

APPENDIX ONE

Shinden Architecture and The Tale of Genji

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It is difficult to truly understand *The Tale of Genji* and its illustrations without understanding the residential architecture within which some of the tale's most memorable scenes were staged. During the Heian period (794–1185), when *Genji* was written, the nobility constructed mansions in the *shinden* style of architecture (*shinden-zukuri*). However, existing structures from the time are virtually nonexistent. Scholars and architectural historians have used descriptions in *The Tale of Genji* and other texts, as well as premodern paintings set in the Heian period, as the basis for diagrams and models to reconstruct what *shinden* residential architecture looked like and how its spaces functioned. This essay outlines some of the most important features of these structures and analyzes their significance within Genji's grand *Rokujō* estate.¹

Shinden Architecture on the Outside

Annual Ceremonies and Events (*Nenjū gyōji emaki*), a copy of a twelfth-century handscroll painting depicting official ceremonies of the courtly calendar and seasonal observances, provides a good introduction to some of the exterior features of *shinden* architecture (fig. 83). The scene illustrated depicts

a cockfight, an event associated with the third month, taking place in the southern courtyard of the south-facing main building of a nobleman's residence. The grounds of the mansion are surrounded on four sides by a perimeter wall, with access allowed through a gate on the eastern (or western) side. Inside the perimeter is an "interior corridor" (*chūmonrō*) with its own gated doors that open onto the southern courtyard. Entering the southern courtyard thus requires passing through two boundaries, the outer gate and the inner gate.

The space between the outer gate and the interior corridor functioned as a waiting area for the attendants who were not of high enough status to enter the courtyard. The hall in the center of the courtyard itself is the *shinden*, the main residential building, in this style of architecture. In the illustration, several men watch the festivities on the eastern side of the building, while women occupy the western side, observing the events from behind drawn blinds and through the spaces between curtains. High-ranking noblewomen largely remained hidden behind blinds, curtains, and furnishings, out of the sight of men (see also cats. 74, 78). To the left of the building, a woman holding a folding fan stands on a covered walkway (*watadono*) at the western side of the *shinden*. Such bridges connected the

