

## The Garden of the Far East, the Garden of Stones and Water—The translated landscape of nature

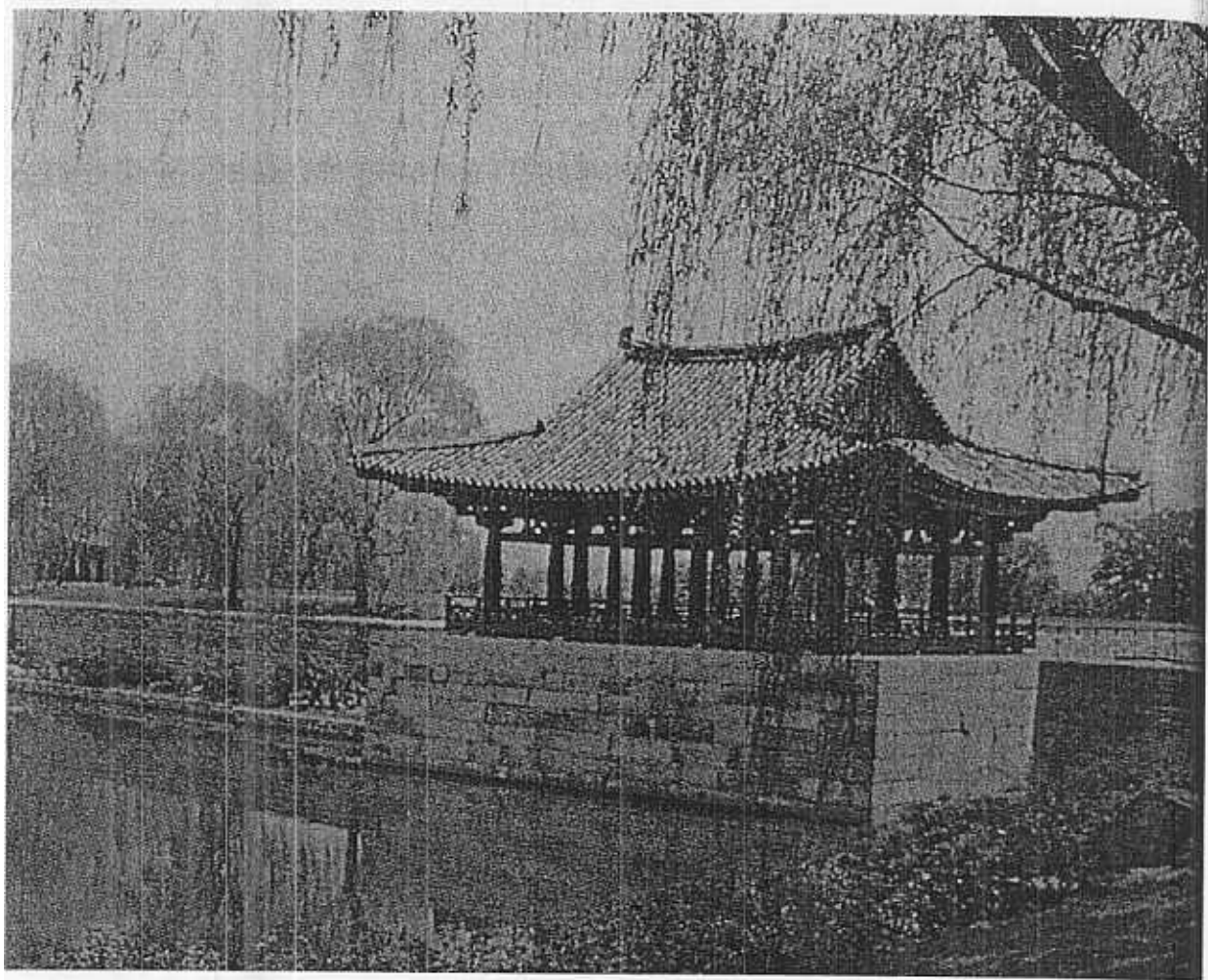
*Sue - Hee KIM*

The Garden of the Far East reflects a vision of nature, the translated landscape of nature in a closed space, in a determined enclosure, created for meditation, besides its function of being an area for relaxation and recreation. Its nomenclature in old Chinese letters means “the garden of quietude” or “the garden of flowers” that which expresses the human desire to be in or near nature, understanding it as the “complete and perfect” artistic creation of the universe. The garden architecture of ancient times would try to reach the essence of things, the fugitive and at the same time, eternal image of the elements of nature, simulating the natural landscape with hills, streams, trees, rocks, flowers, animals, insects, cascade waterfalls etc. in harmony with the laws of nature. According to the ideas of the Far East, nature is understood as the meaning of existence, “the made event” or all things between the heaven and the earth, from the simple grass to the clouds, the mountain, the human being etc. in harmony, without an established hierarchy. It means “the benevolent nature” Of the Confucian philosopher, Meng-Zi,<sup>1</sup> that is shown in artistic works. Equally, it means nature that signifies the perfect and the absolute of the universe, regenerating and maintaining life, that teaches to respect “the natural”, leaving out the artificial structure

as one would an imperfect or vulgar thing.

