



## CHAPTER 6

# GARDENS OF FEASTING: SOCIALIZING ACTIVITIES OF THE DAIMYO

The place of daimyo gardens in warrior-class social interaction invites comparison with European gardens that emerged in the heyday of absolute monarchy. Both daimyo and baroque gardens were distinguished from their historical predecessors by an overriding focus on socializing. Of course, early Japanese and European gardens also fulfilled social functions, but not until the emergence of these seventeenth- and eighteenth-century gardens did socializing begin to govern every aspect of garden scale, design, and style.

### Garden Functions East and West

German baroque-culture scholar Richard Alewyn argues that it was during the seventeenth century that an architectural style focused on festive entertainment, and not on daily living or home-management concerns, first came into being. The showpiece of this new style was the baroque castle, characterized by Alewyn as the “fête grounds.”<sup>1</sup> These terms, “baroque castle” and “fête grounds,” denote a complex composed of a palace and gardens. Not only one or the other, but the two combined formed the requisite venue for gala feasts, in the same way that early-Edo daimyo residences needed visitation gates, visitation halls, and other such structures along with tea gardens to successfully entertain the shogun when he visited. Baroque palace-and-garden complexes improved over time in their capacities for social entertainment, again in the same way that the banqueting and socializing functions of daimyo gardens eventually encompassed much more than the tea ceremony.

Alewyn vividly describes the tumult of activity involved in the construction of the baroque palaces and gardens of Europe. Armies of workers, including carpenters, painters, tailors, gardeners, and cooks, were recruited for the task. The workplaces were vortexes of activity as houses were built, hills moved, groves of trees planted, and excavations conducted, all of it for the sake of an event that might last only a single day.<sup>2</sup>

Gardens were the scenes not only of banqueting but also of conspicuous consumption. “This cost me three million, and it delighted me for only three minutes,” sighed Carlos II of Spain (1661–1700), gazing at the fountain of Diana in the gardens of his La Granja palace.<sup>3</sup> Yet to decry baroque gardens for their prodigious cost captures but one narrow aspect of the whole picture; only by comprehensively considering their functions will we be able to evaluate their full significance. Likewise, some may see the use of daimyo gardens in shogunal visits as the result of a bakufu attempt to force spending and thereby chip away at the lords’ strength, as did the *sankin kōtai* system of requiring them to shuttle back and forth between Edo and their home domains. But in fact, it is also possible to view the gardens as

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1 Alewyn and Sälzle 1985 (1959).

2 Alewyn and Sälzle 1985 (1959).

3 Alewyn and Sälzle 1985 (1959).



self-initiated expressions of the daimyo's loyalty to the shogun. The same motive may have informed the lavish investments behind baroque gardens.

*Socializing and Hunting.* Voltaire (1694–1778) famously remarked that “The only thing [Louis XIV] ever learned to do was to dance and play the guitar.” French scholar of baroque music and opera Philippe Beaussant warns against taking this exaggerated statement at face value, but allows that it is probably not far off the mark, inasmuch as Louis XIV, like his father (Louis XIII; 1610–1643), really only liked to hunt, play music, and dance.<sup>4</sup>

Beaussant's reference to Louis XIII's and Louis XIV's love of hunting brings to mind yet another connection between baroque and daimyo gardens. Versailles, which under Louis XIV became the greatest of all European baroque gardens, was originally a hunting preserve on the outskirts of Paris. The first foundations of the palace and gardens were laid during the reign of Louis XIII, who erected a relatively modest, moat-enclosed brick lodge for resting or occasionally staying overnight while hunting. Since first visiting it at the age of twelve, Louis XIV made frequent use of the lodge before he transformed it into the magnificent palace and gardens known today.

The link between baroque gardens and hunting evokes the relationship that existed between daimyo gardens and falconry. As we saw in Chapter 5, falcon hunting often figured in daimyo-garden entertainments. Not only that, the sport fulfilled a traditionally significant role in the Tokugawa regime, as will be discussed in more detail in the following pages.

*Versailles and Edo Castle.* Baroque gardens were closely comparable to daimyo gardens for the intimate ties they shared with the governing structures of their time. But they also exhibited several significant differences. As related in Chapter 2, anecdotes attribute Louis XIV's construction of Versailles to jealousy over the magnificence of Vaux-le-Vicomte, the residence of finance minister Nicholas Fouquet (1615–1680).<sup>5</sup> Versailles eventually far surpassed Vaux-le-Vicomte and indeed was never matched by anything that came after it either in France or elsewhere in Europe. The royalty of other European states closely emulated Versailles in building their own gardens, so that second, third, and fourth “mini Versailles” were created by courts with ties to the Bourbon monarchy. Yet these replicated versions were inevitably on a much smaller scale that never compared to the original in either function or extent.

