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SEMIOTIC STUDY OF THE JAPANESE DRY LANDSCAPE GARDEN  
IN RYOANJI TEMPLE

Master Thesis

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I have written the Master Thesis myself, independently. All of the other authors' texts, main viewpoints and all data from other resources have been referred to.

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## **Table of contents**

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1. Historical background</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1 Etymology of garden	10
1.2 Zen Buddhism and karesansui garden	13
1.3 Ryoanji temple	15
<b>2. Historiography of garden semiotics</b>	<b>17</b>
2.1 Literature review of garden semiotics	17
2.2 Garden as an object of landscape semiotics	22
<b>3. Theoretical framework</b>	<b>27</b>
3.1 From text to textuality	27
3.2 Semiotics of karesansui garden	31
<b>4. Chronotope and the garden</b>	<b>34</b>
4.1 Primary chronotope and secondary chronotope	34
4.2 Spatial structure as primary chronotope	37
4.3 Materialization of temporality as primary chronotope	41
4.4 Primary meaning of the garden	44
<b>5. Autocommunication in the garden</b>	<b>46</b>
5.1 Secondary chronotope as secondary code	46
5.2 Secondary meaning of the garden	48
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>List of references</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Kokkuvõtte</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Annex 1</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Annex 2</b>	<b>67</b>

## Introduction

The Japanese garden too, of course symbolizes the vastness of nature. The Western garden tends to be symmetrical, the Japanese garden asymmetrical, and this is because the asymmetrical has the greater power to symbolize multiplicity and vastness. The asymmetry, of course, rests upon a balance imposed by delicate sensibilities. Nothing is more complicated, varied, attentive to detail, than the Japanese art of landscape gardening. Thus there is the form called the dry landscape, composed entirely of rocks, in which the arrangement of stones gives expression to mountains and rivers that are not present, and even suggests the waves of the great ocean breaking in upon cliffs

— Yasunari Kawabata (1993)

The dry landscape, which Yasunari (1899–1972) mentions in his Nobel Lecture *Japan, the Beautiful and Myself* on 1968, is a type of traditional Japanese garden art, also known as 枯山水 in Japanese (*Romaji: karesansui*), which consists of rocks, stones, gravels, sand, moss, pruned trees, and other artefacts arranged in a thoughtful way, representing miniaturized landscapes of mountain, forest, sea, and island. It is often called Japanese rock garden or Zen garden.

*Karesansui* garden is not only a symbol of traditional Japanese culture which has been appreciated by many foreigners, but also a mediation connecting nature and human beings in a very interesting way, considering that the rock garden usually has very little vegetation, sometimes even no vegetations at all. Besides, more often than not, the appreciation of rock garden requires viewing from a very specific position and sometimes profound meaning is created from what is not visible.

*Karesansui* garden deserves semiotic attention because it is a semiotically very rich object. It uses signs and codes to represent landscapes that are not present. Basically, a common academic consensus suggests that rock stands for the mountain, while gravel or sand imitates the sea. However, different meticulous arrangements of

these basic elements make space for even more meanings. The codes which are linked to Zen Buddhism and Japanese aesthetics expand the meaning of *karesansui* garden. Therefore, *karesansui* garden carries more messages that go beyond the notions of mountain and sea. Generally speaking, *karesansui* garden carries characteristics of Zen philosophy, ie, “asymmetry, simplicity, austere sublimity or lofty dryness, naturalness, subtle profundity or deep reserve, freedom from attachment, tranquility” (Weiss 2013: 25).

Semiotics contributes to the study of *karesansui* garden in several ways: it explains how meanings and aesthetic values are generated from the garden; it helps to achieve a better understanding of the relationship between *karesansui* garden and the core of Zen Buddhism; it explores the deep structure of the garden itself and its communication with the human.

There are numerous studies and papers that have explored *karesansui* garden both within and outside Japanese academia. The term of *karesansui* is firstly mentioned in the book *Sakuteiki*<sup>1</sup> (作庭記, literally, Records of Garden Making). In *Sakuteiki*, it says: “池もなく遣水もなき所に、石をたつる事あり。これを枯山水となづく。” (Hida 2010: 43). In English, it means “in a place where there is no pond neither stream, setting stones upright is *karesansui*”. Even in the very beginning of *Sakuteiki*, it says: “石をたてん事、まづ大旨をこゝろふべき也。” (Ibid, 41). In English, “firstly it is important to understand the principles of the placement of stones”. In this way, it actually defines that the placement of stone itself is garden-making. According to the study of Sotomura:

It is generally believed that the *Karesansui* as described in the *Sakuteiki* laid the foundation of the establishment of the *Karesansui* garden in the modern sense, which is today regarded as one of the typical Japanese style gardens. (Sotomura 1992: 14).

In modern time, *karesansui* garden has been addressed repeatedly by many Japanese Garden scholars and landscape architects. The Western academic attention to

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<sup>1</sup> The oldest Japanese text on gardens, supposedly written by Tachibana Toshituna (1028–1094).

*karesansui* garden also has a quite long history. The first book systematically introducing Japanese garden art is *Landscape Gardening in Japan*, written by Josiah Conder (1852–1920) and firstly published in 1893. In his book, Conder is the first one who gives a complete historical timeline of the Japanese garden in non-Japanese literature, from which he notes that *karesansui* garden first appeared in Kamakura period and he thinks that “Kare-sansui garden generally represented a wild natural scene amid mountains<sup>2</sup>”. Besides, he also gives a detailed description of the different elements in the Japanese garden, including one separate chapter dedicated to stones only.

Generally speaking, the studies on *karesansui* garden are concentrated on the following approaches: historical approach; Japanese cultural approach; aesthetic approach; landscape studies approach; comparative studies approach, and others. More than often, several different approaches are used at the same time.

*Karesansui* garden has been caught the eyes of semioticians as well. In his book *Empire of signs*, Roland Barthes (1915–1980) sees “the rock garden without any trees or greenery as a Zen ‘sign’ and tries to decipher its *écriture*, or, symbolic meaning” (Yamada 2009: 235). Yuri Lotman (1922–1993) has mentioned *karesansui* garden as one of the examples of autocommunication. He writes “this park is a relatively small gravel area on which stones have been placed in accordance with an elaborate mathematical rhythm” (Lotman 1990: 25), and “the contemplation of the elaborate pattern of the stones and gravel is intended to evoke a mood conducive to introspection” (Ibid).

Semiotic terms, for example, sign, symbol, symbolism, meaning, representation, semiosis, semantics, metaphor etc, are very popular notions that repeatedly appear in many studies of *karesansui* garden. However, there is no satisfactory semiotic study of this object yet. The aim of this thesis is to cast light on *karesansui* garden from a semiotic point of view.

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<sup>2</sup> Available

[http://www.gardenvisit.com/book/landscape\\_gardening\\_in\\_japan\\_1912/chapter1\\_history/karesansui\\_dried\\_up\\_gardens](http://www.gardenvisit.com/book/landscape_gardening_in_japan_1912/chapter1_history/karesansui_dried_up_gardens). Last visited 20th of March, 2017.

### *Research object*

There are two possible ways to delimit current research area. The first one is narrowing down the research approach, that means studying *karesansui* garden from one specific semiotic approach. The second one would delimit the object to a specific garden, then explore it from various semiotic perspectives. The second approach is adopted in this research because focusing on one single garden is more appropriate for two reasons. Firstly, as my aim is to give a comprehensive analysis from a semiotic point of view, it allows to analyze multiple aspects and mechanisms at work in one single text. Secondly, although precise details and motifs of individual *karesansui* garden are different according to type and context, different *karesansui* gardens still share the same historical, cultural and religious core. Therefore, the methodology focusing on one single garden, developed and proposed in this thesis, can be easily applied to other similar gardens as well.

Thus, the object of study is one specific *karesansui* garden at Ryoanji temple, Kyoto, Japan, which was created in 1499 and has been kept structurally untouched since then. The Ryoanji garden is considered as one of the finest surviving examples of *karesansui*. The temple and its gardens are listed as one of the Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto (Kyoto, Uji, and Otsu Cities) in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The reasons why choosing Ryoanji temple are: firstly, its *karesansui* garden is considered as the symbol of all Japanese *karesansui* gardens; secondly, the Ryoanji temple has been studied extensively from other academic perspectives, which will provide reliable data and inspiring ideas for the current research.

### *Research questions*

This thesis aims to answer following questions:

- How to analyze the *karesansui* garden in Ryoanji temple (hereafter the garden) semiotically?
- What are the meanings of the garden?
- How is meaning generated in the garden?

- How to describe the chronotope in the garden?
- How does autocommunication happen in the garden?
- What is the relationship between chronotope and autocommunication?

### *Materials*

The materials used for analysis in this thesis are mainly gained from two sources: 1) Internet – multimedia materials which include the official website of Ryoanji temple<sup>3</sup>, and interviews with the team who produced the 4K video production *Kyoto from Inside and Outside: Scenes on Panels and Folding Screens*<sup>4</sup>; 2) field study in Ryoanji temple, Kyoto city, including a printed map collected from the Tourist Information Center, a pamphlet distributed in Ryoanji temple, and interview materials that I have produced myself.

This study argues that personal experiences, thoughts, and reflections, in another word personal autocommunication, is as important as the representational meaning of the garden. When studying the representational meaning, the garden itself is treated as a closed text. However, to study the more-than-representational meaning, it is necessary to study the garden in multiply mediated discourses. Multimedia materials are produced by individuals who have autocommunication in the garden. Therefore, through textual analysis of these multimedia materials, it is possible to reveal the more-than-representational meaning of the garden.

For this thesis, I have conducted interviews with the curator who is working in Ryoanji temple and several tourists visiting the garden on 15th of December, 2016. See Annex 2 for more details of these interviews<sup>5</sup> conducted. When referring to these interviews, the names of the interviewees have been shortened to their initials in the quotations.

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<sup>3</sup> Available <http://www.ryoanji.jp/>. Last visited 20th of March, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Available <http://www.ntv.co.jp/kyoto2013/outline/eng.html>. Last visited 20th of March, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Interview 1 was conducted in Japanese and Interview 3 was conducted in Chinese. They are translated into English when referred to. Interview 2 and Interview 4 were conducted in English.



I contacted Ryoanji temple via their website. The original attempt was to interview a monk living in the temple. Unfortunately, such an attempt did not succeed, instead, the curator of the temple accepted my appointment. From the interview with him, I expected to hear formal answers, rather than personal thoughts since accepting interviews is part of his work. Thus, my preformed interview questions are more concentrated on data and facts.

On the other hand, interviews with four tourists (they are not group tourists) visiting the temple were conducted randomly. For each tourist, I interviewed him/her twice. The first time was before they are going inside the garden. I asked them several preformed questions. The second time was after they come out from the garden. I interviewed them again with freestyle questions. The expectation from the interviewees is to hear their personal experiences and thoughts about the garden, which they have just visited.

### *Methodology*

The methodology adopted in this thesis is mainly derived from landscape semiotics (Kati Lindström, Kalevi Kull, Hannes Palang), which provides several semiotic approaches to study the landscape, including chronotope theory (Mikhail Bakhtin) and autocommunication model (Yuri Lotman). The reasons for using these semiotic approaches are as follows: firstly, they address questions relating to the meditative qualities that *karesansui* garden supposedly has; and secondly, chronotope theory and autocommunication model are innovative approaches to the field of garden semiotics, and they have not been discussed yet.

