



**The role of pavilion in
aesthetics of Korean
garden-park complexes**



THE ROLE OF PAVILION IN AESTHETICS OF KOREAN GARDEN-PARK COMPLEXES

EL PAPEL DEL PABELLÓN EN LA ESTÉTICA DE LOS COMPLEJOS COREANOS DE JARDINES Y PARQUES

Authors

Rustem Ravilevich Muhametzyanov, *Kazan Federal University. Russia*

E-mail: rustemr@mail.ru

Liailia Aidarovna Gainullina, *Kazan Federal University. Russia*

Natalia Andreevna Bolotova, *Kazan Federal University. Russia*

Fecha de recibido: 13 de noviembre de 2019

Fecha de aceptado para publicación: 30 de noviembre de 2019

Fecha de publicación: 10 de diciembre de 2019

Abstract

Traditional national culture is the result of human wisdom that has gone through centuries of challenges and searches. It can be seen in the architecture and garden-park complexes especially. Traditional garden-park culture of each country is a culmination of an understanding of the unity of the natural environment, religion and nationality. Therefore, this culture is unique and has its own origin. In this article, the role of architectural elements in the Korean garden-park complexes was analyzed. Traditional garden-park architecture has a special value, as it is a unique recording of time and space; it has the complex not partial nature of culture and is a "ship", which consists of various elements of traditional culture. Moreover, it shows people's thoughts about beauty and influences on people's minds and bodies. That is why researching of aesthetics of Korean garden-park complexes is the way to understand Korean national culture. Today we can see a tendency to simplify national styles and replace them by unified global cultural standards and models. This process influence on national cultures negatively. So analyze of the role that plays architecture in Korean garden-park complexes allows not only to trace the evolution of aesthetics but it is also important for understanding the mechanism of culture interaction.

Keywords: Korea, Chinese, culture, art, garden, Taoism, Confucianism, pavilion, architecture.

La cultura nacional tradicional es el resultado de la sabiduría humana que ha pasado por siglos de desafíos y búsquedas. Se puede ver especialmente en los complejos de arquitectura y jardín-parque. La cultura tradicional de los parques de jardines de cada país es la culminación de la comprensión de la unidad del entorno natural, la religión y la nacionalidad. Por lo tanto, esta cultura es única y tiene su propio origen. En este artículo, se analizó el papel de los elementos arquitectónicos en los complejos de jardines y parques de Corea. La arquitectura tradicional de jardín-parque tiene un valor especial, ya que es una grabación única de tiempo y espacio; tiene la naturaleza compleja y no parcial de la cultura y es un "barco", que consta de varios elementos de la cultura tradicional. Además, muestra los pensamientos de las personas sobre la belleza y las influencias en las mentes y los cuerpos de las personas. Es por eso que la investigación de la estética de los complejos coreanos de parques y jardines es la forma de entender la cultura nacional coreana. Hoy podemos ver una tendencia a simplificar los estilos nacionales y reemplazarlos por estándares y modelos culturales globales unificados. Este proceso influye negativamente en las culturas nacionales. Por lo tanto, analizar el papel que desempeña la arquitectura en los complejos de jardines y parques de Corea permite no solo rastrear la evolución de la estética, sino que también es importante para comprender el mecanismo de interacción cultural.

Palabras clave: Corea, chino, cultura, arte, jardín, taoísmo, confucianismo, pabellón, arquitectura.



Introduction

In Korea, gardens appear in ancient times. According to Korean legends the first garden-park complex were built in Go-joseon period. During that time, these complexes were gardens for religious ceremonies and communication with spirits. There were not so many architectural constructions.

In the first centuries of AD Chinese culture starts to influence on the culture of Korea. During the cultural dialogue between two countries, Chinese culture had a powerful impact on the development of Korean Garden-park Art. Chinese elements were fully adopted but it got new features due to getting into completely different space. [1, P. 59].

Influence of China on Korean gardens can be seen not only in appearing of new natural objects in the garden but also in new interpretations of a natural space. It is also can be seen through appearing of architectural constructions. Among the architectural constructions, we can find pavilions, bridges and pagodas; there were buildings that were used as seasonal accommodation in the gardens of villa type. However, among all these constructions pavilions can be seen the most often.

Pavilions have different types. There were two-storied pavilions *nu* and *jeong*, and several of them had rooms. Many of them have no walls or doors. These pavilions were used as a place of viewing natural landscapes. There was also movable pavilion named Saryunjeong, which were built by talented writer, who lived during King Gojon's reign, Goryeo period, Lee Gyu-bo. Saryunjeong were contracted to move around the garden and watch beautiful landscapes while reading a book, drinking tea and playing baduk. [2, P. 184]. As some pavilions could be used as seasonal accommodation there were necessary for life elements. However, there were no shrine or ritual hall.

