SEI´ICHI SHIRAI AND SUBJECTIVE METHOD OF SYNTHESIS

by

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture on May 6, 1988
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Architecture Studies

ABSTRACT

If modernism in architecture is based on a rational,
objective approach, Sei'ichi Shirai was a unique architect
who created his own subjective value system, which resulted
in isolating him from the modern movement.

Educated both in Japan and in Europe, Shirai incorporated
what he saw as the existential quality of western
architecture into his own original designs. His subjective
judgement guided the choice of trans-cultural and trans-
historical architectural elements, and arranged them in a
dialectic manner.

This thesis examines Shirai's designs in the terms of their
internal conflicts with tradition, such as those of Egypt
and Greece, Shintoism and Buddhism, Jo-mon and Yayoi, and
stone masonry and wood carpentry. The attitude was quite
different from that of so-called modern architects, since
Shirai did not deal with systematic spatial integration.

Shirai's architecture emerged like an inevitable creation
that was destined to exist. As a result, proponents of
modernism who think of architecture in the context of the
environment and who create space analytically in terms of
functions and compositions, failed to appreciate his
efforts. His work has the quality of so-called Post Modern
architecture already in the 1950s, but his insights, being
too early, failed to win him wide recognition.

Thesis Supervisor: David Friedman
Title: Associate Professor of the History of Architecture
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I would like to mention that my study at MIT was made possible by the Fulbright Program which supported me financially. This particular thesis is intended to present a new aspect of Japanese culture in the context of what is called in Japan, 'the Japanese spirit with Western Technology.' I hope that this thesis helps promote a better understanding of Japan by the United States. My regret is that the recent Japanese economic threat tends to distort the understanding of Japanese contemporary culture by Western people.

For the past two years I have accumulated many happy debts to my colleagues, Anne Nissen and Rives Taylor, and the staff at Rotch library, who have been supportive and encouraging during my studies at MIT.

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1. Introduction - Contemporaneity of Shirai

In February 1984, the committee of the Pritzker Prize selected Sei´ichi Shirai as the recipient of the prize for the year 1984. For the past few years Arata Isozaki, then a member of the committee, had been recommended to award Shirai. The response of the board at first was not favorable, commenting that his work was a strange eclecticism with derivatives of western icons, but year after year as Isozaki continued his support, the mood of the committee changed until it could appreciate Shirai´s personal approach to architecture. Ironically the committee decided to award Shirai only three months after Shirai´s death. Although Isozaki continued to argue for the award, because of the stipulation of the Pritzker Prize limiting its recipients living architects, the decision to award Shirai was cancelled. If he had lived a little longer, Shirai would have been the first Japanese architect to be awarded the world´s most prestigious prize before Kenzo Tange, who received the award in 1987.

To recognize Shirai´s architecture is quite different from understanding Tange´s architecture. Tange´s approach to architecture fits very well within the theoretical framework of the western architectural tradition. Tange´s work in the field of urban design dealt with the representation of social structure in the architectural context. He contributed by applying the theory of modern western architecture to
Japanese architecture, by giving Japanese traditional forms new interpretations. The realization of forms coupled with his new idealistic symbolism also impressed modern Japanese architects.

To understand Shirai on the other hand requires an appreciation of an oriental sensibility which is a result of cumulative training and experiences, rather than theoretical interpretations.

Shirai has been an enigma for the western critique. Most of the critical discourses on Japanese architecture don't refer to Shirai. The following passage by Botond Bonar expresses the perplexed feeling of the critic.

No one was more at home in the world of the bizarre than Sei'ichi Shirai, who presented it from the very beginning of his long career. His Mannerist architecture is a unique mixture of Oriental or even occult and Western mythology, full of suspense and mysticism. He juxtaposed extraordinary forms, materials, and colors to create dramatic effects and surrealist visions.

... Indeed, to analyze Shirai's architecture in more detail requires a considerable amount of psychoanalytic knowledge. Shirai remains one of the most enigmatic figures in Japanese architecture today. ¹

In the history of Art and Architecture in the western world, there was a norm based on the tradition of Grec-Roman principle. In the modern architecture the norm is emphasized by the notion of economy and function. In either case the norm has been given under the influence of external value system which has been existed outside the subject as a ruling
system. The value system was generally in the structure of hierarchy on top of which rested always the almighty God as the creator of eternal beauty in nature. The respect for beauty is identical to the respect for God. When the God was still alive, style was the norm. In the process of international modernism, however, the God was replaced by economy.

The effort of Shirai was to revive the lost existence of deity with his subjective commitment. Shirai considered an architecture as an existence a priori. Realization of architecture for him is to imbue life into the architectural materials and to commit himself to the activity of corporeal quality of forms. With this self-conscious aspect, his work shows the similar quality with that of Renaissance architecture.

In the design of Shirai, dialogue and dialectic of contrasting forms and heritages discipline the scheme, or enriches the image. Forms and motifs are taken from both Western antiquities and Japanese antiquities. They are unified after the personalized treatment of material in a unique manner that defies critiques to interpret by the conventional normative way. Most of them are easily imitated and identified. The use of material reached the level of corporeal form which made difficult to be appreciated objectively because of its personalization. The architecture of Shirai may not be an object to understand but something to
appreciate by experiencing its very existence.

For Shirai the history of architecture is not a consecutive series of happenings in the linear progression of time and place. History for him existed within fragmented artifacts as inherent spiritual and cultural traits. Shirai, as a creator, had a vast possibility of choices from the ocean of historical motifs, chosen according to his own personal criteria. The personal criteria is hardly manifested as a methodology, because it relates to an internalized subconscious state of mind which is cultivated by an incessant training through physical practice and experience. Shirai made it a rule to do calligraphy every day as physical practice.

Stylistic fragments and Western icons are employed not because they matched with a logical external context but because they had come into being as reflections of aesthetic concepts and images of Shirai. Any external logic fails to tie them together into a cohesive whole. Furniture and fittings too are selected by the same criterion and are given places to rest in harmony.

When Bruno Taut stayed in Japan, he asked to his friend about the taste of tofu (bean curd). He found it curious that Japanese people ate tofu everyday, because he did not find any taste or flavor in tofu. Unlike yogurt or ice cream, tofu itself does not have any taste, but the joy of
eating tofu is realized when one holds a small rectangular piece of tofu with chopsticks and dips it in just a little soy sauce. The combination of soy sauce and tofu is adjusted according to each individual's preference. The delicate adjustment can only be achieved by chopsticks, which pinpoints the difference between the function of chopsticks as distinguished from spoons. Having heard from a friend and Inspired by this anecdote, Shirai wrote an essay on tofu.²

Just as we are part of the flowing life force, so tofu is an organic substance that is part of the same elusive life. The head alone cannot comprehend the good intentions of life, which pervade the universe. Rational thought is indispensable, but is never sufficient in itself alone.³

This passage clearly represents his disbelief in rational behavior. His disbelief in rationality might be based on the recognition that any effort against the Western tradition turns out to be a mere importation of form. Shirai's comment on Rikyu, master of tea ceremony and designer of tea house, explains what Shirai himself tried to achieve.

His (Rikyu's) superior power of persuasion consisted in his deeds which automatically turned into living powers which sprang at his intuition and with concrete facts smashed the memory of faith and beauty of the people and with the quickness of lightning converted them to his clear-cut beauty.⁴

* * *

The effort here to understand Shirai's architecture, without practice, may end up being just a circumscription of 9
his attitude; nonetheless, this writing hopes to present an interesting alternative means of modern architecture. The architecture of Shirai is extremely important at present, because the so-called Post Modern movement seems to be in a state of stagnation after consuming all possible design vocabularies. The philosophy that Shirai presented through a process of realization influenced Japanese architects, including Arata Isozaki. The key to understanding and leading the movement toward a future architecture may lie here.

* * *

10
2. Early Days and Beginning of Practice  
Design of Residences, 1905-1945.

Sei'ichi Shirai was born on February 5, 1905 in Kyoto as the first son of Nanazo Shirai. The family was a copper trader for many generations. Sei'ichi had a sister Kiyo, elder by seven years, and a younger brother Takakichi.

In the year he was born, the Russo-Japan War ended, and in Europe, Otto Wagner designed the Postspartakasse in Vienna. Construction of the AEG Turbine factory was completed in 1909 in Berlin, designed by Peter Behrens.

When Shirai was at the age of 4 or 5, he was entrusted to Manpuku-ji Temple at O-baku-Zan, where he received training in manners and calligraphy. This training may be regarded as the origin of his calligraphy activities later in life.

In elementary school he liked to draw warships all the time, because Shirai was nine years old when the First World War broke out in 1914. When he changed his interest from drawing warships to something else, he liked to draw man-made machines such as steam locomotives or automobiles rather than animals or landscapes. According to his family's memoirs, Shirai drew those man-made machines with smooth beautiful streamlines.5

When his father died at the age of 42 in 1917, Shirai, then 12, moved to Tokyo to live at the house of Ko-ichiro Kondo whom his sister Kiyo had married. The brother in law
Ko-ichiro Kondo was a famous Japanese brush painter, and his house was frequently visited by famous novelists such as Kan Kikuchi and Ryunosuke Akutagawa. Kondo himself was a christian and Shirai thought that he would go to christian high school and study Christianity. As he studied further, however, he began to think of going to Germany to study philosophy, because he was not satisfied with the rigid Japanese educational system, and he longed for a more liberal educational atmosphere. When answering the question concerning which universities students were going to apply, Shirai wrote "Berlin University". In the following year (1922) when he was 17, he took an entrance examination for Tokyo University (then it was called the First National School of Higher Education) and failed. Shirai registered at Tokyo School of Physics.

The same year the Imperial Hotel was completed by the design of F.L.Wright. In Europe, Stockholm City Hall designed by R. Oestberg was completed and Le Corbusier published Vers une Architecture. On September 1, 1923, Tokyo was struck by a strong earthquake, and the resulting fire destroyed the Kondo residence. The Kondo's moved to Kyoto, and Shirai followed.

After moving to Kyoto, Shirai entered Kyoto College of Arts and Crafts, Department of Architecture. Although he was regarded as one of the best students of design, he did not attend class often. He rather spent time at Kyoto
University to listen to lectures on Philosophy, and he frequently visited Katsura Villa and other important Japanese temples in Kyoto and Nara. When Bruno Taut later pointed out that the Japanese had forgotten their own traditional beauty, Shirai protested by recollecting that he grew up appreciating the atmosphere of Japanese tradition before looking at things western. He must have been developing a deep affection and insight into traditional Japanese culture during this time.

Shirai was very close to a young philosopher by the name of Jun Tosaka, appointed as a lecturer at Kyoto College of Arts and Crafts at the age of 26 in 1926. Tosaka introduced Shirai to Professor Fukada at Kyoto University who impressed Shirai by saying, "If you are going to be an architect, you can learn the necessary techniques at any time. What is important is the content, the philosophy." 6

It was a time of changing values for Shirai because idealism and romanticism were enthusiastically welcomed among the young students. The popular mood was well represented by the phrase "The mind hopes for a new virtue, the spirit desires everlasting exaltation, and passion is intensified because of adversities and difficulties."

During his days in college, Shirai studied German very hard, and upon his graduation, as recommended by Professor Fukada, he went to the University of Heidelberg in 1928. There he attended seminars by the existentialist philosopher Karl Jaspers. Shirai later recollected these days. "I was
very interested in Gothic architecture. I really enjoyed seeing cathedrals at lectures. I did not miss one. I read many books in the library and visited cathedrals in northern France and German cities such as Paris and Cologne.

1928 was the year that the first CIAM meeting was held and the CIAM principles were proclaimed. In 1929 Mies van der Rohe designed the Barcelona Pavilion, which many Japanese architects later recognized as the beginning of modern architecture.

From 1930 to 1935 (when he was 25 to 30) Shirai moved around Europe several times. First, he stayed in Berlin for a year where he had been editing and publishing a leftist Japanese newspaper titled "Berlin Tsushin" (Berlin Newsletter) together with Kiyotoshi Ichikawa. Shirai then moved to Paris because his brother-in-law Kondo came to stay in Paris. During his stay in Paris, he was associated with Andre Marleau and Iliya Ellenburg. After staying there for one year, he went to Moscow and stayed there for one year. His activities during this period were not explained much by Shirai, but he even thought of emmigrating to Russia, because in those days, the subject of Communism and Marxism were not permissible in public in Japan. Shirai seems to have developed an idea of totalitarian idealism based on humanism. The attitude toward people which he developed during this period began to take shape later in his designs for several public office buildings in agricultural cities in Akita, a
northern region of Japan.

In 1933 (Shirai was 28) he returned from Moscow to Japan and visited Juko-in Daikoku-ji Temple in Kyoto. He does not recollect his thoughts those days but he liked to visit temples in Nara such as Toh-sho Dai-ji Temple and San-Gatsu-do. He went to Tokyo to take care of homeless children and joined a study group called "Showa Study Group", but he soon retired.

In 1934 he moved to a mountain in Chiba where he and his brother Takakichi and their friends cooperatively built a log house named "Dai-Toh Mountain Cabin" and started a small commune. They intended to create a new society combining Zen training with Marxist ideals, but the national guard took special notice of their activities, and the commune was disbanded.

Back in Tokyo in 1935, when Shirai's brother Kondo thought of moving from Kyoto to Tokyo, and planned to build a new house in a suburb of Tokyo, Shirai, then 30, supervised most of the design as a representative of the owner at the construction site. Shirai assigned Mr. Hirao as the architect because Hirao was the owner of a western furniture shop which Shirai frequently visited. Although Shirai learned design practice from Hirao, Hirao himself later recalled that he had been taught much by Shirai a lot about important aspects of design. Shirai worked enthusiastically on this house in order to pay tribute to his brother.
The Kondo residence [fig.2] is characterized by a straight and wide central corridor upon which rooms are laid out hierarchically, according to the level of privacy [fig.2 plan].

The entrance space on the south end of corridor is designed to be large enough to greet visitors and spend some time there. From this entrance to the door in the corridor is public space with a Japanese style room on the left, and a study on the right. The space around the Japanese style room provides a buffer zone for the room which functions as a guest room and other uses.

The kitchen on the left, and a dining room on the right comes next in the public zone. The private entrance and utilities come next on the left, and a major family room and bedrooms are arranged on the right.

On the exterior there is a long, wide terrace around the public zone providing, pleasant intermediary space. [fig.2a and 2b] Especially in the study, windows open out from the south corner to the garden outside.

