



CHAPTER 8

THE DECLINE OF DAIMYO GARDENS

The start of the Meiji era was for gardens a “manmade disaster.” In the wake of the revolutionary changes accompanying the end of the Tokugawa shogunate, the 1868 Meiji Restoration, and the launching of a modern state, most of the estimated thousands of gardens in Edo vanished.

For Edo gardens, the difficulties of the period began with a series of natural disasters in the later years of the old regime. The great Ansei 安政 earthquake in the tenth month of 1855 (Ansei 2) toppled many trees and structures in daimyo gardens, as did a destructive storm that struck Edo in the eighth month of 1856. In the second month of 1859 (Ansei 6), the great Ansei fire reduced countless daimyo residences and gardens to ashes. Among the victims of the fire was the vast garden of the Owari Tokugawa family, Toyamasō, which lost many of its trees and most of its architectural structures.

Daimyo gardens had been ravaged by earthquake or fire numerous times throughout the Edo period, but they had been rebuilt and improved each time. Natural disasters alone were not enough to spell their demise. The Meiji Restoration, however, dealt them a blow from which few ever recovered.

Garden historian Ozawa Keijirō extols the reign of Emperor Meiji as a glorious age marked by the benefits of *bunmei kaika* 文明開化 (“civilization and enlightenment”) in all other respects, but laments that as far as gardens were concerned the era brought nothing but regress.¹

Deploring the decline of garden art in general and of daimyo gardens in particular, Ozawa attempted to preserve the history of daimyo gardens by purchasing or hand-copying documents and illustrations owned by the former lords. Most of this valuable archive, which Ozawa called “Enrin sōsho” 園林叢書, is now housed in the National Diet Library. Yet the sources that Ozawa was able to save probably constitute but a small proportion of the total that once existed.

The Transition to Meiji

By the end of the Tokugawa shogunate, there were probably well over a thousand gardens in the daimyo residences of Edo alone, not to mention in castle towns in other parts of the country. Further adding to this figure were the houses of the roughly 5,000 hatamoto direct retainers of the shogun, most of whom also maintained multiple residences with their own gardens. Below the hatamoto in rank stood the *gokenin*, who were precluded from gaining the shogun’s audience. The *gokenin*, too, were of sufficient economic status to maintain gardens. The lower-ranking of them, in particular, often used their gardens to grow trees and flowers to augment their income. While none of the gardens would have compared with extensive stroll-style daimyo gardens, they played an important role in encouraging the popular spread of botany and gardening in the Edo period.

¹ Ozawa 1915, author’s preface.

As architecture critic Kawazoe Noboru 川添登 phrases it, “A bird’s-eye view of Edo during the latter days of the shogunate would have revealed a mosaic of gardens, large and small, tucked among clusters of dwellings.”² Today, however, only a precious few gardens—for example Koishikawa Kōrakuen, Rikugien, and the gardens of the Hama and Shiba detached palaces—survive in anything near their original form. The bare remnants of a few other gardens are also hidden away inside places such as the Geihinkan 迎賓館 state guest house (formerly Akasaka 赤坂 detached palace), Shinjuku Gyoen 新宿御苑, and the area around Sanshirōike pond in the Hongō campus of the University of Tokyo.

The Fate of Toyamasō. Toyamasō, the largest daimyo garden ever built, once stretched over 440,000 square meters. But all that remains of the garden now is a small section around Hakoneyama 箱根山 (originally one of the garden’s artificial hills), squeezed in between a Tokyo metropolitan public housing complex and the campus of Waseda University’s School of Science and Engineering.

Following the Meiji Restoration, the Owari Tokugawa donated Toyamasō to the main branch of the family (headed at the time by Iesato 家達 [1863–1940], the heir of last shogun Yoshinobu 慶喜 [1837–1913]), which had been stripped of its lands as well as its status as the political leader of the country. In place of Edo castle, the former shogunal household was assigned to live in what had previously been the middle residence of the Sakakibara 榊原 family, the lords of the Echigo Takada 越後高田 domain—hardly adequate to house the enormous number of retainers still residing in the capital. The expanses of Toyamasō offered some recourse to the main family for the needs of that difficult transitional period.

