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Architectural Anthropology:

SEMANTIC AND SYMBOLIC ARCHITECTURE

An architectural-ethnological survey into hundred
villages of central Japan

STRUCTURA MUNDI

II. THEORETICAL PRINCIPLES

INTRODUCTION

The term peripheral or isolated area as used in ethnology designates geographic units which, owing to their seclusion or particular location relative to mountains, deserts, seas, virgin forests and the like, are characterized by their trend to conserve ancient cultural conditions. In conditions that frequently struck the viewer as primitive in such isolated areas, cultural historians have long recognized original conditions on an overall cultural level. In such situations it was natural to speak in terms of 'primitive cultures', 'ancient peoples', etc.. However, these terms could not be upheld when later research revealed that such ethnic groups also possessed quite complex [e.g. linguistic or social] systems of order, despite the externally primitive-looking circumstances in which they lived.

The cultural history school of ethnology therefore suffered severe shocks, and historical references to the results of ethnological research have become unpopular. And yet, perhaps the viewpoint was incorrect. Were scientists subject to fixation on culture as a whole? Had due consideration been given to the fact that any culture consists of highly divergent elements which may derive from entirely different stages of cultural evolution? Should culture not be regarded as an accumulation of such elements, rather as the cultural-lag theory does within a more limited framework? Instead of looking for something primordial to characterize a culture as a whole, would it not be more realistic to track down original and significant elements within that culture, hoping that new discoveries in man's past may be deduced from his relations with such elements?

These questions have promoted the present inquiry. It is based on material still accessible in Japan. Japan is a truly ideal model for the problem initially referred to. Thanks to its insular location in the Far East, on the edge of continental events, it has always been, and to a certain extent still is, an isolated area. However, it has received the temporary impacts of highly developed cultures and these have

greatly advanced individual aspects of its own culture. Recently Japan has become known for having conserved ancient cultural conditions that continue to exist alongside the most up-to-date institutions.

Such an ancient cultural element of Japanese folk Shinto, the autochthonous folk belief, forms the subject-matter of this study. Early japanologists, influenced by earlier western theories, regarded Japanese Shinto as primitive. The result was that there was little research done apart from a limited number of publications written by early japanologists. However, a closer look seems to reveal that folk Shinto comprises not only the stratum of animism (tree and stone cults), derived from antique historical material and then regarded as original, but also a much earlier one: the stratum of tectono-synthetic cultic monuments, found by oriental archaeology at much earlier levels of civilization (Sumer, Ancient Egypt).

If this ancient cultural element of folk Shinto really constituted a relatively intact material tradition from most ancient times, this would constitute an extremely valuable source, which would have effects in various fields. This is why the following study will attempt to illuminate this tentative beginning from different angles.

1. TECTONIC SYMBOLS IN JAPANESE FOLK CULT

The concept developed in what follows is based on the wealth of tectonic symbols which can be ethnographically discerned within the framework of Japanese folk cult, particularly folk Shinto. Plates 1-7 are designed to represent this material as an overall cultural phenomenon, as comprehensively as at present possible. Such a presentation is intended to form the basis of intercultural comparisons. The material has been compiled largely from illustrations in Japanese literature: partly it was also obtained in the author's field surveys. It roughly represents some five to ten per cent of what is described in Japanese literature and is a very small fraction of what is still available and has not yet been investigated. However, exposed to the effects of modern times, these cultic customs, embedded in autochthonous Shintoist conceptions of order, are now rapidly diminishing.

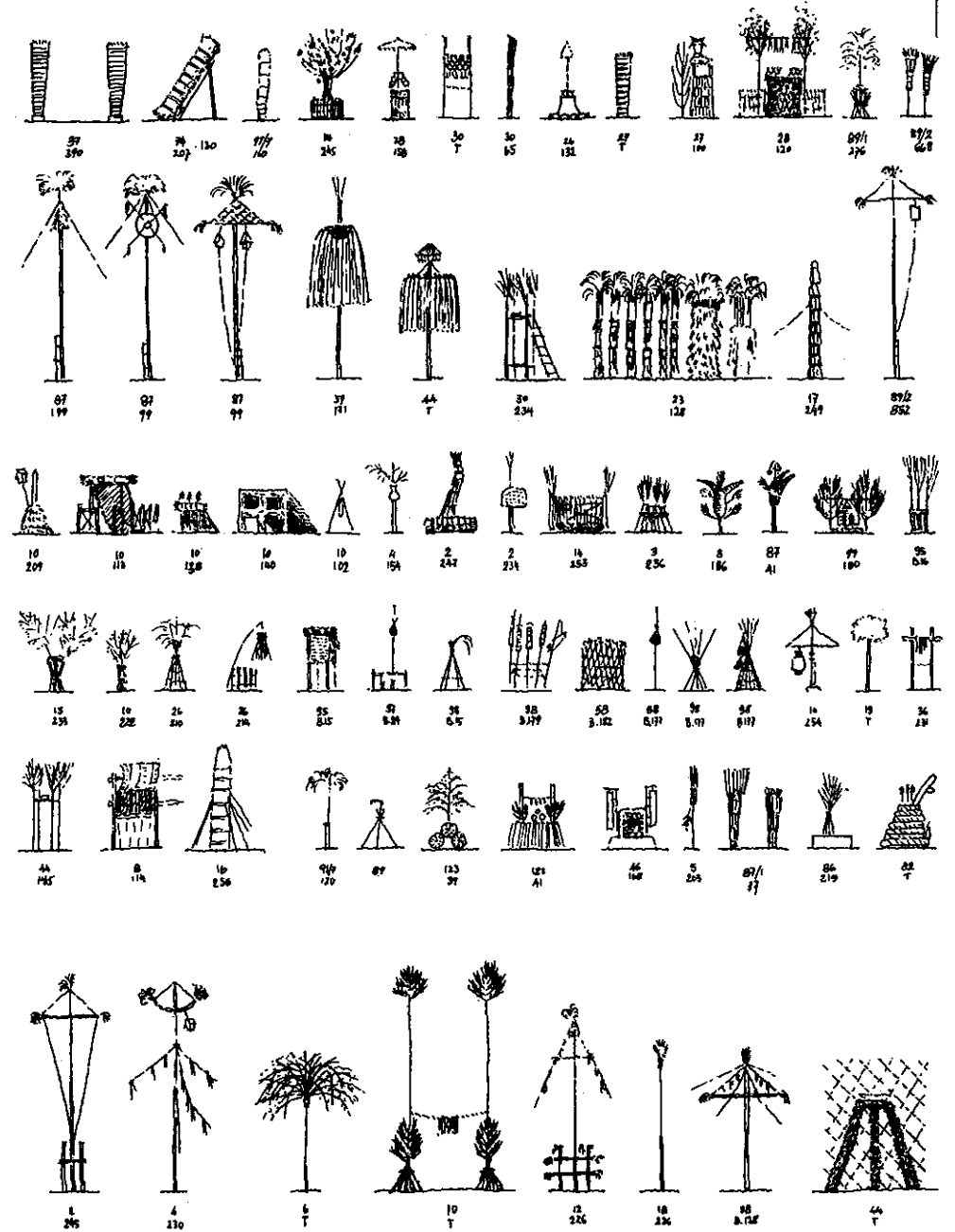
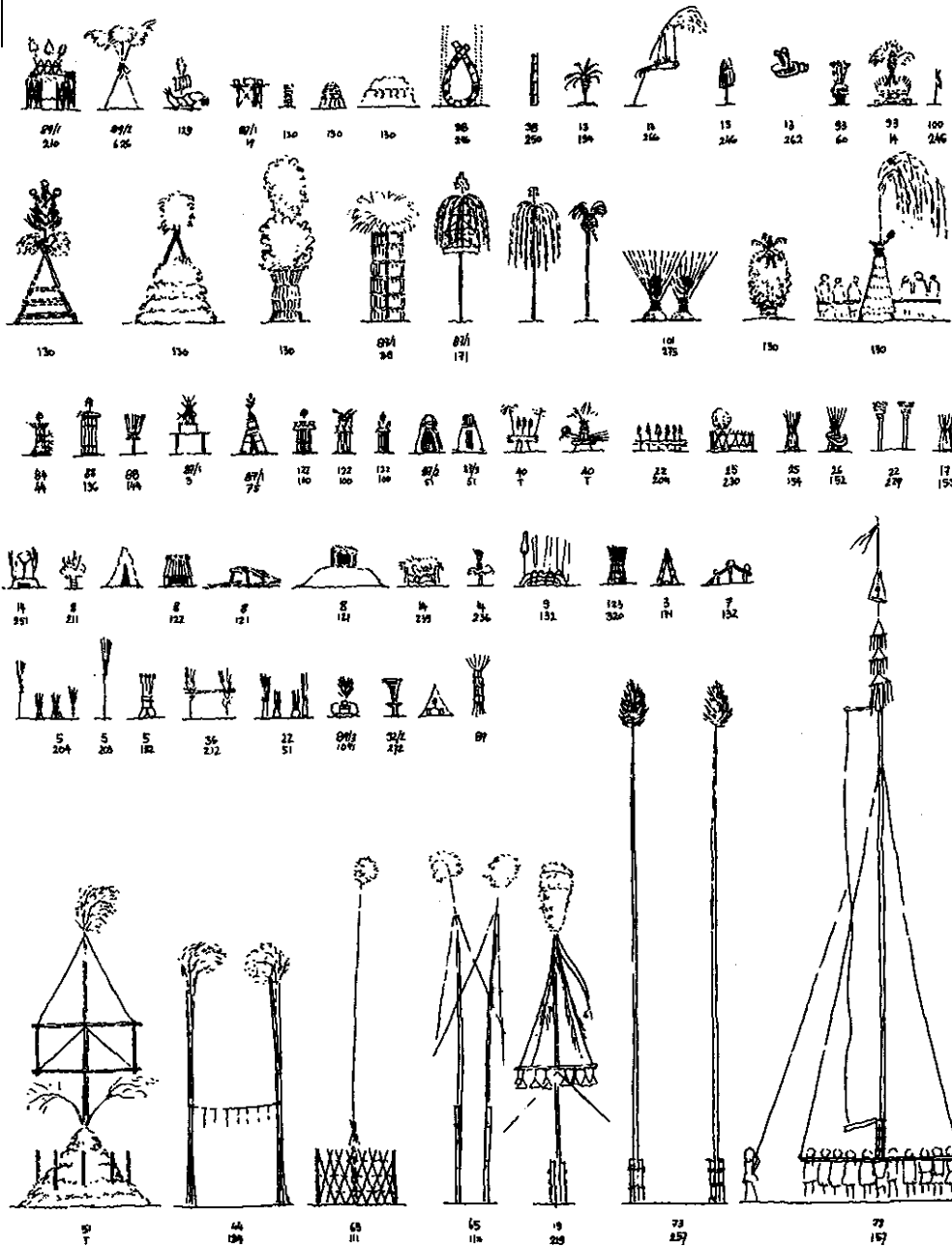
Materially they are cultic symbols made of plant materials, grasses and twigs and the like, and assembled by primitive methods, such as tying and plaiting. They are creations which commonly play a central part in the old traditional cultic festivals and are of a decidedly pragmatic nature. Annually remade of fresh material in invariable shapes, they adorn particular points in the local ritual area and

