

# The History of the Perception of Japanese Gardens: Analysis of how their Authenticity was defined through Discourse

Miyuki KATAHIRA

## Introduction

The phenomenon involving by Adachi Museum of Art Garden in Yasugi, Shimane prefecture, has an observable relevance to the issue discussed in this essay (see Figure 1: Adachi Museum of Art Garden). The popularity of Adachi Museum of Art Garden suddenly, or so it seemed, increased since 2003 both internationally and domestically. Such popularity and interest were stimulated by the fact that Adachi Museum of Art Garden was chosen as “Japan’s Top Garden” by *The Journal of Japanese Gardening* published in the US<sup>1)</sup>. (Figure 2: The *Shiosai* Project of *The Journal of Japanese Gardening*) Since this journal chose Adachi Museum of Art Garden as “Japan’s Top

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\* 本学国際教養学部

**Key words:** Japanese gardens, Muromachi period, *yūgen*, Josiah Conder, Shigemori Mirei



Figure 1: Adachi Museum of Art Garden (Photo by Katahira)

美庭

*Japanese Garden Research*

## 2003 Shiosai Results

*The World's First Ranked Listing  
of Japan's Finest Gardens!*

**J**OIG is pleased to announce the results of our 2003 Shiosai Project. This is the first of an annual effort to identify and promote Japan's finest gardens based on *quality* rather than on other factors. The 2003 survey identified a total of 389 gardens. The 20 gardens listed below thus represent sites that placed in the top five percent of the whole. In a country literally jam-packed with great gardens, this is no small feat.

The big surprise of the 2003 Shiosai Project is the emergence of the *Adachi Art Museum* as Japan's top garden. Katsura Rikyū has always informally held that crown, but the Imperial Household Ministry's somewhat "unfriendly" management of that site appears to have hurt Katsura's stellar image.

Other surprises include

**Japan's Top Gardens:**

1. Adachi Art Museum	Shimane Pref.
2. Katsura Rikyū	Kyoto
3. The Nomura Residence	Ishikawa Pref.
4. Renge-ji	Kyoto
5. Yamamoto-tei	Tokyo
6. Nijo Castle (Ninomaru)	Kyoto
7. Murin-an	Kyoto
8. Makaya-ji	Shizuoka Pref.
9. Shisen-do	Kyoto
10. Ritsurin Koen	Kagawa Pref.
11. Jiko-in	Nara Pref.
12. Raikyu-ji	Okayama Pref.
13. Daisen-in	Kyoto
14. Kasui-en (Miyako Hotel)	Kyoto
15. Minami-kan Restaurant	Shimane Pref.
16. Yabu-no-Uchi School of Tea	Kyoto
17. Tohkoh-en Onsen Hotel	Tōtōri Pref.
18. Seiryū-en	Kyoto
19. Gyokudo Art Museum	Tokyo
20. Ganko Sushi Restaurant	Kyoto

*(above) Adachi's emergence as Japan's #1 garden is a surprise.*

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*JOURNAL OF JAPANESE GARDENING*

Figure 2: The Shiosai Project of *The Journal of Japanese Gardening*

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Garden” based on survey of 389 gardens in Japan, various tours have been offered by tourism industry and the number of international and domestic visitors to the garden has increased to a great extent. Adachi Museum of Art effectively advertized the fact that the garden had received top ranking, and since then, a Museum on *Yasugi-bushi*, the folk song of the local area, and an inn with hot spring bathing facilities have been built next to Adachi Museum. Since 2003, the way Adachi Museum of Art Garden is perceived has changed and Yasugi as a whole has been revitalized by tourism.

It is clear that being chosen as “Japan’s Top Garden” brought a drastic change to Adachi Museum of Art Garden and even to its surroundings, but what the title of “Japan’s Top Garden” actually means, and how it was chosen remain unclear. *The Journal of Japanese Gardening* has been published since 1998, and now has a circulation of two thousand mainly in the US. It provides basic information on Japanese gardens including how to construct and maintain one at home, as well as their general history and introductions to existing Japanese gardens in the US and Japan. Contributors range from professionals to amateurs, among them being gardeners, scholars, and owners of Japanese gardens. In 2003, the journal carried the *Shiosai* project with the aim to identify, introduce and discover high quality gardens in Japan. The journal requested feedback from some ‘experts who regularly contribute articles’ and decided on the ranking<sup>2)</sup>. According to the editor, the ranking was based on *quality*, not fame or historical significance, as the aim was to renew the existing value of Japanese gardens. Therefore, the emphasis was on introducing gardens unfamiliar to its readers, rather than making a list of already well-known gardens. Why did it have to be a ranking, then? The journal could just have recommended new gardens; however, it presented a ranked listing of “Japan’s Top

Gardens.” According to the editor, the reason for this is that the ranking system has popularity and a historical basis in Japan, such as seen in the *Meisho Hyakusen*, “one hundred most beautiful sceneries.” In this way, the editor expected greater attention would be paid. However, some readers including contributors are critical about the ranking, as it seemed to be based on subjective judgment and thus has no solid and objective foundation. Others also argue that Adachi Museum of Art Garden has certainly become popular, but it does not mean that it presents “authenticity” of Japanese gardens, compared to other historical gardens. Though there is some dispute concerning the ranking, nevertheless, Adachi Museum of Art Garden has achieved indisputable fame since 2003. Then, in what way does this phenomenon relate to this essay?

There are two features which especially relate to the argument in this essay. One is the fact that how a garden is perceived has been changed by outer factors, more precisely, *foreign* factors. That is, the way the Adachi Museum of Art Garden is perceived has been changed by the repute constructed by *The Journal of Japanese Gardening*, a foreign journal. Another is that how the popularity or fame that Adachi Museum of Art has attained is differentiated from what is considered as authenticity. Achieving popularity does not seem to equate to acquiring authenticity. Adachi Museum of Art Garden has become popular, but it does not necessarily mean that the authenticity resides within it. In other words, the way a garden is perceived can be constructed and accordingly its value changes due to outer factors, however, such outer impulse alone cannot grant authenticity.

