

## **【Genkyūen and Rakurakuen Gardens】**

Japanese gardens, like many aspects of traditional Japanese culture, were adopted and adapted from Chinese cultural influences. From the sixth to tenth centuries, Japan's governmental structure was directly modeled after the Tang dynasty (618–907), and those who held high positions within this system often built Chinese-style gardens as a way of further emulating the prestigious culture of the Chinese court. In the centuries thereafter, Japanese gardens were built in a variety of motifs and styles, but the Chinese aesthetic endured as an indicator of wealth and class.

At the beginning of the Edo period (1603–1867), gardens served two purposes: as visual pieces that could be admired from within an attached or nearby tearoom, and as a place stroll, with a series of “views” that could be admired from several fixed points around the garden. Both of these functions were useful when entertaining guests, and stroll gardens (*kaiyūshiki teien*) became an almost mandatory fixture of the estates and residences of the daimyo. The gardens, which typically centered around a pond or other water feature, often contained miniaturized homages to famous sites and references to Taoist lore. The Genkyūen garden, for example, contains a number of elements drawn from Chinese legends, such as the central island, which represents Hōrai, the legendary Island of the Immortals.

Genkyūen has existed in several forms throughout its centuries of history. The garden is believed to have been originally built in 1677 as part of the residence of Ii Naooki (1656–1717). At the time, the residence was called Keyaki Goten (“Zelkova Palace”), and the garden already had its characteristic central pond. In the early nineteenth century, a portion of the garden was annexed to create a separate garden by the daimyo Ii Naoaki (1794–1850). This annex was called Rakurakuen, written by repeating the Chinese character for “enjoyment,” as a nod to the fact that a visitor could enjoy both inner views of the pond and outer views of the nearby mountains. The “borrowed scenery” of distant mountains (or castles) in a garden—called *shakkei*—is a common element of Japanese and Chinese gardens.

Beginning in 1997, Genkyūen's grounds underwent significant restoration on the basis of a painting of the garden that dates back to Rakurakuen's creation in 1812.