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Ise Shrine and a Modernist Construction of Japanese Tradition

Jonathan M. Reynolds

Today the Shintō shrines at Ise embody some of the most treasured aesthetic values associated with Japan (Fig. 1).¹ The image of stout columns of unfinished cypress, standing in a court of white pebbles and sheltered by a dense cryptomeria forest, resonates with cherished assumptions about Japanese culture. Ise has come to serve as an exemplar of architecture devoid of unnecessary ornament; an architecture that reflects extraordinary sensitivity to building materials; an architecture that is integral with nature rather than being imposed on it.

The shrines' public status has not always been benign. In the years leading up to World War II, Ise became inextricably bound with nationalism and imperialistic conquest. Yet after the war modernists and their allies seized on this symbol of the antiquity of Japanese culture as a touchstone for their own designs. Within a generation they were able to neutralize wartime political associations by establishing a new vision of Ise that was compatible with the rhetoric of democracy that dominated postwar Japanese political discourse and was consonant with modernist aesthetic values.

This essay examines the rich history of representation of the shrines in text and image, with an emphasis on the remarkable transformation of the cultural status of the shrines after World War II. The publication *Ise: Prototype of Japanese Architecture* played a pivotal role in the formation of the discourse on Japanese architecture in the postwar period.² This book supported the claim made by Japanese modernists that they were the legitimate heirs to Japan's long cultural legacy, and, at the same time, it enhanced the appeal of Japanese modernism for a growing audience overseas. *Ise: Prototype of Japanese Architecture* contributed significantly to the process through which the meaning of the Shintō shrines at Ise was transformed during the postwar period. Ise's status as a site for religious practice and as a symbol of the imperial institution was subordinated to its new status as an object of aesthetic contemplation.

Photography was an essential catalyst in this transformation. Watanabe Yoshio's unprecedented photographs provided intimate visual access to the inner reaches of the shrine complex, thereby tearing down the spatial and visual barriers that had once protected the shrines' religiopolitical aura. This exposure neutralized the shrill nationalistic rhetoric that had enveloped Ise during World War II and facilitated the rehabilitation of the shrines into public institutions better suited to the newly emerging postwar order. The photographs reconstituted Ise within a rigorously modernist aesthetic, rendering the shrines' architecture intelligible in a way that the hazy, poetic representations from the past could not.

Modernist architects and critics embraced this new reading. *Ise: Prototype of Japanese Architecture* and other self-conscious efforts to construct a "Japanese tradition" sympathetic

to modernism strengthened artists' and architects' claim to a distinct Japanese cultural identity in the wake of a devastating war and foreign occupation. This discourse successfully shaped a consensus that modern architectural practice in Japan was inexorably bound up with and could not be understood outside of the context of premodern architecture, a position that is still pervasive in the literature on Japanese architecture to the present day.

Ise and the Imperial Family

The shrines at Ise emerged from World War II bearing a complex historical legacy. For many this was a terrible burden, but some recognized valuable opportunities, seeing aspects of the shrines' history that could be utilized to promote new cultural practices, even while keeping others at a distance and quietly erasing still others. In order to understand this process, it might be helpful to examine briefly the history of the shrine and ways in which it has been represented.

In the fifth and sixth centuries C.E., an elite based in the Yamato region (primarily modern Nara Prefecture, near present-day Osaka and Kyoto) established a military and political hegemony that came to dominate the Japanese main islands. The ruling family at the Yamato court (now referred to as the imperial family) claimed direct descent from the sun goddess, Amaterasu Ōmikami, and the significance of that claim grew along with the family's political stature. Little is known about the earliest history of the shrines at Ise, but by the end of the sixth century the Yamato court had established links with Ise as a site for the worship of its divine ancestor.

Ise Shrine became a crucial structural member in the ideological framework that bolstered the legitimacy of the emperor. According to the *Nihon shoki* (or *Nihongi*), a chronicle of the history of Japan compiled for the court in 720 C.E., the emperor Sujin (traditional reign dates of 97 B.C.E. to 30 B.C.E.) determined that the sun goddess was too powerful to be worshiped within the palace grounds and ordered that the shrine to the sun goddess be moved from the palace to Kasanui in Yamato.³ During the reign of the succeeding emperor, Suinin (traditional reign dates of 29 B.C.E. to 70 C.E.), an imperial princess set out to find a new shrine site for Amaterasu. When the princess arrived in Ise the sun goddess herself declared, "It is a secluded and pleasant land. In this land I wish to dwell."⁴ A shrine was therefore erected at Ise in her honor. The *Nihon shoki* provides revealing insight into the concerns of the court in the eighth century, when the imperial family was consolidating its power after decades of turbulent political strife and governmental reform. Ise had a central role in that project.

A generation before the compilation of the *Nihon shoki*, the court instituted a practice of regularly rebuilding the shrines at Ise. The first rebuilding occurred in 690 C.E., and with the exception of a few hiatuses, the principal shrine structures



1 Watanabe Yoshio, *The Main Sanctuary Seen from under the Eaves of the West Treasure House*, 1953 (reproduced with permission of Ise Shrine)

have been rebuilt approximately every twenty years up to the present day (the most recent rebuilding, the sixty-first, occurred in 1993).⁵ The shrine maintains two adjacent sites and alternates the sites with each rebuilding. Periodic rebuilding is extremely expensive and can be viewed as an act of sacrifice—as a gesture to underscore the court's unwavering commitment to the shrines. Although in the past other shrines were regularly rebuilt, few other shrine complexes have so consistently maintained the practice.⁶ Ise's unique connection to the imperial court made it possible to perpetuate the cycles of costly rebuilding for centuries.

Pilgrims and Tourists

The shrines at Ise have long attracted pilgrims and other visitors. One of the most important for the cultural history

of the shrines was the celebrated Buddhist priest and poet Saigyō (1118–1190).⁷ Saigyō lived for a time in the Ise region, and several of his poems contain references to the shrines and the surrounding area. Pilgrims were welcome to visit the shrine precincts and approach many of the subsidiary shrines at Ise. Most visitors, however, were kept at a distance from the inner compounds of the Inner and Outer Shrines and denied visual access to these sacred spaces by prominent fences. Normally only shrine priests and high-ranking court officials were allowed to enter the inner compounds, and pilgrims were permitted only to approach the outer fences. Buddhist priests were expected to remain even further from the inner compounds than other visitors.⁸ Therefore, Saigyō was obliged to worship from afar. Yet, for this devout pilgrim, these barriers did

not undermine the experience of the shrines, as the following poem suggests:

What the cause may be,
Is a thing I cannot tell;
But spontaneously,
With an awestruck reverence
Do my eyes with tears o'erflow⁹

Saigyō's poetic response established a precedent for aesthetically charged religious experience at Ise that many future pilgrims would emulate.

When the Buddhist priest Saka visited Ise in 1342, he was acutely aware of the shrines' political and cultural legacy. His diary mentioned the founding of the Inner Shrine during the reign of Suinin (in accordance with legend recorded in the *Nihon shoki*) and stressed the importance of Ise as the shrine for the worship of the divine forebear of Japan's sovereigns.¹⁰ When Saka visited the site of Saigyō's former home at Ise, he expressed great respect for Saigyō both because he was capable of "captivating our hearts" with his poetry and because Saigyō was a Buddhist who also "revered the way of the [Shintō] deities."¹¹ Clearly, the themes of Ise as a fountainhead of imperial power and as a source of poetic inspiration had already become well-established cultural tropes by Saka's time.

As a Buddhist priest, Saka (like Saigyō) remained at some distance from the inner compounds, approaching only as far as the Cryptomeria of the Five Hundred Branches (*Ioe no sugi*) at the Outer Shrine and the Kaze no Miya Shrine at the Inner Shrine. Although he could not approach the main sanctuary of the Inner Shrine, he had some limited knowledge of key physical characteristics of the structure, and he delineated those unseen features in his diary as if to bear witness to their existence:

In the construction of the Shrine too there are very many deep and recondite principles. Under the roof ridge there are cross planks that hold various secrets. They involve the symbol of the Deity. Then there is the centre or heart pillar which is concerned in the festival called the Yamaguchi-matsuri and this also is an esoteric matter.¹²

This passage is less concerned with architectural qualities of the sanctuary than with the spiritual nature embodied within its physical form. Saka knew that he could never come close to the buildings of the inner compounds or see the heart pillars beneath the main halls. Yet he expressed faith that if one visited the shrines in a state of physical and spiritual purity, "there is then no barrier between our mind and that of the Deity."¹³

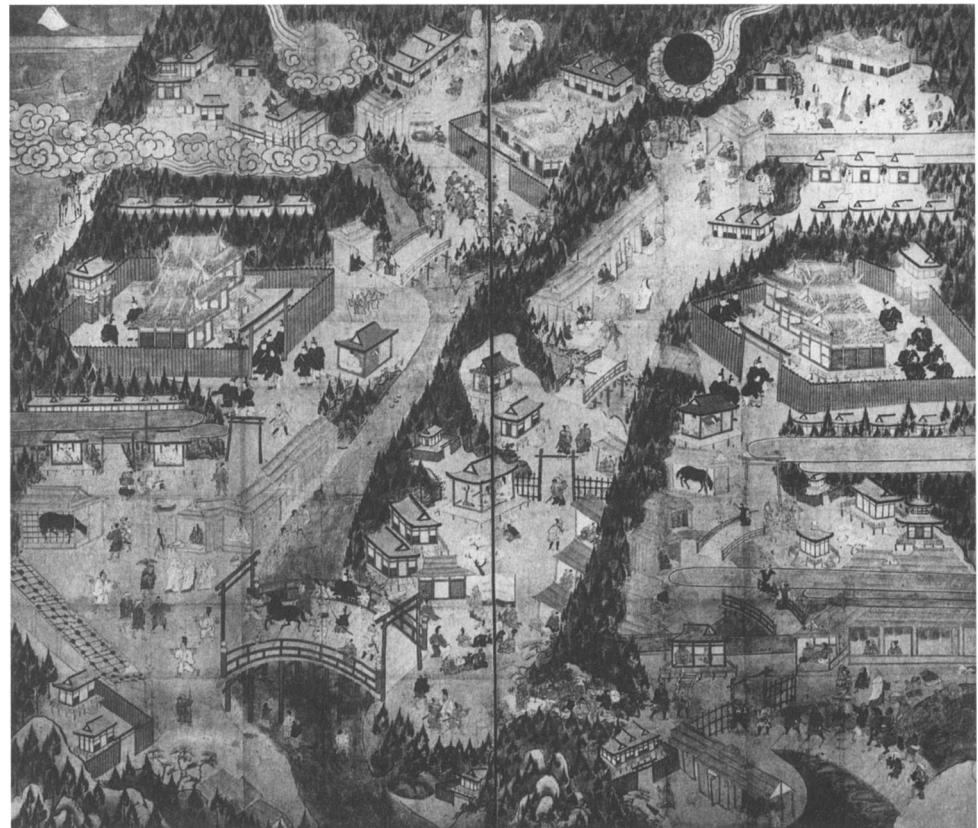
By the Edo period (1600–1868) the shrines at Ise had developed a vast network of confraternities that promoted devotion to the shrines and sponsored pilgrimage. Representatives of the shrines also traveled widely to maintain ties with devotees and distribute talismans.¹⁴ This network helped to generate an astonishing number of pilgrims. Each year Ise routinely received between two hundred thousand and five hundred thousand visitors. At three times during the Edo period, in 1705, 1777, and 1830, Ise pilgrimage reached a

fever pitch; in 1830 upward of five million people traveled to the shrines.¹⁵

All the pilgrimage activity during the Edo period resulted in a growing demand for visual representations of Ise. The *Ise Mandala*, a folding screen in the Powers collection dating to the seventeenth century, may have been produced for a confraternity affiliated with the shrines (Fig. 2).¹⁶ The *mandala* presents a bird's-eye view of some of the most important shrine structures at Ise, including the Uji Bridge and the inner compounds of the Inner and Outer Shrines.¹⁷ These structures are loosely organized in a manner that only vaguely suggests their geographic placement in relation to one another. The virtual pilgrim might follow a path from the inner compound in the middle right of the screen, taking him across the Uji Bridge at the bottom, and then proceed to the inner compound of the Inner Shrine at the middle left. Along the way, the viewer might imagine joining other pilgrims depicted performing ablutions at the Isuzu River or praying at various sites in the complex.¹⁸

The painting would have provided a tangible visual link to the shrines and might have been used by worshipers as a vehicle to facilitate a mental pilgrimage to Ise from afar.¹⁹ The *mandala* was not intended, however, as a guidebook or map. The presence of both a large sun and moon hovering over the Inner and Outer Shrines (symbols of the principal deities enshrined within each compound) underscores that this is a spiritual map of the shrine, not a naturalistic road map.²⁰ Distances are not rendered to scale and the treatment of connective roads is cursory at best; it lacks the precision one would need to navigate in the physical world. Furthermore, the depiction of the shrines' architecture in the *mandala* is not consistent with what is known about the state of the structures at that time. In the painting, the shrine buildings have reticulated shutters (*shitomido*) and plaster walls rather than walls of wood planks, the shrine roofs are hipped and gabled rather than simply gabled, and they are not equipped with the full complement of roof billets (*katsuogi*). It is likely that the *mandala* was produced by a professional workshop far removed from Ise; the painters probably relied on texts or images of other shrines as models rather than on direct observation of the Ise Shrine complex itself.²¹

In order to capitalize on the massive Ise pilgrimage market, publishers issued illustrated guidebooks to famous places (*meisho-e*). These guides offered travel tips, provided historical information, retold famous legends, and recited poems associated with famous sites along the major pilgrimage routes. They were illustrated with numerous woodblock prints depicting famous places and people. The late eighteenth-century *Ise sangū meisho zue* (Illustrations of Famous Places on the Ise Pilgrimage) contains several views of the Inner and Outer Shrines. One group of four woodblock prints presents an aerial view extending from the Uji Bridge to the inner compound of the Inner Shrine (Fig. 3). This group was identified with an inscription reading "Inner View of the Inner Shrine," and two short poems referring to the shrine were written into the clouds floating over the shrine in the fourth woodblock. Although the prints placed the viewer well outside the inner compound, they offered a much more revealing look inside than a pilgrim ever would have had in person. Another print shows priests making offerings at the



2 Ise Mandala, 17th century. Kimiko and John Powers Collection (reproduced with permission from Rosenfield and Shimada, *Traditions of Japanese Art*, p. 151)

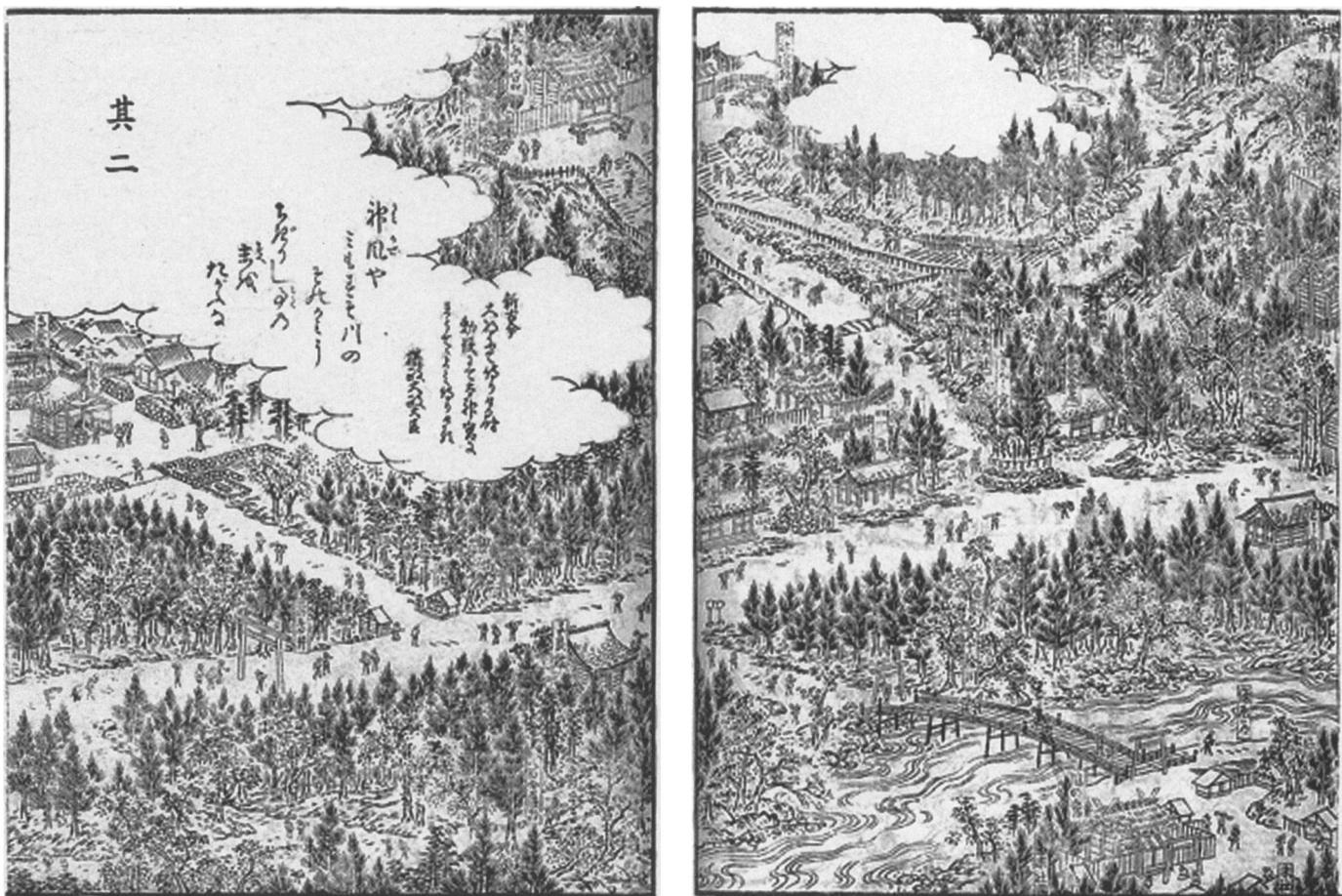
Outer Shrine; it focuses solely on the inner compound there and is even more revealing about the structures that are normally hidden from view.²² The prints from the *Ise sangū meisho zue* were far more accurate than the Ise Mandala about architectural features of the shrine structures.