### *Research structure*

This thesis consists of the introduction, five chapters, the conclusion and the annexes. The first chapter gives a historical background of the Japanese garden, *karesansui* garden and Ryoanji temple. The second chapter reviews the previous studies on garden semiotics and landscape semiotic approaches to garden. Consequently, a theoretical

framework of the analysis is developed in the third chapter. A case study of the *karesansui* garden in Ryoanji temple is formulated in the following two chapters according to the theoretical framework. Afterward, a conclusion will be drawn out at the end.

## 1. Historical background

The history of the Japanese garden is long and complicated. This chapter has no intention to condense thousands of years of history into a short scientific reading. Instead, the history of Japanese garden will be studied mainly from two perspectives: etymology, and Zen Buddhism.

Humans make gardens for a purpose. Discovering the purpose is actually a process of finding out a *primary* meaning of a garden. In addition to a primary meaning, I argue that there is a *secondary* meaning that is generated during the autocommunication process when human beings are interacting with a garden. The primary meaning can be understood as a general meaning that is defined by the text structure and its social-cultural structure. While the secondary meaning can only be approached in the context of autocommunication. For example, the primary meaning of a traditional *karesansui* garden is defined by the historical period when Zen Buddhism was booming and the military class took the power in Japan. Thus, many previous studies<sup>6</sup> on *karesansui* gardens mainly repeat the same process, i.e., finding the primary meaning from the perspective of the concept of Zen. However, so far the secondary meaning of *karesansui* gardens has not been studied systematically.

The following reflections concern only those aspects that will enhance the appreciation of the *karesansui* style in particular. Firstly, an etymological study of the words of ‘garden’ in different languages will be given, aiming to understand how the meaning has changed throughout time. Etymology is a proper tool for finding out the original meaning of ‘garden’ in different cultures. Afterward, a short chronology of the Japanese traditional garden will be given in order to have a better understanding of

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<sup>6</sup> For example, *Reading Zen in the Rocks* by François Berthier (2005).

Japanese garden. As *karesansui* garden is closely related to Zen Buddhism, it is inevitable to have a short review on the Zen Buddhism and how it adapted itself to Japanese culture. Lastly, there is a detailed description of Ryoanji temple where the garden is located.

### 1.1 Etymology of garden

In Indo-European languages, the etymology of the word ‘gardening’ refers to enclosure: “Middle English *gardin*, from Anglo-French *gardin, jardin*, of Germanic origin; akin to Old High German *gart* enclosure”<sup>7</sup>. According to the study of Susan Jagger, following words share the same origin:

*Garden, yard, garten, jardin, giardino, hortus, paradise, paradiso, park, parc, parquet, court, hof, kurta, town, tun, and tuin*—all derive from the enclosure of outdoor space (Jagger 2015: 629).

In Chinese, the character *yuan* (園) denotes fencing or enclosure. *Yuan* (園) can be combined with other Chinese characters to formulate Chinese words that have a meaning of a garden. For example, *huayuan*/花園 (botanical garden; literally flower *yuan*); *gongyuan* 公園 (park; literally public *yuan*); *tinyuan*/庭園 (household garden; literally hall *yuan*) and *yuanlin*/園林 (denotes imperial/noble family’s garden; literally *yuan* forest).

The Chinese character meaning ‘garden’ appears first in the oracle bone script. It is called *you* (囿) in its modern form. The hieroglyphic form<sup>8</sup> (see below) represents a picture of a botanic garden, where the enclosed square represents fences/wall and the inside part represented plants cultivated in a piece of small structured land.

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<sup>7</sup> From Merriam-Webster dictionary. Available <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/garden>. Last visited 20th of March, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> From 象形字典 (Pictograms dictionary). Available <http://www.vividict.com/WordInfo.aspx?id=3114>. Last visited 20th of March, 2017.

$$\text{囿} \text{ (hieroglyphic form of } you) = \text{口} + \text{艹}$$

From the etymology of Chinese character for the garden, we can understand that garden is a piece of enclosed land where human beings grow plants for the purpose of getting food. In short, the garden had an agricultural purpose in the beginning. Thus, there was a gradual shift during history that resulted in the division of its functions from only practical purpose into several other purposes, for example, practical purpose (fruit trees garden), aesthetic purpose (Japanese garden), and both practical and aesthetic (botanical garden).

In Japanese, the word for garden is *teien* (庭園), is a loan word of Chinese origin, meaning “a flat area designed with vegetation, pond, etc”<sup>9</sup>. The oldest Japanese garden still existing is the *pure land*<sup>10</sup> garden in Motsuji temple, which was built in 850 (Heian period). The style of that garden shows many resemblances to the Chinese garden. The close connection with Buddhism also suggests that this type of garden originates from China. Historic ruins of the Japanese garden<sup>11</sup> found in Nara prefecture provide enough proof, showing that Chinese-style gardens were built in Japan as early as in Asuka period (592–710).

Despite the fact that the Japanese garden has been strongly influenced by Chinese culture from Asuka period (late 6th century), some scholars (Berque 1997: 60) argue that the Japanese garden has its own unique origin that could be dated back to the Prehistoric Japan. In Japanese etymology, there is a native Japanese word for the term of garden, *niwa* (庭).

Native Japanese words, also known as Yamato Kotoba (大和言葉) are the words that were inherited from Old Japanese, rather than being borrowed from outside

<sup>9</sup> In Japanese: 計画的に草木・池などを配し、整えられた庭。From digital Japanese dictionary *Digital Daijisen*. Available <https://dictionary.goo.ne.jp/jn/149610/meaning/m0u/%E5%BA%AD%E5%9C%92/>. Last visited 20th of March, 2017.

<sup>10</sup> In Japanese: 毛越寺浄土式庭園。

<sup>11</sup> Heijyokyo Sakyosanjo Nibo Kyuseki Teien ruin in Asuakamura. Available [http://www.ic.daito.ac.jp/~hama/news/asuka\\_teien990615.pdf](http://www.ic.daito.ac.jp/~hama/news/asuka_teien990615.pdf). Last visited 20th of March, 2017.

Japan. In a sense, compared to foreign loan words, native Japanese words preserve the “old Japanese culture” without foreign influences.

Besides having the same meaning as *teien*, *niwa* also means “the place where sacred activities and specialized activities are held”<sup>12</sup>. According to this definition, Ono (2009) thinks that Oyu Stone Circles in Jomon period (2000–1500 BC) and Kofun (megalithic tombs or tumuli) in Kofun period (250–538 AD) can be regarded as the oldest form of the Japanese garden.

Berque argues that “in its most primitive state, the Japanese garden merges with the piece of sacred land, simply dotted with stones and marked out by a rope to designate the actual place where the gods descend” (Berque 1997: 60).

Berque adds: “For over a thousand years, Japan has been influenced by Chinese gardens, either directly, by reproducing certain models, by using Chinese or Korean gardeners, or indirectly through various thought systems” (Berque 1997: 60). The Japanese garden has gradually developed its own characteristics since Nara period, for example, the book *Sakuteiki* was written in Heian period (794–1185). *Sakuteiki* is the first systematic written text on Japanese garden-making.

Muromachi period (1336–1573) is the time when Zen Buddhism flourished in Japan since the first time it came to Japan from China in Kamakura period (1185–1333). Besides, during the same period, the warrior class had taken power over the noble class, which had the dominating power before in Heian period. Along with Zen Buddhism, other forms of Chinese arts also were brought to Japan, for example, Chinese ink wash painting, Zen poetry etc. During this period of political and aesthetic transformation, Japanese garden developed its own unique style – *karesansui* garden, generating numerous famous *karesansui* gardens in Kyoto area.

From Azuchi–Momoyama period (1573–1603) to Edo period (1603–1868), the third type of Japanese garden was gradually formed, i.e., the tea garden. The following

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<sup>12</sup> In Japanese: 神事・行事などの行われる場所. From digital Japanese dictionary *Digital Daijisen*. Available <https://dictionary.goo.ne.jp/jn/168667/meaning/m0u/%E3%81%AB%E3%82%8F/>. Last visited 20th of March, 2017.

table summarizes the chronology of the Japanese garden before Modern Japan, showing typical gardens with their specific socio-cultural structures.

Period	Influential Religious	Class	Typical Type
Pre–Asuka	Animism	Priests	<i>Iwakura</i> <sup>13</sup>
Heian	Buddhism	Noble	Pure Land garden <sup>14</sup>
Kamakura – Muromachi	Zen Buddhism	Warrior	<i>Karesansui</i> <sup>15</sup>
Azuchi–Momoyama	N/A	Warrior Merchant	Tea garden <sup>16</sup>

## 1.2 Zen Buddhism and *karesansui* garden

Scholars have different opinions on the relationship between Zen Buddhism and *karesansui* garden. One opinion is that Zen Buddhism had influences on *karesansui* garden. On the other hand, there are critical opinions challenging the idea that Buddhism of Zen influenced *karesansui* garden.

In his book *Reading ZEN in the Rocks*, French art historian François Berthier who is specialized on Japan, points out that there are certain connections between Zen and the art of the Japanese dry landscape garden based on the following arguments. He

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<sup>13</sup> See Annex1, Fig. 1.

<sup>14</sup> See Annex1, Fig. 2.

<sup>15</sup> See Annex1, Fig. 3.

<sup>16</sup> See Annex1, Fig. 4.

argues that Zen is “a mode of thinking that gives rise to a certain way of acting” (Berthier 2005: 1). Zen is the Japanese variant of *Chan*, a branch of Buddhism combined with Taoism. Zen proclaims that the human being harbors within it “Buddha-nature”, however, unaware of this. To understand this “Buddha-nature”, in other words, to attain enlightenment, the human being needs to practice different methods. He argues that, *karesansui* garden, “retaining only rocks and sand, and a little vegetation” (Ibid, 5), provides “an image of the universe in its most condensed form” (Ibid, 6). In this way, one can attain enlightenment. According to the study of Camelia Nakagawara:

Under the influence of Zen philosophy, contemplation becomes synonymous with introspection, and observing the outside world means looking into one’s own nature. The [*karesansui*] landscapes take the viewer inside on a mental journey to a metaphysical realm, at once intimately close and remote (Nakagawara 2004 :95).

On the other hand, some scholars hold different opinions. In his book *Themes, Scenes & Taste in the History of Japanese Garden Art*, garden and landscape scholar Wybe Kuitert (1988) shows that the term ‘Zen garden’ earned popularity only from 1935, the year Loraine Kuck used the word for the first time. Moreover, he adds more proof from writings of Zen specialists, reaching a conclusion that ‘Zen garden’ is a misinterpretation for medieval Japanese gardens.

The present literature on the garden art of Japan does not give any convincing example that mediaeval individuals had an experience of Buddhist Enlightenment on seeing a garden although I must admit that it seems not unimaginable (Kuitert 1988: 159).

Similarly, Shoji Yamada, in his book *Shots in the Dark: Japan, Zen, and the West*, claims that because Japanese wanted to be recognized by the West after World War II, they unquestionably accepted the idea of Zen that was promoted by foreign perceptions, i.e., rock garden, *kyudo* with other Japanese culture are interpreted as Zen (Yamada 2009: 241). He argues that the causal assertion that Ryoanji garden is an expression of Zen only “contributed to the popularization of the rock garden” (Ibid, 162).



This paper takes the former assumption, because firstly the object of this study, Ryoanji temple is a Zen temple; secondly the period when *karesansui* gardens were built in a large amount matches the time when Zen Buddhism was adopted by the ruling warrior class.

