Ginkaku-ji, Kyoto – dry garden

Chapter 3
A View from the Zen Shoin

Circa 1191 CE Japan adopted Zen from Chinese Chan, a form of Mahayana Buddhism characterized by its rejection of temporal and scriptural authority, refusal to commit itself to words and emphasis on moral character. It taught self- discipline and meditation as a means to *satori* or enlightenment, not as the ultimate goal of a life-long journey, but as a sudden flash of revelation that could come anytime, any-where, even during the most mundane of acts.[1] This entry of Zen was welcomed by the shogun and samurai alike. Its emphasis on spiritual discipline and intuitive understanding appealed to the warrior mind. Amidst the tumultuous Kamakura (1190 – 1340 CE) and Muromachi (1340–1570 CE) eras plagued by internal conflicts and civil wars, the political power had passed from the shoguns to the samurais, shifting the focus of cultural life from palaces to the samurai residences and Zen monasteries they sponsored. Architecture affected in its scale and social function now transformed from the shinden-zukuri residential paradigm of the Heian palace with its symmetrical buildings, ceremonial courts and central ponds, to the new image of the Zen temple.

The architecture of the Zen temple was like its predecessor, the Great Buddha style, developed in Sung China, yet quite different in design. The complex was generally axial in plan and roughly bilaterally symmetrical, reflecting the regimentation of a Zen monk's daily life. Core architectural components such as the entrance gate, lotus pond, main gate, Buddha hall, lecture hall, bathhouse and toilet were strictly aligned along a north-south axis, surrounded in less disciplined arrangement by numerous autonomous sub-temples. These sub-temples were separated from each other as well as the main temple by court-yards with high walls and it was in these enclosed courtyards that both Japanese interior and landscape architecture were to find new architectural paradigms *(Fig. 3.1)*. The interior of the room began to be designed as a *shoin* (writing room) gradually crystallizing its predecessor, the Kamakura era *kaisho* (Assembly Hall for festivities and gatherings) into the shoin-style of architecture. The *tsuke-shoin* (a low wooden desk built into an alcove with a window) now became the central feature of the monastic interior along with the *tokonoma* (alcove), the *chigaidana* (built-in shelves), the *chodaigamae* (painted sliding doors), the *fusuma* (opaque room to room partitions), and the *shoji* (latticed outdoor to indoor partitions) *(Fig. 3.2)* Beyond these sliding partitions was an *engawa* (verandah) that overlooked an enclosed garden that perpetually accompanied the room.

Figure 3.1 Top right: Painting of Tofuku-ji complex showing various sub-temple clusters with their courtyards

Figure 3.2 Opposite page: Kodai-ji Temple, Kyoto – shoin interior

These gardens adjoining a *hojo* (abbot's residence) or *kyakuden* (guest hall) were also radical departures from their Heian predecessors. Their ponds were not meant for boating, and their paths were not meant for walking. Large or small, virtually inaccessible by foot, they were created exclusively for contemplation from a fixed set of vantage points. Designed to relate to their adjoining rooms inasmuch as the interiors were to frame garden views, their landscapes–from representations of natural sceneries, to entirely dry compositions of rocks and sand–though employing the same natural materials as before, increasingly "abridged nature almost to the point of abstraction", like a painting seeking to "imitate the inner essence of nature, not its outward forms."[2]

These Zen monastic gardens are arguably the most peculiar, if not the most significant of all landscape prototypes Japan has produced. They incepted the Japanese garden's departure from its Chinese influenced predecessors and paved the way for new Japanese garden ideologies to follow. These gardens deserve a closer look also because the means and methods of experiencing these abstract landscapes offer us glimpses into the profundity of Zen. My interest in this chapter is not to delve into the history of these landscapes, but to reflect on how they have been experienced, how they are meant to be experienced, or in turn how they elicit certain experiences. These experiences, I would posit, offer us alternative interpretations of reality, alternative engagements with the physical world, and alternative prisms to assess our own states of mind. This is why these landscapes remain as relevant today as they were then.

