

*Who Makes the Garden? (The Comparison Between <Sakuteiki> And Ancient Chinese Documents)*

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**Abstract**

Tachibana Toshitsuna(橘俊纲), the author of <Sakuteiki>(Records of Garden Making), lived in the middle and later period of Japanese Heian Age. A further understanding of ancient Chinese and Japanese gardens may be acquired through the study of writer and his time, as well as of the comparison between other garden monographs such as <yuan ye>(The Craft of Gardens), or of the historical background of other Garden Making activities. Whoever dominate the Garden Making will decide its outer form and inner theory foundation, the construction of the garden will reflect its relationship with the society.

Keywords: <Sakuteiki(作庭记)>(Records of Garden Making); <Yuan Ye(园冶)>(The Craft of Gardens);Fixed Mode(成法); Taboos; Zhu Qiqian(朱启钤); Yangshi Lei(样式雷)

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## Introduction

This essay makes a textual study on <Sakuteiki>, which is taken from <The Study on Translation and annotation of Sakuteiki>, authored by Pro. Zhang Shiqing. At the very first of this book, it quotes "many of the ancient books and records were reserved because of Xu Fu's eastward voyage" from <Japanese Sword Poem(日本刀歌)>, authored by Ouyang Xiu, so as to emphasize on the significance of international exchange to academic research. In modern China, the establishment of architecture research also stands on the shoulder of relevant theoretical research in western countries. Mr. Zhu Qiqian, founder of the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture, has made a wonderful summary on it: "Thanks to our friendly neighbour on the east side, our cultural relics are preserved.....owing to our friendly neighbour on the west side, we are passed on the knowledge of scientific methods"[1]. Thanks to the whole human achievement at that time, the discipline of architecture was able to be established in Modern China, and has made brilliant achievements.

As a matter of fact, how could we deny that our Chinese Civilization maintains its vitality by absorbing the essence of external cultures? Our Chinese Nation is forged through continuous cultural fusion. From the beginning, Chinese Culture is centered on self-improvement and self-renewal: "If you can one day renovate yourself, do so from day to day and let there be daily renovation(苟日新，日日新)", "Although Zhou was an ancient country, its mission was to reform.(周虽旧邦，其命维新)" Interiorly, words like "eastern countries, far or near, were deprived of silk-like cloth by Zhou(小东大东，杼轴其空)" have made a record of how Chinese Civilization thrived from intermittent pain of cultural integration. In foreign relations, from the legendary tale of Xi Wangmu and Fairy Mountains to actual transactions such as the silk road, etc.--constant communication has brought in new blood so as to provide for the well-being and vigor of our culture. All of these have facilitated the robust and splendid Chinese Civilization. Apparently, the core of Chinese Culture is tolerance to diversity. In this way, <Sakuteiki>, a record of Garden Making activities at Japanese Heian Age, has entertained a research value beyond the text itself concerning its close relation with traditional Chinese Culture.

### 1 . Does the "Fixed Mode" Exist?

Tachibana Toshitsuna (1028-1094), the author of <Sakuteiki>, was the son of Fujiwara Yorimichi, who ruled Japan by taking over the position of Fujiwara Michinaga. <Sakuteiki> was produced in such a time when Japan attempted to develop its own culture by absorbing and digesting Chinese Culture. Consequently, it can be found out in this book the outlook of gardens at Japanese Heian Age, techniques in Garden Making as well as its architectural skills, which mirrored parts of the earlier Chinese gardens. It also reflected how different social patterns casted influence on Garden Making. A further study on this book would help us to explore the social factors affecting the Chinese ancient gardens, and make a further analysis on their final forms under the influences.

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[1] See page 20 in bibliography 4.

