

# Paradise Envisioned in Ôshû and a Group of Gardens – A Group of Pure Land Gardens in Hiraizumi –

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## 1. Emergence of “Hiraizumi”

### (1) Hiraizumi, the location of Paradise

Hiraizumi is located almost at the center of Mutsu-no-kuni, an ancient administrative district, in the northern realm of the main island of Japan. Hiraizumi is surrounded by three rivers: the Kitakamigawa River in the east, the Koromogawa River in the north, and the Ôtagawa River in the south. In the west are low-lying rolling hills. Descriptions in *Chûson-ji Konryû-Kuyô-Ganmon* (pledge for the completion of Chûson-ji Temple) and *Enryû-ji Bonshô-meî* (bell inscription of Enryû-ji Temple) indicate that part or whole of Hiraizumi may well have been considered the land of *shijin-sô-oh* (topography protected by four directional deities).

There are some characteristics unique to Byôdô-in in terms of the layout of the temple complex: first, there are no tamped earth walls or other shields along the easternmost edge of the temple premises that faces the west bank of the Uji River; second, in general each temple faces east; and third, there is no axial line of the entire temple complex. The first temple (Jôdo temple) where a Jôdo garden was built was Hôjô-ji Temple in Kyôto, which was originally built by Fujiwara no Michinaga. This temple, and Hosshô-ji Temple endowed by Emperor Shirakawa, are surrounded by a tamped earth wall. On the premises of these temples, a Nanmen-dô (south-facing temple building) and a pond are located on the south-north axis extending from the Nan-mon (south gate), and the pond is surrounded by the U shaped temple. Byôdô-in is significantly different in these features from the other two temples. The building style of the Phoenix Hall was taken over by Shôkômyô-in in Toba and Muryôkô-in in Hiraizumi, exerting a significant impact on the development of Jôdo temples in later years.

### (2) Historical background

For centuries, central powers had been struggling to control local powers. The confrontation came to the surface in the middle to the latter half of the 11th century, which led to a civil war. Fujiwara no Kiyohira, who professed himself a descendant of native “*Tôî* (eastern barbarians),” though he could be traced back to distant aristocracy in the central government, won the civil war, and secured a foothold in Hiraizumi at the end of the 11th century. Kiyohira’s efforts to ensure peace and security in the land based on Buddhist ideas are well described in *Chûson-ji Konryû-Kuyô-Ganmon*. The popularizing idea of the Pure Land of the West based on the increasingly prevalent idea of the “end of the Dharma,” in combination with the trend of creating an ideal space in the suburbs of Kyôto, was behind the endeavor to create the Pure Land on earth in Hiraizumi integrated with a political and administrative center.

## 2. Timeline of creating Paradise:

### a group of Pure Land gardens in Hiraizumi

#### (1) In the era of Kiyohira:

##### Chûson-ji Ôike-Ato (remains of a large pond), etc.

After relocating his residential office to Hiraizumi (Yanaginogosho Iseki (Yanaginogosho archaeological site)), Kiyohira built a tower at the center of the area he put under his control (as recorded in *Azumakagami*). Today, the presence of the tower is known only in this chronicle describing the Medieval age. It is believed that the tower was certainly located almost at the center of the Kanzan-Kyûryô hills that form the precincts of Chûson-ji. Completion of halls and towers was followed by construction of Konjiki-dô (Golden Hall), which served as Amida-dô (Amida hall) and

later as Sô-dô (a funeral hall), facing the residential office.

Chûson-ji Ôike-Ato may represent the first Pure Land garden in Hiraizumi. Excavation surveys thus far have revealed that the pond had a central island, the lower part on the east side was protected by an earth bank, and the garden went through two modifications in the 12th century.

According to the descriptions in *Chûson-ji Konryû-Kuyô-Ganmon*, on the west side of Ôike-Ato were located “Sanken-shimen hiwadabuki-dô (three bays with eaves on four sides cypress bark-roofed hall),” “Sanjû-no-tô (three-story pagoda),” “Nikai kawarabuki kyôzô (two-story tile-roofed sutra repository),” “Nikai shôrô (two-story bell tower),” etc. Excavation surveys have identified the remains of kyôzô.

## (2) In the era of Motohira:

### **gardens at Môtsû-ji and Kanjizaiô-in**

#### a) Môtsû-ji and Kanjizaiô-in

Motohira, successor to Kiyohira, built Môtsû-ji from the second quarter to early in the third quarter of the 12th century. Considering the fact that the principal image is Yakushi(Bhaishajyaguru)-nyorai, the connection with the concept of Jôruri Pure Land can be explained. Môtsû-ji had two main halls: Enryû-ji and Kashô-ji. The garden pond now called Ôizumi ga Ike faces Enryû-ji, and the pond had two bridges due north and due south from Nan-Daimon (South Main Gate) centering on the central island in the pond. The precincts were surrounded by earthen mounds, which were aligned in the north-south direction together with hall buildings. Mt. Tôyama towers at the northwest of the temple.

Ôizumi ga Ike is considered to represent one of the typical Pure Land gardens. It extends in an east-west direction, and the shore protection on the north side is covered with cobble stones. Water is carried from the mountain behind the temple (in the northeast) into the pond in the *yarimizu* stream style comprising flagstones and round gravels, etc. Together with the pond's shore protection (in pebble beach and rough seashore style), its central island, and *keiseki* (garden stones), etc., the stone arrangement for the *yarimizu* stream

is an embodiment of the descriptions in *Sakuteiki* (the book of gardening). After 13 excavation surveys, the original conditions have been fully restored and maintained. The central island has traces of two modifications.

Kanjizaiô-in is adjacent to the precincts of Môtsû-ji on the east side. According to *Azumakagami*, Amida-dô was commissioned and constructed by Motohira's wife. The precincts and the hall building were aligned in a due north-south direction, as in the case of Môtsû-ji.

The pond facing Amida-dô has been called Maizuru-ga-Ike (literally, the pond of dancing crane), which has a central island. The existence of a bridge connecting to the central island is not known. Water is carried into the pond from the northwest, with the source located in a reservoir (Benten-Ike) in the northeast of the Môtsû-ji precincts. The junction with the pond represents *tsutaiochi* (the slithering of a waterfall with a stone arrangement), in line with the descriptions in *Sakuteiki*.

#### b) Mt. Kinkeisan and the Pure Land components layout

It was in the era of Motohira when the layout plan of components, which formed the world of Pure Land in Hiraizumi, emerged with clarity. Construction of a sutra mound (*kyôzuka*) started on the summit of Mt. Kinkeisan. The line extended to the north from the north-south line between Môtsû-ji and Kanjizaiô-in reaches the summit of Mt. Kinkeisan, which clearly indicates that Mt. Kinkeisan played a significant role in the layout of these temples. It is also noteworthy that, at Yanaginogoshô Iseki, the line extended to the west from the bridge over the pond annexed to the residence (or Jibutsu-dô, personal Buddha Hall) reaches the summit of Mt. Kinkeisan. For these reasons, it is likely that the main buildings were reconstructed in a due north-south direction when the pond was built, with Mt. Kinkeisan seen as Pure Land of the West.