After moving its retainers into Toyamasō, the Tokugawa main branch encouraged them to support themselves by farming the land there. But their occupation of the land did not last long. Soon after that, Toyamasō was requisitioned by the army. “The famed sights [of Toyamasō] only fell further and further into ruin,” as Ozawa writes.³ The area became the site of the Toyama army school and, in the post-World War II era, the Toyama Heights housing complex for Allied Occupation personnel.

In addition to the kind of fate that befell Toyamasō, the greatest threat to the survival of Edo gardens during the Meiji era was the Tokyo prefectural government’s so-called *kuwa-cha* 桑茶 (mulberry and tea) program. Following the Restoration, all hatamoto, with the exception of a few who found new positions within the Meiji government, were forced to give up their lands to the state. Tokyo prefecture adopted a policy of dismantling the houses and razing the gardens to turn the grounds into tea and mulberry fields. The mulberries were used to feed silkworms for producing silk, which, along with tea, constituted Japan’s main exports at the time. Many Edo hatamoto gardens were thus destroyed in the scramble to promote export industries and build up the country’s foreign-currency reserves. Daimyo gardens frequently suffered the same fate.

Many of the largest daimyo gardens were appropriated by the Meiji government for use as military facilities or research centers to promote industry. Toyamasō was placed under the management of the army and the Ministry of Military Affairs (Hyōbushō 兵部省). Koishikawa Kōrakuen reverted to the

2 Kawazoe 1979, p. 98.

3 Ozawa 1915, p. 185.

state in 1869, moving under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Home Affairs (Naimushō 内務省) and then the Ministry of Military Affairs before being converted into a main factory of the army's Ordinance Department in 1875. But because the factory did not cover the entire grounds, the area around the central pond was left largely untouched. In this way, most, although not all, of the garden escaped destruction; even so, as Ozawa lamented when he visited Koishikawa Kōrakuen for the first time on 3 April 1876 (the Gregorian calendar having been adopted from 1 January 1873), "Since the establishment of the munitions plant, the smokestacks have been belching more smoke every year, causing many of the trees to wither from their tops until they finally die away."⁴

Emperor Meiji's visit in 1873 seems to have had some effect in saving Kōrakuen, but the "enrich the country and strengthen its arms" policy (*fukoku kyōhei* 富国強兵) driving the Meiji government was in many ways much more powerful. It was a time when military quarters, munitions plants, and indeed tea and mulberry fields were more important than parks for savoring the pleasures of nature.

Rescued Daimyo Gardens. Whether ultimately saved or destroyed, no daimyo garden escaped the turbulent social changes of the Meiji era. Let us now consider some gardens that were initially rescued through private efforts, for example Senshun'en 占春園, which was purchased by the imperial academy scholar Yoshino Kinryō 芳野金陵 (1803–1878), and the Hongō Yasukata 本郷泰固 residence in Komagome 駒込, which came under the ownership of the vice minister Kido Takayoshi 木戸孝允 (1833–1877). Both escaped destruction in the early Meiji era only to vanish in the years following. Rikugien, which was acquired by Mitsubishi founder Iwasaki Yatarō 岩崎弥太郎 (1835–1885), was one of the rare few that survived largely in its original form.

Located in the Koishikawa Ōtsuka 小石川大塚 area of Tokyo, Senshun'en was originally part of the upper residence of Matsudaira Yorinobu 松平頼誠 (1803–1862), the lord of the Mutsu Mori-yama 陸奥守山 domain in present-day Fukushima prefecture. The garden had an impressive central pond as well as many large trees, doing full justice to its status as a daimyo garden. Yoshino purchased the domain's nearby lower residence in addition to the upper-residence property containing Senshun'en, turning a great part of both into farmland out of a desire to take up agriculture and lead a pastoral life. He did, however, leave the garden and its great pond intact. A cherry-viewing banquet was reportedly held here by Yoshino in April 1878.⁵

Toward the latter part of the Meiji era, the Ministry of Education (Monbushō 文部省) bought half of the property to build the Tokyo Higher Normal School (the predecessor of what is now Tsukuba University). The pond was reclaimed to make room for the student dormitory, and the site's days as a daimyo garden were over.