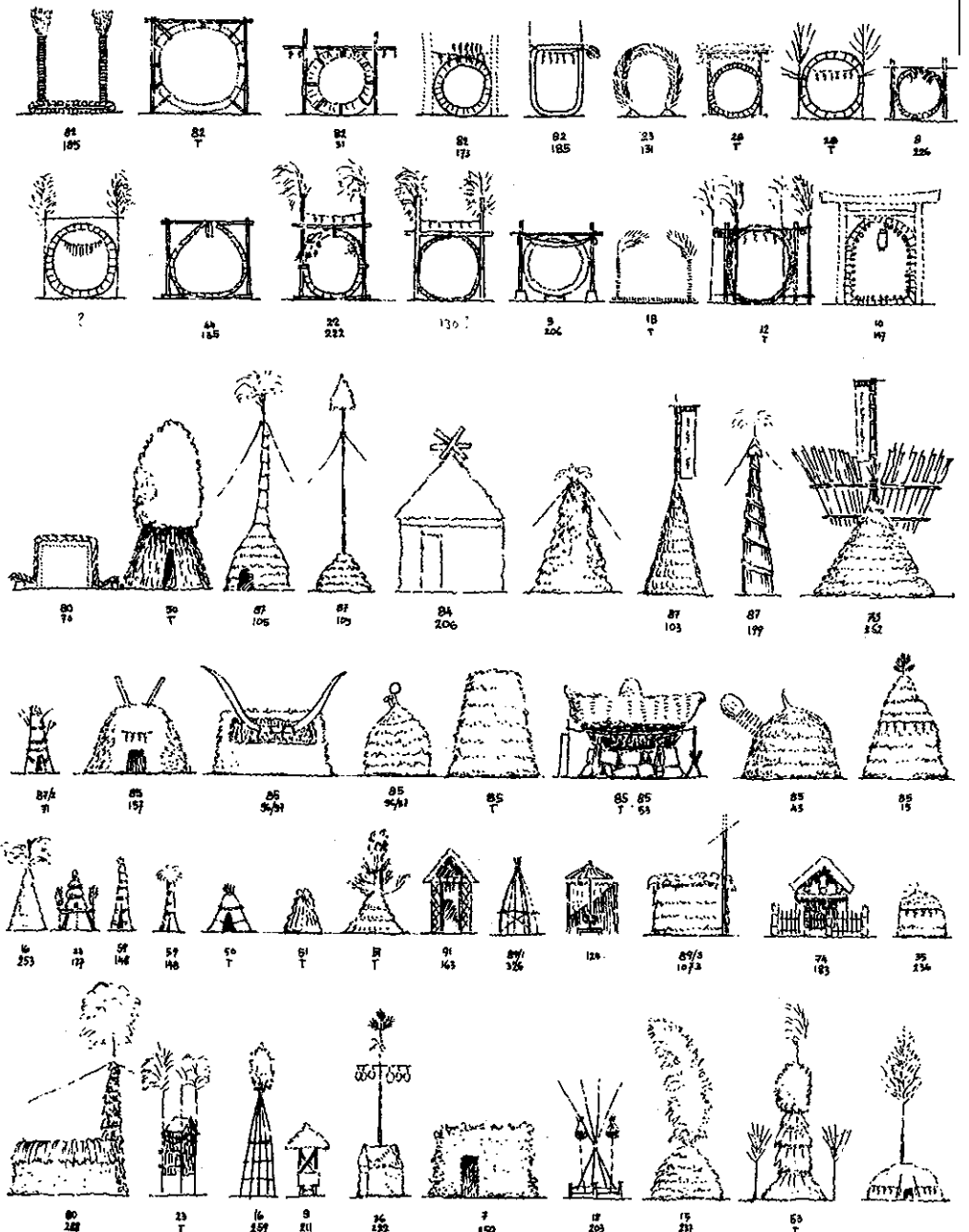
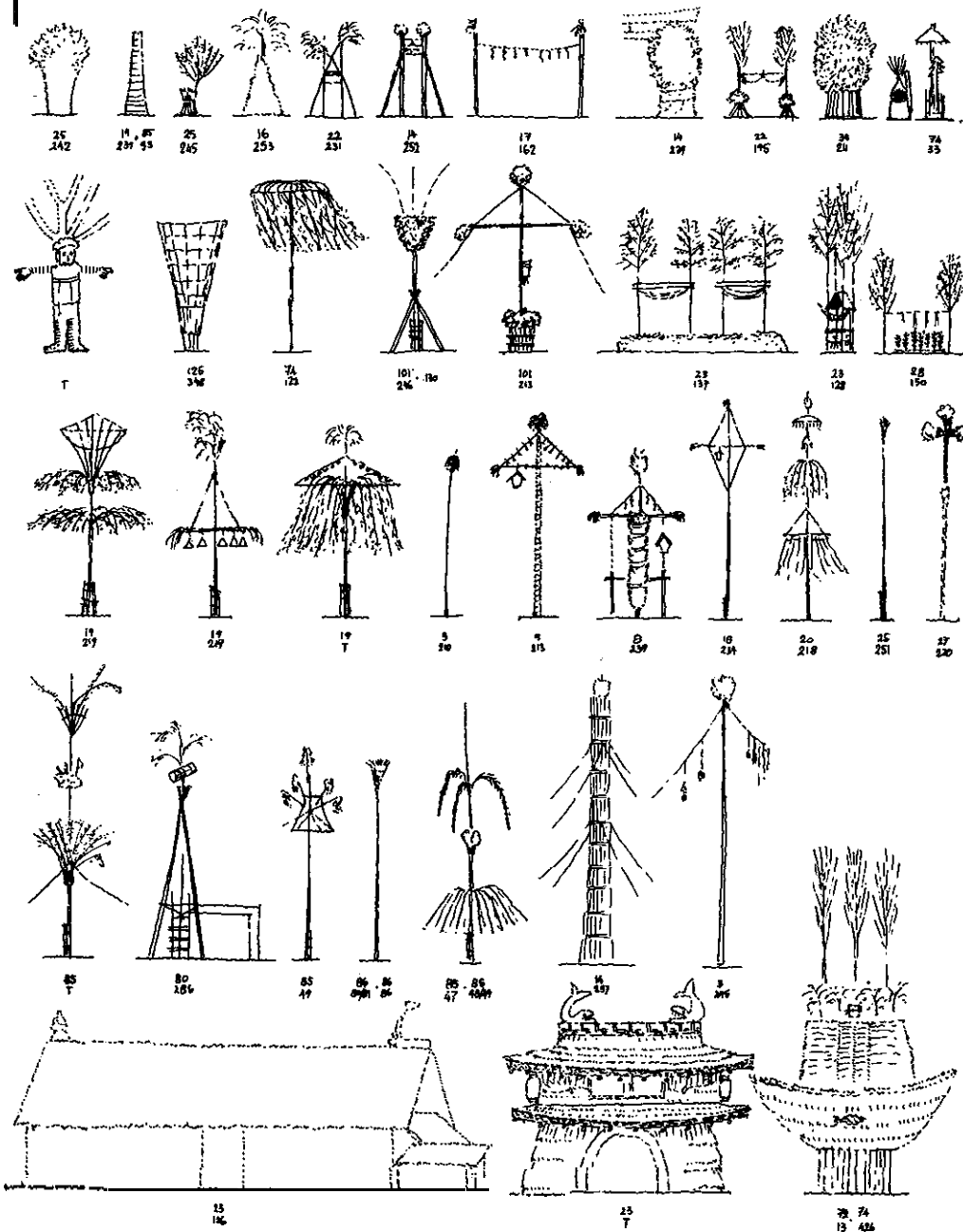
then, usually after a short time, become the centre of certain ritual acts which are soon followed by the destruction of the structures. The great majority of the structures are stationary while others are mobile. The latter may then be carried around in a vertical or horizontal position, often becoming quite effective in the cultic behaviour. The shapes are generally abstract, sometimes with a strong geometrical character. Many kinds reflect technomorphous (ships) or biomorphous (tree, bird, snake, man) subjects or assume mythical forms (dragon, giant).

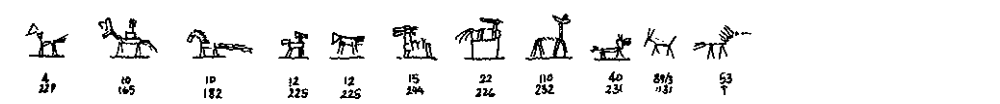
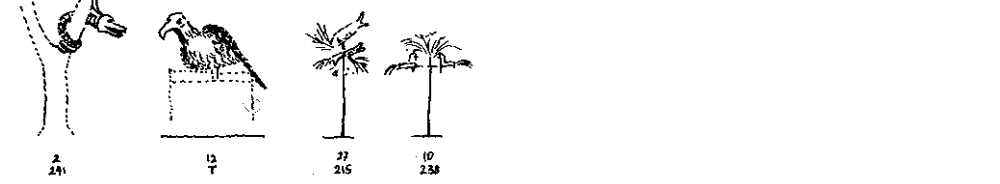
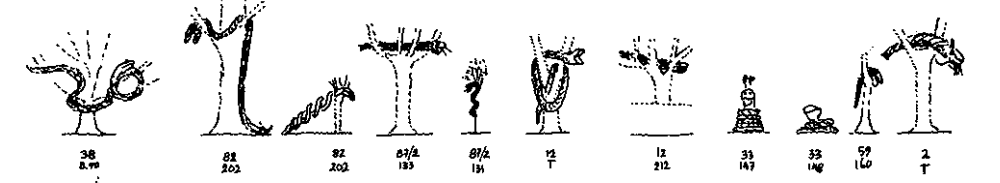
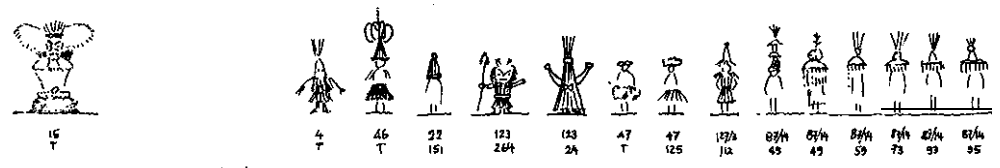
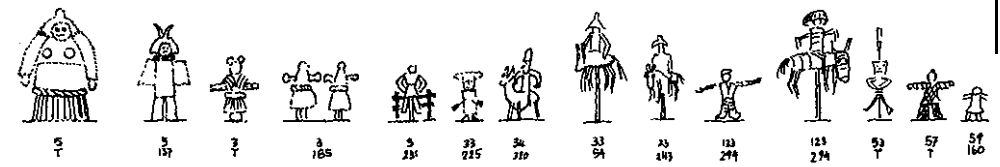
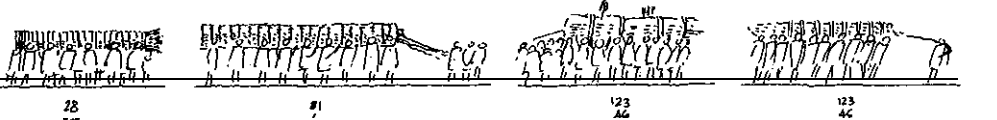
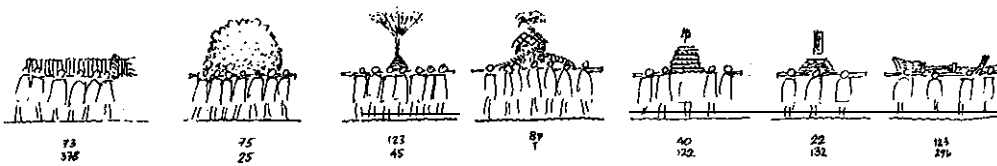
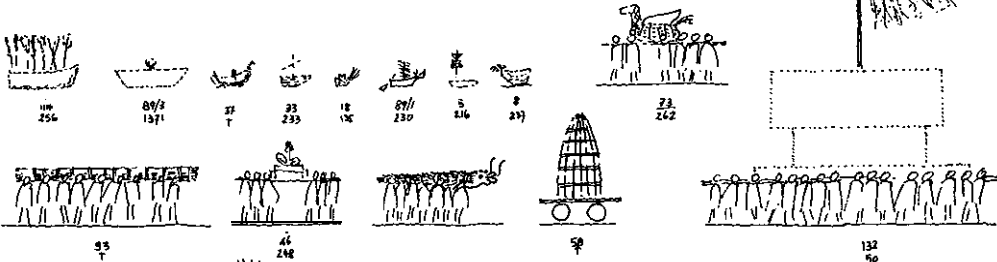
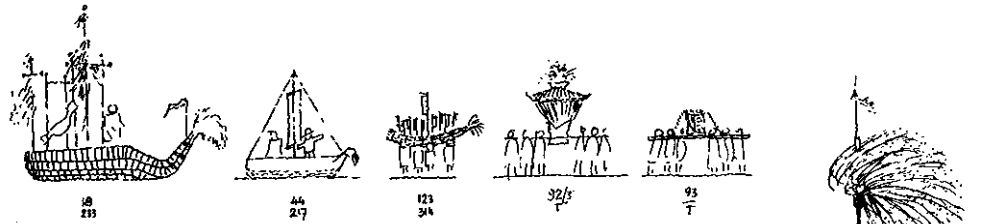
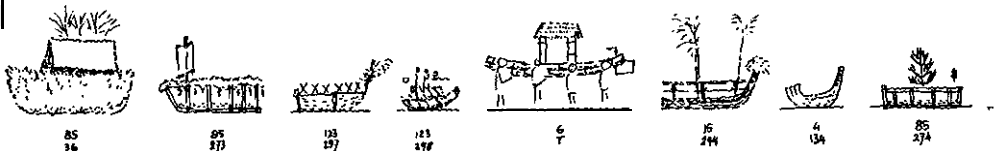
Following western theories, Japanese ethnography interprets such structures in terms of their cultic significance. In general it therefore understands them as 'temporary seats of deities' (YORISHIRO) and individually classifies them in accordance with the various cult types, i.e. with the cultic situations in which they appear (e.g. agricultural rites, spring and autumn festivals, etc.). A characteristic example shows how such classification determines the perspective: numerous types which are ritually destroyed by fire are assigned to fire worship. The sense of such cults is assumed to be derived from the equation of the heat and light of fire with the sun which, in the last resort, is related to the prayer for fecundity. Irrespective of the often strongly symbolical shapes and configurations, the structures which are burnt are thus considered merely as bursts of fire.

Figs. 1-7: Temporary cult signs (YORISHIRO) of Japanese folk cult.

Most of the figures are based on illustrations in Japanese literature and, as far as possible, drawn to scale. The remainder (No. 130) are from personal field records. On the basis of a rough estimate of cults mentioned in non-illustrated sources, the compilation includes about 10% of the folk rituals still practised in Japan today. The numbers below the drawings refer to the special bibliography (upper number) and give the page (lower number T = plate).







If the phenomenon is studied, not in the light of cultic and thus substantially spiritual considerations, but objectively as a material tradition, other relationships unfold. The most important, probably, is the recognition that the entire tradition, independently of its cultic classification, has a striking common denominator in the primitive manner in which these structures are made. Not only the nature of the material used and the method of production, but also the tectonic quality of most samples, leads one to the conclusion that these structures represent a form of primitive building. The same materials and the same manual preparations are known from the technically simple windscreens and huts built by non-literate peoples. Moreover, details clearly reveal that this is a primeval type of building. Let us look at a characteristic example (Figs. 8 and 9).

A frame firmly held together by rope and fixed in the soil by stakes is filled with packing material, tied with ropes and, thus compacted, forms the inner stable core. In conclusion, a sheath is attached externally as an embellishment of the compact free-standing pillar. The production of the tall pillar, another mobile type (Fig. 10), argues for constructive activity, building.

Although structural characteristics are suggested by the technical aspect, the matter still remains unusual. When considering primitive styles of building, we commonly single out primitive shelters for the human body. The word shelter expresses a minimum in material and technical expenditure and in the physical protection offered by such structures. However, if Plates 1 to 7 are regarded from the point of view of building, it is immediately clear that the building tradition presented by the Japanese folk cult does not fit into this concept. Many shapes are much too small to be interpreted as shelters related to the human body. Many of them are entirely devoid of an interior space and thus could hardly be derived from types of dwellings. They are primarily symbols in space. Standing vertically and fixed to the ground, they characterize a locality. Their function, if the word is to be used at all, is simply that of a sign, a symbol. And the function of a sign or symbol, compared with the function of offering shelter, can be fulfilled over a much wider dimensional spectrum: a tectonic sign or symbol may depending on the material used and the work expended, be 10 inches small or 10 feet tall and, in principle, present the same formal and constructive entity. Freedom from the function of serving the human body is also drastically expressed in another manner. The spectrum of configurations by far exceeds what is usual in simple, standardized building forms. It even looks as though the tables were in the act of celebrating a play of shapes, liberated from any practical function. However, this Impression is deceptive. The various structures are strictly bound to old cultic traditions as far as material, design and shape are con-

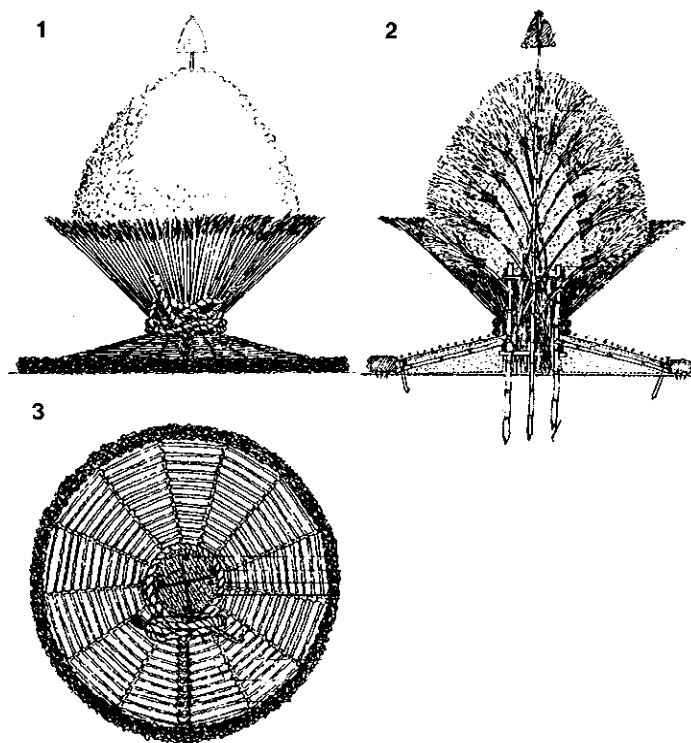


Fig. 8: Constructional drawings of representative types of cult structures (fixed, one-tiered).