## (3) Completion of Paradise: remains of Muryôkô-in

Muryôkô-in was commissioned and constructed by

Hidehira, successor to Motohira, based “on the model of topography of Uji Byôdô-in.” The main temple was Amida-dô that enshrined Jôroku Amida Butsu. The building had transepts, and was open almost to due east. The pond, which was built without a liner, is now called Bonji ga Ike. Water is carried from the northwest side. The source is believed to have been spring water from Mt. Kinkeisan. The pond was host to the central island (on which the main temple was built), a small eastern island, and a small northern island. On the small eastern island three facilities were built facing the main hall. It is confirmed that a bridge connected the main temple and the small northern island. The pond is surrounded by earthen mound and moat. The results of recent excavation surveys show that Muryôkô-in may well have been built in the late years of Hidehira, around the time he entered the priesthood.

On the premises of Muryôkô-in, when Amida-dô on the central island was seen from the east side of the pond across the small eastern island, Amida-dô would sit against the backdrop of Mt. Kinkeisan, which would remind a viewer of the Western Paradise. For this reason, Muryôkô-in is considered as the pinnacle of Pure Land gardens, integrating a pond, a Buddhist hall, and a mountain behind them. Muryôkô-in can also be considered a space where the political and administrative center and the Western Paradise were literally integrated, based on the fact that it is bordered by Yanaginogosho Iseki on the east side across Nekoma-ga- Fuchi (small stream between the two remains).

### 3. “Hiraizumi” as the world of Pure Land

The “world of Pure Land” project in Hiraizumi was initiated by Kiyohira, the first lord, when he settled in Hiraizumi as the center of Buddhist control, embodied by Motohira, the second lord, in the form of a layout plan of components that constituted Pure Land, and was brought to completion by Hidehira, the third lord, with construction of Muryôkô-in in his later years. The process of creating the Pure Land world over a period of 100 years represents the development process of Pure Land gardens with unique features in location, form,

and design. Such endeavor was feasible only in Hiraizumi, where components were systematically arranged based on unique, syncretic nature of Buddhist thought which developed in Japan under the political and administrative rule by the Ôshû Fujiwara family, as well as a plentiful supply of water derived from the natural topography.

In Hiraizumi, the ideal space called “Pure Land” was created over the expanse of space, without being constrained to the precincts of a temple, with political and administrative facilities — characterized by somewhat urban features — integrated with religious facilities such as Pure Land gardens, etc. Indeed, the place deserved the appellation of Paradise on earth.

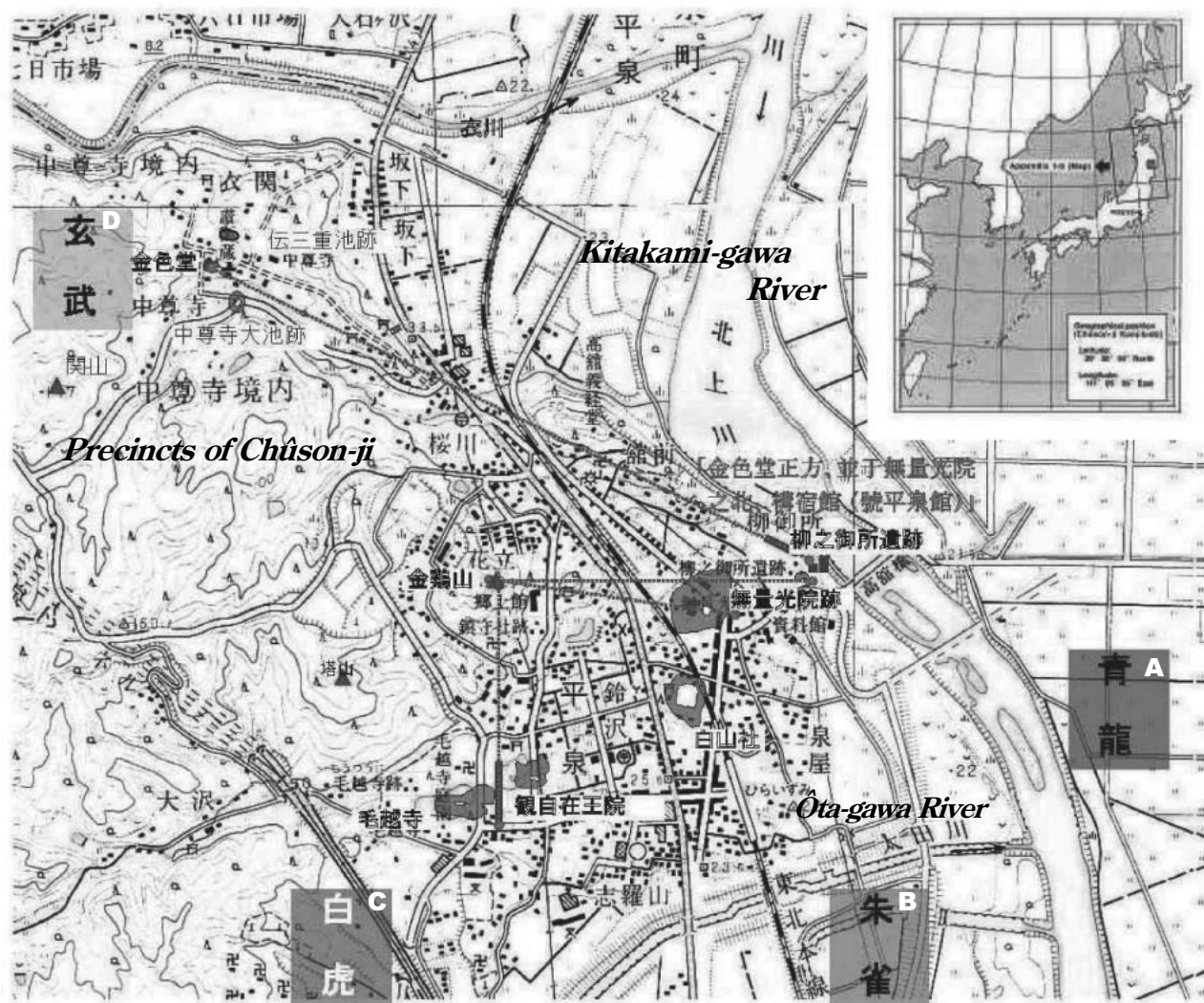
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#### \*Translation's Notes