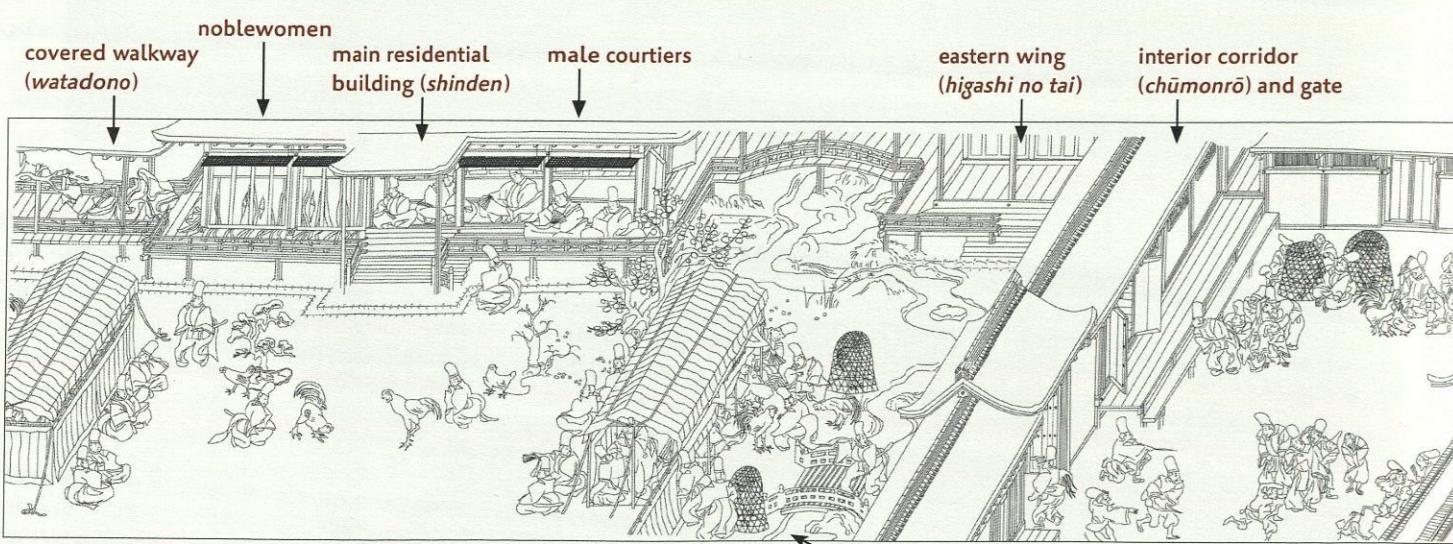


Fig. 83. Line-drawn copy of a scene from *Annual Ceremonies and Events* (*Nenjū gyōji emaki*), 12th century. Tanaka Collection

