

Aesthetic Trends and Sustaining Process of Aesthetic Value of Japanese Temple Gardens

Ran Kamiyama¹

kamiyama@toyo.jp,

¹ Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Toyo University, Japan

Abstract: This paper focuses on the sustaining process of aesthetic value and discussed it by three phases. First, judgment phase is to identify the aesthetic trend by historic and cultural background and philosophy of owners by reviewing literature and compare and contrast different temple gardens. Secondary, transformation phase focuses on identifying how to transform aesthetic trend and value into spatial composition of garden and the surroundings by referring old records, maps, and drawings. Finally, sustainment phase is to discuss how aesthetic value is established, maintained, and enhanced. In this paper, a case study of Ryoan-ji, which is one of the famous temple gardens in Kyoto, is introduced to explain the aesthetic trend and explore the sustaining process of aesthetic value.

Keywords: Japanese Garden, Aesthetic, Sustaining Process, Kyoto.

Introduction

Aesthetic preferences can be unpredictably changed with various reasons, such as time, place, and person, however, some of historically valuable heritages remains to attract people for a long time. One of the possible reasons is that these heritages occasionally or gradually transformed the visual appearance and spatial composition by responding cultural and historical aesthetic trend in their formative periods. Consequently the aesthetic value are added and accumulated by time. As a result, many of highly recognized heritages sustain variable, stable, or even universal aestheticity.

If the above hypothesis of sustaining aesthetic value is revealed, it would be capable of being applied to the contemporary landscape planning and other planning disciplines. However, in the previous studies, aesthetic value in a certain period of time is well discussed, the sequential process of sustaining aesthetic value is less mentioned.

Research Focus and Methods

This research focuses on the sustaining process of aesthetic value and discussed it by three phases. First, judgment phase is to identify the aesthetic trend by historic and cultural background and philosophy of owners by reviewing literature and compare and contrast different temple gardens. Secondary, transformation phase focuses on identifying how to transform aesthetic trend and value into spatial composition of garden and the surroundings by referring old records, maps, and drawings. Finally, sustainment phase is to discuss how aesthetic value is established, maintained, and enhanced.

Study Area

In this paper, Ryoan-ji temple is introduced as a case study (Fig. 1), because Ryoan-ji temple is formed the various landscapes in the long history as follows. Before the establishment of Ryoan-ji temple, there were two different types of shrines and temples were built in the current site of Ryoan-ji temple. First, Otomo shrine was built in 834 A.D. Secondly, Enyu-ji temple in 983 and later Sumiyoshi-Otomo shrine and Tokudaiji-temple were built in ca.1035. Finally, Ryoan-ji temple was established in 1450. As described above, Ryoan-ji temple are established through a series of historical process. And yet the

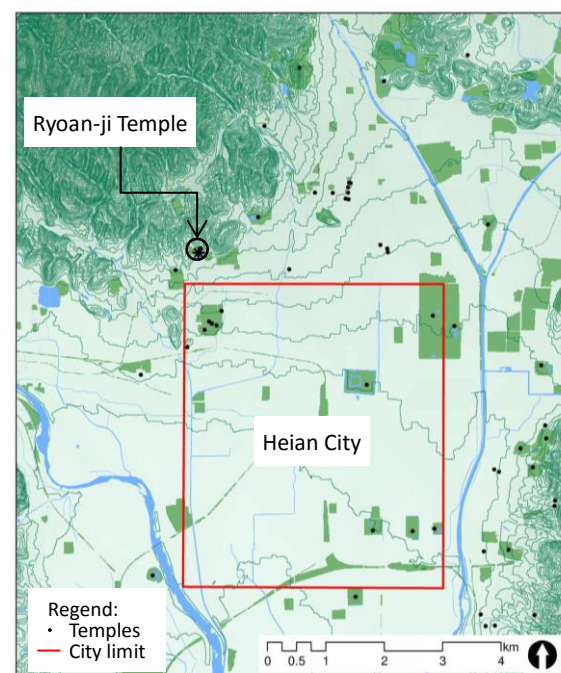


Figure 1. Map of Kyoto City and the Study Area

aesthetic value is sustained. Thus, Ryoan-ji temple is suitable to explore the sequential process of sustaining aestheticity. Two former temples of Ryoan-ji temple, Enyu-ji and Tokudaiji temple as well as two shrines, Tomouji and Sumiyoshi-Otomo shrines are introduced throughout the following chapters.

