



## CHAPTER 7

# PROVINCIAL DAIMYO GARDENS: HAVENS OF POLITICS AND PLEASURE

Practically all the famous gardens extant in prefectural capitals today are daimyo gardens, some much better preserved and attracting many more tourists than well-known gardens in either Kyoto, the traditional home ground of Japanese gardens, or the nation's capital. The best of these regional gardens—Kenrokuen 兼六園 (in Ishikawa prefecture), Okayama Kōrakuen 岡山後樂園 (in Okayama prefecture), and Kairakuen 偕樂園 (in Ibaraki prefecture), among others—are often called the *Nihon san meien* 日本三名園 (three great gardens of Japan) or sometimes the *Nihon san kōen* 日本三公園 (three great parks of Japan). The appellations appear frequently in travel guidebooks, tourist pamphlets, and garden guides, yet no one seems to know which sites should be included or exactly when the terms came into use. Indeed, the distinction between the three great gardens versus the three great parks is unclear even in authoritative scholarly texts on garden history.

Most likely the idea of three great gardens/parks arose in analogy to the so-called three great sights of Japan (*Nihon sankei* 日本三景). The origin of this expression—which refers to Ama no Hashidate 天橋立, Matsushima 松島, and Itsukushima 厳島—is difficult to ascertain, although one possibility is the *sansho kikan* 三处奇観 (three wonders) that is discussed in *Nihon koku jiseki kō* 日本国事跡考 (1643), edited by Hayashi Shunsai 林春斎 (1618–1680) and Yahashi Shuntoku 矢橋春徳 (d.u.). While the three great sights were evidently familiar among both the literati and the general populace of the Edo period, the three great gardens are not likely to have had much currency, given that none of the daimyo gardens in castle towns were open to the public. As to the three great parks (*kōen*), that expression could not have originated earlier than the adoption of the modern public park system in 1873.

Ozawa Keijirō writes in his 1915 “Meiji teien ki” 明治庭園記 that “Although by whom it is not known, Tokiwa 常盤 *park* [Kairakuen] in Mito, Kenroku *park* in Kanazawa 金沢, and Kōraku *park* in Okayama are commonly termed the three great *parks* of Japan”<sup>1</sup> (*italics mine*). The foremost garden historian of the Meiji and Taishō eras, Ozawa had access to voluminous information on the subject and was deeply knowledgeable about Japan's public park system. That he does not mention the three great *gardens* suggests that the expression had yet to be coined. In any event, the “three great gardens” and “three great parks,” both modern expressions coined and used during and after the Meiji era, have lent the landscapes in question great prestige and increased their stature in the public awareness.

Although Ozawa dismisses the idea of the “three great parks,” he does give a clue as to its possible origins:

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1 Ozawa 1915, p. 381.

In August 1885, during his tour of western Japan, Emperor Meiji stopped at En'yōtei 延養亭 tea house in Okayama Kōrakuen. The Tokyo newspapers spared no words in describing the garden, leading its fame to spread at once far and wide, and afterwards prompting some vulgar person to come up with the idea of the three great parks of Japan and to include this garden among them with Tokiwa park in Hitachi and Kenroku park in Kaga. Unsurprisingly, the ignorant masses soon latched onto this popular myth and came to accept it as truth.<sup>2</sup>

The emperor had also visited Kenrokuen several years earlier in 1878. While Ozawa may be correct in considering the emperor's visit to Kōrakuen the immediate impetus for the creation of the expression "three great parks," the root of the idea would thus seem to lie more generally in the series of imperial tours that were made throughout the country during the Meiji years.

As detailed in earlier chapters, shogunal visits raised the status of daimyo gardens and prompted the building of landscape gardens throughout the country, if only among the samurai elite. The visits effectively turned gardens into the prestigious "parks" of samurai society, since through them, what were only private gardens belonging to individual domains became known to and were incorporated into the larger community. Likewise, the Meiji-era imperial tours gave social and national visibility to fine gardens in the castle towns of the former domains. Whereas many great daimyo gardens in Tokyo (as Edo was renamed in 1868) vanished when the properties were confiscated by the Meiji government to construct public buildings or factories, daimyo gardens in outlying provinces were largely protected by the newly introduced park system, and a few even had the good fortune to be toured by the emperor.

In short, the three great parks of Japan were all daimyo gardens in the provinces whose fortunes had been assured by the prestigious event of an imperial visit. While the novelty accompanying their first opening to the public during the Meiji era may also have partly contributed to their popularity, it was a visit by the emperor and its subsequent coverage by the press that proved to be their greatest boast.

The appellations Tokiwa park, Kenroku park, and Kōraku park that Ozawa gives in his work ultimately reverted to "garden" (*en* 園)—Kairakuen, Kenrokuen, and Kōrakuen. Perhaps this was because once public parks in Western style appeared throughout the country, large-scale daimyo gardens designed in the old style started to seem less suited to the image of a proper park after all. The generally held sentiment that the sites were better suited to the category of "gardens" seems to have pushed the expression "three great gardens" toward becoming the better used of the two, as it is today.

Daimyo gardens were once created and cultivated for use by the ruling elite, but in the days following the 1868 Meiji Restoration, they emerged into a new public role for the modern era. Daimyo gardens were spacious enough to be opened to use by large numbers of people, and flexible enough in style to be adapted to the functions required by their new users. Examples around the country were thus greatly appreciated for the assurance they offered that local cities could provide urban amenities on a par with those of Tokyo. But at the same time, the daimyo gardens of the regional castle towns were of a slightly different style than those in Edo. They were also used in a somewhat different fashion.

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2 Ozawa 1915, p. 440.



## Kanazawa Kenrokuen

Kenrokuen, the garden of the Kaga domain, stands in the city of Kanazawa on high ground. From the present-day main entrance near the Hirosaka 広坂 intersection, the approach climbs higher still up a steep slope (Mayumizaka 真弓坂). Then, at the edge of the central Kasumigaikie 霞ヶ池 pond and its distinctively shaped Kotoji 徽軫 stone lantern (today a symbol of the city), the space opens out abruptly. The spot affords a panoramic view of northeast Kanazawa and the Asano 浅野 river valley, backed by Mt. Utatsu 卯辰. Many daimyo gardens have hills looking out onto the surrounding countryside, but Kenrokuen is unusual in offering a fine view even from the main, relatively level part of the grounds.