These types are to be considered as representative because they are most clearly characteristic of the tradition of the region. As fixed, one-tier structures, they are closest to the two main variants of the hypothetical primordial form. On the left, general view (1), vertical section (2) and horizontal section (3) of the hut-like type and on the right, general view (1), vertical section and transverse section of the column type. The drawing on the R.H.S. (4 general view 5 T.S.) shows a formal variant of the column type. The motif of the variation is bound up with the idea of 'female figure', in contrast to the other pillar, which is regarded as 'male'.

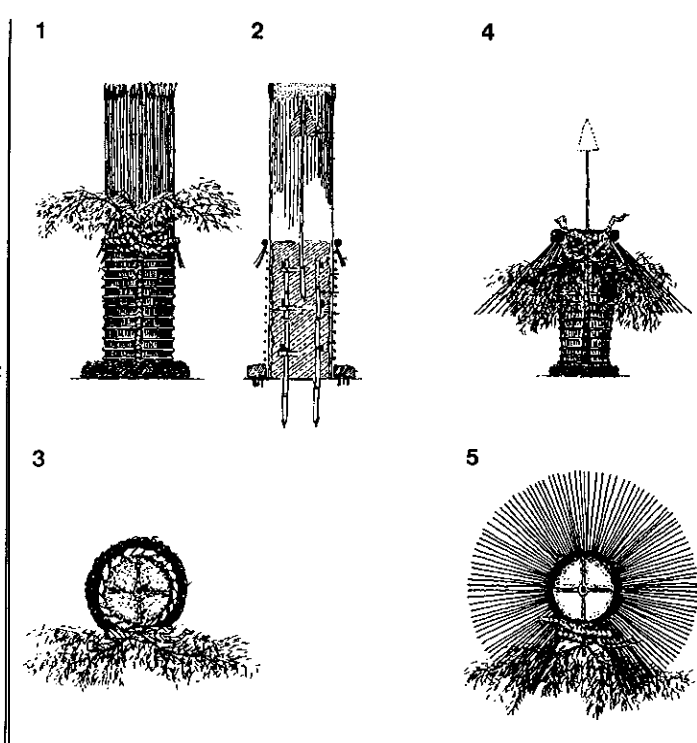


Fig. 9: Construction of the column-type structure.

The essential characteristics of building are clearly recognisable. The setting-up of a supporting framework, the growth of this solidly built structure which, as a free-standing body, is sharply delineated against its surrounding, the covering of the rough structure with costly material which simultaneously leads to the formation of an internal space, the addition of 'mobile parts', the knotting of the rope as final all these are features that, despite the different context, are reminiscent of the basic principles of building.

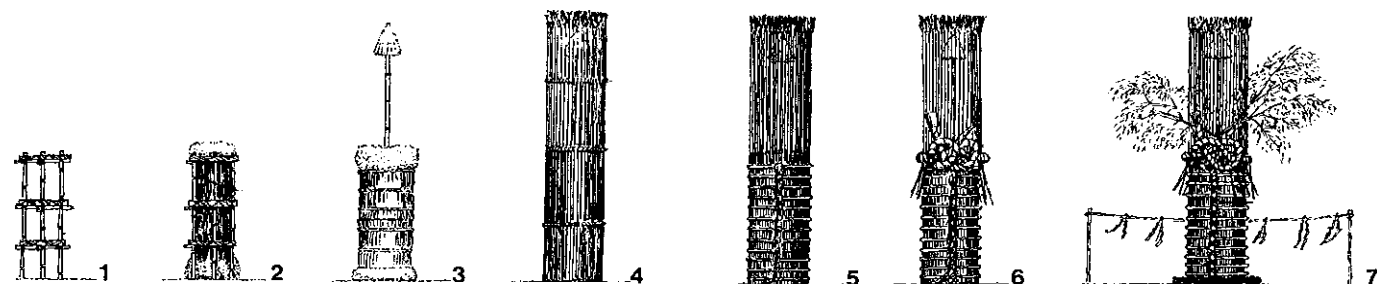
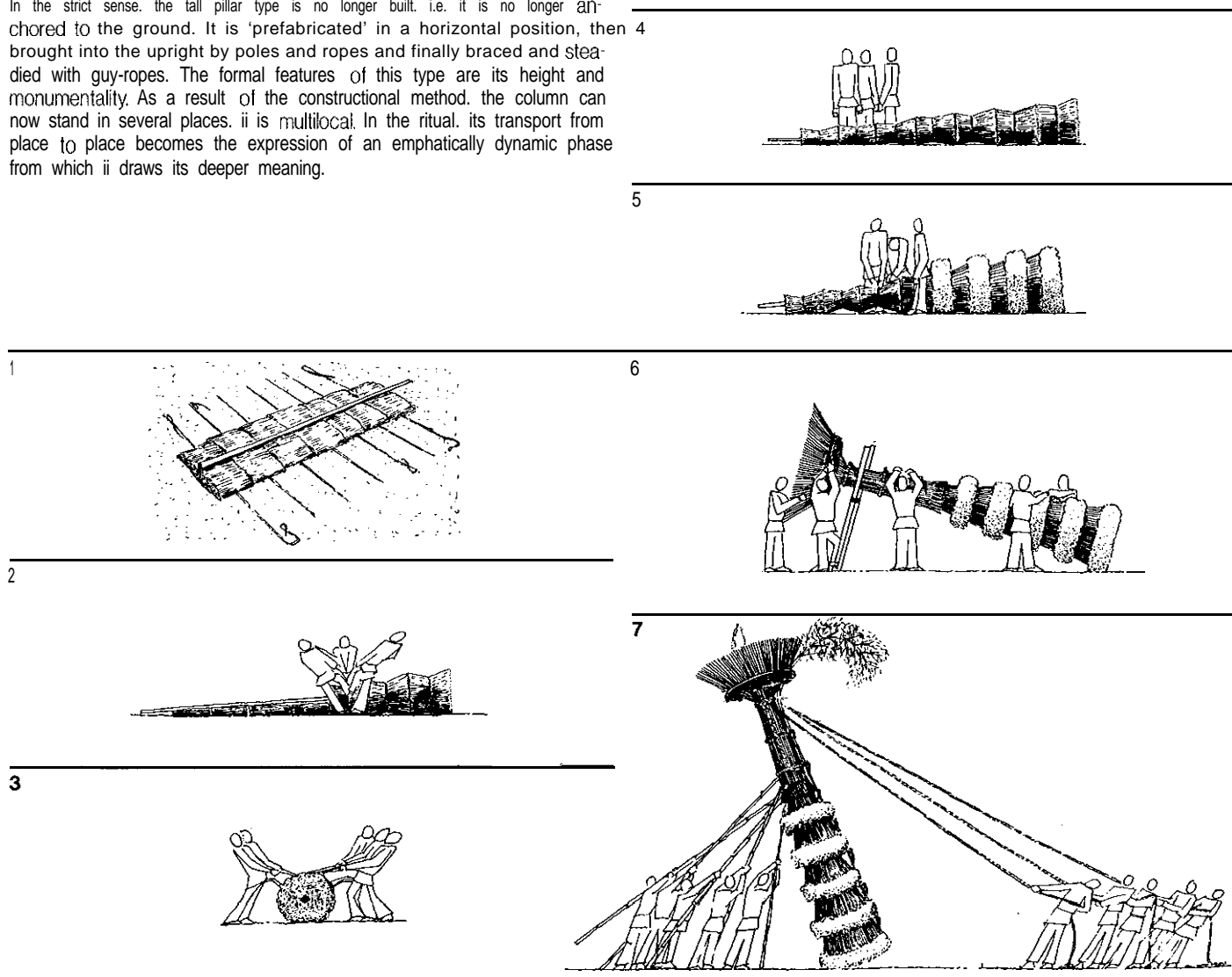


Fig. 10: Erection of the tall pillar type.

In the strict sense, the tall pillar type is no longer built, i.e. it is no longer anchored to the ground. It is 'prefabricated' in a horizontal position, then brought into the upright by poles and ropes and finally braced and steadied with guy-ropes. The formal features of this type are its height and monumentality. As a result of the constructional method, the column can now stand in several places. It is multilocal. In the ritual, its transport from place to place becomes the expression of an emphatically dynamic phase from which it draws its deeper meaning.



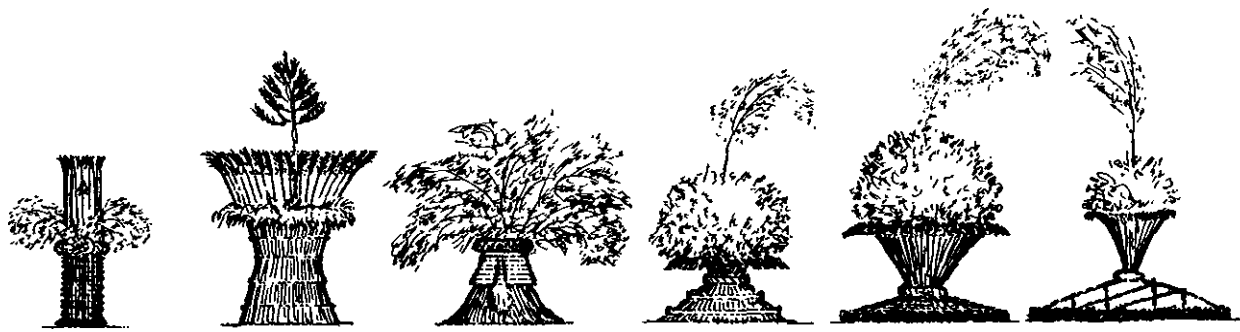
cerned. The tables mainly give an idea of the relative frequency of the phenomenon in Japan and, to judge from the wealth of types, probably also an indication of the antiquity of this type of construction.

Summing up, it may be said that at the primitive level, the term 'building' can be applied much more widely if 'non-domestic', structurally tectonic activity is included. Pragmatically, the term 'building' would thus be applicable both to tectonic marks of minimal dimensions and to monuments of considerable dimensions, regard&d both as an end in themselves and as symbols. It is therefore not difficult to recognize that the term 'building', complemented by this non-domestic component, could help in clarifying numerous interrelationships in the field of cultural history

2. ETHNOLOGICAL ANALYSES OF THE DESIGN OF JAPANESE CULTIC SYMBOLS

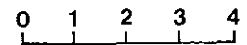
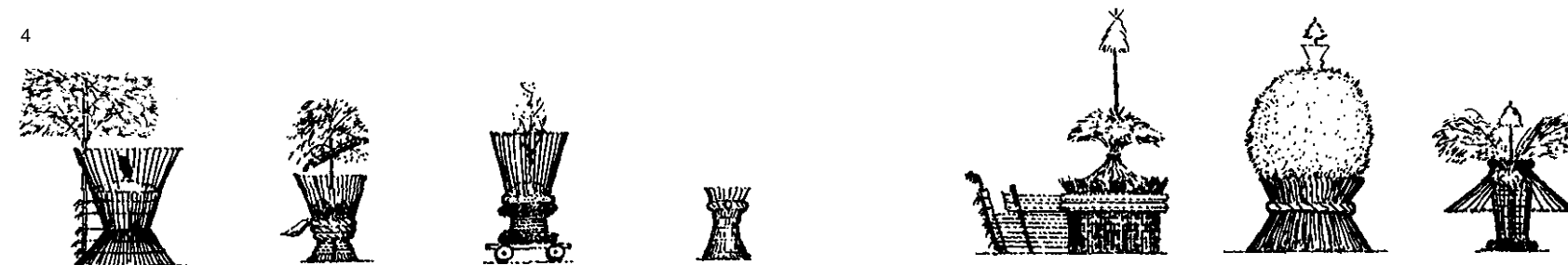
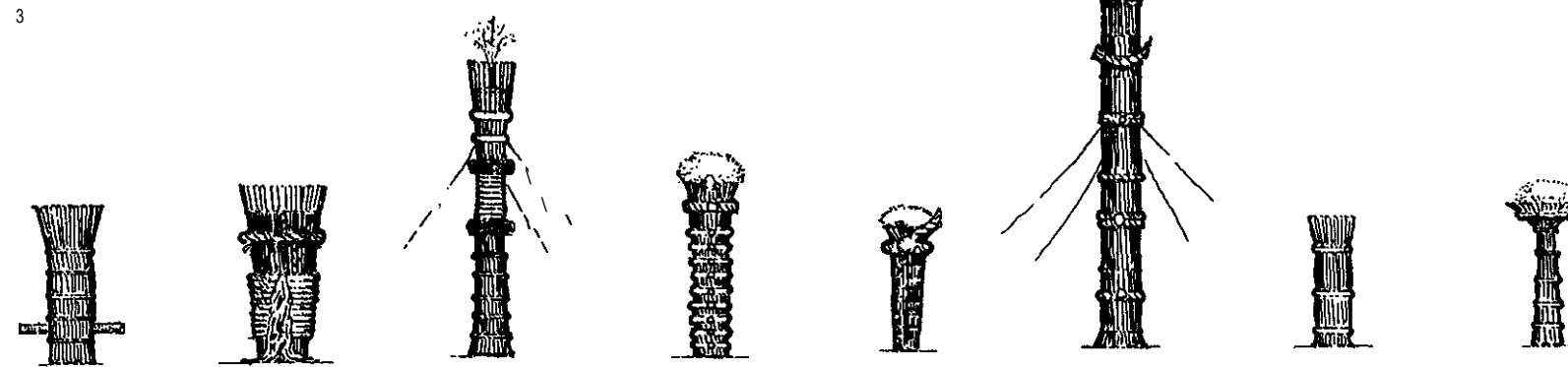
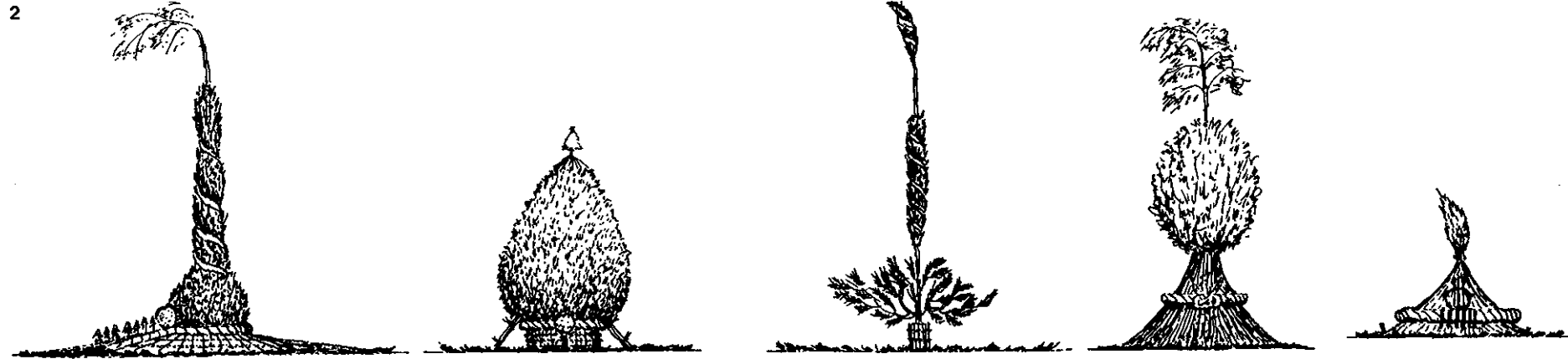
In view of the diversity presented, a methodical analysis was made over a period of years of a regional tradition which was observed around the town of Ômihachiman on Lake Biwa (Shiga Prefecture). In this area some one hundred closely adjacent settlements annually celebrate cult festivals of similar type. All are related to the cult system of the village deity (UJIGAMI) which is probably the most important in Shinto. Cult torches (TAIMATSU), often of quite considerable size (see Figs 11.1 and 11.2 and scale) are built by the cult groups and represent the pivot around which the acts of worship turn. At the same time the torches are cultic marks (YORISHIRO, abode of the gods) and, apart from additional descriptive names, are uniformly designated. Plate 11 shows the most important configurational types to be found in the area considered. A detailed record was made of the materials commonly employed in the construction of the symbols: the various design types, shapes and locations, the cultic procedures and their relationship with the social structure of the settlements were registered in detail and these were processed into a comprehensive documentation. The results of this record and analyses were represented by a single selected example, taken to be representative of the whole area. This 'case study' is published under the title "Sacred Symbols of Reed and Bamboo" in the series of monographs entitled 'Swiss Asiatic Studies' issued by the Far Eastern Institute of The University of Zürich (see Egenter 1982).