Unlike the *mandala*, this guidebook actually was intended as an aid to navigation. Even though it is organized around pilgrimage routes, it presents information in a manner more appropriate to tourism. A pilgrimage would normally be structured around a clear hierarchy of events culminating in the transformative experience of approaching the sacred space of the inner shrine (the kind of experience that Saigyō expressed through his poetry). This guidebook is filled to overflowing with lists of places (some without any specific religious significance) and with prints that depict not only religious sites but also historical events and other items, and all of these scenes are presented in a similar manner. A print of a Buddhist temple is followed by a scene of a market along the pilgrimage route crowded with vendors and entertainers, which is then followed by a view into the garden and interior of an inn where male guests are being served fine food and women are dancing to the sounds of a *shamisen* (a three-stringed musical instrument).²³ This treatment of the travel experience tends to level and equalize all of the events on the itinerary. Ise shrine structures are visually equated with these other scenes; each becomes one in a sequence of spectacles waiting to be experienced by the pilgrims as they progressed along the prescribed route.

During the Edo period the military government severely restricted travel, and pilgrimage was one of the few types of travel that it tolerated. Constantine Vaporis points out that

"[w]hile pilgrimage was, for many people, a significant religious act, for others, pilgrimage became largely a means or pretext by which to obtain official permission to travel."²⁴ Government controls undoubtedly encouraged a more diverse spectrum of people to designate Ise as a destination than might have done so under other circumstances. The late seventeenth-century novelist Ihara Saikaku recognized that not all pilgrims to Ise were as spiritually engaged as the poet Saigyō. Of the protagonists in his *Five Women Who Loved Love*, Saikaku observed, "None of the group had any real interest in the pilgrimage itself. At Ise they failed to visit the Inner Shrine or the sacred beach at which homage is paid to the Sun, stopping only at the Outer Shrine for a few minutes and purchasing as their only souvenirs a purification broach and some seaweed."²⁵ For these "pilgrims" Ise represented little more than an excuse for the many pleasures that travel had to offer.

Not surprisingly, there was a significant commercial dimension to the pilgrimage phenomenon. A variety of businesses catered to the nonspiritual needs of the vast numbers of pilgrims swarming to Ise. Contemporary commentators picked up on the ironies of the this-worldly activities that surrounded the shrine precincts. In the early nineteenth-century comic novel *Shanks' Mare*, when the bumbling characters Kita and Yaji first arrive in Yamada they find "that each house had a tablet at the door bearing the name of a Shintō priest, this giving the houses the air of being a place of business."²⁶ Priests' assistants hustled pilgrims, each hoping to direct them to the house of the priest they represented. As if to heighten the contrasts between the spiritual and the profane even further, the author sends his heroes Kita and



3 Inner View of the Inner Shrine, from *Ise sangū meisho zue*, Kyoto, 1797, vol. 4

Yaji out drinking with other pilgrims and carousing in a brothel the night before visiting the shrines.²⁷

When Kita and Yaji set out for the shrine the next day they run into beggars who convince them to part with a small amount of money. As they cross the Uji Bridge at the entrance to the Inner Shrine precinct they discover men standing in the Isuzu River holding long nets to catch any coins thrown into the river as alms for the shrine. *Shanks' Mare* includes a lively illustration of the scene with caricatured portraits of Kita and Yaji standing on the bridge tossing coins to the men with nets below (Fig. 4). A similar illustration of men catching alms with nets also appears in *Ise sangū meisho zue*, but *Shanks' Mare* provides a very different context for this activity from the guidebook. It is hard not to equate the money harvesting at the bridge with the common beggars collecting money in the previous scene, given the close proximity of these events in the narrative. Even though the text does not indicate what happens to the money once it is caught, the author's cynical treatment of activities around the shrine encourages the reader to be suspicious of the motives of the men with the nets (will any of the money really end up in the shrine coffers?). It is only after the author has had his fun lampooning the pilgrims that he restores some measure of decorum: he assures his readers that once Kita and Yaji were finally in the presence of shrines, the experience "filled them with such awe that their jokes were forgotten and their idle talk silent."²⁸

The Foreign Tourists

In 1868 a new government ruling in the name of the emperor signaled a political transformation, known as the Meiji Restoration. Dedicated to far-reaching political and economic reform, it paved the way for a new category of visitor, the foreign tourist. These visitors held no allegiance to the imperial institution. Nor did they share the spiritual framework that structured Saigyō's appreciation for the shrines' shrouded mysteries. Most were not even aware of the poetic associations that Saigyō helped to foster. Ise was just another sightseeing destination (Fig. 5). However, given their late Victorian standards for architectural beauty, many visitors found Ise lacking in interest. In general, foreign tourists of this period were much more excited by the richly ornamented architecture at Nikko. The intrepid travel writer Isabella L. Bird, who visited in 1880, was moved by Ise's beautiful forests but deeply disappointed in the shrines themselves: "... it is the camphor groves, the finest in Japan, covering the extensive and broken grounds with their dark magnificence, which so impress a stranger with their unique grandeur as to make him forget the bareness and the meanness of the shrines which they overshadow."²⁹ In his travel guide of 1893, Basil Chamberlain cautioned:

It should be premised that the interest of the trip to Ise is chiefly antiquarian. Without going so far as to say, with the disappointed tourist, that "there is nothing to see, and



3 Continued

they won't let you see it," we may remind intending travelers of the remarkable plainness of all Shintō architecture, and that the veneration in which the shrines of Ise are held is such that none but the priests and Imperial personages are allowed to penetrate into the interior. The rest of the world may only peep through the outer gate.³⁰

The American architect Ralph Adams Cram, best known for his Gothic Revival architectural designs, visited Japan in 1898. He had great admiration for much of what he observed in Japan. However, Ise was not a highlight of his trip. He dismissed it as "sufficiently ugly and barbarous."³¹ Ise did not offer the ornate architectural ornament that made buildings beautiful in Cram's eyes. He and other Western tourists lacked the education necessary to recognize the cultural markers that made Ise a meaningful tourist attraction to Japanese visitors.³² And since the principal buildings were difficult to see and there were no great vistas to enjoy, Ise could not even qualify as a natural monument.³³

Not every foreign visitor was immune to what Ise had to offer, however. When the German architect Bruno Taut arrived in Japan in 1933, his modernist aesthetics prepared him to see a very different Ise than European or American visitors a generation before. Taut placed Ise Shrine on a par with the Parthenon. The relationship between setting and building materials was key to Taut's evaluation. He believed that this relationship as manifested at Ise produced the quintessential expression of Japan's cultural identity:

The shrines of Ise are Japan's greatest and completely original creation in general world architecture. We encounter here something entirely different from the most beautiful cathedrals, mosques, the Indian and Siamese temples or pagodas, and even from the temples of China. The Parthenon on the Acropolis is to the present day a visible sign of the beautiful gifts that the men of Athens bestowed on their symbol of wisdom and intelligence, Athena. It is the greatest and most aesthetically sublime building in stone as are the Ise shrines in wood. . . . The fresh green of the high cedars, in the midst of which the shrine stands, frames this dwelling house of the Japanese national spirit which ever renews itself like eternal living nature.³⁴

He concluded, "after the first visit to Ise one knows what Japan is."³⁵

The relatively unadorned buildings at Ise may have seemed "barbarous" to Cram, but the modernist Taut found them authentic and honest.³⁶ The way the buildings at Ise harmonized with their natural surroundings stood in stark contrast to the artifice of European Victorian architecture. Ise expressed certain universal and eternal architectural truths that transcended the superficiality of architectural fashion. Although Taut did not make the comparison explicit, informed readers would undoubtedly have connected his praise for the sensitive use of materials and emphasis on underlying struc-



4 At the Uji Bridge, from Ikku, *Shanks' Mare*, 1960, p. 228
(originally from an unidentified 19th-century edition)



5 Kusakabe Kimbei, *Inner Shrine, Ise*, ca. 1880s. Salem, Mass., Peabody Essex Museum (Courtesy Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Mass.)

ture at Ise with the modernist aesthetic values espoused elsewhere by this outspoken advocate for the new architecture.

Taut's writings were widely read in the West, where they provided detailed accounts of both premodern and contemporary Japanese building that were unavailable in other Western-language sources. His work was of great interest for a diverse Japanese readership, as well.³⁷ Praise for premodern Japanese architecture from this famous Western architect was welcomed by the nationalist philosopher Nishida Kitarō, who in 1941 cited Taut's praise of Ise as proof that aspects of Japanese culture could hold their own when compared with Western culture.³⁸ Taut, as an observer detached from Ise's complex cultural legacy, appreciated Ise primarily in architectural terms. This approach paved the way for postwar modernists (Japanese and non-Japanese alike) who would have their own reasons for separating Ise from certain chapters in its history.

Over the centuries a succession of visitors has approached Ise with wildly different expectations and interpreted what they have seen (and not seen) based on their diverse backgrounds. The shrines have served political, spiritual, aesthetic, and commercial needs. How far apart are the reverential attitude of Saigyō and the slapstick cynicism of the creator of Kita and Yaji? The contrasts between the cultures that shaped Saigyō's response and Cram's were profound. Taut may have been just as sympathetic with Ise as Saigyō, but his vision of Ise was no less far removed from that of the twelfth-century priest than was Cram's. This institution has been shaped and reshaped by so many layers of representation that by the postwar period there was ample room for an extraordinary variety of interpretative strategies.

Ise and State Shintō

Ise had always played an important role in legitimizing the imperial institution, and when new leaders came to power after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 they, too, recognized the ideological potential of Ise and other Shintō institutions. In 1869 the Meiji emperor paid a well-publicized visit to Ise—

this was the first time an emperor had visited Ise in person since the seventh century. The government also initiated numerous policies to promote Shintō. As Helen Hardacre has observed, "State rites, the heightening prominence of the emperor's religious roles, and a new relation between the state and the Ise Shrines became the pillars of the State Shintō."³⁹ All citizens were required to register at their local Shintō shrine regardless of their religious affiliation. In order to bind the populace to the national polity (*kokutai*) the people were encouraged to make pilgrimages to Ise and were expected to enshrine a talisman from the imperial shrine in altars (*kamidana*) in their homes. Participation in these practices increased as the war heated up in Asia in the 1930s and early 1940s. The number of visitors to Ise peaked in 1940 at nearly eight million, and thirteen million Ise talismans were sold in 1943 alone.⁴⁰ Ise continued to be the single most important institution within the system of State Shintō until the end of World War II.

The Japanese government's effort to promote Ise as a bulwark of the imperial institution coincided with the development of architectural history as an academic discipline. Ise's unique political aura profoundly affected the way the shrine and its architecture were treated by historians. One of the most successful practitioners in that field before World War II was Itō Chūta (1867–1954). Though best known for his research on Buddhist architecture, he also published on Shintō architecture, including Ise. Itō, through his prolific writing and his teaching at the prestigious Tokyo Imperial University, had a profound effect on people's understanding of premodern Japanese architecture.

A short article that appeared in a daily newspaper in 1921 reflects the special demands placed on anyone who ventured to discuss Ise in the public domain. Throughout the piece Itō presented Ise as a cornerstone of national culture. After introducing the practice of periodic rebuilding at Ise, Itō emphasized what a great honor it was for Japan that Ise had preserved this custom, "which is unparalleled throughout the world."⁴¹ Itō described Ise as "architecture that manifests the

spirit of simplicity that is characteristic of the Japanese people.”⁴² Only after this flourish of nationalistic rhetoric would Itō proceed to examine the history of the shrine architecture in greater detail.

The reasons for initiating the cycles of periodic rebuilding were of special interest to Itō. He theorized that concern for the purity of the building materials and for the preservation of ancient architectural forms were primary objectives, and he claimed that the practice had been largely successful in protecting unique architectural features since the seventh century. Itō repeatedly sought connections between the shrines and the imperial institution. For example, he stressed formal similarities between the architecture at Ise and that of early palace architecture and speculated that the policy of rebuilding the shrine every twenty years might be related to the custom, abandoned in the seventh century, of constructing a new palace on a different site with the ascension of each new emperor.

Itō concluded his essay with a comparatively lengthy passage in which he seemed to abandon his historian’s voice. He wrote:

Needless to say, the ritual of *sengū* [in which the principal objects of worship are transferred from the old shrine structures to the new] is a truly ancient rite. When one attends this ritual one is transported to the distant past when one could have respectfully worshiped Amaterasu close at hand. Under these circumstances, we think of the great enterprise of the founding of the nation by the imperial ancestors and appreciate the precious value of our national polity [*kokutai*] based on one imperial line through ten thousand ages. We think of the development of our national culture, and our gratitude at having reached this present situation is without measure.⁴³

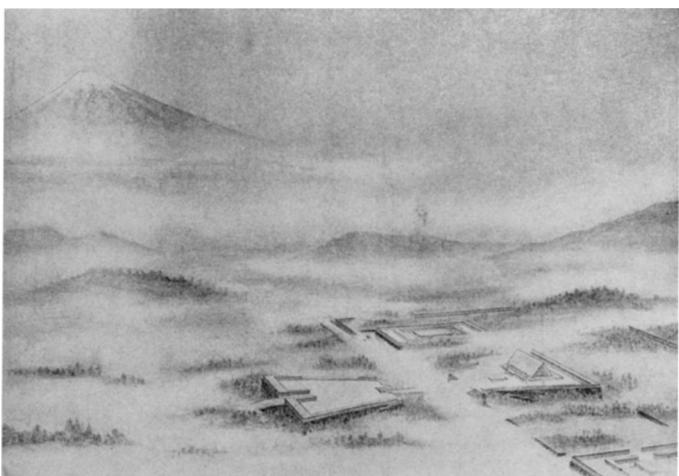
It is not particularly remarkable that the author expressed faith in Shintō and professed gratitude to the imperial institution; this would have been commonplace at the time in a public forum such as a newspaper. What is worth noting is the degree to which Itō’s essay blurred a religiopolitical discourse with an architectural discourse. In the essay Itō explicitly stated to his readers that he would approach the subject of Ise “as an architect,” and yet his historical analysis was tentative and was framed by and subordinated to repeated rhetorical flourishes that emphasized his loyalty as an imperial subject. This tendency is more pronounced in this essay for a general audience than it is in Itō’s other writings for professional architectural audiences, yet it is always more apparent in writings dealing with Ise than in his work on Buddhist architecture or other subjects.⁴⁴ Ise could not be examined with historical rigor in the public eye; the unique ideological sensitivity of the subject demanded that the historian maintain a greater degree of distance from it.

The nationalistic rhetoric surrounding Ise was not reserved for a Japanese audience. Harada Jiro, an art historian on the staff of the Tokyo Imperial Household Museum, was invited by the Society for International Cultural Relations (Kokusai Bunka Shinkōkai) to give a lecture tour in the United States in 1936. This organization was established by the Japanese government in 1934 to promote Japanese culture abroad at a

time when Japan’s foreign policy was under attack in the wake of the Manchurian incident.⁴⁵ Harada’s trip to the United States was typical of the activities undertaken by the Society for International Cultural Relations in the 1930s.

