

INTERPRETING ALAMINOS: The Cultural Context of Form

by Celine Maria Larkin
B.A. Visual and Environmental Studies
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Signature of Author _____
Department of Architecture
March 7, 1983

Certified by _____
Fernando Domeyko
Associate Professor of Architecture
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by _____
Edward Robbins, Assistant Professor
Chairperson Departmental Committee
for Graduate Students

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Abstract

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture on March 7, 1983, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture.

Thesis Supervisor: Fernando Domeyko
Title: Associate Professor of Architecture

Abstract

This thesis presents a methodology for transforming designs from their traditional context to a new, though continuous, form.

In particular, this thesis examines the interactional role of holism - and its underlying mechanisms - between Pilipino architecture and culture.

Given this approach, I base my design of a community center for Alaminos, a medium-sized town in Pangasinan, the Philippines, on three levels of analysis: language, time, and behavior.

To achieve transformational Pilipino architecture, I conclude that it must be (a) "personalistic" according to regional sensibilities (b) culturally defined and (c) nationally fulfilling in its accurate representation of the indigenous spirit.

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When we consider our own society, we use a system of values and a system of references which we have to abandon if we wish to reflect on other societies. And when our readers or listeners say to us: "But you should be able to compare the two things; you ought to be able to put forward a system of reference which would be valid for both", we perhaps have a slight advantage in that we have grown used to doing without such a system of reference.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1959

Introduction

The Pilipino is a stranger in his own house. Three hundred and fifty years of Spanish rule and half a century of American domination have left the Pilipino without a clear sense of his own identity. Recent architecture reflects this disorientation among Pilipinos and within Pilipino society.

Traditionally, Pilipino architecture is holistic, an integration of the individual with his fellow man, with nature, and with the universe. Elements of architecture exist in conjunction with an intrinsic system of attitudes and perceptions; together they constitute the whole of Philippine architecture. Thus, architecture cannot be fully understood solely on the basis of physical patterns and uses. It is incomplete without its social, natural, and cosmological context.

(Culture is a)... system of symbols by which man confers significance upon his own experience. Symbol systems, man-created, shared, conventional, ordered, and indeed learned, provide human beings with a meaningful framework for orienting themselves to one another, to the world around them, and to themselves. [1]

A particular combination of values and their importance relative to one another defines cultural character. The analysis of culture in this paper examines these interactions, emphasizing correlations between the symbol systems of behavior, architecture, language, and philosophy. These systems are checked and balanced against one another to guide the interpretation process.

"Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes, the less complete it is." [2]
Culture is a dynamic system that can never be analysed

conclusively. This paper instead identifies a theme which, in my observation, links issues of behavior, philosophy, and architecture.

The paper examines the role of holism in Pilipino architecture and utilizes this concept in the design of a community center in Alaminos, Pangasinan, the Philippines. Section one discusses the philosophical underpinnings which impact directly on the study. Section two traces the interaction between culture and architecture. Section three examines architectural expression vis-a-vis the cultural framework, using Alaminos as a case study and section four describes the design of a community center for Alaminos generated from this cultural framework. Finally, section five concludes the following:

- 1.) Transformation eliminates "ersatz" and inappropriate architecture while providing a foundation for change oriented to the future.
- 2.) Consideration of the cultural context facilitates the transition from old models to appropriate responses to new conditions.

- 3.) Finally, architectural response to major tenets of Pilipino society in a holistic tradition of harmonizing and realism allows the emergence of a new, but unique, form of indigenous identification.

Endnotes

[1] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, 1973, 250.

[2] *Ibid.*, 29.

I. THEORY



I. THEORY

Change

The Philippines is changing. For the first time since the Spanish arrived in 1565, it is changing on its own terms. One manifestation of this change is the Filipino's desire for an indigenous architecture. Not merely a nationalistic tendency, this search expresses a need for cultural integrity and identity as a foundation for modernization. The thrust of this paper is to explore the implications of working with culture as a basis for new building design and to derive a theme from Philippine culture to focus a new design interpretation.

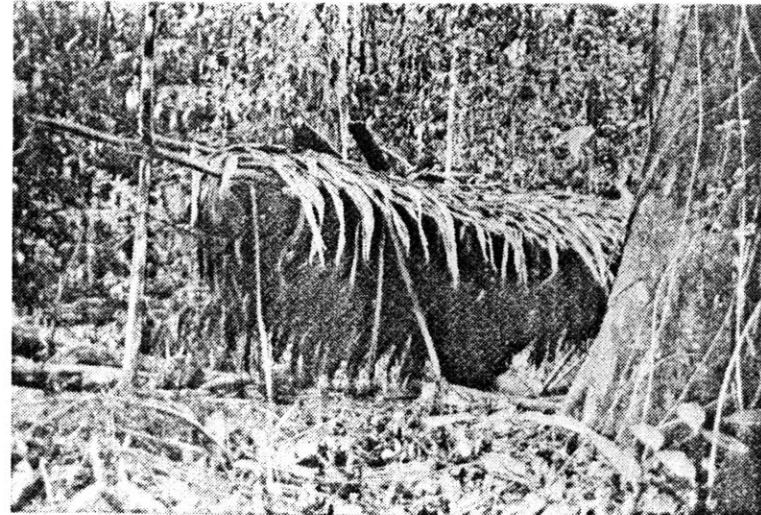
Scholars studying change agree that a culturally sensitive approach works best. [3] In 1965, Galo B. Ocampo as Director of the National Museum called for an integrated approach to modern Philippine architecture, reflective of the changing cultural and

social milieu:

The distance between the lean-to of some of our cultural minority groups and the Philam Life building at the United Nations Avenue is far too great for the Filipino (sic) architect to ignore the significance of cultural patterns." [4]

The distance he refers to represents a cultural and temporal gap, to which attention must be paid by native and foreign architects designing in the Philippines.

The lean-to



Pilipino architects try to address the desire for a more culturally sympathetic architecture. Recognizing the importance of the vernacular as an embodiment of Pilipino environmental and spatial values, they attempt to recreate traditional buildings as Hassan Fathy did at Gournia. [5] A few projects succeed in this approach, such as Caliraya Phase 3, a beautiful and sensitive complex of shelters in harmony with their natural surroundings.

... a building similar to the Philamlife.



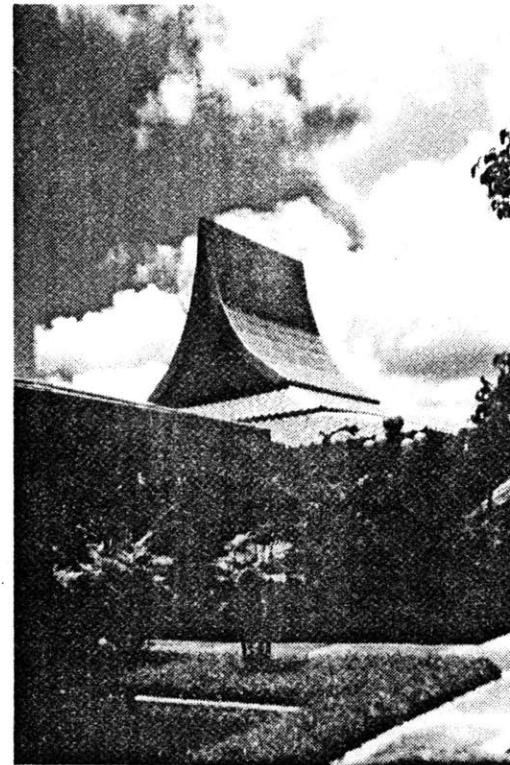
But simply recreating vernacular architecture produces distortion in form as well as function. Models of building types in the vernacular are few. This method provides no basis for transformation from one function to another. Similarly, the approach offers no solutions for larger or urban buildings.



Building materials are short-lived and efforts to abstract vernacular buildings in modern materials produce only larger, more durable buildings. The model only repeats, appearing out of scale and out of place due to a lack of understanding the system underlying the vernacular forms. Recreating the vernacular reiterates and does not transform.

Moreover, reproducing the vernacular often results in "kitsch", a collection of token "native" images. Cast-in-concrete coconut palms as columns, or concrete walls textured to look like *sawali* or *cogon* (native grasses used in traditional construction) and exaggerated roof are common examples. They are usually found in resort areas and restaurants resulting in a kind of ersatz architecture which is amusing at best.

At the opposite end of the scale, architects spend a great deal of time on behavioral studies. These studies greatly improve the understanding of user dissatisfaction with existing buildings.



However, behavioral studies are design aids and provide only functional guidance. While they are important and useful, they lack the necessary correlations between behavioral requirements,

user expectations, and the articulation of expressive form that speaks of "an essence of the Filipino (sic) that weaves through the course of history, manifested time and again in all forms of his culture." [6]

Pilipino architects tried to derive a pattern language from Philippine vernacular architecture. But while the methodology defined by Alexander, et. al. (1977, 1979) considers architecture as a language, it does not acknowledge that both language and architecture are derived from a specific cultural context. Understanding the vocabulary and rules of a language are not sufficient for interpreting or expressing the underlying values and beliefs of a society. As Rapoport says: "Deciding what is 'good' or 'better' is not always intuitively clear; it may sometimes be counterintuitive particularly, although not exclusively, in unfamiliar cultural contexts... The implication is clearly that environmental quality must be understood and evaluated in its cultural context, as defined and understood by the group itself." [7]

The categorization of patterns sheds no light on the value of their perpetuation.

Form and behavior, alone or combined in isolation from the context, do not provide sufficient information for architectural interpretation. It is necessary to transcend into the poetic sensibility of culture to complete appropriate expressions. Interpretation is personal, but it is not arbitrary. Even poetic metaphors derive meaning from associations in a cultural framework, the same framework social scientists believe best underlies positive modernizing change. Architectural expression is similarly culture bound.

Endnotes

[3] Bulatao, 1962; Foster, 1962; Hollnsteiner, 1979; Ocampo, 1965; Rapoport, 1976, 1978; Reyes, 1973; Weiner, 1966.

[4] Galo B. Ocampo, "Cultural Patterns in Philippine Architecture", *Science Review* 6, Nos. 9/11, 1965, 21.

[5] Hassan, Fathy, *Architecture For the Poor, the Experiment in Rural Egypt*, Chicago, 1973.

[6] Rosario Encarnacion, et. al., *A Center for the Study of Filipino(sic) Architecture*, University of the Philippines, 1979, 7.

[7] Amos Rapoport, "An Approach to Designing in Third World Environments," *Designing in Third World Environments*, 1978, 23.

II. CULTURE



II. CULTURE

The desire to harmonize stems from the holistic perception of lowland Pilipinos. [8] Harmonizing is a mechanism for diminishing conflicts between elements to create or preserve unity. In this land of contrasts, man's wish to harmonize with nature is realistic. Throughout these three levels of Pilipino existence runs a common cultural thread that defines language, time, and action.

Holism

Pilipinos live life as a balancing act. They see the balancing act inherent in nature and the eternal dichotomies surrounding human existence. Night is followed by day, the rainy season by dry times. Light coexists with shadow, destruction with regrowth. A plant needs both the sunshine and the rain, the darkness and the light to survive. These are not contradictions because both are necessary parts of the whole. They are harmonies; harmony is the theme of the universe. [9]



Man's success in life is based on the ability to tread gently through the earthly realm and interfere as little as possible with nature's cycles. The Philippines is a country subject to epidemic cholera and smallpox, and less than half the children born will see their sixth birthday. It is devastated yearly by at least a dozen

typhoons, on average three of which leave 260 people dead and over P100 million in debris. It is capable of up to nine rice crops annually on its gentle, arable landscape. Nature dominates, and while it destroys, it also heals - quickly and generously. [10]

The Pilipino expresses his interconnectedness with all aspects of life in the subjectivity of speech. Affixes distinguish whether a word is factual, ordered, dubious, desired, possible, impossible, probable or not, obligatory, or any other qualification, in the speaker's opinion or experience. [11] Pilipinos also intergrate the abstract, the concrete, animate and inanimate into their experience when speaking.

In Tagalog sentences, the predicate normally precedes the subject. It is therefore hard to separate the act from the actor, as social scientists discovered while constructing a sentence completion test. "The difficulty arises, not because the language structure does not allow the subject to come before the predicate - it does by inserting *ay* between them - but because the normal



thought pattern of the Tagalog speaker does not function that way."

[12] For example, "when the important person told him to do it he..." is literally "when told him by an important person to do it ..." in Tagalog. The sentence is a totality that is difficult to interrupt in a way that suggests completion. Pilipino speech harmonizes its patterns. Its interconnectedness allows an imprecision ideally



suited to verbal expression for other cultural reasons. [13]

Pilipinos value time for the activity or interaction occurring therein. Their concept of time is highly subjective. Pilipinos care little for dates and documents of the past. The happening is not fixed in time and space to them. Once an action occurs, it is concrete, and its importance as real as the moment it occurred. A Pilipino relates stories of a hundred years past and of an hour ago as if he attended or observed both. The relation between the speaker and the event dominates the description. [14]

There are no Tagalog words to describe chronological time. Words used today were borrowed from Spanish: *minuto* (minute), *oras* (hour), *martes*, *miercoles*, etc. (days of the week), and the months. Native words refer to periods or actions which constitute the dichotomies of nature, or the repeating cycles of time. For example, words such as *tag-ulan* (rainy season), *tag-init* (dry season), *kabi* (ebb), and *laki ang tubig* (literally lots of water, or high tide.) Other terms which define time only place actions

relative to one another, such as *kanina* (a while ago), *ngayon* (now), or *mamaya* (later).

The quality of time spent is more important than the number of passing hours. Foreigners often complain about "Pilipino time", a knack for arriving late at engagements or starting events later than announced. An hour prescribed can mean as many as three in reality. One underlying reason is the way Pilipino's prepare to go out. Girls preparing for a basketball game will gather in one house and dress together. The game becomes a pretense. The real activity is the friendly comradeship of preparing together for the game, a ritual of joking, gossip, music, and food. Often the group arrives just in time for the last play. No one minds; the time was well spent.

Tagalog has no absolute verb tenses. The timing of actions in speech is simply another qualification of the main thought. Even the word *ay* used as an equivalent of "is" in verbless sentences, also means "was" and "will be". *Maganda ang bahay* means "beautiful



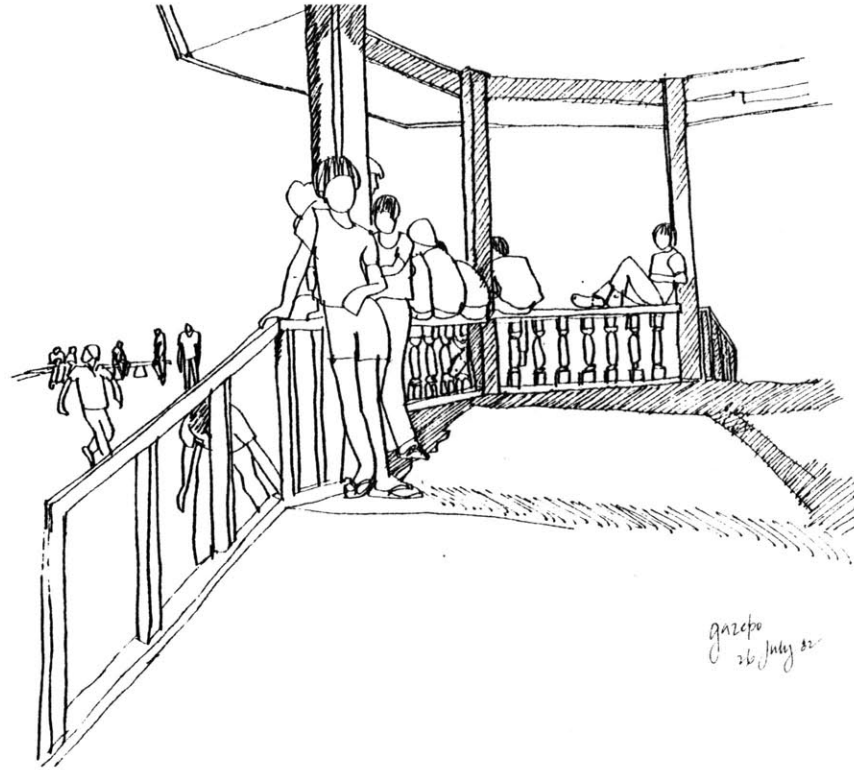
the house; *Ang bahay ay maganda* means the house is, was, or will be beautiful. Breaking a sentence, as in the sentence completion tests, demonstrates the dependence of verbs on context for tense: "*Kapay may gumugulo sa isip niya*, (literally, when there trouble in the mind his), can designate a past, present, or future event, depending on the form of the independent clause." This holistic interdependency is also characteristic of Pilipino social relations. [15]



Mechanisms

Social acceptance is a prerequisite to security in the lowland Philippines. While it is not an explicit goal, Pilipino behavior places a heavy emphasis on getting along with others. Lynch says "the desirability of social acceptance is for the modal Filipino (sic)

an implied postulate, but a cultural theme nonetheless." [16] The lowland Pilipino avoids outward signs of conflict whenever possible. Americans agree to disagree; Pilipinos always try to smooth over or understate their differences through a variety of devices. The Pilipino is always polite, using flowery and often vague language when he speaks, particularly if he disagrees with the



trend of the conversation. If a conflict is brewing or an injustice was committed, a neutral individual is asked to mediate between those who disagree. In this way, angry words need not pass directly from one party to another. These examples illustrate three mechanisms by which Filipinos conduct their affairs: deference, euphemism, and mediation.

Filipinos see no reason to court conflict when a little deference to another's view will preserve the peace. Called *pakikisama*, best translated as "concession", it is a way of ensuring that group opinion will always be unanimous. An individual preserves his place in the group and the group preserves its unified image by occasional concession.



Deference to the group is evident in public opinion polling. When a local manufacturing company tried to poll retailers to discover customer sentiment concerning their product, the results were flattering but radically different from the sales figures and salesmen's reports. The pollsters tried a second time, this time disguising themselves as a rival company. The poll resulted in favor of the rival's product. Retailers felt a positive response would encourage good relations with both companies. [17]

Euphemism is a second means of avoiding conflict and smoothing over differences between individuals. Lowland Pilipinos see no reason to court conflict when a few pleasant words make the same point. Practicing euphemism is and always has been valued in Pilipino culture. As Dr. Encarnacion Alzona stated:

The use of courteous language is an ancient attitude of our people. Bluntness or brusqueness of speech is frowned upon, being regarded as a sign of ill breeding. Thus, we give the erroneous impression to foreigners, who do not understand our concept of good manners, of being prolix or circumlutory. As a matter of fact, it is the respectful and polite way of introducing a serious subject which is the real object of the conversation. A low voice and gentle manner must accompany the courteous speech, following the saying in Tagalog that

Ang maharlang pangungusap (A gentle manner of speaking)
Sa puso'y makalulunas (soothes the heart)
Ang salitang matatamis (Sweet words)
Sa puso'y nakaakit (win the heart)
Nagpapalubog ng galit (and dispel anger)

Speaking in a harsh tone has been the cause of altercations, as the sensitive Filipino (sic) interprets it as an expression of ill-feeling. Even menial workers resent it, and the wise employer guards the tone of his voice in

speaking to them, if he wants to preserve harmony and good feeling between management and labor. [18]

The structure of Tagalog especially suits the practice of euphemism. The imprecision of language allows a great deal of innuendo. In this concrete language, abstract terms are expressed by concrete words used metaphorically. [19] Thus, displeasure and other harsh or negative feelings are discussed indirectly. It is a sort of dematerialization of language, for to a Pilipino, unspoken thoughts not concretely or directly verbalized do not exist - although of course the individuals involved understand one another perfectly. This allows the potentially wounded party a chance to redeem himself or make amends without losing esteem in the face of his fellow men.

Forms of non-verbal communication are used to reinforce an unpleasant message. Pilipinos will go to great lengths to make silent messages clear. The silent treatment is a particularly effective means of disciplining children, to say that they have behaved

poorly and are excluded from the sanctum of the family. Hall would call Pilipinos a "high context" society, for the concrete understanding of metaphorical speech is embedded in the parameters of their society, immediately comprehensible to insiders; a mystery to those without. [20]

Mediation is the third means of achieving smooth interpersonal relations. This process has a long history among Pilipinos. References to the mediator system go back to 1582, when Spanish settlers wrote that although there were no judges in Pilipino society, there were mediators who went "from one party to another to bring about a reconciliation." [21] A neutral party is asked to act as a go-between, either to save embarrassment or create communication between individuals who are not on speaking terms. A successful mediator is held in high esteem by his peers, for he balances a delicate situation which must be resolved with grace and wit.

Go-betweens make difficult requests on behalf of others,

especially to respected individuals or when rejection is feared. Go-betweens can pave the way for a person to make the request personally, once he knows the request is in good stead. In family situations, a son or daughter may have to lobby in this way for permission to do something, a lengthy and repetitive process.

A concept of privacy that equals the western notion of solitude does not exist to the Pilipino. In Tagalog, the word best translated as "privacy", *pag-iisa*, literally means "to be alone" (The root *isa* means "one"). To be alone is to be isolated from one's group. Private activity is contrary to the Pilipino's group orientation. The Pilipino finds happiness in the constant company of his friends and family:

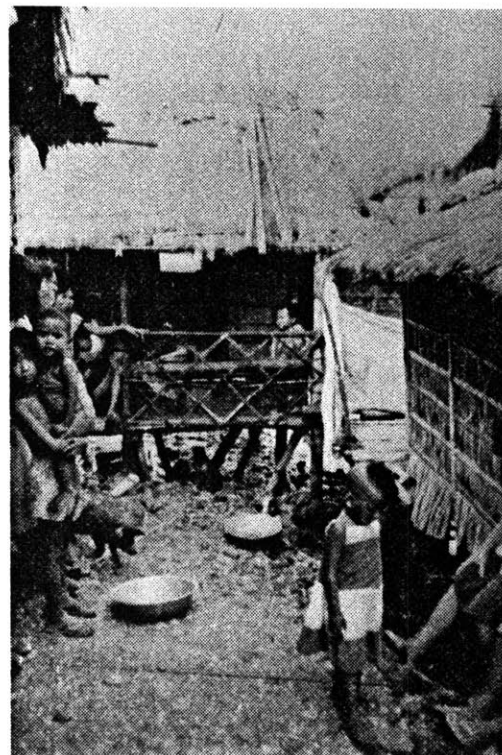
Family members... prefer doing things together. Intrahousehold privacy is either a myth to them, or at least of much lower priority than close family ties." [22]

According to Dr. Mataragnon:

[Pilipinos are] a polychromic people, meaning that they like to do many different activities in one place. They

are not particular about entertaining in the living room, eating in the dining room, or sleeping in one's own room ... Modular structures - rooms fixed in size and purpose - are therefore not as practical as undefined spaces made flexible with lightweight partitions. [23]

The distinction between the functional use of rooms in most houses around Alaminos is ambiguous. Without furnishing, rooms bear

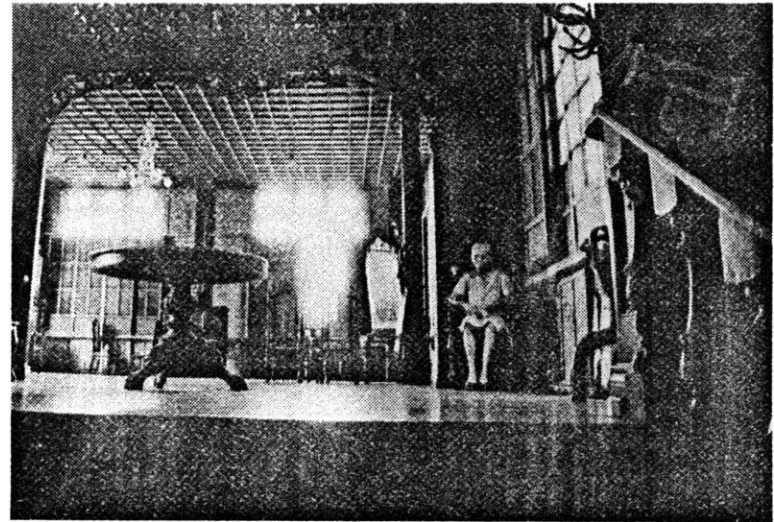


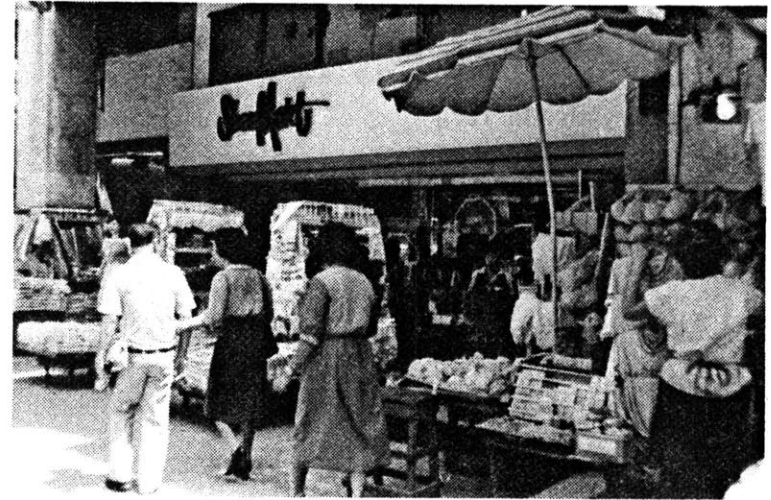
little difference. Thin partitions provide a visual barrier for particularly intimate activities, such as changing clothes or making love, but otherwise doors remain open between spaces. The use of a space changes by group consensus, with little concern for territoriality. The *sala* or living room by day may be covered with mats and sleeping bodies at night, a practice lowland Pilipinos consider congenial. Pilipinos emphasize interpersonal contact in the use and articulation of space. In the absence of physical devices to limit intimacy, social norms are set up as substitutes. A visitor is greeted at the boundary of the property, often signified by a gate, and escorted into the private territory. Still, the house is often "a transient domain of almost everyone, and it is often difficult to distinguish ownership and privacy from neighborliness and communality." [24]

The Pilipino preference for flexible space does not result in empty space. Any wasted space is *sayang* or "regrettable, a pity". Underutilized space is considered *sayang*. Architecturally

overdefined spaces are considered *sayang* also, for their use is limited. The interior of Pilipino homes is often described as cluttered, but even when there are few pieces of furniture, they are arranged to possess the room. The Pilipino harmonizes an emphasis on interpersonal contact with functional needs by placing greater importance on furnishing than architectural definition. This merging of function and form reveals a strong sense of pragmatism in resolving spatial issues.

Neal M. Oshima, Philippine Ancestral Houses.





Realism

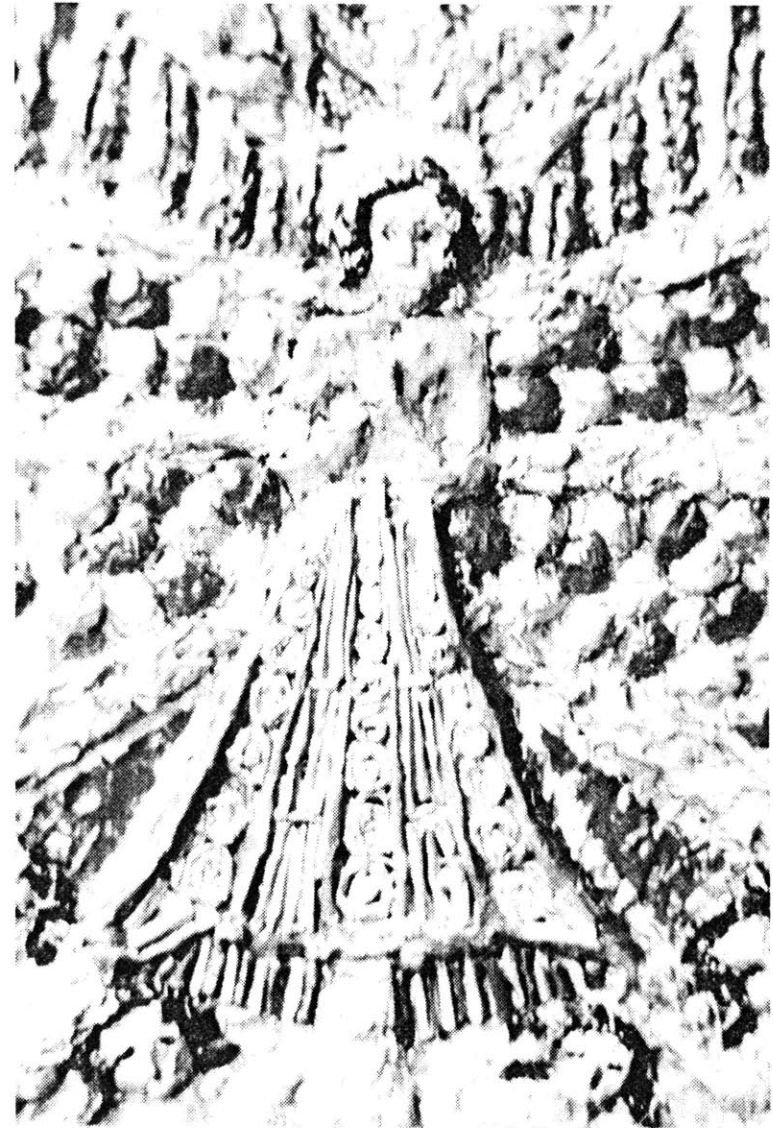
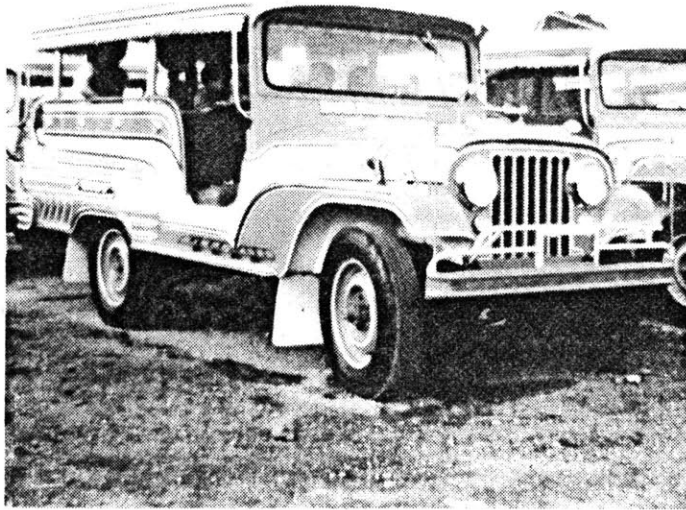
The Pilipino has a very practical mind. Harmonizing devices are used consciously to soften hard reality. The concrete nature of Tagalog demonstrates this realism. It is based on roots which describe concrete things in nature and life. These roots are modified into nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives by affixation. Other languages have modified to an extent that the stem is often embedded in a deep rooted derivation from ancient languages. In Tagalog, the root is always present in the same form as its origin. For example, the stem that relates "chair" and "to sit" is not obvious in English. In Tagalog, *upuan* means chair, and *umupo* means to sit. The root *up* is clear. [25]

The equivalent of an abstract noun in English is a concrete collective noun in Tagalog. For example, "magnitude" in English results of a concrete stem *dami*, meaning "an amount, a quantity", and the affixation *ka - an, ka - han*, which refers to "a collection".