Findings

Judgment phase

In this chapter, the aesthetic trend and the characteristics of the temples and gardens are identified through the historical and cultural background as well as through owner's philosophy.

Historical background of Heian Period (794-1185) to Kamakura Period (1185-1333)

In 794 A.D., the 50th emperor Kanmu (737-806) established the capital in Kyoto. The capital city was coordinated with grid system influenced by Chinese Taoism philosophy. The capital place, where is a plain surrounded by mountains on the north, east, west, and opened to the south, has been selected according to Feng Shui principle and the city. The imperial palace was placed at the center and noble family residences were planned to construct in the surrounded area. However, many of nobles prefer to build their villa or estate outside of the city limit where is near mountain, because Japanese people found beauty from nature, such as mountain, river, grass, tree, flower, bird, wind, and moon. Among of all, attitude toward mountain is rather special. In fact, most of Japanese old cities locate the plain surrounded by mountains and the views to and from mountain has been highly respected. Many shrines, temples, and gardens in Kyoto distribute to the mountain side rather than in the city limit. Especially the famous temple gardens are distinctively located near the mountain and have a great view to the nature.

In the early Heian period, Imperial authority became stronger and generated luxury imperial culture. Accordingly, many of poetry and literature mainly themed nature are composed. In architecture, the dominant architectural style called Shinden style residence is established for palatial and aristocratic society. This particular style often applied for the villa typed temples near mountains. Consequently, garden style called Shinden-zukuri garden is developed as well. One of the essential elements of a Shinden-zukuri garden is a pond. The Shinden style residence is usually built adjacent to the pond. People enjoy boating, fishing, and viewing pond and also walking around the surrounding area of a pond.

In contrast, the late Heian period to the early Kamakura period is regarded as the pessimism age. People believe that the year of 1052 was the beginning of a decadent age of Buddhism. Due to the pessimism, aristocrats and monks worship Jodo-shinko, which pray for peaceful death and rebirth in

nirvana. In these circumstances, the Japanese paradise garden was evolved. Figure 2 is the illustration of Byodou-in temple from "Miyako Meisyo-zue". Byodou-in temple was established in the Heian period and formed by the typical Shinden style residence and Shinden-zukuri garden with a pond.



Figure 2. Illustration of Byodou-in Temple from "Miyako Meisyo-zue" (Akizato, 1786)

The characteristics of Enyu-ji temple by Emperor Enyu

Enyu-ji temple was established in 983 A.D. ordered by the 64th emperor Enyu (959-991) and two years later Emperor Enyu abdicated when he was 26 years old. He became a priest and resided at Enyu-ji Temple from 985. According to "Fusouryakuki" (Keizaizasshi ed. 1897), a Japanese history book, Enyu-ji temple contained a Hokkedo (Hokke-sanmaido) hall. The Hokkedo hall is generally used to meditate and seek the ultimate truth or occasionally functioned as a mausoleum. It also described that Hokkedo hall is located on the east side of pond. The son of Emperor Enyu, the 66th emperor Ichijyo (980-1011) visited fishing pavilion and enjoy boating and attended poem ceremony in Enyu-ji temple (Kyoto City ed., 1979a). A fishing pavilion is a small structure jutting out over the pond, typically located at the southern end of either the eastern or the western corridors of a Shinden style residence. Above historical resources suggest that Enyu-ji temple are functioned as a residence with religious aspect, and also with entertainment aspect.

