

**The Historical Development of
Japanese Capital Cities,
their Houses, Temples, and Gardens**

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Summary

Japanese buildings are traditionally built according to the post and lintel principle. They are most often made of wood. Exterior and interior partitioning is flexible and is achieved by screens or shutters. Corridors connect the buildings of a complex.

Japanese gardens emerged from the rearrangement of natural clusters of stone in roped-off sacred Shinto shrine areas. The Japanese garden has six basic compositional elements, which are described in the ancient book, the Sakuteiki. Basic prototypes are implemented by intensifying and recreating nature.

The capitals of Heijō-kyō and Heian-kyō were established in the 8th century based on a Chinese model. They were arranged in a grid of city blocks. Merchants lived in townhouses in the city and commerce was carried out on the markets.

The Shinden Style is the building style preferred by the Heian aristocracy. Its grounds usually occupy two city blocks north-south and features a pond as well as numerous other features, and a complex of buildings and corridors. The interior is fairly open and flexible through the use of screens.

Temples began to be built as Buddhism had been introduced from the mainland. Japanese Buddhist temples have features such as a pagoda, which varies in form. Tōdaiji and Byōdōin are prime examples of the temples of this time.

During Medieval times a new style of building called the Great Buddha Style was introduced from China. This style is simple yet dignified and suited for building massive structures in short time. The Zen Style was also introduced at this time and features highly embellished rafters and ornamentation. The styles present in Japan before this time became known as the Japanese Style, which was mixed with the two new styles and then called the Eclectic Style.

During the Medieval Period garden development first led to the dry landscape garden, where gravel of granite generally replaces water. In the latter part of the period great warlords built large gardens with ponds and stones which were meant to be viewed from inside.

The Edo Period began when Tokugawa Ieyasu established himself in Edo Castle and began planning the city surrounding it. There are many illustrations of Edo from this time, which was a proliferating city of government and commerce. Merchants' houses and the houses of the townspeople were arranged in alleys with shops facing the main streets and residential houses in the backalleys. The stroll garden developed during this time.

The Sukiya Style gradually developed from the Shinden Style, taking inspiration from the architecture of the teahouse. Understatement and irregularity characterize the style. The Katsura complex in southwest Kyoto is a prime example of this style. The gardens of Sukiya complexes makes heavy use of miegakure and combine elements of different styles.

The Sōan Style is the architecture of the teahouse. Sōan are extremely small and rustic teahouses where the tea ceremony is performed. The garden containing the teahouse is called roji and is composed around a path leading up to the teahouse. Wordless communication is common in the tea garden and inside are features which makes the transition into the world of tea more tangible.

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1 Introduction

This paper focuses on the historical development of Japanese capital cities, their houses, temples, and gardens. Thus, while the subjects under discussion are quite numerous, it is their development through time that is the primary topic.

The outline of this paper is historical, i.e. it begins with the Ancient Period at the turn of the 6th century, and continues through the Medieval Period into the Edo Period up until the Meiji Restoration in 1868. The reason for not including the history of architecture and gardening in Japan before then is that it was at that time Buddhism and Chinese culture – and with it its architecture – was brought to Japan from the Korean peninsula. Before, the Jōmon and Yayoi cultures lived in pit dwellings that did not follow much of an architectural standard, and there was not yet any centralized seat of government, and thus it falls outside all the relevant topics of this paper.

At time of the Meiji Restoration in 1868 Japan became a modernized nation-state. Not only government function but also architecture became a lot like their Western counterparts. Modern Japanese architecture does not by any extent greater than that of elsewhere find inspiration in the traditionally Japanese, and thus it too has been left out of this paper.

The focus lies on the capital cities and their houses, temples, and gardens. Thus, such subjects as farmers' houses and the dwellings of common people living outside the capital cities, and the differing city styles of port towns, trading towns, castle towns, et cetera, are left out. This is not to say they are subjects of lesser importance.

Furthermore, in order to rationalize, some subjects that do have relevance for the topic of this paper are not covered or covered to an extent lesser than what would have been desirable. These include the architecture of *kabuki* and *nō* theater, and the subject of castles. Matters that have received perhaps a little less attention than they deserve are *Shintō* architecture, the dwellings of the common people, and some specifics about *Samurai* dwellings. Some of this has been left out in order to be able to keep the focus of each part of the paper fairly consistent.

In brief, it is my intention to, with this paper, shed light on the question of *How the capital cities of Japan have developed, and with them the styles and ideals of their houses, temples, and gardens, from the first influx of Buddhist culture to the modernization of the Meiji Restoration.*

Many thanks to Yukiko Yamasaki for her input on this paper and for contributing with many interesting facts, and to my friend Lars Abrahamsson for finding the faults I could not see.

2 Basics of Japanese Architecture and Gardens

This chapter will introduce many of the basic concepts involved in Japanese architecture and gardening.

2.1 Japanese Architecture

Traditional Japanese buildings, especially temples and older aristocratic residences, are often constructed of wood but temples usually rest on a podium of stone. They are generally designed on the *post and lintel principle*, which means they have non-bearing walls in the bays (*ken*) between each pair of posts. The roof is usually built of tiles in older buildings and later with variations such as wood shingle, whose eaves are cantilevered far out over the verandas by means of a system of brackets. The brackets rest on posts beneath and sometimes in the intercolumnar spaces as well.

Exterior partitioning is often achieved by reticulated hinged shutters (*shitomido*), i.e. they are made of a woven material and can be detached from the structure, or simply by hanging bamboo (簾, *sudare*). Interior partitioning is enabled by using screens – either folding screens (屏風, *byōbu*) or non-folding screens (衝立て, *tsuitate*) standing on the floor or sliding screens (*fusama* or *shōji*) which slide along the lintels.

The core of the structure is called the *moya* and is usually one, three, five, or some other odd number of bays in width by two or three or so in depth. Surrounding this central core on most structures are peripheral sections called *hisashi*, usually one bay in width. Hisashi with separate pent roofs beneath the main roof are called *mokoshi*, and they usually serve as tertiary spaces and border the hisashi that are under the main roof, but they can also surround the moya directly.

Building complexes such as temples or Shinden-Style residences are often composed of many structures consisting of moya and hisashi areas as described above. They are connected by corridors (廊, *rō*) with roofs, which can be quite spacious, thus making the whole complex seemingly one building.

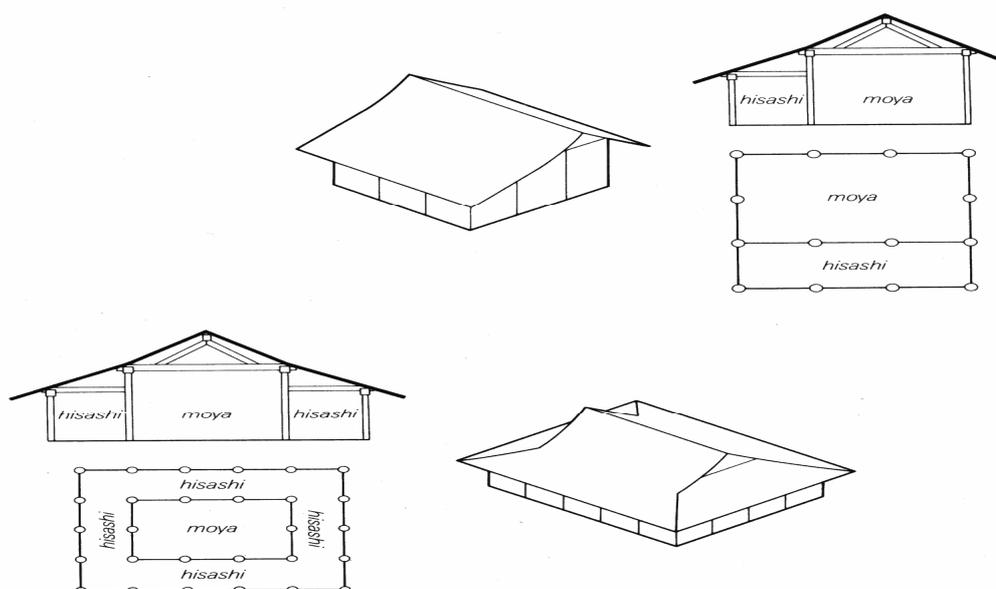


Illustration 1: A 3-by-3 bay building with hisashi on one side, and a 5-by-5 bay

building surrounded by hisashi.

2.2 Japanese Gardens

The earliest known written document on Japanese garden making, the *Sakuteiki* (“Notes on Garden Making”) describes how one should arrange stones. This is done by first placing the principal stone and then set other stones complying to the requesting mood of the principal stone, so as to resemble a pack of dogs crouching on the ground, or a running and scattering group of pigs. In general, says the *Sakuteiki*, there should be seven or eight “chasing” stones for every one or two “running away” stones. (Inaji, p. 3)

With the gradual rearrangement of natural clusters of stones, the ancestral form of the Japanese garden began to emerge. According to the beliefs of Shintō, the indigenous animistic religion of Japan, roped-off areas of old trees and clusters of rocks, inhabited by divine spirit, have the appearance of playgrounds or “gardens” for *kami*, or spirits. (Inaji, p. 3)

2.3 The Six Basic Elements of Garden Composition

The Japanese garden has six basic compositional elements, as described in the *Sakuteiki*: the artificial hills, the pond, the island, the white sand south garden, the garden stream, and the waterfall. Even when abstracted or condensed, the skeletal structure of the Japanese garden is composed using these six elements to portray the landscape in accordance with the prototype. Plants and springs may also be used as garden accents where appropriate, according to the *Sakuteiki*. (Inaji, p. 17)

2.3.1 Artificial Hills

The garden is surrounded by artificial hills to embellish the architecture. (Inaji, p. 17)

2.3.2 Pond

Stones are placed in the pond to simulate a seascape. The pond can be in the Ocean Style, which constructs the scene of a rough seashore, or the River Style which should resemble the intricate course of a dragon or a snake. (Inaji, p. 17)

2.3.3 Islands

The *Sakuteiki* mentions several types of pond island landscapes: the Hill Island, the Field Island, the Forest Island, the Rocky-Shore Island, the Cloud Shape, the Running Stream Type, the Ebb-tide Beach Style, the Pine-bark Pattern, and so on. (Inaji, p. 17)

2.3.4 South Garden

The layout of the South Garden (南庭, *nantei*) requires about 20 meters from the outer pillars supporting the roof of the staircase southward to the shoreline of the pond. (Inaji, p. 17, 19)

2.3.5 Garden Stream

Water, the Sakuteiki says, proceeds when the earth allows it, and stops when the earth arrests it. Another theory says that the mountain symbolizes the kind, and water his subjects, and the stones represent the kind's counsellors. According to this theory, water runs at the command of the mountain. The mountain-rapids style of the garden stream should present the scene of rapids gushing out from the ravine formed by two mountains. (Inaji, p. 19)

2.3.6 Waterfall

When we observe natural waterfalls we notice that tall falls are not necessarily wide, nor low falls always narrow in breadth, the Sakuteiki says. (Inaji, p. 19)

2.4 Stylized Forms and Modeling After

In the Sakuteiki, the term *yō* (様, way; manner) refers to the stylized forms in which each of the six compositional elements can be rendered to express the natural landscape. *Yō* indicates form or shape, definitive style and appearance, air, or state. Sometimes the term *kata* is also used. (Inaji, pp. 22-23)

Intermediating between stylized forms (*yō*) and the act of designing the garden is a learning stage called *manabi* (学び, learning; study) – the process of studying and modeling after. Learning the art of garden making, or any of the traditional Japanese arts, requires repeated simulation of existing models, thus studying and modeling after are linked. Based on *yō*, the stylistic form, *manabi* calls for an understanding that enables the transformation from nature's existing form to the garden form to be implemented. (Inaji, p. 23)

The stylized forms are based on existing forms of nature that the designer should make his own and model after the general air of. The implementation should be designed with the mood of harmony, and above all, the prototype being expressed must be evident. None of the stylized forms reproduces nature in its existing form. Instead they each extract a certain form or air from nature and intensify and transpose it by recreating it. This abstract stylization is a primary factor in the development of Japanese gardens, and constitutes the core of the various garden styles that have emerged. (Inaji, p. 24)

The Ancient Period

Asuka Period
(590-710)

Nara Period
(710-784)

Heian Period
(794-1192)

3 The Early Capitals

In the beginning, Japanese capitals were merely the place where the Emperor and his family, and the people serving them, lived. It was custom to move the capital when a new emperor ascended the throne. However, when Imperial Japan began to form as a centralized state, from the enactment of the *ritsuryō* system, it was decided to establish a permanent capital, following the examples of China and Korea. (Inaba & Nakayama, p. 32)

The cities Heijō-kyō (平城京, “Capital of the Castle of Peace”, present-day Nara) and Heian-kyō (平安京, “Capital of Peace and Tranquility”, present-day Kyōto) were modeled after the Tang-Chinese capital Changan (also X'ian), although the Japanese cities should, rather, be called “scale-reduction models” (Inaji, p. 6). The main avenues of Heijō-kyō were 85 meters in width while the ones in Changan were 150 meters, and the total area of Changan was about four times that of Heian-kyō. Furthermore, the Japanese capitals were built in a climate and terrain different from China's. (Inaji, p. 6)

Heijō-kyō was capital during the Nara Period (710-784) and Heian-kyō during the Heian Period (794-1185) and subsequently through the years until it was moved to Edo in 1868, even though the actual center of the Shogunate's power was at times located elsewhere. (The capital was moved around during the ten years between 784 and 794.)

