



Koishikawa Kōrakuen 小石川後樂園

The Koishikawa Kōrakuen is a daimyo garden of the Edo period.

In 1629, Tokugawa Hidetada (Second Shogun) gave the land to Tokugawa Yorifusa (徳川 頼房), the leader of the Mito-han and 11th child of Tokugawa Ieyasu, to build a garden in the Kōraku-area of Edo.

Yorifusa was allowed to construct the garden as he liked, the only requirement was to build a garden in the kaiyushiki style (回遊式 - strolling garden) and to not change the topography dramatically.

In 1623 Tokugawa Iemitsu became Shogun and allowed to change the topography of the garden as well.

Yorifusa couldn't complete Koishikawa Kōrakuen, but moved the task to his third son and successor 徳川光圀 Tokugawa Mitsukuni.

Both leaders of the Mito-han engaged themselves much in the garden construction, but also consulted gardeners like Tokudaiji Sahei (徳大寺佐兵衛), who dammed up the pond and did the stone settings around.

Mitsukuni studied Confucius and invited the Chinese Confucian Shu Shunsui (朱 舜水 1600-1682) to advise him in garden design. It is said, that the design of the Fullmoon bridge came from Shu Shunsui himself.

Mitsukuni also invited the Zen monk Tōkushin Zenshi (東舉心禪士 1639-1695, another name is Tōkushinetsu) to Mito (Ibaraki Prefecture) and it is very likely, that he discussed the matter of Kōrakuen with both Chinese scholars.

This shows, that not only one life attitude might have influenced the Kōrakuen garden.

Edo period

江戸時代
1603 - 1868

Han

藩
Feudal domain

The name Kōrakuen was chosen by Mitsukuni out of the Chinese text of Hanchuen's "Gakuyoro-ki". It contains a phrase, which can be roughly translated with "One with power should see coming troubles before all others, maintain them while everyone enjoys life and then enjoy after everyone else."

The last part of this phrase gave Kōrakuen its name. Kōrakuen literally means: Garden for enjoying later.