The aim of this essay is to explore this structure in the history of Japanese gardens; that is to clarify how the outer factors interrelate with the way a gar-

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den is perceived, and the process of how the authenticity is to be defined and recognized. The definition of an outer factor in this essay is discourse which appeared in the West, mainly in the US and UK. Just as *The Journal of Japanese Gardening*, an American journal, has had such an impact on Adachi Museum of Art Garden, Western discourse has played a significant role in the history of perception of Japanese gardens. The case of Adachi Museum of Art Garden, in other words, is not a new or unique phenomenon; structures similar to what is described above can be found historically. The first part of this essay will trace the discourse on Japanese gardens arose in the West which especially had a significant impact in terms of considering perception of and authenticity of Japanese gardens. Then, I will also analyze the reaction to such Western discourse appeared in Japan. The discourse in the West does not function by itself, as it was not *The Journal of Japanese Gardening* alone that brought a change to Adachi Museum of Art Garden. What resulted in this phenomenon is the fact that the Adachi Museum of Art administrators themselves effectively used *The Journal of Japanese Gardening* to construct their self-image for publicity. It is this structure in which Western discourse and Japanese response intermingle with one another that this essay will examine. Japanese response here includes discourse arising in Japan which was consciously output to Western readers. The second part of this essay aims to analyze what was behind such conscious effort and how it functioned in defining the authenticity of Japanese Gardens. What kind of roles have the Western discourse and Japanese response played in the perception of and defining authenticity of Japanese gardens?

## Western Discourse on Japanese Gardens

Since the mid-nineteenth century, Japanese gardens were exhibited in International Expositions held in Europe and the US along with Japanese products and architecture, and accordingly, Western interest in Japanese gardens grew around this time. It was 1893 that Josiah Conder, an English architect, wrote *Landscape Gardening in Japan*, and this is the very first book written in English which gave an outline of Japanese gardens for the readers in the West. In a strict sense, documents written in Western languages on Japanese gardens date back to the fifteenth century. Missionaries from Portugal in the fifteenth century and traders, doctors, and scientists from Holland in the eighteenth century, for instance, recorded the gardens they saw in Japan in their diaries, reports, letters and so on. Today we know that such documents of historical value exist, but they were not written for a wide range of readers. In other words, these writings have not been recognized widely enough to have an influence either in Western countries or in Japan. In contrast, Conder's book was published in the UK, the US and Japan and is still reprinted today. In the following, I will first summarize Conder's writings briefly, and then, I will examine what kind of impact Conder's writings have had on Western viewers.

Josiah Conder was appointed by the Meiji government to teach the study of architecture in Japan. In addition to teaching, he learned Japanese painting from Kawanabe Kyosai (1831-1889), and studied flower arrangement and Japanese gardens. In 1886, his article "The Art of Landscape Gardening in Japan" appeared in *the Journal of the Asiatic Society*<sup>3)</sup>. Based on this article, Conder published *Landscape Gardening in Japan* with supplementary photos in 1893<sup>4)</sup>. In both article and book, Conder introduces history, variety of styles,

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composition, and ornaments of Japanese gardens to Western readers based on Japanese references on gardens in addition to his own observation. The references he mainly used are gardeners manuals published in the Edo period such as *Tsuki-yama Teizōden* and several other texts of the Meiji period, all of which are written in Japanese and by Japanese writers<sup>5)</sup>. Not only an architect but also a scholar of the study of architecture himself, Conder uses those publications in an academic manner, meaning, he summarizes the significant points of these texts and emphasizes how some teachings are still valuable whereas some others are no longer found in practice or are only written theories. In other words, Conder introduced these manuals as historical references, not blindly regarding them as the rules of Japanese gardens.

For instance, Conder explains there are three levels in the composition of Japanese gardens: formal composition as *Shin* (真), semi-formal as *Gyo* (行), and informal as *So* (草). However, he also remarks that the levels of the composition are to be determined by surroundings and that the border between the different levels is ambiguous in practice. Though referring to the manuals, Conder stressed that gardeners have a license which allows flexibility from the theory in constructing a garden. Likewise, Conder also mentions taboos in constructing gardens based on the *Yin* and *Yang* doctrine and Taoism which appeared in the manuals. For instance, Conder explains that the manuals describe how it is taboo to build a stream flowing from West to East, as this is considered a backflow. In those manuals, there are also numerous explanations alike; for instance, one of the manuals instructs how placing stones on the Southwest side of the house would lead illness to the owner's family. Similarly, placing a stone arrangement in a certain direction is proscribed in those manuals. Conder explained these rules and taboos to the readers in the

West with the awareness that they should be perceived as historical writings rather than living rules in a practical sense.

Since Conder's article and books were published, they were quoted by a great number of Western authors on Japanese gardens. Conder's writings, in other words, became a frame of reference for understanding Japanese gardens for Western authors and readers. Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850-1935) and Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904), who are known for introducing culture and people in Japan to the West, for example, both referred to Conder in their writings on Japanese gardens. *Things Japanese*, first published in 1890 by Chamberlain, has a section on Japanese gardens in which he refers to Conder's article. Hearn in "the Essay on Japanese Gardens" in *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* published in 1894 beautifully portrayed the garden attached to his house in Matsue, Shimane prefecture. Although the styles of their writings were different from one another, Hearn used Conder's writings in his description of the use of stones in a garden. It is worth noting that Chamberlain and Hearn both explained that stones form a "skeleton" for the composition of a garden by citing Conder's writings. This understanding was not originated by Conder, it is stated in *Tsukiyama Teizōden*, the manuals published in the Edo period. This understanding has notably been passed on to numerous authors in the West through Conder's writings.