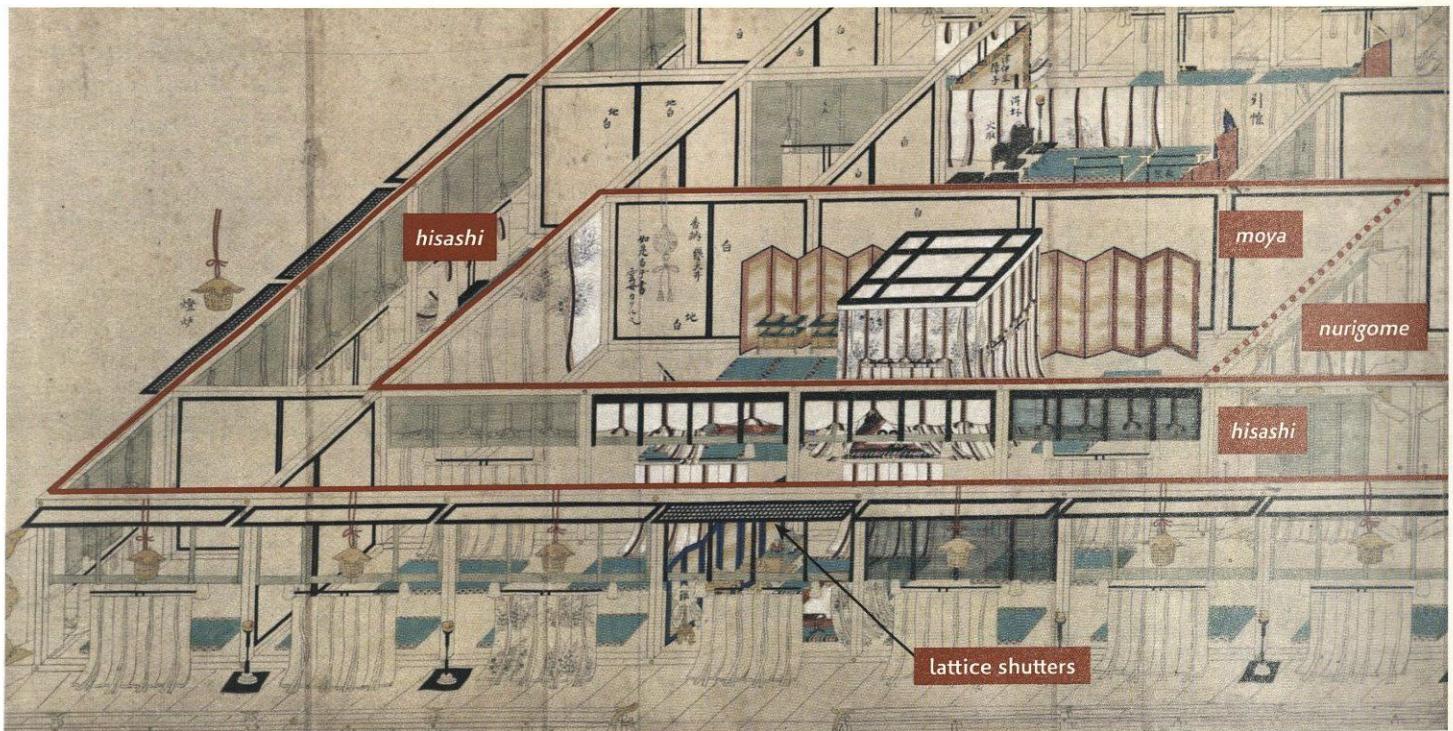


Fig. 84. *A Miscellany of Essential Household Accessories* (*Ruijū zōyōshō*), Scroll 2. Edo period (1615–1868). Handscroll; ink and color on paper. Tokyo National Museum (QA-4001)

main building to separate wings (*tai*) of the residential complex. In some cases, the main building was the residence of parents, while an adult daughter occupied a residential wing, the place to which her husband would return from his own residence, in accordance with the Heian-period system of uxorilocal marriage. Narrow streams (*yarimizu*) flowing beneath the covered walkways and bridges fed into the man-made ponds and lakes that were often part of the landscaped grounds of these properties. Seated on a walkway or veranda (*sunoko*), composing poetry while listening to a babbling brook or gazing out at the courtyard garden, Heian-period occupants of *shinden*-style architecture experienced all four seasons.

Shinden Architecture on the Inside

The interior spaces of *shinden*-style architecture are composed of a central core, the *moya*, surrounded by aisles (*hisashi*) and outer aisles called *magobisashi* (literally, “grandchild aisles”) (fig. 84). As with other forms of Japanese timber-frame architecture, *shinden* buildings consisted of round vertical posts, horizontal beams, and non-load-bearing walls. This resulted in buildings with open plans and no fixed walls or permanent barriers. Individual living spaces were created by partitioning spaces with furnishings and fixtures: portable standing curtains

(*kichō*), folding screens (*byōbu*), blinds (*misu*), freestanding wood screens (*tsuitate*, see cat. 74), and paper sliding doors (*shōji*). Even areas of the wood floor could be reconfigured with movable tatami mats for sleeping or sitting. All of these items were changed out for those in different materials and colors according to seasonal and ceremonial needs, which conformed to a strict set of rules (*shitsurai*) that dictated their use.

Exterior-facing features included black-lacquered lattice shutters (*kōshi*) that were raised open from the inside to create a flow between interior and exterior space. By the late medieval period, these black-lacquered shutters had largely disappeared from residential buildings, replaced by external horizontal sliding doors. Their presence in paintings of the early modern period came to signify an archaic form that symbolized the residential architecture of the nobility in the classical and medieval eras.

In the late Edo period (1615–1868), designs were created in an attempt to reconstruct the imperial palace of the Heian period (fig. 85). The Seiryōden, the emperor’s residence within the Imperial Residential Compound (Dairi), was centered on the Imperial Daytime Chamber (Hi no Omashi), surrounded by sliding-door paintings depicting celebrated sites throughout the Japanese archipelago. Unlike the rest of the building, the Imperial Nighttime Chamber (Yon no Otodo) was a special