### 1.3 Ryoanji temple

Ryoanji temple, in Japanese 龍安寺, is a Zen temple located in northwest Kyoto, Japan. The *karesansui* garden inside Ryoanji temple is considered one of the finest surviving examples, which attracts visitors both from Japan and abroad. The temple and its gardens are inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List as one of the Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto. A short history of the temple could be found on its official web page, written as follows:

The epitome of all Zen gardens, Daiunzan Ryoanji was established by Hosokawa Katsumoto, the deputy to the Ashikaga shoguns in 1450. Katsumoto received the mountain villa of Lord Tokudaiji and invited the Zen priest Giten Gensho, who was at the time the fifth abbot of Myoshinji, to transform the villa and establish it as a temple. Although it was destroyed in the fire during Onin Wars only two decades later, it was rebuilt by Katsumoto's son Masamoto. The abbot's hall [Hojo] was constructed in 1499, and the garden was presumably constructed at the same time. However in 1797 the fire destroyed Hojo, Founder's hall and Buddha hall; thereafter the current Hojo was brought here from Seigen'in, a sub temple (tacchu) of Ryoanji. Among other things, the de facto ruler of Japan in 16th century Toyotomi Hideyoshi frequented Ryoanji, and a plaque written personally by him remains among the temple's assets. Furthermore, Katsumoto, his wife and son, as well as the founder Giten are buried on the temple grounds (Official web page of Ryoanji Temple<sup>17</sup>).

From the above historical background, several observations about the Ryoanji temple can be made :

- The *karesansui* garden is only a part of the Ryoanji temple.
- The exact date and creator of the *karesansui* garden are unknown.
- Although there were rebuildings in the temple, the garden has been kept intact.

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<sup>17</sup> Available <http://www.ryoanji.jp/smph/eng/history/index.html>. Last visited 20th of March, 2017.

- The garden has a close relationship with Zen priests and the *Samurai* class.

Those who have not visited Ryoanji before would probably be surprised by its size (see the map of Ryoanji, Annex 1, Fig. 5) when they visit it for the first time. That is because apart from the *karesansui* garden itself, the temple has other types of gardens and architectures as well. It even encompasses a pond, known as Kyoyochi pond, which consists of a *pure land* garden.

The *karesansui* garden (see Annex1, Fig. 6) in front of the abbot's hall is a small rectangle flat land, with a length of 25 meters and a width of 10 meters. The garden is enclosed by three walls. Visitors are not allowed to step down the veranda into the garden. That means, the angle from where one can see the garden is limited. Visitors are supposed to see the garden from the the side of the veranda and they can only do that. Over the walls there are trees, including pine trees and Japanese cherry trees. The garden is carpeted with small gravel, with 15 bigger stones sparsely situated in the garden. The stones form into five groups, from left to right (facing the garden from the veranda side), 5 stones, 2 stones, 3 stones, 2 stones, and 3 stones respectively. It is not possible to see all of the 15 stones from the veranda. The gravels have been raked into very deliberate patterns, one linear and one concentric.

## **2. Historiography of garden semiotics**

Of these developments, the garden, unquestionably, is closest to Japanese heart, probably because its materiality seems to translate the natural environment most directly (Berque 1977: 59).

This chapter opens with a detailed literature review of garden semiotics, which has not been systematically studied before. After that, garden is studied as an object of landscape semiotics. Following by landscape semiotic approach to garden, a theoretical framework is proposed in the next chapter.

### **2.1 Literature review of garden semiotics**

To start with, it is important to give a comprehensive overview of studies dedicated to the semiotics of garden. Garden as an object has been studied in semiotics through various approaches, including theories of signs; cultural semiotics; ecosemiotics; and landscape semiotics. Although some scholars are not semioticians themselves or they are not explicitly mentioning the word semiotics, still their ideas are more than often related to semiotics.

It seems that garden semiotics receives more attention in Chinese academia than in the Western. While in Japanese academia, there only very little attention has been paid to this area. However, one should notice that in Chinese academia, semiotic perspectives towards gardens are comparatively narrow, mainly adopting the types of signs, i.e. the index, the icon and the symbol from Charles S. Peirce (Liu 2010), as well

as the distinctions between pragmatics, semantics and syntax from Charles Morris (Yang & Zhang 2013).

Chou combines both Peirce and Morris' theories to study the *karesansui* garden in Ryoanji temple. It is the first semiotic attempt to study *karesansui* garden using just the very basic theories of signs. Chou studies signs in the garden according to the Peirce's trichotomy, claiming that one element (a stone) is a qualisign, more elements grouped by a simple relationship (stone groups) is a sinsign, different type of elements grouped by a more complex relationship (Ryoanji) is a legisign (Chou 2011).

On the other hand in the Western academia, garden semiotics has gone further than the very basic theory of signs, and has joined the contemporary culture studies, considering garden as a culturally shaped natural space, which yields very fruitful results. There are multifarious papers on gardens, more or less touching the area of semiotics, however without using the word of semiotics in particular.

Susan Jagger sees "humans and nature as forces interacting to create a new entity, the garden" (Jagger 2015: 630). She studies Western gardens focusing on the cultural aspects, where she demonstrates the changes of the meaning of gardens from Ancient time, to Medieval time, and to Renaissance time. She argues that in Ancient Greece, gardens over the city wall were places where philosophers were walking and talking in search of a good life. In Medieval time, monastic gardens represent paradise through geometry and divinity. During the Renaissance, botanic gardens in Italy were showing family's wealth and power. Following the Renaissance, the Baroque gardens were "grandeur and advertisements of wealth and power" (Ibid, 639). She points out that "gardens are an expression of power and control over the natural world" (Ibid, 641). As a conclusion, firstly "representations of power and privilege are evident, both in the symbolic features found in the gardens and in the meanings presented by the gardens as a whole" (Ibid, 640); secondly, the dualism of human *versus* nature is clear during the development of gardens in the West: in the ancient time, gardens have natural frames and are more related to religious beliefs, while since Renaissance, gardens have rigid

frames, more artifacts and are more related to mathematical thinking; lastly, gardens are places where knowledge with limited access is generated and stored (Ibid, 640).

In his book *A Philosophy of Gardens*, David Cooper questions the meanings of gardens. He identifies four modes of meaning of garden (Cooper 2006: 113–122).

- The mereological and the instrumental meaning: A makes contributions to B, partly or fully. For example, a fruit tree garden means harvest of food.
- The depictive and allusive meaning or the representational meaning: A represents B in two ways. Firstly, garden depicts “physical objects, bodily actions, events, and so on” (Ibid, 115). Secondly, garden alludes “emotions, feelings, moods, and attitudes” (Ibid, 117).
- The symptomatic meaning: garden is a symptom of a presupposed social-cultural structure.
- The associative meaning: the meaning of garden is personal and individual.

The mereological/instrumental meaning, representational meaning and symptomatic meaning are similar to the primary meaning of gardens that was proposed in the previous chapter. The associative is the secondary meaning. The primary meaning is defined by the object itself and its social-cultural context, while the secondary meaning is comparatively personal and experiential.

Moreover, Cooper continues his philosophical questions to the meaning of “The Garden” (neither a typical garden nor all types of garden, but an exemplary garden). He proposes: “The Garden exemplifies a co-dependence between human endeavour and the natural world” (Cooper 2006: 145). In his words, “The Garden, then, is an epiphany—a symbol, in the Romantic sense—of the relation between the source of the world and ourselves” (Ibid, 150). He exemplifies his proposals with the *karesansui* garden. In his opinion, the meaning of the *karesansui* garden lies in the co-dependence between human beings and the nature as the *karesansui* garden summons the “Zen-enlightened sensibility” (Ibid, 152).

Timo Maran (2004) firstly argues that garden has been overlooked in semiotics while it is a “semiotically active place” (2004: 119). He examines gardens from the ecosemiotic perspective and draws the conclusion that:

Gardens contain and participate in different levels of semiotic processes, from biological communication up to cultural symbolicity, from personal cognition to social identities. They function also as mediators between these different levels of communication, and, as such, may be considered to be condensations in the semiosphere (Maran 2004: 131).

Furthermore, he also points out that “gardens also play an important role in the auto-communication processes” and “gardens carry and evoke memories of one’s past” (Maran 2004: 124). He details the time that flows in gardens as well, where he identifies two ways to visualize timeless time.

- manual regenerating: techniques, e.g. repainting, covering up the influence of time, reduce the semiotic value in the garden.
- natural aging: “things getting old and marked by time” (Ibid, 126) have greater semiotic potential.

Maran’s work contributes to the awareness of the garden as a semiotic object and provides the literature review on garden semiotics, where he presents a list of valuable references.

Landscape semiotics also contributes to the study of garden semiotics. Urve Sinijärv (2008) studied the Estonian old manor parks along with other European parks/gardens, reaching a conclusion that park is “one of the most multi-dimensionally sensed works of art that man has ever created” (2008: 175). She thinks that landscape is a stage where the performance of our everyday life leaves traces. Park is one kind of trace that carries information, e.g. aims, values, beliefs etc. “In a semiotic sense, gardens and parks are multidimensional, carrying numerous signs and being perceivable with different senses on various levels” (Ibid, 170). The design of parks is a language that conveys us this information.

Karsten Jorgensen (1998) argues for the importance of semiotics in landscape design. To analyze meaning in a landscape design, for example, a garden or a park, one should look at “the overall composition of a garden or park and the situation, which includes the interpreter's cultural background, their experiences and so on” (1998: 39). That is true because the *secondary* meaning of garden is individual, chronotopic, and experiential. In other words, the *secondary* meaning arises from an individual interacting with the garden in a certain space-time, influenced by the interpreter’s cultural background, memories, experiences and so on. In his words, “you have to analyze a specific case to be able to speak reasonably about meaning in landscape (de)signs” (Ibid, 39). That is to say, to study the *secondary* meaning of a garden, case study is inevitable.

Besides above-mentioned approaches, recently there are fresh ideas on garden semiotics. Katarzyna Kaczmarczyk and Montana Salvoni (2016) study landscape gardens as cultural boundary objects with the help of Lotmanian theories. They study how landscape gardens inhabit and create “semiotically dense nature-culture boundary” (Kaczmarczyk & Salvoni, 2016: 53) in the following aspects:

- Landscape gardens inhabit in and problematize the boundaries between dichotomies: indoor/outdoor, natural/artificial, etc.
- Landscape gardens are boundaries themselves, separating the house and the countryside geographically.
- Landscape gardens are boundaries between its native culture milieu and the others, contributing to cultural self-identifying.
- Landscape gardens stimulate the perception of “the outer limit of a first person form”, from a perspective that gardens are “designed for particularly solitary experiences” (Ibid, 65).

## 2.2 Garden as an object of landscape semiotics

Just like the term of ‘culture’, it is not easy to give an absolute definition of ‘landscape’. The definition given by European Landscape Convention “holds most political currency at the moment and represents the widest possible consensus in European landscape research” (Lindström, Kull, Palang 2014: 112). European Landscape Convention defines landscape as follows: “Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors” (European Landscape Convention 2000: 2).

Following up this definition, Lindström *et al* gives several assumptions that are recognized by the majority of European Landscape researchers (Lindström *et al* 2014: 112) :

- Landscape is a human phenomenon linked with both physical expanse and cultural ideas.
- Landscape preserves traces that contribute to identity building.
- Landscape is a collective phenomenon, but individual perception is also important.

Semiological approaches and post-structuralist approaches are by far the most common among the explicit attempts to develop landscape semiotics (Lindström *et al* 2014: 113). Structuralist approach originated from linguistics and has been developed mainly in literary theory and anthropology. It believes that there must be a certain structure in every text, where meaning is produced and reproduced within the culture. The semiological approaches are based on following assumptions (Ibid, 114).

