

ICOMOS



International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage

The Administration Building at the Izumo Shrine, in Shimane, Japan

PRESS RELEASE

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One of the leading International organizations for the protection of 20th Century Cultural Heritage – the International Council on Monuments and Sites International Scientific Committee on 20th Century Heritage (**ICOMOS ISC20C**), has expressed its concern about the alarming situation now facing the Administration Building at the Izumo Shrine, in Shimane, Japan. It is the understanding of the ISC20C that the Shrine proposes to demolish this highly significant work by the architect Kiyonori Kikutake (1928-2011).

ICOMOS is the international professional body which safeguards cultural heritage, and is an adviser to UNESCO. The ICOMOS ISC20C has written to the authorities at the Izumo Grand Shrine, requesting that the current proposal for demolition be suspended and that the Shrine further examine the options for retention of the Administration Building.

The ICOMOS ISC20C believes that a solution to the Shrine Administration building's problem could also be found if given further expert assessment. The committee has strongly encouraged Shrine authorities to seek a positive conservation outcome for this item of Japan's modern heritage. The ICOMOS ISC20C is made up of internationally known architects and heritage specialists from many nations, with practical expertise in heritage structures of the 20th Century. Collectively they have dealt with many such difficult problems world-wide that were able to be solved with creative technical solutions. ISC20C has offered to work with the Shrine to help find a satisfactory outcome for all concerned.

The ISC20C notes that the architectural importance of this building has been acknowledged by the architect's peers, with Kiyonori Kikutake receiving numerous awards soon after its completion, including the 15th Japanese Architectural Association Prize (1963), the Building Contractors Society Prize (1965), and the 7th Pan Pacific Award (1964). The architect was inspired by traditional Japanese architecture and the building serves as a wonderful foil to the beautiful traditional architecture of the rest of the Shrine.

The enduring architectural significance of the building has also been recognized by heritage authorities such as Docomomo Japan, which in 2005, identified the Administration Building of the Great Shrine of Izumo as one of the 100 important buildings representing modern architecture in Japan. The architectural and artistic merit of the building, as well as its historical significance is uncontested, however the building has not yet been well documented. The ISC20C experts understand that the reason given for the proposed demolition is the problem of water persistently leaking into the building. The ICOMOS



ISC20C has asked that the Shrine seek an improved technical solution to the problem that would allow the building to remain and continue in a useful purpose for the Shrine.

The ISC20C has recently published Approaches for the Conservation of the Twentieth Century Architectural Heritage (the Madrid Document) which represents international best practice in the management of modern heritage places, and should form the basis for decisions about the future of the Shrine building. This document is readily available on line, and is translated into Japanese at:

<http://icomos-isc20c.org/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/madriddocumentjapanesetranslation.pdf>



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