

THE  
OF  
MODERN  
ARCHITECTURE

MAKING  
A  
JAPANESE  
TECTURE

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1868 TO THE PRESENT

# 8 | A New Dialogue with Tradition

## TOWN AND COUNTRY

Whereas for Tange sheer increase in the number and size of metropolitan areas outweighed all other considerations, such as the effects of depopulation of the countryside, another way of looking at the far-reaching experience of demographic shifts since before World War II would involve noting interaction between urban and rural lifestyles (fig. 8.1). From a purely demographic point of view, the statistics themselves were more dramatic than any kind of self-consciously futuristic imagery they could have inspired in urban architecture or cityscape. In fact, during the past sixty years of the present Showa reign, the relative proportion of city to country dwellers in Japan has been exactly reversed. Thus, some ninety million people, or 77 percent of the nation's total population, now live in the cities—a reversal similar to that which took place in Britain during the nineteenth century.

The number of urban inhabitants in Japan is at present greater than the entire population of the eastern seaboard of the United States. More than a third of these ninety million people are concentrated in the Tokyo region, including areas of neighboring prefectures. The metropolitan area as a whole is about the size of Northern Ireland or the state of Connecticut. Elsewhere in the country, the Osaka region in central Japan contains about a fifth of the total urban population. The Shizuoka Prefecture area, between Tokyo and Nagoya, and the island of Kyushu in southern Japan each account for a further tenth, with the remainder divided between smaller urbanized areas in other regions. This overall urban population represents a somewhat higher than average percentage for the industrialized nations and double that for the world as a whole.

Nevertheless, in 1950, roughly two-thirds of the Japanese population was still engaged in agriculture and fishing, a proportion comparable to that of the rural population of the United States in 1890. Tokyo itself at that time still contained only six million inhabitants. By 1970 this figure had doubled, and the Tokyo region, or commuting area, contained twenty-one million inhabitants. Tokyo, like other urbanized districts in Japan, is a relatively compact city with strong central area(s) and generally high densities. However, in certain downtown areas the absence, until recently, of high-rise structures preserved exceptionally low densities in comparison with cities in the rest of the developed world. The three central wards of Tokyo, therefore, still contain far fewer persons per square kilometer than either central Paris or Manhattan. On

the other hand, millions in nearby areas are housed at densities easily matching either of those great cities. Most significantly of all, *average* densities far higher than those of either greater Paris or New York extend over an area covering thousands of square kilometers of the Tokyo region.

In the domain of architecture, those very same municipalities up and down the country that rejected any notion of comprehensive planning (the major exception was Nagoya) competed during the 1950s and 1960s to commission and build concert halls and auditoriums, sports facilities, libraries, and municipal offices. Initially, these works responded to the "urban core" formulae advanced by CIAM, as carried over into the theory of Kenzo Tange and others. Communities of all sizes came to acquire "monuments" on a scale which even the country's major cities had barely possessed before the war. But, unlike the builders of Japan's medieval defenses, for example, the originators of the new, mainly sub-Corbusian "Japan Style" had few sizable precincts of unbuilt land at their disposal by which to isolate and enframe their works. All the same, agricultural plots in the surroundings of towns and cities, the numerous bombed and burned-out sites left by the war, and the overall vernacular character of even urbanized districts invested the new reinforced-concrete architecture with impressive vistas and contrasts. The general architectural quality of these works was high, as was their level of craftsmanship, and they provided excellent fodder for architectural journals at home as well as abroad.

Soon, however, infill of empty sites, disappearance of old-style gardens, and building-over of agricultural lands on the outskirts of towns began to occur as expanding urban growth reflected newfound prosperity. With amazing rapidity, existing towns, which till the war had consisted of one- or two-story wooden buildings, presently displayed structures having three or more stories, which, of necessity, were built of reinforced concrete. Therefore, today, buildings of the redoubtable Japan Style live on in the pages of all the old architectural journals of the period while becoming increasingly blurred in their real context.

Another factor diminishing the real impact of the architecture of the immediate postwar period was sociologically derived. Namely, by the late 1950s, cultural optimism associated with the war's end and a renewal of democratic institutions had reverted to an identifiable pattern of political and economic interests. Since 1955 Japan has been continuously ruled by a conservative Liberal Democratic Party, strongly



8.1. View of Shinohara's Umbrella House under construction in Nerima Ward, Tokyo, 1961. See also figures 8.23–24.

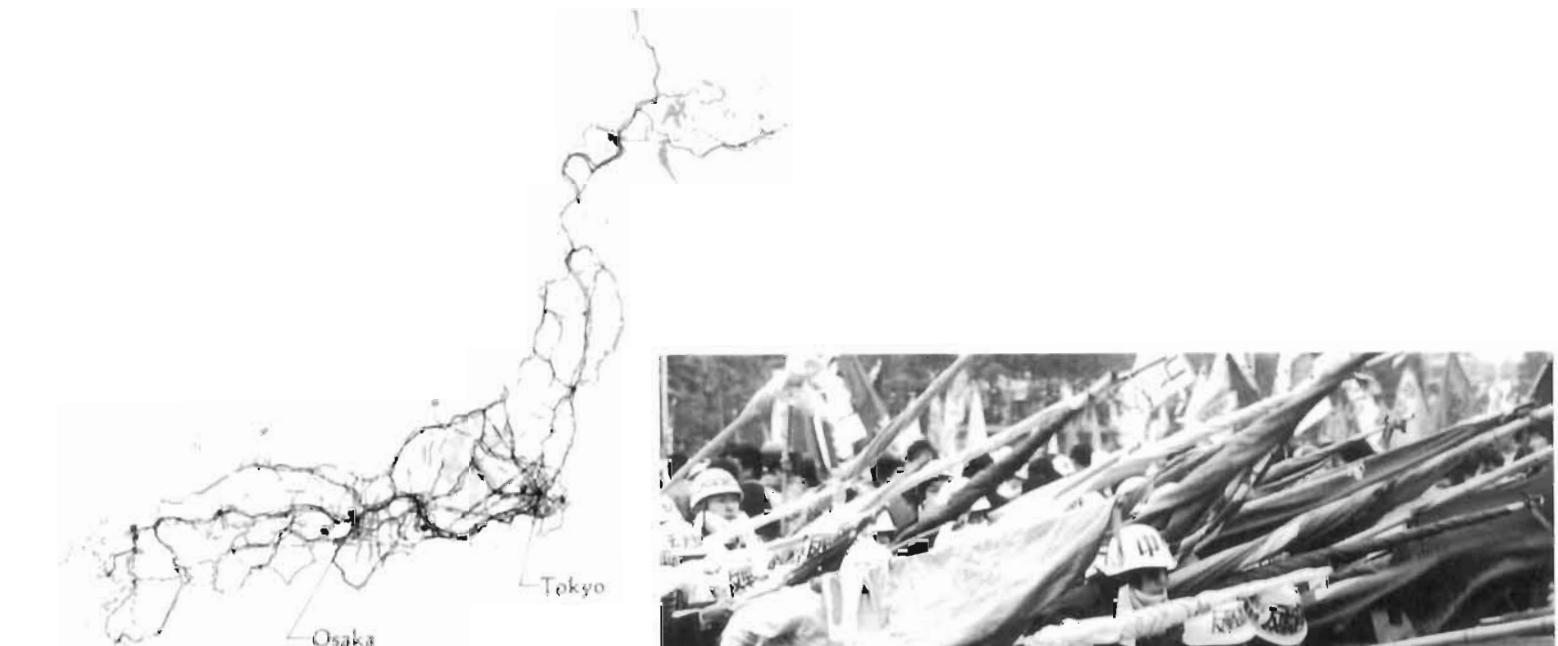
representative of both rural and big-business interests. For the most part its elected officials were content to delegate responsibility for physical planning to a technically oriented bureaucracy anxious not to disturb the status quo. But notably—as in the field of transportation planning—newly created ad hoc authorities were also given a good deal of power. In fact, the jurisdiction of such planning bodies was habitually ill-defined; frequently conflicts of interest arose at the local level, and due process was more often than not ignored. Yet, too little was understood about the relation of planning matters to architecture for the formation of much organized opposition. Moreover, the public-works bias inherited from the previous century was combined with notions of American postwar urban-renewal strategies. Even if one does not believe the latter to have been misguided, it remains difficult to imagine such an approach being made to work successfully under Japanese conditions.

Still, it appears that the Japanese were saved from certain fatal errors by their relative lack of choice in accepting densities imposed by the urban explosion with which they were faced. Thus, as long as basic services are maintained at a high level in urban communities, as at present, much of the population is insulated from such disruptions as major traffic arteries by virtue of sheer density of low-rise settlement, while residing in comparative—if cramped—comfort. On the other hand,

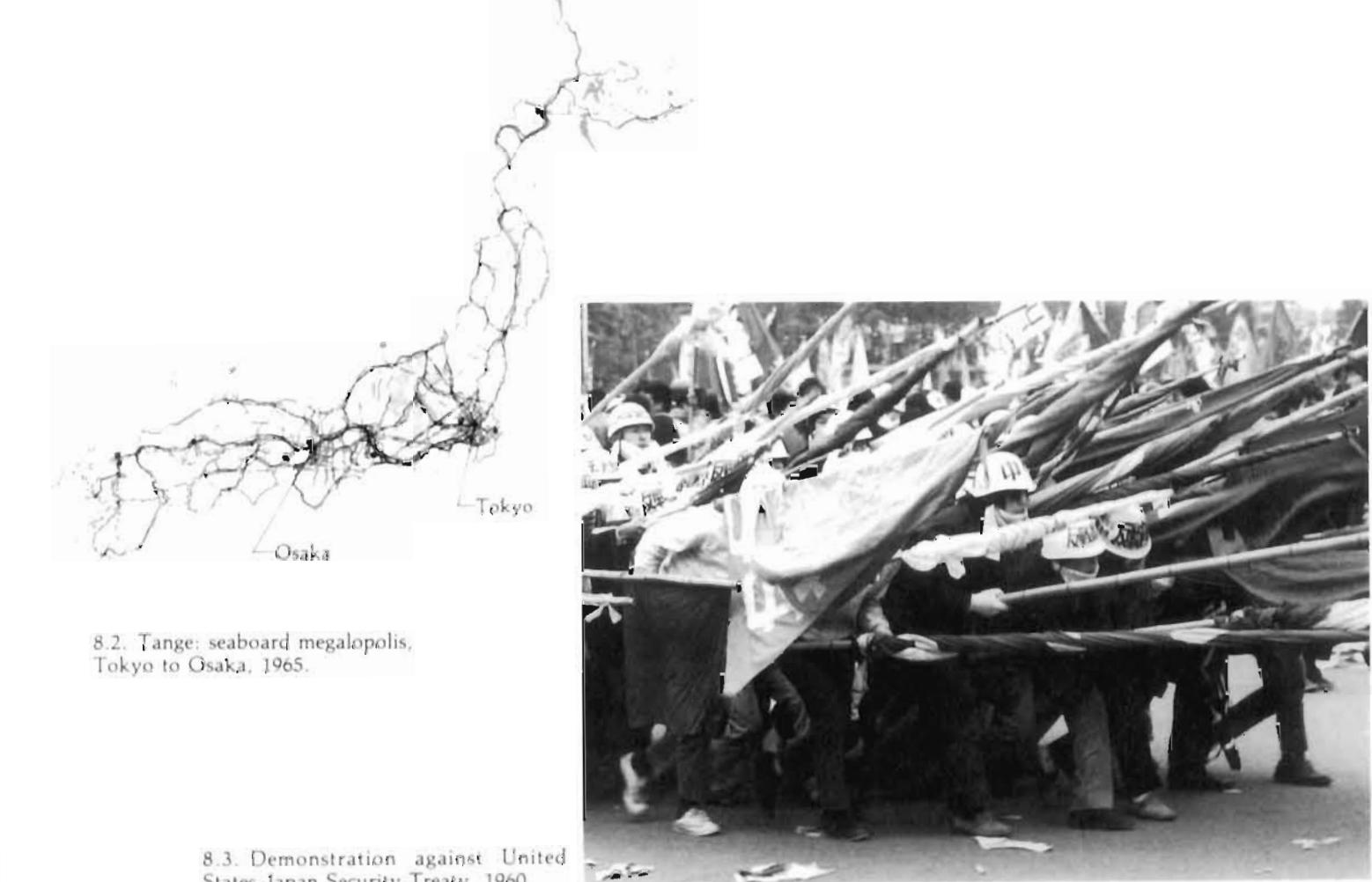
Neither complete Haussmannization, nor even a thorough Manhattanizing, such as has occurred in postwar Greater Paris or still more recently in the San Francisco Bay Area, has obtained in Japan. At a national level, centralization of bureaucratic functions is so much a fact of life—just as in the private sphere—that no further elaboration of the principle by “art” has ever been deemed necessary. In Tokyo, survival of the old “garden-mosaic” pattern, itself a result of political centralization, permitted gradual yet insatiable development of southern and western districts which today constitute the diplomatic enclave. Now that central neighborhoods are themselves being filled with new skyscrapers, it is most of all the advent of middle-rise construction in the more densely inhabited suburban areas that poses the greatest threat to amenities. In addition, peak-hour transport capacity to the city center over acceptable commuting distances remains inadequate by Western standards, though in all other respects level of service is remarkable. Inevitably, however, the single worst aspect of the entire picture is nowadays the amount required for permanent new housing investment per family as a percentage of total income, owing to persistent densification of existing urbanized areas. Theoretically, it was these two inadequacies,

prehensive planning, such as the attempt made after the Great Kanto Earthquake to rationalize circulation. Population concentration and plain traditionalism are the accountable factors, as well as a cautious husbanding of spatial resources originally induced by scarcity of suitable farming terrain. On the other hand, it has been estimated that in spite of a more than fourfold population increase since the end of the Tokugawa period, the expansion of cultivated land during the last hundred years has not on average exceeded one-half of 1 percent a year. It is, therefore, not a little irrational that the old attitudes continue to influence perception of land use in newly urbanizing areas augmented by a tax structure which privileges the agricultural use of all land, wheresoever located. Yet one happy result—however anomalous to Western views—has been that, even as the metropolis swallows up outlying districts, these have kept a common homogeneous pattern of familiarity and ease. The Japanese metropolis retains, then, an analogy with nineteenth-century European towns as being a collection of continuous yet distinct villages. This medieval conception of the city remained a unifying feature in force all over Europe until baroque planning principles replaced and finally destroyed it—an eventual triumph by Haussmannization.

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8.2. Tange: seaboard megalopolis, Tokyo to Osaka, 1965.



8.3. Demonstration against United States-Japan Security Treaty, 1960.

transportation and housing, that might have been alleviated—if not completely overcome—in a second grand proposal made by Tange, this time for a seaboard megalopolis (fig. 8.2) extending from Tokyo in the east to Osaka in the west. The scheme first received overseas publicity at an International Symposium on Regional Development organized in Hakone, near Mt. Fuji, in 1967, although Tange's ideas had been previously published in the national press.<sup>1</sup>

However, just as in Tange's earlier Tokyo Plan of 1960 (see fig. 7.20), initial costs would have been astronomic and the requisite technology of doubtful feasibility. All such radically utopian schemes end up providing an orchestration of images, motifs, and themes around which the aims of the establishment they seem to oppose crystallize with characteristic efficiency of purpose. The net result, as happened with Metabolism, too, is a limited progress in terms of “style” or vocabulary accompanied by a substantial growth of vested interests.

**LE CORBUSIER'S PARENTAGE OF THE JAPAN STYLE**  
A quarter of a century later, it seems mandatory to recall that the celebration of artistic companionability at the World Design Conference held in Tokyo in 1960 contrasted sharply with protest against renewal of the United States-Japan Security Pact the same year (fig. 8.3). Eventually, more than five million demonstrators turned out to contest the ratification of this treaty, marking the outburst as the largest popular movement since the war. The psychological breach became more firmly established as Japan's power in the economic sphere evolved and the conservatism of her political establishment was openly accepted as a fact of life; disenchantment and frustration among intellectuals reached a high point in

the futile revolt of the universities later in the decade. Out of all this emerged a more skeptical generation of architects for whom the vernacularized late-modern idiom of the Japan Style still exerted a formal attraction, but in a context largely deprived of meaning. Thus, as social goals of the protest movement aborted, the expected pursuit by younger men of the “architect's modern” practiced by Maekawa, Tange, and others was subtly undermined. In brief, events of the sixties imposed a tacit recognition that a specifically Japanese “new tradition” was as empty as Antonin Raymond had warned.

It is remarkable, all the same, how the richly personalized style of Le Corbusier came close to putting down roots, perhaps for the very reason that—as exemplified at Chandigarh—his vision never corresponded with a particularized view of place or culture. On the contrary, his concept of the Radiant City as a “rational and poetic monument set up in the midst of contingencies”<sup>2</sup>—though it might contradict Japanese sensibilities—would never prove thoroughly alien in the milieu of an industrialized, or industrializing, cultural setting. Yet the solutions self-styled by Le Corbusier as “Cartesian,” from his early *ville contemporaine* onward, stem from a principle of radical doubt which Asian philosophies, in their unscathed preindustrial existence, do not share. Such systems, in other words, disregard the contradiction between metaphysics and science embodied in Descartes' conviction that the world can only be known through the mind. For Le Corbusier—builder, planner, and, hence, demiurge—regarded the “environment: places, peoples, cultures, topographies, climates” as unspecified and ambiguously “contingent”—both a realm of chance prior to necessity and a wealth of resources subject to liberation by modern technology. This technology he saw to be univer-

sal, eagerly assuming that an absolute belief and a uniform material culture would flow from its application. And over all would reign Art.