The garden was called Kenrokuen after 1822, when twelfth domain lord Maeda Narinaga 前田 斉広 (1782–1824) requested Matsudaira Sadanobu (also Rakuō 楽翁), the lord of the Shirakawa 白河 domain and a former shogunate senior councillor, to give it a suitable name. (Some accounts credit Narinaga himself with choosing the name.) The name, meaning “garden combining six [attributes],” was taken from the following passage in *Luoyang mingyuan ji* (Jp. *Rakuyō meien ki*) 洛陽名園記 (1095) by the Song-dynasty poet Li Gefei 李格非 (ca. 1045–1105): “An outstanding garden has six attributes, which are difficult to achieve at the same time. Too much spaciousness (Ch. *hongda* 宏大; Jp. *kōdai*) results in too little seclusion (Ch. *yōusui* 幽邃; Jp. *yūsui*). Too much human intervention (Ch. *renli* 人力; Jp. *jinriki*) results in too little sense of age (Ch. *canggu* 蒼古; Jp. *sōko*), and too many watercourses (Ch. *shuiquan* 水泉; Jp. *suisen*) results in too few vistas (Ch. *tiaowang* 眺望; Jp. *chōbō*).”<sup>3</sup>

The name quite skillfully captures the essence of garden aesthetics, even if Sadanobu (provided he really was the namegiver) had never seen the site for himself. At least to this viewer, Kenrokuen is quite faithful to its name, particularly in its combination of numerous watercourses with fine vistas. Yet it was not so long ago, but only close to the end of the Edo period, that the garden acquired all six of its much-celebrated attributes.

Indeed, until then, not all of Kenrokuen was even a garden. For more than a century, the area around the central pond contained retainers’ residences. Called Chitosedai 千歳台 (“[best] heights of a thousand years”), the area became known as Takezawa no oniwa 竹沢御庭 (Takezawa garden) in the early nineteenth century following the construction of the Takezawa 竹沢 residence along the pond’s southwestern shores. It was not until 1851 that the residence buildings were removed and replaced with meandering streams, stone lanterns, and plantings, finally resulting in the area of Kenrokuen so famous today for its many pines bound with rope supports during the winter (Figure 7-1).

What *was* a garden from early in history lay to the west on considerably lower ground. The location of this older garden—called Renchitei 蓮池庭 (“lotus pond” garden), or sometimes simply Hasuike—corresponds to what is now Hisagoike 瓢池 pond and the Kaiseikitō 海石塔 stone lantern standing on its center island. In sum, present-day Kenrokuen may be roughly divided into two parts, an upper section called Chitosedai or Takezawa garden and a lower section called Hasuike garden.

3 “Huyuan” 湖園 in *Luoyang mingyuan ji*.





Figure 7-1. Kenrokuen today. Courtesy of Ishikawa prefecture.

*Hasuike Garden.* As the reader will recall, the tea ceremony figured prominently in the daimyo gardens of the early Edo period. Thus the lower section of Kenrokuen, like most other daimyo gardens, began as a tea garden. In 1596, second lord Maeda Toshinaga 前田利長 (1562–1614) invited the Ming Confucian scholar Wan Bozi 王伯子 to reside in “Hasuike garden,” intimating that a garden of some sort had been installed by that time. Yet this early garden was almost certainly much more modest than the spacious stroll-style daimyo garden that Kenrokuen was to become. There is some doubt as to whether it had been of sufficient scale even to hold tea ceremonies.

Full-scale garden construction did not commence until the time of fifth lord Tsunanori 綱紀 (1643–1724). A map of the town of Kanazawa from the Enpō 延宝 era (1673–1681)<sup>4</sup> gives the label “O-Sakujisho” 御作事所 (construction works office) to the area corresponding to Hasuike garden. Inside the O-Sakujisho appears a “ritei” 離亭, a cottage of some sort. Most likely the cottage had an adjoining garden, albeit a relatively modest one. In 1676, the Sakujisho was moved inside the castle and the vacated grounds was converted into a separate residence (*bettei* 別邸) for Tsunanori. The residence was named the Edomachi 江戸町 tea house, because the area had once quartered the many attendants and ladies-in-waiting who came from Edo with Princess Tama 珠 (1599–1622), the second daughter of shogun Hidetada, upon her marriage into the Maeda family in 1601.

Tsunanori created Hisagoike pond and built a *sukiya*-style structure, in what marked the beginnings of the Hasuike garden. In 1678, Tsunanori held a *kuchikiri* 口切 (tea-jar opening) ceremony in his new garden, demonstrating that the site was of a scale appropriate to hosting such an event. An account of

<sup>4</sup> *Enpō Kanazawa zu* 延宝金沢図, ca. 1673–1681. Collection of Ishikawa Prefectural Library.

the ceremony by one of the invited retainers provides the chief source by which the appearance of the garden may be envisioned.<sup>5</sup>

*The Memorable Banquet at Hasuike Tea House.* On the fifteenth day of the eighth month of 1686, Tsunanori served “tea” (i.e., a tea meal) at Hasuike tea house to the four senior retainers Honda Masanaga 本多政長 (1633–1679), Maeda Takasada 前田孝貞 (1628–1707), Okumura Yasuteru 奥村惠輝 (1653–1705), and Okumura Tokinari 奥村時成 (1644–1693).<sup>6</sup> The retainers were served a meal of rice, two soups, and five side dishes, and then given tea. Afterward they toured the garden, where they paused for refreshments inside a tea house with many fine appointments on display. The retainers enjoyed tea, food, and more tea, then visited a “flower garden” (*ohanabatake* 御花畠), probably meaning they were shown some rare and colorful plants. The writer notably makes a distinction between viewing the garden versus viewing flowers. Other diversions, such as appreciating the articles on display in the tea house, followed. Yet the day’s events were hardly complete.

The retainers and the lord viewed a demonstration of horsemanship in the riding grounds, before being served with “sweets” (*kashi* 菓子), soups, and sake in an adjacent tea house. (While “kashi” here can be taken to mean “sweets,” it may also indicate snacks or side dishes to go with sake.) Six lower-ranking retainers in attendance were also given food and drink. The councillors recited noh chants, and the feasting lasted after dark until about seven in the evening.

The banquet was followed by a moon-viewing feast inside the lord’s residence, with more drinks given to a different set of retainers. “At the moon-viewing feast on the same night, the attendants on duty were served refreshments, soups, and drinks in the Higaki 檜垣 hall and the second hall [inside the residence], while the guards received their share inside the guardhouse and those from the rank of foot soldier (*okachi* 御歩) down received theirs in the kitchen.”<sup>7</sup> The day seems to have been an occasion for merrymaking for the entire household. The Hasuike garden and its tea houses provided the main setting for events such as this one, which were lavish affairs better described as feasts than as occasions for the tea ceremony. There could be no banquets without gardens and vice versa, so inextricably were their purposes combined.