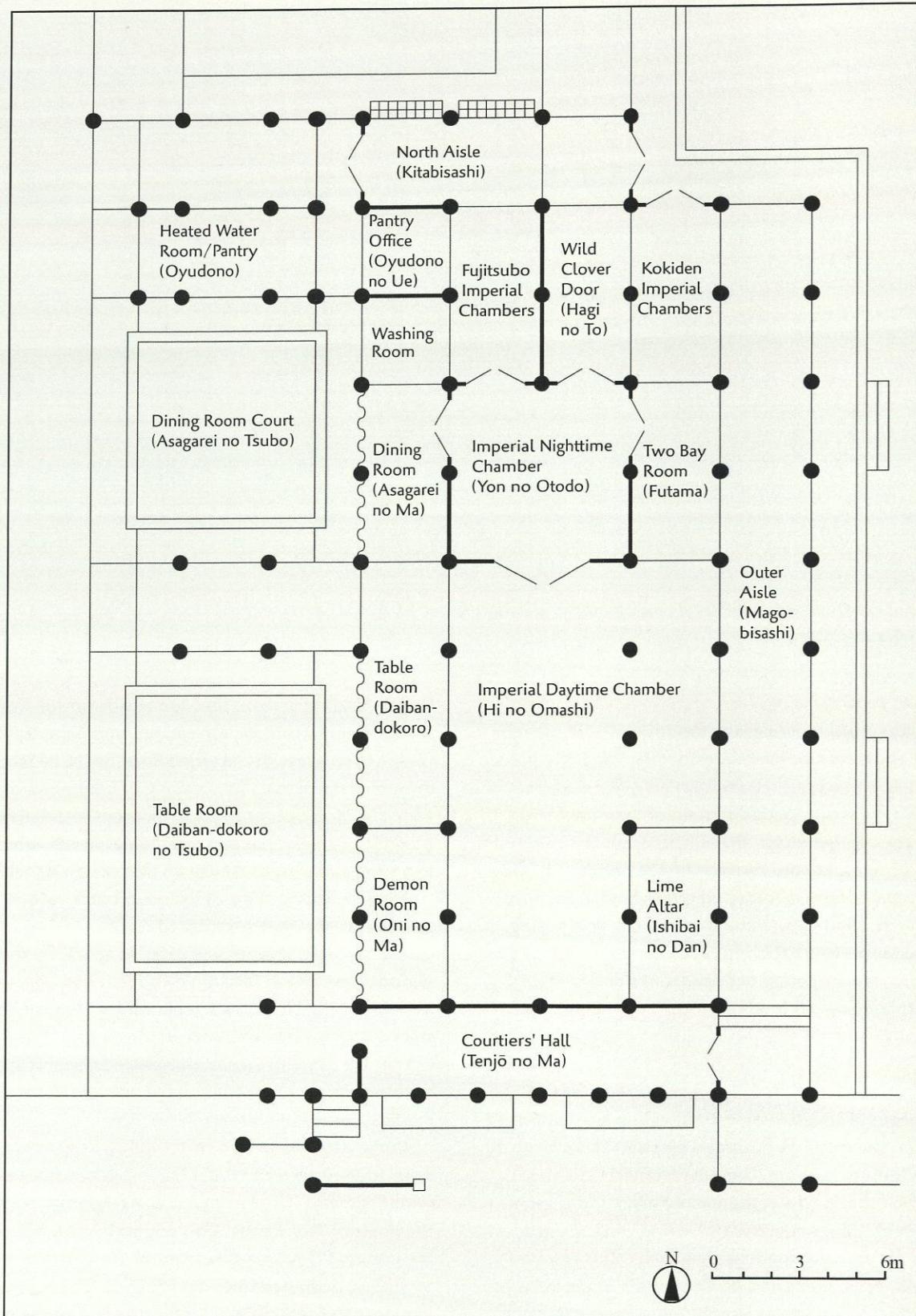


Fig. 85. Plan of the Seiryōden (literally "Hall of Cool and Refreshing Breezes"), the emperor's residence, based on nineteenth-century reconstruction of the Kyoto Imperial Palace. After Nihon Kenchiku Gakkai 2007

enclosed room with plastered walls (*nurigome*), adjacent to the designated chambers of the Fujitsubo and Kokiden Imperial Consorts in the north; the Rear Court (*Kōkyū densha*) of the imperial consorts and wives consisted of separate buildings to the north of the Seiryōden, but the chambers of these two highest-ranking ladies were constructed within the interior of the emperor's residence. Rooms enclosed by white plaster walls and accessed by hinged wood doors (*tsumado*), like the imperial bedchamber, often served the purifying function of a sacred space, and were used as nuptial chambers or funerary spaces, specifically for the laying out of a corpse. An important furnishing occasionally placed within such a chamber was the curtained platform (*chōdai, michō*) (fig. 86). It was constructed by inserting vertical posts into a low wood dais (*hamayuka*) and suspending a layer of fabric above to enclose all four sides. These curtained platform beds, when placed within a room with plaster walls, created a separate space demarcated for auspicious or special events, including childbirth, marriage rites, and imperial funerals.