3.1 Layout of Heian-kyō

Heian-kyō was built in a grid fashion, with city blocks separated by narrow streets. City blocks composed sections of the city called *bō*, usually containing four blocks east-west by four blocks north-south, separated by large avenues. Through the middle of the city ran Suzaku Avenue, from the Rashōmon gate in the south to the Imperial Palace gates, Suzakumon, in the north. (Inaji, pp. 6-7; Inaba & Nakayama, pp. 38-40)

The Imperial Palace compound contained the East and West Imperial Assembly Halls, and the Court of Government's twelve buildings, which were symmetrically arranged around the central axis. To the north was the Great Hall of State where the Emperor supervised the governmental process. Surrounding these compounds were offices, stables, storehouses, and the like. (Nishi & Hozumi, pp. 58-59)

Suzaku Avenue divided the city in two halves called simply Right Capital (the western half; seen from the Imperial Palace) and Left Capital (the eastern half). Later the western part became known as *Rakuyōjō* (洛陽城, “Luoyang City”), since it was a copy of the Chinese city with the same name, and the eastern as *Chōanjō* (長安城, “Changan City”) for a corresponding reason. The center of Kyōto is called *Rakuchū* (洛中, center of Rakuyōjō) still today. In the south of the city there were two markets: one for each half of the city, each occupying an area of 12 blocks. (Inaba & Nakayama, pp. 32-33; Nishi & Hozumi, p. 62)

The size of one city block was one *chō* (120 meters) in each direction, or 14,400 square meters. Heian-kyō consisted of 38 blocks on the north-south axis and 32 east-west. Larger compounds occupied many blocks. The Imperial Palace grounds in the north of the city occupied as much as 80 blocks plus intermediate streets (1.4 kilometers north-south by 1.1 kilometers east-west), while the larger aristocratic

residences sometimes took up two or four blocks. Smaller residences of the common were built on subdivisions of the city blocks, which could be divided into as many as 32 lots separated by narrow lanes. (Inaji, pp. 6-7; Nishi & Hozumi, p. 62)

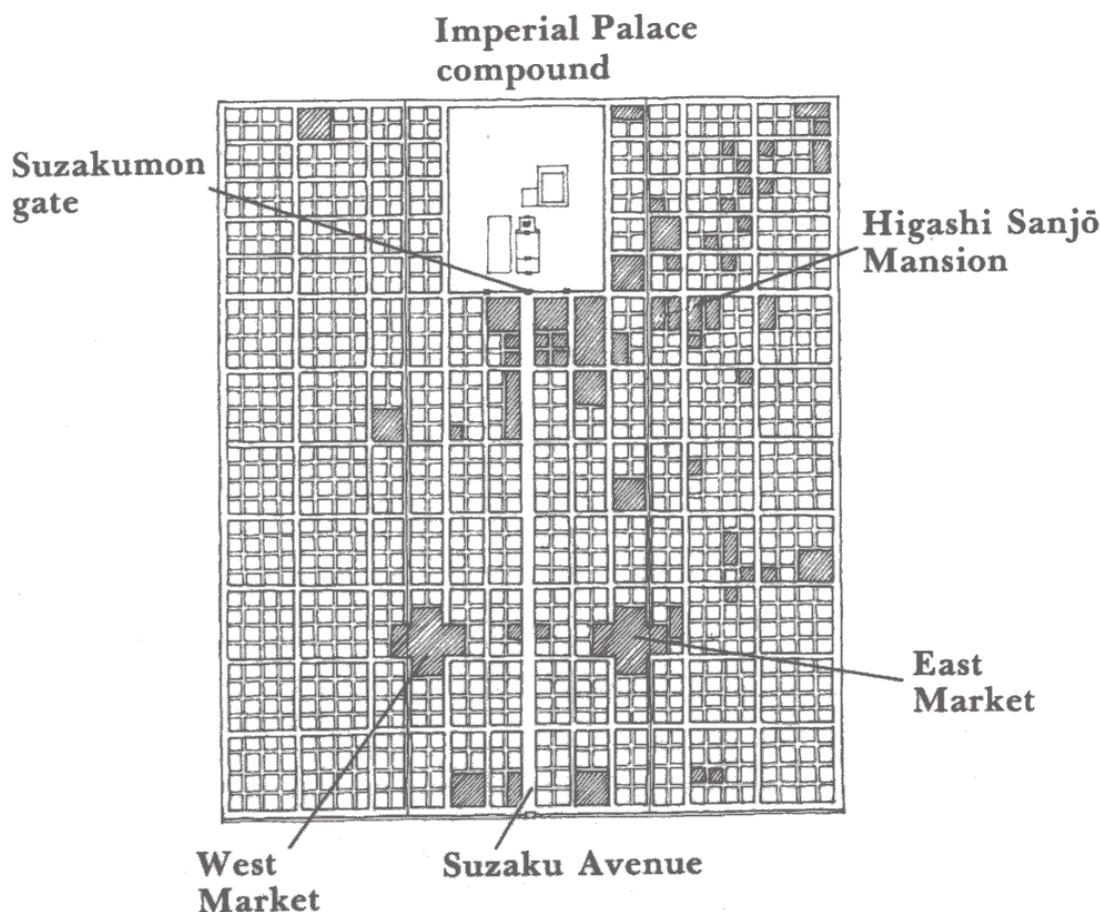


Illustration 2: Map of Heian-kyō.

3.2 The Dwellings of the Merchants and Craftsmen Class

In Heijō-kyō, the markets had been run by officials and the merchants had been licensed to maintain the stores. With Heian-kyō, an increase in population encouraged the emergence of independent merchants. Townspeople began to make an independent living in the capital, and their houses, *machiya* (町家, townhouse) are thought to have been located in the outlying districts close to the markets or lining the back streets. The goods sold in the house could be displayed on stands outside the house. (Inaba & Nakayama, pp. 32-33)

The townhouses had one and a half or two bays facing the street and were three or four bays in depth. They follow the general pattern of Japanese houses of the time by having a core area (*moya*) and a peripheral section (*hisashi*), with shingled roofs standing on pillars embedded directly into the ground. (Inaba & Nakayama, pp. 33-34)

The houses were divided front-to-back in halves: one with an earth floor, and the other half being the living space, covered by woven mats directly on the ground or on boards resting on logs. In the center of the living area was an open fireplace. (Inaba &

Nakayama, pp. 33-34)

The part of the building with a earthen floor had doors which opened directly into the street. On the back side was a door leading out to the yard behind the house, where there was a communal well shared with the neighbors. Just inside the back door was a small kitchen. (Inaba & Nakayama, pp. 33-34)

In the front section of the living-area half of the house there was a raised floor. The upper one-third of the wall had a window with hinged shutters, which was opened during the daytime when this area was used as a shop, selling its goods to the people on the street on the other side of the window. (Inaba & Nakayama, pp. 33-34)

With the decline of the southwestern part of the city (due to its inhospitable dampness (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 62)) the West Market ceased to be used, and over time the East Market too changed character. With the spread of commerce through the city, the marketplace came to be used more as a location for festivals. (Nishi & Hozumi, pp. 62-63)

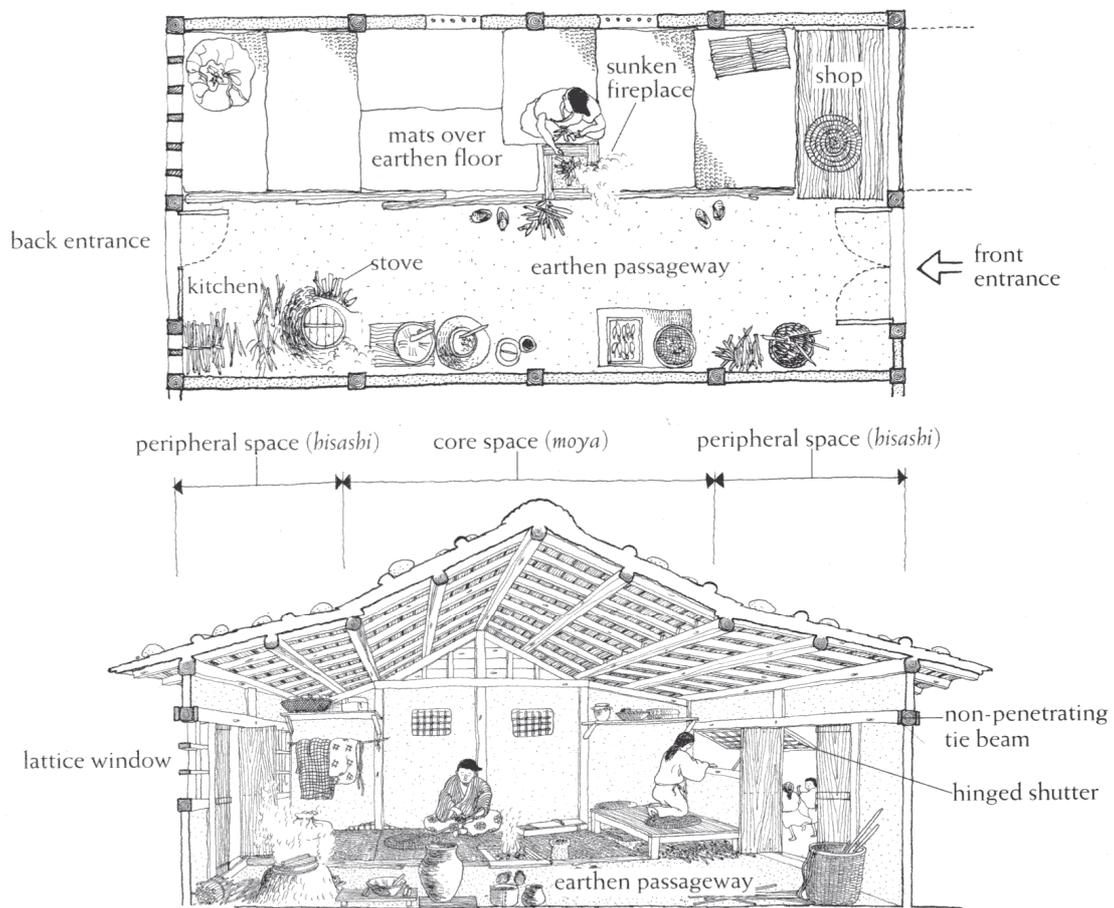


Illustration 3: Townhouse interior.

4 The Shinden Style

The Shinden Style (寝殿造り, *shinden zukuri*) is the architectural style preferred by the aristocracy during the Heian Period (784-1185). It takes its name from the word *shinden* (寝殿, sleeping hall) which denotes the main hall at the center of the shinden compound were the master resided (Inaji, p. 7, Nishi & Hozumi, p. 64).

4.1 The Shinden Compound

The pattern followed in the Shinden Style was adopted from the style used in palaces in T'ang China. The Chinese buildings had, unlike the Japanese, hipped roofs (*azuma*, or *yosemune-zukuri*) which the Chinese though added monumentality and dignity (Inaji, p. 10) and the compounds and buildings themselves were completely symmetrical.

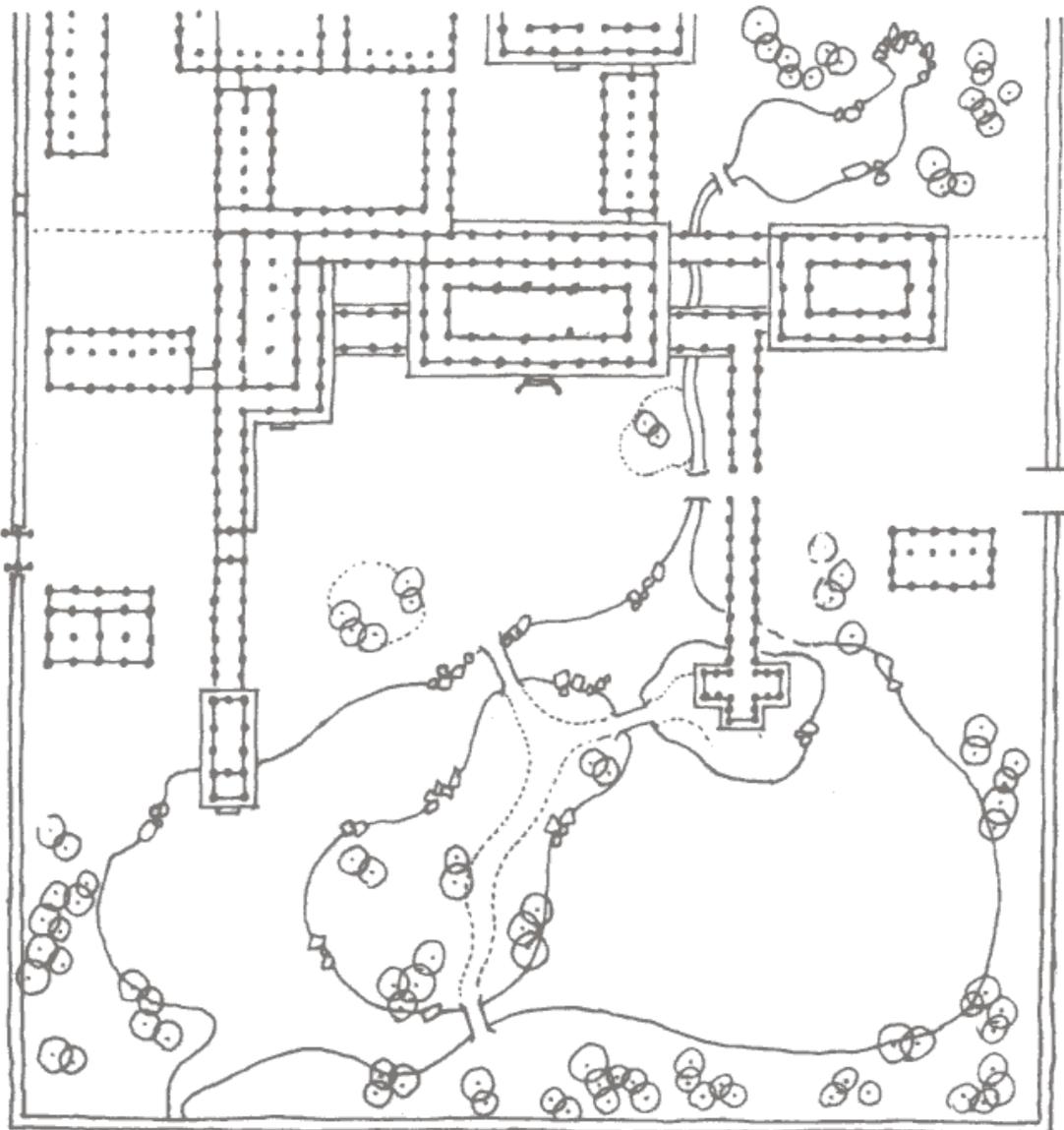


Illustration 4: Map of a Shinden compound.

