel Echard</td>
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<td>1962</td>
<td>UNDP Technical Assistance Officer</td>
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<td>1962</td>
<td>Facilities in Phnom-Penh</td>
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<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Master Plan: &lt;Plan Directeur de la ville de Beyrouth et sa Banlieue&gt;</td>
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<td>1966</td>
<td>Professor at the Department of Art, University of Damascus</td>
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<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Master Plan: &lt;Plan Directeur de Damas &gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>OTCA (later JICA) intervention in Damascus</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>District Plan: &lt;Projet d'aménagement de la vieille ville d'Alep &gt;, &lt;Projet de Bab al-Fraj &gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Master Plan: &lt;Aleppo Master Plan&gt;</td>
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<td>1975</td>
<td>Adviser at Dar al-Handasah</td>
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<td>1977</td>
<td>Article: &lt;Syrian Urban Formation &gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Professor at Lebanon-Catholic University</td>
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<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Cancellation of: &lt;Projet d'aménagement de la vieille ville d'Alep &gt;, &lt;Projet de Bab al-Fraj &gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Died in Beirut</td>
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*Location of projects or activities are shown as: J=Japan, F=France, A=Algeria, C=Cambodia, L=Lebanon, S=Syria

2. The Laboratory of Kiyoshi Seike and the Maison de Plan Carée à Tokyo (1930-1953)

Gyoji Banshoya was born in 1930 as the second son of Eiichi Banshoya, a professor of German literature at Rikkyo University. In 1953, he graduated from the department of architecture of the Tokyo Institute of Technology. His supervisor was Kiyoshi Seike who had been teaching since just after his demobilization in 1945. As an editorial member of the architectural journal Shin-Kenchiku, Seike communicated frequently with leading foreign architects such as Antonin Raymond and Walter Adolph Georg Gropius, and was open to international developments. Classmates of Banshoya include famous architects such as Kazuo Shinohara and Shoji Hayashi (Fig. 1). One of the principles of the Seike Laboratory was that members should train overseas and it was also recommended that they participate in Ministry of Foreign Affairs, OTCA (Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency) and JETRO (Japan External Trade Organization) projects as opportunities to go abroad(2). Banshoya, nicknamed "Ban-chan", was close to Seike and he later invited his professor to his office in Damascus on a number of occasions. He also became a great advocate for younger graduates of the laboratory such as Nobuo Goto to study abroad.

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(1) Most of the planning documents were obtained from ministries or municipalities. Some documents were obtained from the FPOs in Beirut and Damascus and the archive of the French Institute of Architecture (IFA) in Paris (IFA-Fonds number will be shown). In addition, I referred to Banshoya’s own CV, articles and testimonies from his relatives and colleagues.

(2) Kazuhiko Takahama and Taigi Yamaguchi also went abroad, to Italy and Germany respectively.
Just after graduation, Banshoya published his first architectural piece, "The Square House," in Shin-Kenchiku, which was the residence of his brother, Junichi, 6 years his senior. The point of the square plan of this house is its flexibility as a low-cost house; he used just one structural pillar accompanied by a Russian pechka stove to support the whole structure of the house and did not adopt any fixed partitions in order to make it possible for habitants to evolve the living space by themselves according to their family situation. This is why he created both the simple "Surface Plan" (Fig. 2) and the "Completed Plan" (Fig. 3) which was to be completed by the habitants. According to Junichi, this concept was based on a traditional Japanese housing method called "Shinden-Dukuri". This concept was that some furniture such as Byobu or Kicho was modified from its original purpose in order to be used for partition free living. However, this concept was not born of nostalgia but of a reaction to the demand for low-cost housing in the period after the war.

The appearance of the house remained in the traditional style. An anonymous reviewer of Shin-Kenchiku wrote: "The ambitious maiden work of a young architect just graduated from university….Implying modernity in its classical elegance of appearance, the house shows the youthful motivation of the architect". This means that the Square House was evaluated in the context of a balance between tradition and modernism.

