

III

APPENDIX

International Expert Meeting on Paradise and Gardens in Eastern Asia

Introduction

The International Expert Meeting on Paradise and Gardens in Eastern Asia (hereafter “International Meeting”) was organized jointly by the Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties and the Agency for Cultural Affairs of the Government of Japan, for the three days from May 19 to 21, 2009 at the smaller auditorium of the Nara Palace (Heijō-kyū) Site Museum. The Department of Cultural Heritage of the Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties served as a secretariat for the meeting.

In this International Meeting, important views on the history of gardens of Eastern Asia were shared, a multifaceted discussion on the topic of Japanese “Pure Land Gardens” identified the outstanding universal values inherent in those gardens, and a significant step was taken in the comprehensive research of the history of gardens in Eastern Asia.

In the following sections, I will describe the background to the International Meeting and outline its purpose and agenda, as well as some of the insights gained through the meeting which will define the direction of future research in this field.

Background to the International Meeting and its purpose

The “Ancient Garden Research Project” commenced in 2001 at the Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties. This project was started as part of the “Research of Gardens Associated with Ancient Capital Ruins,” set forth in the medium-term plan which was established upon our reorganization as an independent administrative agency. In its second phase, the Ancient Garden Research Project currently focuses on gardens of the Heian period (from the

end of the 8th century to the end of 12th century). Specifically, we have been examining the gardens of palaces and of aristocratic residences since 2006.

In examining the gardens of the Heian period, various issues to be addressed were identified. Especially, we came to realize the importance of deepening our understanding of the uniquely characteristic gardens known as “Pure Land Gardens” which were created from the 10th century to the 14th century in Japan. To this end, it was absolutely necessary for us to clarify the process of development of the Pure Land Gardens, in terms of the beliefs in ideal worlds brought to Japan from China and Korea, their influence on the spatial design of gardens, and similarities and differences in the way these ideal worlds were represented between China, Korea and Japan.

Representative of such Pure Land Gardens is the garden of Byōdō-in Temple, listed as a World Heritage Site as part of the “Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyōto (Kyōto, Uji and Ōtsu Cities)” and the group of gardens in Hiraizumi, one of Japan's historical assets included in the Tentative List of World Heritage. These important gardens, which are the main topic of our research, are all closely associated with the World Heritage initiatives undertaken in Japan.

It is for this reason that we sought cooperation and support from the Agency for Cultural Affairs in conducting the “Ancient Garden Research Project” in 2009 and invited researchers specialized in the history of gardens and architecture from China and Korea as well as Japan to address the issue of how views of ideal worlds were associated with gardens of Eastern Asia historically, identify the characteristics of such gardens, and define, in a global context, the value of the group of “Pure Land Gardens” in Hiraizumi, which

represents the very essence and the ultimate and finest form of Japanese “Pure Land Gardens,” by comparing them with other ancient gardens.

Program and agenda of the International Meeting

The round table of the International Meeting consisted of eight members — Dr. TANAKA Tetsuo (Former Professor, Tôhoku University of Art and Design) who served as a chairman, two foreign researchers, each invited from China and Korea, and five Japanese researchers. In total, the International Meeting was attended by 20 persons, including: the local specialists invited to share in-depth knowledge about the gardens of Byôdô-in Temple and the group of Pure Land Gardens in Hiraizumi; members of the JAPAN ICOMOS National Committee; researchers specialized in the temples of Hiraizumi; Mr. TANABE Ikuo, Director of the Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties and other research personnel thereof; and others. The first two days of the meeting were devoted to reports, comments, lectures and questions-and-answers to share the basic information necessary for the discussion to follow, and then a three-part discussion was held through which we deepened our understanding of this topic.

Prior to the meeting, handout materials were produced as reference information for the lectures, reports, and comments given in Japanese, Chinese or Korean. The secretariat put together these handouts and prepared their English translations. The working language of the meeting was Japanese, and a total of four interpreters — two Chinese-Japanese and two Korean-Japanese interpreters — and one interpretation coordinator were assigned for the meeting. These translation and interpretation services were provided by Congress Corporation.

The program of the meeting and the topics for discussion are as shown below.

The meeting began with an opening address by Mr. TANABE Ikuo (Director, Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties), followed by explanation of the purpose of the meeting by Dr. ONO Kenkichi who served as a roundtable

member (Director, Department of Cultural Heritage, Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties). Dr. TANAKA Tetsuo, the chairman of the meeting, then raised topics for discussion.