Residential Architecture in *The Tale of Genji*: The Rokujō Estate and Its Garden of the Four Seasons

By Chapter 21 of the tale, "Maidens of the Dance" (*Otome*), Genji, age thirty-five, is flourishing, having been exonerated after exile and having risen to the position of chancellor. He begins constructing a grand palatial estate in the capital, partly on land that once belonged to Lady Rokujō. The entire compound encompasses four parcels of land joined together, with each quadrant dedicated to one of the four seasons and within which Genji installs his various women (fig. 87). Genji lives in the main building (*shinden*) of the southeast (spring) quadrant, along with Lady Murasaki, who occupies the eastern wing (*higashi no tai*), and her adopted daughter, the Akashi Princess, who lives in the eastern rooms of the *shinden*. After Genji's death, his grandson the Second Prince, Niou, calls the main building of this quadrant his home, while his granddaughter, the First Princess, claims the eastern wing, all of which is appropriate since both of them are children of the Akashi Empress (the former Akashi Princess). To create the landscape of the spring quarter of the property, Genji constructed tall hills and planted the quintessential flowering trees and plants of that season: red plum, cherry, wisteria, azalea, and mountain rose, along with five-needle pines.

The northeast (summer) quadrant is home to the character known as Hanachirusato and to Genji's son Yūgiri before he marries. Later, the western wing becomes the living quarters of Tamakazura, and after Genji's death, Yūgiri takes over this portion of the estate, installing there one of his wives, the Second



Fig. 86. Curtained platform (*michō*), from a copy of the *Miraculous Origins of the Kasuga Deity* (*Kasuga Gongen genki-e*). Edo period (1615–1868), 19th century. Ink and color on paper. Tokyo National Museum (A-1662)

Princess, known as Ochiba. The summer grounds are characterized by a natural water spring (*izumi*), bamboo (*kuretake*), hedges of deutzia, flowering orange trees, pinks or gillyflowers (*nadeshiko*), and roses, along with a track for horse racing and mounted archery events.

The Umetsubo Empress, also known as Akikonomu, literally "one who loves autumn," resides in the southwest (autumn) quadrant of Rokujō when not at the palace. In this section, sited on what was originally a slightly elevated plot of land, Genji enlarged the hills, planted trees that would give forth brilliant crimson leaves in the fall, and erected a waterfall.

The northwest (winter) quadrant of the estate is where the Akashi Lady resides, surrounded by a perimeter of pines, a fence full of chrysanthemum flowers, and trees found deep in the mountains. This is the only residential complex among the four quadrants without a main building (*shinden*); instead, there are two large wings (*tai*) side by side, and the northernmost portion of the property is occupied by storehouses.

The Nijō Residences

Genji also inherited the residence of his mother, the Kiritsubo Consort, which is called the Nijō mansion (*Nijō'in*), where he lived before the construction of the Rokujō estate. It is to the western wing of this residence that Genji first brings the young Murasaki to live with him, and even after Rokujō is built this remains Murasaki's second home. After her death it is inherited by Prince Niou, a son of the Akashi Empress, and he welcomes



Fig. 87. Model of Genji's Rokujo estate. The Tale of Genji Museum, Uji City

into its western wing the Uji Princess Nakanokimi, whom he takes as a wife. At a separate compound called Nijo Toin, which Genji received from his father and renovated, Hanachirusato occupies the west wing, while the north wing eventually becomes the home of Suetsumuhana and Utsusemi. All the while, the main building is left open for Genji to use as his residence; Hanachirusato inherits the residence after Genji's death.

