Manyō-shū and Gardens: Park-Images in Ancient Japan

Hiroyasu Kotani

Some poems of Manyō-shū, especially ones by Ōtomo-no-Yakamochi, assimilated the concepts and themes of Kaifu-sō and other Chinese writings. In those poems the key image is garden, an invention introduced into Japan from China and Korea. Park-images are found even in earlier works such as “Kotokuki-kayō-nishu,” “Naniwadu-no-uta,” and “Jomei-tennō-kunimi-uta.” This essay will examine the strategic use of those park-images in the old poems.

Chinese Gardens in Japan

Machio Terakawa

The landscape gardening of ancient Japan was much influenced by Chinese gardens. In China the art of gardening was closely related to Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and other religious principles. Once imported into Japan, however, it had come to assume quite a different meaning. Although gardens were modelled after Chinese style, they ceased to be religious expressions but functioned as the place for bacchanalies and symposia. Reading the descriptions of gardens from Nihon-shoki, Kojiki, Kaifu-sō, and Manyō-shū, I will follow this process of cultural shift.

Ancient Japanese Gardens:
The Political and Cultural Function of Landscape Art

Hiroo Takeda

In ancient times gardens were a place for rituals and symposia. People came there from every part of the country and had a cultural interchange between them. They also politically functioned as an apparatus for Japanese imperialism, as is seen in a poem of Kaifu-sō. This poem on the symposium for the envoys to Shinra shows that gardens, literature, and religion combined to spread imperialistic ideologies to the other countries of East Asia. Thus in this essay both cultural and political aspects of gardens will be examined.
Utsuho-monogatari and Gardens

Masakazu Kuzuwata

Modelled after Chinese gardens, a new kind of space called "teien" was designed and constructed in Japan. Magnificent gardens were the symbol of the imperial power, but they were also the sites from which literature, music, and dancing drew much inspiration. Indeed, gardens are the most important setting in literary works of the Heian Period. In Utsuho-monogatari, it is in the garden that the climax is reached when the mystery of the fabulous koto harp is at last unveiled. In Makura-no-sōshi and Genji-monogatari, gardens are the subject in which many poetical wits and emotions were experimented and created.

Akasi-no-Nyudō Falling into the Water Conduit:
His "Gyōdō" Ritual in the Garden

Masahiko Takeuchi

In the Akashi part of Genji-monogatari, Akashi-no-Nyudō pretends to fall into the water conduit in the garden when he parts from Hikaru-Genji. He does it in his performance of a ritual called "gyōdō." What does the act mean? In ancient times a water conduit was regarded as a watercourse into which spirits came from the other world on the flow of water. Probably by his gesture of fall Akashi-no-Nyudō tries to invoke a spirit named Sumiyosi-shin. Here I will consider the religious meaning of his seemingly strange act and its relation to the "gyōdō" ritual in the garden.

Treetops and the Mirrors of the Ponds:
The Symbolic Aspect of Gardens in Genji-monogatari

Masako Mitamura

The gardens of the Heian Period are characterized by visual and acoustic effects that trees, ponds, water conduits, and cascades work together to bring about. The gardens depicted in Genji-monogatari have the same characteristics, but they are more symbolic. The big old trees represent the tradition of old families, and their shadows the rule of patriarchy. Those trees are always accompanied by the subtle sound of water, which implies the latent principle of the old family system. In Genji-monogatari, the landscape of trees and images reflected on the ponds both explicitly and implicitly represent the world itself epitomized into the garden.