1. The configurations and types of design of these cultic symbols are neither accidental nor simple as was formerly assumed by religious science, which has classified such structures as fetishes, idols and the like.

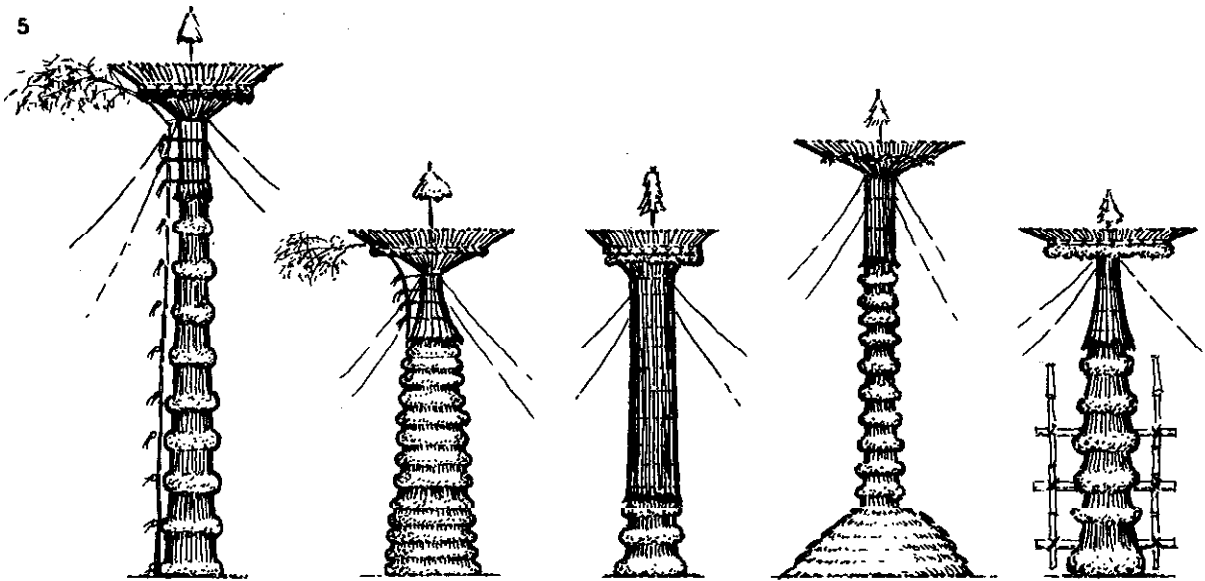


Figs. 11.1 and 11.2: Table of the most important types of form in the regions studied.

The arrangement of the table is based on priorities explained in the case study (Egenter 1982). The frame in 11.1 shows the two main variations of the hypothetical prototype. They are drawings of experimentally constructed signs (note the scale).



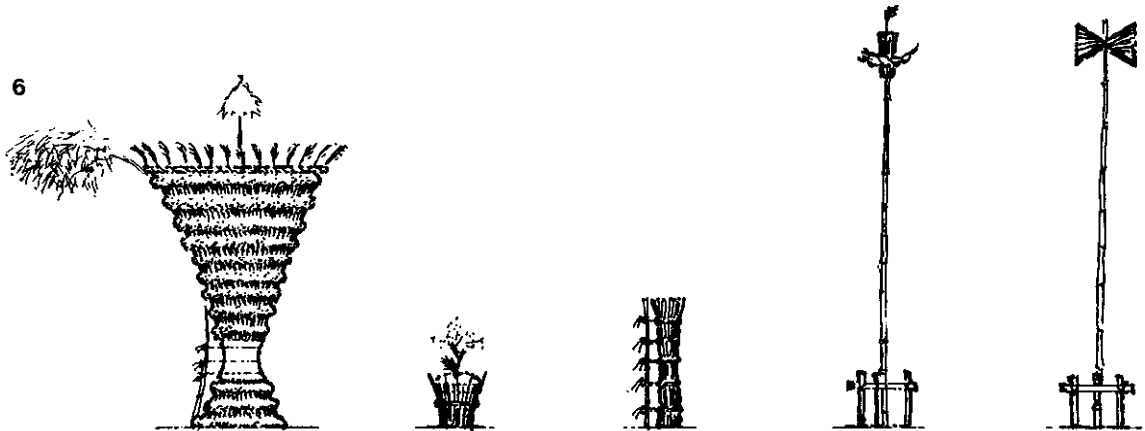
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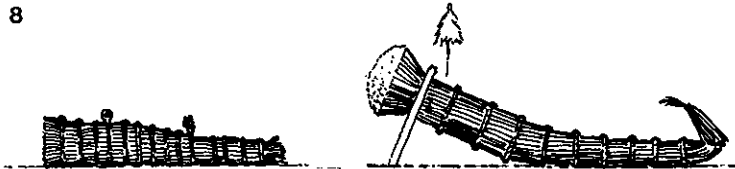


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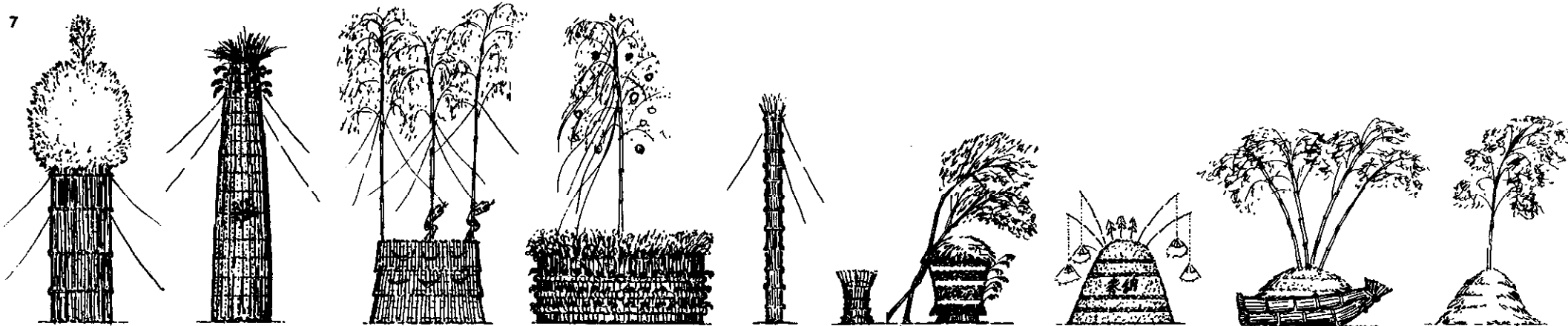


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7



2. Again, the temporal and spatial character of these symbols within the framework of the cultic festivals is strictly determined by tradition. Socio-spatial hierarchies within individual settlements and amongst several settlements are temporarily represented in these structures.

3. The quality of the structures as territorial and social symbols forms the basis of aspect 2 (see Fig. 12).

4. The structures are made of fresh material each year, and always in the same configuration. A generally valid design has been handed down (Fig. 13) and this can be recognized in most configurations. Formal analyses argue a dualistic system of various pairs of opposing categories, bound into a unit. The original and deeper sense, the actual symbolism of such structures can probably be recognized in this visual embodiment of a multi-category dualism. Fig. 14 is an attempt to discover the general principle of design as shown in Fig. 13 in various configurations known to the history of architecture and art.

5. 'Style zones' could be discerned in the area studied (Fig. 15). Two elements of 'style' could be observed:

a. in the stationary structures: a stereotyped tradition of identical basic types in settlements interconnected by genetic relationships. These common basic types are varied in details in such a way that they constitute a sort of 'heraldry' for both the individual settlement and the larger associations thereof,

b. in mobile, formally derivative types: specific local variations or addition of details to a regionally standardized type. This type, which is not specific to a particular location, generally appears in plurality alongside single structures of type a).

6. These structures are rewarding objects for the investigation of genetic problems of form. Geometric forms, whether two- or three-dimensional, constitute the essence of their exterior appearance. A long bamboo splint, when tied end-over-end will always assume a more or less circular configuration while a cylindrical shape will automatically result when stalks are bundled - to name but two ex-

Fig. 12: Cult structures as signs: territorial and social representation.

This function of the cult signs is more fully described in Part III, Chapter 7

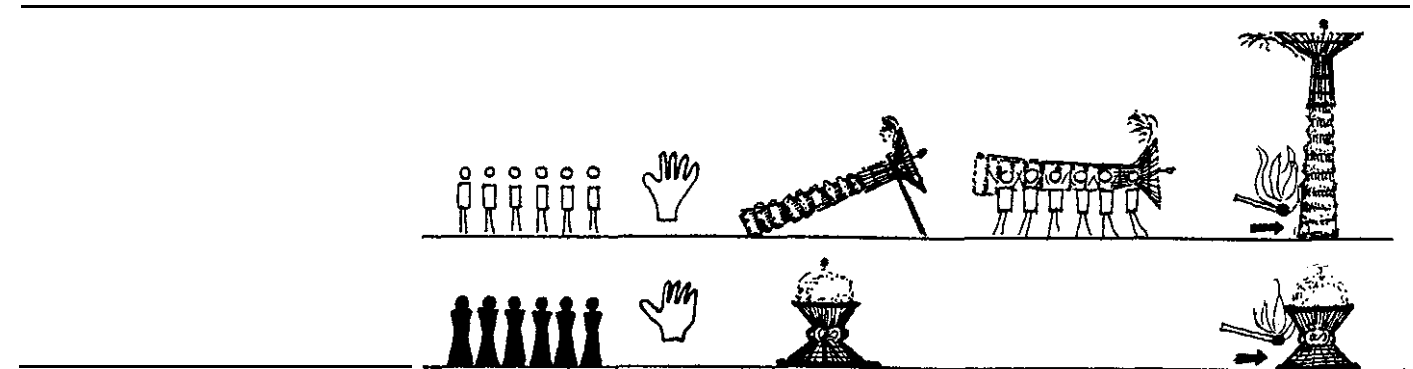
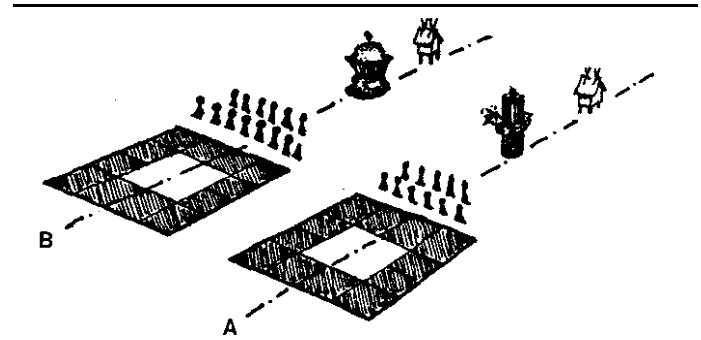
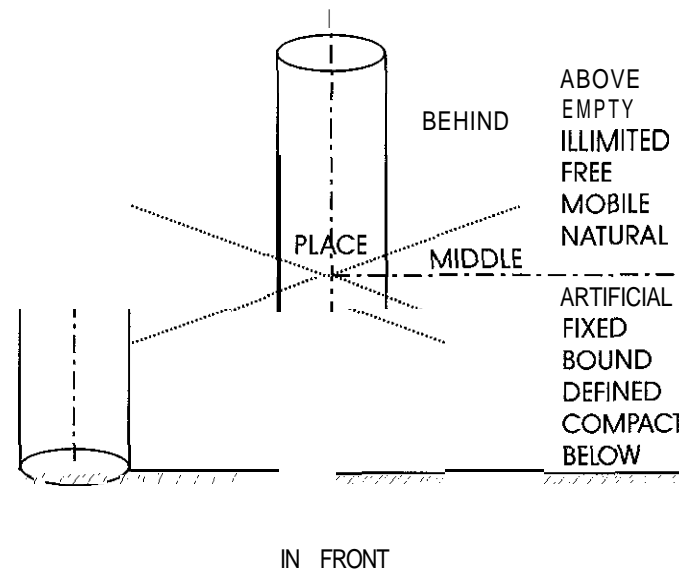
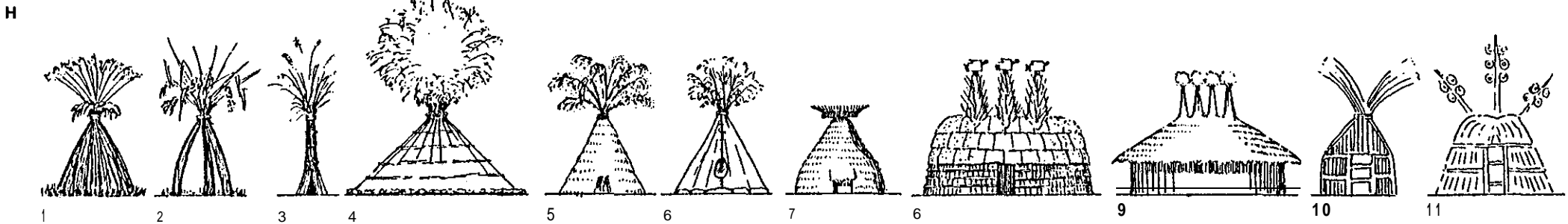
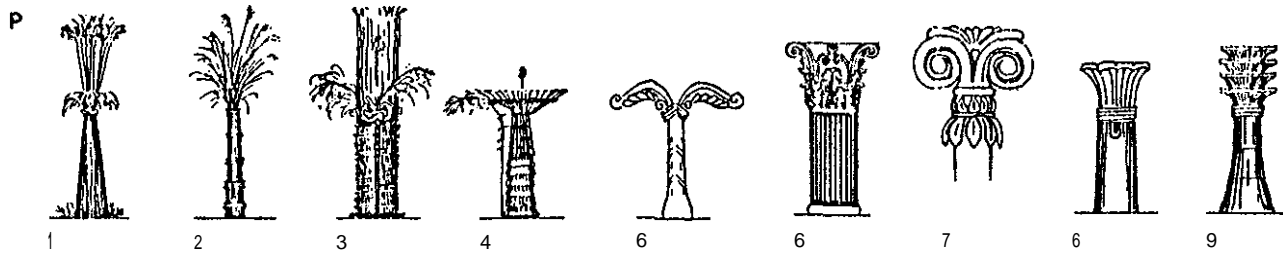