The result is *kadamihan*, or literally, "a collection of amounts". The affix *ka -an, ka - han* applies equally to nouns like *bato*, or "rock", to make *kabatoan*, or a "rock heap, or rocky place". A concrete thing is used to refer to something abstract by metaphorical association.

Quality is also expressed by an increased quantity of a concrete thing. "Whiteness" is an increased quantity of the real phenomena "white". "Whiteness" is expressed by the affix of quantity and the root *puti* to form *kaputian*. "Goodness" results of the concrete *buti* ("good" as in "the common good") and affixation to form *kabutihan*.

Pilipino aesthetics are related to the concrete perception of quality. The Pilipino responds to very real aspects of beauty - color, rhythm, and light. Quality is inherent in everything, and can only be increased by increasing the number of whatever possesses the quality. To increase beauty, one increases the quantity. Mercado believes this correlation underlies the multiples in



rhythmic variation and bright hues in floral motifs common in folk art. [26] Architecture reflects clearly the merging of holism, the mechanisms by which it is attained, and the realism which governs it's construction in a concrete aesthetic.

Endnotes

[8] This analysis is based on the study of Pilipinos living in the lowlands, generally meaning south to central Luzon where Alaminos is located. The distinction is important because regional differences are so great.

[9] Leonard Mercado, S.V.D., "Filipino(sic) Thought," *Philippine Studies* 20, No. 2, 1972, 230.

[10] George M. Guthrie, Fortunata M. Azores, et. al., *The Psychology of Modernization in the Rural Philippines*, Quezon City, 1971, 7.

[11] *Op. Cit.*, 230.

[12] Walden F. Bello, Alfonso de Guzman II, *Modernization: It's Impact in the Philippines VI*, Quezon City, 1969, 121.

[13] This imprecision is in the manner of speech, not in terminology for concrete things. Many things are described by very precise terms, as, for instance, all the forms of rice and ways to grow and prepare it.

[14] Leonardo N. Mercado, S.V.D., *Applied Filipino(sic) Philosophy*, Tacloban City, 1977, p. 19.

[15] Walden F. Bello, Alfonso de Guzman II, eds., *Modernization; It's Impact in the Philippines VI*, Quezon City, 1969, 13.

[16] Frank Lynch, Alfonso de Guzman II, *Four Readings on Philippine Values*, Quezon City, 1973, 9.

[17] *Ibid.*, 11.

[18] *Ibid.*, 11.

[19] Bienvido Lumbea, "Poetry of the Early Tagalogs", *Philippine Studies* 16, No. 4, 1968, 241.

[20] Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture*, Garden City, 1977, 91.

[21] Lynch, 13.

[22] Rita H. Mataragnon, "Psychological Issues in Public Housing", 1982, 3.

[23] *Ibid.*, 3.

[24] F. Landa Jocano, Bangalese Alsaybar, "Cultural Concepts of Some Housing Needs Among Filipinos," *Ekistics* 234, 1975, 317.

[25] Mercado, "Filipino (sic) Thought," 230.

[26] Mercado, *Applied Filipino (sic) Philosophy*, 13.

III. ARCHITECTURE



III. ARCHITECTURE

Architecture in the Philippine context has as complex a relationship to nature and society as man does. Holism dominates the overall organization of the Philippine environment. Architectural elements are used to symbolize deference, as a mediating presence, or to euphemistically diminish barriers between the man-made and natural world. At the same time, Philippine architecture is a realistic response to climatic constraints.

Extensions

A personalistic attitude towards nature persists today, and extends into attitudes towards architecture. The natural environment is considered well beyond man's control and requires negotiation with nature to assure survival:

The pre-Spanish Filipinos (sic) believed in spirits, *diwatas* and *anitos*, dwelling in rivers, mountains, towns, and seas. Some were thought to be evil, others benevolent, but in any case, all of them needed to be appeased by ceremonies and sacrifices. With the

coming of Christianity, the veneration of saints has replaced the *maganito* rituals. And so now we have specific devotions for specific favors: thus a saint for finding lost objects, another saint for finding a good husband, still another for really impossible, hopeless cases. [27]

A house therefore is like a human being. It must be assured a good life in exchange for the shelter it provides. Pilipinos say *Nakakapahinga ang bahay*, or "the house must breathe."

Housebuilding required numerous rites. Jocano says

the central value of rural life - the desire to be in harmony with nature for good fortune - apparently have tremendous influence on the orientation of houses and settlements.

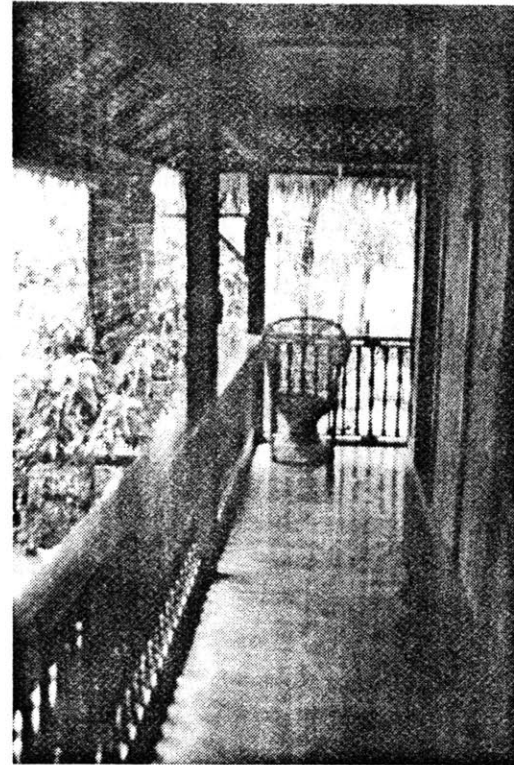
Concerns for the proximity of water, transportation, and other services are secondary. [28]

The first concern in siting a house is that it faces out towards open space so breezes may pass freely through it. Otherwise, the house will feel *tampo*, or bad, and misfortune will befall the owner. Sites along banks and streams are considered lucky. A house built facing into a mountain or foothill is extremely bad luck. The north

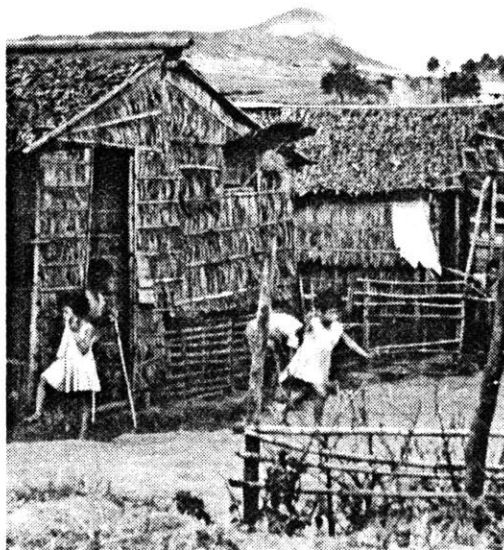
and east winds bring good luck also, while the southern and western winds bring disease and malaise. Sites must also be checked for their "heat". Cool places, *singaw*, are preferred. This means few or no environmental spirits live there. Hot or *mainit* sites are dangerous, for in building the house, one is meddling in the unseen abodes of the *anitos* and *diwatas*. Misfortune will undoubtedly ensue.

If it is necessary to build on or near a hot site, rituals are performed to exorcise the evil spirits. Salt was used to neutralize evil forces. Coins, wine, brass, the blood of a pig or chicken, and other paraphernalia were buried beneath the four posts of the house to keep them strong against mischievous and malicious spirits. Today, the ritual house blessing by a Catholic priest commonly serves the same function. In Manila's slums, black and white crosses are found inscribed on the posts and walls of houses.

The materials of a house also have spiritual significance. In a house of bamboo, the "eyes" must be carefully placed so they do



not stare at one another. Knot holes in wooden boards are feared as "devil's eyes", or the home of the *batibat* monster which brings death by suffocating the sleeping household. Knots in the posts of houses are carefully smoothed and placed facing outwards when the house is built, for the tree was a living thing killed in order for



the house to be built. If it faced inwards, death might visit.

Timber and bamboo were carefully placed parallel to one another. If they were placed perpendicular to each other, death would occur. Death is symbolized by the crossing directions, each cutting the other off. To pit the opposing directions against one

another is symbolic of disagreement and discord. Wood, like any other being, should peacefully follow the direction of its neighbors and be in accord with them. [29]

A house is born in a time of good or ill fortune. The horoscope of house building reveals the fortune of a house and its occupants built at a certain time of the year. Since Spanish times, this has been called an *almanaque* or *lunario*.

There are four phases of house building. Each phase includes three months. A man's fortune is determined by the month in which he chooses to build his house. The fortunes fall in two categories: harmony with one's fellow men, and harmony with nature. Good fortune in both respects brings wealth and a fulfilling life. Misfortune is the absence of one or both these valued aspects, such as drought, poor harvest, or jealousy and hatred in the family and community which results in premature death or disease. Fortune and the direction of the wind at a given time are directly linked.

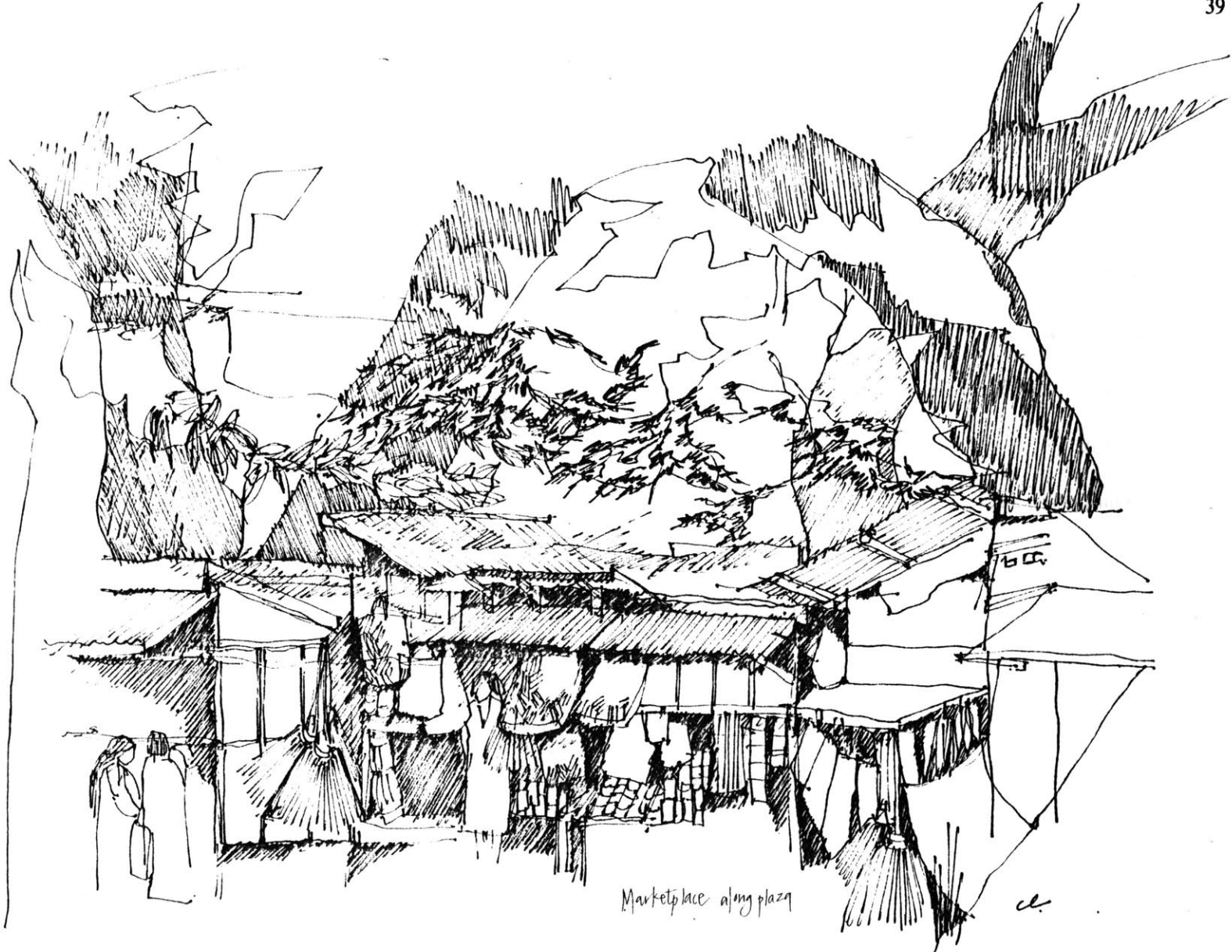
The first phase, the phase of the south, falls in January, February and March. A January house is a "house of abundance." Resident will have good harvests and constant employment. Building in February ensures long friendships and material comfort through friendly alliance. March however, brings ill winds. The March house is a house full of jealousy, hatred, betrayal, and sudden death.

The second phase is full of good fortune. The east winds bless this time of year. April houses are "houses of life," promising longevity to its owners. A May house is a "house of wealth," and June building brings good tidings.

The north is the direction of the third phase, which begins in July with the "house of wealth and inheritance." The owners will receive a great inheritance from unknown benefactors, friends, acquaintances, relatives, and even their parents. The August house is called the "house of gifts and useful things." One will be blessed with kind and friendly neighbors who will help assure economic

security. The September house is not so fortunate. It is a house of misfortune and disease, prone to all kinds of bad luck.

The fourth and final phase is the phase of the west. It is a very unlucky time. October building brings misfortune to children whose lives will be ruined by untimely marriage and the other hardships of poor planning. November is the time of "fear, fright, and death." One crisis will follow the other until the owner's life is destroyed. Among these disasters are crimes, accidents, and fighting. It is the most dangerous month in which to build. Only December offers a little respite. The December house is the "house of mercy, religion, travel, and righteousness," promising its owners a life rich with religious experiences and opportunities for much travel. Most importantly, the owners will live righteously, in harmony with man and nature. [30] Pilipinos also create a sense of connectedness and harmony in the arrangement and ornamentation of their homes.



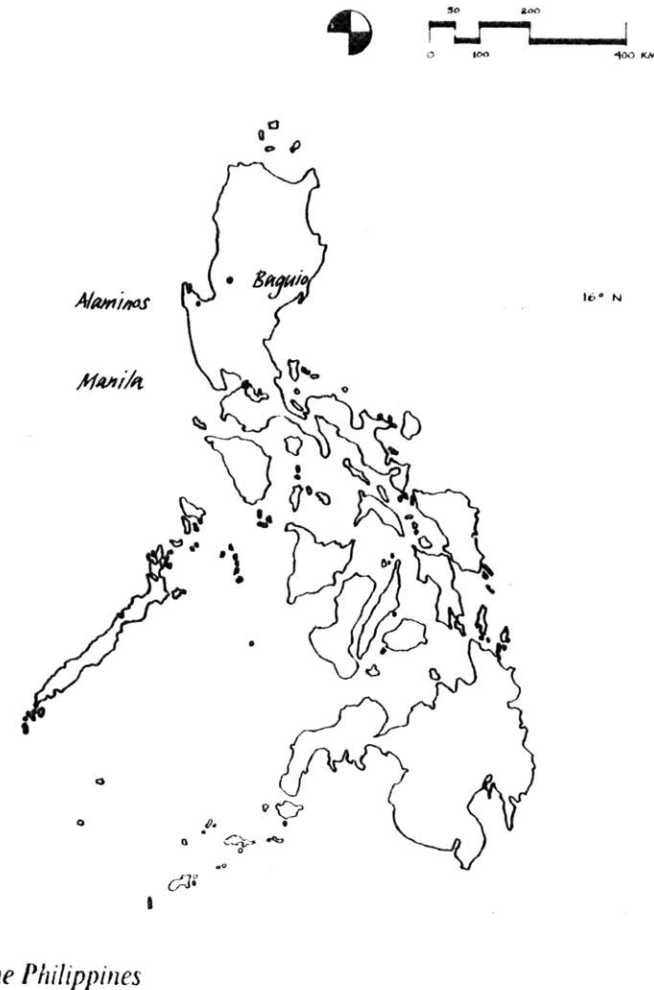
Marketplace along plaza

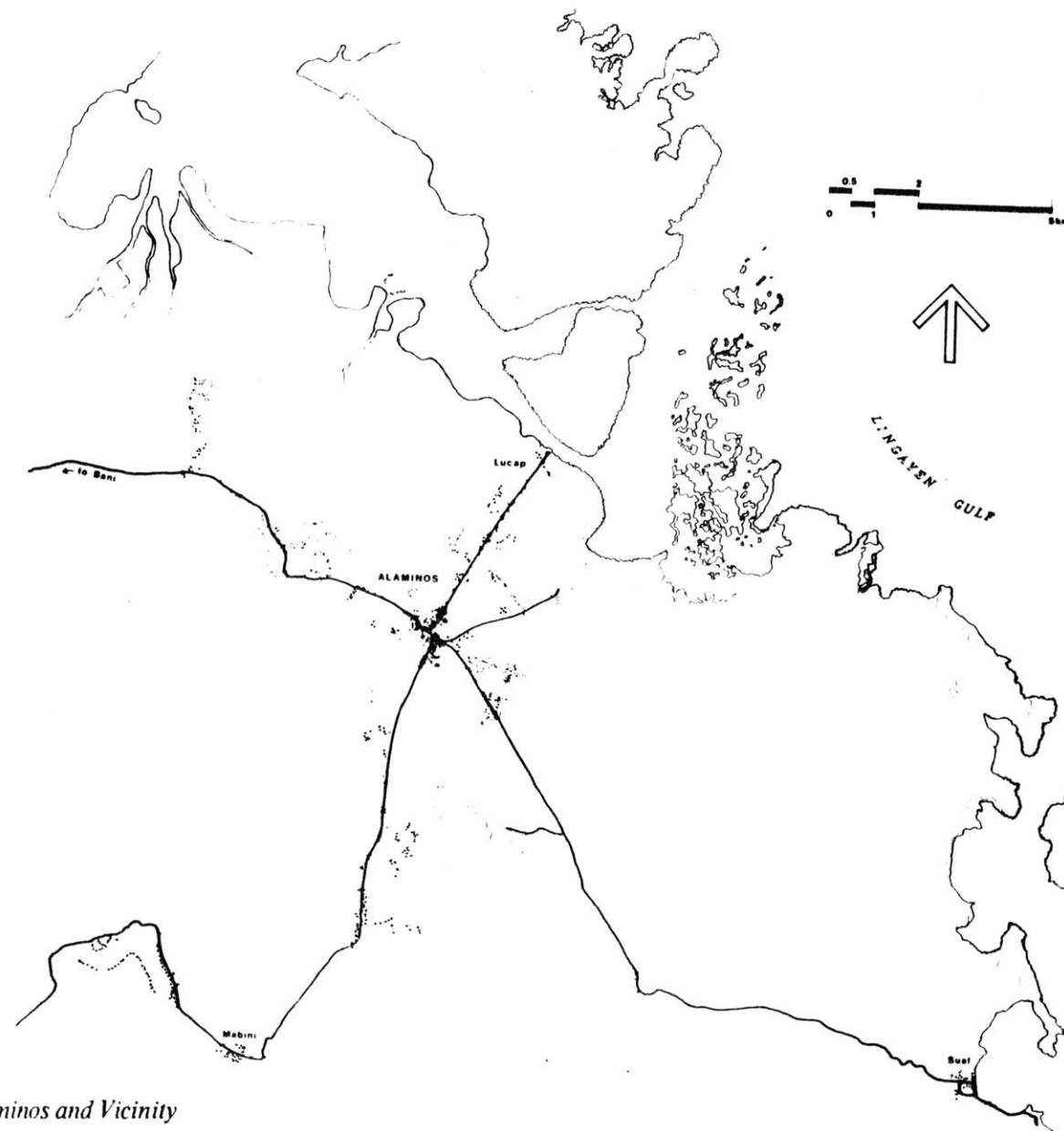
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Case Study

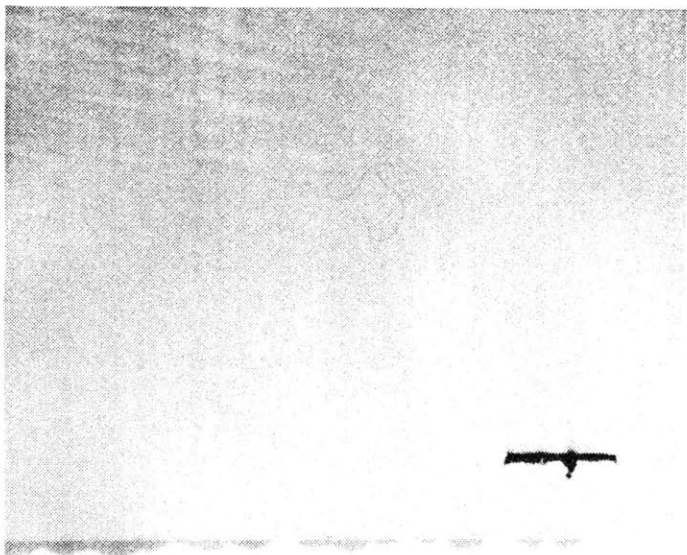
Background

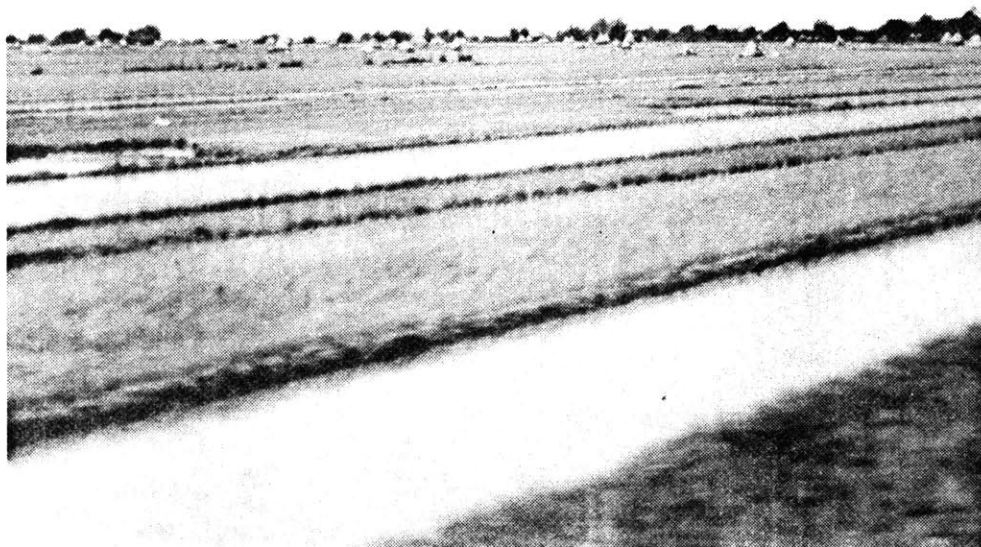
In July of 1982, I went to the town of Alaminos to document the architecture there and in the nearby *barangays* of Lucap and Mabini. Alaminos is in the province of Pangasinan, which is in northwestern Luzon. It is 257 kilometers north of Manila, the capital of the Philippines, and 45 kilometers west of Lingayen, the capital of Pangasinan. Only 4.8 kilometers away are the Hundred Islands, a small archipelago of coral islands in the Lingayen Gulf and a popular tourist attraction. The lush, brilliant greens of rice fields surround the town, nestled in a landscape that is otherwise wide, flat, and wet. Nowhere does the land rise above 20 meters from sea level, though limestone hills up to 200 meters high surround the coastal plain and are visible in the distance. Typhoon rains flood Alaminos yearly. In addition, Alaminos is accustomed





Alaminos and Vicinity





to earth tremors. Fifteen incidents were reported between 1966 and 1975 alone.

In 1763, two bands of homeless people met on the coast of the Lingayen Gulf. Both groups were fleeing Spanish persecution when they met accidentally in the place we know as Lucap. One

band was from Zambales, to the south, and the other was from western Pangasinan. They decided to form a free community, call Casboran or Baley.

By gentlemen's agreement, the two leaders decided to alternate their rule. In 1798, the settlement happily began to build



a church and convent. But the church building continued beyond one term, and Suyang, the leader from Zambales, refused to step down before its completion. Jose Perez, the leader from Western Pangasinan, summoned a man called Palaris, who led refugees in a raid on the village. They razed the town as villagers fled into the

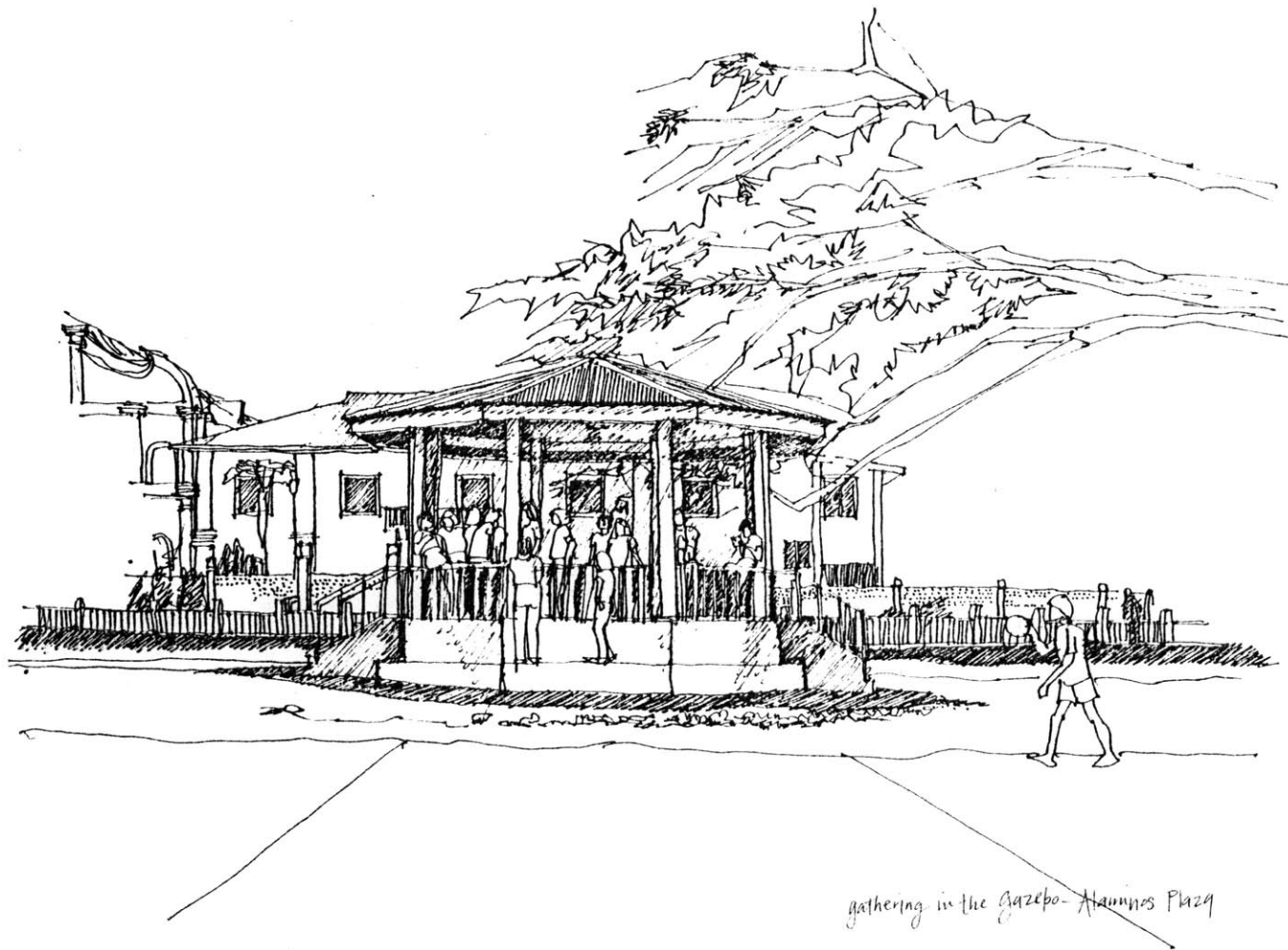
surrounding countryside. By 1775, a new settlement called Zarapsap was growing rapidly where Casboran had been. By 1860, the Spanish noticed its prosperity and sent Zarapsap a governor. The town was renamed Alaminos in 1887 in his honor.

Today, the main development goal in Alaminos is to increase

agriculture and related activities. Secondly, the town plans to develop commercial and small-industry opportunities for its modernizing people. According to the 1975 census figures, there were 42,496 people living in and around Alaminos. 15.46% of these people live in the town, the remaining 84.56% live in outlying areas called *barangay*. There are 21,259 male inhabitants and 21,337 female inhabitants who reside in a total of 7,820 households. The census also reported the population had been growing at a rate of 9.66% over the five years.

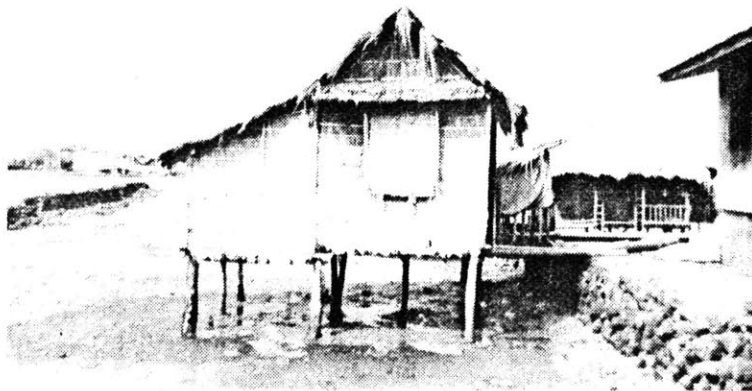
Alaminos is a town in transition. Some inhabitants are farmers who have always lived and worked around Alaminos. Others are professionals with university educations who often have second homes in Manila or another large city. Alaminos offers many opportunities. It is not yet cosmopolitan, but needs a place for a growing number of public and group activities.





