

History of Chinese Classical Gardens

-- Taking the Mature Gardens of The Song Dynasty as An Example

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Abstract: From the beginning of Shang Dynasty to the end of Qing Dynasty the development of Chinese classical landscape gardens went through five periods: the formation period of Shang, Zhou, Qin and Han Dynasties, the transition period of Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, the heyday of Tang Dynasty, the maturity period of Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties, and the middle and end of Qing Dynasty. Five thousand years of glorious Chinese culture makes Chinese classical gardens different from Western gardens and Islamic gardens. The unique garden system and style give rise to the unique and profound Chinese classical garden system in world history. Based on the history of Chinese classical gardens, the paper focuses on the historical background of the development of the Song garden, the characteristics of typical gardens and literati gardens in the two Song dynasties, in order to understand the development process of the Song garden more deeply. Under the condition of learning and understanding, the method and concept characteristics of classical garden design in Song Dynasty are inherited and applied to modern garden planning and design.

Keywords: Classical Chinese garden, Genyue, Song dynasty, Literati garden.

1. Introduction

Classical gardens are one of the treasures of Chinese traditional culture, and their characteristics clearly reflect Chinese people's view of nature and outlook on life [1-2]. From the perspective of the development history of Chinese garden, the slave society in ancient times gave birth to the embryonic form of Chinese classical garden, and then the tourist function gradually increased but the overall layout is still rough. Until the period of Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, the urban private garden began to be favored by the cultural and humanistic flow, became the first type of villa garden in later generations, the tourism function rose in the main position, people began to consciously introduce folk garden technology, rich garden content and style. The Tang Dynasty came to the heyday of the garden has formed three garden patterns, showing a more delicate planning and design methods, literati garden style has been pregnant, villa garden to achieve a prosperous situation; In the mature stage, the garden techniques became more proficient, and the literati garden became the mainstream. In the Song Dynasty, the citizen garden which separated from the literati garden also got considerable development. During the reign of Emperor Qianlong and Emperor Jiaqing in Qing Dynasty, the imperial gardens in the North and private gardens in southern yangtze maintained the situation of standing side by side. But after the Emperor Daoguang, the Chinese garden gradually declined, ending its splendid classical era with the collapse of Chinese feudal society. As the first stage of mature garden, the garden of Song Dynasty inherited the characteristics of previous gardens and laid the foundation for the development of later gardens.

2. The Historical Background of Garden Development

The Song Dynasty to the early Qing Dynasty is the mature

period of landscape architecture. The garden of Song Dynasty is the first stage of entering the mature period, which is inseparable from the social development background. Song Dynasty was a relatively weak country after the Sui and Tang Dynasties, and the national power continued to decline in the Southern Song Dynasty. From the emperor to the common people, the extravagant social atmosphere was formed and built. In terms of economy, the economy of the Song Dynasty was highly developed, with flourishing commerce and handicraft industry, which was reflected in the Riverside Scene during the Qingming Festival. At the same time, the emergence of the four great inventions promoted the development of economy and technology, providing convenience for the Song people. The development of technology has facilitated the development of plant cultivation technology. In terms of culture, Song Dynasty was a country that emphasized literature rather than weaponry. Influenced by the idea of literatus, the gardens of the Song Dynasty were smaller in scale and more exquisite in design, which promoted the development of "literati gardens" and even made the royal gardens become the least royal gardens. Poetry reached its peak in the Song Dynasty, and the development of landscape poetry and landscape painting had a profound impact on the development of landscape architecture in the Song Dynasty. In addition to traditional activities such as writing poems, playing the piano and drinking alcohol, there are also activities such as drinking tea, playing polo and appreciating antiques. To sum up, under the background of mutual influence of politics, economy and culture, the unique garden characteristics of Song Dynasty were formed and pushed to the mature stage of garden.

3. A Typical Garden in Song Dynasty – Genyue

Genyue was built in 1117 and completed in 1122, which lasted nearly 6 years[3]. Genyue is one of the imperial gardens, located in Kaifeng City. Different from other gardens,

the garden is designed by the Song Emperor Huizong, which represents the highest level of the royal garden style construction characteristics in the Song Dynasty. It is an artificial landscape garden with less royal style. This paper introduces the techniques and artistic achievements of garden from five aspects: hill making, water-designing, animals and plants, architecture, and stone-layout. In terms of hill making, the main body Chang Shou Mountain, the auxiliary body Wanshouling and Shou Mountain are located in the north, west and south respectively. The three mountain groups embrace each other as a whole, forming a rolling mountain landscape, clear priority and garden echo, reflecting the Song Dynasty landscape painting theory. Conform to the ancient garden of public opinion at the same time, the main hill sits in the north, which can block the cold air from the north. In terms of water-designing, Genyue has its own complete water management system, covering all the inland water bodies contained in nature, such as flying streams, waterfalls, rivers, streams, ponds, swamps, pools, lakes, etc. And the form of water surrounded by mountains, reflecting the natural state of the garden, is the most ideal state of nature landscape composition. In terms of animals and plants, gen yue is rich in animal and plant resources. With the improvement of plant cultivation technology and ornamental skill, plants can be planted alone, in groups, in clusters, or as garden borrowing and matching scenes. Various methods add poetic color to the Genyue garden, and the rich flora and fauna can be regarded as a natural animal and botanical garden. In terms of architecture, there are a variety of architectural forms, including almost all architectural forms, such as pavilions, pavilions, water pavilions, pleasure boats and so on. In addition to practicality, architectural design mostly meets the needs of viewing. Architecture lies between seeing and being seen, perfectly showing the needs of viewing inside the building and the needs of sightseeing. In terms of stone-layout, in addition to the garden outside the rolling high mountain, garden pavilion also placed a beautiful single stone. The stone shape is either standing or lying, even the single stone is superimposed into the overall stone screen, reflecting the vivid and natural state of Genyue garden.