Fig. 13: Spatial organisation of the column-type structure.

On R.S. are the categories expressed by the spatial arrangement of this type.





P Pillar type structure

- 1 Hypothetical primordial form, rooted. of reed. experimental
- 2 Cult symbol of the yard deity of cut reed. supported: northern Japan
- 3 Cult symbol of the yard deity of cut reed and rape: central Japan
- 4 Cult symbol of the yard deity, of cut reed and rape: central Japan
- 5 Cult symbol of a German tribe (Irmisul: cult symbol of the Saxons. reconstruction acc. to Nita de Pierrefeu)
- 6 Corinthian column with acanthus capital: Ancient Greece
- 7 Neandria capital (acc. to R. Koldewey)
- 8 Palm column from Berscheh. grave 2: Middle Kingdom, Ancient Egypt (acc. to Borchardt 1897)
- 9 Cult symbol of town deity. reed. so-called Ded pillar Ancient Egypt (acc. to Andrae 1930)

H Hut-like types

- 1 Hypothetical primordial form, rooted reed. experimental
- 2 Cult symbol of field deity rooted, rice. central Japan
- 3 Cult symbol of yard deity of cut material. reed: northern Japan
- 4 Cult symbol of village deity, of cut material, bamboo: central Japan
- 5 Cult symbol of village deity, of cut material, bamboo: central Japan
- 6 Cult tent. prairie Indians: North America (acc. to Scully 1972)
- 7 Mountain temple of the Kogi, Columbia (acc. to Brockhaus Völkerkunde 1974. 5/171)
- 8 Temple of the Natchez Indians (acc. to R.B. Hassik 1975)
- 9 Main house of a village near Goroka, New Guinea (acc. to M. and J. Mann. 1972. p. 49)
- 10 Cult symbol. reed. Sumer (acc. to Andrae 1933: the pair of Ishtar symbols that flanked the cult hut was omitted for greater clarity*)
- 11 Cult symbol: reed (acc. to Heinrich 1957).

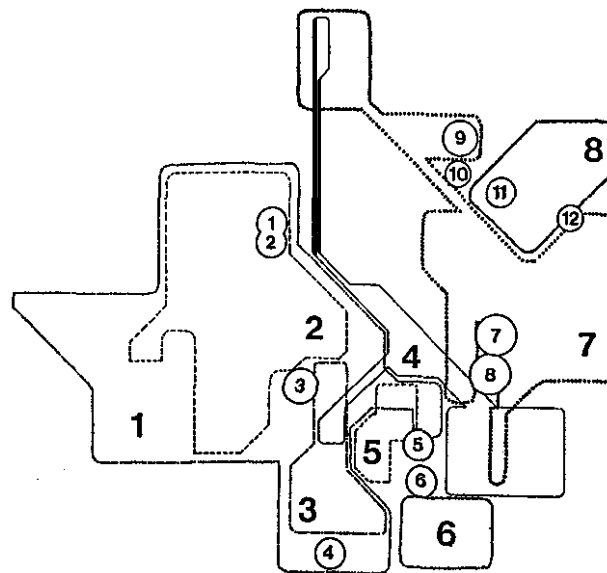


Fig. 15: Diagram of the distribution of the cult structures.

This is described in Part III, Chapter 5.4.

Fig. 14: significance for building- and art-history of the spatial organisation shown in Fig. 13 for building- and art- history.

In order to demonstrate their common basic pattern, the objects are adjusted in size and partly also in their proportions.

amples. Elementary principles of building, such as the stabilizing triangular frame, are applied, as it were automatically e.g. in the outer jacket of the lower cone in the 'hypothetical original form' (see frame Fig. 11).

7. Form variability within the tradition studied was factually proven (see Figs. 11.1 and 11.2), and form was shown to be the medium of meaning (ties in with the function of time symbolism, upper formal part with cosmos symbolism). The fire-cult theses (see above) of Japanese ethnology are thus placed in question on the bases of these examples. The result of the study suggests that the structural aspect of these symbols is older than that of fire rituals.

8. The form variants found in the area could in principle be explained on the basis of the technique of producing tectonic shapes by means of reed bundles. The variations in form that are fundamentally possible with a bundle of reeds (under certain conditions) were recorded in a table (see Fig. 16). The principle was thus systematized as the basis of studies in cultural history.

9. Shapes that were externally quite different could be interconnected on the evidence of homologies (Fig. 17). On that basis the hypothetical evolution of this tradition could be reconstructed to a limited extent (Fig. 18) and it proves that a change of form is possible in this domain of 'non-domestic building'. In the broadest sense this could be understood as an indication of the 'hypothetical original form' which we have postulated, namely of a rooted tectonic prototype with two typical configurational variations, produced experimentally and shown on Plate 11a.

10. The periodic reconstruction of the structures involves a peculiar persistence of form in time: it may, at least theoretically, remain constant throughout long periods of time. In addition, as the material used in the construction is always newly harvested, it always appears in materially fresh condition. Fig. 19 shows the form of such cultic structures unchanged in time: a pillar and a tree built with the materials described compared with the life cycle of a natural tree. The diagram alludes to the phantasies known from the literature of many cultures in connection with cultic symbols: the symbols of eternal youth, trees of eternal life and the like.

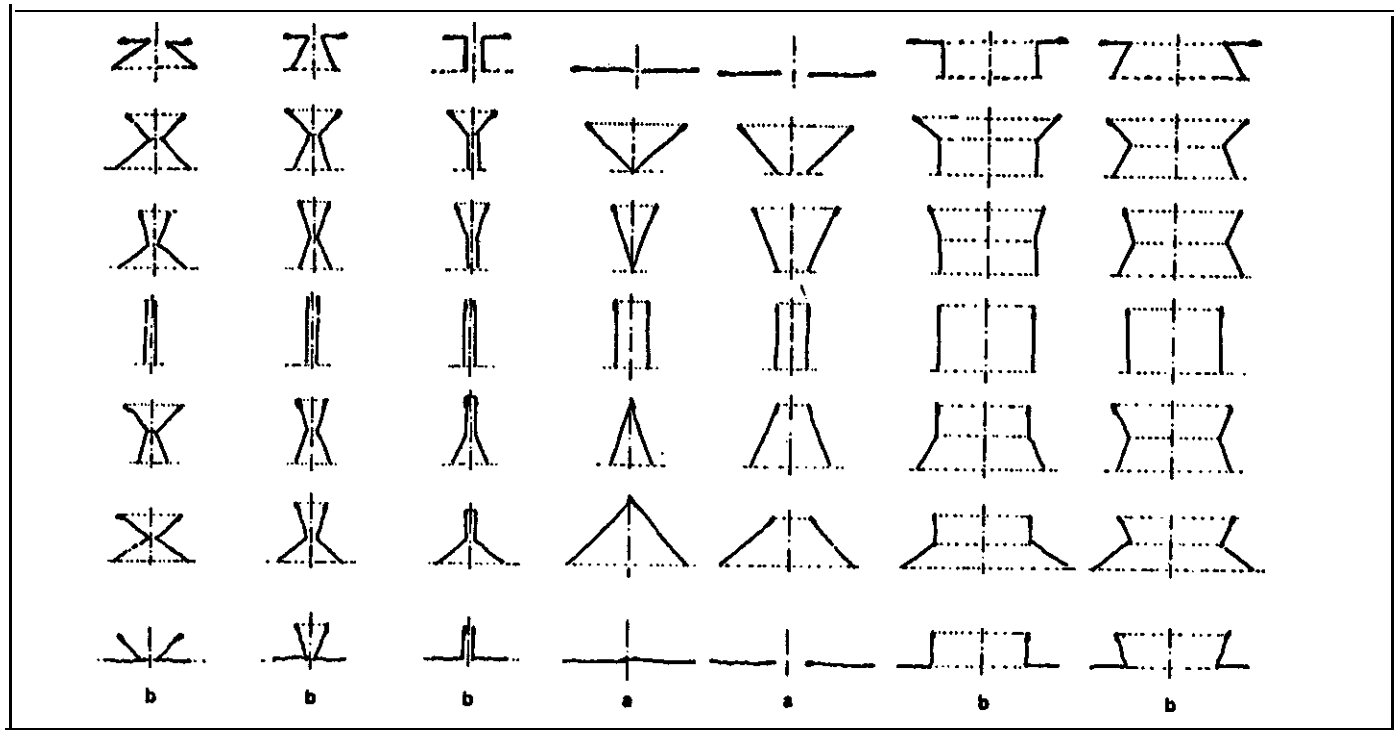


Fig. 16: Principal formal variations of the reed bundle with straight stalks (see part II, Chapter 5.3).

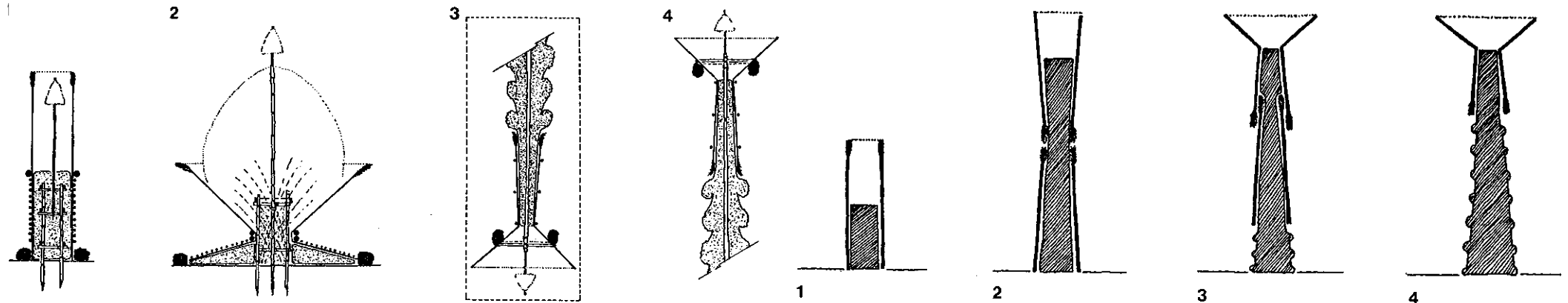


Fig. 17: Comparison of internal structure of three cult symbols of different shape.

On L.H.S. the two representative types (1 column shaped and 2 hut-like types) compared with the tall column on R.H.S. (4). To make the homologies clearer, drawing 3 (in dotted frame) has been included. This shows the tall column type in reversed position.

Fig. 18: Reconstruction of the evolution of the tall column type (4) from the one-tiered, fixed column type (1).

Hypothetically the development would have been via a two-tiered inverted reed column, which can still be found in the region (see Kurimidesaike), and by subsequent loss of the lower tier of the covering (see Suehiro).