*A Bird Hunt.* Feasting was not the only function fulfilled by daimyo gardens, however. For example, eleventh lord Harunaga 治脩 (1745–1810) has left behind his own vivid record of a fowl hunt at Hasuike garden during the second month of 1774.

A lookout who had been dispatched to Hasuike garden returned to report that two pairs of birds had alighted on the pond. Accordingly:

At about the middle of the eighth hour [roughly three in the afternoon] I went to the lookout house and saw the birds swimming near the first and second bamboo grass thickets [which had

5 Documents by Honda Awa no kami Masashige 本多安房守政重 (1580–1647), Yokoyama Saemon 横山左衛門, etc.

6 *Sangikō nenpyō*, p. 848.

7 *Sangikō nenpyō*, p. 848.

been purposely planted to hide view of the hunters from the prey]. I took my net and went toward the thickets. There were indeed two pairs of birds. When I looked from behind the second thicket, I at first found the birds swimming too far forward from the target point. Because of this I, from my position behind the lookout near the point, hesitated for a long time to throw, but finally both pairs swam into the desired spot.<sup>8</sup>

Small waves rippled on the other side of the target point, indicating the prey was in just the right place, and so “I stepped out of the enclosure with my left foot as I lunged forward with my right, throwing the net.” One pair of the two proved to be the wing-clipped decoys kept to lure wild birds (the real prey) down into the pond, and these successfully escaped. Harunaga expresses his satisfaction with his net, which he had acquired from an Edo craftsman named Yahei 八兵衛, remarking on how smartly it ensnared the birds and how easy it was to throw. Harunaga brought his two prizes to the tea house and continued with the hunt, capturing several other birds that came down into the pond. The ponds and tea houses of Kenrokuen were once full of life, unlike today when they are little more than lifeless objects of mere appreciation that visitors are hardly allowed to touch.

*Debate over Chitosedai's Designer.* From the time of the tea gatherings hosted by fifth lord Tsunanori in Hasuike garden, the Chitosedai area beyond and above it—what would later become the upper section of Kenrokuen—changed several times in use. But there was no large-scale construction, and for a long time it lay more or less untouched.

The noted garden designer and scholar Shigemori Mirei and his oldest son Kanto 完途 argue that construction of a garden in Chitosedai began early in the Edo period, around 1630 or 1631. The basis of their argument, which is seconded by the writer of the “Kenrokuen” entry of *Ishikawa-ken no chimei* 石川県の地名,<sup>9</sup> is an 11.4.Kan'ei 7 (1630) entry in the *Honkō Kokushi nikki* 本光国師日記 diary by the priest Konchiin Sūden 金地院崇伝 (1569–1633) that reads, “Reply from Enshū to [my letter dated] the fifth day of the fourth month. Since he has sent Kentei 賢庭 to Kaga, he will instruct him to start work on [my] garden project upon his return.”<sup>10</sup>

Kentei was one of the protégés of the garden designer Kobori Enshū. Proponents of Shigemori's theory claim that the artificial hill and stone arrangements in the southeast corner of Kenrokuen betray distinctive traces of Kentei's style and therefore must be where he did his work while in Kaga. The idea has its attractions, especially in light of its implication of a relationship between the garden traditions of Kyoto and Kanazawa. But the hard part is finding the necessary corroboration. While we can safely assume that Kentei was engaged in some garden-building project in Kaga, it would seem speculative to assume that it was inside Kenrokuen.

The area in question had originally housed the Maeda family residence before being turned into a residential area for family retainers in 1620. The aforementioned Enpō-era (1673–1681) map shows

8 *Tairyōkō shuki*, pp. 948–49.

9 Heibonsha Chihō Shiryō Sentā 1991.

10 *Honkō Kokushi nikki*, vol. 6, p. 299.



Chitosedai taken up by retainers' houses, making it highly unlikely that the upper section of Kenrokuen dates that far back in history. It is, of course, possible that Kentei's work was preserved within the compounds of these retainers, and that the land later reverted to the lord's possession to become part of Kenrokuen as it is today. But this scenario is unfortunately almost all conjecture.

To summarize, in the late seventeenth century there was still nothing like a garden in the area that is now the upper section of Kenrokuen (or if there was, it may have been hidden away inside one of the retainers' residences), and while Hasuike garden had already been built in the lower section, it was not of sufficient scale to be considered a full-fledged daimyo garden.

*The Six Attributes Perfected.* In 1792, eleventh lord Harunaga (of the aforementioned fowl hunt) built two domain schools on Chitosedai. Named Meirindō 明倫堂 and Keibukan 経武館, the schools were devoted to scholarship and military arts, respectively. Obviously there was yet no garden here.

In 1819, in preparation for building his own retirement retreat, twelfth lord Narinaga moved the schools to the east onto adjacent property owned by the Okumura 奥村 family, one of the domain's chief retainers. At the time, a path connected Chitosedai and Hasuike garden, which were separated by a fence. In 1820, Narinaga incorporated Hasuike garden into his residence by removing the path and the fence. At that point, it seems Narinaga had no plans to build a separate garden. Chitosedai was almost entirely occupied by his residence, which was called the Takezawa residence and sometimes the Takezawa palace (Takezawa goten 竹沢御殿).

In 1822, near the completion of the residence, a plaque inscribed with the name Kenrokuen was sent to Narinaga by Matsudaira Sadanobu, as described earlier. But while the residence may have had something akin to a garden at the time of the naming, it would have been insignificant next to the Hasuike garden in either scale or history. The designation Kenrokuen, it follows, must initially have been intended for the lower garden alone.

Of the six attributes, "secluded" would have been apt for the densely wooded Hasuike garden, with its central Hisagoike pond, tea house, *sukiya* pavilion, and flocks of wild waterbirds. In addition, "depth" and many "water courses" it did have, but hardly "spaciousness," "human intervention," or "vistas." It might be unkind to say the garden betrayed the name bestowed on it by Sadanobu, but in fact, it was a mere "Kensanen" (garden combining *three* [attributes]) and had yet to fulfill but half the promise of its name.

