

The Origins of European Formal Gardens



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INTRODUCTION

It is believed that European formal gardens, especially those adorned with clipped trees (topiary) and plants arranged in geometrical patterns, have their origins in Roman gardens. This understanding is based on the evidence of 'opus topiarium' and trimmed plants in Latin texts, although it is known that the 'topiarium' is not what 'topiary' means in a modern sense. Wall paintings, textual evidence, and excavated Pompeian gardens suggest that the Romans had densely planted gardens resembling natural groves, challenging our previous conception of Roman gardens. My research explores how the Romans perceived and described their gardens, and whether Roman gardens can be the origin of European formal gardens.

GARDENS IN POMPEII

When Wilhelmina F. Jashemski, an American classicist who had green fingers, decided to study Roman gardens in the early-1950s, it was not a topic which received scholarly attention. Pierre Grimal, a French classicist who wrote a book on Roman gardens in 1943, is an exception but he did not feature examples of uncovered gardens in Pompeii, which had already been reported by Italian and German excavators since the end of the nineteenth century. Jashemski first envisaged writing a monograph covering all the known textual and archaeological examples of Roman gardens, but she soon realised the scale of this challenge. Instead, she started excavating gardens in Pompeii and neighbouring sites, and collaborated with archaeologists, archaeobotanists, ornithologists, natural scientists, and others. Based on the outcomes of her excavations, she edited volumes on Pompeian gardens which became sources of information for later scholars.

The excavations in Pompeii made Jashemski realise that many Roman gardens were not formal gardens, because plant root cavities discovered in gardens suggest that the plants did not form geometric patterns. (cf. organic substance such as roots decayed gradually following the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 CE and made cavities inside volcanic deposits. It is well known that a famous Pompeianist Giuseppe Fiorelli poured plaster into cavities and made plaster casts of victims.) Her observation was followed by Annamaria Ciarallo, a Pompeianist, whose analyses suggested that Pompeian gardens were often reconstructed in the styles popular at the time of excavation. In the case of Casa degli Amorini Dorati (Figure), archaeologists referred to sculptural finds but there is no mention of the garden patterns in the excavation reports *Notizie degli Scavi* (cf. the wreaths and oscillae hanging in the colonnade are based on depictions on wall paintings). Nevertheless, the garden was reconstructed as if it had been a formal garden.

TEXTS, WALL PAINTINGS, AND EXCAVATION

Following in Jashemski and Ciarallo's footsteps, excavators in the 21st century recognised that the appearance of Roman gardens envisaged by scholars in previous centuries should be revised. Kathryn Gleason, for example, has affirmed this view in her excavation at the Villa Arianna in Stabiae. I also analysed garden wall paintings and classical literary sources and argued that Roman gardens had a more naturalistic appearance.

However, the question remains: 'Why did we start thinking that Roman gardens are the origin of European formal gardens?' By using archaeological and textual evidence, I am trying to answer this question during my fellowship at the Institute for Advanced Research, Nagoya University.



Figure: Casa degli Amorini Dorati, Pompeii. After the reconstruction. (Credit: P.Grunwald, Neg. D-DAI-Z-83.2037. Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Rom)

TAKING A STEP FURTHER

My project 'European Gardens: Origins, Reception, and Reconstruction' is generously supported by the Program for Fostering Researchers for the Next Generation (Japan Science and Technology Agency). In this project, I shall collaborate with historians and natural scientists based at Hokkaido, Tohoku, and Nagoya Universities. Through this project, I aim to study how scientific analyses of archaeological finds are conducted and how one should interpret the results provided by natural scientists.

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Trilateral Relationships among Japan, Korea and China in the 17th-19th Centuries



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INTRODUCTION

Joseon Korea, a kingdom caught between *Tokugawa* Japan and two consecutive dynasties of China, the *Ming* and the *Qing*, played a very important role in building diplomatic relations between the two in the first half of the seventeenth century. It contributed almost as much as it sabotaged. Throughout the early modern period, *Tokugawa* Japan and *Ming-Qing* China were connected by *Joseon* Korea, but the same country constantly tried to hamper progress.