Analysis

Pilipinos consider buildings as intrusions on nature. Traditionally, siting a house requires an attitude of deference to assure harmonious relations in the future. The site itself and the building's orientation on the site influence the lives of owners and occupants. The *bahay kubo*, the oldest form of Pilipino house, is a delicate presence that touches the ground only with the ends of



bamboo posts. It appears to hover over the ground, allowing the landscape to continue undisturbed beneath it.

People treat the floor "by turns, (as) a horizontal window, a permanent bed, or a basket." [31] The floor is made of bamboo strips placed slightly apart so that air may circulate up from the





Resting gently on the land.

shaded area below. The house remains well ventilated at night when doors and windows are closed. The floor is springy and makes a comfortable sleeping surface. Raising the floor level ensures a dry home, above the damp and flood prone lowlands. The floor becomes a mediator between the interior and exterior, subtly conducting a direct interchange between the two without denying the integrity of either.

The ground and raised levels differ functionally. Work oriented and informal activities occur on the ground areas during the day. Raised areas are for formal, intimate, generally nighttime uses. The strongest functional distinction is between the upper and lower levels. Rooms are otherwise used for a variety of interchangeable activities. It is as if the land is borrowed during the day and returned to the spirit and natural world at night, when people sleep protected in closed quarters above the land.

The shadow underneath the *bahay kubo* enhances the expression of a hovering mass. The shadow serves to disguise in

darkness the slender poles that support the floor. The first definition is created: a separation of landscape and building by a horizontal plane. This horizontality is itself carefully diminished, which will be discussed later.

There is little difference between the plan organization on the ground level and that of the floor above. A holistic attitude is evident in the organization of spaces, which are conceived as a continuous realm within the bounds of ownership. Functions which require enclosure form clusters in this realm.

Unity in the cluster formation is maintained by proximity and association of repetitive parts to a central focus. Additions and subtractions do not change its character. It has a sensibility shared by the structure of Tagalog, where quality is linked directly to the concrete subject and quantity can change without influencing this relationship.

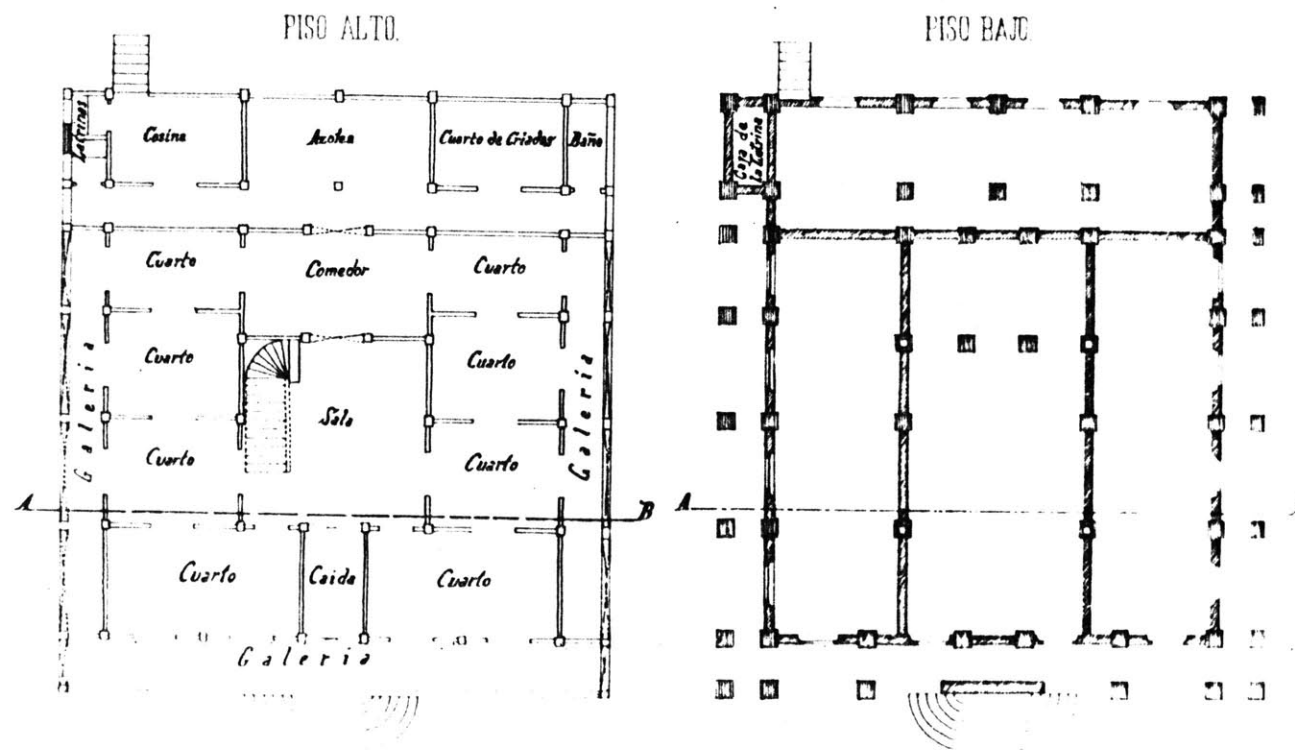
The cluster is formed of linked spaces contained within a larger realm. The space within a space character, when spaces are

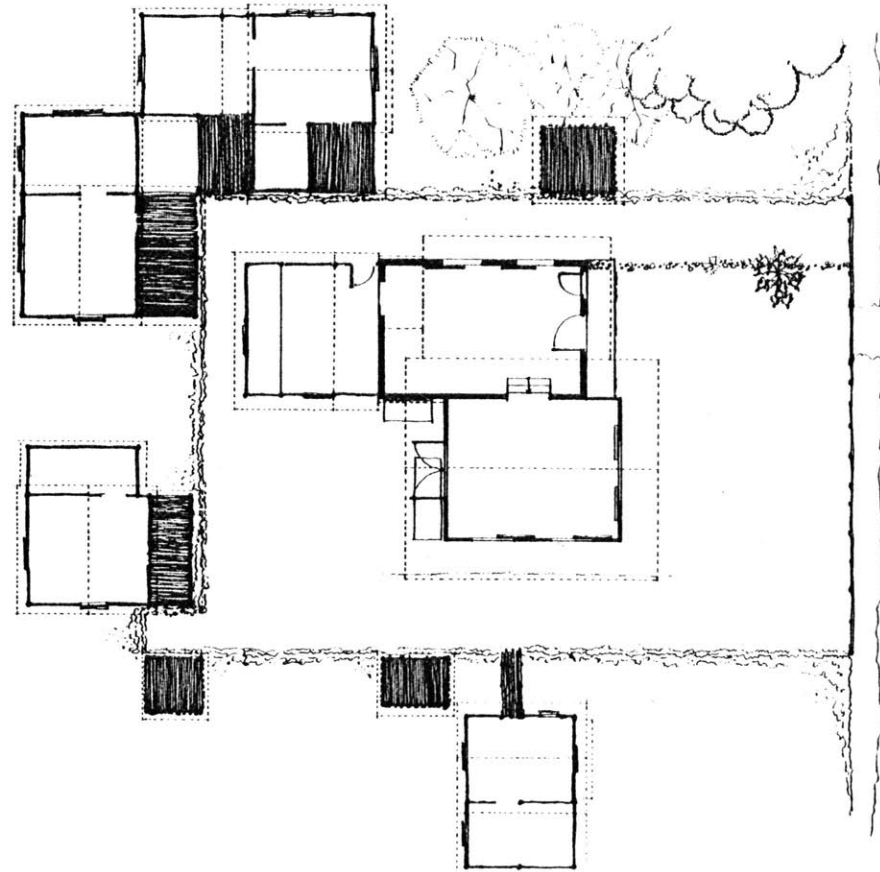


Rabina House, Lucap

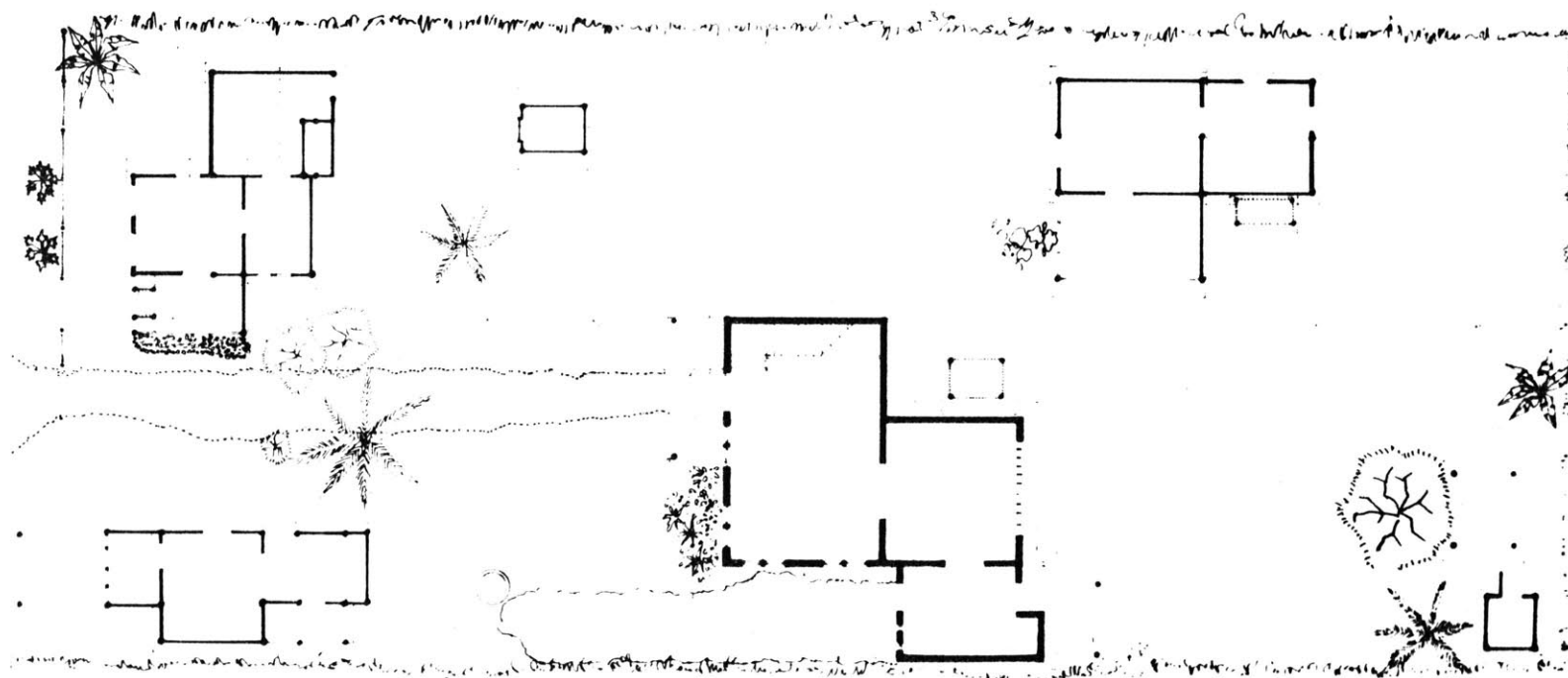
both interior and exterior, creates a pavilion-like quality. The houses in the hamlets of Lucap and Mabini exemplify this arrangement. Houses in Alaminos are generally clustered under one roof in a style called the *bahay na bato*, which is associated with the Spanish influence.

Plan, Spanish House





Plan, Rabina House, Lucap

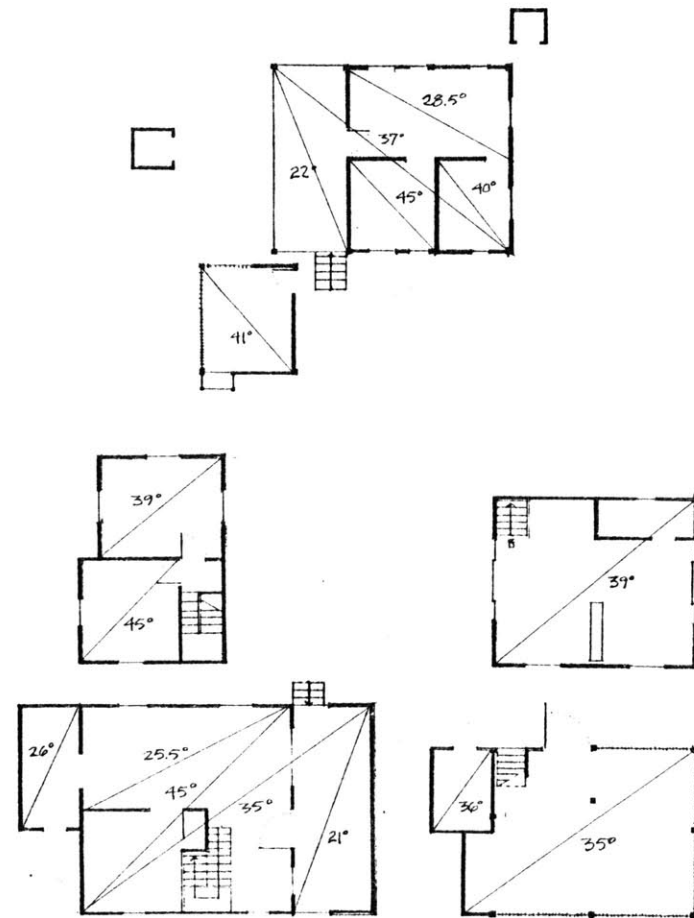


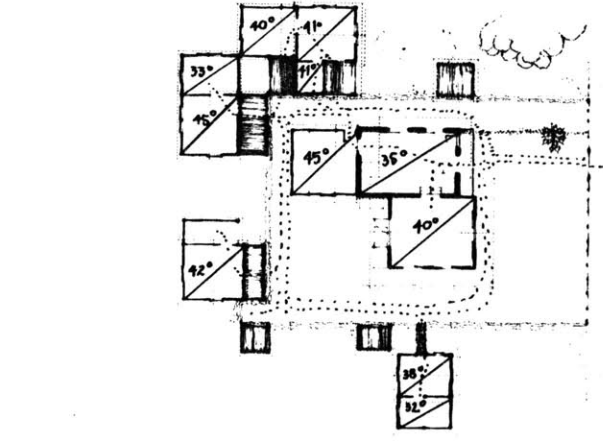
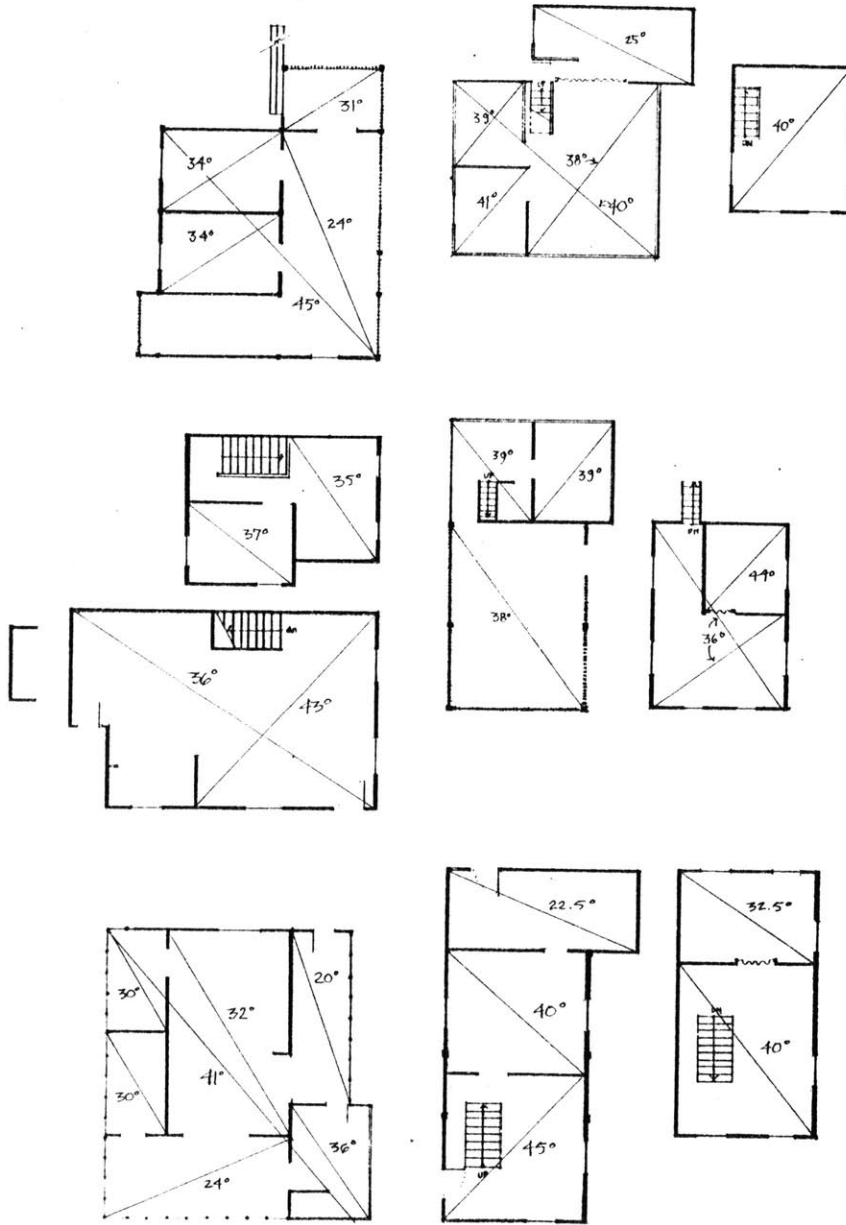
Plan, Santos House, Mabini

Spaces are generally proportioned in plan along a diagonal between 45 and 35 degrees. The near equality of the sides suggests a central focus within the room. The rooms are proportioned between square (*kubo*), and the Golden Section, though the relationship between width, length and height does not fall into a harmonic, arithmetic, or geometric system. There is a system of measurement and proportion based on the human body in Pilipino history, but again, the plans do not seem to be very concerned with this. Relations between rooms and spaces dominate. Most spaces are proportioned like rooms, and accommodate a variety of functions. Some spaces serve as transitional spaces, but never exclusively so. The narrowest spaces average a proportion along a 25 degree angle, these being porch-like areas in front of the more primitive houses. In the *bahay na bato* or Spanish style houses, these narrow areas were internalized and incorporated into the plan of the sala. The only clue to their origin is the separation of this area by a row of columns that support the roof. Horizontal organization is balanced

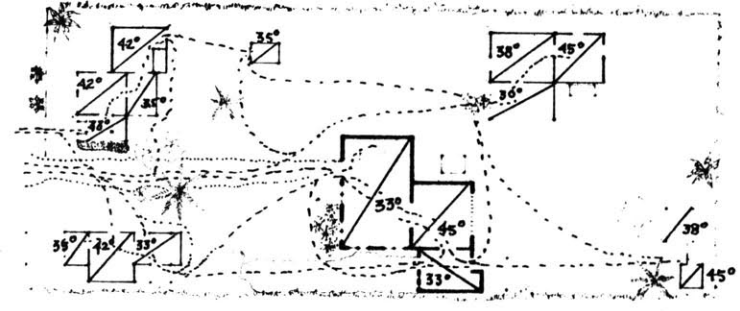
by very high ceiling heights. Rooms heights average between 3 and 3.5 meters. The tall proportions produce natural cooling.

Plans of houses outlying Alaminos from Prof. Geronimo Manahan.

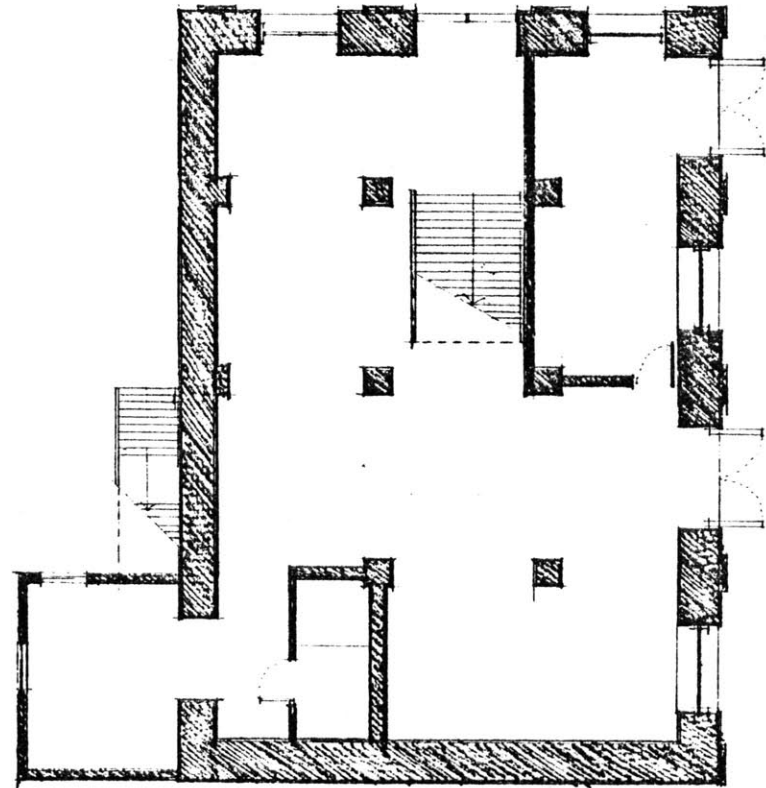
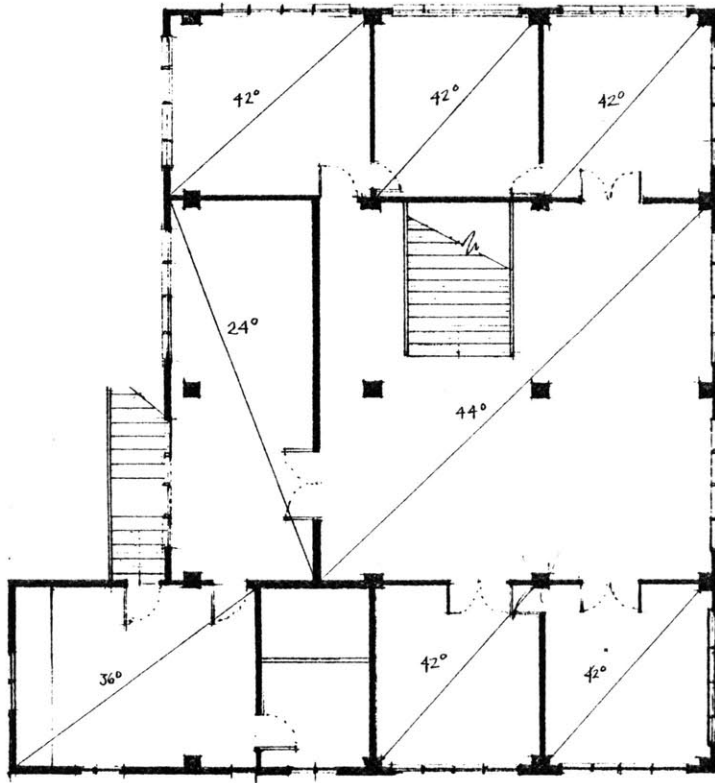




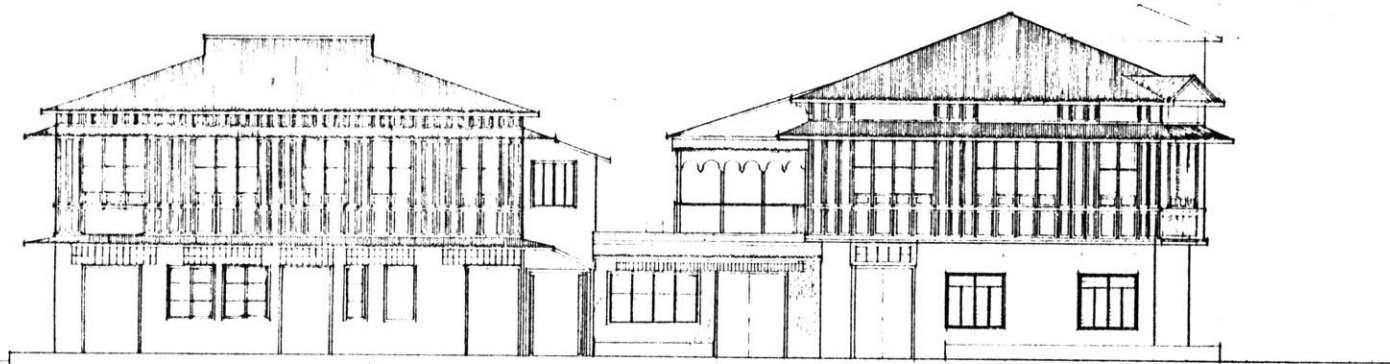
Rabina House, Lucap



Santos House, Mabini



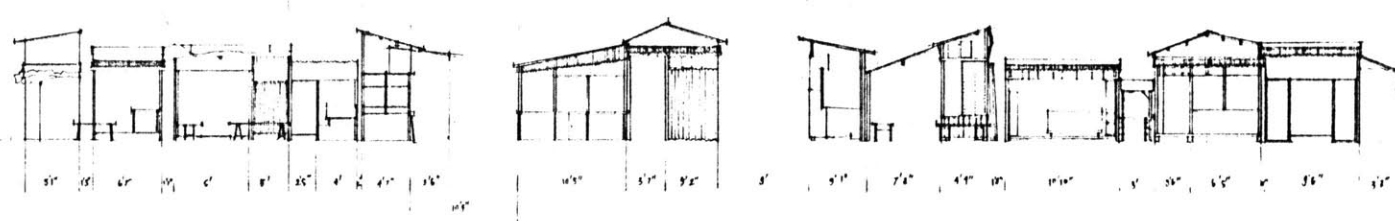
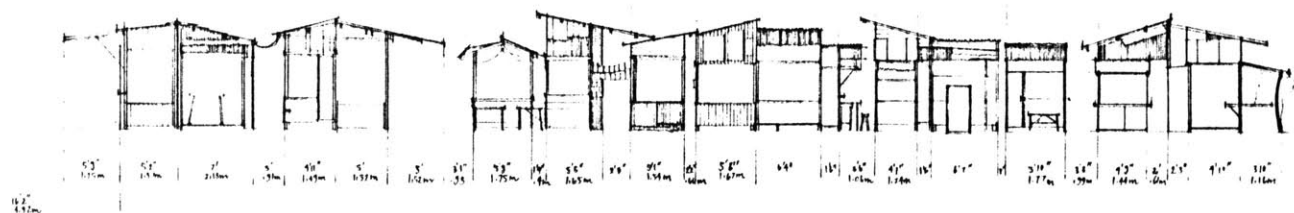
Plan, Pink House



Elevation, Spanish Houses



Elevation, Church and School

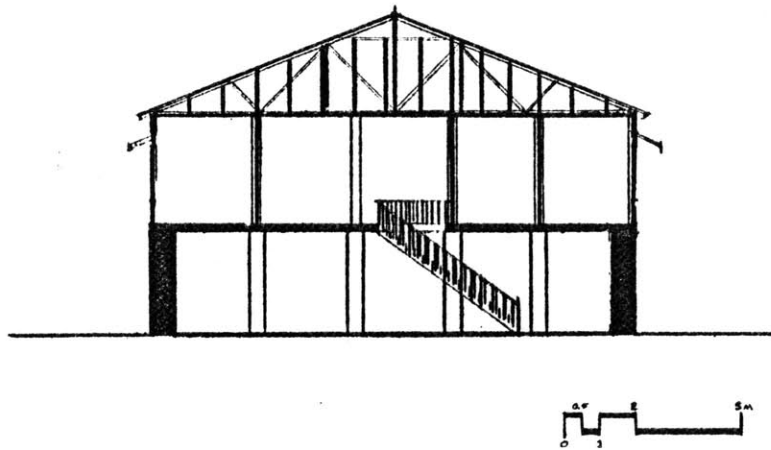


Elevation, Market Buildings

Circulation is implied by the overall arrangement of the rooms. Paths criss-cross the houses in a seemingly random manner, without notable form or definition, determined by the activities taking place. Exterior paths are sometimes marked by rocks or paving patterns, but only on the ground.

