

SPECIAL PROBLEMS CONNECTED WITH THE CONSERVATION OF GARDENS
OF HISTORICAL INTEREST IN JAPAN

It is great honour for me to have an opportunity of speaking on "Special Problems connected with the Conservation of Gardens of Historical Interest in Japan", as I have been invited to do by Professor Gazzola, President of ICOMOS, at this first symposium on problems relating to the conservation and restoration of gardens of historical interest, held under the joint sponsorship of ICOMOS and of the International Federation of Landscape Architects.

Historic Japanese gardens, even apart from the Katsura Villa, the stone garden of the Ryo-an-ji Temple, and others which are famous throughout the world, are very highly thought of. We have many excellent gardens, inherited from earlier generations, mainly in Kyoto but also in various other parts of the country. At present as many as a hundred and twelve such gardens are scheduled as "places of scenic beauty representative of our beautiful land", under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Property, by reason of their unique historical style or artistic value.

As is apparent from Appendix 1, most of the historic gardens in Japan belong to Buddhist temples, and this is probably due to the fact that the development of Japanese gardens has been so closely related to that of Buddhism.

As an introduction to the development of the various styles, I will discuss the characteristics of traditional Japanese garden styles and their wide variations in Section I. Section II will be devoted chiefly to the problem of excavations carried out for the purpose of determining the original forms of ancient gardens as a preliminary to

their restoration, Section III will deal with the laws and administrative measures in force in Japan for the conservation of historic gardens, and in my final Section I would like to look squarely at Japanese reality and at the way in which our valuable cultural assets are being imperilled by the rapid progress of urbanization and the destruction of the natural environment and point to the measures most urgently needed for the conservation of cultural property faced with the danger of environmental destruction.

I- The characteristics of the traditional Japanese garden styles.

From documentary records, the history of traditional Japanese gardens can be traced back to as early as the Asuka Period (6th to 7th Century). Japanese gardens were greatly influenced by Buddhism, which, like Japanese culture as a whole, was introduced from the Chinese continent. In contrast to western gardens, which began with the formal style, - the "landscape" style not developing until the Eighteenth Century - traditional Japanese gardens adopted the landscape style as a means of exploiting natural elements from the very beginning. Though historic Japanese gardens were influenced by Buddhism, they developed and matured as an important part of the Japanese national culture, fostered by the climate peculiar to Japan and the characteristic Japanese attitude towards nature. Their styles have had a multifarious development, closely associated with so highly symbolic a concept of garden design as "kare-sansui" ("dry-landscape" garden) and with "wabi", a peculiarly Japanese feeling towards nature which it is difficult to define, while in the course of such development the styles of previous generations have not been discarded. It was early in the Edo Period (16th Century) that the celebrated "strolling garden" at the Katsura Villa was completed. This masterpiece of Japanese landscape gardening is highly esteemed as a complete synthesis of the many styles of Japanese traditional garden design.

From the point of view of form, Japanese garden styles can be divided into three principal types, i.e. "landscape gardens", "dry-landscape gardens" and "Roji" (tea-gardens). However, if one wishes to analyse the historical development of their styles, it is possible to divide them into six types, "Shima" gardens (waterside gardens with and island set in a pond, dating from the Asuka-Nara Period), "Shinden-zukuri" gardens (Heian Period), "Jodo" gardens (late Heian Period to early Kamakura Period), "Karesansui" (artificial gardens without real water, of the Muromachi Period), tea gardens (Momoyama Period) and strolling gardens (early Edo Period).

As we have just said, these historic garden styles reflect the characteristics of their periods. The basic principle underlying all such traditional gardens is the introduction of landscape, and, as technical methods for adaptation to nature, or for the designing of landscape, Japanese garden-designers progressively developed three different styles of deformation - "Shin" (the elaborate style), "Gyo" (the moderately elaborate style), and "So" (the highly simplified style). In seeking to relate these gardens to the surrounding environment, they also developed such techniques as that of "diminutive landscape" or "borrowed landscape", in which emphasis is placed on the integration of the garden into its background.

The table given in Appendix 1 shows a list of Japanese historic gardens scheduled as cultural property in various parts of Japan. I have classified these gardens according to their period style when seeking to assess their historical value and I have also attempted to appraise them from the point of view of designing technique and of state of preservation and maintenance, thus showing the reasons why they have been scheduled as "cultural property" by the Government.

2- Problems relating to the excavation of ancient gardens and their restoration to their original state

The excavation of ancient gardens and research into their design have been actively pursued in recent years and it has become increasingly clear that there exists a close relationship between ancient Japanese and ancient Chinese gardens. The case in point is that of a part of the ruins of a palace garden of the Nara Period which was discovered in 1968 during excavation of the site of the Heijo Imperial Palace in Nara by the Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Property. The excavation of the ruins of this garden has proved the existence in ancient Japan not only of "Shima" landscape designs and of waterside designs, hitherto known only from historical records, but also of channels of flowing water on which to float wine-cups, which are considered to have been introduced into the country from China in ancient times.