By contrast, the Tokugawa shogunate did not endeavor to make Edo castle superior to castles in the provinces. It did not rebuild the main keep of Edo castle after it was destroyed in the great fire of Meireki 3 (1657), even though a number of other daimyo castles, such as Nagoya and Kumamoto, had impressive donjons.

The shogun's quarters inside Edo castle contained numerous gardens, including the Nishi no maru garden, which was built in the early Edo period in the west keep (see Chapter 4), and the Ni no maru 二

<sup>4</sup> Beaussant 1986 (1981).

<sup>5</sup> It has not been confirmed whether Fouquet's later arrest on embezzlement charges and the king's employment of André Le Nôtre (1613–1700), the creator of Vaux-le-Vicomte, as his own garden designer was a form of punishment for presuming to build a residence and garden more magnificent than the king's own. Many historians argue that Fouquet's arrest was based on solid charges, and that the king's relationship with Le Nôtre was based on a contract and reflected no design to monopolize the practice of his talents. To attribute everything to Louis XIV's envy or ambitions could be oversimplification.

の丸 garden, which was initially designed by Kobori Enshū (1636). But none of them compared to the spacious gardens of the provincial daimyo. One might argue that, since Edo castle was much larger than any single daimyo residence, the numerous gardens scattered within its grounds, if considered together, would have outdone the average daimyo garden. Yet many gardens on the estates of the shogun's vassals, for example the Owari lower residence garden at Toyamasō, Ritsurin'en in Takamatsu (in present-day Kagawa prefecture), and the Mito lords' Koishikawa Kōrakuen, were much larger even by this measure. Not only did daimyo gardens exceed Edo castle gardens in size, but they did not emulate their style.

Baroque and daimyo gardens also differed in the nature of the social entertainments that they hosted. All of baroque Europe sought to emulate the grand fêtes of Versailles. At these events, it was the king who invited his vassals to partake in lavish banquets. Although the king did on occasion visit the residences of his vassals, the entertainments held there remained strictly reduced copies of the royal original. In Japan, when the shogun visited the gardens of his vassal lords—which were far more splendid than any that he owned—the gift exchanges and entertainments were much more elaborate than at similar functions held in Edo castle for the lords.

Fukiage 吹上 garden, the largest garden inside Edo castle, was a private space for the shogun and his women. What primarily took place there were not visits by leading retainers or the daimyo, but enjoyments for ladies and attendants of the women's quarters (Ōoku 大奥). An article in the Meiji-era periodical *Fūzoku gahō* 風俗画報 describes two such annual events, cherry viewing and mushroom gathering.<sup>6</sup> In the former, hundreds of women, headed by the shogun's wife, emerged from the women's quarters to spend a day picnicking under the flowers, enjoying sake and sweets, and indulging in diversions such as tag, hand games, and kite flying.

The second event was also attended by most of the residents of the Ōoku. The participants vied to find *matsutake* mushrooms that had been hidden inside the garden beforehand, with prizes given to the first mushroom, the biggest mushroom, and so forth. The women enjoyed themselves from the Hour of the Dragon to the Hour of the Monkey (about seven in the morning to five in the afternoon), eating, drinking, and composing poetry out-of-doors (Figure 6-1).

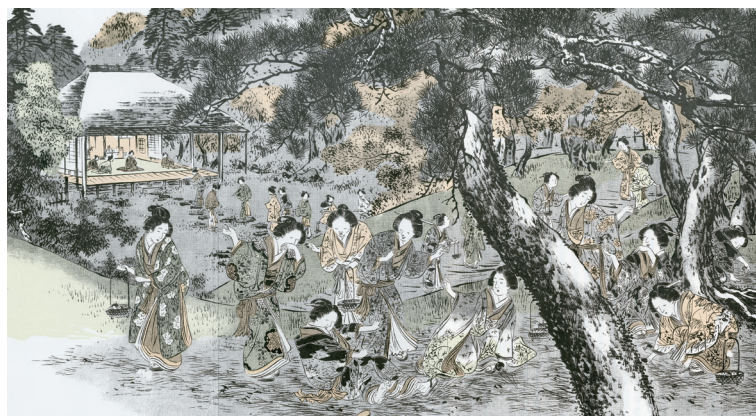


Figure 6-1. “Fukiage oniwa kinokogari no zu” 吹上御庭茸狩之図 (Mushroom Gathering at Fukiage Garden). Source: *Fūzoku gahō*, no. 58 (September 1893).

