

# III The Japanese Garden Outside of Japan - The Significance and Role -

## 3. The Japanese Gardens of Embassies and Cultural Centers

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### Preface

There are as many as 189 oversea diplomatic facilities of Japan worldwide, including embassies, consulate generals and permanent mission of delegations. An embassy is a diplomatic office where ambassadors extraordinary and plenipotentiary execute official duty in a host country and is inviolable under the provision of the international law. A consulate general is a government institution that is responsible for encouraging Japan's trade and protecting Japanese expatriates. (There are also honorary consuls who are chosen from the citizens of host countries. But it is beyond the scope of this chapter.)

Regardless of the size of premises and buildings, an embassy is a representative facility of Japan and Japanese cultures. Probably, this is the reason why there are demands of creating Japanese gardens in the occasions of renewal of the embassy buildings. Yet, construction of Japanese gardens in the embassies of Japan has been traditionally conducted. Some early ones were constructed before World War II e.g. Japanese Embassy in the United States (Washington D.C.) and European countries.

### 1. Overall Condition of Japanese Gardens in Diplomatic Facilities

Japanese garden of Japanese Embassy in Washington DC, relatively large example, is comprised of a number of pines and maples that demonstrate Japanese atmosphere. Because it is beyond the control of local gardeners to take care of those special trees, professionals are dispatched from the Garden Society of Japan for maintenance these days. Similarly in the official residence of Japanese ambassador in China, EKO House of Japanese Culture in Germany and Nordpark in Germany, professionals are regularly dispatched from Japan to maintain specific trees such as pines.

Japanese garden in the former official residence of Japanese ambassador in Cambodia (1970) is also one of the oldest examples. There, few people may realize the existence of stone arrangement that is today hidden behind of greatly established shrubs. Apart from the hidden stone arrangement, the whole garden is well maintained.

In the case of Japanese Embassy in one European country, the garden is not strictly a traditional Japanese garden but represents well Japanese atmosphere with moss-covered forest, marsh, island and a little addition of ornaments such as red arched bridge and stone lantern. Harmonizing with surrounding natural setting, the maintenance of this garden would be manageable enough for local gardeners.

### 2. Special Necessity for Japanese Gardens in Embassies

Facilities of embassies reflect the situation of host countries. In case of countries in instable conditions, the boundaries of embassies are sealed off by tall concrete walls. Because the walls serve as border lines, Embassy staffs are obligated to stay in the embassies and continue their tasks, unless the situation becomes as disastrous as wars. Therefore, the security of embassy is an essential part of garden construction. For example, gardens must have good visibility. Placing big rocks or fast growing trees near walls must be avoided to prevent intrusion using them as footholds. Bush planting that could enable someone to hide inside must be also avoided.

### **3. The Role of Japanese Gardens in Embassies**

After 60 years since the end of World War II, many of Japan's diplomatic facilities are now being repaired or renovated. Meanwhile, Japan Embassies are conducting cultural activities in countries with little recognition and exchange at citizen's level so far, and trying to provide precious opportunity for local foreigners to know Japan, for example inviting a number of guests. In that case, by the way, it is necessary to spare large areas for lawns to accommodate a number of people is the case halls and terraces become full. Thus, as a part of diplomatic activities, the role of Japanese gardens attached to the embassies is very important as well as the introduction of Japanese cultures such as Ikebana, tea ceremony, calligraphy and judo.

Also, the Embassies are the place where Japanese expatriates gather and perform cultural activities. The presence of Japanese gardens can be mental support for their oversea lives.

### **4. Considerations for the Design of Japanese Gardens in Embassies**

Japanese garden construction need to take future maintenance into account. Although it is important to represent the beauty of Japanese gardens, maintenance of Japanese garden is generally very expensive. Therefore, the maintenance after completion should be considered as an integral part of garden planning. In my own experience, the supervisors of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs understood this very well and often asked us to make the garden free from maintenance as possible. In the case of the Japan Embassy in China, water features were entirely revised for the minimization of maintenance burden. A stream meandering through the garden was reduced to the half of the original length. The height of the waterfall was kept lower. The area of the pond was partly reduced and replaced by Suhama (pebbled surface). By modifying these water features equally, the whole balance of the garden composition was restored. In the case of Vietnam and Cambodia, dry garden style was adopted instead of the use of water and ponds were represented by paving sand. This indicates the importance of flexibility in material choice in different environment from Japan to ensure feasible maintenance.

Because embassies are often used as venue of important meetings or parties with high-ranking officers or celebrities, buildings are often facilitated with authentic Japanese-style rooms or tempura corners. Essentially, such facilities are associated with tea gardens or alike with stone lanterns, water basins or Nobedan (stone-paved garden path). Authentic Japanese cuisines combined with authentic Japanese gardens will provide foreign visitors with satisfactory experience. It will be also an effective tool for the Japan Embassies to introduce Japan.

Finally, for future improvement, it will also be necessary to incorporate host countries' tradition, religious requirement or customs such as geomancy in Asian countries into the design of the gardens.

### **Postscript**

Besides Japanese Embassies, many of foreign Embassies also incorporate Japanese gardens on their demand. Such embassies include:

U.S. Embassy in Egypt \*1

Special AP for the ambassador of the United States

Embassy of the Czech Republic in Japan

Embassy of Canada in Japan

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Japan.

### **References**

1. Japanese Gardens in Japanese Diplomatic Facilities

Japanese ambassador's residence in China \*1  
Embassy of Japan and Japanese ambassador's residence in Vietnam \*2  
Embassy of Japan and Japanese ambassador's residence in Cambodia \*1  
Former Japanese ambassador's residence in Cambodia \*3  
Embassy of Japan in Israel \*1  
Japanese ambassador's residence in Lebanon \*1  
Consulate-General of Japan in kalach \*1  
Embassy of Japan and Japanese ambassador's residence in the United States \*3

## **2. Japanese Gardens in Cultural Centers**

EKO House of Japanese Culture in Dusseldorf \*1  
Nordpark in Dusseldorf \*2

Designer/Contractors

\*1: Hakone Ueki Landscape Construction Co.,Ltd.

\*2: Iwaki Landstec Co.,Ltd.

\*3: Others