4.1.1 Grounds

A Shinden compound is enclosed by earthen walls (*tsujibe*) with planks on the sides and a tiled roof. It typically includes a pond in the south, a Main Gate (正門, *seimon*) in the eastern wall and a rear gate (裏門, *uramon*) in the western. The buildings flowing in the east-west direction to the north of the pond. They are usually one city block in size (120 meters in each direction), though some of the larger are two north-south blocks. Inaji suggests that two blocks was the standard size of Shinden compounds in Heian-kyo (Inaji, p. 9). At the end of the Heian Period though, the zoning restrictions limited the sizes to subdivisions of one-fourths or one-eighths the size of a city block (Inaji, p. 30, Nishi & Hozumi, p. 64).

The pond typically features at least one island connected by bridges to the north and south shores, and is fed by a stream running from the northeast. On the shores not facing the buildings there might be a small hill made from the earth that was excavated to create the pond, with trees planted on it.

4.1.2 Buildings

The buildings are centered around the shinden hall which is connected by open hallways (*sukirō*) to the lesser buildings known as *tainoya* (対の屋, opposed hall) where members of the owner's family and their servants live. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 64)

There are also two pavilions: the Fishing Pavilion (釣り殿, *tsuridono*), usually to the east, and the Fountain Pavilion (泉殿, *izumidono*) to the west. They are located either on the shore of the pond, on pillars in the pond, or sometimes even on an island in the pond connected by a corridor on pillars. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 64)

The compound can also feature ox-cart shelters and household offices just inside the exterior gates (usually only inside the eastern, main gate), and in some cases even the eastern *tainoya* is replaced by a larger building known as a *lesser shinden*. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 65)

4.1.3 Hallways and Corridors

The shinden is connected to the *tainoya* by hallways (*watadono*). The *tainoya* are in turn connected to the pavilions by corridors. Along the two southern corridors there are Inner Gates (中門, *chūmon*) which directly face the outer gates and thus provided the entrance into the complex. The corridors are spacious enough to hold offices of the household staff. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 64)

4.2 Interior of the Shinden Complex

Shinden-Style buildings are composed of only one room – partitioning and furnishing define living space (though this changed at the end of the Heian Period, when buildings were divided into fixed rooms (Inaji, p. 30)). The floors are constructed of wooden planks, though there are also thick, movable mats of woven straw to sit on. At the ends of buildings swinging doors (妻戸, *tsumado*) are usually used and sliding doors (*yarido*) on verandas.

The shinden is composed of a core *moya* of perhaps five bays in size east-west and two north-south, surrounded by a one-bay *hisashi* in every direction. The south *hisashi*

was used by the master to receive guests while the north one was for everyday living. (Inaba & Nakayama, pp. 38-40)

Exterior partitions are made of shitomido, the reticulated hinged shutters mentioned in the introduction, or sudare, hanging bamboo blinds, often with curtains (*kabeshiro*) behind. When these are open, an entire one-bay space between columns is completely unobstructed.

For interior partitioning movable screens – sometimes foldable and sometimes one-piece – or hanging curtains were used. Sliding screens, originally called shōji but later (and henceforth herein) called fusama, are also used in a few cases for interior partitioning. (Shōji later acquired the meaning of the sliding translucent paper screens typically used in the Shoin Style.)

The partitions used in Shinden complexes only shielded from sight, though, and not from sound or cold. Thus, winters were uncomfortable. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 67)

4.2.1 Division of the Interior

In the late Heian Period the interior of the shinden was divided into two halves, directly under the roof ridge partitioned by sliding doors (*munewakedo*) (Inaji, p. 34). As mentioned in the previous section, the buildings were also divided into fixed rooms.

The north half (*ke*) of the shinden came to be used as daily living, and was divided with fusama into three rooms: the study, the sleeping room, and the informal reception room (書院, *shoin*; drawing room). The south half (*hare*) was used for formal ceremonies and was not further subdivided. (Inaji, pp. 34-37)

The rooms of the north half were externally partitioned by *mairaido*, sliding doors, and not as before by shitomido swinging shutters. Mairaido open up by sliding horizontally, unlike shitomido, thus even fully opened they leave a half-bay section closed to the outside. This results in a framed view of the north garden, which gives rise to its unique characteristics. (Inaji, pp. 34, 47)

4.3 The Garden

The south garden included a ceremonial area directly to the south of the shinden, which occupied the 21-27 meters available north-south between the shinden and the pond. To the east and west this area was enclosed by the corridors.

The pond is in the ocean style (thus mimicking the open sea) where dragon-headed Chinese-style boats can float, and in the center of the pond there is typically an island with a musicians stage built upon. As noted before, artificial hills were created on the sides of the pond not facing the complex.

Considering that Shinden buildings have the ability to open up the exterior walls completely, the garden becomes as much a part of the architecture as the buildings themselves. Nor are there fixed positions in the buildings from which the garden is intended to be viewed.

At the end of the Heian Period, as the imperial ceremonies began to dwindle, the role of the south garden began to change into what was to be called a *contemplation garden* (観照庭, *kanshōniwa*). In the contemplation garden, the basic concepts of a

south garden (the white sand area, the pond, the islands, and the artificial hills) are not absent, but abbreviated.

4.3.1 The North Garden

As mentioned, when the shinden became internally partitioned the northern exterior walls became composed by mairaido sliding doors. Since these can never open up completely, this demands a change in how the north garden is composed – compensating the lost panoramic view by a higher density garden prototype. (Inaji, p. 37)

Inaji (p. 37) mentions as an example how the theme of the north gardens of Daisen-in and Taizō-in incorporate the elements of the prototypical Shinden north garden. In the narrow garden partitions visible from the rooms along the north wall of the shinden, the waterfall and rapids; their flow around dams and islands, under bridges, and exiting under the building towards the south garden. In Daisen-in and Taizō-in the water is replaced by moss and coarse white sand – an abstract expression of the prototype.

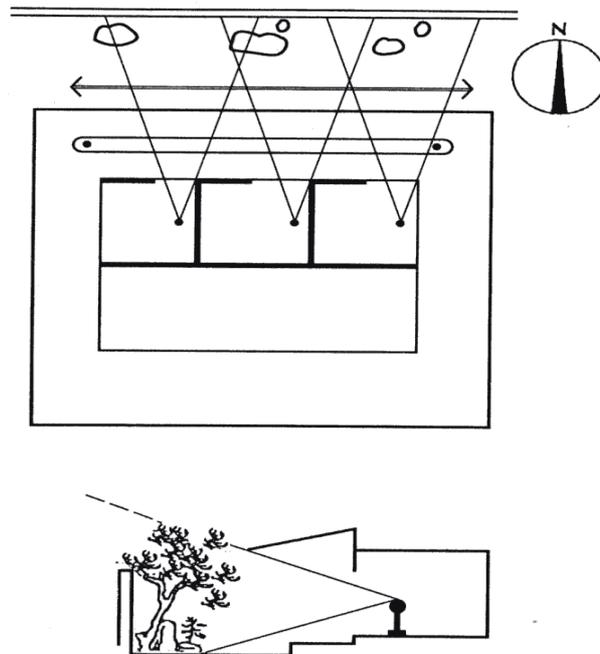


Illustration 5: Views of the North Garden.

4.4 The Preference for Asymmetry

The bilaterally symmetrical layout of the compound was in practice lost, or at least diminished. One example is Higashisanjō Palace of the powerful Fujiwara family, as described by Inaji (pp. 10-11), which differs from the standard formula.

The shinden is located a bit to the west of the center of the compound. The west tainoya was moved to the northwest – north of the shinden. There is no spring pavillion. The west gate is located far north of the center of the western wall.

Most notably though, is the zigzag, *gankōkei* (雁行計, geese-in-flight plan) layout of

the buildings, which can be seen also in other compounds, such as the later, Sukiya-Style Katsura Detached Palace. The process of asymmetry being preferred over the symmetrical patterns is frequently repeated. Architects and historians repeatedly attribute this to Japanese aesthetic taste. (Inaji, p. 11)

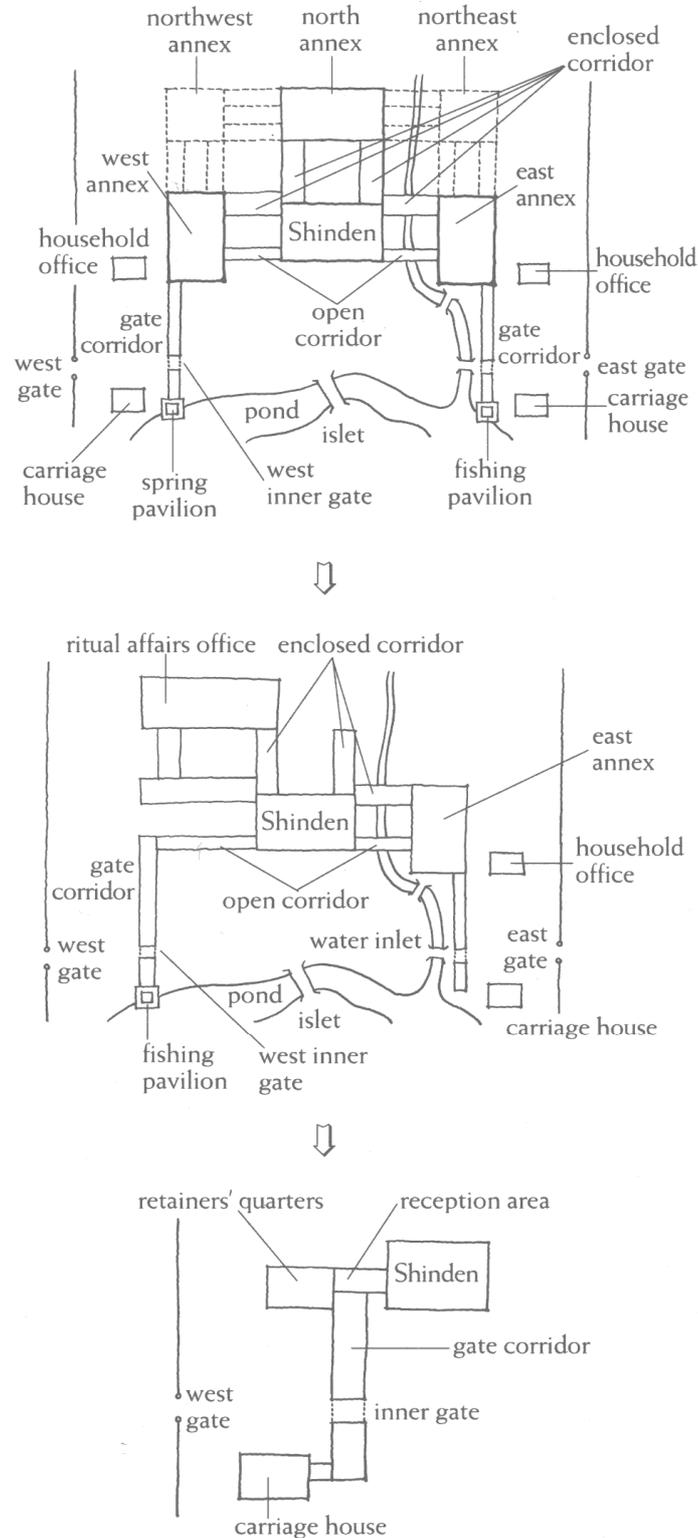


Illustration 6: Shinden prototype changes toward asymmetry.

5 Residential Houses of the Nara Period

The only remaining residential building from the Nara Period is the Dempōdō, though other residential structures has been reconstructed from written-down descriptions.

5.1 Dempōdō

Dempōdō of the Hōryūji temple in Heijō-kyō was originally a residential building moved to the temple in 739 where it was given the name Dempōdō (傳法堂, Dharma-transmission hall). (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 60)

The building is seven bays long and four bays wide and has a tiled roof. Unlike temples of the time, which had floors of packed earth, Dempōdō has a wood-plank floor, from which its origin as a residential structure can be deduced (if not from its peculiar-looking exterior). The building does not look exactly the same today as it used to, but architectural historians have figured out how it was originally built, and that is what I will describe in this essay.

When it was built, it was five bays long and four bays wide. The roof was originally made of cypress bark. The rear three bays were enclosed by walls and the front two were open (under the roof), and there was a wide veranda in front (not under the roof).