Emperor Enyu lived Enyu-ji temple for six years and he passed away in 991. Emperor Enyu was cremated near the Enyu-ji temple. After his cremation, the mausoleums of five emperors and an empress, who are direct descendants of Emperor Enyu (Fig.3) were selected to locate at the behind mountain of Enyu-ji temple. Enyu-ji temple became an ancestral temple after his death, and the mountain behind the temple dignified by the presence of those mausoleums and became a landmark viewed as sacred mountain. In Shintoism, mountains are generally

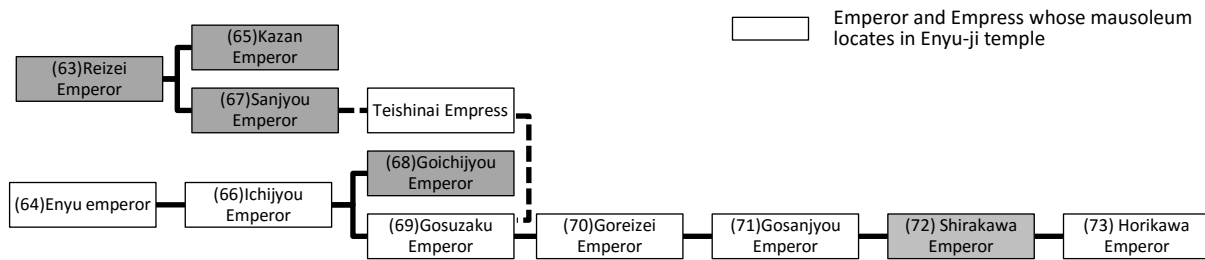


Figure 3. A Family Pedigree Chart of Emperor Enyu

regarded as a holy place, and people believe that ancestors live on the other side of a mountain or mountain range and visit the mountain top in a certain time.

The characteristics of Tokudaiji temple by Saneyoshi Tokudaiji

In Heian period, the Japanese manorial system was established and the particular society such as imperials, nobles, and warriors had their own private land. Eventually, the family-based society diminished. Alternatively, the owner of the manors began to pray to the deities to protect their land instead of family gods. In 834 A.D., a family member of Tomono (also called Otomo) received a land by the 54th emperor Ninmyo (810-850), and built a shrine called Tomouji shirine (Kyoto City ed., 1979b). The Shine is to deified a family god, ancestors and progenitors of surname lineages. However, the declining with the Otomo family, the shrine has been eventually ruined. In the late Heian period Tokudaiji family acquired the land possessed by Otomo family and governed the land (Kyoto City ed., 1979b). Tokudaiji family worships Sumiyoshi god and Tamatsushimanokami goddess. Both are known as the god of song (poetry) and were transferred to the Tomouji shirine, then the shrine was renamed Sumiyoshi-Otomo shrine. After that Tokudaiji temple was built. Although the certain established year and exact site of the temple is unknown, according to Sakeiki (Sasagawa et al., 1922) the diary of Tsuneyori Minamoto (985-1039), Tokudaiji temple was existed near the Sumiyoshi-Otomo shrine around 1035. The other dairy by Yoronaga Fujiwara called Taiki, tell us that temple called Tokudaiji was owned by Saneyoshi Tokudaiji (Fujiwara) (Kyoto City ed., 1979c) and the temple was build the site of Enyu-ji temple, functioned as his mountain villa (Kyoto City ed., 1979d). Saneyoshi Tokudaiji is a progenitor of Tokudaiji lineages and a famous poet. Unfortunately, Tokudaiji temple was fired in 1156 and Saneyoshi passed away in the next year. The temple was gradually ruined.

