



## 1 / HOW LARGE BUILDINGS MAY BE CREATED BY THE FUNDAMENTAL PROCESS

The most critical thing to unfold from the hulls of public space, are the large buildings — especially the large public buildings. They form the main centers that fix the public space and give it life.

Although the detailed treatment, design, and structure of buildings in general will be taken up later in the book, by examples of other processes, I start with these large buildings because they play such a vital role and do so much to embellish public space.

What happens, typically? An important space, one of the hulls of public space described in chapter 3, existing in rudimentary form, is to be embellished, made stronger, given more life. Usually one building, then, becomes the “head”

of the space. Others, secondary buildings, may also come into play as secondary centers.

Almost without exception, this building is to be a jewel, it is to play a role of a vital center made to animate the public space. The volume of the new building, then, is created by its relation to the public space, by the need to make the space more alive by the insertion, and then differentiation, of this “jewel.”

To illustrate the process I shall touch, in this chapter, aspects of six public buildings: The Great Hall at Eishin Campus; the Mountain View Civic Center; the Tokyo International Forum; The Julian Street Inn in San Jose; the Mary Rose Museum in England; and the Nyingma temple, Kathmandu.



## 2 / THE GREAT HALL: A MULTITUDE OF LIVING CENTERS

The Great Hall at Eishin is illustrated on pages 102-111 in this chapter, on pages 180-81 of chapter 5, and on pages 206-10 of chapter 6. The process of laying out this building, designing its detail, completing the detailing and ornament, and managing construction, is to be described in detail in another book, *BATTLE: THE STORY OF A HISTORIC CLASH BETWEEN WORLD SYSTEM A AND WORLD SYSTEM B* (in press). The description will give the practical steps that were involved at Eishin, and the practical aspects of design and construction management which were required. In principle, what happened in the Great Hall closely followed the accounts of process given in this chapter for two other large public buildings; the Mary Rose Museum (pages 132-50) and the Julian Street Shelter for the Homeless (pages 120-31).

In order to grasp these detailed points of management — which certainly do require en-

tirely new ways of thinking about the making of a public building — we need to know the essence of it. We need an answer to the question, What is the essence of the way to make a large building *in the context of living process?*

It may be described, perhaps, in terms that are expressed fully in Book 4 (page 95 and surrounding pages): *Everything you make must be a being.* A “being” is another way of talking about a living center: it refers to the emotional aspect of a center when it is genuinely endowed with life. If you look at the photograph of the Great Hall on page 102, it seems to have a presence . . . something almost like a living being. That is because the whole building is a living center made of many living centers that have a correspondence with each other. And where is that quality coming from? It comes from the presence of living centers in the columns that are visible; and each one of them has this presence, too. It

A VISION OF A LIVING WORLD



*Luminous plaster on the interior columns and capitals of the Great Hall, Iruma-sbi, Tokyo, first state of completion.  
Christopher Alexander, Ingrid King, Hajo Neis and others, 1985.*





*Further view of luminous plaster on the interior columns and capitals of the Great Hall, first state of completion, 1985. In this picture and in the picture opposite we see that this interior is replete with "beings" or living centers.*

comes from the presence of a living center in the shape of each bay between two neighboring columns: and each bay has this living presence, too.

If we examine the photographs of the building interior, on pages 104-111, we see lights as living centers, we see column capitals as living centers, we see the volume of the interior *itself* as a living center and a being (page 106). The stage, ordinary enough, has taken its shape as a living center. The ornaments themselves, the chevrons on the black columns (page 110-11), and the red quatrefoil in the center of the capital — these have a being-quality, too, because they too are living centers.

The subsidiary buildings which surround the hall, they have this quality, also. The music school attached on one side of the Hall, the small archway which approaches the Hall from the administration building (both shown on page 109); the bridge across the lake that approaches the Great

Hall from the east (page 102), these too, have, within themselves, the quality of beings: and then, the bridge's handrails, its ramp, its shape, those too are shaped and made as living centers.

But the quality of living centers also has a further aspect. It requires the positive-ness and thus the being-ness of each part that lies *between* two parts. Even the tea bushes by the lake (visible in the foreground of the picture on page 102) have being-like space between the rows of bushes. The spaces underneath each column capital, and between each pair of capitals — they have a being quality (this page). The space between the lights hanging in the hall, and the space inside the ring that bears each light, and the space between the individual lamps themselves — those all have a being quality, also. They, too, are living centers (see page 209).