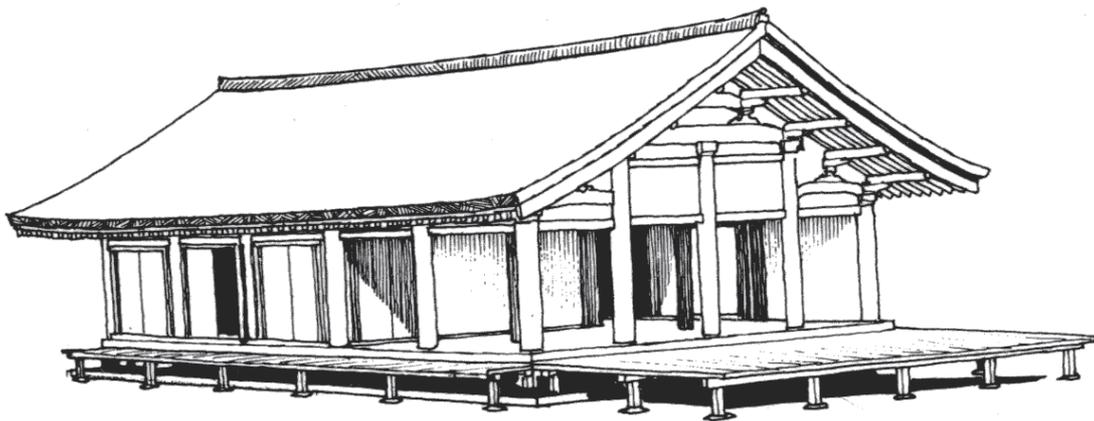


Illustration 7: Dempōdō.

5.2 The Toyonari Mansion

The mansion of Fujiwara no Toyonari is thought to have been five bays wide and tree bays deep. Like the Dempōdō and the houses of the following Shinden Style, it had an elevated plank floor, and no fixed interior partitions. It also followed the pattern of separating the core section (moya) from the secondary hisashi spaces, although it is not clear whether the building had one or two hisashi verandas. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 60)

6 The Great Temples

Temple architecture was imported from the Korean Kingdom of Paekche (or Baekje), following the Buddha's teachings which themselves had been introduced to the Japanese in the mid sixth century. The impressive expressions of Buddhist religion and its attendant art and architecture from the highly developed culture on the Asian continent led the way to higher civilization for the early Japanese. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 12)

Buddhist buildings are critical to the development of Japanese art and architecture since it introduced new structures and ornamental features. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 12)

The year 1051 was believed to be the fifteen-hundredth anniversary of the death of the Buddha and the beginning of the final decline of the Buddha's teachings. It was believed at the time that only the Amida Buddha had the power to save mankind, and halls dedicated to Amida were built in great numbers. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 19) We will look at the Phoenix Hall of the Byōdōin villa-temple, which is a prime example.

6.1 The Pagoda

The pagodas of China and Japan are thought to have developed from the spire of the Indian *stupa*. The stupa is a building shaped like a hemisphere built from stone and earth, with an umbrella-shaped spire on top and houses the relics which represents the bones of the historical Buddha. The pagoda is essentially a set of roofs (5 in the case of Hōryūji) built from a massive column that runs through the center, resting on a foundation stone. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 15)

The five stories of the Hōryūji pagoda gradually decrease in size toward the top. Later pagodas did not stress this feature as much – some being seemingly straight from top to bottom. The Hōryūji pagoda has the most marked diminution of any extant pagoda. The Hōryūji is the only temple where the pagoda has the central role, which shifted gradually to the Golden Hall in later temples, changing the pagoda's role to a purely ornamental one. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 15)

6.1.1 The Decline of the Pagoda

Asukadera, completed in 596, is thought to have been the first temple built in Japan. Its pagoda was located in the center of the compound, with three golden halls surrounding it on three sides. The golden hall of a Buddhist temple houses the image of the historical Buddha. Later temples featured the pagoda on equal terms to a single golden hall in the center of the compound, but at Kawaradera (mid 7th century) the pagoda stands *beside* the southern of two golden halls. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 16)

For a time the pattern of one pagoda beside a single golden hall was the standard, until the Yakushiji temple was built by the start of the Nara Period with two pagodas flanking a single, central golden hall. The great Tōdaiji temple built in the middle of the Nara Period also featured two pagodas flanking the central golden hall. This time though, they were moved even outside the corridor surrounding the golden hall. (Nishi & Hozumi, pp. 16-17)

6.1.2 The Jeweled Pagoda

Later on, in the beginning of the Heian Period, as the sects of what is now termed

“Esoteric Buddhism” founded temples on the mountains Hiei and Kōya outside of Heian-kyō, a new form of pagoda began to be built: the *jeweled pagoda* (宝塔, *hōtō*). It is characterized by a roughly hemispherical body with a pyramidal roof and with a spire on top. Later the hemispherical body was enclosed by subsidiary sections with pent roofs on all four sides and thereafter the hemispherical body itself was removed, save for a rounded vestige on top of the pent roof and under the main roof. This style of pagoda is called the *many-jeweled pagoda* (多宝塔, *tahōtō*). (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 18)



Illustration 8: The many-jeweled pagoda at Ishiyamadera.

6.2 Hōryūji and the Five-story Pagoda

The oldest temple still in existence is Hōryūji, standing on the plain just outside ancient Heijō-kyō. Its Five-story Pagoda (五重の塔, *gojū no tō*) (see illustration), Golden Hall (金堂, *kondō*), Inner Gate (中門, *chūmon*), and the surrounding corridor

(廻廊, *kairō*) are the oldest wooden buildings in the world today. Hōryūji was first completed in 607 and burned down in 670 but the rebuilt version is the one that still stands. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 14)

The temple was probably rebuilt just before the start of the Nara Period (i.e. before 710). This is indicated by a few typicalities of the period: a slight convexity of the columns, thin block plates (*sarato*) between the tops of the columns and the main bearing block of the bracketing, stylized Buddhist swastika patterns on the ornamental railings, and the inverted V-shaped struts beneath them. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 14)

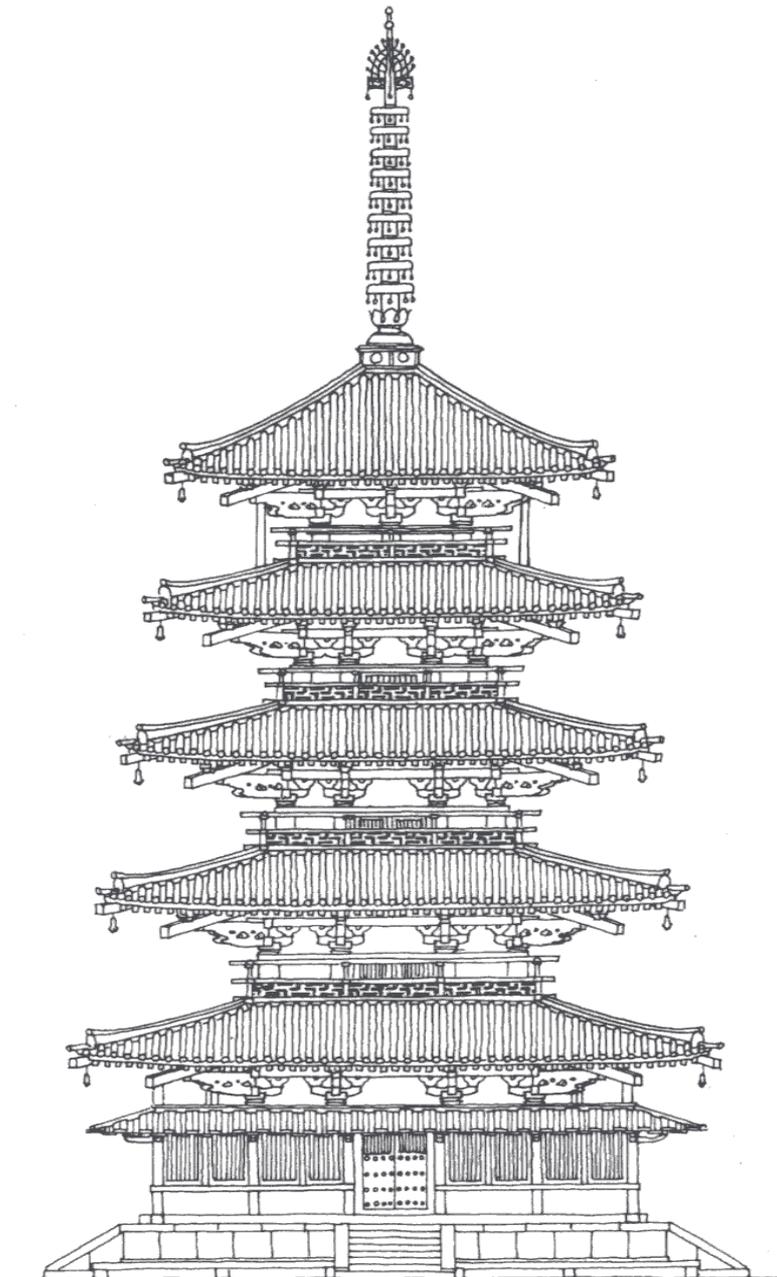


Illustration 9: The Five-Story Pagoda.

6.3 Tōdaiji and the Great Buddha Hall

In the early Nara Period, Emperor Shōmu decreed that nationally sponsored temples should be established in each province, governed by a great central temple in the capital. In 760 the Lecture Hall (講堂, *kōdō*) and the Great Buddha Hall (大仏殿, *daibutsuden*) of Tōdaiji were completed. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 17)

The Great Buddha Hall standing in the center of the compound today is a rebuilt version two-thirds the size of the original. Still, it is the largest wooden structure on Earth, and houses a huge bronze image of Vairocana, the Cosmic Buddha, that took two years to cast and three years to polish. The twin pagodas standing to either side of the main entrance in the front of the compound, seven stories, one-hundred meters tall each, were added several decades thereafter. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 17)

6.4 Byōdōin and the Phoenix Hall

In the Heian Period, Pure Land (浄土, *jōdo*) Buddhism – at first an offshoot of the Tendai sect on mount Hiei – became popular. It teaches that faith in and prayer to the Amida Buddha leads to salvation and rebirth in the “Pure Land”.

In the latter half of the Heian Period, the imperial family and the aristocrats began building entire temple complexes around a garden and pond, following the same practice used at their private villas. These “Esoteric” villa-temple complexes supposedly recreated the Amida Buddha's paradise, on Earth. Byōdōin is the finest such villa-temple still in existence. It was originally the villa of Fujiwara no Yorimichi, head of the most powerful noble clan of the times, which was changed into a private temple with only a few monks in attendance. (Nishi & Hozumi, pp. 18-19)

The Phoenix Hall (鳳凰堂, *hōōdō*) is the most famous of Byōdōin's structures. It was completed in 1053 and houses a gilded statue of Amida on a lotus throne surrounded by beautiful decorations. The name comes from the fact that the structure is laid out as a stylized phoenix; the central hall being the body of the bird and corridors forming the wings and the tail. The structure is elegant and light in construction, and provides a fine example of the taste of the aristocracy of the time. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 19)

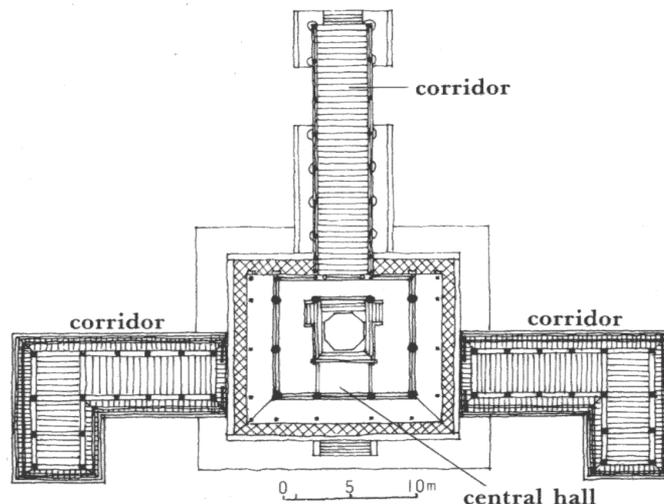


Illustration 10: Layout of the Phoenix Hall.