Kido's garden had previously belonged to the hatamoto Hongō Yasukata, who had been an attendant (*osobashū* 御側衆) to the shogun. According to Ozawa's *Meiji teien ki* 明治庭園記, Kido happened to be in the area one day in 1869 when he saw workers carrying garden rocks, trees, and the

4 Ozawa 1915, p. 340.

5 "Senshun'en shōōki" 占春園賞櫻記. See Ozawa 1915, pp. 291–92.

like. He asked them where they had come from, and was pointed to the garden. Looking inside, he saw that most of the trees had already been cut down, leaving a most pitiful scene. Unable to stand by and watch the garden's destruction, Kido decided then and there to purchase the property.⁶

In 1912, Ozawa took thirty students from the Tokyo Prefectural School of Horticulture on a study tour of the Kido property. From the inscriptions on two monuments on the grounds, the group determined that the garden had been built by Hongō Yasuyuki 本郷泰行 in 1795, during the reign of eleventh shogun Tokugawa Ienari.

Ozawa claims that the garden would have been entirely effaced from human memory had Kido not accidentally stumbled upon the moving of its rocks and trees. He credits Kido with being the first Meiji individual to save an Edo daimyo garden.⁷ (Of course, he does not forget to note that the garden's origins would never have been revealed had he himself not studied the garden's monuments, since neither Kido nor his family had ever taken the pains to do so.)

The garden that Kido saved and whose history Ozawa uncovered is today no more. Only a few unremarkable condominiums mark the spot east of Rikugien where it once stood. Its fate provides some indication of the extraordinary good fortune it took for other gardens such as Rikugien, Kōrakuen, and Shiba and Hama detached palaces to survive.

The Satake Garden. While countless daimyo gardens either vanished or fell into disrepair during the Meiji era, a few succeeded in capturing popular attention. One was the Satake 佐竹 garden, which was familiar enough to the public to frequently find its way into Westerners' accounts of Meiji Japan. Evidently the Satake garden was commonly shown to Westerners desiring to visit a Japanese garden. A photograph and description appear in Josiah Conder's 1893 book *Landscape Gardening in Japan* (Figure 8-1),⁸ and the garden is also pictured in many of the photograph books depicting Japanese scenery and customs that were purchased by Western travelers as souvenirs.

Altogether, the Satake garden was practically synonymous with "Japanese garden" in Tokyo from the late 1870s until about the turn of the century. Ozawa attests

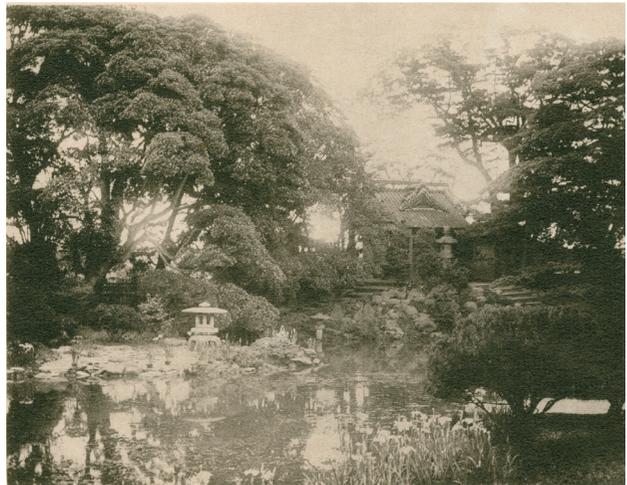


Figure 8-1. The Satake garden, from *Landscape Gardening in Japan* by Josiah Conder (Tokyo: Kelly and Walsh, 1893).

6 Ozawa 1915, p. 256.

7 Ozawa 1915, p. 255.

8 Written while the Englishman was employed by the Meiji government to teach Western architecture at Tokyo University, this work was the first serious discussion of Japanese gardens published in English and is still, in this author's opinion, the best work on the subject ever written. It was required reference for any Westerner seeking to learn about Japanese gardens for more than fifty years until shortly following World War II.

to the garden's great popularity among Tokyo residents, describing the unending stream of visitors flocking especially on sunny days to "the Satake garden, located across from the Azumabashi 吾妻橋 bridge" in the Honjo Nakanosato Kawaramachi 本所中之郷瓦町 neighborhood.⁹

The garden originally belonged to a residence of the Numazu 沼津 domain (in present-day Shizuoka prefecture). In the Meiji era, the property was purchased by Marquis Satake Yoshitaka 佐竹義堯 (1825–1884), the former lord of the Akita 秋田 domain, to replace his hereditary upper residence at Shitaya Shamisenbori 下谷三味線堀 (east of what is now Ueno station in Taitō ward), which he had given up to the government. It was under its new owners, the Satake, that the fame of the garden reached its peak. As such, it is an unusual example of a daimyo garden that was much better known during than before the Meiji era.