At a lecture in Seattle, Harada spoke supportively of Japan’s secession from the League of Nations and of his nation’s need to pursue its own military and political interests. He expressed deep concern over the extent of Westernization in Japan and the threat to traditional Japanese culture that that process represented. In this context, Shintō was for him one of the few areas of cultural life untainted by what he termed “the zeal to welcome new things.”⁴⁶ Harada characterized his personal response to a recent trip to Ise in these words: “Not long ago I revisited the Imperial Shrines at Ise and was profoundly awed. My soul was thrilled with the invigorating freshness of the verdure and moved by the echo in the mystic murmur of the ancient cryptomeria and camphor trees that half conceal the simple and sacred edifice.”⁴⁷ Musing on the site, he remarked, “Real Japan, the old and true Nippon, seems to dwell there, speaking to the people in the silent language of the past, of the eternity of beauty and of truth as revealed in nature.”⁴⁸ While Harada acknowledged the spiritual dimension to his visit, his emphasis, at least for this audience, was on aesthetics. Harada documented the shrines’ ancient cultural pedigree by citing the famous lines by Saigyō and a haiku poem by the seventeenth-century master Bashō, words that “echoed in the heart of every Japanese visiting the shrine.”⁴⁹ Yet this cultural legacy was being deployed to address the most contemporary of problems. Harada shared his anxiety over the extent of Westernization with many intellectuals. He turned to Ise as an antidote to the encroachment of the West and used belief in the purity of Ise as the embodiment of cultural identity to justify Japan’s imperialistic foreign policy. And Harada was making this argument for cultural nationalism before an American audience. This was an ominous portent. Ise became an increasingly important ideological tool for the government as it mobilized the Japanese people for all-out war and defended its actions to the outside world. As a result, the shrines at Ise emerged from the war tainted by Japan’s military aggression across Asia.

The architect Tange Kenzō was responsible for one of the most explicit examples of the deployment of Ise’s architectural forms as a symbol of Japanese imperialism during this period. In 1942 Tange won the highly prized competition for the design of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere Memorial (Fig. 6). The competition rules did not specify a site for the memorial hall, and Tange chose to place his project at the foot of Mt. Fuji, a site redolent of nationalistic associations. Tange, who had studied the architecture of the Italian Renaissance and had written a provocative essay comparing Michelangelo to Le Corbusier, surrounded the main memorial hall with a trapezoidal enclosure reminiscent of Michelangelo’s plaza for the Capitoline Hill in Rome. The forecourt to the complex recalled Gian Lorenzo Bernini’s design for the great colonnade at St. Peter’s. The memorial hall, however, was descended directly from the main sanctuary at Ise Shrine.⁵⁰ The imposing reinforced-concrete hall itself was built on a broad podium—the culmination of an elaborate monumental approach. A massive gabled roof set



6 Tange Kenzō, *Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere Memorial Hall*, competition design, aerial perspective, 1942 (from *Kokusai kenchiku* 56, no. 693 [Dec. 1942], p. 963)

perpendicular to the main axis dominated the design, and the entrance was placed in the center under the eaves of this imposing roof, just as at Ise. The nine windows extending out from the roof directly below the ridge recalled the roof billets (*katsuogi*) perched on the roof of the main sanctuary and certain subsidiary buildings at Ise Shrine.⁵¹

Tange's design was radical in several respects. First, he dared to contaminate the supposedly pure Japanese architectural forms of Shintō with features derived from major works of the Western canon, and he proposed to build his hybrid design in modern materials. With this move Tange universalized otherwise parochial architectural forms, a gesture appropriate for a project designed to proclaim Japan's position as a world power poised to dominate Asia. Second, Tange introduced this surrogate for the reclusive shrine architecture into a monumental and extremely public setting, where, as a symbol of the legitimacy for the imperial institution, it could more effectively carry out certain types of rhetorical chores.⁵² The citation of Ise's architecture in this context is a reflection of how closely linked Ise had become with Japan's imperialist ambitions during the war.

The Meaning of "Tradition" for Japanese Modernism

Ise's legal status changed dramatically with Japan's defeat in 1945. The Allied Occupation instituted sweeping reforms that affected every aspect of public life. Occupation staff determined that there were close ties between Shintō and ultranationalism, and Shintō institutions immediately became a target of occupation reforms. The Shintō Directive of December 1945 legally separated Shintō from the state. The Occupation ended state funding for Shintō institutions, including Ise, and forbade the propagation of Shintō in the public schools. The Japanese political system quickly adjusted to its newly regained independence when the Occupation ended in 1952. As politicians reassured Japanese political autonomy, intellectuals in fields ranging from literature to psychology explored the issue of Japanese cultural identity. There was a widely felt need to fill the breaches in Japan's cultural boundaries caused by military defeat and occupation.

Debates over the meaning of Japanese tradition had plagued the architectural profession before the war. After it, architects returned to this issue with a new sense of urgency. Ironically, the authority of "tradition," which had been deployed to preserve the status quo in the 1930s and 1940s, was quickly coopted, at least by some, to challenge the discredited wartime political and cultural order and even to forward new democratic social ideals. Some architects wrote of an alternative "tradition" centered on "the people" rather than on authoritarian, "feudal" regimes.⁵³ A steady stream of articles and panel discussions engaged a diverse range of architects, architectural historians, journalists, and engineers. There seemed to be an insatiable interest in Japanese architectural history. Essays attempted in a variety of ways to situate contemporary architects in relation to premodern Japanese architecture. These exchanges came to be referred to collectively as the "Nihon dentō ronsō," or the Japan tradition debate.⁵⁴

In the mid-1950s memories of World War II were still vivid, and some contributors to this discourse were wary of certain monuments of traditional culture because of the uses to which they had been put by extreme nationalists. The art historian Miyagawa Torao reminded his readers of Ise's nationalistic past in an article that appeared in the architectural magazine *Shinkenchiku* in 1955 (an abridged version of the article appeared in the English-language edition of the magazine four years later). He decried what he described as the "fascist viewpoint" toward Ise advanced by figures such as Itō Chūta and condemned the way ultranationalists had exploited Taut's naive praise for Ise. Miyagawa emphasized that because of the political climate that prevailed in Japan before and during the war, it had not been possible to study the architecture in an objective fashion. At that time, anyone who revealed too much about the shrines and their architecture or offered even the slightest criticism would have drawn the attention of the censors. Indeed, he claimed that that defensive attitude had not dissipated entirely. The article proposed a number of issues that needed to be explored. For example, Miyagawa questioned the cliché that Ise was the paradigm of purely Japanese architecture, suggesting that there was evidence of historical connections between Ise and both continental Asia and the Pacific islands. Miyagawa concluded by expressing the hope that it would finally be possible to study Ise's history more vigorously and discuss it in a more balanced fashion.⁵⁵ Miyagawa's essay clearly demonstrates just how much was still at stake politically in any examination of Ise Shrine in the 1950s. Ise's role within State Shintō had not been forgotten.

Tange Kenzō was one of the most active participants in the debate over tradition. In a series of articles beginning in 1955, he addressed the role of tradition in design. Tange asserted that tradition was an integral part of the self, and that the "creative process" inevitably involved confrontation with that aspect of the self. He wrote:

My study [of history] has led me to the conclusion that tradition cannot continue to live of its own force, and that it cannot be considered in itself a creative energy. To be transformed into something creative, tradition must be denied and, in a sense, destroyed. Instead of being apotheosized, it must be desecrated.⁵⁶

Provocative statements such as this left many thinking that Tange was hostile to tradition. Tange apparently received a letter from none other than Walter Gropius expressing alarm at Tange's perceived callousness toward Japanese tradition.⁵⁷ In fact, Tange was not advocating that tradition be jettisoned. To the contrary, he was insisting that tradition was an essential catalyst for his work. For Tange, creativity was a dialectical process; he needed to wrestle with the tradition that was a part of himself in order to produce something new. In succeeding articles, it became clear just how important his vision of tradition was for his understanding of his own designs.

Tange identified two aesthetic strains in Japanese cultural history. He named one strain "Jōmon" after the prehistoric culture that extended across the Japanese islands from as early as 10,000 B.C.E. until approximately 300 B.C.E. Tange characterized the "Jōmon aesthetic" as dynamic and plebeian. "Jōmon" was contrasted with the passive, ordered, and aristocratic "Yayoi aesthetic" named after the Yayoi culture, which dates from the end of the Jōmon until approximately 300 C.E. Tange argued that these two aesthetics had a dialectical relationship and that at different stages in Japanese history one or the other dominated Japanese architecture. Tange found evidence of the presence of both the "Jōmon" and the "Yayoi" in some of the most successful designs in the history of Japanese architecture, as, for example, the Katsura Villa. Of Katsura Tange wrote:

Conflict between the Jomon and the Yayoi principles is to be found throughout the Katsura Palace. It is this conflict which gives the palace its creative tension. Close study has led me to see in Katsura both an aristocratic tendency to preserve or recapture the tradition of the Heian court and an anti-aristocratic tendency to create something entirely new.⁵⁸

Tange carried this analysis forward into the present. He described the post-and-beam structure of the Kagawa Prefectural Office Building (designed between 1955 and 1958) as a manifestation of the Yayoi aesthetic and associated the use of massive concrete walls for his Kurashiki City Hall (1958–60) with the Jōmon aesthetic.⁵⁹ Tange was careful not to claim that there were any specific direct historical links between designs that reflected the same aesthetic principles, only that these structures shared an aesthetic sensibility with one lineage or the other. Nonetheless, by choosing the names "Jōmon" and "Yayoi" he implied a continuity in Japanese culture stretching from modernist design back into prehistory. In this way Tange could affirm the Japaneseeness of his modernist design without resorting to problematic historicizing ornamentation.

Some critics went even further than Tange in attempting to identify Japanese modernist design with premodern architecture. The architectural critic Kawazoe Noboru, in his many articles on Tange's designs, made several formal comparisons between Tange's work and major Japanese monuments. The succession of cantilevered balconies on Tange's Kagawa Prefectural Office Building reminded Kawazoe of the cantilevered roofs of pagodas.⁶⁰ He argued that Tange's Hiroshima Memorial Museum resembled the eighth-century Shōsōin storehouse; the horizontal louvers protecting the museum

contents from sunlight were equated with the variegated exterior surface of the Shōsōin's distinctive log construction, and the museum's massive reinforced columns suggested the great wooden columns of the storehouse.⁶¹ For Tange these comparisons might have been too literal and specific, but in an architectural community struggling for historical roots, they were convincing to many. Although formal comparisons between premodern Japanese architecture and modernist design were nothing new—both Japanese architects and Bruno Taut had done this in the 1930s—such comparisons became an increasingly important feature of architectural criticism from this time forward.⁶²

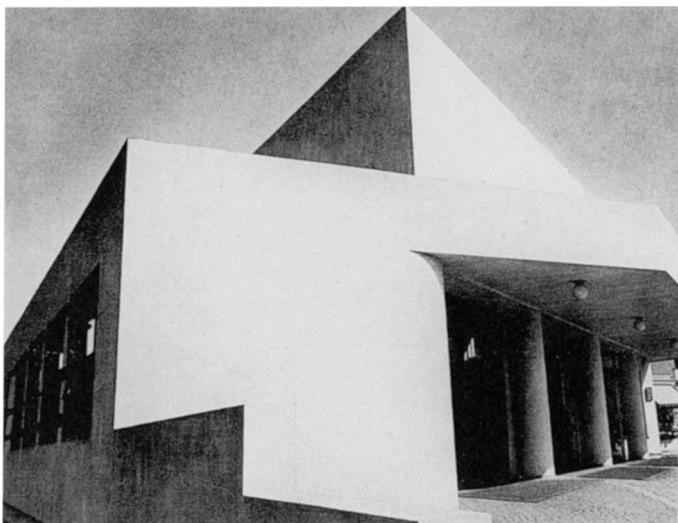
Photographing Ise Shrine

Ise has been represented in a variety of media over the centuries. In 1953, however, the shrines were rendered through photography in a way that profoundly changed later understanding of them. These new photographs established an unprecedented level of intimacy, and in doing so undermined the religious aura that had always shielded the shrines. At that same time they enabled Tange and others to elevate the shrine buildings to a new position as the prototype for all of Japan's later architectural achievements.

At the time of the fifty-ninth rebuilding of the shrines at Ise in 1953, the photographer Watanabe Yoshio (1907–2000) was invited to photograph Ise by the Society for International Cultural Relations (the same semigovernmental organization that had sponsored Harada's lecture tour to the United States in 1936).⁶³ This organization planned to publish a book in English that would introduce Japanese architecture to a world audience. The Society for International Cultural Relations asked the modernist architect Horiguchi Sutemi to write an introductory essay and edit the project. Horiguchi recommended that Watanabe photograph Ise for the publication.

Watanabe began his career as a photojournalist in the 1930s. Early on his choice of subjects was extremely eclectic, including street scenes, display windows, and portraits. Watanabe's first published architectural photograph, a dramatic image of the newly completed Ochanomizu Station in Tokyo, appeared in 1933 (Fig. 7). In an article from 1939, Watanabe acknowledged photographs by Eric Mendelsohn and Alfred Renger-Patzsch as particularly important for the development of his work.⁶⁴ Renger-Patzsch's photographs offered Watanabe some powerful strategies for distancing himself from the pictorialism that was still very popular in Japan. Both Watanabe's *Ochanomizu Station* and Renger-Patzsch's *Herrenwyk Blast Furnace as Seen from Below* of 1928 (Fig. 8) were shot from a disorientingly low camera angle, and both images made use of dramatic contrasts of light and dark that tend to transform the architecture into relatively abstract geometric forms. During the 1930s Watanabe became increasingly well known as an architectural photographer. His photos of Horiguchi Sutemi's Okada House of 1933 led to several other commissions for designs by Horiguchi. It was on the strength of Watanabe's photographs of these designs from the 1930s that Horiguchi chose Watanabe for the Ise assignment.

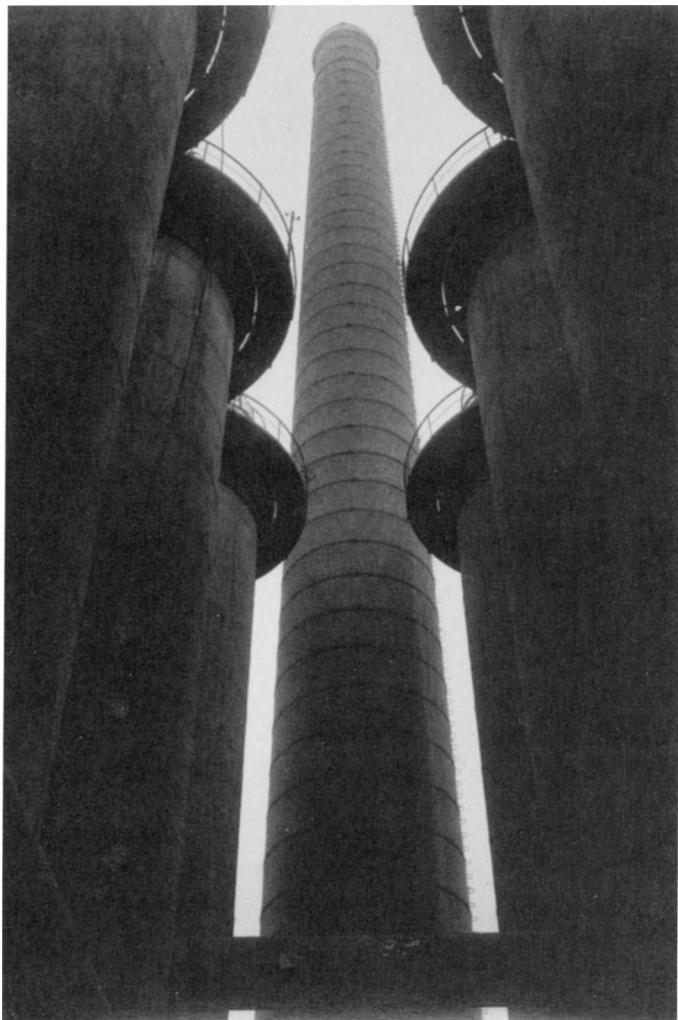
The Ise Shrine authorities had never before granted permission to photograph from within the inner compounds of the Inner and Outer Shrines. It was difficult to convince the



7 Watanabe, *Ochanomizu Station*, 1933 (from Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, *Watanabe Yoshio no sekai*, 1996, p. 30)

shrine authorities to allow Watanabe access, even with the backing of the Society for International Cultural Relations. Yet before this the shrine buildings had been documented, often in excruciating detail. Texts from the early tenth century list every board and nail.⁶⁵ Early hand scrolls and *uandala* were vague in their treatment of the inner structures, but the *Ise sangu meisho zue* offered comparatively detailed views of the inner compounds and their site. The Shrine authorities produced elevations and perspective drawings of even the most sacred buildings in order to facilitate rebuilding. These images were not widely available before the late nineteenth century, when architectural drawings of the main sanctuary began appearing in architectural publications.⁶⁶ The inner compounds and the surrounding precincts had even been photographed several times since the 1880s, although photographers had always remained outside the compounds' protective fences, as was the case with the shot by Kusakabe Kimbei, who specialized in postcards and other photographs for tourists (Fig. 5). Clearly, by 1953 the physical appearance of the buildings of the inner compound was no great secret. Why did the prospect of the new photographs raise such objections? Undoubtedly the officials were concerned about the intrusion of the photographer and his equipment on sacred ground. It is also possible that the naturalism associated with the medium of photography presented special problems. There may have been concern that in the act of looking at photographs viewers might in some sense be transported to the site and in the process violate the shrines' sacred space. Was viewing photographs of the shrine at close range too much like being there in person?