SITTING ZEN

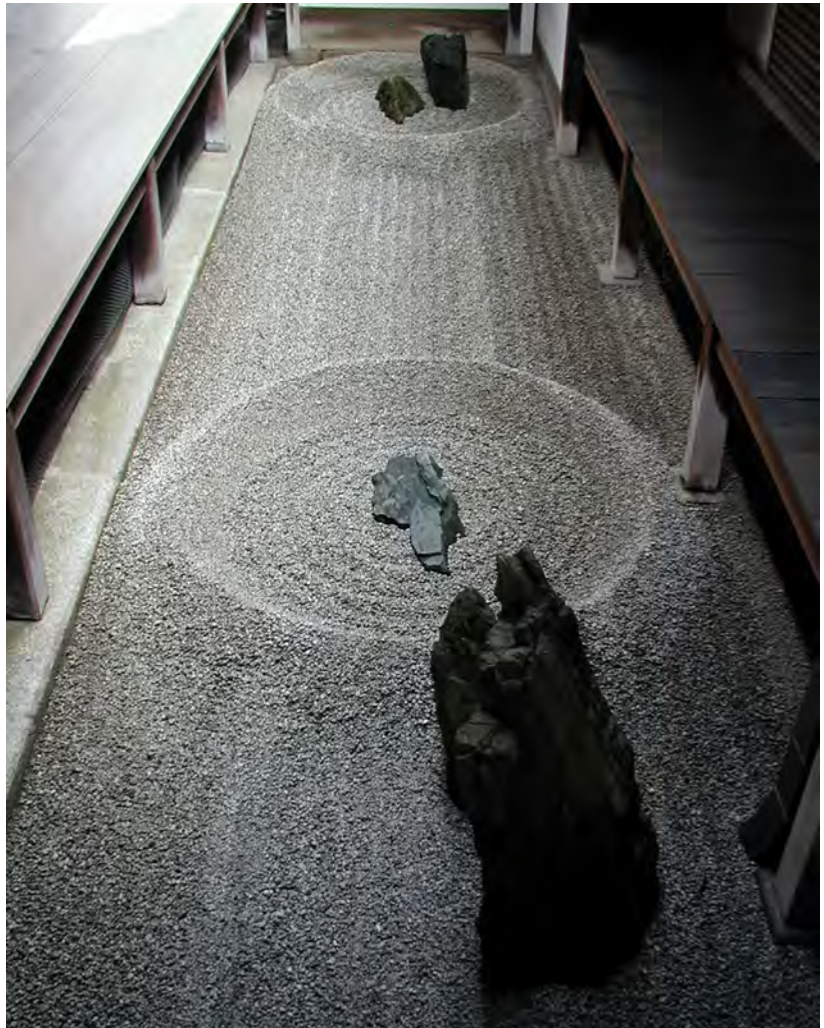
The static experience of a shoin garden, in that it is perceived through absolute stillness from a single vantage point, is nothing new to practitioners of the Zen meditation technique of Zazen. During such an act, one sits motionless (Za implies sitting without moving, like a mountain) often facing a wall, the pelvis tipped forward, the knees pushed against the floor, and the spinal column straightened. This visual dissociation from the surroundings is said to bring about an interior revolution, a deep wisdom whose essence is unattainable through logical thought alone. The visual experience of many shoin gardens is in this sense a kind of Zazen, the meditation platform replaced by an engawa, and the frontal wall replaced by a natural mural.

The *karesansui* (dry garden) of the Ryoanji Temple (1499) sits in a rectangular yard about 248 square meters enclosed by a mud wall[3] *(Fig 3.3)*. There is no water within the confines of this enclosure, no plants, no trees and no flowers, nothing associated with a conventional garden save the abstract tranquility of dry sand and fifteen rocks of different sizes laid out in groups of 5,2,3,2 and 3 from east to west. They are per-ceived either individually or collectively always against the backdrop of the intermediate mud wall that separates the foreground from the trees beyond.

At Ryogen-in (1502), a sub temple of Daitoku-ji adjoining the abbot's residence are five gardens according a Zen view on all sides of the shoin: The Ryogintei located to the north has a continuous bed of moss with a stone arrangement; the Isshidan to the south has a bed of raked sand with rocks, one group within an oval moss island. The Nakaniwa to the east in turn is much smaller with raked sand and

Figure 3.3 Ryoan-ji dry garden, Kyoto

Figure 3.4 Ryogen-in, a sub-temple of Daitoku-ji Temple, Kyoto. opposite page: Isshidan Garden; bottom: Nakaniwa Garden



rocks, and enclosed by a verandah on three sides as opposed to the others than can only have two. There are two other enclosed gardens to the south-east and west. The shoin thus becomes a transparent object floating within a larger outer frame, and the garden becomes a mural surrounding the room. The shoin can be opened to different gardens at different times of the day, or seasons, eliciting multiple frames for meditation. *(Fig 3.4)*

There is an old Zen saying, "Don't just sit there. Sit there." It bears a connection to the very origins of Zen: One day the Buddha came late to his daily sermon, holding a white lotus in his hand. He sat looking at the flower, saying nothing. Even as his disciples gazed anxiously at each other, only one laughed out loud. The Buddha called him, and gave him the flower. The interpretation of this episode is one the foundations of Zen. Buddha was giving his greatest sermon that day, a sermon that was beyond words, and that sought to demonstrate the ultimate state of mind of being completely in the moment. Only one disciple understood its significance. The notion of sitting still in front of a Zen garden is not only about self-discipline, but about mental dissociation with everything else, save the few rocks, shrubs or raked sand that lie in front.