Sadanobu, who had never visited Kanazawa, cannot be blamed. Indeed, considering that the name refers to the qualities desired in an ideal garden, he may have chosen it to reflect the goals to which he hoped Kenrokuen would aspire. The garden did eventually realize Sadanobu's vision. In 1837, thirteenth lord Nariyasu 斉泰 (1811–1884) added Sazaeyama 蝶螺山 (also Kangetsudai 観月台) hill to Chitosedai. The hill reportedly used earth from the excavation of the central pond, indicating that the pond, too, was enlarged on this occasion. Later he removed the Takezawa residence altogether, turning Kenrokuen into a spacious daimyo garden much as it still is today. Finally at this point, the garden lived up to its name.

## Okayama Kōrakuen

The beginnings of Okayama Kōrakuen—the garden that, as we saw, probably initially inspired the idea of the three great parks—may be traced to a vegetable field that was turned into a garden during the late seventeenth century by Ikeda Tsunamasa 池田綱政 (1638–1714), the fourth lord of the Okayama domain. Located on the north shore of the Asahi 旭 river opposite the main keep of Okayama castle, the garden was called variously Gokōen 御後園 (rear garden), the Ochaya 御茶屋 (tea house), or the Chaya 茶屋 residence. The name Gokōen (and its shorter form Kōen 後園) remained until 1871, when the garden was given its present-day designation, Kōrakuen. The poet Yamamoto Itarō 山本遺太郎 (1911–2001), who grew up near Kōrakuen, recalls that his grandmother always called the garden “Kōen.”<sup>11</sup> He adds that throughout his childhood he believed she was saying “park” (also read *kōen*), evidence that bolsters the conjecture that Okayama Kōrakuen is the starting place of the appellation “three great parks.”

It is sometimes claimed that Gokōen was originally built as a defense to protect the rear of the castle from attack. While the theory is not improbable, any military purpose that the garden may have had most likely faded very quickly.

*Before Gokōen.* The Okayama domain had an earlier garden-like amenity in the Hanabatake 花畠 (flower garden), which was built by second lord Tadakatsu 忠雄 (1602–1632). Hanabatake lay opposite Kōrakuen on the other side of the castle, that is to say downstream to the south in the present-day area of Kyokutōchō 旭東町.

From the name, Hanabatake would seem to have been used to cultivate plants for appreciation, not practical use. According to a mid-Edo account by a domain retainer, the area included a garden named Tokugetsudai 得月台 with water courses, tea houses, and arrangements of rare rocks and trees.<sup>12</sup> Tadakatsu's successor, Mitsumasa 光政 (1609–1682), built a domain school called Hanabatake kyōjō 花畠教場 on the site. But in turning the area into a place of learning, he did not completely do away with its function as a pleasure garden.

In 1642, Mitsumasa and his retainers dined at Hanabatake on crane that had been sent as a gift from the shogun. The language of existing accounts suggests that the crane (cooked mostly as *atsumono* 羹, or a kind of soup) was consumed with some formality. The bestowal of crane from one of the shogun's falcon hunts was an important ceremony that confirmed the bonds of rank between the shogun and the domain lords as well as the lords and their retainers. If Hanabatake was chosen to host such an event, then it must have maintained amenities for feasting and ceremony even after its conversion into a school.

According to the history *Ikeda-ke rireki ryakki* 池田家履歴略記, which is estimated to date from 1799:

Tokugetsurō 得月楼 pavilion was built [at Hanabatake] during the time of Lord Kunai 宮内 [Tadakatsu]. It functioned as a pleasure retreat (*yūsoku no bessō* 遊息の別荘). The first occurrence of the name “Hanabatake” in records is in the year [Kan'ei 19] that Rekkō 烈公 [Mitsumasa]

<sup>11</sup> Yamamoto 1979, pp. 45–46.

<sup>12</sup> *Bunkai zakki*.

partook at Hanabatake of crane bestowed upon him by the shogun. On the eleventh day of the eleventh month of this year there was a performance of *sarugaku* 申楽 at Hanabatake, for which actors were called from the southern capital [Nara].<sup>13</sup>

While not clear in this account, the *sarugaku* performance took place on the same day that Mitsumasa dined on crane, as indicated by Mitsumasa's diary (which, however, identifies the performance as being of *noh*, not *sarugaku*):

Eleventh day [of the eleventh month, Kan'ei 19 (1642)]

Item: Dined at Hanabatake on crane caught during the shogun's falcon hunt, bestowing portions on all the councillors (*rōjū* 老中), *kumigashira* 組頭, and their seniors (*monogashira* 物頭). Ordered a performance of *noh*.<sup>14</sup>

A gift from the shogun, followed by *noh*: the occasion was highly ceremonial in character, and yet pleasurable as well.

The map *Okayama ezu* 岡山絵図, which is thought to depict the city as it was during the Genroku and Hōei eras, identifies the Hanabatake area as the “lower residence” (*shimo yashiki*). The designation suggests that the site still functioned as a garden during the lordship of Gokōen builder Tsunamasa, who succeeded Mitsumasa in 1672. Possibly Tsunamasa's desire to have a garden designed more closely to his own tastes inspired his decision to add the new garden to the already existing one at Hanabatake.

*Built over Thirteen Years.* Unlike with many other daimyo gardens, the dates of Kōrakuen's construction are relatively well documented. Tsunamasa announced the project in 1686 and commenced construction late in the following year, completing it for the most part by 1700. At that point, the garden covered some 89,000 of the roughly 130,000 square meters that it encompasses today. The entire project thus took thirteen years, divided into several phases.

In those times as today, Japanese gardens were not built according to a predetermined design and schedule, but were instead gradually shaped as work proceeded. The En'yōtei, Eishōtei 栄唱亭, Moshōan 茂松庵, and Ryūten 流店 tea houses were built relatively soon after work began, suggesting that Kōrakuen, like other daimyo gardens, was designed first and foremost to hold tea ceremonies.

One illustration probably dating to the Hōei era shows groves of pine and cherry trees on the south side of what is now Kayō no ike 花葉の池 pond in the part of the garden facing the castle.<sup>15</sup> The lawn that is today the most marked feature of Kōrakuen yet covers a small area; Hyōtan'ike 瓢箪池 (gourd pond), which now connects to the Sawa no ike 沢の池 pond, is nowhere to be seen. Overall the garden appears not quite as bright or as open as it is today.

13 *Ikeda-ke rireki ryakki*, vol. 1, p. 169.

14 *Ikeda Mitsumasa nikki*, p. 45.

15 *Hōei ezu* 宝永絵図. Former collection of Ikeda family; currently in the collection of the Kōrakuen Office 後楽園事務所, Okayama.