- (1) Landscapes are to a certain extent analogous to languages.
- (2) Landscapes, like languages, consist of signs, that is, independent identifiable meaningful units.
- (3) Landscape signs like language signs can be described by the Saussurean sign model that consists of the “signifier” and “signified.
- (4) The meanings of the arbitrary signs are understood through their similarity and difference to other signs in the sign systems.



- (5) Each single real-life landscape element (sign) is *parole*, that is, a local manifestation of some deeper language, the *langue*, or a deep structure (a notion borrowed from generative grammar).
- (6) Landscape elements/signs are combined into “utterances” according to some (social) codes. These utterances are normally analysed from the point of view of the receiver’s social codes.
- (7) Landscapes can be analysed with the same methodological devices as language, discourse or text.

There are two possible directions how to apply semiological/structuralist theories on *karesansui* garden. The first direction tries to decipher *karesansui* garden, on the premise that the gardens were designed to be read, like paintings, “are meant to be contemplated from a specific and carefully defined vantage point” (Casalis 1983: 349). This direction suggests studying the structure of stone groups, the design of raked sand or gravels, and other visual perceptions/signs inside the garden to find out meanings in both denotative and connotative levels.

On the other hand, the second direction studies *karesansui* garden inside the context of Japanese culture. It examines *karesansui* garden in the context of other traditional Japanese art forms, for example, *haiku*, *sumi-e* (ink wash painting), *fusuma-e* (paintings on sliding-door panels) etc., and with Zen Buddhist practices. This direction approaches *karesansui* garden as *parole* of the *langue*, or a deep structure within the Japanese culture.

The second direction has generated plenty of academic studies on Japanese garden from various perspectives: history, religious, arts, architecture, design, aesthetics, psychology, etc. However, the first direction has not so far received much academic attention. Several reasons could be found to explain why the first direction is not as productive as the second direction.

First reason is that traditionally *karesansui* garden has been regarded as a miniaturized landscape of nature views, which limits interpretation. Etymologically, *karesansui* consists of two parts: *kare* (dry) and *sansui* (landscape). The word *sansui* originates from Chinese *shanshui*, literally meaning mountain and water (river, lake, and sea). In the *karesansui* garden, rock stands for mountain or mountainous island and raked gravel stands for water is the mainstream recognition that can easily found in many written text, from travel guidebooks to historical researches.

Secondly, throughout the years there is a tendency to overinterpret *karesansui* garden, growing with the increasing public popularity. Japanese books<sup>18</sup> with the keywords of ryoanji and mystery have been published and met public curiosity. These books try to solve the puzzle via very bold assumptions, for example, the *karesansui* garden relates with the Cassiopeia, or the Lunar motion and phases; the garden is a map to the hidden treasures buried in the mountain where Ryoanji temple locates, and so on so forth. Needless to say that finding the meaning of *karesansui* garden is, to a large extent, very subjective. It depends greatly on viewers' own thoughts and experiences.

Thirdly, some scholars argue that there is no meaning existing in *karesansui* gardens and the efforts to interpret *karesansui* garden are resultless. Garden historian Gunter Nitschke writes: "The garden of Ryoan-ji symbolizes neither a natural nor a mythological landscape. Indeed, it symbolizes nothing, in the sense that it symbolizes *not*" (Nitschke 2002: 92). However, he also stresses that profound Zen insight is generated only by the "interplay" of the garden and viewers, and of the garden and the space. "It is here, perhaps, that we find the ultimate purpose of garden art – to provide the necessary forum for such [profound Zen] insight" (Ibid, 92).

Considering that the second direction has been already studied extensively over the years, this thesis would suggest new semiotic approaches to *karesansui* gardens via criticizing the first direction.

First direction pays much attention and efforts on the garden itself, while another very important factor, the viewer, i.e., human factor has been excluded from the discussion. It is prone to take the *karesansui* garden as a fixed non-literary text, like a painting or a puzzle waiting to be read. Methodologically, they (Casalis 1983; Van Tonder & Lyons 2005) focus on visual signs, iconography, and spatial structures. However, the spectatorship between the viewer and the text has been overlooked.

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<sup>18</sup> For example, 1.明石, 散人 1996. *龍安寺石庭の謎*. 講談社. (Translated by the author of this thesis: *The mystery of the rock garden in Ryoanji temple* written by Sanjin Akashi) 2. 細野, 透 2015. *謎深き庭 龍安寺石庭: 十五の石をめぐる五十五の推理*. 淡交社. (Translated by the author of this thesis: *The mysterious rock garden in Ryoanji temple* written by Hosono Toru).

Being in front of a *karesansui* garden, there are not solely rocks and sand you can see. There are natural contents beyond the garden, for example, sky and clouds, trees, the temple itself, etc. Moreover, there are sounds you can hear as well, birds chirping and insects humming. If you pay enough attention to your sense of smell, it is not hard to notice the incense of the temple mixed in the air. If you stay in the garden longer enough, you will notice the shades of stone are changing over time. Such individual experiences are also important in the meaning generation and cannot be easily overlooked and abstracted into a structure.

*Karesansui* garden is neither merely an artistic device for contemplation, nor a designed device to invoke meditation. Such interpretations are related to the emphasis on Zen in Western academia. Fundamentally, *karesansui* garden functions as a place to hold specific activities, just like other forms of Japanese garden. From Kamakura period, “Zen temples became a salon for all kinds of cultural activities, poetry and tea sessions” (Kuitert 1988: 99). In nowadays, it is a tourist attraction, attracting millions of tourists annually. For some specific events, *karesansui* garden might be closed for public, holding diplomatic or documental activities.

Thus, to truly understand the relationship between viewer and *karesansui* garden, it is important to study the communication between them in the context of space and time. Such an approach suggests that *karesansui* garden is a three-dimensional text, inviting viewers to see, to hear, to smell, to feel, to experience and to participate. As Kanzaki and Wise note:

According to Japanese aesthetic theorist Donald Keene, such Zen gardens are expressly designed to invite viewers to ‘participate’ in their creation, and as a result, says Keene, can ‘move us even more’ than art-forms that cast us in a passive role. The art of the Zen gardener, in theorist Camelia Nakagawara’s words, is ‘highly interactive’, deliberately stimulating the viewer ‘to participate in the creation’ of the work before them (Kanzaki & Wise 2013: 196).

Therefore, to study *karesansui* garden, one can never extract it from its natural surroundings and its viewers. Extratextual elements around *karesansui* garden also should be taken into consideration. These extratextual elements are analogous to the

concept of actors according to actor-network theory, which is a research methodology considering all the factors involved in a social situation in the same time.

Hitchings studied British private gardens using the actor-network theory. He argues that: “human and non-human actors worked together in the process of creating a garden” and “these processes informed the human conceptions of these gardens” (Hitchings 2003: 102).

### **3. Theoretical framework**

Due to the lack of a specific theoretical framework that could be used for the analysis of gardens, a transdisciplinary approach is developed based on landscape semiotics (Lindström, Kull, Palang 2014). Specifically, this thesis will use the chronotope theory by Mikhail Bakhtin and the autocommunication model by Yuri Lotman. This chapter is going to dive deeper into what kinds of methods can be applied to the selected materials, aiming to produce the analysis in the next chapters.

This chapter opens with a historicizing of the notion of text, from structuralism's rigid treatment to text as fixed, closed, separate entity to cultural semiotic approach, where text is comparatively more creative, dynamic and relative. Structuralism's approach to the Ryoanji temple produces a great deal of literature focusing on the primary meaning only. On the other hand, cultural semiotic approach to text provides a new way to penetrate the secondary meaning of the *karesansui* garden in Ryoanji temple. Therefore, a theoretical framework of the semiotics of *karesansui* garden will be given based on the dichotomy of primary meaning and secondary meaning.

#### **3.1 From text to textuality**

Traditionally, the concept of the text has been playing an important role in literary theory, literary criticism and cultural studies. It has received much more academic

attentions since the movement of new criticism during the 1950s and became a key notion in cultural studies among structuralists during the 1960s to the 1970s.

For traditional literary theorists and literary critics, the object of their study is literary “work”, of which form and meaning are deliberately denoted by authors. While new criticism tries to create a more scientific, objective mechanism of analyzing literary “work”. It argues that factors of author, reader, and reality that are important in old literary theory, should be extracted from literary “work” in order to get the “text” out of the “work”. It focuses only on the text itself and emphasizes close reading. Like new criticism, structuralism also focuses on the text and tries to find the meaning and underlying formal elements within the text.

Structuralism argues that there must be a structure in every text, which explains why it is easier for experienced readers than for non-experienced readers to interpret a text. Hence, everything that is written seems to be governed by specific rules, or a “grammar of literature”, that one learns in educational institutions and that are to be unmasked (Selden 2005: 76).

In this view, landscape as a closed text has a beginning, an end and a fixed boundary. The author of the landscape encodes and transmits meanings through text. Therefore, the methodological approach is “to identify individual signs, codes and messages among apparently neutral physical forms” (Lindström *et al* 2014: 115).

Structuralist criticism points out that literary work has an author, while text does not have an author. Compared to work, text is an open, non-centralized, non-closed structure, which is systematically encoded with codes. The process of reading a text can be thought of as a process of decoding a text, and during decoding, meaning emerges as well. French semiotician Roland Barthes (1915–1980) explains his ideas of text as follows:

We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author–God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash (Barthes 1977: 146). Once the Author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile. To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing (Ibid, 147).

Such an approach to text provides a nice background of studying the *karesansui* garden in Ryoanji temple, because the creator/author of the garden is unknown. Only from this point of view, treating the garden as an open text gives us the freedom to decipher the text from different perspectives. Thus, readers of the garden also take part in the meaning-making process.

To understand how readers participate in the semiotic process, cultural semiotics conceptualizes such process as cultural autocommunication. It is the transmediality that locates inside cultural autocommunication “as a mechanism serving both creative and mnemonic functions” (Ojamaa & Torop, 2015: 61). The notion of transmediality is closely related to textuality, i.e. the “text’s processual existence in culture in diverse media languages and discourses over time” (Ibid, 61).

Textuality allows the analysis of the complexity of the meaning of Ryoanji temple, because “textuality redefines the borders of the text so as to open new analytical perspectives” and it “considers readers as capable of including new meanings and to make interpretations” (Bellentani 2016: 85).

From text to textuality, the authorship and the readership seem to achieve reconciliation. However, not only the author and the readers are participative actors in the cultural autocommunication process in the garden, because of the very intrinsic attribute of garden: it opens to natural environment. Thus, non-human actors also should be taken into consideration. Therefore, following actors participate in the cultural autocommunication processes of the garden:

- human actors: author, reader, garden keeper, etc.
- non-human actors: text made by reader, natural environment, etc.

The *karesansui* garden in Ryoanji temple enjoys high popularity in tourism, media, and academia. Therefore, it generates new texts in diverse media languages and discourses over time. To study its complex transmediality, it is clear that many actors together participate in the process making the garden an epitome of Zen culture.

There is a large amount of written text about the garden in Ryoanji temple in various languages across different media. Nearly every single book on Japanese garden

will talk about the garden. Essays and thesis on the garden are written from diverse methodologies: various humanities approaches, visual recognition, IT theories, and so on and so forth. Commentaries and stories on the garden written by tourists constantly appear in online blogs and social networks, and of course, introduction of the garden appears in mass-printed maps, pamphlets, and guidebooks, etc.

In their book *The Semiotics of Heritage Tourism*, Emma Waterton and Steve Watson stress the important role embodied experience plays in the heritage tourism and argue that “the act of photography brings bodies and objects together” (2014: 31), and it is an “interactive and embodied process of engagement and meaning-making” (Ibid, 97). The search hashtag #ryoanji on Instagram generates 12322 open posts<sup>19</sup>. Of the first 100 images posted, 31% feature the *karesansui* garden.