BORROWED SCENERIES

The idea of *shakkei* (borrowing scenery) is one of the most distinctive concepts of Japanese garden design. Here, the perceived limits of the enclosed garden are stretched far beyond its immediate boundaries to a distant natural or man-made feature of the geography. Using various devices–from stone lanterns and bridges to composing frames–such views are "humanized" and captured as integral parts of the garden. Shakkei was codified in the oldest extant Japanese garden manual, the eleventh century Sakuteiki ("Records of Garden Making"). Its origins are unclear, but the concept is probably Chinese, as the concept is found in the Chinese garden manual Yuanye.[4] Its earliest adoption in Japan is seen in the Tenryu-ji Temple garden in the Kamakura era drawing Mount Arashiyama into its composition. Whether as an augmenting device to the introverted confines of the shoin garden, or a reverence for the natural countryside, shakkei transforms the view from the shoin from intimacy to infinity.

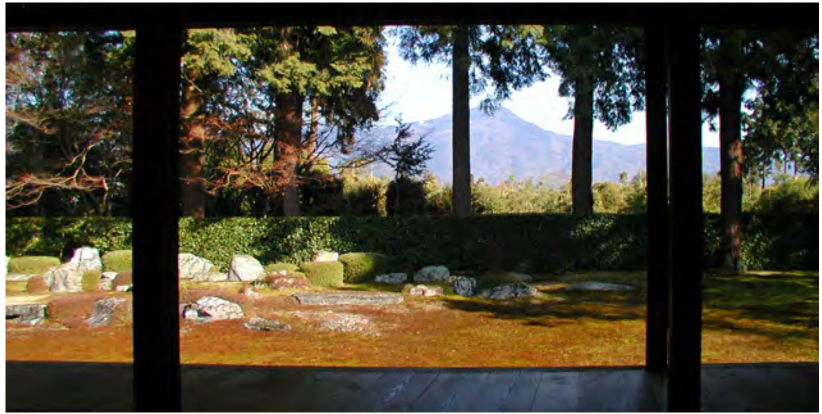


Figure 3.5 Top: Entsu-ji Temple, Kyoto. Shoin garden with Mount Hiei in the distance

Figure 3.6 Opposite page: Shoden-ji Temple, Kyoto. Shoin garden with Mount Hiei in the distance

At the Entsu-ji Temple (1639) is a slightly tiered, oblong garden to the east of the temple's shoin. Here, Mount Hiei is captured using a technique of successive planes *(Fig 3.5)*. A hedge forming the garden enclosure serves three purposes: as a backdrop for the rock composition; as a trim line to separate the garden from the numerous trees just beyond; and as the lower part of the frame that includes the distant mountain as a live backdrop. A thick wall of bamboo provides the middle plane forming the sides of the frame. Beyond the bamboo, some tall cypress and red pine trees from another green plane, their lower trimmed edges forming the upper part of the frame. The trees are then a link between the mountain and the middle ground of the garden and it is through their trunks that one views the breath-taking scenery. In the shoin of the Shoden-ji Temple (early 17th century), the linearity of a low white wall accentuates seven clusters of pruned shrubs against a foreground of raked sand and a background of Mt. Hiei. *(Fig. 3.6)*.[5] At Nanzen-ji (circa 1605), a composition of white sand with three large rocks and three small rocks is laid out close to the garden wall from east to west and are interspersed with two pine trees and evergreen shrubs, all viewed as a composition against the backdrop of the Daiorichi-san mountain.

The experience of such shoin gardens are in many ways parallel to the perception of Japanese landscape paintings. With no ground line to position the composing elements, distinct successive perceptual planes become the composing parameters forming foregrounds, middle-grounds and far walls, the viewer's eye leaping from one plane to another across space or void. As such the most significant architectural element of these gardens is its enclosing wall, fence, or hedge, defining the extent of the pictoral composition, filtering out visual unnecessities, creating the backdrop for the foreground, and delineating that which is near from that which is beyond. What this suggests is the importance of personal participation, in reading patiently step by step, the numerous details and visual offerings of the landscape. From a design standpoint, the technique of shakkei attests among other things to the meticulous site planning of the shoins. Building locations were determined not only per the terrain, but also per their relationship with distant features, natural or man-made, and most of these decisions must have been made directly on site.

SYMBOLIC LANDMARKS

There is more to the inclusion of a distant natural landscape in a shoin garden than its pure visual value. There are mythic and symbolic connotations that are far less comprehensible to non-Zen adherents. Many Zen temples are made up of a number of symbolic elements known variously as *jikyo* or *kochi* (liter-ally "ten stages"). They are landmarks impregnated with meaning and inherent components of a culturally appointed environment without which Zen temples and monasteries would not be a reality.