#### References

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- 2 *Report on the Redevelopment of the Former Site of a Chinju-sha Shrine on the Precincts of the Special Historic Location of Môtsû-ji Temple*. Ed. Hiraizumi-chô Board of Education, 2007
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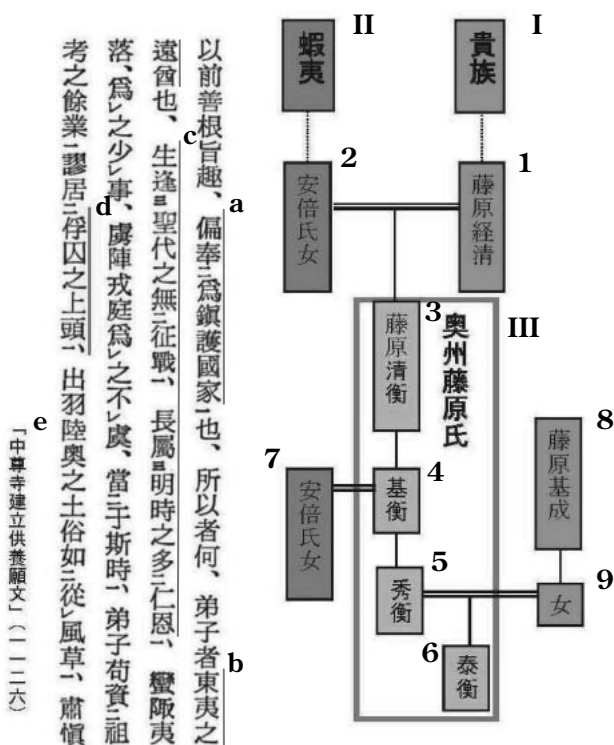
### Notes

- a. Buddhist halls and pagodas were built in the selected places.
- b. Higher and lower parts of the premises were landscaped as hills and ponds respectively.
- c. The place is protected by the four deities\*.
  - \*A: Blue Dragon
  - \*B: Red Phoenix
  - \*C: White Tiger
  - \*D: Black Warrior
- d. *Chûson-ji Konryû-Kuyô-Ganmon* (1126 AD)  
(pledge for the construction of Chuson-ji Temple)

餘、拋三財幣之涓露、<sup>a</sup>白吉土而建三堂塔、治真金而顯佛經、  
經藏鐘樓大門大垣、依<sup>b</sup>高築山、就<sup>c</sup>窪穿池、龍虎協宜、即是  
四神具足之地也、蠻夷歸善、豈非諸佛摩頂之場乎、又設萬  
[中尊寺建立供養願文] (一一二六)

Fig. 1 Location of "Hiraizumi" and Layout of Components

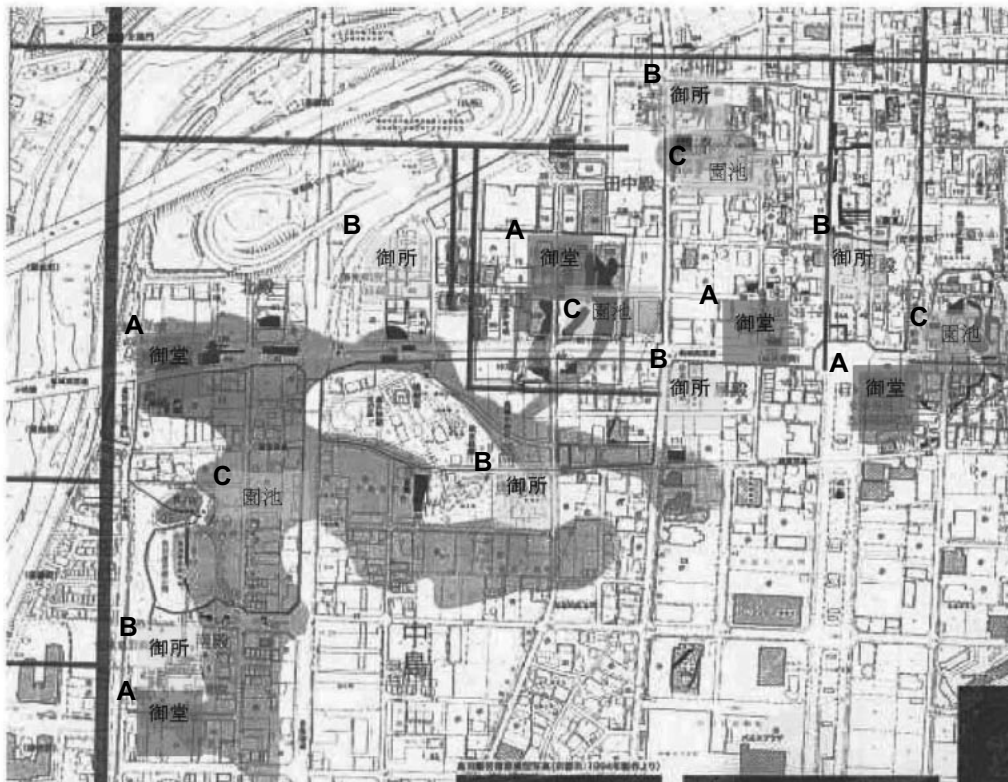




### Notes

- I. Aristocratic family
- II. Native *Emishi* tribe
- III. ÔSHÛ FUJIWARA Family
1. FUJIWARA no Tsunekiyo
2. a daughter of ABE family
3. FUJIWARA no Kiyohira
4. FUJIWARA no Motohira
5. FUJIWARA no Hidehira
6. FUJIWARA no Yasuhira
7. a daughter of ABE family
8. FUJIWARA no Motonari
9. a daughter of FUJIWARA no Motonari
- a. The purpose was exclusively to pacify and protect the nation.
- b. He is a descendant of the native *Emishi* tribe.
- c. He brought the war to an end in his childhood. When he grew to adulthood, he ruled the region with benevolence.
- d. He became the leader of the native *Emishi* tribe.
- e. *Chûson-ji Konryû-Kuyô-Ganmon* (1126 AD)  
(pledge for the construction of Chûson-ji Temple)

Fig. 2 Genealogy of the Ôshû Fujiwara Family, and Kiyohira's Perception of the Genealogy



### Notes

- A. Temple Hall  
(御堂)
- B. Residence  
(御所)
- C. Garden Pond  
(園地)

Fig. 3 Restoration map of the Garden, Residences, Temples and Ponds at Toba Detached Palace (prepared based on the 2007 appended figure, Kyôto City Archaeological Research Institute)



Plan of Ôike Ato and its related buildings

奉<sup>a</sup>建立供養<sup>a</sup>鎮護國家大伽藍一區事  
 三間四面檜皮葺堂一字在左右廊廿二間  
 二階瓦葺經藏一字<sup>b</sup>  
 奉<sup>c</sup>納金銀泥一切經一部  
 奉安置<sup>c</sup>等身皆金色文殊師利尊像一軀  
 大門三字  
 築垣三面<sup>d</sup>  
 反橋一道廿二間<sup>e</sup>  
 斜橋一道十間<sup>f</sup>  
 龍頭鶴首畫船二隻<sup>f</sup>  
 左右樂器大鼓舞裝束卅八具<sup>g</sup>  
 右、築<sup>h</sup>山以壇<sup>h</sup>地形、穿<sup>h</sup>池以貯<sup>h</sup>水脈、  
 〔中尊寺建立供養願文〕(一一二六)<sup>i</sup>