Most pavilions had size 3-to-1 *gan*, but there also were pavilions 3-to-3 *gan* (Gwangpung-gag at Soswaewon), 4-to-2 *gan* (Seonseokjeong in Seonnagwon, Namgangjeongsa, Gyeongjeong in Seoseokji), 2-to-2 *gan* (Goyeongjeong), and 1-to-1 *gan* (pavilion with thatched roof).

All pavilions, except pavilions 1-to-1 *gan*, have rooms of 4 different types due to room location. The first type is "central", where the 1 *gan* room is located in the centre. Those pavilions were found in Honam region (Gwangpung-gag and Imdaejeong in Soswaewon, Seyeongjeong in Boyeondong). The second type is "one-sided", where rooms are located on the left or the right. These kinds of pavilions were found in Gyeonggi region (Jogangjeong and Jewoldang in Soswaewon). The third type is "separated", where rooms are separated on the left and right by the floor (Gyongjeong in Seoseokji). And the last one is "back room" (Buamjeong ang Gyoengjeong). In spite of different types of pavilions, the main type of this kind of construction is an open building that allows to enjoy the nature and to show the aesthetics of garden art.

Methods

In this article pavilion is considered as one of the central element of garden architecture of Korea in aesthetics of garden-park complexes. While analyzing we based our research on two positions. The first is that religious and philosophical thoughts had a big influence on garden art. So they also influenced on Korean architecture. Building and construction is connected to an act of creation in traditional culture and to the perception of



the world. In fact, architecture “models” an image of the world. The world cannot be known and explained by human without language. The main role of architecture is to make the world visible and to help human make his staying in the habitable space aesthetically filled. As Greek shrine on the mountain pavilion shows the world in its wealth [3, P. 40]. And Korea is not an exception.

The second is that big influence on architecture had natural and climatic conditions of Korean peninsula. Location on the peninsula had the biggest influence overall Korean culture. It can be seen in a special respect for natural power. So people searched stable materials, forms and styles of architecture that will stand against natural impact. Here we can agree with A. Toynbee, that it is a Challenge for which civilization gives its own Response [4, pp. 530-537]. We are not going to idealize natural-geographical aspect, but it should not be underestimated.

Nature and the place of human being in the natural space played important role in Korean culture. The confirmation is the gardens, which appeared in the ancient period. Only after changing their roles in the society and beginning of influence of Chinese philosophical systems on Korea, architectural constructions began to appear in the gardens. And the first of all it was pavilions that had their own role in the garden.

Results And Discussion

Variety of seasons on Korean peninsula is an important aspect that has influence on architectural constructions. Cold winter, hot and humid summer make difficult conditions for architecture. However, in traditional Korean culture nature was not an object for subjection. It was an ideal that should be comprehend. These thoughts were formed within the mythological and poetic perception of the world and supplemented by Chinese philosophical and religious teachings. So in Taoism concept of “untouched nature” has an idea of making a safe world by principles and laws of nature. It means adaptation to the nature. On the other hand, there was a Tao (Absolute) that should be comprehend, contemplating absolute beauty of the world. That is why human should not only comprehend Tao through the nature, but also be a part of this nature and make a part of a nature of his constructions. In addition, Korean Feng Shui (Pungsu) emphasized the importance of choosing a place for a building construction [5 ,P. 25].

Confucianism as Taoism disclaims idea of “unity of human and nature”, but in reality, it lends to respecting nature laws by human, constructing building in a special way that from inside the building landscapes should be seen, so the building could be a part of a nature. The teaching of Confucius focused on the social problems, and it lent to the influence of Taoist aesthetics on Garden and Park Art and architecture.

In Taoism, unity with a nature should not considered as rejecting civilization, it should considered as evolutionary step to a higher state of mind that allows to enjoy the best present which nature can give. However, this evolution achieves through the knowledge of nature and the Absolute that exists in it. It is a route that human pass individually and people can unite with nature through mind freedom. Freedom of emotion and experience is a step to mind freedom. Empty and transparent space that is created by pavilion minimalizes external formalities and guarantees maximum freedom to human emotions.



Pavilion is the embodiment of a nude structure. In this situation, nude structure shows architectural beauty. And it goes through three phases. First, this construction incarnates true meaning of inner and outer space. Secondly, it defines the style of interior and appearance. Thirdly, two different styles become one. Going through these 3 phases, pavilion unites all general characteristics of a building in one by open framed construction.