Tenryu-ji is the oldest Zen garden in Japan, designed by the Zen priest Muso Kokushi in 1339 on the premises of the former Kameyama palace. It has a two-tiered dry waterfall composed of imposing rocks, seen against the luxurious foliage of the opposite bank of the pond from the *daihojo* (abbot's living quarter) verandah. It is said to have had real water falling into the pond, but it is more reasonable to think that the waterfall was made dry from the beginning because the sounds of the Oi River running in Arashiyama, beyond the Kameyama Hills, could be heard in the garden in those days.[6] The point is that the backdrop to the stretch of white sand between the large daihojo and the Sogen-chi pond were the hills of Kameya-ma and Arashiyama, borrowed into the garden composition, without which its comprehension was in-complete[7] *(Fig 3.7)*.

Of the ten such landmarks at Tenryu-ji, five are natural features. Of these, two are directly in the surrounding mountains: Nengerei (Mount Arashiyama's summit) and Banshodo (the pine forest on the Arashiyama's southern slopes), their names imparting a specific meaning to these environmental elements.[8] For instance, Mount Arashiyama was called Nengerei (literally "peak of the picked flower,") the name derived from the fable wherein the Buddha used a single flower as his teaching (discussed earlier).[9] It is claimed therefore that apart from the Sutras and Buddhist dogmas, the role played by jikyo as unwritten and unexplained teachings on the essence of Buddhism cannot be underestimated. This double coding of the surrounding natural landscape as symbols of esoteric teachings remains a consistent theme of many Zen temples–such as the *jikkei* (literally "ten scenes") of the Kennin-ji and the Sokoku-ji Temples, or the *fukei* (literally "landscapes") of Myoshin-ji. The garden

Figure 3.7 Top and bottom: Tenryu-ji Temple, Kyoto. Zen garden with Mount Arashiyama as backdrop

and their mountains here are an integrated macrocosm, the very foundations upon which a Zen temple stands, both as establishments of Zen teaching and academic learning.

Where mountains and valleys are not part of their natural surroundings, shoin gardens have built artificial mountains within their confines by arranging rocks and shrubs on a natural hillside. The garden of Tofuku-ji Temple's Fumon-in (early 17th century) is an example of a *tsukiyama* (artificial hill) garden, wherein elements of the dry landscape coexist with a profusion of shrubbery *(Fig. 3.8)*. In front of the Fumon-in building is a wide expanse of sand with a simple checkerboard pattern that varies depending on the interweaving of the raked and unraked sand bands. To the rear of the sand is a rising tsukiyama of manicured shrubs creating the effect of a high mountain against the backdrop of trees. Typical of tsukiyama gardens, there is a small, narrow pond at the foot of the artificial hill with a two-slab *yatsuhashi* bridge and another single-slab stone bridge. The Chishaku-in Temple (late 17th century) is also known for its re-fined tsukiyama with manicured shrubs and angular rocks rising high and close to its shoin, creating the impression of high mountains *(Fig. 3.9)*. At the foot of the waterfall dissolving into the oblong pond along the foot of the hill stands a *mizu-wakeishi* (stone that divides the water into two) this natural three-slab stone bridge surrounded by an intricate configuration of shrubs and rocks.

GARDEN AS NARRATIVE

In contrast to the static perception of the shoin garden – where it was largely about a frozen frontal view with a fixed line of sight – some gardens required the viewer to read their composition as a sequence of events–like the unfolding of a picture scroll. Here the summation of the various individual vignettes was as important as the autonomous parts, thereby bringing in a sense of motion into the entire experience.

At the Daisen-in at Daitoku-ji Temple (1509), the significance of the karesansui is not in its abstract com-position of rocks but in its symbolic narrative of na-

Figure 3.8 Top: Tsukiyama (artificial hill) garden at Tofuku-ji Temple. Top Tofoku-ji; Middle & Bottom: Chishaku-in

Figure 3.9 Middle and bottom: Tsukiyama (artificial hill) garden at Chishaku-in Temple

Figure 3.10 Daisen-in dry gardens, Daitoku-si Temple, Kyoto

ture. Here, more than twenty rocks of various sizes, shapes and textures are packed in a small garden of less than 100 square meters to depict a landscape of mountains, a waterfall and a river *(Fig 3.10)*. The water (represented by the white sand) starts deep in the mountains in the far distance (represented by camellia shrubs in the rear), making a waterfall in the valley to form rapids that wind and dash against the rocks. Two gigantic crags tower before the camellia shrubs, representing cliffs or mountains in the foreground. After passing a slab stone bridge, the rapids become deep water, emerging as a wide, serene river that passes under a corridor (the corridor represents an artistic abbreviation to depict the water all the way from its start to its eventual journey to the ocean). After safely traversing the stormy rapids and emerging into the open, tranquil sea, there is a large rock in the shape of a boat, called a *funa-ishi* headed for the ocean with a full load of treasures. Here rocks play the role of the hero symbolizing the austere, strong will of the seeker of truth, who resists and rejects things worldly and human.