The Square House was also published in the French architectural magazine l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui in October 1953 titled "Maison de Plan Carreé à Tokio". The feature topic of this number was "Habitation" and some results of critical discussion at a CIAM 9 conference were promptly reported by George Candillis, Vladimir Bodiansky and Michel Ecochard, etc.. Banshoya’s work was introduced just after Candillis’s general remarks. In the article about Banshoya himself, he explained that Japanese habitations were in the process of a transformation from the traditional to the modern and suggested that he had abandoned the use of Tatami (Japanese traditional carpet sized 180cm * 90cm which is also used as a measurement of floor space) but left it as a module of the house. In the version of l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, he showed a photo of a room with movable Tatami (Fig. 4) which did not appear in the Shin Kenchiku version (Fig. 5). On the other hand, Candillis referred to the Square House in his remarks and evaluated it as a kind of evolutional architecture, showing his own sketch (Fig. 6) and saying "The architect only designs the frame of house but the rest of the house should be completed by the habitants themselves according to their needs and their habits". Here we see the basic concept of evolutional housing manifested by Candillis and other French modernist architects in Casablanca in order to supply low cost housing called H.Q.M. (Habitation à Loyer Modéré) to the general public. Based on his experiences in Morocco and other developing countries, Candillis was trying to overcome the rigidity of CIAM discipline in order to organize Team 10. According to Candillis, the Square House should be definitely evaluated because it showed a Japanese case of evolutional housing, something that was in urgent demand in architecture after World War II.
Besides planning the Square House, Banshoya was diligently following European trends in collective housing. His research resulted in the translation of an article from *l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* published in *Shin-Kenchiku* in Sep 1953. The translated article was titled "Residential district planning in postwar Italy" and it was not a simple translation but an editorial translation; the thoughts of translator himself were reflected in the composition of the translated article. For example, Banshoya intentionally selected two articles (from Giuseppe Samonà and Saverio Muratoni) to be translated. The fact that Banshoya intentionally chose the future pioneers of Italian urban conservation who belonged to INA Casa suggests that he was already interested not only in low-cost housing but also in urban planning, especially in urban conservation planning.

It is clear that much was expected of Banshoya as an architect of "evolutional" housing in his younger days. With respect to history, his idea was not simple revivalism or a kind of nostalgia but a reconstitution of historical spatial composition based on the necessity of modern elements. The reconstitution of historical space was a result of his "evolutionism" based on the recognition that physical spaces will change as time goes by.

As a matter of fact, the Square House carved out his career dynamically; this work was finally evaluated by Le Corbusier who was a juror for French governmental scholarships. Six months after graduation, Banshoya got a chance to study in France as a scholar-trainee with the French government.

### 3. ATBAT and Agence de Plan in Algiers (1953-1958)

#### 3-1 L’Agence du Plan

In October 1953, Banshoya started work as a scholar-trainee with the French government at ATBAT (Ateliers de Bâtisseurs). ATBAT was an architectural office founded by Le Corbusier and some of its young architects such as Vladimir Bodiansky, Gerald Hanning and George Candillis were well-known for their activities based in Casablanca. G. Hanning was the managing director of Le Corbusier’s office and G. Candillis was a leading architect at CIAM in its later days. Banshoya was dispatched to the Paris office of ATBAT and worked on researching case studies in Madagascar and Paris concerning "Habitat pour le Plus Grand Nombre (housing for the general public)". Unlike Takamasa Yoshizaka who went to Paris in 1950 to study under Le Corbusier for two years, Banshoya, who studied under the new generation of architects, was able to learn organically about issues in the cities of the Middle East and North Africa.

In July 1954, Hanning was invited by the mayor of the city of Algiers and his colleague and student Banshoya also crossed the sea to follow him there. The mayor was Jacques Chevaller who had just founded a special institution called "Agence du Plan (Planning Agency)" in June 1954. It was a consultative body under the direct control of Mayor Chevaller who intended to make Algiers into a model city (Ville d’Exemple) or a pilot city (Ville Pilote) of North Africa where indigenous Muslim Algerians and French Christian colonials could cohabit. It was Pierre Dalloz who advised the mayor to found the Planning Agency following the example of the office for the reconstruction of the city center of Le Havre established by Auguste Perret. He was installed as the director of the Agency and G. Hanning was named as his manager. Under Hanning, there were some assistant architects including Banshoya.

#### 3-2 Background Information about Algiers

Algeria had been a French colony since 1830 and the city had experienced many manifestations of modern urban planning. The sequence of French apartment-style facades in the coastal area at Algiers port already existed in the 1840s and 1850s. In the

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(3) Source: Banshoya’s brother, Junichi.
(4) From Banshoya’s CV: “Housing for the General Public” was a movement led by Ecochard in Morocco to provide low cost housing to resolve slum issues. It was also called “Urban Planning for the general public”. ATBAT also participated in this movement.
1930s, René Danger, Henri Prost and Le Corbusier made proposals and their plans were partially realized. From 1953, a French architect, Fernand Pouillon, began work on the three collective housing projects of Diar es-Saada, Diar el-Mahcol and Climat de France. Pouillon himself lived in a Diar el-Mahcol apartment where Banshoya came into contact with the aesthetics of Algiers's colors and forms in everyday life.