The Satake garden was especially famed for the quality of its garden rocks and stone lanterns, most of which dated from the garden's first construction in the early part of the Bunsei 文政 era (1818–1829) by Mizuno Tadaakira 水野忠成 (1763–1834). Then a senior councillor (*rōjū* 老中) to the shogunate, Tadaakira was in sole charge of managing the Edo castle kitchens, and the influence of this position signified that he never lacked for gifts from the hatamoto or the lords of other domains. As the story goes, the news that Tadaakira planned to create a garden brought heaps of garden rocks, bridge stones, *chōzubachi* 手水鉢 water basins, stone lanterns, and the like to his door, out of which he picked the best to adorn his garden. It was perhaps this advance reputation that earned the garden a visit from the garden- and banquet-loving shogun Ienari in 1825.

Satake built the new Ōtori 大鳥 ("big bird") shrine atop a garden hill, but left other features untouched. He opened the garden to the public for monthly shrine festivals on the Day of the Cock. The largest festival of the year, held in the eleventh month, attracted a particularly impressive number of visitors.

Commoners had little opportunity to view daimyo gardens even in the Meiji era, in part because many gardens were turned to other purposes or demolished in the name of the mulberry-and-tea policy. Most that did survive became state property and were shut away inside government facilities, while the few exceptions such as Rikugien remained closed to the public although—or perhaps precisely because—they entered private ownership.

The Satake garden earned much popularity as one of the very few daimyo gardens available to ordinary citizens. Yet even it was finally put up for sale in 1888. Turned into the Tokyo office of Mt. Kōya's Kongōbuji 金剛峰寺 temple, the site continued to occasionally welcome the public during events including exhibitions of old treasures associated with temple founder Kūkai 空海 (774–835). Still later, the property was acquired by Sapporo Breweries, which converted the southern half of the garden into a brewery and kept the northern half as a banqueting facility.

Although only partially intact, the garden thus retained some of its traditional socializing capabilities even after the Meiji era, albeit with a beer company taking over the role once claimed by a feudal lord.

9 Ozawa 1915, p. 350.

Heirs to the Daimyo Garden Tradition

Even as the daimyo garden went into decline during the Meiji era, knowledge of its appearance and style spread to the world through accounts of foreign visitors and, significantly, the above mentioned book by Josiah Conder. Daimyo gardens had an established place in Western understanding of Japanese gardens until at least the post-World War II era, when interest shifted toward dry landscape (*karesansui*) gardens and other temple gardens of the Zen tradition.

Influence on Overseas Perceptions. The freedom and openness of daimyo and other stroll-style gardens strongly appealed to visitors from overseas. We need only look at Japanese gardens exhibited at international expositions or created for the homes of Japanophiles to understand how firmly overseas images of Japanese gardens have been shaped by daimyo-garden designs and styles. When Japanese see these gardens with their scarlet-painted torii and arched bridges, or stone lanterns in every corner, they are inclined to shake their heads and protest that a “real” Japanese garden would be much more subtle and restrained. Not only the structures but also the flora, they say, are much too showy and self-assertive.

And yet those torii, arched bridges, and stone lanterns do not vary significantly from what is found in daimyo gardens in Japan. Many overseas Japanese gardens, especially those built before World War II, were studiously modeled on daimyo gardens, as we may see by the fact that most of them are in the stroll style. These prewar replicas reflect perceptions brought back by visitors to Japan during the late Edo to Meiji periods. Many, in truth, were designed by Japanese themselves, suggesting that images of gardens held by Japanese were not so radically different.

Even so, there is something about overseas Japanese gardens that makes a twenty-first century Japanese national reluctant to acknowledge them as faithful representations of their own garden tradition. Perhaps this impulse indicates just how deeply ingrained post-World War II outlooks on gardens have become. One typical outlook is the tendency to regard Kyoto temple gardens, particularly the rock and dry landscape gardens of Zen temples, as the epitome of Japanese garden art. Another is marked by admiration of the stroll gardens of old imperial taste, as exemplified by the garden of Katsura detached palace. The feeling is strong that aristocratic gardens are much more tasteful than those created by the daimyo, even though both belong to the stroll style.