The impact of Conder's writings appeared not only in the nineteenth century, they remained as a frame of reference for Western writings on Japanese gardens in the twentieth century and onward. We can witness the influence of Conder's writings in the following publications: *The Flowers and Gardens of Japan* published in 1908 by Florence Du Cane, in *Japanese Gardens* written by Basil Taylor in 1912, and *Geschichte der Gartenkunst* first published in 1913 in



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Germany by Marie Gothein which was translated into English and published in 1928 as *A History of Japanese Garden Art*, to name a few. In addition, *Landscape Gardening in Japan* is still reprinted today; recent examples are reprints in 2002 by a Japanese publisher and in 2010 by the publisher in the US.

### **Japanese Reaction to Josiah Conder and his Impact in the West**

Then, how did scholars or gardeners in Japan react to Conder's writings and his impact on other Western authors? It was 1930s that the reaction arose in Japan. As stated above, Japanese gardens had already been introduced widely in Western countries in the nineteenth century, but the growing interest in Japanese gardens in the West was not taken as an issue or was simply not well-known in Japan at the time. The reaction to such Western interest appeared in Japan from the mid 1920s to 1930s. This is a notable period not so much in the history of Japanese gardens but rather for the history of the *study* of Japanese gardens. During that time, garden-related institutions including schools and associations were founded, and *Zōengaku*, now translated as "Landscape Architecture," was established as a new discipline. An academy devoted to the study of gardens was being thus formed and a discourse on gardens arose through a great number of publications. Consequently, we can find the rise of Japanese reaction to the Western interest around that time.

Leading scholars of gardens in Japan at the time reviewed the Conder's book critically in the 1930s. Sato Akira (1903–2003), teaching landscape architecture and urban planning at Tokyo University of Agriculture, and Harigaya Shokichi (1906– ), teaching the history of Western landscape architecture at Tokyo Zoen High School (the Tokyo University of Agriculture at present) in 1930s, especially criticized how Conder referred to *Tsukiyama Teizōden*, and

other manuals published in the Edo period. They claimed that Conder overly relied on those manuals of the Edo period. They articulated that those manuals were not appropriate as references for two reasons. Firstly, these works excessively emphasized the *Shin*, *Gyo* and *So* levels of a composition. For the Japanese scholars, such emphasis on the composition leads to over-formalization of a garden design. Their second reason for criticism is that Japanese scholars rejected how Conder introduced taboos in constructing gardens based on the *Yin* and *Yang* doctrine and Taoism according to the manuals. The Japanese scholars disapproved that such taboos are mere superstitions which people do not follow and cannot be found in practice, and accused Conder of introducing such *false* knowledge of Japanese gardens to Western readers. They concluded that Josiah Conder had not understood the essence of Japanese gardens well enough. Consequently, they despised the fact that the Western authors followed Conder's writings, and even declared that they were desperate to purge the influence of Edo manuals from the understanding of Japanese gardens in the West<sup>6)</sup>.

However, it was the Japanese scholars' misinterpretation. As I explained above, Conder was well aware that the gardeners' manuals in the Edo period were *not the rule*, yet, he believed that they were worth studying as a historical reference. He was also well aware of how these taboos were not totally believed or practiced. In other words, either intentionally or unintentionally, Japanese scholars misread Conder's writings. Their criticism toward Conder is not limited to a simple claim that he did not understand Japanese gardens well enough, but it actually had more implication.

Their disapproval of the gardeners' manuals in the Edo period implies how the Edo period was regarded in the study of Japanese gardens at the time. The

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study of the Edo period (e.g. styles, related documents) had not been done sufficiently enough for some time among scholars of Japanese gardens. It was only as recently as in the mid 1990s that this “bias” was pointed out<sup>7)</sup>. It was not only gardeners’ manuals, but also styles which became popular and were developed in the Edo period were treated in the same manner. Especially, the *Kaiyū* style was often undervalued in the discourse on Japanese gardens because it was considered to be over-formalized and a mere copy of natural scenery. Negative comments on the Edo period including manuals and styles can be found widely since the mid-1920s<sup>8)</sup>. Taking this into consideration, the Japanese scholars were concerned not only about the lack of understanding among Western authors, but more so with the fact that the influence of Edo manuals, which they condemned as *false* knowledge, was spread widely in the West by Conder and his followers.

Then, what exactly lies behind the criticism toward the Edo style and writings? Answering this question leads to unraveling the issue of defining and constructing the authenticity of Japanese gardens.

### **Defining or Constructing? Discourse on the Authenticity of Japanese gardens**

What does criticism toward manuals of the Edo period really mean? To answer the question, I will first look at the quote by a Japanese scholar commenting on the Western understanding of Japanese gardens. Frank Waugh (1869–1943), one of the founders of landscape gardening in the US and a professor at Massachusetts Agricultural College (University of Massachusetts at present), was invited to Japan in 1932 by *Zouengakkai*, Japanese Institute for Landscape Architecture. Accompanied by the leading scholars of the time

such as Uehara Keiji (1889-1981) and Tamura Tsuyoshi (1890-1979), Waugh visited gardens in Tokyo and Kyoto. In his short article “Impressions of Japanese Landscape Architecture,” Waugh stated that first and foremost the smallness of Japanese gardens was striking<sup>9)</sup>. He also remarked on the extensive use of stones and two-dimensional quality of gardens resembling photography and paintings. Hearing Waugh’s impression as such, Japanese scholars seemed discontented. Tamura expressed how unsatisfied he was when he heard Waugh’s impression of Japanese gardens, and he realized how few people in the West understand Japanese gardens<sup>10)</sup>. Harigaya Shokichi also felt something was lacking, like Tamura. Harigaya commented on Waugh’s impression of Japanese gardens as follows:

Professor Waugh said modestly that Japanese gardens should be introduced by Japanese people themselves. This should not be taken as mere modesty, because it is easy for foreigners to understand the *Kaiyū* style in the Edo period, as it is just an imitation of natural sceneries. However, it is difficult for foreigners to understand the symbolic gardens which have the highest art values. That is to say, I fear that we, Japanese, have to inform foreigners the essence of Japanese gardens which can be found in Kyoto gardens built in the Muromachi period. That is, the taste of *Yūgen*, the rhythmical placement of stones, the grace of stone lanterns covered by moss<sup>11)</sup>.