However, the period during which Banshoya stayed in Algiers was quite a critical phase politically. Just after his arrival, the FNS launched their anti-France movement in November 1954. The battle of Algiers, which was famous for terrorist acts as described in Gillo Pontecorvo's movie, started in 1957. After years of struggle, Mayor Chevallier was forced to resign in May 1958 then the Quatrième République collapsed in October 1958. Algeria finally got independence in 1962.

Under such circumstances, Chevallier's administrative policy was to improve people's living environment by providing as much low-cost housing as possible. In particular, it was quite important to balance housing policy between Muslims and Christians. For example, here is a quotation from the minutes of the first municipal assembly on 11 May 1953 published in the "Bulletin Municipal Officiel de la Ville d'Alger", the public magazine of the city at the time. The questioner is Mustapha Bouchakor, a deputy mayor of Muslim origin asking the mayor about the recipients of Pouillon’s housing. The new mayor (of Christian origin) responds that it does not matter whether the habitants of these new houses are Muslim or Christian:

M. Bouchakor, Adjoint.

-Evidemment, nous sommes favorables à l’exécution de ce projet, mais je tiens tout de même à répondre la question d'ordre pratique que j'avais posée en Commission des Travaux et Finances: à quelle catégorie seront destinés ces appartements?

M. Jaques Chevallier, Député-Maire.

-C'est avec plaisir que je répète ce que je vous ai répondu en séance privée: je considère que tous les hommes, quelle que soit leur origine, doivent être logés et bien logés. Il n'est pas question de créer un habitat spécial pour les habitants d'origine européenne ou pour les musulmans, mais un habitat mixte dans lequel les européennes ou pour les musulmans ayant atteint le degré d'évolution que vous connaissiez, pourront cohabiter. Une répartition équitable sera faite entre les uns et les autres.

As mentioned here, Chevallier promoted a cultural symbiosis of Algerian people regardless of their origins. Under Mayor Chevallier, many H.L.M. housing projects were planned and implemented. However, the political situation was so serious that, for example, M. Bouchakor from MTLD was arrested by French authorities just after the FLN rebellion. As the independence movement became more and more serious, Chevallier’s idea of symbiosis became a target of criticism from both the Muslim and Christian sides.

3-3 Achievements in Teamwork

According to the CV of Banshoya, the projects he participated in were as follows:

1. Plan d’Aménagement au 1/2,000 ème de la réorganisation du centre-ville d’Alger (surface approximative : 30 ha)
2. Plan d’Aménagement, études du plan de masse et mise au point d’infrastructures (du 1/5,000 ème au 1/500 ème) de la nouvelle ville des Annassers (100,000 habitants — 700 ha)
3. Plan d’aménagement du quartier du Champ de Manoeuvres à Alger (1/500 ème — 1/200 ème — 1,500 habitants)
4. Plan d’Aménagement et recasement du « bidonville » de Mahiedine (1/500 ème — 5,000 habitants).
5. Plan d’Aménagement de Châteauneuf à Alger (1/500 ème — 3,000 habitants)
6. Plan d'aménagement et plan de masse du quartier de Frais-Vallon (1,500 habitants).
7. Plusieurs études sur l'habitat pour le recasement de « Bidonville »
8. Plan Directeur de la région d’Alger (1 million d'habitants (1/5,000 ème et 1/2,000 ème)

The progress of these projects was continuously reported in the Alger-Revue. In May 1955, Banshoya was first introduced as a member of the Agency in an article in the Alger-Revue, the second largest public magazine of the city, which described him as an "Architect-Engineer from the Tokyo Institute of Technology studying a plan for evolutionary housing" (Fig. 7).

Here I will briefly explain Banshoya’s works comparing his CV and articles from the Alger-Revue. Project No. 2, collective housing at Annassers was most frequently written about. The first article about Annassers appeared in 1956 to report on the project, then a second article was published in 1959 and reported that Banshoya was working on a maquette of the project site (Fig. 8).
1961, some photos were published showing a partial realization of Annassers\(^{10}\). Project No. 3 was a renovation of the huge, modern apartment designed by Bernard Zehrfus in 1952 in order to reorganize it from a Corbusier-type space to a more sophisticated space. Project No. 4 was to provide H.L.M. housing to about 8,000 city center habitants who were squatters of which completion was reported in 1959\(^{12}\). However, it should be noted that Banshoya was not credited individually for any of this work in these articles.

