

A study on contemporary Japanese architectural design : ephemeral space and fragmented urbanity

Zgheib, Hani

<https://doi.org/10.11501/3181877>

出版情報 : 九州芸術工科大学, 2000, 博士 (工学) , 課程博士
バージョン :
権利関係 :

CHAPTER 4.

RITUALS: THE ACT OF BUILDING

1. INTRODUCTION

Japan, like no other country, presents a cultural dual structure where sacred structures made of straw, reeds and bamboo co-exist with up-to-date technology. Intriguing at first, and after a thorough study, we realize a close connection between the concepts of traditional rites, architecture and the urban environment.

As we saw in Chapter 3, the Japanese traditions, compared to those of western societies, tend to place more value on the invisible tradition, and that the Japanese perceive their built environment through their activities, not through the physical presence. However, through some special performances, or rituals, we could see the reasons behind this attitude. And also, through deeper understanding of the origins of these activities and their symbols, we could understand further the invisible tradition. Numerous methods are possible for the study of *matsuri*, among them the traditional method of investigating the history of the festival. But some researches, including this one, have attempted to approach the study of *matsuri* not merely as a problem of history, but of function, namely the way in which the *matsuri* influences or operates on the people involved.

In this chapter a study is done on some of the primitive rituals that bear with them the concepts of place making. These rituals still exist now and I think they have a great effect on contemporary Japanese perception of space, thus the city and architecture. We should always keep in mind the ephemeral space and the apparent chaos of the city and architecture, which is the subject of our research. And by studying some of the rituals, the intention is to reveal the connection between them and the main subject.

The act of binding, or the tying of the sacred rope (*shime*), and the act of producing festivals (*matsuri*) are the traditional rites subject of study in this chapter.

The ceremonial festival, with the special way people are involved, could bear some concepts explaining the Japanese behavior towards the city and their activity in their environment, and consequently the way they conceive architecture.

2. ANALYSIS

2.1. The Mythology

In one of the oldest written documents recording the legends and myths of Japanese history, the Nihonshoki (compiled circa 720), it is said of the Japanese archipelago: "In that Land, there were numerous deities (or spirits) that shone with a luster like that of fireflies, and evil deities that buzzed like flies. There were also trees and herbs that could speak."

This passage reflects the spirit of Shinto, which centered around the presence of *kami*, the divine ancestral spirits, and their life-giving powers. Inherent to Shinto ideology is the belief that all perceptive beings are the common offspring of *kami*, and therefore are strong with their spiritual force and presence. Shinto, "The Way of the Gods", considered uniquely Japanese, is not so much a religion as a complex of beliefs that has remained relatively unaltered through time. With the practice of proper rites and celebrations, a spiritual harmony is maintained that assures the human community of a secure existence. The individual, as a result, becomes but one link in an infinitely larger chain of life.

Shinto's roots can be traced to the early Japanese agricultural population. They were in wonder and fear of the mysteries of nature; these were explained by the existence of *kami*. *Kami* also served to explain the creation of the world: "... in the beginning men and animals were gods, and plants and rocks had speech." *Kami* existed in the service of the community too, and each clan associated itself with a particular deity (*ujigami*).

In the early stages of Shinto worship, prayers and the expression of gratitude on the part of the living were addressed directly to nature and none of the symbolic repositories of the spirit, such as shrines, that are associated with Shinto today, were needed. *Kami* were believed to live in remote places and only visited human society on select occasions. Prior to important festivals or rites, an *iwasaka* (a sacred area marked off by a stone) or a *himorogi* (a symbolic square demarcated with straw ropes hung between four posts) was erected for the *kami* to inhabit. (Fig. 4.1, 4.2) The desire to capture and contain the holy power of the deity was a primary motive.

Another familiar Shinto element is the *shimenawa*, the tying of the sacred rope. The *shimenawa* is hung on rocks, trees, shrine structures, and in private residences in order to expel evil spirits and to protect against religious impurity. (Fig. 4.3, 4.4)

2.2. Micro Scale

Gunter Nitschke ¹ provides evidence to show that primitive man staked out his bit of land with bound bundles of grass which, in time assumed such importance that they were deified. And their creation, use and subsequent destruction were ritualized, developing eventually into the many varied and complicated Shinto and Buddhist festivals of Japan today.

Building is primary in the evolution of man; religion, secondary. Etymologically, religion hints at an act of binding. And binding seems to have been one of the earliest constructive skills which man acquired in his evolution.

From the Japanese perspective this is hardly a revolutionary statement. As Nitschke argues, it can hardly be an accident that:

- 1) In ancient Japanese language one and the same word stands for binding, occupying, signifying, and fencing off a sacred area.²
- 2) Some of the oldest gods of indigenous Japanese myths are gods of binding.
- 3) Even today a Shinto ritual always, even sometimes in a hidden form, comprises an act of binding and/or unbinding of a sacred artifact or offering.
- 4) The earliest buildings in Japan, as reconstructed by archeologists, as well as some of the temporary structures still erected in the backcountry are held together only by binding.

As we saw, according to the Shinto religion, the gods, *kami*, reside in the invisible depths of the mountains or the sea. And they manifest themselves for a brief period of time when they come and visit a particular location in the world of the living. The tying of the sacred rope (*shimenawa*) inscribes the territory and indicates its occupation by the *kami*, and also denotes the temporality of the event that takes place within that territory. From the simple act of tying a sacred rope a divine space, a 'place', is created.³

The temporality here is expressed in two ways.

1. The purpose of the construction is to allow a temporal event materialized in the symbolic function of the structure itself, the event being the temporal occupation of the location by the *kami*.
2. The construction itself is executed as a temporary act in reference to the technique, being dismantled or untied, and to the materials being perishable (rope, wood, grass, straw, etc.).

Therefore, we can say that temporality is constructed, and that the act of tying the rope (*shime*) transforms a simple human action, through the creation of a place, into an architectural conceptualization.