The gardens of the Chūson-ji Temple, the Mōtsū-ji Temple, the Muryokō-in Temple and the Kanjizaion-in Temple, which have been uncovered by the National Commission for the Protection of Cultural Property since 1952, were apparently laid out in the age of the Hiraizumi Culture (1099-1187), late in the Heian Period. The results of the excavations and of the investigations into these ruins (1952) have provided a great deal of valuable information regarding the ancient Jodo garden style and show that part of the garden design fits in with the designing techniques of the Shinden-zukuri garden style described in the Sakuteiki (Book of Garden Design), probably the oldest book of this kind in Japan. This is particularly evident in the garden of the Mōtsū-ji Temple.

The excavation of the ornamental stone work at the site of the defunct "Tanhokuken" of the Saiho-ji Temple marked a step forward in the work of determining the original form of the Saiho-ji Garden. The excavation and restoration of the garden of the Zuisen-ji Temple (1969) have further greatly enlightened us on the garden-designing techniques of

Musō-Kokushi, a famous Zen priest and garden-designer, and the excavation and restoration of a garden at the site of Asakura's residence at Ichijōdani (1967) also provided us with a great deal of information of very considerable value for further research on the Japanese gardens of the Middle Ages. The stones used in Japanese garden design were so heavy that it is relatively frequent for them to have been preserved in their original positions. However we must be cautious when making investigations into historic garden styles, since ancient gardens were often left to decay or re-arranged long after they were originally laid out. As an example I would like to speak about the research which preceded the restoration of the garden of the Daisen-in Temple, which is regarded as a typical "dry landscape" garden of the Muromachi Period.

The Daisen-in Temple garden is an important piece of cultural property, which was scheduled as a "place of scenic beauty" in 1924 and as a "special place of scenic beauty" in 1952. Opinion had been divided on the original form of this garden before restoration work was done on it in 1961. When the chief priest's quarters in the temple were rebuilt, a narrow roofed corridor dividing the garden into upper and lower sections was restored in its original form, with the result that the garden assumed a greatly changed aspect.

The excavation and restoration of ancient gardens necessitate lengthy research and investigation and also very considerable funds for the actual digging, and for this reason a great deal is expected of the more positive research work being done by the National Research Institute for Cultural Property and similar bodies.

3- Administrative machinery for the conservation of historic gardens in Japan.

The government efforts for the protection of cultural property in

Japan began with the enactment, in 1919, of the Law for the Protection of Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty and Natural Monuments. This law was amended in 1950 and became the "Cultural Property Protection Law" which remains in force today.

Under this law, the administrative work is done by the Monuments Division of the Cultural Property Protection Department of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, an external organ of the Ministry of Education. The Government's basic policy for the protection and scheduling of cultural property is discussed and decided on by the National Commission for the Protection of Cultural Property, composed of five members. This commission is assisted by various specialist councils, each covering a given subject such as historic sites, places of scenic beauty, natural monuments architecture, fine arts, etc., which carry out the actual research and investigations and help the Commission make its decisions on the scheduling of cultural property and on the devising of plans for its protection. Such councils are composed of a total number of not more than 90 experts.

The scheduling of historic gardens is discussed by the Council on Places of Scenic Beauty, which is composed of 10 experts.

In addition to these central administrative organs, there are prefectural boards for education which look after the protection of cultural property on the administrative level in the different prefectures. Some of the prefectures, cities, towns and villages have their own commissions of experts on cultural property and apply their own regulations governing its protection. These local organs operate in close contact with the central administration ; however, at levels lower than that of the prefectures the administrative machinery is not yet fully developed.

Such famous pieces of cultural property as the gardens of the Katsura Villa, the Shugaku-in Villa, the Kyoto-gosho Palace and the Sento-gosho Palace are so well taken care of by the Imperial Household

Agency that there is no need for them to be scheduled

Administrative work such as scheduling and the organization of research, custodianship, guidance and protection come under the jurisdiction of the Monuments Division of the Cultural Property Protection Department of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, where one research official and one technical official are effectively in charge of historic gardens. The Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Property has only five technical officials to carry out research and investigation relating to the conservation of such gardens, and it is strongly felt that the number of these officials should be increased and more budgetary appropriations made to finance the work.

There has recently been an increase in the amount of designing work needed following the excavation of ruins and also in the need for conservation work on existent historic gardens, preservation work on natural surroundings and precautionary measures against disasters.

