

Leisure Activities at the Kawara Imperial Villa of Retired Empress Meishō: Through Comparison with the Shugakuin Imperial Villa

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to clarify the ways Japanese imperial villas were used. The villas that were studied are the Kawara and Shugakuin Imperial Villas, which were built in the early modern age. The peculiarity of Kawara Imperial Palace is clarified through those comparisons. The historical materials studied are mainly diaries written in that period. Consider its tendency and feature through the research on frequency of visit, the season, and type of leisure activity. The court culture at the early modern age has influenced a traditional Japanese culture considerably. Research such a court culture is important for understanding the Japanese culture in Asia. This paper verifies one example of Japanese imperial architecture and is expected to be useful in the field of international comparative studies.

1. Introduction

The Shugakuin and Katsura Imperial Villas are famous imperial villas of the early modern age in Japan. Many studies and books have been published about them [1]. They were constructed in the suburbs of Kyoto, the former capital of Japan, and both still exist. Retired emperors and aristocrats visited them many times in the early modern age. Visiting villas is one aspect of Japanese culture. As discussed in this paper, the Kawara Imperial Villa was also such a villa, even though that fact is hardly known because the villa no longer exists and its construction details are hazy. In the early modern age, the Kawara Imperial Villa was used by Retired Empress Meishō (1624-1696), who was the 109th emperor and the 7th of eight empresses in Japanese history. It was also located in Kyoto, but outside the urban wall built on the city's border. The history of its construction is unknown, and after the death of Retired Empress Meishō, an aristocrat became the owner [2]. The Kawara Imperial Villa is located beside the Kamogawa River, on which there is now a large hospital. Based on the research of Dr. Matsui, this paper scrutinizes the leisure activities at the Kawara Imperial Villa and compares them to the Shugakuin Imperial Villa to clarify its architectural features.

2. Purpose

Studies on the Shugakuin and Katsura Imperial Villas have greatly influenced many academic and practical fields. Both villas have been precisely researched, especially in modern times. Much research by foreigners on both villas has focused on international Japanese architecture. Our research on the Kawara Imperial Villa clarifies Japan's court culture in the early modern age, which is meaningful in the fields of architectural and cultural history. Historical research on modern times is also

substantial. Imperial villas are places to escape from daily life for leisure activities. Considering such usage paradoxically suggests a retired emperor's daily life. Comparisons to the Shugakuin Imperial Villa effectively identify the uniqueness of the Kawara Imperial Villa for learning about the common features of both villas. We expect our research to become basic historical materials for studies in other fields because it considers the space of imperial villas from an architectural perspective.



Fig 1. pavilion and pond, the Shugakuin Imperial Villa

3. Method

This paper analyzes the content of leisure activities, the times of visits, and their tendencies from diary descriptions and considers the utility/usage of the Kawara Imperial Villa. A diary called “Mujo-hoin-nikki,” written by Princess Tsuneko in the 17th century, is one important document to learn about court culture in the early modern age. This diary, which covers more than 30 years, is used in many fields other than architecture [3]. The Imperial Princess frequently visited the Kawara Imperial Villa with Retired Empress Meishō. Many events took place at the villa. By comparison to the Shugakuin Imperial Villa, which was built by Retired Emperor Gomizuno-o (1596 -1680), we can consider the characteristics of the visitors to the Kawara Imperial Villa. Our analysis clarifies the differences of both villas and considers the cause of those differences from the characteristics of the owner and the location. On the other hand, the aspects shared by the two villas are also clarified to consider why the facility/institution was constructed. This will be a question of architecture principle. The tendency of the leisure activities at the Shugakuin Imperial Villa refers to past research.