What exactly was his part in these projects? Even though he was engaged in work on evolutional housing or H.L.M, he was also still an architect of houses, as expected by Candillis. Furthermore, the housing that was needed in Algiers was of a design that would realize the cohabitation of Christians and Muslims. This design principle can be recognized as a kind of reconstitution of historic spatial composition because here the design means to adapt to the housing tradition of Algerians, especially Muslim Algerians. On the other hand, Banshoya’s colleague (later an architectural historian), Jean-Jacques Deluz, stated that Banshoya was engaged in the planning of roads and intersections due to the fact that he was “a genius of dessin as well as of Japanese calligraphy”\(^{6}\). Because Deluz was a latecomer to the Agency in 1957, we can deduce that his description must be of Banshoya’s latter days in Algiers. So Banshoya’s work extended from the study of evolutional housing for H.L.M. to a kind of traffic design. It is said that this was due to the influence of G. Hanning\(^{7}\). However, since evolutional housing was originally a method to realize the "Habitat pour le Plus Grand Nombre" which had a lot in common with Italian low-cost housing, it was quite natural that Banshoya expanded his view to urban planning as collective housing planning. In addition, traffic planning was an essential element of French urban planning based on a clear road line. Through practice in Algiers, Banshoya learned a French-Algerian style of urban planning where micro scale design and macro scale planning were tightly unified.

Because work for the Planning Agency was usually carried out as team projects, Banshoya’s work was not credited to him individually. However, it should be clear that Banshoya played an important role at the Planning Agency as a planner of evolutional houses and as a genius of dessin for road planning.

In 1958, Mayor Chevallier received the architectural prize, “Grand Prix d’Architecture” from the Cercle d’Etudes Architecturales. In his acknowledgement of the Grand Prix, he demonstrated his appreciation of the members of the Agency saying he owed all this success to them. In fact, he listed Japanese at the top of his list of member nationalities at the Agency.

M. Pierre Dalloz est venu nous aider dans cette tâche en groupant autour de lui un certain nombre de jeunes hommes et de jeunes femmes, français et étrangères (des Japonais, des Américains, des Polonais, des Péruviens) qui tous ensemble, travaillant en équipe, permettent de faire une synthèse de nos problèmes et de répondre à tout.

There is no doubt that “Japonais” refers to Banshoya who contributed to the Agency to make Chevallier’s teamwork so successful\(^{13}\).

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\(^{10}\) Source: Banshoya’s brother, Junichi.

\(^{12}\) Source: Banshoya’s brother, Junichi.

\(^{13}\) Deluz (2003) p.233. Banshoya was introduced as the third architect of the Agency. Deluz himself joined the Agency in 1957 and became its director in 1959.
4. Encounter with Two Maestros and Assignment as a UNDP Specialist

In May 1958, Chevalier resigned after his efforts to maintain peace and the Agency was downsized. Banshoya decided to go back to France and established a small office beside the Place de Vosges, Paris⁸. With Paul Herbe, a friend since his time in Algiers, Banshoya collaborated with architect Max Richter on a project for an international architectural competition for a new post office in Berne, Switzerland. The plan was not realized, but it was published in *l’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* in Feb 1959 (Fig. 9)¹⁴. From March of that year, he went back and forth to Algeria to participate in the elaboration of a new district plan for Bone, which dates back to the Roman ruin of Hippone⁹.

In June 1959, Banshoya met two grand maestros. The first was Kenzo Tange, who came to France to receive the 1st international architectural prize from *l’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui*. Banshoya played the role of interpreter for Tange (Fig. 10) (10). After that he became a collaborator in some of Tange’s projects in the Middle East and North Africa such as the Presidential Palace in Damascus. The second maestro was Michel Ecochard who he met at a party held by Tange’s party. Through his acquaintance with Ecochard, who had experience of working with some members of CIAM or ATBAT in «Urban Planning for General People», Banshoya became more interested in the Middle East and North Africa¹¹.

Banshoya first participated in projects in the Middle East in February 1961. Ecochard, who had been impressed by Banshoya in their first encounter, invited him to Algiers and their families formed a close friendship. As a valuable assistant to Ecochard, Banshoya participated in some district plans for Beirut such as the ministries quarter, the Medawa quarter, and the small resort city of Jenié¹². In January 1962, Banshoya was named as a UNDP technical assistance officer and was sent to the Direction of Urban Planning of the Ministry of Public Enterprise and Information in the Kingdom of Cambodia¹³. Just after independence from French Indochina in 1954, Cambodia asked the United Nations to cooperate in the reconstruction of their new capital. The person who invited Banshoya was Gerald Hanning¹⁴. His mission was only for one year and he worked as a member of a team led by ex-CIAM members just as he did in Algiers¹⁵.