Stairways simply link rooms to rooms vertically. In the absence of hallways or passages, stairs are the only physical definition of circulation. Stairways sometimes arrive directly into

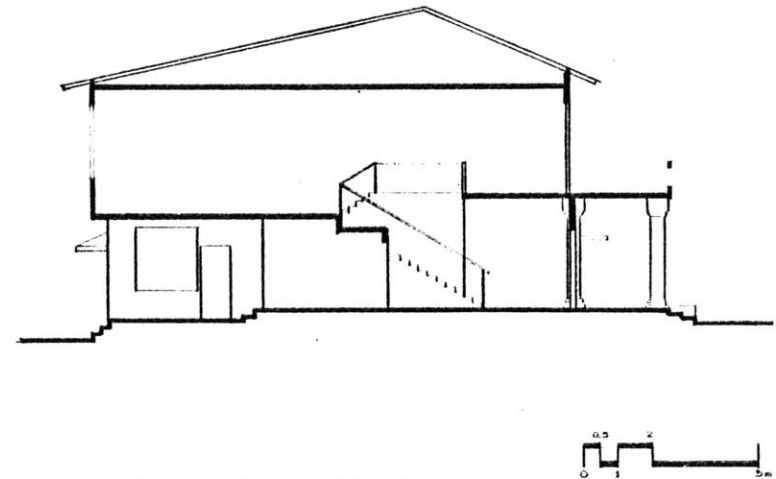
Diagram of Stair Movement



Pink House

the center of the room, an event credited to the Spanish introduction of the open stairwell. The stairway deemphasizes the connection to the ground. For example, the stairs most appreciated display a light, airy feeling, standing freely in space. It was considered a major innovation when one of the early Pilipino architects set the stair in a sunny *zaguan* instead of placing it beside a shadowy wall, which was the usual pattern. [32]

The entrance ritual allows the direct connections between



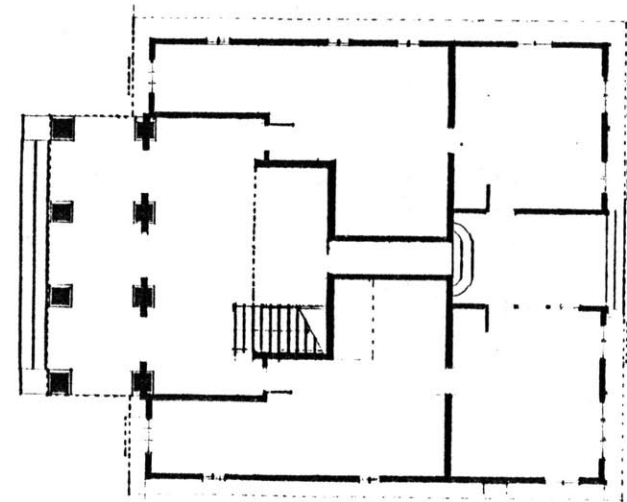
Section, Alaminos Municipal Building

interior and exterior to occur without a direct invasion of privacy. Once one enters the bounds of the property in Mabini and Lucap, one has the choice of several house entrances. In the Municipal building, one enters a room through a portico where the stairs ascend to another room above circled by the entrances to various offices. Only these entrances are locked at night. To enter the Catholic school, one again passes beyond gates to the grounds, then through a huge portal into a space from which the stairs

ascend, to the exterior court beyond, and from the court into various classroom entrances. Privacy seems to be preserved by the ambiguity of these spaces, with their multiple functions and the seeming equality of movement in any direction. Social contact is necessary for the stranger to locate specific or less public places, thus controlling access between public and private places.

Doors accommodate circulation, but do not define it. Doors and windows are means of integrating the interior to the exterior.

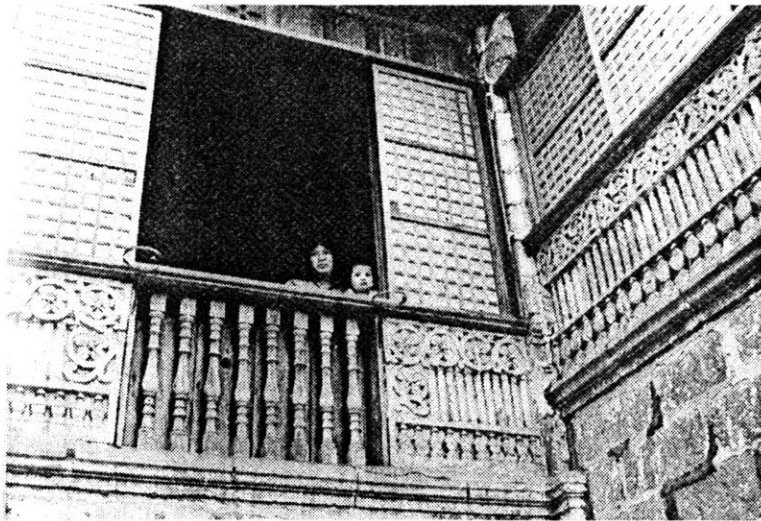
Alaminos Municipal Building



Plan, Alaminos Municipal Building



They give the wall greater permeability and flexibility. Windows are usually operable panels which slide aside, opening virtually the entire wall area. Operable panels sometimes extend to open the building's corners to create a less enclosed feeling. Inhabitants can participate directly with the outside activity from the open edge,



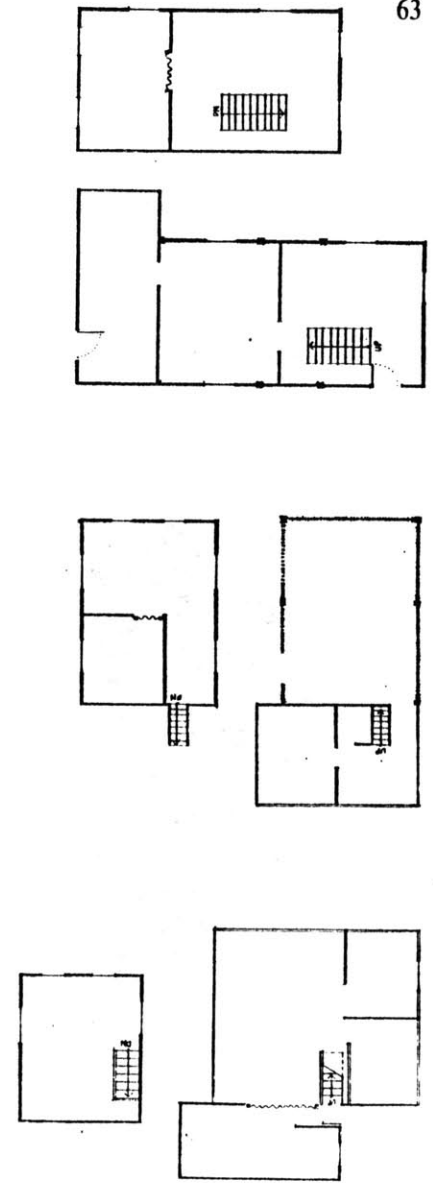
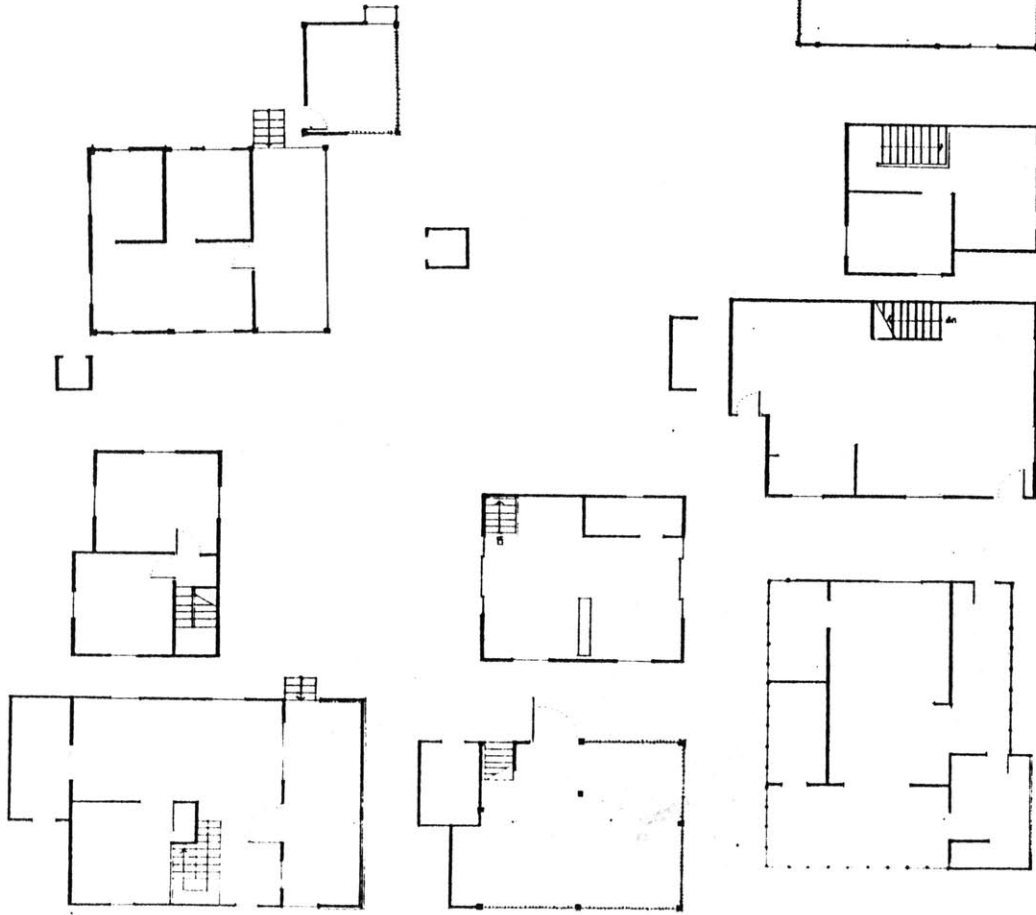
~ Neal M. Oshima, *Philippine Ancestral Houses*.

and view the outside without the severe contrast between interior shade and exterior brightness.

Transparency characterizes the definition between spaces. Walls are as transparent as possible, barely interrupting the continuous plane of the floor. Walls are like screens. They allow



light, air, and human contact to filter through them. The transparency of interior walls make all the activity in the house one, and shared among all those present.



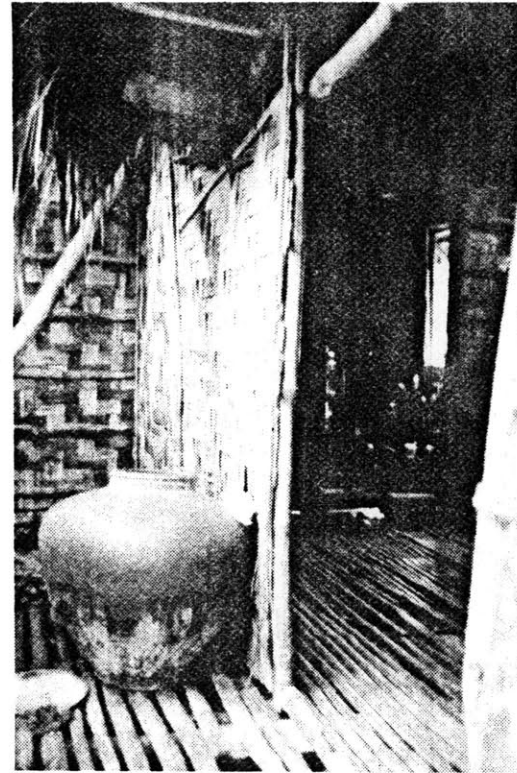
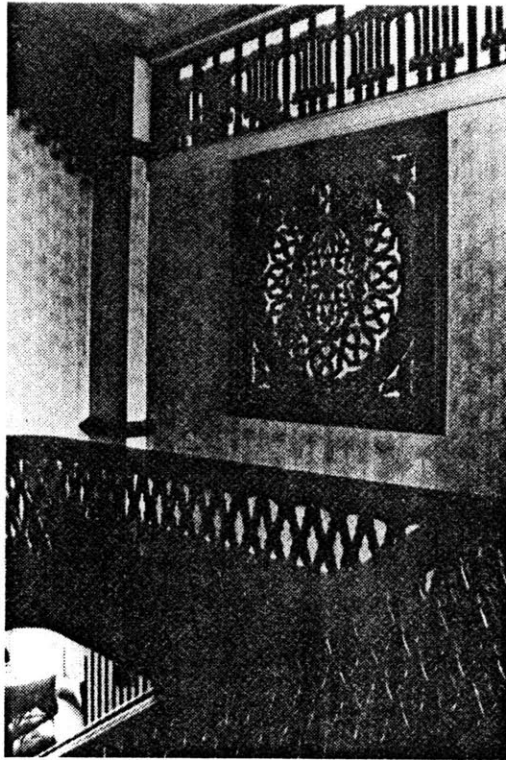
— from Prof. Geronimo Manahan.

The wall is often opaque only for the lower 2 to 2.5 meters, or just above head height. Above is a pierced wood transom or nothing at all. In the *bahay kubo* of Lucap and Mabini, the entire wall area breathes. Although they appear opaque, the woven grasses offer little resistance to breezes. Since visual transparency is

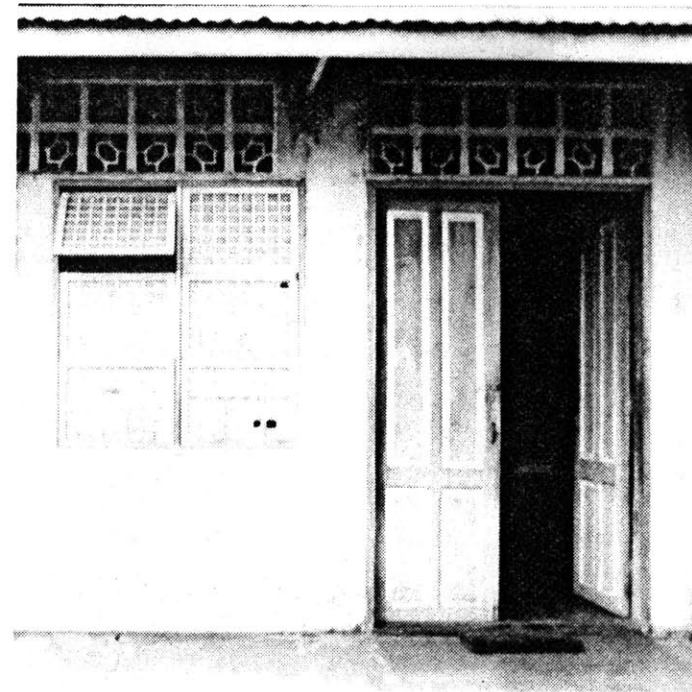
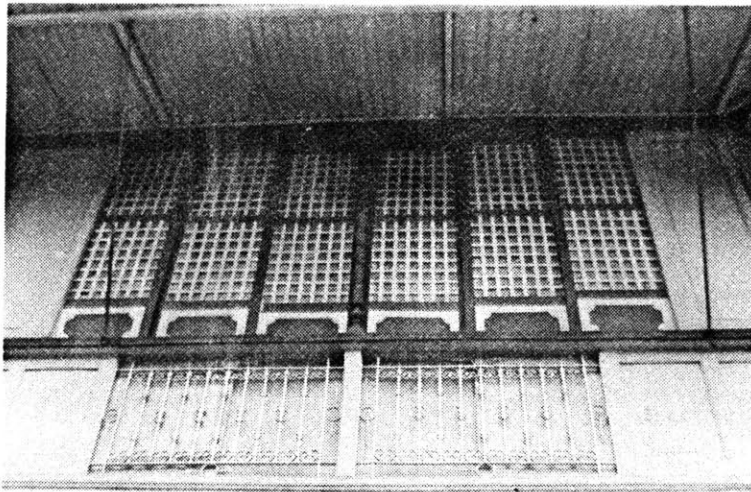
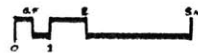
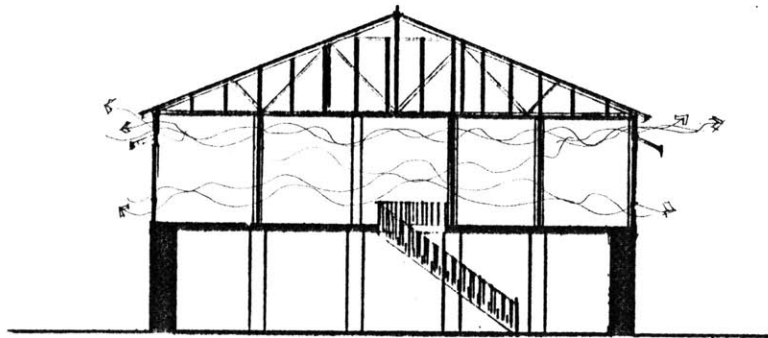
not possible, views link spaces across the plan. Open spaces are aligned so a visual connection penetrates the entire house.

Walls mediate between the opposing desires of coolness and light, air without rain, and dryness without heat. Air can pass through the house even when it is closed to the driving rains of the

-Neal M. Oshima, *Philippine Ancestral Houses.*



wet season. The houses in Alaminos have ornate grillwork or pierced woodwork along the top and bottom of wall sections, with sliding shutters to adjust the amount of ventilation.

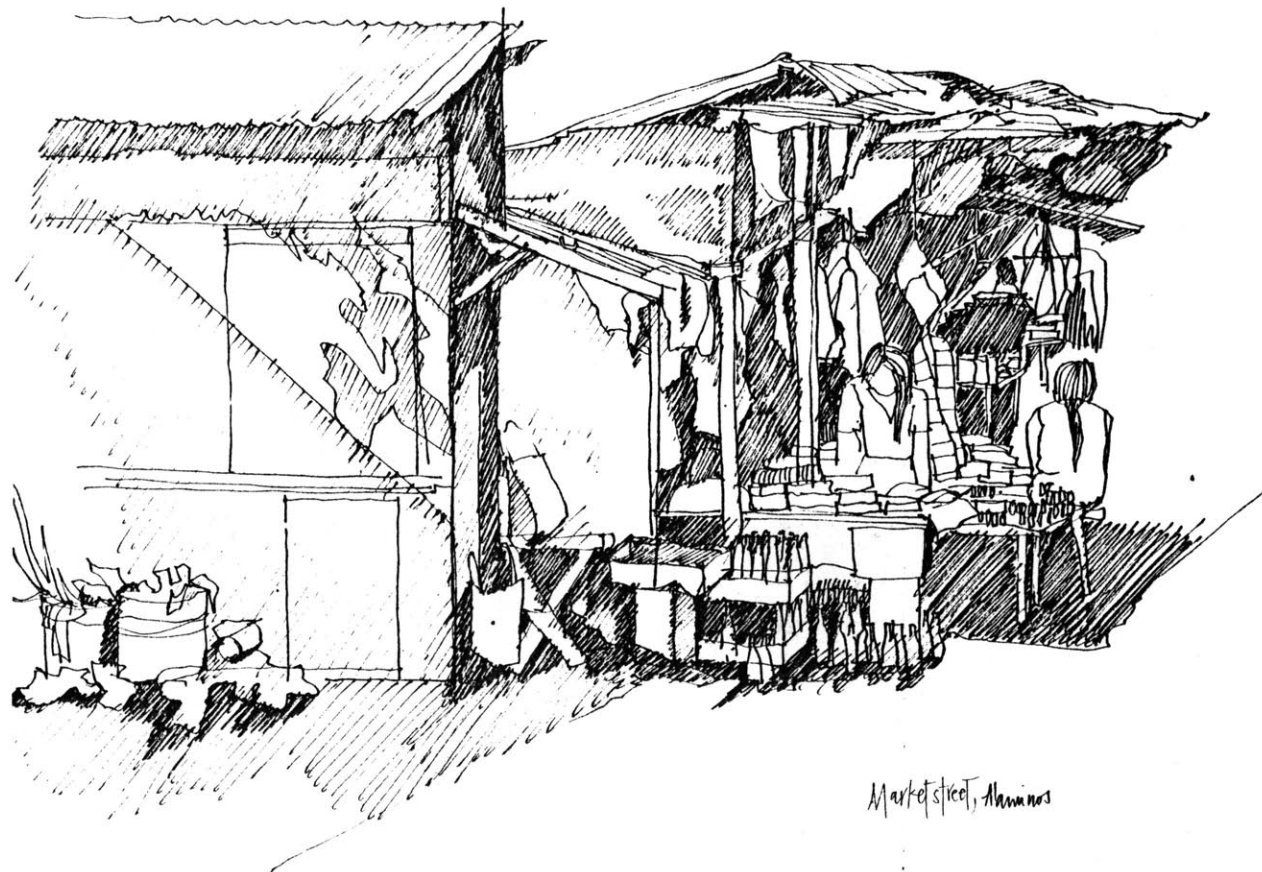


Daylight in the Philippines is strong and direct. Alaminos is situated about 16 degrees north of the equator, and the sun's rays are almost vertical most of the day. Light entering the house directly is intensely hot, and so bright it causes disturbing glare and backlighting. The wall as screen shatters and diffuses the sunlight,

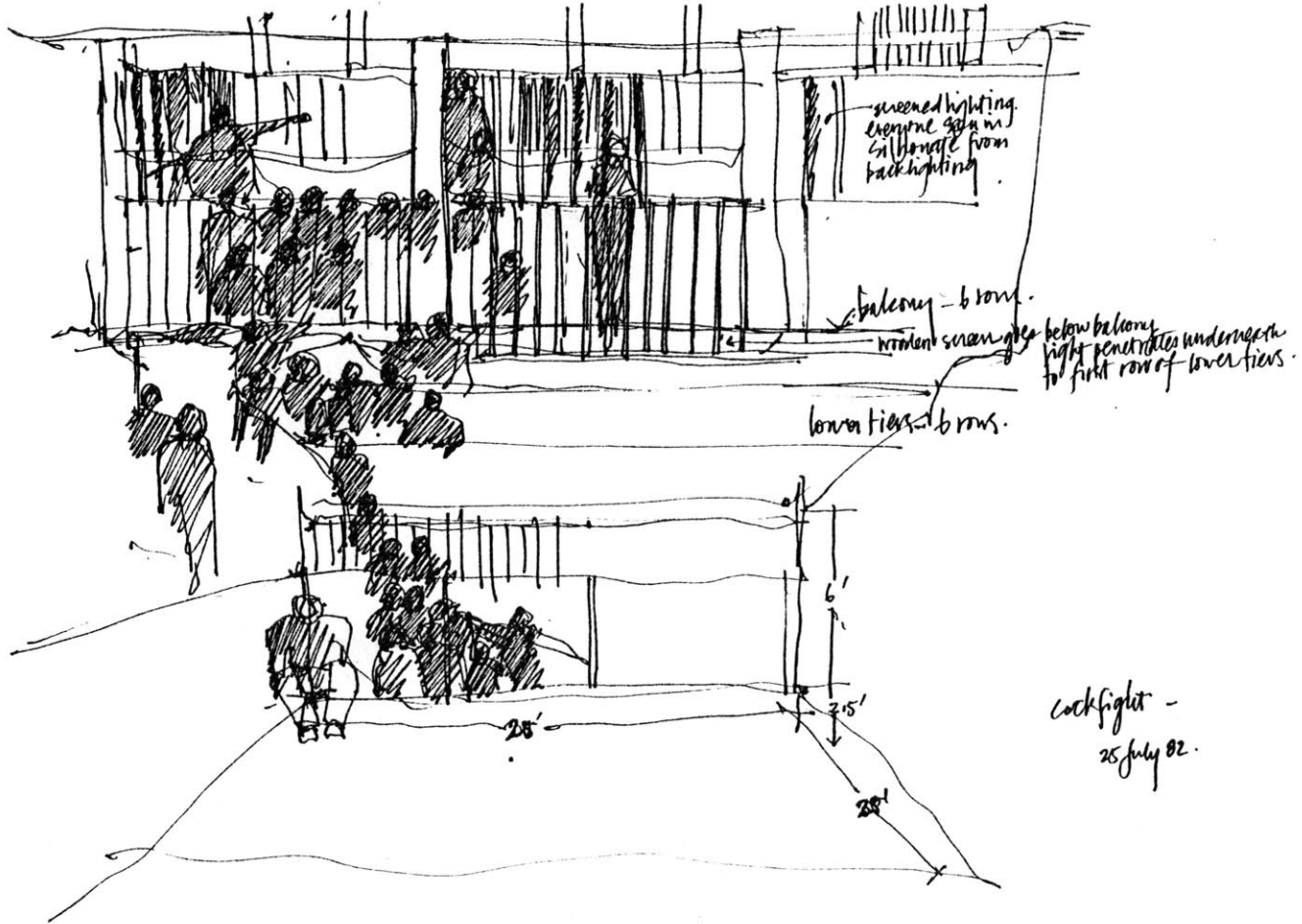


reflecting its brightness indirectly to the interior or filtering it through translucent materials. Walls of louvers or layers of screens exemplify shading and indirect lighting control. A wooden grid with capiz shell infill is a popular window/wall treatment, exemplary of a translucent filter. The capiz is a native mollusk whose top shell is flat, white, translucent, and easily cut and mounted.





Market street, Alaminos

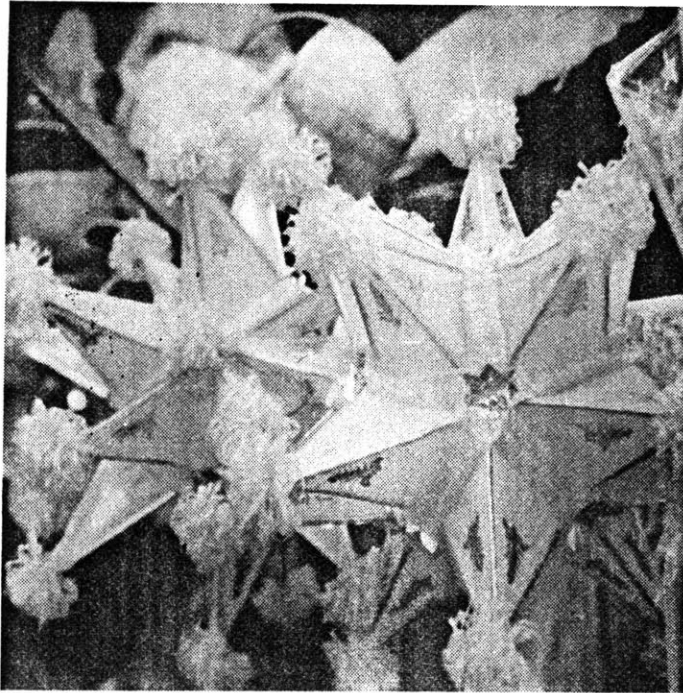


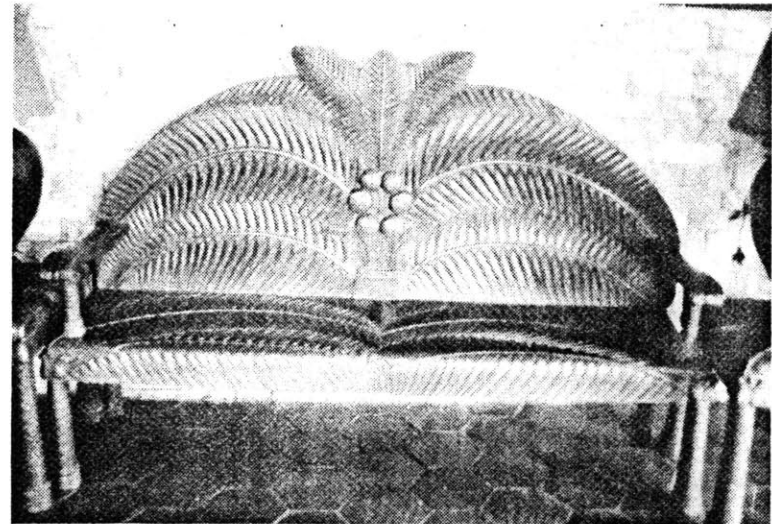
Cockfight -
25 July 82.

The articulation of closure is a gentle language of architectural euphemism. Its objective is dematerialization, to make barriers seem less than their physical reality, and hence, less of an intrusion on the greater landscape. Light and dark are juxtaposed, as are raised or carved areas. Light bouncing off these

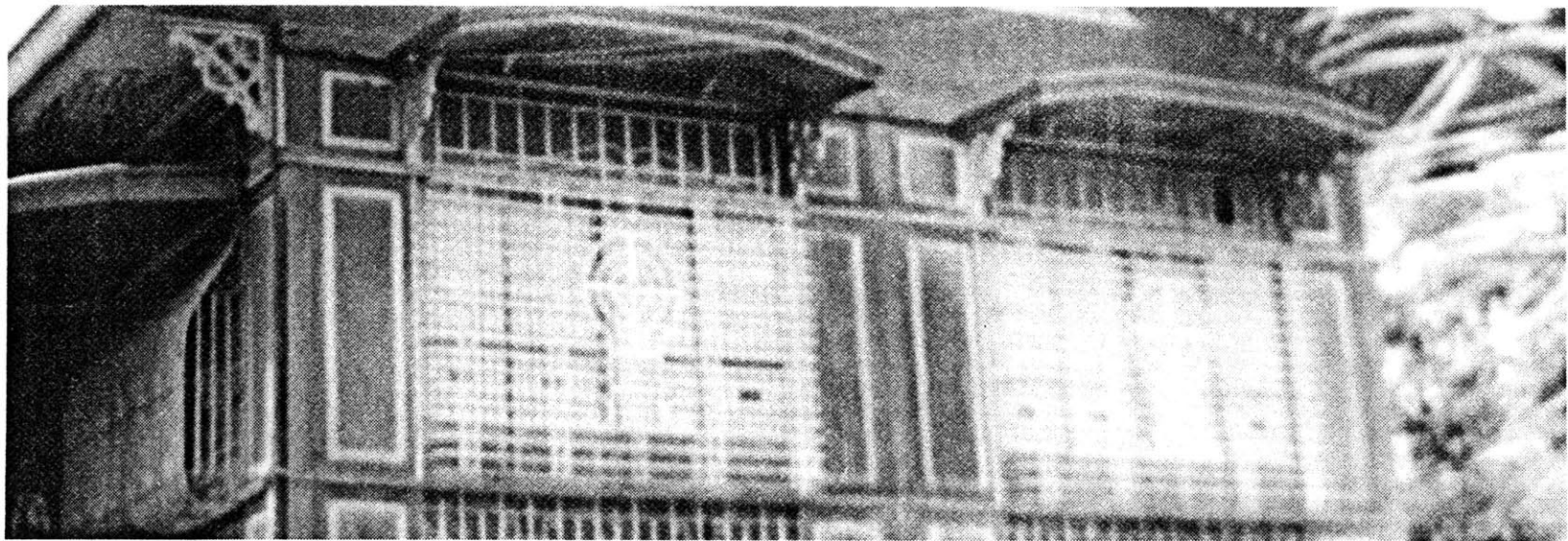
surfaces is shattered. The surface vibrates, appearing ephemeral and unreal. The effect is used judiciously by Pilipinos, as for example, to balance the horizontality of the section organization, and diminish the mass of the wall surfaces. The vibrations create a feeling of transparency where it is not functionally possible.

Transparency in folk art is paralleled in architecture.