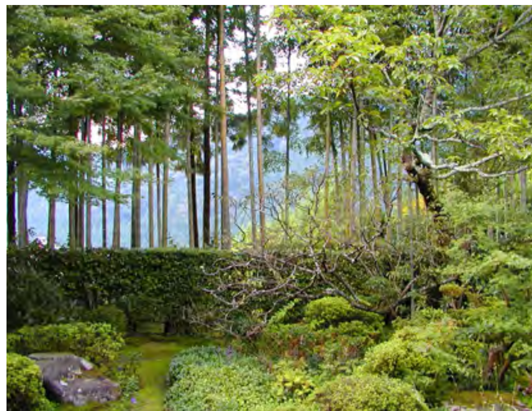
In the Sakuteiki, the author considers man-made natural landscapes superior to natural ones. The rationale behind this intriguing statement is that man-made Japanese landscapes emulate only the best parts of nature weeding out all redundancies and distractions, and doing away with "meaningless stones and features."[10] In his book "Secret Teachings in the Art of Japanese Gardens," David A. Slawson has offered detailed elaborations on these techniques, stemming from his personal experiences as an apprentice in Japan. With meticulous diagrams that analyze the rock compositions of famous places, from Daisen-in to Nishi Hongan-ji, Slawson reveals how what appears to the common eye as relatively natural landscapes, is in fact exactly the opposite: a careful exercise in planar recession, depth and perspective.[11]

CONTRADICTION & DUALITY

There are shoin gardens that resist the idea of compositional narration and are dominated instead by two (or more) completely contrasting scenes meant to be viewed from two different angles from within the shoin interior. This perception in every sense devalues the impression of the garden as a continuous mural surrounding the shoin, and creates two autonomous vistas that if attempted to be viewed through the corner, created a perceptual tension.

Figure 3.11 Top: Hosen-in shoin garden, Sanzen-in Temple, Kyoto. Combined view of entire garden

Figure 3.12 Right and bottom: Autonomous views of the garden through two walls of the shoin



In his essay "Frontal Perception in Japanese Architectural Space", Gorge Ferras has elaborated on the shoin at the Hosen-in at the Sanzen-in Temple.[12] Two right angled walls of this shoin open into two contrasting views *(Fig. 3.11)*. Looking through the first wall, one sees a pine tree suggesting qualities of masculinity and strength. Looking through the other, one sees a grove of bamboo suggesting qualities of femininity and grace. Looking at the corner and viewing both together it is difficult to comprehend any garden-to-garden continuity. And since the walls of the shoin themselves are different in their composing elements, any attempt to view this garden as a continuous mural accentuates the tension. The landscape can either be perceived as autonomous views when one sits frontally towards a single wall and enjoys them one at a time, or as a conscious conflict, but never as a single continuous narrative surrounding the building *(Fig. 3.12)*.

Considering the meticulous attention Zen garden makers gave to their creations, it is not far-fetched to argue to that such contradictory compositions were conscious devices to enhance Zen meditation. Their inherent visual paradox is analogous to a Zen *koan*, a terse statement that defies rational explanation often given to Zen novices to meditate upon. The idea of accepting a paradox as the ultimate reality forms part of Zen philosophy, embracing the notion that if something appears true, it is only seemingly so, with its antipode also part of a larger reality.[13]

FROM SITTING ZEN TO WALKING ZEN – A VIEW FROM THE ROJI

The shoin gardens were Japan's first radical landscape design departures from its Chinese predecessors. The succeeding gardens of the Tea Ceremony were the second. In the Momoyama Era (1570-1616 CE), the need to keep Zen novices awake in monasteries during meditation sessions, among other things, brought in tea-drinking. This gradually evolved into an elaborate ritual called the Cha-no-yu, the Tea Ceremony, a spiritual art form that involved a host preparing tea for a guest, and that physically included a *roji* (tea garden) and a *chashitsu* (tea-room).[14] The Cha-no-yu thus offers an instructive comparative optic to further reflect on Zen gardens as well as understand the evolution of Zen spatial concepts in Japan.

Numerous books have elaborated in the architecture of the Tea Ceremony,

Figure 3.13 Bottom: Kennin-ji Tea Garden and Hut, Kyoto

Figure 3.14 Opposite page: Koto-in Tea Hut, Kyoto. Left: Detail of Lattice; Right: Interior

which in itself bears an elaborate history.[15] To focus on the intention of this chapter, I will refrain from these specifics and describe the concepts broadly. It must be mentioned however that from Sen-no-Rikyu, to Kobori Enshu, the story of Tea Ceremony architecture, from its beginnings at the Todai-ji temple, to the various tea-room layouts, based for instance exclusively on the location of the hearth, testifies to the richness of this subject.[16] What I describe below is the larger themes than run through this diverse architecture; the threads that connect the traditional spatial conceptions of this ritual across Japanese history.