Fig 2. Site Plan of the Shugakuin Imperial Villa

4. Result

4.1. The Kawara Imperial Villa

The Kawara Imperial Villa, which no longer exists, used to be located at the Kamogawa riverside 1 km east of the Imperial Palace in the center of Kyoto. It was only owned by Retired Empress Meishō, the daughter of Retired Emperor Gomizuno-o. The dairy archives used in our research were “Mujouhoin-nikki”

and “Motohiro-ki,” which indicate that the Empress’s first visit occurred in 1688 and that they continued for nine years until her death [4]. The appearance of the imperial palace is written in the diary in 1688. “The taste of this garden is wonderful. Some pavilions built in the garden are beautiful, and very interesting. We saw all over the palace spending all day, and various meals were served. The Sanjou-Oohashi Bridge seen from the river beach on the east side is a wonderful view”. Moreover, in the description in 1694, it is written, “The pavilions in the imperial palace is very cool and comfortable. It is interesting to see the scenery of fields and mountains from the pavilion. We had meal and played until evening”. The other “We strolled in the garden of the imperial palace together, and enjoyed the scenery of each pavilion. There were many maids to serve meals. There was pavilion imitating “shioya” (hut in the beach where the salt is made) at the island in the pond and smoke is rising up from the boiler. The shells were scattered on the waterside, the fishing net was spread, seaweeds were scattered, and it appears interesting. It is like looking at a real beach. It reminds me of old story of Minister *Toru* (*Minamoto*). We played all day. On the other hand, other pavilion is imitating shop, there are a wonderful toys, and flowers are decorated” (1688). Other specific leisure activities were “The maids in the palace dressed as farmer, about ten people wore the uniform and the hat, singing song, and planted rice” (1673), or “Warriors disguised as fisherman to catch the fish in the river in the east. Various nets were used” (1670) etc. At the imperial palace, they enjoyed looking at actual people besides play to imitate the farmer or the fishermen. “We saw line of people going to Hyakumanben Temple walking along the river. It is interesting view” (1671), or “We enjoyed looking at people who pass the front of the window of the imperial palace all day. We saw performance of a street performer who happened to pass by” (1673) etc. During that nine-year

Table 1. Visits to Kawara Imperial Villa by Retired Emperor Meishō

date	playings	archives
1688.03.26	ga, ba	MN
1688.10.14	ga, ba, im	MN, MH
1689.02.03	ga, ba	MN
1689.03.18	ga, ba	MN
1690.03.28	ga, ba, im	MN
1690.04.25	ga, ba	MN
1690.09.13	ga, ba	MN
1690.11.11	ga, ba	MN
1691.04.13	ga, ba, ws	MN
1691.06.11	ga, ba, im, ws	MN
1693.02.07	ga, ba	MN
1693.05.23	ga, ba, im	MN
1693.08.06	ga, ba	MN
1693.10.21	ga, ba	MN
1693.11.16	ga, ba, ws	MN
1693.11.29	ga, ba, ws	MN
1694.04.21	ga	MN
1694.U5.16	ga, ba	MN
1694.09.23	ga, ba	MN
1695.02.21	ga, ba	MN
1695.03.12	Uncertainty	MN
1695.05.12	Uncertainty	MN
1695.07.19	Uncertainty	MN
1695.09.23	Uncertainty	MN
1695.10.16	ba	MN
1696.04.14	Uncertainty	MN, MH

legend1: ga=garden, ba=banquet, im=imitating ordinary's life, ws=watching street

legend2: MN=*mujouhoin-nikki*, MH=*motohiro-ki*

period, she made 25 visits, an average of three visits a year. The most frequently visited months (based on the lunar calendar) were four times in April and twice each in February, March, May, September, October, and November. One visit was made in June, July, and August. Visits were made in summer because it was cool by the river and close to the Imperial Palace. The activities at the villa included garden viewing, watching citizens, imitating fishermen and farmers, and role plays involving such activities as bazaars.

4.2. The Shugakuin Imperial Villa. The Shugakuin Imperial Villa, which still exists, is located on a mountainside about 5 km northeast of the Imperial Palace in Kyoto. The use of the Shugakuin Imperial Villa can be divided into the following three periods: in the first (1655-1679) by Retired Emperor Gomizuno-o, in the second (1721-1731) by Retired Emperor Reigen (1654-1732), and in the third (1824-1836) by Retired Emperor Koukaku (1771-1840).