6 *Fūzoku gahō*, nos. 51 and 58.

*Social Circles in Japan and the West.* A third difference was that whereas baroque gardens gave birth to a high society centering on the court, daimyo gardens did not. The halls and gardens of Versailles were the primary arenas of interaction among people of the court. While class differences did of course exist, the socializing there was relatively little constrained by considerations of rank. In many ways, European court society provided the seeds of the public social meeting places that would emerge in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Baroque gardens were, in effect, one early kind of public social venue.

Use of daimyo gardens remained much more limited by rank. Gardens were strictly places for lords to entertain either their superiors (the shogun and his attendants) or samurai-class subordinates (their own vassals). Although the enjoyments there sometimes allowed people to cross the rules of rank, it did not create a “society” in the European sense of networks of free interchange.

High society in Europe had norms and rules that formed a kind of edifice above and beyond its constituents, for example the practice of the “debut,” when new members would be presented at court at appropriate times. However, such norms were nowhere to be found in the interaction that took place inside daimyo gardens. While they were relaxed occasions for pleasure to both high and low, they remained distinct from the interactions in European society that took place on a more equal footing. Such differences may well lie at the root of differences between Japanese and Western social gatherings as practiced even today.

*The Gardens of Edo Castle through Western Eyes.* One highly interesting illustration purporting to be of Edo castle (Figure 6-2) is to be found in the 1670 *Atlas Japannensis* by the Dutch missionary Arnoldus Montanus (c. 1625–1683). The castle is shown with three donjon-like towers. The central tower, the highest and most ornate, probably represents the main keep, and the other two (only partially shown) are perhaps the *sumi yagura* 隅櫓 (corner towers). For those familiar with Japanese castles, the drawing seems a bit improbable. In fact, Montanus had never been to Japan but wrote his book based purely on documents and hearsay—thus his fanciful depiction.

Of interest to us, however, are not the towers but the garden-like area before the castle. Here, flowerbeds are shown arranged in orderly geometric patterns reminiscent of baroque gardens. The picture reflects the assumption, common to Europeans at the time that all gardens attached to royal palaces must be geometric. Since all gardens belonging to the royalty and the chief members of the aristocracy in Europe were in the French style, the reasoning probably went, so must it be for the garden of the shogun, the sovereign of Japan. Or perhaps Montanus chose to include a baroque garden to meet the expectations of his readership; gardens of the style would have been quite familiar to the wealthy aristocrats and merchants who were the only people capable of purchasing luxury books of this kind.

Two centuries after Montanus’s work, nearly identical illustrations that were probably based on it were included in an English and a German book,<sup>7</sup> evidence of the powerful hold the association between royalty and geometric gardens continued to exert on the European imagination. Neither of the works depicts daimyo gardens, however. If they had, perhaps they would have elected to present

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7 Stainmetz 1860; Steger and Wagner 1861.



miniature versions of the shogun's garden, based on what the authors knew about the gardens of the royalty versus lower-ranking members of society in Europe.

Several descriptions of Edo castle were written by members of the Dutch East India Company who were given audiences with the shogun.<sup>8</sup> Yet no such record survives that might offer glimpses of daimyo residences. Shut away behind closed walls, these residences were completely off limits to foreigners. Books on Japan probably contained no pictures of daimyo gardens because illustrators had nothing on which to base their imaginations. The gardens of the daimyo always remained carefully hidden away, quite unlike the grand and public baroque gardens of their landowning counterparts in Europe.

### Gardens in the Changing Tokugawa System

One purpose of gardens is to give pleasure and to comfort and revive the spirit. Daimyo gardens, too, often gave such benefits; for example, some daimyo turned to garden making as a hobby after passing their responsibilities to successors and retiring from public life. At the same time, daimyo gardens were not built simply to satisfy personal needs, but were also a means of maintaining status and social position and fulfilling public duties. They were primary venues for all the varied forms of ceremony



Figure 6-2. Illustration of Edo castle included in Arnoldus Montanus' record of the visit of envoys to the ruler of Japan. Source: Arnoldus Montanus, *Atlas Japannensis* (London, 1670). Collection of International Research Center for Japanese Studies.