The constructed temporality involves two constant elements: the construction technique and the place.

1. The construction technique, the tying of the rope, indicates the use of minimum temporary perishable things (rope, wood, grass, straw, etc.) and the precision of the binding method, performed by specialized Shinto priests in a ceremonial way. The technique and the method of construction are entirely independent from any specific place. They are applied anywhere, in the same manner. The location itself is not relevant as much as the event that denotes it. The technique and the method involve the minimum elements, and the construction is 'placeless'.
2. The place is achieved in terms of its temporal potential capacity rather than an actual lasting object. It is through the intervention of the construction, the tying of the rope, that the place is really actualized, though temporarily. It is through the use of temporal material that temporary structures are conceived, leading to an ever-changing notion of place.

The act of making architecture in Japan could be seen as a similar concept of the process of demarcation and occupation found in the process of *shimenawa*. The distinction of what is constructed and conceived is the manner of assembling the material in order to produce a meaning-generating condition. The material remains a light instrument of various possibilities of construction, of making a 'place' irrespective of location. The concept of this construction

bears the notions of the territorial demarcation and temporal occupation of the 'place', reflective of the idea of *shimenawa*.

2.3. Medium Scale

I will refer in this paragraph to some findings by Japanese scholars who affirm that the spiritual and ritual, thus intangible, origins of architecture in Japan precede and define the physical construction.

A number of points demonstrate the similarities between the concept of *shime* and the typical idea of Japanese architecture. The most relevant is the notion of "Shared Space" in domestic architecture intended by Mitsuo Inoue ⁴. For him, the interior space in Japanese architecture was conceived traditionally as a domain, not only reserved for humans, but also deities and ancestral spirits. In this respect, the house represents a sacred and physical structure. (Fig. 4.5)

And according to Sakae Mogi,⁵ the shrine is not the only ritual site for the performance of certain festivals. In fact, it was formerly performed at the individual homes of families that had made serious religious prayers to the deity in time of crisis. And that fact indicates that the spatial relationship of *kami* and Buddhas within the home is connected to their relationship within the space of the village. The *kamidana* (the Shinto god shelf) and the *butsudan* (the Buddhist family altar) often coexist inside the house, although there are differences in their spatial arrangement within the home depending on the geographical area.

One interesting example taken from Sakae Mogi's research ⁶ is the Festival of Purification at Tenryu Village, Nagano Prefecture. The *tatami* mats in front of the *kamidana* were removed so as to allow the bare floor to be used for dancing, a religious performance called *Kake Odori*. A fireplace was opened in the middle of the floor and used to heat the cauldron for the ritual of boiling water, while the neighboring room was used as a backstage area. In turn, the audience sat in the lower drawing room during the performance of the rituals. In short, the spatial arrangement of *kami* and buddhas within the traditional setting of old homes was determined on the basis of a consideration for the Festival of Purification within the village.

According to Toshiaki Harada,⁷ shrine architecture is not as old as it seems. The architecture did not exist from the original establishment of the shrine. Originally, the majorities of shrines had no permanent architecture, but were provided merely with such facilities as a *himorogi* (divine tree) or *iwasaka* (divine stone) at which periodic worship was performed. As people lead their lives within a society, it is certain that they come to recognize a center to their spiritual union; the life of the society comes to be regulated by that center, and follows that center. And the physical space, which became the fixed locale for their rituals, was what is called now the *ujigami* shrine. Even if its exterior form was not necessarily one that our current common sense would call a 'shrine', it nonetheless was a location for the observance of religious ceremonies, namely ritual worship. In short, the worship of a deity was not dependent on the prior existence of a physical structure as became common in later shrine architecture.

If these facts are correct, is it then the case that the *ujigami* shrine is merely something optional which can be established voluntarily in terms of time and space, in accord with the desires of the people of the community?

In fact, these community rituals have their significance in the prognostication of abundant crops and the celebration of harvest. These rites are observed as communal activities with the *kami*, at places appropriate to the public life of the residents.

The locales in which such deities are worshiped form the original significance of the 'shrine'. Such locales did not necessitate physical buildings, and it was moreover considered sufficient to invoke the deity's presence merely for the duration of the festival.

2.4. Macro scale

The analysis of Japanese festivals, *matsuri*, carries with it many of the concepts discussed earlier and extends the debate to the city level. *Matsuri* is a wide subject by itself and could be a subject for an extensive research later. However, it is imperative to mention some of symbolic and religious aspects in order to understand further the hidden order that we are looking for.

The case of the *Hakata Gion Yamakasa* festival will be examined here.

2.4.a. Building Process

Matsuri, or festival, according to Toshiaki Harada,⁸ is essentially a matter of purification. Through *matsuri* one is restored to the state of *ke*, or filled with divine life energy, dispelling the state of *ke-gare*, the accumulation of impurities through exhaustion. The notion is also related by Hiroko Yoshino to the original Japanese creation myth involving the descent of the gods to the profane world and their subsequent return to sacred world after death. *Matsuri* is also a process of political integration, incorporating the original shrine, clan shrine, as well as a state visit to the City Hall and paying respect to the prominent personalities of the town.

Portable shrines, or *mikoshi*, stand at the center of about 80% of Japanese festivals today. Originally, it imitates in miniature the symbolic construction of a shrine.⁹ In the case of the *Hakata Gion Yamakasa Matsuri* in Fukuoka, every year, portable shrines are built from temporal material like wood, rope, straw (perishable elements of the environment) and carried through the neighborhood to entertain the gods. It is more than just a parade or procession, it is a ritual and manifestation of the presence of the *kami*. A lot of religious performances, energy, money and time are spent during the two weeks of preparation and training. (Fig. 4.6 ~ 4.11)

The building process of the *mikoshi* is a challenging task for the few remaining craftsmen. The technique is highly sophisticated and depends on good craftsmanship. Although it is built of light and perishable materials, the tying and the way to assemble the *mikoshi* is the real challenge. By the time the assemblage is finished, the *mikoshi* weighs a little more than one ton. The huge wooden one-ton festival floats are completed with model figures and other sacred elements. On one side of the model is a sacred figure built on a large

scale, on the other side a contemporary or fictional figure is built, which is usually inspired from the Japanese cartoons (*manga*) in order to keep the children attracted to the festival.