From a similar Cartesian base, Jean-Paul Sartre had also constructed his conception of the work of art as a flight from contingency, like Keats's Grecian urn. But, in the event, Le Corbusier stopped short of the celebrated Sartrian formula of existence itself as radical contingency. At the same time he offered the Radiant City not, in Sartre's manner, as an agonized existential choice but as an inevitable one. For Le Corbusier "contingency" indicates either whatever is accidental or superfluous (and, therefore, dependent on something else) or, instead, a contribution or resource (from which something else may be created). The Radiant City is poised dazzlingly, therefore, as a mediating term between these worlds, a product of the three human characteristics: reason, destiny, and passion.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, and above all, it is "a manifestation of the human spirit itself: geometry."<sup>4</sup> Geometry, and the ideal city, must afford a "bearable" and "acceptable" alternative to the "chaos" of a not always perceptible "mathematics of the universe."<sup>5</sup>

The Athens Charter tends to play down these ideologically aggrandizing aspects of city-building, and it is curious that Le Corbusier seems ever to have believed that such notions could find sufficient, as well as necessary, expression in mere "plans." Not until the elaboration of the acropolis at Chandigarh, more than twenty years later, did a geometrically fashioned town schema yield its final lyrical convergence of passion and destiny with reason in an array of urban monuments. So it is of exceptional interest that the building, or rather project, of Le Corbusier's which Kenzo Tange seized on when still a student—the so-called Palace of the Soviets (see fig. 7.8)—is exactly the kind of building that would have afforded a similar focus. On the other hand, the Moscow scheme played on a combination of technical virtuosity, imposed by its vastness, and a specified (i.e., Marxist) ideological bias and impact. Neither of these elements could satisfy the passion for a kind of universal poetry to which Le Corbusier acceded in the passages from *La Ville Radieuse* I refer to above.

Nor does the projected Palace of the Soviets presage those forms subsequently mediated by Surrealism via Le Corbusier's own painting. In keeping with this experience—and except for certain elements of pure pastiche—Tange's architecture, like that of his teacher, Maekawa, for the most part stops short at the prewar phase of Le Corbusier's development. In terms of urban planning, a similar lack of development en-

snares the very work of Le Corbusier himself, who shows little progress in this field after the great functionalist, utopian setpieces of the 1920s and their reelaboration in his work of the 1930s.

There is, however, a particular quality which unifies and distinguishes the works of Tange and other Japan Style practitioners in purely formal terms. Partially ignoring Le Corbusier's pursuit of ever more dynamically sculptured three-dimensional forms, his Japanese followers exhibit a specific concern for *matière* which originates in, but goes beyond, the work of the French architect except for his chapel at Ronchamp. Much of the best building in Japan during the postwar period has a kind of calligraphic aptness that an overconcern for three-dimensional form would have vitiated. In the best cases, such works read as giant glyphs in a way that ties them more to contemporary painting than to architecture. It was just this quality that made such buildings as the Tange town hall for Kurashiki (1960) and his stadia for the Olympic games in 1964 photograph so beautifully (see fig. 8.57), even if this appeal has by now worn somewhat thin. In visual terms Tange's famous model of the plan for Tokyo displays a similar liveliness. Yet, if the works of the Japan Style could be painterly and even picturesque—terms which Le Corbusier's own works do not evoke—it was nevertheless through Le Corbusier that the Japanese discovered a working manner that allowed for augmentation in value under artisan standards at a time when labor was still cheaper than industrialized materials.

#### THE NEXT STEP

Le Corbusier's example, unquestionably then, provided the basis for the tradition out of which the next step evolved. The relevant general questions asked by the upcoming generation were:

- (1) What is concrete?
- (2) How may we best understand the great Le Corbusier?
- (3) How can Le Corbusier be reconciled with Japanese methods?

Nothing in this triad of rhetorical demands posed by younger architects born in the thirties relates explicitly to Le Corbusier's concern with urban planning, which, gradually, after Marseilles and Chandigarh, became part and parcel of his architecture. Several loopholes—like the epithet "great," the notion of reconciliation, and the vagueness implied in the term "Japanese methods"—might have permitted inclusion of an

urban theses. On the other hand, urban considerations could just as easily be ignored in the best Japanese tradition of straightforward avoidance of all the conventional planning strategies.<sup>7</sup> Most significantly of all, however, it is the spatial implications of Le Corbusier's work, be these "urban" or purely architectural, that were missing from Japanese emulation of his work. Possibly no one was more aware of their inability to deal with such spatial issues than Japanese architects themselves. Their lack of experience in these matters was mercifully bypassed on account of the simplified nature of the International Style, with its emphasis on volumes plotted on a system of points and bounded by plain two-dimensional surfaces. The relative and uncomplicated superficiality of such modern "spatial" containers invariably calls to mind the traditional Japanese post-and-beam system of construction with its lath-and-clay infill and papered apertures. This coincidental resemblance was intuitively recognized on the Japanese side a half century back and took on the appearance and value of a research datum. And it is clearly, too, a research-oriented approach that inspired those three questions typifying the reception of Le Corbusier's postwar turnabout in style among Japanese architects. In the final analysis, moreover, the revolution in Le Corbusier's concept and manner provoked a definite crisis within modernism, one for which the Japanese were no better prepared than, say, the Americans.

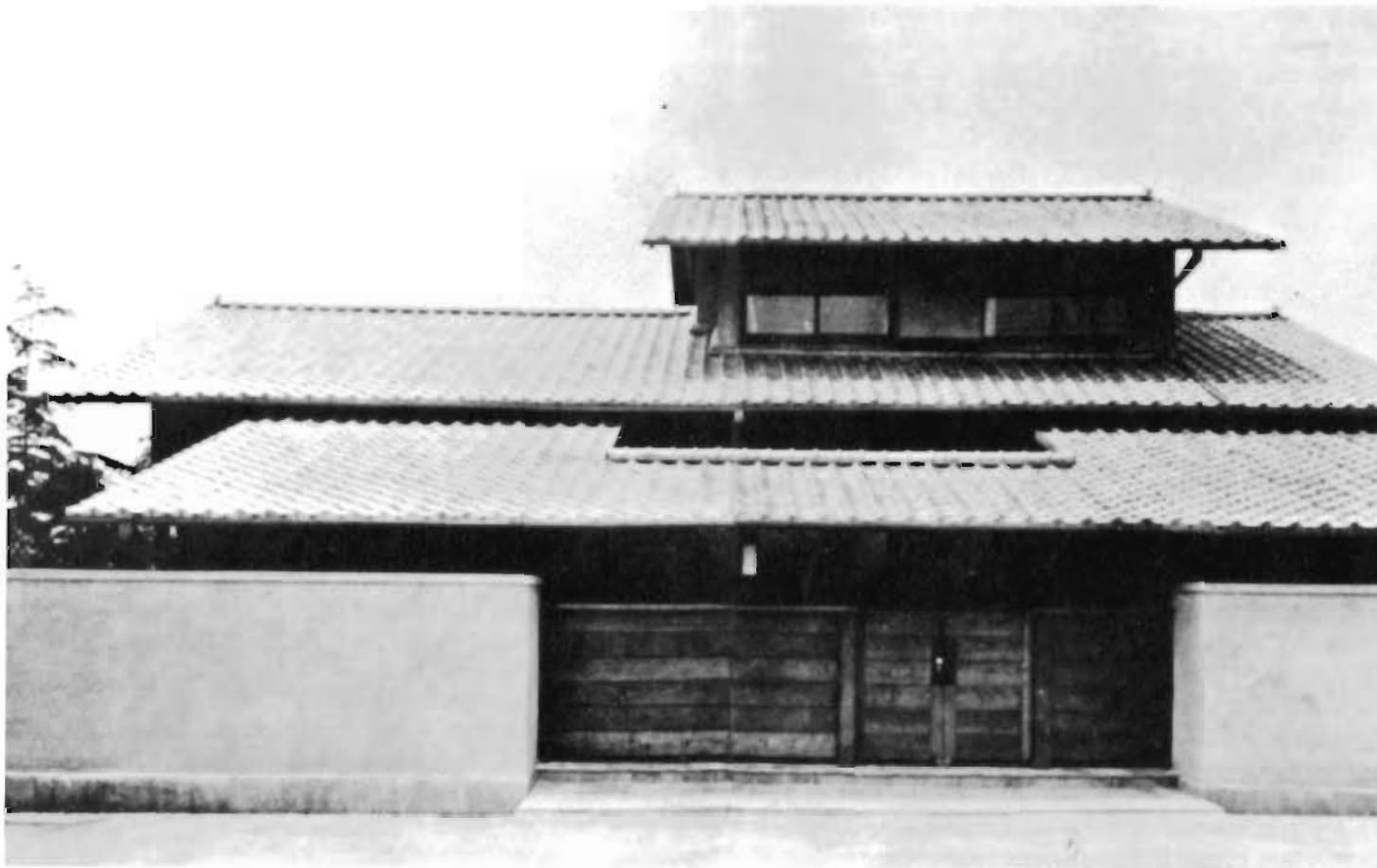
On the one hand, Japanese architects, on account of earthquake risk, were in a position to produce the heavy concrete work elicited—mainly for aesthetic reasons—by this Corbusian revolution. In America, a similarly labor-intensive structural apparatus could not have been rendered cost-effective in most cases. But, quite apart from that, in Japan new access to long-untapped reserves of national tradition had paradoxically been opened up by the war. This circumstance radically influenced the way in which Japanese were able to respond to the new architectural challenge that was bound up, just as throughout Europe, with a process of national reconstruction. It could be that eradication of military government in the aftermath of the Japanese defeat produced a wave of nostalgia for a past society and its lifestyle. In addition the war effort had long before made manufactured materials unavailable for ordinary building purposes, and by the end of the war even wood was temporarily unobtainable. However, official promotion of wooden-construction techniques in place of steel during the years of Sino-Japanese conflict in the late thirties stood architects in good stead in

the immediate postwar years. At this time, established architects such as Maekawa first worked in wood, but turned to concrete as soon as it became once more available, together with reinforcing in sufficient quality and quantity.

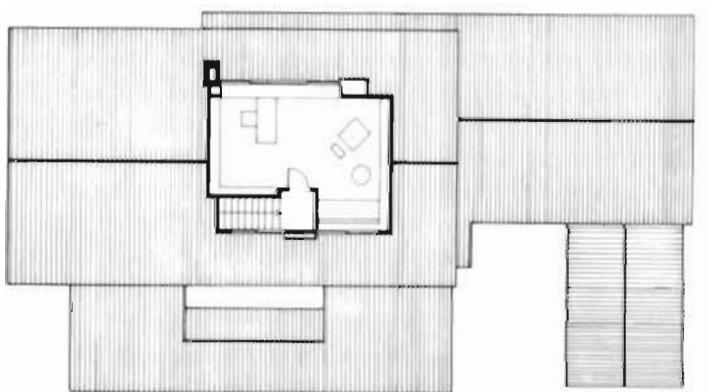
To a certain extent, and notably in the early postwar style of Kenzo Tange, these two building methods came to be conflated. This certainly provided one source of the fascination that the Japan Style exercised on foreigners, and well into the 1970s examples (increasingly bordering on a tongue-in-cheek parody of the national past in a mixed style) could be pointed out. There is a sense, too, in which the postwar mixed style may have been a natural outgrowth of the *sukiya* style itself, since the tea aesthetic had always encouraged traditional use of unfamiliar elements, as well as unfamiliar employment of old and tried devices. In later feudal times, moreover, *sukiya* evolved from the cloistered, hothouse environment of the tea ceremony, where it had originated, to the mercantile culture of the burgeoning towns. The merchant quarters were less severely affected by sumptuary laws such as those governing architectural expression among hereditary nobility and samurai until the start of the Meiji period. Thus, in commercial and entertainment districts there existed, well before the modern age, a repository of innovative uses—in restaurants, teahouses, and private dwellings—where tradition had either pushed the conventions of serious representation to their limits or shortcircuited these altogether.

In terms of building aesthetics, the reforming attitude of the Modern Movement should have put paid to such delightful practices. In fact the phase of expressionism had contributed to further dalliance. It is such byplay—as the German visitors Bruno Taut and later Walter Gropius were particularly quick to notice—that seems most deep-rooted and typical in the Japanese approach. Or so it was at least when ceremonial purposes, governed as these have always been by sumptuary considerations, are not at stake. Nor, of course, is one concerned here with religious architecture. It is, therefore, first of all the *sukiya* style and its derivatives which must figure in any discussion of the new access to tradition, whether mediated by a forced return to wooden construction at the start of the war or more complex psychological causes.

In my belief, substantial (as opposed to mere superficial and trifling) gains accrued out of this investigation of traditional means in residential architecture, and not in public building—even if such a judgment excludes many of the acknowledged masterpieces of the so-called Japan Style. The default of the pre-Olympics style has already been discussed



8.4. Maekawa: Kasama House, Komaba, Tokyo, 1938. Facade.



8.5. Maekawa: Kasama House, Komaba, Tokyo, 1938. Plans.

briefly with regard to external, that is, urban, considerations; the matter of housing is the reverse of this coin. Postwar building in Japan discriminates between public and private spheres in a way that has increased with the advance of the modern era. No one inside the country can remain unaware of this conclusively alienating phenomenon, if only in terms of the shrinking size of individual dwellings and splendid isolation of most public facilities. Moreover, there is some attempt to camouflage the disturbing qualitative rupture between public and private domains as a traditional virtue, beginning possibly with a misunderstanding of the philosopher Teisuro Watsuji's<sup>8</sup> comments on cities and housing in the early Showa period.

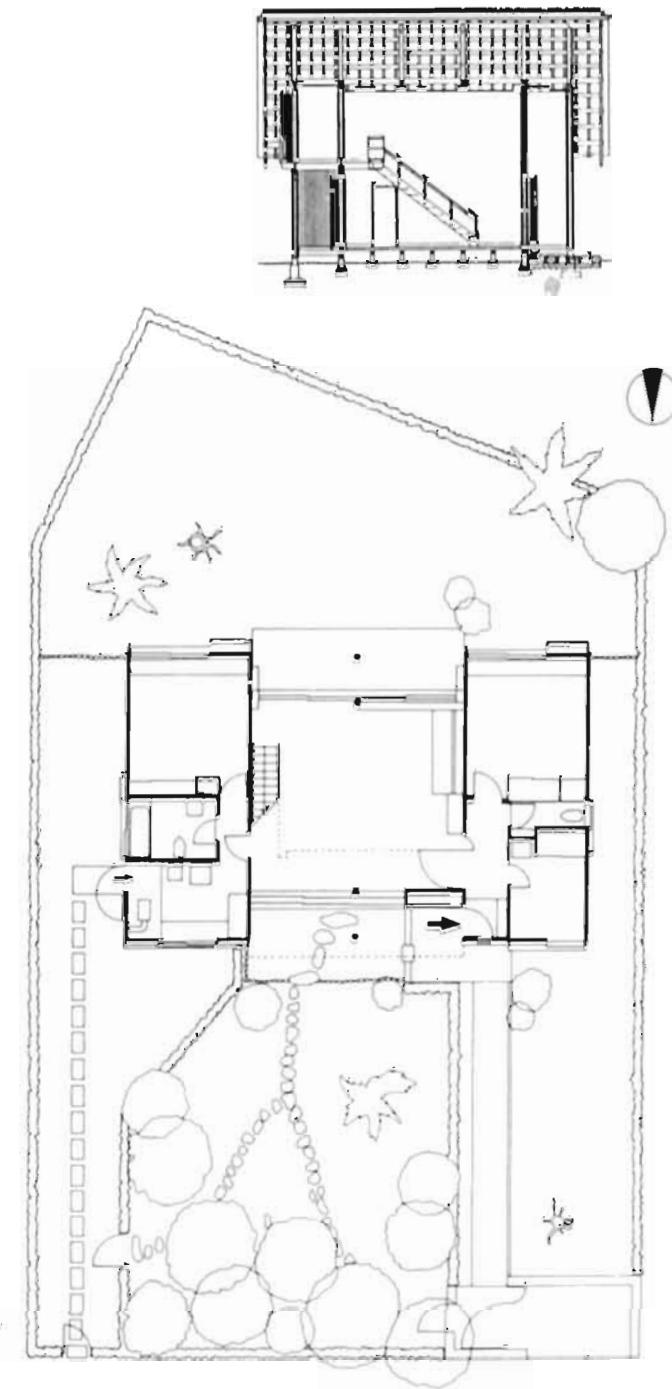
#### HOME FRONT

After the war the Japan Style proceeded for the most part to ignore the lack of any specific and localizable urban dimension in Japanese cities—already singled out as an issue by Watsuji in 1935. If we admit the importance of the traditional distinction Watsuji cites between the “house” and the “outside,” one way out of this double bind seemed to lie in upgrading the resources of the home by making it more traditional. Antonin Raymond was clearly thinking along these lines in his large joint-style residences before the war, but also in his vacation house at Karuizawa (see figs. 6.40–42). So, it seems, was Tange's teacher, Hideto Kishida, at the Imperial University, and at the same institution another historian-architect-professor, Chuta Ito, from an even earlier date. Finally, in Kyoto, Taut's great friend Koiji Fujii's Japanese-style houses go back to the early 1920s.