Harigaya insists that the *Kaiyū* style developed in the Edo period does not have the same “art” value as symbolic gardens built in Kyoto in the Muromachi period. In his logic, it is thus easier for the Westerners to understand the Edo gardens than Muromachi gardens in Kyoto. What makes this difficult for foreigners to understand is, according to Harigaya, the highest art value as

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the taste of *Yūgen* residing in the Muromachi gardens in Kyoto. Here we can witness how the Edo period is described as a contraposition to Muromachi gardens in Kyoto. He implies that the *Kaiyū* style developed in the Edo period has less art value or less authenticity than Muromachi gardens. “Gardens built in Kyoto in the Muromachi period” indicates more or less Ryoanji, Nanzenji, Daitokuji and others most of which belong to Zen temples of the Rinzaï sect. Harigaya agrees with Waugh that Japanese people need to explain Japanese gardens to the West, but this is not only because he simply feels responsible for it, but he supposes that the highest art value as represented by the taste of *Yūgen* is difficult for foreigners to understand. Harigaya’s quotes indicates that gardens built in Kyoto in the Muromachi period are more authentic than those of the Edo period. Moreover, this authenticity is vaguely imagined but often explained by referring to the term, *Yūgen*. The comment alike was not particular to Harigaya at the time; leading scholars of gardens of the time, such as Uehara Keiji, Tamura Tsuyoshi, and Tatsui Matsunosuke (1884-1961), shared this view<sup>12)</sup>. They were making comments more or less alike on the issue of how the Western understanding of Japanese gardens was insufficient.

We can witness the structure, that is, how outer factors functioned as an impulse to define a value of a garden. In this case, Western gaze for Japanese gardens, such as those of Conder, his followers and Waugh, as an outer factor triggered the rise of attention among Japanese scholars toward defining a value concerning what is high and authentic in Japanese gardens. Along with this, the term *Yūgen* and the Muromachi period as an important time period were discussed as the key aspects of Japanese gardens. In the following, how the use of the term *Yūgen* has changed in the discourse on Japanese gardens will be illustrated. I will try to show how its use has been modified in relation to

the historical context.

### **Changes in the use of *Yūgen* in the Discourse on Japanese Gardens**

The term *Yūgen* is an aesthetic concept found in literature and performing arts since the medieval period in Japan, about the tenth century, according to *Kōjien*. The Oxford English Dictionary explains that it was first introduced to the West by Arthur Waley (1889–1966) in *Noh Plays of Japan* in 1928. Waley is a scholar of Eastern literature, especially known for translating Chinese and Japanese classical literature, such as *The Tale of Genji* by *Murasaki Shikibu*. In *Noh Plays of Japan*, he defines it as “what lies beneath the surface; the subtle, as opposed to the obvious; the hint as opposed to the statement.”

Then, when and how was it used in talking about a garden? If we look up historical documents on Japanese gardens, in the *Sakuteiki*, assumed to have been written in the late Heian period and the oldest existing gardeners’ manual in Japan, this term does not appear. The use of *Yūgen* can be found in *Tsukiyama Teizōden*, a gardeners’ manual from the Edo period. It says “when one builds seashore and islands with stones on a flat ground, the landscape should have an atmosphere of *Yūgen* and calm taste.” It is not clearly defined, but one can assume that it is used to describe tranquil scenery. It is interesting to notice that in *Tsukiyama Teizōden* the term *Yūgen* is not necessarily connected to the Muromachi period. The term *Yūgen* is not particularly regarded as *the authenticity* of a garden either.

It is obvious that there was no need for it; there was no external impulse in the Edo period to define *Yūgen* as the authenticity of Japanese gardens. What I would like to point out here is that *Yūgen* has existed as an aesthetic term since the medieval period, and it was not a newly invented in the 1920s,

but it was since the mid-1920s that the term was related to the authenticity of Japanese gardens and to the Muromachi period. In other words, the term *Yūgen* can be found in classical literatures describing Japanese gardens; however, as the example of *Tsukiyama Teizōden* shows, it is not necessarily used in relation to authenticity or the Muromachi period. That is to say, what the term means and how it has been used differ in accordance with the context. With the awareness of the Western gaze, the term *Yūgen* has begun to carry a more specific meaning.

Then, in what way was *Yūgen*, which was only used for tea gardens in general in the Edo period, transformed to carry such a meaning of authenticity, and in what way was it connected to the Muromachi period? Let's look at another example of how the term *Yūgen* was actually used in relation to the Muromachi period. Shigemori Mirei (1896-1975), known for designing gardens and writing about gardens, defined *Yūgen* as something like a lingering tone and pointed out that *Yūgen* could be found since the time of Heian literature. Shigemori further argues that since the Heian period, the term *Yūgen* had been the central concept of Japanese aesthetics, and what's more, it was most developed in the Muromachi period. It was the development of *Yūgen* in the Muromachi period which enabled to transformation of the influence of Chinese ink paintings into the development of the *Karesansui* style<sup>13)</sup>. I would like to emphasize two points of what Shigemori implies; one is that *Yūgen* has continuity from the aesthetics of the Heian period, and the other is that it was development of *Yūgen* in the Muromachi period that led the establishment of the *Karesansui* dry landscape style which meant independence from Chinese influence. In such a way, Shigemori concluded that along with the development of *Yūgen*, the authenticity of Japanese gardens resides in those built in the

Muromachi period. As illustrated above, connecting authenticity with the term *Yūgen*, the Muromachi period and the *Karesansui* style was found commonly in the discourse among Japanese scholars of gardens around the 1930s.

The next section will further trace the discourse in which the authenticity of Japanese gardens has been defined and constructed in relation to *Yūgen*, the Muromachi period and the *Karesansui* style. In so doing, I would like to especially focus on Shigemori Mirei as one of the key authors of this discourse.