It also had a strongly agrarian character from the outset, probably as a result both of the fashions of the times as well as of Kōrakuen's origins as a vegetable garden. The illustration shows vegetable fields covering the area that is now Yuishinzan 唯心山 hill; the tea fields are already much as they are today. A small experimental rice field called Seiden 井田 was added later.

Samurai historically had their roots in the countryside, and they retained close ties with farmers and farming even after they became the ruling stratum of society. While Kōrakuen's tea and vegetable fields were somewhat akin to the elements of country taste incorporated into gardens during the height of the French baroque style, it would probably be more accurate to interpret them as reflecting samurai society's preoccupation with its own origins.

*Gokōen Opens to the Public.* Improvements to the garden continued to the last days of the Edo period. By the time the vividly colorful *Gokōen ezu* 御後園絵図 map was created in 1863 (Figure 7-2), the lawn had been broadened, the Yuishinzan hill had been built, and three islands (Naka no shima 中島, Minoshima 御野島, and Jarijima 砂利島) had been installed in Sawa no ike pond. Vegetable fields still claimed nearly all the eastern side of Yuishinzan hill and Sawa no ike pond, but otherwise the garden



Figure 7-2. *Gokōen ezu*, illustration of Okayama Kōrakuen in 1863 (Bunkiyū 3). Courtesy of Okayama University Library.

had assumed much of its present-day form. In those days, the atmosphere of open spaciousness that strongly marks present-day Kōrakuen must have seemed even more pronounced.

Yet despite its inviting appearance, the garden remained almost completely closed to outsiders until 1871, when it was opened to the public and renamed Kōrakuen after the Confucian maxim enjoining rulers to take their pleasures only after the people have done so. The notice of the garden's opening, as quoted by Yamamoto, said: "Gokōen will hereafter be called Kōrakuen. Any member of the four classes [samurai, farmers, craftsmen, merchants] wishing to visit the garden outside their days of work should submit a request to that effect."<sup>16</sup> Anyone could now visit the garden, but only after observing detailed regulations. Visitors were required to present identification, write down their names, and place their seal on the application before entering. Other rules stipulated no groups of more than twenty, no wooden *geta* sandals, no overly extravagant clothing, and so on.

What seems strangest to modern eyes is that despite the claim of admitting "any member of the four classes," visiting days were segregated by class as well as by gender. Days of each month ending in "1" were reserved for *shizoku* 士族 (upper-ranked samurai) and those ending in "6" for *sotsu* 卒 (lower samurai class), while farmers were assigned to days ending in "3" and craftsmen and merchants to those ending in "8." Women were allowed more days than men: of the days allotted to farmers, men were given admittance on the thirteenth of each month and women on the third and twenty-third. Such were the limitations imposed even after the garden became available to the general public. As to before that time, Kōrakuen (or Gokōen as it was still known) was by all indications an entirely exclusive facility to which not even members of the samurai class could readily gain access.

### Mito Kairakuen

Also often counted among the three great parks, Mito Kairakuen was opened to the public much earlier than either Kenrokuen or Okayama Kōrakuen. Its start as a daimyo garden, however, came quite late.



Figure 7-3. Map of Okayama Kōrakuen in 1938, from Shigemori and Shigemori 1971–1976, vol. 16.

<sup>16</sup> Yamamoto 1979.

*A Plum Orchard.* Kairakuen began in 1833 with a grove of plum trees that ninth Mito lord Tokugawa Nariaki planted at Kanzaki Shichimendō 神崎七面堂 shrine (still in the garden, although not at its original location) in Mito, the seat of the domain (now capital of Ibaraki prefecture). The orchard was supposedly planted as an emergency food supply against famine, but the reliability of the story remains very much in question, as with most anecdotes of this kind. The plums might more plausibly have been cultivated as part of a project to promote agricultural production.

Kairakuen stands on high ground overlooking the broad waters of nearby Lake Senba 千波. In its initial state, the site was little more than a plum orchard with a beautiful view. It contained none of the design features normally associated with gardens, but was merely an open space where many people could gather. In a way, Kairakuen was almost destined to become a public park from the outset.

In 1839, Nariaki set down his intentions for the garden in a work entitled *Kairakuen ki* 偕楽園記, the contents of which he had inscribed onto a monument on the grounds. It is unusual to find a daimyo publicly proclaiming his goals for a garden prior to its construction. Equally exceptional, Kairakuen was made available to all members of the samurai class, unlike other daimyo gardens that were reserved for the lord's use in occasions of tea or pleasure.

The name Kairakuen ("garden to be enjoyed together") reportedly derives from a passage in *Liang Hui Wang shang* 梁惠王上 by Mencius 孟子 stating that the ancients knew true enjoyment because they took their pleasure with the masses. The designation thus embodies the garden's goals with respect to (professed) function instead of outward appearance, as was the case with Kenrokuen, for example. While Nariaki's desire to share his garden with others may well be a mark of his enlightened rule, it is probably better interpreted as simply a reiteration of traditionally held Confucian precepts. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the Mito domain had maintained the similarly named Koishikawa Kōrakuen 小石川後樂園 ("pleasure after" garden) at its Edo residence since the late seventeenth century, and Kairakuen's name, too, probably drew on that same tradition. Although it is possible to draw parallels between the ideals informing the garden and the philosophy of the enlightened monarchs of the West, the attitude itself was not a particularly novel one in Japan during this period already approaching the middle of the nineteenth century.

*The Opening.* Kairakuen marked initial completion in 1842 with the finishing of the Kōbuntei 好文亭 tea house (Figure 7-4). The garden subsequently started admitting visitors. Although conceived as a kind of public park, entry was limited to members of the samurai class, with the exception of Shintō and Buddhist priests and ascetics, who were treated as having equivalent status. Even then, admittance was only given on days of the month ending in either "3" or "8," with men assigned to four days out of the month (third, eighth, thirteenth, and twenty-third), and women two days (thirteenth and twenty-eighth). The keepers of Okayama Kōrakuen may have taken Kairakuen's system into consideration when drawing up the visitors' schedule for its own opening to the public.