2.4.b. Order Reappears

Professional Shinto priests perform ritual acts and prayers through all the phases of the preparations, which go on for two weeks. Blessing is performed for the parts before they are used and the people who are participating in the holy task of carrying the *mikoshi*. The blessing is applied also for the built *mikoshi* and the places it will visit.

The older men transmit the knowledge of the rituals and the social customs of the festival to the young men of the community and who vigilantly watch the playing out of the ceremonies. The festival stitches a bond between the older and the younger generation, reconstituting a communal spirit.

At the time of the festival, the entire town re-organizes itself into *chonai* system of the feudal period for the preparation and performance of a grand two-week religious festival. Through this festival, the entire community renews its traditional roots in a way that appears mythical to the modern Western mind.¹⁰

The portable shrine is carried through the town to entertain the gods, and brought to rest in the streets to spread the energy of the *kami* and encourage prosperity. These festivals enliven space by reinvesting it with sacred significance: space and time become one and the same through participation in the festival. As time is suspended, public space adopts its own form irrespective of its workaday uses.

Although it is a temporary structure, it still maintains an aura of dominance in the minds of the participants who, by ritual re-enactment of the procession through the neighborhood, understand a hierarchical relationship of the spaces of the town with the revival of the *matsuri*. The actual configuration of the town, thus the visible public space, loses its meaning, allowing for the hidden order to appear again. (Fig. 4.12, 4.13)

The axial organization of the town with no visually apparent endpoints would appear to signify the lack of importance of spatial limits to the town. To the Japanese, however, spatial discovery is one of sequence from the part to the whole, the parts being united into a whole by the festival. The idea of sequence in a spatial context derives from the practice of purification, in which one progresses by degrees from one stage to the next. This sequence occurs in time as well as in space. From the time of everyday activities to the time of festivities, when through an act of purification, life energy is restored for the working days ahead and the space of the town is unified, so that it can again work in its individual parts. (Fig. 4.14)

Victor Turner¹¹ speaks of everyday structure, of our everyday lives, against which the period of *matsuri* would represent a completely different order, one that he calls “antistructure”, the emergence of a different world. However, while it is understandable how that other world comes about in the sense of structure, the problem of why it is that this antistructure totally disrupting the everyday order emerges in the middle of *matsuri*.

In fact, we could also speak of a hidden structure reappearing, instead of an antistructure. The real structure that appears once a year during the time of *matsuri* reveals that the apparent structure of everyday life is a flowing temporary one. The ‘Sea of Signs’ reflected in

architecture is very much related to the ambiguity of limits between reality and fiction, as we saw in Chapter 3.

2.4.c. Urban Performance

The *matsuri* is a ritual that mobilizes a large number of people, incorporating frequent ceremonial aspects while simultaneously adding elements of recreation, so that the overall tone becomes one of a kind of celebration or rejoicing.

When a festival is viewed in particular as a kind of drama, or performance, we have to ask what kind of plot, or scenario it depicts, and from there investigate where the essential nature of the festival, its essential characteristics are revealed.

Minoru Sonoda ¹² made the following observation about the recent tendencies of the *matsuri*:

Just a short time ago, it seemed that the movement marching under the banner of 'modernization' would sweep all before it, and the foolish excitement of *matsuri* was one of the victims of that movement. There was a tendency to add easy rationalization to anything appearing to be beyond the reach of rational understanding. And as a result, many aspects of *matsuri* ended up being transformed into cold, lifeless formalities. On the other hand, recent years have seen a number of new kinds of foolish excitement gain the popular imagination.

The condition of carnival chaos based on the crowd is by no means something limited to a small number of especially large festivals. In most popularly celebrated festivals, it is a certainty that this aspect will appear at some point or place. On the contrary, when someone says *matsuri*, the image of a kind of disordered craziness is in general the more common perception. Festivals involve an extravagant expenditure of dazzling sound, color and energy. People anticipate becoming crazily intoxicated on the festival itself.

William Currie ¹³ sums it up very well:

"...Carnivals and street fairs were not new to me, nor were outdoors religious festivals and processions. But the mixture of the sacred and the profane, the solemn and the earthy, rich symbolism and loud bargaining, this was something I had not experienced before. I had the feeling that if one could understand the spirit of *matsuri*, then one would have gone a long way toward understanding the Japanese way of looking at the world ..."¹⁴

When *matsuri* is viewed structurally, it can be seen to involve dualism, or a situation comprised of opposed elements. At the same time, when we look near the end of Currie's description, he talks about the vivid colorfulness, the wildness of the *mikoshi* procession, the sounds of drum, or the beauty of the Chinese lanterns. In other words, rather than merely a matter of structure, there seems to be a kind of raw experience into which such elements themselves draw participants and observers as well. In other words, when we take up the problem of *matsuri*, rather than as a matter of religious faith, it is in the form of sensations that the phenomenon is recorded in our memories. As a result, we could say that many aspects of present-day *matsuri* involve problems of the senses.

It is worth noting that the festivals of Christianity in the West have become extremely abstract.¹⁵ And in the process of abstraction such festivals, rather than having become detached from symbols, they have become separated from the senses.

On the fifteenth day, the festival reaches its highest point. At which time the men, hoarse from shouting, exhausted from pulling their wagons and intoxicated with rice wine (*sake*), carry the floats and race at the break of dawn. A tremendous energy is released over the entire town. This ritual allows each participant, in the image of a holy fighter, to transcend his limited existence in an ecstatic union with the gods and his comrades. Late in the morning, as the floats are returned to their neighborhoods, a tremendous silence falls over the town and the gods return to their mountains. The festival has come to an end and the energy of the town has been recovered and renewed.