Saigyō (1118-1190), who is a Buddhist priest, a famous poet, and also a member of the Fujiwara clan, was served Tokudaiji Family. He visited Tokudaiji temple after the fire and composed a poem. He mentioned in his poem that the structure to attain

spiritual enlightenment, called *Sanmaido*, was existed in the temple (Sasaki, 1992). Moreover, *Kokoncyomonjyu*, a collection of notable tales of Kamakura period completed in 1245, suggests the existence of pond during the Bunji year (1185-1190) (Kyoto City ed., 1979a), and *Seiasyo*, a book of poem theory, described that the temple has the room for poem and held a poetry ceremony (as cited in Nishida, 1944). Composing poem or hold a poem ceremony is one of the popular custom in this period of time. However, the construction of a poem room is seems the attribution to the personal desire. Enyu-ji temple and Tokudaiji temple has some common feature, such as Hokke Sanmaido hall, a poem ceremony. These facts suggest that Saneyoshi sustain those already existing value and enhanced the value by transferring the song gods and creating a song room to fit his philosophy.

Historical background of Muromachi period (1336-1573)

The Muromachi period is the governance of the Ashikaga shogunate, the strengthened the warrior class power instead of Imperial authority. Subsequently, the unique culture has been developed, such as the tea ceremony, flower arrangement, a new architecture style, and landscape gardening.

In the Muromachi period, Zen Buddhist, particularly the Rinzai School, is widely spread. Zen practice focuses on the self-concentration and meditation. This concept is matched with the philosophy of warrior society. Thus, the Ashikaga shogun strongly supported Zen practice. Meanwhile, Zen garden or dry garden has been appeared to be dominant feature of temple gardens. Due to the philosophy of Zen, landscape gardening became simple and a picturesque like motionless view is created. As a result, a view from a certain point in gardens or structure is carefully composed and designed.

The characteristics of Ryoan-ji temple by Katsumoto Hosokawa

In 1450, Katsumoto Hosokawa (1430-1473) inherit Tokudaiji temple from Kinari Tokudaiji (1442-1486), and named Ryoan-ji temple. During the Muromachi period, the Onin War (1467-1477), a civil war was

occurred and escalated into a nationwide war involving the Ashikaga shogunate and a number of warrior society in many regions of Japan. The most of Kyoto was destroyed by the prolonged war including Ryoan-ji temple. After the war, the study room, called shoin, was relocated and functioned as an abbot's quarter (Kyoto City ed., 1979e). Shoin is one of the remarkable Japanese architecture during the Muromachi period. And later developed as shoin-zukuri style and served as a reception room. The Buddha hall was transferred from Tofukuji-temple in 1473 to the temple (Kyoto City ed., 1979e).

During the Edo period (1603-1868) there were twenty one sub temples existed in the site of Ryoan-ji temple (Kyoto City ed., 1979e). However, the temple was fired in 1797 and only the abbot's quarter was remained and now only three structures exists.

One of the most famous rock garden, or called dry landscape garden is located on the garden at the abbot's quarters of Ryoan-ji temple. The original location and form of garden is uncertain, but the reason of the creation is described on Miyako Rinsen Meisyo-zue (Akizato, 1799), a guidebook published in 1799. Initially the garden is composed by Katsumoto Hosokawa to worship the Iwashimizu Hachiman-gu shrine. This shrine is a Shinto shrine in the city of Yawata in Kyoto Prefecture. The shrine was established by the 56th emperor Seiwa (850-880) in 859, and since then kept strong connections and patronage with the Imperial family. Coincidentally, Emperor Enyu visited the shrine in 979 (Arai, 2007). Since then the shrine continued to be visited by nearly all the emperors until the reign of the 96th Emperor Godaigo (1288-1339). Iwashimizu Hachiman-gu shrine enshrines Hachiman God, the 15th Emperor Ojin, and the God of War. And also believed the ancestral mausoleum of Minamoto family. The ancestor of Hosokawa family is regarded as Minamoto clan. To worship the shrine every day from the study room with in a temple, he did not plant any vegetation in the garden. The Otoko mountain is visible from the garden (Figure 4). The illustration is drawn by Kinkichiro Honda (1851-1921). In his illustration, the mountain is drawn behind the wall of rock garden.