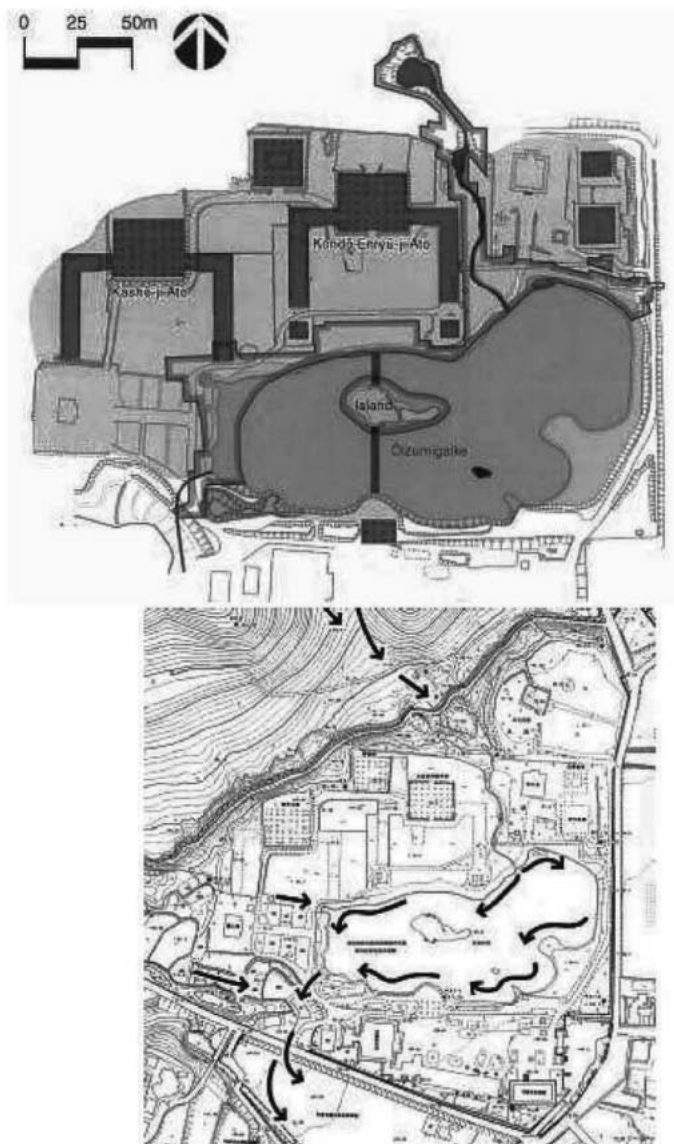
### Notes

- a. Description of the great temple hall to pacify and protect the nation by the power of Buddha
- b. Tile-roofed scripture house
- c. One set of complete Buddhist scriptures written with melted gold and silver is dedicated.
- d. Arched bridge
- e. Skew bridge
- f. Two boats on which heads of a dragon and water bird are depicted
- g. Musical instruments, drums and dance costumes on both sides
- h. Earth was piled up to create hills, and ground was dug to form a pond.
- i. *Chûson-ji Konryû-Kuyô-Ganmon* (1126 AD)  
(pledge for the construction of Chûson-ji Temple)



Fig. 4 Chûson-ji Ôike in the Era of Kiyohira and *Chûson-ji Konryû-Kuyô-Ganmon* (pledge for the completion of Chûson-ji Temple)





一 毛越寺事  
堂塔四十餘宇、禪房五百餘宇也、  
基衡建立之、先金堂號圓隆寺、鑲金銀、繼紫檀赤木等、  
盡萬寶二交衆色、本佛安樂師丈六、同十二神將、  
雲慶作之、  
佛菩薩像以  
「吾妻鏡」

遺水事<sup>a</sup>  
一、先水のみななみの方角をさだむべし。経云、東より南へむかへて西へながすを順流とす。  
西より東へながすを逆流とす。しかれば、東より西へながす、常事也。又東方よりいだして、  
舎屋のしたをとおして、未申方へ出す、最吉也。青竜の水をもちて、もろ／＼の悪気を白虎  
のみちへあらひいだすゆへなり。その家のあるじ疫氣悪瘡のやまひなくして身心安楽寿命長  
遠なるべしといへり。  
四神相応の地をえらぶ時、左より水ながれたるを、青竜の地とす。かるがゆへに遺水をも殿  
舎もしへ寝殿の東より出て、南へむかへて西へながすべき也。北より出ても、東へまわして  
南西へながすべき也。経云、遺水のたわめる内ノ龍の腹とす、居住をそのへらにあつる、吉  
「作庭記」<sup>g</sup>

## Notes

- a. about *Yarimizu* stream
- b. First, the direction at the upstream end of the *yarimizu* stream should be determined.
- c. Normally, the *yarimizu* stream should be made to flow from east to south and then to the west.
- d. Ideally, the *yarimizu* stream should start from the east...
- e. ... and then be led to the southwest.
- f. Even when *yarimizu* stream is started from the north, the recommendation is to lead the flow to the east and then to the southwest.
- g. *Sakuteiki* (the book of gardening, which is the oldest in existence, all of the world)
- h. More than forty temple halls and pagodas.
- i. The main hall was named *Enryû-ji* Temple.
- j. It was built by *Motohira* (FUJIWARA no Motohira).
- k. A statue of *Yakushi-nyorai*, 2.4 m in height, was enshrined as a principal image.
- l. *Azumakagami*

Fig. 5 Môtsumi-ji temple and garden (Ôizumi ga Ike) [in the era of Motohira]

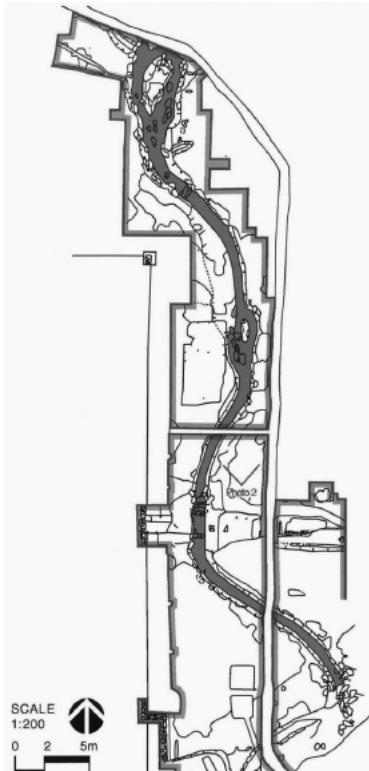


Fig. 6 Yarimizu Stream at Mōtsū-ji Garden (Ōizumi-ga-Ike) [in the era of Motohira]