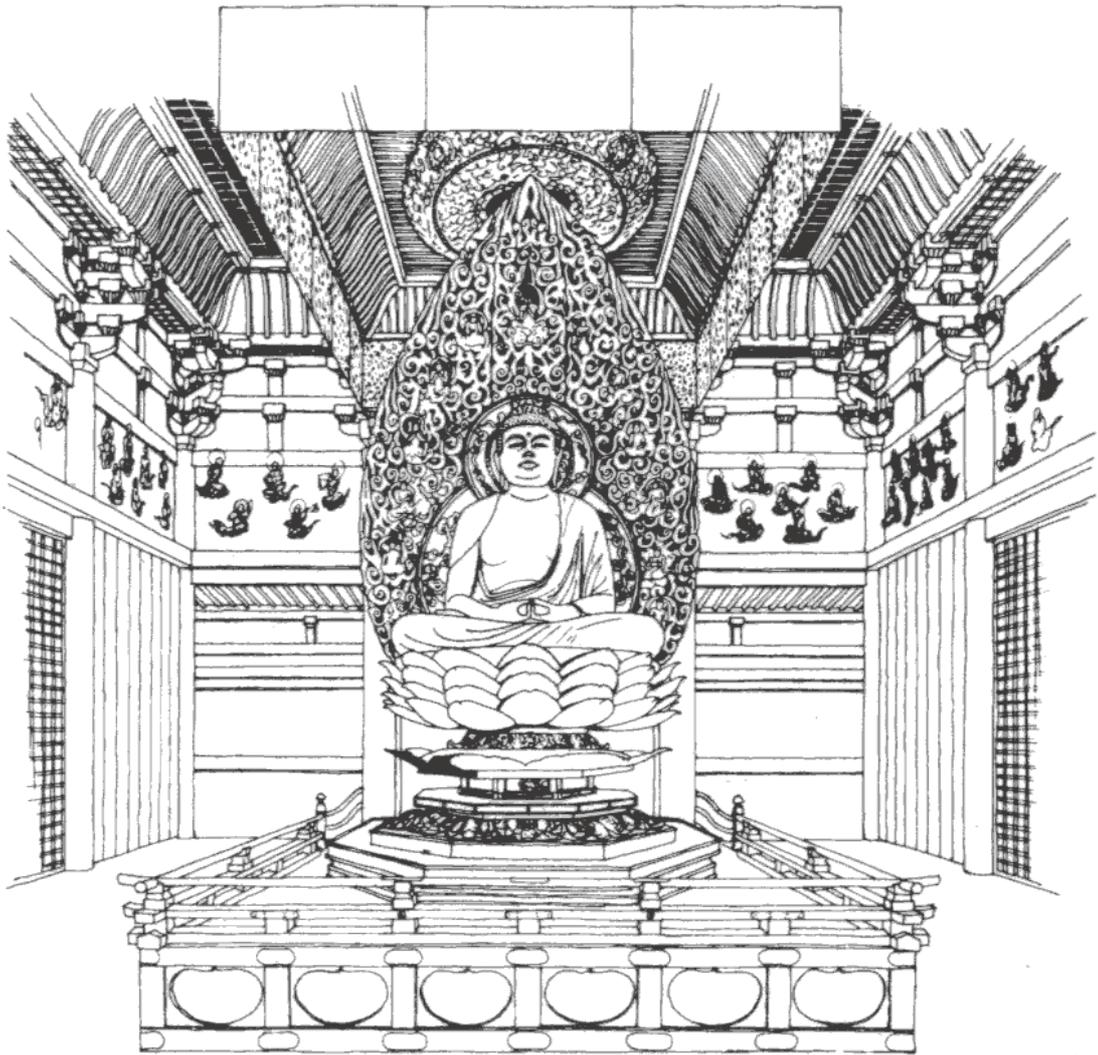


Illustration 11: The Amida Statue in the Phoenix Hall.

The Medieval Period

Kamakura Period
(1185-1333)

Muromachi Period
(1336-1573)

Northern and Southern Courts Era
(1336-1392)

Warring States Era
(1467-1573)

Azuchi-Momoyama Period
(1573-1603)

7 The Medieval Temples

7.1 The Great Buddha Style

The Great Buddha Style (大仏様, *daibutsuyō*) was introduced to Japan by the monk Chōgen, who brought it back with him from Song China when Tōdaiji (see some section) was about to be rebuilt in the early Kamakura Period (1192-1333) after having been destroyed in the preceding Gempei War. The Great South Gate (*nandaimon*), completed in 1199, the Founder's Hall (*kaizandō*), and the worship section (*raidō*) of the Lotus Hall (*Hokkedō*) still remain from this time. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 20)

Unlike other styles, bracket arms are characteristically set directly into the posts, not simply placed on top of them, and posts are strengthened laterally by penetrating tie beams, which provides for strong structural support. There is no ceiling, so the roof construction is visible from the interior and thus also has an ornamental function. The thick main columns run the entire height of the structure. The rafters run in a parallel fashion. (Nishi & Hozumi, pp. 24-25)

The style is simple yet dignified and suited for building massive structures in a short time due to the fact that many structures share common components and many components have the same size. Building in the Great Buddha Style was discontinued with the death of Chōgen. Nishi & Hozumi suggest the style did not harmonize with Japanese tastes and was linked too strongly with the Shōgun regime and its policies of the time. However, its rational structural program was absorbed into other styles and was long-lived. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 20-21)

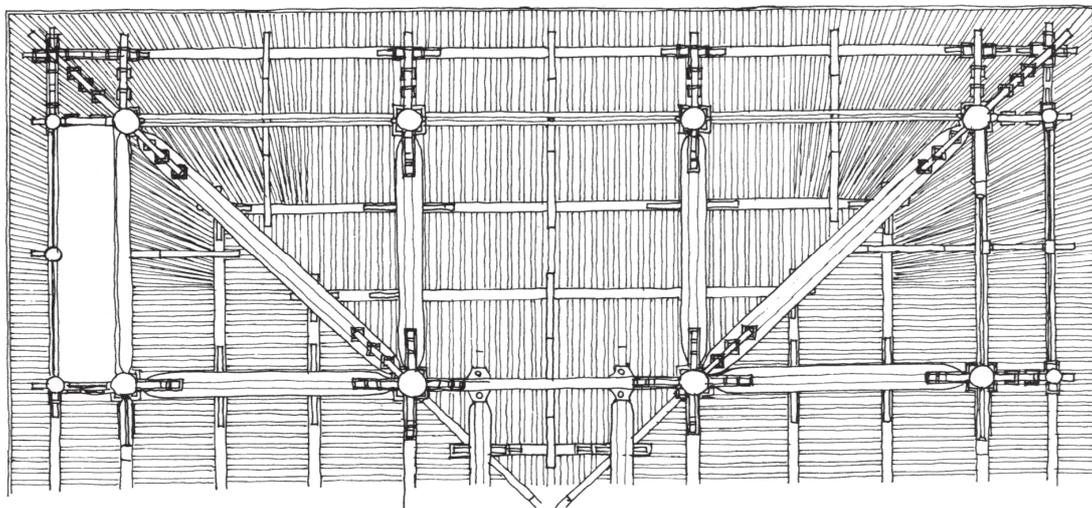


Illustration 12: Underside of a Great Buddha-Style roof.

7.2 The Zen Style

Two of Chōgen's (see section above) contemporaries were the monks Eisai, who introduced the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism to Japan from China, and Dōgen, who soon thereafter brought in another Zen sect: Sōtō. It came to be that Eisai, who patronized with the Shōgun regency, was to build temples in and around Kamakura and Kyōto. Dōgen, who declined his invitation to the Shōgunal regent, went into the

mountains north of Lake Biwa (much to the north of Kyōto) were the Sōtō main temple Eiheiji was built. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 22)

7.2.1 The Zen Complex

The Zen sects introduced a new architectural style quite different from the Great Buddha Style though both had their origin in Song China. The Zen complex is built according to a set of rules for the shapes, scales, and placements of its buildings, which situated roughly symmetrically around a central north-south axis. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 22) At the south is the Main Gate (*sōmon*) in front of which is usually a bridge over the moat which one has to cross in order to enter the complex. Inside the complex a path leads straight ahead to the Enlightenment Gate (*sammon*) – which corresponds to the Inner Gate (*chūmon*) of other sects. To the west of the path is the latrine and to the east is the baths. (Nishi & Hozumi, pp. 26-27)

On the other side of the Enlightenment Gate is the central court, surrounded – as is also the case with other sects – by an open corridor. Standing in the center of the court one has the Monks' Quarters (*Sōdō*) to the west and the kitchens to the east. Most importantly though, is the Buddha Hall which borders the central court to the north, bordered immediately to the west by the Founder's Hall (*Soshidō*), and to the east by the *Tochidō* (土地堂, “hall for the worship of local deities”). A bit to the north of the Buddha Hall lies the Dharma Hall (*Hattō*) and at the extreme north of the compound is the Abbot's Quarters (*Hōjō*) but in the case of the Kenchōji temple, rebuilt 1315, a Guest Hall (*Kyakuden*) occupies this spot. The Kenchōji also has a pond in the north-east corner where the Guest Hall lies. (Nishi & Hozumi, pp. 26-27)

7.2.2 Building Style

Buildings stand on a stone podium and have stone floors, and the posts stand on stone blocks rather than on the podium itself. Unlike the Great Buddha Style, where brackets are only above the bay posts, the Zen Style has numerous brackets between the posts. Zen Style buildings can also have outer pillars in between the bays. Zen-Style buildings have cusped windows (*katōmado*) paneled and ornamented doors like the Great Buddha Style, and has a decorative transom running above both windows and doors admitting light into the building. (Nishi & Hozumi, pp. 22-23, 26-27)

The complex roofs of the Zen Style have flying rafters radiating from the central one-bay-square ceiling that hangs above where the altar stands. The rear end of the ceiling is supported by two posts, which are cut out to provide an unblocked view of the altar from the entrance, that reach up from the back of the altar beneath. Since the posts are cut out they are not fit to hold up the ceiling alone. Instead, the front end of the ceiling is supported by two short struts that rest on two gigantic transverse beams, which span two bays from front to back. The rafters radiate from this central square ceiling, fanning out around the entire structure. (Nishi & Hozumi, pp. 26-27)

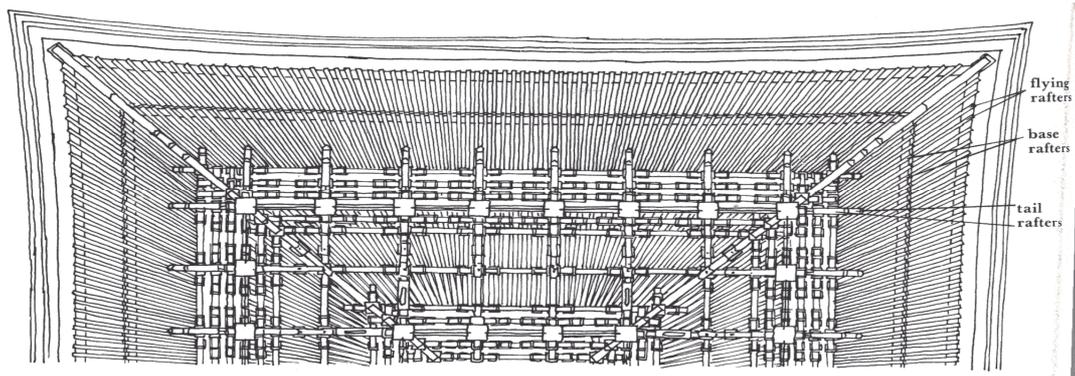


Illustration 13: Underside of a Zen-Style roof.

The Zen Style is also known as the “Chinese Style” (*Karayō*), in contrast to the earlier Japanese Buddhist architectural styles which became known as “Japanese Style” (*Wayō*). However, the Zen Style of Japan differed in many ways from that of China. The roof, which in China is covered with tiles, is often made of wood shingles in Japan. Also, the Japanese invented what is called a “hidden” or “double” roof style, in which two roofs were built: a steep outer one built over a more horizontal inner roof. The two roofs merge on the edges so that the impression from the outside is that of a single roof. This makes it possible to build wide spaces without having a steep drop in the rafters above the peripheral sections, and gives horizontality to the outlying spaces, and eliminates shadows. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 23)

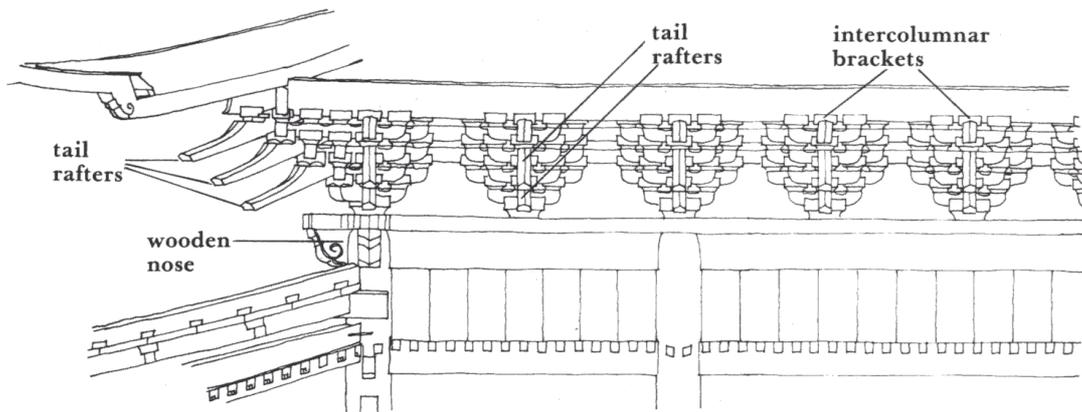


Illustration 14: Typical Zen-Style rafters.

7.2.3 The Zen Temple Garden

The South Garden of the Zen temple shows how the garden's role shifted from functional to purely ornamental in the Medieval Period. Heian Period naturalism gave way to the more abstract styles of expression characteristic of the Muromachi Period. The Zen temple South Garden is modeled after the ceremonial area of the Shinden Style South Garden, but often omits some or most of the main compositional elements of the Shinden Style South Garden, such as the artificial hills, pond, and islands. What remained was only the white sand area. (Inaji p. 40) The veranda facing the white sand garden, called the *dōjo* (training ground) was used for meditation.

Zen gardens also often incorporate views of distant natural features such as mountains, waterfalls, or lakes. This technique is called *shakkei* (borrowed scenery), and uses the garden site as the foreground and the borrowed scenery as a background

which is framed by a middle ground used to draw the distant view into the garden. This extends the perceived scale of the garden far beyond its boundaries. (Inaji, pp. 40-41)

7.3 The Japanese and Eclectic Styles

As noted at the end of the last chapter, the Buddhist architectural styles present in Japan before the Medieval Period became known as the “Japanese Style” (*wayō*). This style continued to be used after the introduction of the Great Buddha and Zen Styles – in time adopting elements from both and developing into the Eclectic Style.