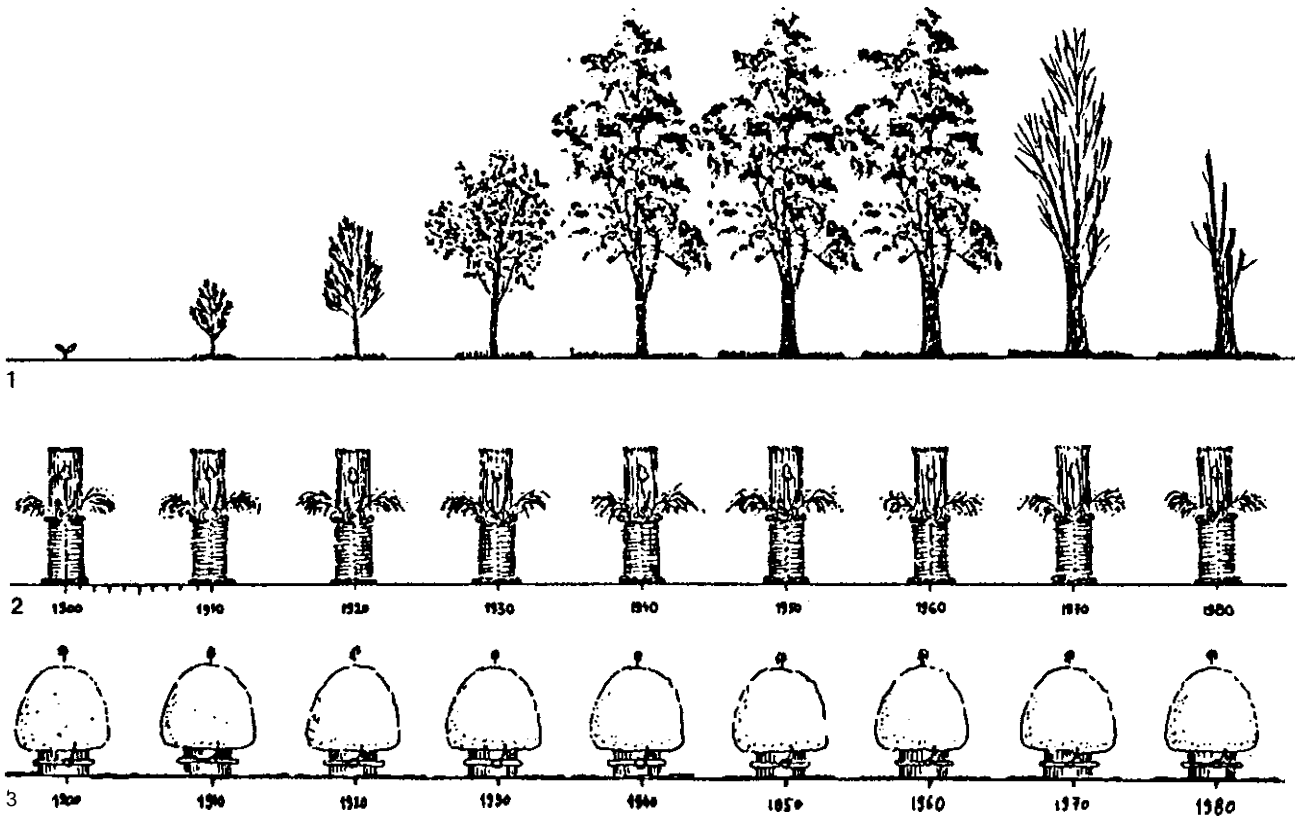
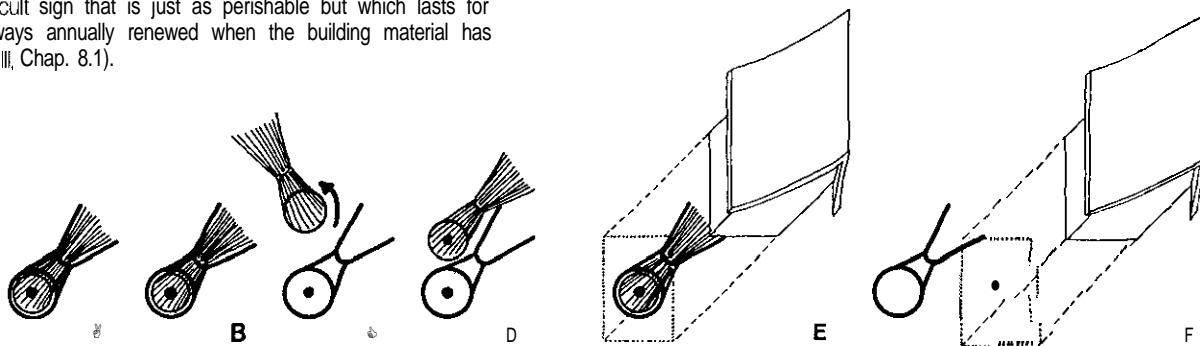


Fig. 19: Form in time

By comparing two cult structures with the life cycle of a natural tree, the table shows the remarkable nature of the tradition and its basic symbolism (see Part III, Chap. 9.3, 'Structural Symbolism'). The forms of both the column type and the artificial tree (see Goshonji) remain exactly the same (at least theoretically), beyond the period of 80 years.

Fig. 20: Types of renewal relative to location.

Various Japanese cult forms of similar content (primitively constructed cult structures) permit the reconstruction of a primordial type in relation to the passage of time: a cult sign that is just as perishable but which lasts for one year and is always annually renewed when the building material has grown again (cf. Part III, Chap. 8.1).



11.

Today most cultic symbols appear in a short-lived, temporary form. The probable original condition, viz. their duration for one year, has been reconstructed on the strength of a typology of recent examples in Japan (Figs. 20, 21). The degeneration into the merely temporary is probably due to the introduction of durable shrines or the wooden construction technique based on Chinese models.

12.

The reconstruction of periodically renewed structures with a life of one year, as mentioned in 11. above, reflects the significance of the cultic symbols as an expression of settlement history. One of the original functions was probably that of a sanctified symbol marking a territorial claim. In the establishment of settlements, such marks of a sanctified, traditional, legal system must originally have been made of rooted reeds. To maintain the claim, the form would have to be remade periodically. With the establishment of settlements remote from reed-beds, the tradition must have been maintained by bringing cut material to the site.

So much for the findings in constructional ethnology in a Japanese area. Regarded as such, they reveal a phenomenon, new to architectural theory and hardly ever considered before, which we have designated as non-domestic building. It has been shown that important questions of architectural theory and of art history can be correlated with this designation. However, such correlations only make sense if the theory is given an historical basis. For understandable reasons this is hardly possible in Japan. The advanced continental influences were introduced comparatively late. Moreover they reached the islands via an upper class which identified itself with this advanced culture and established itself on this foundation. The autochthonous heritage which we have considered here therefore found no explicit entry into the fine arts or into architecture. The literate class, deriving its knowledge from the continent, apparently also considered it unworthy of being admitted to literature. In addition, the traditions survived in the villages, so why should they have been described in canonic texts or converted into durable material? At best, we have some evidence in the sources from prehistorical, mythical times as reflected in early historical texts. Some names of deities, which relate to tying or knotting if the pertinent words are understood concretely; a myth about the emergence of gods with a background of reeds. That is about all the evidence from Japan that can be historically connected with the subject of our interest. Some further historical weight derives from the fact that similar tectonic symbols are to be found under several shrines of the old traditional Ise system, inter alia as a highly mystic cult symbol (shin-no-mihashira) of the Naiku, the most important shrine of the entire state creed.

if we endeavour to regard the material presented in the light of cultural history we will find it necessary to seek avenues other than that of the simple connections within the same culture. In the following an attempt will therefore be made to continue the discussion from an entirely different standpoint. The leap was hinted at in the Introduction, when Japan was interpreted as an isolated area, in the sense of ethnology's research into cultural history. We therefore switch over to a geographically and historically different cultural area where, surprisingly quite similar phenomena are found (although not as primary, but as secondary, sources).

Methodologically this leap can be justified as follows. Within an extremely limited thematical frame a phenomenon was dealt with as an object tradition surviving in an isolated cultural area. An attempt was made to show its significance and to sketch its hypothetical evolution. Judging from the elementary material and technical conditions involved and from the fundamental significance of such objects for early settlements, it is possible that such an evolutionary process could have taken place at different times and in quite different cultural zones. Thus in the following we do not speak of a historical connection but of a cultural-anthropological parallel. Assuming such a parallel, it is possible that, due to different material conditions in different cultural areas, it could have found different historical expression. In one case it could continue over long periods as an object tradition: in another, this object tradition could have been lost but might have survived iconically in durable material and would thus reach us in terms of secondary sources. This is the standpoint from which, in the following, similar sources of oriental archaeology will be comparatively treated.

3. THE THEORY OF COLUMN EVOLUTION OF ORIENTAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR RESEARCH INTO CULTURAL HISTORY

In the classical archaeology of the 19th century the Doric column was a favorite theme, its shape being explained in the light of its function in the architectural structure of a temple. For example: 'the basic function of a column as a rising support bearing a load has been definitely established in the form of the Doric column'. As its shape lent itself to such exemplary functional interpretation, classical archaeology brought the Doric column to the fore as a true product of the Greek mind. By contrast, the Ionic and Corinthian columns were manoeuvred into the background and regarded as blurred, later forms. In respect of the genesis of these types, scientists were reticent. By way of example, the Corinthian capital was explained as an invention engendered by a basket shrouded in ivy!

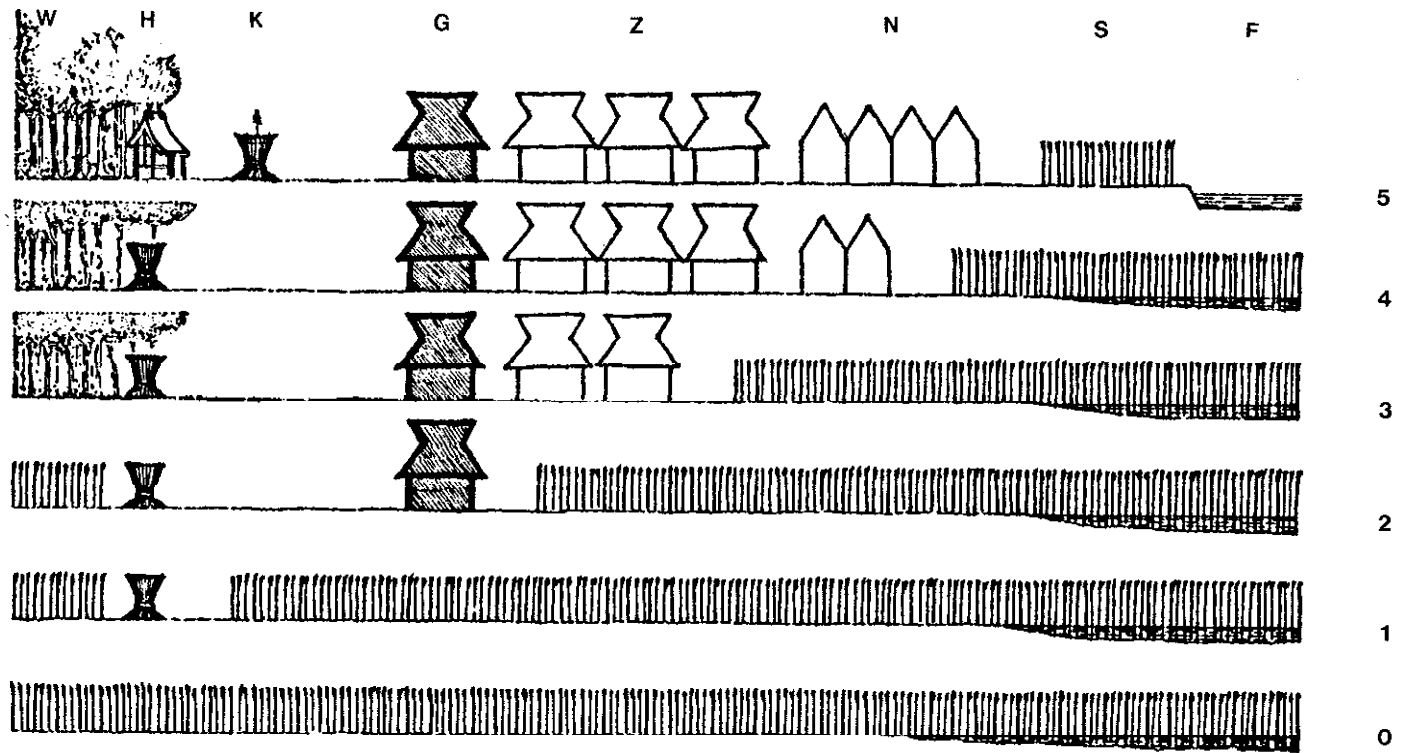


Fig. 21: Significance of cult structures in relation to settlement development.

From the standpoint of building, the characteristic features of the cult signs point to their importance in relation to settlement history. At the founding of a settlement they were probably set up as signs of sacred territorial rights and, mainly also for political reasons were then annually renewed to preserve them as legal symbols.

On the basis of new evidence, later oriental archaeologists launched the evolutionary idea around the turn of the century. Jettisoning classical archaeology, which was fixed to the Doric order, the Ionic column was adopted. In the first place, it had originated in a transitional zone between Greek culture and a newly opened cultural domain: in the Greek colonial cities on the western coast of Asia Minor. In terms of cultural geography, it could thus easily be connected up with the newly discovered material, which was much older. In the second place, its most pronounced characteristic, the rolls, suggested relationships with finds from a variety of middle-eastern cultures: the roll motif was found to be considerably disseminated in oriental antiquity and to have assumed a broad spectrum of formal variations. Thirdly an essential shift resulting from

consideration of the middle-eastern material was the fact that the accent in the meaning of the term 'column' was noticeably shifting from 'structural unit' to 'symbol'. Many representations of free-standing steles, standards, trees of life and the like (even pictographic signs with the same motif), forcefully suggested this shift. The Ionic column as a structural unit must therefore have had a freer early life and only secondarily become "wedded" in its symbolic aspect to that of the functional, the bearing of loads. By way of example, this view is quite clearly supported by the awkward manner in which Egyptian plant columns commonly bear the entablature with which they are burdened. A column, even in an architectural structure, would then have to be regarded primarily as a free-standing unit, as a sign in space, as a symbol. In the fourth place:

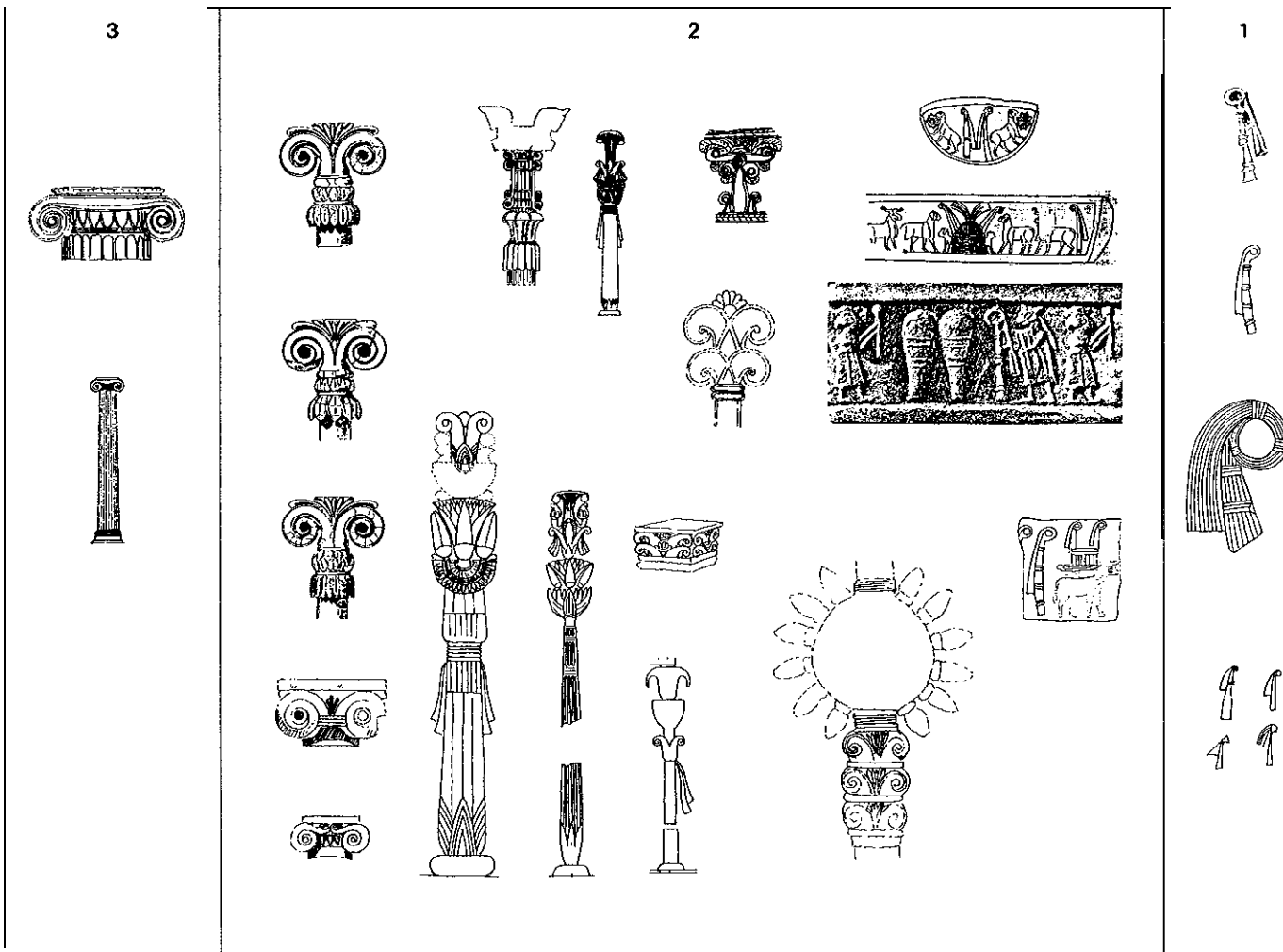


Fig. 22: Geographical survey of Andrae's developmental theory.