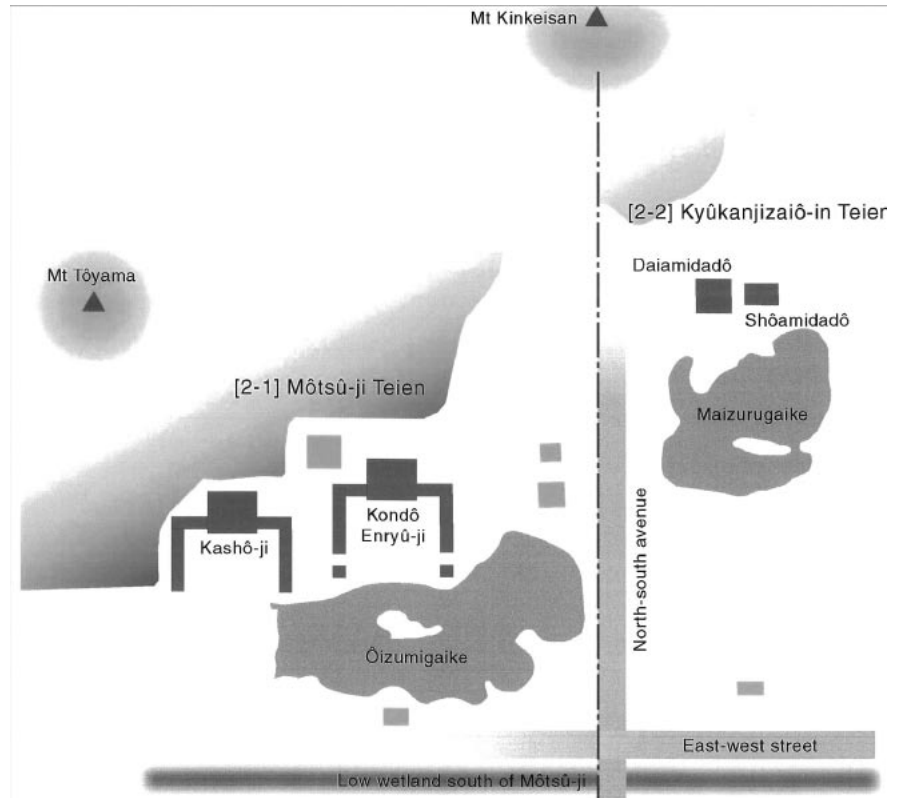


Fig. 7 Mt. Kinkeisan and Design of Mōtsū-ji / Kanjizaiō-in [in the era of Motohira]

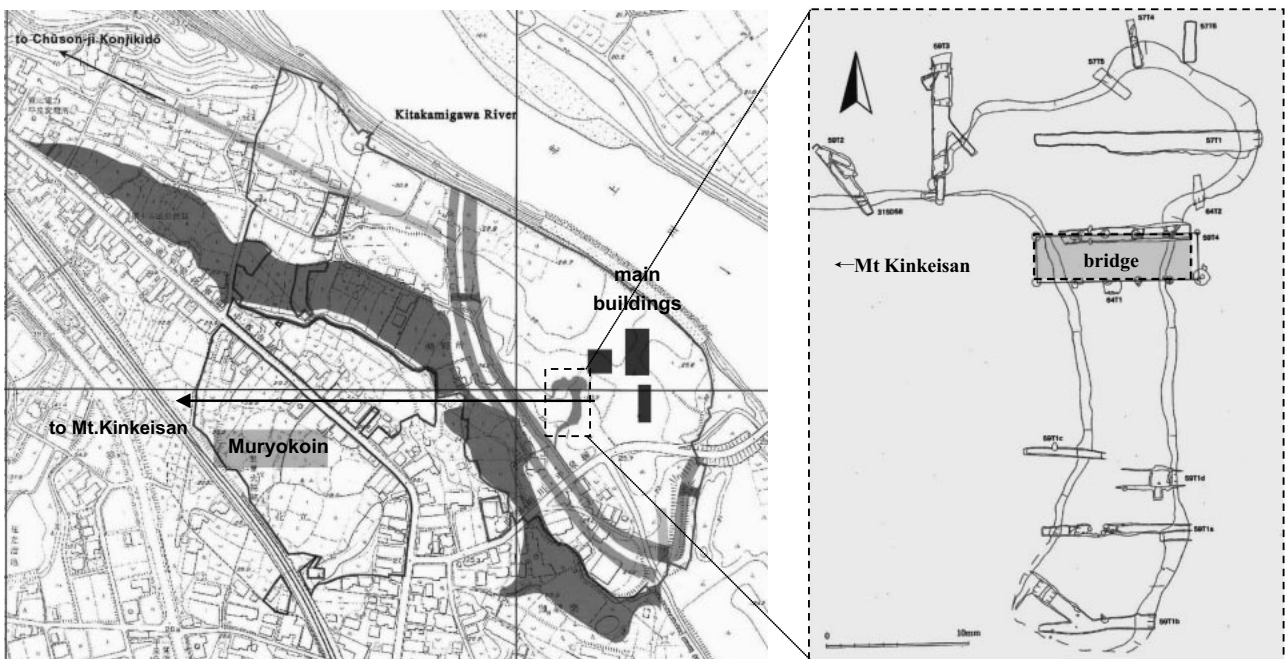


Fig. 8 Mt. Kinkeisan and Design of Yanaginogoshi Iseki Garden Pond and Major Structures