### **The Authenticity and the Muromachi Period Connected: Analysis of *Shigemori Mirei***

Shigemori designed numerous gardens while pursuing his career as the prolific author of eighty-one books. He wrote not only about gardens but likewise on topics such as flower arrangement and tea culture. In 1932, he founded *Kyoto Rinsen Kyokai*, The Kyoto Garden Association, and started to publish a monthly journal titled, *Rinsen* (literally, forests and streams). Contributors to *Rinsen* included Shigemori, his colleagues specializing in various fields related to gardens, and experts invited from outside the association.

The objective of the Kyoto Garden Association was to study old gardens by visiting them and reading related historical documents. It aimed to raise interest in and awareness of the values of historical gardens and to preserve them. Additionally, it sought to encourage creators to develop new ideas for garden designs<sup>14)</sup>. In *Rinsen*, Shigemori contributed an article (or articles) every month and dealt with a variety of topics. *Rinsen* also regularly introduced historical documents, and the association planned excursions to gardens every month. The journal strongly encouraged readers to both visit gardens and study historical texts.



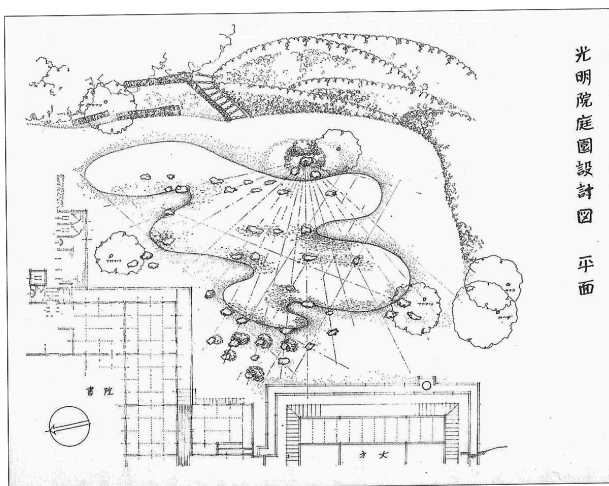


Figure 3: Design Drawing of *Komyoin*  
(Exhibition Catalogue, *Garden Designer/Garden Historian*  
*Shigemori Mirei*, Okayama Prefectural Museum of Art, 2009)

In his writings, Shigemori promoted a specific manner of garden appreciation focused emphatically upon *ishigumi*, sometimes pronounced as *iwagumi*, stone arrangements. Shigemori insisted that a viewer was expected to be able to *read* these arrangements of stones, because in Shigemori's view, they form in large measure the framework of the entire garden composition or function as its primary scenery. Some stones, he indicated, have practical functions while others are placed for visual effect.

The importance of stone arrangements and Japanese admiration of stones were also guiding principles in his own design practice. He designed gardens at the Zen monastery Tofukuji, in Kyoto, in 1939. Figure 3 is Shigemori's design drawing of *Komyoin* at *Tohukuji*. There is a central stone and the other stones were placed radiating from it. It shows how stones form the composi-



Figure 4: Picture of *Kōmyōin*  
(淡交社編集部『そうだ京都, 行こう』  
淡交社2004年)

tion of a garden. Figure 4 is an actual picture of *Kōmyōin*; it shows this arrangement of stones is not only composing the garden, but stones are also used for visual effect. His works were not limited to Zen temples, he also designed a garden at *Kishiwada* castle and at Shinto shrines such as *Matsuo Taisha*. Figure 5 is Shigemori's old residence in Kyoto, which was used in TV advertisement for Sharp Liquid Crystal Display and is now open for visitors. The use of prominently placed stones is a defining feature of his designs, which not surprisingly are generally of the *Karesansui*, dry landscape, style. In other words, Shigemori emphasized the importance of stone arrangements in gardens in both theory and practice.

According to Shigemori, a garden's stone arrangement specifies the date of its construction, the intention of its creator, the garden's purpose, and how *jiwari*, the allotment of the garden's plot as a whole, was determined<sup>15)</sup>. Therefore, a viewer must acquire a proper attitude for viewing a garden, that is to



Figure 5: Shigemori's Residence in Kyoto  
(Photo by Katahira)

understand how the stone are arranged. Shigemori's method is grounded in the idea that a viewer should be able to identify a garden's structural design before appreciating it in an aesthetic way.

Shigemori's explanations of the importance played by stone arrangements typically referred to gardens belonging to Zen temples, such as Ryoanji and Daisen-in. Figure 6 is an image from one of Shigemori's books published in 1940. The right side is the stone arrangement of Daisen-in, and the left is that of Ryoanji. The stone arrangements at these gardens, he argued, were exemplary because they were perfectly balanced and expressed well the *spirit* of culture of the Muromachi period<sup>16</sup>). Contemporary viewers, including garden designers and constructors, were thus expected to not merely enjoy viewing the gardens of Ryoanji and Daisen'in but to also develop a form of literacy regarding their stone arrangements. Shigemori made an enormous amount of effort in various journals and books endeavoring to educate viewers in their knowledge and appreciation of garden stone arrangements. Why are stone

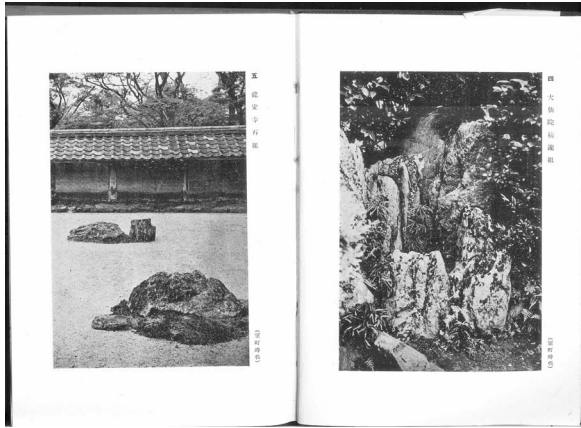


Figure 6: Images of Ryoanji and Daisen-in  
(Shigemori Mirei, *Nihon Teien*, 1940)

arrangements so important? Why not some other garden element or ornament? Shigemori gives a practical reason: plantings are too changeable and elements such as stone lanterns and washbasins are portable and thus replaceable. For those reasons, Shigemori believed that *ishigumi*, stone arrangement, was the most appropriate and reliable feature for dating and understanding a garden<sup>17)</sup>.