<sup>8</sup> See Kaempfer 1977; Fisscher 1978.

and social interaction required of the daimyo, whether with the shogun, with other lords, or with their own retainers.

At one extreme of these social functions lay official shogunal visits with their pomp and protocol, examples of which were presented in Chapter 4. But as the Edo period progressed, even such occasions sometimes shed their stiff political and ceremonial aspects to become pleasure-oriented social events cementing the bonds between lord and liege.

*A Garden-crazy Shogun?* The shogun could, for example, visit a daimyo unofficially under the pretense of having stopped by during a hunting expedition. A case in point is the 1793 visit paid to Toyamasō by eleventh shogun Tokugawa Ienari. The visit was intended to be strictly unofficial, as indicated by its record in *Bunkiyōin dono gojikki* 文恭院殿御實紀, the volumes of *Tokugawa jikki* dealing with Ienari's reign: "[The shogun] went falconing along the riverbanks of Takada 高田 and caught pheasant. He made a stop (*tachiyorarete* 立寄られて) at the Owari domain Toyama residence before returning [to Edo castle]."<sup>9</sup> The same source likewise styles a second visit four years later (see also Chapter 5, p. 133) as a coincidental and informal one in which the shogun merely "passed through" (*otōrinuke* 御通ぬけ) Toyamasō, bringing along the prizes of his hunt. "[The shogun] went to Takada. He passed through the Owari domain Toyama residence, bringing as gifts ten larks (*hibari* 雲雀) from the hunting grounds, a potted sago palm (*hachiue sotetsu* 鉢植蘇鐵), and a pine arranged on a stone tray (*ishidai matsu* 石臺松). The larks he carried himself."<sup>10</sup>

Ienari was exceedingly fond of gardens, and one might surmise that his visits were more for the sake of seeing and being entertained in the gardens of his vassals than the more formal purpose of reaffirming hierarchical bonds. Garden historian Harigaya Kanekichi 針ヶ谷鐘吉 calls Ienari "garden-crazy" (*enheki* 園癖) in his 1938 work "Toyamasō no omokage" 戸山荘の面影,<sup>11</sup> and the evaluation is echoed by Kotera Takehisa 小寺武久 in the 1989 *Owari han Edo shimo yashiki no nazo* 尾張藩江戸下屋敷の謎.<sup>12</sup>

In one anecdote, Ienari personally directed the design of the garden of the *okozashiki* 御小座敷 ("little sitting room"), the shogun's main chambers in the women's quarters of Edo castle:

One year, in his leisure hours, the shogun had his personal attendants (*kinjū no mono* 近習の者) work on a garden attached to the *okozashiki*, building up an artificial hill, digging a pond and filling it with fish, and arranging trees and plants in an attractive manner.<sup>13</sup>

When he showed his creation to his grand chamberlain (*soba yōnin* 側用人) Matsudaira Nobuakira 松平信明 (1763–1817), that sage adviser allowed that the garden had certainly come out well, but remarked it was a pity Ienari should be satisfied to spend his time on such small matters. "For my lord,

<sup>9</sup> *Bunkiyōin dono gojikki*, vol. 14, p. 212.

<sup>10</sup> *Bunkiyōin dono gojikki*, vol. 22, p. 354.

<sup>11</sup> Harigaya 1938.

<sup>12</sup> Kotera 1989, p. 53.

<sup>13</sup> *Bunkiyōin dono gojikki furoku*, vol. 1, p. 294.

who is responsible for governing the whole country, all the mountains and seas of the land should be as your garden.”<sup>14</sup> Those in attendance were startled by such daring criticism and were nervous as to how the shogun would respond, but Ienari said nothing and, judging from the favor he later showed Nobuakira, appeared to have been impressed by his chamberlain’s candor.

This anecdote is based on an earlier account in *Shinmi Masamichi ki* 新見正路記 by one of Ienari’s close retainers and, as such, seems much too good a story to be completely true. Nobuakira was reportedly twenty-four years old (by traditional count) at the time of the incident. Taking the more likely of the two dates given for his birth (Hōreki 宝暦 13 [1763]) would put the date of the episode at 1787, the year Ienari became shogun at fourteen—hardly of an age to be enthusiastic about garden making.