Eventually the shrine authorities relented. After lengthy negotiations it was agreed that Watanabe be permitted to photograph the newly reconstructed shrine buildings before they were formally consecrated.⁶⁷ When Watanabe first began work, carefully chaperoned by shrine staff, he was still not allowed to photograph the main south facade of the main hall. Eventually, however, the shrine staff lifted this restriction as well.⁶⁸



8 Alfred Renger-Patzsch, *Herrenwyk Blast Furnace as Seen from Below*, 1928 (© 2001 Albert Renger-Patzsch Archiv/Ann and Jürgen Wilde, Cologne/Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York)

Why would the Shrine authorities agree to the photographs? Occupation reforms severed Shintō institutions from state subsidies, which placed shrines in the position of having to rely entirely on private contributions. Ise was able to raise the funds necessary for the 1953 rebuilding, but the shrine leaders may well have recognized the photographs as an avenue for building broader public support in the future. The shrine authorities were particularly concerned with international opinion in the wake of the war and occupation. According to Watanabe, they had been positively impressed by Bruno Taut's enthusiastic treatment of Ise and saw advantages in having these new photographs distributed overseas.⁶⁹

A selection of Watanabe's photographs appeared in the book *Architectural Beauty in Japan*, published by the Society for International Cultural Relations, in 1955. At the time the book appeared, architecture evocative of Japanese tradition was a conspicuous instrument of Japanese cultural diplomacy. Horiguchi Sutemi designed the Japan Pavilion at the Centennial Exposition in São Paulo in 1954 in what he described as a "modern sukiya style [*gendai no sukiya zukuri*]," an updated variant on an elite residential style of the Edo period. An even more self-consciously traditional design by

Yoshimura Junzō was constructed in the garden of the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1954.⁷⁰ An article in *Progressive Architecture* interpreted Yoshimura's design as a manifestation of an "esthetic discipline" characteristic of traditional Japanese architecture:

[The architect working within the Japanese architectural tradition] achieves richness in his structures not with arbitrarily introduced ornaments but through subtle utilization of exposed structural elements, natural materials, and meticulous craftsmanship. Such contemporary features of Western architecture as the post-and-lintel skeleton-frame construction, the modular system, flexibility of plan, the close indoor/outdoor relationship, and ornamental quality of structural system . . . were anticipated by the design principles of such an architectural disciple.⁷¹

The construction of the Japanese Exhibition House at this Western modernist stronghold was an especially aggressive assertion of the argument that premodern Japanese architecture had something to teach the contemporary Western world.

The publication of *Architectural Beauty in Japan* reiterated this claim. Horiguchi's brief essay at the beginning of the volume provided an overview of Japanese culture from the prehistoric period to the present. He singled out the design freedom associated with *sukiya* style as especially relevant for the present. He also acknowledged the growing interest in Japanese architectural history abroad.⁷² In his essay, Kōjiro Yūichirō addressed the theme of the relevance of premodern Japanese aesthetics for modern art even more directly than had Horiguchi. Kōjiro made several direct comparisons between premodern Japanese art and modern Western art. For example, he pointed out that tea masters would select stones and other objects from the natural world and use them in ways that imbued them with symbolic value. This strategy was in Kōjiro's eyes similar to the "readymades" of contemporary artists in the West. He mentioned the importance of Japanese architecture for Pietro Belluschi and other architects in the United States and found the reception of Yoshimura's Japan Exhibition House at the Museum of Modern Art and Horiguchi's Japan Pavilion at São Paulo encouraging. Kōjiro was convinced that premodern Japanese aesthetics might provide an avenue for addressing the potentially dehumanizing effect of the functionalism of contemporary architecture.⁷³

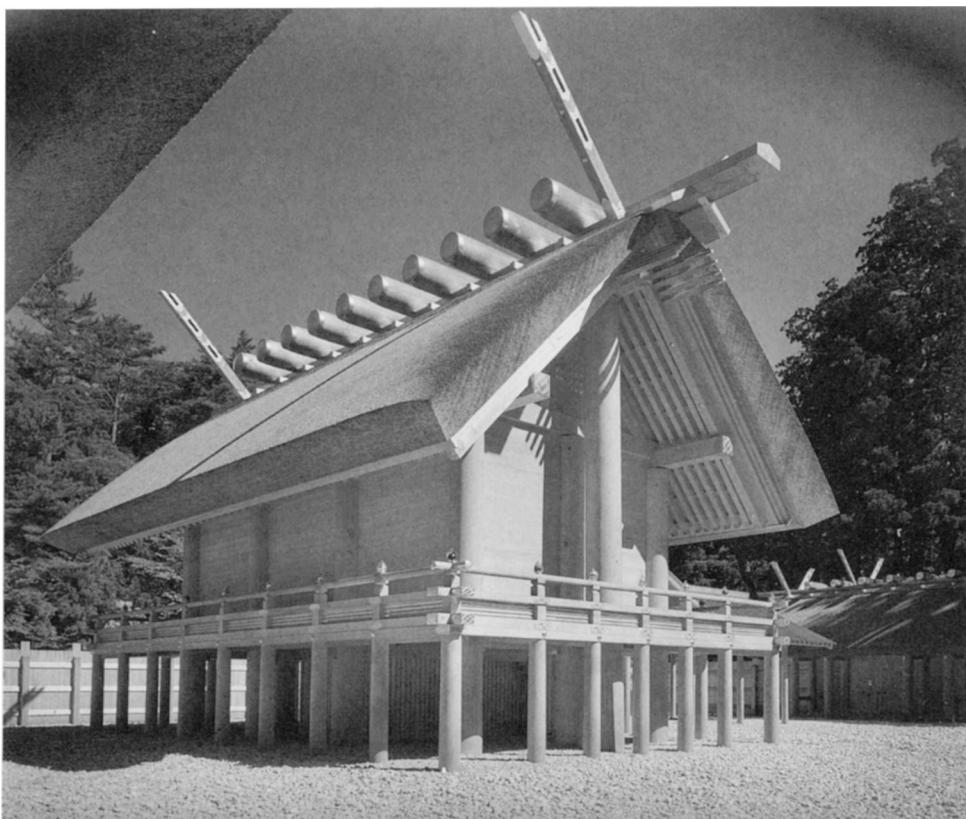
There are only brief references to Ise in the text, including one paragraph in Horiguchi's introduction and a short explanatory note at the back of the book. These passages explained the cycle of rebuilding at Ise and expressed admiration for the sensitive use of building materials at the shrine. The authors praised the cypress construction, for example, claiming that "its soft, warm beauty is of a pure Japanese type never to be seen in buildings made of stone."⁷⁴ Thus, while pointing out characteristically Japanese aspects to the architecture at Ise, they give no hint of the strident imperialism that drove Harada's wartime lecture. The authors did not recite poems by Saigyō and Bashō. Unlike Itō Chūta's newspaper article, the texts made no effort to explain the religious significance of the shrine or to use the discussion of Ise as an opportunity to praise the emperor. The shrine was included

in the collection as an important monument in the history of Japanese architecture, no more, no less.

Architectural Beauty in Japan featured 133 plates of Japanese architecture presented in loosely chronological order, from the great keyhole-shaped tomb associated with the emperor Nintoku (dated in the book to the fourth century) to Yoshida Isoya's Botan Restaurant (completed in 1954, only one year before the book was published).⁷⁵ Watanabe Yoshio produced the greatest number of plates (44), and Satō Tatsuzō, Murasawa Fumio, Hirayama Chūji, Ishimoto Yasuhiro, Murai Osamu, and other well-established photographers also contributed. Ise was particularly well represented, but the publication also included the Imperial Palace in Kyoto, tearooms, castles, and modern hospitals, auditoriums, and private residences. Although the plates are gathered into premodern and modern sections, the division is unobtrusive, and the overall impression created by assembling these structures together into a collection is one of coherence and continuity.

The photographs of Ise appeared at the beginning of the portfolio of plates, preceded only by Nintoku's tomb. The Hokkedō, an eighth-century Buddhist image hall at Tōdaiji, and Tōdaiji's famous storehouse the Shōsōin followed Ise in the book's visual narrative. A caption dates the buildings at Ise to the 1953 rebuilding, but the placement of the images in effect dates the structures to the fourth to eighth centuries, and explanatory notes date the original forms of the shrines' structures to the "archaic period." We first see an aerial photograph of the inner compound of the Inner Shrine and the surrounding forest, a view only imagined by the illustrators of the eighteenth-century pilgrimage guidebook (this photograph was supplied by *Mainichi Shinbun*, a national daily). Then we confront a full view of the main sanctuary shot from the southwest corner of the inner compound. The roof ornaments stand out dramatically against a cloudless sky, and the fences along the west side of the compound cast deep shadows in the late afternoon sun. In the next plate the gables of the two treasure houses flanking the main sanctuary frame a view of the sanctuary from behind (this photograph is very similar to Fig. 15, except that it was shot earlier in the afternoon so that the shadows cast by the roof ornaments cross the roof at a different angle). Then Watanabe moved a few yards to the west and shot the northwest corner of the sanctuary from under the eaves of the west treasure house (Fig. 9). The photographer's final two photographs present the gable end of one treasure house and the main facade of the other. The gable view is especially impressive—the comparatively small structure completely fills the frame. The roof ridge juts out at the viewer in a threatening fashion, and the finials (*chigi*) rise into the sky as if commanding authority over the space below.

Each of these photographs presents at least one entire building rather than focusing on building details. The buildings are seen to be resting firmly on the ground, and fences or other features help the viewer to orient structures in relation to their site. Watanabe shot the photographs from approximately eye level, and the inclusion of the edge of treasure house roofs in several photographs helps create the illusion that Watanabe came upon the sanctuary by accident as he turned a corner. These details call attention to the space occupied by the photographer and his camera and to



9 Watanabe, *Ise Shrine, Main Hall (Sanctuary), Northwest View*, 1953
(reproduced with permission of Ise Shrine)

the limitations that the site imposes on the photographer's movement within that space. The photographer represents the buildings not as free-floating forms but as structures in a measurable and easily comprehensible space—a space as we ourselves might experience it. In this way the photographer and his camera become surrogates for the viewer.

The same year that *Architectural Beauty in Japan* was published, Watanabe's photographs of Ise began appearing in other Japanese and non-Japanese publications, including the architectural magazine *Shinkenchiku* and Arthur Drexler's *The Architecture of Japan*.⁷⁶ Watanabe's photographs, including his exclusive photographs of the inner compounds at Ise, quickly became the authoritative representations of Ise just when the global audience for Japanese architectural history was growing.

Ise as a Modernist Prototype

Architectural Beauty in Japan undoubtedly helped to neutralize the negative associations attached to the shrines at Ise since the war by confirming their status as architecture without mentioning their recent political history. The publication of *Ise: Nihon kenchiku no genkei* in 1962 promoted the architecture at Ise even more aggressively by claiming a unique position for Ise as a prototype for all later Japanese architecture. The book was a lavishly illustrated product of the publishing wing of the national daily newspaper *Asahi Shinbun*. The architect Tange Kenzō, the architectural critic Kawazoe Noboru, the photographer Watanabe Yoshio, and the graphic designers of the Nippon Design Center all collaborated on the project. Three years later, an elegant English-language edition was published by MIT Press under the title *Ise: Prototype of Japanese Architecture*. The *Ise* publications artic-

ulated a highly selective interpretation of the shrine architecture especially well suited to the needs of the modernist communities in Japan and abroad.

In this new publication, Tange expanded on themes that he had already begun to explore in the earlier writings on Jōmon and Yayoi. The essay emphasized the ancient origins of the shrines: "By the banks of the limpid Isuzu River, amid dense forests at the foot of Mount Kamiji and Mount Shimaji stands Ise Shrine, its appearance only a little changed since remote antiquity."⁷⁷ Tange described viewing the shrine buildings "in light filtering through the age-old cryptomeria trees" and related being "transported back to the world of the archaic myths of the Japanese people."⁷⁸ "Nature" is the vehicle that allows Tange to travel into the remote past.

According to Tange, the mountains and forests were not all that had endured from that mythic past. The shrine architecture itself established certain principles that have continued to inform architectural practice into the present:

In the subsequent history of Japanese Architecture, extending over more than a thousand years, it proved impossible to advance beyond the form of Ise. It became the prototype of Japanese architecture. Is there anywhere another equally clearly defined form that has persisted through such a long history? The entire later course of Japanese architecture starts at Ise. The use of natural materials in a natural way, the sensitivity to structural proportion, the feeling for space arrangement, especially the tradition of harmony between architecture and nature, all originated here.⁷⁹

Tange placed his emphasis on architectural proportions and

the harmony between Japanese architecture and “nature” and in doing so reproduced conventional modernist rhetoric about premodern Japanese architecture. It should be noted that this elegy was written by an architect best known for reinforced-concrete structures on a monumental scale built in urban environments.

At this point Tange reintroduced his analytical framework of Jōmon and Yayoi styles. Tange believed that Ise, as the starting point for all later Japanese architecture, embodied the fusion of these two strains. In an effort to trace the spiritual sources for Ise, Tange attempted to characterize religious experience during these two eras.

In the Jomon period, the spirit of the crops was symbolized in the weird figures of the earth-mother deity, entombed in a stone chamber in the ground, and gloomy incantations calling for the growth of crops from the corpse of the slaughter spirit Ogetsu-hime were said. By comparison, the festivals held around the raised-floor storehouses seem to radiate a lighthearted, this-worldly joy.

Whereas the Jomon people sought to glimpse the dark pool of nature’s secrets in fear and trembling before fantastically shaped stones, we sense in the Yayoi period a feeling of stability and fulfillment; any conflict between nature and man seems to have vanished before man’s awareness of nature’s bounty and favor.⁸⁰

Tange argued that both modes of religious practice were still preserved at Ise. “Rock abodes” of spirits like the “fantastically shaped stones” worshiped by the Jōmon people were found all over the shrine precincts. The main shrine buildings were, for Tange, the direct descendants of grain storehouses at the center of Yayoi festivals. The presence of both Jōmon and Yayoi cultures contributed depth and complexity to the Ise complex.

Of course, no amount of archaeological research would be able to substantiate some of Tange’s primitivist imaginings, but portions of his essay are less speculative than this. He attempted, with the aid of research by noted scholars, to engage in a historical project grounded in archaeology and historical documents, to address questions ranging from the origins of the Japanese people to the origins of the shrines at Ise. He considered the historical evidence for the development of the relationship between the Yamato court and Ise and offered an explanation for the sources of the shrine buildings in earlier storehouses. It is telling that Tange did not mention State Shintō or the wartime history of the shrines at Ise. Nor did he discuss his appropriation of the shrines’ architecture for the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere Memorial Hall. Nonetheless, the history that he did construct would seem to undermine the ideological foundations on which State Shintō and the Co-Prosperity Sphere were founded by calling into question the mythic origins of the imperial institution.

In the end, what is perhaps most startling about this essay is Tange’s impulse toward wild mystification in combination with his urge for seemingly more concrete historical argument. Perhaps he felt the need to align himself with those who had discredited one set of myths (the divine origins of

the imperial family) and yet desired to establish spiritual roots for his Japanese cultural identity that would not be subject to verification through the archaeological record.

Like Tange, the architectural critic Kawazoe Noboru sought to create for the reader some sense of the physical experience of a visit to Ise. He opened his essay with a step-by-step description of a visit to the Inner Shrine:

The visitor’s contact with the Ise Shrine begins with the sound of his feet on the pebbles covering the approaches.