We can see how the power of games overcomes in some aspects the holiness of the occasion. The huge dolls carried on the *mikoshi* represent images of religious meaning on one side and an image of children cartoons on the other side. Also, how the men are described as holy fighters integrating in the act, separating them from their everyday activities. Ritual is mixed with play. We can recall the Urban Theater discussed in Chapter 3 and how the built environment becomes a game of signs. If we consider the *mikoshi* as a construction, the similarity could be perceived.

2.4.d. Temporal Borders

The concept of temporal and ephemeral construction in Japan is extended to the city. As we saw, the Japanese cities lack civic spaces with a monumental character in the form we are used to seeing in the West. So public spaces exist in the arrangement of the city as a whole, and enter the collective memory of the citizens through the activity of the *matsuri*, the festival.

The festival perfectly reveals the spatial context of areas surviving from past eras. Sacred spaces as well as the often-unremarkable spatial composition of the neighborhood are vividly brought to life through the festival. Although the portable shrine is, like the *shimenawa*, a temporary structure, it maintains an effect of dominance in the minds of the participants. This space relationship is a product of the collective memory of these people. The whole neighborhood becomes the 'place' created by this temporal and ephemeral construction. At the end of the festival the shrine is dismantled. The festival has ended, and the energy of the town has been renewed.

The concept of temporality of the city can be perceived in two ways:

1. The city itself being temporal, or considered temporal. As we saw before, many factors allow this idea (the physical change due to repeated disasters and vulnerable wooden constructions, the way of occupying the city as a sequence of places achieved through movement and the type of activities in a vivid stage-like atmosphere).
2. The city houses temporal events, like the *matsuri*, performed by the people and regardless of the temporal configuration of the neighborhood. Here again, the concept of *shime* is defined. A temporal construction (the city) is being determined by temporal events (*matsuri*, life activities).

It is worth noting also that the *matsuri* discussed earlier, and which continue unchanged from the past, are viewed as a joining of man and nature through ritual. They represent the central act of worship that renews ties with the spiritual world.¹⁶

The *shime* is erected to welcome the deity to earth, and after the end of the festival thanks are offered to the deity as it leaves the earth again.¹⁷ In other words, it can be said that it is the *shime* that represents the deity in his sojourn in Fukuoka during the *Yamakasa* festival. Noting that no sense of tension or excitement is created like that seen in the movement of the *mikoshi*. The *shime* is a more abstract and vague representation of the sacred. Namely, the *shime* can be considered a symbol of the city,¹⁸ in this case Fukuoka, as a united whole.

The whole city becomes a temporal moving realm whose borders are not physically defined. The borders are connected with time, i.e. the temporal delineation of limits experienced during *matsuri*. Architecture finds itself caught up, or should we say free, in this fiction domain, the city.

Even physical constructed architecture gives way voluntarily to the flow of the festival. A good example is the Nakasu area in Fukuoka. In the path of the festival, a new commercial complex was built, Hakata Riverain. In order to let the path of the *mikoshi* clear, a passage was designed in order for the procession to be able to visit a neighboring shrine. Since the unity of the complex is needed, a bridge was designed. During the festival, the bridge is elevated and the passage is clear. (Fig. 4.15 ~ 4.18)

The design of the new commercial complex gave way to a ritual that takes place once a year. A good example how contemporary design can allow the traditions to go undisturbed.

The procession is undisturbed and the *mikoshi* is dismantled for to restart the whole energy the following year. (Fig. 4.19, 4.20)

3. SYNTHESIS

So far we have seen the following temporal elements that constitute the Japanese rites:

Shimenawa This rope can set apart an object or space, at any possible scale, from an otherwise profane environment, forever or only temporarily. If one hangs such a straw rope once a year over one's entrance or around one's premises, this not only sanctifies one's property for the next year, but in addition it invites a deity representing time, the *toshi-gami*, the Year God. Thus by a spatial manipulation, by an act of binding, one is capable of representing and sanctifying, and what is even more important, of measuring and renewing time.

Mikoshi: the visual embodiment of a Shinto deity during the time of its festival.

Matsuri Ritual Path and Ritual Place at the festival are far from being accidental. They often delineate the growth form of the physical structure of the town otherwise difficult to recognize, like the build-up of the procession itself expresses the social organization of the community.

Ritual signs in the form of banners, lanterns and ritual ropes mark the paths, the places and the temporary headquarters of the seven groups to which the community subdivides itself for the time of the festival.

How do they affect the perception of space in Japan?

Human history knows of two patterns to represent the sacred by building:

- 1) The tradition of the pyramids and cathedrals, i.e. the practice of forcing the most durable material the earth had to offer man into ideal and often colossal forms, which then served him as images of the eternal, the timeless and constant in opposition to his own impermanence. Here time was defeated by the seeming timelessness of the material, the stone, iron etc. and by the ideal quality of its form, mostly geometry.
- 2) The tradition of the bundle of grass or the crown of flowers, i.e. not to allow time to leave traces on his sacred built images. Man himself destroyed them shortly after their completion and ritual use. Then he could afford to build them of grass, straw, reeds, flowers etc., that is, the most impermanent material at his disposal at any one time and place. A sacred and often secret order watched over arbitrary changes of the form and the manipulation of these sacred artifacts. Through the trick of ritual renewal at fixed intervals the sacred would appear. Thus, copying, not only inventing, has a sacred foundation, justification and long tradition.

One can probably claim that to date Japan shows few attempts to build monuments for eternity, to outwit time by the seeming durability of certain materials. The phenomenon of cyclic renewal of human artifacts must have pervaded nearly all scales of human building operations. Even whole capitals in Japan were once subject to renewal with the accession of a new ruler.