As the most magnificent book on garden making in ancient Japan, <Sakuteiki> was frequently compared with <Yuan Ye>, a prominent one in ancient China. The most eye-catching difference between these two writings was that <Sakuteiki> concentrated on techniques while <Yuan Ye> was opposite.[2] Early in the Ming Dynasty, Zheng Yuanxun briefly summarized: "there is no fixed modes in Garden Makeing." [3] when making inscription for <Yuan Ye>. He points out the essence of Garden making: deviates itself from the rigid stereotype in order to satisfy people's daily requirements of being leisurely comfortable and close to nature. In <Yuan Ye>, the author stressed on the appreciation and usage of gardens and inner architectures; he sort out the basic points that would influence the natural beauty of garden for analysis, and emphasized on "hill making" and the application of borrowed scenery. The book also relates to some specific circumstances, and architectural details schema. As for the part of garden designing and the implementation of technical details, the writer put it down to "no fixed modes". If we make a comparative study on these two writings from whether "fixed modes" exists or not, we might as well draw into the conclusion that the core of <Yuan Ye> lay in unifying readers' understanding of gardens so that they may be consistent in their tastes and interests. As a result, it provided a platform for a further discussion within garden lovers or we say readers from upper class expected by the writer. As for the issue of construction, it was for the case designers to think about. In consideration of the political demands of Ruan Dacheng, who was the initial infuser of <Yuan Ye>, we would not exclude the possibility that the intention in creating <Yuan Ye> had something in common with Ruan writing <The Swallow Note (燕子笺)>. Namely, the aim of <Yuan Ye> was to seek the cultural identity in target readers so as to further achieve the social objectives. And it is very differently from the target of <Sakuteiki>, which was to give guidance in practice. If a reader draw into the undoubted conclusion that "there is no fixed mode in Garden Makeing", just out of a book without considering practicality, then the rationality of this thing is worth suspicious.

Then is there a "fixed mode" in garden making? <Sakuteiki> is a case that challenges the saying of <Yuan Ye> because it is exactly focused on "fixed modes". The garden described in <Sakuteiki> has a fixed formula. It is a significant component of the noble mansion featured by "shinden-zukuri". It is described in this book the layout of south court, the designing of the water level and landscape on the court, the arrangement and skilled handling of stones, as well as the formation and designing of water and islands, all of which are highly applicable. It is no wonder that <Sakuteiki> is taken as being more like a technical monograph than <Yuan Ye> by most of the readers. The most impressive part is the waterscape designing, which is made possible by the proper handling of the landforms, such as rock banks on which the water bodies depend. For example, landscapes with a variety of styles will be made out by organizing the final shape of a waterfall with the application of water and stones, summarizing the features of waters and islands with various-typed water bodies and making simulations. Generally, the essence lies in using stones to restrict water flows. Namely, stones, being tangible, can served as edges so that water, being intangible, can be held within control. It can be found in <Sakuteiki> the theoretical

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[2] See Wang Jin-tao <The Comparative Study of Yuan Ye and Treatise on Garden Design>: "<Yuan Ye> is for literary appreciation while <Sakuteiki> is for practical technology." Issued on <Chinese Garden>, the third session of 2010.

[3] Zheng Yuanxun's inscription .see page 37 in bibliography 2.

conclusion: "water is shaped by its surroundings". [4] In China, it is the skill that spreads among craftsmen, while the <Yuan Ye>'s target readers, scholar-officials, would not involve any of this. In Japan, Karesansui, devoid of water, naturally comes into being with the maturing of this theory. Since the waterscape can be made by the outlining in the confinement of water, it doesn't matter whether there is water or not. Generally speaking, <Yuan Ye> stresses on "no fixed modes". It focuses on grasping the garden essence, points that help the viewer to appreciate the beauty of the garden. While <Sakuteiki> concentrates on "fixed modes". It is a summary book based on plenty of experience in Garden making. Under the guidance of detailed procedures and practical skills, constructors may get to know how to make a garden. In fact, gardens, architectures, as well as paintings, they are all final products that provide service for a specific group of people. In order to achieve the ideal effect, they will be more or less stylized tendency, refines the theory or inspection techniques, which is determined by the fact that people accumulate experience in similar production activities. In this way, the value of "fixed mode" is highlighted. By the simple and plain records of Garden Making activities, <Sakuteiki> displays the "fixed mode" is possible to exist under certain background conditions. The "fixed mode" is the practice skills summary and guidance, is also a significant part which contributes to the forming of a garden under craftsmanship. While it is deliberately avoided in <Yuan Ye> because of the writers' thinking that it may diminish the sense of mystery in gardens.