4.2.1. First Period: Retired Emperor Gomizuno-o

The archives about the first period of the Shugakuin Imperial Villa are mainly from two diaries, “Kakumei-ki” and “Mujohouindono-onikki.” During the 25-year period when it was used by Retired Emperor Gomizuno-o, 77 visits are recorded in

the archives [5]. Retired Emperor Gomizuno-o visited more than three times a year on average. The months with the most visits (based on the lunar calendar) were March and September, with 15 visits each. Next is April, 11 times, October, 10 times, and February, 9 times. In general, he chose the more comfortable seasons of spring and fall for his visits. In Shugakuin Imperial Villa of this time, there was a pavilion called “Shishisai”. The pavilion was reconstructed to the Imperial Palace afterwards, and had been burned down. From a description in the diary, pavilion “Jugetsukan” and “Rinuntei” were used many times (20 times and 5 times each) and “Shishisai” also was used 10 times. “Shishisai” existed in the north end of the pond, “Yokuryuchi”, and it is considered that the boating took place from there. Moreover at this time, “Zourokuan” was built adjacent to the “Jugetsukan” and the two-story pavilion named “Wankyokukaku” existed in the detached palace in Lower Villa also. The leisure activities at the villa in this period included banquets, poetry readings, garden and moon viewing, pottery making, tea ceremonies, boating, and hiking. Participants included several aristocratic companions of Retired Emperor Gomizuno-o as well as guards and servants. It is considered that the visiting group were not so large by several guests including the Retired Emperor Gomizuno though an accurate number of people are uncertain.

Table 2. Visits to Shugakuin by Retired Emperor Gomizuno-o

date	playings	archives
1655.03.13	hi	KK, other
1656.12.25	Uncertainty	other
1659.04.14	ga, hi, mo	KK
1660.05.12	Uncertainty	KK
1661.08.15	bo, ga	KK
1662.03.28	ga, po, hi, bo, ba	KK
1662.04.12	hi, bo, ba, hi, bo	KK
1662.04.26	Uncertainty	KK
1662.10.18	ga, ba, bo, ba	KK
1663.03.23	Uncertainty	KK
1663.09.15	ba, po	KK
1664.03.16	Uncertainty	KK, other
1664.09.11	Uncertainty	KK
1664.12.04	Uncertainty	KK
1666.04.14	Uncertainty	KK
1667.03.12	Uncertainty	other
1667.09.06	Uncertainty	other
1668.03.21	Uncertainty	KK
1669.03.27	Uncertainty	other
1669.10.05	Uncertainty	MN
1670.10.13	Uncertainty	MN
1671.02.11	Uncertainty	MN
1671.03.02	ga, hi, bo, ba	MN
1671.03.09	Uncertainty	MN, other
1671.05.06	ga, hi, bo, ba	MN, other
1671.08.28	ga, bo, ga, ba	MN
1671.09.13	hi	MN
1671.09.28	hi, ga, ba	MN
1671.10.04	Uncertainty	MN
1671.10.18	Uncertainty	MN
1672.03.10	hi, bo, ga, ba	MN
1672.04.04	Uncertainty	MN, other
1672.08.06	Uncertainty	MN
1672.08.19	hi	MN
1672.08.24	hi, bo, ga, ba	MN
1672.09.06	hi	MN
1672.09.13	Uncertainty	other
1673.02.10	Uncertainty	MN
1673.02.16	hi, ga, ba	MN
1673.03.13	Uncertainty	MN, other