Just before the war, neotraditional themes were embodied in works by Kunio Maekawa. Both his Kasama House of 1938 (figs. 8.4–5) in the Komaba district of Tokyo, supervised by the young Tange, and his own residence (figs. 8.6–7) of 1940–41 in Meguro are representative of a simplified and



8.6. Maekawa: the architect's house, Meguro, Tokyo, 1940–41. Facade.



8.7. Maekawa: the architect's house, Meguro, Tokyo, 1940–41. Plan and section.

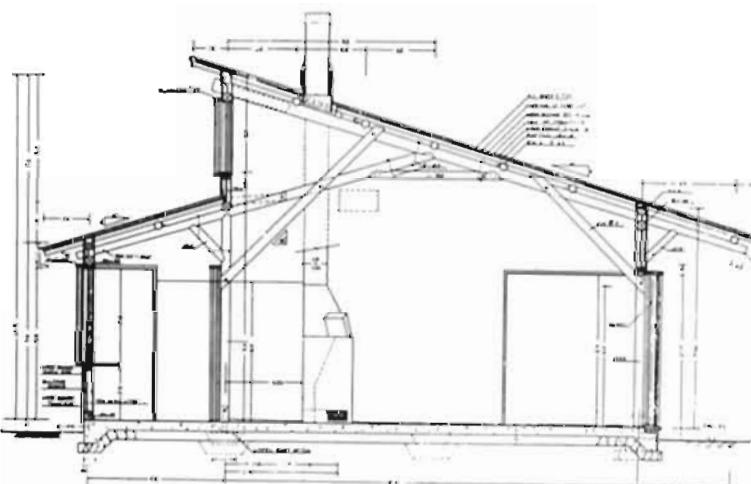
generalized, yet unorthodox, traditional Japanese aesthetic. Maekawa's robust version of this idiom was made possible by his five-year association with the Raymond office and with Junzo Yoshimura, who had joined Raymond as early as 1926, when still an undergraduate. At the time the Kasama House was erected, Yoshimura was with his employer in the United States, where he remained almost until the outbreak of the war. Raymond acknowledges his help with an unidentified house at Montauk Point, Long Island, referred to as “one of the earliest houses with definite Japanese influence but properly adapted to American conditions.”<sup>9</sup> The interior of Raymond's big vernacular farmhouse at New Hope in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, was also partially remodeled in Japanese style during 1939, and Maekawa could not have been ignorant of such developments. Raymond reimported a similar idiom with him when he returned to Japan. The Saloman House in Shibuya of 1952, Raymond's own new home and office in Shibuya of the following year (figs.

8.8–10), and the nearby St. Alban's Church of 1955 were all executed in a related style. A hallmark of this Japanese manner Raymond derived with Yoshimura's help is its unsquared beams—a usage now touched with a more urbane flair than in the rustic prewar Karuizawa context. Notably at variance with orthodox traditional ideas are the round columns between sliding paper-covered shoji screens as well as the exposed diagonal exterior bracing, both of which can already be observed in Maekawa's own house of 1941.

The 1950s was also the decade of a series of so-called case-study houses built in answer to the postwar demand for low-cost housing and linked to research being done throughout the developed world, particularly in the United States. As early as 1948 the magazine *Shinkenchiku*, which had reappeared on the scene in 1946, sponsored a competition for minimal-type wooden housing. Among the most celebrated of Japanese works in this category was the series initiated in 1951 by Kiyosi Seike with his ninety-square-meter Mori



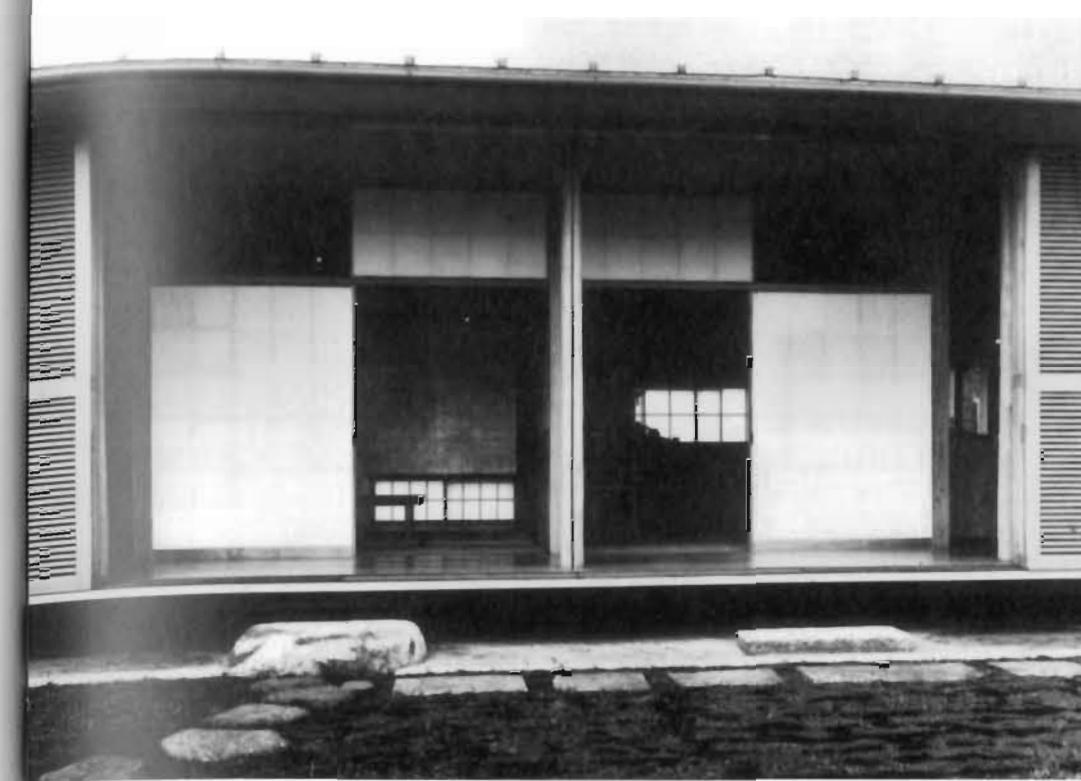
8.8. Raymond: the architect's house, Shibuya, Tokyo, 1953. Facade.



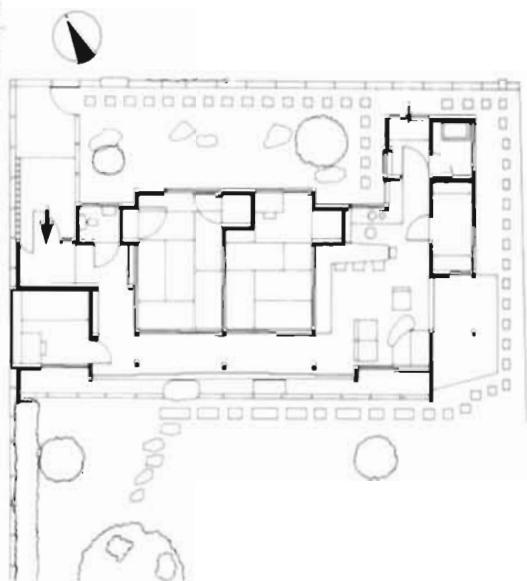
8.9. Raymond: the architect's house, Shibuya, Tokyo, 1953. Section.



8.10. Raymond: the architect's house, Shibuya, Tokyo, 1953. Interior.



8.11. Seike: Mori House, Bunkyo Ward, Tokyo, 1951. Facade.



8.12. Seike: Mori House, Bunkyo Ward, Tokyo, 1951. Plan.

House (figs. 8.11–12). Its design amounted to a single room with spaces marked off by *shoji*—surmounted by a fixed *ramma*, or openwork transom—which could be opened or closed at will. Similar ideas were pursued by the same architect with increasing sophistication in the Saito House of 1952 (figs. 8.13–14), where raised islands of *tatami* afforded traditional-style seating in the midst of contemporary “Scandinavian-modern” furnishings. The adjacent Miyagi House of the following year (figs. 8.15–16) was not of wood, but of concrete block—with a roof, supported on light steel trussing, which could be pushed back to reveal the sky. As a group, these houses, including Seike’s home, completed one year later, recall the design of Marcel Breuer’s own residence (figs. 8.17–18) at New Canaan, Connecticut, of 1947; Charles Eames’s Case Study House at Santa Monica, California, of 1949; and even Mies van der Rohe’s steel-and-glass house for Dr. Edith Farnsworth of 1950. Yet, of all these, only the Breuer House shares the extreme informality of Seike’s variations on a theme. The latter combine an abstract and intellectualized approach to the problem of low-cost housing, creating new, economical solutions with knowledge culled from the vernacular. The chill, costly elegance of exposed steel framing as employed in the United States was impractical in Japan, and the absolutely flat roof—which in Japan necessitates non-wooden construction—appears rarely in work of the period. In 1954 Seike met Walter Gropius and was invited by him to undertake further modular-housing research in America.

Another Japanese architect who had encountered Gropius was Kenzo Tange. At the time of Gropius’s visit to Japan, Tange had recently completed a new home for himself. This

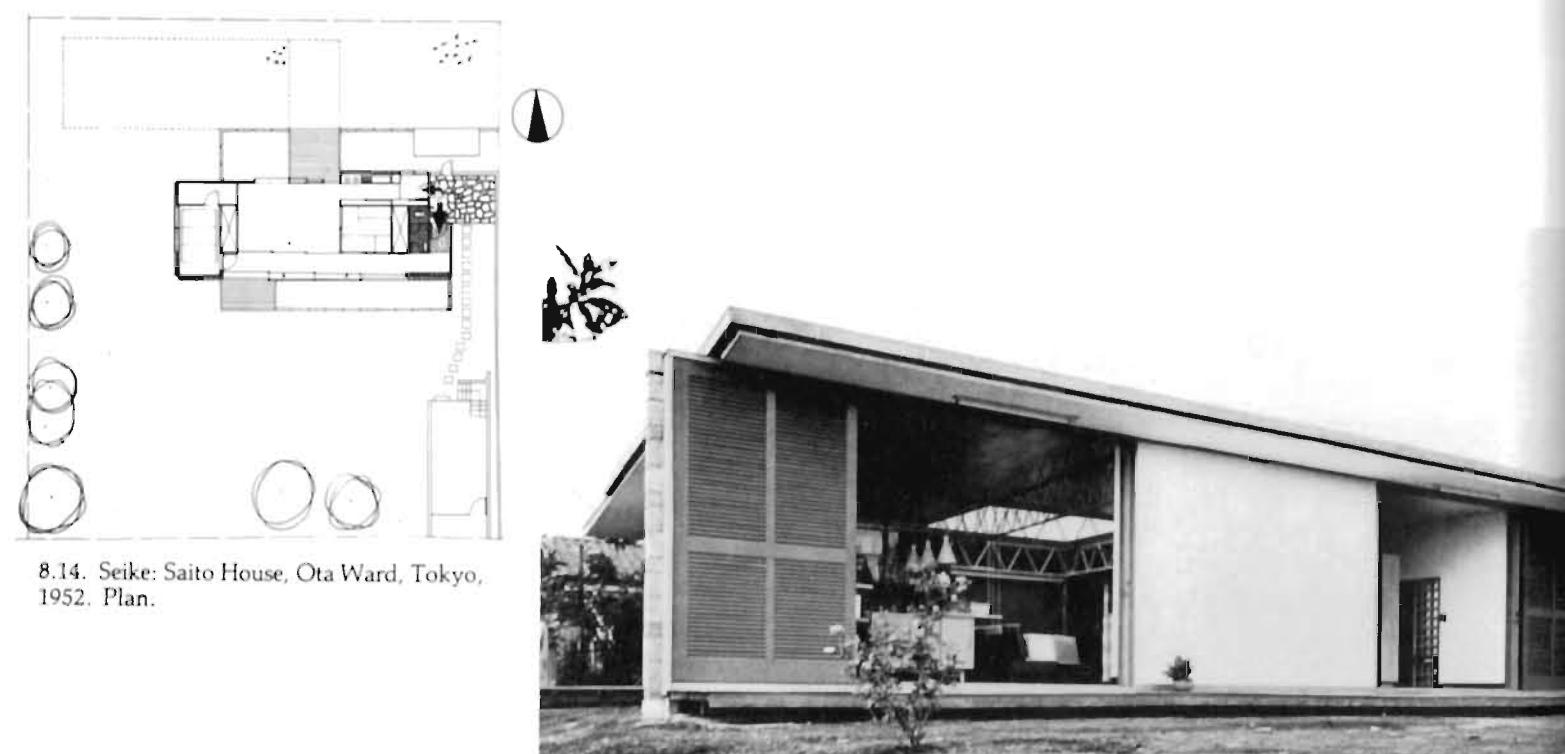
was set in one of the southern suburbs of Tokyo. Like Seike’s works, it consisted of a largely open plan, but the living quarters were raised a whole story into the air. The house, at Seijo, was to prove the only residential design of Tange’s entire career, and its interiors afford a *locus classicus* of modified *sukiya* detailing, updated with modern materials, such as the uninterrupted plate-glass glazing at second-floor level. Except for a service core, the floors are all of *tatami* matting. The only Western-style furniture in view are a few low, lightweight sling-back chairs with frames of bent iron.

In both the Tange residence and the houses designed by Seike—all widely considered to be models of the period—the question of tradition was easily resolved. A transition was achieved in much the same way as one slipped into traditional dress upon arriving home, although that custom is virtually in abeyance thirty years later. Many of the more desirable outer suburbs of Tokyo still merged with the countryside in that far-off time, and land was neither as scarce nor as expensive as today. The urge to update tradition, or backdate the International Style, could be accomplished in more or less semirural surroundings. Indeed, Tokyo may at the time have appeared to be enjoying a neat balance between urban growth and suburban development. In retrospect, conditions—though primitive with respect to amenities—were almost as idyllic as those under which Wright’s early style had flourished, at the beginning of the century, in Oak Park.

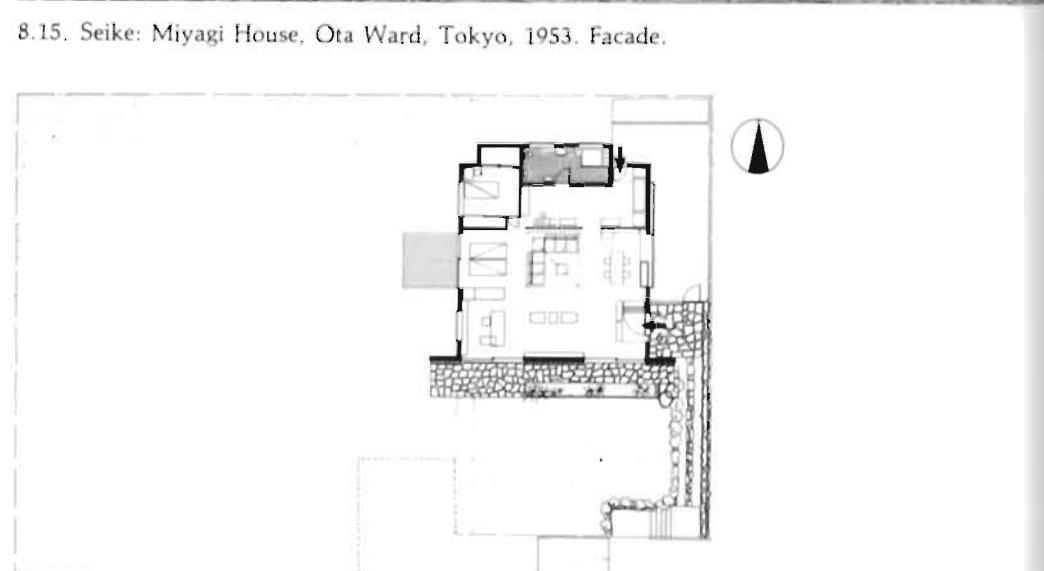
As we shall see, several of the key residential works of thirty years ago were raised, like Le Corbusier’s Villa Savoye, a full story by means of *piloti*. One wonders, indeed, whether this fact may be read as somehow anticipating the subsequent