According to this theory, the Ionic columns (3) are to be regarded as a developed form at the fringe of a development area (2), with its simplest types in the form of the so-called ring bundle symbols (1). In the opinion of Andrae, the essential common criteria are the volute motifs, the bundling and the palmette (acc. to Andrae, 1933).

2.

The entire family of forms, including the tonic column, is characterized by a formal structure which has its roots in the technically determined structure of plant bundles. In other words, the formal structure here points to prototypes which would have had to be fashioned of readily handled vegetable materials by means of binding (Fig. 23);

3.

The form, which has become static in its transformation into the inorganic condition, must reveal its symbolic significance in its prototypic i.e. organic condition if it does so at all:

4.

Types made of rooted material might be regarded as the prototype of such structures (Fig. 24).

If the wealth of finds made by oriental archaeology is taken into consideration, the principle of the first two hypotheses can certainly be accepted. As regards the first hypothesis, it is entirely justified to view critically the important steps of the development outlined by Andrae. By way of example, he does not clearly state whether he interprets the freestanding symbol, the ring bundle, as a symbol of the Innin-Ishtar deity as suggested by the earliest pictographic sources, or whether he regards it more technically as part of a hurdle gate (Fig. 25) such as are used by cattle-breeders in the area. Formally it may well be said that the double roll and the ring bundle are probably two entirely different things (the double roll is never tied as is the ring bundle and Andrae obviously finds it difficult to derive the paired aspect of the double roll from the simple ring bundle. Very probably the solution is that the double roll is the conversion of an originally spatial shape into a plane, the motif being derived from a bundle with materials which, projecting over the top tie, curl up in drying, like reeds and the like.

around the turn of the century various scientists engaged in oriental archaeology, while still keeping an eye on the antique heritage (Borchardt, Puchstein, Luschan): they began to suspect that both structural and ornamental shapes might have had models and possibly precursors in the organico-vegetable domain. There was discussion as to what plants might have served as models for this or that Egyptian column or whether more abstract Greek ornaments could in any way be connected with similar, but much more concrete, Assyrian examples representing more constructive elements.

A survey of the entire movement shows that in later stages it was mainly W. Andrae who consistently followed up the various clues,

taking them as the basis of his excavations and processing them into a theory of evolution. His most important work in this context (see Andrae 1933) relates to the Ionic column. We will here briefly discuss this work.

In essence, it endeavors to substantiate four hypotheses and to develop from them a theory of the evolution of the Ionic column. The four hypotheses can be summarized as follows:

1.

In its latest form the Ionic column stands at the fringe of a field of development which leads back to Sumerian representations of the simplest type of cult symbols: to so-called ring bundles (Fig. 22);

Nonetheless: in view of the material assembled by oriental archaeology over the past fifty years, nobody will seriously doubt that evolution, as contemplated by Andrae in his first hypothesis, could really have taken place in this cultural complex.

Nor can the principle of the second hypothesis be questioned. The numerous Egyptian plant columns with their frequently incontrovertible ties around the upper shaft portion, the many early ornaments, symbols and signs (e.g. the great variety of Sumerian signs on clay tablets) argue clearly in this direction. Methodologically viewed, the significance of this hypothesis resides mainly in its position relative to the domain that gave it life = archaeology. The hypothesis derives its bearings from an object which is entirely archaeological in its nature. The preconditions for form, however, are shifted into a domain outside the defining borders of archaeology into a domain of form-fashioning of which nothing survives materially but which is handed down in durable material. It can be seen at a glance that this beginning might be dynamite for materially oriented research INTO cultural history if it did not = as it does with Andrae rest on a purely speculative basis !

The third hypothesis is similarly based. Strictly speaking, it denies access to symbolism in durable form, shifts it into a domain which does not even exist for the archaeologist, namely form in its organic condition. The thought is so fantastically new that even Andrae was unable to exhaust its implications. While it is roughly indicated in the context of the original prototype form, symbolism is also sought in the series of forms of the archaeological finds; the symbolic commences with paired rolls (Fig. 26). The hypothesis that the symbolic meaning of form has its origin in organic precursors raise?, two groups of basic problems: firstly, the question of the symbolic content of form as such and, secondly, the significance of the extraneous contexts of form. Andrae fails to produce satisfactory answers to either question. His main obstacle was probably the lack of sources. Quite obviously there was a lack of data, mainly relating to the question: what could be the function of a free-standing column made with primitive means in an early society, of which almost nothing concrete is known? This blind spot most likely prevented consistent tackling of the second problem which, as such, could have been solved, namely, the inner structure of the object. Why was no attempt made to produce an organic reconstruction e.g. of a Neandria Column? It is true that Andrae believes that, in the region of emergence of his rooted prototype, viz. in the reed swamp = which he interpreted as the 'original water' he sees preconditions for the symbolical. He also regarded the development of form from 'chaos' as symbolical but, on the whole, his interpretation bears the stamp of the literary concepts of this entire

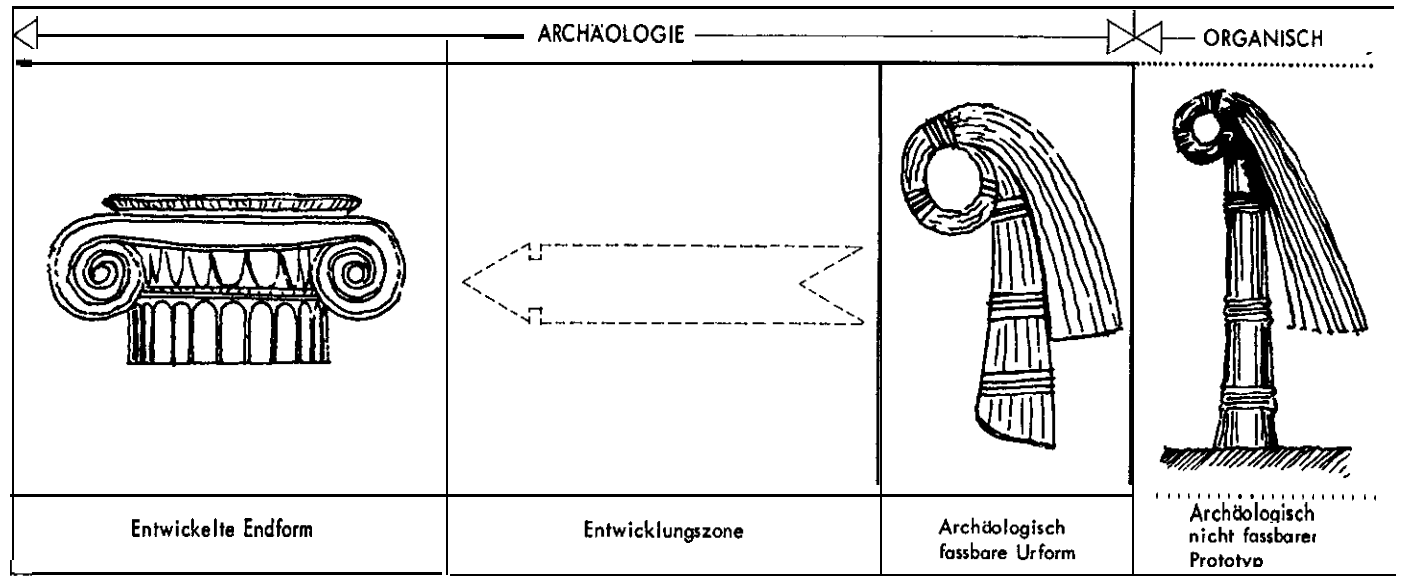
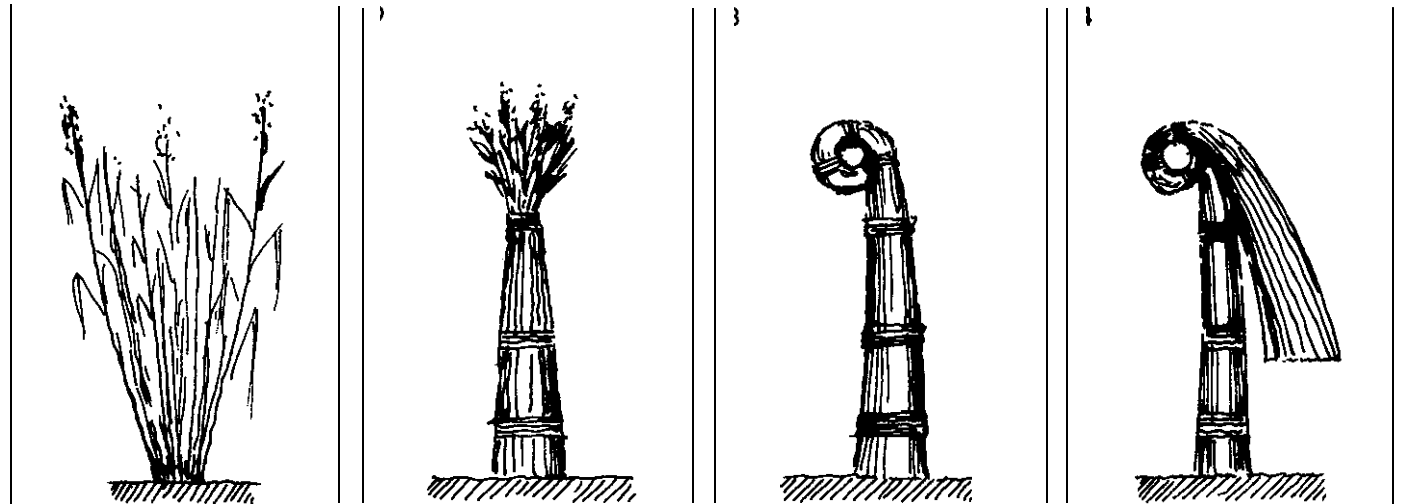


Fig. 23: Andrae's most important hypothesis

The earliest archaeologically excavated form of the development area is derived from a precursor made of organic material.

Fig. 24: The making of the ring bundles from rooted reeds (acc. to Andrae 1933).

Andrae's form 2 is only a reconstructed intermediary stage in the making of the archaeologically proven form 4. By contrast, the present study attempts to show that form 2 is the really important one, because it is much more fruitful.



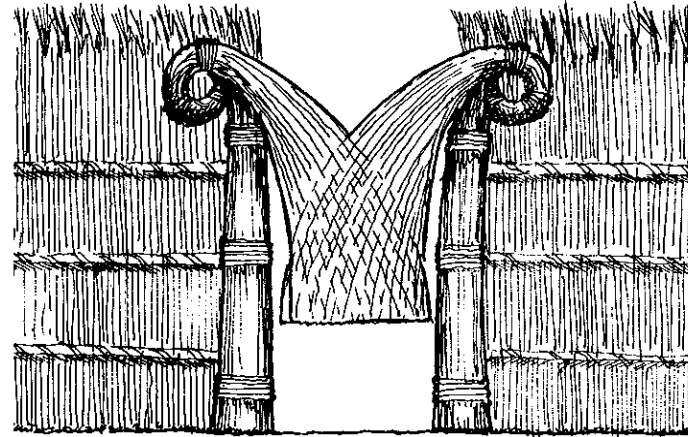
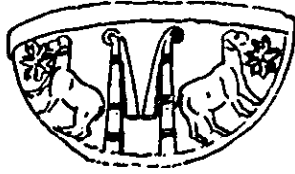
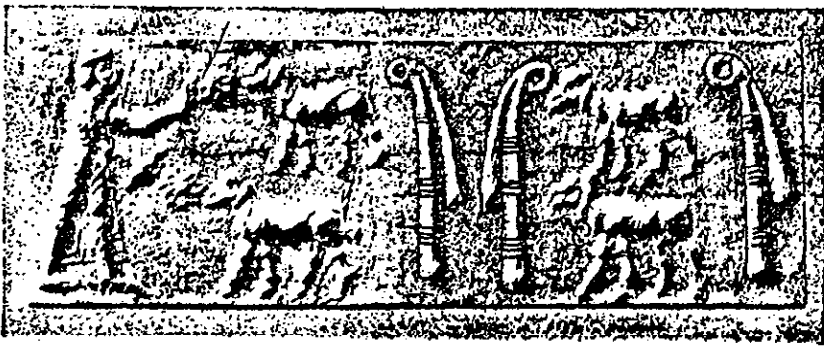
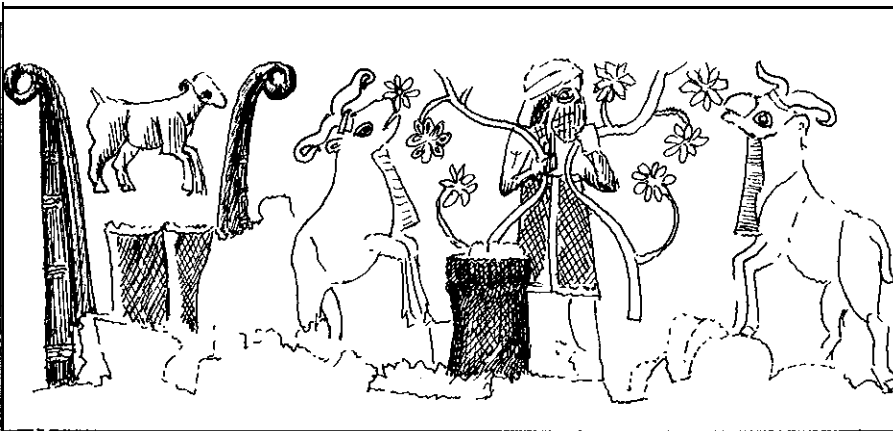


Fig. 25: Reconstruction of the function of the so-called ring bundle as penfold gate.