From the Japanese perspective, forms made of the most impermanent materials are probably far older than objects archeology had been interested in so far. Because of their material quality, these forms are subject to constant renewal, and moreover, because of their inherent sacred character, subject to isomorphic copying. Even some of the oldest of them already show imprints, which can only have been earned through techniques of binding, knotting or folding.

4. CONCLUSION

Two concepts of Japanese space perception have been extensively discussed by many researchers. But after studying the rituals, let's try to see these concepts again through the angle of temporality issued from the above rituals.

KAIWAI

Space in Japan is defined by time and ritual, and festal rites involve elaborate symbolic temporary constructions. A public space in Japan is rarely conceived of as hard bordered, but rather as *kaiwai*, or an activity space. Public spaces exist in the arrangement of the city or town as a whole, and enter the collective memory of the citizens as a function of the festival.

We can see how the Japanese might think of physical spaces, through the way of everyday activity and the way of the festival as a fluctuation of spaces which are defined by their activities rather than their visual order.

Kaiwai, or activity space, unlike the visually defined spaces of the West, is an amorphous sense of space that changes with the activities of its users and their intentions. The street is the locus of the *matsuri* experience and gains its form from the memory imprinted on it by the people of the community. The street is not seen simply as a corridor of vehicular or pedestrian traffic, but as the connector of private and social space. It is a spatial mode of social integration, characterized by layering function and experience, the basis and culmination of which the experience of *matsuri* during which the environment is charged and infused with the mystical *kami* energy. The public spaces are the streets rather than a central square because the Japanese perception of street and private spaces is a part of an integral space-time continuum or *ma*. Life is seen as a process of ebb and flow, rather than a series of events; it changes metamorphically just as nature does from season to season, age to age, birth to death, in endless rhythms of renewal.

In order to understand the actual state of architecture in Japan, one has to go back to the origins. The life cycle of Japanese cities creates a special frame for the architecture concepts. It is an architecture created by the people's memories rather than constructed places. It is a 'placeless' architecture, detached from the physical sense, and related to the signs of the mind.

MA

Japanese *ma*, or space-time relation, is not fragmented, labeled and contained like space in the West, but is rather an emptiness or void that gains its form only in relation to unseen boundaries created by the activities performed in it.

Space-time referred by architects is a sort of spatial current, a combination of spacing and timing as a constant flow of possibilities, a tension between things allowing for different patterns of interpretation. A Japanese room, for instance, can be used simultaneously for living, sleeping and eating, and is called an eight mat *ma*. Or, the context of space might change from a study to one for a tea ceremony by the addition of a flower arrangement. These

artifacts are a 'bringing together' of the space with the utensils, giving the spatial current its temporary form. Like the form of a stream, the form of spaces in a house is the result of process patterns. In fact, Kikutake Kiyonori ¹⁹ has said that form is not merely the visible delineation of a space but is rather the total consideration of space with its function. *Ma* is constantly awaiting or undergoing transformation by the availability of physical components and potential uses. Kikutake is recognizing process patterns rather than objects.

The interval of Shinto is therefore closely bound to the intervals of nature, which cause fields to yield the harvest and then to lie in fallow. The Shinto deities are invited for the season of fertility, production and harvest to an impermanent resting-place in the fields. This temporary resting-place for the deities might be symbolized by a straw rope hung between four bamboo saplings set up in a rice field. While the deities are invisible, the way of formalizing and experiencing their presence is postulated by the temporary preparation of a space for the gods to visit. The void in the rice field created by these four saplings (or symbols) is then filled with the spiritual form of the deities called *ki*. The presence of this spiritual force spreads out and transforms the fields, temporarily, from a profane place for growing rice to a sacred place for the deities to rest. The sense of *ma* here, too, is therefore indefinite and temporary, like that of the eight-mat room which can be transformed by sliding doors and the addition of various accoutrements to take on one form after another.

More difficult to understand, however, is the lack of Japanese civic spaces with a monumental character typical of the West. Japan does have great temples and shrines which are, in many ways, equal in scale and grandeur to western architecture. There are also great open spaces in front of and around buildings. Yet these spaces were to be experienced by moving through them rather than by viewing them from a fixed vantage point. "Sequential spaces may be understood as a distribution of memories of the experience, noting that the content of memory includes not only the beauty of physical space, but also the story, or legend concerning the elements along the path",²⁰ reflective of the activity of the *matsuri*.

The procession route can lie at a right angle or parallel to the everyday route and in this way the path of the gods is an interpretation to the normal activities of the town and therefore lends itself better to a remembrance of the mythical past. The shift to accommodate the gods signals the cleansing of the town from all blemishes and the recovery of the life energy necessary for the period of prosperity and growth in the streets. During the festival, workaday time is suspended to renew its original meaning. The Japanese do not experience space and time as objective detached observers, but are fully involved in them. The Japanese, in experiencing their town spaces sequentially, are renewed and invigorated by the healing actions of the parts as they are magically and mystically subsumed into the human psyche at festival time.²¹

The similarities between the concepts discussed above and contemporary Japanese architecture can now be revealed:

1. The temporal materials being used in the making of the space for the gods to visit could be compared to the contemporary light materials used today. The contemporary temporality here is a feeling evoked by the use of these materials and, sometimes, also their short life span. Architecture is becoming this temporal realm for activities that are renewed periodically.

2. The fact that this construction (*mikoshi*) is built and, after being used, demolished makes it easier for us to understand the acceptance of physical change by Japanese designers. Temporality of construction is a way of thinking. The construction's meaning and function are more significant than its life span.
3. The city, being a temporal frame for this activity brings to mind the new primitivism discussed earlier where life of people is in flux and the physical space tends to lose its meaning. The city becomes like a huge *shimenawa* space created for activities.
4. The ambiguity between reality and fiction through the mixture of rituals and games, the structure and the anti-structure, the everyday order and the temporal order, during the festival. The Urban Theater and the Sea of Signs find their origins.