To sum up, Genyue is a large-scale artificial landscape garden with landscape as the backbone of the garden, with plants and buildings. The composition is appropriate, and the site is appropriate according to local conditions. Compared with Sui and Tang gardens, it is small and exquisite, but the royal style is weakened, and it is mostly poetic and picturesque. In the garden, the architecture in the garden is the building according to the mountains, the pavilions according to the water, and the pavilions are hidden in the trees. This is a great innovation in the history of Chinese gardens, reflecting the landscape characteristics of Chinese gardens, and providing reference for the creation of gardens in the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties.

4. Characteristics of Literati Garden

The rise of literati gardens is influenced by many aspects. Firstly, literati paintings in the Song Dynasty reached the peak. The landscape framework of landscape painting theory is applicable to garden construction. Secondly, the change of political, economic and social factors. Thirdly, the transformation of seclusion thought contributed to the popularization of garden construction and promoted the development of literati garden. Finally, the rise of Buddhism and Zen is tantamount to using the garden as a vehicle for Zen.

Different factors influenced the development of literati gardens in Song Dynasty, thus deriving its unique characteristics of literati gardens.

4.1. Simple Form and Far-reaching Artistic Conception

Simple form is not a copy of the natural scenery but refinement and generalization. Simplicity requires simple garden elements, simple design methods and techniques. For example, Sima Guang's "Solitary Paradise" is known as the simplest garden in Luoyang. The profound artistic conception is the embodiment of the cultural connotation of the garden. The rise of the status of the literati in the Song Dynasty made the construction of the garden have lingering effects. In addition to the simplicity on the visual surface, at the same time with the help of poetry, title to obtain the purpose of the image, to achieve a far-reaching artistic conception of the environment. Landscape painting is the art form that can most directly and comprehensively reflect the aesthetic taste of the literati in the Song Dynasty. Therefore, the literati garden deeply influenced by the literati feelings reflects the meaning of the poem and has the three-dimensional expression of aesthetic taste, the artistic conception is far-reaching and thought-provoking.

4.2. Clarity and Sense of Space

The characteristics of sparse refers to the sense of space, garden design is more virtual than real, reflected in the number of garden architecture and garden scenery reduction. In the aspect of mountain building, the mountains are even into pieces, the mountains are more gentle, and most of them are earthen mountains; In terms of water-designing, it focuses on the planning of large water surface, and does not give too much division of water surface, reflecting the sense of open space and open atmosphere; The plant configuration is multi-cluster planting and large area group planting, the space is open and smooth, there is close and dense matching; The number of buildings in Literati Garden is small and the volume is small. The individual buildings are more than the group buildings. To sum up, the number of buildings in literati gardens is small, reflecting the sparse architectural layout, and the creation of water landscape reflects its broad and cheerful.

4.3. Elegant Style

Elegance is a word to describe people, which is used to personify the elements of gardens. The plants are endowed with personality beauty, such as plum, orchid, bamboo, chrysanthemum four gentlemen symbolizing the nobility and purity of human character. Begonias and peonies symbolize wealth in gardens. Single stone placement is very popular, stone selection to "thin, leakage, transparent, wrinkle" as the evaluation standard, reflecting the elegant interest of the literati stone appreciation. The name of the building reflects the elegance of the garden, using more huts, small buildings to express themselves not with others with the same flow and pollution. Poems were written at the pavilions to reflect the lofty and moral integrity of the garden owners. Many literati wrote wonderful poems in the garden because of the beautiful scenery, expressing the liberation from vulgarity and self-admiration of literati and scholars.

4.4. Nature and Harmony

The natural interest of gardens is closely connected with the beauty of harmony. The interest of nature is mainly

reflected in two aspects. One is that the garden requires harmony between itself and the outside garden, and the other is that the garden requires harmony between the elements in the garden. The literati garden does not approve of major changes in the garden. First of all, the site selection of the garden should choose the original beautiful landform and the place near the mountains and rivers; Secondly, the garden building should pay attention to the softening of edges and corners, which can be covered with plants or other details, so that the building and the garden are integrated and natural; Furthermore, the cultivation and planting of plants reflect the sense of nature, and the use of cluster planting, patch planting or group planting constitute a profound sense of garden.

5. Conclusion

In the long history of development, Chinese classical gardens have formed their own unique garden culture, embodied in architecture, plants, mountain and water, among which the Song garden is the first. In Song Dynasty gardens, the mountain construction design is exquisite, the mountains and rivers depend on each other, the priority is clear; Plants scattered high and low, color harmony, plants metaphor for

people; The buildings are small and exquisite, and generally individual. Water is diverse in form, such as static lakes, pools, bogs and dynamic streams, ripples, flying streams, waterfalls, different forms of water reflect different landscape artistic conception. These garden concepts and design methods are still out of date. We should dig deeply into the inner garden deposits of gardens and integrate ancient gardens with modern gardens.

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