The lowest drawing represents Andrae's interpretation of the function of the ring bundle as entrance to a penfold and as a symbolically closable gateway to a primitive Ishtar cult zone. The interpretation is probably based on cases where such ring bundles appear in pairs (see Figs. in the upper row).



cultural area. His arguments are therefore mostly ambiguous, externally applied to the structures and they sometimes slip into the mystical. He is unable to advance to the heart of the matter: to the concrete circumstances which apply to the organic structure, its closeness to the soil, its tectonic quality, its simultaneous stability and lability (in phase 2 of the production sequence, (Fig. 24), and its transitory nature.

In the present context the only interesting feature of the fourth hypothesis is the genetic aspect of form. the transition from non-form to form. In this magnificent attempt. Andrae obviously fell a victim to his reconstruction, in that the ring bundle had given him the notion of a form almost completely 'mastered'. Only thus can it be explained that he appears not to notice the form taking shape in phase (Fig. 24). While it is acknowledged in a summary with almost anthropological pathos, as the 'first act of volition' and as 'let there be'. the accent is later placed exclusively on the transition to the ring bundle. The form made in the second phase is some points ahead of the ring bundle (Fig. 24, phase 4) namely:

1. It can be produced with only one tie, by a simple operation. In terms of theory of development it is thus simpler than the ring bundle.

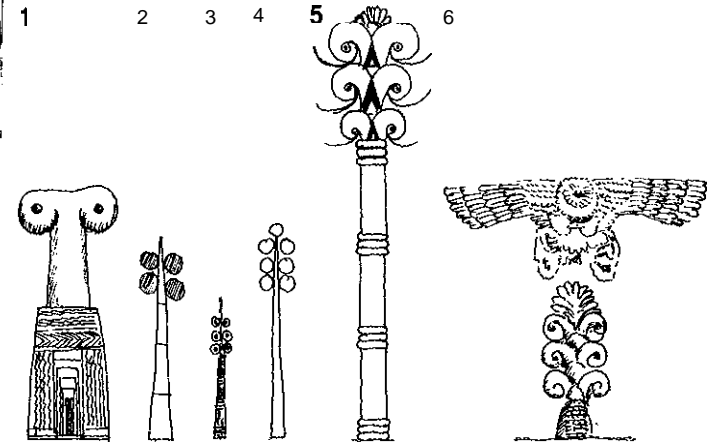


Fig. 26: Developmental series of structures with paired volutes (acc. to Andrae 1933).

According to Andrae, this developmental series leads to symbols of cosmic significance (6).

2. In terms of its structure, it fulfils two criteria of Andrae's evolutionary sequence, which are probably more important than the roll motif technically, the tectonic bundling: and formally, the two categorially different formal domains.

3. For Andrae too it is the beginning of the step from non-form to form and thus it represents a preliminary stage. The structure is equivocal: it is at one and the same time form and non-form and thus includes the prerequisites of the symbolic.

4. Upon closer consideration, it is formally much more capable of evolving (cf. Fig. 16) than is the ring bundle.

The four points are not without importance. They separate two forms which may be regarded as symptomatic of certain positions. That Andrae's concepts were rooted in archaeological thinking is shown in the delimitation of form phase 2 from that of phase 4, which he championed. In hinting at the lack of sources, the following critical objections allow an assessment of the changes based on ethnographical insights. As stated previously Andrae's concept of form is based on what is durably shaped. This archaeologically-tinged concept of form also obstructs him in the theory of evolution. It prevents him from recognizing the really simple: for example, with a little less prejudice, the Neandria capital could have been recognized as a simple derivative of form phase 2 (Fig. 2). Andrae sees the connection via complex changes in form and function! This quite clearly reveals that he did not fully realize the methodological significance of his attempt. He goes too far in regarding the organic as relevant only for the earliest strata, and he finds evolution only in the inorganic domain: the products of organic industry being perishable and of non-archaeological nature and thus not susceptible to direct proof, could quite easily have taken a course parallel to those of inorganic industry and have directly influenced the arts and crafts which process durable material. The Neandria capital, if viewed in this light, could then do without Andrae's line of evolution. It would have to be seen as a ship, shaped like many other ships because it floats on the same river, the same water.

In practice, this would then also imply that in this domain the theory of evolution is based not only on the strength of formal details but also on constructional conditions. Andrae's motif of the tectonic bundling of vegetable material meets this prerequisite and this is why it has become fertile for the theory of evolution: the roll motif is a structurally unfounded formal detail and this fact is probably the

reason why Andrae made mistakes in connection with it.

While Andrae's theses may doubtless be criticized in important sections, it should not be forgotten that his hypotheses suggests beginnings which might be of exceptional value to prehistory. That it was difficult, not only for Andrae, to guess at the full significance of a phenomenon which could only be speculated upon in retrospect, is also demonstrated by the Ded pillar. Under the influence of the tree-cult theories, this was long regarded as a defoliated tree until later finds clearly identified it as a bundled-reed pillar (Fig. 27).

In fairness, allowance should therefore be made for Andrae's lack of sources. He can surely not be blamed for failing to reconstruct the "function" with the limited information then available to him in that culture area. It must be assumed that the Islamic and Jewish creeds etc. have ousted primitive religious symbolic behaviour which, judging from ancient portrayals, must be assumed to have existed. Andrae therefore remained hesitant in his judgements. The choice between the rich symbolism of the material on the one hand and the recently discovered, only practically-functional, reed designs of the marshland Arabs doubtless presented difficulties. Andrae's fairly implausible, and often unclear, interpretations probably

explain why the evolutionary concept pioneered in his work has been largely disregarded in archaeological and art circles. The impression gained today is that evolutionary thinking in this field has in fact become unpopular.

Against the background of these attempts at reconstruction, which have so far failed because of lack of evidence, it must be recognized that ideas deriving from the non-domestic building tradition, which is ethnographically still evident in Japan, have something to contribute to research into cultural history.

4. SYNTHESIS AND PROSPECTS

Andrae himself collected only a small part of the material on which his theses rest. This is not surprising, for he was mainly concerned with the evolutionary history of the Ionic column and not really with a new methodological principle of prehistoric research. His reconstruction of evolution was limited to a few characteristic features and to what he used as a basis for his second and third hypotheses (the fourth hypothesis does not proceed beyond an intuitive speculation). He did not even go so far as to make a formal analytical examination of his find the organic prototype or the rooted bur-

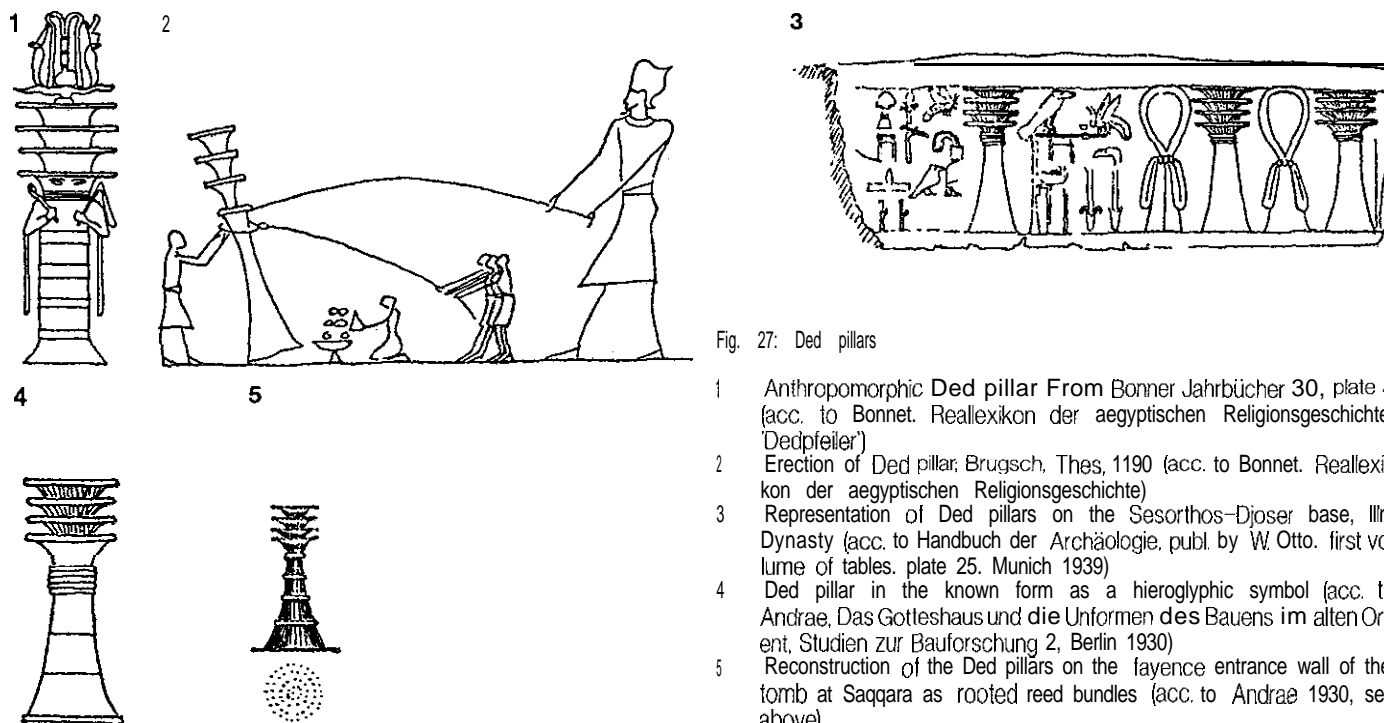


Fig. 27: Ded pillars

- 1 Anthropomorphic Ded pillar From Bonner Jahrbücher 30, plate 4 (acc. to Bonnet. Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte. 'Dedpfeiler')
- 2 Erection of Ded pillar; Brugsch, Thes., 1190 (acc. to Bonnet. Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte)
- 3 Representation of Ded pillars on the Sesorthos-Djoser base, IIIrd Dynasty (acc. to Handbuch der Archäologie, publ. by W. Otto, first volume of tables, plate 25, Munich 1939)
- 4 Ded pillar in the known form as a hieroglyphic symbol (acc. to Andrae, Das Gotteshaus und die Umformen des Bauens im alten Orient, Studien zur Bauforschung 2, Berlin 1930)
- 5 Reconstruction of the Ded pillars on the fayence entrance wall of the tomb at Saqqara as rooted reed bundles (acc. to Andrae 1930, see above).

dle. It is entirely possible that he failed to suspect the possible significance of the beginning he had made. A real idea thereof will only be gained if the Japanese material is placed side by side with its reconstructions and, above all, with such comparable material as actually exists in the Middle East.

We will give a few pointers to explain the meaning of the comparison.

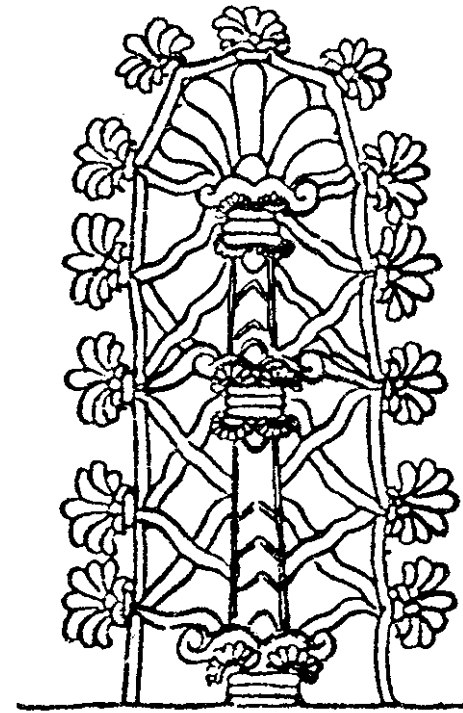
As an example, the extensive material of the so-called trees of life (Fig. 28), found on seals from Asia Minor, would, if viewed in this way appear in an entirely different light. It would be possible to understand why these structures tend to look so unbiological, whence come the many variations in form, in what medium the form-differentiations might have developed and why they commonly appear at the centre of the cultic-mythical sphere. A formal development between, say simple Sumerian reed pillars and formally differentiated Assyrian representations of the tree of life could be interpreted as having taken place in the organic industrial domain.

The philologically relevant arbor vitae complex could also be checked for structures which might have been engendered by organic models (see Fig. 19): a multitude of different plants in one object, impressive size, eternal youth etc., i.e. properties transcending the 'merely biological', are things entirely possible in the sphere of the artificial. Similarly, the question should be asked whether the cosmic symbolism (*arbores mundi*, trees reaching to the skies, trees at the centre of the earth etc.) do not relate to the archaic concept of a merely local world or even only to symbols for such a local world.

To remain in the sphere of art: one would now have to see representations in durable material, e.g. 'hard&shelled fruits' on the twigs of large trees which are, however, no longer visible to archaeology and which represented the non-durable precursors or their evolution and differentiation. The question would also have to be raised whether, without such invisible trees, 'fruits', i.e. early art, could have come into existence at all. It is possible that such questioning might disclose other 'trees', e.g. in the domain of mediaeval Norse art etc..

Stated more clearly: we would find ourselves on methodologically new avenues in prehistorical research. The material relating to the art of any early culture could thus be consistently questioned back to its unknown prior life. A line of evolution directed toward the organic-prototypal could be applied to any suitable inorganically transmitted form. Assuming development in that prototypal organic

Fig. 28: Assyrian palmette tree from Qalkhu, Nimrod (acc. to Andrae 1933).



domain, such evolutionary lines should sometimes lend themselves to considerable expansion. The dark wall behind many things archaeological might thus be pierced with the passage of time. The view of prehistory would become less obstructed...

Let us for the time being content ourselves with a vision of a new field of work in which, in cooperation with archaeology philology and ethnology and disciplines with a closely defined objective, such as architectural research, the sciences of art, religion and sociology more productive work may be accomplished than is usually done in backyards enclosed by tall hedges.