



*World Cultural Heritage*

**Nara Palace Site**  
**East Palace**  
**Garden**

平城宮  
東院庭園



44th investigation (1967)



Plan drawing



284th investigation (1997)



Excavation



99th investigation (1976)



Recovery of artifacts

## The East Palace Garden pond: Earlier and latter phases

The pond at the East Palace Garden can be divided into two phases, an earlier and a latter one, by substantial modification in the later Nara period. In the earlier phase, large round stones were laid on the bottom forming a belt running along the shore, but the latter phase saw a shallow pond entirely paved with a layer of small stones extending onto the banks. The shape of the pond also changed from the relatively simple backward "L" of the former phase to complex one with inlets, island, and peninsulas, and a stone arrangement forming an artificial hill on the north shore was also newly added in the latter phase. Along with this reconfiguring of the pond, the buildings were replaced several times.



Archaeological features of the earlier East Palace Garden: 99th investigation (1976)



Reconstructed East Palace Garden (from the southwest)

## Buildings and Other Facilities in the Garden

In the East Palace Garden, there are restored buildings belonging to the later Nara period in the west side of the pond and the northeastern and southeastern parts of the site. These buildings are as follows (see the picture left); the central building in the middle left, the northwest building above it, and the two-stories corner tower in the right side of the middle part. Moreover, other features of the buildings belonging to different phases in the Nara period have been unearthed, which have not been reconstructed. For example, there were one building with pillars atop foundation stones in the north of the central building and another building with eaves on its north side in the north of the southwestern part of the pond. Both of them were facing to the pond. Features of winding stone-lined ditch for "Kyokusui" (stream) were unearthed at two locations. These are considered to have been associated with the pond in the earlier phase; however, the one located in the west of the central building was restored.

# Archaeological excavation

Remains of a large garden were discovered in 1967, in the southeastern corner of the Nara Palace precinct's eastern extension. As this locus corresponded with the "East Palace" seen in the *Shoku Nihongi*, the excavated garden was named the East Palace Garden. Until that time it had been possible to learn about Nara period gardens only through old documents such as *Manyōshū*, but as a result of the excavations conducted after this chance discovery, conditions of the garden and the area around it have for the most part become clear. It has been ascertained that the garden had a pebble beach pond, with an intricately shaped shoreline, at the center of its 80 m east-west by 100 m north-south lot, and that various buildings were placed around it.



▲ Vicinity of the artificial hill stone arrangement on the north shore, latter phase pond features (from the southwest)

\* An artificial hill (tsukiyama) is a man-made feature in the shape of a mountain placed within a garden to create a hill and water landscape, and in former times it was also called *kazan*. The construction of such *kazan* with piled stones is known to have been practiced in China by the time of the Later Han Dynasty. In Japan, this is the oldest example.

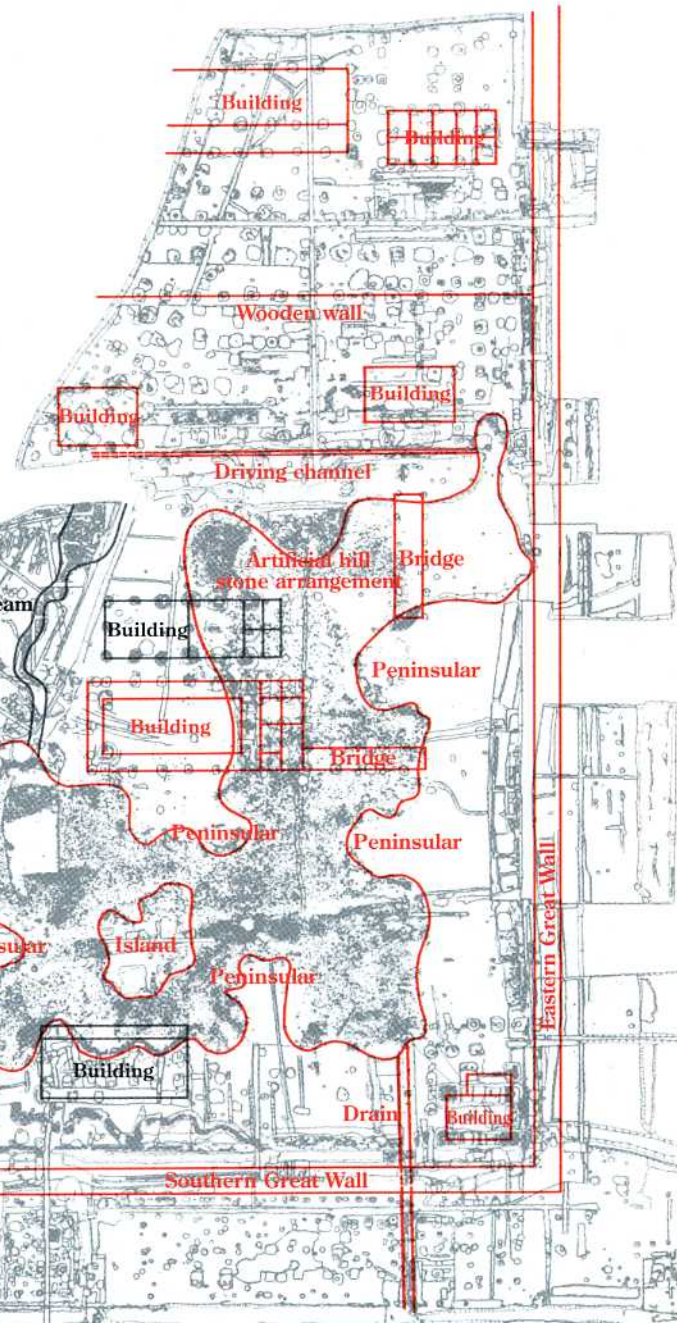


▲ Artifacts recovered from the pond  
Glazed tiles and a wooden small vessel with pottery used for banquet



◀ Western coast of the pond in the latter East Palace Garden (99<sup>th</sup> investigation; from the south)

Rocks were arranged in the point of the peninsular and pebbles were scattered on the bottom of the pond.



Features of the latter phase (in red) Features prior to the latter phase (in black)

## Archaeological features of the latter Eastern Palace Garden