The most famous audio text on Ryoanji temple probably is the series of musical composition pieces entitled *Ryoanji* produced by John Cage. According to the study of Michael Fowler, “Cage uses the spatial proclivities of the garden’s geometry as a metric and a valuable inter-media transfer tool” (Fowler 2014: 35).

There are many video productions on Ryoanji temple as well. For example, 1) the experimental film, *MA: Space/Time in the Garden of Ryoan-Ji*, produced by Takahiko Iimura, artistically represents the notion of *ma* (spatial and temporal interval) in the garden. 2) 4K video production *Kyoto from Inside and Outside: Scenes on Panels and Folding Screens* on the special exhibit at Tokyo National Museum produced by Nippon TV, shows the *karesansui* garden in four seasons using high media technology.

Above-mentioned examples of the textuality of the *karesansui* garden in Ryoanji temple shows that the garden is, at the same time, a creative device generating secondary meanings through autocommunication. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on the secondary meaning circulating in the garden.

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<sup>19</sup> Data of 8th, April 2017.



### 3.2 Semiotics of *karesansui* garden

There is limited literature to date on the semiotics of *karesansui* garden in particular. Unsurprisingly, most of them use Ryoanji temple as an example. Due to the reason that most of the writers are not semioticians, their semiotic ideas and thoughts are scattered in their writings, without a proper structure. This subchapter aims to build a theoretical framework for semiotics of *karesansui* garden.

Japanese garden has been discussed in the context of semiotics from the middle of last century when romantic orientalism was popular. French semiotician Roland Barthes studied the semiotics of Japanese culture in his book *Empire of Signs*, in which more or less he talks about Japanese garden as one of the examples. Even though he does not refer to *karesansui* garden in particular, his writings on Japanese garden strongly suggest that he is talking about *karesansui* garden rather than other types of Japanese garden. For example, he writes “the garden is a mineral tapestry of tiny volumes (stones, traces of the rake on the sand)” (Barthes 1982: 108).

His thoughts on the Japanese garden (Barthes 1982) are as follows:

- Zen enlightenment (*satori*) creates an “*emptiness of language*” (Ibid, 4) that writes “gardens, gestures, houses, flower arrangements, faces, violence” (Ibid, 4).
- Zen experiments abolish the infinite semiosis, in Barthes’s word: “thought of thought” (Ibid, 75), attacking the semantic operation of signs.
- Gardens have similar structure as Japanese packages. Japanese packages are designed to postpone what they enclose in time.

Gardens as packages, is analogous to the concept of *wrapping* in Japanese culture (Hendry 1994). Hendry thinks that the Japanese garden is an example of “the wrapping of space” (Ibid, 16). The physical movement from the outside to the inside is the symbolic journey from mundane to spiritual (Ibid, 15). To date, there is no such study on the *wrapping* structure of Ryoanji temple.

The infinite semiosis, Barthes also calling it as “internal recitation” (Barthes 1982: 75), is analogous to the concept of autocommunication proposed by Lotman. However, Lotman thinks that *karesansui* garden is designed with mathematical rhythm and the contemplation of the garden evokes introspection (Lotman 1990: 25). Lindström also suggests: “Dry landscape gardens with their carefully laid out master plans from one certain vantage point in the temple, that invoke religious autocommunication” (Lindström 2010: 369). Still, they all agree on the autocommunicative dimension of *karesansui* garden, despite the dispute if Zen practices are trying to abolish it or invoke it.

Non-semiotician scholars stress the importance of autocommunication in several ways: significant changes occur “in the mind of the viewer and in his perception of the garden” (Petersen 1957: 131); “a rock garden is a non linguistic semiological system where, however, speech intervenes in a rock garden constantly in order to double up what is seen by what is said” (Casalis 1983: 349).

If we see these speeches/dialogues around *karesansui* garden in diverse media languages and discourses over time, we can expand the concept of autocommunication to *cultural autocommunication*. The basis of cultural autocommunication is “culture’s functioning as the system of primary or proto-texts and of secondary or meta-texts, and culture is describable as a process of interpretation, mediation, deformation, elimination, etc. of texts” (Ojamaa & Torop, 2015: 65). Therefore, *karesansui* garden and “illustrations, reviews, advertisements, annotations, interviews and other meta-texts” (Ibid 65) based on it could be analyzed through different tools of analysis.

On the other hand, the temporal and spatial features of *karesansui* garden have been noticed. Weiss discovers the temporality of a dry landscape garden is extremely complicated, operating on different levels: “natural, phenomenological, iconographic, historical” (Weiss 2013: 31), and the spatiality of gardens is “plastic and dynamic, such that kinetics is of the essence” (Ibid, 14). Still, chronotope as a concept has not yet been studied in the context of *karesansui* garden. The connection between chronotope and meaning will be detailed in the next chapter.

The meaning of *karesansui* garden is really complicated for semiotic analysis. A theoretical framework is suggested below basing on David Cooper's work and previous argumentation.

*Primary meaning:*

- mereological and instrumental meaning: *karesansui* garden contributes to the Zen contemplation (Casalis 1983; Berthier 2005).
- representational meaning: *karesansui* garden represents nature landscape, where rock stands for mountains or islands and sand imitates the sea; the structure of *karesansui* garden expresses Zen philosophical feeling of emptiness, naturalness, and simplicity (Weiss 2013); Mountain is masculine (*yang*) while water is feminine (*yin*). Using masculine material to imitate feminine material expresses Zen thinking on paradox (Nakagawara 2004).
- symptomatic meaning: *karesansui* garden shows the social-cultural structure of the Muromachi period.

*Secondary meaning:*

- associative meaning: this one is really scattered in the autocommunication and cultural autocommunication process and it can only be discussed case by case; so far there are no previous studies that concentrate on associative meaning, partly because of practical difficulties in collecting and presenting the very individual thinking in the deep mind.

## 4. Chronotope and the garden

This chapter starts with a theoretical question: how to apply chronotope, a concept derived from literature criticism to landscape study? Based on the original writings of Bakhtin and previous studies related to chronotope, this chapter suggests two possible ways: 1) study the primary chronotopes of the garden, i.e., the spatial structure that includes body movements and eye movements, and the materialization of temporality in the garden 2) study secondary chronotopes in the garden. Afterwards, the primary meaning of the *karesansui* garden in Ryoanji temple will be analyzed according to these suggestions.

### 4.1 Primary chronotope and secondary chronotope

Bakhtin develops the concept of chronotope in his essay “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics” (henceforth FTC), where he conceptualizes three different chronotopes within different literary genres of novel, which are the Greek romance, the Chivalric romance, and the Rabelaisian novel. Bakhtin defines the “intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships” (Bakhtin 1990: 84) as chronotope. A more detailed definition reads as follows:

In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. The intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope (Bakhtin 1990: 84).

The concept of chronotope can be understood as “[a] unit of analysis for studying texts according to the ratio and the nature of the temporal and spatial categories presented” (Todorov 1984: 426). Bakhtin uses the concept of chronotope “to capture the spatiotemporal matrix that shapes the actions of protagonists within literary texts.” (Brown & Renshaw 2006: 241). Even though Bakhtin develops and applies the concept of chronotope in the literary theory, he points out the possibility that chronotope can be applied to genre theory as well. He stresses the intrinsic connectedness between chronotope and meaning. In the end of FTC, he gives excellent remarks:

For us the following is important: whatever these meanings turn out to be, in order to enter our experience they must take on the form of a sign that is audible and visible for us (a hieroglyph, a mathematical formula, a verbal or linguistic expression, a sketch, etc.). Without such temporal–spatial expression, even abstract thought is impossible. Consequently, every entry into the sphere of meanings is accomplished only through the gates of the chronotope (Bakhtin 1990: 258).

“The characteristics of chronotope as described by Bakhtin and his followers present well the semiotic features of landscape” (Lindström *et al* 2014: 121). Describing a landscape painting, Tim Ingold thinks that temporality takes on visible form in a landscape and writes:

Not far off, nestled in a grove of trees near the top of the hill, is a stone church. [...] They have more in common, perhaps, than meets the eye. Both possess the attributes of what Bakhtin (1981: 84) calls a ‘chronotope’ – that is, a place charged with temporality, one in which temporality takes on palpable form (Ingold 2000: 205).

Garden as a type of landscape has chronotopes. Kussain argues that there are actual chronotope and imaginary chronotope in the garden and writes as follows:

A chronotope itself is constituted of actual and imaginary time, actual and imaginary spaces. [...] The space where the fifteenth stone disappears is a moving but a constant volume. And therefore it is logical that it is the category of imaginary spaces, having the ability to dissolve objects located therein (Kussain: 2012).

Chronotope also plays an important role in Japanese gardens. *Ma* (in Japanese: 間, literally meaning in-between) is an important concept that could be found in many forms of Japanese art: architecture, haiku, ink paintings, and of course *karesansui* garden as well. It embodies both temporal and spatial characteristics. In Japanese, *ma* appears both in the word of time/時間, and the word of space/空間. In a way, it is analogous to the concept of chronotope. *Ma* shows “the fact that all experience of space is a time-structured process, and all experience of time is a space-structured process” (Nitschke 1988).

Peter Torop (2013) specifies the hierarchical typology of chronotopes:

- Topological chronotope: real time and space where event unfolds.
- Psychological chronotope: actor (of event)’s subjective attitude to time and space.
- Metaphysical chronotope: authorial interpretation of chronotope.

Following the work of Torop and the dichotomy of meaning previously mentioned, it is possible to conceptualize two types of chronotopes in the *karesansui* garden.

- Primary chronotope: similar to topological chronotope, it shows the real spatiality and temporality of the garden, generating primary meaning.
- Secondary chronotope: analogous to psychological chronotope, it expresses actors’ personal experience of time and space in the garden. In other words, the primary chronotope perceived by visitors turns to the secondary chronotope.

To study the primary chronotope, firstly it is possible to analyze the spatial structure of the garden. Considering that a visitor’s path to visit the garden is always starting from the gate of Ryoanji temple, this thesis will focus on the whole spatial structure of Ryoanji temple, as well as the structure of the garden itself. Now, the question is how to study the temporality of the garden.

According to Bakhtin, chronotope has strong representational significance, as he notes “time becomes, in effect, palpable and visible; the chronotope makes narrative events concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow in their veins” (1990:

250). Combining both thoughts from Ingold and Bakhtin, the first possible direction to apply chronotope to the field of landscape study can be drawn: studying the palpability of time in a given text. In a conclusion, “the chronotope, functioning as the primary means for materializing time in space” (Ibid, 250) allows us to study the materialization of time in the garden.

On the other hand, Mireya Folch–Serra firstly providing a review on the application of the chronotope concept in geography, writes “as a method, chronotopical analysis identifies treatments of time and space in diverse guises in different discourses” (Folch–Serra 1990: 264), and “the main lesson to be taken from Bakhtin’s typology is that there is no single, timeless/master chronotope” (Ibid, 264). If we take the *karesansui* garden to consideration in different events/discourses, it is possible to conceptualize different chronotopes by different actors. These different chronotopes are secondary chronotopes because they are individual experience of time and space in the garden.

In following subchapters, at first different elements in the garden will be analyzed according to the spatial structure of Ryoanji temple and the materialization of temporality in the garden; secondly, the primary meaning of the garden will be discussed based on the chronotopic analysis. Afterward, the secondary chronotope of actors with the garden will be analyzed in the next chapter.