Shirai was said to have a nature which was "violent like a running horse" in those days. [fig.1a] He must have found architecture very challenging, which provided him with a new world. Perhaps if he had started with sculpture or painting, he would have been frustrated, because pure art might not have been substantive enough for Shirai to fight against. In the realm of pure art, his practice and training in
calligraphy in his later years must have disciplined his inner conflict, and satisfied his vibrant enthusiasm for creation. In any case, Shirai's first experience with architecture began with this house. His youthful and passionate energy had now been oriented toward architecture.

Around this time the world was changing to a global orientation and a futuristic vision. In 1932, the Museum of Modern Art in New York held an exhibition of modern architecture, where the word "International style" was coined. Lewis Mumford published Technology and Civilization in 1934, and Le Corbusier published The Radiant City in 1935. In the U.S., F.L. Wright designed "the Falling Water House" in 1936.

When Mr. Egawa, a relative of Kondo, visited this house, he was quite impressed by the quality of the workmanship. Egawa had a plan to build a summer residence in a resort town called Izu, and he appointed Shirai as the architect. This house is called Kanki-so; [fig.3] it exhibits a Tudor style with various forms and motifs.

The Tudor style was used in the design of houses with variations by many Japanese architects in the early 20th century. Among many of those designed, the most famous one was the Matsumoto Residence by K. Tatsuno. [fig.4] Tatsuno learned Western architecture from an English architect Josiah Conder, had been invited as a professor of Tokyo University by the Japanese Government in the late 19th century. Tatsuno
later went to Europe (mostly to England) to study more western architecture. The Matsumoto Residence was a product of his study there. Following Tatsuno, in the early 20th century, many other architects in Japan were eager to adopt western styles, because they were symbols of civilization and progress.

Shirai stayed near the site of Kanki-so for more than a year, in order to supervise the construction. He learned the use of chisels and other traditional carpentry tools in the course of directing the work of the craftsmen. Because it was eclectic in design, carpenters did not know how to perform the work, and Shirai had to invent ways of executing the work together with them.

The plan of Kanki-so consists of a juxtaposition of three squares in a row. Each part consists of a unique combination of different styles. The east end is a masonry wall containing two Japanese rooms. There are two corbeled girders between the exterior brick shell and the inner wooden structure. The roof of the brick shell is a balcony that is accessible by both an exterior staircase and by a stage in the salon on the second floor.

The middle part of the house has Japanese rooms and utilities on the first floor, and a large salon on the second floor. The exterior wall of the second floor projects out because of the double wall. The projected parts are supported by a series of brackets, which are extensions of
floor beams. [fig.3a] The ceiling of the eaves also expresses the thickness of the wall, which as a whole, gives an impression of a traditional storage house with its heavy fire-proof plastering outside. The salon on the second floor is furnished with a fireplace, a stage and a dormer window, and all of them give the feeling of a medieval European castle. [fig.3d,3e,3f]

The west end is a simple combination of rooms and utilities. The exterior is a straight expression of the half-timber style. A window of this house already shows the pattern of circles in squares which is one of Shirai's favorite window designs. [fig.3b]

In this building Shirai seemed to experiment courageously with juxtapositions of various elements. As a result, the details of joining different elements are not sufficiently solved, but the quality of this house lies in its ability to bring all the elements together in a picturesque fashion. Shirai's concern was to concentrate on each element not on the total coordination of overall design.

Kondo introduced Shirai to various people who were mostly involved in cultural activities, such as poets, novelists and painters. One of them was Mr. Shimanaka, a publisher, who asked Shirai to design book covers over a 20 year period. Shimanaka also commissioned Shirai to build a new house in Tokyo, and a summer house. The house in Tokyo was burnt down during the War, but the beautiful summer house named "Moon-
flower" was completed in 1945, and survived the War.

The Shimanaka summer house has an eclectic exterior, with a thatched roof and louvered window shades. [fig.5a] The simple massing and the round corners of the white walls associate the design with Scandinavian farmhouses. The house was nicknamed "Moon flower", and constructed during the Second World War. The architectural expression might therefore recall a hermitage, that represents the state of Shirai's mind.

The interior is also a contribution of Western and Japanese motifs. [fig,5b] The transition from the living room to the Japanese style room is boldly presented by an elevated step with a round corner. The two lintels in this transition area are adjusted to be the same height, which emphasize the existence of this transition area, and as a result, the Western space and the Japanese space confront and collide with each other.

Shirai's work in the late 1930s and early 1940s is mostly wooden residences. There are two more Japanese style houses beautifully designed and therefore noteworthy here, the Sekine residence and the Kiyosawa summer house.[fig.6, fig.7]

At the Sekine residence, rooms are scattered along the cross axes of circulation, but here again the main feature is a large square study room that exists almost as an independent block.[fig.6c] The shape of the roof for this study room suggests the independence of this room.[fig.6a and
The rest of the house is an ordinary Japanese residence except for the bath behind the kitchen. The access to the bath is not from the kitchen but from the Japanese-style living room, or from outside.

The Kiyosawa summer house, of 1941, like the Sekine residence, was composed of units of squares connected by a cross axis of circulation spaces. The exterior has similar characteristics to low-cost housings, which consists of dark-colored wooden frames and white walls and windows. The brackets for the eaves implies the use of small members for rafters, to cut down building costs. The plan, however, does not indicate the idiosyncracy of low-cost housing (the features of which will be discussed later in Chapter 4) but rather the influence of Western life style, with a fireplace in the living room. The overall design depends very much on the traditional Japanese structural module of the 3-feet grid.

Shirai got married in 1937. His first son, Hyosuke, was born in 1938, and the second son Ikuma in 1944.

Before the War, people in Japan tended to think of Japan as the center of East Asia, and design competitions for monumental projects in China, Bangkok and Korea were held among Japanese architects between 1938 to 1942. The competition called for symbolic forms of national prestige.
Kunio Mayekawa and Kenzo Tange won some of the competitions by combining modernism in planning and traditionalism in expression. [fig.48] Large gable roofs and wall patterns show their consciousness of shrine architecture. The combination of these traditional elements in a new context must have provoked to experiment with new ways of investigating Japanese tradition later in their practices.

Shirai, however was not interested in this nationalistic movement, nor in the so-called modernist movement. Shirai refused to participate in the War because of his philosophical stance. During the heavy bombing in Tokyo of 1944 and 1945, he stayed in his house and kept studying until his house burnt. This attitude is symbolically exhibited in his designs, where Shirai was concerned with his own world and lived as an independent citizen all through his life.

* * *
3. The Gable facade and Social Humanism

Town offices and Residences with Gable Facades, 1948-1958

During the War, Shirai family's furniture was kept at the House of Mr. Ogiri in Akita, and after the War, Ogiri invited Shirai to make an evening lecture to the people of Akita. With this activity, the name of Shirai became popular in Akita.

Gradually, Shirai began to have opportunities to realize his ideal of socialist liberalism, with the design of town offices for small local towns. He was the only architect who was concerned with the people in rural areas at that time.

Everybody else in Japan was preoccupied with the modernization of cities, busy working on functional buildings with monumentality. The modern movement, which advocated the functionalism and consideration to urban context, dominated the architectural design of public buildings. However, just as modernism in art turned into an academic expression rather than the expression of humanism, modernism in architecture turned to be a manifestation of the architect's theory.

Functionalism, structuralism, and metabolism in architecture are all methodological systems that set up a frame of logic that connects architecture and society. These are the work of social science that analyze human relations in the context of social mechanisms. Each individual becomes subsumed into a functioned group, which in turn, is subsumed
into a larger functioned group. This was the methodology for the rapid growth of the economy under capitalism.

For Shirai, design was the pursuit of "Humanism in Architecture." It was an effort to establish subjective identity in architecture. Shirai projected his subjective entity into each scheme. The representation is different according to each site, but his attitude is always a reflection of his consciousness of the people around him. He did not think of relying on any design methodology that created a logical relationship between architecture and society.

Shirai longed for the liberation of the individual from various social institutions. As was mentioned earlier, when Shirai returned from Europe, he tried to practice a life of community using Zen training as a means of liberating the individual's mind. For him, architecture was a representation of his liberation. Architecture existed for him as an artistic symbol of the people who use it.

In praising the Chinese architectural heritage, especially that of Tien Tan, he pointed out the everlasting artistic quality that it has as the symbol of people's energy and tradition, regardless of the political system. [fig.8]

One and a half centuries ago, Germany under Friedrich II had looked wistfully upon her neighbor France, where with the resounding chorus of La Marseillaise, the dawn of modern times was becoming brighter each day, yet in that forlorn Germany, Beethoven and Goethe completed their immortal works of art, monuments of humanity. We too, learning from
the spirited activities of our neighbor, the rising China, would be happy to dream of establishing our own Tien Tan (the Temple of Heaven) which, however plain, would effect the catharsis of the sufferings of the Japanese people. For we are convinced that the noblest task and wish of us architects are to inspire the people with pride and hope through the medium of architecture, and to pioneer in the battle for protecting human rights. 9

Shirai understood that, although it was not permitted to him to share the same political era with them, he could have the good fortune of enjoying the same philosophical era as the days of Tien Tan. He strongly motivated himself to make Japanese architecture partake of the same architectural era in current world history. As a creator of form, Shirai endeavored to deal with unique and impressive forms.

In practice, Shirai, though not against the idea of functionalism, designed his public buildings with a strong recognition of the architectural elements that made each architecture a representation of people's vigor in life. For example, he used a large roof as the major element for the Akinomiya Town Office [fig.9], and a large balcony for the Matsuida Town Office. [fig.10]

Shirai designed three town offices, but here in this chapter two of them will be introduced for chronological and stylistic reasons, and the rest will be dealt with later. The earliest one is the Akinomiya Town Office in 1951.[fig.9a] He designed this office with a large gable roof, overhanging on each side, housing two storied structure in the center and one storied rooms in both wings.[fig.9c]
The central part project out backward keeping two storied structure, and ended with terrace on the first floor and balcony on the second floor. The central part of front facade is cut out and made an entrance porch and a balcony slightly extending out in an arc form. The porch and terraces are intended to be protections from snow. But when this building was first built, Shirai was criticized for employing a shallow sloped roof and many terraces, because heavy winter snow might pile up on the roof and the terraces and entrance porch might not function after a blizzard. This criticism was raged and might have had turned into a vandalism, had the first winter not proved the correctness of Shirai's design with proper orientations. Snow on the roof naturally slid down, and even after a heavy snow it was possible to walk under the eaves and use the porches and terraces.

The town office of Matsu'ida is another example of using a large balcony as if it were a symbol of liberation of people.[fig.10] The main building has a large gable with columns on the facade, reminiscent of a Greek temple. The site on top of a hill must have inspired Shirai with arcadia. The plan of the office area is very similar to that of Akinomiya; office space in the center, with service spaces and individual rooms in both wings.[fig.10b] In the regular grid structure, the counter separates public area and office area with a tilted angle and a round corner.

The balcony extends magnificently toward both sides with
a convex arc as if it invites people. As we see in the photo, [fig.10a] the combination of convex and concave formed by the gabled roof and curved terrace gives a sense of comfortable stability.

Following the Akinomiya (1951), the K residence (1952)[fig.11], Atelier No.5 (1952) [fig.12], the O-magari Lumber Office project (1953)[fig.13], and the Okuda residence (1957)[fig.14] show common peculiar character of the gable facade. The gable form itself is a basic Japanese traditional motif, but here in Shirai's facade, building blocks are symmetrically positioned under the large gable roof, whose eaves are cut off. As a result, stability and gravity is generated. The central part is often void so as to serve for a key function of connecting outside and inside.

The front facade of the K residence shows a large gable roof supported by brick walls on both ends.[fig.11a] Shirai's intention is to frame the volume of the living space, making the slope low grade, eliminating all unnecessary elements by cutting eaves. As a result, the form has a massive presence in the entry access, showing a firm connection to the ground. But at the same time, the central portion of the mass is void and only roofs go up to mark their apex. The central void serves as an entrance porch with the main entry on the left and a private entry to the garden on the right. Windows are placed symmetrically on both walls. [fig.11c plan]
The wall on this facade, however, does not entirely function as a wall of the house behind. As is indicated in the plan, the wall on the right is a fence of the garden. Shirai's wish is to create a well balanced facade with an entrance porch in the center. On the sides of the main building mass, there are wings like the composition of a Renaissance villa. It is not certain that Shirai had a Renaissance villa in mind but the use of a fake wall was quite against the architectural trend of that time.

In Atelier No.5, the front entrance was pushed to the side and the center void is used as a terrace.[fig.12e] Two columns, one inside and another outside, emphasize the symmetrical axis and symbolically vitalize this space. [fig.12f,12g]

The column is a structural element but Shirai found its symbolical use in vitalizing the space. The columns in the center were seen in the Akinomiya and the Matsuida Town Offices. The O-magari Lumber Office has an independent column in the clerestory front entrance porch.[fig.13a] (The use of the column is discussed later in chapter 10.)

The Okuda residence has a large one story-high gable roof on the front facade, and the wall stands back to create parking space. Later in Zensho-ji Shirai used this gable facade for the Buddhist temple.

Shirai explained that this gable form is taken from traditional Japanese roof as we see in the large theater
structure or Katsura villa. For Americans this form may be reminiscent of Shingle style houses such as the Low House in Bristol, Rhode Island by McKim Mead and White, discussed, for example, in Vincent Scully's book "The Shingle Style and the Stick Style" in 1955.[fig.15] The Low House, according to Scully, is rigidly frontal,... It has a truly classic unity without classicizing detail. ...It attacks the classic problem of the pediment or gable, and the great roof slope defines the mass with majesty and calm,...contained by horizontal overhangs.

The conscious effort to classicism in Western architecture may well have been transported to Japan by architects trained in Europe, such as Junzo Sakakura, whose Iibashi House (1942) shows a gable roof over the longitudinal direction.[fig.16a,16b] The gable basically appears on the short side of the rectangular plan not on the long side. The Low House has a shallow depth as opposed to the large gable facade.[fig.15b] The frontality of a large gable facade is created by this inversion of these sides. The Iibashi House, like the Low House, has the gable facade on the long side.

In 1952, the same year with Shirai's K residence and Atelier No.5, Kiyoshi Seike designed the Takeda House, with an equally grand gable facade.[fig.17a] This design, having a free standing column in the center, shows an attitude toward design similar to that of Shirai.¹⁰ The treatment of the roof overhang on both gable side and eaves side in the Takeda
House is more in tune with Japanese tradition. Shirai's K residence on the other hand, departs from the Japanese tradition creating excess overhangs, and more importantly, using the gable facade as a sign board.