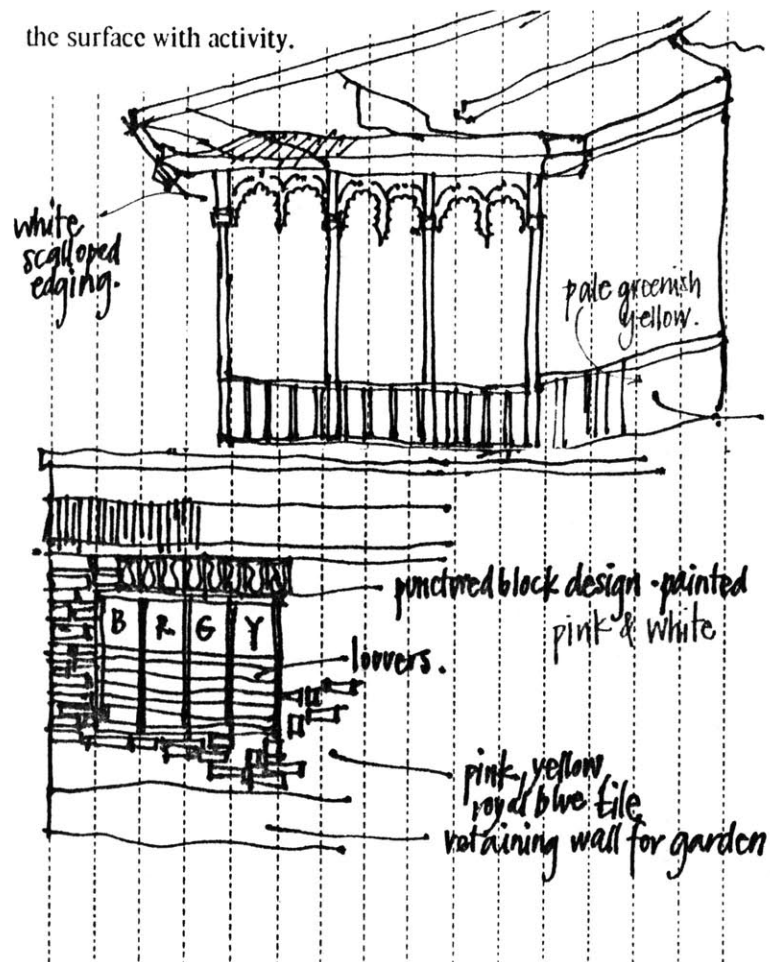




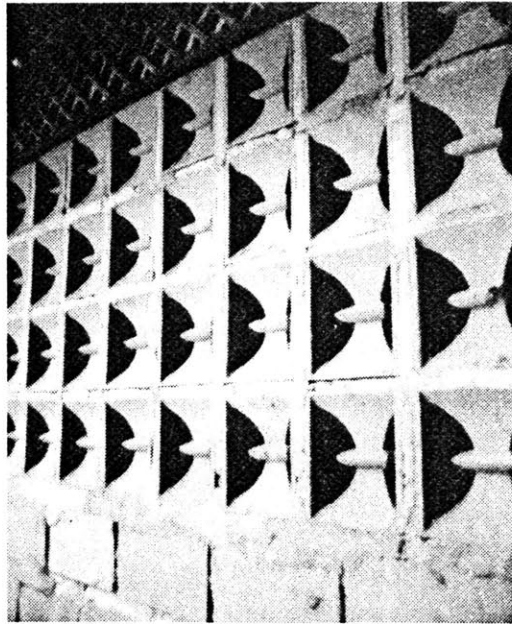
Transparency of surface treatment.



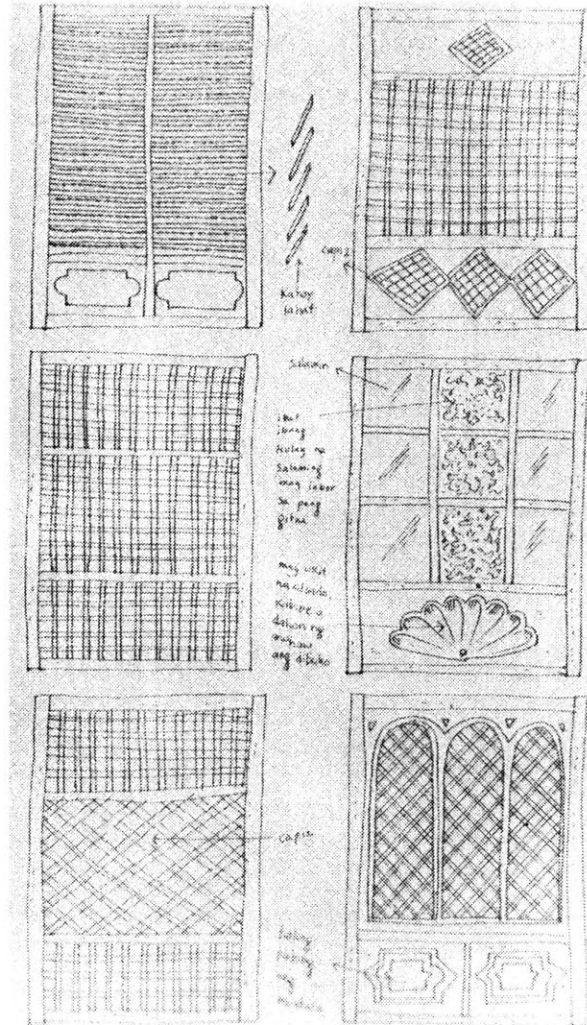
Colors help bring the buildings to life. Whether of concrete or wood, buildings in Alaminos are bright pinks, blues, reds, and yellows. Rarely is a color used alone. Together, they vibrate, filling the surface with activity.



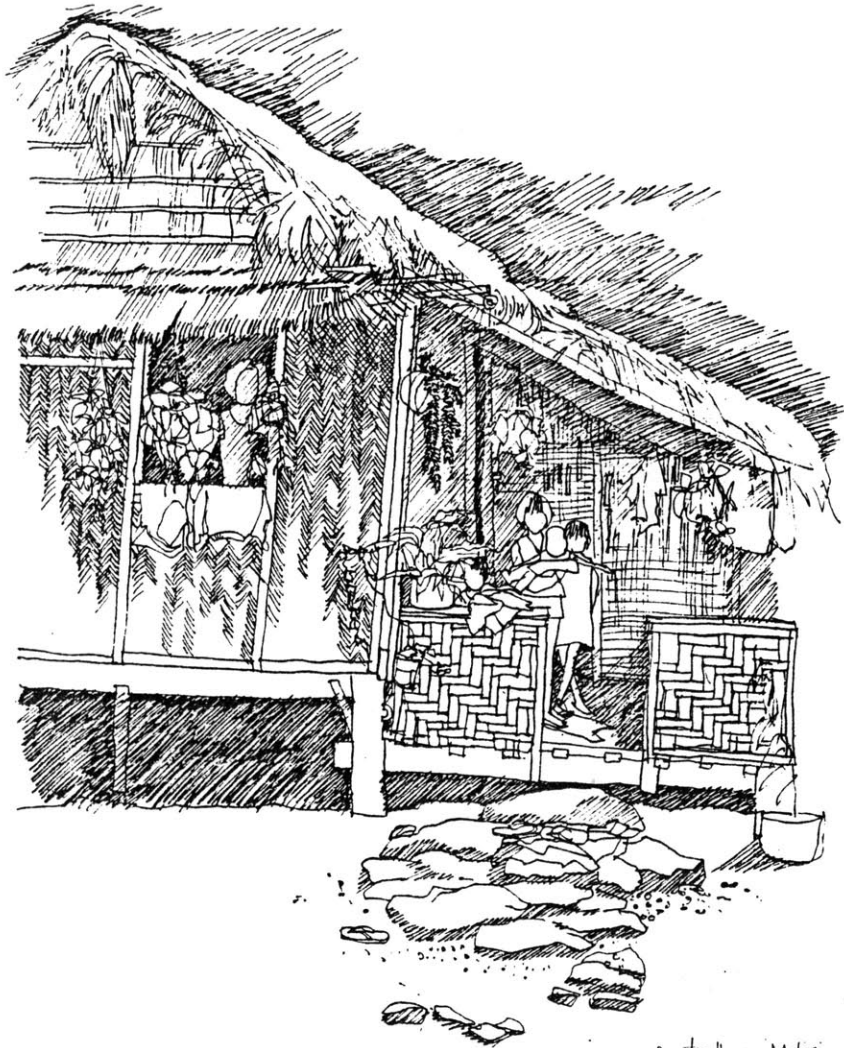
Wall surface treatment demonstrates the Pilipinos concrete aesthetic. Consider once again the Tagalog poem: an abundance of metaphors carefully clarify the main thought. Rhyme and metrical construction remain simple, providing foundation for the development of metaphors. A single sound is repeated in several lines, to recall the unity of the phrases. [33] The notion of a repetitive motif has been noted in the structure of the plan. It



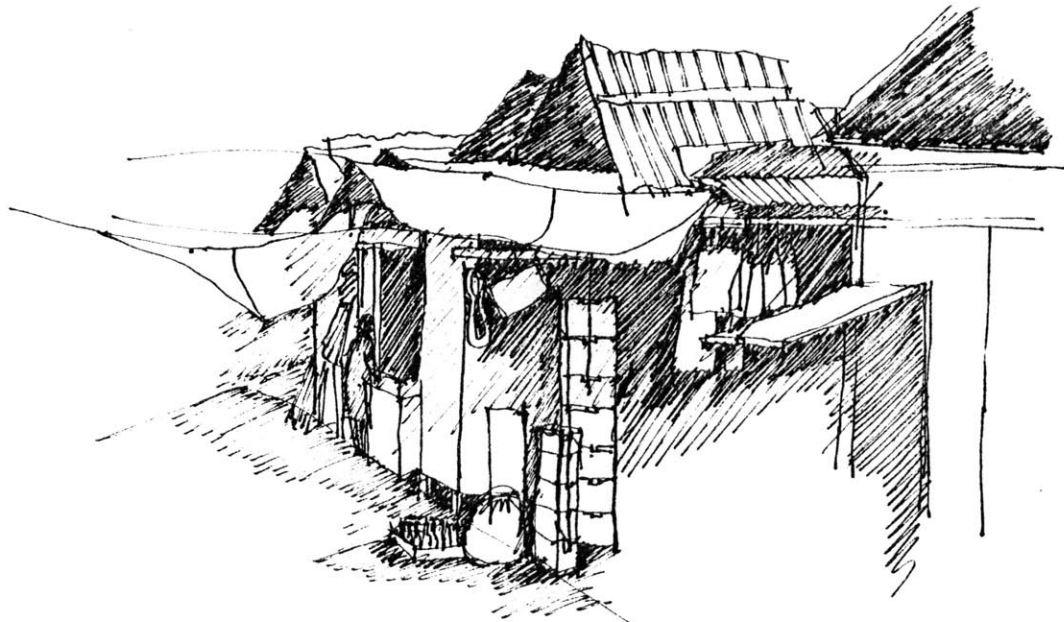
appears again in the articulation of the wall surfaces in the use of repetitive motifs, horizontals and verticals playing off one another.



— Philippine Ancestral Houses

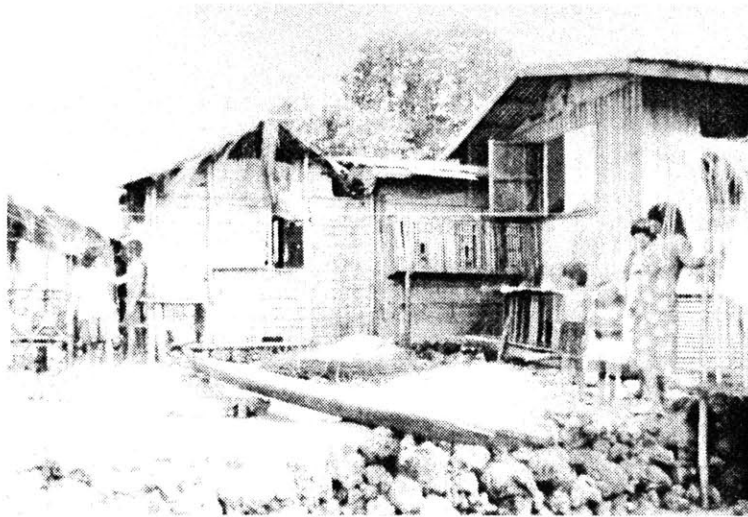


Santos House, Mabini



Marketstreet, Alaminos July 29,
82

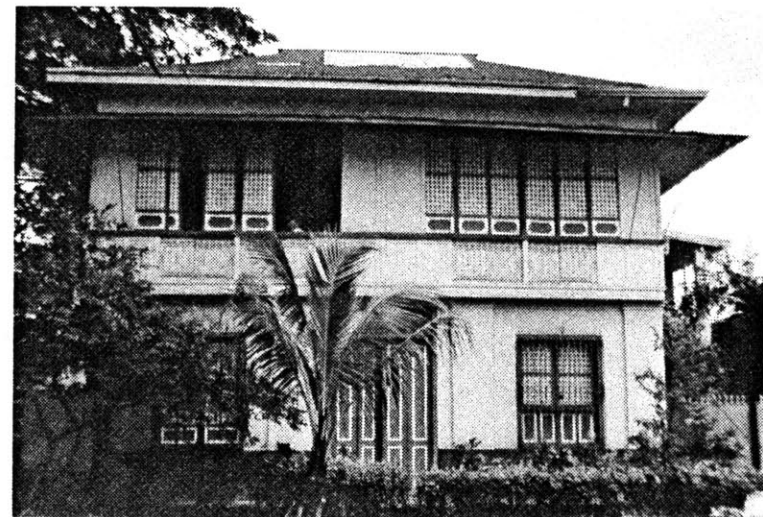
The roof in Pilipino architecture is a great protector, mediating with the sky. Traditional roof forms protected against heat and rain. A steep roof pitch forced the rain to shed quickly from the *nipa* or *cogon* thatching. Water running off the edge falls into ground channels and is diverted away from the foundations. Today, the use of waterproof materials, notably the corrugated iron known as "G.I. sheeting", eliminates the need for such a steep roof pitch. Most contemporary dwellings have flatter roofs, as in the

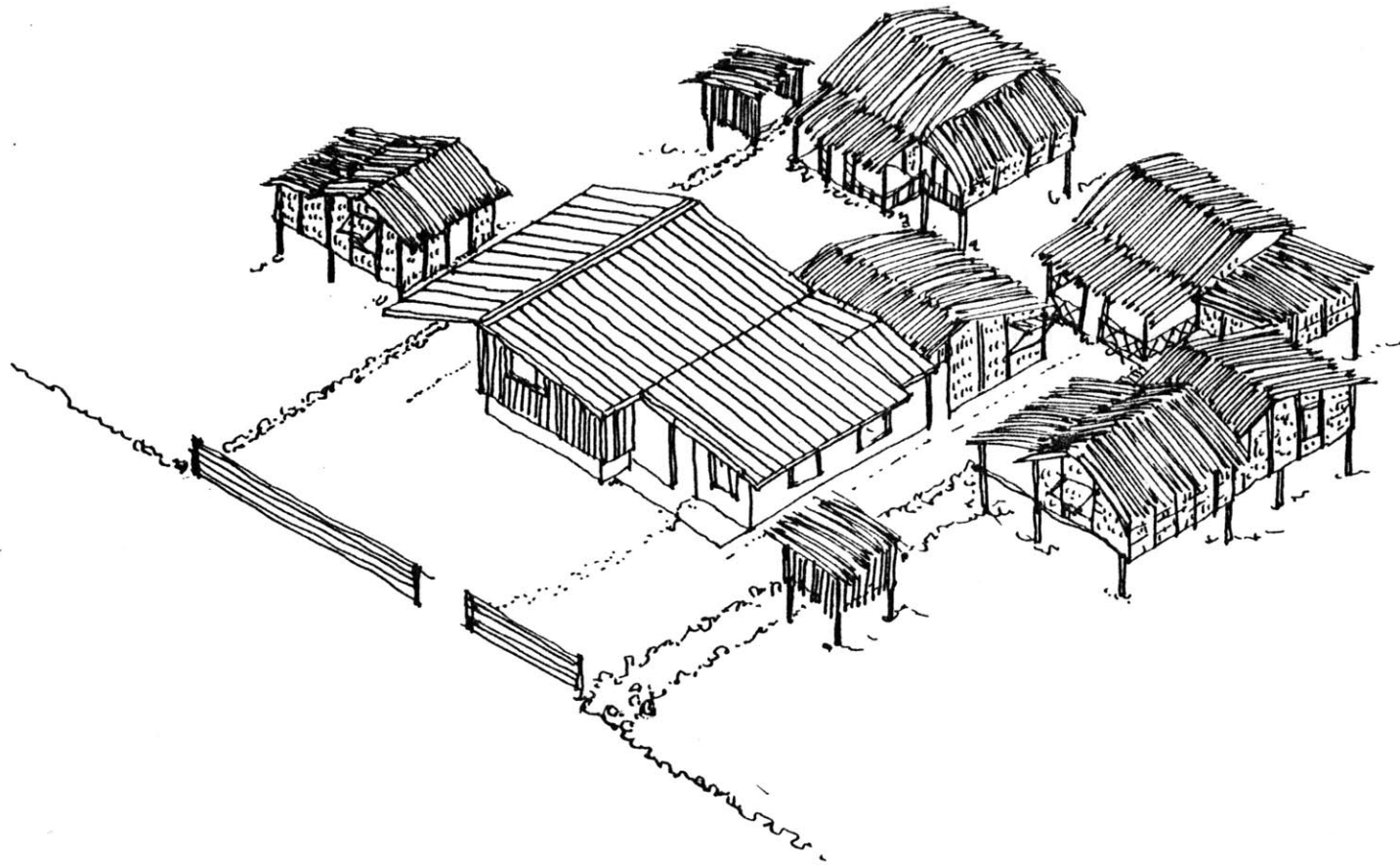


compounds at Mabini and Lucap, where *nipa* and concrete houses stand side by side.

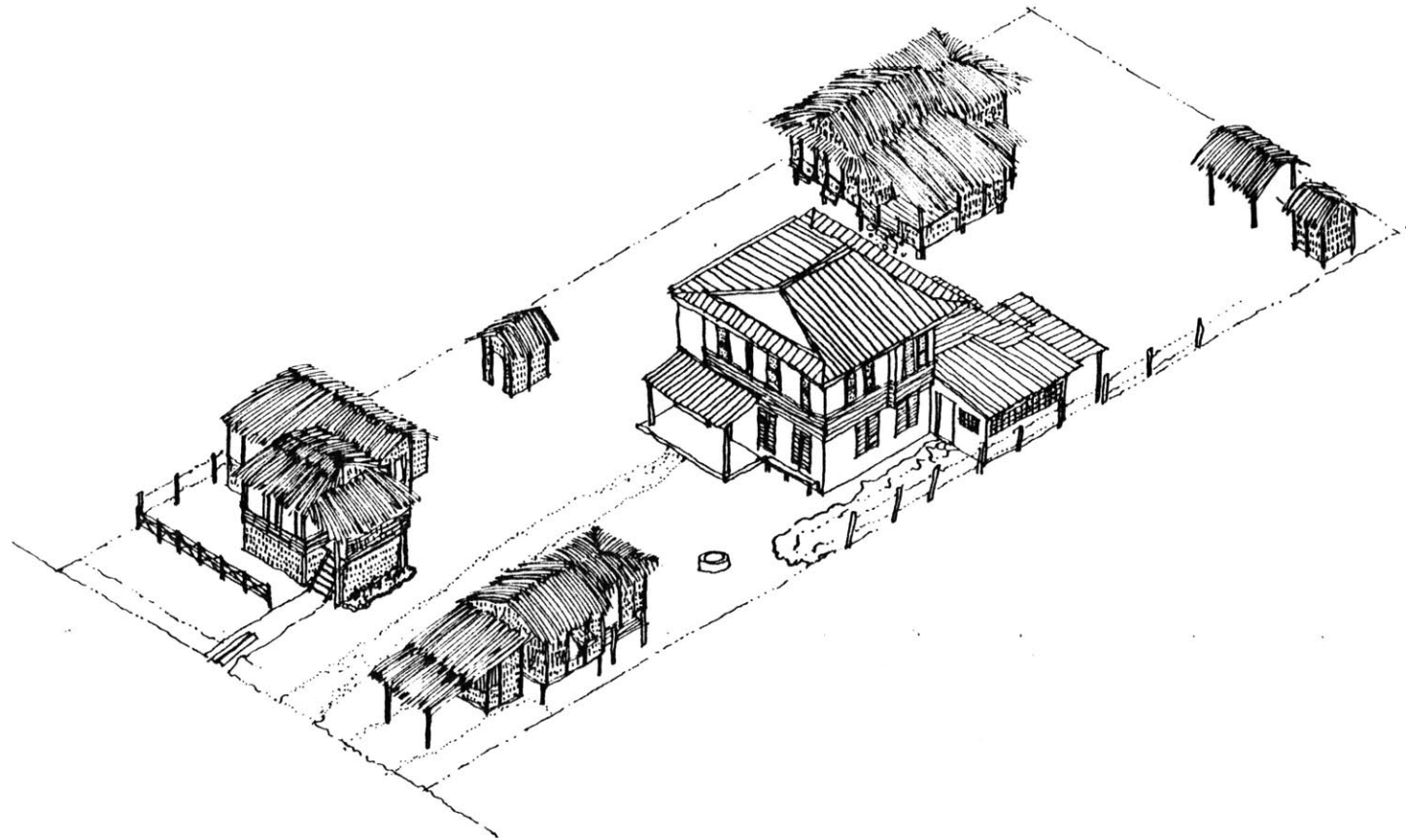
Hot air passes out through vents at the peak of the popular hipped roof shape. High ceiling heights developed in the *bahay na bato* for the same reason. Though roofs are flatter in most of Alaminos, ceiling heights remain high for natural cooling.

The eave edge marks the transition to the sky. In Alaminos, the eaves are usually surfaced with white boards. It is a smooth,





Rabina House, Lucap



Santos House, Mabini

light, reflective area, except for small ventilation holes. Sunshine reflects off its surface, diminishing the shadow beneath. Reflected light bouncing off the eave gives the roof a lighter, less massive appearance. The roof floats, completing the building's disassociation from the ground.

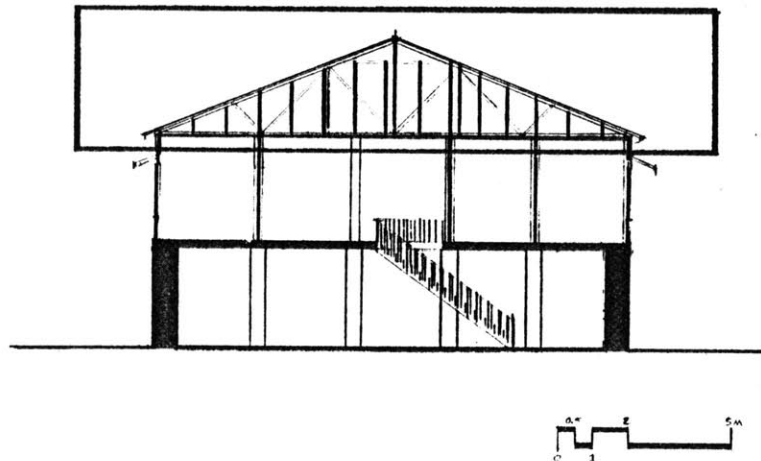


The wide eave protects the walls from rain runoff and shades them from heat. The eave is usually a meter wide. The walls, however, are too tall for the overhang to protect, and windows require small awnings for local protection. The awnings are sometimes individual, though a continuous awning seems more popular.

Traditionally, the structure is conceived as a prefabricated system. Parts are made on the ground and assembled by a group of friends and neighbors working together. The functional separation of the wall, column, and roof in a building is a persistent attitude even today.

Pilipinos conceived the roof as a basket or shell that contains the house. In the case of the *nipa* hut, builders lash the roof together on the ground and lift it into place on top of the house posts. [34] This same quality remains in the larger houses of Spanish influence where roof trusses span the increased distance across the house.

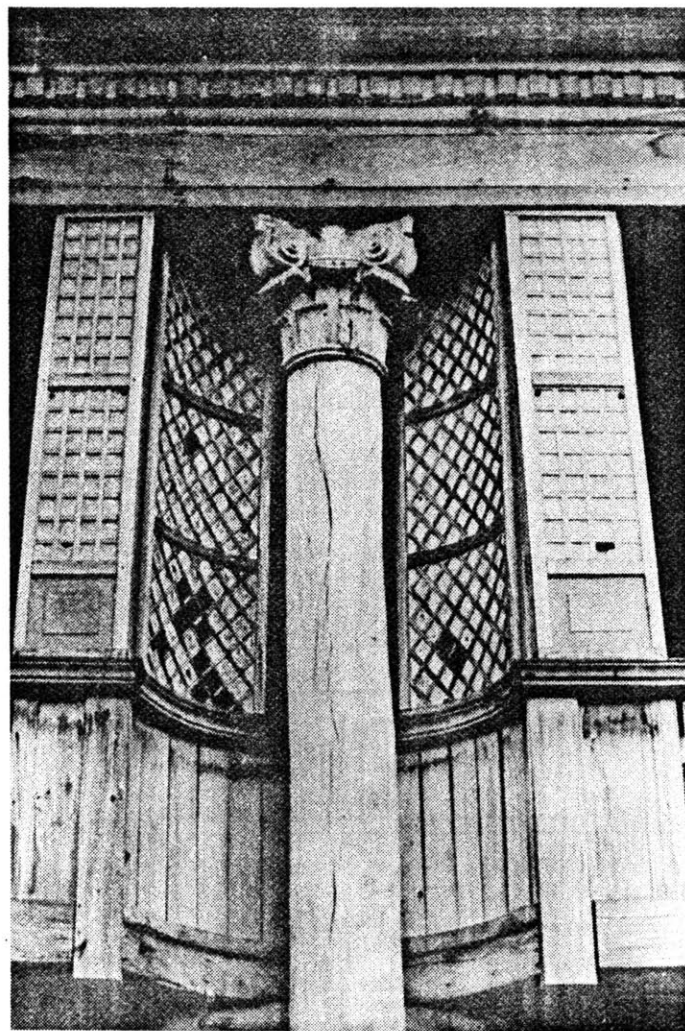
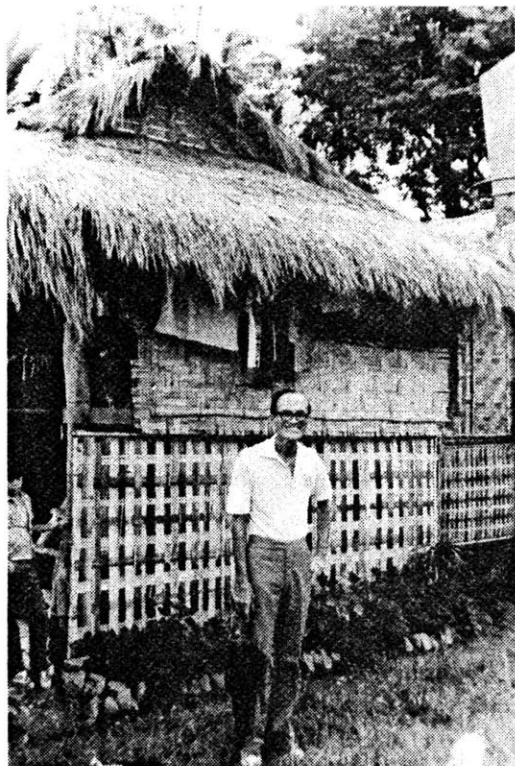
Walls are independent systems from the structure that supports the floor and the roof. Since they have no structural responsibilities they are only enclosures against the elements and in fact, Pilipinos generally enclose an area only when necessary. The bamboo structures in Lucap and Mabini are built like the traditional *bahay kubo*. The independence of the wall system is illustrated by this description of the method by which houses are



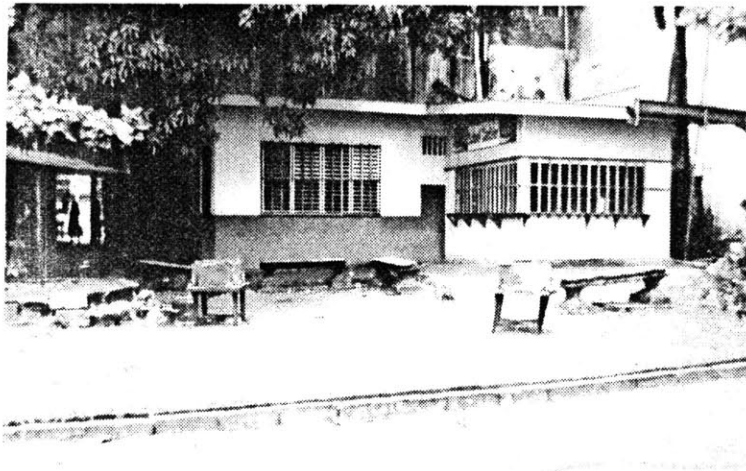
traditionally constructed:

Wall sidings are assembled on the ground... What keeps the sidings firmly in place between the door sill and the roof beam is not the house post. With the help of rattan lashings, horizontal bamboo studs clamp the sidings together at both sides; at the same time these studs enter through holes into the sidings' vertical support: bamboo poles that stand between the roof beams and the floor sill. The wall sidings thus surround the house posts which stand independently of them. [35]

Houses on the Spanish pattern in Alaminos share the same building system. These houses also stand on stilts, either of tree trunks or of red brick. Stone walls disguise the structure on the ground floor, but this seems to be a stylistic concern or a definition of property. The walls are really curtain walls with no load bearing function. In other areas, houses similar to the Spanish-style houses in Alaminos creatively expressed the separation of structural and closure systems. In Alaminos, several more contemporary buildings illustrate the separation of wall and structure by the transparency of the corner, suggesting that the wall of the building can be freely manipulated.



-Neal M. Oshima, *Philippine Ancestral Houses*.



Building materials in Pilipino houses have always been chosen for their availability and durability. Hence, the *sawali* and *cogon* of the *bahay kubo* are replaced whenever economically possible by G.I. sheeting and wood. More recently, the use of concrete has increased. The most modernized parts of the house in Lucap the and Mabini residences are stuccoed hollow concrete block. Usually, the lower storey of a native house is enclosed with decorative concrete block as soon as the owners can afford it.



These materials are treated with the same careful effort to reduce mass and create transparency, evidence again of the many correlations between Pilipino values and buildings in Alaminos. The correlations help to clarify the cultural context of form.

Endnotes

[27] Ramon C. Reyes, "Sources of Filipino (sic) Thought," *Philippine Studies* 21, No. 4, 1973, 433.

[28] Jocano, Alsaybar, 315.

[29] Fernando N. Zialcita, Martin I. Tinio, Jr., *Philippine Ancestral Houses (1810-1930)*, Quezon City, 1980, 42.

[30] Jocano, Alsaybar, 316.

[31] Zialcita, Tinio, 16.

