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Archi-Cultural Translations through the Silk Road
2nd International Conference, Mukogawa Women's Univ., Nishinomiya, Japan, July 14-16, 2012
Proceedings

THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY: A STUDY OF THE SPATIAL ATTRIBUTES FOUND BETWEEN CAR PARK AND INNER SHRINE

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Keywords: Shinto, Shrine, Space, Japanese Urbanism, Japanese Architecture

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The space between Shinto shrine car park and the inner gate provides opportunity for development of the experience of the visitor [2][10][11][13]. Through the use of shadow, scale, sensual deprivation and progressive staging, the spatial qualities become more significant than architectural structures [24][22][50].

Research conducted focuses on the sequential experience of the spaces within the Shinto shrine complex [5][18]. Here the author intends to define a framework to explore the special qualities experienced within the grounds of the Shinto shrine. The author will explore significant relationships between movement and architecture [33][35].

This research examines and explores the relationship between the users and the use of spaces during the physical journey within the Shinto shrine grounds. This research proposes that such consecutive spaces can be more significant than built architecture [7][8][34][41][50]. Through deconstruction of these sequences a framework is proposed that can be further implemented into urban development [7][8][9]. Empirical research reiterated with case studies details a framework that outlines techniques used in the creation of significant space [38][55][58].

The selection of the car park as a starting point was chosen to define the extents of the shrine perimeter [1][16].

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Ise shrine and Meiji shrine were selected due to their locations, allowing exploration into site specific journeys experienced by the users [24]. The case study method was chosen to separate the Ise and Meii Shrines from the relative events, spaces and adjacencies. Through comparison of the two similar shrines, any constant or contrast becomes clear. The use of case studies allows direct relationships between the two shrines to be examined.

Through the case studies, the journey is separated from any outside influence [20][24]. This is achieved through the contextual comparison of the Shrines. Using a literature review as data, identifiable factors of spatial design were analysed to form a framework consisting of; Space Making and Movement, Scale, Stimulation and Aesthetics [44].

3.0 ANALYSIS

Influences by western architects within Japan, along with the sudden modernization, the isolation policies, and a culmination of government upheaval and defeat in World War II, shaped an architecture that is iconic and easily recognized globally [7][16][17][21][39][43][59]. Although

the architecture in Japan ranges from simple to exorbitant, there remains an underlying commonality and steadiness that is globally recognised [8][39][52].

Since the early Nara period, Tokyo has been classified as a greatly urbanized city. Architecture in Japan has been dependent on the urban renewal, rapid urbanization, and seemingly unstructured layout of Japanese cities [7][8][9][39]. Through this, the architectural journey has been diluted [23][27][39].

Case studies of Ise and Meiji Shrines provide insight into the development of successful spaces that can be reused in urban architecture. Through an understanding of the processes of movement involved with the transitional spaces, the architectural journey can be reinstated [11][33][36][56]. It is important then to understand where Shinto architecture begins, and to what degree it can influence the lifestyle and experience of modern Japanese urban spaces.

4.0 ISE SHRINE

Ise shrine comprises two major shrines. Located within six and a half kilometres from each other [1][11][36], the inner shrine and outer shrine are connected via paths buried deep within *Cryptomeria* forest. These paths are barely visible from aerial maps [11]. Resembling palace garden walls, the forest guards the shrine [1][11][51]. The tension and expectation builds from the outside [14][15][19][25]. The depth and thickness of the surrounding forest creates a physical boundary bordering on man-made [51]. On passing through the first gates and over the river, visitors begin to feel welcome [11][12][41].

The carved paths meander through the forest, immediately influencing the user's sight lines. At Ise, there is no connection to the surrounding town, as such, the only markers of direction are architectural structures placed along this path. Spaces that are stacked progressively exaggerate Ito's theories on flow of spaces and users [24][25].

The importance of such spaces are enhanced through the revelation and layering of architectural moments [33][49][53]. Each rounding of a corner or passing through Ito's 'vortices' tends to slow movement [24]. The revelation of subsequent spaces is a process that historically signifies importance in city planning [7][8][9][39]. This coupled with Unwin's ideas on hierarchy and Le Corbusier's Architectural Promenade theory, reflect a disconnection to the outside world [54].

Architectural structure form points in which the flow of spaces is stemmed and a point to gather is formed [24]. In Shinto shrines the Torri gates mark the start of the journey, midpoints, and often the finish [11][19][22][48][58]. The gates, in terms of architecture are simple and unassuming. This anticipation of what is beyond is inbuilt as one passes through such thresholds [54].

Though large, the gates provide relief from the forest. When placed along the path, the gates provide a scale closer to that of the visitor [11]. When the sun is overhead the gates cast shadows that are clean and sharp, recognisably man made [51]. Most striking is this visual line, the crossing of which symbolises the progress of the journey [11]. These architectural structures often become encased in shadows, vanishing back into the natural environment. This In turn, reduces the scale of the structures [23] [58].

This extends to the removal of physical, mental and materialistic stimulation [3][45][46][47]. Removing the visual connection with the main shrine allows only the top to be seen and leads to further imagination of what lies beyond. This simple act of denying visitors the whole picture encourages further exploration by the visitor [33][54][57]. Similarly, the removal of audible stimulation creates an environment with only the sound of river stones underfoot, and the groan of the forest [11][42]. The user becomes acutely aware of their immediate surroundings [51]. Removing excess stimulation can be seen as a preparatory device for experiencing the most sacred places [26][35][58].