Robert Venturi used the gable facade as a weapon to criticize the contemporary current of function-oriented architecture. This "vernacular" and "ordinary" form were in his designs extraordinary and original solutions, in the socio-cultural context. His Mother's House (1962) shows close resemblance to Shirai's houses in the early 1950s. The critical documentation of Venturi made his design famous, whereas Shirai's effort ten years before must have been too early to be fully recognized as critical or to have impact on other architects in Japan.

* * *
4. Low-Cost Housing and the Idea of Function

1952-1958

The rapid growth in popularity of Shirai in the Akita district was attributed to his effort to realize architecture at a low cost. When Ogiri appointed Shirai as the architect of an expansion project of the hotel "Ukigumo"[fig.18], the unit cost of this expansion project was only 70% of the average unit cost of wooden construction at that time, and yet the workmanship was superb enough to satisfy Ogiri completely. The cost for the extension was 14000 yen for 36 square feet, the Japanese spatial modular unit (approximately 1 dollar for 1 sq.ft. by $1=360 yen rate in 1950) Shirai seems to have learned in his early practice the essence of value engineering, and was always conscientious about the cost of construction. He was always eager to find good and inexpensive materials. Next year in 1950 when Ogiri heard of the intention to construct a new town office at Akinomiya, he strongly recommended Shirai as the architect. When the design of the Akinomiya town office was first presented, people did not like the scheme, saying that the huge roof looked like a warehouse and that the inside must be dark even during the day. But the key factor in persuading them to approve this scheme was its low cost. The cost estimate at the start of the construction was about $1.20 per sq. ft., and the final cost at the end rose to $1.70 per sq. ft.
because of the rapid inflation caused by the Korean War. However, this final unit cost was still cheaper than average construction costs.

In 1955 when Ogachi town, a neighboring town of Akinomiya, lost its office by fire, a plan was formed to build a wooden office with mortar plastering, costing $3.00 per sq.ft., which was rejected by people who knew Shirai's reputation. They strongly urged the town to ask Shirai to built a concrete office at a very good price. The average cost of a concrete structure then was $4.50 to $5.70 per sq.ft. Officers in the town were dubious about Shirai's capability, but Shirai quickly prepared a plan and persuaded them to go with his scheme. The project was completed with a budget of $3.70 per sq.ft. and finished in November 1956.

Shirai's concern with humanism appears to have spurred his concern with cost-conscious design; the issue revolved around the need for low-cost housing for people. The key to bridge between low costs and quality of space is "the wisdom of life" which is found in the traditional Zen philosophy of being "conscious without medium, of the unconscious consciousness". Shirai wrote as follows.

One piece of wood with three holes and a strap running through them serving as the gear for the irregularly shaped foot, and two straight sticks as tools for eating, may be called primitive solutions for complicated problems. The Japanese have acquired the knack of causing a single square piece of cloth called 'furoshiki' to function equally well as ponderous brief-cases. All these perhaps are not
solutions consciously worked out. These highly
Japanese functions have only been discovered after
ages of trial and error. The special cultural forms
we have inherited, likewise, did not grow
primordially on our soil. In contrast to the later
Kimono, a one piece garment, the articles of costume
found in the Shoso-in Treasury (store house in
Todaiji Temple, Nara period) are two-piece ones. Or
again, in the eighth and ninth centuries spoons as
well as chopsticks were arranged on the eating
table.\textsuperscript{11}

In the `furoshiki`, the all-purpose wrapper, and in a
pair of chopsticks capable of picking up any kind of food,
Shirai saw the type of functions subject to no limitations
whatever.

Functions stand opposite to one another
according to numerous internally regulating
viewpoints. Even where western functions are opposed
to Japanese ones, so long as one has grasped them
correctly without being drowned in them, one cannot
afford to commit the error of thinking chopsticks to
be inferior to spoons in function.\ldots

It is highly desirable that young Japanese
architects should have a clear idea of the internal
regulating factors of Japanese functions and bring up
our architecture with the `chopstick` function far
beyond the pursuit of that of the spoon.\textsuperscript{12}

Architecture does not progress solely by the effort of
architects but by a close communication with the real client,
the people. But so far Japanese architecture, while keeping
in touch with the public, has been unable to avoid the fault
of forming a small, isolated kingdom, starting its own
movements, cherishing certain idealistic dogmas, and becoming
isolated from the public at large.

Living aloof from the rest of the architectural world,
and breathing the same air as the public, Shirai was keen enough to grasp the 'wisdom of life' that existed in the public since long ago, and was deeply influencing the architecture of Japan, by constructing a series of low-cost houses.

For Shirai, it is not true that function is something required in architecture, but rather a work of architecture has the potential to become architecture as long as it functions. Shirai mentioned the relationship between function and architecture in the following way:

"Function in architecture manifests itself by demanding training and adaptations of people who use it. To compromise with human behavior and to spoil the users is not a true rational and functional approach. I am interested in engaging in an architecture that disciplines and trains human-beings." 

Shirai's consciousness was always of the independence in architecture. Function is one element, and low-cost (or cost-conscious value engineering) is another. The design activity should satisfy the both, and also contribute to a greater cause; the upgrading of spatial quality.

In the design of the House for Doctor Watanabe (1952-53)[fig.19], Shirai got inspiration from a traditional Japanese farm-house. Black columns and white walls are the result of a logical consideration of structure rather than just creating the nostalgic beauty in the Japanese mind, and
the refreshingly modern feeling to westerners in association with paintings by Piet Mondrian.

The structural material of this house, ceder, was provided by the client brought from his home town. The plan is tightly squeezed into an almost square shape of 24 feet by 24 feet, and is divided into three squared areas (utility quarter, living room and Japanese style room,) and a small sleeping room with three tatami mats. The tightness is overcome by connecting the living room and the Japanese room, allowing the continuation of the wooden floor on the window side of the Japanese room, creating a peaceful coexistence. The shoji screens were made larger than usual, and a spatial continuation along the south windows eliminates the sense of smallness; a window below the storage element gives variety and extenuation to the interior space.

At the time, the majority of the modern Japanese style in residential architecture then introduced what is called 'O-kabe', an essentially western construction in which a plastered outer wall covers the entire internal wood structure. The style was specifically called the 'Modern Sukiya' Style, and it spread widely throughout Japan, chiefly used in hotels and tea-houses. Although the form was modernized, Shirai criticized this trend as a deterioration of traditional Japanese culture.

Nowadays small houses of wood in town have their frames almost always coated with mortar, whether they are in a fire-zone or not. The street is lined with
houses of the so-called 'modern sukiya' style with roofs of Japanese tiles and juraku-clay walls of resin-finish. In these houses insulation and ventilation within walls, to which sufficient care ought to be given, are extremely inadequate. This style may be welcomed in entertainment districts, but would cause many problems if it was to find its way to the houses of respectable citizens. 1*

The Japanese structural framework depends on the use of tenons allowing the ends to be free to some extent, and the structure does not resist horizontal forces. But after a certain stage the junction resists by means of the elasticity of the wood. The modern 'sukiya style' architecture in which the frame is covered with mortar has discarded this advantage and causes cracks to be formed there. 'Shinkabe' on the other hand has free ends, and is able to move with the axes; therefore it can function as an earthquake-proof wall up to a certain point. Herein is manifested the "wisdom of life" acquired by the people of a country with high humidity, frequent earthquakes and a low economical standard.

Shirai set his eyes on the farmhouse, and found a 'type' in them; on the strength of his discovery he created low-cost houses with gable roofs and the dry construction of the 'shinkabe style', a Japanese traditional style exposing structural elements on the wall surface similar to the stick style in Europe.

This method was studied by many architects as the prototype of low-cost houses after the publication of the 'Unified Structure House' by Kenji Hirose, a collaborator of
Shirai. Hirose himself had inherited the technique from Shirai who, three years previously, had experimented with it in his own house.

In elaborating this idea and by adopting the 'shinkabe style' Shirai created the contrast of dark wood and white wall, and by doing so he gave intensity to the design. In the tradition of 'shinkabe' he felt the unconscious "wisdom of life" of the Japanese.

In the design of the House at Kodaira (1953-54), Shirai followed the same principle of the house for professor Watanabe. Shirai designed this house with a rectangular planning.[fig.20] The client received a government subsidy for financing, so the specification and building area was controlled by Government Standards, but Shirai reduced the building area much smaller than the limit in order to raise the unit cost of construction.

As was always the case, despite financial adversities, he used large windows, unusually long tatami mats and a large entrance area. The client was a poet (haiku poet), and had many visitors; he therefore wanted a wide entrance porch to meet them. The wall, angled at 45 degrees, is characteristic of Shirai's cost conscious design for the entrance wall. The wall on the other side extends out as if it defines the private space. This extended wall is also part of his design vocabulary. The outside area is turned into a part of intermediary space because of this wall. The deep over-
hanging roof also helps create intermediary space that supplements the small interior space.

The Kimura residence (1959)[fig.21] is also compact, and the image of the plan is a combination of the previous two examples. The entrance porch is defined by an extended wall, and the wall of the entrance hall is angled to reduce the loss of space. Unusual angles are used in the room and the steps, but they all serve to enrich an efficient use of space. In this house walls are always thick enough to contain sliding doors when opened. As a result, openings and walls become clear and the light from the window makes a strong contrast against the wall.

A final example is the atelier for Mr. and Mrs. Masuda (1959).[fig.22] Here the design is a treatment of an almost cubic volume of 24 feet by 26 feet by 21 feet (high). The entrance porch is reduced to become part of the balcony, and the living room is accessed directly from the porch. The blank walls on both sides and the continuous window on the rear elevation reminds us of Le Corbusier's work. Shirai must have studied Le Corbusier, and have understood the modern volumetric composition of house elements.

He created openings only where they were absolutely necessary. This does not mean that he was indifferent to openings, windows of hope for people. On the contrary, he fully answered the demand for openings by boldly using large
sheets of glass in his low-cost houses. The resultant increase in the building cost, (for sheet glass was by no means cheap in Japan at the time,) was effectively balanced by reducing the number of openings, and eventually, the number of fittings.

From these examples Shirai's energy in inventing and creating a space was intensified by limitations, rather than hampered. This attitude was based on the philosophy and technique of tea-house design. The proportion and the size of each element, however, is very much a part of Shirai's sensibility, which he himself calls the "Jo-mon" tradition. Juxtaposition and accumulation of various elements were tamed and ordered by his own subjective values, which as a result, created a mysterious quality in space. In other words, there is always a tension between the physical limitations and the creative consciousness that generates a unique quality in Shirai's design.

In Japan, there is a tradition of ingenious design causing people to appreciate in various ways the building's physical limitations. Shirai's spirit of designing a rich space with limited resources seems to correspond to what Rikyu did for Tea-Room design. Shirai described in his essay 'Two-Mat Tea Room Taian' as follows:

Within the two-mat Taian Tea Room, Rikyu succeeded in shrinking time as well as enlarging space within the harmony of light and shade. For Rikyu, every space contained the human possibility of
escaping the restricting mystery of space while time was a living substance that existed before the possibility of eternity.

Rikyu succeeded in emancipating time and space. ... Not only did he reveal the existence of supersensuous beauty within the sensuous, but with the living shape and breath of his creation he succeeded in showing us the essence of life. 

Shirai's activities seem quite successful, with his cost-conscious design and quick response to the owner's needs. But his efforts often ended in just an unexecuted project.

Shirai thought that the use of the 'gable roof' and 'shin-kabe' construction may have been the solution to low-cost houses under post-war financial stress, but in the final analysis these houses were merely temporary solutions meant to tide over the worst conditions. The harmony of the white wall and the dark wooden members perhaps embodied nothing more than a nostalgic longing for the past. As soon as he was aware of this, Shirai started a battle against this system, in the robustness of spirit which was uniquely his own. While most people, seemed preoccupied with keeping up with the times, running after vogues and changing incessantly with them, he had the consistency of purpose to cast and recast a method once adopted until he believed all its potential was exhausted.

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Although he was around 50 years old, in the 1950's, Shirai continued to energetically produce a number of original schemes. Among them was the Atomic Bomb Catastrophe Temple in 1955.[fig.23] It was a marvelous crystallization of Shirai's creative talent and critical view toward the modern movement in architecture.

This project intended to create an art museum that would exhibit a series of drawings portraying the tragedy after the atomic bomb at Hiroshima. The series of drawings by Mr. and Mrs. Maruki had attracted more than 9 million visitors in the exhibition because of their realistic description of the disaster. Having been impressed by this, Shirai developed a design which tried to express the people's desire for peace. Thus, before any decisions concerning the site, cost and capacity of the project were made, he had started his planning and design. It was just ten years after the atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki when the H-bomb testing took place at Bikini Island, causing radioactive rain in Japan. People recalled the tragedy and started to protest against nuclear bombs.

Apart from this social movement, Shirai first conceived of the temple as standing on the desolated land. He interpreted the principles of peace as a restoration of
dignity and morality against violence. He intended to symbolize a power which rises from the ruins after the atomic bomb. As an architecture growing in the desert, it had its origin in the stupendous ruins of the ancient civilizations around the Nile and the Euphrates; at the same time, modernity was emphasized in the cantilever formed by the intersection of a cylinder and a cube.[fig.23a]

The site was composed of two circles; an approach of green lawn and an outdoor meeting space, and a pond connecting the two.[fig.23f] The museum is placed in the midst of a pond so as to emphasize the symbolic nature of the building.

At first, the composition of a white cube with a black shaft looks like a representation of the structural system. But as seen in the section, [fig.23h] there are no columns and beams. The structure is actually a single plastic cast-in-place concrete frame that creates a light-well in the middle and an exhibition space around.

The museum building is screened by the entrance pavilion so that it cannot be seen from the approach;[fig.23e, 23f] drawing nearer to the entrance pavilion, visitors will be impressed by the museum appearing beyond it, and further on, over the pond. The entrance pavilion is elevated half-story up above the ground so that visitors in the front yard do not get an easy immediate view of the museum.[fig.23d,23g] By walking up the ramp from the side, visitors command the
view, but not quite clearly, because of the two columns placed on the central axis. These columns keep interrupting until the visitor walks across the hall. 16

Walking through the entrance pavilion and going down the stairs, visitors enter an under-water passage, in the middle of which is a small chamber where people can sit and meditate. [fig.23d] A small top light provides this chamber with a natural light. The door of this chamber separates the museum from the entrance pavilion. The design of this door is typical of Shirai’s design using the same size of circles in square frames. One might assume that the origin of this pattern is from a medieval stained glass or mosaic, because the pattern appeared in the very beginning of Shirai’s design at Kanki-so.[fig.3b] Or this pattern might be inspired by Buddhist Mandalas, which describe many different heavens in juxtaposed circles.