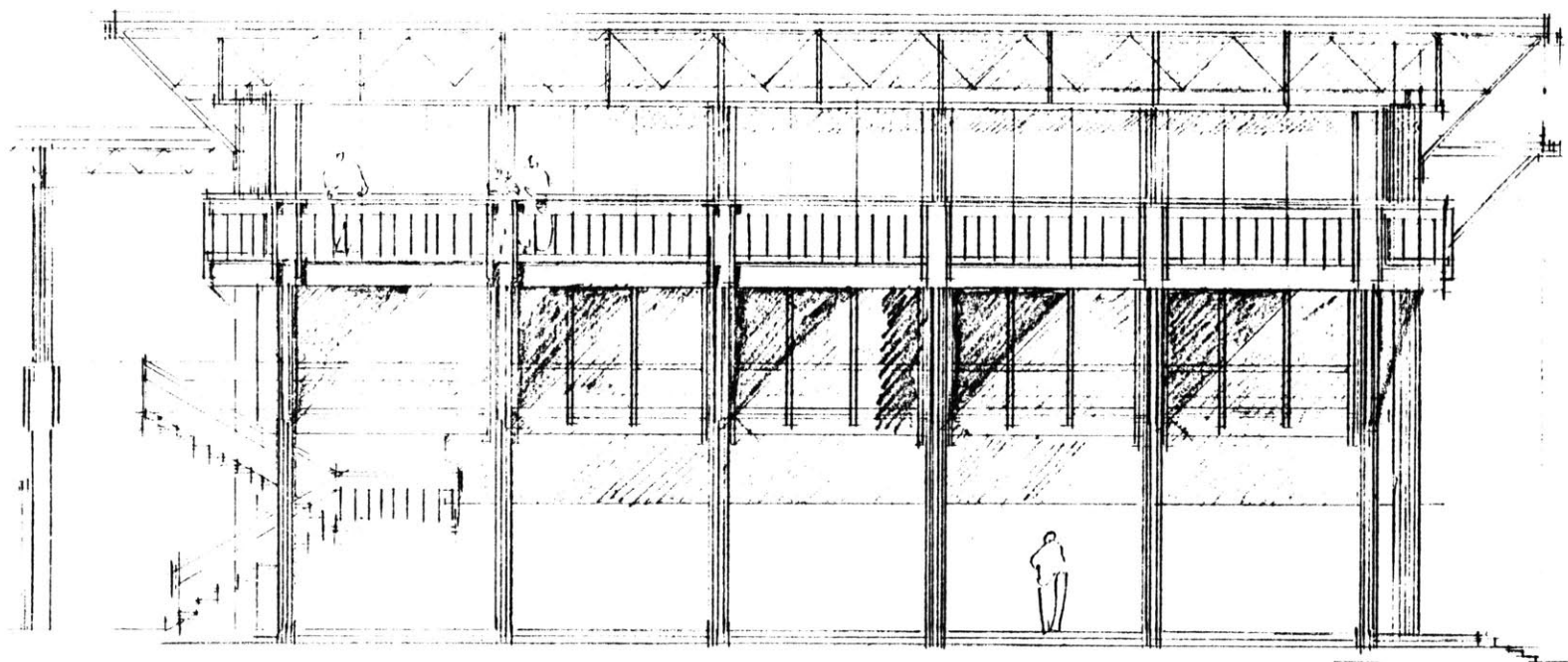
[32] *Ibid.*, 52.

[33] Lumbera, 240.

[34] Zialcita, Tinio, 13.

[35] *Ibid.*, 16.

IV. INTERPRETATION



IV. INTERPRETATION

The design process is another way to test and evaluate the applicability of correlations between architecture and culture.

Design and analysis took place concurrently, becoming clearer as I developed the general attitudes of the study both theoretically and in practice. I approached the specific requirements of the building with these attitudes in mind. They were the basis for my interpretation. The design of the community center in Alaminos continues a tradition of architecture rooted in holism, through the mechanisms of deference, euphemism, and mediation, realistically applied.

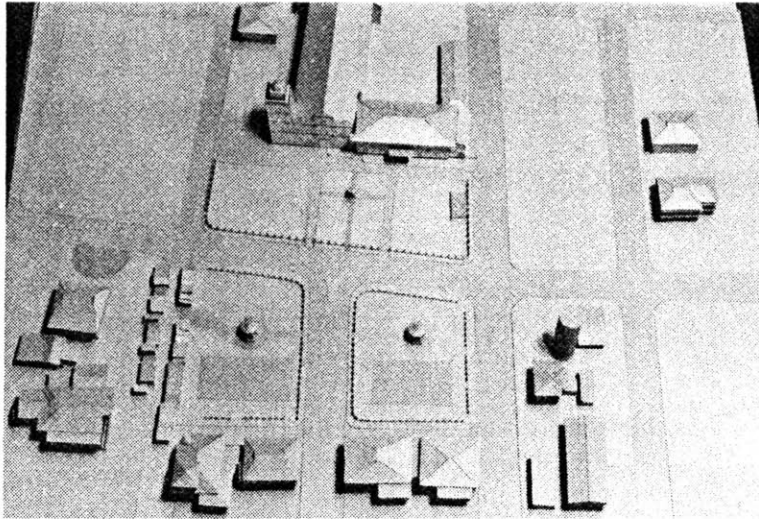
The Community Center

The community center in Alaminos is a place of exchange; a link between rural and urban, traditional and modern. The building provides a place for the free interchange of ideas and

information in both the artistic and practical aspects of the town's growth. The functions which the community center accommodates are as follows:

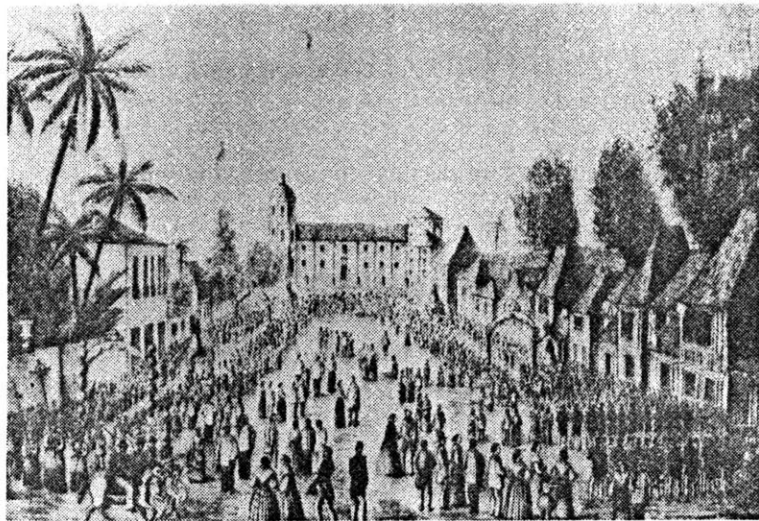
- 1.) A forum, a place for the exchange of ideas ranging from political debate to dramatic performances.
- 2.) Exhibition areas for displays of the latest technology for agriculture or for art made by the town's young, sometimes audio-visual.
- 3.) Three (3) Workshop areas, one for agricultural education, a tool shop for cottage industries like shell or wood working, and one for craft seminars.
- 4.) Two (2) lecture rooms for classes on management, marketing, and so on.
- 5.) A restaurant/cafe facility to service the entire complex.
- 6.) Commercial area for local vendors.
- 7.) Administration for the community center activities.

The site is on the main road through Alaminos from Lingayen to Bani. On the eastern side of the site is the church and



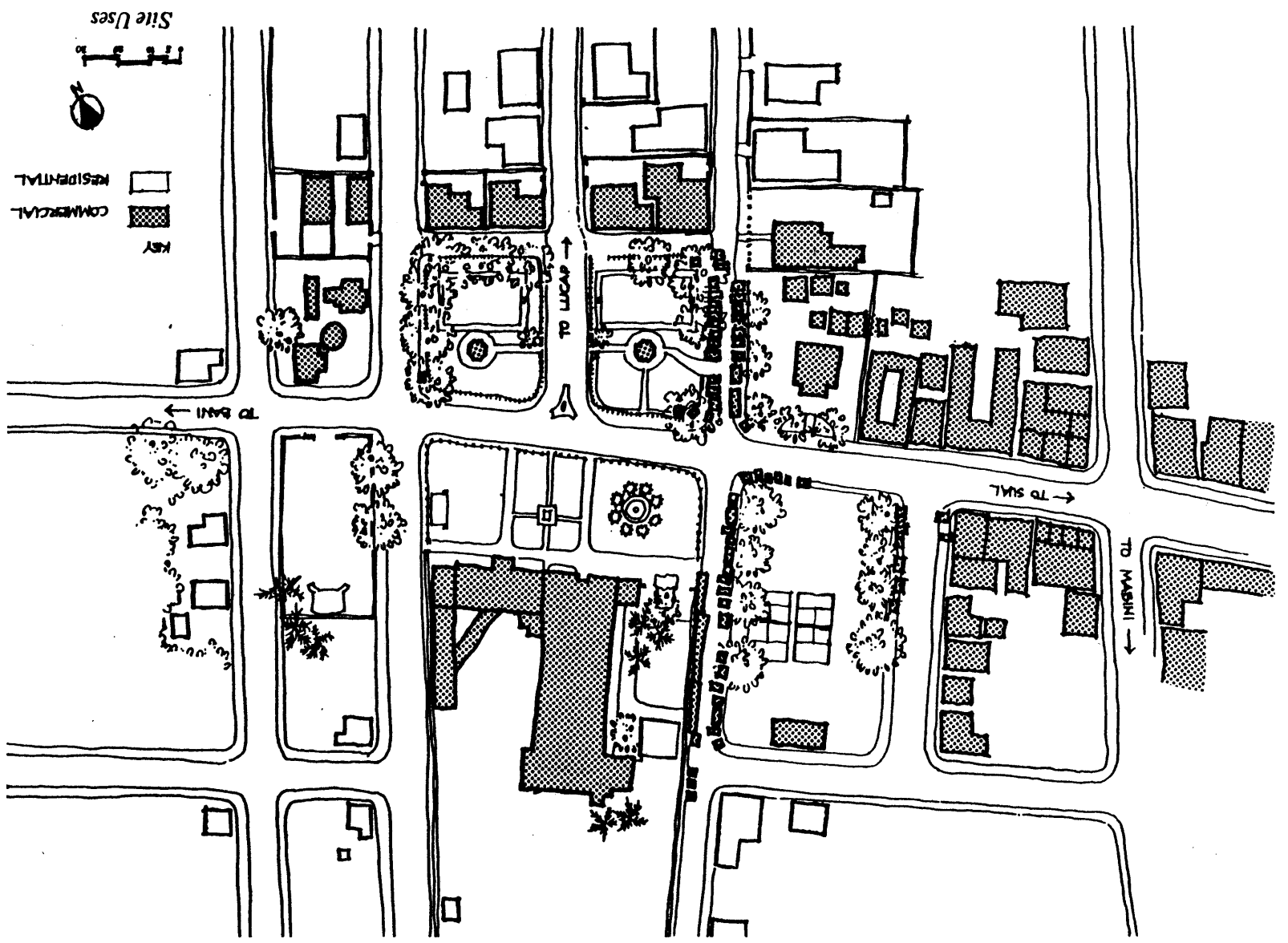
Site Model

Typical Law of the Indies Plaza.



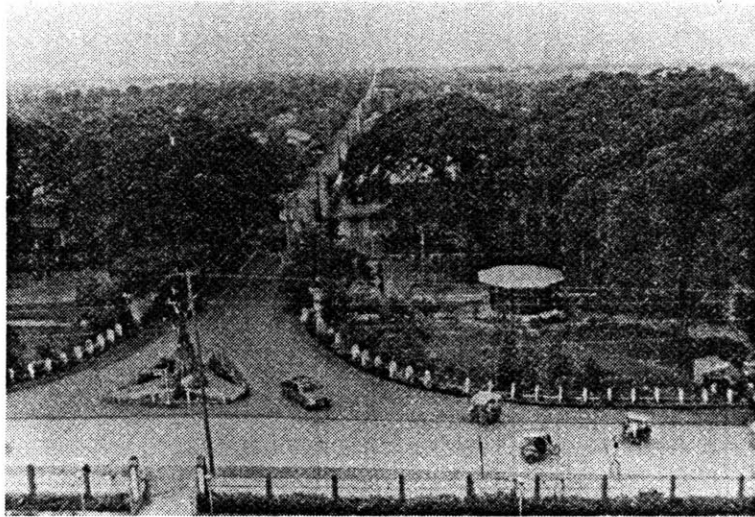
Catholic school set behind a grassy yard. Across the main road on the north side are a cylindrical concrete water tower and two small administration buildings. Between the churchyard and water tower to the northeast is the town plaza. To the south and west are houses, with rice fields beyond.

Although most of Alaminos is oriented linearly along the narrow road to Bani, the plaza remains an important node enhanced by the frontality of the church, the repetition of a recognizable pattern in town planning and the openness one feels after having passed through a dense commercial district. The plan of Alaminos is a modified version of the Law of the Indies, the result of Spanish colonialism. Philip II (1527-1598) of Spain decreed in 1573 that all the towns in Spanish colonies be organized around a central plaza. The Church dominated one side, the public administration building another, and the houses of prominent citizens completed the enclosure. In Alaminos, the north and south sides of the plaza are clearly addressed. The church and Catholic



school make an imposing edge on the south side, and the facades of the old Spanish houses wall the opposite side. The municipal building flanks the eastern side of the plaza, but faces the main road instead. The water tower is on the western side. Only a small public health building next door addresses the plaza. Furthermore, the road to Lucap and the Hundred Islands splits the plaza into twin parks. It is heavily trafficked by tourists on their way to this natural wonder, particularly during the dry season.

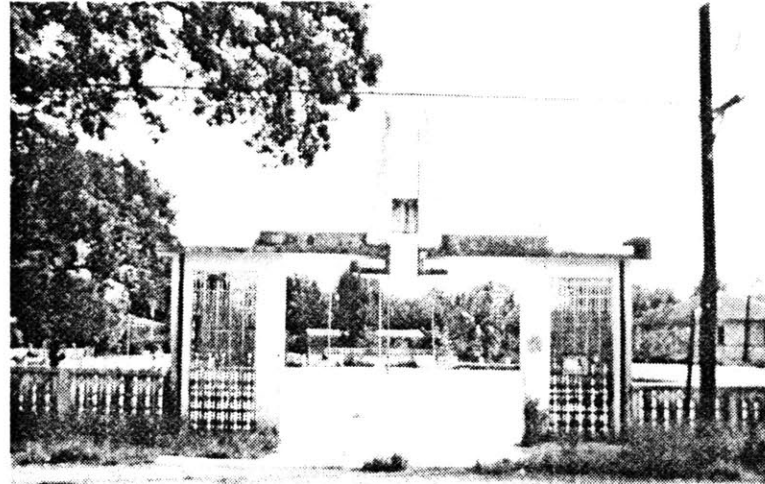
Road to Lucap



The site is presently a concrete plaza with concrete benches along each side and a stage at the far end. A lone group of young men seem to consider the corner nearest the church yard as their meeting place. Occasionally, a few children come to play, but usually the site is deserted.

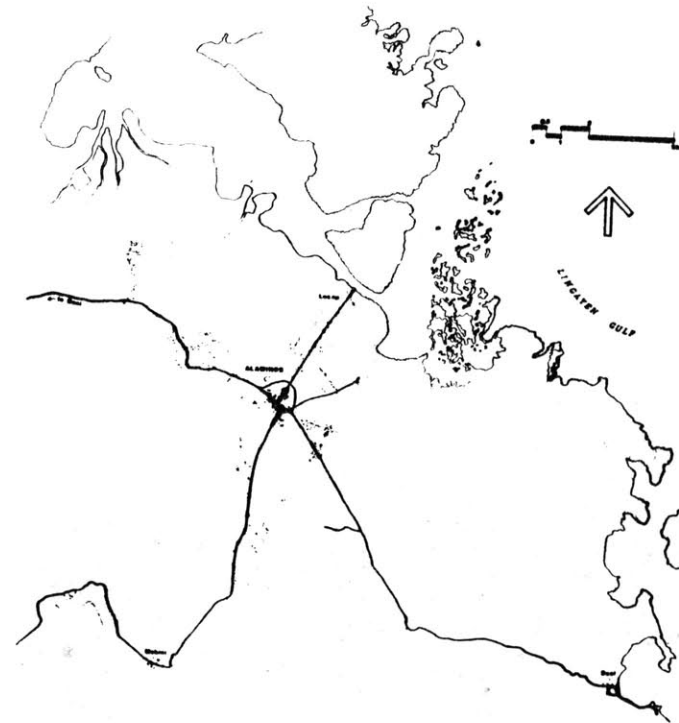
I planned the community center as part of the greater domain of Alaminos. First, the plan proposes that a circle road be constructed around the town center, possibly to the north to

The Site



accommodate tourist traffic destined for the Hundred Islands as well. Roads large enough to accommodate eventual traffic requirements would destroy the relationship between places, particularly along the main road which is now the focus of the town.

Mediation governs the associations with the surrounding landscape. All four sides of the building exhibit a different character. The community center balances the closing of the church yard and the imposing water tower without blocking the flow of the town along the main road with two frontal facades and open treatment of the corner. The small corner plaza is also a continuation of the surrounding open area before the transition to the interior open space. The building mass diminishes to the south and west in deference to the scale of housing and open land. The south, as the direction of growth, is loose and the landscape penetrates into the building.

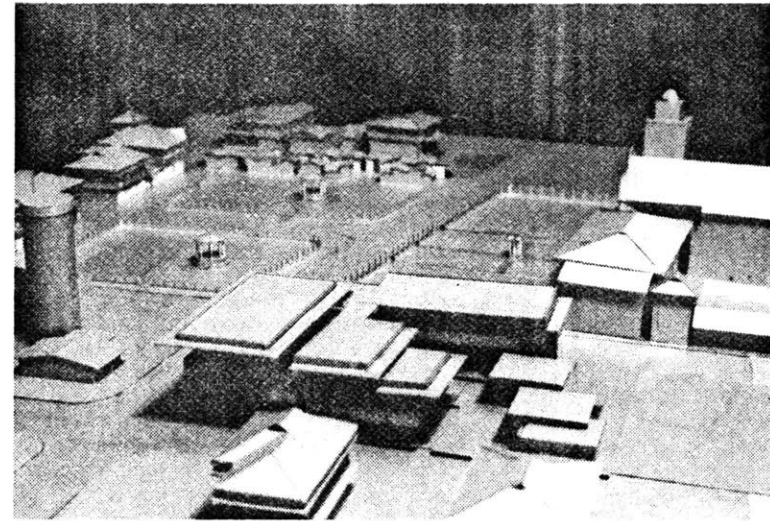
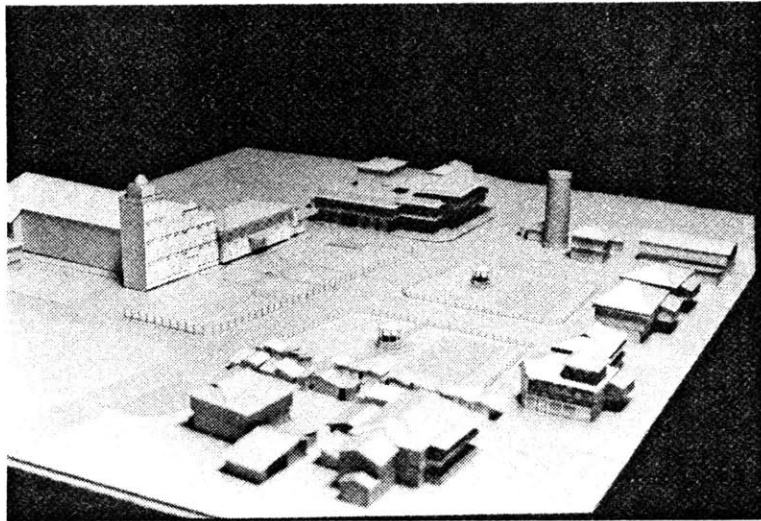
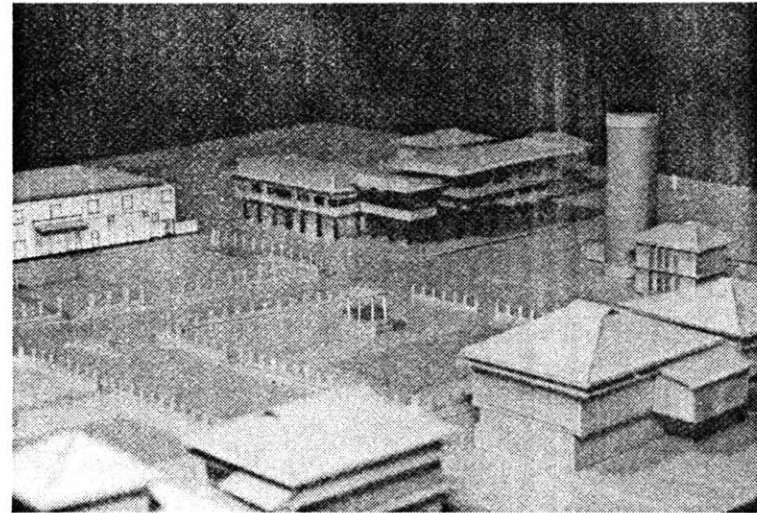


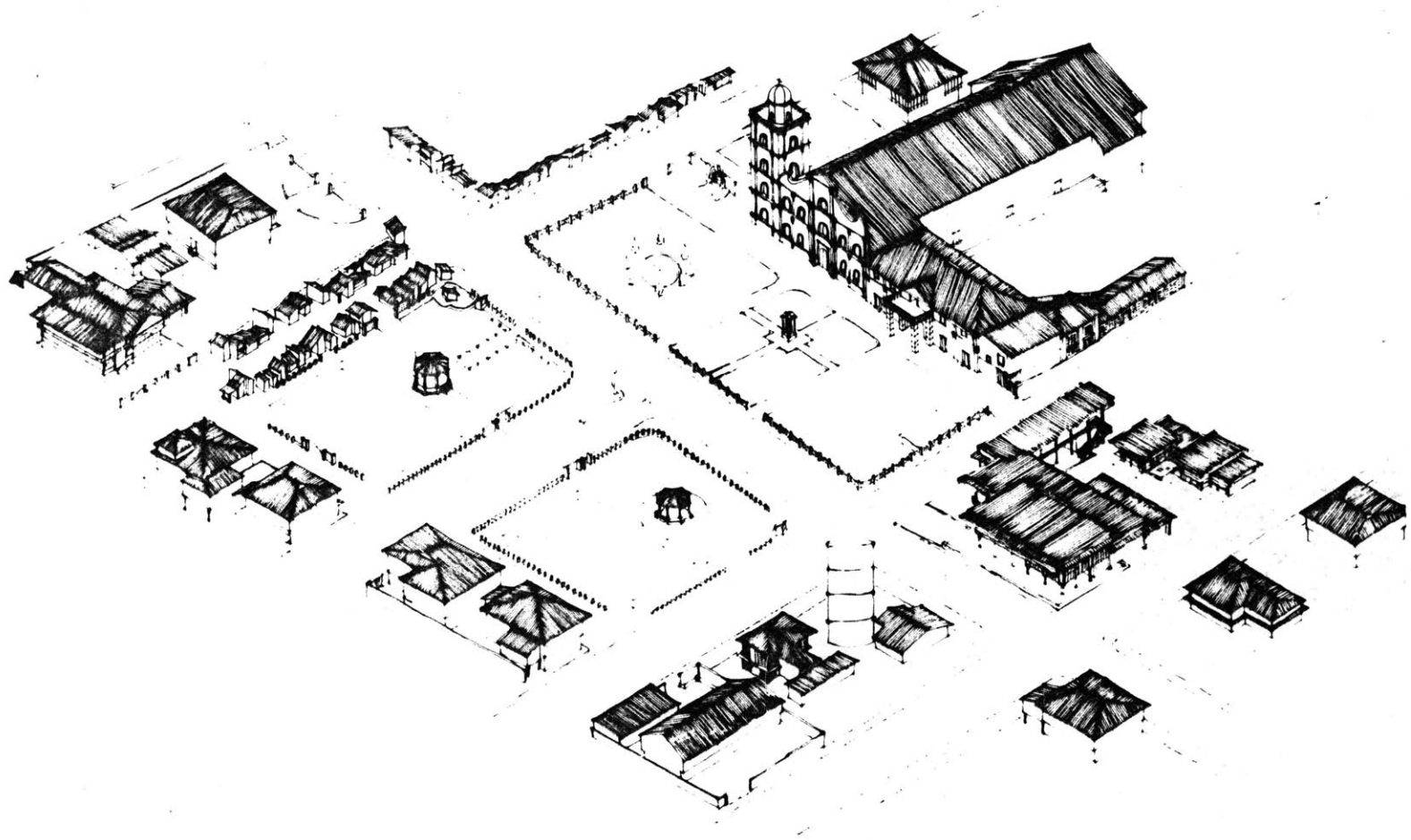
Alaminos Community Center Model

Top right: View across plaza.

Bottom right: View from west side.

Below: View from road to Bani.