8.13. Seike: Saito House, Ota Ward, Tokyo, 1952. Facade.

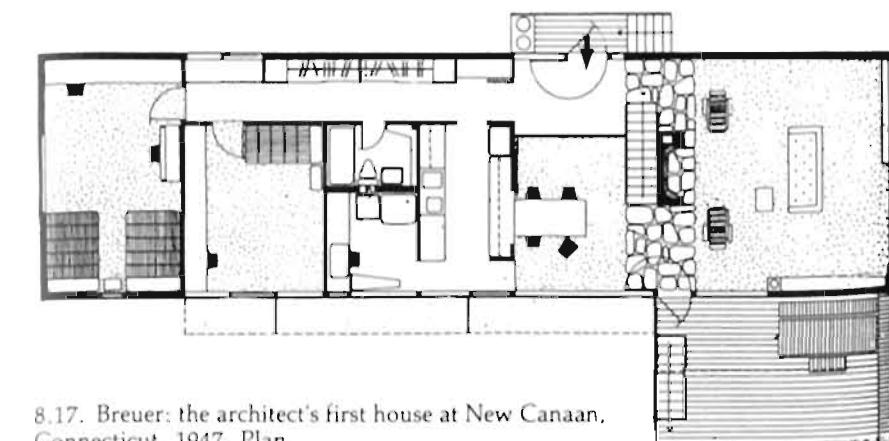


8.14. Seike: Saito House, Ota Ward, Tokyo, 1952. Plan.

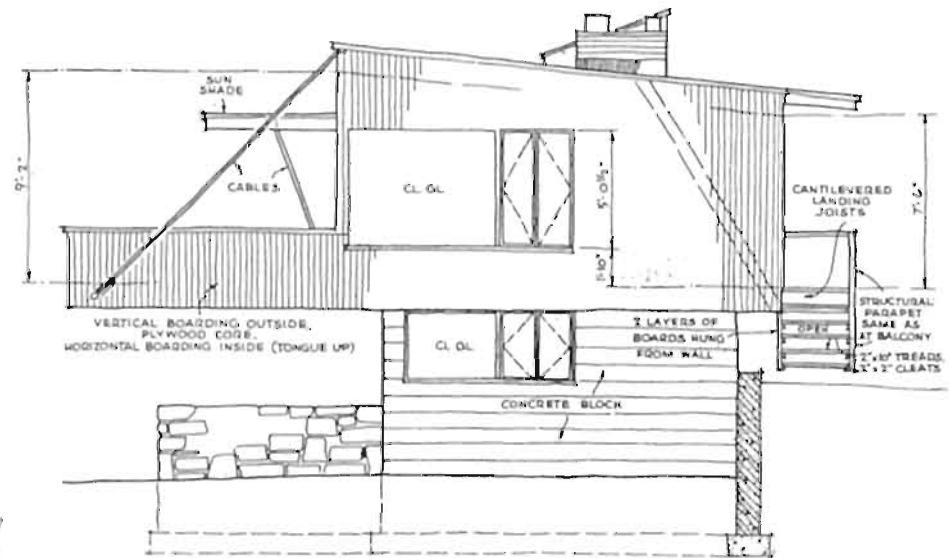


8.15. Seike: Miyagi House, Ota Ward, Tokyo, 1953. Facade.

8.16. Seike: Miyagi House, Ota Ward, Tokyo, 1953. Plan.



8.17. Breuer: the architect's first house at New Canaan, Connecticut, 1947. Plan.



8.18. Breuer: the architect's first house at New Canaan, Connecticut, 1947. Right elevation.

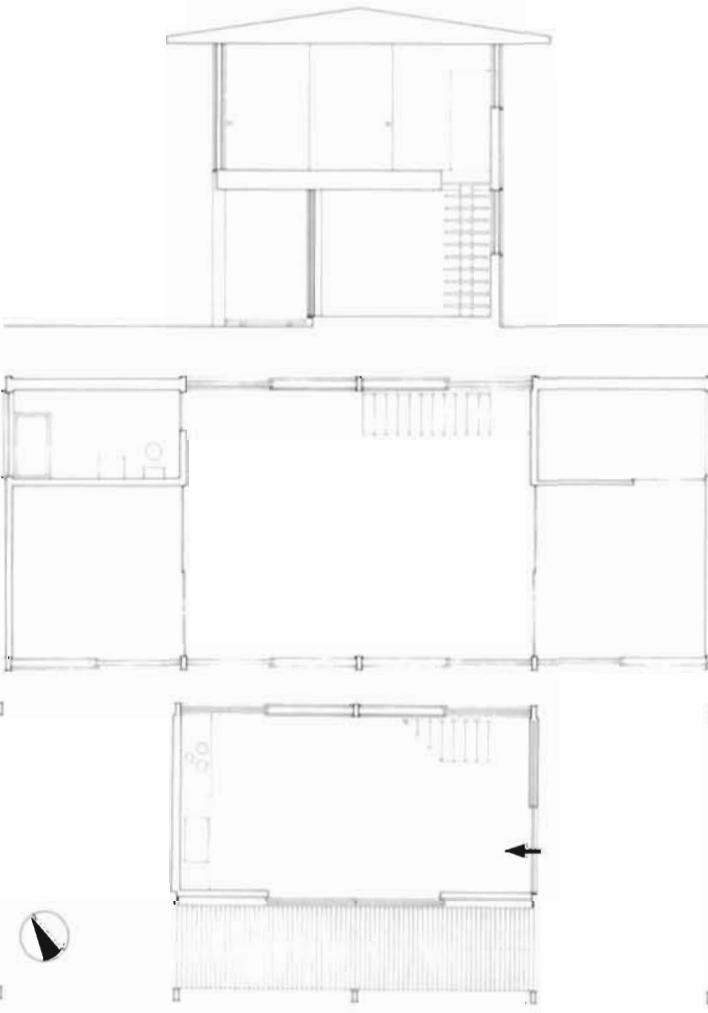
decay of the environment, which was to become apparent within a single generation in Japan. The palace-style dwelling of relatively modest scale which Tange built for himself at Seijo—now swept away—offers a case in point. Although its formal vocabulary depends on the Imperial Villa at Katsura (see fig. 8.37), or even on the main palace at Kyoto studied by Professor Kishida, the framing system also recalls Tange's detailing of the Hiroshima Peace Center, including its *piloti*. Kikutake's Skyhouse (see fig. 7.14)—to be presented by Tange at Otterlo—is also raised above ground, but the structure is entirely of concrete. Here, technically, the supports are not *piloti* but slablike pylons aligned in parallel with each facade at its midpoint. From them, Skyhouse is suspended over a void at the edge of a narrow hillside almost in the center of Tokyo. Beneath the subtly modulated effect of its ceiling a single square room occupies the space created by the shell roof. The usable floor space is just ninety-eight square meters, but Skyhouse rapidly became one of the best-known of all Japanese modern buildings. This celebrity was partly owing to attention received from the Smithsons in England, though the couple disapproved of the "formalism" they saw in Kikutake's "decision-making" process.<sup>10</sup>

### THIRD-MAN THEME

A third house (figs. 8.19–20) raised off the ground and marked—like Tange's—by the image of Katsura Villa came out of a quick, informal studio competition won by a young final-year student of Kiyoji Seike's at Tokyo Institute of Technology. The designer was Kazuo Shinohara, who in the same year, 1953, became an instructor in the university under Seike. The house was built at Kugayama the following year; it bore a remarkable coincidental resemblance to the nearly contemporary Kenzo Tange Residence (not illustrated). However, in Shinohara's house the essential framework was of steel, so that no details of carpentry were represented. There was, all the same, a low-pitched overhanging roof but with its rafter ends concealed. In contrast, the two-tiered roofing system of the far larger house by Tange plays a more conspicuous part in the overall aesthetic. His Seijo facade incorporated subsidiary bays in an a-b-a-b-a rhythm, while the four double bays of Shinohara's House at Kugayama were disposed in Miesian simplicity without recourse to further accent. Nor does the raised portion of the design by Shinohara include the kitchen and dining room as in Tange's house. Although the resulting separation of functions at Kugayama



8.19. Shinohara: House at Kugayama, Suginami Ward, Tokyo, 1954. Facade.

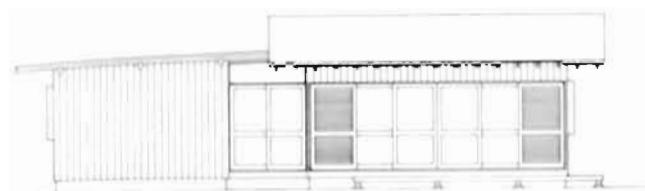


8.20. Shinohara: House at Kugayama, Suginami Ward, Tokyo, 1954. Plans and section.

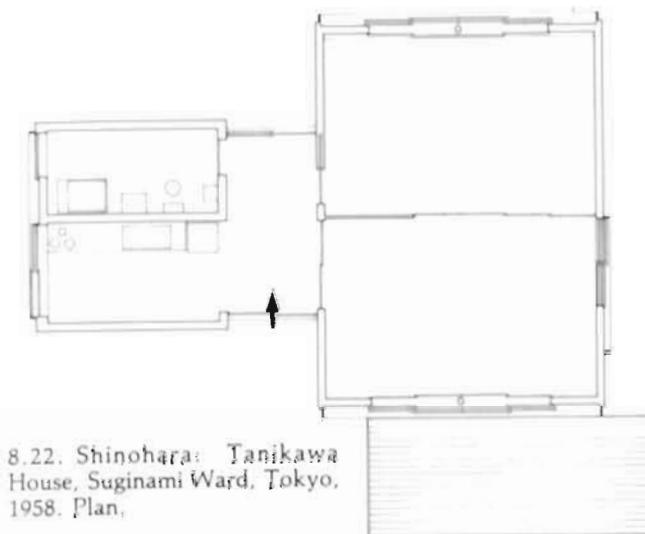
was unusual, the arrangement imparted a vernacular flavor through the importance acquired by the kitchen as the informal point of entry—and, indeed, the only one.

A subsequent house designed by Shinohara—in 1958, for the poet Shuntaro Tanikawa—returned to the single-level mode initiated by Seike several years before. However, the otherwise modestly composed Tanikawa House (figs. 8.21–22) includes an oddly insistent element of mirror symmetry about its floor plan. The work would be described later as “an uninhibited attempt to create a characterless space” that could “sustain itself when an artist lived in it.”<sup>11</sup>

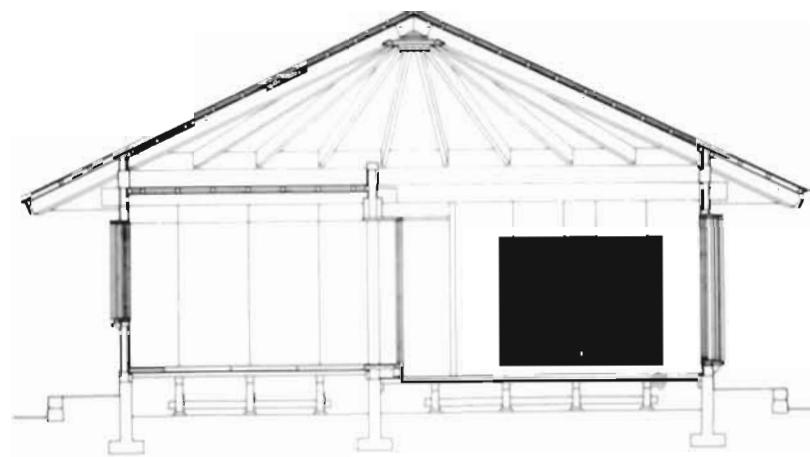
Before the end of the sixties Shinohara had produced thirteen houses, all in an insistent adaptation of traditional styles and techniques, a manner in which elegance and rusticity became mixed in a curious and unnerving way. Even so, the conventions he employed were as yet rarely bent to such a degree that interiors, in particular, might not at times be confused with the work of Seike or, indeed, numerous other architects in the habit of exploiting vernacular forms and materials. Yet, fittings and furnishings apart, little about Shinohara’s work was facile or commodious. It is not so much that these houses were doggedly uncompromising—a charge familiarly leveled against Shinohara by other architects; rather, each of his designs was built up in a nearly abstract manner out of the simplest of elements. Recipient of a mathematical training, the architect never hesitated to make use of structural solutions that distance his work from the domain of strict tradition. Gradually, an idiosyncratic sense of discipline evolved in these early works that sought to link tectonic requirements with decorative intentions, such as in the so-called Umbrella House of 1961 (figs. 8.23–24). Here—as in the traditional space reserved for the tea ceremony—the objective was to portray the structure of space itself. And to this day the Umbrella House of fifty-five square meters remains the smallest of Shinohara’s works. Now the theme was, indeed, space, yet the spatial content of such a work is necessarily diagrammatic, immobile, and highly



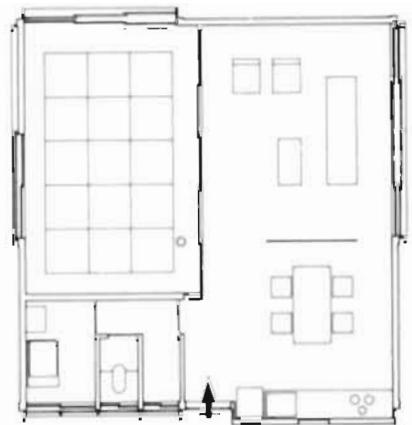
8.21. Shinohara: Tanikawa House, Suginami Ward, Tokyo, 1958. Elevation.



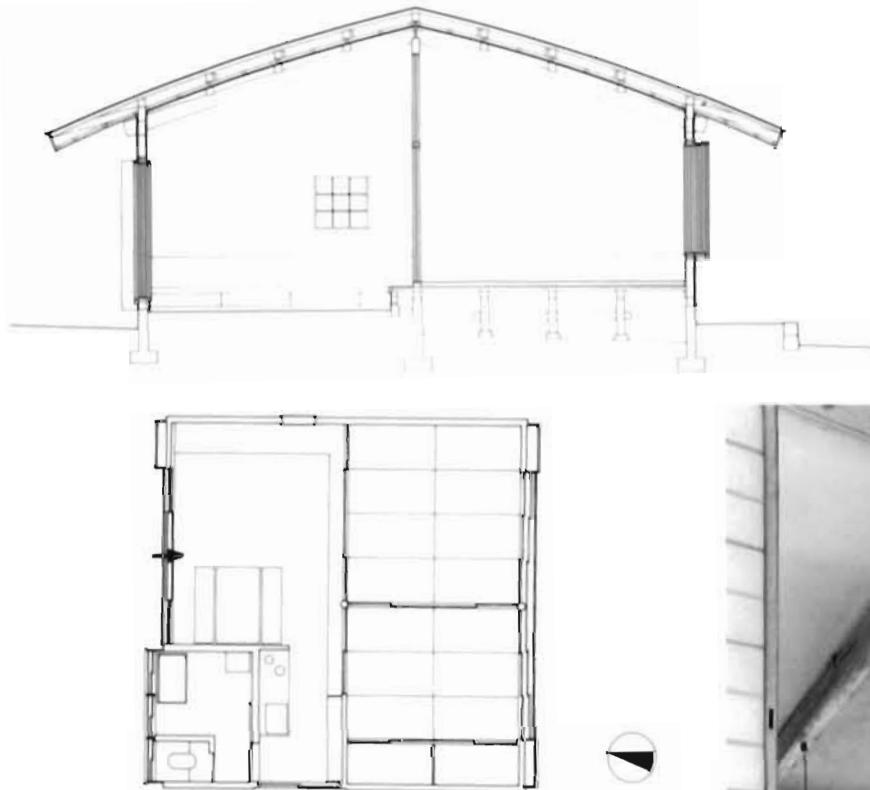
8.22. Shinohara: Tanikawa House, Suginami Ward, Tokyo, 1958. Plan.



8.23. Shinohara: Umbrella House, Nerima Ward, Tokyo, 1961. Plan and mid-section.



8.24. Shinohara: Umbrella House, Nerima Ward, Tokyo, 1961. Interior.



8.25. Shinohara: House with an Earthen Floor, Kita Saku, Nagano Prefecture, 1963. Section and plan.



8.26. Shinohara: House with an Earthen Floor, Kita Saku, Nagano Prefecture, 1963. Interior.

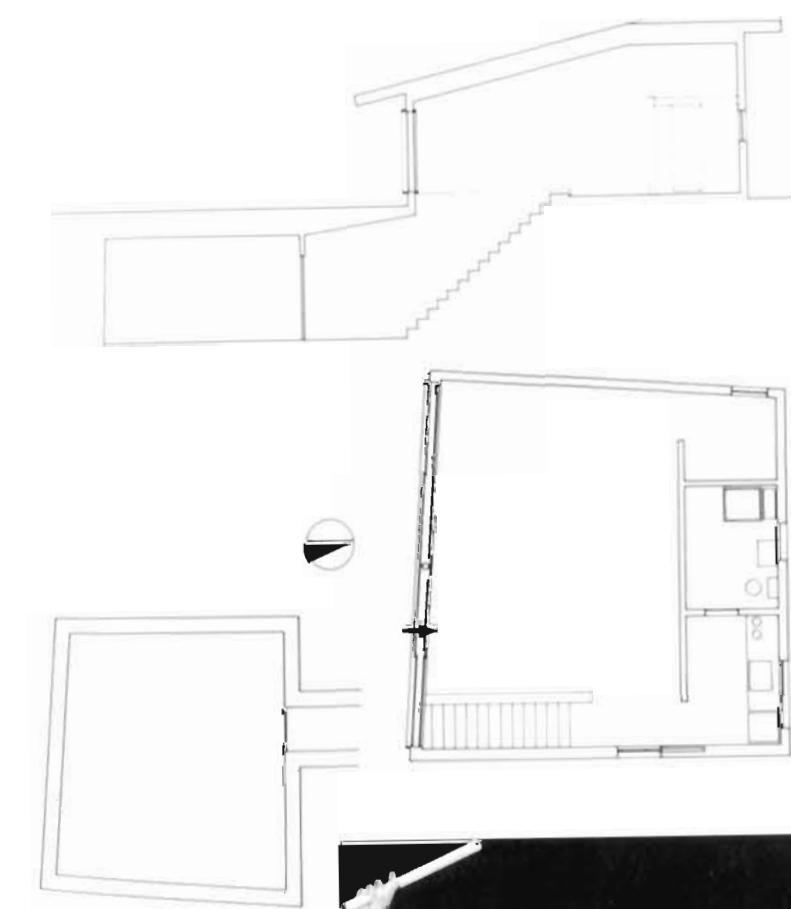
charged with a peculiar symbolism. A separate aim was to echo the spatial force of the *donna*, or earth-paved domestic working space of the traditional farmhouse, by means of a change in level between the *tatami* matting of the sleeping room and the wooden flooring of the living area in the Umbrella House. This was achieved in a more direct and obvious way, in 1963, in the House with an Earthen Floor (figs. 8.25–26)—designed as a lodgelike cottage and built with local materials in the Japanese Alps. Ordinary clay was mixed with lime and salt in the traditional manner and tamped down underfoot to form an entry plus kitchen-and-eating area.

