

Preserve the spirit in the Traditional Landscape and Garden
Water Warship of Paddy nationality in Jingfeng Garden

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Abstract. Historic landscape and gardens always record how people understand the nature. Jingfeng garden in Jianchuan, Yunnan province is such a place where the residents warship the water.

It comes into being for the stream beside it, which is the mother river and plays an important role in paddy growing. People selected this place for rain begging and harvesting celebration. They came here in festivals and constructed new temples. In Qing dynasty, it became a public garden with beautiful buildings and watery sights. It records the process of cultural communication between nationalities and the relationship between the paddy nationality and the nature.

But this was destroyed in the modern society. The watery sights disappeared because of the tap water factory on the stream. Temples were abandoned and the spirit of the place disappeared with the change of lifestyle.

Today, it is necessary to recover the environment and landscape to manifest the spirit of place.

1. Introduction of Jingfeng garden



Illustration3:old tree in thegarden



Illustration1:View of Jianchuan city and Jingfeng Garden from the mountain behind the garden



Illustration2: view of Jingfeng pavilion in the Jingfeng garden

China has been an agricultural country for more than 5,000 years. People accumulated a lot of knowledge about climate and geography acting on the planting. During the ancients fighting with the nature, their understanding about nature was also developing, and formed the particular culture under the agricultural background.

In the history of farm working, water worshiping and utilization accompanied throughout the history, especially for paddy nationality, because paddy planting needs plenty of water, feasible weather, and elaborate treatment. So at the ancient time, rain from the sky and river on the ground was always regarded as a kind of spirit controlled by gods. And with people knowing the nature deeper, the spirit fades away step by step. Jingfeng garden is such a place recording the whole process of people dealing with water, which

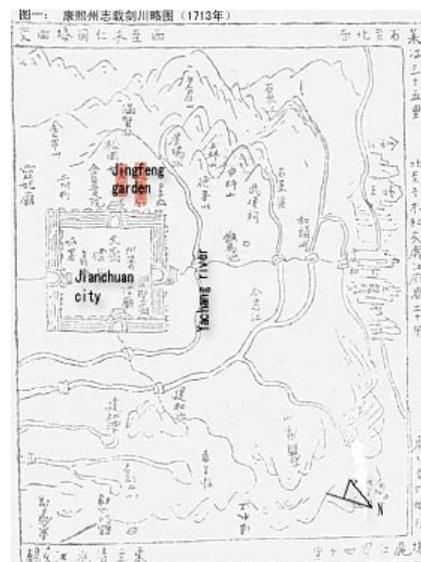


Illustration4: map of Jianchuan city in Qing dynasty(_____ 1986)

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has disappeared in most places in china.

Jingfeng garden is located on the mountain behind the Jianchuan city in the northwest of Yunnan province. The Bai nationality lives here, and has a history of paddy planting for more than 4,000 years whose culture is just similar with Han nationality. And because it stays in the valley of mountains, part of its early culture remained. That gives us a chance to get close to the early conception of paddy nationality.

In the Illustration 4, there shows how ancient people chose the place to put Jinhua city which established in Ming dynasty. According to Chinese geomantic omen, it has big apex of mountains behind the city, and faces plat land. Several rivers in the left are “Azure Dragons”. It is a good place for settlement. In fact, this good place in geomantic omen was not selected when it built the city, but existed as an important village for long time. Why did the ancient Bai people select this place for village? During the research for this question, we found the closest river which called Yachang river had having important function in the history of Jinhua

2. History of the Jingfeng garden

2.1 Step 1: As a holy place of the valley

In this area that Bai nationality lived, people have the tradition to live beside the stream from very early time to even now as the water offers the steady source for people. And a good and big stream can supply more people and paddy fields. In the historical literatures and fables, rivers and streams always were described as “good dragon” or “bad dragon”, and used the fighting between them to symbolize people struggling with the nature(*Baizushenhuachuanshuojichen* 1986, 96_106). And a lot of stream and sources were looked as holy spring. The pools were said to have with dragon. The Yachang river besides Jingfeng garden was said come from “99 dragon pools” in the highest mountain(*Diannan xinyu*,21). And it assembled a pool nearby the mountain behind the town named “Bainantuo dragon pool”, and this stream with quite a number water dashing out at the northwest of the town forming a landscape of waterfall. A shrine for worshiping “Bainantuo dragon” that was the former form of Jingfeng garden was built there.