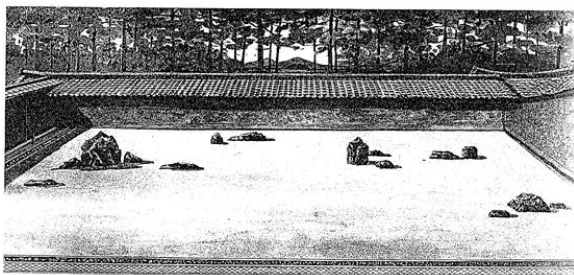


Figure 4. Abbot's Quarters of Ryoan-ji Temple
Illustrated by Kinkichiro Honda (Honda, 1911)

The Iwashimizu Hachiman-gu shrine locates on the Otoko mountain, and perhaps he viewed the mountain from his study room. The original place of the study room is unknown, however the function and the style, the room is assumed to place the same or the place near from the present dry garden.

According to Miyako Rinsen Meisyo-zue, the Ryoan-ji eight views, which are the selections of most beautiful and outstanding sceneries of Ryoan-ji Temple are written. And those are:

- 1) a temple complex of East mountainous area
- 2) a mausoleum of Minamoto clan
- 3) a ruin of the Fushimi castle
- 4) river scape of the Yodo river
- 5) a tower of Toji temple
- 6) twilight tolling of a bell in Hanazono (Myoshin-ji temple)
- 7) pine trees of a mountain
- 8) fall colors of adjacent temples

Second view indicates the view to Iwashimizu Hachiman-gu Shrine by Katsumoto in the Ryoan-ji temple period. The seventh view is contributed to the Enyu-ji temple. The other views are long distant views to the south. Probably the open views to the south were newly recognized and valued by the discovery of the view to Iwashimizu Hachiman-gu shrine and the arrangement of the artificial garden.

Transformation phase

This chapter is to identify how to transform aesthetic trend and value into spatial composition of garden and the surroundings by referring old records, maps, and drawings.

Aesthetic trend and value of Enyu-ji-temple

The aesthetic trend of the Heian period is highly influenced by the coexistence of Buddhism and the Japanese native religion, Shinto. The presence of pond and mountain is a dominant landscape components, and they became aesthetically important feature of Enyu-ji temple.

The spatial composition of landform is very important to select a place of temple. As the capital was selected according to the Feng Shui principle, temples were often selected from the same reason in the different scale. A valuable place based on Feng Shui principle is surrounded by mountains on the north, east, and west side and opened to the south. Aside from the scientific validity, the visual enclosure is truly effective. In addition to the landform, the water feature is essential, and the best position of water is to place in the south area. This particular landform is believed to be protected by the winds and to be gifted water and probably the most preferred landform composition in Japan. The Enyu-ji temple is to say the most suitable composition based on Feng Shui principle (Fig. 5).

On the other hand, the idea of placing a mausoleum at a mountain is basically from the belief of Shintoism. After emperor Enyu passed away, his crematory and six mausoleums were placed at the mountain behind of the temple. The aesthetic response to the mountain of Enyu-ji temple is added and the mountain are viewed as aesthetic appreciation and as a sacred place (Fig. 6).