Although there was nothing inherently out of place about provision of a *donna* in a house located in a mountain area, one is nevertheless brought face-to-face with a humble device long since abandoned by the Japanese. The symbolism invoked is of a slightly literary sort, as if conjuring up primitive origins beneath the veneer of consumer society. One is suddenly far from the optimism of the fifties as portrayed in glossy magazines, while the same symbolic rhetoric is explored further in a suburban house completed in 1966. In the House of Earth (figs. 8.27–28)—without a doubt the most un-

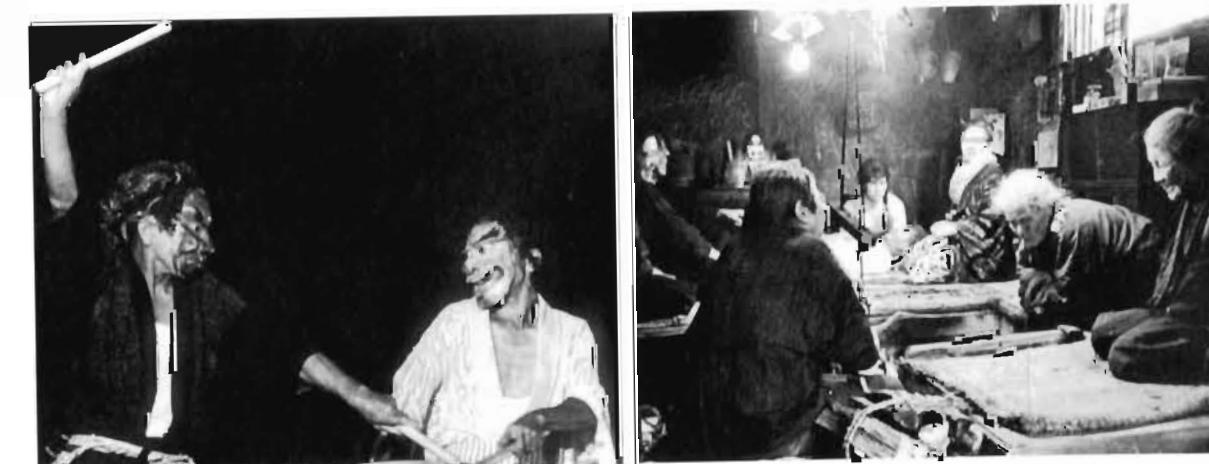
toward of all these years—the main living area is given over to a floor of earth pounded in the traditional manner described above. Down a red-carpeted stair is a belowground sleeping chamber, the sole other room in the house. In plan both upper and lower areas are slightly out of square: a fact stressed aboveground by a most unusual triangulated ceiling construction inclined at one end. Another oddity is intense use of red and black, as if portraying opposition. Shinohara's self-avowed theme of a primitive irrationalism is out of sympathy with the positive and forward-looking confidence of the Japan Style, but accords well with the decade which saw production of films like Shohei Imamura's *Insect Woman* of 1963 and Teshigahara's stylish, yet harrowing, version of Abe's *Woman of the Dunes* the following year. Just as the filmic dimension of these works (figs. 8.29–30) was impeccable, there is nothing in what Kazuo Shinohara refers to as a "black"—or "psychopathological"—space in the House of Earth to detract from its precision and geometry. It was known, however, that Shinohara objected to contemporary worship of technology in Japan. He thus intended his work of this period to be read as a rejection of the posturings of Metabolism.



8.27. Shinohara: House of Earth, Nerima Ward, Tokyo, 1966 (night view). Inset shows living room interior.



8.28. Shinohara: House of Earth, Nerima Ward, Tokyo, 1966. Plan and section.



8.29. Teshigahara: still from *Woman of the Dunes*.

8.30. Imamura: still from *Insect Woman*.

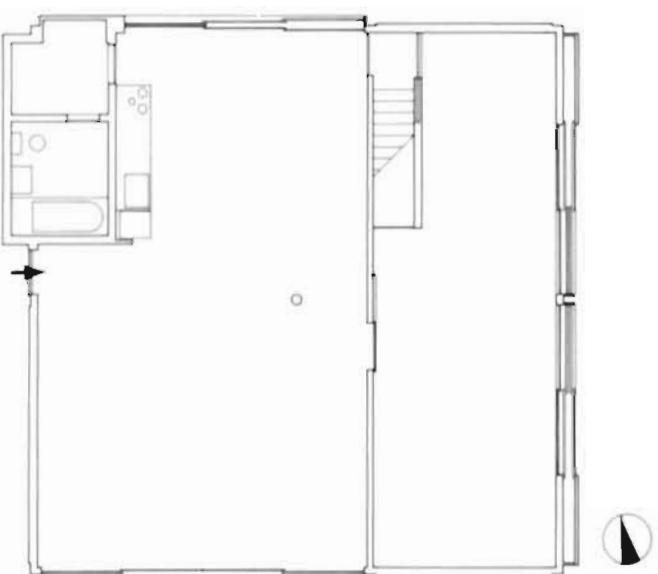
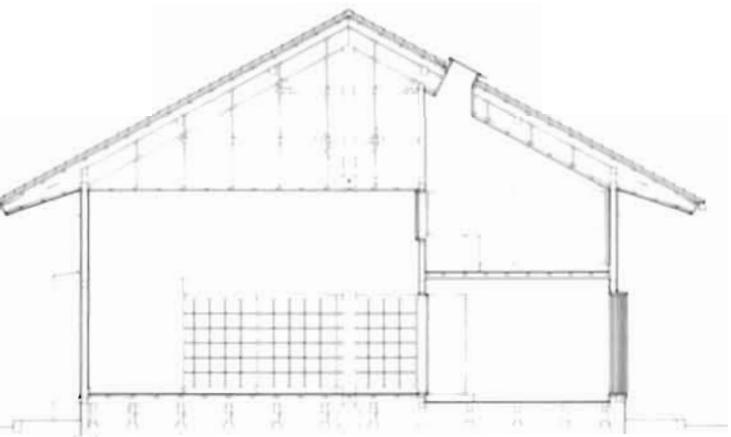


#### ABSTRACTION WITH TRADITIONAL FORMS

The occult perfection of the House of Earth was matched in the same year by a counterpart named the House in White (figs. 8.31–33) in a different area of Tokyo. In this work Shinohara was at last able to give full expression to an “abstract” space by using only traditional forms. It was also in the design of his House in White that traditional syntax was first displaced by what the architect refers to as a newly “independent” spatial quality. Till then, the expressive means which Shinohara had taken over from traditional architecture were rooted in intuitive preferences, and this latitude of choice was justified by a conviction that residential architecture need not reflect those up-to-the-minute concerns posed by society at large. Gradually, however, like the cineasts mentioned above, who were his contemporaries, Shinohara realized just how social and environmental transformations penetrate the inner realm of the individual, the family, and the dwelling itself. It was at about the same time, then, that Shinohara started to consider ways in which the resources of modern architecture might be used to stake out the “space” of the individual. He would attempt to combat—at least by deployment of certain metaphors—the leveling effects exerted by industrialization and mass society.

The abstract purity of the House in White, as opposed to the more obviously metaphorical—even surreal—face of the House of Earth, may not be apparent at once. Nor is its perfection readily understood from photographs. The house comprises a square ten meters on each side surmounted by a pyramidal roof with extensive projecting eaves. It must be noted that—in Japan—this structure has not the remotest association with residential architecture. In fact, the external shape of Shinohara’s House in White recalls far more readily one particular category of Buddha hall]. A surviving example is the Jodoji Pure Land Hall (fig. 8.34) in Ono, Hyogo Prefecture, best known for its exceptional boldness of design. In his early work, Frank Lloyd Wright more than once drew on a similar roof form to anchor a large composition, such as the Martin House in Buffalo. This merely suggests how—in

8.31. Shinohara: House in White, Suginami Ward, Tokyo, 1966. Facade.



8.32. Shinohara: House in White, Suginami Ward, Tokyo, 1966. Plan and section.



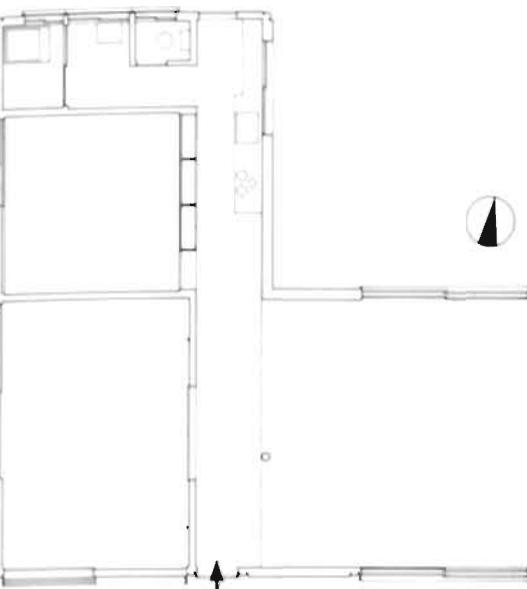
8.33. Shinohara: House in White, Suginami Ward, Tokyo, 1966. Living room.



8.34. Pure Land Hall, Jodoji, Ono, Hyogo Prefecture, 1192.



8.35. Shinohara: North House in Hanayama, Kobe, 1965. View through bedroom from living-dining area.



8.36. Shinohara: North House in Hanayama, Kobe, 1965. Plan and section.

such as the wooden post. Shinohara's Second Style—the one elaborated in the 1970s—will build upon this event by allowing him to break altogether with Japanese compositional methods. Yet there is a significant element of paradox in that, viewed retrospectively, the Second Style may appear, in a radical sense, more "Japanese" than the First, even though bare of vernacular accouterments.

#### DOUBTS ABOUT NATION AND STYLE

Any attempt, moreover, to explore the terms of such a paradox is bound to bring to mind the *Kulturkritik* proposed by Kenzo Tange at about the time he was preparing his book on Katsura of 1960. Tange was interested in setting in motion a sweeping self-criticism of the entire Japanese tradition, for he claimed it was being overrated by foreign architects without due regard for inherent weaknesses. Tange put forward his argument in terms derived from Nietzsche's "Birth of Tragedy." Japanese tradition, veiled in Dionysian mystery and shadow—symbolized by the Ise Shrine—contrasts unfavorably with the Apollonian Parthenon on the Acropolis of Athens. Japanese architecture, according to Tange, reflected an essentially passive appreciation of natural phenomena viewed always as something "to be contemplated." Tange berates the "self-emptying" attitude of Zen Buddhist art that draws Japanese away from reality and causes them to lose themselves in an all-encompassing vastness of thought.<sup>12</sup> The "yielding disposition" peculiar to the Japanese was, he says, already part of the ancient animistic religion of prehistoric Japan. Tange argues that the same spirit persisted, yielding an emotional interpretation of reality. Thus, in spite of technical achievements imported from the Asian mainland and embodied in the construction of early Buddhist temples, such as Horyuji and Todaiji at Nara, native Japanese architecture made scant headway. In later times, notwithstanding certain practical adaptations, expression of taste overrode concern for construction and materials.

For Tange, the sense of openness in Japanese architecture and "the transient, inconstant and feeble expression accompanying it" failed significantly to "comprehend reality as something dynamic." Not even the development of an ingenious system of modular construction succeeded in fixing the conditions of "typification" necessary to express the "flux and diversity" of real life. Japanese buildings give no impres-

their extreme precision of forms combined with a wide-ranging selection of traditional motifs—it is possible to find a parallel between the Prairie work of Wright and what Shinohara calls his First Style, brought to a close in 1966 with the House in White.

In Shinohara's North House in Hanayama, Hyogo Prefecture, constructed the previous year, the plan was also square (figs. 8.35–36). This marginally earlier work was given a pyramidal roof but had one quadrant of its entire structure excised. This allowed for the central support system to be embedded in a corner wall, although an additional freestanding post of polished cedar—helping support the roof—is visible in the main living area. There the spatial volume rises dramatically to the full height of the roof, while nonsquared diagonal wooden struts abut against the re-entrant corner at the center of the plan. A similar arrangement of struts holds up the roof of the House in White but is concealed under the pyramid of the roof in an attic, since the ceiling of the main room intervenes at a height of 3.6 meters. The square plan is unequally bisected into two rectangular spaces, just as it was in the Umbrella House (see figs. 8.23–24). But in that work the exposed umbrellalike frame was self-supporting, as its overall dimensions were less.

In the House in White, however, the central post occupies the middle of the living room, while the sleeping area comprises two levels set into the smaller half of the plan. The upper bedroom, lit by a skylight, occupies part of the space under the roof, while the attic over the living room is merely a crawl space. The living room itself consists of a rectangular volume around the strategically placed cedar pillar; no aspect, excepting *shoji*, is related to the conventional vocabulary of Japanese interior spaces. Even these *shoji* are rendered untraditional by the extreme height of the space, exactly double that of the windows. The presence of the wooden post is enhanced by the strangeness of these proportions; or, put another way, the pillar creates a resonance within a volume that, without it, would appear unformed. Naturally, the pillar also affords a necessary diversion from the service core, but its principal function is to pin down the space, which appears to revolve about it—as if turning on axis.

According to its architect, the significance of the House in White lies in achievement for the first time of an abstract, "non-Japanese" space in spite of persisting traditional features,



8.37. Katsura Villa, Kyoto, mid-seventeenth century. Bird's-eye view with gardens.

sion of unity because they are unable to combine "the functional and the expressive, the material and the artistic" as the Western tradition has consistently worked to do. Tange's criticism—offered from a designer's point of view—is valid enough, especially as regards the *sukiya* style. He remarks of Katsura Villa (fig. 8.37): "Lyricism is the prevailing impression, and the tension elevating all features to a completely satisfying whole, is absent." This is a perfectly true observation but not one that proved easy to translate into the reality of the Japan Style as a counter-praxis—unless what Tange intended was the undeniable effect of ton upon ton of concrete.

There is no question of any explicit debate between Kenzo Tange and Kazuo Shinohara, a beginning architect and university instructor twelve years his junior. Tange's line of argument as sketched here in the briefest possible terms seems to have been advanced mainly as a means of consolidating his own power among the restricted circle of architects who might eventually gain the privilege, or receive the nod, to build for the nation. His approach to the theme of a national style elicited a modicum of oblique criticism or—what is worse in the Japanese ideological arena—was met with silence. The whole issue now seems forgotten, even by Tange himself, who henceforth turned to the ever more vaguely defined goal of constructing a "communications space." Contrastingly, Shinohara's theses dealt increasingly with that rarest of commodities: "space" in Japanese architecture. On the one hand, this notion of spatiality *qua* architectural content reveals the influence of Modern Movement architectural discussion on Shinohara's thought. On the other, the "Japanese" space that, henceforward, constitutes the aim of Shinohara's Second Style might be understood as a dialectic reply to the challenge Tange was trying to construct in his theses on the history of Japanese building and taste.

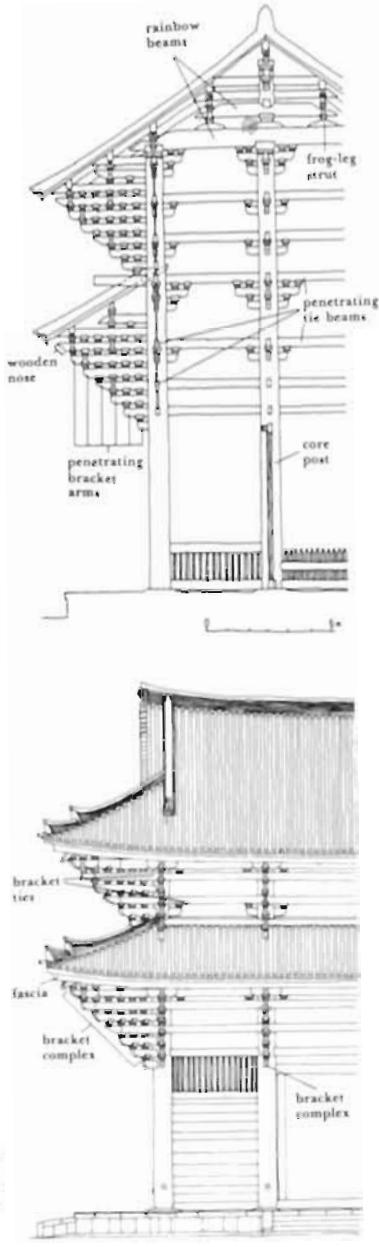
Finally, just as in Japan one is never far from the Meiji notion of a national style in architecture as handed down from the earliest generation of trained architects, so the equally important idea of modernism cannot be meaningfully separated from the presence of Le Corbusier. The construction of Tange's well-known Kagawa Prefectural Office (fig. 8.38) at Takamatsu, in his native island of Shikoku, simulates in concrete that boldness of the so-called Daibutsu style (fig. 8.39) derived from the original Todaiji at Nara, which for Tange embodied the reality of Japanese "nationhood" as no subsequent idiom had succeeded in doing. Kagawa is thus the culmination of Tange's early "trabeated" style and also, perhaps, of Maekawa's influence. For good measure, the design included a European "plaza" as centerpiece, which for Tange afforded a symbol of Western self-assertiveness. And the whole composition was played off against distant mountains, as Le Corbusier had recently done at Marseilles and would do again at Chandigarh.