Crossing the bridge over the river Isuzu and passing beneath the first *torii*, he finds himself unconsciously lapsing into silence, preoccupied with the sound he is making. . . .

A little further on, another sound begins to obliterate the sound of the pebbles: the rippling murmur of the Isuzu where it draws close to the road. At this spot, known as Mitarashi, with the murmur of the water all about him, he dips his hands in the stream as a token of physical purification, and in so doing is brought into still closer communion with Nature.⁸¹

Kawazoe came to the shrine with a companion, but he mentioned no other visitor. We can concentrate on the buildings, as they stand enveloped in “nature.” The noise and conflict of the contemporary world is left behind. Indeed, with the aid of the trope of “unchanging nature,” history itself is left behind. This, of course, reinforces a central theme already introduced in Tange’s essay. Kawazoe continues:

Back on the path, he finds the cryptomerias crowding about him ever more thickly. Great trees, centuries old, press together above his head, and in the tenebrous light that filters through them he feels himself carried back to those dim, primitive ages before man had learned to clothe his thoughts in words, when man’s life was still at one with Nature.

It was the gloom of this primitive age that nurtured the Japanese soul; it was in this same dim light that it first awakened.⁸²

With the aid of Tange’s and Kawazoe’s texts readers could imagine that through Ise they had gained access to the very origins of Japanese culture. The precincts of the shrines could act like a time machine that sent the reader back to a time long before the conflicts of the twentieth century to an imagined era when there was one unified Japanese society undisturbed by class conflict or the disruptive effects of foreign cultures.

Nationalists before the war obfuscated the history of the imperial institution and the shrines at Ise (to this day the Imperial Household Agency obstructs archaeologists’ access to tombs associated with the imperial family).⁸³ Ise, as the shrine to the sun goddess, was insulated from close examination, but it was just tangible enough and just visible enough to serve as a monument to the divine origins of the imperial

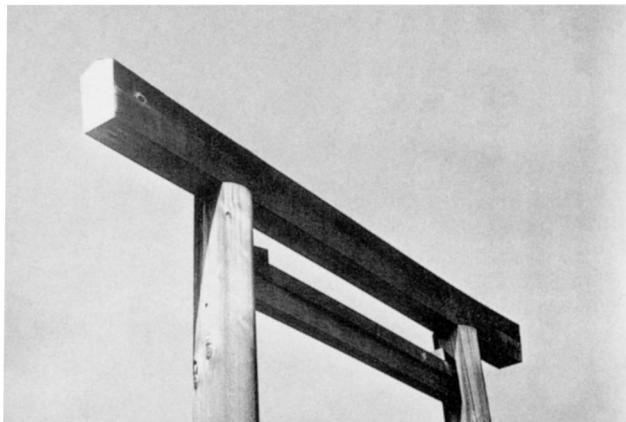


10 Watanabe, *The Isuzu River*, 1953
(reproduced with permission of Ise Shrine)

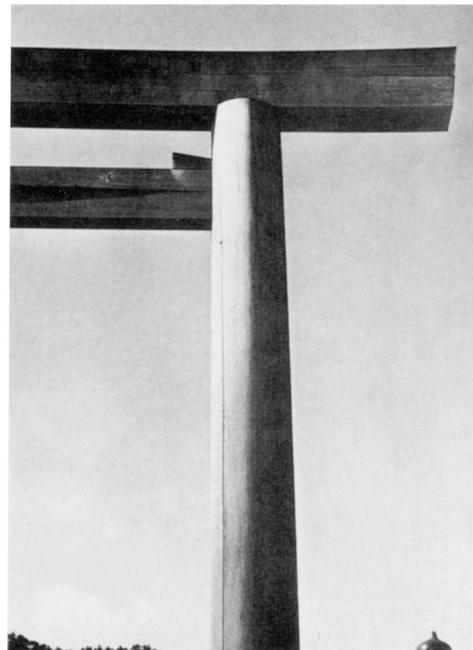
house. Kawazoe, like Miyagawa Torao, attempted to undermine the imperialistic explanation for the origins of Japanese culture and the development of Ise by arguing that the development of the Yayoi culture was made possible through direct contact with continental Asia. He even suggested that there might be a connection between the legend of Amaterasu's descent to Japan and the arrival by sea of people from Asia (he pointed out the mirror symbolizing the sun goddess at the Inner Shrine is kept in a boat-shaped container within the main sanctuary).⁸⁴ Was the sun goddess merely a technologically advanced immigrant? Kawazoe is even more thorough than Tange in his analysis of the history of the shrine and its relation to the imperial court during the sixth through eighth centuries. While citing passages from the *Nihongi*, he either sets them off as myths or scrutinizes them for information that can be corroborated by other kinds of historical evidence provided by scholars, such as the archaeologists Kobayashi Yukio and Oka Masao. According to the *Nihongi*, the link between the imperial court and Ise came into being as a result of an emperor's act of pious devotion and the divine inspiration of an imperial princess. For Kawazoe, the imperial family did not acquire its position as a result

of a divine inheritance. Rather, it became the imperial family through centuries of warfare and political struggle. The court established ties with Ise so that it could become an outpost of imperial authority at a time when the Yamato court was expanding its power to the north and east; in this interpretation the imperial sponsorship of the shrines at Ise becomes an act of shrewd political calculation.⁸⁵ Kawazoe placed the early development of Ise within a historically specific framework that was plausible in the political context of postwar Japan, and this interpretation of the origins of Ise loosened the ideological bonds that rigidly controlled discourse on the shrines.

Kawazoe, having dismissed the claim for the divine origins of the imperial family, was now free to focus on the shrines as architecture. In the final pages of his essay Kawazoe offered a capsule history of Japanese building in which he described Ise as "the prototype of pure Japanese architecture."⁸⁶ First, Kawazoe emphasized the centrality of wood as a building material in Japanese architecture. Ise was also an early manifestation of what Kawazoe believed was a preference for structures that relied on a grid of horizontal and vertical members and avoided diagonals and curved lines. In a move



11 Watanabe, *The Torii at Uji Bridge*, layout from Tange et al., *Ise* (Asahi Shinbun, 1962), 110–11



that reveals Kawazoe's underlying agenda, he then connected these elements to contemporary art and design:

The Japanese discovered a unique method of construction suitable for soft woods like cypress, which, by permitting a certain degree of swaying, allowed buildings to absorb some of the latitudinal shocks from the earthquakes, to which Japan is so prone. Similar in principle to the earthquake protection features in modern multiple-story structures, one of the chief characteristics was the avoidance of diagonal structural members. This method in turn created the type of structural beauty, known as the "Mondrian pattern," which relies on the interplay of horizontals and verticals.⁸⁷

Kawazoe's description of the engineering advantages of the shrine structures was less remarkable than his aesthetic argument. If it seems far-fetched for Kawazoe to compare Tange's reinforced-concrete designs with a pagoda, his suggestion that the trabeated wood construction at Ise could be likened to a Mondrian painting is extraordinary.

Kawazoe cited Ise as a prime example of a tendency in Japanese building to perpetuate architectural form without undue concern for the preservation of the actual building itself. For Kawazoe this suggested an appreciation for the mutability of all things and the recognition that the practice of building should be attuned to natural processes.

The ability to add new rooms without upsetting the order of the whole meant, conversely, that rooms could be removed at will. The design, one might say, had its own metabolism, which allowed it to keep pace with the cycles of life in Nature and society. To paste new paper on the *shōji*, which set the basic tone of the Japanese room, was enough to create a startling effect of freshness and light. In the same way, to have the *tatami* re-covered was to fill the room with the faint, clean smell of rice straw. By such a means, the Japanese house was able to create an air of

freshness however old the building itself was, and it was a Japanese custom to redecorate the house in this way in December, so as to greet the New Year in just such an atmosphere. The custom might even be described as an echo of the regular rebuilding of the Ise Shrine.⁸⁸

Although he did not make the connection explicit, this passage implies yet another genealogical link with contemporary practice. Kawazoe was one of the founders of a design group known as the Metabolists, whose members issued a famous manifesto at the World Design Conference in Tokyo in 1960 and produced some audacious projects and structures in the next ten years. When Kawazoe described architecture maintaining its basic structure but regularly replacing materials (in a manner similar to the metabolic processes of a living creature) and adding or subtracting parts as needed, this was a clear expression of the core principles of Metabolist theory.⁸⁹ And by equating Japanese architectural practices with natural processes, Kawazoe could trump the seemingly mechanical or unnatural methods that predominated in the West.

The Photographs

The book *Ise: Prototype of Japanese Architecture* featured the most extensive collection of Watanabe's powerful photographs of Ise published to date, including both the original images from the 1953 shoot and some additional photographs taken expressly for the new publication. The photographs of Ise chosen for the book *Architectural Beauty in Japan* were among the more "objective" images in the series. As part of a historical survey of Japanese architecture, these photographs were intended to serve a "documentary function." In each photograph the camera angle was level with the ground and the camera was placed far enough away from its subject so that the photographs would depict entire buildings rather than fragments. The photographs appear to function as tools for conveying information about the architecture rather than as an expressive medium for the photographer. When asked

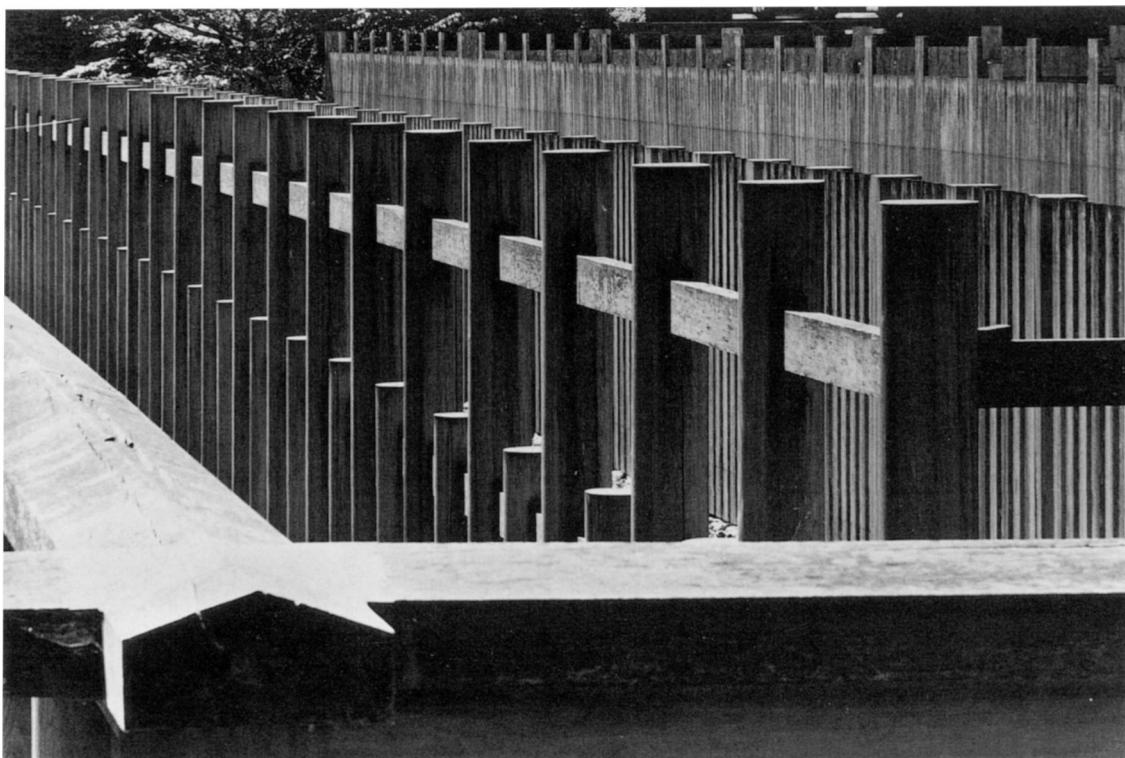


11a. 石子面の石垣。この石垣は、
手を洗ひ口をすすめ、御衣冠の身
は御内院の御門の御門の御門。
おれここを見て、て教導した。

11b. 手水洗を仰ぐらみ



12 Watanabe, *Mitarashi at the Isuzu River*, layout from Tange et al., *Ise* (Asahi Shinbun, 1962), 114–15



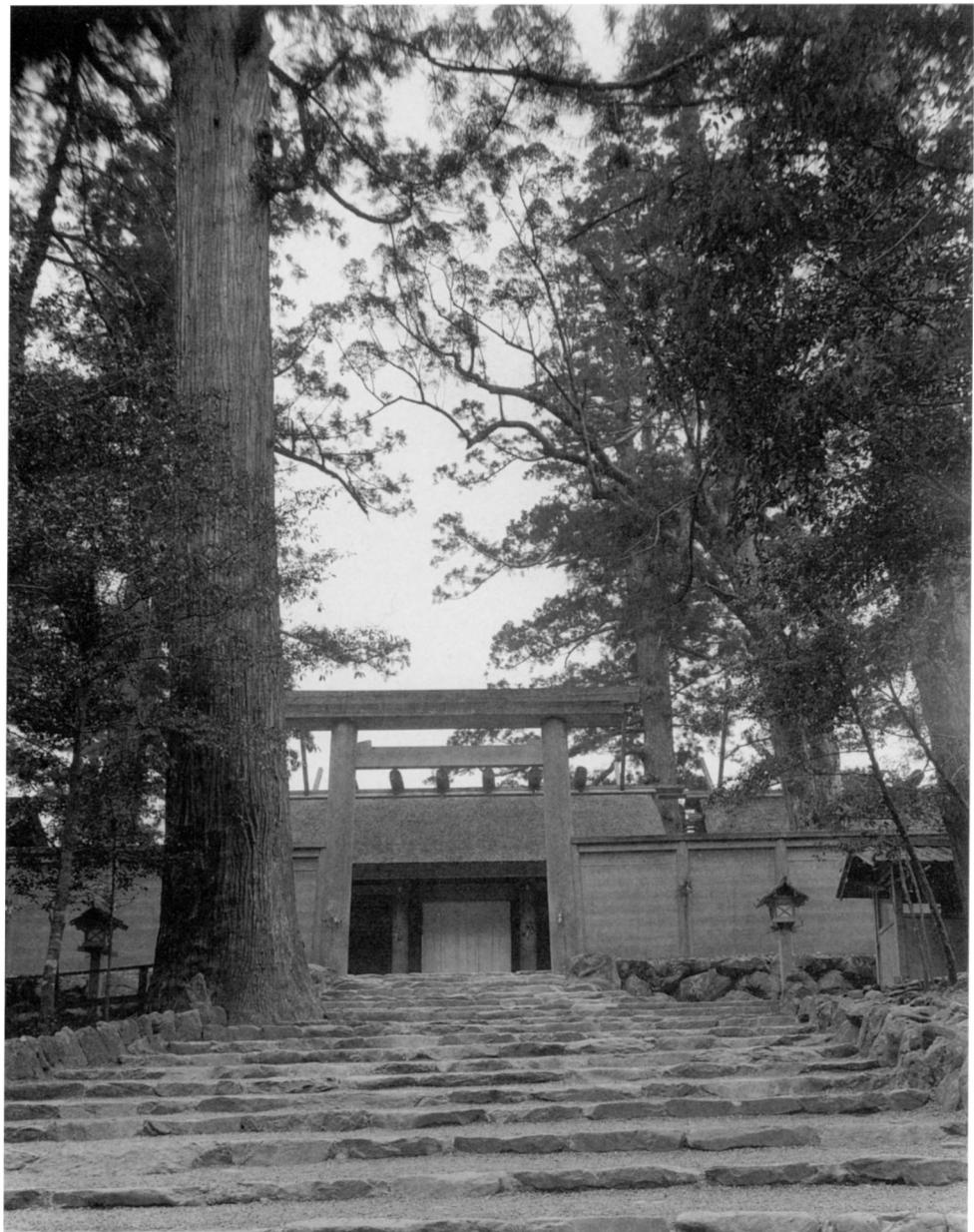
13 Watanabe, *Four Fences of the Inner Compound of the Inner Shrine*, 1953
(reproduced with permission of Ise Shrine)

what troubled him most when taking a picture, Watanabe answered that clouds were his biggest concern: "With clouds there are emotions. I like photographs of architecture in which emotions have not intruded. When clouds get into the picture it looks like a landscape . . . and conversely when there is fine weather without a single cloud, then photographs of architecture in its pure form can be taken."⁹⁰ This claim to objectivity might be sustained when dealing with the small set of images included in *Architectural Beauty in Japan*, but the larger collection reproduced in the *Ise* book displays a much broader range of aesthetic strategies. In addition to the comparatively "straight" images, as well as extensive plans and elevations, were also comparatively "abstract" images.