Kairakuen's character as an open garden was partly the product of the times in which it was planned; as discussed in Chapter 6, by the mid-nineteenth century, it had already grown difficult for daimyo to limit gardens to their exclusive public and private use. The plan may also have been influenced by the



special situation of the Mito lords—who, as close relatives of the shogun, spent almost all their time in Edo instead of their home domain—as well as by the complicated domestic problems troubling the domain toward the end of the Edo period. But I will leave clarification of these factors for future study, here limiting myself to the question of whether it can be considered a “true” daimyo garden in terms of style and function. With regard to style, the lack of a central pond and watercourses makes it hard to classify Kairakuen as a stroll-style daimyo garden, although one can of course walk around in it. As to function, the test would be how well equipped the garden was to host tea ceremonies or feasts by the lord. Only one banquet with a few senior retainers, hosted by Nariaki, was ever held at Kairakuen, so it falls short as a daimyo garden in this respect as well.

Kairakuen was less a daimyo garden proper than an anticipation in terms of style and function of the public parks of the subsequent Meiji era. No doubt it was this quality that captured people’s attention during the new era of Meiji Enlightenment and led Kairakuen to be counted among the three great parks.



Figure 7-4. Map of Kairakuen garden with Kōbuntai tea house, 1851. Courtesy of Ōrai Museum of Bakumatsu-Meiji History.

### Ritsurin'en

Other prominent examples of Edo-period daimyo gardens built in domanical castle towns include Ritsurin'en in Takamatsu 高松 (Kagawa prefecture; Figure 7-5), Jōjuen (Suizenji park) in Kumamoto (Kumamoto prefecture), and Genkyūen in Hikone (Shiga prefecture). All three were designed to be appreciated while strolling around a central pond; they differ in scale, but share the same basic layout.

Today, Ritsurin'en (Ritsurin Kōen) is by far the most extensive, covering approximately 760,000 square meters, while Jōjuen follows at 60,000 square meters and Genkyūen at 20,000.

*Perfected by the Fifth Lord.* Ritsurin'en is located about two kilometers south of Takamatsu (also Tamamo 玉藻) castle along the east slope of Mt. Shiun 紫雲. The vast part of its grounds is undeveloped hills, but even if that is omitted, the so-called inner garden (*uchi niwa* 内庭)—the part most visitors come to see—remains quite large at 160,000 square meters. The inner garden has six major ponds: Nanko 南湖 (crossed by Engetsukyō 偃月橋 bridge, the garden's best-known scenic feature), Hokko 北湖, Seiko 西湖, Kansuichi 涵翠池, Fuyōshō 芙蓉沼, and Gun'ōchi 群鴨池. If conditions for pleasant strolling are the outstanding feature of a daimyo garden, then perhaps Ritsurin'en stands foremost among all daimyo gardens outside Edo.

Ritsurin'en began as part of a separate residence (*bettei* 別邸) of the Ikoma 生駒 clan, the rulers of Takamatsu prior to the domain's handover to the Matsudaira 松平 family in 1642. The Ikoma built the central section of the garden around what is now Nanko pond.

The garden acquired its name during the rule of Yoritaka 頼恭 (1711–1771), the fifth Matsudaira lord. Born as the fifth son of the lord of the Moriyama domain in Mutsu province, Yoritaka was adopted by the Matsudaira in 1744 and relocated to Takamatsu, where he did much to promote salt production and other industries within the domain. Yoritaka reworked the Hinoki 檜 (“cypress”) residence (the garden's main structure at the time), repaired the Kikugetsutei 掬月亭 (“scoop the moon” tea house), and added several new tea houses. In 1746, he commissioned the Confucian scholar Nakamura Bunsuke 中村文輔 (1701–1763) to select the “sixty sights of Ritsurin'en,” descriptions of which Nakamura compiled into a work entitled *Ritsurinsō ki* 栗林莊記.



Figure 7-5. Illustration of Ritsurin'en, ca. 19th century. Courtesy of the Kagawa Museum.



Yoritaka had a deep interest in botany. He often explored the Ritsurin'en woods with his retainers and cultivated experimental specimens along the pond shores or in plots inside the garden. During the Kan'en 寛延 era (1748–1750), Yoritaka took into his service the famed inventor and naturalist Hiraga Gennai 平賀源内 (1728–1780), whose hometown was Shido 志度 near Takamatsu. Yoritaka also furnished Ritsurin'en with a large medicinal herb garden for botanists and physicians to conduct research. Thus during Yoritaka's time, Ritsurin'en functioned not only as a setting for tea ceremonies and entertainments but also as a center for nature research similar to an arboretum or wildlife preserve.

*Yorishige's Accomplishments.* Whereas Yoritaka perfected the garden and gave it its name, its basic design was established by first Matsudaira lord Yorishige 頼重 (1622–1695), ruler of Takamatsu for thirty-two years from 1642 to 1673. Yorishige expanded the amenities that had been left by the Ikoma, adding such structures as the Hinoki residence, the Kannondō 観音堂 worship hall, and Kikugetsutei tea house. The area was then called Ohayashi 御林 (“the woods”), although the name Ritsurinsō occasionally already appears in records as well. Yorishige was well versed in the tea ceremony and ceramics, and he invited the Kyoto craftsman Awataguchi Sakubei 粟田口作兵衛 (1603–1678) to Takamatsu to operate the kiln inside Ritsurin'en. Sakubei assumed the name Kita Rihei 紀太理兵衛 upon his arrival in Takamatsu and developed the Riheiyaki 理平焼 ware for which the city is especially known today. The direction of Yorishige's tastes makes it all the more likely that his garden, like other daimyo gardens, focused on tea-ceremony events.

Some of Kagawa's lords, for example third lord Yoritoyo 頼豊 (1680–1735), governed the domain almost entirely from this retreat. Yoritoyo is said to have added several tea houses and reworked the whole garden. In this way, Ritsurin'en changed to accommodate the tastes and political policies of successive owners.

One particularly radical change at Ritsurin'en is attributed to tenth lord Yoritane 頼胤 (1811–1877), who reputedly cleared away the chestnut trees growing around Gun'ōchi pond, the better to satisfy his fondness for hunting. As the story goes, it is because of Yoritane that Ritsurin'en (“chestnut grove” garden) has no chestnut trees despite its name. This is reminiscent of the story (see Chapter 5) claiming Koishikawa Kōrakuen to have been utterly ruined when the stones along the garden paths were removed to accommodate a visit from Keishōin, the mother of fifth shogun Tsunayoshi. Both stories seem somewhat contrived, as though even garden alterations are being mustered to emphasize the ineptness of an unpopular ruler.