*The Naturalist Shogun.* Ienari’s name is indeed frequently associated with gardens, but he seems to have been more interested in what we might call “gardening” (*engei* 園芸)—that is, in growing plants—than in larger projects of garden landscaping (*zōen* 造園). The Confucian scholar Hayashi Daigaku no kami 林大学頭 (1801–1859) recounts a visit to the senior councillor Matsudaira Sadanobu in which his host showed him thirty different varieties of chrysanthemums. According to Sadanobu, the flowers had all been given to him by Ienari out of those the shogun had grown himself at Edo castle; Ienari had moreover offered to give him even more if he so desired. Sadanobu was not the only official of the shogunate to receive chrysanthemum seedlings from Ienari, who was reportedly also fond of cultivating peonies (*botan* 牡丹).

Ienari liked birds and kept many as pets. Among the most remarkable was his flock of all-white mandarin ducks (*oshidori* 鴛鴦), which had been developed by breeders in the Kyōhō era and which he kept in the gardens of Edo castle.

From his liking for rare plants and birds, Ienari’s inclinations can perhaps be more accurately characterized as those of a naturalist. But some of the anecdotes about his interest in plants also have bearing on gardens. One such story deals with a large trident maple (*tōkaede* 唐楓) that stood in the garden of Rankatei 蘭花亭 tea house inside Edo castle. The tree flourished and grew but became a source of consternation to the gardeners because its shade blocked sunlight in summertime and produced a mountain of fallen leaves in autumn. The problems could easily have been reduced by thinning the maple’s branches, but the gardeners hesitated to touch the tree, which had been planted by former shogun Yoshimune and was therefore considered sacrosanct.

One day, seeing the condition of the maple, Ienari ordered that it be trimmed. The gardener, vacillating, went to one of Ienari’s attendants and pleaded that he dared not touch the maple because of its distinguished history. When the attendant informed the shogun, Ienari replied that too little trimming is bad for a tree, since poor ventilation and excess weight leave it vulnerable to pests and damage. If the maple had such a history, all the more reason to take extra care over it. He apologized for not having explained more fully and asked those around him to freely point out anything else they might notice in the future.<sup>15</sup> The story suggests that the shogun had a wide knowledge of trees and their care.

14 *Bunkiyōin dono gojikki furoku*, vol. 1, p. 294.

15 *Bunkiyōin dono gojikki furoku*, vol. 2, pp. 303–304.



*A Fondness for Entertainments.* It may be off the mark to describe Ienari as “garden-crazy” in the sense that he loved building gardens in the way garden connoisseurs might today. Rather he appreciated gardens for their functions, including as spaces for keeping his coveted stocks of rare plants and birds.

Ienari also prized gardens for the entertainments held in them. He hosted numerous garden banquets during his tenure as shogun:

Everyone was moved by the shogun’s attentiveness to his family and relatives. Every spring in the cherry-blossom season and every fall during the turning of the leaves, he invited the Gosankyō 御三卿 [the Tokugawa branch houses of Tayasu 田安, Hitotsubashi 一橋, and Shimizu 清水] and spared no effort to entertain them. In particular, he made it his custom in autumn to invite them to view the collection of chrysanthemums that he grew in the Gojūsangen 五十三間 while they were in bloom.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to these family gatherings, Ienari organized many feasts for his attendants and retainers:

The shogun summoned his attendants to banquets celebrating seasonal pleasures, the five festivals [*gosechi* 五節: Jinjitsu 人日 (seventh day of the first month), Jōshi 上巳 (third day of the third month), Tango 端午 (fifth day of the fifth month), Tanabata 七夕 (seventh day of the seventh month), and Chōyō 重陽 (ninth day of the ninth month)], and other occasions. Those who were fond of sake were always given plenty of it. Those who were not were only offered food and were never forced to drink any more than they wanted.<sup>17</sup>

The writer does not waste this opportunity to again praise the shogun’s benevolence toward his subjects, offering the opinion that although people too often tend to force alcohol on nondrinkers, the shogun “fastidiously avoided troubling those below him even the slightest.” In any case, Ienari appears to have loved banqueting; he frequently entertained guests in the gardens of Edo castle as well as enjoyed being entertained in the gardens of his daimyo vassals.