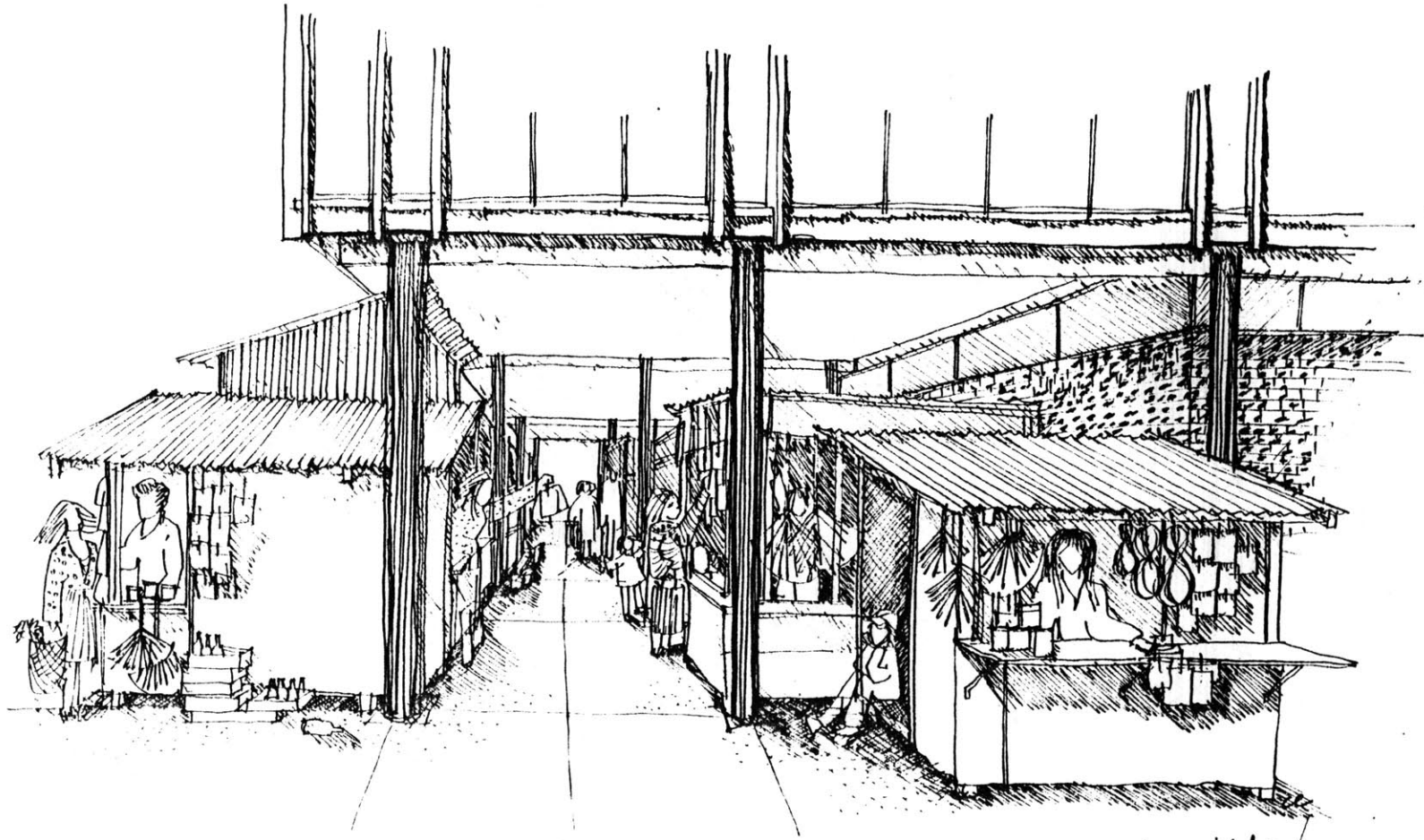


Site Axonometric

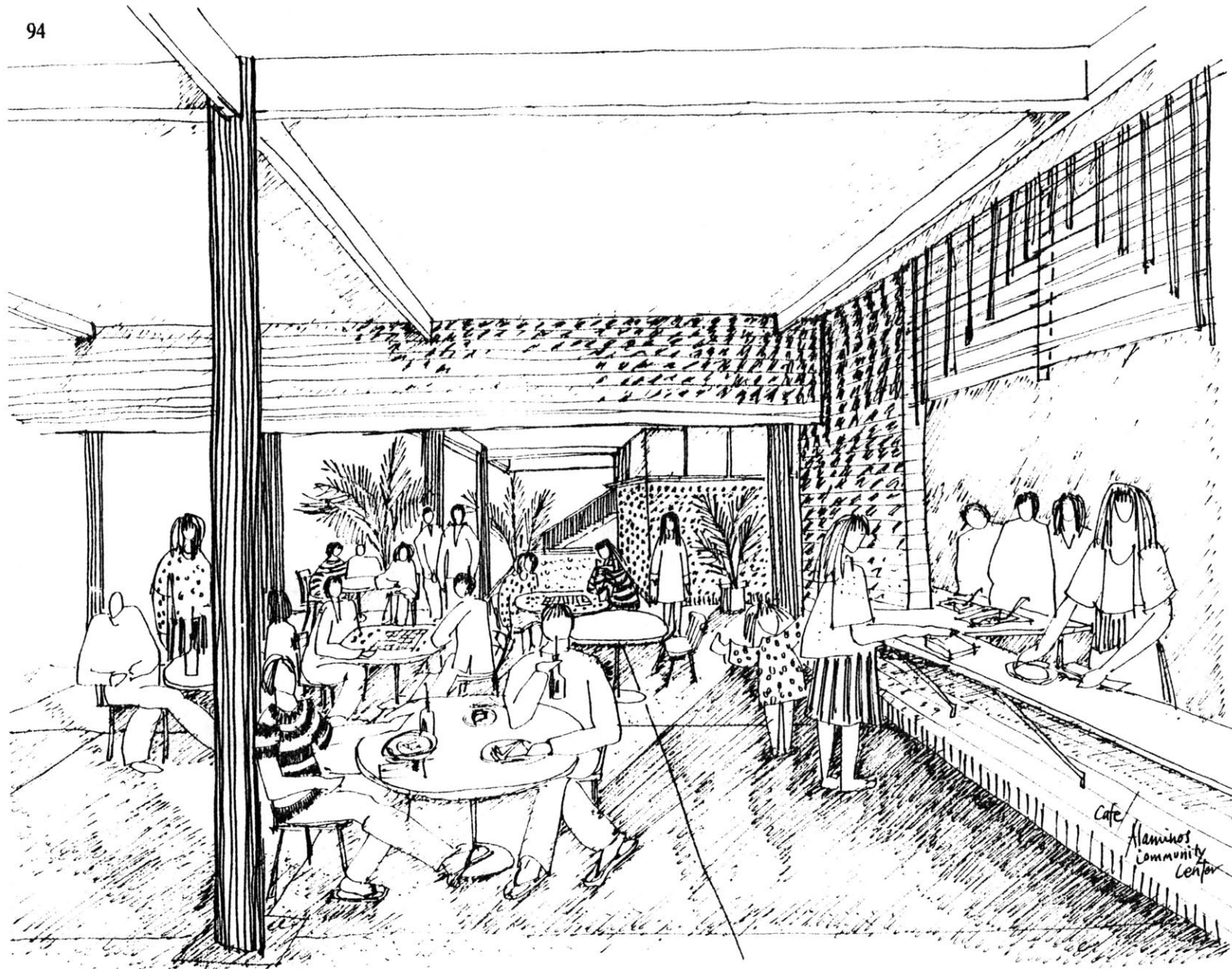


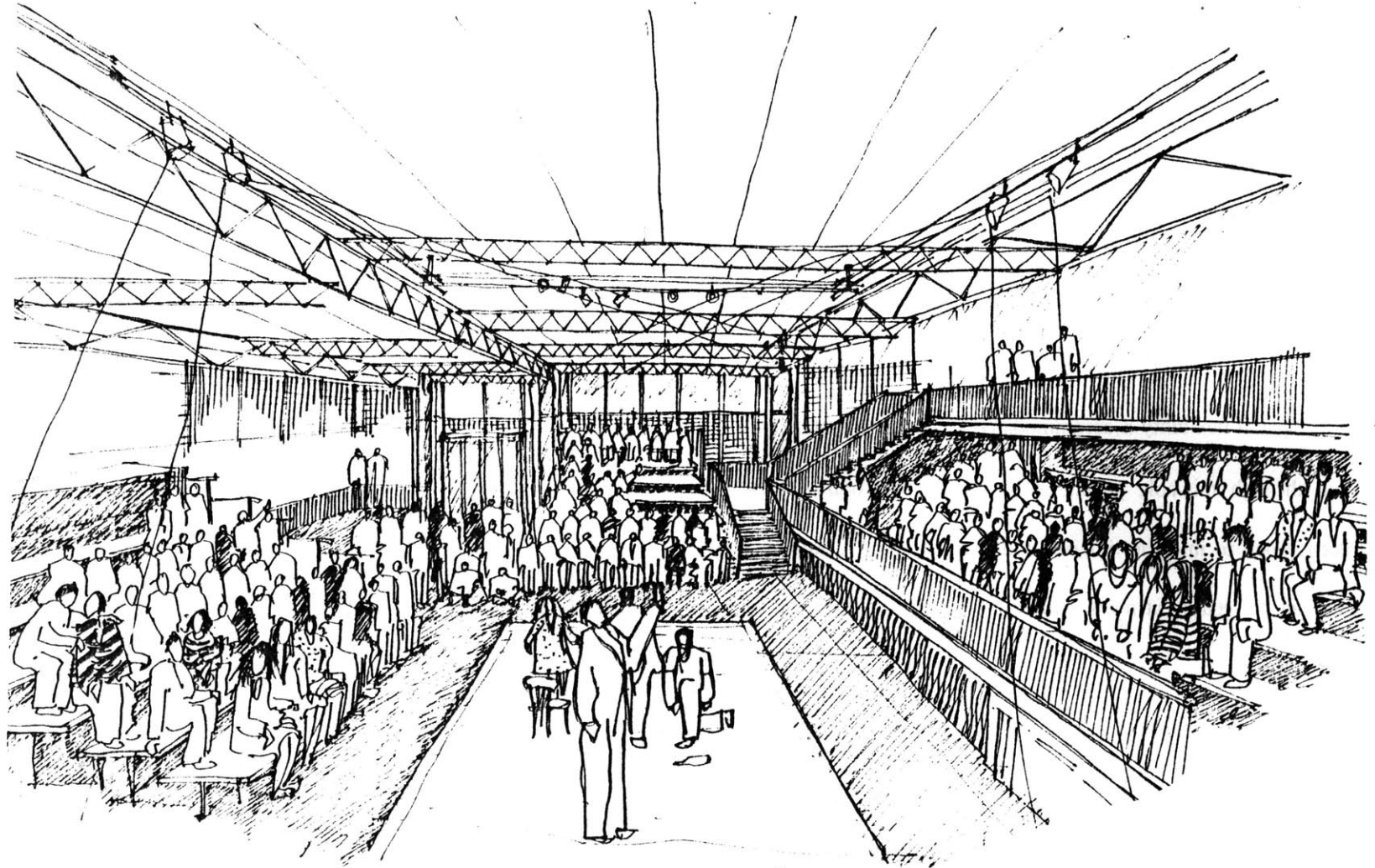
I organized the functions in the community center around the relationship between them and the surrounding townscape. Since the light is very vertical, the interrelation between activities became a more important criterion for planning. The commercial area is along the road. The forum is centralized, with direct access from all sides. The cafe is between the street and interior, to service both. Administration is equally accessible from the workshops and from the exhibition and forum areas.

The community center has two major levels: the ground and a raised public level. The functions are disposed according to their relative formality, for in a building of this nature it is hard to distinguish absolutely between public and private or nighttime and daytime use. Thus, the forum, exhibition gallery, lecture rooms, and reception areas are on the second floor. The workshops, storage, cafe, the administration, and commercial functions are on the ground level.



Commercial Area
Alamitos Community Center

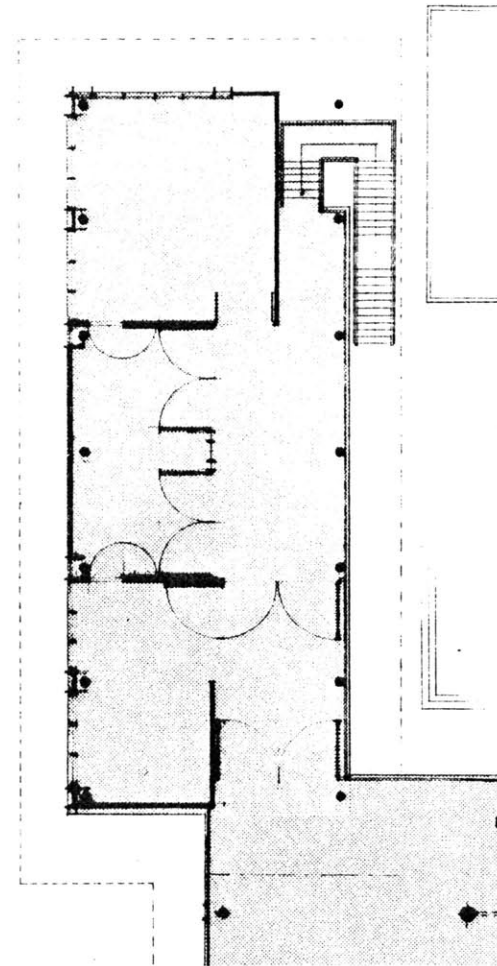




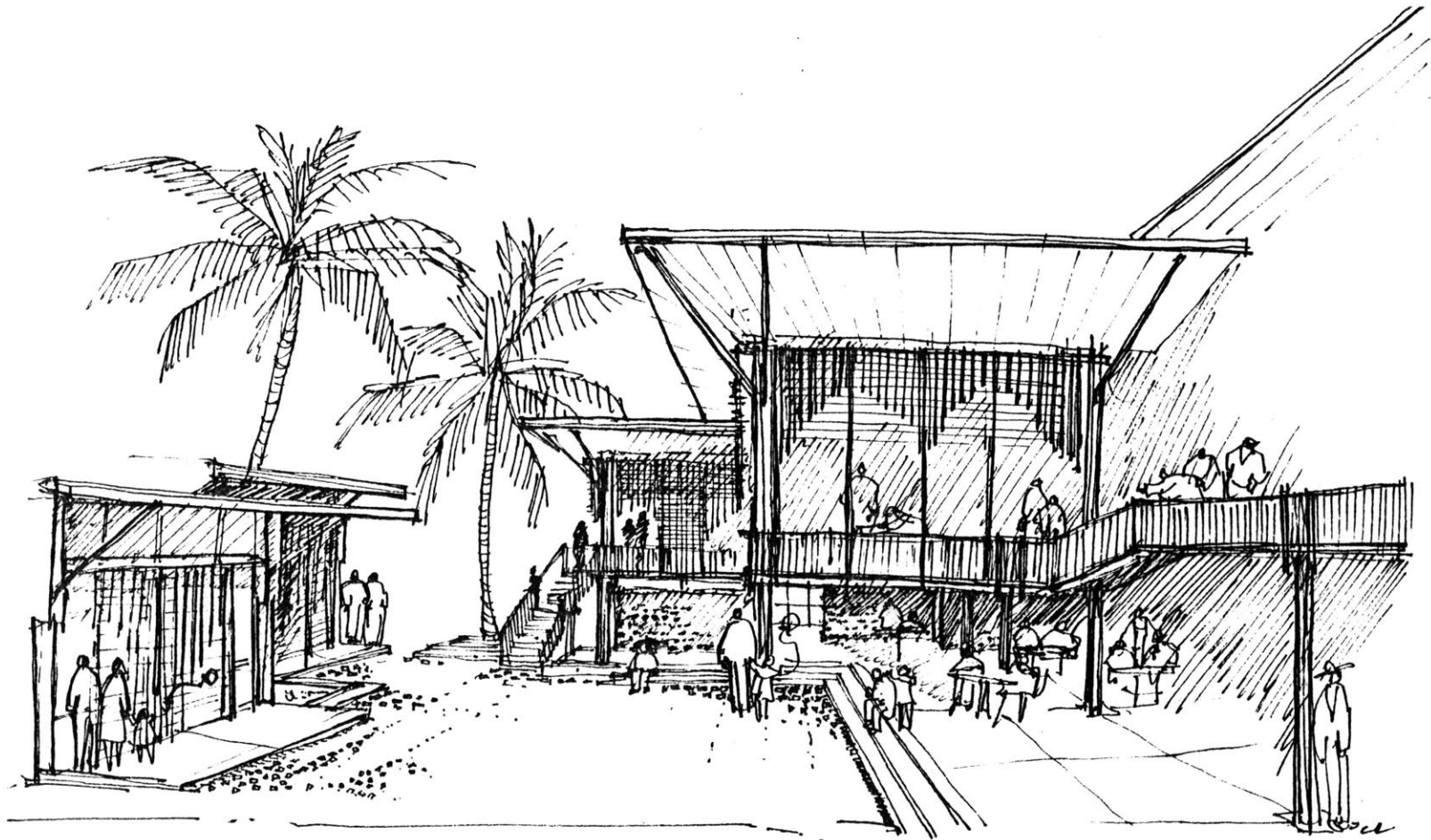
Theatre / Alumnus Community Center

The building was planned for multi-functional use, in accord with the aspects of spatial use and privacy in Philippine culture. The most flexible space is the forum, where the levels are wide enough for comfortable tables and seating, or a gallery layout. Circulation from the sides avoids interrupting the gallery layout or the theater seating. Theater seating consists of movable bleachers hidden in the wall cabinets which extend out for performances. In other places, spatial flexibility is accommodated by the continuation of a room through movable panels, as in the lecture rooms, where screens open to integrate interior and exterior space. Individual areas can be secured at night while the building remains open for other activities.

The plan is made of similar parts clustered together around the main courtyard. The geometry is repetitive, particularly in the workshop and administration areas. Transparency in the plan and section connect them to all parts of the compound at once. The building plan maximizes direct contact with nature. Closed



functions are linked to exterior areas for this purpose. The courtyard quite literally integrates nature and the building by placing gardens and pools of water in the compound.



Courtyard / Alaminos Community Center.

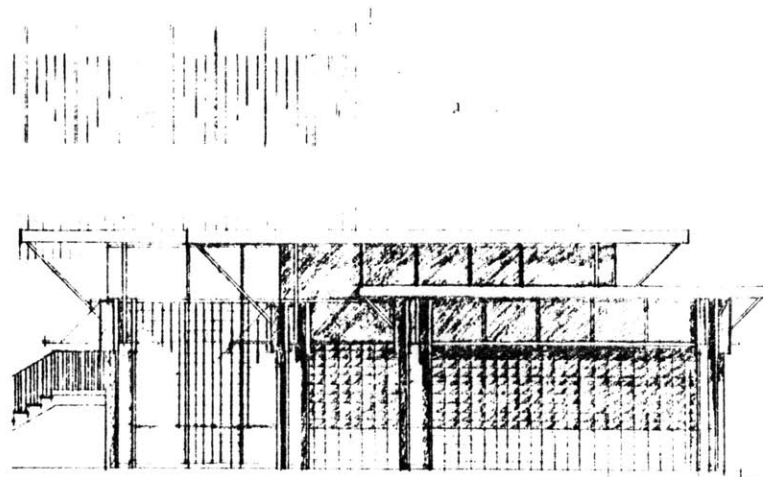
Circulation in the building best illustrates the use of euphemism, for it is entirely implied by the definition of spaces and activities. The only exceptions are the stairs, which intervene like gates at the entrance of another realm.

Euphemism is also evident in the gentle manner one proceeds from space to space, or from the point of entrance to the inner court. There is a certain ambiguity about the exact moment at which one enters the building, but one feels one has arrived by the focusing of the space. Herein lies the deception, for one may have indeed arrived, or may just be at another place to decide which way to go. The subtle boundaries mediate the penetration into the building.

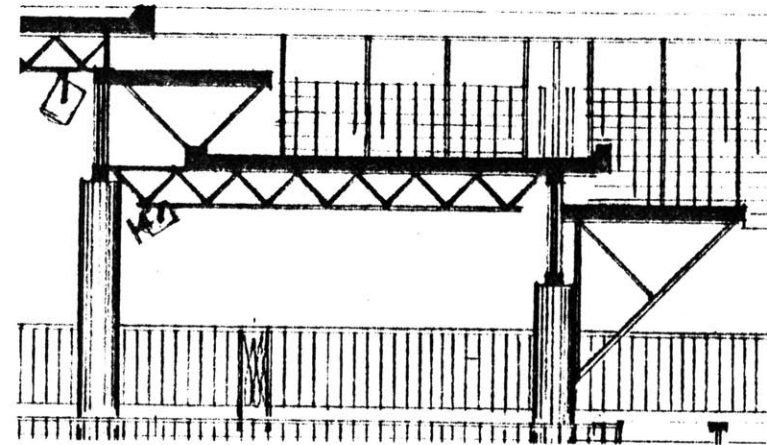
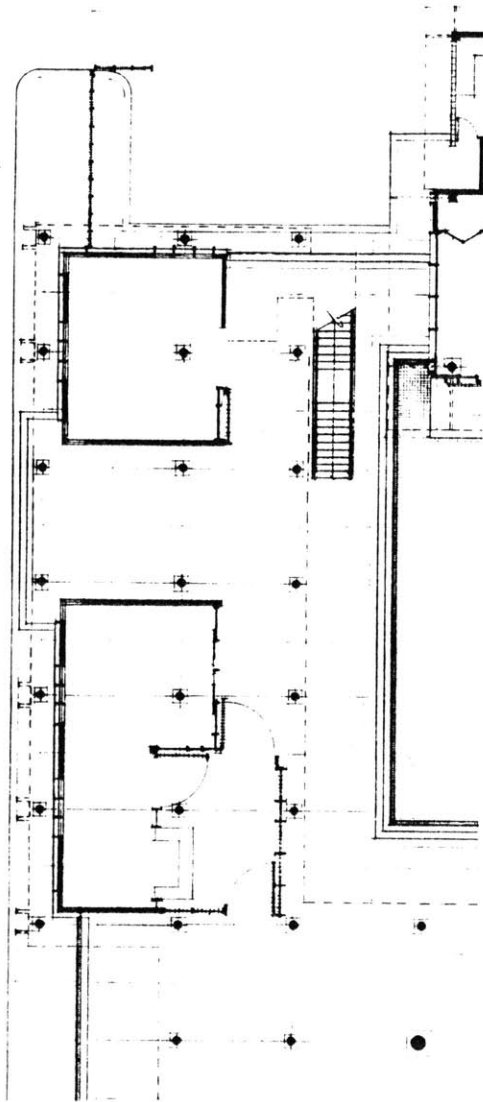
Some spaces have a mediating function. A reception area mediates between the two lecture rooms. The corner lobby mediates between the courtyard and the corner court. The corner lobby on the second level serves again the same function, mediating between the forum and the classroom wing. They are in turn,

circulation spaces, gathering spaces, or exhibition spaces.

Transparency in wall articulation creates further interchange between activities. Some walls are directly transparent, as are the ones around the workshops; others are transparent glass when acoustic privacy is necessary, as are the walls of the seminar rooms. Walls which are necessarily solid, like the restroom and storage areas, are dematerialized by active surface treatment.



Trusses give the roof a light, floating feeling and some of the basket-like quality of the native houses. The roof system rests on special large columns. It is integrated yet separate from the floor and wall structure. The roof trusses are lit from all sides to dematerialize their lacy members.

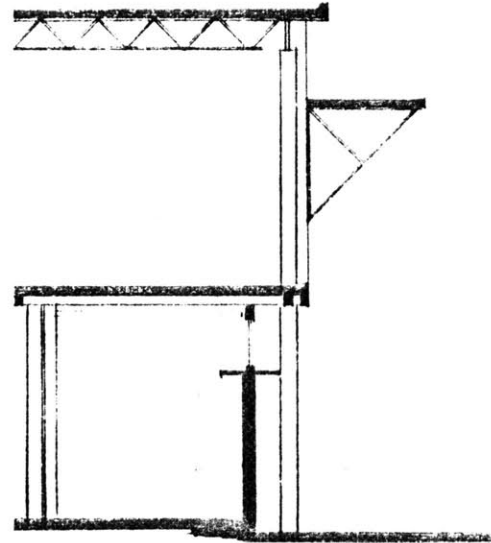


Typical lighting conditions in existing Pilipino buildings did not reflect the usual love of diffuse yet bright lighting that Pilipinos prefer. By redefining lighting in the context of aesthetic value instead of observed pattern, a new lighting system evolved, derived from more current technology. A light shelf placed above eye level and sometimes extending into the room directs the light upwards and diffuses it along the ceiling. Shading devices on the walls vary according to their orientation around the building. Window panels are under wide overhangs or beside fins to diminish the intense glare that makes viewing uncomfortable, though the juxtaposition of interior and exterior rooms eliminates the need for many viewing panels.

The structure of the building is a prefabricated concrete system with metal trusses for the roof spans. The structural system remains the major definition of the building plan, giving it scale and order. A building this large requires metal and concrete for strength and longevity. Local workers could fabricate the structural

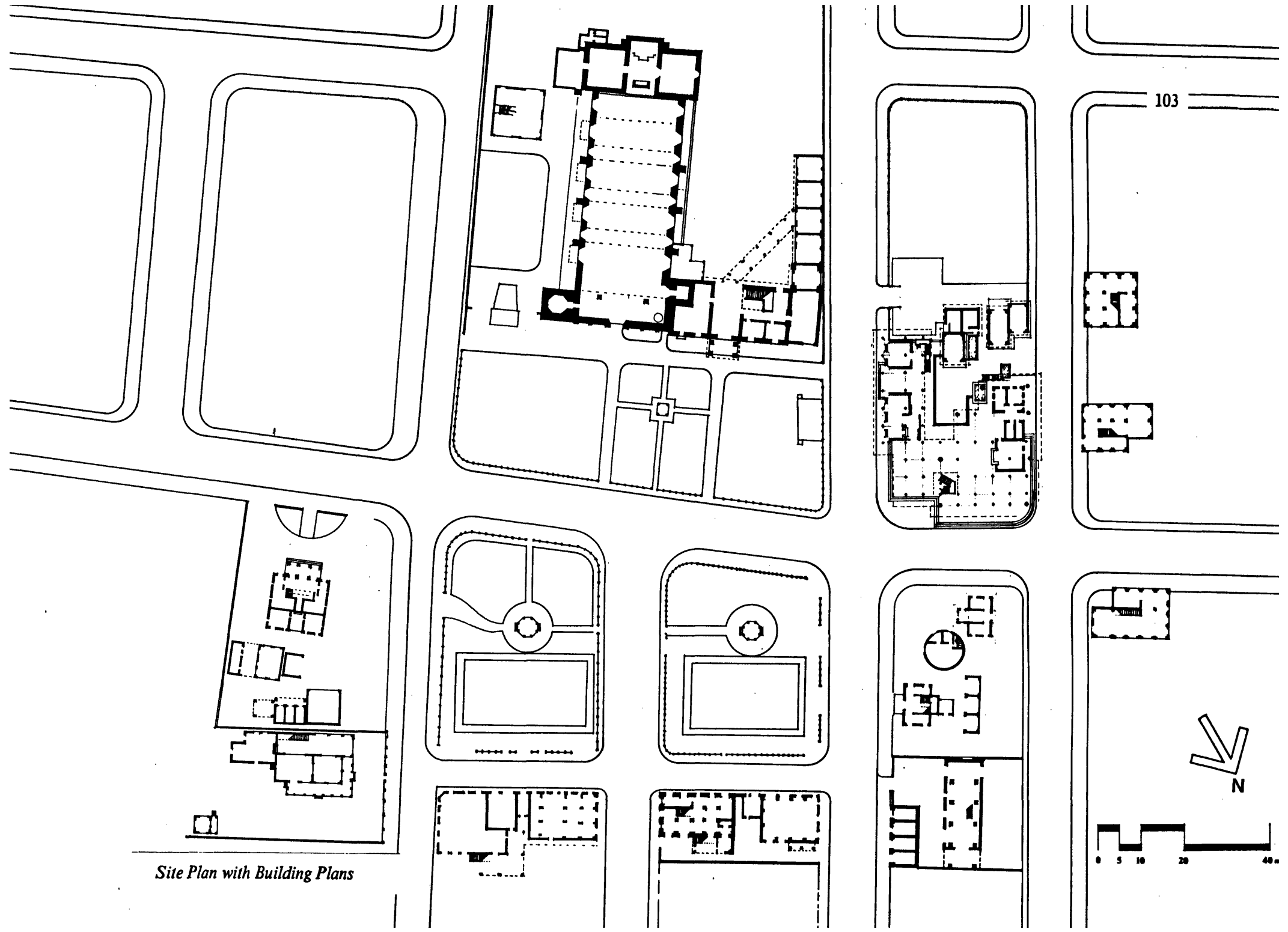
members on the site. Metal and concrete have the same expressive qualities Pilipinos traditionally achieved in wood when employed with the same goals in mind.

I did not sacrifice modernity to tradition while designing the community center. Instead, the building grew out of attitudes which are alive today in Alaminos and among lowland Pilipinos generally. The Alaminos community center represents a continuity of architectural tradition based on enduring Pilipino values.



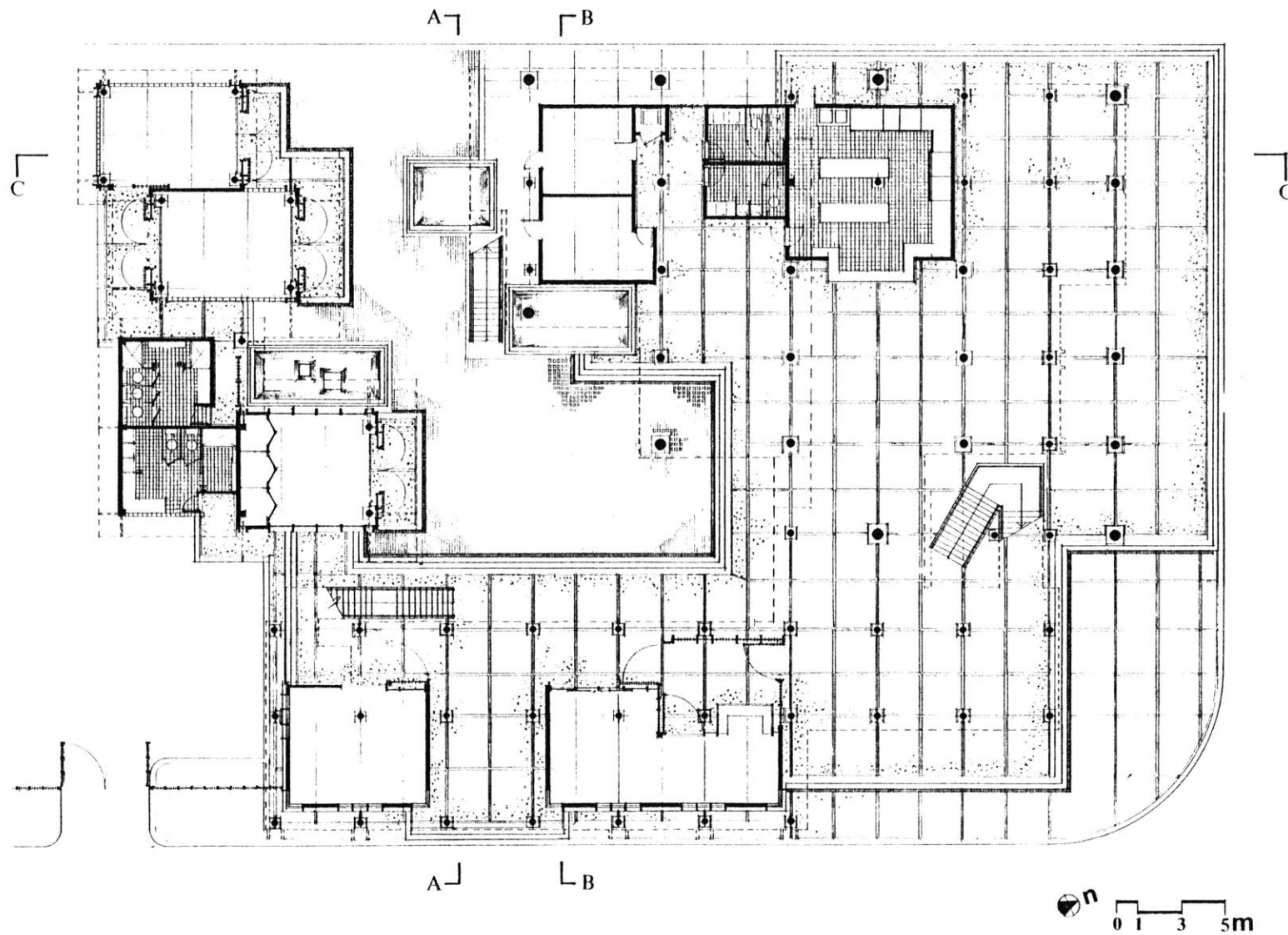
DRAWINGS

Site Plan with Building Plans

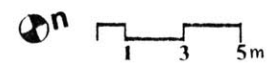
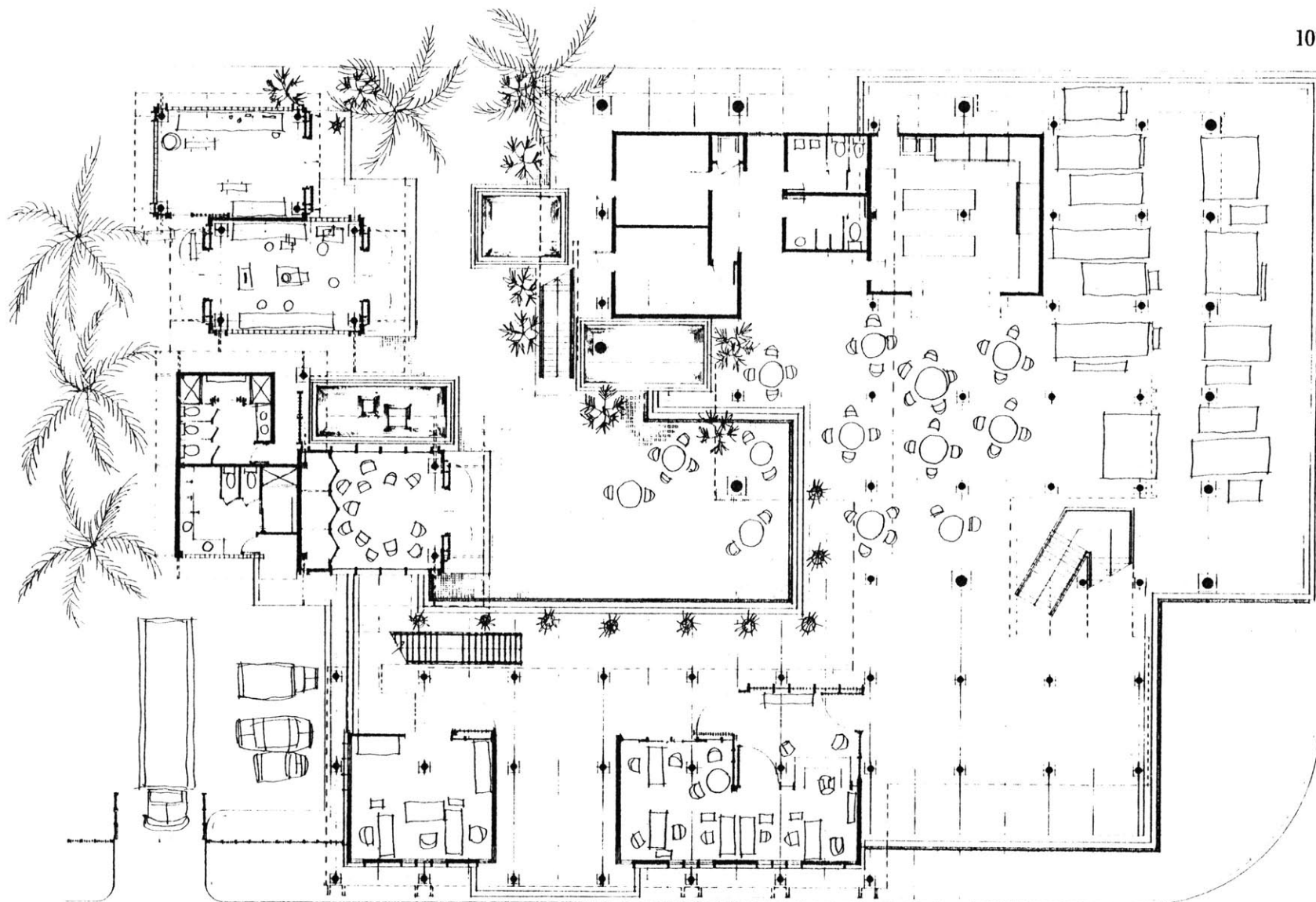