#### LE CORBUSIER IN TOKYO

The Kagawa building by Tange was prepared from 1955 onward and completed in 1958. Almost contemporary is the National Museum of Western Art, designed by Le Corbusier—under construction at Ueno in Tokyo between 1957 and 1959 (figs. 8.40–41). Although it is scarcely one of Le Corbusier's masterpieces, the very fact of its authorship—a condition for the return of the collection it houses, seized during the war by the French government from a Japanese resident in Paris—was of great importance for Japan. The dramatic Nineteenth Century Hall (fig. 8.42), a centrally enclosed, double-story space lit from above and containing sculpture by Rodin and Bourdelle, is by far the museum's most impressive feature. Although large, the room is of a fairly intimate scale for a public building. The plan of the museum



8.38. Tange: Kagawa Prefectural Office, Takamatsu, 1955–58.



8.39. Great South Gate (Nandaimon) at Todaiji, Nara, 1199. Half-elevation and partial section.

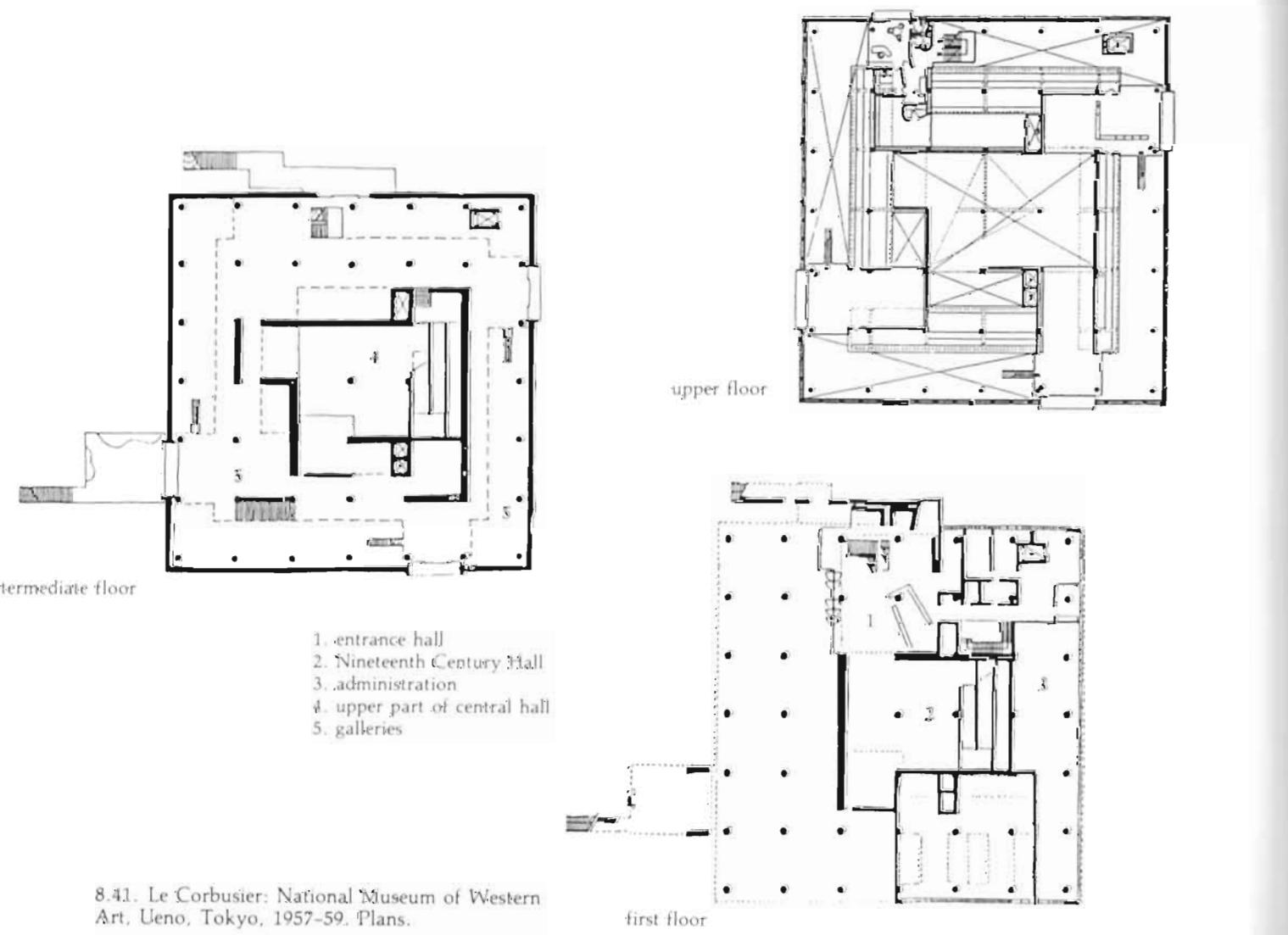
is determined by the standard columnar grid Le Corbusier used as an expression of structural logic from the mid-twenties onward. It is of incidental interest that his method was similar in idea to the time-honored *kitwari* system of structural proportions, which was traditionally employed in *shoin*-style work before the advent of *sukiya* caused builders to rely on more arbitrary aesthetic-based notions.

In an earlier design of Le Corbusier's—for the Museum at Ahmedabad in India—the central space was simply left open to the sky. In Tokyo this was clearly out of the question: the climate dictated an enclosed structure, and a large skylight in the form of a triangular prism was intended from the beginning. Therefore, I know of no specific precedent for the Nineteenth Century Hall at Ueno. In an early drawing for the project the large skylight is expressed on the interior as a series of smaller lights.<sup>13</sup> Later on (fig. 8.43) it was decided to expose the crossing of the central beams supporting the roof,

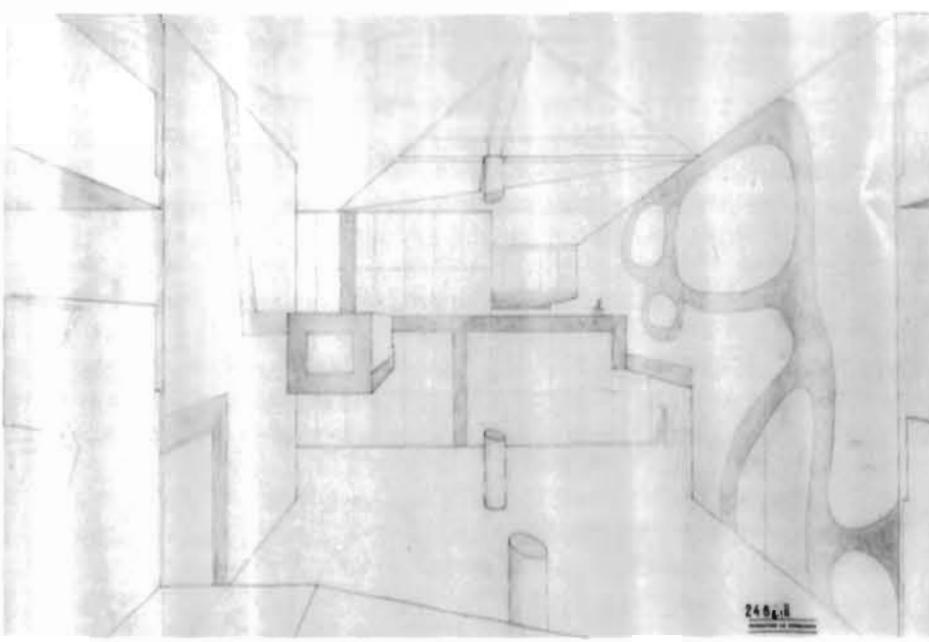
leaving these visible within the space occupied by the skylight itself. A similar arrangement occurs in the roof of the Council Chamber in the Assembly Hall at Chandigarh, but there the central pillar—which would have interrupted the seating—was suppressed altogether. At Tokyo the bare walls of Le Corbusier's hall were to have been relieved by a photographic mural depicting the glories of the nineteenth century. The idea must have been based on the precedent of a mural installed in the Swiss Students' Hostel in Paris in 1931 but destroyed by the Germans in 1943. The Tokyo mural was never executed, and the intended effect<sup>14</sup> would have been very different from the appearance of the hall today. Even in its "unfinished" state, or possibly because of it, the Nineteenth Century Hall (its name now forgotten) ranks with the significant interiors of Le Corbusier's late style. Moreover, no real description for this type of space is possible except to say that it is distinctively Corbusian.



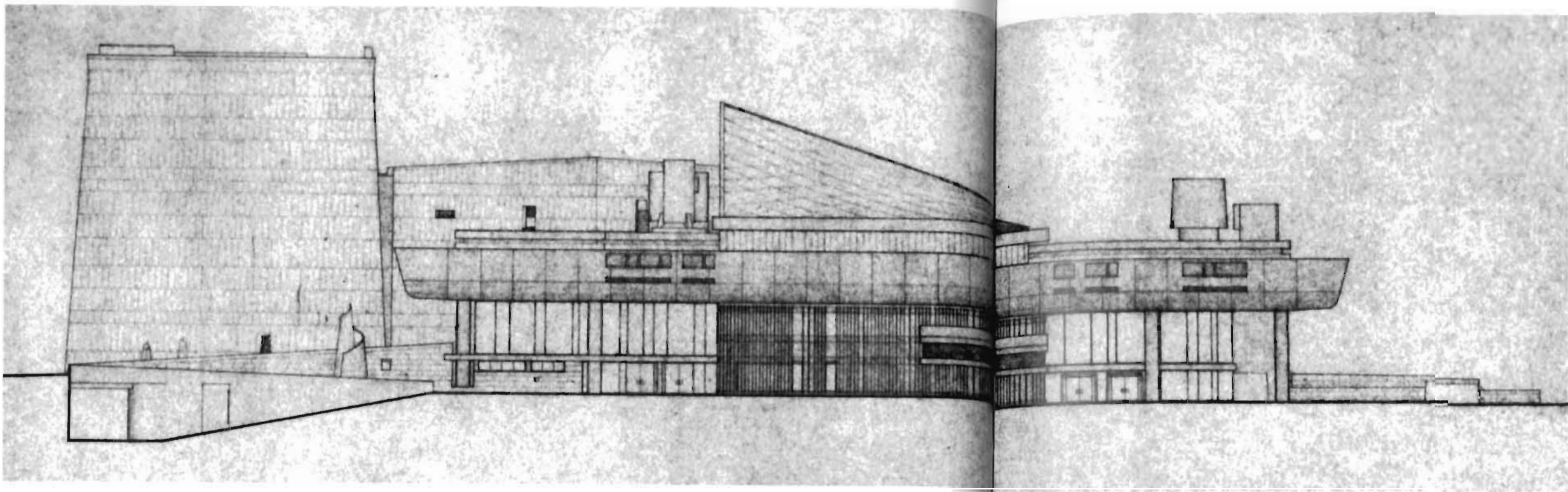
8.40. Le Corbusier: National Museum of Western Art, Ueno, 1957–59. Facade.



8.42. Le Corbusier: National Museum of Western Art, Ueno, 1957–59. Nineteenth Century Hall interior.



8.43. Le Corbusier: National Museum of Western Art, Ueno, 1957–59. Sketch for Nineteenth Century Hall.



8.44. Maekawa: Tokyo Metropolitan Festival Hall, Ueno, Tokyo, 1961. Elevation drawing of the east facade.

At the level of public architecture, the late style of Le Corbusier was to be diffused throughout Japan. Immediately opposite the National Museum of Western Art at Ueno, for example, may be seen Maekawa's Tokyo Metropolitan Festival Hall of 1961 (fig. 8.44), one of the best-known and indeed most distinguished among this progeny. Yet such buildings invariably attempted to present—in one and the same design—a vernacular statement that had nothing to do with Le Corbusier's late manner. For the subtle quality of the spaces Le Corbusier deemed appropriate for monks at La Tourette, art students at Harvard, or Indian capitalists and legislators was curiously irrelevant, I believe, to a country on the move, such as Japan in the 1950s had become. Thus, the ambiguity of the Janiform stance Tange had earlier taken up without regard to nation and style—an inherited dilemma—persisted in the Japan Style. Tange and Maekawa were satisfied to be confirmed in their role as elder statesmen in the eye of the public, while Metabolism—newly born—gradually faded away at the tip of a long wave of publicity in the course of the following decade.

In the end it was Le Corbusier, even in his role as a "neocolonialist" at Ahmedabad and Chandigarh, who prevailed. There, as elsewhere, his late style amounted to a broadside attack on, as well as a continuation of, mainstream modern principles (without descent into specific vernacularisms)—necessitating a slow and piecemeal operation of reassembly and assimilation. In Japan both the reflection and archaeological sense of disinterest this required were luxuries, neither being an attribute of the Japan Style. By way of a counter-example, the Museum of Modern Art at Kamakura (see fig. 7.5) might conceivably be understood as fulfilling these conditions. Though small, the building realized by Junzo Sakakura—architect of the Japanese pavilion at the Paris Exposition of 1936 (see figs. 6.88–89)—was one of the earliest public buildings constructed in Japan after World War II. It dates from 1951, the same year as Seike's experimental Mori House and only two years after Raymond's Reader's Digest Building. Charming and well scaled as the museum at Kamakura still appears to the visitor today, it is really a continuation of Le Corbusier's style of the late thirties.

Similarly, Le Corbusier's National Museum of Western Art, built in 1959, is related to a much earlier concept, and both the Ueno and Kamakura museums are separate versions of this. Therefore, it is only the central sculpture hall at Ueno which, despite its roots in prewar studio-cum-residence design, represents an adventure into Le Corbusier's postwar idiom.

#### "JAPANESE SPACE"

If there was a lesson to be learnt from the example of the central hall (see fig. 8.42) at Ueno, unique for its time in Japan, I find it applied in the series of residences by Shinohara already described, culminating in the House in White of 1966. After Wright, and with the exception of Raymond, Le Corbusier was only the second main figure in modern Western architecture to design a work subsequently built in Japan. The Ueno museum was locally supervised by Kunio Maekawa and Junzo Sakakura, together with Takamasa Yoshizaka. Yoshizaka translated *Le Modulor*, having spent three years in Le Corbusier's Paris office from 1950, and was, therefore, the youngest of the French architect's Japanese disciples. Kazuo Shinohara, on the other hand, had no direct connection with Le Corbusier of any kind, and he shared none of the obvious tropes of Corbusian style, delightfully abundant in the later work of Yoshizaka up until his death a few years ago. Never in Shinohara's First Style is there a conscious striving after effect, except possibly in terms of furnishings, which from time to time were selected from the "craft," or design, side of the Japan Style. Rather, it is the exotic shell roof of wood in the House of Earth (see fig. 8.27) and the positioning of the single column in the House of White (see fig. 8.33)—having no precedent in Japanese architecture—that seem to call for an explanation, if that is the right word. It does not diminish the importance of Shinohara's own compositions, which in Japanese architecture represented veritable discoveries, that these specific instances appear to match up with the quality of spatial intentions in Le Corbusier's hall as built.

With the advent of Shinohara's Second Style, in 1970 a noticeable change of orientation took place. The vocabulary of Japanese forms and materials which had marked his earlier work now disappeared. His houses, the unique building type

subscribed by Shinohara in exact contradistinction to Tange, no longer "look" Japanese. In no case were polished wooden beams and *shoji*, *fusuma*, *sudare*, or other traditional Japanese house fittings applied, except for the one now *tatami*-floored room still *de rigueur* in nearly all Japanese residences even today. Nevertheless, the main space of the House in White, with its pillar and its *shoji* isolated—so to say, abstracted from the conventional representation of structure imposed upon the traditional Japanese interior—relates to the architecture of the tea ceremony room. In its compelling and disorienting bareness, such a space does not necessarily become less "Japanese" or more "Western." These aspects, and their meaning for Shinohara himself, were analyzed in a book he published in 1964, two years earlier than the House in White, under the disarming title *Residential Architecture*. Once again, in contradistinction to Tange's arguments, Shinohara's text attempted to set forth the main distinguishing features of the Japanese approach to planning and to space itself, in a manner free of socio-ideological criticism. The first third of Shinohara's text is devoted to the topic of "Japanese space" and is noticeable for its disregard of the structural and decorative vocabulary of the various historical styles. Issues dealt with include spatial division and connection, spatial logic in Japanese architecture, the notion of viewpoint and time, and the interpretation of vernacular dwelling houses, or *minka*.<sup>15</sup>

The second chapter of *Residential Architecture* by Shinohara consists of a discussion of conditions and restrictions affecting contemporary architectural production. It deals with the notion of the house as art, the idea of nonfunctional or "wasted" spatial elements, the concept of *yoshiki* (style) as personal creation, technical and prefabrication procedures, and, lastly, design as an experimental activity. The third chapter is given over to examples, namely, the seven houses constructed by Shinohara up until 1953. Only at the end of his short treatise does the author mention the possible existence of a "fourth space." That dimension might be susceptible of social interpretation, though far from such ideas as Tange or his Metabolist protégés tended to favor.

