

4. REFERENCE MATERIAL

Structure and Chronology of the Pure Land Gardens in Japan

Introduction

The figure on the right is a roughly chronological arrangement of the ten Pure Land Gardens in Japan, drawn based on the article “Change in the styles of temples of Pure Land Buddhism in the Heian period” written by Mr. Sugimoto Hiroshi and other relevant archaeological excavation reports. It should be noted that the layouts of Hôjô-ji Temple (A) and Hosshô-ji Temple (C) shown in the figure are based on the respective reconstruction drawings due to lack of sufficient archaeological findings. The outline of each of these Pure Land Gardens is as shown below.

A. Hôjô-ji Temple (Kyôto)

Construction of Hôjô-ji Temple began in 1019 by Fujiwara no Michinaga. Though the temple was called Muryôju-in in the initial stage when the east-facing Amida-dô hall was built to the west of a pond, it was renamed Hôjô-ji in 1023 when all the buildings on the premises were completed. Presumably, a main hall and a pond were located on the south-north axis extending from the south gate, and the pond was surrounded on its three sides by a building and corridors.

B. Byôdô-in Temple (Uji)

Byôdô-in Temple was originally built as a private villa, which was later purchased by Fujiwara no Michinaga and then converted into a temple by his son, Fujiwara no Yorimichi, in 1052. According to a record, major buildings constructed in the premises include an Amida-dô hall (Phoenix Hall), a Hokke-dô hall, a Tahô-tô pagoda, a Godai-dô hall, a Fudô-tô pagoda, and a Goma-dô hall; and in general, each of these buildings

faced east. The garden was built utilizing the old bed and terrace of the Uji River. The Amida-dô hall (Phoenix Hall) was constructed on the central island located in the westernmost part of the pond, and soon after the construction of the hall, a small imperial palace was built on the bank opposite the Phoenix Hall. The arrangement of a viewing position (the small imperial palace) and the object to be viewed (the Phoenix Hall) on the same axis is characteristic of the garden of Byôdô-in Temple.

C. Hosshô-ji Temple (Kyôto)

Hosshô-ji temple was built by Emperor Shirakawa in 1077. It can be inferred that a main hall, a nine-story pagoda, a lecture hall, and a Yakushi-dô hall were built on the south-north axis extending from the south main gate, and the Amida-dô hall was located in the southwestern part of the premises to face east, looking to the pond. Presumably, the main hall and the east and west corridors extending from both sides of the main hall surrounded the southern part of the garden on its three sides, and a pond was created to the south.

D. Môtsû-ji Temple (Hiraizumi)

Môtsû-ji Temple was built by Fujiwara no Motohira, the second head of the Ôshû Fujiwara Clan. It is generally maintained that the construction of the temple occurred between the years 1141 and 1156, the later years of Motohira. The influence of Hosshô-ji Temple is apparent in the layout of Môtsû-ji Temple, in that on the premises of Môtsû-ji Temple, the corridors from the main hall of Enryû-ji Temple surround the south garden on its three sides, and a pond is located to the south. The arrangement of the buildings with Mt. Tôyama behind them is also characteristic of this temple.

E. Kanjizaiô-in Temple (Hiraizumi)

This temple was built by the wife of Fujiwara no Motohira around 1152. Buildings constructed in the premises included a large Amida-dô hall, a small Amida-dô hall, and a Fugen-dô hall. The pond had a stone arrangement designed to represent a waterfall, as well as a water course and an island. Characteristically, the Amida-dô hall of this temple was not located to the west of the pond, but faced south, looking to the northern bank, and buildings were laid out with Mt. Kinkeisan behind them.

F. Shiramizu Amida-dô Temple (Iwaki)

This temple was built in the mid 12th century by Tokuni, the younger sister of Fujiwara no Hidehira, the third head of the Ôshû Fujiwara Clan, and the widowed wife of Iwaki Norimichi, a feudal lord of the Iwaki area. With the south-facing Amida-dô hall built in 1160 that looks to the pond and Mt. Kyôzuka at the back, this garden bears a similarity to the garden of Kanjizaiô-in Temple. The existence of two islands, large and small, in the pond is also characteristic of this garden.

G. Muryôkô-in Temple (Hiraizumi)

This temple was built in the later 12th century by Fujiwara no Hidehira, the third head of the Ôshû Fujiwara Clan. According to the *Azumakagami* chronicle, the Amida-dô hall and all the other elements of this temple were modeled on Byôdô-in Temple. The pond was located in front of the Amida-dô hall and transepts, and had an island in it. The pond was found to have extended behind the transept of the main hall, which indicates a similarity to Byôdô-in Temple in the design of its garden. The group of buildings on the island and the Amida-dô hall are aligned on the east-west axis, and Mt. Kinkeisan is located to the west on the same axis. In light of this layout, the garden of Muryôkô-in Temple can be considered the pinnacle of Pure Land Gardens designed to reproduce the landscape of the Paradise Pure Land.

H. Jôruri-ji Temple (Kizugawa)

This temple dates to 1047. The Amida-dô hall was built in 1107 and the precincts and the pond were renovated and enlarged by Priest Eshin of Kôfuku-ji Ichijô-in Temple. With the relocation of the Amida-dô hall to the western bank of the pond and the transfer of a three-story pagoda to the eastern bank of the pond from Kyôto Ichijô Ômiya in later years, the temple layout as we know it today was completed. Also characteristically, Jôruri-ji Temple is surrounded by mountains on its three sides.