Throughout history, the Garden that was created according to these ideas presented some definite models according to the religious or philosophical theories of each period or each dynasty. However, in spite of the stylistic variety, the oriental architect always takes into consideration the following dispositions in garden construction: the geological and geographic conditions that exist at the moment at which the selection of the terrain takes place, which connects it with the oriental theory of Feng-Shui, the geomancy; the different types of vegetation according to the time of the year and the flowering seasons which condition the appearance and the colour of trees and plants; the size and height of these trees and plants that affect the ventilation and illumination of the sites or the nearest buildings; the importance of sound as it creates the atmosphere which echoes the sound of running water, the waterfalls or the small rivers, the sound of the flights and songs of the birds nestling in these trees, and the sound of the winds passing between the trees that seem to resemble the traditional music played by Kumunge, a Korean instrument; the perfume from selected trees and flowers as well as their fruits.

Sue - Hee KIM



*Anapchi Far East*

The Far Eastern garden whose origins are found in the legendary period of Zhou<sup>2</sup>, the time of Confucius<sup>3</sup> and Lao-Zi<sup>4</sup>, and in the construction of the recreation palaces with gardens for banquet celebrations, scenes of which are to be seen in the old bronze vessels, would in general fall into three categories. The most representative of them is the model of the classical garden, created in the enclosed site such as the palace complexes or castles, the nobleman's houses, the academies or the village houses etc. These gardens imitate nature, the miniature landscape, but have an artificial disposition. The second model is the gardens placed near buildings because these were built on beautiful natural sites of woods and meadows, like the sites of temples or tombs. And the third model is the "natural" garden of the panoramic landscape that was painted by poet-painters as "the ideal landscape" and probably, the distant landscape. They are the famous landscapes which travellers or those who walk would stop to see. Sometimes, it is the famous cascade with Taoist legends, the capriciously formed rocks or some very old trees. Pavilions or a simple balcony are built to enjoy the vision of these singular gardens that are the same as nature, the universe-garden which distance makes almost unapproachable. Thus it is sometimes only possible to contemplate the landscape paintings of the Far East, Shan-Shui Hua "the painting of mountains and water".

Among the models of gardens, one of the oldest and restored gardens is said to be in the Palace of Tong-Gung, in the old capital of the Shilla Kingdom<sup>5</sup>, Kyung-Ju, in the southeast of Korea, although there exist some documents about the birth of garden art in the Han

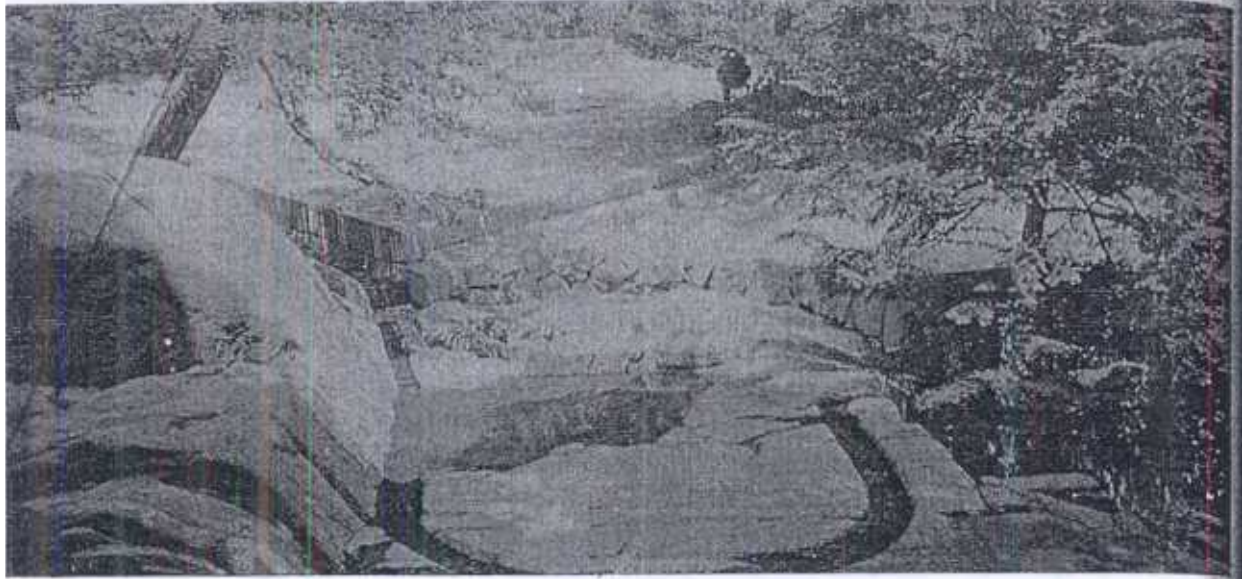
Dynasty period according to the "Records of History" written by Sima Qian<sup>6</sup>. The Palace of Tong-Gung was built with an immense garden and a pond named Anapchi, in the seventh century, And the following text was written in the "History of Three Kingdoms".