Aesthetic trend and value of Tokudaiji temple

The historic records about Tokudaiji-temple is limited and the composition of temple is unknown. However,

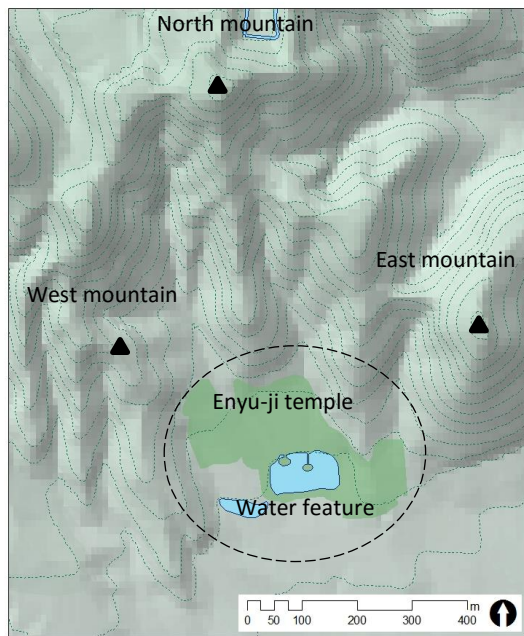


Figure 5. The Landform of Enyu-ji Temple

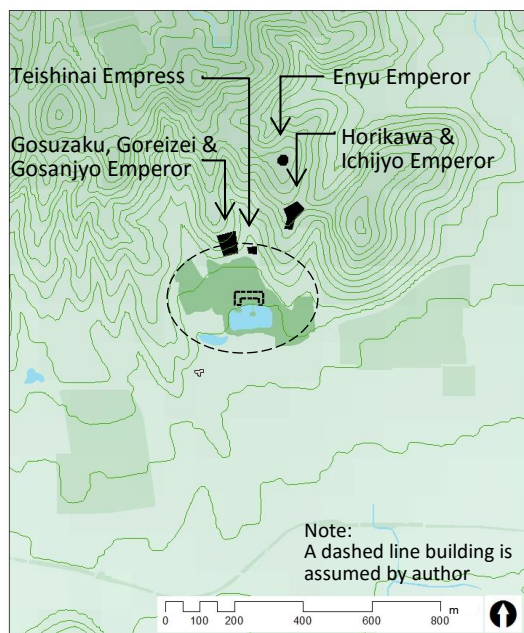


Figure 6. Spatial Composition of Enyu-ji Temple

similar structure and cultural activities were found in both Enyu-ji and Tokudaiji temple from the previous chapter. Previously existed shrine called Tomouji (Otomo) shrine was established to worship the family god, and Tokudaiji family transferred their worshiped gods to the existing shrine and named Sumiyoshi-Otomo shrine. The current location of the shrine is shown in Figure 7. A mountain behind of the shrine is also called Sumiyoshi Mountain. If the Tokudaiji temple locates the same place of the current Ryoan-ji temple, the Sumiyoshi mountain locates on the west side of temple. The new value is added to the west mountain of the temple and the newly discovered view is accumulated to the site.

Aesthetic trend and value of Ryoan-ji temple

The aesthetic trend of the Muromachi period is based on Zen Buddhism and the worrier society class culture. In the Ryoan-ji-temple, the view to the south, especially to the Iwashimizu Hachiman-gu shrine, is valuable for owner. This view is initially based on the ancestral worship and the attitude toward the southern mountain is emphasized in Ryouan-ji temple (Fig. 8). To worship the shrine, simple garden without trees and a quiet personal space for viewing place were newly created (Fig. 9).

In the Edo period, the landscape of Ryoan-ji-temple is apprized by eight views, which are mainly consists of a panoramic view to the south. This trend is influenced by the new view and garden. However, eight views includes a view of north mountain by Emperor Enyu, and a view of south mountain of Iwashimizu Hachiman-gu shrine by Katsumoto, which