Shigemori also alluded to the Japanese admiration for stones, pointing out that this cultural practice can be found as early as the Heian period<sup>18)</sup>. He argues that though styles and tastes of gardens have changed over time, Japanese appreciation of stones has remained constant. He declared that such awe and fondness for stones are rooted in the combined influence of Buddhism, Daoism and Shintoism<sup>19)</sup>. He further argued that a particular preference for *biteki kyoyo*, aesthetic profoundness, in stones deepened with the influence of Zen from the late Kamakura to Muromachi periods<sup>20)</sup>. What's more, he in-

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sisted that the appreciation of stones came to be most highly cultivated through the influence of Zen, which teaches one to foster self-reflection or inner enlightenment without being swayed by appearance. The linkage between appreciation of stones and Zen is implied as such in the Shigemori's argument. It is not that Shigemori was preaching the doctrine of Zen, but what underlies his arguments is the view that the influence of Zen was a crucial factor for appreciating the aesthetics of Japanese gardens. The influence of Zen culture is implied on different levels in his discourse, and he tried to standardize garden viewing by emphasizing the importance of stone arrangements and their relationship with Zen culture. As the Shigemori's argument shows, the authenticity of Japanese gardens was often linked to Zen influence and *Karesansui* style. Though *Karesansui* style is not limited to Zen temples, as it is a dry landscape style found in gardens of various eras, *Karesansui* seems to be automatically associated with Zen temples of the Muromachi period in his argument.

For Shigemori, the Muromachi period was the time in which the essential features and principles of Japanese gardens were established. He argues that Muromachi-period artists were equivalent to the artists of the Renaissance:

“The Muromachi artists were geniuses not limited to one field, just like the Renaissance artists, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raffaello. Just as the Renaissance artists were gifted in architecture, paintings, sculpture, and even astronomy, the Muromachi artists were gifted in calligraphy, paintings, tea, arranging flowers, and making gardens<sup>21)</sup>.”

Shigemori here tries to draw the history of Japanese gardens in parallel with European art history. Artists of the Muromachi period are regarded as equivalent to the artists of the Renaissance. Such parallel view of the history of Japa-

nese gardens and European art can be found in the discourse on Japanese gardens at the time. Harigaya, for example, compares Kyoto to Rome; he affirms that the essences of Japanese gardens from ancient time to present are concentrated in Kyoto, just as countless beautiful gardens and villas are concentrated in Rome and its suburbs. Harigaya also states that as archetypical Italian gardens can be found in Rome, Kyoto is the place to study Japanese gardens, thus, gardens in Kyoto receive the attention of scholars from all over the world<sup>22)</sup>. Such a view was not limited to the circle of the scholars of gardens, but was also shared by those in related fields of study. Tsudumi Tsuneyoshi (1887-1981), a scholar of German literature and aesthetics, for instance, states as follows:

*Sōami* (?-1525), an artist in the late Muromachi period, has established a foundation of Japanese gardens which still remains as the basis of Japanese gardens until today. *Sōami* was not only a great master of ink paintings, but was also proficient in poetry, in playing a bamboo flute and in art in general. Just like Italian artists of the Renaissance period were talented in various fields, as was *Sōami*. The fact that he was a landscape painter as well as a tea master played an essential role in developing his garden skills<sup>23)</sup>.

This quote shows that the historical view that something authentic to Japanese culture was born in the Muromachi period was not unique to the discourse on Japanese gardens. In fact, such a view had already been established in the study of related fields like art history or aesthetics in Japan. The person who initiated this historical view the earliest was Ernest F. Fenollosa (1853-1908), a philosopher and art collector who taught at University of Tokyo in the Meiji period. Fenollosa protected Buddhist art works during the Meiji period

and is considered an adherent of Asian art today. Fenollosa praised the value of culture in Medieval Japan, but was quite critical of popular art developed in the Edo period. For example, Fenollosa was critical of *Ukiyoe* prints of the Edo period and the Western artists and critiques who admired them. He argued that *Ukiyoe* prints were not more than popular art, thus having no high value. He admired, instead, the *Kanō* school which was founded in the mid-Muromachi period. For Fenollosa, the *Kanō* school was the successor to Japanese Medieval culture. Fenollosa advocated a comparative historical view of Japanese art and Western art, stressing that the Muromachi period is equivalent to *Quattrocento and Cinquecento*<sup>24)</sup>.

The historical view which regards the Muromachi period as parallel to the Renaissance period was in this way shared by scholars across various fields at the time. By defining *Yūgen* as a term developed in the Muromachi period that represented the authenticity of Japanese gardens, Japanese scholars were implicitly insisting that Japanese gardens have as high value and universal value as the art of the Renaissance created by artists like Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raffaello. Scholars of Japanese gardens in the 1930s were borrowing knowledge or frameworks from other academic fields every now and then to guarantee such proposition. Therefore, scholars of Japanese gardens felt what they had to do was to make people in the West recognize that the authenticity of Japanese garden is grounded in the Muromachi period, and it can be most apparently reflected on *Karesansui* style in Zen temples in Kyoto. The quote by Sato Akira in the following illustrates this :

Most Western people do not fully understand Japanese gardens, and there are only few who can observe aesthetically without ethic-based emotions. However, it is not impossible for Western people to have an appropriate

understanding of Japanese gardens, just like Fenollosa understood Buddhist art of Japan so well. Therefore, we have to investigate the points that Westerners tend to make mistakes about, and this would also lead us to realize what we might have overlooked. This is the very time to renew the existing view of Japanese gardens and prepare for a true view of them. This is what Japan, as a growing tourist nation, has to do<sup>25)</sup>.