The way in which a large public building can be given this quality — the presence of living

A VISION OF A LIVING WORLD



*Concert in progress in the Great Hall at Eisbin. The stage is a living center, the lights are living centers, the diamonds and ornaments are living centers. Second state of completion, 1989.*

*The photograph is blurred because, to get it at all, I had to use a hand-held one-second time exposure.*





*Detailed view of the performance, 1989.*

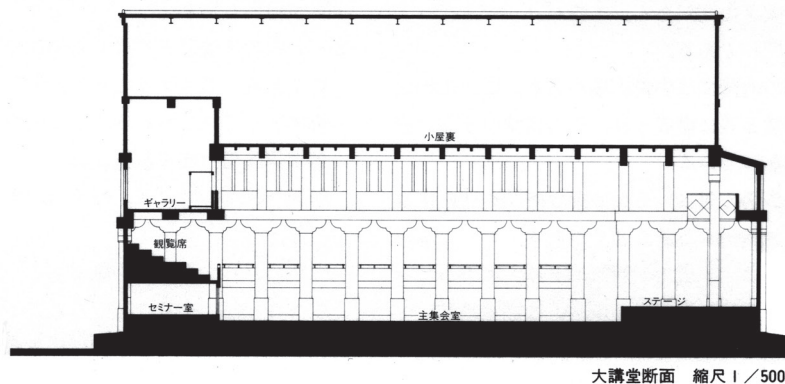
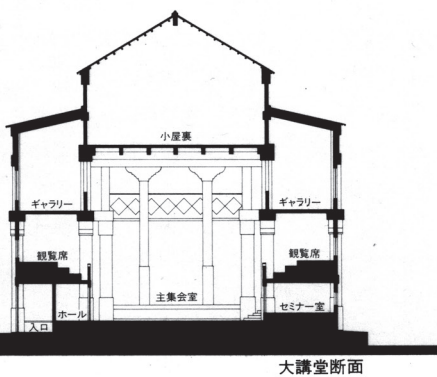
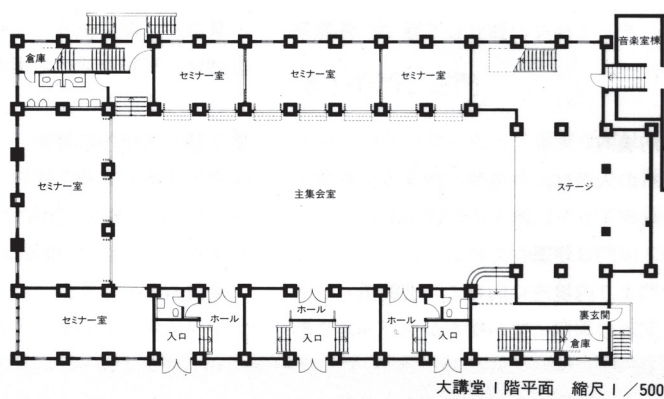
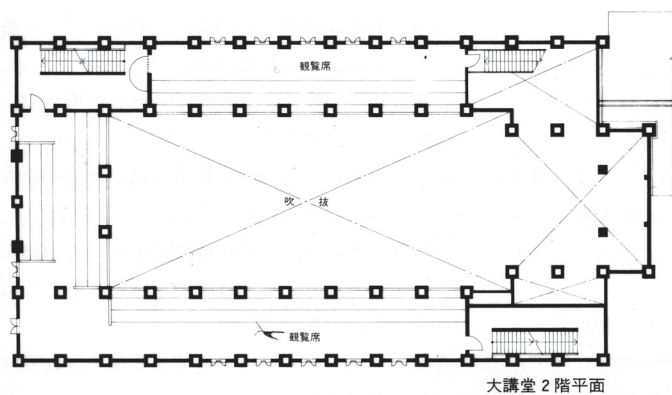
centers throughout its fabric — requires forms of management, forms of contract administration, forms of construction, which allow the focus of the entire operation to be on this living quality, day-in, day-out, while the building is being made — while it is first conceived, while it is planned in detail, while it is being built. Day-in, day-out, the construction of living centers

is going forward, and the entire management process is focused and arranged to make this possible.

The effect of the living centers, both their profusion and their unity, which makes the largest whole a living center too, is to bring nourishing life — real life — to the community and to its individuals.



Great Hall, south elevation: the layout of living centers in columns, bays, beams, windows, roofs, steps, arches, and window sills.



Great Hall, plans with interior cross-section and longitudinal section