## 2. Taboos & Symbolic

Concerning the techniques by making use of stones to confine the flow of water, we can find its unique meaning in <Sakuteiki>: "let the soil being the emperor, the water being its subject, the soil may give way to the incoming of water and also stop the running of it." It is a vivid expression embodied with specific culture connotations. It is more of a realistic record of the political situations in Japan where the relationship between emperor and ministers is distinctive in nature, than an analysis on the process through which Japanese culture absorbs the humanism values in traditional Confucian Culture. We may find out that the garden art in its latter period has developed into Karesansui, which is of no actual use. Just like in the political field, the monarchy did not have real power. This association appears to be quite interesting. [5]

Whoever makes a comparative study on <Sakuteiki> and <Yuan Ye> would point out that taboos in <Sakuteiki> are large in number while in <Yuan Ye> they are barely found. [6] The formation of this difference is hard to know. The taboos in the narration and records of <Sakuteiki> have a complex and large system within which a plenty of detailed rules are mentioned. It attaches theory-based different meanings to each element included in Garden Making activities. [7] This difference is seemingly worth further analyzing from the perspective of the cross-culture communication between China and Japan.

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[4] See page 112 in bibliography 1.

[5] See P12 in bibliography 1, quote <the Senzai Hisshō>. The original text was written in the times of Tokugawa Shogunate.

[6] See page 96 in bibliography 3.

[7] See page 35 in bibliography 1.

The attitude of Chinese people towards taboos is not unchangeable. Taboos and auspicious signs are two sides of one piece of leaf. According to the research of some scholars on folklores, auspicious signs were paid special attention to and given invented explanations in Ming and Qing Dynasties. It was manifested in the history in prior to Qing Dynasty that ancient Chinese people were inclined to treating taboos and auspicious signs in a rational way when they were in a pursuit of high level of philosophy and without specific requirements. As a matter of fact, this kind of theme is hardly found in a formal literature writing. Hence it is well understood the reason why in <Yuan Ye> the writer avoids any mention of taboos when we make associations with the inditement intention.

The society written in <Sakuteiki> is quite different from that in ancient China, Taboos are frequently touched about which may leave on readers a deep impression. They are usually connected with symbols which serve as substitutions. For example, the ancient Japanese refer to Tsing Lung white tiger as 9 willows and 7 Chinese catalpas, and ruse fixed stone combinations as symbols of 3 statues of Buddha. Furthermore, it connects tree-worship which is inherent in Japanese Culture and also embodied in introduced Buddhism, with the historical record that first Emperor of Qin didn't burn books about tree planting.[8] All these phenomenon have reflected itself as being simple and straightforward while they are still easy to operate. These unique features of being readable and practical can still be seen in modern Japan.

Being practical is also manifested in the chapter of "spring water" in <Sakuteiki>: Here first stresses that spring water is able to dispels summer heat, rather than the tranquil mood which the Chinese ancient poetry often concern.[9] It is very likely that when Japan was just beginning to introduce Chinese civilization, the most important thing should be to establish their own civilization system. For instance, The poems and essays authored by Bai Juyi were well received and had great significance in Japan for the reasons that on one hand, the language is simply clear and easily translatable, on the other hand, most of his poems reflected lives of that time so that they may serve as materials for research and study.

In this way, we may have a clear understanding of the association between taboo systems in <Sakuteiki> and Chinese culture. It is for these is not necessarily the correct symbol translation, Japanese have absorbed Chinese culture at a fast pace. And the next, they also made further movements to develop their own garden culture. While in China, the garden art has no requirements hence no restrictions in this area.

### **3 .The decision maker in Garden Making**

As was mentioned in <Yuan Ye>, the final form of a garden was not held in the hand of its owner or the craftsman, but in the hand of the "decision maker"[10], which was quite persuasive. Then who was on earth the decision maker of a garden, or we say the biggest saying in garden construction? The craftsmen or scholar-officials as social elites? In order to explain this problem, Let's take a look at the <Sakuteiki>, it records that Fujiwara Yorimichi who stayed in political power at that time of Japan had once

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[8] See page 118 in bibliography 1.

[9] See page 120 in bibliography 1: "spring water"(泉事).