These two schools of thought, which for the sake of convenience I will call the *rock garden ideal* and *aristocratic garden ideal*, closely parallel the theories espoused, respectively, by Mori Osamu and Shigemori Mirei, the two garden scholars discussed in Chapter 3. Both had an extremely low opinion of Edo gardens and agreed that Japanese gardens lost their artistry and fell into decline during the Edo period. Given that overseas Japanese gardens reflect such “devolved” Edo-like features in their design and style, in looking askance at them, we are simply obeying the views of garden experts like Mori and Shigemori.

The rock garden ideal and the aristocratic garden ideal are both the products of modern times. Both focus on visual factors, whereas daimyo gardens were built to satisfy a very different set of ideals. Daimyo gardens partially incorporated the traditions of the rock garden and the aristocratic garden, yet remained firmly dedicated to social entertainment and—more broadly—to a wide variety of enjoyments including but not limited to the social.

Ueji's Gardens and Yamagata Aritomo. The Meiji Restoration set in motion forces that led to the end of the daimyo garden as a part of the living culture of social enjoyment. Thus it sealed the demise of daimyo gardens in a sense, but these gardens did not so much completely die out as pass their legacy to a new generation—the gardens of the famed designer Ogawa Jihei 小川治兵衛 (also Ueji 植治; 1860–1933).

Born in what is now the city of Nagaokakyō 長岡京 in Kyoto prefecture, Ueji was adopted into the Ogawa family in 1877 and eventually became the seventh-generation head of the family's garden-ing business. He is particularly known for the gardens he created for the villas of Meiji statesmen and financiers in the Nanzenji 南禅寺 area of Kyoto, among them Murin'an 無隣庵, Tairyū sansō 對龍山莊, Hekiunsō 碧雲莊, and Shokuhōen 織宝苑. He also designed several outstanding modern public gardens, including the Heian Jingū 平安神宮 shrine garden and Kyoto's Maruyama park.

Ueji's first breakthrough came with his work on Murin'an, the villa of the Meiji statesman Yamagata Aritomo. This project from 1894 to 1896 laid the foundations of Ueji's career and set him on the path to becoming the father of modern Japanese garden design.

Yamagata evidently had a high regard of daimyo gardens and their functions. He considered traditional Kyoto gardens outdated and was vocally determined to build Murin'an into a bright, open garden designed entirely to his own liking. He sought, in other words, to draw on the heritage of daimyo gardens to create a new garden for the new era.

Murin'an clearly incorporates most of the basic features of daimyo gardens. Its broad open lawn extends before the main residence. Two shallow brooks feed into a pool that resembles more a broadened stream than a pond proper; paths wind around the pool and through the garden. In one corner is a waterfall set against the nearby Higashiyama 東山 hills. The garden is not appropriate for full-scale tea ceremonies of the most formal kind, but is well suited to lighter, more pleasure-oriented occasions of tea. The lawn is perfect for garden parties, and the wide, shallow pool offers a pleasing view to guests who wish to stroll its paths in between socializing.

In December 1900, while showing the art critic Kuroda Tengai 黒田天外 (d.u.) around his garden, Yamagata reportedly criticized Kyoto gardens for being preoccupied with creating an atmosphere of retirement to the exclusion of other qualities like grandeur or spaciousness. Nothing attracted him about those little tea gardens, he continued, which was why he was inspired to build his own kind of garden at Murin'an.

According to the garden historian Amasaki Hiromasa 尼崎博正:

In other words, Yamagata desired to rebel against traditional Kyoto garden style. His choice of grass instead of moss reflects this underlying intention. He encouraged Ueji to adopt many other innovations, such as planting ferns in between the rocks of the waterfall stone arrangement and installing Japanese fir (*momi* 樅), a type of tree that was not typically used in Kyoto gardens prior to that time.¹⁰

10 Amasaki 1990, pp. 215–16.

I would add that Yamagata probably wished not only to “rebel against traditional Kyoto garden style” but also to incorporate design styles found in the daimyo gardens of Edo. Amasaki, too, seems to acknowledge this when he later notes that Yamagata’s choice of grass was in itself not unusual, given that expanses of lawn “for holding garden entertainments and other occasions of large-scale socializing had been an indispensable feature of gardens from as early as the age of the Edo-period daimyo.”¹¹