Quintessentially, the roji is a gathering of rocks, random stones, dewy ground, trickling water and moss covered stone lanterns, all surrounding the chashitsu. The garden is divided by a *chumon* (inner gate) or a *nakakaguri* (low gate) into two parts, a waiting area and the inner garden of the Tea Hut. Bending over through this low gate makes the transition into the world of tea. A fence usually encloses the entire precinct beyond which trees filter out the secular world and also shield the Tea Hut from direct view. As one advances in the roji, the space progressively becomes smaller sanctifying and preparing the visitor for the intimacy of the innermost space of the tea hut. *(Fig. 3.13)*.

The Tea Hut reveals the underlying theme of rusticity and refinement involving an inveterate use of natural materials to bring out their inherent aesthetic qualities. This theme is mainly summarized through two modes of expression, *sabi* and *wabi*. Sabi refers to individual objects and an environment generating a rustic imperfection. However when used in the context of Zen, sabi implies a state of total annihilation or absolute emptiness. To achieve this state of absolute void is the aim of every Zen Buddhist. The Tea Ceremony strives to cultivate this. On the other hand, Wabi implies quietness and tranquility, referring to a way of life associated with simplicity and minimalism. In the context of the Tea Ceremony, the approach to the hut is imperative to abet a wabi state of mind, when both host and guest must cast away all that is mundane and redundant so that the atmosphere of tea may be absorbed. This conscious notion of rustic simplicity is expressed in the architecture of the Tea Hut. For example, the lattices on the shoji windows are made not of wood but of split bamboo. The rice-paper panels making up the *shoji* may be protected on the exterior either by vertical bamboo grills, or by the wattle of the wall

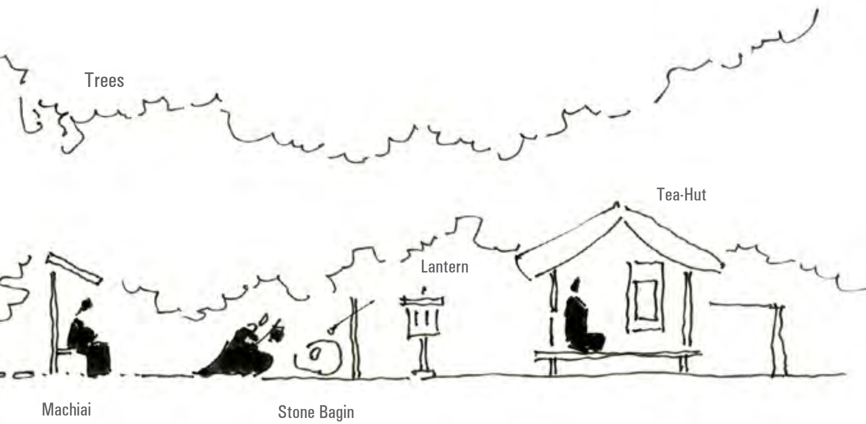
EXPERIENTIAL SEQUENCE OF THE CHA-NO-YU

interior, all left exposed to enhance the rustic visual effect. The wooden baseboard of the decorative alcove may be carefully chosen for its knots, elevating the rusticity of the space. Then there is the preference for monochromes to bright colors not only in the walls but also the coarse pottery of the tea utensils, rather dull in color and imperfect in form *(Fig 3.14)*.

However, as Kisho Kurokawa has pointed out, this seemingly dull theme "is not a rejection of color"[17] and the aesthetic stereotype of the tea room, and by extension the quintessential Japanese aesthetic, is not one of a supposedly Zen minimalism. "The hidden lesson here is that only those who are already well acquainted with the splendor of cherry blossoms and crimson-tinted maples can truly appreciate the wabi of a stark weather-beaten thatched hut."[18] In this sense, the tea master Sen-no-Rikyu in fact conceived of the rustic tea hut as the "ideal place in which to express the beauty of a single flower…"[19]

One might say then that the architecture of the Tea Ceremony is an experiential compound unlike an architecture that is more objectively perceived through form and shape. The roji, the chashitsu, the various appurtenances and the physical and spiritual parts of the ceremony manifest a ritualistic architecture of progressive purification, involving the sloughing of all that is material to retain only that which is the bare essential. As a Zen master once explained, the essence of the Tea Ceremony is that "by seeing the *kakemono* (scroll) in the tokonoma alcove, one's sense of sight is cleansed; by smelling the fragrance of the incense and the flower in the vase, one's sense of smell is cleansed; by listening to the boiling water in the kettle, one's sense of hearing is cleansed; by gently handling the tea utensils, one's sense of touch is cleansed; by tasting the quaint bitter tea, one's sense of taste is cleansed; and thus when all the senses are cleansed, the mind itself is cleansed of all defilements."[20] *(Fig. 3.15)*