The rise of awareness among scholars of Japanese gardens that Western interest in Japanese gardens was increasing made them realize that they needed to have an agreed definition of the authenticity of Japanese gardens, and in this process, continuity from the Muromachi period was chosen to be defined as authentic. On the other hand, the styles and knowledge of the Edo period were discarded. Therefore, Fenollosa who appreciated Muromachi culture was considered to understand the essence of Japanese gardens, whereas Conder whom Japanese scholars condemned for relying too much on the Edo manuals was considered unable to understand them. As I have illustrated so far, values and authenticity of Japanese gardens were an issue among the scholars of gardens as well as in related fields in the 1920s to 1930s. In the following I would like to give one more example of how an important term was established at the time. That gives an indication of how significant this period of time is in analyzing the process in which terms and values of Japanese gardens were changed and constructed.

### **Re-establishing *Karesansui*: Discussion on Kanji Characters for *Karesansui***

In a report on a survey of Historic Landmarks by Japanese Ministry of Home Affairs in 1928, the term *Karesansui* was written as 乾山水<sup>26)</sup>. However, today



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*Karesansui* is usually written as 枯山水. Both terms are pronounced the same and literally translated as a dry landscape, and it might be a matter of choice of *kanji* characters. However, this involves more issues than it seems. It has been pointed out that the word *Karesansui* with the *kanji* characters 枯山水 became common in the early Showa period, that is the mid-1920s to 1930s<sup>27)</sup>. To look at the documents of the time, it is true that how it was written and even pronounced varied and unsettled. Behind the choice of the *kanji* “枯”, to wither, there were an active discussions across fields.

Kinbara Shogo (1888-?), who was specialized in Eastern aesthetics and art history, developed a discussion on *karekusa*, withered leaves, in *Toyo Bigaku* (Eastern Aesthetics) published in 1932<sup>28)</sup>. He argues that withered leaves might be associated with death and considered far from beauty in the West: However, according to Kinbara, there is a sensibility of finding pathos in withered leaves in the Eastern aesthetics. He explains that imagining a subtle sense of living from those withering leaves is aesthetically appreciated in the Eastern culture. This discussion on withered leaves can apply to the use of the *kanji* “枯” for *Karesansui*. The *kanji* “枯” carries more aesthetical connotations than the *kanji* “乾”: the former means not only to dry up, but it also means to wither, to discolor, to run out and to season, whereas the latter only means to dry up. Kinbara often referred to Japanese gardens as examples to argue the definition and distinctiveness of the Eastern art and aesthetics. By using a tea garden as an example, Kinbara discusses how the smallness of a tea garden leads an imagination of larger space and this relation between small and large is one of the distinguishing features of Japanese art and aesthetics<sup>29)</sup>. Like Kinbara, some philosophers specializing in aesthetics frequently used Japanese gardens as an example to discuss the originality of Japanese art and

aesthetics around the 1930s. Among them, were Tsudumi Tsuneyoshi mentioned above and Onishi Yoshinori (1888-1959), to name a few. They shared the aim to find out what is original in Japanese art and to establish a theory for it<sup>30</sup>. What is common is that they had studied European philosophies and aesthetics and claimed that they needed another framework to grasp the originality of Japanese art. In other words, they were seeking to establish a Japan-born theory to explain Japanese art and aesthetics. For finding the theory as such, Japanese gardens were often used as an useful example. It is significant to draw attention to the fact that arguments searching for authenticity of Japan emerged at the time in different fields, and concepts and arguments were borrowed from one another.

### Conclusion

The period from the 1920s to 1930s was certainly a significant time for the *study* of Japanese gardens. The awareness of the Western interest in Japanese gardens during that time stimulated defining or *re-defining* the authenticity of the Japanese garden. As the study of gardens has an interdisciplinary nature, frameworks were also borrowed from different fields. The search for Japanese-ness across fields at the time can be explained in relation to the rise of Nationalism of the 15 years war (the series of war including the invasion of Manchuria in 1931, Japan-China War in 1937-1945, and the Pacific War begun in 1941). Yet, it cannot fully be reduced to the rise of Nationalism either. For example, Shigemori's argument on the influence of Zen and denial of Edo culture caused rather mixed reaction among Japanese scholars. Although the arguments of those scholars overlap with Shigemori's more or less, the discourse on Japanese gardens at the time was not monolithically united. There

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were other components entangled behind the scenes. That was, as I mentioned earlier, a particularity of the domestic situation during that time. The establishment of related institutions, such as schools, associations and journals, provided platforms for a variety of discussions on the issues relating to Japanese gardens. There were numerous unsettled issues, due to the topic's interdisciplinary nature, so it was a time for Japanese scholars themselves needed to agree on a definition of Japanese gardens for export to the West. There was also an academic impulse to resist the domination of Western academia; Japanese scholars of gardens were eager to establish their own theories and methodology, without relying on existing theories already established in Western academia. I would like to conclude by suggesting how a kind of axis reflecting a context has existed in the study of Japanese gardens, and still exists as the case of Adachi Museum of Art Garden implies, and it continually affects how Japanese gardens are viewed.

※This paper is based on two oral presentations at the annual conference of the Association for Asian Studies held in Chicago in March 2009, and at the International Conference on Japanese Gardens Outside Japan held by California State University in Long Beach in March 2009.

### Notes

- 1) *The Journal of Japanese Gardening*, Jul/Aug, No. 34, ed. Douglas M. Roth, 2003
- 2) Contributors who were asked to give a feedback for making the ranking list are Steve Beimel, the president of Esprit Travel and Kyoto Diary Society; Tim Brown, a gardener for Zen Associations in Boston; Kendall Brown, professor in Japanese Art History at California State University; Tamao Goda, art director of