The Ideal of the Country Village. I do not intend to claim that Yamagata sought to faithfully emulate daimyo gardens—only that the scenery created by them greatly influenced his ideas about what a garden should look like. Yamagata did not choose to incorporate everything about daimyo gardens into his own garden at Murin’an. To quote again from Amasaki:

In another revealing statement, Yamagata asserted that “although people have traditionally attached great significance to garden ponds, I am of the opinion that streams are much more attractive.” Yamagata called on Ueji to seek models not in the untouched nature found along the sea or in deeply secluded mountains, but in bright pastoral scenery exemplified by gurgling brooks passing through a country hamlet.¹²

Yamagata thus did not install a pond in his garden, despite its central importance to the daimyo garden.

If Amasaki’s view is to be accepted, Yamagata’s vision of the perfect garden was extremely close to the country-village gardens discussed in Chapter 5 as one of the three major stages in the history of daimyo gardens. To briefly revisit my discussion, I had argued that early daimyo gardens were built to host tea ceremonies in secluded hillside-like surroundings. Over time, tastes began to shift more toward bright village scenery of the kind seen, for example, at Toyamasō. Finally came tidewater gardens with their idealization of the pleasures and landscapes to be found along the sea.

Drawing on his knowledge of daimyo gardens, Yamagata chose the country village as the ideal on which to base his own garden. No doubt Ueji also grew to appreciate daimyo gardens through working for Yamagata and gaining exposure to his ideas.

Daimyo Gardens Reborn. Ueji’s greatest patron was Sumitomo Kichizaemon 住友吉左衛門 (also Shunsui 春翠; 1865–1926), the fifteenth-generation head of the Sumitomo moneylending family. Evidence suggests the influence of daimyo gardens on Ueji’s work for Sumitomo, which included Keitakuen 慶沢園, located inside the family’s Chausuyama 茶臼山 residence in Osaka; Seifūsō 清風莊, now owned by Kyoto University; Yūhōen 有芳園, attached to the family’s Shishigatani 鹿ヶ谷 villa in Kyoto; and the gardens in the Sumitomo main residence and former main residence at Unagidani 鰻谷.

The following is a particularly revealing statement by Ueji regarding the construction of Keitakuen, which began around 1908:

11 Amasaki 1990, p. 216.

12 Amasaki 1990, p. 216.

Sumitomo Kichizaemon's new villa at Chausuyama is going to be about 40,000 *tsubo* 坪 [132,400 square meters], half of which will be the garden. It will be an undertaking as grand as the projects by Toyotomi Hideyoshi ages ago. I started on the garden last year, but it will take me at least three years, since Sumitomo has placed me in charge of the entire project. After all, the grounds are as large as Osaka castle, and just thinking of the rocks, hundreds and hundreds of them, each weighing at least 5,000 or 7,000 *kan* [18,750/26,250 kilograms], are being brought every day from Shikoku. Once completed, the garden will be the greatest in all of western Japan. Not even Okayama park [Okayama Kōrakuen] will be able to measure up to it.¹³

Clearly Ueji had daimyo gardens very much on his mind, to the extent that he formulated his plans for Keitakuen based on a mental comparison with Okayama Kōrakuen. As if to bolster this point, Ueji accompanied Sumitomo on a visit to Kenrokuen in Kanazawa a little later in October 1911, after he had begun work on Sumitomo's garden at Seifūsō.

Often counted among the greatest masterpieces of modern Japanese garden design, Ueji's gardens were the heirs to the daimyo garden tradition. There is no denying that daimyo gardens greatly declined as a result of the Meiji Restoration; indeed, many claim that they were utterly destroyed by it. Yet the truth is that daimyo gardens not only survived but reshaped themselves to answer the garden demands of subsequent generations. Daimyo gardens successfully lived on in this new form because they fit the social needs of Meiji statesmen and financiers—the emerging leaders of the new age.

The two hundred and sixty-odd years of Tokugawa rule gave daimyo gardens ample time to develop a wide variety of pleasures and social entertainments. Indeed, this history endowed them with a design and style that equipped them to respond to the social needs of later generations as well.

13 Kuroda 1913, pp. 198–99.