The most vital notions, however, to be culled from this

brief historic text—remarkable as coming from a working architect—were those related to spatial composition itself. Among them are the distinction between spatial division and connection as well as observations on viewpoint and time, already referred to. Finally, a conclusive argument for the "nonexistence of space" in Japanese architecture led for the first time to a reliable working distinction between the respective manners in which Western and Japanese architectural traditions were established and subsequently grew. According to Shinohara, European architectural composition links successive spaces. By contrast, Japanese architecture exhibits a process of "spatial division" that involves subdividing an embracing void into smaller, relatively unstable units. This resulted in what Shinohara terms a "static" quality about Japanese space, emphasized by the lack of any indication as to possible paths of human movement, especially in the earlier epochs of Japanese building. Similarly, in later age, gardens—like the one in which Katsura Villa is set (see fig. 8.37)—were composed of a series of viewpoints, with little attempt to coordinate or integrate these by means of an overall view of the surroundings. A similar typology of movement emerges from the act of viewing a piece of sculpture or a work of architecture. Angles of view dictated by the work itself produce a discontinuous series of separate viewing points, enforcing a notion of frontality.<sup>16</sup>

The fact that these discrete viewpoints were not dictated by the viewer but may be thought of instead as attached to the statue or building in question suggests that "space as we conceive of it today was unknown in Japan." The "space" encompassed by the elegant and beautiful structures of former ages was akin to "cosmic emptiness."<sup>17</sup> Yet, for Shinohara, nonexistence of space is primarily nonideological, though he notes that Western, post-Renaissance space must be built up from the standpoint of the "ego."<sup>18</sup> The same post-Renaissance space also found "room for science"—a development which, in turn, permitted the "step-by-step" evolution of architecture. In Japan, where science was little in evidence during the feudal period, such an architecture never made its appearance. However, at just that moment when contact with the West was still possible before the Tokugawa era shut out



8.45. Chashitsu, Ryokakutei, Ninna-ji, Kyoto, ca. 1688.

Western culture altogether: "The *chashitsu* [fig. 8.45] represented the discovery of interior space.... The concept of an 'interior' as an object of design was first conceived here." Hence, the privileged role of the tea ceremony in developing spatial tension which—in the case of previous Japanese architecture—was traditionally concentrated in the phenomena of frontality and discontinuity of viewpoint.<sup>19</sup>

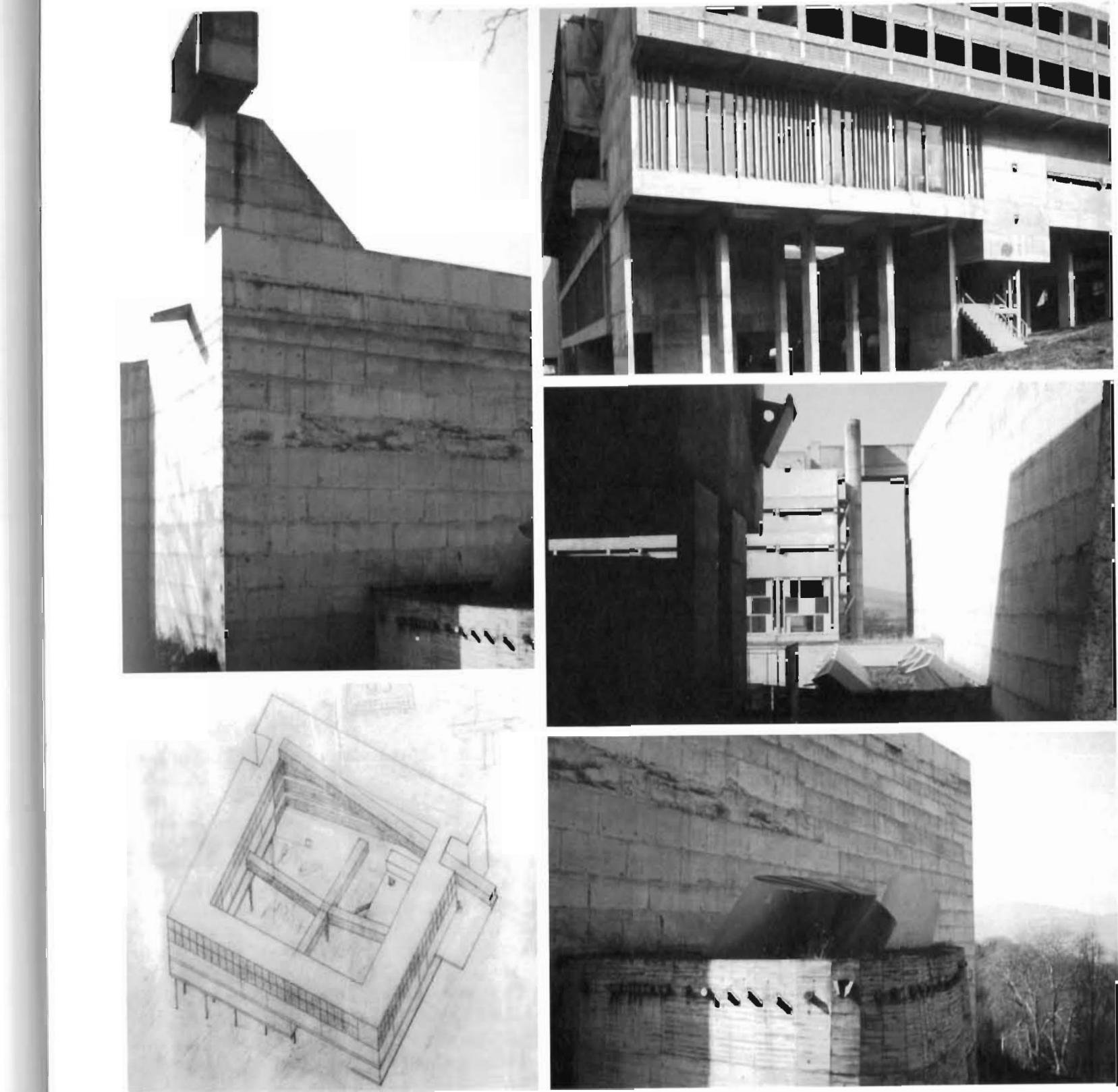
Shinohara's definitions and propositions discussed above amount to a breviary of Japanese space, which according to him possesses a pronounced "topological" quality.<sup>20</sup> There is, however, an important motif in the architecture of Le Corbusier relating to this matter, namely, the famous notion of "the architectural promenade" that establishes itself from the period of the Parisian villas onward. Moreover, the majority of Le Corbusier's works of that period—and often later ones, too—are simple cubes or rectangular solids. By virtue of this, they are necessarily organized using a technique of spatial division, even when, as in Japanese stroll gardens, a path of movement through the work is clearly indicated. Such division, unlike the technique of arrangement in traditional Japanese buildings, affected not only the horizontal but also, from the beginning, the vertical plane of Le Corbusier's houses. From an even earlier moment, interlocking vertical and horizontal spaces were a salient feature of Frank Lloyd Wright's work, although in traditional Japanese buildings such sequences are restricted to certain kinds of vernacular dwellings and a particular type of townhouse invented by merchants in western Japan during the feudal age. Then, in Le Corbusier's post-World War II style, space becomes truly "topological," with bendings and stretchings occurring as a matter of course. In spatial terms, this represents the crux of the "postmodern" dilemma, especially to the extent that such spaces—in a way recalling Shinohara's House of Earth—may be interpreted as psychopathological.

For the ordinary observer as well as numerous architects,

the nature of the Modern Movement's spatial revolution is best expressed through so-called Miesian simplicity. However, "space" in the modern Western sense evolved—if not pictorially, yiz the case of Wright and Japanese prints—then in analogy with an imaginative blend of the great halls of the Heian period in Japan (known only through reconstructions) with their more intimate *shoin* counterparts—the latter having come in during the medieval age and reached a high point of development in the Muromachi and Momoyama periods. Both the Heian and *shoin* modes (fig. 8.46) depended on spatial division, but neither as yet possessed the high degree of tension peculiar to the minuscule *chashitsu*, or ceremonial space of rustic tea. The latter was a catalyst, so to speak, and heralded the evolution of the more widely applied—and, spatially, far more diversified—*sukiya* manner. If Western modernism has been characterized from its inception by a strong Japanese flavor—as indeed seems the case—it remained until recent times relatively free of the stylish and perverse complexities which Japanese artistic development achieved during its long seclusion until the 1850s.



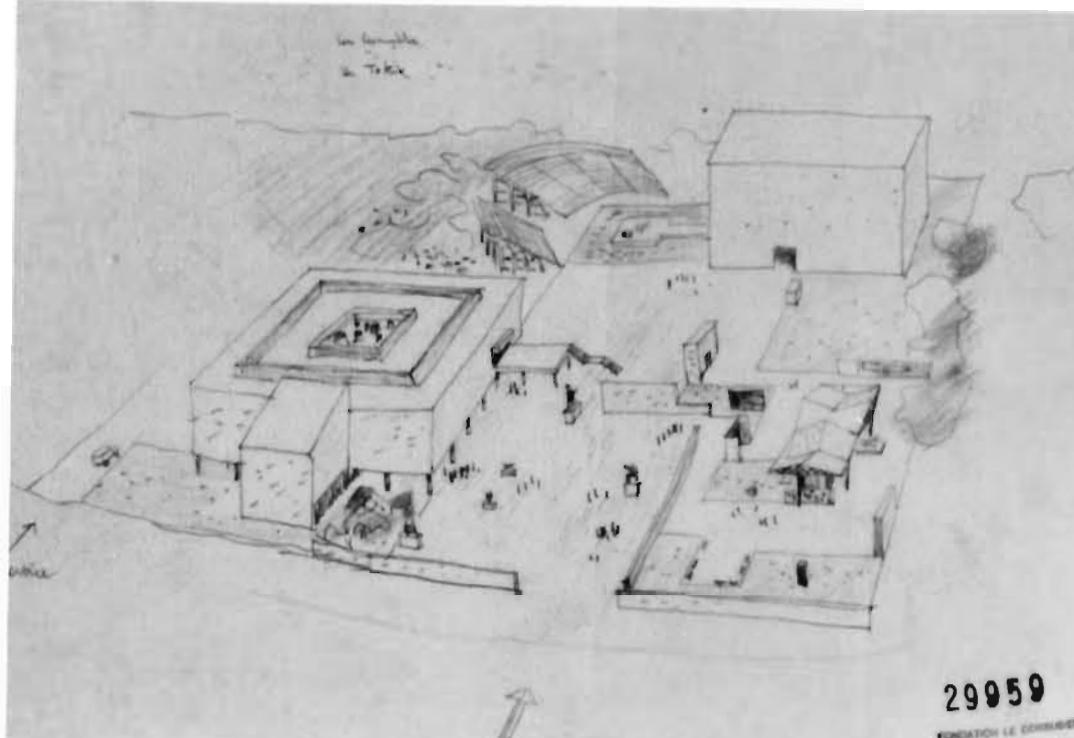
8.46. Audience hall at Nishi Honganji, Kyoto, 1618, in the *shoin* style.



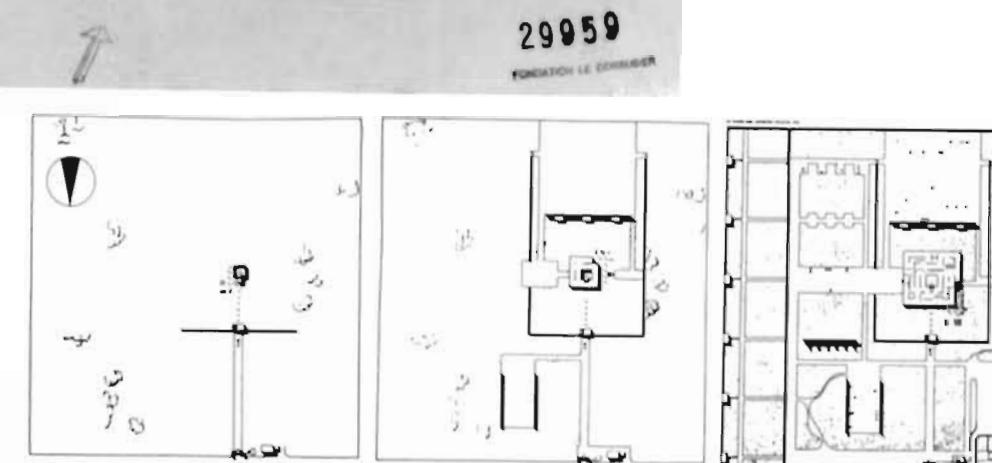
8.47. Le Corbusier: four views of La Tourette monastery, near Lyons, 1957-60 (north wall; top left and bottom right), plus axonometric.

#### FRONTALITY OR "REVOLUTION"

Notoriously, and for all the clarity of his Mediterranean vision, Le Corbusier's late style exploded in exactly this direction, both in the great apartment building at Marseilles and the pilgrimage chapel at Ronchamp. The new manner was an embodiment of a certain postmodernism before the letter, having matured in the enforced inactivity of the war. It baffled and astonished numerous established architects, especially those from English-speaking countries visiting France for the first time since the peace. One of the finest tuned and most eloquent testimonies was provoked, however, by another building: Le Corbusier's convent for the Dominican monks at Sainte-Marie-de-la-Tourette (fig. 8.47). Colin Rowe's powerful and emotive critique of this work was



8.48. Le Corbusier: preliminary sketch for National Museum of Western Art, Ueno, Tokyo (March 1956), showing Boîte à Miracles.

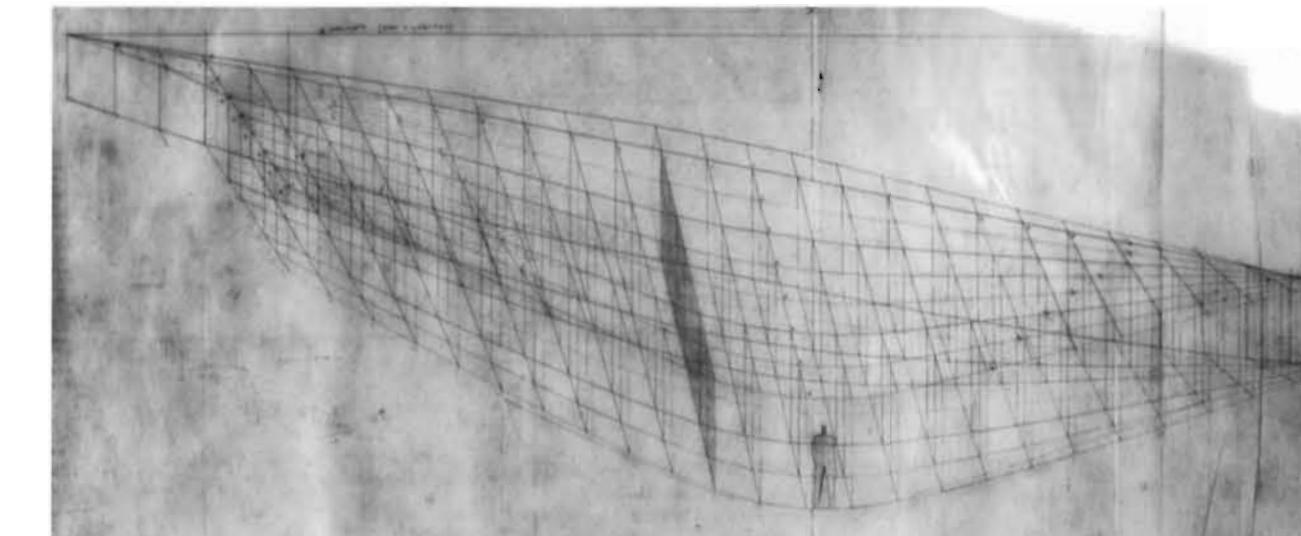


8.49. Le Corbusier: Musée du XXe Siècle, or Musée d'Art Contemporain, 1930 onward. Unrealized project.

published in *The Architectural Review* in 1961<sup>21</sup> and is of particular interest, as the monastery near Lyons was contemporary with the Tokyo Museum of Western Art.

Rowe boldly suggests that the layout of the precinct at La Tourette included "some very private commentary upon Acropolitan material," and thus referred to Le Corbusier's decisive early sojourn upon the Acropolis of Athens. The Ueno scheme, too, if completed as designed, would have borrowed from the ancient iconic Athenian arrangement—volumes in tension with each other and with the site. Le Corbusier's unbuilt structures included an amphitheater, a further Acropolitan feature, whose stage was dramatized by being set amid a reflecting pool. There was also to have been a proscenium, so that actors might equally well declaim while facing the opposite direction, toward an all-weather seating enclosure. Le Corbusier named the arrangement his *Boîte à Miracles* (fig. 8.48), and Rowe cites it as a possible source for the design of the chapel at La Tourette. In the end no theater was built at Ueno in connection with the museum; nor was the Temporary Exhibitions Pavilion that should have faced the museum entrance. This pavilion, however, was appropriated by Kikutake as a residential prototype that later became Skyhouse (see fig. 7.14). But instead of using the tapered *pilotis* of the original design, Kikutake proceeded to apply the straight, slablike version with broad-sided face and narrow silhouette which Le Corbusier made use of at La Tourette. When later on the Ueno pavilion was redesigned in steel for erection at Zurich shortly before Le Corbusier's death, these same slab-type *pilotis* were utilized.