Ienari was also much devoted to outings. He took countless trips to Asukayama, the banks of the Sumida river, and other cherry-blossom spots popular with the ordinary people of Edo. One anecdote relating to his love of such excursions reveals an interesting perspective on his character. According to the story, an attendant, noting that Ienari always visited Asukayama in early summer when the cherry blossoms had all fallen and the trees were fully leaved out, one day suggested that he would have a much more enjoyable time if he went at the height of the blossoming season. To this Ienari replied:

<sup>16</sup> *Bunkiyōin dono gojikki furoku*, vol. 3, p. 314.

<sup>17</sup> *Bunkiyōin dono gojikki furoku*, vol. 3, p. 312.

I see what you mean. But it is my understanding that the hill [Asukayama] has been a popular place for the people to gather and enjoy spring blossoms since it was first planted with cherry trees during the Kyōhō era. Should I decide to go, however, entry would be barred from at least two or three days before my visit. Should there be a storm during that time, the flowers would all fall. I feel it is wrong for the pleasure of only one person to prevent those of everyone else, which is why I avoid taking excursions during the cherry-blossom season. This applies not only to [trips to] Asukayama but the Sumida river as well.<sup>18</sup>

Everyone, the account reports, was awed by his words. The anecdote concludes with Ienari instructing his officials to take the utmost care in maintaining the sites and to replant any trees that might have died.

*Changing Perceptions of the Ideal Sovereign.* Such stories reflect, if not Ienari's actual qualities as a ruler, at least people's aspirations for him. They are the products of a time when the ideal in a sovereign was focused not on might and military charisma, but on intelligence and rationalism. A Western parallel may be found in the emphasis on natural and humanistic attributes in Enlightenment thought.

The question of whether Ienari's words and actions can be accurately described as "enlightened" aside, his rule does bring to mind that of the enlightened monarchs of the West. The same may be said of other shoguns of the mid- and late Edo period as well. Eighth shogun Yoshimune, in particular, instituted many policies akin to the public-welfare projects of the present day, of which his planting of cherry trees at Asukayama (which figured in the anecdote above) is a good example.

Yoshimune's first cherry-tree planting endeavor took place along the banks of the Sumida river at Mukōjima 向島 in 1717, shortly after his accession as shogun. The Asukayama project was carried out slightly later, around 1720 or 1721. Although ostensibly part of his efforts to reinstate shogunal hunting grounds that been neglected over the years (to be discussed in more detail below), both Asukayama and Mukōjima were quickly claimed by ordinary folk for their own pleasure. The bakufu, far from denying public access, actively encouraged it. Numerous public outing areas and cherry-blossom spots were thus systematically created and maintained during Yoshimune's time.<sup>19</sup>

Yoshimune seems to have been ahead of his time in his adoption of policies for the public welfare. But he does not seem to have been fond of paying official visits to the residences of his vassals or hosting banquets in his own gardens in Edo castle. Yoshimune's outings were famously for falcon hunting, and he did not maintain his predecessors' tradition of visiting vassals, save for the occasional stop at lower residences in the outskirts of the city or the residences of *gundai* 郡代 (officials in charge of shogunate-controlled lands) farther out in the country.

*Gardens and Falcon Hunting.* First shogun Ieyasu, whom Yoshimune revered as his model, was also fond of falcon hunting and built numerous pavilions and/or tea houses at strategic points in the sho-

18 *Bunkyo'in dono gojikki furoku*, vol. 4, p. 315.

19 Shirahata 1986.

gunal falconing grounds. Such structures formed part of his political strategies for solidifying shogunal control over areas outside of Edo,<sup>20</sup> but they also became nodes of recreation among members of warrior society. While this second function arose only incidentally, its import grew rather than receded as the Tokugawa regime stabilized, and indeed came to assume a considerable role.

It is often claimed that Yoshimune turned to falcon hunting as a means of reaffirming the original values of the by then well-established shogunate. By reviving falconry, a sport that had all but died out in the wake of fifth shogun Tsunayoshi's edicts forbidding cruelty to animals (*shōrui awaremi no rei*), Yoshimune sought to revitalize samurai culture. To this end, he reinstated the practice of building residences and tea houses on the most important falconing grounds. It is no coincidence that his cherry-planting projects at Asukayama, Mukōjima, and Goten'yama 御殿山 all lay either inside or near such sites.

Yoshimune's involvement with garden construction differed considerably from that of other shoguns. He had very little to do personally with the shaping of specific gardens. He participated neither in social entertainments hosted in gardens nor in the salon culture cultivated there by the privileged elite. Although a pioneer in the development of what might today be termed public parks, he contributed almost nothing to daimyo garden design or style.