It was known that people in the village lead water to paddy

fields from here. People wished the water to keep its peaceable temper but sometime it would be out of control. So a function was added on the shrine to pray good rain and good water for the planting. The spirit of this site came into being under this background.

2.2 Step 2: As a place for gods and development of irrigation works

The Bai people has lived through with the streams for a long time, accompanying with the water's benefaction and outbreak, until outside



Illustration5: view of Lingbao pagoda

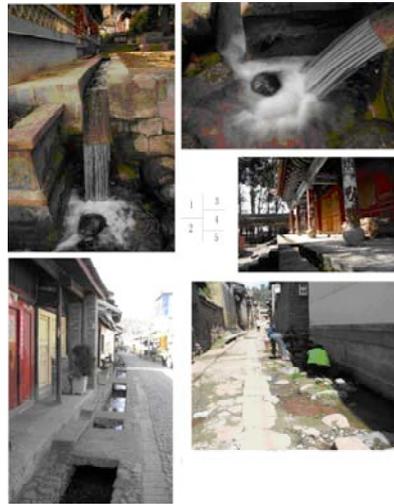


Illustration6: waterscape in the garden and the city

culture affected this area. In 700s AC, Nanzhao state was established, and observed the Han's culture from Tang dynasty in its northeast, and culture of Buddhism in its west from India. On one hand, advanced irrigation works was brought into effect under the power, on the other hand, the foreign religion gave the worshipping a new form and new content. And at this time, irrigation works was always presented with supernal appearance. So there was a story in their history about a famous hierarch burying a copper tablet to calm down the flooding dragon (Linbao ta beiji 1991,86). Also temple was built for putting the gods watching bad power from the nature.

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Another climax for water management was in Ming dynasty. At that time Yunnan was included in Chinese domain. Jianchuan city with the city wall were built. The irrigation works got further improvement, on both the material side and the spirit one. Firstly, on the Yachang river they built a dam to adjust the quantity of the water (*Kangxi jianchuan xianzh* 1986), then built a pagoda beside the river to improve geomantic omen. This place as the most important holy site gathered a lot of people from the valley, and ceremonies were held in important festivals.

2.3 Step 3: Tendency to a garden's atmosphere and secularity

After a long time, this place had been provided with good condition of water landscape and flourishing trees. However, when