## **4.2 Spatial structure as primary chronotope**

Although the object of this study is the *karesansui* garden in Ryoanji temple, one should notice that the garden and its surroundings are very closely combined together, for example, the garden is enclosed in the abbot’s hall; the garden is enhanced by the vegetation outside the wall. To study the text structure, a holistic approach must be

taken. The Ryoanji temple could be treated as one text, then the garden is the text in the text.

Ryoanji temple is a complicated landscape that has a pond garden, a tea garden, a moss garden and a *karesansui* garden, etc. The *karesansui* garden locates in the center of the temple: spatially northern to the geometric center (see Annex1, Fig. 5); ideologically, in the front of the power center, Abbot's hall.

In Japanese culture, many cases show that center seems to be empty. Barthes reckons that the center of Tokyo, the Tokyo Imperial Palace, "hides the sacred 'nothing'" (Barthes 1983: 30–32). Hendry argues that amulets and talismans sold at shrines, "consist in little more than a couple of layers of folded paper, or a little cloth bag, perhaps wrapped only around a piece of card to give them shape" (Hendry 1994: 13). The empty amulets seem generate religious protecting power (Ibid, 13).

*Mu* (無), meaning no, not, nothing, is a key word in Buddhism, especially Zen traditions.

According to Zen doctrine, Enlightenment is *mu*-emptiness or nothingness. Zen ideals include qualities such as mushin, selflessness or detachment, and *munen*, *musō*, freedom from all ideas and thoughts (Kondo 1985 :291–292).

Zen practices are the way from mundane/material world to ritual/spiritual world. That require dematerialization. Emptiness is the acme of dematerialization. The *karesansui* garden is clearly dematerialized compared to the pure land garden, because it uses only lithic material.

The structure of Ryoanji temple is possible to be considered as wrapping. The center, the *karesansui* garden is wrapped by different layers of space. To see the *karesansui* garden, which is the only aim for most tourists, visitors first should enter *sanmon* gate (山門). Typical *sanmon* gate consists of a bigger gate in the middle and two smaller gates on two sides. In Ryoanji temple, there is only one bigger gate with



one smaller gate. Entering the gate signifies one is detached from three passions of greed, hatred and foolishness.<sup>20</sup>

After entering *sanmon* gate, visitors will see a pond garden, which takes more than a quarter of the whole area of the temple. The garden consists of Kyoyochi pond/鏡容池 (see Fig. 7), several islands, a stone bridge, with many trees and water vegetations. This pond garden is overlooked by most visitors, however, it has complicated history and symbolic value as much as the *karesansui* garden does.

Passing by the pond garden and going through the *sando* (参道), a path to Buddhist temple, visitors need to climb a short flight of stone stairs before reaching the official entrance gates of the *karesansui* garden. Official entrance gates (one specifically for group tourists) actually connected to the *kuri* (庫裏), administrative office and souvenir shop of Ryoanji temple. The only gate to the Abbot's hall and the *karesansui* garden directly, known as *chokushimon* gate (勅使門), is closed to public.

The following table summarises the wrapping structure:

Outside world	Boundary	Outer garden	Boundary	Inner garden
	<i>Sanmon</i> gate	The pond garden	Wall	The <i>karesansui</i> garden
		Water Vegetation Lithic material		Lithic material moss
Mundane				Ritual

There are many signs in the garden guiding tourists to visit the garden via the exact path described above. Thus, a *path* structure from the outside world to the inner garden is clear. Movement from outside world to the Ryoanji temple is the first step into the spiritual world; movement from the pond garden to the *karesansui* garden is a “further progression into the domain of ritual time and space” (Kondo 1985: 296).

Several writings try to solve the puzzle, the intriguing structure of the *karesansui* garden. Casalis thinks that: the garden's structure shows asymmetry; different stone

<sup>20</sup> また、貪（とん）・瞋（じん）・痴（ち）の三煩を解脱する境界の門ともいう。Available <http://www.janis.or.jp/users/sairyuta/tera/tatemono.html>. Last visited 20th of March, 2017.

clusters in a tension structure spatially (1983: 357-358). Van Tonder and Lyons analyze rock garden via medial axis transformation, revealing the “implicit structure in the visual ground of a quintessential rock garden design” (2005: 353).

In landscape studies, body movement through space is often related to the experience of time. In the *karesansui* garden body movement is limited, that is probably the reason why visitors prefer sitting down. However, here in this particular garden, it is the eye movement that bears the temporality. There are many spatial intervals between these rocks in the garden. Eye movements from one rock, to the other, then to next one, needs time, creating temporal rhythms that are similar to *Haiku* and *Noh* theater performance (McGovern 2004: 353).

Eye movements are complicated in the garden. To simplify it, eye movements drawn by the patterns raked on the ground of gravels are analyzed. The rhythmical patterns of gravels cause rhythmical movements of eyes, as Nakagawara writes:

In looking, one is “raking” the sand in a symbolic way by following the repetitive, rhythmical patterns of the ripples. One is thus drawn into a dialogue with the composition, and at the same time with oneself (Nakagawara 2004: 97).

There are two types of patterns raked on the ground of gravels.



Flow and ripple patterns (McGovern 2004: 350)

The repeating eye movements that follow the linear pattern and concentric pattern, inject dynamics into the static patterns. The *karesansui* garden is no longer a simple picture Casalis claims. It is a living space, where water flows and ripples. Besides, Nakagawara argues that, “the visual sensation of movement, and the rhythm created this way is also, as a result, is suggestive of sound” (2004: 97). In some *karesansui* gardens, “using silence to effectuate sound, amassing silent boulders to create the fearful roar of a waterfall” (Ibid, 97).

In Ryoanji, there is no roaring sound, because there are no remarkable wavy patterns. The forceless linear pattern suggests a calm and tranquil sea surface. What an echo to the rare meaning of *niwa*, that is unknown to most people: sea surface with smooth waves<sup>21</sup>. The ripple, is an indexical sign to the sound when something drops into the water.

### 4.3 Materialization of temporality as primary chronotope

As mentioned before, one who studies the garden should never separate it from its surroundings. Thus, not only the elements in the garden, but also different actors around the garden together materialize time in space. Temporality is measured against a spectrum ranging from ephemeral to permanent.

#### *Ephemera*

The ephemera is “short-lived and irregularly repetitive phenomena” (Lindström 2010: 365). For example, snow, rain, a ray of sunlight, fallen leaf, etc, non-human actors that are momentary but still have emotion value and effect in the garden. In a Zen garden, ephemera offer “aesthetic, religious, or utopian possibilities hitherto unimaginable” (Weiss 2013: 226).

The 4K video<sup>22</sup> of the garden through all four seasons from *Kyoto from Inside and Outside: Scenes on Panels and Folding Screens* produced by Nippon TV, shows culmination of the seasonal beauty of the garden. Through the interviews<sup>23</sup> with the

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<sup>21</sup> 波の平らな海面. From digital Japanese dictionary Digital Daijisen. Available <https://dictionary.goo.ne.jp/jn/168667/meaning/m0u/%E3%81%AB%E3%82%8F/>. Last visited 20th of March, 2017.

<sup>22</sup> Partly available <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loAcUZ7zIqo>. Last visited 20th of March, 2017. Also see Annex 1, Fig. 8 to Fig. 11.

<sup>23</sup> Available <http://www.ntv.co.jp/kyoto2013/column/03.html>. Last visited 20th of March, 2017.

team who produced the video, we can read their perceptions of time in the garden. The following is translated from Japanese by me and **bolds** are also highlighted by me.

Question: You all have visited the garden many times, spending a long time photographing. What do you think is the most attractive part of the garden?

[...]

Fujiwara: The **vicissitudes of the four seasons** of the stone garden. The same plant turns red, and becomes withered in winter. The cherry tree blossoms and turns green.

[...]

Tsutsumi: The **changelessness** over a year in like roofs and like gravels, which take half frame of the image. But, the trees are **changing** in the background. [...] The **passage of time**.

[...]

Tsutsumi: The **shapes of shadow** will also change in 10 minutes.

Kai: [...] **Depending on the light**, the color of the roof also changes.

Therefore, the changing ephemera *versus* the seemingly changeless elements in the garden, create the perception of the passage of time.

### *Trees*

Trees over the wall, including cherry tree, maple tree, and pine tree, are the best example to show the vicissitudes of the seasons. *Shakkei* (literally, borrowed views) is a frequent design skill in Japanese gardens. In Ryoanji temple, trees as non-human actors are borrowed into the *karesansui* garden. Seasonality of trees (see Annex 1, Fig. 8 to Fig. 11), *hanami* (cherry blossom) in the spring and *momiji* (colored leaves) in the autumn, is a great contrast to the rock and gravel, temporally and materially.

Different types of trees have their unique temporalities closely connected to the aesthetic awareness of Japanese culture. The most well-known example is the cherry tree, of which the flower is almost the sign of Japan itself. The temporality of cherry tree from full blossom to fading away is usually within a week. “It is precisely the evanescence of their beauty that evokes the wistful feeling of *mono no aware* [a gentle sadness to impermanence] in the viewer” (Parkes 2017). Besides, the cherry blossom is also a very strong metaphor for *samurai* class. They embrace their inevitable mortality in the battles as an extremeness of beauty, just like fading away cherry blossoms. This connection is easily noticeable in the front of the Yasukuni Shrine, where many cherry

trees are planted. On the other hand, the pine tree, because of it is evergreen, is a symbol of longevity in Japanese culture.

### *Moss*

Moss seems to be neglectable and it is neglected in most previous studies, because compared to trees it is much unremarkable. However, slowly growing moss still possesses its own unique temporality. In the winter, it is weathered, with dark color. In the spring, it turns green.

### *Wall*

The wall is made of clay boiled in rapeseed oil. As time goes by, the oil will seep out and leaves unique traces on the wall, forming particular design and showing its own temporality. Moreover, the wall is also a confrontation between two extreme ends of temporality, drawing the boundary of outer garden and inner garden. It is ephemera that penetrates the boundary, bringing in visible temporality inside the garden. The function of wall in the garden is summarized by Parkes as follows:

Above and beyond the wall there is nature in movement: branches wave and sway, clouds float by, and the occasional bird flies past. But unless rain or snow is falling, or a stray leaf is blown across, the only movement visible within the garden is shadowed or illusory, as the sun or moon casts slow-moving shadows of tree branches on the motionless gravel (Parkes 2017).

### *Rock*

The temporality of rock converge to timeless, thanks to its materiality. It requires a great deal of attention into details to see the minor temporality of rocks. Physical processes of weathering will gradually alter the form and character of these stones.

Above analysis on temporality shows how diverse temporality could be in the garden and the confronting tension between evanescence and permanence around the garden. In a word, temporality makes the garden a meaningful place.

#### 4.4 Primary meaning of the garden

Following the previous analysis on the primary chronotopes of the garden, the *representational* meaning of the garden is clear. To sum up, the primary meaning of the garden is given as follows:

*Mereological and instrumental meaning:*

1) From a historical perspective, the *karesansui* garden as the center part of Ryoanji temple, contributes to the Zen practices.

The claim that the *karesansui* garden contributes to the Zen contemplation (Casalis 1983; Berthier 2005) is questioned during the interview with Ohira Toshiyuki, the curator of Ryoanji temple.

L.Z.: Are there monks meditating in front of the *karesansui* garden?

O.T.: No.

L.Z.: So, where do they usually meditate in the temple?

O.T.: There are no specific places. Monks are meditating in their own private places. (Interview 1).

2) From a contemporary perspective, the *karesansui* garden is the main attraction of Ryoanji temple, attracting visitors and profiting for the temple.