The roji and the shoin gardens taken together are a study of contrasting overlaps. They are both about human interrelationships between a room and a garden. The shoin garden embodies the idea of "sitting Zen", in that one alights within a space to view a garden as the ultimate experience. The Tea Ceremony in turn embodies the idea of "walking Zen" in that one walks through a garden to arrive in a room as the final experience. In the shoin gardens, one views an abstract or



THE FOUR PRINCIPLES OF THE CHA-NO-YO

'WA' (Harmony)

'SEI' (Purity)

'KEI' (Reverence) 'JAKU' (Tranquility)

SPIRITUAL ESSENCE OF THE CHA-NO-YU

By seeing the kakemono one's sight is cleansed

By smelling the fragrant incense one's sense of smell is cleansed

By listening to the water boiling one's ears are cleansed

By handling the tea utensils, one's sense of touch is cleansed

By tasting the tea one's sense of taste is cleansed

Figure 3.15 Cha-no-yu concepts. top: Diagrammatic sequence of key events from roji to chashitsu. middle: The philosophical principles of the Tea Ceremony. bottom: The experience of the Tea Ceremony.

Figure 3.16 Huntington Gardens, Pasadena, California. left: Dry Zen garden; right: Pond Garden; opposite page: Shoin

miniaturized natural scene. During the Tea Ceremony in turn one emulates a walk through a forest to reach a hermit's hut.[21]

The chashitsu, as an architectural space, emerged from the shoin, evolving over time, and through various tea masters, its own aesthetics and spatial concepts. If one traces the origins of the tea ceremony in Japan, one reaches the thirteenth century, when Nambo Chomei, the founder of the Sufiki-ji temple in Chikuzen, went to Sung in 1259, studied Buddhism under the Kyodo of the Keizan-ji, and returned in 1286 with a *daisu* (stand for tea utensils). This daisu was taken to the Daitoku-ji temple, and given to Muso, the founder of Tenryu-ji temple. Muso began Cha-no-yo with this daisu and set down the formalities for its use.[22] In other words, before Sen-no-Rikyu and other famous tea masters began conceiving an architecture for a tea hut, the ceremony was part of a monastic shoin, adapted for this new use.

In both the shoin and tea gardens then, the aesthetic focus is as much about objects and forms, as the thoughts and feelings aroused by them in the participant. In both, the room and the garden are agents enabling participants to sense, experience and actively engage in the creation of beauty in every-day life. Both experiences demand conscious personalization and participation. Both use refined metaphors and mythic associations. Both emerge through, and by extension, manifest tenets of Zen.

THE POST-WAR "ZEN" GARDEN

Following World War II, new Zen-inspired garden prototypes began to emerge both through the social background of its patrons as well as a different mindset of its designers. In his 1960s article "The Secret of the Rock," architect Kenzo Tange noted unabashedly that he "liked the carved rock, because it reflects the will of the carver."[23] In 1989, celebrated sculptor Isamu Noguchi in an interview stated that "Man's hands are hidden by ….many effects of nature, moss and so forth….I don't want to be hidden. I want to show, therefore, I am modern. I am not a traditional Ueki-ya, tree trimmer."[24] As Nitschke points out, such attitudes surfaced as "dualism between man and nature previously unknown in Japanese garden architecture, and the desire to impose upon nature the supposed distinct will of man."[25]

The settings for these new gardens were the courtyards, entrances of major buildings or even public plazas. The cultural tread tying them back to their Zen predecessors was the presence of the rock as the main compositional element as well as the search for beauty through random form. But they were different from their ancestors in many ways. First, they were not emulations of any natural scenes, rather abstracted original compositions created by the minds of their artists. Second, they were not necessarily created as meditative compounds, but more as aesthetic moments that contrasted with their surroundings. And third, they were not tied to any canons or evolved wisdoms, rather free to be interpreted by the will of their creators.

Nitschke calls out a number of cases to delineate the differences: In 1958, Kenzo Tange designed a pond garden to the south of his Kanagawa Prefecture Government Office building. For the first time, it introduced hewn rocks into sculptural forms, as seen in the garden's 10 x 40 yards water basin. In 1961, sculptor Masuyuki Nagare, in one of his gardens for the Palace Hotel in Tokyo, placed a rectangular-carved waterfall into a rectangular water basin. In the 70s, Hiroshi Murai created a "Cool Garden" in a marble-clad courtyard in the Longchamp Textile Company building in Kyoto. The white marble floor recalled the austere snow-laden raked sand bed, with two dried leafless trees placed with their roots directly atop the marble. In 1975, Mirei Shigemorei created a garden for the Hotel Sheraton Grande with raked pebble pat-terns and a spiral stone motif juxtaposed with natural forms of rock clusters. And in 1989, Itsuko Haseg-awa created a winding garden stream, lined with abstract metal trees in the Shonandai Cultural Center in Hasegawa.[26]

These new attitudes can be read as representative of both the increasing ambivalence towards a past, as well as a new-found excitement to modern aesthetics and tendencies. What is significant however is the effort in these gardens to not outright obliterate or negate history, but seek conceptual and aesthetic threads that keep alive the memory of a tradition–however thin or forced they may appear to be. One might argue that projects such as the ones mentioned above trivialize the profound essence of the Zen garden as an artistic commodity. But on the other hand, in an age and time when Japan along with much of the world was on a high of discovering modernity in all its guises, the fact that architects and artists sought

to hold on to historic concepts or even their fragments is laudable and in some ways responsible for celebrating and keeping alive the idea of the Zen garden within post-industrial Japan.