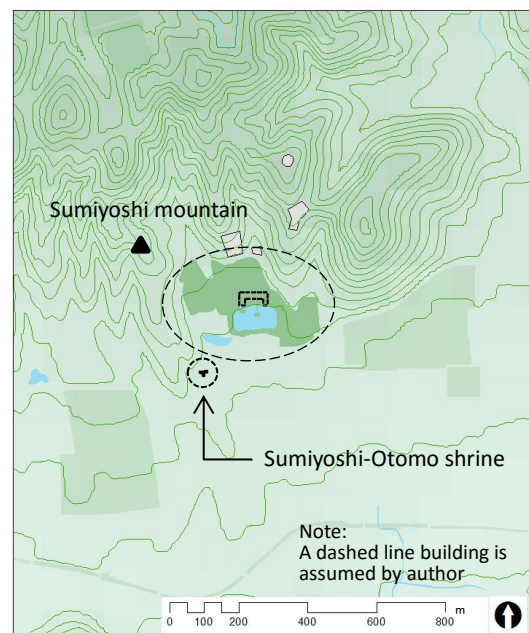


Figure 7. Spatial Composition of Tokudaiji Temple

means that the old view is still important and maintained to be viewed. The discovery of open view to the south change the aesthetic appreciation in



Figure 8. Spatial Composition of Ryoan-ji and Iwashimizu Hachiman-gu Shrine



Figure 9. Abbot's Quarters of Ryoan-ji Temple (Akizato, 1799)



Figure 10. A view from Saigen-in to Kinugasa Mountain (Akizato, 1799)

the temple. In addition to the south view, the west east view is newly created. Figure 10 is the illustration of a view from the Saigen-in temple. Saigen-in is a sub temple of Ryoan-ji temple and locates on the west side of the pond (Fig. 11). The landscape of pond with Kinugasa mountain, which locate on the east side of the temple. Kinugasa mountain is famous for the elegant shape. People are attracted by the aesthetic appearance of Kinugasa mountain and view it as an aesthetic object.

Spatial composition of Ryoan-ji temple

The site of Ryoan-ji temple is formed by the land of upper level and lower level (Fig. 12). Figure 13 is known as a traced drawing of the original drawing which was drawn before the Onin war. There were some building structures on the upper level, but there is no building structure on the lower level before the Onin war. The possible reason is that the higher elevation is more feasible to see the long distant view

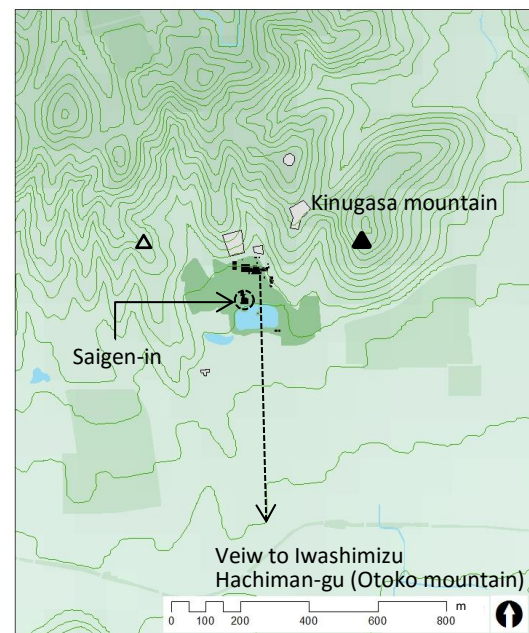


Figure 11. Spatial Composition of Ryoan-ji Temple

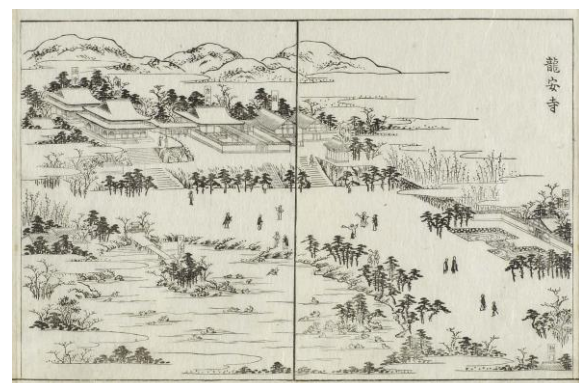


Figure 12. Landscape of Ryoan-ji Temple (Akizato, 1799)

such as Iwashimizu Hachiman-gu shrine. In contrast, the building structures are drawn on the both level in Figure 14, which was drawn before the fire in 1797. Some of the buildings are located adjacent to the pond. As a result, the east view is discovered by the new viewpoints. Conversely, the building may be newly created to view the Kinugasa mountain.