According to his CV, the projects in which Banshoya participated were as follows:

1. **Stade olympique (70,000 personnes), piscine, gymnastie (8,000 personnes), de Seop Games à Phnom-Penh.**
2. **Plan d’aménagement de détails de la ville de Phnom-Penh (400,000 habitants)**
3. **Plan de masse au1/500 ème de Front de Bassac à Phnom-Penh (5,000 habitants)**
4. **Plan d’exécution des nouveaux quartiers de Shianoukville**
5. **Réseau routier de Shianoukville**

Project No. 1 was realized for the 3rd South Asian Cup of football in 1964. Project No. 3 was a district plan composed of a pair of apartment buildings called "White House" and "Gray House" and a national theater. The district plan was realized along the Bassac.

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⁸ Source: Banshoya's brother, Junichi.
⁹ From Banshoya's CV. He collaborated with two French architects, Roux Dorlut and Daniel Badani. This project continued until February 1961 but he did the work for this project from his office in the Place de Vosges.
¹⁰ Anon. (1959b). Tange and Banshoya appear in the photo of Fig 10.
¹¹ Source: Banshoya's wife. Tange's party was held on a pleasure boat on the Seine. Banshoya already knew Jean Ecochard, the son of Michel Ecochard, who he had met in Algiers.
¹² Prior to this, Banshoya had participated in a resort project in Corsica where Kunio Kato, later a professor at the University of Kyoto, also participated. IFA-Fonds 61.
¹³ From Banshoya's CV.
¹⁴ Banshoya was supporting his former colleagues, V. Bodiansky and G. Hanning, who had been sent to the ministry as well. The director of Urban Planning was Vann Molyvann who had just come back from France. Molyvann (2003).
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a tributary of the Mekong but later became a ruin due to a series of civil wars. Siamouville was a new city planned to commemorate independence. Projects No. 4 and No. 5 were based on the first master plan of 1969, but their implementation was stopped due to the civil wars. The city was later developed to be the second city of Cambodia under a new master plan in the 1990s.

Though Banshoya’s mission in Cambodia was limited to 1 year, it was significant as his first assignment as a UNDP specialist. He completed his mission in the ancient French territory of Cambodia and his projects were also related to some heritages of CIAM. In addition, Banshoya met a young Japanese man, Nobuo Goto, who would become his most trusted collaborator in Damascus at a later date.

5. Master Plans for Three Cities in the Middle East

Michel Ecochard was the most influential urban planner for the elaboration of diverse plans such as public facilities or district planning in Lebanon under President Fuad Chehab who was promoting the modernization of the country. Banshoya was re-called to Lebanon by Ecochard at the end of 1962 and after that he would be engaged in missions in the Middle East for the rest of his life. In particular, master plans for the three cities of Beirut, Damascus and Aleppo are considered as his greatest masterpieces.

5-1 Beirut (1962-1966)

Beirut was originally a small Phoenician port established 5,000 years ago and became one of the important east Mediterranean cities under the Ottoman rule. In the age of French Mandate, an urban redevelopment project based on Baroque-style design was carried out in the heart of the old city (actually called “Down Town”) that had been demolished by an Ottoman governor Djémal Pacha. The plan elaborated by the French planner, René Danger, indicated a central square and main streets in a radial pattern. Playing the role of the financial center of the Middle East, Beirut, where many foreign enterprises including Japanese companies were gathering, flourished and was called the “Paris of the Middle East”. In 1943, Ecochard suggested a principal road plan but it was not approved. After his “Urbanisme pour le Plus Grand Nombre” mission in Morocco, Ecochard tried again and elaborated the first master plan of Beirut after independence in 1963. According to the original planning document, the chief planner was Ecochard and Banshoya was listed as one of three assistants. Another document provided later by the French Institute of Architecture regards Banshoya as Ecochard’s 1st assistant and states that Ecochard and Banshoya were coordinators for young Lebanese architects who were in charge of district planning. Ecochard and Banshoya were mainly engaged in traffic planning and the creation of public spaces. As a result, they elaborated a city center district plan encompassing the Ghalghoul quarter and the East quarter of the place of Martyrs in 1964 (Fig. 11).