Nishi & Hozumi exemplifies the early Medieval Style by the Main Hall of Tendai temple Chōjuji, which is composed of an Inner Sanctum (*naijin*) and an Outer Sanctuary (*gejin*) separated by lattice doors with a diamond-pattern transom above. The two areas were originally separate structures. Each of the two areas has its own exposed roof, visible only from the interior. A single hidden roof is built over both, which gives the building a unified appearance. This style contrasts greatly to the highly ornamented Zen Style in its calmness and uses traditional parallel rafters – not radiating as in the Zen Style – on the underside of the roof. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 28)

The Japanese Style began adopting elements from the two newer styles towards the end of the Kamakura Period. It adopted the wooden noses of beams and bracket arms from the Great Buddha Style, and the posts supporting the porch roof from the Zen Style. The number of pure Japanese-style buildings declined dramatically during this Period, and the degree of stylistic mixture thus determines whether a building is to be identified as Japanese Style or what is known as the Eclectic Style (*setchūyō*). (Nishi & Hozumi, pp. 28-29)

8 Medieval Gardens – From the Austere to the Energetic

During the Medieval Period the gardens experienced a great transformation. The gardens of the Kamakura and Muromachi Periods are clearly indebted to the large wave of Chinese influence which Japan experienced for the second time; the first being the original influx of Buddhist influence in the 6th century. This time, however, it was Zen Buddhist gardening and architecture that had the greatest influence. (Nitschke, p. 65)

The gardens of the Azuchi-Momoyama Period are mainly stereotypical versions of the pond garden or variations of the dry landscape garden. During this time, a third wave of Chinese influence brought with it a new social order of Confucian ethics, and this brief era is characterized by great warlords and the building of castle towns. Local warlords' palaces overtook the function which had previously been performed by the noble residences and Pure Land temples of Heian times and the Shogunal villa retreats and Zen temples of the Muromachi Period, and their gardens differed greatly from that of earlier times. (Nitschke, pp. 115-118)

Zen temple gardens have been covered in the previous chapter. This chapter will focus mainly on the general trends of gardens during the Medieval Period.

8.1 The Dry Landscape Garden

During the early Muromachi Period, the Heian garden prototype, with its ponds and islands, continued to flourish, and found a new variation in the “pond-spring-strolling” garden (*chisen-kaiyū teien*) which was designed to be enjoyed on foot rather than from a boat. This reflected the dwindling size of the ponds in such gardens. The transformation continued, and soon there were gardens where the element of water was neither physically nor even symbolically present. These, often rocky, gardens usually had a wide variety of moss planted on its ground, which gives the garden a thick, moist carpet of intense green. However, the concept is not entirely new, as it is mentioned already in the *Sakuteiki*. (Nitschke, p. 68)

Early forms of the dry landscape garden were built – quite rarely, however – in the Nara and Heian Periods, but then only as integral components of pond gardens. In the Kamakura Period, the *kare-sansui* (枯れ山水, withered landscape) garden becomes no longer relegated to a subordinate role. In its purest form, it contains no water, no plants, and no trees. (Nitschke, pp. 88-89)

These gardens contain wide areas covered with small, white stone gravel as a substitute for water. The gravel is often granite, but sometimes sand is used instead. The gravel is raked according to set, decorative patterns, which are renewed regularly. This work is part of the Zen monks' meditative practices, since – according to Zen – simple, everyday business can be made into Zen training. (Holm, pp. 46-48)

The patterns depict the movement of water and vary between parallel lines and different wave, circle, and spiral patterns. In the gravel are stones that represent islands, and the pattern flow around these to depict waves washing over the “seashore”. Since the gravel represents water, it is not stepped upon. Instead, there are steppingstones and paths. (Holm, pp. 46-48)

8.2 The Pond Garden

At the end of the Medieval Period, a form of garden different from the Muromachi Period forebears developed. They differ both in their overall layout and rockwork. The ponds in these gardens reveal an increasing complexity, with serpentine shorelines, filled with inlets, deep bays, and peninsulas. They exhibit some properties which makes them unique in the history of Japanese gardens. Daimyō lords were eager to display their individuality and creativity, as well as their Shoin villas, and collected large rocks resulting in rock compositions – simpler than their predecessors, but more powerful and energetic. (Nitschke, p. 118)

The aesthetic aim of these pond gardens was to provide a magnificent view from the shoin – not, as earlier, to provide a beautiful stroll for the visitors. In order to make this view as dramatic as possible, ponds were often sunk below the level of the shoin. However, they can also incorporate dry landscape gardens and rock settings along the ponds, and these areas are meant to be enjoyed both on foot and from fixed points in the shoin. (Nitschke, p. 118, 120)

Unlike the dry landscape gardens of the Muromachi Period, the Azuchi-Momoyama Period pond garden seeks to combine the dry and the wet, so that the transition between the two appears natural. Bridges of natural stones, standing stones and dry walls along the banks of the pond are characteristics of this. (Nitschke, p. 120)

The Edo Period
Tokugawa Period
(1600-1867)

9 Edo – Capital of the Tokugawa Shōgun

The history of the city which was to become the new capital after the Meiji restoration of 1868 begun in 1590 when Tokugawa Ieyasu, subordinate of the great warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi, established himself in Edo Castle. He began not only to strengthen and expanding the castle but also to plan the city that was to surround and supply it. What became one of the largest cities on earth – Tōkyō, as it was renamed after becoming capital – grew up around the castle. The site on the Kantō Plain was chosen because it was ideally suited for land and sea trade. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 90)

9.1 Layout

Honchō Avenue, one of the main arteries in the city running approximately east-west, was laid out on the route connecting Mt. Fuji with the western part of the central city (the Tokiwabashi area). Similarly, the road from Kyōbashi in the south to Nihombashi in the north was laid out in the direction of Mt. Tsukuba, thus integrating the distant mountains in the city plan. Even though Mt. Fuji lies over eighty kilometers to the southwest and Mt. Tsukuba over sixty kilometers to the northeast, the mountains, especially the former, seem to have played a dominant role in the consciousness of the citizens. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 90-91)

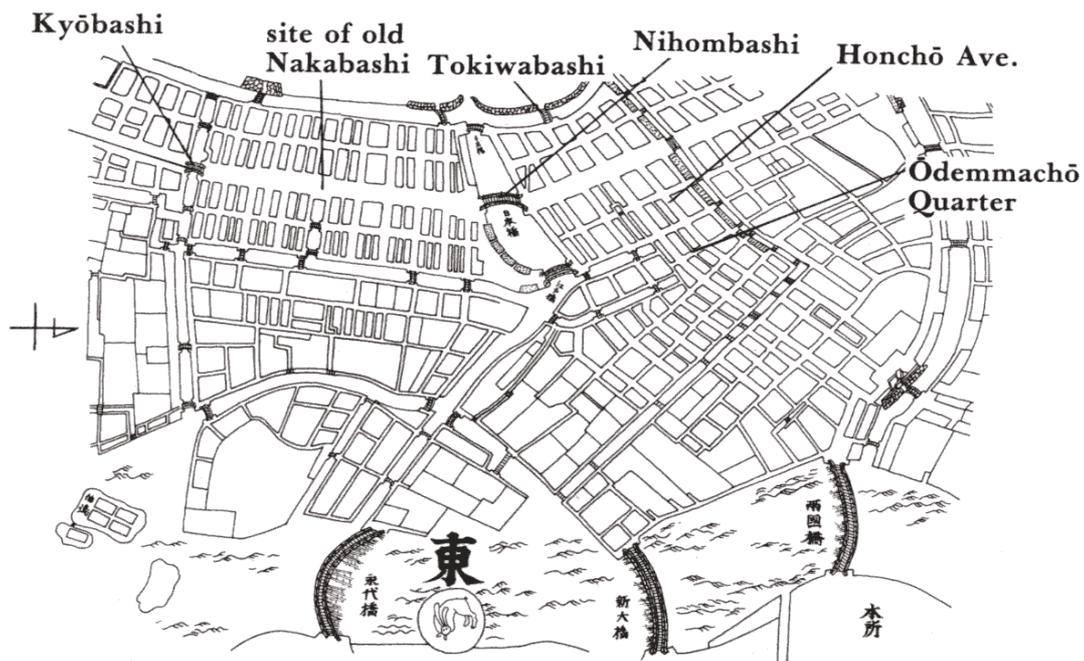


Illustration 15: Map of the Nihombashi quarter in Edo.

There are many illustrations of Edo from this time, painted on picture scrolls or folding screens. They depict a proliferating city, as the site of the Shōgun's government and the largest city in Japan. They also show a thriving commercial center, with boats laden with goods and men carrying loads on poles over their shoulders. The various subsections (町, *machi*) of the city were demarcated by gates called *kido* (木戸, “wooden doors”) that were closed off at night. Over them stand three-story towers with a good view of the area and next to them are watchmen's

stations. There are also fire towers together with the written explanation “these are built about one per ten blocks”. (Nishi & Hozumi, p 91)

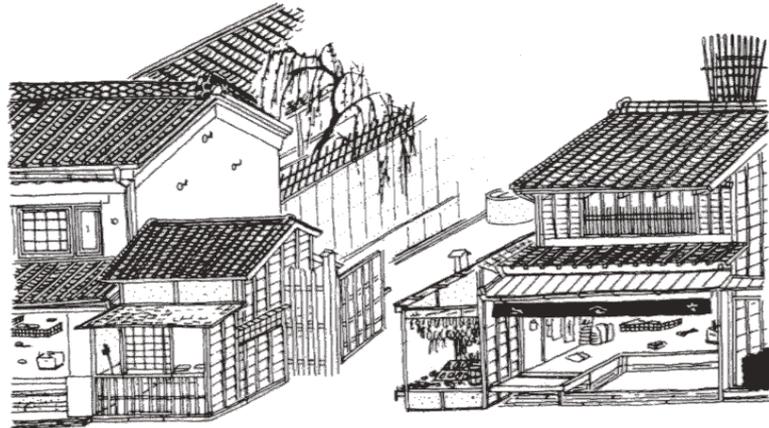


Illustration 16: Edo neighborhood with *kido*.

9.2 The Houses of the Merchants

The alternate-residence system (*sankin-kōtai*) between Edo and the feudal domains forced local governors to spend part of their time in Edo and often leave family when going back to their domains. Due to this, many different kinds of merchants and craftsmen came from outlying areas to take up residence in the new metropolis. The merchants came from western Honshū – Kyōto, Ōsaka, Ise, Ōmi, and other parts – to sell goods. As the stores' employees had left their family back in their province, they had very little sense of themselves as citizens of Edo. (Inaba & Nakayama, p. 77)

The stores in which they sold their products are called *omotedana*, “front shelves”, since they faced a main street and combined a business area in the front with a residential area in the rear. These stores were often more imposing than their main stores back home, but lacked a uniform style, as they might have, for instance, tiled roofs on the part facing the main street and shingled or even thatched roofs in the rear dwellings. Nevertheless, they share some common characteristics. (Inaba & Nakayama, p. 77)

9.2.1 Composition

They were usually narrow across the front and deep from front to back. The shop area occupied the whole front area of the main structure, and behind it were various reception and living rooms, a bath room, shed, and storehouse. In the larger stores there was sometimes a wall with a gate for private use in the front. In the Kyōto-Ōsaka area, there might be an earthen-floored passageway for direct access from the main street to the rear, with one or two rows of rooms next to it. In Edo this was not so, as the storefront was usually made up of an earthen-floored area and a board-floored shop area behind it. Customers came into the earthen-floored section and sat on the edge of the raised floor of the shop to be shown the merchandise. (Inaba & Nakayama, pp. 77-78)

Two-story houses began to be built as more and more merchant-class dwellings were built and space became too scarce to allow for wide street-facing facades. The first type of two-story house to develop is known as *zushi-nakai*, which has a low second

floor at the front of the premises for the employees' quarters. This floor in time developed into a regular second floor with a *zashiki* (座敷, "tatami room") for entertaining visitors. The facade of the second floor varies in form. (Inaba & Nakayama, p. 78)

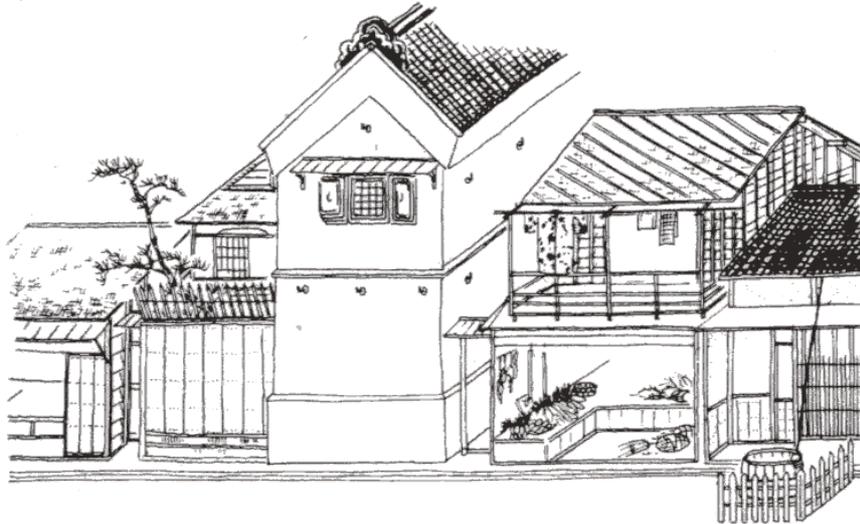


Illustration 17: Two-story shop with residence.