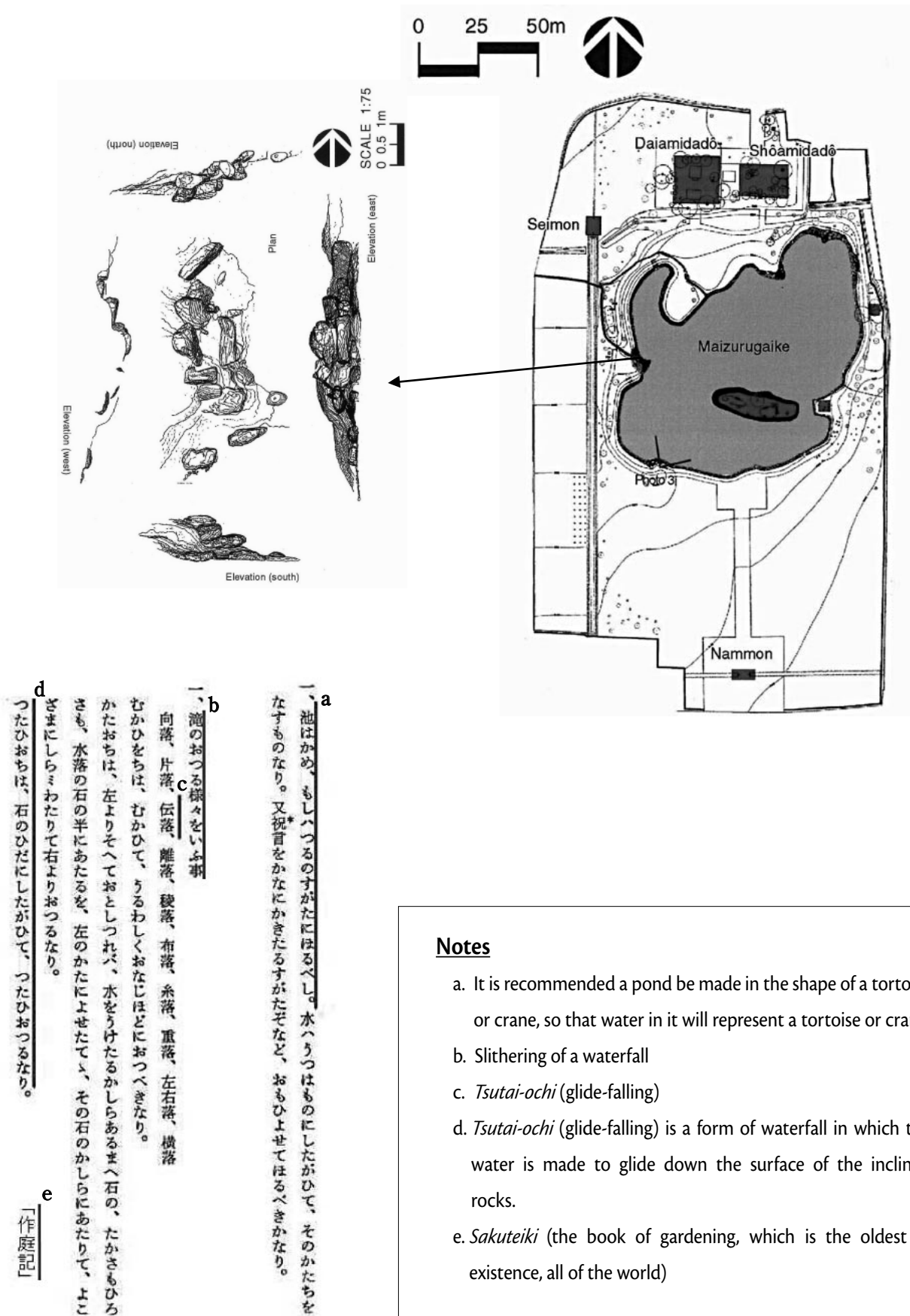
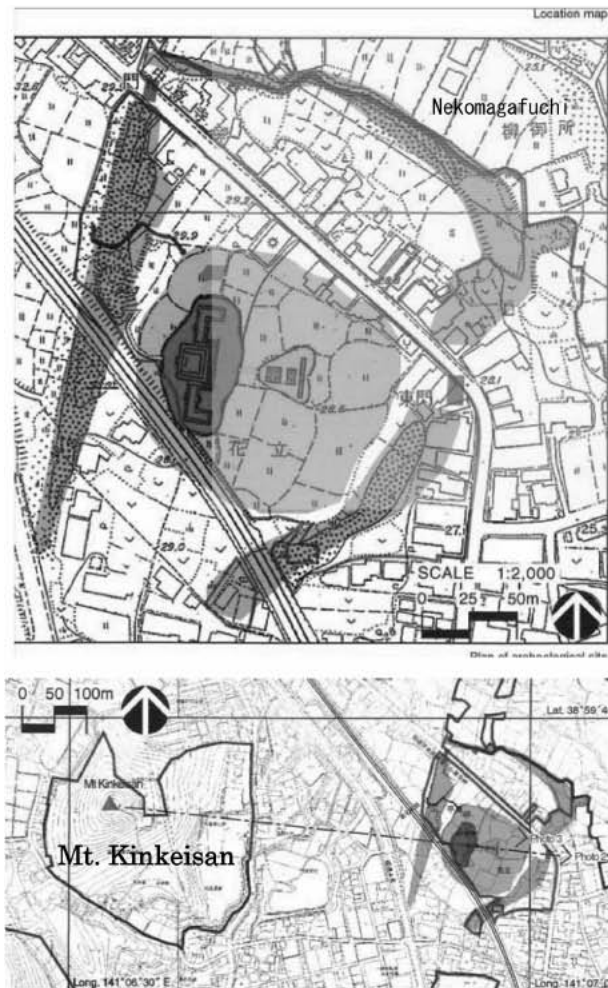
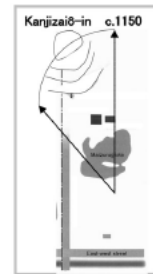
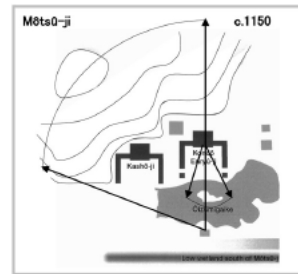
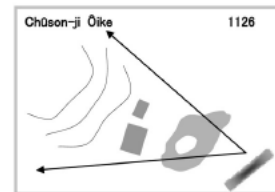


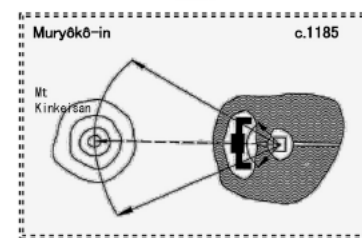
Fig. 9 Kanjizaiô-in garden (Maizuru-ga-Ike) [in the era of Motohira] and *Sakuteiki*



### Types of Pure Land Gardens According to Development Stage in Hiraizumi



All elements were combined and integrated in the view; with the addition of special attention to the 'west', the utmost expression of Pure Land space was produced



### Notes

- It was built by Hidehira.
- Here, a statue of Amida Butsu, 2.4m in height, is enshrined as a principal image.
- The entire design of the garden is modeled after that of the Uji Byôdô-in temple.
- Azumakagami

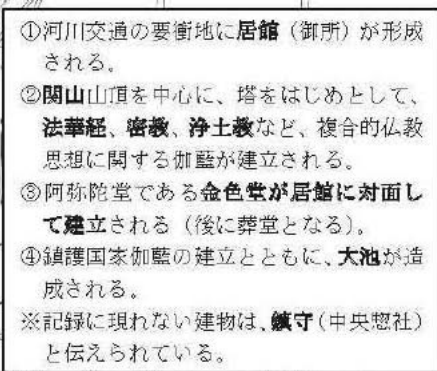
a 無量光院號新御堂事  
秀衡建立之、其堂内四壁屏、圖繪觀經大意、加之、秀衡自  
c 圖繪狩獵之鉢、本佛者阿彌陀丈六也、三重寶塔、院内莊嚴、  
悉以所摸二字治平等院也、  
d 吾妻鏡



\*Sunset at Muryôkô-in to the top of Mt. Kinkeisan in the end of August (viewed from the East gate)