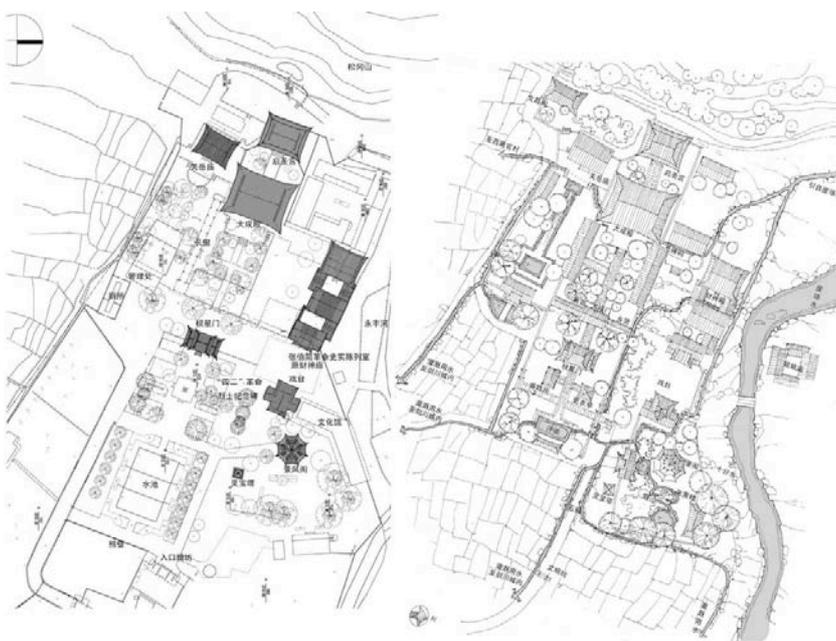


Illustration7: The plan of current state Illustration8: The plan of original state in 1700s

people had the ability to control the water, its divinity was accordingly weakened. The condition that the god of water governed here singly was broken by other temples coming into this area. Many gods that people needed in their life were added in. In the middle of Qing dynasty, there were temples for Confucius, Fortune deity, dragon, and

so on. With this temples and shrines, some landscape architecture and waterscape came into being. Then Jingfeng garden became a place for people to have their religion life and for literators to have literary activities.

This kind of functions continued to 1949 the PR China was founded and such activities were stopped. More badly, a waterworks was built above the Jingfeng garden, and used Yachang river's water. In the end, waterfall disappeared, and the waterscape was dilapidated. All the celebrations and religion life have been intermitted for over half a century. People forgot the divinity of this place in there mind. Now it is only a garden with some historic buildings and old trees for people to have a rest or entertainment. New waterscape is not harmonious with the environment. The spirit of the place vanished.

3. What characteristic should be preserved in the garden

In this case, there are some questions should be answered.

3.1 Is it important enough to be preserved?

Through the description of Jingfeng garden's history, this place played an important role in the whole history. It recorded all historic memory in its setting, old buildings and literature. In this valley, most of Bai people's life is related with it. So it's a memorial carrier of local religion, cultural pluralism, relationship between human being and the nature. That needs us to preserve.

3.2 Do people still need this spirit from gods and site?

Before this question, there is another question: have this valley's people changed their life style? We can know that more than 50% people are still engaged in paddy planting. And they still go to their local shrines for a better weather or other things. A lot of traditional festivals still continue to take place after the policy allowed. For example, the Confucius celebration resumed in 2005, which had been stopped since 1949. That is to say, this place can remain its spirit, but it need be revived.

3.3 What characteristic should be preserved in this garden?

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3.3.1. Mixed gods worshipping and cultural pluralism

It is a character of agricultural culture. As a matter of fact, Han nationality's culture has the same phenomena. In this case we can know clearly how it became possible, and how it came into being.

3.3.2. Waterscape and the setting

Jingfeng garden began from the water worship, and water worship kept on in whole history, so the waterscape and its related setting and existing architecture is most important. It is a lively example to show the philosophy about human and the nature.

3.3.3 Ceremony about water worship and other religion life

A simple example is a fortune deity shrine was built by residents in recent years nearby the garden. In Chinese tradition, water also means fortune. But as the waterscape and setting disappeared, the relationship could be weaker. Then many celebrations will lose their root little by little.

4. Preserve the spirit of garden with “time”

In this case, we conclude that it is a composite conservation. It includes intangible heritage and tangible heritage while the intangible part is more important. It includes historic site, garden and landscape. They are both important.

Then integrality may be the most important. And it is a living heritage which may be still utilized in the future. It is a long project to study and control its developing and transformation. So if we want to conserve it, we must put a factor of “time”, whatever in history or in the future.

Then, how to preserve and manage this heritage, there would be some suggestion:

- To restore the waterscape, especial the waterfall. To move away the waterworks and use other resource; And to reestablish the ecosystem of water, trees and paddy fields.
- To restore the historic site for activities according to the research work of the arrangement of Jingfeng garden (most old people still remember how it was like).
- To control the dimensions of the city and the setting about mountains and rivers.
- To make a plan of long-period conservation, which should

relate the change of life style and religions, and allow some change under the local culture and requirement.

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