9.3 The Houses of the Townspeople

The majority of the townspeople lived in the side streets and alleyways behind the main streets. The people living in Edo at this time who were not merchants were craftsmen or had such occupations as maids, shop clerks, and apprentices. Their homes are collectively referred to as *uradana*, "rear shelves", in contrast to the *omotedana* of the merchants, and consisted mostly of rowhouses. (Inaba & Nakayama, p. 79)

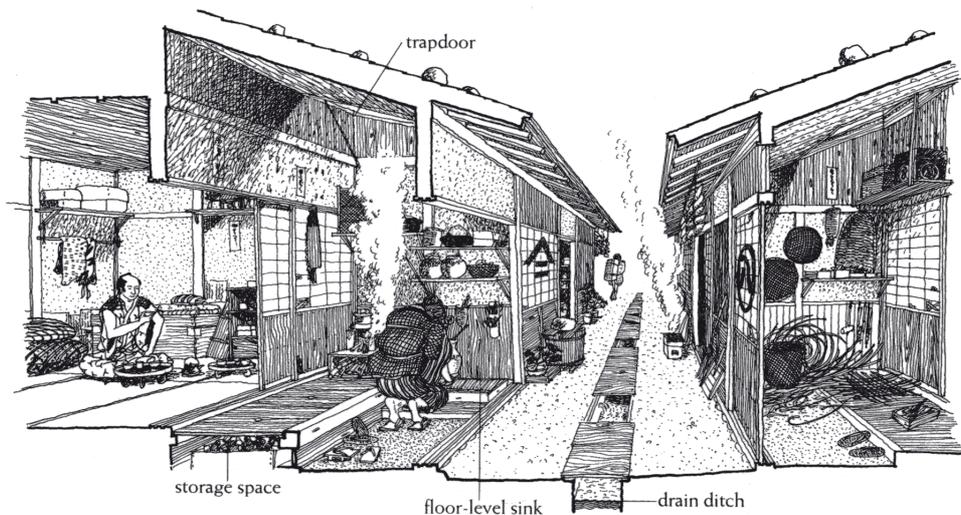


Illustration 18: An Edo alley.

9.3.1 Life in the Alleyways

The rowhouses were organized around a back street or alleyway of a meter or so in width, down the center of which ran a ditch to carry away rainwater and kitchen waste water. The alley widened in some places to form an open space containing the communal well, privies, and a garbage dump which were under the supervision of the residents of that block. The well was the focus of social life, especially among housewives, as it served as site for doing laundry and preparing for meals. (Inaba & Nakayama, p. 79)

Each block of rowhouses had its own gate that led into the alleyway. The landlord or his representative lived in the same block and collected rent on behalf of the houseowner or landowner and had the right to sell the waste from the communal privies to farmers as fertilizer. (Inaba & Nakayama, p. 79)

Rowhouses were either single-row, where each household occupied the whole width of the building from alleyway to alleyway, or double-row, where two households were back-to-back, with openings to the outside on only one side of the house. A rowhouse was usually divided among five to ten households, sometimes more, separated by thin earthen walls, each occupying a slice of the house of about 1.5 to 2 bays in width and 2 to 3 bays in depth. (Inaba & Nakayama, p. 81)

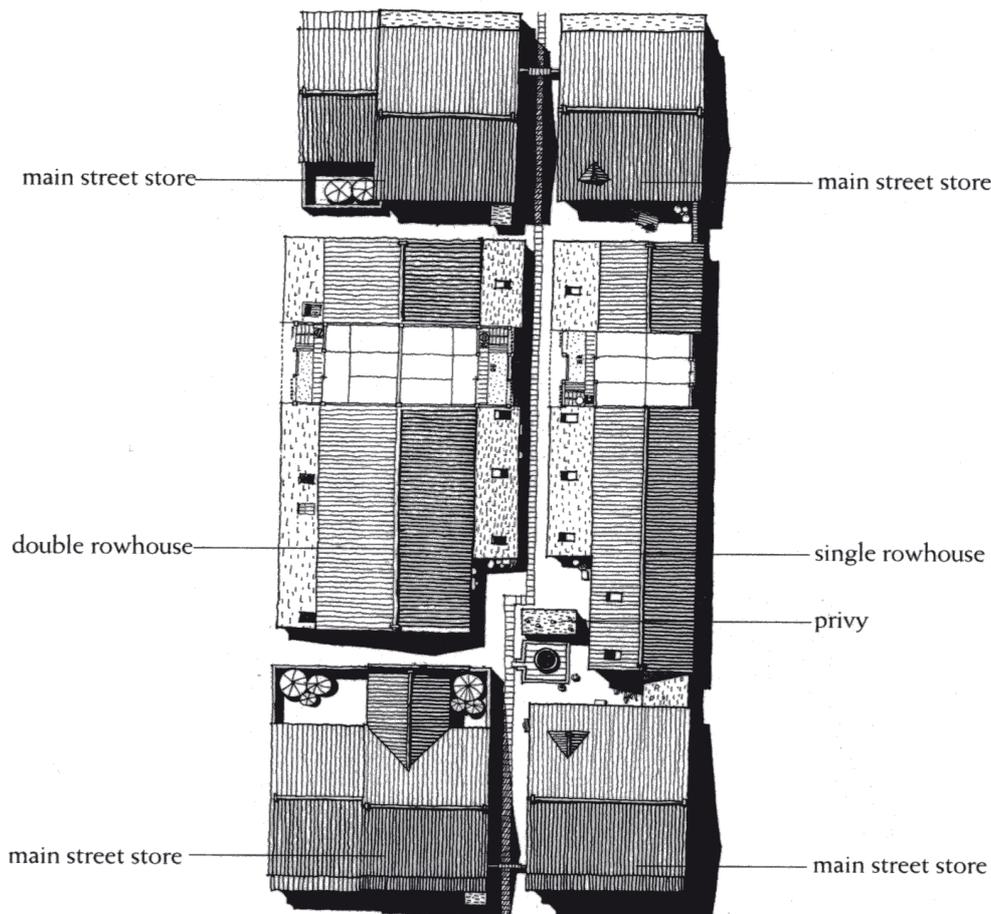


Illustration 19: Layout of an Edo alley.

9.3.2 Interior

The entrance, facing the alley, had a sliding door with a boarded lower half and a latticed upper half covered with translucent paper. Inside was an earthen floor, from which one stepped up into the raised interior. In the raised part was a place for cooking containing a stove, a water jar, a floor-level sink, and a storage trapdoor opening into a storage space beneath the step-up from the earthen floor to the raised planked floor. There was another trapdoor in the ceiling above the earthen floor, which could be opened by pulling a rope to let out smoke. (Inaba & Nakayama, p. 81)

There was just one room at the back, usually of 4.5 to 6 tatami mats (i.e. approximately 7 to 9 square meters). The room served as both bedroom and dining room, and also for handiwork. Tatami mats, wooden sliding screens, and translucent screens were the residents' personal belongings which were counted as valuable private property and brought along when moving to new quarters. (Inaba & Nakayama, p. 81)

9.4 The Edo Stroll Garden

A new style of garden developed during the Edo Period: the stroll garden. These are large park-like gardens where visitors walk around a pond on aesthetically placed steppingstones. Holm (p. 39) describes the experience as a series of pleasant surprises. During the walk along the predisposed path the garden is continually opened for new views from different perspectives, making heavy use of the technique called *miegakure*, which will be discussed in the next chapter. The visitors' curiosity is kept by revealing the garden piece by piece. The stroll garden also makes use of borrowed scenery. (Holm, pp. 38-39)

The stroll garden includes basically all elements of Japanese gardens: ponds, islands, winding streams, waterfalls, lakeside footpaths, hills, and fixed indoor vantage points of the Muromachi gardens as well as elements of the tea garden. What is unique is its size and disposition. They were never built as temple gardens of any sect, and many of these gardens are public parks today. (Nitschke, pp. 182, 184)

10 The Sukiya Style

As was mentioned in the chapter on the subject, the Shoin Style gradually developed from the Shinden Style during the Muromachi Period (1338-1573). However, the formal Shoin Style was far too imposing for the everyday activities of the upper class, and a different kind of Shoin Style consequently developed alongside with the formal type, and this type is frequently referred to as the Sukiya Style (数寄屋造り, *sukiya-zukuri*; “Building of Refined Taste” Style). (Nishi & Hozumi, pp. 74 & 78; Nitschke, p. 157)

The term Sukiya first appears in a document dated 1532, but up until the Edo Period it was used to describe a freestanding teahouse. In the Edo Period it came to mean a building or a building complex incorporating elements of both teahouse architecture (the subject of the next chapter) and informal Shoin Style elements. (Nitschke, p. 157)

The Sukiya Style substituted among other things the Shoin Style's square-cut posts with rough, unbeveled corners (*menkawabashira*), the heavy circumferential rails (*nageshi*) with more delicate structures, and brilliantly painted walls with understated decorations, intimacy and whim. Much of the atmosphere of Sukiya structures is created by ideas borrowed from the architecture of the tea ceremony. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 78)

10.1 Characteristics of the Sukiya Style

The most important general characteristics of Sukiya Style structures are understatement and irregularity, at times bordering on rusticity, borrowed from the tea taste. This accounts for the roughly hewn posts and simple ink paintings, where paintings exist at all. However, along with the understated atmosphere goes elegant details of the most expensive kind. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 80)

Many Sukiya rooms have cusped windows (*katōmado*) and a latticework of traced lines on their transoms, patterns of openwork on shelves, and even figured metal nail covers. Shoin rooms usually have the decorative alcove and shelves side by side at the back wall, with the writing desk to one side of the veranda wall and the decorative doors across from it. Sukiya rooms, on the other hand, almost never use the decorative doors, and they also show eccentric reinterpretations of the traditional placement of the other formal fixtures. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 80)

10.2 Katsura Detached Palace

The Katsura complex in southwest Kyōto, near the Katsuragawa river, has often been presented as the quintessence of Japanese taste. It is the country villa of a line of princes beginning with Toshihito (1579-1629) and his son Toshitada, and is made up of four connected parts: the Old Shoin, Middle Shoin, Music Room, and New Palace. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 78)

The Katsura complex was built by degrees. The Old Shoin and part of the garden were built by Toshihito at about 1616, and Toshitada is responsible for the Middle Shoin, possibly built in 1641. The Music Room and New Palace are thought to have been added by Toshitada's son Yasuhito in preparation for an imperial progress by his father, the Cloistered Emperor Gomizunoo, and the date 1660 has been found in the lining of one of the fusama screens in this section of the complex. (Nishi & Hozumi,

pp. 78-79)

The complex was built in the countryside to allow unimpeded relaxation. Toshihito, Toshitada, and their guests would admire the cherry blossoms in spring and the crimson leaves in autumn while enjoying tea, or floating in the boats on the spacious garden pond. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 79)

The garden has the generous and anachronistic proportions of the south gardens of the Heian era. The grounds form an integrated whole with the buildings within it. The tastefully situated rocks and artfully maintained trees and bushes are not meant to be the occasional object of an admiring glance, but to be constant companions of the residents. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 79; Nitschke, p. 157)

The garden also affords five teahouses: Gepparō (“the Tower of Moonlit Waves”), Shōkintei (“the Pavilion of the Lute in the Pines”), Shōiken (“the Hut of Smiling Thoughts”), Shōkatei (“the Pavilion of Admired Blossoms”), and Enrindō (“the Hall of the Garden Forest”). (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 78)

10.3 The Gardens of Sukiya and Combined-Style Complexes

Complexes like Katsura, which combine Shoin, Sukiya, and to some extent Sōan (teahouse style, which is described later) Styles with varying degrees of formality into a single arrangement requires interesting solutions on the garden plan. The method used to link these three completely distinct interior spaces and their respective gardens into one continuous form, while obstructing the view from one to another, is called *miegakure* (見え隠れ, “appearing and disappearing”, and the architectural composition used was the before-mentioned, diagonally-stepped “geese-in-flight” formation (*gankōkei*). (Inaji, p. 68)

While the Katsura garden had a large pond for boating, Sukiya structures such as the Manshu-in temple in northeast Kyōto, has a dry waterfall garden as its main feature. Viewed from the formal shoin of Manshu-in, the garden composition is centered around a single “boat” pine (*funamatsu*). Viewed from the Sukiya-Style shoin, however, the main feature of the garden is a Buddhist triad rock (*sanzonseki*) arrangement. Moreover, from the veranda linking the two shoin the view of both parts of the garden is obscured by two trees placed so as to interrupt the lines of sight from one building to another, which is a prime example of *miegakure*. (Inaji, p. 68)

A stream of white sand links the two views of the dry waterfall garden, and tucked into the part of the garden in between the direct views from the two shoin a lone island floats, hosting a single pine that is the central focus of the overall garden composition. In addition, the boundary between the dry waterfall garden of the two shoin and the roji garden of the sōan is marked by a series of stepping-stones extending toward the adjacent mountains. Just as the Shoin, Sukiya, and Sōan Style structures are combined using the geese-in-flight formation, the sub-gardens are structured by means of *miegakure* into an integrated, total garden composition. (Inaji, p. 68)

11 Sōan – The Architecture of the Teahouse

Before the tea ceremony began to reach maturity in the early Muromachi Period, warriors and aristocrats had made tea in one room, then served it in a large formal Shoin room. This practice is referred to as Shoin Tea, and its architecture has been covered in previous chapters. The subject of this chapter is the architecture of the teahouse and the tea garden.

Tea, and especially the collecting of utensils, was popular among the Muromachi shōgun and select members of his aesthetic circle, and also among the wealthy merchants of Sakai City (near present-day Ōsaka). Under the influence of the thoughts of a Zen student and curator of Chinese arts, one of these merchants took his interest in tea far beyond acquisition and did much to develop the *wabi* (侘び, “quiet refinement”) ideal of refined rusticity that became one of the central elements of tea taste. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 106)

The development of *wabi* continued in the trend toward simplicity and naturalness, often incorporating folk objects into the tea ceremonies. Now, unlike Shoin Tea, the tea was often prepared and served in the same room, which concurrently was shrunk to as little as two tatami mats in some designs. This type of extremely small and rustic teahouse is known as *sōan* (草庵, “grass cottage”).