The tensions generated by frontality—which, as Shinohara remarks, ease as the viewer changes his angle of view—remain an important element of Le Corbusier's late style. It is a weakness of Tokyo's Museum of Western Art, as built, that so little of the quality of spatial experience induced by the viewer's movement—for instance, on the Acropolis—remains. It is one of the merits of the La Tourette essay by Rowe that



8.50. Le Corbusier: Notre-Dame-du-Haut, Ronchamp, 1950–55. Diagram showing double-shell roof construction.



8.51. Maekawa: Tokyo Metropolitan Festival Hall, Ueno, Tokyo, 1961. Overhead view (see also figure 8.44).

The evolution of the main building at Ueno is also of interest. Its immediate prototype was the so-called Musée d'Art Contemporain project (to house work by living artists) of 1930.<sup>22</sup> Later referred to as a "square spiral," this self-encircling structure was to have been begun by constructing a single exhibition room reached by a tunnel. As funds permitted, further rooms would be added, resulting in a state of perpetual construction masked by a wall extending on either side of the belowground entrance. This Musée du XXe Siècle—or "Musée à Croissance Illimitée"<sup>23</sup> (fig. 8.49), as it was baptized in 1939—was nonetheless designed from the beginning with walls conceived as movable partitions, so that the additive process by which the space evolved cannot be directly sensed inside the structure. Therefore, the principle of spatial division cited by Shinohara and others in connection with the history of Japanese building (and evident in Le Corbusier's own early work) is not excluded. As for the issue of "frontality" raised by Shinohara in his remarks on traditional Japanese architecture, a frontal view is imposed *a priori* by the fact that the museum was to have been hidden behind a wall of masonry—a residue of which does, in fact, remain in Le Corbusier's sketch for the whole project at Ueno.

According to Rowe, the net result of all this complexity is that the monastery tends to "revolve, to pivot around an imaginary central spike" while resorting as well to "a supremely static behavior."<sup>24</sup> To a more modest yet still marked degree, the same could be said of the Nineteenth Century Hall at Ueno (see fig. 8.42). There the pinwheel construction of its central support, set beneath the aperture of the skylight, resembles nothing so much as the outline of a windmill sail poised to rotate. I have already mentioned the rotational sensation inside Shinohara's living room, with its central pillar (see fig. 8.33), in the House in White. Nevertheless, by contrast with Shinohara's remark that the angle of vision from which a work of Japanese architecture is viewed should be thought of as "attached" to the building itself, Rowe observes that a number of features of Le Corbusier's work "are ob-

dient to the exigencies of the eye rather than those of the work, to the needs of the conceiving subject rather than the perceived object."<sup>25</sup> In either case, a norm of heightened spatial tension is at stake: whether exhibited in Le Corbusier's late style—for instance, at Ueno—or as it may be found in the Japanese *chashitsu*, and was revived in a work such as the House in White. Though these two approaches are the fruits of opposed traditions, the results appear comparable, though not identical, in effect.

#### SHELL GAME AND RE COURSE TO WIT

It is what Rowe refers to as "dichotomy"<sup>26</sup> that counts here, not necessarily the mathematical sign of it. But, in Japan, Le Corbusier's postwar style received, by and large, a tectonic interpretation—one unconcerned with, if not quite opposed to, appreciation of spatial values in his work. This attitude resulted in, or perhaps merely coincided with, a vogue for shell construction, where the "tension" is perceived as part of the structure rather more than of the resulting space. Notre-Dame-du-Haut at Ronchamp (fig. 8.50) was the first pure product of the Corbusian late manner in 1955, and the upper face of its great sweeping double roof seems a flat, tilted hyperbolic-paraboloid spanning diagonally its roughly square area. By 1957 Tange had already applied this solution, although without the "Mediterranean" (if that is what Ronchamp is) disguise, in his now rarely published Meeting Hall at Shizuoka. Maekawa followed suit—but the shell is merely covering for a truss structure—in the roof of the small upstairs hall of his Festival Hall at Ueno (fig. 8.51) in 1961.



8.52. Tange: Totsuka Country Clubhouse, Totsuka, Kanagawa Prefecture, 1960–61.

Likewise, Shinohara's House of Earth makes use of a simple folded "shell" built of wood without curvature (see fig. 8.27). It, too, spans on a diagonal—and is characteristically tilted by having one end raised—in order to enhance rigidity in a frame structure which, though of modest proportions, is weakened by being open on one side.

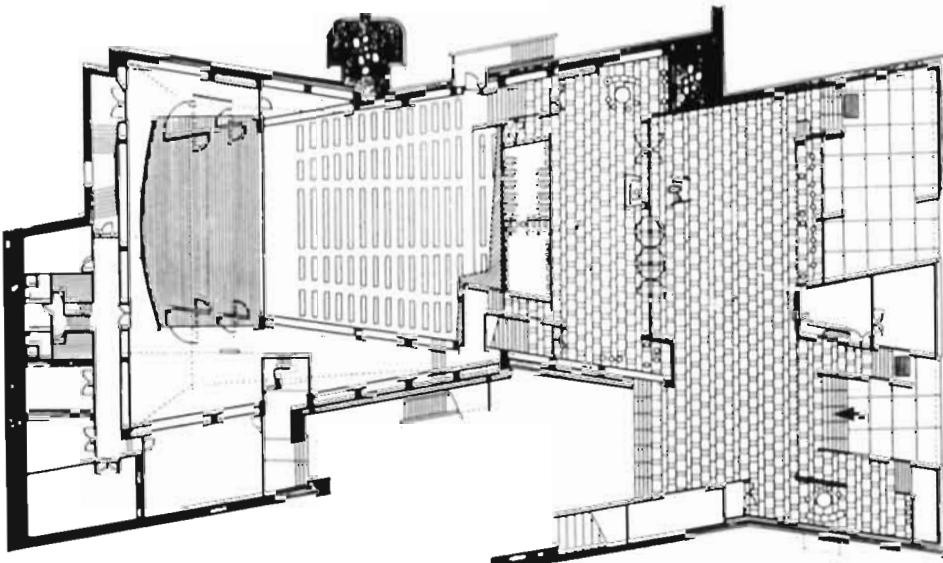
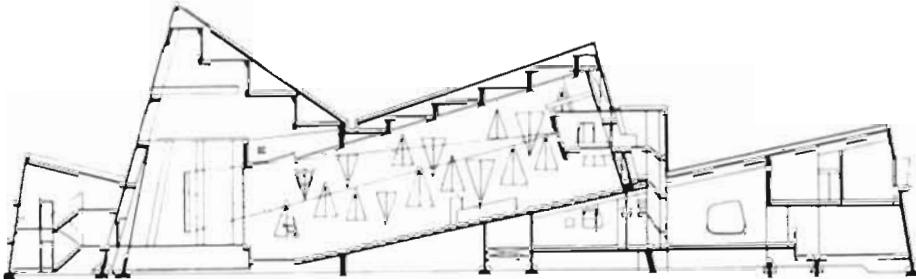
Next, varying his approach by aiming at the *appearance* of Ronchamp—although the structural aspect accords more with what Le Corbusier was currently doing in India—Tange introduced the Ronchamp theme into a profane setting at the Totsuka Country Club (fig. 8.52). With somewhat greater economy, in the same year, 1961, Maekawa recalled the billowing upturned profile of the Ronchamp roof by applying a sort of decorative cornice in his Festival Hall at Ueno. And, indeed, this is no less effective than in Le Corbusier's own work, for instance, at Ahmedabad, where in the museum a concrete cornice of similar type is used to set off brick walls.

At Nichinan, in Miyazaki Prefecture, the Nichinan Cultural Center of 1960–62 designed by Tange (figs. 8.53–54) uses decorative elements, such as apertures copied from the portico of the Chandigarh Assembly Building. The composition was developed by the architect as a series of prismatic solids, which become overlapping oblique triangles in profile and appear to radiate fanlike from a single center. Later, in 1966, Kikutake's Miyakonojo City Hall (fig. 8.55; also in Miyazaki Prefecture) afforded a Metabolist counterpart of this work. Instead of monolithic concrete as at Nichinan, the side walls of Kikutake's auditorium space are formed of radial concrete beams translated in the upper part of the building into steel ribs. Over these the roof of steel sheeting fits like the canopy of a baby carriage, one of the wittiest of all Metabolist attempts to analyze structure into its alleged respective permanent and changeable elements. The image at Nichinan was, by contrast, static and sculptural, but Tange's inspiration may

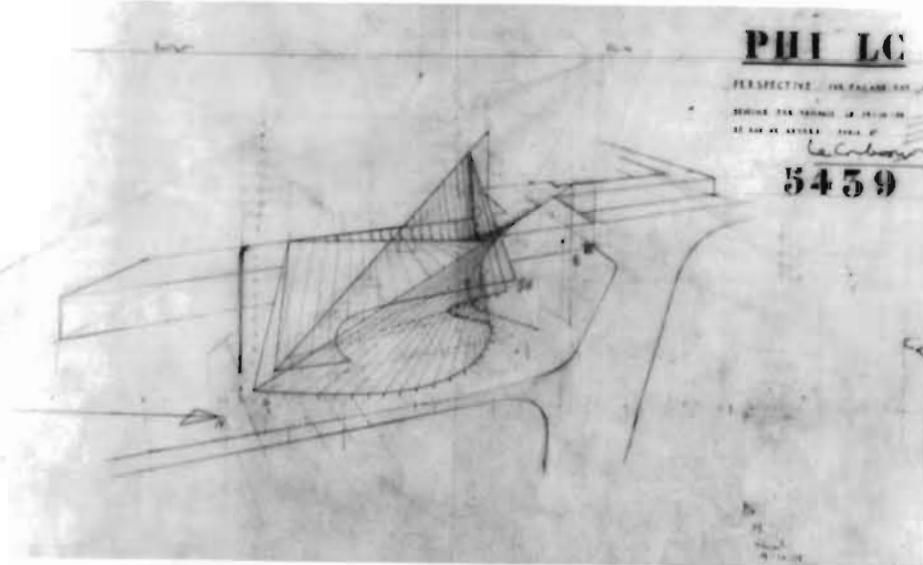


8.53. Tange: Nichinan Cultural Center, Nichinan, Miyazaki Prefecture, 1960–62. Lateral facade.

8.54. Tange: Nichinan Cultural Center, Nichinan, Miyazaki Prefecture, 1960–62. Plan (paving of courtyard, right, extends into foyer, left) and section.



8.55. Kikutake: Miyakonojo City Hall, Miyakonojo, Miyazaki Prefecture, 1966.



8.56. Le Corbusier, with Iannis Xenakis: Philips Pavilion, Brussels World's Fair, 1958. Schematic drawing.



8.57. Tange: National Olympic Stadiums, Yoyogi, Tokyo 1961–64.

have been the small but dynamic Philips Pavilion (fig. 8.56) designed by Le Corbusier for the Brussels World's Fair in 1958. It was a complex tentlike manifestation of saddle-shaped hyperbolic-paraboloid surfaces created by stretching cables between pinnacelike supports in a system elaborated by Iannis Xenakis.

Wherever the Philips Pavilion's influence began in work by Tange in the early sixties, its importance is clear for the designs of both St. Mary's Cathedral and the National Olympic Stadiums of 1961–64 (fig. 8.57). The Brussels World's Fair had boasted several tensile structures of greater magnitude than the Philips Pavilion, but none was closer to being an exercise in pure geometry. A still earlier building which made use of related techniques was the Ingalls Hockey Rink of 1956–58, at Yale University, designed by Tange's great friend Eero Saarinen and the engineer Fred Severud. In both the Yale building and the Tokyo twin stadia, it was necessary to employ hybrid structural methods, though it may be supposed that Tange's engineer, Yoshikatsu Tsuboi, profited from knowledge of Severud's design. As pure sculpture—inspired, Tange says, by the broken silhouette of the Colosseum in Rome—the pair of stadia overlooking Tokyo's Yoyogi Park remains the preeminent work of the Japan Style. By contrast, the less said the better about Tange's design for the rebuilt

Tokyo Cathedral, with its splayed cruciform fabric composed of eight mathematically derived hyperbolic-paraboloid shells spliced together (and lightly fudged) at the joints.

Kenzo Tange has been obsessed throughout his life with notions of monumentality and with achieving the feel (without of course, the look) of Western classical tradition. In a few works, like his small Kagawa Prefectural Gymnasium of 1965 at Takamatsu and better-known Kurashiki City Hall of 1960, he achieves this balance by uncompromisingly and unselfconsciously plumping for Japanese tradition. Kazuo Shinohara's quest lay in an opposite direction, obvious by 1966 in the climax of his First Style. Henceforth, his preoccupant goal would be to obtain a feeling of Japanese space that did not depend on mere details. But there was to be a middle figure in this equation—a student of Tange's, younger than Shinohara by only half the dozen years that separate the ages of Shinohara and Tange. The man in question was Arata Isozaki, and he shared with his mentor concern for both Western architectural tradition and urban design. Yet, he was, unlike Tange, critically aware of Japan's link with her ancient past having been severed by her own history. It was this gap, I think, that he endeavored to fill from the outset of his career by recourse to metaphor and wit.

## 9 | Technology, Metaphor, and the Resurgence of Japanese Space

### TO BUILD OR DESTROY

Arata Isozaki, while not achieving the customary doctorate in architecture until 1961, was designated a collaborating member of the Tange team upon first entering Tange's studio at Tokyo University as a fourth-year undergraduate in 1953. After publication of the Tokyo Plan in 1960 (see figs. 7.20–21), Tange and his office committed themselves to the development of a scheme for the existing Tsukiji area of downtown Tokyo, which was to have constituted one part of the "civic axis" as sketched out in the larger plan. Whereas in Tange's original plan the tentlike auxiliary residential zones had claimed the attention of architects and public alike, the Tsukiji Plan (fig. 9.1) was an assemblage of vertical elements joined horizontally by trusslike arms approximating the scale of whole buildings. For Isozaki himself, as well as the Metabolists, it was these articulated megastructures with their erector-set possibilities that established—along with Kikutake's seaborne ideas (see fig. 7.15)—the new wave of mechanical-biological imagery.

A strict chronology no longer appears feasible, but sometime in 1961, or possibly the year after, Isozaki finished a series of Metabolist-related sketches and models entitled "City in the Air" (fig. 9.2). Meanwhile, the scheme for a "Joint Core System" (fig. 9.3), which he conceived of as an infrastructural aid to large-scale urban development, may date from as early as 1960. It seems to have had a decisive influence on certain works and projects by the Tange office. Such were, if not the buildings set for Tsukiji itself, then certainly the Yamanashi Press and Radio Center at Kofu of 1964–66 (famous for being photographed against its mountain backdrop on clear days) or subsequent related designs, like the Shizuoka Press and Broadcasting Center in Tokyo of 1966–67 (see fig. 7.22). In "City in the Air" and "Joint Core System" Isozaki proceeded by fusing the circular shafts represented in Kikutake's sketches of 1958–59 with the trabeated megastructural fantasies of Tange's civic axis portion of the Tokyo Plan, whose elements were square in cross-section. By means of this gesture he was able to fix the definitive image that the Metabolist-generated megastructure was to achieve in Tange's built oeuvre. It is likely that Isozaki's solution echoes the classical manner of joining (round) column with (square) beam perpetuated by Le Corbusier in such works as the recently completed Museum of Western Art in Tokyo of 1959.

Eventually, having founded the firm of Arata Isozaki

Atelier, with its ironic initials AIA—usually read as American Institute of Architects—in 1963, the young architect would persist for nearly a decade in returning at intervals to the utopian systems architecture propounded by Metabolism. But of his initial proposals, dating from 1960–62 and including "City in the Air" and "Joint Core System," the most distinctively prophetic was also the least characteristically Metabolist in its presentation and feeling: a third scheme, the photomontage he entitled "Future City" (fig. 9.4). Here the vertical shafts derive from a gigantic and metamorphosed version of some ruined proto-Doric structure long ago abandoned to the ravages of an urban freeway. However, these ruined column shafts have been spliced and recycled as joint-core analogues with the help of modern materials. In other words, they are connected up at various angles with segments of truss borrowed from Isozaki's own "joint-core" drawing. The mood of this scenario piece is Piranesian, one portion of the recently added trussing having already crashed to the ground, while a few spectators gather to assess damage. Populated with antlike human figures as well as cars, the city promises nevertheless to function in spite of isolated disasters. Through its flirtation with classical ruins, this composition posits a theme altogether without precedent in Japanese architecture. That is the possibility for Isozaki—based on an analogy with the demise of the Western classical tradition—of the imminent destruction of architecture.

This metaphor of classical ruins may well owe something to Louis Kahn, who could have transmitted his enthusiasm for the subject during his short Japanese sojourn while attending the World Design Conference. Yet, it has previously been pointed out that the sporadic destruction of whole districts—if not entire cities—was a familiar occurrence in Japanese life, due to the vagaries of fire, typhoon, earthquake, and war. As a result, attitudes toward the natural and man-made environment have long been characterized by an acceptance of the precariousness of human life. Thus, a generation of architects, including Maekawa and Tange, had witnessed unflinchingly—almost without commentary—the destruction of Tokyo and other urbanized areas by the close of World War II. By contrast, we saw Frank Lloyd Wright arrive—and having spent the better part of a decade devising a structure he believed could refute the inevitable—proceed to inscribe musings on the fortuitous survival of the Imperial Hotel at the heart of his autobiography.

The conceit transforming ruins into a city of the future in Isozaki's imagination lies midway between such behavioral