

## Shōrin'en

The Shōrin'en garden appears in the *Shoku Nihongi* chronicle only during the Tenpyō era years (729–749). According to the *Shoku Nihongi*'s account, Shōrin'en was a location with a palace building where the emperor gathered officials of the fifth court rank and higher for banquets. Also, it was spacious enough for horse archery, and was without doubt an important location for the emperor's use. Yet it remained unknown where and in what manner Shōrin'en was located.

The circumstance through which Shōrin'en's actual existence became recognized was the 1972 investigation of the Hyōtan'yama tomb in conjunction with its management as a Historic Site. It began with confirmation on the part of the Archaeological Institute of Kashihara's investigators of an embankment-shaped feature stretching north–south on the eastern side of the Hyōtan'yama tomb that appeared to be the remains of a tamped-earth wall. With confirmation of a northward extension of this embankment-like feature in the investigation for Historic Site preparation of the Shiozuka tomb in 1978, the Kashihara Institute undertook a full-scale survey of the surrounding area. Based on that investigation, the extent of the surviving tamped-earth wall feature was ascertained, and from the conditions of scattered artifacts the area of distribution of archaeological features could be inferred. Given these results, the existence in the Nara period of a wide area enclosed by an earthen wall was verified, and from considerations of its location immediately north of the Nara palace and of the terrain, along with surviving place names and land allotments, this area has come to be considered the Shōrin'en garden, furnished with an internal enclosure in which a palace building was located.

Thus inferred, Shōrin'en was presumed to border on the northern Great Wall of the Nara palace, and extend from the tamped-earth wall feature on the eastern side of Hyōtan'yama as its western side, to the artificially straight-line eastern bank of Mizugami pond as its eastern border, which then would extend further northward past the round portion of the Hishiage tomb. Considering the topography, the northern limit was presumed to follow the ridges of the neighboring hills. The extent was 1.1 km east–west by 1.3 km north–south, with the Utahime road running north–south through this area at about its center.

Subsequently, verification through excavation has progressed starting with the earthen-wall features. To the west of the Utahime road, within the inferred area of the enclosure, the ground is slightly elevated and features are numerous, and this is coming to be confirmed as the central portion of Shōrin'en. It has also been verified that moats surrounding the tombs were reutilized as garden ponds, and the actual shape of Shōrin'en has come into view. At the same time, further to the east of Mizugami pond, which had been taken as the eastern limit, features of the Nara period have been discovered in rapid succession in recent years, presenting new issues for research.

In excavation No. 107 at the southwest corner of the Konabe tomb, stone-paved shore protection taken to indicate a pond was found in the shape of a right-angled corner, and large amounts of pottery and roof tiles from the time just after the move to the Nara capital had been discarded. Stone paving has been found just east of the Konabe tomb as well, and the possibility has increased that the environs of the tomb were used as a pond garden in the first half of the Nara period. But as the periods where each location was

utilized are regarded as very brief, it is possible that building new garden pond facilities for holding banquets was a frequent occurrence. The stone-paved feature detected in excavation No. 107 was very likely used in the period before Shōrin'en appears in the *Shoku Nihongi*, and it is drawing attention for considerations of the time of construction of Shōrin'en, as well as of its nature and extent.