Of course, Ritsurin'en might well have had chestnut trees that were cut down at some point. Yet the name Gun'ōchi (“duck gathering” pond) suggests that the hunting done there was wild-duck snaring, for which the presence of chestnut trees would have been no hindrance. All we can safely read from the anecdote is that daimyo gardens were frequently the scenes of bird hunts in addition to tea ceremonies and social entertainments.

### Suizenji Park

Suizenji Jōjuen is in the city of Kumamoto. Once a retreat for the domain lord, it lies at some distance from Kumamoto castle approximately three kilometers to the east-southeast. In addition to Jōjuen, the Kumamoto lords maintained another, earlier garden called Ohanabatake 御花畠 inside their main residence, which lay immediately south of the castle. Ohanabatake dated back to the time of Katō Kiyomasa 加藤清正 (1562–1611), the castle's builder; the only trace that remains of the garden today is the name Hanabatake-chō 花畑町 given to a district bristling with government and corporate high-rises.

*Ohanabatake.* The first historical reference to Ohanabatake appears in a copy of a *kokuinjō* 黒印状 (official daimyo letter), estimated to date from around 1606, in which Kiyomasa instructs the recipient to closely oversee the garden's construction in his absence.<sup>17</sup> In 1632, Hosokawa Tadatoshi 細川忠利 (1586–1641) replaced the Katō family as lord of the domain, marking the beginning of what was to be a nearly 240-year rule by the Hosokawa. Sometime after 1636, Tadatoshi moved his residence from the castle to Ohanabatake. Although the move is usually attributed to the uncomfortable accommodations at Kumamoto castle, it probably reflected the fading need for lords to stay within their castles on a constant war footing once the strife of the Warring States period had been quelled. The Ohanabatake residence remained in use until 1871, when the feudal domains were abolished and the last lord, Morihisa 護久 (1839–1893), offered the property to the Meiji government.

At Ohanabatake, Tadatoshi built ponds and streams, an artificial hill, and a small *shoin* 書院. Later illustrations (e.g., *Yōshuntei naka no zu* 陽春庭中之図, *Ohanabatake on-ezu* 御花畑御絵図) attest to the



Figure 7-6. Detail of Ohanabatake garden, from *Yōshuntei naka no zu*. Courtesy of Eisei Bunko.

<sup>17</sup> *Shimokawa monjo*.



presence of a fine stroll garden centered on a large pond (see Figures 7-6 and 7-7). The formality of the names given to the site's buildings, such as *omote goten* 表御殿 (front residence), *oku goten* 奥御殿 (inner residence), and *o-ura goten* 御裏御殿 (rear residence), suggests that Ohanabatake was an adjunct of the lord's official residence dedicated (at least ostensibly) to matters of state, not a pleasure garden designed for more informal occasions of tea.



Figure 7-7. Diagram of Ohanabatake garden (*Ohanabatake on-ezu*), ca. 18th century. Courtesy of Eisei Bunko.

In contrast to Ohanabatake, Jōjuen was, like Ritsurin'en, built in the countryside as a place where the lord could seek respite from administrative cares. The property originally belonged to Suizenji temple, whose founder, Gentaku 玄宅 (d.u.), a former abbot of Rakanji 羅漢寺 temple in Buzen (present-day Ōita prefecture), had followed Tadatoshi to Kumamoto. As its name ("temple on the water") indicates, the Suizenji area was noted for its abundant spring water. Tadatoshi was well versed in the tea ceremony, and the availability of the quality water necessary for making tea most likely contributed to his decision to build his retreat here.

In 1636, Tadatoshi relocated the temple to make way for his villa. As this would have been roughly the same time that he moved his official residence to Ohanabatake, it appears that he established both his base for administering the domain and his second home for resting from his duties in concerted fashion. The first structure that Tadatoshi built on his retreat was a tea house, and both it and (by extension) the villa were called Suizenji ochaya 水前寺御茶屋. Here again, we find the tea ceremony influencing the start of yet another daimyo garden (see Figure 7-8).



Figure 7-8. Detail of Suizenji garden, from *Suizenjitei naka no zu* 水前寺庭中之図, ca. 19th century. Courtesy of Eisei Bunko.

*Developed by Hosokawa Tsunatoshi.* The garden gained the name Jōjuen and reached its highest state of completion during the time of third lord Tsunatoshi 綱利 (1643–1714), who became lord in 1650. Two decades later, in 1670, he began extensive work on the garden; by the following year, the garden had attained much of its present-day appearance. At that time, Tsunatoshi selected the name Jōjuen 成趣園 ("perfect refinement" garden) from a poem by the Chinese poet Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365–427) and established the "ten sights of Jōjuen." Included in the list were the white plumes of steam rising from the nearby volcano Mt. Aso 阿蘇, indicating that *shakkei* (borrowed scenery) was part of the garden's design.



Given its many tea houses, there can be no doubt that Jōjuen was built with the tea ceremony chiefly in mind. But if we think of the “six attributes” that were discussed in connection to Kenrokuen, we can see that the landscape displays none of the “seclusion” or “depth” associated with the dim, wooded look typical of most tea gardens. This open, spacious atmosphere was probably intended from the very beginning; indeed, any garden that counted the steam rising from Mt. Aso among its sights is sure to have leaned more toward “spaciousness” and “panoramas” than anything else.

Lying directly in the shadow of Kumamoto castle, Ohanabatake was, by its very location, not a suitable place for indulging pleasures or putting aside the concerns of domain government. Those functions were claimed by Jōjuen, which became a villa garden well suited to the tea ceremony and other entertainment.

### Genkyūen

The Genkyūen 玄宮園 stroll garden and Rakurakuen 楽々園 dry landscape (*karesansui*) garden at Hikone castle are located in the so-called second enclosure (*dainikaku* 第二郭), north-northeast of the main keep. They originally belonged to a building complex called the Keyaki 榎 (*zelkova*) residence, which is



Figure 7-9. Illustrated map of Hikone castle gardens (*Omote goten oniwa zu*). Courtesy of the Hikone Castle Museum.