- The Journal of Japanese Gardening*; and Sadafumi Uchiyama, landscape architect in Portland. Ibid. 5-9 pp.
- 3) Josiah Conder, “The Art of the Landscape Gardening in Japan”, *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, Vol. XIV, Yokohama: R. Meiklejohn & Co., 1886, 119-175 pp.
  - 4) Josiah Conder, *Landscape Gardening in Japan: With the Supplement of 40 Plates*, (New York, London: Kelly & Walsh, Ltd, 1893)
  - 5) The references that Conder stated are as follows: 作者不明『築山庭作伝』1633年, 北村援琴『築山庭造伝』1736年, 籬島軒秋里『都林泉名勝図絵』1800年, 同『草木育種』1815年, 同『築山庭造伝』1829年, 同『石組園生八重垣伝』1829年, 同『築山山水伝』1838年, 長生舎主人『金生樹譜』1832年, 作者不明『作庭記』1838年版, 横井時冬『園芸考』1891年, 本多錦吉郎『図解庭造法』1891年, 作者不明『築山山水庭作秘伝』1892年, 『風俗画報』1891-1892年
  - 6) 佐藤昌, 「外国人の見たる庭園」, 『園芸学会雑誌』, 園芸学会, 第4巻第1号, 1933年4月, 88-106ページ, 針ヶ谷鐘吉, 「コンドル博士の日本庭園観」, 『庭園と風景』, 日本庭園協会, 第17巻第1号, 1934年, 34-35ページ。
  - 7) 白幡洋三郎『大名庭園』講談社1994年
  - 8) 重森三玲, 「日本の庭園」, 『林泉』, 日本林泉協会, 第5号, 1935年5月, 134-163ページ, 丹羽鼎三, 「味ふ庭園」, 『史蹟名勝天然祈念物』, 史蹟名勝天然紀念物保存協会, 第14巻第11号, 1939年, 17-20ページ。
  - 9) Waugh, A. Frank, “Impressions of Japanese Landscape Architecture” 『造園研究』, 造園学会, 第6号, 1932年11月, 8-11ページ。
  - 10) 田村剛, 「日本庭園の海外紹介」, 『庭園と風景』, 日本庭園協会, 第17号, 1937年, 12ページ。
  - 11) 針ヶ谷鐘吉, 「京都庭園禮讃」, 『庭園と風景』, 日本庭園協会, 1932年10月, 246-248ページ。
  - 12) 上原敬二, 「日本庭園の再吟味」, 『林泉』 京都林泉協会, 第15号, 1936年3月, 65-68ページ, 同, 「日本庭園に於ける神秘性」, 『林泉』, 京都林泉協会, 1939年3月, 50-58ページ, 田村剛, 「庭園に於ける茶道の功罪」, 『瓶史』, 1936年7月, 46-53ページ, 同, 「日本庭園の海外紹介」, 『庭園と風景』, 日

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- 13) 重森三玲，「日本芸術における特殊性の一，二について」，『林泉』，京都林泉協会，第42号，1938年6月，122-127ページ。
  - 14) 重森三玲，「京都林泉協会10周年を顧みて」，『林泉』，京都林泉協会，第89号，1942年5月，114-116ページ。
  - 15) 重森三玲『日本庭園』一條書店1940年，同『枯山水』大八洲出版1965年，同「石組の築造と観賞」，『林泉』京都林泉協会，第9号，1935年9月，279-283ページ，同「日本庭園の研究について」，『林泉』，京都林泉協会，第27号，1937年3月，74-77ページ。
  - 16) 重森前掲書1935年5月，140-42ページ，重森前掲書1938年6月，124-125ページ。
  - 17) 重森前掲書1940年
  - 18) 重森前掲書1935年5月，150-153ページ。
  - 19) 重森前掲書1938年6月，127ページ。
  - 20) 重森前掲書1935年5月，159-160ページ。
  - 21) 重森三玲「雪舟とその庭園について（附，東福寺芬陀院庭園）」，『林泉』，京都林泉協会，第3号，1935年3月，69-78ページ。
  - 22) 針ヶ谷鐘吉，「巻頭言」，『庭園と風景』，日本庭園協会，第14巻第10号，1932年10月，293ページ。
  - 23) 鼓常良『日本藝術様式の研究』内外出版印刷1933年，129-130ページ。
  - 24) Earnest Fenollosa，『美術真説（*The True Theory of Art*）』東京：龍池会1882，*Outline of the History of the Ukiyoe: Illustrated with Twenty Reproductions in Japanese Wood Engravings*，(Tokyo: Bunshichi Kobayashi 1901)，*Epoch of Chinese and Japanese Art: an Outline History of East Asiatic Design*，(London: W. Heinemann 1912)
  - 25) 佐藤昌前掲書1933年4月，98-101ページ。
  - 26) 内務省編『史蹟名勝天然紀念物保存法指定庭園調査報告書』1928年
  - 27) 岡崎文彬『造園事典』養賢堂1974年，尼崎博正・武居二郎監修『庭園史をあるく』昭和堂1998年，上原敬二『造園大辞典』加島書店1978年，木村三郎「枯山水論の行方」『造園雑誌』日本造園学会，第49巻第5号，1986年，67-

72ページ。

- 28) 金原省吾『東洋美学』古今書院1932年
- 29) 金原省吾『東洋美術論』講談社1942年
- 30) 金原省吾の他，鼓常良『日本藝術様式の研究』内外出版印刷1933年，『生活文化の東西』章華社1935年，大西克礼『現象学派と美学』岩波書店1937年，『幽玄とあはれ』岩波書店1939年など。

**The History of the Perception  
of Japanese Gardens:  
Analysis of how their Authenticity  
was defined through Discourse**

Miyuki KATAHIRA

Outer factors, such as the Western discourse, have played a significant role in the history of the perception of Japanese gardens. This paper examines how these outer factors, including the Western discourse that arose in the late nineteenth century, had an impact on the way gardens are perceived and how their authenticity is defined and constructed in Japan. The essay also analyzes the reaction of Japanese scholars to such Western discourse. The aim of this paper is to untangle the structure in which the Western discourse and Japanese response have intermingled with one another. In so doing, the essay clarifies what kind of impact this intermingling structure has had on the perception of Japanese gardens and on defining their authenticity. Authors who have written on Japanese gardens, such as Josiah Conder, Shigemori Mirei and other scholars of Japanese gardens are closely examined. What kind of roles have the Western discourse and Japanese response played in the perception of and defining the authenticity of Japanese gardens?

Key Words: Japanese gardens, Muromachi period, *yūgen*,  
Josiah Conder, Shigemori Mirei