Banshoya also participated in projects until 1966 as follows:

(15) The city had originally been an exchange center for tribes and cultures and the old city was formed in original spatial composition.
(17) From Banshoya’s CV.
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1. Autoroute de Zaharani-Tripoli (150km)
2. Plan d’aménagement de la zone résidentielle de Naameh (40,000 habitants)

Project No. 1 was the construction of a highway connecting Saida and Tripoli which gradually became the most important artery of the country.

The city of Beirut was seriously damaged due to the civil war which started in 1975. Later, in the 1990s, the construction company, Solidere, led by Prime Minister Rafic Hariri started a downtown reconstruction project. In spite of his assassination in 2005, the downtown area has been beautifully renovated keeping its original Baroque style. It is said that Banshoya participated in this reconstruction project in some way as a consultant for Dar al-Handasa in his last years.

5-2 Damascus (1966-1968)

Damascus is also an old city dating back 5,000 years where grid pattern Roman streets and crowded narrow lanes of the Islamic age have been historically combined. In 1936, when Syria was under the French mandate, Danger and Ecochard elaborated the first modern master plan. For the second master plan for the city, Ecochard officially employed Banshoya as his first collaborator; the master plan of Damascus in 1968 was credited to the two names of Ecochard and Banshoya. Planned population was set to one and half million which was twice that of the population in 1936 and the city was to be expanded with detailed zonings such as industry, housing and conservation areas. This master plan is still official and active today in 2012. Traffic planning was also emphasized in Damascus in order to cope with the age of cars. In fact, a highway connecting with the other Syrian cities was proposed to introduce some roads inside the old city. Banshoya’s principal idea was to rediscover some Roman grid streets and to renovate them as roads. In the master plan, there is a study plan of the old city titled “Reconstitution de la Ville Antique (Reconstitution of the Antique City)” (Fig. 12). He believed that his idea was still based on the reconstitution of the historic spatial composition. After 5 years of elaboration, Ecochard and Banshoya spoke of their thoughts concerning planning in l’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui in September 1973.

Que faire ? Doit-on abandonner ce centre commercial et en reconstruire un dans la zone d’extension moderne de la ville ? Cette solution permettrait de dégager les 21 caravansérails et de les transformer en musées. La chose est impossible.....Doit on conserver ce centre dans son état et son fonctionnement actuel ? Non, les caravanes se sont muées en camions de 20 tonnes qui obstruent totalement les petites voies et rendent chaque jour plus impossible la circulation mécanique et piétonnière.

Conservation of original installation is important but abandonment or simple idleness could result in the destruction of the old city. No doubt they proposed their plan with an understanding of the conflicts and complications of urban conservation and activation. However, in fact, this master plan would be strongly criticized later.

Fig. 12: Study Plan “Reconstitution de la Ville Antique” in the Master Plan of 1968

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(18) At that time, Ecochard was in charge of archaeological survey in Damascus, supporting Danger. The main object of this plan was to provide a new city inside the old city.
(20) Since 2008, there has been an attempt to revise the master plan in cooperation with JICA.
In Feb 1966, Banshoya became a professor of the Faculty of Art at the University of Damascus which had been just founded. He also elaborated master plans for Rasht and the Ville de Pahlevi with Ali Sardar Alghami, who was a student of Ecochard (21).

Nobuo Goto collaborated with Banshoya on the Damascus project. Soon after this, Goto was assigned to the Paris office of Ecochard which is when the so-called Japanese/international cooperation started. The first Japanese specialists from OTCA (later JICA) were Masao Okui and Koji Yagi. Both of them were from the Seike Laboratory. They were in charge of some district plans as smaller, more detailed parts that supported the master plan. They put up a sign saying "Maktab (Office) Banshoya" on the rooftop of the Damascus governorate where they worked. That was the first example of Japanese/international cooperation in Syria (22), as well as the contribution of the legendary Japanese veterinarian Giro Orita. On top of their cooperation with the government, Kenzo Tange and his team URTEC realized Tishurin Park and the New Presidential Palace in Damascus in the 1970s (23).

5-3 Aleppo (1969-1975)

Aleppo is another of the most important historic cities in the Middle East. The main characteristic of Aleppo is its solemn townscape of stone buildings. The city was also famous for its traditional Souk (market) which used to be a huge commercial center on the Silk Road. In 1954, French urban planner André Gutton, who was a professor of the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, elaborated the first modern master plan which included some road plans inside the old city (22).