Ienari, who ruled after Yoshimune during a time when the shogunate was enjoying even further stability, may be credited with initiating an informal style of shogunal visit that coupled falcon hunting with stops at the Edo residences of the daimyo. Ienari's visits effectively took advantage on one hand of improvements to daimyo residences that had been encouraged by the early shogunal visits of the seventeenth century, and of the construction, on the other, of country residences and tea houses that provided amenities for the falcon hunts that were begun by Ieyasu and revived by Yoshimune. By supporting shogunal visits, falcon hunts, and other warrior-class social and ceremonial activities, daimyo gardens played an important role in the Tokugawa system of rule.

### **Broadening Functions and Public Access**

Daimyo gardens functioned as settings for pleasurable and ceremonial occasions among members of the warrior class, and also more widely as a kind of social cushioning device between ruler and ruled, the lord and his people. The more varied the socializing activities of the samurai became, the more they were compelled to share these amenities with the general populace.

*A Request to Tour Shimizuen.* Although daimyo gardens were closed to outsiders, they were made freely and frequently available to those with appropriate connections. Lords were known to occasionally grant permission for entry based on requests passed through chief retainers. For household retainers and their hatamoto acquaintances, visits to these gardens represented exciting, once-in-a-lifetime chances.

One such event was the gathering held by the lord of the Hagi 萩 domain (in present-day Yamaguchi prefecture) for several retainers at the Shimizuen 清水園 garden of his residence in the Aoyama

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<sup>20</sup> Honma 1981.



青山 area of Edo. Exactly when the garden was built is not known, but it cannot have been before 1636, the year that first lord Mōri Hidenari 毛利秀就 (1595–1651) received the property from the shogunate.

According to “Shimizutei no ki” 清水亭の記 in *Meien ki* 名園記 by Isono Masatake 磯野政武, one of the participants of the tour:

Having heard [my petition], the lord instructed us to visit his garden on the fifth day of the tenth month. Earlier, Niimi Izumo no kami Masatsune 新見出雲守正恒 had long expressed his wish to see it too, if ever he had the chance, but I had let the years slip without asking. This time I had privately reiterated our request, and we had passed it to the lord, who gave me permission to come with him.<sup>21</sup>

The day began with a visit to the nearby Mōri family temple. Here the group met their guide and together approached the garden gate “as if we were all going to spend a day out picnicking in the fields.” We may surmise that the occasion had been arranged more as an informal gathering than as a public audience with the lord. The guide showed them around the grounds, with the lord himself joining to lead the group partway through. The group then entered a pavilion, where they were entertained with a meal. The lord, most solicitous, offered his visitors food and drink. Afterward all composed poetry, something the lord, too, was evidently fond of. From the signature on his poem, we may identify the lord as Mōri Shigenari 毛利重就, the seventh daimyo of the Hagi domain, who governed from 1751 to 1782.

The tour of the garden had been timed so that the sun had already set by the time the group entered the pavilion for their meal. The feast continued into the night, with everyone enjoying sake and intoning poetry under the light of the moon.

“[The lord] moved around the room three or four times throughout the banquet, showering us with such attention as is almost impossible to describe,” writes the author, apparently much moved by Shigenari’s attentiveness. “He poured drinks for all of us and encouraged us to empty many cups of sake.” Loaded with gifts of local products from Shigenari’s domain, the group finally went home overwhelmed with gratitude to their host.

*A Club Prototype.* The author of *Meien ki* was well versed in poetry, as demonstrated by his modeling of his account on Heian-period *kobun* 古文 prose. The evidence leads us to suspect that the writer and his companions were fellow poets who were acquainted with Shigenari from before the visit. It would seem that Shigenari had invited them not because he happened to hear of their group and was interested in meeting them, but because the members had requested that their regular poetry meeting be held at least once inside his fine garden.

As the above demonstrates, daimyo gardens were in some respects like clubhouses, in that they could be used by the lord to gather with those of his retainers with similar interests. The history of

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<sup>21</sup> *Meien ki*, p. 219.

social clubs in Japan is usually considered to begin with the influx of Western culture from the Meiji era onward. Yet from before that time, Japan had its own groups whose objective of bringing people did not vary from the goals of clubs and clubhouses in the West.