At the end of the underwater passage, visitors will first see an urn in the center of a round floor.[fig.23h] It is quite a symbolic setting, resembling a western tomb. The light here is screened by many small round holes that suggest the isolation of this space from the ordinary world. On the side of the cylinder there are four small windows and four larger openings which bring light in different directions. For Shirai, the vertical shaft and the cantilevered cube had to be of continuous reinforced concrete. The vertical space here gradually introduces people into the elevated exhibition
space, not just to see the pictures of disaster but also to experience the grief and sorrow of the catastrophe. A functional diagram might tend to separate the exhibition function from the circulation space and articulate them by differentiating structural systems. For Shirai, the wish to obtain human dignity was expressed in an architecture that amalgamated function and form.

A quality of vertical space similar to this space is found in the earlier design of Shirai in Kanko-do (1954), a bookstore he designed for his friend. The second floor slab was opened round and a thick column supported the roof slab at the center. The stairs embraced the column and dramatized this clerestory.

Similarly in the exhibition hall, after climbing up the long spiral stairs along the wall and standing on the landing of the exhibition floor, the view through the window is, again, the entrance pavilion over the pond. The visitors' vision is confined between the two buildings, first from the Entrance Pavilion, confirming the place they are going (the Exhibition Hall), then from the Exhibition Hall to review the place they have come through (the Entrance Pavilion). Visitors inevitably realize that they have come to a special isolated world. It is this dialogue between two elements in design that characterizes the mature work of Shirai in the 1960s and 1970s.

In order to create this levitated cubic form, it is
reported that Shirai studied many monuments with the greatest care, not for the purpose of learning from them but for the purpose of rejecting them. Shirai conditioned himself to design this building with no similarity to anything in the history of architecture. The drawings in the initial stage of this scheme showed a trapezoid with steps on four sides, with a cylinder in the center. It was obviously a truncated pyramid, except for the cylinder top like, a tomb in Egypt before the days of the Great Pyramid. The pyramid form shows a strong affinity with the ground. The resulting quality is something similar to what are seen in the gable facade houses. However, in this levitated cube, the form keeps its freedom from any historic reference, and therefore it leaves a strong impression on the beholder. The Egyptians gave architecture a purely subjective meaning and tried to dominate nature. Therefore, the creative power in Egyptian architecture must have inspired him as source of new form for the Exhibition Hall.

While we can see that the Exhibition Hall is based on Egyptian inspiration, the Entrance Pavilion has characteristics of Greek architecture. Shirai's understanding of the contrast of Egypt and Greece is reflected in the contrast of the Exhibition Hall and the Entrance Pavilion. As opposed to the purely subjective attitude of Egyptian culture, he saw the quality of Greek culture as laying in the successful synthesis of the
creator's subjective mind and the viewer's standpoint. This Greek influence will serve as the key to balancing Shirai's work between his subjective vigor and the objective viewpoint of his own internal account.

We can appreciate Shirai's unique attitude when we compare this project with Tange's Hiroshima Peace Memorial Hall in 1950-52. Tange's project is based on the idea that architecture can give order to the urban context both physically and symbolically. Tange used pilotis derived from Le Corbusier and advocated a city axis that connects the Memorial Hall and the Atomic Bomb Dome, penetrating the Peace fire which sits in the saddle-like sculpture. Tange's design was a straight-forward application of modern urban theory, quite persuasive to both the citizens and the local municipality in modern Japan.

Shirai's project, on the other hand, does not advocate its relation to the outside, rather as Shirai himself stated, it was designed to be built in the desolated land. Although there is a similarity in the elevated floors, Shirai's design has an inner-oriented centripetal quality. Hajime Yatsuka observed Shirai's intention as follows:

For him (Shirai), the unprecedented disaster of the atomic bomb could not be an occasion for a new public realm; but demanded instead an isolated space in order to permit contemplation and remembrance.

In the book of Paul Valery, Shirai had underlined the following passage. "Peace is a fighting process where love
and creation are engaged."

This original work proceeded the work of L. Costa's Brasilia Master Plan (1956) and may have given a source of inspiration to Tange's Shizuoka Broadcasting Office in Tokyo (1967) and the Yamanashi Cultural Center (1966). [fig.26,27]

In the 1950s, Shirai designed other buildings with similar formal compositions. The earliest one was the Ogachi Town Office in 1956.[fig.28] This office was the last of three town offices he designed. The first impression is the close similarity with the Atomic Bomb Catastrophe Temple, but the design considers the site condition being in a crowded neighborhood, and the form matches the people's need, providing a monumental block and a possible passage-way under the over-hanging rectangular mass.

The massive block may give an enclosed, rejecting image but the plan is the same in principle as the previous two town offices. Instead of having wings on the sides, the rooms are lined along the central entrance corridor and office space occupies the rear half. Since the front entrance is connected by the corridor, the main entrance is placed on the south side of the building, giving direct access to the office counter. Because of this consideration, the building has orthogonal axes of openings, which corresponds to the primary forms of his religious buildings and the Atomic Bomb Catastrophe Temple. These similarities
point to the continuity of Shirai's Proto-typical design image for space.

He seems to conceive of space as a rectangular box, with the possibility of openings on the orthogonal axes. When the openings are made, they should be large enough to break up the mass. When openness to people is required, the original block is cut in half or the front pieces are moved apart to both sides and a terrace or a colonnaded porch creates an entrance gate. But this formal manipulation might be relied too much for explanation in hindsight, because the date of these designs are chronologically reversed. It might be more accurate to say, then, that his designs become tighter and centripetal, beginning from the open extended layout of the Akinomiya and the Matsu'ida Town Offices. The change of expression is very much related to the location of the site.

Along the same lines with the Ogachi Town Office, is a project for the Public Art Museum of Akita City. (1957) [fig.27] Here, a line of top-side light articulates the roof but the treatment of the basic mass is the same. In the same year, he worked on the To-hoku Ro-do Kaikan Project (Laborer's Building in To-hoku region).[fig.30] His concern with expressing people's identity and power took form after the Atomic Bomb Catastrophe Temple. Five years later he realized this idea in the Yokote City Hospital. (1962) [fig.31] This psychiatric hospital became known because there was no steel cage to lock in the patients, although in
those days alcoholic patients were considered dangerous and generally put into a barred area.

Shirai developed this formal image in the 1960s, in the design for the Shinwa Bank Offices. But prior to that development, he completed designing an interesting religious architecture.

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6. Religious Architecture and Limitation in Design

1955-1973

Shirai's design of religious architecture exhibits his struggle in coordinating philosophical content with formal originality. His design eliminates all decorations and forms (icons) developed in relation to religious routine services. As a result his idea exists as an irreducible substance that everyone should confront. As a result it may be regarded as critical to the contemporary trend of using icons for the easy association of religious activities.

Shirai's schemes were always boiled down to a simple building mass which was covered by a large roof. The only decorative elements were the compositions of dark colored columns and white walls. But the target was to seek for the essential elements of form that houses religious content. In this sense his architecture is quite different from what was argued by Venturi in terms of the vernacular and the ordinary. The space in Shirai's idea is a crystallized form of the basic needs of existence which, although austere, is created as a constant fight of various elements and parts.

In order to understand Shirai's effort on primary religious form, the Hanso-bo project (1955) is helpful because it is the first project that represents his religious image in an uninterrupted form.[fig.32] Hanso-bo was supposed to be built at Matsu-ida, in Gunma Prefecture, where
he had designed the town office.

This project consists of two buildings, a small entrance house and the main temple. Similar to the Atomic Catastrophe Temple, these two forms represent the dialogue between different religious origins. The gable facade of the entrance house has its origin in the Shinto tradition, and the main hall with hipped roof has its origin in Zen Buddhist tradition. Shirai's clear-cut design attitude toward minimal iconography ties these different traditional heritages together, keeping the dialogue at an implicit level.

The entrance house has the common characteristic of the shallow sloping gable facing the approach. A tall vertical entry consists of a dark-colored sliding door, grilled fenestration splits the wall, and the round columns mark the corner.[fig.32a] This wooden structure dominates the visual representation of structure on the exterior. This house has openings on both orthogonal axes.[fig.32c]

Interestingly, this entrance house and the main hall are connected by an underground corridor, which reminds us of his project, the Atomic Bomb Catastrophe Temple, a little earlier in the same year. [fig.32b,32c] It is not inappropriate to point out the similarity to the Atomic Bomb project in this case, because the main hall is placed on an elevated mound, and the view from the entrance house gives the same feeling of levitation that we see in the Atomic Bomb Catastrophe Temple's Exhibition hall.
The columns of the main building have strong enthuses and the plan resembles that of a Greek temple. Here we see a combination of Western Antiquity and the Oriental tradition. Columns on both ends are engaged with the walls extended from the sides. As a result, the entrance porch of this main hall has a sense of enriched space; an intermediary space between outside and inside. An effective use of the fence behind the two buildings enhances the intensity of the space in between the buildings, and creates a promenade to a sacred ceremonial space. [fig.32a,32c]

The side view of this main worship building is a simple composition of a large roof and a large opening in the center, which reminds us of To-sho Daiji temple in Nara, that he liked to visit in his twenties. The form is one unified solid mass, and the door in the center suggests a central force going into the building.

Inside consists of three aisles, just like a western church. The area marked by dotted lines near the entry is very likely to be opened up to the roof rafters, giving a similar spatial composition to Gothic cathedrals. [fig.32c] The outer sanctuary and the inner sanctuary are separated by panels from both sides, and stairs on the left side lead to an underground passage.

The idea of an underground passage is quite unique and there is no example of any religious building connected in this way in Japan. The passage would be a place to prepare
for meditation, or a supplementary facility in the case of rain.

On the back of the main building, there is another stair that leads to another underground passage which leads to the back of the building. Although the limited information does not tell us anything further about its purpose, we begin to notice a mysterious flow of activities that penetrates and weaves through the rigidly structured spaces.

In 1956, when Shirai was asked by a Journal to discuss the best piece of architecture he had seen during the past year, he answered by citing the Taiseki-ji Temple Treasury House.[fig.33] He explained,

This project was full of vigor to investigate a frontier of new type of religious form. The liberation of style and the audacious expression which tries to change the sense of value truly deserves applause. Immaturity of design is overshadowed by this high-pioneering spirit. 19

The designer of this project, Kimio Yokoyama, wrote an article deploring the absence of effort by modern architects in the design of modern temples. In the process of design, Yokoyama recollected, he had to fight with the client's stubborn reliance on the traditional Buddhist icons. This reliance, viewed from another aspect, was based on a distrust in so-called "modern architecture". Modern architecture then had been generally considered by the public to be superficial representations with new materials, as seen in vulgar commercial buildings. Modernism in architecture, although it
seemed to be full of new formal language, in reality was devoid of steady spiritual development. People in religious activities are acutely aware of the spiritual poverty in the modern architectural theory called functionalism. Dealing with the conflicting notion of humanism and institutionalism, or traditionalism and modernism, Yokoyama tried to find a form that signified dignity and symbolized the noble spirit of religion.

Although the tendency of form and the method of realization was different, Shirai praised Yokoyama’s effort highly, probably because Shirai felt the same about the achievement of modern architecture. Moreover, the design by Yokoyama had an original quality similar to Shirai’s Atomic Bomb Catastrophe Temple of the previous year.

Three years after the Hanso-bo Project, Shirai was fortunate enough to execute his design for religious architecture at Zensho-ji Temple (1958) in Nishi-Asakusa, Tokyo. [fig.34] This work was brought to him by a friend.

The main worship building represented Shirai’s attitude toward religious buildings. For him there was no need for a Buddhist Temple to have traditional forms, rather it should be "a clear and pure space for worship and reflection"²⁰. He was not interested in following the typological or iconological rules that Buddhist temples had established over more than a thousand years in Japan. Temples, in their traditional form, tended to be filled with decorative motifs
such as elaborate gable and bracket carvings.

The tight financial constraints also required him to cut excess of any kind, not to mention decorations. The facade is characteristic of a Shinto shrine, a large gable roof with a deep overhang, and a large slit in the center of the facade as an entrance.[fig.34a] All these elements were already common in Shirai's facade designs. An elevated floor with charming railings and balustrades has the same spatial quality as a balcony. All these elements are made of in-situ concrete, with painted walls and stucco sprayed on the ceiling. The columns at the corner of the walls are fake. They are simply painted black and are shown in the plan as a layer of extrusion to give the appearance of a column. But they certainly helped provide the austere atmosphere of a temple, with the contrast of the black columns and the white walls.

The delicate care of the design provides an inviting atmosphere to the approach of this temple. The edge of the veranda is convex and the facade wall is concave by changing its thickness.[fig.34b] Together with the large vertical opening for the entrance niche, this wall and the veranda gives a subtle indication for people to enter. The entrance niche provides an intermediary space which is similar to the entrance of the K residence and the Hanso-bo Project.

The deep eaves and elevated floor are all basically architectural vocabularies of Shinto Shrine and residential
buildings in traditional Japan. The shallow slope of the roof gives the impression more of Sukiya architecture such as Katsura. The entrance steps might remind Westerners of F.L.Wright's Falling Water House, (1936), Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth house (1949) or Crown Hall (1956), but the elevated floor and the steps on the front are traditional elements in Japanese architecture. Moreover the use of stone for the steps indicates Shirai's own design reference, which is different from that of the modern architectural movement. Stone, with rusticated sides, is an important material to bridge between this world and the world after death, which is of concern in Japanese Buddhism.

The view from the entry toward the inside is carefully blocked by shoji screens. This series of shoji screens makes a good contrast with vertical openings and vertical columns. Transparent glass underneath and above the screen brings light and view into the inside.