Lectures and reports were subsequently delivered and comments were given in the following order:

Lecture I: “Designs and Techniques of Japanese Gardens representing a Paradise (Ideal World) on Earth” (Dr. MOTONAKA Makoto, Chief Senior Specialist for Cultural Properties, Monuments and Sites Division, Agency for Cultural Affairs)

Comments to the Lecture I (Dr. AMASAKI Hiromasa, Professor, Kyôto University of Art and Design)

Report I: “A Garden in Uji Embodying the Yearning for Paradise” (Mr. SUGIMOTO Hiroshi, Sub-Manager, Historic City Planning Promotion Section, Uji City)

Report II: “Paradise Envisioned in Ôshû and a Group of Gardens - A Group of Pure Land Gardens in Hiraizumi” (Mr. SATÔ Yoshihiro, Chief Advisor, Lifelong Learning and Culture Division, Iwate Prefectural Board of Education)

Comments to the Reports I and II (Dr. NAKA Takahiro, Professor, Kyôto University of Art and Design)

Lecture II: “Development of Gardens in Ancient China and Pure Land and Pure Land Gardens” (Dr. LU Zhou, Professor, Tsinghua University, China)

Lecture III: “Anaptch Garden - An Ancient Garden in South Korea that Symbolizes Paradise” (Dr. HONG Kwang-Pyo, Professor, Dongguk University, Korea)

Lecture IV: “Early Style of Chinese Gardens and Ancient Gardens in Japan” (Dr. TANAKA Tan, Professor, Institute for Research in Humanities, Kyôto University)

Based on these presentations, discussion took place in three sessions, in which we addressed the following three topics: “Relationships between man and nature: the garden as a means of representation,” “Garden ponds: change in their significance,” and “Paradise and gardens: essence and diversity of representation in Eastern Asia.” Each session lasted over two hours and sessions I and II opened the discussion to the floor, while the last session was held in a

round table format to conclude the discussion.

The topics discussed during sessions I and II on the second day of the meeting were, in this order, “Interactions between man and nature as the basis of the garden culture,” “Diffusion and development of the garden culture,” “Representation of gardens in Eastern Asia,” “Meanings of ponds in the gardens of Eastern Asia,” “Ponds depicted in Pure Land paintings,” “Relationships between ponds and buildings in Pure Land Gardens,” “Unique and rare features of Pure Land Gardens in Japan,” and “Representativity and exceptionality of the group of Pure Land Gardens in Hiraizumi.”

Session III on the third day discussed the contents of the draft conclusions drawn up to compile the achievements of the preceding discussion.

Outcomes of the International Meeting

The results of the discussion during session III were compiled in a report titled “Outcomes of the International Expert Meeting on Paradise and Gardens in Eastern Asia,” which consists of the following sections: 1. Purpose; 2. Topics of discussion; 3. Conclusions; and 4. Main participants.

In section 3 of the report “Conclusions,” the gardens of Eastern Asia are described as “cultural assets created upon the establishment of particular garden cultures in the respective countries, which were developed individually as the philosophy of garden-making was transferred from China to Korea and Japan, and in that process, integrated with the views of nature indigenous to respective regions.” Based on this understanding, the report emphasizes that what we call the “Pure Land Garden” emerged from the styles of gardens and the garden culture established in Japan, which was designed to embody the world of the Buddhist Pure Land as a paradise. Then the report points to the three issues that require full consideration for the fair assessment

of the outstanding universal value of the Japanese Pure Land Gardens.

To be specific, the report first describes the definition of “Pure Land Garden” that was agreed upon in this International Meeting, and indicates the fact that so far, no ruins of “Pure Land Gardens” have been discovered in China, and also that there has been no evidence that would indicate the prevalence of Pure Land Gardens in Korea, except for the Gupum Lotus Pond of Bulguksa Temple that represented the world of the Pure Land. Then the report concludes that in terms of the development process, the group of “Pure Land Gardens” in Hiraizumi is the most typical and representative example of the Japanese Pure Land Gardens which garnered much popularity in Japan, as evidenced by the existence of a number of gardens created in this style, including the garden of Byôdô-in Temple.

Conclusions

This International Meeting addressed the issue of the “Pure Land Garden,” one of the most important themes in the history of Japanese ancient gardens, in the broader context of Eastern Asia, and gained very important insights that would be helpful in promoting research in this field. In the research of the history of ancient gardens in Japan, it is of special importance to clarify the various influence of the Asian Continent upon Japan and the process of diffusion of garden cultures. In this sense, I very much hope that the outcomes of this International Meeting will contribute to progress in the historical research of the earliest gardens in Asian countries, and help to connect the history of gardens in Asia closely with the world history of gardens.

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