I. Yôfuku-ji Temple (Kamakura)

Yôfuku-ji Temple, built in 1192, consisted of a central hall with an Amida-dô hall and a Yakushi-dô hall on both sides, transepts, a fishing pavilion and a pond. The central hall was modeled on the Nikaidaidô hall of Chûson-ji Temple. The arrangement of the main buildings that face east to look to the pond bears a similarity to that of Muryôkô-in Temple. Green boulders taken from the Sagami River were laid over the bed of the pond, a group of standing stones were positioned, and an island was created in the pond.

J. Shômyô-ji Temple (Kamakura)

Originating from the private Buddhist hall constructed by Hôjô Sanetoki, this temple is thought to have been completed around 1260 on the present site, which was selected due to being surrounded by hills on its three sides. Sanetoki's grandson, Kanesawa Sadaaki, commissioned the renovation of elements of the temple layout, including the pond, from 1317 to 1323. Consequently, the main hall was positioned so as to face south to look to the pond and an island was created at the center of the pond. The visually impressive scenery created by the buildings on the premises and the mountains at the back deserves special attention.

AWANO, Takashi

Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties

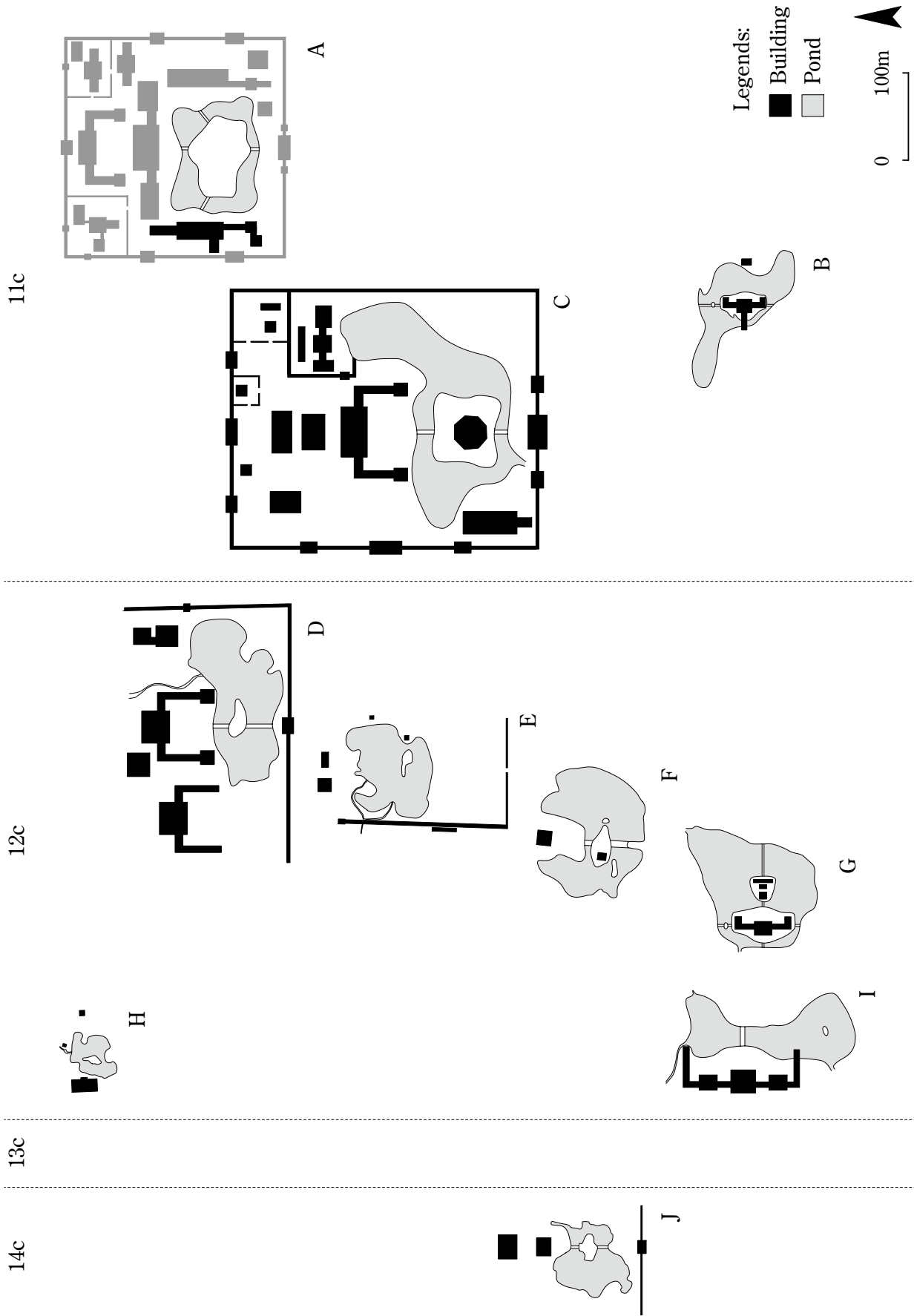


Fig.: Structure and Chronology of the Pure Land Gardens in Japan