It is useful to consider which character occupies the *shinden* in Genji's Rokujo estate. As a structure with a special status, the *shinden* is expected to be the living quarters of an official wife. Murasaki is Genji's greatest love, but she has no strong parental backing and is raised by Genji himself, and because she never becomes his primary official wife, she resides in the east wing of his spring residence. When Genji marries the daughter of the Suzaku Emperor, the character known as the Third Princess, he welcomes her into the spring quarter of Rokujo as his official wife, and she occupies the *shinden*, as Murasaki never could.

Similarly, the residence of the Akashi Lady in the winter quadrant has symbolic significance by having no *shinden* at

all. As the daughter of a member of the provincial governing class (*zuryo*), her status is so low that it is deemed best for the daughter she has with Genji, the Akashi Princess, to be raised by Murasaki. The specific spaces of a *shinden* complex within which someone resides are thus strictly determined by their rank and status, and in *The Tale of Genji* those spaces reveal much about a given character.

The female attendants who served high-ranking ladies lived in specially designated apartments (*tsubone*) or, at the imperial palace, in the large room called the Table Room (*Daibandokoro*). The author of *The Tale of Genji*, Murasaki Shikibu, was a female attendant and at one time resided in the palace of Emperor Ichijo (980–1011). There her room was located near the eastern door on the northern walkway that bridged the *shinden* and the east wing. She shared her chambers with a fellow lady-in-waiting named Koshoshō. They merged their two rooms into one, and when both were in service at the same time, portable standing curtains divided their living areas. When one returned home the other occupied the whole space.