The interior has characteristics of a Christian church, like the Hanso-bo Project. Two rows of octagonal columns divide the interior into three parts; the central worshipping space (nave) and the two aisles on both sides for circulation. When the chairs are laid out and the religious services take place on the elevated stage, the similarity with a church becomes more clear. The interior of a traditional Buddhist temple is covered completely by a tatami floor, and only the holy casket is placed on the elevated
The architectural elements here are the white walls and ceiling, the polished marble floor, and the black polyurethane lacquer paint on the octagonal steel plate coverings over the columns. This reduction of architectural elements dramatizes the golden holy casket in the stage setting of the elevated wooden and tatami floor with golden geometric patterns on the detached ceiling.[fig.34f, 34g]

The large sliding doors on both sides of the walls provide the interior with a lot of natural light through the shoji screen.[fig.34g] Each panel can slide into the walls and create an orthogonal axis for light. This composition of large openings, coinciding with columns, reminds us of the transept in a cruciformed apsidal church. The site does not allow any expansion on the side, nor does the space need any room, but more likely Shirai must have pursued a primitive massing with a slit on the center as we saw in the Hanso-bo Project. Shirai does not make any comments about his intention to make this interior look similar to those of churches, but his attitude was always to employ every possible design idea from whatever he learned. His interest was to cut out a primary space of worship and crystalize it with all the references he developed in his life.

Shirai recalled, "the reason I did not feel at ease with temples since my childhood was that temples had some kind of horrifying atmosphere created by grotesque sculptures, as if
a ghost might appear. The architecture had been filled with shamanistic icons and decorations, these temple forms were not in accordance with the spirit of Buddha." 21

In 1961, Shirai was awarded the first Kotaro Takamura Award in the architectural division, for the Akinomiya Town Office, Matsuida Town Office, and Zensho-ji Temple. This award commemorates K. Takamura, a modern western-style sculptor. It is representative of Shirai's work that people in the field of art acknowledged Shirai as a prominent form-giver (architect) before he was given any architectural award.

In appreciation of this award, Shirai spoke of his design preference in relation to the music of Beethoven. He described his "ambition of architecture to be grandeur and magnificence as expressed by Beethoven." In the music of Beethoven, there is no genius as in the music of Mozart, nor self-righteousness as in the music of Tchaikovsky. What we find in Beethoven's music is a struggle with musical motifs and a long and laborious process of harmony by counterpoint and balancing. Depth and gravity with grandeur is a result of these struggles. Probably one of the easiest references is Bolero, which repeats the same musical motif with variations and yet never bores the audience.

Shirai's space contains strong and vibrant living forces with a high level of sophistication. When Shirai was designing Zensho-ji Temple, he wrote an article explaining
the spirit of Sen-No-Rikyu, a tea master, as the dialectical process of creative instinct and the power of life.

To block the presumptuousness of power and live within the unity of beauty and action, to be in perpetual pursuit of the creative instinct while constantly in association with nature, to create the substance of beauty latent in the depth of the senses, has been Rikyu's philosophy. He continuously stirred the minds of the people by making them recognize their forgotten fate and reversed value and made them realize the expansion of life by proving the existing unimaginable contradictions in the brand new order of beauty. Rikyu was a genius who could focus the seemingly contradictory elements of life and beauty within the order of beauty. 22

Fifteen years later he designed the Ruri-ko-do Project (1973). [fig.35] Even though this project is a much later work by Shirai, his image of Buddhist Temple had not been changed. One solid massing with a large roof and an opening on the center manifests a primitive, and therefore never-changing proto-typical form as a place of worship. [fig.35a]

The combination of concave and convex appears in this project but their layout is the reverse of that at Zensho-ji.[fig.35b] The concave fence line invites people to the entrance gate and a straight approach leads directly to the main hall, crossing over a stream. The wall of the main building is swelling outward toward the entrance niche. The mode of entry is very similar to that of Zensho-ji, but there are no columns inside because this pavilion is dedicated to a holy casket or a Buddhist statue. The structure therefore is small and the wall is treated as a plastic element.
7. Shinwa Bank and the Dialectics of Forms

1961-1970

The series of Shinwa Bank Offices exhibits Shirai's matured design. Among them, the Shinwa Bank Main Office (1968) marked the culminating point in the career of Shirai, because he was awarded most of the major architectural awards for this work, the Annual Architectural Prize (1969), the Architectural Institute of Japan Award (1969), the Mainichi Art Award (1970), and the Architectural Contractors Association Award (1971).

Shirai's relation with the Shinwa Bank began when Shirai's brother Kondo introduced Shirai to the Chairman of Shinwa Bank, Mr. Kitamura. In 1961, Kitamura appointed Shirai as the architect for the design of the main office and two other branch offices. Although the date of completion of the two branches, and the main office first phase were different, the design of the main office also started around this time.

The two branches indicate the dialogue in Shirai's design between affinity with horizontal power and the levitating force in the vertical direction. In the 0-hato branch,[fig.36] a massive building block is alleviated by the horizontal colonnade in the front. Whereas in the Tokyo Branch,[fig.37] the exterior is characterized by a
rectangular block with deep vertical grooves of windows, lifted above the base of the first two floors. The expression of the building block is quite different.

At O-hato the building is treated in a classical manner, having frontality with the main block on the platform, with a colonnade stretching out on both sides. The gently curved front facade softens the massive presence and a continuous band of frieze marks the top edge. The top-arched, tall window establishes the center of the building, and the vertical grill-lines make a good balance with the colonnade in the front. This colonnade carefully opens its roof around the main block in order not to cast shadows over the elevation of the main building.[fig.36c]

At Tokyo, the expression is abstract with a rigid granite mass from which windows are carved out.[fig.37a] The detail around the window shows the thickness of the exterior wall. This block is completely articulated at the third floor level, so that the block above the third floor appears to levitate from the bottom block. The dark granite surface and the expression of thickness is a manifestation of Shirai’s challenging attitude toward the urban environment. The entrance porch is gently curved, like the facade of the O-hato branch, [fig.37d] and the interior has round cornered ceiling units combined with lighting, which create an atmosphere of closed space similar to a cave.[fig.37c]

The site conditions and space requirements may very well
have affected this difference, O-hato being a local branch
and Tokyo being the city branch in the heart of a metropolis.
But the contrast in these works is very interesting and
suggestive when we see Shirai's later work.

Around the same time or perhaps a bit later, Shirai began
to design the main building of the Shinwa Bank. Due to the
owner's financial problems, construction was halted for five
years, and finally completed in 1967. According to Shirai's
own memoirs, the chairman of the Shinwa Bank, Mr. Kitamura,
asked Shirai in 1961 to design something monumental on a site
no larger than 5500 sq.ft. This site is at the end of an
arcade in a commercial area, and a cliff-like mountain is
pressing in on it from the back.

The facade of the Shinwa bank Phase I is striking.
[fig.38a] The white polished travertine block is supported
by a black granite cylinder. The design of this building
shows a strong similarity to the Atomic Bomb Catastrophe
Temple project.[fig.23] When the bank was completed in 1967,
people found it surprising that Shirai kept his proto-typical
form in mind for more than 10 years, looking for a chance to
realize it. During this decade, Japanese architecture saw
the rise of the Metabolist Group (1960), the prefabrication
and industrialization movement, the New Tokyo Project (1960)
and the Olympic Stadium (1964). It was a decade of dynamic
change from conventional systems to a future-oriented,
technological approach.

Some may associate this building with Corbu's Villa Savoy (1931) in its composition of cubic mass with a dark colored curved wall beneath. But Villa Savoy has columns that support the whole structure, and the transparent curved wall of the ground floor expresses void space as opposed to the solid white mass above. This curved wall is a manifestation of arbitrariness as opposed to the regular column layout. Here in Shinwa Bank the black cylinder is actually a structural core that supports the white octagonal block housing office space inside. Shirai's form in this sense is a more plastic conception of form.

When we see the plan, it is obvious that Shirai had a predetermined image and pushed all the required functions into it.[fig.38f] The important banking room is placed behind the elevator hall which is not necessary to visitors. As is usually the case with Shirai's design, the entrance is from the side of the monumental mass. As one approaches the entrance, it appears more like a joint space between the first phase and the second phase.[fig.39c] The step is strangely crooked and the crooked part has a stone rise.[fig.39a]

On the fourth floor we see Shirai's typical interior space, a light-court. This courtyard with an oval opening is placed in the center of the plan, providing light and greenery to the adjacent reception hall and executive lounge,
and moreover though this opening it commands a view of the cliff behind.[fig.38c] It looks similar to the traditional design technique of "shakkei" or "borrowed scenery" that enriches the interior space, creating a communication with the natural landscape far beyond. Inside this building, the courtyard works also as a source of psychological relief providing a sense of orientation to the rooms around it. It is this focal point that represents Shirai's centripetal force.

The importance of the Shinwa Bank lies in the fact that Shirai was able to use all of the architectural vocabulary that he had acquired thus far in his career. When Shirai was nominated for the Architectural Institute of Japan Award, the phrase of recommendation reads as follows:

When we look at architecture in the context of its relationship with human beings, especially when we recognize the ultimate goal of architecture as a sublimation to the metaphysical that speaks to the heart and soul of people, Shirai is a distinguished architect who is rare to find on the recent architectural scene.

The Shinwa Bank Main Office is an extraordinary piece, an ultimate work, that has been made possible by the understanding of the owner and the volition of Shirai. The space embodied by this architecture is unique and original (ingenious), and the materials such as stone and metal, given life by the dedication and passion of Shirai, sing songs and play harmony in this architecture.

This achievement is not only a victory by Shirai but also a glorious aspect of "architectural essence" that should deserve praise beyond time and place.  

When he was awarded, the second phase was almost completed. The picture showing both phases reveals a clear
contrast with what we have seen in the two branches, an expression of levitated, powerful form in the first phase on the right, and a gentle settled form seeking affinity with ground as the second phase on the left. This contrast looks as if it were intended from the very beginning, but the fact is, it is a combination of the monumental first phase, and an additive space in the second phase. On the site of the second phase, there stood a traditional brick and stone Renaissance style Bank. The owner did not have a plan to touch it because it was a favorite building of the owner. However, probably because of the increase in the demand for business space, and the ardent persuasion of Shirai, the owner decided to demolish the existing building, and replace it with the second phase.

The gentle bronze wall of the second phase is connected to the first phase by a glass box.[fig.39d] The underside of this box became the main entrance to both buildings. This connection, although it appears simple, was of major concern for Shirai. In the fine detailing, carving each layer of skin of the facade, he tried to fuse the two contrasting expressions into a harmonious whole.

His concern with the dialectical treatment of the two buildings is explicitly stated in the following remark, thanking the award of the Japan Institute of Architecture.

One of the greatest pieces of historical architecture in the example of extension was Hagia Sophia. My work can never be comparable to this great architecture, but I began to realize that changes of
conditions which are almost fatal in the contemporary activities could be converted into a source of encouragement to achieve a higher level of work. The totality of the building should be one of the most important requirements, and I have come to achieve a dialectic in the completely different expressions of the two phases. 

The contrast of the powerful and the gentle is expressed in his essay "The Tradition of the Jo-mon Culture" in Shinkenchiku 1956.

I have for long been endeavouring to grasp a section of Japanese cultural tradition in the conflict between Jomon and Yayoi art. This has been urged by my experience as an architect. The idea that the fatal synthesis between Jomon and Yayoi types, not unlike the opposition between Dionysus and Apollo in Greek mythology, has caused the racial culture to develop, is eventually a reflection upon, as well as protest against, the predilection given to what is a posteriori wherein the characteristically Japanese features have been combined with the human and historic interest peculiar to Japan. ...

I am well aware of the fact that the study of the archetype of Jomon art, of its process of accumulation and endurance and the attempt to regard its expression of strong spirit as a finished pattern, have frequently ended in the fault of distortion. To us who create, to use tradition--which is at the same time an image of the future--as a moment for creation is to remove the coating of symbolism from type or model as a completed phenomenon to recognize in our reality the potential as an a priori force connoted in its history and individual, and at the same time to cast in it our self that will be the working agent. Each time I think of Priest Ku-kai, Sesshu the painter, and Rikyu the tea-master, I cannot help feeling the desperate pulsation of the Jomon potential which was alive in them and in their times.

The capacity to unify life and the spirit of man and age in a universally valid reality and sublimate this into an everlasting value may be something over and beyond personality and time. It may be something so extremely rare that one can scarcely hope to attain. Nevertheless, I am convinced that in studying how we should inherit and bequeath to posterity the potential of the silent Jomon art that
has successfully run through the cultural spirit—with occasional fluctuations, to be sure—of a nation, the sure moment for creation in the proper Japanese way in future is to be sought.\(^2\)

In this essay Shirai referred to the Egawa residence at Nirayama in relation to Jo-mon culture. The picture of the interior shows thick columns and a live-tree column. [fig.40b] The Jo-mon culture, represented by decorative earthen wear [fig.41] has generally been recognized inferior to that of Yayoi, because Yayoi earthen wear [fig.42] shows more sophisticated techniques of pottery making, and therefore the product as pottery has more practical value. Jo-mon earthen wear is generally considered not as practical as those of Yayoi, but Shirai, in discussion with many other artists, contended that Jo-mon had been equally practical in its psychological relation to people. The powerful expression must have worked in motivating Jo-mon people to go out for hunting.

This dialogue of form was first seen in the Atomic Bomb Catastrophe Temple, between Egyptian creative power and Greek rationality. The translated version of the dialogue, as it were, appeared in the Han-so-bo project, as a infusion of Shinto tradition and Zen Buddhism tradition. These examples in the 1950s, however, were not explicitly dialectical. The design of the Shinwa Bank Offices in the 1960s gave him the chance to develop the dialogue between classical existential
quality, and an original levitating momentum. The Shinwa Bank Main Office was born as Shirai's challenge to explore the possibility in the dialectical composition of form.

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8. Vertical and Mural Architecture

Heritage of Stone Masonry, 1974-1984

In the 1970s, the word 'post-modern' was beginning to be used to describe architectures with historical quotations and decorative motifs. Venturi's manifesto for 'architecture as sign board' and his preference for complexity and contradiction in architecture was gradually understood by young Japanese architects. Shirai, after designing the K residence, was always conscious of this matter in his designs, but he rarely proclaimed his internal ideas. Shirai was no less capable of manifesting his ideas than Venturi, but his tendency to be an isolated architect kept him in his own world. He practiced calligraphy more energetically every day.

Shirai was then about 70 years old, and the dialogue of forms could not exist in as rigorous a manner as in the 1960s, but in a more casual and manneristic way.

In 1974, two buildings were completed, the NOA building (1974)[fig.43] and the Santa Clara Chapel at Women's Junior College (1974).[fig.44] The NOA building deserves detailed description because it occupies a conspicuous corner of the center city of Tokyo.

The most appealing aspect of the appearance of the NOA building is the contrast between the rusticated-brick lower block and the softly gleaming, almost budlike tower which
rests lightly on the brick base.[fig.43a] The flowingly smooth surfaces of the curving walls of the tower are constructed of sulfur-treated bronze sheets.