5. NOTES

- ⁽¹⁾ Gunter Nitschke, Shime, Binding/Unbinding, In *Architectural Design*, no. 12, 1974
- ⁽²⁾ Gunter Nitschke argues that, in etymological investigations, he went back to the verbal form of ancient world. The key terms of his theory are:
- Shimeru* (old Japanese: *Shimaru*): to bind, to close, to sum up.
 - Shimeru* (old Japanese: *Shimu*): to occupy.
 - Shimesu* (old Japanese: same): to signify.
- ⁽³⁾ Vladimir Krstic, In *Architectural Design*, Sept./Oct. 1998, pp. 10-15
- ⁽⁴⁾ Mitsuo Inoue, *Space In Japanese Architecture*, Weatherhill, New York, 1974
- ⁽⁵⁾ Sakae Mogi, Religious Space in the Village as Seen through Festival and Legend, In *Matsuri, Festival and Rite in Japanese life*, Institute of Japanese Culture and Classics, Kokugakuin University, Tokyo, 1988
- ⁽⁶⁾ Ibid.
- ⁽⁷⁾ Toshiaki Harada, Op. Cit. Toshiaki Harada, The Origin of Rites of Worship within The Local Community, In *Matsuri, Festival and Rite in Japanese life*, Institute of Japanese Culture and Classics, Kokugakuin University, Tokyo, 1988
- ⁽⁸⁾ Ibid.
- ⁽⁹⁾ F. Thompson, In *Architectural Review*, Oct. 1997, pp. 78-83
- ⁽¹⁰⁾ It is worth mentioning the Japanese system of *Sha*. It is close to being somewhat an obscure phenomenon in Japanese society. For instance, in Japan, business companies of all kinds are called *kai-sha* where *kai* simply means an association. Members of a company are called *shai-in* and the president *sha-cho*. In Hakata, community participant members are called *sha-in* and their leader, *sha-cho*. This seems to suggest that, in Japan, even a business company is a quasi-religious group held together by a religious sentiment towards their common shrine, the company. From this perspective it is not surprising that Japanese workers are loyal to their companies, and there are very few strikes in the country. After F. Thompson, Ibid.
- ⁽¹¹⁾ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process*, Adline, Chicago, 1969
- ⁽¹²⁾ Minoru Sonoda, Festival and Sacred Transgression, In *Matsuri, Festival and Rite in Japanese life*, Institute of Japanese Culture and Classics, Kokugakuin University, Tokyo, 1988
- ⁽¹³⁾ William Currie, "Matsuri", In *A Hundred Things Japanese*, Japan Culture Institute, Tokyo, 1969. This book is issued by the Japan Culture Institute and in which foreigners with an interest in Japan were asked to write about various aspects of Japanese culture.
- ⁽¹⁴⁾ Ibid.
- ⁽¹⁵⁾ Keiichi Yanagawa, The Sensation of Matsuri, In *Matsuri, Festival and Rite in Japanese life*, Institute of Japanese Culture and Classics, Kokugakuin University, Tokyo, 1988
- ⁽¹⁶⁾ Amy Reigle Newland, *Tokyo: Form and Spirit*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, 1986, pp. 98, 99
- ⁽¹⁷⁾ Hirochika Nakamaki, Divine Symbols in Japanese Festivals, In *Matsuri, Festival and Rite in Japanese life*, Institute of Japanese Culture and Classics, Kokugakuin University, Tokyo, 1988
- ⁽¹⁸⁾ Ibid.
- ⁽¹⁹⁾ Kiyonori Kikutake, *World Architecture 2*, pp. 10-19, 26-27
- ⁽²⁰⁾ Teiji Itoh, *The Japanese Approach to Urban Space*, Tokyo, 1973, p.109
- ⁽²¹⁾ F. Thompson, Op. Cit.

6. GRAPHS AND FIGURES



Fig. 4.1. With the *shimenawa*, or the tying of a sacred rope, a space called *iwasaka* (a sacred area marked off by a stone) is constructed. It is a temporal space, where the gods descend for a brief period of time.

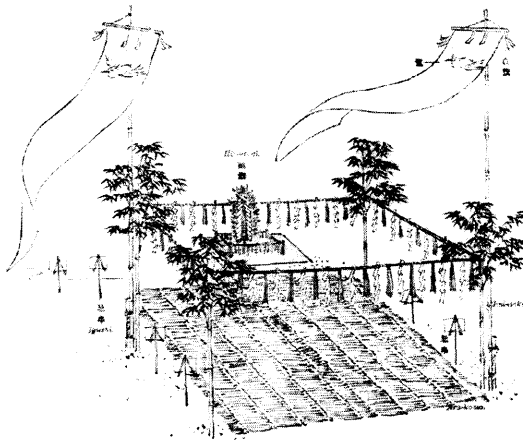


Fig. 4.2. *himorogi* (a symbolic square demarcated with straw ropes hung between four posts) was erected for the *kami* to inhabit. Perishable materials, through human action, are transformed into an architectural conceptualization. The desire to capture and contain the holy power of the deity was a primary motive.

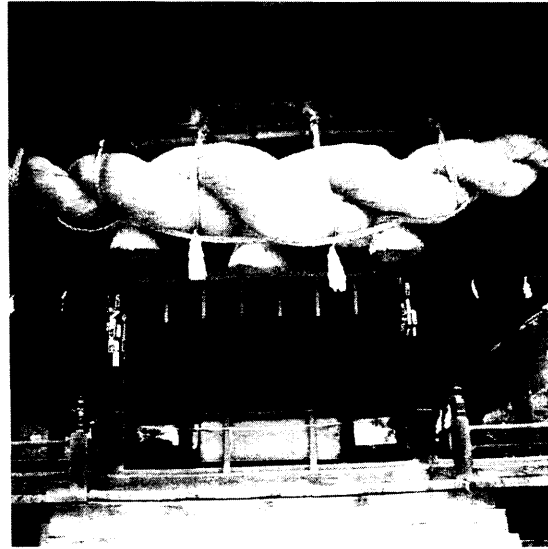


Fig. 4.3, 4.4. Different types of *shimenawa*, defining a sacred space.