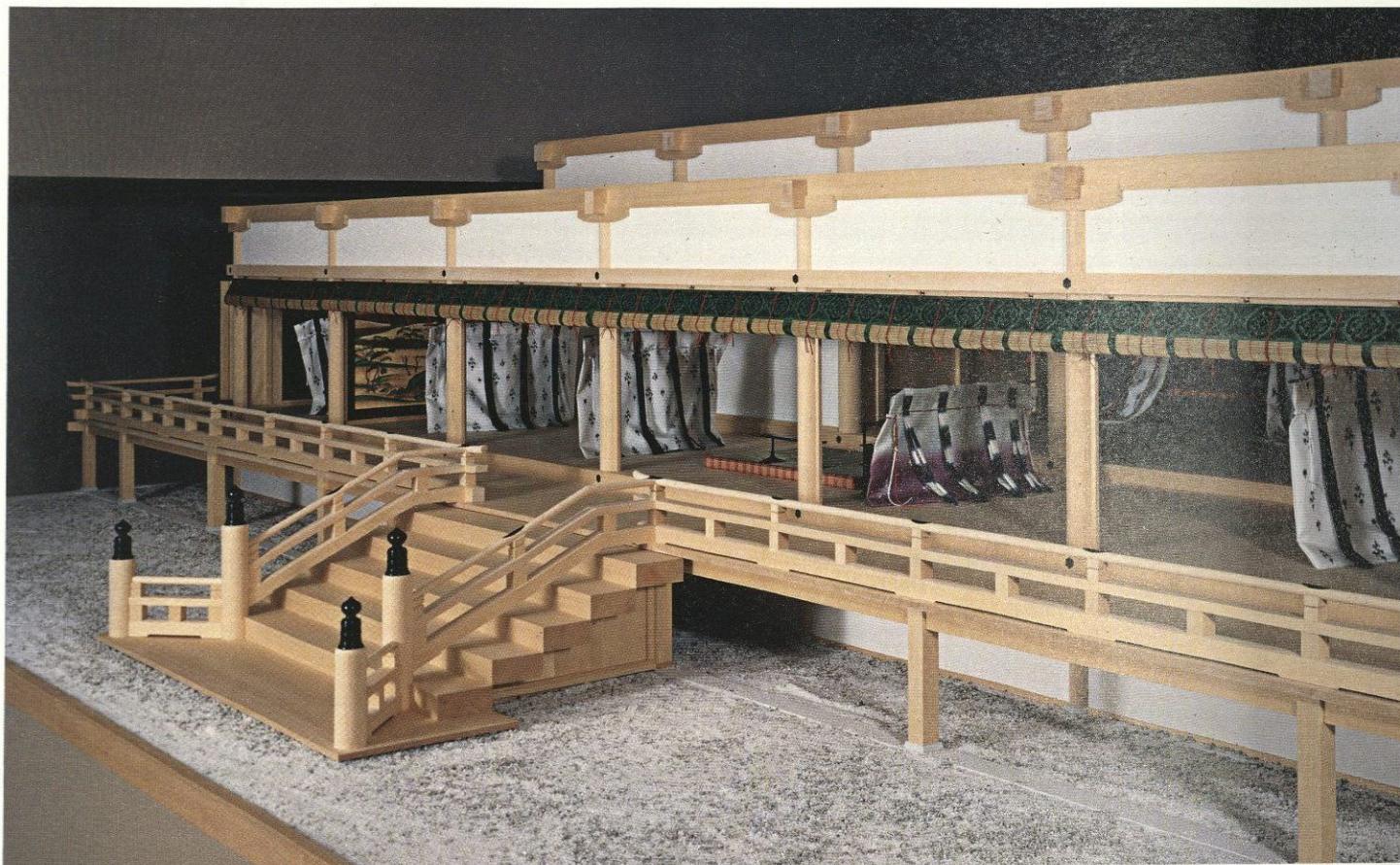


Fig. 88. Re-creation of one portion of a model of Genji's spring quadrant at Rokujo. The Costume Museum, Kyoto

The Tale of Genji and Research on the History of Residential Architecture

The first systematic and large-scale inquiry into the history of residential architecture in Japan began in the late eighteenth century with the compilation of massive collections of old documents and pictorial materials related to the Heian palace and the homes of the nobility. As research developed, scholars of architecture and Japanese literature began investigating the residences described in *The Tale of Genji*. The twentieth century witnessed the construction of actual models that re-created these fictional structures, most important among them being those made by the literary scholar Tamagami Takuya and the architectural historian Ike Kōzō.² Ike's plans became the basis for the remarkable one-quarter-scale model of Genji's palace in the spring quarter of the Rokujo estate, constructed at the Costume Museum in Kyoto, under Ike's supervision (fig. 88). That model contains all of the interior furnishings of *shinden* architecture explained above, created

by expert craftsmen, as well as dolls with robes and textiles informed by historical research and the descriptions in the tale. The model that belongs to The Tale of Genji Museum in the city of Uji re-creates all four quadrants of the Rokujo estate at 1/100 scale (fig. 87). Life-size models based on scenes from the twelfth-century *Genji Scrolls* have also been built, providing an immersive experience of Heian-period architecture.

—Translated by Melissa McCormick

1. For a more comprehensive study of this subject in English, see Akazawa 2018. For a broader examination of architecture as represented in *The Tale of Genji* and Heian architecture in general, see *Genji monogatari zuten* 1997; Hinata 2004; Kawamoto, Shigeo 2005; Nihon Kenchiku Gakkai 2007; Akazawa 2010. The layout of Heian-kyō, present-day Kyoto, as well as the residential architectural style of the capital elite, is discussed in chapters 1 and 2 of Stavros 2014.

2. Ike 1989. Schematic diagrams and digital reconstructions prepared for a project headed by Professor Tamagami are included in a website hosted by the Obayashi Corporation, *Genji monogatari / The Tale of Genji: Hikaru Genji Rokujo-in no kōshō fukugen* (*The Tale of Genji: A reconstruction of the Shining Prince's Rokujo estate based on historical evidence*), accessed Nov. 6, 2018, https://www.obayashi.co.jp/kikan_obayashi/genji.