The effect of a massive block of stone masonry achieved in the base section of the building results from the skillful treatment of details by the architect, a man who is often said to understand the very innermost essence of stone materials.

Close attention was devoted to such details as the roughening of the bricks, the depths of the grooves between the bricks, the proportions, the parapets, the openings, and the bands of yellow Indian sandstone.[fig.43e] The form of the parapet reveals the subtlety of Shirai's design intentions. Ordinarily, the line of a parapet is an unbroken horizontal, but Shirai has deliberately emphasized a sense of massiveness by breaking the horizontal.[fig.43a] It was probably his creative sense that inspired him to adopt this method of manifesting the true nature of a large block of stone. The original scheme by Shirai was to use stone masonry work for this base section, but the proximity to the front road is said to have made it impossible to implement, and it was replaced by brick work.

Although the total appearance of this building evokes a sensation of defiance against the surrounding city-scape, a soft, gentle mood is also created by some of the details, such as the main entrance[fig.43e] and the sculpture niche in
the masonry wall.[fig.43d] The transparent ribbon window on the 8th floor and the penthouse jutting out on top of the tower gives a corporeal sense in the composition of structure and volume.[fig.43a]

Unfortunately, since the building is rented to various tenants, Shirai was unable to carry his design attention to all of the details of the entire design. The absence of his touch in the interior spaces was an inevitable result.

Shirai designed a computer facility building as the third phase of the Shinwa Bank Main Office, started in 1973 and completed in 1975.[fig.45] This building was named the Kaisho-kan. The front tower dominates this building and different textures created with rough local stone, black sulphur-treated steel on the wall and polished granite at the entrance frame make an interesting contrast. This entrance motif is thought to have been taken from Borromini [fig.45j] and the oval windows indicate Shirai's interest in Baroque architecture.[fig.45k]

Whenever critics recognized Shirai's architecture, such as the NOA building,(it is conspicuous in the heart of Tokyo), they described the expression as "mysterious" or "audacious". They tended to relate Shirai's work to the context of the streetscape, and tried to get the formal meaning from this relationship. They often found Shirai's
method critical because the NOA building shows a complete rejection of any relation to the surrounding context.

However, it would be better to say that Shirai tried to throw his strong spatial conceptions into the rather feeble contemporary Japanese circumstances. His concepts, which were cultured on the experience in his early days in Europe, was an adjustment of existential gravity created by the European masonry tradition within the limitations of modern technology available in Japan. His aim was to transplant the quality of substantial existence, which often takes shape as a fight against European tradition, by emphasizing the thickness and gravity of the masonry wall. The basic difference in construction technology in the modern situation, however, forced him to create a superficial treatment of wall texture when he used stone as the facing material of the exterior surface.

Shirai's design of stone masonry took shape in two museums in the early 1980s. One is the Sho-to Museum (1980)[fig.46] and another is the Sekisui-kan, a museum for K. Serizawa (1981)[fig.47]. Although both use stone as the exterior material, the difference in expression shows a contrast similar to that seen in the Shinwa Bank. It is a contrast of thinness and thickness, lightness and gravity, or sharp artificiality and robust naturalness. This contrast may derive from the difference in location; the Shoto museum
is in the center of Tokyo, and the Sekisui-kan is in a rural relic park in Shizuoka Prefecture.

The front porch of the Sho-to Museum is created by a concave wall and an eave projecting out by a convex arch. The entrance is marked by a tall, grilled door with a round arch at its head. The entrance hall directly connects to the bridge across the vertical light-well.

It is an awe-inspiring experience to come to the light well because this vertical space is almost impossible to predict from the image of the entrance view. The dark, quiet, medieval atmosphere is broken by the bright, reflective texture of vertical columns. The world around this void is frozen, and broken into pieces. Every floor provided with a lobby next to this vertical void.

The plan shows a combination of two ovals, one on the end of the building, and another clerestory void in the center of the building. A water basin at the bottom of this clerestory void reflects the sky above.

In reference to this void it may be helpful to recall the conversation of Shirai interviewed by Hiroshi Hara for the journal Design Hihyo (design critique) July 1967. In response to questions about systems and methodologies of design and creation, Shirai, then 60 years old, talked about his struggling views and experiences. Shirai expressed his doubt that the beauty was something to be created. He believed that things are not so simple as to be created out
of nothing. He was interested in thinking of the possibility of "latent existence" which is different from either the Kantian a-priori idea or Freudian physiological existentialism. His methodology of realization would be something like a reversed 'nihilism' in Buddhist philosophy. Existence in oriental philosophy includes the destiny of vicissitude.

Here in this building, a core is provided as a void which is nihilistic, but the space in this building is vitalized as a reversed merit of nihilism.

In order to find materials to cover the wall of the tower of the third phase, Shirai visited Korea looking for porcelain called "Sen". There he saw the anniversary of 2000 years of independence that impressed him with the powerful expression of Korean arts. Although Shirai did not use porcelain for the exterior cladding of the third phase, he became more interested in Korean art and begin to visit Korea frequently. For the exterior cladding of the Shoto Museum and the Sekisuikan, he used pink sand stone taken from a Korean quarry. He named the stone "Ko-Wun-seki" meaning stone like a red cloud.

In the 1970s Shirai began to open exhibitions of his calligraphy and his first book of calligraphy "Koshi-Kyo Shocho" was published in 1970.[fig.57] Newspapers praised his achievement by reviewing that there seemed to have been born a professional calligrapher in Sei'ichi Shirai. The
second volume came out in 1976 and the third in 1978.

In 1980, for the entire work of the Shinwa Bank Main Office took ten years to complete, Shirai received the 36th Japan Institute of Art Award. He was the 14th of the recipient in the architectural field.

He died in 1983 November 19 at the construction site of his own house named "Wun-Han Kyo" meaning life with a cloud. Several works under construction then were completed through the efforts of his two sons.

* * *

So far the discussion has focussed on Shirai's original and unique aspects of design. But dealing with the last part of his life, I must refer to an important issue, which is the conflict between traditionalism and Modernism. This issue was the cause of heated argument among the active architects in the 1950s. To understand the conflict of traditionalism and modernism, we should start by examining Modernism in Japan.

Modernism in Japan was essentially nothing more than the Westernization of Japan. But there were three types of responses by the Japanese when they were faced with Western culture. These types of response are;
1) to be totally overwhelmed by the Western tradition, and simply imitate it.
2) to skillfully apply theories developed in Western history.
3) to struggle between Western tradition and Japanese tradition, and personally synthesize what was learned in both Europe and Japan.

All the major architects from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century were in the first category. They learned how to imitate the design of western architecture. Tatsuno, the designer of the Matsumoto House [fig.4] in chapter 2, was one of the leading architects in
this group. Traditionally in Japan, there were no architects, but only carpenters as professionals. Therefore the "architect" was created in the late nineteenth century, referring to the people doing western-style design in masonry. When Western architecture was introduced, the technology and design were so new that people could do nothing but imitate the form in wood. Some carpenters created a semi-western style, which incorporated Japanese carpentry techniques with foreign motifs such as pediments, arches, cornices, and columns.

Tange, who did not experience life in any European country, was in the second category. Tange put himself a proper distance from the Western tradition and succeeded in theorizing the principles of modernism. He skillfully integrated traditional architectural forms with modern architecture, for example, in a competition-winning proposal for a Japanese Cultural Hall in Bangkok. [fig.48] The spatial organization was based on the construction system of Japanese wooden architecture. After the war, he became famous for his methodology to apply Japanese traditional elements to modern design.

Simultaneously, in the international movement, Japanese wooden modular construction was considered to be very modern, and famous architects, such as F.L. Wright and Mies van der Rohe, designed attractive buildings which show similarities to Japanese spatial compositions.
Even before the war, the German architect Bruno Taut stayed in Japan from 1933 to 1936, and he published his impression Re-discovery of Japanese beauty, praising Katsura Villa in contrast to Nikko To-sho-gu Palace. In principle, Taut pointed out the simple aesthetic beauty in Japanese architecture. He saw in Japanese architecture a new example of modern architectural expression without decoration.

Yet within the rational character of the modern movement, there existed a feeling of unrest. Local Japanese architecture seemed to provide an answer, showing a humane, responsive way of relating to the environment. Haag wrote,

"The villages lie secure in the balance of life forces. The land utilization patterns are orderly, the overall setting is intelligent, the micro-climatic responses, the human scale, the graduated system of circulation--all work together in an organic whole to promote human values."

In practical terms, the tatami mat appeared to these architects to be a great idea.

Japanese domestic structure itself is unique in many ways. Foremost of these is that it is based on a common denominator, the mat. This modular unit insures a simple direct plan, coordinates structure, space and scale into a meaningful organic whole, allows for the complete standardization of parts and off-site preparation of these parts facilitates untold savings in material and time.

Before this, Kenzo Tange had already noticed the principle of modernism and the idea of universal space as identical to those which are found in the traditional Japanese house; namely they are spaces created by columns and
slabs similar to Corbu's Dom-ino frame, and the strong relationships with outside nature similar to the idea found in the Mies' Farnsworth House. In his own house, [fig.49] Tange used hinoki, a Japanese cypress, instead of steel columns to elevate the floor, and he made the ground floor "piloti space". In the humid climate of Japan, floors are usually lifted 1.5 or 2 feet above the ground. Instead of glass windows, he used traditional paper-sliding-doors, shoji, as partitions. Since the Japanese rooms were arranged by the module of the tatami mat (3 feet by 6 feet) [fig.49a], the method of having an orthogonal grid in the planning of space is similar to that of the Miesian grid. It seemed easy for a Japanese to reinterpret Corbu's piloti idea and Mies's modular grid system. It was easy for Tange to use slender wooden posts to mediate Western ideas and Japanese sensitivity.

But for Shirai, the matter of creation was not so easily adjusted after his experience of life in Europe. Shirai knew that the heritage of tradition in European culture was very heavy, and therefore the creation of modern architecture was inconceivable without a fight against this western tradition.

Chisho-tei (1953) is a Japanese banquet-style restaurant with a wide entrance and two grand halls. [fig.50] What is interesting in this Japanese style design is its combination with a concrete structure in the back of the entrance.
The concrete footing and the elevated floor of the building is a consideration against the moisture from the marsh in the site. [fig.50c] In a similar flood basin, Mies van der Rohe designed the Farnsworth house (1949) using steel posts, which created the sense of a Japanese house without a roof. That project must have been known by Shirai when he designed this building, but in this case the footing looks more like a reinterpretation of the piloti system, as we see in the Unite d’habitation in the 1930s. The plastic expression of the staircase and the combination of round columns and the elevated mass seems to be more indebted to Le Corbusier. It was Shirai’s decision to have thick columns. The design, therefore, expresses powerfulness rather than the lightness of Mies’ building.

Although the base was elevated by a concrete structure, the building is a wooden structure in the traditional style. [fig.50i,50j] In order to strike a balance with the concrete pilotis, the wooden posts were bolder than usual in the front entrance area. [fig.50e,50f] The module in this house is larger than those used in ordinary traditional houses. Shirai created his own modular system in the structural frame in order to relate with the size of the concrete. [fig.50g] The detail drawing reveals an effort to inflate the size of the columns to compete with other parts of the building. [fig.50g] This effort becomes more evident later in his work.
Saku-setsu ken (1971) shows Shirai's unique attitude to the use of traditional architecture; he persisted to use traditional Japanese forms and appearances by employing fake construction, and favored a contrast of closedness and openness like that in traditional space.

The appearance of the Saku-setsu ken is a traditional Japanese wooden structure, but the real structure is reinforced concrete. [fig.52c,52d] All the modern materials, concrete and a steel column, are covered by Japanese cedar, cloth, and paint on mortar. Wooden posts engaged in the exterior wall are all fake expressions of structure. One quarter of the thickness of ordinary columns are pasted on concrete walls.

The courtyard in the front has the severe expression of Zen temples by a closed setting of walls, and the expression of wooden structure gives rhythm, contributing to create an authentically austere atmosphere. [fig.52a] The entrance porch is provided as a layer of corridors, which works as a buffer space against the heavy snow during the winter. [fig.52c] As opposed to these closed spaces, the private rooms in the back of the house have open qualities into the back garden. [fig.52f] This traditional Japanese openness is created dynamically by the use of a modern material, a steel H-beam corner post, that supports large spans of beams on both sides. [fig.52c] This column is also covered by cedar.
As a result, the column looks very thick. [fig.52]

The garden, with inorganic materials such as rocks and white sand, work as a crystallized form of conception. Generally this type of Zen garden is fronted by the veranda of the temple, on which the priest and other people meditate, by contemplating it. Although the traditional Zen garden is isolated from the outer world, the garden itself is always unified into the architectural space. On the other hand, the closed Zen garden here is fronted by a sukiya-style wall, which expresses a very ascetic view in an enclosed space. The roof line curves downward toward the end of the eave. This typical feature of the sukiya style developed out of residential design in the 18th century. The line looks simple but the elaboration and the production of those lines requires sophisticated skills. The implicit tensions imbedded in the various design motifs employed make this house more impressive, and create a clear, memorable image.

In Japan the plants supposed to be the noblest are not the cherry whose blossoms fall as serenely as a dying hero, but the pine that grows by breaking the oppressing rock, and bamboo that flings back the heavy snow after suffering under its pressure, and the plum that blooms in the freezing wind when spring is yet far ahead, for in these our forefathers saw true strength. The Japanese nation, "living in isolation under the protection of a single line of rulers", beaten and crushed in society and nature, still never forgot resistance.
Thus the Japanese culture potentially contains a power to resist against the dominant existing power.

In the same vein, Shirai strongly objected to what is so-called "Japanese". One of his goal was to develope his own expression of wooden carpentry by concrete or other materials. The frequent use of post-and-beam structure by concrete reveals this tendency.

Away from the fake expression of the Sakusetsu-ken, Shirai designed Shiribetsu Sanryo (1972) with a strong gable expression by concrete. The expression of thick columns impresses the facade.

Although he kept fighting with the Japanese tradition in the 1970s, Shirai's last designs show his taste to a quiet and totalitarian expression. Wun-Han-Kyo exhibits a large traditional hipped roof that subsumes all the architectural elements. [fig.54a] The house of Keika also has a large gable roof that subsumes entire plan. [fig.55d]

* * *

83
10. Conclusion - Shirai's Formal Elements

Certain common traits may be found in reviewing the whole of Shirai's work, which help us to characterize his approach to architecture.

