Japan’s architecture is deeply rooted in its history and religion. Traditional Japanese architecture received its influence from the Chinese who, during the Asuka period (538-710), brought with it the worship of kami, spirits that can manifest in nature as elements of the landscape. In Shintoism, kami is said to be of nature rather than separate from nature, which alludes to Japan’s reverence for all that is natural.\(^1\) This reverence can be displayed in two ways: first, through traditional Japanese architectural elements that create flow between exterior and interior spaces, allowing for a relationship between man and the environment; this relationship is possible due to Japan’s temperate climate, as spaces can be kept closed or opened up depending on the temperature.\(^2\) Second and more prominently, this reverence can be presented through the use of a natural building material like wood, which is especially common in traditional Japanese architecture.

This project identifies several key traditional architectural elements such as the engawa, a covered exterior corridor that runs around the outside of a building’s main space and acts as an extension of the interior space, that help to foster this inside-outside relationship. It also explores Japanese wooden construction and the traditional practice of carpentry, with a focus on traditional wooden joints through literature review and analysis of case studies of traditional shrines and modern wooden buildings. Utilizing my research and analysis, I incorporated these architectural elements and use of wooden joinery to develop a structural and design proposal for the Nitobe Inazo Memorial Hall in Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan.

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