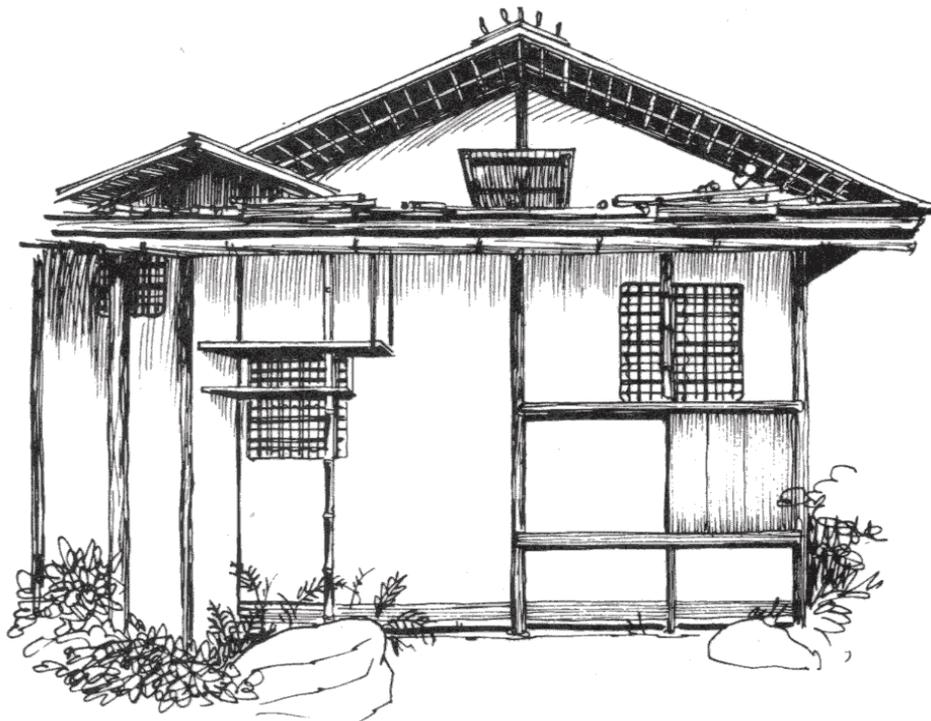


Illustration 20: The Fushin'an Teahouse.

11.1 Design and Internal Decor

Sōan teahouses are by definition small, between two and four and a half mats in size, but an unlimited number of visual effects is attained within this confined space. Window placement is used to create visual effects on the walls and the right play of light and shade when the tea ceremony is performed. Some teahouses have windows

that can be opened at various angles to vary the light that falls on the interior according to season. Some teahouses also have hatches on their eaves that can be opened to let in light for the same purpose. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 116)

The typical teahouse consists of a two-mat tearoom (茶室, *chashitsu*) next to a one-mat anteroom bordered with a section with wood floor. North of the anteroom is a one-mat space called the *katte* (勝手, “kitchen”) where preparations for the tea ceremony are made. Screens separate the rooms. The tearoom has a hearth (*ro*) cut into the floor in a corner, where the tea water is boiled. There is also a decorative alcove area, which makes the room seem less confined. (Nishi & Hozumi, pp. 106-117)

The teahouse is entered via a low door called a *nijiriguchi* (躡り口, “crawl door”), which forced participants to bend over to enter, so as to increase the apparent size of the tearoom and also remind them of the attitude of humility appropriate to wabi tea (Nishi & Hozumi, pp. 106-107). The internal design of the teahouse is worked out in great detail. Every aspect reflects the wabi ideals, using natural materials for their inherent decorative qualities, such as by choosing a plank with knots to enhance rusticity. Moreover, the ceiling is often inclined in some section, such as above the guests' mat, to help mitigate the feeling of constriction. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 107)

11.2Roji – The Tea Garden

The tea garden, called *roji* (露地, “dewy ground”) is composed around a path leading up to the teahouse. The purpose of the tea garden is to detach oneself from everyday thoughts and cleanse the mind of mundane concerns before entering the serene world of the tea ceremony. The idea is that the experience is composed of both the movement through the garden and a movement of the mind, which makes the tea garden different from earlier Japanese gardens, which were meant to be experienced sitting, either in a boat or on a veranda. (Holm, p. 37, Nishi & Hozumi, p. 118)

Guests wait for their host in the garden and then go with him or her to the teahouse itself. The garden is as carefully arranged as the teahouse and has its own conventions. Trees shield the teahouse from direct view and steppingstones (飛び石, *tobi-ishi*) lead along the path, all chosen and arranged to give the impression of elegance. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 118)

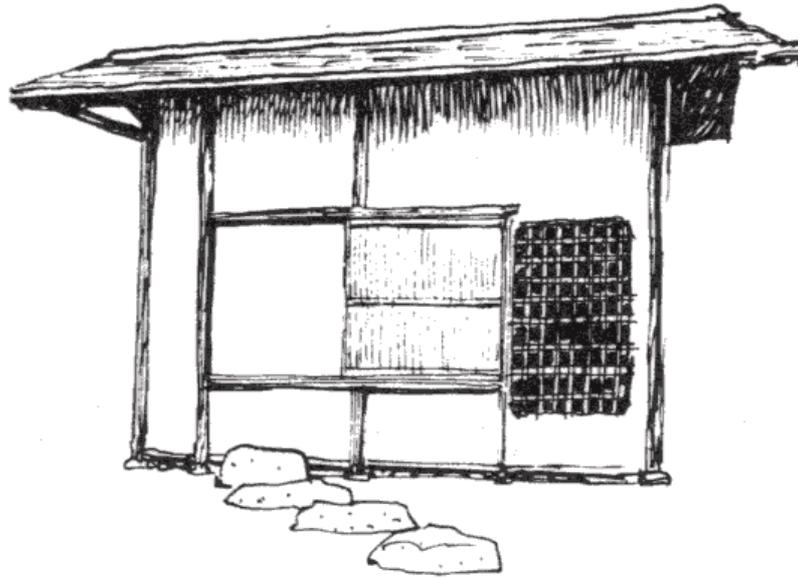


Illustration 21: Steppingstones leading to a low gate.

11.2.1 Elements of the Tea Garden

The steppingstones early acquired an aesthetic value independent of their practical function: to spare the delicate moss from trampling feet, slow the visitors' pace, and guide them along a physically and visually pre-specified course. They also serve an ultimate purpose, namely to make people conscious of one of their most basic activities – walking. This falls directly in line with one of the two phases of Buddha's own method of meditating: to concentrate upon the soles and feet while walking. Tobi-ishi gradually replaced the decorative rock settings of earlier times and became themselves the definitive new form of Japanese rock composition. (Nitschke, pp. 150-151; Nishi & Hozumi, p. 118)

Wordless communication is common in the garden of the tea ceremony through subtle signs, such as the small stone tied up by a black rope, *sekimori-ishi* (関守石, barrier-keeper stone), which is placed on the path leading the guests into the garden. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 118, Holm, pp. 37-38)

11.2.2 Composition of the Roji Grounds

To generalize, the garden is divided by an Inner Gate (*chūmon*) or a Low Gate (*nakakuguri*) into two parts: a waiting area and the inner garden around the teahouse. Like the crawl door of the teahouse, the *nakakuguri* forces the guests to bend over to pass through, thus making the transition into the world of tea more tangible. Inside the gate is a bench where guests pause before entering the teahouse, a low stone basin with water for cleansing the hands and mouth, and a stone lantern for lighting the path to the teahouse during the evening. (Nishi & Hozumi, p. 118-119)

More complex gardens include the garden of Zangetsutei and Fushin'an Teahouses, which comprises three gates that the guest has to pass through in order to reach the Fushin'an Teahouse. One enters the garden via the *rojiguchi* (露地口, "garden gate"), behind which is a bench and a toilet. One enters a middle garden through a low gate fit with a small door. Inside this garden is the Zangetsutei Teahouse and a structure

called the Founder's Hall. The Plum-viewing Gate leads the guest into the inner garden around the Fushin'an Teahouse. Inside is a low basin (蹲, *tsukubai*) carved out of a boulder, which visitors use to wash themselves both physically and ritually, an inner bench, and a "sand toilet" (*sunazetchin*), spread with river sand and naturalistic stones. (Nishi & Hozumi, pp. 118-119; Nitschke, p. 151)

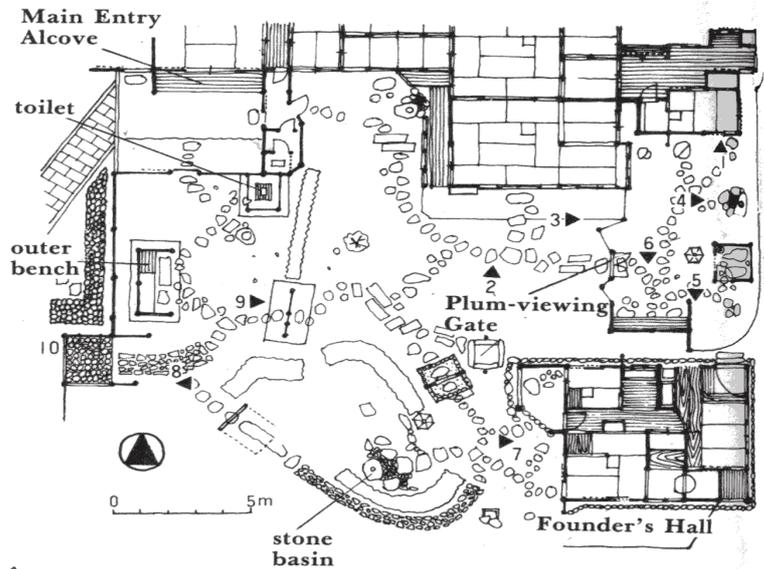


Illustration 22: Map of the Fushin'an and Zangetsutei tea garden.

12 Concluding Remarks

The study of Japanese houses, gardens, cities, and temples has been an interesting one, and there are a couple of points that I find striking.

One can wonder if the difference between the Japanese and Western views on traditional architecture and gardens is a profound one, or if it is merely superficial. There are differences, I am sure. For one, the extremes found in different areas. Size is one case where these extremes manifest themselves clearly: compare the Great Buddha Hall – the largest wooden structure on earth – with the Kasuga shrine of the powerful Fujiwara family, which is centered on four main structures only two meters wide by less than three meters deep. This does not implicitly make one more noteworthy than the other (except perhaps as tourist attractions).

Consider also the teahouse – perhaps one of the most well known and mystified pieces of Japanese architecture. Its influence on Japanese architecture has surely been inversely proportional to its size. Even a single teahouse of less than two and a half square meters in size – the Konnichian Teahouse – has been viewed since its creation in the seventeenth century as one of the monuments of great tea taste.

The variability of traditional Japanese architecture and gardens is also striking. From the tiny courtyards of Zen temples to the gracious parks of Katsura Detached Palace, which includes winding paths for walks and ponds for boating. The conceptual extent of gardens is also worthy of attention. On the one hand the immaterial garden of a single flower in the decorative alcove of a teahouse or the raked gravel of a dry landscape garden. On the other, the large stroll gardens of Edo with their near infinitely extent by the use of borrowed scenery.

This list can go on, with the opposites of the symmetrical ideal and the preference for asymmetry in implementation, the opposites of the golden walls of the Golden Pavilion and the understated simplicity of Sukiya Style decor, and so on. There are, however, commonalities seen through all periods covered in this paper. These include the choice of materials – particularly the use of wood, paper screens, straw mats, and wood shingles, planks, or tile for roofs. Also the post and lintel system, with which this paper began, is present throughout.

Another omnipresent concept is the dynamic partitioning of interior spaces by use of freestanding or sliding, removable screens. This means that functions can be acquired from one space by selectively opening and closing off areas. Even exterior partitioning is somewhat dynamic, which makes the distinction between inside and outside, and that between wall and door quite more flexible than the Western counterparts.

The veranda serves as a transitional space, regarded as part of the building when viewed from the exterior and as part of the outside when viewed from within. This makes integration between architecture and garden a prime concern, and it has been my attempt to also integrate these topics as much as possible in this paper.

Finally a note on the main topic of this paper: the historical development through time. I find it interesting to see how the style changed from the grand, airy complexes of the great ancient temples and the Shinden homes of the Heian aristocracy, to the austerity of Zen contemplation gardens and formality of Shoin rooms, to the energetic, luxurious homes of the Medieval warlords and their grand parks with powerful stone arrangements, and finally to the development of the subdued, refined

Sōan tea style and their quiet gardens, and its assimilation into the reconciled Sukiya Style.

However, the dwellings of commoners living and the merchants' houses in the capital cities did not change to that great an extent. Neither did the nature of the capital cities themselves, which kept true to the model of the great ancient Chinese capitals.

To answer my own question regarding the profundity of differences between Japanese and Western architecture and gardens: The establishment of capitals surely followed a different pattern than in the West. Heijō-kyō, Heian-kyō, Edo, and the numerous other centers of government established during wars or fighting were all planned and carefully implemented according to Confucian and Sino-Japanese geomantic ideals.

I do not see such a great difference in houses. Houses are usually built for a purpose, and that purpose is the same in ancient Japan as in the ancient West, whether it is for living, trading, relaxing, or simply displaying. However, this is not to say the superficial differences are not great, as has previously been noted.

The greatest profound difference can be seen in the gardens. While Western gardens – be it palace, castle, church, or residential such – seem to have been established more for boasting than for sincere enjoyment, the Japanese garden seem to have throughout time realized the beauty in the simple, even abstract.

Perhaps this stems from the shortage of arable and livable land, and the abundance of islands, waters, and mountains from which to gather inspiration. In any case, the ancient Japanese somehow realized that a single rock could express at least as much as a whole park full of flowers.

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