

Case study on a new concept of temple garden in Japan

KOMASE Tomonori (駒瀬友紀)¹⁾, WADA Yukinobu (和田幸信)²⁾, FUJISAKI Kenichiro (藤崎健一郎)³⁾

1)Komase Landscape Planning, 2) Hogenji Temple (法玄寺) , 3) Nihon University

This is a report of recently constructed temple garden. The target garden is Hogenji temple of Honen Buddhism (浄土宗) in Tochigi prefecture.

Client : Hogenji Temple (法玄寺) [Chief priest : WADA Yukinobu]

Designer : KOMASE Tomonori

It's foundation dates back to beginning of 13th century.This garden was designed in the style of a traditional Japanese gardens of temples while adding new elements.

1. As a Buddhist garden

Basic teaching of Honen Buddhism, ordinary people even criminals,only if they have been calling upon Amida Buddha,are saved by Amida Buddha and guided through the white road between the two rivers onto the Pure Land. To embody this teaching, three symbolic expressions are adopted.

① Appearance of Amida Buddha (来迎)

In an elevated area covered with moss, three stones are erected. When people are dead Amida Buddha appear flanked two Bodisattvas in order to salvage them.So center stone represent Amida Buddha accompanied with two Bodisattvas.

② Way to the Pure Land (二河白道)

Based on the teaching of Honen Buddhism, in order to approach to the Pure Land everyone must cross a big river. River sides are filled with wild fires and fierce animals.Thought it is almost impossible to cross the river Amida Buddha indicates a white road between two waters to lead people towards the Pure Land.This teaching is symbolized in this garden by a road with white gravels surrounded by areas covered with moss.

③ The Pure Land (浄土)

“The Amida Sutra” describes that The Pure Land of Amida Buddha is illuminated by holy lights.In order to embody this sacred world filled with lights, special lighting fixtures are created using stone called “Ohya-stone. This stone contains some holes. Ohya-stones are carved to make cylinder and inside are hollowed out in order to equip a light bulb. When switched on, lights radiate through holes and make a solemn atmosphere. This is a metaphor of the Pure Land.



Fig. 1 Basic Plan of Hogenji Garden



Fig.2 Appearance of Amida Buddha



Fig.3 White road between the 2 rivers



Fig.4 The Pure Land

2. As a healing garden

In the total planning, the aim was to create a harmonious coordination of a space that embraces Buddhist philosophy and nature, offering a religious environment where anyone can easily visit, relax, and find solace. It was designed with the intention of becoming a place where people can "observe, feel, stand still, and find comfort" - a healing garden that serves as a source of emotional support and refuge. The design was implemented with the goal of creating a "sacred garden" that is open to many people.



Fig.5 Healing spaces where you can stroll and find tranquility

3. Stone lanterns and explanatory plaquemade of Oya Stone

The supplementary elements are planned to emphasis basic design using tuff named Oya stone which is a specialty in nearby region of Oya. Using the Oya stone, newly designed stone lanterns were made and settled to embody the sacred world filled with light. Oya stones are carved into cylinders, with their insides hollowed out to accommodate light bulbs. Tuff is easy to cut and shape, and possesses numerous hollows. The electric light radiates through these hollows creating a solemn atmosphere. This scenery serves as a metaphor for the Pure Land.



Fig.6 The lanterns



Fig.7 The making process of stone lantern

An explanatory plaque crafted by engraving characters onto copper sheets attached to Oya stone.



Fig. 8 The explanatory plaque and the making process

4. Fences

Various fences were made of bamboo and wood materials. Formal style Ryuanji fence and Kuzuryu fence were adopted. In addition to these traditional styles, a new style fence was designed with sunburned bamboo and black bamboo ears. This newly designed fence was named Hogenji fence after the name of this temple.



Fig.9 The Hogenjifence : Newly designed and named after this temple