Even with few clouds to be seen, several of the photographs were highly charged with emotion.

In the *Ise* book, although a number of photographs accompanied the texts, the majority of the images were gathered together as a coherent portfolio. This portfolio has a narrative structure, designed to evoke the experience of visiting the shrines.⁹¹ Usually, a visit to Ise involves sharing the experience with many others. Yet not a single person appears in Watanabe's photographs. No worshipers are seen at prayer, no priests are shown going about their daily routines, no tourists rush ahead with their camera shutters clicking away. No one is allowed to intrude on the viewer's reverie.⁹²

In the Japanese edition of the book the portfolio of the

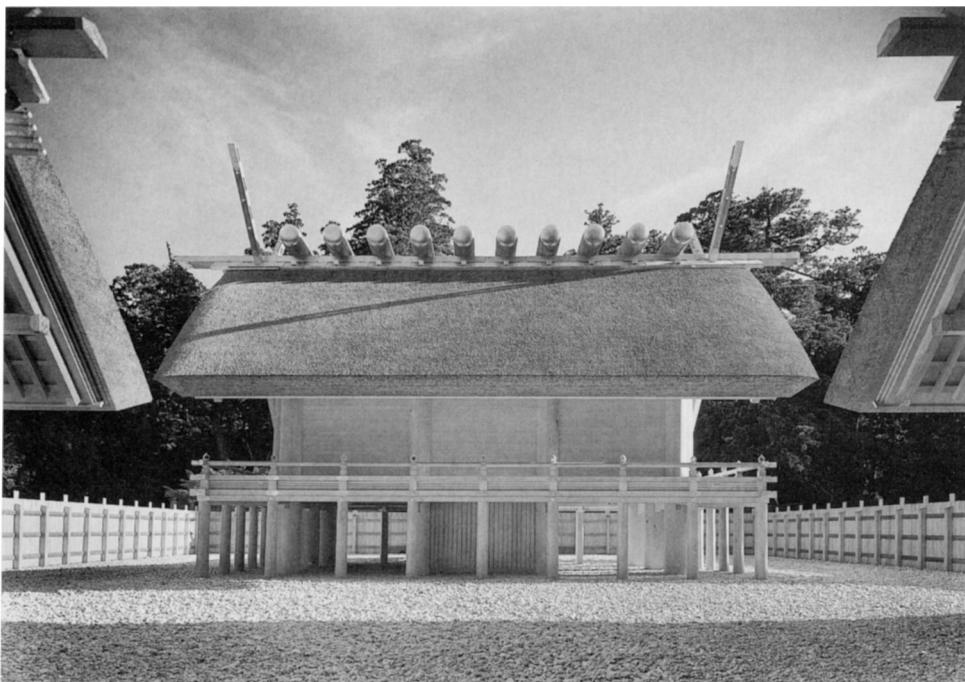


14 Watanabe, *Stone Staircase and South Gate of the Outermost Fence of the Inner Compound*, 1953 (reproduced with permission of Ise Shrine)

Inner Shrine opens with aerial photographs of the shrine and the surrounding countryside. A shot of the Inner Shrine from the Uji Bridge to the inner compound is vaguely reminiscent of the woodblock print of the compound included in the Edo period Ise guidebook (Fig. 3). When we return to the ground we come upon the Isuzu River. But we see not a panoramic view but a close-up of a few square yards of the surface of the water (Fig. 10). The photograph does not include any shoreline or other features that might orient the viewer. We are presented with abstract patterns of black and gray with flashes of white that only with time begin to coalesce into an image of water rippling over well-worn rocks on the riverbed. On the facing page a photograph of an imposing bridge guard rising out of the river contrasts sharply with the amorphous water. We then find several more views of the bridge: a detail of the lower half of two of the massive columns supporting the bridge, an oblique view of a portion of the bridge, and a row of bridge guards arrayed like sentinels across the river. We encounter the *torii* that stands at the east end of the

bridge. In one frame we see the upper third of the gate shot at an acute angle to the side and from below, and on the facing page the right half of the gate taken from a point perpendicular to the cross beams (Fig. 11). Deep shadow accentuates the volume of these enormous wooden forms as they are silhouetted dramatically by the nearly cloudless sky. The photographs then bring us to the Mitarashi, where pilgrims cleanse themselves before approaching the inner compound (Fig. 12). Yet there are no pilgrims in sight. We, the viewers, are the only pilgrims. The photographs are cropped so low that the steps leading down to the river are divorced from the main path. This replicates the view we would have if we were to bow down and wash our hands in the river.

The river, the bridge, the gates, and the Mitarashi form an all-important threshold separating the sacred precincts from the mundane world. In one's imagination one can trace the pathway by working back and forth between the aerial views and the detailed photographs of these points along the way. However, once back on the ground, the camera does not pull



15 Watanabe, *The North Facade of the Main Sanctuary*, 1953 (reproduced with permission of Ise Shrine)

back far enough from these objects so that a coherent picture of this transitional zone as a sequence of three-dimensional spaces that one can imagine walking through can be formed. Rather, the photographer simulates the experience of a person standing in these spaces and confronting these objects in space. This succession of close-up photographs accosts the viewer like disjointed yet vivid, visual memories.

As we continue our pilgrimage we encounter towering trees and the undulating sunlight as it is reflected off the surface of the river—images that evoke memories of the textures, the sounds, and perhaps even the smells of flowing water, roughly cut stone, and the damp forest floor. We view the vacant alternate site of the inner compound and catch our first glimpse of the ridge and the roof finials of the main sanctuary beyond the fences.

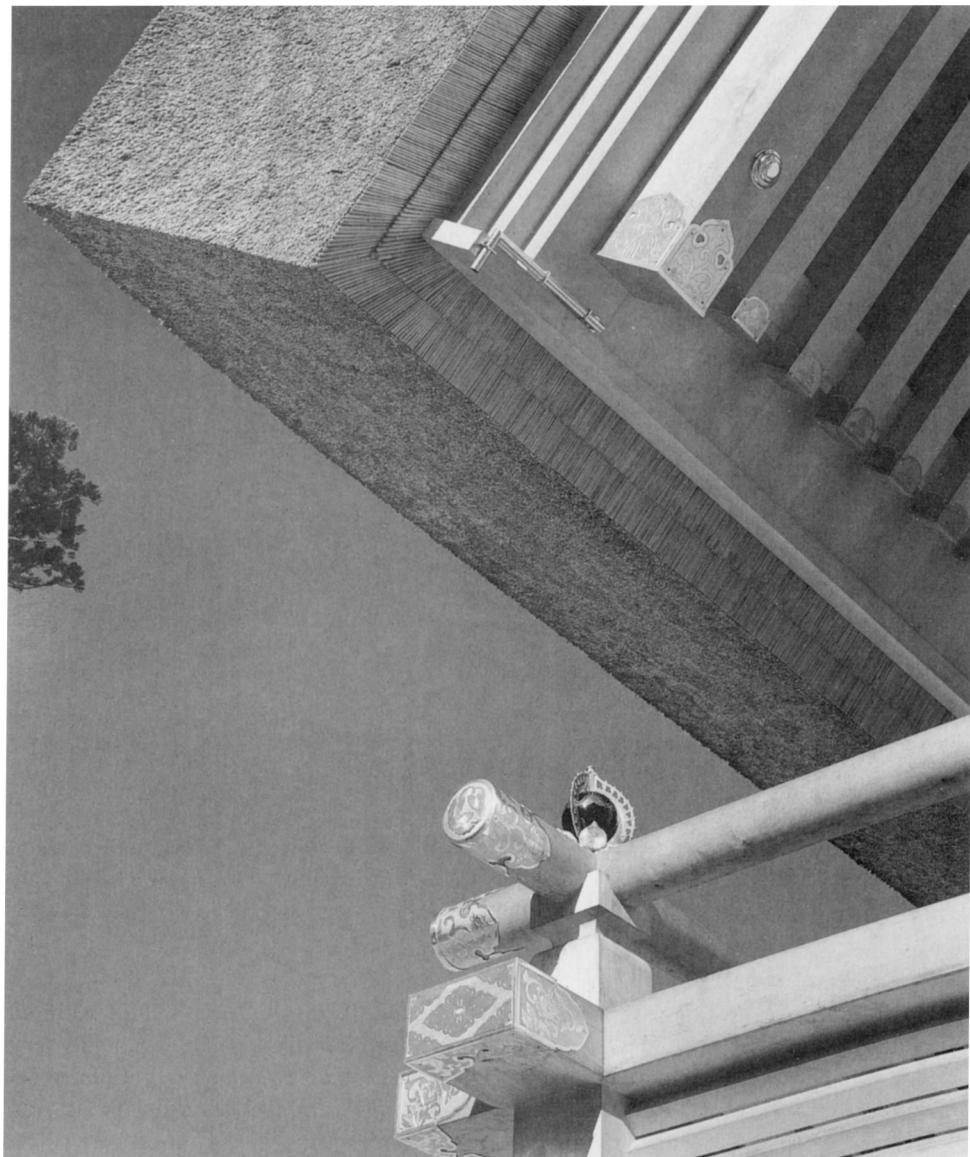
Watanabe must have been obsessed with the fences of the inner compound. In a succession of photographs he presents us with views of the fences from various angles and teases us with partial views of the structures beyond. In one example, Watanabe set his camera at a point just above the top of the northeast corner of the outermost fence (Fig. 13). Our view is tightly controlled. We catch only a glimpse of a group of trees on the south edge of the compound and a small portion of the eaves of a subsidiary structure within the inner compound at the top of the frame. We are allowed to see no more than the layers of fences; there is no way around this seemingly impenetrable barrier. The top rail of the first fence forcefully defines the bottom frame of the composition; the relatively open grid of the second fence sets up a visual contrast with the tightly grouped posts and rails of the third fence and the continuous plane created by the vertical planks of the innermost fence. Through this image one can begin to appreciate Kawazoe's comparison of Ise with Mondrian.

Until this point we are in much the same position as the pilgrims and tourists who have come before us. After building anticipation through the repetition of the images of the

barriers that have held us at bay, Watanabe brings us back to the main gate (Fig. 14),⁹³ then through that gate and into the inner compound. Finally, through the photographs we are able to inspect (or violate?) the sacred precincts that we would not ordinarily be allowed to see in person (Fig. 15).

For the pilgrim, visual barriers and spatial distance enhanced the aura of the inner compounds. Watanabe's photographs establish a very different relationship to the shrine architecture. They analyze the arrangement of these structures as physical objects in space. They demonstrate great respect for skilled craftsmanship and a love of the fine materials that went into the construction of these structures. They revel in the contrast between sensuous, silky, smooth surfaces of finely planed wood rafters and the vibrant texture of the precisely trimmed miscanthus thatch roofs (Fig. 16). At the same time, these photographs threaten to strip the core structures of their mystery by submitting them to relentless inspection. The buildings are fragmented or disembodied by radical camera angles and merciless cropping. Roof finials (*chigi*) when seen at a distance appear to be an integral part of the roof as a whole. But when a detailed photograph of them is blown up to fill two full pages in the *Ise* book (Fig. 17), they resemble the disturbing, disembodied limbs so favored by Surrealists such as Hans Bellmer or Man Ray. These architectural details are laid bare before the viewer with an intensity that verges on the pornographic. Watanabe's aesthetic appreciation is a world away from Saigyō's response to the shrine as he prayed at a respectful distance.

At times Watanabe remains far enough removed from his subjects that one can take them in as a coherent whole. At times he is so close to his subjects, or shoots the subjects at such an oblique angle, that the resulting photographs become profoundly disorienting. Watanabe took one of his photographs of the northwest corner of the main sanctuary from under the eaves of the west treasure house (Fig. 1). The rafters of the treasure house thrust downward at an angle



16 Watanabe, *Detail of the Roof and Metal Fittings of the High Railing of the Main Sanctuary*, 1953 (reproduced with permission of Ise Shrine)

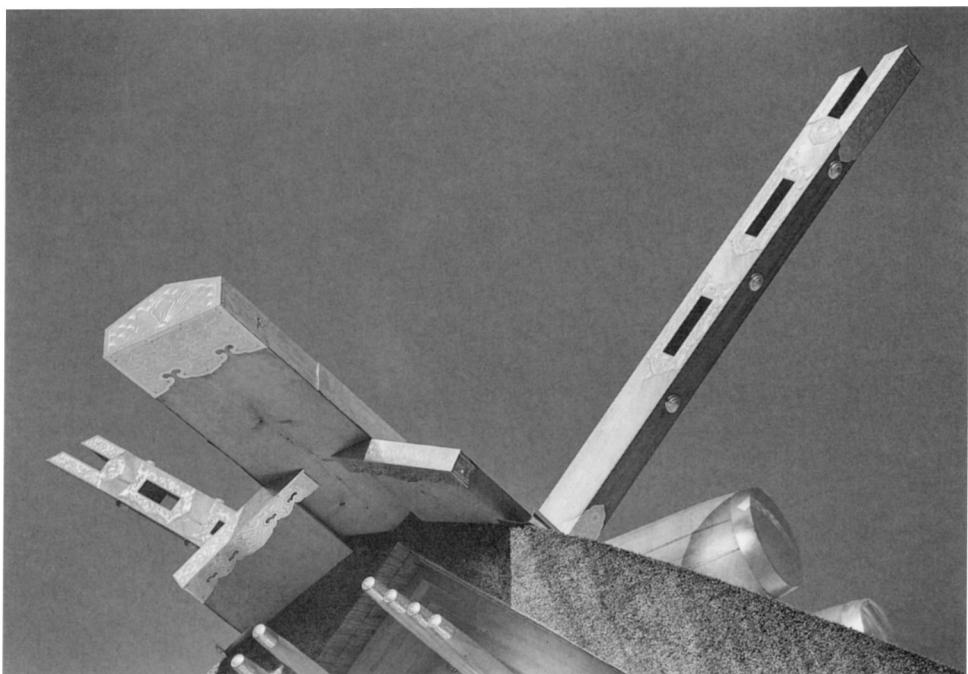
almost exactly perpendicular to the roof of the sanctuary, and the massive miscanthus thatch roof of the nearby treasure house seems to dominate the sanctuary (which is actually much larger) beyond. One thin roof finial that extends from the sanctuary toward the treasure house performs the acrobatic feat of visually holding that great treasure house roof at bay.

Watanabe's comparatively "abstract" images of Ise are especially reminiscent of the work of Watanabe's early influence Renger-Patzsch. In response to the latter's photographs, Hugo Sieker once observed, "We see familiar earthly things—parts of them, as a rule (such sharp objectivity always calls for *detail*)—yet they seem strange and miraculous!"⁹⁴ Watanabe, like Renger-Patzsch, has the capacity to make things "seem strange." One never loses sight of the "reality" of the object, but through the photograph the object is rendered unfamiliar. And since the medium of photography carries with it an expectation for naturalism, this duality generates an edgy tension. Watanabe's approach foregrounds the photograph as an interpretative process rather than as a "transparent" medium for the representation of his subjects.

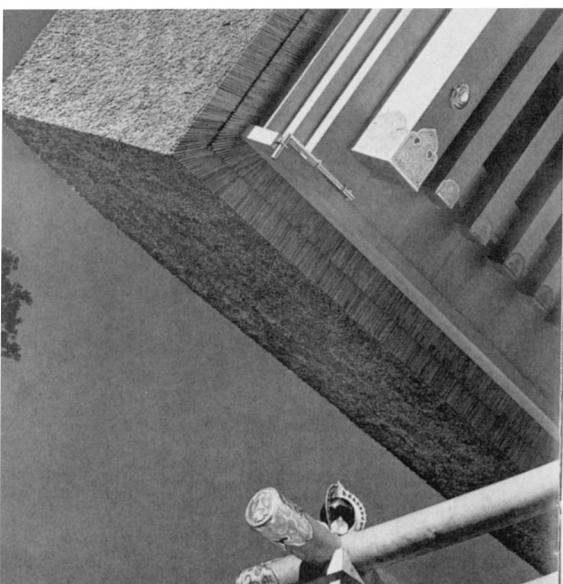
Book Design

Book design had a powerful, if underappreciated, impact on the modernist interpretation projected by the Ise publications. The publisher of the Japanese edition of the Ise book, Asahi Shinbun, hired the now-legendary modernist design firm Nippon Design Center to design the publication. One of NDC's senior founders, Hara Hiromu (1905–1985), produced the book box and cover, and Katayama Toshihiro (b. 1928) was in charge of the layout.⁹⁵ Hara's book box was striking. The severity of the mat-black cover was relieved only by relatively small white labels on the spine and at the left-center of the main face. Small, black Sino-Japanese characters identified the authors, subtitle, and publisher, and two vermilion characters proclaimed the primary title: ISE. The placement of the label on the cover alluded to pre-modern Japanese book design, and yet the mechanical precision of the typography and the sparseness and clarity of the cover design were firmly grounded in the modernist graphic tradition.⁹⁶

Katayama was allowed to design the book with considerable autonomy, although he consulted with colleagues and with



17 Watanabe, *The "Chigi": The Main Sanctuary*, 1953 (reproduced with permission of Ise Shrine)



18 Watanabe, *Detail of the Roof and Metal Fittings of the High Railing of the Main Sanctuary*, layout from Tange et al., *Ise* (Asahi Shinbun, 1962), 170–71

the publishers.⁹⁷ The photographer, Watanabe, was not directly involved in the layout of the book. Katayama looked to the texts by Tange and Kawazoe as the starting point of the organization of the photographs. Since both essays began with a description of a visit to the shrine, Katayama arranged the main group of photographs of the inner shrine in a sequence that simulated a pilgrimage leading from the Uji Bridge inward toward the inner compound. Katayama felt that he needed as many photographs as possible to develop an effective layout. In order to generate more images, he not only incorporated Watanabe photographs at or near full frame but also reproduced radically cropped portions of the same photographs.