In August of 1967, Banshoya received his next mission as a UNDP technical assistance officer consisting of the projects as follows (24):

1. Projets d’aménagement de détails de la ville de Damas
2. Plan directeur de la ville d’Aleppo (600,000 habitants)
3. Recherches sur l’Habitat
4. Plan d’aménagement du centre-ville d’Aleppo
5. Création d’un centre d’habitation et de construction
6. Centre Pou plan régional et d’urbanisme
7. Plan d’aménagement pour les villages de Kaboun, Kaden et Berze

Project No. 1 was a collaboration with Japanese specialists from OTCA and project No. 2 became the most important project of Banshoya’s life. In the municipality of Aleppo, there was a young French scholar (later an important historian), Jean-Claude David, who lived there from 1968 to 1972. With his extensive knowledge about the old city of Aleppo, J-C. David became an important collaborator for Banshoya. In April 1970, Banshoya had already finished the first study report and he published his ideas in Architecture d’Aujourd’hui in September 1973 (23) jointly with J-C. David. Here also, they emphasized the importance of connecting the old city with the other parts of the wider city. They argued that the traditional spatial order of the old city was now being lost as a result of abandonment and they presented their concept to introduce some roads without cutting through the old city, showing some diagrams (Fig. 13 and Fig. 14). In fact, they deleted some of the preceding road plans proposed by Gutton which cut through the Souk. His basic idea was to introduce some small parking lots behind the caravansaries which were bases for commercial activities in the Souk. The parking lots were limited to lightweight trucks as an alternative for caravans, which were out of date, and the roads for trucks were designed to avoid the historical area (Fig. 15). In fact, Banshoya tried here to manage both conservation and activation of the old urban fabric at the same time. That is to say, his principle of reconstitution of historical spatial composition based on the necessity of modern elements was still alive.

Thus, Banshoya finally became the chief urban planner in Aleppo, seconded by Henrick Roral, an architect from Poland. The master plan was officially settled in 1975 and they were credited with their names in Arabic (25). Project No. 4 was an urban renewal project in the historic quarter of Bab al-Faraj. Banshoya presented his ideas with a maquette and it was published in the Lebanese magazine l’Orient-Le jour Samedi in January 1975.

On the whole, Banshoya in his best days was playing a quite important role as the leading urban planner in these three cities in

(21) From Banshoya’s CV
(22) Source: M. Okui. The first urban planning project based on Japanese/international cooperation is introduced in Okui Masao and Yagi Koji (1973), pp.35-36.
(24) From Banshoya’s CV.
the Middle East. From the viewpoint both of scale and methodology, Gyoji Banshoya’s work compares with that of famous French planners such as R. Danger, Michel Ecochard and André Gutton.


After the expiration of his contract with UNDP in 1975, Banshoya based himself in Beirut. He was invited by Dar al-Handasa to be a supervisor for its Direction of Urban Planning and participated in the reconstruction of Beirut. In 1977, he became a professor at the Lebanese Catholic University. However, he didn’t lead big projects such as master planning by himself. Maybe one of his final projects was the Japanese ambassador’s residence in the suburbs of Beirut which he started in 1977.

In 1977, Banshoya, at 47 years of age, published an article in *Kenchiku Zasshi* (Journal of Architecture and Building Science) of the Architectural Institute of Japan. The article was titled “Urban Formation in Syria” and it described how Syrian cities formed a multilayered urban tissue containing all the civilizational elements of Syrian history starting from the Euphrates civilization, via Hellenism and Roman civilization to Islamic civilization. The article is magnificent, but in the last pages Banshoya referred to the actual situation surrounding urban planning. He mentioned that Michel Ecochard widely contributed to the institutionalization of the conservation of historic monuments in Syria while trying to limit the chaotic expansion of the city by introducing detailed architectural laws. Of the urban planning with which he concerned himself, he said that conservation plans for old cities were continuously approved in spite of various arguments against them. In addition, he affirmed that the number of young Syrian specialists was rapidly growing due to international cooperation. He noted the names of Kiyoshi Seike and Iwao Kobori (Professor at the University of Tokyo, Geography) in his acknowledgements.

Incidentally, it is a fact that France implemented many urban planning projects in its colonies, protectorates and mandatory territories, and it is also certain that Ecochard was one of the most influential planners in French urban planning overseas. However, Ecochard, who was originally influenced by archaeology in Damascus and later participated in CIAM’s modernist activities, was not always evaluated in positive sense regardless of his huge accomplishments. In particular, his method to introduce roads inside the old cities has sometimes been criticized for its negative influence on the old urban fabric. The plans by Banshoya, who worked in a similar manner to Ecochard, were also fated to receive the same treatment. An overview of this criticism is described below in order to discover the truth about the legendary works of Gyoji Banshoya.