Sustainment phase

This chapter is focused on identifying how aesthetic value is established, maintained, and enhanced through the important landscape components, pond and mountain.

Pond

A Pond in the Ryoan-ji temple, which is called Kyoyou-chi pond today, is regarded to exist from the beginning of the Enyu-ji and Tokudaiji temple period. The shape of the pond is almost the same form and portion (See Fig. 12, 13, and 14). A pond generally situates in close proximity to a building in the Heian period architectural style. The pond was functioned as



Figure 13. “Ryoan-ji Shikichi no Zu”
in Ryoan-ji temple’s possession
(Shogakukan, 2005)

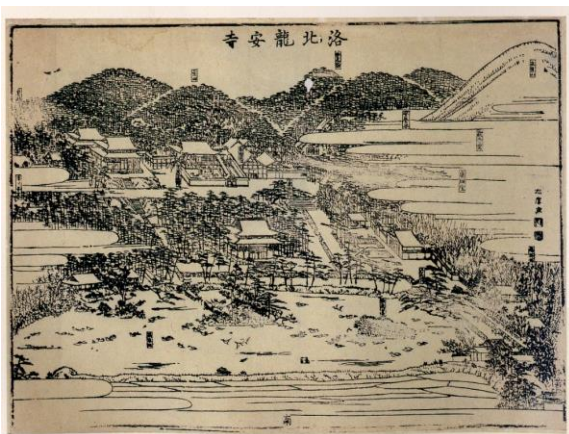


Figure 14. “Rakuhoku Ryoan-ji Zu”
in Ryoan-ji temple’s possession
(Shogakukan, 2005)

boating and fishing and perhaps makes a pleasant environment and played an important role to compose poems. In the Ryoan-ji temple period, the main buildings were constructed on the upper level, because the function of the pond changed into mainly the viewing. However, After the Onin war, some buildings were newly constructed, and the water feature provide a new aesthetic value, such as viewing the east mountain. In addition to this, in the Edo period the mandarin duck known as lovebirds in the pond became famous and illustrated on the guidebook (Fig. 12 & 14). The attitude to the pond is shifted through the age, but the shape and portion are maintained. Meanwhile, the various views are generated by the creation of new viewpoints.

Mountain

Mountains are essential feature for the three temples. In each age, owners add value to the mountains and created the new views to fulfil their aesthetic satisfaction. The attitude to the mountain is similar throughout the age, but the distinctive point is that each owner selected different mountains. This allows to enhance the value and sustain the old and new view to the future.

Conclusion

In the judgment phase, the different aesthetic trend and the characteristics of the temples and gardens are identified through the historical and cultural background as well as through owner’s philosophy. Temples and garden are highly depended on the historical trends and religion acts. Especially the mountain view is deeply engaged to the act of worship. Each owner added the aesthetic value to the mountain and created a sense of belonging between the temple and mountain. In other words, a view is created by the personal relation to the landscape resources.

In the transformation phase, the spatial composition of temples and gardens, and the representation of the aesthetic trend and value are identified. The locational selection of the temple is highly depending on the Chinese Taoism. As a result, it revealed that the north view in Enyu-ji temple, the west view in Tokudaiji temple, and south and east views in Ryoan-ji temple are created.

In the sustainment phase, the sustainment of the aesthetic value is discussed through the sequential process of temples and gardens. In each age, the views are newly created corresponded by the historic and cultural trends as well as by the owners’ philosophy. In fact, the new view was created, although the old view is saved by picking up the different landscape components. Each owner discover the new view from the existing environment of the site without destroying the past value. This

would be the most distinctive approach to create and sustain the view in the study area.

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