The column has an important meaning from the very beginning of Shirai's design practice. In Kanki-so, [fig.3b] the window mullion is not just a member of the window frame but, an independent round column, as if it supports the opening in the center. The column in the window appears again in the Santa Clara Chapel [fig.44b] in a more dramatic and challenging manner. The independent white column looks almost like a bone which become conspicuous because of the opening. This enigmatic element attracts the curiosity of the viewer. When one gets close to the window to see what's happening there, one is surprised to find one's own face reflected in the glass, looking miserly into the window.

The column in the window space appears perverted by carrying each individual meaning.

Inside a hall, Shirai often put a thick, independent column like a symbol of space. The use of the column is seen in the Egawa House when he referred to Jo-mon culture, and those independent columns are either round, such as the Kanko-do bookstore [fig.24a, 24c], Atelier No.5 [fig.12g], the Matsuida Town Office [fig.10a] etc., or octagonal, such as in Zensho-ji Temple [fig.34e-g], the House at Kureha.
A column stands, having a staircase around it, or a column supports the ridge of a gable roof. It symbolizes the vertical movement of space which relates to the power of life.

The column at entrance porch has a peculiar character. The Shimanaka Summer House [fig.5a] has an entrance porch with an independent column to support the corner of the roof. In contrast to the round corner of the white wall, this square column marks the structural framework. Often the column obstructs the major circulation of the entry.

The entrance porch of Akinomiya is mysterious because three columns are placed so as to block the entrance doors. [fig.9a] This layout is not a result of structural considerations, because in the terrace at the back stand four columns which coincide with the modular coordination of this building. [fig.9b, 9c] In Matsuida Town Office, despite its resemblance to a Greek Temple, the center column contradicts with rules of western antiquity. Shirai’s architectures always has this mysterious stubbornness, often overlapping contradictory elements on the facade. (In these cases, the central columns contradict the openness of the design.) Symbolically, an independent column placed in the center reveals the contradictory character of the human-being reflected in architecture. But in any respect, this is an unusual layout in the light of both western and eastern tradition.
In the Atomic Bomb Catastrophe Temple project, the Entrance Pavilion has two fluted columns on axis. [fig.23g,23c] It is possible to comment that this column placement has a similar quality as that of Horyu-ji Temple, the oldest wooden structure in Japan. Temples in ancient times, especially in China, are known to be erected in boundless wilderness, so the corridor around the temple obstructs the view of the Main Hall. But gates always leave the central axis open so that people pass though the gates on axis and get a good symmetrical or well balanced view of the buildings inside. Ho-ryu-ji, having columns on the central axis of the gate, is regarded as the only exception in Japanese temples. The columns on axis refuses people’s entrance. Noticing this peculiar fact, the Japanese philosopher Takeshi Umehara examined the history of Ho-ryu-ji and made an inference that Ho-ryu-ji Temple was not built as a place of worship but as a place of curse by the noble scholar and politician, Prince Sho-toku. This inference was first made in the book Kakusareta Ju-jika (a hidden cross) published in 1969. Therefore at the time of this project in 1955, Shirai may not have been so strongly aware of the reference, but the fact that he visited Temples in Nara so frequently in his 20’s, and his calligraphy in the 1950s include the word Ho-ryu-ji, suggest that he, somehow brought two columns on the central axis, wishing that the tragedy would never be repeated. Although Shirai does not explain
anything about these fluted columns, they are pure abstractions of Western orders. They do not have either capital nor base. They stand as if broken pieces of columns in a relic, surviving only with its shaft intact. Because of this, these columns can lead us to a variety of references in the history of architecture.

His column in the hall also exists as an obstacle in the circulation system. His column looks like it is demanding to be perceived as spatial content. Often it is the core of a space, and from which the space is generated, and therefore it is robust with an octagonal section, or at least round, but not decorated.

The aspiration and conscious effort to create a vertical space which began as early as 1954 with the Kanko-do Bookstore gradually took its own existence. The Atomic Bomb Catastrophe Temple in the subsequent year was a magnificent machine that featured a vertical meditation space. A series of projects that featured levitated box were expressions of vertical power against gravity. (Ogachi Town Office, 1956 [fig.28], Tohoku Labor Association, 1957, [fig.30], Akita City Museum, 1957 [fig.29])

In the Atomic Bomb Catastrophe Temple project, [fig.23a] the rectangular mass is penetrated by a black column. Although this abstract form featured a cube lifted by a cylinder, Shirai had an image from the beginning that a shaft penetrates a block. The verticality of the column is enlarged
and became a single building by itself in his later work, such as in the NOA building [fig.43] and Kaisho-kan (Shinwa Bank Phase III) [fig.45].

Vertical power was nothing other than Shirai's will to exist. Even in the design of a house like the Okuda residence [fig.14], a chimney shaft stands proudly on the facade as if it breaks the horizontality made by stretches of roofs. Verticality of space is emphasized when a void space is placed at the center of the facade, as is seen in Zensho-ji Temple [fig.34a], where ascending movement along the steps and vertical opening topped by the ridge of the gable impresses the vertical movement of the eye.

In the 1960s, the verticality of space is more vividly expressed in the series of Shinwa Bank Offices. The Tokyo Branch [fig.37] shows verticality as almost an inevitable consequence in the urban context, but the Ohato Branch [fig.36] also gives an inspiration to verticality through its tall windows. The large banking hall of O-hato [fig.36e] is inherited in the Main Bank Phase II [fig.39e]. Here, vertical stripes of yellow marble give rhythm to the dark blue wall. Tall buildings such as the NOA building and the Kaisho-kan have vertically impressive elements. The entrance arch of the NOA building [fig.43e] is as high as three stories, that makes walking up the stairs an exciting experience. The entrance hall of the Kaisho-kan [fig.45g] has a 10-story clerestory that makes this entrance awe-
inspiring in spite of the sensuous curves.

In the Shiribetsu Sanryo, the entrance hall is a large clerestory hall with free-standing stairs and bold columns loosely laid out in the space. [fig.53b] Similar space is observed in the hall of the Biwako Lakeside Lodge. [fig.56i] Finally, in his last two residential works, vertical space is skillfully created. At the House of Keika, a light court is the key space. [fig.56b] The atelier next to it has a lower floor level in order to attain a higher ceiling height. [fig.55d] (It is a result of having one large roof.) The view through the window during the ascending movement in the staircase will emphasize the verticality of the light-court. [fig.55g] The terrace space at Wun-Han-Kyo indicates an enclosed space by having screens (Sudare). [fig.54e] The rectangular space enclosed by the hanging screens appears as if it were lifted up, which is similar to the spatial composition of the Atomic Bomb Catastrophe Temple.

Curves taken from an oval shape are another characteristic of Shirai's designs, which began to appear in the front balcony of Akinomiya in 1951 [fig.9c]. This developed as a major formal element in the facade, such as the balcony of the Matsuida Town Office 1956 [fig.10b], the To-hoku Labor Association, 1957 [fig.30], the O-hato Branch of Shinwa Bank, 1963 [fig.36], and the entrance to the Tokyo Branch, 1963. [fig.37d] These curves are usually fragments of
a circle or an oval.

A complete oval shape appeared first in the K residence in 1952, where the fountain at the front porch is oval [fig.11c] and a top side window in the left wing is also oval.[fig.11a] In the Atomic Bomb Project, an oval shape appeared in the site plan, [fig.23f] and towers such as NOA building [fig.43b] and Kaisho-kan [fig.45] also have oval plans. Santa Clara Chapel shows a charming overlap of oval and hexagon in plan, and the Sho-to museum is the culmination of the oval form. [fig.46c-f] It appears as an organic analogy developed in the overlay of oval forms.

Skylights in the sunken court are often oval such as the Shinwa Bank Phase I [fig.38e], and the House at Keika. [fig.55b] (The House of Keika had an oval aedicule on the south elevation of gable wall in the design phase. [fig.55d])

When an oval shape appear on the facade, be it an icon or a swelling form of a balcony or a wall, it expresses strong frontality. The front facade is the prime importance to the design of Shirai. Frontality that started with Akinomiya Town Office developed with some motifs such as gable roofs, windows and columns. The development of facade is based on his idea to give his building a face to speak to people. Matsuida Town Office is a good example with a large franking balcony and columns, which are Shirai’s formal language to speak to people. [fig.10a]

Concern with the design of planes is not just a matter of
the facade but the composition of interior as well. The Banquet hall of Chisho-tei, 1953 [fig.50i,50j], is composed of a layers of planes, and the study of the House of Kureha, 1965 [fig.51e], consists of a large tiled floor and a shallow tatami floor with a Tokonoma (decorative alcove) within which hangs a decorative scroll. The space is for the purpose of facing the wall.

The gently curved wall of the O-hato Branch is the bosom of Shirai clothed with a canopy. [fig.36a] In the Shinwa Bank Main Office Phase I, the curved black wall is covered by a white octagonal block. The bosom, however in 1970, stepped to the front, gradually removing the cloths in the Phase II. The two building blocks of each phases of the Shinwa Bank Main Office look like two dolls, male and female, sitting side by side [fig.39a]. Finally in the mid 70s, the naked body stands up, as in the NOA building [fig.45a], or lies down, as in Santa Clara [fig.44a].

The gentle curves and round corners are symbolic representations of Shirai's corporeality in design. These curves appear when Shirai wanted to express the substantiality of the architecture. Shirai worked with these curves and round corners till the end of the last work. One of them, Biwako Lake Side Lodge, shows the curved wall at the end of the wing, covered with Persian blue tiles and with granite veneer.
In Shirai's housing design, elements and details get large and powerful. For example, windows are opened large where they are necessary, and the doors are almost always slid into the depth of the wall. Therefore the wall gets thicker and the amount of wall keeps comfortable balance with amount of openings. The size of tatami mat and the height of windows is generously larger than usual even in the low-cost housing. (see House at Kodaira [fig.20b, 20c]) The interior space is a crash of each element.

In some cases the lack of uniformity seems to be created on purpose. For example in the K residence, the beam in the ceiling and column in the window and Tatami lines don't meet at all. [fig.11f] The coordination of elements in floor, window and ceiling creates a unified sense of atmosphere in the traditional Japanese style interior. (compare with Tange's own house [fig.49d]) In his last work Wun-Han Kyo, a desk and a seat for sitting in a lotus position are placed over a tatami line, which is unusual and must be uncomfortable too. [fig.54i]

The list of these characteristics continues endlessly. The breaking of the traditional norm was not a sin because Shirai has his own unique criterion.

James Sterling used the technique of axonometric drawing which shows the image of the whole building without foreshortening the parallel lines. This technique became
popular among architects who manipulate building blocks like the design of machine. The axonometric drawing without roof is helpful in visualizing and juxtaposing various building elements existing in a project. This drawing technique, however, has been fairly familiar to Japanese since middle ages. Many picture-scrolls had been drawn in the axonometric drawing describing the peoples activities in the house. For example Ishiyama-dera Engi [fig.53] shows the interior as a sequence of space. (How modern it looks drawn without a roof!) The viewpoint of this scroll is equidistant in each scene. Each scene is composed of series of activities in the house, and each space is consist of several interior elements. The idea of house being a composition of fragmented spaces is identical to the idea that post-modern architects has developed. Fragmentation of space and arrangement of elements are inseminated in the tradition of Japanese art.

The designer's effort to arrange various elements in the so-called Post-Modern movement did not find any major direction. After the trial of various design movements, design sources and ideas seem to be totally consumed and devastated. It is for this reason that we need to look back what Shirai did for the change of the time regardless of the modern movements. In a deep philosophical level, Shirai seemed to have been reached a far higher level of synthesis and integration of cultures and traditions.

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Notes


2. Memoir of Tokugen Mihara in Shirai Sei`ichi no kenchiku to Hito (The Architecture and Personality of Sei`ichi Shirai), Sagami Shobo, Tokyo, 1979, Sept.


5. Kenchiku Bunka, 1985 February, PP142

6. Kenchiku Bunka, 1985 February, P143

7. Kenchiku Bunka, 1985 February, P143

8. Shirai himself would not speak much of these days. The small commune in a mountain was not for a political purpose, but rather it is assumed that he was looking for some sort of idealistic activity upon which he could exert his energy.

9. Shinkenchiku, 1955 September
   In this article Shirai expressed his concern of symbolic meaning of the public building regardless of social structure. The round pagoda elevated by a stepped platform is one type of oriental classic, which may have given various inspiration for his project in the 1960s and 1970s.

10. Although it is not certain, Shirai's Akinomiya Town Office may have inspired Seike's Takeda House.

11. Shinkenchiku, 1953, August


13. Shinkenchiku, 1955, October, P.25


16. The meaning and the use of columns are extensively discussed later in the chapter 10.
17. Shinkenchiku, 1955 April.


27. Shinkenchiku, 1955 September.
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"Meshi" Living Design, Tokyo, Nov. 1956.