The first question was submitted by the Department of Antiquity of the Syrian Ministry of Culture, the institutionalization of which Ecochard himself had contributed to in the past. In 1976, a directive was introduced to enhance the law concerning the conservation of ruins and historic monuments. There was also a broad appeal concerning the crisis of national monuments and some

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(26) Source: Michel Abdou, Banshoya’s brother-in-law. He also taught at St. Joseph’s University and other Lebanese universities.
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conservation movements were organized by habitants and students(27). These movements were first seen in Aleppo. In 1978, the Aleppo Old City Committee was organized by habitants. With the encouragement of the committee, the Department of Antiquity registered the whole old city as a historic monument and UNESCO launched a survey on urban planning in 1979. The project leader was the famous Swiss architect, Stefano Bianca, who had a wealth of experience in conservation planning, for example, in Fez, Morocco and Cairo, Egypt. The UNESCO report titled “The Conservation of the Old City of Aleppo” in 1980 mentioned that though it is much better than Gutton’s Plan, Banshoya’s plan of 1975 lacked recognition of the differences between the old city and the new city and concluded that the master plan should be promptly revised(25). When Nadj Otori, who was originally from an old family who lived in the old city and who went on to become an architect, became the mayor of Aleppo, he adopted the principles of the UNESCO report and started to revise the plan. In 1982, the decision to cancel the urban renewal project for Bab al-Faraj where the demolition of old buildings had already started was made. In 1983, an international symposium was held to commemorate the cancellation(26).

The conservation movement soon spread to Damascus and the old city was registered as a World Heritage Site. Further, two international conferences about urban conservation organized by Nakaba al-Mohandisean (Syndicate of Engineers) were held in Damascus in 1982 and 1985, where almost the same critical discussions unfolded. It is said that Ecochard, at 77 years of age, was invited to the 1st conference and he was in tears as he spoke of his ideas and his love for the city(28) while it is unknown whether Banshoya attended these conferences. On the other hand, UNESCO launched a survey led by S. Bianca and submitted a report(27) titled “The Conservation of the Old City of Damascus” which points out the crisis in the old city caused by the master plan of 1968 and the necessity of its revision.

There was no room to discuss conservation in Beirut as the city was embroiled in the civil war. However, sometimes the master plan of 1963 has been referred to negatively because of its modernist policy encouraged by the economic boom under Chehab’s policies(28). There is supporting evidence that one of the concepts of the reconstruction project led by Hariri was to restore the Baroque city using R. Danger’s plans rather than allowing the projects by Ecochard and Banshoya to succeed.

Thus, the projects of Gyoji Banshoya in the Middle East were to experience a severe trial less than 10 years after he created them. However, in the end, conservation activities didn’t achieve the renewal of the master plans either. Finally, an international architectural competition for an alternative to the cancelled project of Bab al-Faraj was held and the winner’s plan was adopted by the city of Aleppo. However, the plan has not yet been implemented except for some administrative buildings and a huge hotel(29).

The author doesn’t know how Banshoya felt about this. The fact is that he became sick in the mid-80s and spent time recuperating in Japan and he retired in 1989 to live out the rest of his life quietly in Beirut. However, it is still difficult to ascertain whether these criticisms were essential criticisms based on a deep understanding of Banshoya’s policy to manage both conservation and modernization, or just a temporal boom in conservation caused by the political and social confusion in Syria(29). It is necessary to perform a more detailed analysis of his plans, texts and the testimonies of those who were around him.

7. Conclusion

The conclusion is that the works of Gyoji Banshoya were broadly influential in major cities in the Middle East and North Africa up till now. First of all, his works accomplished in the great historic cities and in critical French modernism in this area should be archived in the history of urban planning.

On the other hand, this paper is not concerned with a detailed analysis of each of his plans. The future direction of this research will be one that reanalyzes the history of the modernization of these cities including Banshoya’s work which is one of the important pieces of urban planning history. Specifically, the realization of his road plans, new town plans and plans for old cities will be historically clarified then the actual situation of the spatial change of urban tissue caused by these plans will be examined through field surveys. This is meaningful not only for the reanalysis of the urban planning history of this area, but also for the understanding of the cities of the Middle East and North Africa in relation to Japanese/international cooperation.

(29) For example, J-C. David analyzed the history of urban planning in Aleppo in relation to the political confusion in Syria. David (1986).
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