In the days before the Second World War, Buddhist temples had sufficient financial resources to be able to take good care of their gardens as religious cultural assets. Since the war, however, their financial position has become difficult, owing to the government policy of separating religion and politics, with the result that the situation with regard to the protection of their gardens is now becoming rather serious. Historic gardens well known to the public support themselves adequately by attracting large numbers of tourists, but the gardens of the Buddhist temples and the privately-owned gardens which are not so popular with the tourists have difficulty in raising the necessary funds for their maintenance and upkeep. If a garden is to be well conserved, good care must be taken of it, involving such maintenance operations as the trimming of trees, the prevention of vermin and of damage from disease, the renewal of the soil, the planting of trees where needed, weeding, cleaning-out of ponds and so forth. Such being the case, the

Government should make a proper budgetary appropriation to cover subsidies for the maintenance and management of those historic gardens which possess a genuine value

Non-governmental organizations are of great importance for the protection of historic gardens, but the movement in this direction is not very active in Japan as yet. The Japanese National Trust, a foundation for the protection of the resources serving the tourist trade, has recently been making an organized effort to assist in the conservation of historic gardens left in a poor state of upkeep, but its work has not yet had satisfactory results. Much is expected of it in the future, when it is anticipated that it will be vigorously active. There are other private organizations, such as the National Council for the Protection of Scheduled Gardens and the Japanese Association for the Protection of Gardens, but they are not very active as yet. The government also gives administrative guidance to the local authorities, whom it advises to set up "model districts for the protection of cultural property", subsidized by the Treasury. This system is expected to be expanded further in the future.

Finally, I wish to speak briefly about the activities of academic circles with regard to historic gardens. Continuous research is in progress in architecture and landscape design, both at the universities and in the division of research on gardens at the National Research Institute on Cultural Property. The results of these research activities are published both in book form and in the organs and annual reports of the Japanese Institute of Landscape Architecture and the Japanese Institute of Architecture.

4- The relationship between historic gardens and their surroundings

As I have repeatedly stated, most of the historic gardens scheduled

as cultural property belong to Buddhist temples and it is therefore much easier to conserve these than ordinary privately-owned gardens.

One of the important factors in the protection of historic gardens is maintenance of their surroundings in the most desirable state possible. In the case of a garden which is so designed as largely to depend on scenery outside it, the destruction of such "borrowed" scenery would be fatal. For example, the tourist facilities constructed on the top of Mt. Hiei in a suburb of Kyoto have greatly impaired the scenic beauty of the famous mountain and also greatly affected the Entsu-ji Temple garden which "borrows" this scenery. We have many other similar cases, such as the relationship between the Isuien garden in Nara and the hotels mushrooming near the top of Mt. Wakakusa-yama near Nara, or that between the Jiko-in Temple garden and the rapidly-progressing urbanization near the reservoir and in the rural area whose scenery constitutes an important part of the garden.

There is now always a possibility, anywhere in Japan where historic gardens are situated in the suburbs of a big city, that modern concrete buildings may be put up immediately next to them.

I consider that any city planning authority should assume responsibility for preserving the surroundings of all historic gardens scheduled as "cultural property".

The existing system of scheduling "urbanization adjustment zones" and "scenic beauty preservation zones" instituted by the City Planning Law is highly effective as a means of solving the problem. More will be achieved by the scheduling of "special conservation zones" under the law providing "special measures for the conservation of historic natural scenery in ancient cities", enacted for the purpose of conserving the natural scenic beauty of such old cities as Kyoto, Nara and Kamakura.

However, these specially scheduled zones do not extend into urbanized districts. It is therefore necessary to institute a system for scheduling "historically important zones" under which severe restrictions would be imposed on the height, composition and design of buildings even in urbanized areas, where the cities concerned are ancient and of such importance as those mentioned above.

In this respect, a large number of valuable suggestions were contained in the recommendation made on the basis of the conclusions reached at the symposium on the problems relating to the conservation and development of historic zones in the city plans for Kyoto and Nara, held in Japan in 1970 (under the joint sponsorship of the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO and the Agency for Cultural Affairs).

In the 1960's Japan energetically pursued a policy under which great emphasis was placed on economic development, with the result that land-development projects were vigorously implemented and a wave of urbanization swept the country. These large-scale projects swallowed up rural districts and destroyed valuable cultural property buried below the ground. The increased height and density of multi-storey buildings in the big cities have gradually altered the environment and environmental pollution has occurred everywhere and spread widely. It is obvious that urban development has adverse effects on the surroundings of historically valuable gardens. There is also an increasing number of cases in which the sources of the water-supply for the ponds and streams so important for traditional Japanese gardens have been dried up as a result of land-development schemes. The city planners, too should take the responsibility of devising and executing appropriate measures to cope with so deplorable a situation.

In the 1970's the Japanese government is expected to reconsider its present economy-oriented policy and switch to a policy under which increased emphasis is placed on environmental preservation. I think now

is the time to discuss more seriously the problem of reconciling development and conservation on the basis of the newly-established philosophy and principles governing conservation.

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