1673.04.18	bo	MN
1673.08.19	bo	MN
1673.10.02	Uncertainty	MN, other
1674.02.22	bo	MN
1674.02.28	Uncertainty	MN, other
1674.05.14	bo	MN, other
1674.09.07	Uncertainty	other
1674.10.22	ga, bo, ba	MN
1675.01.12	Uncertainty	other
1675.03.01	bo	MN, other
1675.03.12	Uncertainty	other
1675.04.06	Uncertainty	other
1675.04.11	Uncertainty	MN, other
1675.04.18	Uncertainty	MN, other
1675.05.28	Uncertainty	other
1675.08.23	Uncertainty	other
1675.09.06	Uncertainty	other
1675.10.08	Uncertainty	other
1675.11.19	Uncertainty	other
1676.02.06	ga, ba, mo	MN, other
1676.02.12	Uncertainty	MN, other
1676.08.17	hi, bo	MN
1676.09.21	hi, ga, ba	MN, other
1676.09.29	Uncertainty	other
1676.10.09	Uncertainty	MN
1677.02.17	ga, hi, bo, ba	MN, other
1677.05.06	bo	MN, other
1677.09.25	Uncertainty	MN, other
1678.02.13	bo	other
1678.03.20	Uncertainty	MN
1678.09.01	Uncertainty	MN
1678.09.07	ga, hi, bo, ba	MN
1678.09.28	hi, bo	MN, other
1678.10.17	Uncertainty	MN
1679.03.23	bo, ga, ba	MN, other
1679.04.09	Uncertainty	other
1679.04.23	Uncertainty	other

legend1: hi=hiking, bo=boating, ga=garden, ba=banquet, mo=moon, poetry=po,

legend2: KK=kakumei-ki, MN=mujohouin-nikki

4.2.2. Second Period: Retired Emperor Reigen

The archives for the second period include “Reigen-in-houou-gokou-shinki” and “Sentō-nyoubou-nikki.” In this 11-year period, 23 visits were made [7]. Retired Emperor Reigen averaged more than two visits a year: (based on the lunar calendar) five in April, September, and October and two in February, March, August, and November. The visits were again mainly in spring and autumn. The feature of this time is building of “Shishisai” and

Table 3. Visits to Shugakuin by Retired Emperor Reigen

date	playings	archives
1721.09.27	hi, sh, ba	RG, SN
1722.03.13	ga, hi sh	RG, SN
1722.09.09	ga, hi, sh, ga, ba, mo	RG, SN
1723.04.06	ga, hi, ba	RG, SN
1723.09.07	ga, hi, ga, ba	RG, SN
1724.08.27	hi, ga, ba, sh	RG, SN
1724.10.07	ga, sh, ba, hi, po	RG, SN
1725.04.26	ga, hi, ba	RG, SN
1725.09.16	ga, ba, hi	RG
1725.10.18	hi, sh, ga, po	RG, SN
1726.04.26	ga, ba, po, hi	RG, SN
1726.11.02	ga, hi, sh, po, ba	RG, SN
1727.09.09	ga, hi, mo, po	RG, SN
1727.10.02	ga, hi	RG, SN
1728.02.11	ga, hi, po	RG, SN
1728.04.11	hi	RG, SN
1728.08.25	Uncertainty	RG, SN
1729.02.03	ga, ba, hi	RG, SN
1729.03.28	Uncertainty	RG
1729.10.11	Uncertainty	RG
1730.04.12	Uncertainty	RG, SN
1730.11.16	Uncertainty	RG, SN
1731.10.18	ga, hi, ba, bo, po	RG, SN

legend1: hi=hiking, bo=boating, ga=garden, ba=banquet, mo=moon, po=poetry, sh=shrine

legend2: RG=*reigen-in-houou-gokou-shinki*, SN=*sentou-nyoubou-nikki*



Fig 3. Yokuryu-chi pond, the Shugakuin Imperial Villa

“Wankyokukaku” did not exist first, and it was ruined at first because it was not used for years. Retired Emperor Reigen repaired the Villa on the occasion of visiting. Moreover, the “Rinuntei” was constructed because it was burned down at this time, but it differed from the former building. Retired Emperor Reigen recollected the father, Retired Emperor Gomizuno whenever visiting Shugakuin Imperial Villa. The activities of this period include having banquets, visiting shrines, hiking, garden and moon viewing, and poetry readings. Visiting at this time was not easy for Retired Emperor Reigen. The procedure to the shogunate was complex and obtaining the permission of visiting was difficult. The size of the groups was somewhat larger than in the first period.

