FOUNDING OF THE SHRINE: Under the Emperor Suinin (A.D. 249-280), his daughter princess Yamato-hime, went from place to place looking for a good location for the worship of the Great Deity. When she came to the Ise area, an oracle was vouchsafed to her declaring: "Since this land of Ise is a land where no turbulent tempests blow, and is a peaceful land where the twang of the bow and the hiss of the arrows are never heard, I desire to rest in this land." She then erected a shrine for the worship of the great Deity of Ise.

ARCHITECT: EMPEROR TEMMU
PROJECT: ISE SHRINE
LOCATION: ISE, JAPAN
TYPE OF PROJECT: SHRINE
DATE (completed): 692 (rebuilt every 20 yrs)
STRUCTURE: POST AND BEAM

BIBLIOGRAPHY:
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- Tange, Kenzo Ise Prototype of Japanese Architecture, Massachusetts. The MIT Press, 1965
The great Shinto shrine at Ise was built amid a dense forest of giant cryptomeria trees next to the Isuzu River at the foot of Mount Kamiji and Mount Shimaji in southern Honshu, Japan. The shrine consists of two groups of buildings: the Imperial Shrine, known as the Naiku (inner shrine) and the Geku (outer shrine). The Naiku is dedicated to the Sun Goddess Amaterasu Omikami (Heaven-Illuminating Great Deity), and the Geku to the Goddess of Cereals Toyouke Omikami (Abundant Food Great Deity).

Apart from the Naiku and the Geku, there are 14 other major and 109 minor subsidiary shrines at Ise. Many of these shrines were erected before the shrine for the Great Deity at Ise.

Tradition by itself cannot function as the driving force for creativeness, but it always bears within itself the chance to stimulate creativeness. Here primeval darkness and eternal light, the vital and the aesthetic, are in balance, and a world of harmony with nature unfolds. The site for the Naiku is situated within a forest of trees, yet placed in a clearing of light.
The chambers of the shrines are raised on timber piles which themselves are analogous to the central sacred post. The roof is not supported by the walls (although the rafters do rest on purlins), but the ridge beam is carried instead by two large columns at either end which embedded directly into the ground without any foundation. At the Naiku the shrine is decorated with gold and copper ornaments, and they increased in time. At the Geku, however, it was only decorated with metal ornaments. Inside these shrines are the location of special treasures, inside the naiku there is a bronze mirror which was traditionally a sacred object.
Ise Shrine

Construction of Naiku, is the so called “yuiitsu shinmei-zukuri,” consisting of posts and beams, with boards fitted in between the posts to make up the walls, and verandas with railings. The most important structural methods was that the posts are set directly into the ground with out any kind of base stone. These are connected by simple transverse beams that support center struts strengthened by diagonal braces that normally carry the ridge pole. The ridgepole is supported on pillars that stand free of the building on the gable sides.

The shrine are constructed of wood from the sakaki tree. Which is the symbol used to call the deities dwelling in Heaven. Since the shrines are reconstructed every twenty years the empty site is strewn with large white pebbles. The only building the empty site, which retains its sacredness is a small wooden shed or hut. Inside the shed is a post about seven feet high known as shin-no-mihashira (literally the agust column of the heart). The new shrine will be erected over and around this post which are the holiest and most mysterious object in the Ise Shrine.
Entrance to the Inner Shrine begins at the Uji Bridge, which passes over the sacred Isuzu River. There are two torii gates at either end of the bridge, it is said that by crossing the bridge one’s mind and heart is purified. The shrine is situated in 5500 hectares of natural forest as well as hinoki (cypress) trees.