Fig. 10 Muryôkô-in Garden Pond (Bonji-ga-Ike) [in the era of Hidehira] and Development Schema of Pure Land Gardens in Hiraizumi [in the era of Motohira]



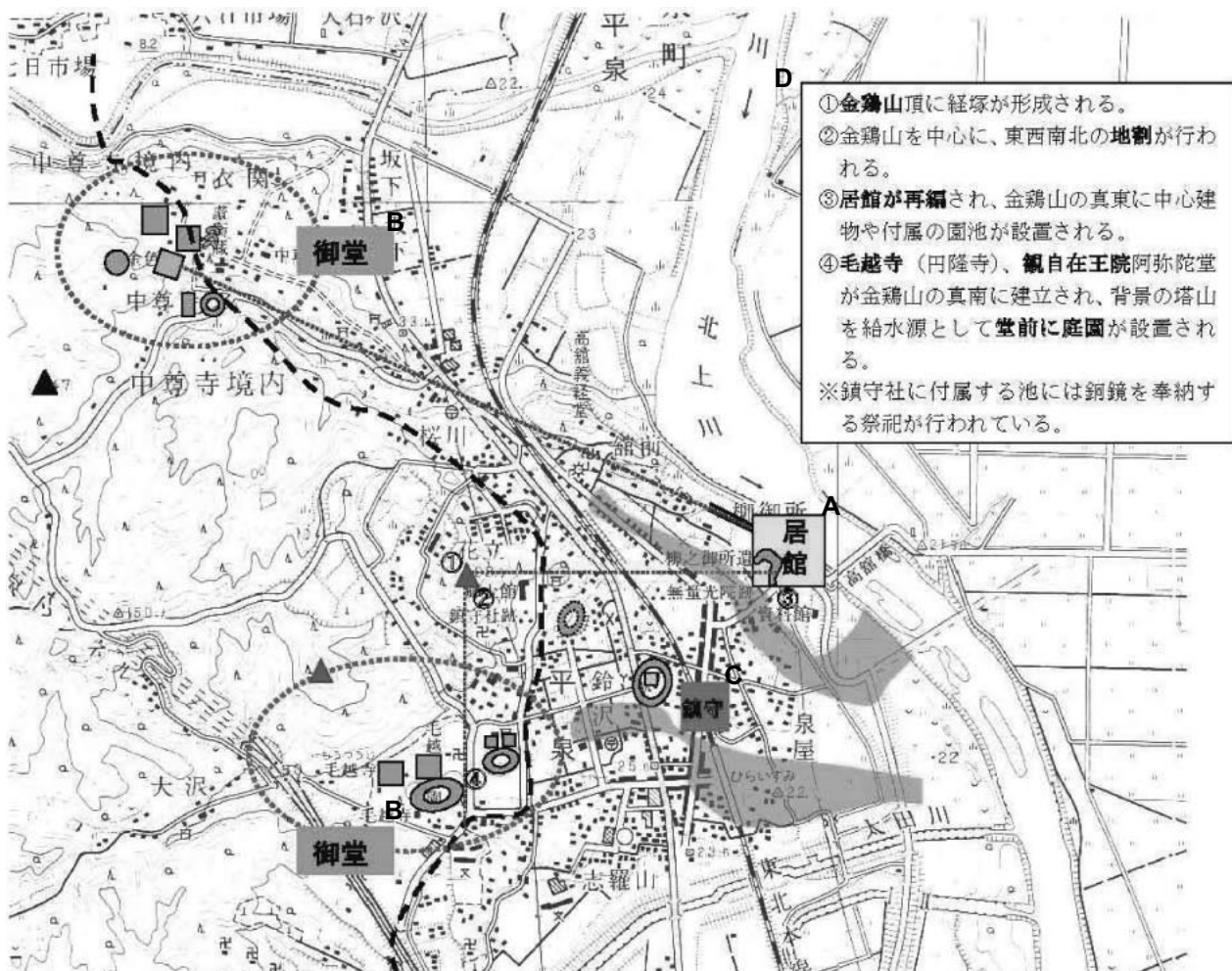


## Notes

- A. Residential Office (居館)
  - B. Temple Hall (御堂)
  - C. *Chinju* shrine? (鎮守?)
  - D. (explanation of the figure)
1. The residential office was built in the place of strategic importance for river transportation.
  2. Pagodas and temple halls were built on the summit of Mt. Kanzan and in its vicinity. They were associated with complex Buddhist ideas including the Hokkekyô sutra, and Esoteric and Jôdo Buddhist thoughts.
  3. Konjiki-dô (Golden Hall), which served as Amida-dô (Amida hall) and later as Sô-dô (a funeral hall), was built, facing the residential office.
  4. Ôike pond was constructed, together with the Great Hall, to pacify and protect the nation by the power of Buddha.
- \* The building that does not appear in the record is said to be a *chinju* shrine (a central shrine that contains many deities).