One example of this strategy of multiplying images appears on pages 170 and 171 (Fig. 18). A photograph of the balustrade and the underside of the eaves of the main sanctuary at

the inner shrine extends to the edge of all four sides of the left page with no frame. Katayama had already cropped this photograph to fit the rectangular print into the square format of the book (mainly on the top and bottom). He then zoomed in on the corner post of the balustrade with its glass and brass newel cap (*suidama*).⁹⁸ The resulting vertical composition was pushed to the outer edge of the facing page, leaving a wide band of white between the two images.

In some cases Katayama separated the radically cropped photographs from their source photographs. He took a tall narrow strip from an already heavily cropped photograph of the west side of the main sanctuary of the inner shrine (p. 165) and laid it on the outer edge of a page across from a detail of the staircase of the sanctuary (pp. 168–69). In these two closely cropped photographs it becomes difficult to recognize the role of each of the visible architectural elements as

architecture. Moreover, by juxtaposing the images, Katayama called attention to the formal similarity of these powerful horizontal and vertical features as elements belonging to two abstract compositions.

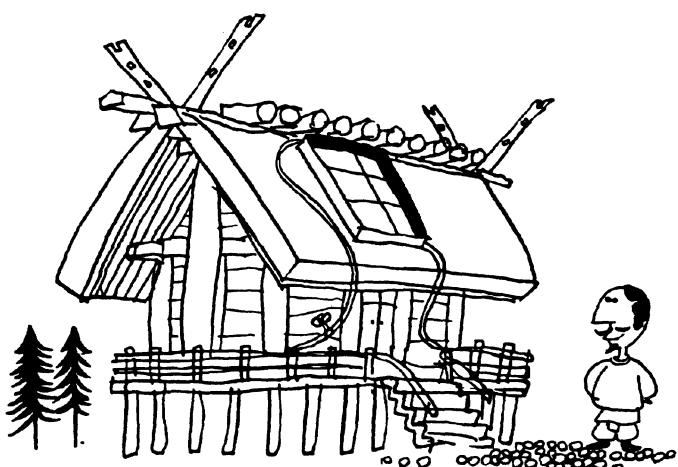
This approach allowed Katayama to play with the proportions and orientation of the photographs and control the visual density of each page (Figs. 11, 12). As a group, the photographs achieved a relentless, yet dynamic and varied rhythm that contributed tremendously to the visual intensity of the book.

Just as important, Katayama's strategy of working radically cropped segments of photographs into the book accentuated certain tendencies already present in certain Watanabe photographs. Watanabe used disorienting camera angles and isolated portions of buildings to produce arresting abstract compositions within the frames of individual photographs; Katayama pushed this process of abstraction further by detaching fragments of photographs from their context and juxtaposing them in dramatic ways across the pages of the book.

The Successful Re-Vision of Ise Shrine

The desire to construct a Japanese tradition that would be meaningful for contemporary Japanese architectural practice was pervasive in the 1950s and early 1960s. Of all the contributions to the tradition debate, the publications on Ise were among the most effective at claiming a position for Ise within the architectural canon and at shaping the way the shrine architecture was understood. The architect Hozumi Kazuo satirized the debate over tradition in a series of cartoons published in the architectural journal *Kenchiku Bunka* in 1963.⁹⁹ Hozumi found perverse pleasure in taking these arguments literally. He drew the audience hall at the seventeenth-century Nijō Castle with a sketch of Le Corbusier's modular man in the decorative alcove to poke fun at attempts to equate premodern proportional systems with modular design. Hozumi placed sculpture by Isamu Noguchi in the sand-and-rock garden of the Ryōan-ji, and in a Duchamp-like gesture, added diagonal steel braces to the facade of the Katsura Villa. Ise did not escape his eye. He equipped the main sanctuary of the shrine dedicated to the sun goddess with solar panels (Fig. 19). A caption in Japanese read: "How would it be to draw off the water from the Isuzu River and utilize the heat from Amaterasu's sun?" Hozumi's cartoon may have critiqued the most absurd aspects of the tradition debate and yet, by targeting the arguments forwarded by Tange and Kawazoe, Hozumi was in some sense acknowledging their success. Their work had convinced a diverse audience that Ise was a prototype for modernist architecture and conversely that modernism in Japan was not a foreign intrusion but an architecture that had developed organically out of indigenous practices.

Watanabe returned to Ise to photograph the shrines when they were rebuilt again in 1973 and 1993. He lost the monopoly, however, he had enjoyed in 1953. Numerous photographers and filmmakers had been granted access to the inner compounds beginning in 1973. Yet Watanabe's original images have had a lasting effect on all later efforts. One of the most impressive photographic studies of Ise was produced by Ishimoto Yasuhiro in 1993.¹⁰⁰ Ishimoto, trained in the Bauhaus-infused program at Illinois Institute of Technology in the early 1950s, became well known for a compelling series of



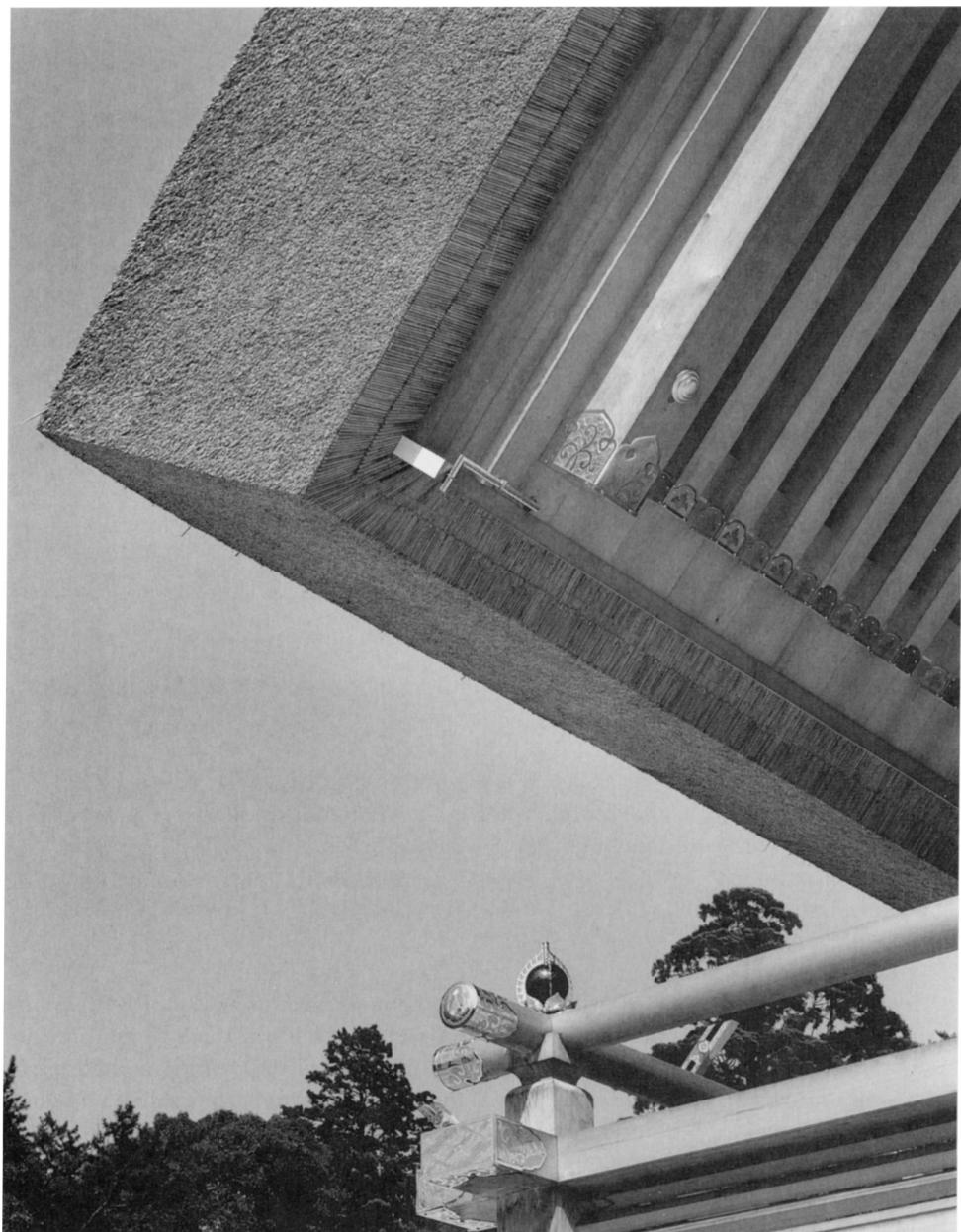
19 Hozumi Kazuo, "How would it be to draw off the water from the Isuzu River and utilize the heat from Amaterasu's sun?" from *Kenchiku Bunka* 200 (June 1963): 81

photographs of Katsura Villa that were contemporary with Watanabe's first photographs of Ise (these photographs were published together with an essay by Tange in 1960). Certain images from Ishimoto's study of Ise pay homage to Watanabe's earlier work. When Ishimoto photographed the back of the main sanctuary of the Inner Shrine, he framed the sanctuary with the tips of the eaves of the treasure houses on both sides just as Watanabe had done.¹⁰¹ Ishimoto cites Watanabe's composition, even though the emotional tone of the two images is subtly different. Ishimoto shot the sanctuary under even lighting conditions and produced a relatively dark and brooding print, whereas Watanabe chose to shoot in the harsh, glancing light of late afternoon, producing deep shadows and a dramatic and yet open effect.

Like Watanabe, Ishimoto photographed the balcony, railing, and eaves of the northwest corner of the main sanctuary (Figs. 16, 20). Here, too, Ishimoto revealed his debt to Watanabe's composition, but subtle shifts suggest a very different sensibility. Watanabe shot his photograph from a position extremely close to the balcony; the newel cap of glass and gilded bronze thrusts up at an oblique angle toward the eaves that seem to loom over the viewer in an unsettling way. Ishimoto moved further away from his subject. In his image, the newel post stands upright and is easier to locate in relationship to its architectural context. Ishimoto also carefully balanced the great miscanthus thatch roof with the triangular area formed by the balcony and sky below, averting any threat that the roof will topple onto the viewer. Ishimoto's approach is more stable and analytical. These differences notwithstanding, the fact that Watanabe's work of 1953 could still have such a significant role in shaping the work of another highly accomplished photographer forty years later is testimony to its success in framing all later visual interpretations of these remarkable structures.

Ise as Photographic Reproduction

Ghosts still haunted Ise when Tange and his colleagues published *Ise: Nihon kenchiku no genkei* in 1961. Tange found it necessary to resurrect Jōmon people chanting "gloomy incantations calling for the growth of crops from the corpse of the slaughter spirit Ogetsu-hime" as a way to ground the archi-



20 Ishimoto Yasuhiro, *Inner Shrine, Main Sanctuary, Northwest Side*, 1993 (reproduced with permission of Ise Shrine)

tectural practices found at Ise in the earliest stages of the development of Japanese culture. Kawazoe emulated the pilgrims as they walked solemnly and silently through the shrine precincts. Both authors dwelled at length on the formation of the imperial institution and its unique bonds with Ise.

Yet no sooner did Tange and Kawazoe summon these ghosts than they put them to rest once again. It is difficult to hear the Jōmon incantations over the din of the helicopter, which Tange tells the reader he used to inspect the shrine.¹⁰² While Kawazoe wanted to create a reverential atmosphere, he was also anxious to dismiss Shintō belief as myth; his spirituality was the secular spirituality of aesthetics. Emperors were described as battle-hardened soldiers and calculating politicians, not as the divine heirs of the sun. Nonetheless, in this seance neither Tange nor Kawazoe dared to raise the most troubling ghost of all—imperialism. Perhaps this ghost was still too disruptive to control.

Until the end of World War II, visitors to Ise were kept at a

distance from the most sacred shrine structures by both the exigencies of religious ritual and the demands of the dominant political ideology. But this distance, or "aura," to use Walter Benjamin's term, could not be preserved in the wake of the profound political and cultural changes after the war. The shrine quickly succumbed to the pressures of a modern mass culture. In general terms, Benjamin linked the decay of aura to

...the desire of contemporary masses to bring things "closer" spatially and humanly, which is just as ardent as their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction. Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction.¹⁰³

In the case of Ise, this transformation served a variety of interests. Watanabe's photographs, and their successors in the years to come, would be consumed by an international

market for books, magazines, and tourist guides. The photographs proved to be useful tools of cultural diplomacy for the shrines at a time of diminished public support. Furthermore, the combined effect of Tange's, Kawazoe's, and Watanabe's interpretations of Ise provided cultural continuity longed for by Japanese architects and critics.

In the process, a new Ise Shrine has emerged—Ise Shrine as a body of photographs, as a readily reproducible series of images. The fenced inner compound of this Ise is no more distant than the library bookshelf. These widely published photographs allowed a mass audience that might never visit the original site to become familiar with Ise-as-reproduction. And in the years since Watanabe's photographs were published, few have visited the shrine precincts without having seen Ise-as-reproduction first. As a result, photographic reproductions have come to mediate the experience of the "authentic" Ise. The contemporary visitor knows "what lies within" in a way that Saigyō could not have.

The photographs have stripped away the shrines' cloak of mystery, exposing its sheltered forms to the penetrating gaze of an international audience. Yet in another sense the photographs seem to have restored the shrines' innocence. The photographs opened up a space for Ise as an aesthetic object unburdened by the weight of recent history.

Watanabe's photographs of haze-covered hills and dark cryptomeria forests conspire with the texts to draw the viewer into a reassuring fantasy. At the same time, they capture enough of the grit and gleam of the material world to make it all seem plausible. His photographic narrative seems to transport one far from the contemporary world. Yet his formalist treatment of many of the architectural details is emphatically modern in approach, and through these photographs, he finds modern design within the ancient forms.

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Notes

This article is dedicated to the memory of Watanabe Yoshio (1907–2000).

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1. The shrines are located in the adjacent towns of Uji Yamada and Ise City in Mie Prefecture, approximately 70 miles (110 km) southwest of Nagoya and 100 miles (160 km) southeast of Kyoto by train. Today there are two major Shintō shrine complexes located at Ise. The Kōtai Daijingū, or Naikū (Inner Shrine), is dedicated to the sun goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami. Toyoke Ōkami, the goddess of grain, is worshiped at the Toyoke Daijingū, or Gekū (Outer Shrine). Scattered among these two extensive shrine precincts are eighty-one subsidiary shrines.

2. Tange et al., 1962 and 1965.

3. *Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 697*, trans. W. G. Aston (Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle, 1972), 151–52. Kojima Noriyuki et al., eds., *Nihon shoki*, vol. 2 of *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1994), vol. 1, 270–71.

4. *Nihongi* (as in n. 3), 176; Kojima (as in n. 3), 318–19.

5. The longest break in the history of the rebuilding of the Inner Shrine occurred between 1462 and 1585 and for the Outer Shrine between 1434 and 1563. For a detailed discussion of the history of the periodic rebuilding of the shrine, see Inagaki Eizō, "Kodai chūsei ni okeru jingū no shikinen sengū," in Fukuyama Toshio, ed., *Jingū* (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1975), 173–94.