CONCLUSION

The multitude of shoin gardens discussed above, and in turn the evolution of the tea gardens, affirm the Zen emphasis on constant experimentation and spontaneity. The differences between the abstract dryness of Ryoan-ji and the clipped shrubs of Entsu-ji , are in fact differences in personalizing mediums to reach a common eventual goal. It is important to note here that many of these landscapes emerged from practical constraints. For instance, in the war-filled Kamakura and Muromachi eras, it was becoming increasingly difficult for monasteries to economically sustain large ponds and water bodies, and the aesthetic of emulating water through other materials was in fact a response to this limitation. The importance of this landscape tradition, however, is not only in its aesthetic value, not only the meaning it holds for the exhibitor, but also the mental attitude through which they are made. Where these gardens stand out is in the way gardeners or tea masters created and maintained them with meticulous detail, be it the raking of dry sand or the shaping of trees and shrubs to elicit the exact natural effect. These gardens teach us that ordinary objects and events become beautiful when one wholeheartedly invests in them without any pretention of past or future. This is analogous to the tea ceremony, or to Zen calligraphy. This is the Zen of the Japanese garden.

This attitude however, has significant bearings at both the micro and macro scale. As discussed before, many of these gardens have sensitive relationships with their macro-environment that demand an equally important investment. Today many new high-rise buildings block the traditional views from such gardens. One such threatened shakkei garden is at the Entsu-ji Temple that borrows the Hiei mountain as an integral part of its garden lay-out. New construction projects planned in this part of the town represent an immediate threat, and one insensitively placed and over-scaled building is enough to make irreparable damage. Construction activity also endangers environments of great symbolic value such as the historic urban landscape around the Yasaka pagoda in the Higashiyama area of Kyoto. The verdure that surrounds the city and the moods of the changing seasons and climate have always been an essential part of the cultural experience of these Zen gardens in a way that might be unsurpassed compared to other landscapes across the world.

In his book "Japanese Gardens," Gunter Nitschke has summarized the evolution of the Japanese land-scape across history as a transformation from "prototype

to type and stereotype."[27] In this light, there are at least four guises Zen gardens enjoy today. The first is as original monastic landscapes. They continue to be preserved and maintained with many adaptations, but without losing their core values, ideas and processes. Ironically, many of the most famous of these are now tourist attractions, hardly used for meditation. The second is as themed emulations of Japanese Zen landscapes, all over the world. While scholars of Japanese gardening criticize these tendencies as shallow and thin, the fact is, these landscape set-designs, do succeed in creating the catchy allure of the familiar Japanese exotic of rocks, raked sand and clipped trees and shrubs. They cater to a specific audience, and for a specific purpose that is significantly different from their original intentions (Fig. 3.16). The third presence of Zen gardens continues through the works of contemporary masters and apprentices that pass on the authentic canons and principles of Japanese garden design as it has been done over generations. Here, the more one delves into dissecting the secrets of Japanese gardens from manuals and can-ons, the more one realizes that their central message is to "not copy existing gardens, but rather…. reflect selected qualities of the natural environment so as to nurture the hopes and needs of the client,"[28] be it monks, abbots, emperors or ordinary citizens. And the fourth is the idea of the Zen Garden as an aesthetic reference interpreted through modern materials and methods, as described in the previous section.

"In absolute quietness, the voice of the cicada is absorbed into the rocks" the poet Basho once wrote in a whiff of Zen epiphany. Whether he was walking through a forest path, or sitting in a shoin, is not the point. The point is that he had discovered that ultimately, Zen teaches us another comprehension of time and space. Time, instead of being a linear onward-moving concept, can exist in many simultaneous dimensions. Instead of being a homogeneously shaped, perfect and unchanging thing, time can be seen as separate fragments of a larger reality. None of them tell the complete truth. But all of them exist. This eventually is what Japanese Zen Gardens tell us. It is not their authenticity that matters as much. What matters far more is our attitude to perceiving them, internalizing them, and therein experiencing other states of mind. As Fosco Mariani observes, they negate any faith in intellect. "Salvation and illumination come suddenly, they explode in intuition. The garden is therefore one of the most delightful points where the I and the not-I can dissolve and sublimate, like the mixing of the waters of the river and ocean. The garden is more important than treatises, syllogisms, or ancient writings. It is the song of things."[29]