[10] See page 47 in bibliography 2.

made design and plans for the construction of his own house all by himself.[11] Hence we can draw into conclusion that:

First of all, as the saying goes: "when girls in the city began to make updos, girls from other areas will follow the trend." [12] Fujiwara Yorimichi, being a man in great power, will have a positive effect on the society as a whole by making designs for his own house. So much so that it will alter the rejecting mood towards the craftsmen work prevailing among intelligentsia. In the later ages of Japan, there appeared a group of "ishitateso(石立僧)", who were identified as monks instead of craftsmen, which served as strong evidence to demonstrate that there formed no gap between garden designer and literacy class in Japan.

Secondly, the garden construction in Japan flourished under the nourishment of Chinese culture. However, the fact that the ruling class makes plan and design for their own houses revealed the social reality that it was highly civilized in the upper class while there was a lack of technicians among lower class. As a comparison, we also can see, in Qing Dynasty, it was the Lei family with craftsman background that took command of the official designing agency named as YangFang(样房). It exactly reflected the fact that the upper class made scarce contribution to the architecture designing while the lower class was supported by a sound base of craftsmanship. The two circumstances were entirely different.

Respective situation in China and Japan contributes to the difference lying in <Yuan Ye> and <Sakuteiki>, though both being classical gardening books. Tachibana Toshitsuna resembled Li Jie, the author of <Yingzao Fashi> in the way that they were both from upper class and lead their architecture construction for themselves or for the same class. However, Ji Cheng was serve for members of the upper class relying on his own talents. Consequently, <Sakuteiki> was more technically-inclined to help readers to participate in the construction of their Garden, while <Yuan Ye> was more theoretically-inclined so as to meet the needs of its own target readers, namely the scholar-officials who refrained from doing humble works. Ji Cheng praise highly the "decision makers" as the communication between garden's owners and craftsmen. They played the same role with the European architects, which appeared from middle class in medieval times when the owner of the house found themselves not effectively understood by craftsmen due to their limited professional knowledge, and thrived in renaissance Europe. [13]

Furthermore, Tachibana Toshitsuna and his father successively engaged in Garden Makeing activities in ancient Japan. This fact was well recorded in a history in which the upper class eagerly learned from Chinese culture before forming its own culture for the purpose of social development and the consolidation of its ruling power. Garden makeing was the significant part of the pioneering enterprise. The influence of gardens was given into full replay in the promotion of a new civilized mode, as the role played by Buddhist temples and statues in the dissemination of the doctrine.

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[11] See page 114 in bibliography 1.

[12] See <Collection of Poems of Music Bureau : the Ballad in Capital City>(<□府□集·城中□>).

[13] Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, the writer, Xu Bo, the translator: The Magnificent Cathedral, Chapter2, "Architects". Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2007.

## Conclusion

Garden Makeing, or construction work, is changes with its time. Whoever takes control of it will decide the appearance of the final product and the research product. For instance, <Yuan Ye>, written in the late Ming Dynasty, which does not cover much of the technical content. The writer seems to leave this part to professionals. While at the end of Qing Dynasty, Zhu Qiqian, the founder of the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture, lamented on “the separation from theorist to artisan(道器分途)”and the lack of high quality technical monograph. He was committed to “develop the communication between scholar and craftsmen(沟通儒匠)”[ 14 ]. In his work titled as <The Textual Research on Yang-shi-lei Family>[15], we may find records of the reasons contributing to this phenomenon: Lei family was different from Tachibana Toshitsuna and Li Jie as they had a craftsman background so that they must try their utmost to sustain their business to provide for the living. In this way, they had every reason to treat the skills and materials as their unique possessions[16] which deter any sharing or communication. For this reason, it is possible for Tachibana Toshitsuna and Li Jie to compile the technical works. While in the time of Yangshi Lei, theories were usually separated from practical skills. By the end of Qing Dynasty, The new political figures usually devoted themselves to implementing new policies and saving the country with industry. Being the politician, Zhu Qiqian was responsible for the construction work so that he was also engaged in the communication between craftsmen, which made it possible for him to compile books and conduct research works. These are all the actual cases in which social factors and “decision makers” cast influence on architectural design and theory. Garden makeing are recorded in either tangible or untangible history, and now we are also the history makers.

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[14] See page 6-7 in bibliography 4.: <Origins of the SRCA>.

[15] See page 79-84 in bibliography 4.

[16] See page 75 in bibliography 4.

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