6. According to Wada Atsumu, only two other shrines, Kamo no Wakeikachi-uchi and Kamo no Mioya, continue to rebuild every twenty years. In the past other shrines maintained a rebuilding cycle of twenty years or longer. See Wada Atsumu, "The Origins of Ise Shrine," *Acta Asiatica* 69 (1995): 68.

7. For a discussion of Saigyō's biography and the visual representation of that biography, see Laura W. Allen, "Images of the Poet Saigyō as Recluse," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 21, no. 1 (winter 1995): 65–102.

8. This proscription notwithstanding, numerous Buddhist temples grew up around the Shintō shrines at Ise, and Buddhism and Shintō were complexly intertwined at this time. Kuroda Toshio has argued that despite the customary restrictions on Buddhism at Ise, it is inappropriate to speak of Shintō as a religion independent of Buddhism prior to the Meiji Restoration (1868). See Kuroda Toshio, "Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 1, no. 1 (winter 1981): 1–21.

9. Saka, 70 n. 1. Harada Jiro translates the poem somewhat more loosely: "I know not what is within / But I am in tears with gratitude"; Jiro Harada, *A Glimpse of Japanese Ideals: Lectures on Japanese Art and Culture* (Tokyo: Kokusai Bunka Shinōkai, 1937), 88. Although the poem is widely attributed to Saigyō and is included in later anthologies, it is not known where the poem first appeared. See Kuwahashi Hiroshi, *Saigyō zenshū*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shintensha, 1982), 184.

10. Saka, 33, 36.

11. Ibid., 70.

12. Ibid., 56–57. The heart pillar is a column placed in the ground directly below the center of the main hall at both the Inner Shrine and the Outer Shrine.

13. Ibid., 48.

14. Hardacre, 14–16.

15. Vaporis, 242–44.

16. This *mandala* has been published in John M. Rosenfield, *Extraordinary Persons* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), vol. 2, 358–66; see also Rosenfield and Shūjirō Shimada, *Traditions of Japanese Art: Selections from the Kimiko and John Powers Collection* (Cambridge, Mass.: Fogg Art Museum, 1970), 151–53.

17. It is more accurate to state that this *mandala*, like many paintings of this genre, provides a succession of bird's-eye views, for all of the structures across a wide area are shown as if they were seen from a similar angle, rather than at different angles as if seen from a single location.

18. The same basic organization is employed with three other surviving Ise Mandalas; see Osaka Shiritsu Hakubutsukan, ed., *Shaji sankei mandara* (Osaka: Osaka Shiritsu Hakubutsukan, 1987), 174–83.

19. Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese Mandalas: Representations of Sacred Geography* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 4.

20. The sun and moon not only were included in *mandalas* for Ise Shrine, which was dedicated to the sun goddess, but were used, as Rosenfield points out (as in n. 16), 358, to symbolize the presence of other Shintō deities at other shrines.

21. Although there are some differences between the appearance of Ise Shrine at the beginning of the 17th century and the present, the differences are not as extreme as the *mandala* would lead one to expect. Commenting on a similar *mandala* in the collection of Ise Shrine, Fukuyama (as in n. 5), 130, suggests that while it is possible that painters deliberately distorted architec-

tural details out of respect for the shrine, he believes that the distortions are more likely the result of ignorance on their part.

22. Suzuki, 95.

23. Ibid., 104–6. The text for the print of the party scene explains that the party is taking place at an old market town (Furuichi) where merchants conduct business and where “there are always women entertainers to comfort the sorrows of the traveler. . . .” (106).

24. Vaporis, 4.

25. Ihara Saikaku, *Five Women Who Loved Love*, trans. W. M. Theodore De Bary (Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle, 1956), 97; also cited in Vaporis, 239–40.

26. Jippensha Ikku, *Shanks' Mare*, trans. Thomas Satchell (Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle, 1960), 209; and idem, *Tōkaidōchū hizakurige*, ed. Nakamura Yukihiko, vol. 81 of *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1995), 295. The *Ise sangū meisho zue* contains a print depicting shrine representatives greeting pilgrims in the streets of Nakagahara; but the scene is not treated with the same satirical edge as in the text of *Shanks' Mare*. See Suzuki, 86.

27. Ikku was not imagining the importance of brothels for pilgrims. It is estimated that there may have been as many as one thousand prostitutes in brothels in the vicinity of Ise during the Edo period; Hardacre, 16.

28. Ikku, 1960 (as in n. 26), 229; and ibid., 1995, 317.

29. Isabella L. Bird, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1880), 280.

30. Basil Hall Chamberlain, *A Handbook for Travelers in Japan* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), 245.

31. Ralph Adams Cram, *Impressions of Japanese Architecture and the Allied Arts* (Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle, 1981), 92.

32. Dean MacCannell defines markers and discusses their importance for making a given site a successful tourist sight; see MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 109–33.

33. These Victorians were not the first Western visitors to comment on Ise. Engelbert Kaempfer (1651–1716), who never actually traveled to Ise, commented on the main sanctuary of the Inner Shrine (“. . . poorly built of wood and not very high, and is covered by a low roof of hay”) and shrine pilgrimage based on the reports of others; see Kaempfer, *Kaempfer's Japan: Tokugawa Culture Observed*, ed. and trans. Beatrice M. Bodart-Barley (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 117–26.

34. Bruno Taut, *Houses and People of Japan* (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1937), 139.

35. Ibid., 143.

36. The search for “authenticity” is often a powerful engine driving the modern tourist's exploration of premodern cultures. As MacCannell (as in n. 32), 3, observes, “For moderns, reality and authenticity are thought to be elsewhere: in other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler lifestyles. In other words, the concern of moderns for ‘naturalness,’ their nostalgia and their search for authenticity are not merely casual and somewhat decadent, though harmless, attachments to the souvenirs of destroyed cultures and dead epochs. They are also components of the conquering spirit of modernity—grounds of its unifying consciousness.”

37. *Houses and People of Japan* was published in English by the Japanese firm Sanseido in 1937. Several books and articles by Taut appeared in Japanese in the 1930s. For a discussion of the complex and, at times, ambivalent reception of Taut's writings in the Japanese architectural community, see Jacqueline Kestenbaum, “Modernism and Tradition in Japanese Architectural Ideology, 1931–1955,” Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1996, 107–31.

38. Discussed in Yusa Michiko, “Nishida and Totalitarianism: A Philosopher's Resistance,” in *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism*, ed. James W. Heisig and John C. Maraldo (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), 128.

39. Hardacre, 32. Hardacre, 4, defines “State Shintō” as “the relationship of state patronage and advocacy existing between the Japanese state and the religious practice known as Shintō between 1868 and 1945.”

40. Ibid., 24–26.

41. Itō Chūta, “Ise Daijingū,” first published in *Tōkyō nichī nichī shinbun* (1921), reprinted in Itō Chūta, *Nihon kenchiku no kentū*, vol. 2 of *Itō Chūta chosakushū*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1982), vol. 2, 227.

42. Ibid., 228.

43. Ibid., 230.

44. Itō's treatment of Ise and other shrine architecture in an essay that appeared in the architectural publication *Kenchiku zasshi* in 1901 is more moderate. He does mention *kokutai* (national polity) in a concluding passage on the future of Shintō architecture, but the essay contains far less nationalistic rhetoric and considerably more formal description than does the newspaper article; Itō Chūta, “Nihon jinja kenchiku no hattsu,” *Kenchiku zasshi* (Jan. 1901); reprinted in Itō Chūta (as in n. 41), vol. 1, 375–424.

45. In Sept. 1931, the Japanese army falsely claimed that the Chinese had attacked their forces in Mukden in order to provide a pretext for further expansion in Manchuria. This Japanese aggression led to international condemnation, which in turn resulted in the Japanese withdrawal from the League of Nations.

46. Harada (as in n. 9), 87.

47. Ibid., 88.

48. Ibid., 89.

49. The poem by Bashō cited by Harada reads: “I cannot tell what flowers it came from / But an unnamable fragrance filled me”; ibid., 88–89.

50. Tange Kenzō, “Recollections: Architect Kenzo Tange,” pt. 2, *Japan Architect* 337 (May 1985): 12.

51. The main sanctuary at Ise actually has ten roof billets, and lesser buildings in the shrine precincts have fewer; with nine windows the memorial hall claims very high status but does not aspire to the rank of the main sanctuary.

52. Kestenbaum (as in n. 37), 201–7.

53. Raymond Williams writes of the potential counterhegemonic role of tradition in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 116. See also Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin, “Tradition, Genuine or Spurious,” *Journal of American Folklore* 97, no. 385 (1984): 282.

54. Fujimori Terunobu summarizes this debate in “Dento ronso,” in *Gendai kenchiku no kiseki* (Tokyo: Shinkenchiku, 1995), 214–15. See also Funo Shūji, *Sengo kenchikuron nōto* (Tokyo: Sagami shobō, 1981), 213–22.

55. Miyagawa Torao, “Ise Jingū ni tsuite no suisō,” *Shinkenchiku* 30, no. 1 (Jan. 1955): 8–14; and idem, “Reflections on the Ise Shrines,” *Japan Architect*, Jan.–Feb. 1959: 59–65.

56. Tange Kenzō, “An Approach to Tradition,” *Japan Architect*, Jan.–Feb. 1959: 55.

57. This was in response to a related essay that appeared in *Shinkenchiku* in Jan. 1955. See Kawazoe Noboru, *Contemporary Japanese Architecture*, rev. ed. (Tokyo: Japan Foundation, 1973), 67.

58. Tange Kenzō et al., *Katsura: Tradition and Creation in Japanese Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 34.

59. Tange Kenzō, “Recollections: Architect Kenzo Tange,” pt. 4, *Japan Architect* 339 (July 1985): 6–8.

60. Kawazoe (as in n. 57), 62.

61. Kawazoe Noboru, “Tange Kenzō no Nihonteki seikaku: Toku ni rāmen kōzō no hattan o tōshite,” *Shinkenchiku*, 30, no. 1 (Jan. 1955): 63.

62. For example, in 1929 Makino Masami suggested that Le Corbusier had more in common with premodern Japanese architecture than did much of contemporary Japanese design; see Makino, “Ru Korubujie o katari Nihon ni oyobu,” *Kokusai kenchiku* 5, no. 5 (May 1929): 67–68. Taut stated that “absolute modern principles are to be observed in the building at Katsura”; Taut (as in n. 34), 299.

63. Watanabe Yoshio received his formal training at the Konishi School of Photography in Tokyo. After graduating in 1928, he became a technician at the Oriental Photography Co. In 1931 he was transferred to the company's advertising department and worked on its publications, such as *Oriental News and Photo Times*.

64. He specifically mentions Mendelsohn's collection of photographs from *Amerika* published in 1928. He did not name any particular photographs by Renger-Patzsch or detail what he admired about either photographer. Watanabe Yoshio, “Kenchiku to shashin,” *Shashin bunka* 2 (1939): 177.

65. The *Engi shiki* (compiled in 927) contains detailed descriptions not only of Ise construction but also of various stages of the enthronement ceremony and other events. See *Engi-Shiki: Procedures of the Engi Era*, trans. Felicia Gressitt Bock, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1970), 123–50.

66. Itō included building elevations and drawings of *chigi* (roof finials) and other details in his article on Shintō architecture published in 1901 (as in n. 44).

67. Before the shrine is consecrated members of the local lay community are also allowed to enter the inner compound in order to place fresh stones on the grounds (a ceremony known as *oshiraishimochi gyōji*).

68. Satō Akira, interview with Watanabe Yoshio, in Watanabe and Nikkōru, 80.

69. Ibid.

70. Although, in fact, a hybrid of several architectural sources, the design was modeled in large part on the so-called *shūden* plan of the Kōjō-in at Onjōji in Omi.

71. “A Traditional Japanese House: The Esthetic Discipline,” *Progressive Architecture* 35, no. 12 (Dec. 1954): 109.

72. Horiguchi Sutemi, “General Observations on Japanese Architecture,” in Kokusai Bunka Shinkōkai, 3–6.

73. Kōjirō Yūchirō, “Modern Art and Japanese Architecture,” in Kokusai Bunka Shinkōkai, 7–15.

74. Horiguchi Sutemi and Hamaguchi Ryuichi, “Notes on Plates,” in Kokusai Bunka Shinkōkai, 150.

75. The essays contained a number of other photographs not included among the numbered plates.

76. See, for example, Miyagawa Torao (as in n. 55), 6–12; and Arthur Drexler's *The Architecture of Japan* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1955).

77. Tange Kenzō, in Tange et al., 1965, 14; all textual citations are from Tange, 1965. See also Tange et al. 1962.

78. Tange Kenzō, in Tange et al., 1965, 16.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid., 30.

81. Kawazoe Noboru, “The Ise Shrine and Its Cultural Context,” in Tange et al., 1965, 166.

82. Ibid.

83. Although the Imperial Household Agency has increased access to some extent, restrictions are still extensive. See Walter Edwards, “Contested Access: The Imperial Tombs in the Postwar Period,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 26, no. 2 (summer 2000): 371–92.

84. Here Kawazoe, in Tange et al., 1965, 190, is relying on the writings of Yanagita Kunio.

85. Ibid., 179–81, 198–99.

86. Ibid., 200.

87. Ibid., 202.

88. Ibid., 206.

89. See Kawazoe Noboru, "Kinōshugi to metaborizumu," in *Kawazoe Noboru hyōronshū*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Sangyō Nōritsu Tanki Daigaku, 1976), 144–73; see also Kurokawa Kishō, *Metabolism in Architecture* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1977).

90. Satō (as in n. 68), 83.

91. The arrangement of the photographs was the responsibility of the book designer (see the discussion of Katayama Toshihiro below), but Watanabe himself stressed the importance of walking through the shrine precincts for one's understanding of the shrines as a whole; see *ibid.*

92. In an interview with the photographer in 1998, I asked why no people appeared in any of his photographs of the shrine. At first Watanabe thought I was only asking about the inner compound and explained that usually no one was allowed there. When I pointed out that people were not even present in areas outside the inner compound he stated that he had not chosen to exclude them for any special reason, and that if he had found appropriate figures in an appropriate place he might have included them. These comments force one to be cautious about projecting too much onto the photographs. At the same time, it is difficult to take this response completely at face value, if only because Watanabe must have gone to great lengths to avoid including visitors in this busy and popular shrine complex; Watanabe Yoshio, interview with author, July 31, 1998.

93. This is not the original photograph published in the *Ise* book (this photograph is no longer available from the Watanabe family); it was shot at approximately the same angle, but from a position a few steps lower on the stone staircase.

94. Hugo Sieker, "Absolute Realism: On the Photographs of Albert Renger-Patzsch," in *Photography in the Modern Era*, by Christopher Phillips (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989), 111; emphasis is Sieker's.

95. Hara Hiromu is best known for magazine and book designs. In the late

1930s and the 1940s, he produced murals for the Japanese pavilions at the International Exposition in Paris of 1937 and the Chicago Trade Fair of 1938 (these photomontages included photographs by Watanabe), and he was the art director for the controversial propaganda magazines *Nippon* and *Front*. He was the founder and president of the Nippon Design Center. Katayama Toshihiro was with Nippon Design Center for three years before he joined the Swiss Pharmaceutical firm Geigy. Since 1966 he has taught design at Harvard University's Carpenter Center.

96. In 1965, John Burchard, dean of the Humanities and Social Sciences at MIT, proposed that the *Ise* book be published in English. Kameyama Yusaku (b. 1915), a senior colleague of Katayama at the Nippon Design Center, was invited to design the book. The English edition included slightly fewer photographs, maps, and drawings than the Japanese edition but maintained the high production values exhibited in the earlier publication. Kameyama retained the narrative structure of the original, moving from Uji Bridge to the inner compound of the Inner Shrine before moving on to the Outer Shrine. Kameyama chose to leave some of Watanabe's photographs in or near full frame, others he cropped more severely than Katayama had done. That said, he juxtaposed long shots and details in a similar fashion, and, in the end, the combined effect of the photographs and layout was close to that of the original Japanese edition.

97. Katayama Toshihiro explained his role in the development of the *Ise* book in a telephone interview with the author, Jan. 19, 2000.

98. The enlargement included a section of the bottom edge of the original cut out of the larger frame photo as it appeared in the book.

99. Hozumi Kazuo, "Nihon kenchiku igai shi," *Kenchiku Bunka* 200 (June 1963): 81–84.

100. His photographs were published in Ishimoto Yasuhiro, Isozaki Arata, and Inagaki Eizō, *Ise Jingū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995).

101. The photograph by Ishimoto is reproduced in *ibid.*, 109.

102. Tange Kenzō, in Tange et al., 1965, 52.

103. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 223. Benjamin, 243, defines "aura" as a "unique phenomenon of a distance however close it may be."