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"Stone Buddhist Images of China", Shinkenchiku, Tokyo, Oct. 1955

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* January 1976, Kaisho-Kan
* March 1975, Santa Clara-Kan
* February 1975, Noa Building, comment by Takefumi Aida
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* May 1973, Sakusetsu Ken

Shinkenchiku,

* July 1956, Tomo-o Iwata, ‘Toward the Discovery of Traditions and People’
* October 1955, Three Local Public Offices, comment by Michio Yoshinaka, ‘Study of Sei’ichi Shirai’
* October 1955, Sei’ichi Shirai, ‘Stone Budda in China’
* September 1955, Sei’ichi Shirai, ‘Tien tan (the Temple of Heaven)’
* April 1955, ‘Atomic Bomb Catastrophe Temple’ (project), comment by Tomo-o Iwata, ‘Against Atomic Age’

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* October 1981, by Shin Takamatsu, ‘Kekkai no cho-jo’ (Layer of insecularizing screen)

* January 1981, Kiyoshi Awazu, ‘Bishi-teki Meishi-sei’ (Microscopic Clarity)

* May 1978, Kazuya Yuki, ‘Shirai sei-ichi Kenkyu no tame no note’ (Memorandum for the study of Sei’ich Shirai)

* February 1976, Kojin Suzuki, ‘Chi to Gen-ei’ (Intellect and Illusion)

* January 1976, Kazuyuki Honda, ‘Gyakko no persona’ (Persona Lit from Behind)

* January 1975, Kazuya Yuki, ‘Nusumi enu Keiken na Inori ni Sasageraete Ryo-kai’ (Mass Sacrificed for the Pious Pray)

* November 1974, Takashi Hasegawa, ‘Noa bilu wo mite’ (Comment on Noa Building)

* July 1969, Ko Miya’uchi, ‘Kin-dai no koku-hatsu’ (Prosecution of Modernism)

* February 1968, Noboru Kawazoe, ‘Shirai Sei’ichi no sekai’ (The World of Sei’ichi Shirai)


* November 1957, Yu’ichiro Kojiro, ‘Girisha no hashira to Nihon no minshu’ (Greek Columns and Japanese People)
LIST OF SEI´ICHI SHIRAI´S WORK

1936, Kondo Residence, Tokyo
1937, Kiwo residence (named Kanki-so), Shizuoka
1941, Sekine Residence, Tokyo
    Kiyosawa Residence, Nagano
1946, Ko-on Theater (Project) Sendai, Miyagi
    Sanri-Zuka Agricultural Village (Project) Narita, Chiba
1951, Akinomiya Town Office, Akita,
    Takise Residence, Tokyo
1952, K Residence, Tokyo
    Ukigumo, Akita
1953, Residence of Dr. Watanabe, (This was an experimental small housing.)
1954, House at Kodaira, Tokyo
1954, Kanko-do, Gunma
1955, Atomic Bomb Catastrophe Temple (Project),
1956, Matsuida Town Office, Akita,
    Ogachi Town Office, Akita
1957, Okuda Residence, Akita
1958, Zensho-ji, Tokyo
1959, Shidosha, Akita
    Atlier of Mr. and Mrs. Masuda, Tokyo
    Kimura Residence, Saitama
    Ogishima Residence and Ogishime Pediatric Clinic, Tokyo
1962, I´izuka Residence and I´izuka Clinic, Nagano
1963, Shinwa Bank O-hato Branch, Nagasaki
   Shinwa Bank Tokyo Branch, Ginza Tokyo
1965, House at Kureha (named Shicho-sha), Toyama
1967, Shinwa Bank Main Office (The First Phase), Nagasaki,
1970, Shinwa Bank Main Office (The Second Phase), Nagasaki
1971, Sakusetsu-ken, Akita
1972, Shiribetsu Sanryo, Hokkaido
1974, NOA Building, Tokyo
1974, Santa Clara Chapel, Ibaragi
1975, Shinwa Bank Main Office (The Third Phase) named
   Kaisho-kan, Nagasaki
1978, House at Saginomiya, Tokyo
1980, Shoto Art Museum, Shibuya, Tokyo
1981, Keisuke Serizawa Memorial Art Museum (named Sekisui-
   kan), Shizuoka
1984, Biwako Lakeside Lodge, Shiga
       Unhan-kyo (Shirai's own residence), Kyoto
       House of Keika, kanagawa

Awards

* Kotaro Takamura Award in the architectural division for the
  work of Akinomiya Town Office, Matusida Town Office, and

The following Four prizes were awarded for the design of
Shinwa Bank Main Office.
* The Award of Architectural Institute of Japan, 1969
* The Mainichi Art Award, 1969
* Annual Award for Architect, 1969
* Annual Award of Building Contractors Society, 1971

In addition to the above awards, he was awarded from the
Japan Institute of Art for the entire work of Shinwa Bank in
1980.

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FIGURES

Figures without designer's indication are all Sei'ichi Shirai's work. (Except earthen wears, Katsura Villa, Kompira Grand Play House, Ho-ryu-ji, and Ishiyama-dera Engi.) Most of the Shirai's work are taken from the following references.

* SD, January 1976.

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Fig. 41. Jomon earthen-ware, Joan Stanley - Baker, Japanese Art, p17, Thames and Hudson Ltd. London, 1984.

Fig. 42. Yayoi earthen-ware, Tokyo National Museum, An Aid to the Understanding of Japanese Art, Tokyo, 1980.

Fig. 45j, 45k. Anthony Blunt, Borromini, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1979.

Fig. 58. Katsura Villa and Fig. 59. Kompira Grand Play House. Nishi and Hozumi, What is Japanese Architecture, Kodansha International Ltd. Tokyo, 1983.

la. Sei'ichi Shirai about 1950

lb. Sei'ichi Shirai about 1970
2. Kondo Residence, Tokyo. 1936
(Destroyed by the War)

2a. South view

2b. East view

2c. Plan 1:250
3. Kanki-so (Kiwo residence), Shizuoka, 1937

3b. A window on the back

3a. Side View

3c. Plan 1F 1:200
3. Kanki-so (Kiwo residence), Shizuoka, 1937

3d. Furnace in the Salon

3e. Bay Window

3f. Salon and Stage on the 2nd Floor
4. Matsumoto Residence by Kingo Tatsuno, 1910
Shimanaka Summer House, 1945
named "Moon-flower"

5a

5b

5c Plan 1:200

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6 Sekine Residence, Tokyo, 1941

6a. South Elevation

6b. East Elevation

6c. Plan 1:250
7. Kiyosawa Residence, Nagano, 1941

7a. View from the south

7b. Plan 1:250

7c. View from the north
8. Tien Tan, China
9 Akinomiya Town Office, Akita, 1951

9a. View from the East

9b. View from the West

9c. Plan 1F

1:350
10. Matsuida Town Office, Akita, 1956

10a. Front Porch

10b. Plan 1F

1:750
10. Matsuida Town Office, Akita, 1956

10c. Rear View of Model

10d

10e
11. K Residence, Tokyo, 1952
11. K Residence, Tokyo

11d

11e

11f
12 Atelier No.5, Tokyo, 1952

12a. South Elevation

12b. East Elevation

12c. West Elevation

12d. North Elevation

12e. Plan
12. Atelier No.5, Tokyo, 1952
13. O-magari Lumber Office (project) Akita, 1953

13a. East Elevation

13b. South Elevation

13c. West Elevation

13d. Plan
14. 1957, Okuda Residence, Akita

14a. View from the Road

14b. Plan 1F

14c. Guest room

14d.
15. Low House, Bristol, R.I
by McKim, Mead & White

15a

15b.plan
16. Iibashi Residence
by J. Sakakura, 1942

16a

16b

17. Takeda Residence
by K. Seike, 1952

17a

17b

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18. Ukigumo (A Japanese style Inn), Akita, 1952

18a. Main Building

18b. Site Plan 1:1000
18. Ukigumo (A Japanese style Inn), Akita, 1952

18c. View of the Entrance

18d. Detached Room
18. Ukigumo (A Japanese style Inn), Akita, 1952

18e. Entrance Hall

18f. Guest room
19. Residence of Dr. Watanabe, Tokyo, 1953

19a. View from the West

(This was an experimental, small, low-cost housing)
20. House at Kodaira, Tokyo, 1954

20a. View from the south

20b. Plan 1:150

20c. West Elevation

20d. East Elevation

20e. South Elevation

20f. North Elevation
20. House at Kodaira, Tokyo, 1954

20g. Entrance

20h. Japanese style room

20i. Entrance Hall

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20. House at Kodaira, Tokyo, 1954

A SECTION

B SECTION

C SECTION

D SECTION

E SECTION

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21a. Entrance Porch

21b. View of The Japanese room from The Living room

21c. Elevations 1:200
22. Atelier of Mr. and Mrs. Masuda, Tokyo 1959

22a

22b. Plan 1F

22c. Atelier (Clerestory)
23. Atomic Bomb Catastrophe Temple (Project), 1955

23a

23b. Plan BF

23c. Plan 1F

23d
23. Atomic Bomb Catastrophe Temple (Project), 1955

23e. Aerial View

23f. Site Plan

COMPOSITION
1. PERMANENT MUSEUM
2. MUSEUM
3. SPIN STAGE
4. LUMINOUS POND
5. DOP LIGHT
6. BALLAST COURT
7. GREEN
8. FIRE TOWER

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23. Atomic Bomb Catastrophe Temple (Project), 1955

23g. Entrance Pavilion

23h. Exhibition Hall
24a. View of the Central Clerestory

24b. View of the second Floor

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24. Kanko-do, Gunma, 1954
25. Hiroshima Peace Memorial, Kenzo Tange, 1951

27. Yamanashi Cultural Center, Kofu, K. Tange
28. Ogachi Town Office, Akita, 1956

28a

28b. Plan 1F

2F 1:550

29. The Public Art Museum of Akita City (project), 1957

29a

29b Plan
30. To-hoku Ro-do Kaikan (Project), 1957
(Laboror's Building in To-hoku region)
31. Yokote City Hospital, Akita, 1962

31a

31b. East View

31c
32. Han-so-bo Temple (Project), Akita, 1955

32a

32b

Fence

32c. Plan

Entrance House

Main Temple
33. Taiseki-ji Temple Treasure House, by Kimio Yokoyama, 1956
34. Zensho-ji Temple, Tokyo, 1958

34b. Plan 1:200
34. Zensho-ji Temple, Tokyo, 1958

34c. Entrance Porch

34d. Elevations
34. Zensho-ji Temple, Tokyo, 1958
35. Ruri-Ko-Do Temple (Project), 1973
36. Shinwa Bank O-hato Branch, Nagasaki, 1963

36a. View from the Road

36b. Plan 1F

36c. Plan 2F
36. Shinwa Bank O-hato Branch, Nagasaki, 1963

36d. Facade Detail

36e. Banking Hall
37. Shinwa Bank Tokyo Branch, Tokyo, 1963

37b. Plan 1F  1:250

37a. View from the South
37c. Interior

37d. Entrance porch
38. Shinwa Bank Main Office (The First Phase), Nagasaki, 1967

38a. Facade

38b. Garage Entrance

38c. Courtyard

38d. Hall
Shinwa Bank Main Office
(The First Phase)
Nagasaki, 1967

38e
Fourth-floor plan.

38f
Scale: 1/350.
39a. View of both phases
(the first on the right, the second on the left)

Shaded area is the second phase
39. Shinwa Bank Main Office

39d. View of both phases
    (the first on the right,
     the second on the left)
39. Shinwa Bank Main Office (The Second Phase), Nagasaki, 1970

39e. Banking Hall

39f. Stair Hall
40a. Egawa residence, Nirayama

40b. Egawa residence interior
41. Jo-mon earthen ware

42. Yayoi earthen ware
43. NOA Building, Tokyo, 1974

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43b
Typical Floor Plan

43c
Plan 1F
1:1000
43. NOA Building, Tokyo, 1974

Garage Entrance
43f

Entrance view
43e

43d

43g
44. Santa Clara Chapel, Ibaragi, 1974

44a North West View

44b
44. Santa Clara Chapel, Ibaragi, 1974

44c. Chapel

44d. Plan 1:600
45. "Kaisho-kan", Shinwa Bank Main Office (The Third Phase), Nagasaki, 1975

45a

45b
Plan 10F

45c
Plan 1F
45. "Kaisho-kan", Shinwa Bank Main Office
(The Third Phase), Nagasaki, 1975
45. "Kaisho-kan", Shinwa Bank Main Office (The Third Phase), Nagasaki, 1975

45e. Exterior Wall

45f. Lounge

45g. Entrance Hall
45. "Kaisho-kan", Shinwa Bank Main Office (The Third Phase), Nagasaki, 1975

45h

45i. Guest Lounge

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45j. Door of Casino del Bufalo, Borromini

45k. Tomb of Cardinal de Chives
S. Giovanni in Laterano, Borromini
45L. The Entire Phase of The Shinwa Bank
Drawing by Author
46. Shoto Art Museum, Shibuya, Tokyo, 1980

46c. Second-floor plan.

46d. First-floor plan.

46e. First-floor basement plan.

46f. Second-floor basement plan; scale: 1/500.
46. Shoto Art Museum, Shibuya, Tokyo, 1980

North elevation; scale: 1/500.

West elevation.
46. Shoto Art Museum, Shibuya, Tokyo, 1980

46j

46k

47a. View from the South

47b. Plan 1:1000

47c. Fountain between the Exhibition Hall

47d. Fountain

47e. Exhibition Hall
48. Japanese Cultural Hall in Bangkok
by Kenzo Tange

49. Tange House, Tokyo, 1953

49a. 2F Plan

49b. 1F Plan

49c. Section
50. Chisho-Tei, Gunma, 1953
(A traditional Japanese restaurant)

50a. Entrance Porch

50b. Plan

50c

50d. East View

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50. Chisho-Tei, Gunma, 1953

50e. Approach

50f. Vestibule interior
50. Chisho-Tei, Gunma, 1953

50h. Vestibule interior

50i. View of tokono-ma at the Main Banquet Hall

50j. Smaller Banquet Hall
51. House at Kureha (named Shicho-sha), Toyama, 1965

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51b. Plan 1:800
51. House at Kureha (named Shicho-sha), Toyama, 1965

51c. South side

51d. Gate House
51e. Study House Tiled floor

51f
View from the Gate

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52b
52. Sakusetsu-ken, Akita, 1971
52. Sakusetsu-ken, Akita, 1971

52e. House Living room

52f. Living room and garden in the back
53. Shiribetsu Sanryo, Hokkaido, 1972

53a. East View

53b. Hall and Stairs

Plan 1F

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54. "Unhan-kyo" (Shirai's own Residence), Kyoto, 1984
54. Unhan-kyo, Kyoto, 1984

54c. View of the Gate

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View from the Porch looking at the Gate
54. Unhan-kyo, Kyoto, 1984

54e

54f. Terrace
54. Unhan-kyo, Kyoto, 1984

54g. Study room
54. Unhan-kyo, Kyoto, 1984

54i. Study room
54. Unhan-kyo, Kyoto, 1984

54k. Bedroom

54L. Bedroom
55. House of Keika, Kanagawa, 1984

55a. View from the Road

55b. Plan 1:150
55. House of Keika, Kanagawa, 1984

55c. View from the south

55d. Elevations

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55. House of Keika, Kanagawa, 1984

55e. Approach

55f. View from the Bedroom
Light-court viewed from Atelier

55g

55h. Light-court

55i. Salon

55. House of Keika, Kanagawa, 1984
56. Biwako Lakeside Lodge, Shiga, 1984
56. Biwako Lakeside Lodge, Shiga, 1984

56d. View on the Guestroom A

56e. View from the Terrace
56. Biwako Lakeside Lodge, Shiga, 1984

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56g. Lobby
56. Biwako Lakeside Lodge, Shiga, 1984

56h. Lobby
56. Biwako Lakeside Lodge, Shiga, 1984

Lobby with stairs leading to the Gallery

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57. Calligraphy of S. Shirai
58. Katsura Villa, 17c.

59. Kompira Grand Playhouse, 19c.
60. Horyu-ji Temple Gatehouse 7c

The middle gate, Horyuji, 7th century

61. Ishiyama-Dera Engi