An example is the gardening societies that were founded during the gardening booms of the Edo period. Many Japanese horticultural associations and gardening clubs retain a highly secretive nature even today, perhaps reflecting the special value attached to rare and exotic plant varieties since that time. Their jealously guarded pools of knowledge, available only to the initiated, were for societies their greatest treasure and the source of their closely knit bonds. The continued survival of such secretive traditions in many fields may well be one reason Japan seems so resistant to the formation of more inclusive clubs.

*A Domain Lord's Hospitality.* Aside from club-like gatherings held by lords and their like-minded retainers, daimyo gardens frequently hosted entertainments aimed at an even wider section of the lords' subjects.

Let us examine the case of the domain residence that was maintained in the Akasaka 赤坂 area of Edo by the Kii Tokugawa, the lords of Wakayama 和歌山 castle in present-day Wakayama prefecture. This residence—located on the grounds of what later became Akasaka detached palace and then the Geihinkan 迎賓館 state guest house—was home to a garden called Saien 西園 (west garden).

"Although admittance into the garden was quite limited, most requests by retainers who either had accompanied the lord from Kii to the capital or were attached to the domain residence in Edo were granted as a matter of course," according to the writer of *Ki no shiori* 紀の柴折, who was a domain retainer.<sup>22</sup> The feel of the passage suggests that even people who were not members of the Kii domain could gain permission to visit, as long as they went through the proper channels.

No permission, meanwhile, was required for young domain children invited to garden parties held for them by the lord:

During the time of Kenryūkō 顯竜公 [eleventh lord Tokugawa Nariyuki 斉順, 1801–1846], domain retainers' male children who were fifteen years and younger were admitted into the garden twice every year, once in the second month during the First Horse Day Festival (*hatsuuma* 初午) of the Inari shrine inside the garden, and again in or around the tenth month during the Shūyōsha 秋葉社 shrine festival. The children roamed freely around the garden in groups (*ren* 連) of a few dozen with names like Yamayashiki Ren 山屋敷連 ["hillside house" group] or Dan Ren 段連 [steps group]. . . . In the years that he was in Edo, the lord gathered the children on the lawn (called the *hiroshiba* 広芝) in front of Hōmeikaku 鳳鳴閣 pavilion, where he would give a falconry demonstration or have his attendants flush birds, letting the children try their own hands as well. He also threw mikan oranges, sweets, and other delicacies to the children, amusing himself with the sight of them madly scrambling about screaming and jumping for joy. This event, known as the *onagemono* 御投げ物 ["tossing things"], was for us domain retainers one of the greatest and most unforgettable pleasures of our childhood.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Ki no shiori*, p. 874.

<sup>23</sup> *Ki no shiori*, p. 874.

The account gives a glimpse into the relaxed and informal uses of daimyo gardens. While admittedly displaying the exaggerated reverence of one's lord typical of accounts of this kind, the passage reveals that daimyo gardens were—at least in certain limited ways—akin to modern-day public parks.

Every spring and autumn during the cherry-blossom season and the turning of the leaves, Saien hosted entertainments for the lord's wives and their ladies-in-waiting, at which time the garden was closed to all male retainers except those in the service of the women's quarters. Between one event and another, it and other daimyo gardens were kept quite busy throughout the year.

*Shrines within Garden Grounds.* As daimyo gardens grew, they often swallowed up local Inari shrines and other nearby religious sites. Since excluding the populace from these places of worship could only invite friction, the lords customarily admitted the public into their gardens during shrine festivals and the like. This was the case at Saien as well as at Yokuon'en, the Tsukiji 築地 residence of Matsudaira Sadanobu that was discussed in Chapter 5:

During the Horse Day Festival (*uma matsuri* 午祭), children rushed around the residence beating drums, while everyone high and low set lanterns in front of their houses and came to pray at the garden shrine. Worshipers were allowed into the garden as far as the plum orchard. Drums were similarly beaten during the annual Hachitengū 八天宮 shrine festival, which was held in the eleventh month on the Day of the Sheep. On this day, the custom was to abstain from alcohol until the Hour of the Cock [around six in the afternoon], after which everyone freely indulged in feasting and celebration.<sup>24</sup>

The fact that many daimyo gardens were turned into public parks in the Meiji era reflects the reality that by that time, they had already been offering a wide variety of pleasures extending far beyond their initial purposes of appreciation, worship, and ceremony.

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24 *Shukokukō godenki*, p. 916.