**Fig. 11 Development Process of Pure Land World in “Hiraizumi” (in the era of Kiyohira)**





### Notes

A. Residential Office（居館）

B. Temple Hall（御堂）

C. *Chinju* shrine（鎮守）

D. (explanation of the figure)

1. A sutra mound was constructed on the summit of Mt. Kinkeisan.

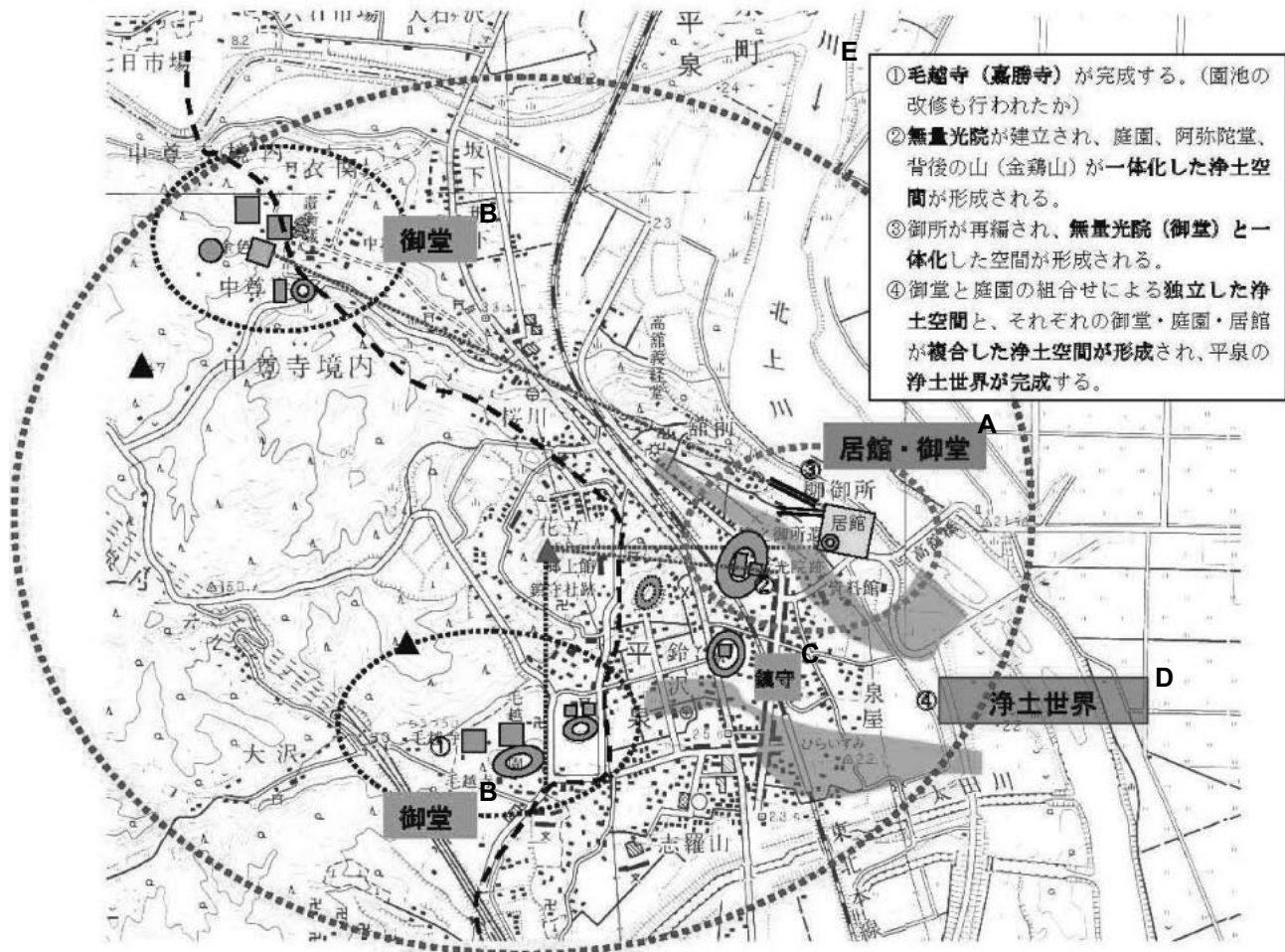
2. The precincts were divided into blocks along north-south and east-west axes with Mt. Kinkeisan at the center.

3. The residential office was renovated and a garden pond and central building were constructed directly east of Mt. Kinkeisan.

4. Môtôji (Enryûji) temple and Kanjizaiô-in Amida-dô hall were constructed directly south of Mt. Kinkeisan, and a garden was created in front of the hall, carrying water from Mt. Tôyama behind the hall into the garden pond.

\* A ritual to dedicate bronze mirrors was conducted at the pond attached to the *chinju* shrine.

Fig. 12 Development Process of Pure Land World in “Hiraizumi” (in the era of Motohira)



### Notes

A. Residential Office and temple hall（居館・御堂）

B. Temple Hall（御堂）

C. *Chinju* shrine（鎮守）

D. Pure Land World

E. (explanation of the figure)

1. Construction of the Mōtsū-ji (Kashō-ji) temple was completed. (The garden pond is considered to have been renovated at the same time.)
2. With the completion of the Muryōkō-in temple hall, Pure Land space was formed, integrating a garden, Amida-dō hall, and Mt. Kinkeisan behind them.
3. An ideal space was newly developed, comprised of the renovated residential office and the Muryōkō-in temple hall.
4. Independent Pure Land spaces each created by a combination of a temple hall and garden, and spheres comprised of these residential offices, temple halls and gardens were formed. Together they created the Pure Land world of Hiraizumi.

Fig. 13 Development Process of Pure Land World in "Hiraizumi" (top : in the era of Hidehira/Yasuhira)

Table : Garden Ponds in the Center Area of “Hiraizumi”

No.	Location	Name	Time of construction	Axis	Size (m) *			Shore protection	Shape	Corresponding building	Central island		Bridge	Water course		Water discharge	Year of archaeological survey	Remarks
					East-west length	South-north length	Depth				Shape (number of island)	Building		Direction	Inclination			
1	Chūson-jī	Ōike	Earlier 12th C.	Kiyohira	70	120	<u>1.0</u>	Without a liner, surrounded by earthen mounds	Irregular	Small kyōzo (scripture house)?	Irregular	Benten-dō	x	Northwest to southeast		?	1960-2008	
2	Chūson-jī	Sanjō-no-Ike	Mid 12th C.?	Motohira?	?	?	?	Cobble stones arranged	Irregular	Kondō (main hall)?	Irregular, cobble stones arranged	Benten-dō	○	Surface water from watersheds in the vicinity		?	1960-1967	Pure Land garden
3	Mōtsū-jī	Ōzumi-ga-Ike	Mid 12th C.	Era of Motohira	<u>190</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>0.8</u>	Covered with cobble stones	Irregular	Enryū-jī Kondō (main hall)	Irregular, built during two different periods	x	○	North to south	5/100	East to west	1955-1958, 1980-1990	
4	Mōtsū-jī	Benten-Ike	Mid 12th C.	Era of Motohira?	80	40	?	Without a liner	Irregular		(Two islands)	Benten-dō	?	?		Northwest to southeast	Survey not conducted.	water source of Maizuru-ga-Ike
5	Kanjizaō-in	Maizuru-ga-Ike	Mid 12th C.	Motohira	<u>90</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>1.4</u>	Covered with stones in part	Irregular	Anida-dō	Irregular	x	△	Northwest to southeast		West to east	1954~1955	
6	Muryōkō-in	Bonji-ga-Ike	Later 12th C.	Later era of Hidehira	110	135	<u>0.3</u>	Without a liner	Irregular	Anida-dō	(Three islands)	Anida-dō and others	△	Northwest to southeast	2/100	West to east		Pure Land garden
7	Takokoku-no-Iwaya	Gama-ga-Ike	12C	Motohira /Hidehira?	?	?	?	Cobble stones arranged	Irregular	Sakō-jī Bishamon-dō	Round-cornered, rectangular?	Benten-dō	?	?		?	1968	
8	Hakusan-sha		Mid 12th C.	Motohira	?	?	<u>1.0</u>	Cobble stones arranged	?	Hakusan-sha	?	Chinju-sha	○	Northwest to southeast		South	1992	Garden pond with shrine
9-1	Yanaginogoshi Site		Mid 12th C.	Motohira	<u>42</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>0.8</u>	Without a liner	Horseshoe-shaped	Residence (Jibutsu-dō?)	x		○	Natural spring water?		East to west	1990-2005	Garden pond with residential office
9-2	Yanaginogoshi Site		Later 12th C.	Later era of Hidehira	<u>42</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>0.6</u>	Covered with cobble stones	oval-shaped	Residence (Mansion?)	△(Irregular?)	x	x	Natural spring water?		Northeast to southwest	1990-2005	

\* Numbers shown with underlined are actual measurements obtained as a result of excavation.