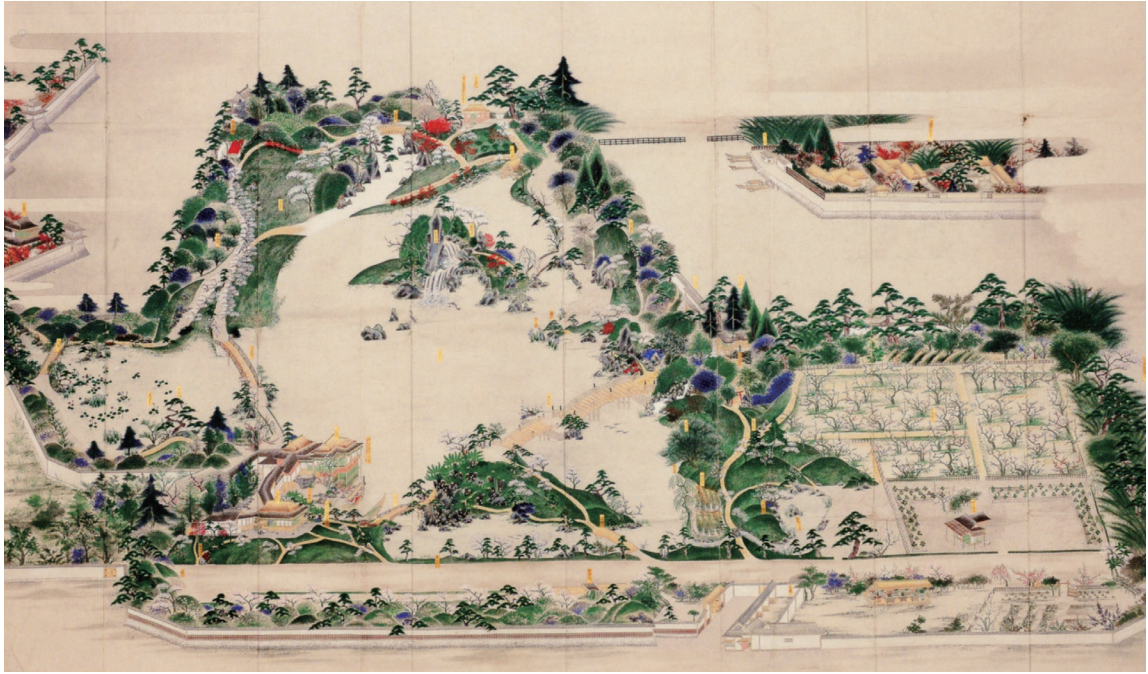


Figure 7-10. Genkyūen garden at Hikone castle. Detail from *Genkyūen no zu*, 1813. Courtesy of the Hikone Castle Museum.

sometimes characterized as the “lower residence” (*shimo yashiki*)—a rather unsuitable designation given that it lies within the castle grounds, albeit beyond the inner moat. This proximity is probably explained by the central place traditionally held by the lords of Hikone (the Ii 井伊 family) within the shogunate. The lords spent most of their time in Edo and so likely did not stray far from the castle even during the few occasions that they did return to their domain.

At Hikone, everything needed by the lord was provided in the castle or its immediate surroundings. The *omote goten* 表御殿 (front residence) for conducting matters of state stood within the castle grounds, unlike at Kumamoto, where the analogous Ohanabatake residence was located a slight distance away. The Hikone front residence had several gardens, including a number of *tsuboniwa* 坪庭 and a full-scale main garden with streams, ponds, stone arrangements, and artificial hills (cf., *Omote goten oniwa ezu* 表御殿御庭絵図; Figure 7-9). The main garden was equipped for occasions of tea or other ceremonies. The presence of a “state” garden directly inside the castle may explain why the second, more pleasure-oriented Keyaki residence and its two gardens were also built very close to the castle.

The Keyaki residence was built by fourth lord Naooki 直興 (1656–1717) from 1677, the year after he assumed his title. Construction concluded two years later in 1679; a hall dedicated to the bodhisattva Kannon was added in 1692. Being part of a “separate residence” (*bettei*), the garden was most likely equipped with a *sukiya*-style structure that served as a tea house, in contrast to the *shoin*-style structure of the main residence. Since the Keyaki residence primarily served as the home of retired lords of the domain, its garden was probably also of a style suited to their more mature taste.

The Bunka 文化 10 (1813) *Genkyūen no zu* 玄宮園図 (Figure 7-10) depicts the garden as it was shortly after renovations following the retirement of eleventh lord Naonaka 直中 (1766–1831). The garden appears much more dramatic and vivid than it does today, with a rich profusion of plants and water falling over the (now dry) waterfall rock arrangement on the pond's central island. Of course it is possible that the picture has been somewhat exaggerated for the sake of interest, but it seems safe to conclude that images of the ideal daimyo garden were far more colorful in those times than they are today.

### Places of Color and Gaiety

Commentaries often extol Japanese gardens for their austerity and sobriety, and studies of daimyo gardens, too, hardly ever describe them as having been colorful. But such images diverge from reality. True, deeply secluded retreats based on tea-ceremony aesthetics were the ideal during the early days of daimyo gardens. Yet as tea ceremonies evolved from the formal and austere into increasingly more elegant and elaborate events (their underlying philosophy notwithstanding), gardens, too, acquired a much brighter atmosphere.

Social events in castle-town gardens ranged widely from the stiffly ceremonial to the noisily informal. The diary of Asahi Bunzaemon 朝日文左衛門, a samurai official in the Owari domain (present-day Aichi prefecture), recounts one particularly exuberant banquet hosted by the lord in 1697 in Nagoya 名古屋, the seat of the domain:

Third day of intercalary second month: Today the lord invited those from the ranks of *toshiyori* 年寄 to *ōmetsuke* 大目付 (overseer official) to view the garden in his lower residence. Those attending were served soba buckwheat noodles at Surugaguchi 駿河口 tea house. The lord encouraged everyone to drink heartily and gave permission for those who were feeling drunk to ride [home] on palanquins directly out of the garden. Hearing this, everyone pretended to be greatly drunk so they could get a ride. Kanematsu Suri [Taifu] 兼松修理 [大夫] really was drunk. He fell off his palanquin and scraped his head.<sup>18</sup>

Nagoya castle included another garden inside its second keep that survived without being reduced in size or turned away from its original purpose. Extensive renovations in 1822 transformed the site into a fine garden with paths winding past ponds, artificial hills, tea houses, and colorful plantings. The garden well befitted the Owari domain, which was noted also for the vast garden of its Toyamasō lower residence in Edo (see Chapter 5). No other domain could lay claim to a castle garden as large or as gorgeously appointed. Every domain did, however, maintain gardens of some sort both at home as well as in Edo.

Even the castles, which were ostensibly places reserved for administrative purposes, had gardens for recreation. And even country residences designed for relaxation sometimes became arenas of politics. Indeed, daimyo gardens of the castle towns were havens of both politics and pleasure reserved for the lord and a few select retainers.

18 *Ōmu rôchûki*, vol. 2, p. 23.