On the official website of Ryoanji temple, a picture of the garden visually occupies the homepage and the garden itself has a separate introduction webpage. On the pamphlet distributed in the temple, a picture of the garden with caption “龍安寺 RYOANJI TEMPLE” are on the cover. On the city map of Kyoto, freely distributed in the Tourist Information Center in JR Kyoto station on December 2016, advertisement of Ryoanji with a picture of the garden is listed with restaurants, hotel and shops. The admission fee for entrance is 300 Yen for children or 500 Yen, and tickets are only checked at the entrance of the garden, not the temple.

*Representational meaning:*

- *depictive meaning* - the *karesansui* garden represents natural landscape; rocks stand for islands and gravels imitate the sea. As mentioned before, etymologically *karesansui* means mountain and water. In Ryoanji temple, concentric raked patterns on the gravels is an iconic sign of water waves. Considering that the vast distribution of gravels/water and the miniaturization of *karesansui* gardens, the area of gravels in the garden symbolizes the sea. Thus, rocks/mountains locating in the gravels represent islands.
- *allusive meaning* - from its spatiality, the garden is connected to the concept of ideal spiritual state *Mu* and moving from the outside to the inside represents a spiritual journey from mundane to ritual; from its temporality, the garden represents philosophical thinking on the paradoxical relationship between ephemeral and permanent.

*Symptomatic meaning:* the *karesansui* garden expresses the shift in sociocultural structure of the Muromachi period.

The warrior class gradually takes power over the noble class. In the meantime, a new ideology serving the warrior class is needed. “The philosophy of Zen Buddhism magnificently coincided with the needs of the warrior” (Nakagawara 2004: 92). Changes in social forms trigger changes in Japanese culture. The aesthetics of Zen Buddhism has great influences on garden arts, generating a newly emerging form of expression, the *karesansui* style, of which “Ryoanji is the epitome and pinnacle” (Ibid, 94).

## **5. Autocommunication in the garden**

This chapter opens with a short review on the notion of autocommunication proposed by Yuri Lotman, and its application to landscape semiotics suggested by Kati Lindström. Hence, autocommunication process in the garden will be analyzed based on previous studies on materials collected.

### **5.1 Secondary chronotope as secondary code**

Lotman revises and develops Jakobson's model of communication, focusing on language and text. The core of Jakobson's model of communication is that meaning is generated from the correlation between context, code and contact, in other words from the whole communication process. Jakobson regards text as an invariable object, while for Lotman, text is rather a function. "In an overall cultural system, texts fulfill at least two basic functions: to convey meanings adequately, and to generate new meanings" (Lotman 1988: 34).

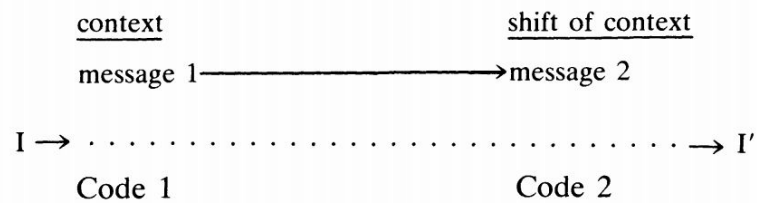
Lotman refers Jakobson's model of communication as I-s/he communication. This kind of communication is characterized by one-way information flow, where the code remains unchanged and, theoretically speaking, the stability of code warrants the message's unmistakable transmission, though in reality the message fails to be fully transmitted (Lotman 1990: 21–22). Text in I-s/he communication fulfills mainly for the first function of text, which is to convey meanings adequately.



Lotman proposes another model, which is I-I communication, also known as autocommunication. Text in I-I communication fulfills mainly for the second function, which is to generate new meanings.

In the 'I-I' system the bearer of the information remains the same but the message is reformulated and acquires new meaning during the communication process. This is the result of introducing a supplementary, second, code; the original message is recoded into elements of its structure and thereby acquires features of a new message (Lotman 1990: 22).

I-I communication is demonstrated as follows in *Universe of the Mind* (1990).



Lotman's model of autocommunication in 1990 (Lotman 1990: 22).

Here, it is very clear that there is a *dual code* (Code 1 & Code 2) coexisting in autocommunication, which is the exact very reason that new meaning generates from autocommunication. Furthermore, Lotman thinks that rhythm in poetic text is closely related to autocommunication. "Rhythm is raised to the level of meaning, and meanings are formed in rhythm" (Lotman 1990: 33).

Moreover, Lindström suggests the possible methodology of applying the concept of autocommunication to the study of landscapes. She argues that "perceptual markers of landscape", rhythms, ephemera, eye movements, "can be considered as a secondary code leading to autocommunication in the person who contemplates the landscape" (Lindström 2010: 359). The *karesansui* garden in Ryoanji temple and other landscapes, for example, Miyajima shrine becomes famous "because of their specific rhythmic qualities that offer special opportunities for contemplation and self-reconstitution" (Ibid, 366). In Ryoanji temple, specific rhythm especially invokes "religious autocommunication" (Ibid, 369). As mentioned before, there is a dispute if the garden is meant for Zen contemplation. Thus, this chapter reckons that the garden invokes

autocommunication in general. Religious autocommunication is conditional. To achieve Zen contemplation, one must have at least knowledge, more or less, on Zen Buddhism as the secondary code.

In his book *Rhythmanalysis*, Henri Lefebvre provides a framework for analysis of rhythms:

Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is **rhythm**. Therefore:

- a) repetition (of movements, gestures, action, situations, differences);
- b) interferences of linear processes and cyclical processes;
- c) birth, growth, peak, then decline and end (Lefebvre 2004: 15).

Therefore, rhythm is an embodiment of chronotope, which is the interaction between a place and a time. Birth, growth, peak, then decline and end has been already discussed as seasonality of trees (primary chronotope) in the previous chapter. On the other hand, the secondary chronotope surged from tourist, and temple worker will be analyzed in the following subchapter.

## **5.2 Secondary meaning of the garden**

To analyze autocommunication process in the garden, firstly materials are needed. The autocommunication generates new meaning (secondary meaning) that is carried by new texts/narratives. Hence, via studying the interviews with actors, it is possible to penetrate the autocommunication process, and analyze it thoroughly to get some insights on the secondary meaning of the garden.

Secondly, as mentioned before autocommunication is individual and experiential. Therefore, the possible way to analyze it is to give concrete individual examples. To make the analysis in a clear form, the secondary chronotope as the secondary code in the autocommunication process will be exemplified via tourist and temple worker.

### *Tourist*

Tourists are the major human actors participating the meaning-making process, besides they are also embodied with various temporalities. Some tourists will come, take pictures then quickly leave for next attractions. On the other hand, some tourists prefer to take a seat, immersing themselves in front of the garden for a while. If one wishes to sit longer, it is possible to sit for hours. Yet, the temporality is limited to the opening time of the temple and their time schedule if they travel in a group.

Tourists visiting the garden daily can be conceptualized as rhythm as well. In general, this type of rhythm interferes the process of religious autocommunication. For example, the question from an interview with the temple worker shows that group students make noise.

Q7. Do you have any problems when running the temple?

A7. Every time we need to apply for a permit for some repairments from the Kyoto city and Agency for Cultural Affairs. Besides, we receive complaints from the tourists who are contemplating the garden, complaining that because of the noise of group students, it is not able to enjoy the Zen space. Our place is a Zen temple but also a tourist attraction, thus it is hard to limit tourists (平尾, 川原, 河本 *et al* 2008: 5).

Another interview with tourist C shows that too many tourists block their view and the noise is disturbing.

L.Z.: Have you tried to sit down, seeing the garden from different angles?

T.C.: There wasn't really enough opportunity, because there were too many people.

L.Z.: Have you noticed different sounds around you, or just noise?

T.C.: Just noise, and phones ringing (Interview 4).

According to my own participatory observation of tourists visiting the garden, I find out that many of them were walking several times along the veranda for the position, trying to see all the fifteen stones at the same time. A girl from one student group found that position and even yelled to her classmates to come here. Despite that many tourists' eye movements are bound for the fifteenth stone and their body movements are limited in

the veranda facing the garden, two of my interviewees (who are tourists) expand their chronotopes via noticing the seasonality of trees and walking around the main hall.

The interview with tourist B shows that the seasonality of trees helps with his appreciation of the dryness of the garden.

T.B.: Maybe this time [December] is not a good season. I don't know the *karesansui* that much. However, I want to see the *kare*-ness [dryness] of the garden. I suppose in the spring or summer time, the feeling of the *kare*-ness is much stronger, because the contrast [between the garden and the background] is much stronger (Interview 3).

The interview with tourist A, who is an architect himself, shows that walking around the architectures and sitting from different angles help his appreciation of the garden.

T.A.: Before going to see the garden, I made a turn to the pavilion [main hall], so it could actually see from the beginning, then arriving at the tea house, because I don't know, but I remember that is the way to see it. [...] The garden makes sense just because of the tea house and vice versa. [...] The physical part is so simple and so strong, you can forget about the conceptual part. You don't need to think about it as well. So now I just enjoy the spatial experience without thinking about the why or what (Interview 2).

L.Z.: What is in your mind when you were gazing in front of the garden?

T.A.: Yeah. First, I was beginning to think about the position of the rocks, and proportion.

L.Z.: So, you were trying to get the idea, like why there are special arrangements.

T.Z.: Yes, exactly. Also, I moved my sitting points, so I could see from different angles, to see the proportion how it works. And the relation between flat stones and bigger stones. So it's kind of, like aphorism of obstacles in life, may represent. And then, I started just wondering about my own problems, my thoughts (Interview 2).

The interviews with tourist A and B are good examples showing that their embodied chronotopes come into their autocommunication process with the garden. In the case of tourist A, the primary chronotope (seasonality of trees) has become a secondary chronotope that triggers his thinking on the *kare*-ness of the *karesansui* garden. As mentioned before, seasonality of trees as a primary chronotope expresses the impermanence temporality of the garden in terms of the primary meaning. Tourist A perceives the seasonality of trees via a biological spectrum from withering to flourishing, which makes him think of the *kare*-ness in the *karesansui* garden. In his

autocommunication, the *kare*-ness is best exemplified by the contrast between flourishing trees and withering stone garden.

In the example of tourist B, his bodily movement around the architectures is the secondary chronotope that makes him purely enjoy the simple but strong spatial experience. His path to the garden differs from the official path (the primary chronotope) guided by the route map and road signs. Thus, his spatial experiences differ from the primary meaning (from mundane to spiritual). When gazing in front the garden, the primary chronotope (position and proportion of rocks) draws him into solving the puzzle like many other people do. Later, the primary chronotope turns to the secondary chronotope as he perceives the spatial relationship between the flat stones and bigger stones as the obstacles (here the spatial structure as the secondary chronotope) of life in his autocommunication.

### *Temple worker*

The curators of Ryoanji temple check the garden daily in the morning to see if everything is in good condition. The interview with one of the curators shows that this type of rhythms does not help in autocommunication in particular.

L.Z.: Can you briefly tell me your daily work?

O.T.: [...] And I check the garden in the morning.

L.Z.: Why do you need to check the garden?

O.T.: It is standard procedure to check if the garden is in a good condition. In rare cases, there are wild pigs running inside.

L.Z.: Really? [Surprised]

O.T.: Yes, because the mountain is right behind the temple.

L.Z.: How do you contemplate the garden?

O.T.: Ehm, [pausing], ehm.

L.Z.: I know it is a very hard question, but how do you feel when you are facing the garden?

O.T.: I am seeing the garden basically everyday. I am already used to it. Special feeling? Ehm, [not giving an answer] (Interview 1).