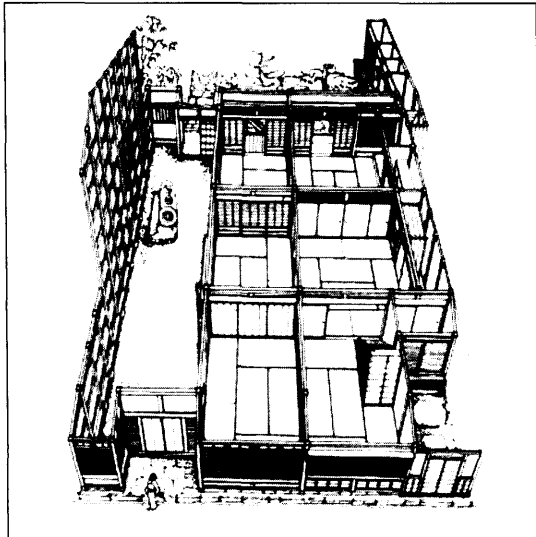


Fig. 4.5. Traditional interior space, a domain created for humans and also for ancestral spirits, according to Mitsuo Inoue.



Fig. 4.6, 4.7. The blessing of the parts that will form the *mikoshi*, the portable shrine. Also the blessing of the people who will engage in the activity. It is expected that the gods will occupy the *mikoshi* and the people using it and, therefore, the entire neighborhood as they move in it.

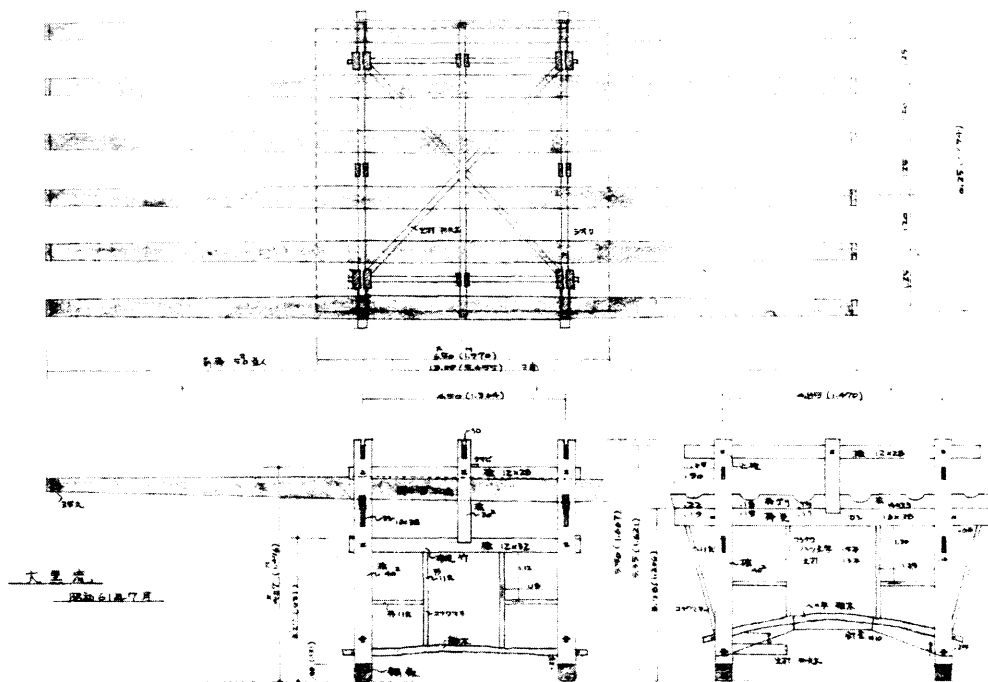


Fig. 4.8. Building the *mikoshi* requires a lot of effort and a preciously rare skill. It is a perfectly balanced and aesthetic architectural work.



Fig. 4.9. The *mikoshi* is built with high precision craftsmanship, transferred from one generation to the next. In the same manner as the building craftsmanship.



Fig. 4.10, 4.11. Although the *mikoshi* is built of temporal material, it is a high precision temporal shrine. A lot of energy is spent to build it. It weighs a little more than one ton.



Fig. 4.12, 4.13. The *mikoshi* is carried through the neighborhood to entertain the gods. The traditional space composition is temporarily brought to life. The whole town becomes the temporal frame for this temporal religious activity.

