

II The Japanese Garden Outside of Japan - Where, When and Why -

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Preface

This survey of Japanese Gardens outside Japan has documented a total of 432 such gardens (see Chapter 7). This chapter summarizes the collected data in terms of global distribution, chronological distribution and motivation behind their construction.

1. Global and Chronological Distribution

Japanese gardens outside of Japan are located worldwide, but primarily in North America and Europe. (Figure 1)

On a country-by-country basis, the United States has by far the greatest number of Japanese gardens (126), approximately 30% of the total for the purposes of this survey. This is followed by Germany (34), France (27), China (25), Australia (23) and UK (21).

The northern limit of distribution is marked by a garden in Korso, Finland (built in 1987), which is located within an atrium because of the severely cold climate of the country. Basic hard landscape materials were imported from Japan. And, due to the difficulty in finding appropriate plants locally, they were selected in The Netherlands and transported to the site.

Not only low temperatures and high snowfall, but also high temperatures, long periods of draught, and other radically different climatic conditions present immense obstacles to the construction of Japanese gardens. Yet even in exceptionally hot and dry Africa and West Asia e.g. Egypt and Iraq, as many as 13 Japanese gardens have been created and maintained, while overcoming these climatic difficulties. For example, the Japanese Garden in Al Naseem Public Park (built in 2001) was specifically designed to provide the soothing effects of the sound of water, and uses lighting to add to the relaxing mood, for visitors who come to enjoy the cool evening breeze after the severe heat of the day. In East Asia, the construction of Japanese Gardens is concentrated in the period between the 1980s and 1990s in China, and in the period of the 1970s in Indonesia and the Philippines.

Although it is difficult to summarize all the conditions relating to the construction of Japanese gardens, one outstanding characteristic is the role played by Japanese-Americans, who developed the industry of horticulture and landscape architecture in their adopted country. Similarly, in Central and South America, Japanese gardens fostered by the Japanese immigrant community—such as the Japanese Garden in Lima, Peru (built in 1973-74), and created for the 100th anniversary of Japan-Peru friendship—are a dominant presence.

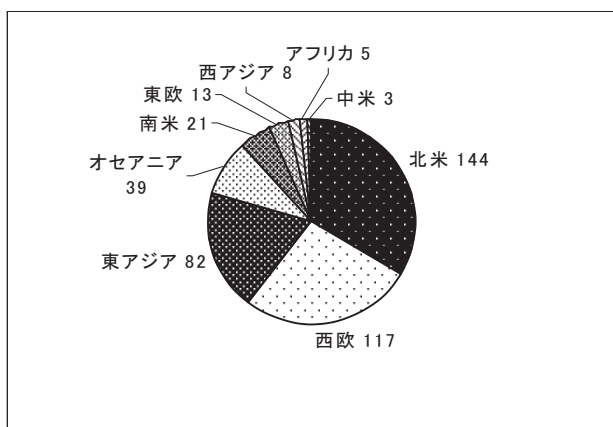


Figure-1: Global Distribution of the Japanese Garden Outside of Japan



Photo-1: Japanese Garden in the Palace of Schonbrunn

An overview of the decades between 1870 and 2004, looking at the number of gardens built over any given 5 year period, reveals that the trend in the construction of Japanese gardens reached its peak in the period between 1985 to 1990 (66 instances). In the following 5-year period (1991-94), the number fell to 43. From 1995 to 2000, it again rose to the peak of 1985-90 (61 cases).

There were 47 gardens completed before World War II that are still in use and open to the public. Among these, 17 were completed in the 19th century. Though no longer in existence, among those gardens included in this survey, the first Japanese garden constructed outside Japan was the garden exhibited as part of the Japanese Pavilion, at the 4th Paris Exposition in 1867. Although much about this garden is still unknown, the present survey identified one other garden completed around the same time in the suburb of Nîmes, which was known as Bambouseraie de Prafrance. In France, the UK and Austria, there seems to be a history of continuous construction of Japanese gardens from the 19th century until today.

One remarkable new tendency since the late 20th century is the emergence of restoration and renovation work of old Japanese gardens. Japanese gardens in this category include that of Albert Kahn in the suburbs of Paris, the Nitobe Memorial Garden in British Columbia University, Vancouver, and the Japanese Garden in Musée Ephrussi de Rothschild in Nice, France.

The garden in the Palace of Schönbrunn in Vienna, Austria, is an unusual case in which a forgotten Japanese garden was “miraculously” discovered and revived by systematic survey and research between the years 1997-99. In the restoration study, they tried to clarify the transformation process of the garden theoretically and adhere to the original design, material and technique. With such efforts, this garden is an important example of the restoration of genuine Japanese gardens overseas.

In the 21st century, systematic and extensive surveys of Japanese gardens began with a survey of Japanese gardens overseas, conducted in Europe and South American countries in 2001 and 2002. Consequently, this led to an increasing number of projects concerning restoration and renewal. For the process of renewal, not only a precise record of the new design and construction, but also adequate site surveys and historical research are essential. Moreover, no effort should be spared in order to reach agreement and understanding of the outcome of restoration, not only owners, but also with the people who are familiar with and have come to enjoy the existing garden. This is an important point for the restoration and renewal of gardens around the globe.

2. Motivations for Japanese Garden Construction

According to our analysis of the types of coordinators i.e. private or public organization, group or individuals, and their purposes for constructing a Japanese garden, we find the following: approximately 35% of the gardens in our survey (152 in total), were constructed to commemorate the friendship between Japanese municipalities and cities in other countries and regions, so-called “sister city” relationships. Such projects are mostly conducted in the form of a donation from the Japanese city to its sister city. But there are also many cases that are conducted through the collaboration of local citizens and students. The working stage of garden construction usually includes works that can be carried out by local people without professional skills. Successfully organized, this form of collaborative participation and attractive working environment serves to strengthen the sense of friendship and cultural exchange between peoples of different countries. Physical works, such as earth work or planting, can rely on nonverbal communication, overcoming some of the barriers posed by differences in languages. Close participation with skilled professionals sent from Japan, in such areas as stone setting and other aspects of garden making, helps promote interest in further study of Japanese culture.

Postscript

Many types of Japanese gardens have been constructed worldwide from the late 19th century to the present day. In building these gardens, it is usually the case that specific garden ornaments, such as

stone lanterns and bamboo fences, are transported from Japan, while plant materials are collected primarily in the host country. Employing landscaping techniques with plant materials that suit the local climate often creates residual difficulties in creating an authentic Japanese look and feel. Finding suitable ornamental rocks and those for use in making waterfalls etc. is also an extremely difficult task. Many garden builders have experienced extensive searches, across thousands of kilometers, in search of suitable rocks in the host country.

When relatively large sites are available, gardens tend to be designed as stroll gardens, featuring ponds and waterfalls. There are also many instances of combined gardens, such as combinations of tea garden and dry garden. Some gardens are characterized by the dynamic incorporation of traditional Japanese auspicious motifs into the design, while others are enthusiastically constructed using original interpretations of Japanese imagery and inexpensive local materials. In categorizing such gardens as Japanese, it becomes necessary to expand the definition of Japanese gardens to make allowance for individual interpretation. Many of these gardens are innovative creations that, while ignorant of traditional definitions, never the less provide a precious experience and exciting phenomena of cultural exchange and fusion, as embodied in a physical space.