The contrast becomes significant between man-made and natural, and between light and dark [51]. The depth of the surrounding forest is exemplified in the darkness beneath the branches. The continuing depth of the forest enhances imaginative experiences [11]. To the visitor, the forest seems to continue unending. Once within the bounds of the shrine, spaces seem simpler and more powerful [57][58].

Simplicity is inbuilt into the shrine and can be seen throughout the Shinto style [6][13][19][21][37]. The Torri gates and bridges that dot the path are made from wood that is harvested from the forest that surrounds them [21]. Simplicity is evident from choice of material through to architectural elements. In Asian culture, simple objects often hold greater meaning and significance than the complex [29][51]. The basic necessity and importance of architecture is outlined in Tanizaki's thoughts where

"as long as a house keeps out the cold and as long as food keeps off starvation, it matters little what they look like" [51].

It can then be outlined that simple objects throughout Shinto shrines hold even greater meaning, particularly when they come from nature [58].

Ise is most successful in the progression of space. Shadow, movement, visual hierarchy, and personal hierarchy become important spatial qualities. At Ise, the element of scale has relevance along the path. In this manner, the space before one reaches the Shrine generates a perception of importance.

4.1 MEIJI   SHRINE

At Meiji, paths carved through the dense forest provide an instant relief from the 'hodge podge' urbanised Tokyo [7][8][9][30][39]. This is achieved through natural repetition of trees and the same gravel ground found at Ise [11][28][31]. In the experience of the author, the paths at Meiji provide a softened edge, a contradiction to the surrounding city.

The paths cut into the forest provide a buffer zone between the shrine and the city, and reveal structures in a pragmatic way [34][54], much the same as in Le Corbusier's Architectural Promenade Theory [33]. Until the emergence on Meiji's main square, only glimpses of supporting architecture are visible. Rounding of corners and intersections provides sudden vistas, not expected when entering into the path.

Direct, wide and nearly completely paved, these paths of Meiji are similar to the streets of Tokyo [1]. Although the scale of the city buildings and forest are similar, Meiji forest does not overpower visitors. Instead, it is liberation from the density felt within the streets of Tokyo. This is in part due to the denying of visual stimulation [24][51]. As users move within and along the path, no direct visual feed between architectural structures is gained until reaching the main grounds of Meiji shrine. The open spaces present the main shrine at their far end. The scale of the squares is unexpected In the city of Tokyo.

The first and most significant sensory change noticed is the instant deprivation of noise from the city surrounds. Visitors to Meiji are shifted from a busy city to the still of the forest [11]. At Meiji, the paths are generally wide, gravel, and unenclosed. The crunch of gravel dissipates as user's transition to the paved main paths of Meiji. Quiet and simplicity stands out as significant at Meiji, providing seclusion and at the same time creating an escape from the crowded Tokyo city.

5.0 DISCUSSION

Shinto Shrines are classified as the indigenous architecture of Japan with links to modern Japanese architecture [9][10][37][39][55]. To deconstruct successful and recognizable spatial elements of Shinto shrines, the developed framework is examined in conjunction with the Ise and Meiji shrines. As the two shrines are placed differently within the fabric of the city, and as the same spatial experiences were discovered within the shrines grounds, all external stimulation can be regarded as insignificant to this study.

Bognar explores notions of an inward looking architectural style that creates a journey from the street to the inner workings of the residence [7][8]. The architecture of the journey, rather than the physical architecture becomes significant. This method is more successful combined with the removal of stimulation. Shinto architecture commonly places importance toward the centre of the shrine in effect turns the architecture inwards. This creates a desire to move within the gardens and to explore the grounds. The site then unfolds and reveals itself as the visitor advances. This is particularly evident in the Meiji shrine, of which is centred in a busy part of Tokyo. Regardless, it provides a sheltered site, when the spatial qualities are most significant when contrasted to the city. The resulting experience of both Ise and Meiji are seemingly private and sacred. As the majority of Shinto shrines consist of the same initial spatial acquisition [11][58], It has been noted that the transition from surrounding city to shrine is conducted in similar ways [23].

Removing stimulus identifies other methods used to make known the important, or separate the important sounds, sights and experiences. Removing overly ornate architecture in place of traditional Shinto structures enhances the textures of such structures that would not otherwise be noticed. Similarly, the creation of 'vortices' of which slow the flow of movement would not be noticed if wayward structures were erected for the sake of planned space creation [24].

6.0 CONCLUSION

Through empirical research reiterated with case studies conducted on the Japanese Shinto shrines of Ise and Meiji, a spatial framework is outlined. These spaces become the focus of further research regarding their success and what processes or techniques were used in their development. The question is posed as to why the journey Shinto shrine was experienced as significant, even to those who have no connection to Shinto belief.

Initial studies explored notions of religion, faith and belief, defining these relative to the Shinto architecture. Supplementary explorations revealed that the journey to the shrine was more spatially significant.

These spaces were analysed in terms of techniques employed. Such spaces were then defined in terms of four factors found between the car park and the Shinto shrine. This developed framework was analysed to discuss successes when composed with culturally significant architecture. It is hoped this research can be furthered and implemented into urban developments.

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