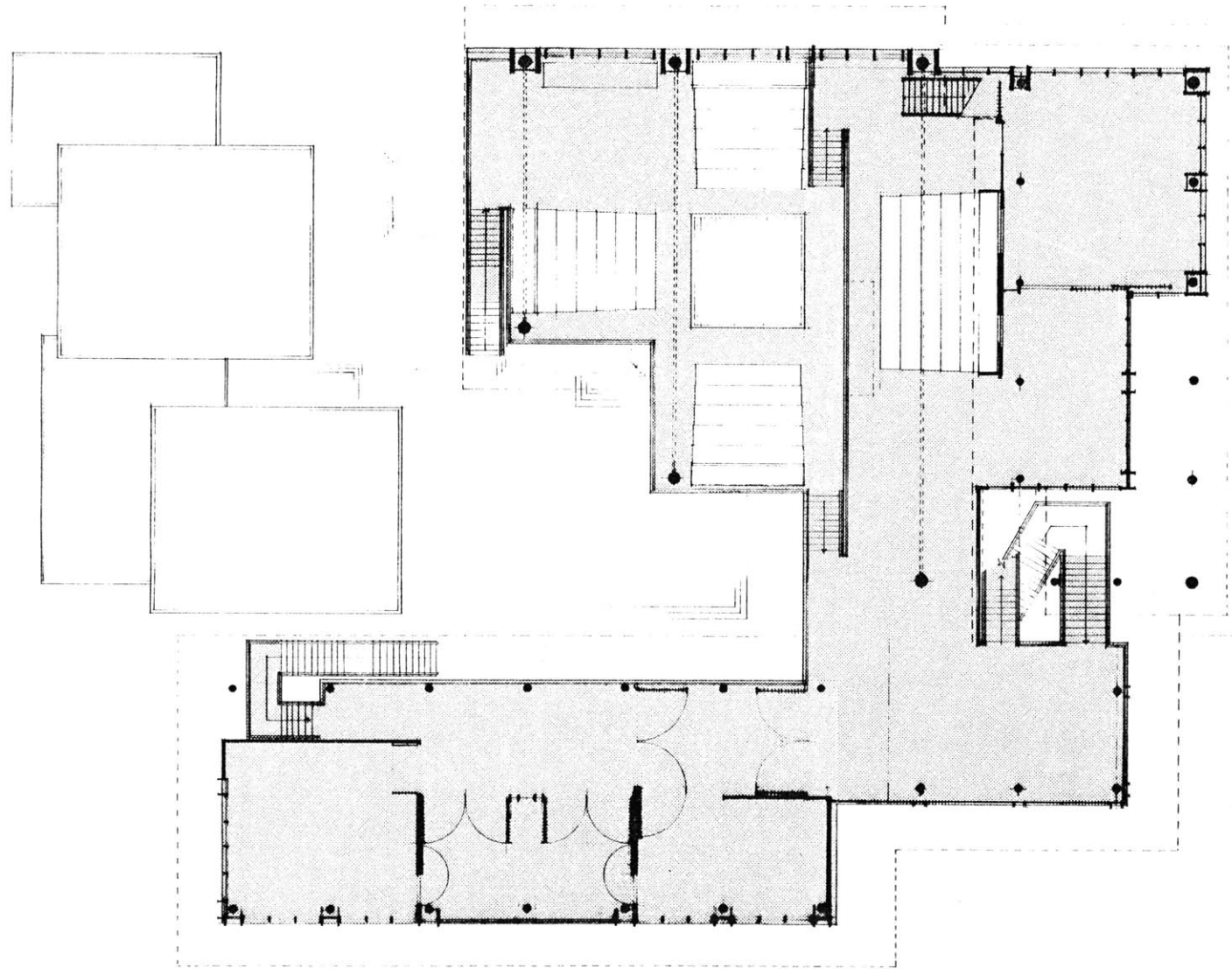
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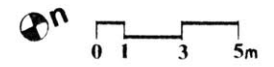


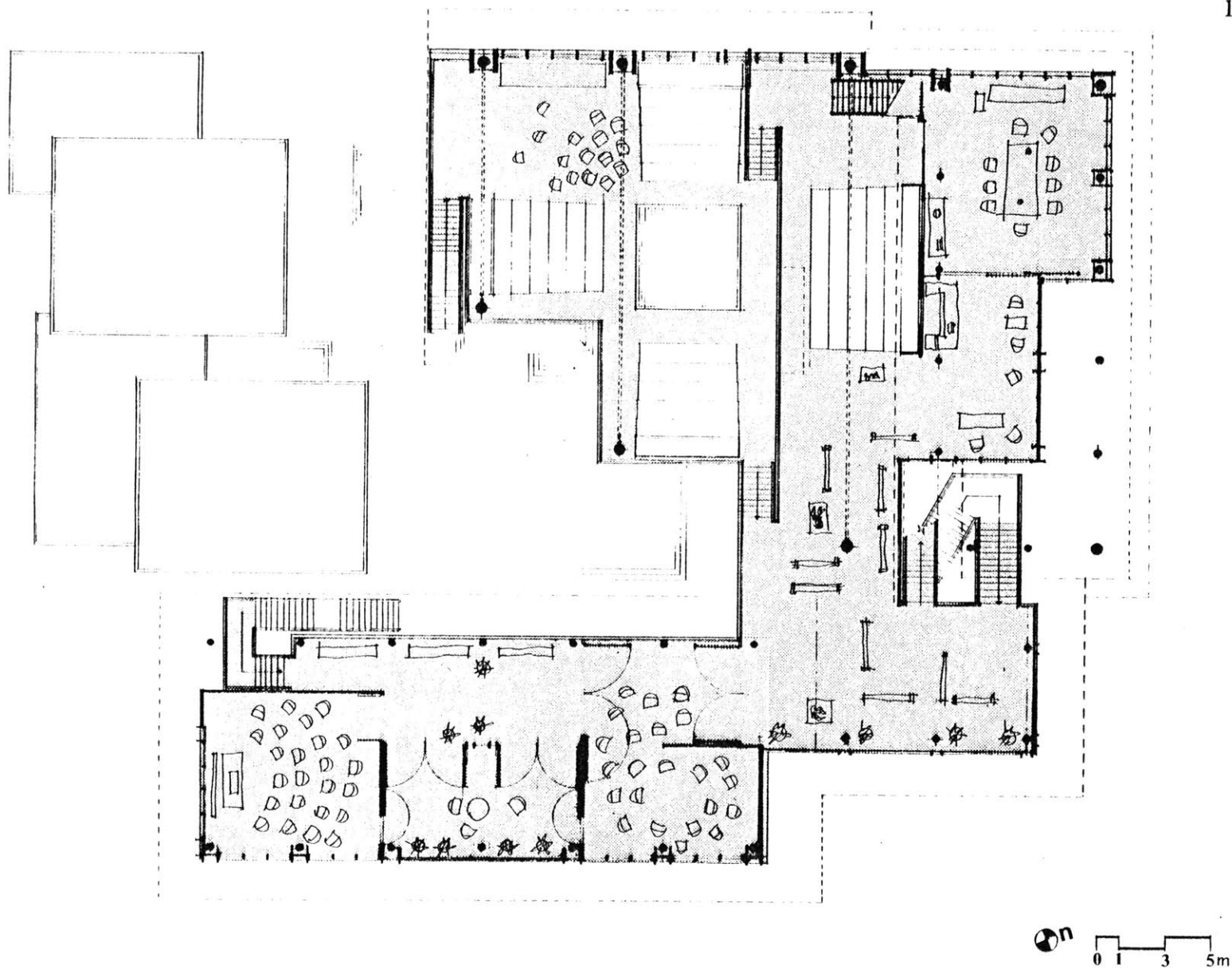
Alaminos Community Center Ground Floor Plan

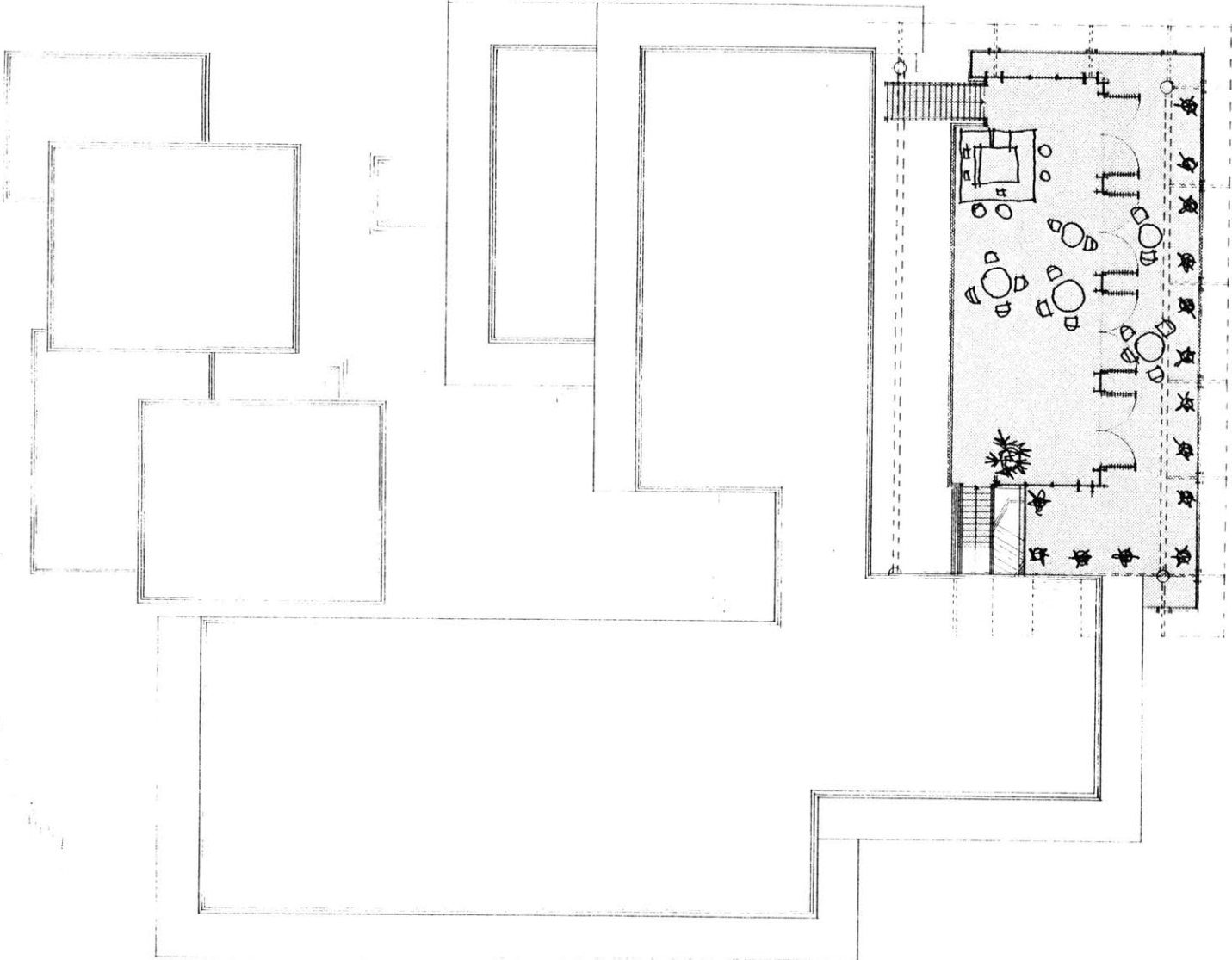




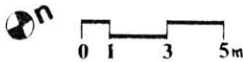
Alaminos Community Center Second Floor Plan

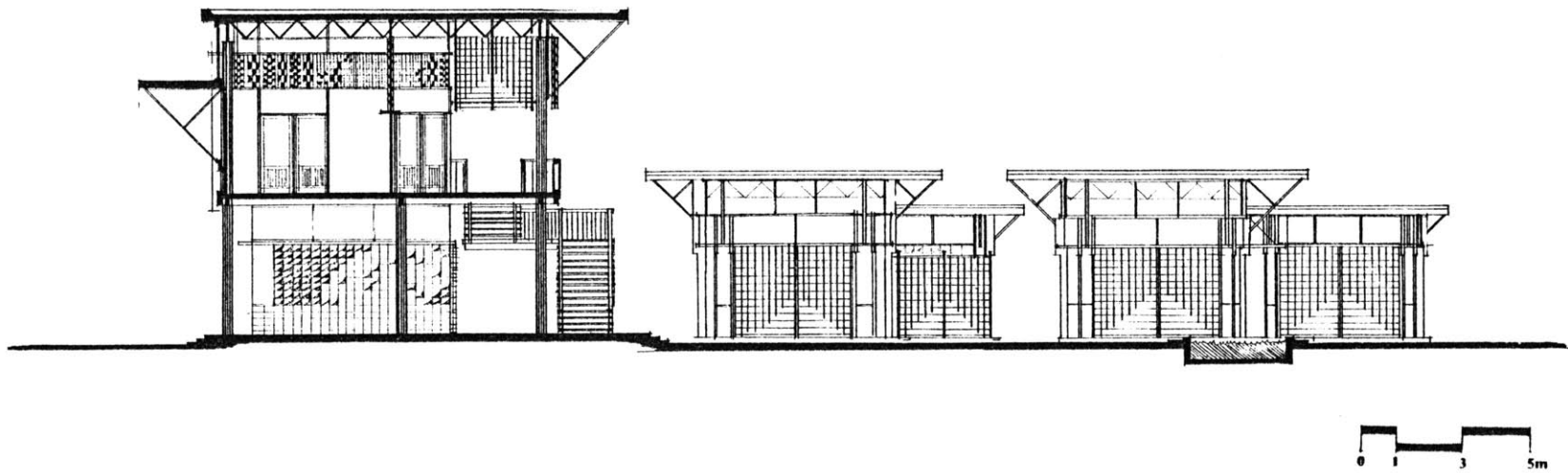




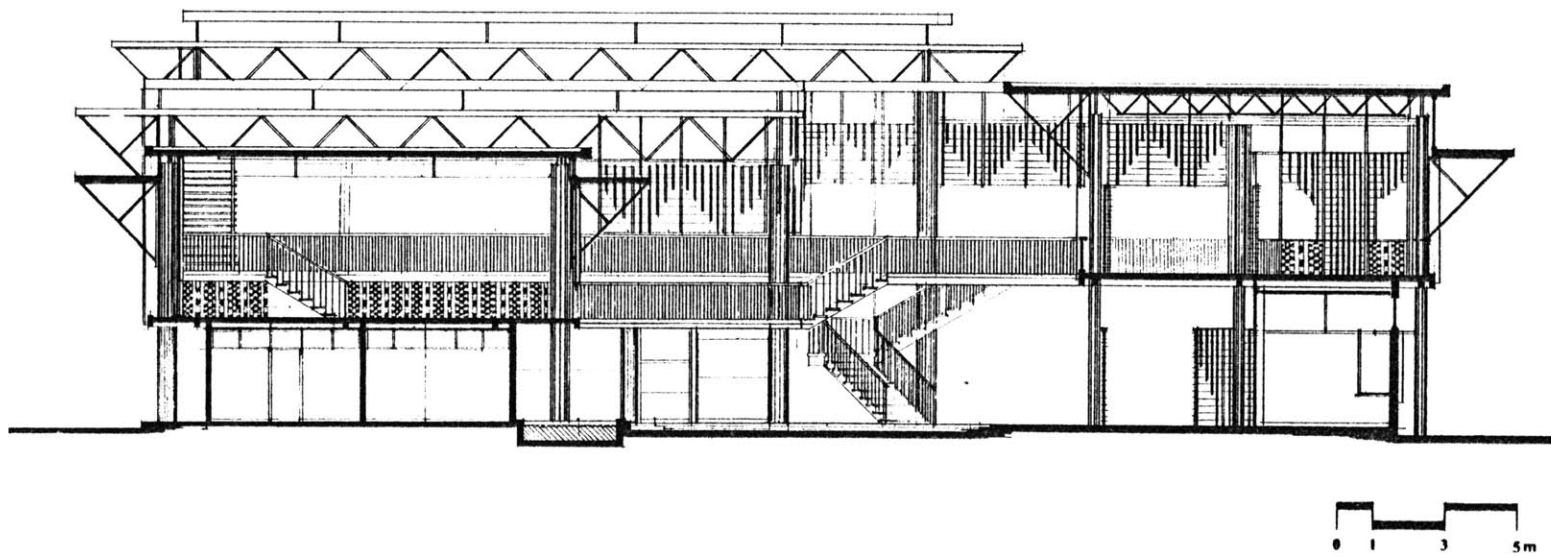


Alaminos Community Center Third Floor and Roof Plan

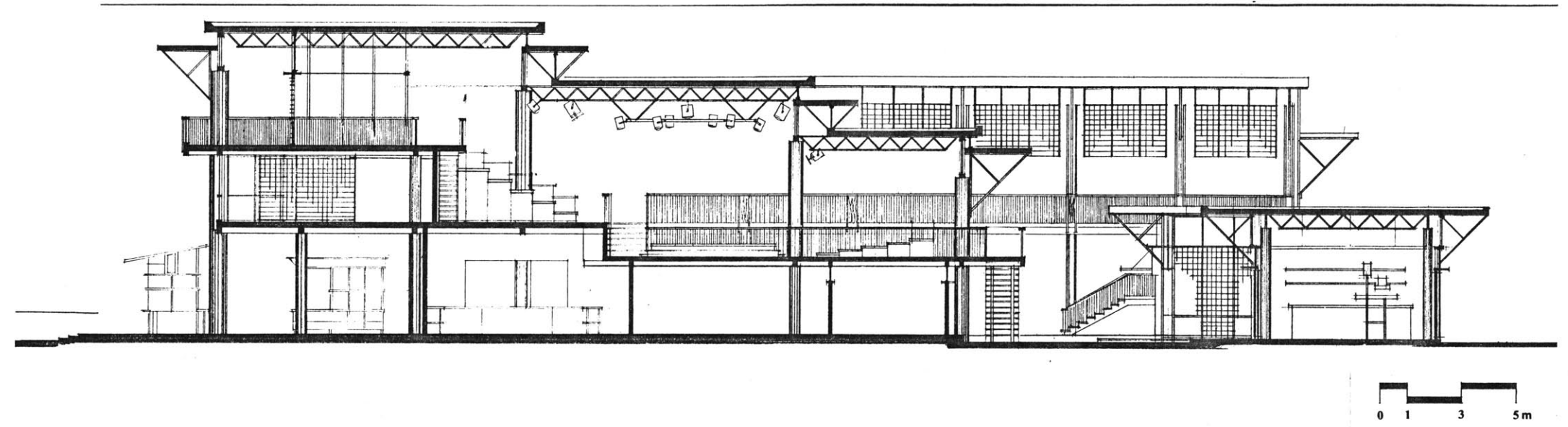




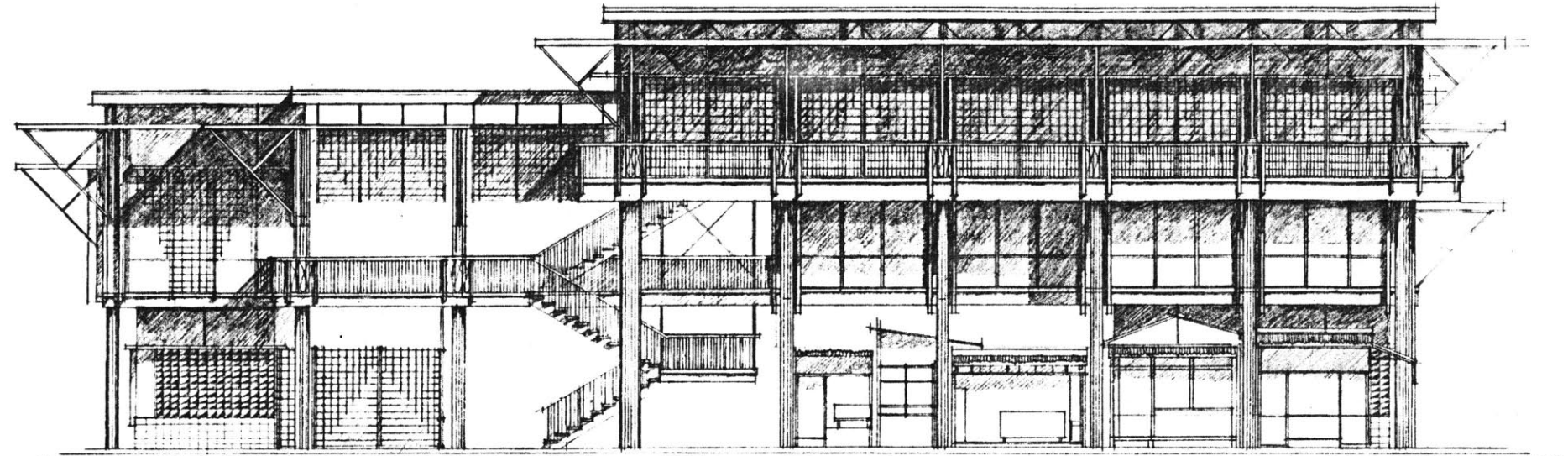
Alaminos Community Center Section AA



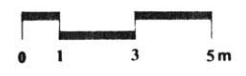
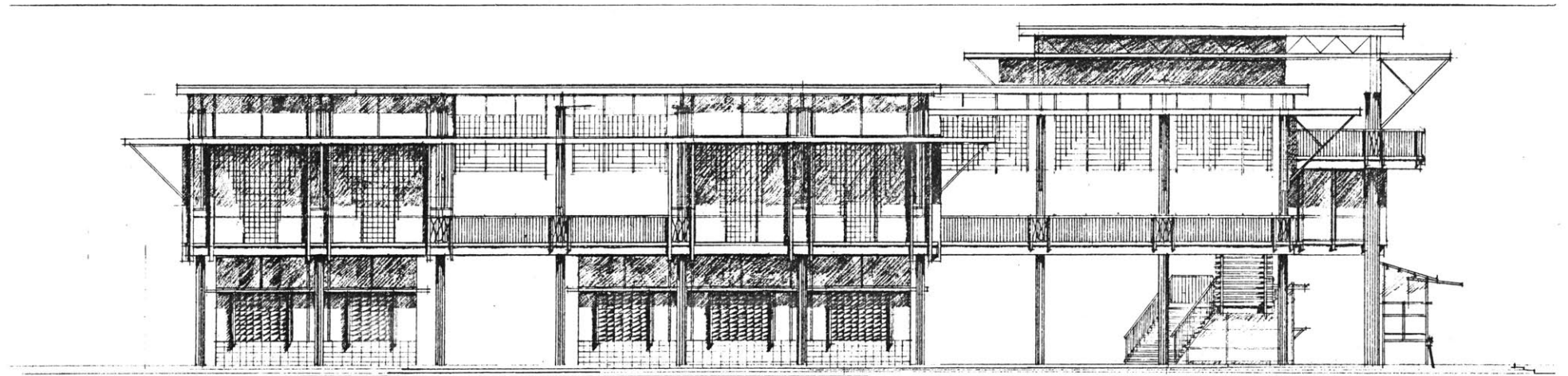
Alaminos Community Center Section BB



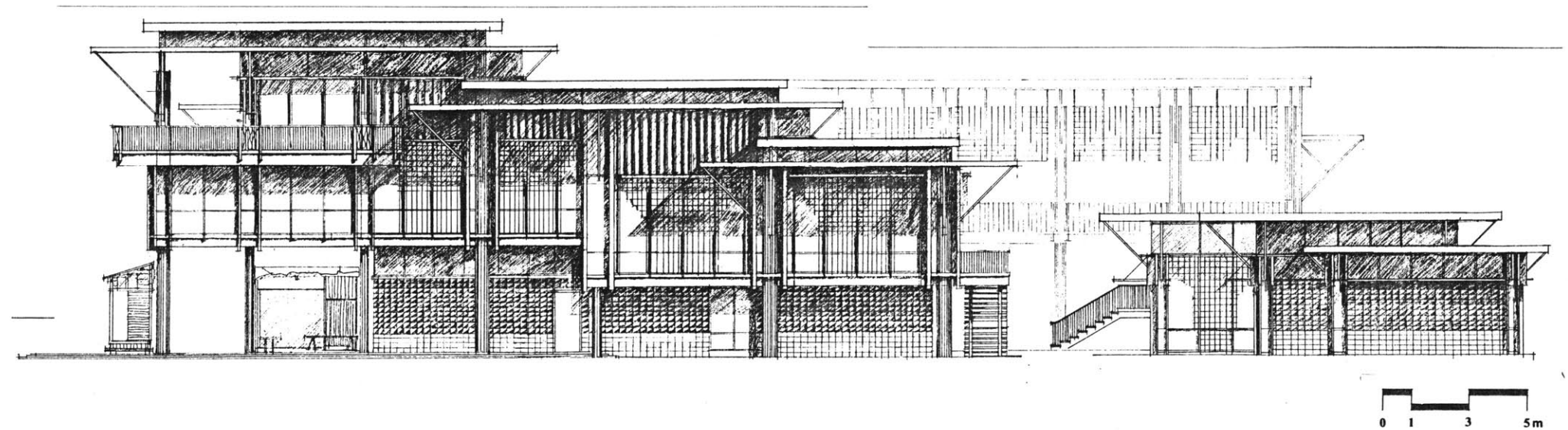
Alaminos Community Center Section CC



Alaminos Community Center North Elevation



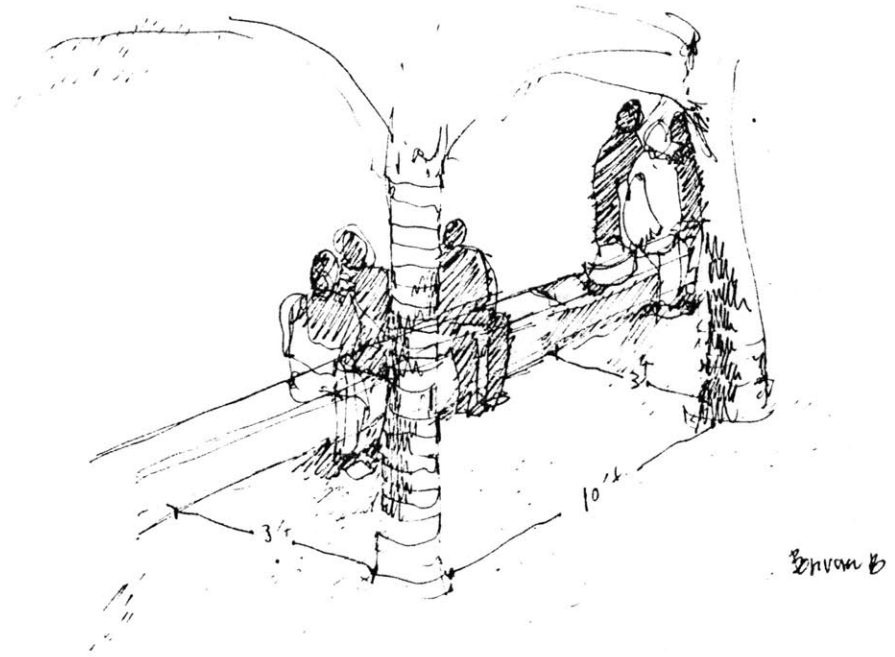
Alaminos Community Center East Elevation



Alaminos Community Center West Elevation

Conclusion





Architectural design in a rapidly changing context such as Alaminos, or the Philippines in general, requires a transformation from existing models to appropriate new forms. Reiteration of the vernacular or the use of imported forms cannot properly address the issues of change and modernization. Only culturally rooted innovation can eliminate ersatz and inappropriate building design and provide a foundation for further change.

The changing Philippines has very different requirements than previously in history. Most new architecture is derived from models which do not fully accommodate the Pilipinos needs, nor respond to the Pilipino context. This illustrates the general disorientation of a rapidly developing society. Efforts by Philippine architects to develop viable alternatives have not succeeded because

their approaches do not adequately integrate formal, behavioral, and cultural concerns.

Understanding the cultural context of form facilitates the transition from the past to the future. For this reason, an interdisciplinary approach is necessary. The cultural context lies embedded in the many forms of a society's expression. The integrated study of language, poetry, beliefs, behavior, and social values provide important insights into the character of this context. Correlations between these various aspects of culture pointed to the important themes that provide continuity in Pilipino life.

I found the incorporation of the major themes of Pilipino society, particularly the attitude of holism, the mechanisms of harmonizing, and the underlying realism, provided a basis for

architectural interpretation. Architecture must be consistent with the other beliefs and symbol systems of a culture. When the design process is thus rooted in the cultural context, it may allow the emergence of a new and genuine form of indigenous identification.

Architecture is a personal interpretation of the many interactive forces between man and environment. While the values and symbols of a culture form a context which binds people together, architecture also becomes an integral part of this cohesive network if it is sympathetic to the attitudes and beliefs of the people it serves. The expression of the cultural context in a new architecture promotes and strengthens a sense of identity, and is particularly important in a country striving to cope with the stress of growth and modernization.



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