4.2.3. Third Period: Retired Emperor Koukaku

The primary archives for the third period are “Shugakuin-gokou-roku” and “Hinami-an.” In this 13-year period, Retired Emperor Koukaku visited 14 times, averaging slightly more than one visit per year. The most visits were made (based on the lunar calendar) in March (six times), September and October (three times each), and April (two times). The feature of the villa at this time was that the building was ruined after about 90 years after the second period. It was the same situation as the second period. Retired Emperor Koukaku ordered the repair, and “Rinuntei” and “Jugetsukan” were newly built. Those were considered as the same one built in second period. However, the “Kysuuitei” was reconstructed. It is considered that the “Kysuuitei” is the only original building from that time.

During this period, the main activities were poetry readings, banquets, playing music, garden viewing, and hiking. The number of people visiting the villa at this time exceeds 100. The participant borrows a peripheral private house and is using it in Shugakuin Imperial Villa because it did not install. The size of the groups was the largest of the three periods.

Table 4. Visits to Shugakuin by Retired Emperor Koukaku

date	playings	archives
1824.09.21	ga, hi, sh, po, ba, mu	SG, HA
1825.10.23	ga, po, hi, mu	SG, HA
1826.03.23	ga, sh, hi, po, mu	SG, HA
1826.10.18	ga, po, sh, mu	SG, HA
1827.09.21	ga, po, sh, hi, mu	SG, HA
1828.03.23	ga, po, sh, hi, mu	HA
1829.03.26	ga, po, sh, hi, mu	SG, HA
1829.09.14	ga, po, sh, hi, mu	SG, HA
1830.U3.16	ga, po, sh, hi, ba, mu	SG, HA
1831.10.17	ga, po, sh, ba, mu	SG, HA
1832.03.23	ga, po, hi, mu	SG, HA
1833.03.10	ga, po, sh, ba, mu, hi	HA
1835.04.07	ga, po, ba, mu	SG, HA
1836.04.07	ga, po, sh, ba, mu	HA

legend1: hi=hiking, ga=garden, ba=banquet, po=poetry, sh=shrine, mu=music

legend2: SG=*shugakuin-gokou-roku*, HA=*hinami-an*

5. Discussion

5.1. The Kawara Imperial Villa

The leisure activities at the Kawara Imperial Villa involved role plays in which the garden pavilions were decorated as stores, and

servants and companions dressed as farmers planting rice, or fishermen fishing in a river. Since Empress Meishō enjoyed watching actual local citizens from a window along the street, a common theme of the activities at this villa involved watching ordinary people or imitating them.

5.2. The Shugakuin Imperial Villa

All visits to the Shugakuin Imperial Villa during the three periods were held in the most comfortable seasons of spring and fall. Japanese people have traditionally enjoyed looking at flowers in spring and the changing fall colors in autumn. The sizes of the groups varied, but the members were generally aristocratic acquaintances of the emperors. The activities shared by all three periods were poetry readings and banquets. But boating and tea ceremony activities in the first period, visiting shrines in the second, and playing music in the third reflect each emperor's preferences. Since the villa was located on a mountainside, another very popular activity was to leave the villa to go hiking in the mountains.



Fig 4. pond and the mountains, the Shugakuin Imperial Villa

6. Conclusion

A variety of leisure activities were carried out at the Kawara and Shugakuin Imperial Villas. These activities differed based on who was residing in them. Mountain hiking reflected the location and was an opportunity for emperors to explore nature. Because Retired Empress Meishō's Kawara Imperial Villa was located in the center of Kyoto, she and her acquaintances did not go outside the villa for their activities. Instead they watched the street from the villa or role-played ordinary citizen's lives to escape from their own lives. The lives of the emperors were controlled by the Edo Shogunate, and life at the Imperial Palace was as isolated as the Imperial Court. "Imperial Villas" were a place to escape from their daily lives.

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