現在の流

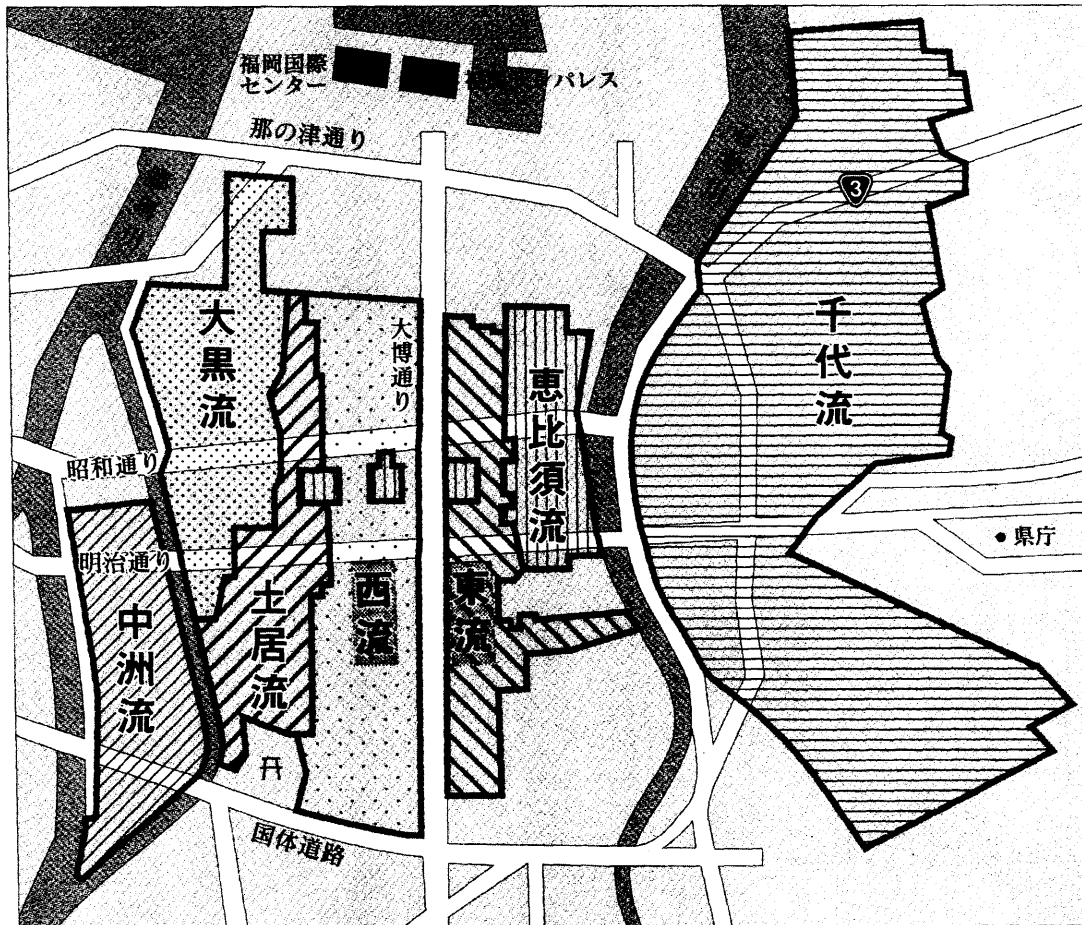


Fig. 4.14. The town is divided into *chonai*. These neighborhoods are decided by the people, independently from the actual configuration of the town. The memory of the people is activated and defies the physical configuration.

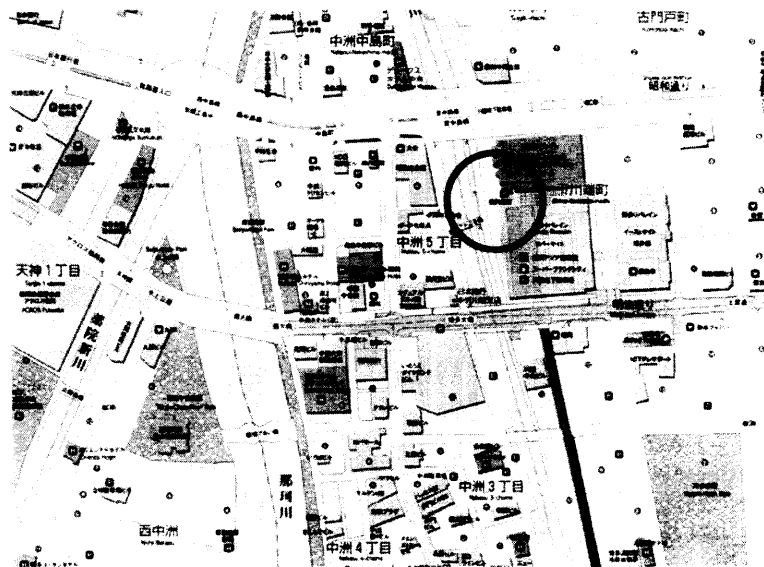
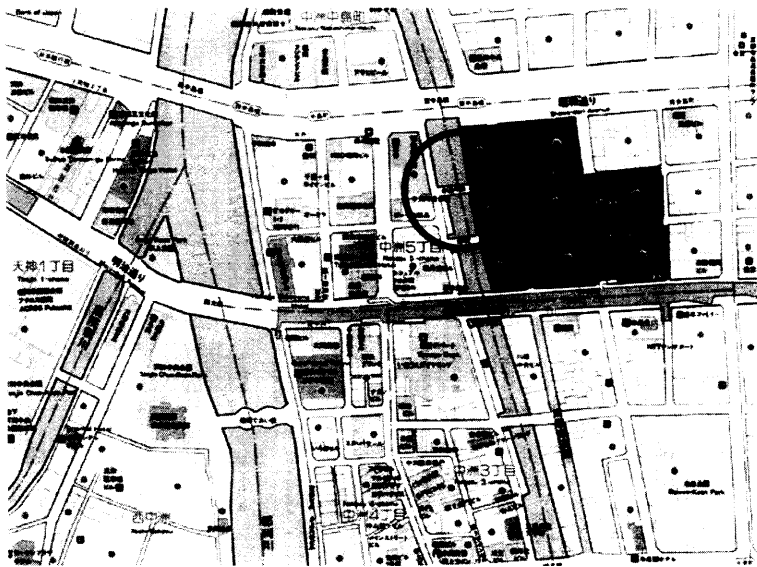


Fig. 4.15. (above) the area before the Riverain complex was built.

Fig. 4.16. (below) the area after the Riverain complex was built.

The circle indicates the location of the shrine to be visited.

Nakasu, part of Hakata, where the *matsuri* takes place and the processions are held. In order not to change the path of the *mikoshi*, a passage was included in the design of the new Riverain complex. The *mikoshi* can always visit the shrine that was kept in place.



Fig. 4.17, 4.18. In the passage created between the two parts of the building, a bridge was designed to allow continuity in the divided complex. However, the bridge is a movable one in order to allow the procession undisturbed. And since the *mikoshi* represents a temporal shrine, it should not be covered at all.



Fig. 4.19, 4.20. At the end of the festival, the *mikoshi* is dismantled. This is another way of discovering the spatial perception of space in Japan. Space is perceived through rituals and events, not through its physical components. The festival has ended and the energy of the town is restored.