The unique characteristic of a pavilion is no difference between inner and outer space. The goal of its construction is to become one with a nature. It is possible due to pavilion's typology as frame construction without walls. Therefore, without strong desire to become one with a nature, it is impossible to build such construction. However, no-walls construction does not automatically achieve harmony with nature, not to mention the undivided outer and inner spaces. It can be achieved through aesthetics of nudity. And this idea of unity is expressed in most forms in the pavilion.

Pavilion Eupjung-ru in the Academy Meokgyo Seowon is a good example of structural purism and pavilion architecture. Frames of this pavilion could be explained by simple scheme. It follows base principles and saves its original attribute. There is no separation on left and right, and even on 4 seasons. Pavilion follows the nature; therefore, there is nothing to hide. Location of the pavilion shows scientist with flawless character and its name means "pure village". Ideological basis of this construction is "unity" [6, P. 95]. Unity is a thought that tells about mistakes of separating; view that dominates over our thoughts, system of value and our life style. Preaching unity, Vimalakirti Sutra brings to naught the different types of dichotomy: as form comparison with no-forms; "my" in comparison with "yours"; constant in comparison with the transitional; finite in comparison with the infinite; life in comparison with death; slavery in comparison with freedom; knowledge in comparison with ignorance; meditation in comparison with emptiness; light in comparison with a darkness [6, P. 95].

The pavilion affirms the idea of unity. It allows coexistence of "me" and "others". Subject and object becomes one. True meaning of "me" in nature is to make of "me" a part of a nature and exclude existence based on self-awareness. The unity of subject and object could also mean the unity of inner and outer spaces. Vimalakirti Sutra says, that "me" and thing that is possessed by "me" are different, but thing which possessed by "me" exist thanks to "me". So, without "me" there is no such thing that "me" possessed. These two things do not separate in the Kingdom of Dharma [6, P. 96].

The same principle of separating to inner and outer space works in constructions. In the Universe space is exist in the state of equality without any borders. Separating of inner and outer space by walls is the inevitable action taken by people. Artificial separation leads to isolation; isolation leads to distance; distance leads to indifference; indifference leads to mistrust and suspicion that at the end leads to a conflict. These problems could be seen in architecture when studies about unity are ignored. Traditional Korean architecture always has been cautious and faithful to the studies of unity. This thought is expressed in aesthetic of nudity and pavilion is the best example.

Idea of unity is expressed in most pavilion's forms. There is no outer separation in pavilion. As it was said before, subject and object are united, the same goes for Taoist idea of "unselfishness". True meaning of "me" in the nature is to make of "me" a part of a nature [7].



In the case of Gyeonglyeom-jeong pavilion of an Academy Sosu Seowon, it is difficult to find out human or nature have created the pavilion. Harmony with a nature makes existence of such construction real. Transparency is a state that origins from humility and frugality, and it is also one of the two best lessons that nature can teach us.

Becoming one with nature, that is included in pavilion, can be interpreted as Taoist conception of flow and harmony. Human can become one with nature through interaction of flow and harmony. Flow could be described as “freedom to become one with serene sky and green forests” [6, P. 107]. Pavilion exists as a part of a nature, and nature becomes an inner part of pavilion. So, pavilion becomes nature itself.

Harmony is important condition for flowing state. Flow as a state of spirit freedom is a risk to become passive. Harmony is more active state helps to overcome such risk. Harmony is a state when someone gave up on compulsion to become different. Moreover, this state allows us to reach true flow by eliminating of unimportant and minor elements and leads us to our identity. This natural state is reached by eliminating of unnecessary scenery and unimportant elements [8, pp. 41-44].

For example, pavilion Jaunlo of Yeonmunsa temple. There are many columns but there are no elements of arrogance. Architecture is focused on harmony with nature. Color palette was added to create an openness not as a try to achieve something more, but as a try to achieve a harmony with true nature colors. Nature permeates into the forms created by people and spreads throughout the pavilion.

Summary

Proceeding from the foregoing it can be concluded that the desire to achieve harmony and understanding with nature displays in pavilion. It is implementing through the open system that shows an idea of external separation. And it leads to unity of subject and object.

Conclusions

A peculiar impetus to the origin of Korean garden tradition was in desire of Korean people to live in harmony with a nature. The special role was played by China that gave new architectural ideas. One of these accepted elements was pavilion. It should be mentioned that Korean carefully approached to the choice of the place of construction. They built pavilion in natural space so it became a part of a landscape. They did not separate it from nature. Moreover, pavilions had different forms, but the most popular was an open-type pavilion. This kind of pavilion has played big role in realization of Buddhist and Taoist aesthetics that disclaimed individual freedom of comprehension of truth by human.

Acknowledgements

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.



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