"...in the year of 674, a pond was made with some island-mountains, the flowers were planted, the exotic birds and animals were placed in the garden..."

Anapchi is a clear antecedent of later gardens of Japan and China, in the style of the landscape gardens with artificial ponds. However, its most important character rests in "the irregularity" of its composition and of its forms. It is a pond of great dimensions, almost 15,000 square meters, that symbolises the paradise of Taoist immortals.

There are two elements in the garden of the Palace of Tong-Gung: that which is of "natural" origin and that which is artificially constructed. The first Group refers to rocks which are the symbols of mountains, trees plants, animals etc. and the second, to bridges, pavilions, the stoneways etc. The garden of the Palace of Tong-Gung served as a model for gardens in the Far East, the meaning of the garden being an arranged space in harmony with the laws of nature.

Among the elements in an oriental gardens, water and stone are respected and indispensable, and sometimes gardens were made with only these two elements, It was so because water and stone symbolizes the two opposite elements of the universe according to the ideas of the Far East as well as being intrinsic symbols of longevity, reflected in many styles of expression. In the case of stone, the rocks are a small island, often a sculpture, or a



*Arroyo de Jade (Jade Stream)*

*Lotus Pavilion*



commemorative plate. And the water is in varied forms that enclose it as a lake, a pond, a small river or a cascade would. As for the cascade, there are no fountains with high spreading water in the gardens of the Far East. This means, that the water in a cascade runs down according to the laws of nature, often interrupted, passing between some stones or rocks that make possible the sinuous water-way. It is the most important difference which distinguishes the gardens of the Far East from those of the Arabian gardens although water is the fundamental element in both cases.

Walking across the gardens of the Far East means passing among plants and trees like chrysanthemum, orchid, plum tree, bamboo, pine tree, willow, ginkovilova, etc. And it also means passing among mountainous landscapes as a poet - historian of the Korean art once said;

"...the mountain turns deeper and the valleys, more blue. The sound of the water turns clearer and the stones and the rocks, more blue... The jade-like songs of the mountain's birds are like the poured crystals on the silver tray... walking between the rocks and the tree trunks looks like the difficult way of the human life..."

The ancient gardens of the Far East represent "natural" beauty. This beauty is not artificial and it is reflected in the least petal of the lotus flower, in the flying butterfly or dragonfly drawing invisible lines in the sky or in those rocks of capricious forms that create a "non-occupied space", Its importance has been explained by the contemporary sculptors. The restoration of these ancient gardens and the creation of the new green zone coincide with the human desire for the illusion of immor-

tality or longevity, which is retained in time and space, and which is possible only through such artistic creations.

A poem of a Korean Taoist poet portrays the idea of immortality. This short poem suggests the image of the Far East garden' In other words, It is nature or the universe that turns reality into a dream, in a cyclical process of transformation.

" If I  
turn into a stone  
the stone  
turns into a lotus  
and a lotus  
turn into a lake.  
If I  
turns into a lake  
the lake  
turns into a lotus  
and the lotus  
turns into stone."

At the end of the 20th century, in which they talk about the return to nature and ecology, the needs of the new aesthetic sensibility emerges as a work of research which proposes the emancipation of art from technique. The suggestions that arise from these ancient gardens are to turn to "the unique element, charged with meaning, memories, legends and with the art" help to make the search for an enduring beauty a possibility.

The gardens of "water and stones" of the Far East is crystallization of the microcosmic world, the image of "the poetic and magic world, and also sensitive and alive to this last refuge" for the human being of our days. From the works of the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, who visited the Japanese garden of ponds, bridges and rocks, a gift of Japan at the Universal Exposition of Chicago, in the final years of the 19th century, to the works of an



*Temple*

artist like M. Mertz, in our day, nature has been reflected in the harmony of the world-creation, the same universe shown in artistic creation. It is the same vision of nature shown in the musical creation of Cage, "el Crisantemi" of Fuccini, "the song of birds" of P. Casals or of the poems of E. Pound, that remains.

The beauty of a cut branch of flowers of an almond tree in a glass of water a painting of van Gogh or the photography of an American artist, is the same image to a landscape painting. And so it is in the miniature landscape of nature in a garden. The same "beauty" is reflected in the gesture of taking a natural rock and putting it in an enclosed space - that means the garden.

At the end of the 20th century we can say that we still have the poem, the wind, the water and the stone, all those mean the garden.

#### Notes

1. Meng-Zi ( ?372? - 289 a.c.)
2. Dirastia Zhou (siglos XII-III a. C.)
3. Confucius (551-479 a. C.)
4. Lao-Zi (? 604 - ? a.c.)
5. Shilla Kingdom (57 a.c. - 935 d. C.)
6. Sima Qian (145-90 a.C. )