The monks do maintenance of the garden (raking the pattern on gravels and cleaning the fallen leaves) usually once in ten days. As no interviews with the monks available, this

autocommunication can be somehow pictured from the description of Nakagawara's study:

At the same time, by perpetuating an archetypal act in raking the gravel, he is unified with the cohorts of priests who have performed the raking through history. The gravel is their shared lithic blood, flowing like sap through the rake and the hands that hold it. And all this time, the concrete feel of the gravel under the special sandals the monk is wearing reminds him of the here and now and of the limitations of the physical body he inhabits (Nakagawara 2004: 98).

As opposed to *zazen*, which is how tourists typically think of Zen Buddhism autocommunication in the garden, it is the repetition of routinised kinetical bodily movements that trigger the autocommunication.

## Conclusion

*Karesansui* garden is indeed an intriguing object, because it has many semiotic perspectives for further research. This thesis may serve as a start point for future semiotic studies of Japanese garden, especially *karesansui* garden.

This thesis summarizes previous studies on garden semiotics and gives a theoretical framework based on landscape semiotics. This thesis conceptualizes two layers of meaning existing in the garden, and two layers of chronotope along with them. The primary meaning that is bond to socio-cultural structure, which have been studied repeatedly in previous studies. Thus, this thesis takes a new strategy, analyzing the primary chronotope of the garden and how it generates the primary meaning.

This thesis stresses the importance of human actors' participation in the meaning-making process and classifies their meaning as the secondary meaning. To analyze the secondary meaning, the thesis adopts the tool of autocommunication and explains that the secondary chronotope functions as the secondary code during autocommunication.

To put the theoretical framework into application, this thesis does a case study on the *karesansui* garden in Ryoanji temple via data collecting and data analysis. The case study of Ryoanji temple elucidates the meaning of the garden, via analyzing its spatial structure with visual elements, and personal autocommunication.

As a result, the primary meaning is clear: from its spatiality, the garden is connected to the concept of ideal spiritual state *Mu* and moving from the outside to the inside represents a spiritual journey from mundane to ritual; from its temporality, the garden represents Zen philosophical thinking *Mujo* on the paradoxical relationship

between ephemeral and permanent. On the other hand, the secondary meaning is exemplified via the interviews with tourists and temple worker.

The result justifies the usability of the method of the research. The aim of this thesis on how to study *karesansui* garden in a semiotic way has achieved and the proposed research questions have been answered correspondingly as well.

The interview results with tourists show that tourists' own autocommunication with the garden is valuable and deserves academic attention. In a UNESCO World Heritage, tourists are easily pre-conceptualized as a stereotyped group that they come, take pictures and leave for the next attraction. However, in the case of Ryoanji temple, the tourists I interviewed are well prepared for the visiting and they indeed have valid autocommunication in the garden.

This thesis has not detailed in the personal autocommunication of monks and the cultural autocommunication of the garden, which leaves unsolved space for further research in long-term perspectives.



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## Kokkuvõtte

### SEMIOOTILINE UURIMUS JAAPANI ZEN-AIAST RYOANJI TEMPLE NÄITEL

Selle magistr töö eesmärk on uurida *karesansui aia* tähendust ja vastata küsimusele, millist tähendust omab *karesansui* aed Ryoani templi jaoks.

Sissejuhatuses määratletakse uurimisobjekt defineerides see üheks kindlaks aiatüübiks. Esitatakse ülevaade varasematest uurimistöödest *karesansui* aia kohta. Kirjeldatakse kasutatud materjale ja selgitatakse uurimustöö eesmärke.

Esimene peatükk algab uurimistöö teemakäsitlusega, kus kõigepealt analüüsitakse sõna “aed” etümoloogilist tähendust ja arengut erinevates keeltes. Lisaks antakse ajalooline ülevaade Jaapani ajakunsti kujunemisloost, milles *karesansui* aed on lähedalt seotud Zen budismiga. Peatükk lõppeb pildimaterjali ja aiatüübi lühikirjeldusega.

Teine peatükk algab aiasemiootika detailse kasutatud kirjanduse ülevaatega, mida siia maani pole süstemaatiliselt uuritud. Seejärel uuritakse aeda maastikusemiootika vaatepunktist.

Kolmas peatükis esitatakse uurimistöö teoreetiline ülesehitus, mis põhineb maastikusemiootikal. Strukturalismi järgi loob lugeja uue tähenduse. Teiseks, autor leiab, et kronotoop on sobiv vahend aia tähenduse uurimiseks. Viimaks, esitatakse lugeja interpretatsioonid autokommunikatsiooni kaudu. Seetõttu, uurimistöö väidab, et tähendus on mitmekihiline ja on võimalik eristada esmast ja teisest tähendust.

Neljandas peatükis väidetakse, et sarnaselt tähendusele on ka kahte tüüpi chronotope: esmasele kronotoop'ile vastab esmane tähendus, kui teisele kronotoop'ile vastab teisene tähendus. Seejärel uuritakse detailselt esmast kronotoop'i, mis sisaldab

endas *wrapping* struktuuri ja *path* struktuuri, lineaarset ja kontsentrilist mustrit ning aja materialiseerumist. Lõpuks esitatakse aia tähenduse kokkuvõte.

Viiendas peatükis väidetakse, et teine chronotope on nagu teine kood autokommunikatsioonis, mis päästab valla aia sekundaarse tähenduse. Aia teisene tähendus põhineb peaaesjalikult intervjuudel aia töötajate ja küllastajatega.

Kokkuvõtteks võib öelda, et selle magistritööga on loodud teoreetiline raamistik *karesansui* aia tähenduse uurimiseks. Seda raamistikku on edukalt rakendatud ühe konkreetse aia uurimiseks. Välja töötatud raamistik võimaldab seda tulevikus rakendada ka teiste aiatüüpide uurimisele.

## Annex 1

### List of pictures



Fig. 1. Title: 與喜天満神社 磐座; Available  
[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fc/Yoki-tenman-jinja\\_Shrine\\_-\\_Iwakura.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fc/Yoki-tenman-jinja_Shrine_-_Iwakura.jpg).  
Last visited 20th of March, 2017.



Fig. 2. Title: The Pure Land garden of Mōtsū-ji; Available  
<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/9/92/M%C5%8Dts%C5%AB-ji.JPG/640px-M%C5%8Dts%C5%AB-ji.JPG>. Last visited 20th of March, 2017.



Fig. 3. Title: View of the daisen-in stone garden Nakaumi in Daitokuji; Available <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/56/Daisen-in3.jpg>. Last visited 20th of March, 2017.



Fig. 4. Title: 皇大神宮茶室 霽月; Available [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/57/Jingu\\_Chashitsu04.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/57/Jingu_Chashitsu04.jpg). Last visited 20th of March, 2017.



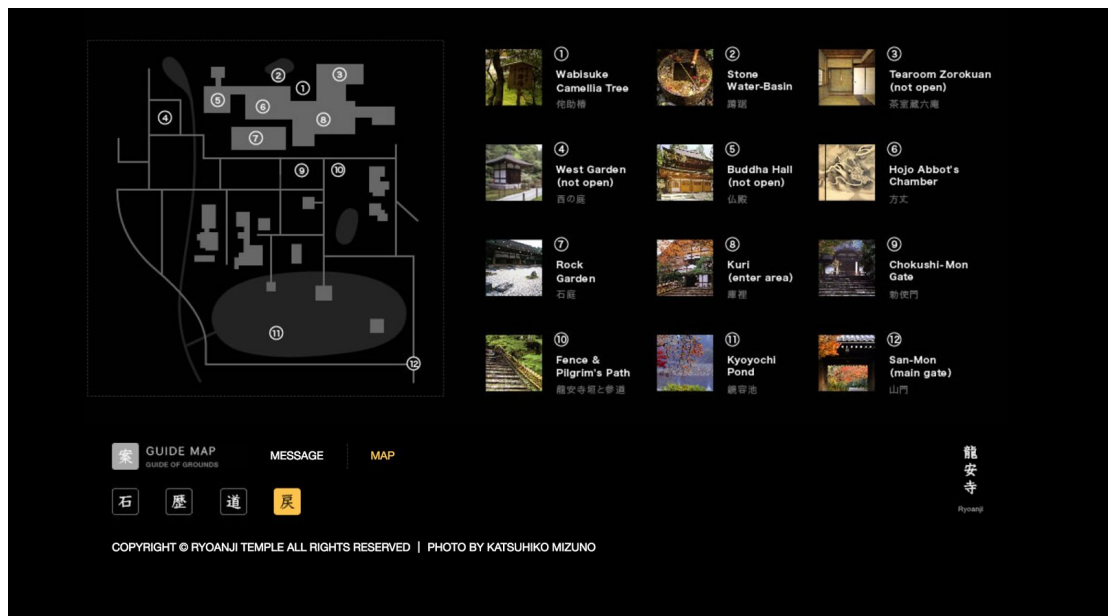


Fig. 5. Screenshot from the official website of Ryoanji temple; Available <http://www.ryoanji.jp/smph/eng/guide/grounds.html>. Last visited 20th of March, 2017.



Fig. 6. The *karesansui* garden in Ryoanji temple. Available [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fc/Kyoto-Ryoan-Ji\\_MG\\_4512.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fc/Kyoto-Ryoan-Ji_MG_4512.jpg). Last visited 20th of March, 2017.



Fig. 7. Kyoyochi pond. Photography: Aleksandrs Jonins.



11月下旬の石庭。赤と黄の紅葉のバランスも美しい。撮影／高橋一徳

Fig. 8. The *karesansui* garden in November. Photography: Takahashi Kazunori. Available [http://www.ntv.co.jp/kyoto2013/column/images/01\\_1.jpg](http://www.ntv.co.jp/kyoto2013/column/images/01_1.jpg). Last visited 20th of March, 2017.



3月初旬の石庭。冷気が張り詰めている。撮影／高橋一徳

Fig. 9. The *karesansui* garden in March. Photography: Takahashi Kazunori. Available [http://www.ntv.co.jp/kyoto2013/column/images/02\\_1.jpg](http://www.ntv.co.jp/kyoto2013/column/images/02_1.jpg). Last visited 20th of March, 2017.



4月の石庭。咲き誇る枝垂桜と奥のソメイヨシノ。撮影／高橋一徳

Fig. 10. The *karesansui* garden in April. Photography: Takahashi Kazunori. Available [http://www.ntv.co.jp/kyoto2013/column/images/03\\_1.jpg](http://www.ntv.co.jp/kyoto2013/column/images/03_1.jpg). Last visited 20th of March, 2017.



5月の石庭。生き生きとした新緑の迫力。撮影/高橋一徳

Fig. 11. The *karesansui* garden in May. Photography: Takahashi Kazunori. Available [http://www.ntv.co.jp/kyoto2013/column/images/04\\_1.jpg](http://www.ntv.co.jp/kyoto2013/column/images/04_1.jpg). Last visited 20th of March, 2017.

## **Annex 2**

### List of interviews

#### Interview 1

Date: 15.12.2016, Place: Ryoanji temple, Kyoto

Interviewer: Lidong Zhu

Interviewee: Ohira Toshiyuki

Recorded to digital audio, 24 minutes.

#### Interview 2

Date: 15.12.2016, Place: Ryoanji temple, Kyoto

Interviewer: Liong Zhu

Interviewees: Tourist A

Recorded to digital audio 6 minutes.

#### Interview 3

Date: 15.12.2016, Place: Ryoanji temple, Kyoto

Interviewer: Liong Zhu

Interviewees: Tourist B

Recorded to digital audio 8 minutes.

#### Interview 4

Date: 15.12.2016, Place: Ryoanji temple, Kyoto

Interviewer: Liong Zhu

Interviewees: Tourist C

Recorded to digital audio 2 minutes.

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