Research Background

Succeeding to country unified by his father, the second emperor *Hong Taiji* consolidated power within and declared a new dynasty—the *Qing*. The emperor ruled that establishing official diplomatic relations with Japan would be beneficial, but the consequences of the dynastic changes from *Ming* to *Qing* meant that efforts to that end yielded nothing concrete. The state of bilateral relations at that time has been called "silent diplomacy" (by *Iwai Shigeki*) or "non-diplomatic relations" (by *Sugeyama Kiyohiko*).

When we turn our sights on Japan, in the 1630s the *bakufu* imposed a prohibition on overseas voyages and limited foreign contact to the four ports of *Nagasaki*, *Tsushima*, *Satsuma*, and *Matsumae*. However, when we examine this situation from the perspective of the continent, we find that China was connected to Japan through the mediation of *Joseon* Korea and the *Ryukyu* Kingdom in the early-modern period. Research on the diplomatic situation in the *Ryukyu* Kingdom and cultural exchanges occurring via the *Ryukyu* Kingdom has been plentiful. However, the Sino-Japanese connection through *Joseon*, the most loyal vassal state of *Ming* China and later *Qing* China, has received far less attention.

Why were diplomatic relations between Japan and China not restored and became dependent on the mediation of secondary countries? The primary cause was the Japanese invasion of Korea (1592–98), which disturbed the old international order in East Asia. Japan's restoration of diplomatic relations with *Ming* China, which formed part of post-war normalization, contributed to the establishment of diplomatic channels between Japan, China and Korea.

Restoration Process

At the dawn of the *Tokugawa bakufu*, *Tokugawa Ieyasu* attempted to reconstruct diplomatic relations with *Ming* China through three channels: (1) *Ming* merchants visiting *Nagasaki*, (2) *Joseon* Korea, and (3) the *Ryukyu* Kingdom. However, (1) and (3) did not bring good results, with only attempt (2) bringing results. However, scholars have not investigated (2) to the same extent as the other two.

In this project, I have investigated the diplomatic process and real situation surrounding how *Tokugawa* Japan attempted to restore diplomatic relations with *Ming* and *Qing* China via *Joseon* Korea in the seventeenth century.

Since the *Tokugawa bakufu* had already given the *Tsushima* domain the right to manage *Joseon* affairs, in examining Japan's attempt to restore relations with China, the activities of the *Tokugawa bakufu* and *Tsushima* domain should be discussed separately. This process is divided into two periods: the period of

coexistence of multiple intermediaries mentioned above (before 1615), and the period when Korea was the sole mediator (after 1615).

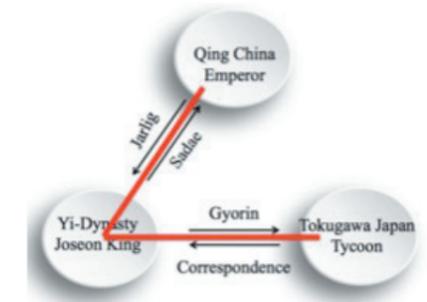


Figure 1: Relationships between Japan, Korean and China in the early modern period

Joseon Korea: the sole mediator

After *Jurchen* Manchu's invasion of Korea in 1627, the only *bakufu*-sanctioned envoy sent to Seoul in the early-modern period was *Kihaku Genpo*, a diplomat-monk from the *Tsushima* domain, in 1629. Deciphering his manuscripts, including letters written by *Genpo* recorded in "*Zenrin Tsusho*," *Genpo's* diary "*Hochoro Jokyo nishbi*," and the reception record "*Eumbing haenggi*" which have been largely ignored by researchers up to the present, we have discovered that restoration of diplomatic relations was not ordered by the *bakufu* in the 1629 mission, but was used by *Tsushima* as an excuse to visit the capital of the *Joseon* Dynasty. Also, since *Qing* China was suspicious of *Joseon's* relationship with Japan, *Joseon* did not report to *Qing* China on *Tsushima's* expectations for the restoration of diplomatic relations.

Overview

From my empirical analysis, I demonstrate that placing *Joseon* Korea as a mediator between *Tokugawa* Japan and *Ming-Qing* China, who had not established formal diplomatic relation in the 17th–19th centuries, allowed China and Japan to have mediated political connections. To truly understand the trilateral relationship is not to build up bilateral relations between any of the two, even in a detail-oriented way. By sleight of hand, *Joseon* Korea benefited from being the mediating state, manipulating diplomatic relations between Japan and *Qing* China to its own ends.

References

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