

Landscape Narratives of the Garden in Central Guangdong- The Case Study of the Keyuan Garden in the Qing Dynasty

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Abstract

The Chinese courtyard space arranges and lays out the physical environment through gardening elements such as architectures, flowers, trees, rocks, water features, and pavings. It is not only a functional place for living and touring, but also a narrative space in which events and activities take place. This research took the Keyuan Garden, one of the four famous gardens in central Guangdong Province as a case study, to describe and analyse the narrative expression of courtyard space from an interdisciplinary perspective which include landscape design, literature and narratology. The Keyuan garden was divided into three parts: the block narrative space which as paragraphs in garden narrative text, the linear narrative space which as sentences in garden narrative text, and the point narrative space which as vocabulary in garden narrative text. This research pointed out these three narrative spaces, as new language, were composed of different gardening elements, constructing the overall material space, and evoking the viewer's experience, cognition and interpretation of the courtyard space by interpreting the tangible gardening elements. The comprehensive and in-depth interpretation of the Keyuan garden from a multi- perspective will help to understand the art of gardening in central Guangdong in the Qing Dynasty, and provide a reference for inheriting the traditional and excellent construction wisdom today.

Keywords: Landscape Narratives, the Keyuan Garden, Lingnan Garden, Landscape Design.

Introduction

Lingnan gardens, Northern gardens and Jiangnan gardens constitute the three major gardens in China. Lingnan garden has developed its own unique style: the characteristics of integration of buildings and gardens,

friendly scale, lush greenery, simplicity and elegance, and practical use. Lingnan private gardens began in the Tang Dynasty and flourished in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Although its area is small, the buildings, landscapes and plants have a unique local charm[] (Liu Tingfeng, 2003, p18). In the chapter “the late stage of garden maturity - the middle and late Qing Dynasty (1736-1911 AD)” of History of Chinese Classical Gardens, narrated that: “In the early Qing Dynasty, the Pearl River Delta region in Lingnan with a relatively developed economy, private gardening activities began to flourish and gradually affected Chaoshan, Fujian and Taiwan. After the middle of the Qing Dynasty, it became increasingly prosperous, and formed its own characteristics in the arrangement of scenes, spatial organization, the handling of waters and stones, and the planting of flowers and trees. Finally, it emerged prominently as one of the three major classical Chinese garden. Qinghui Garden in Shunde, Keyuan Garden in Dongguan, Yuyin Shanfang Garden in Panyu and Liang Yuan Garden in Foshan are known as the four representative works in central Guangdong, which are relatively well-preserved”[] (Zhou Weiquan, 1990, p.511). The most distinctive feature of Lingnan gardens is the courtyard style. Among the four famous gardens, the Keyuan Garden in Dongguan formed some small courtyards by connecting all the houses and the buildings.[] (Liu Tingfeng, 2003, p.34)

This research takes Dongguan Keyuan, one of the four famous Lingnan gardens in central Guangdong as a case study to interpret the narrative expression of courtyard space from the interdisciplinary perspective of landscape design, literature and narratology. The narrative space of the Keyuan garden is divided into three parts: the block narrative space, the linear narrative space and the point narrative space. These three narrative spaces constitute the paragraphs, sentences and vocabulary of the narrative text of the garden respectively. By analyzing the relationship between physical space and narrative text, from the aspects of gardening conception, scenes arrangement, architectural layout, and landscape planning, we can better comprehend the gardening strategies and construction method of the garden in central Guangdong from multiple dimensions.

Research Methodology

This research study is based on qualitative approach. Exploratory research with case study methodology. The Keyuan Garden, Lingnan garden in Dongguan, Guangdong province will be selected in this research as study case.

Sources of the research constituted of two parts: Primary data and secondary data. The research process begin with secondary data collection and review. The literature review conducted focuses on

Chinese classical garden design studies, the history of Keyuan Garden and the owner introduction, the motivation of the garden construction, and some relevant materials. Those reviews serve as a theoretical framework for this study. Source of secondary data were obtained from library and online resources, which located more than 40 books and journals related to research topic. At the meanwhile the primary data collection took place and on-field data collection were conducted. To obtain the primary data through field study, which included: taking pictures, drawing sketches, conducting field measurement and recording field notes, etc..

Literature Review

1. The background of the Keyuan Garden in Dongguan Guangdong Province

The Keyuan garden is located in Guancheng, Dongguan City, Guangdong Province. It was founded in 1850 and completed between 1861 and 1864. The garden covers an area of more than 2,000 square meters and is surrounded by buildings, corridors, courtyard paths, green plants and water features (Figure 1). The layout is like a checkerboard maze array, and the paths can reach all directions. Although the garden is not large, the layout is ingenious and the layers are rich[] (Wang Hongxing, 2011, p7).

Figure 1. (a) Panoramic view of the Keyuan garden; <https://www.dgkeyuan.org/> (b) Model of the Keyuan garden.



Life of the Owner

Zhang Jingxiu (1824-1864), the owner of Ke Yuan Garden, was a native of Boxia, Guancheng Town, Dongguan County, Guangdong Province, style name De Pu, also known as De Fu. He has served as a Dao's Officer of Youjiang Dao Guangxi Province, and the Surveillance Commissioner of Guangxi. He was dismissed for improper handling of Heaven-Earth Society Revolt[] (Local Chronicles Compilation Committee of Guangxi, 1992). As the other side of the intellectual, Zhang Jingxiu had a high artistic accomplishment among the contemporaneous Cantonese bureaucrats, and was proficient in seal cutting, calligraphy and Chinese paintings, as well as instrument, chess and poetry.

History of the Keyuan Garden

The original site of Ke Yuan was the residence of Mao's family, and after the owner retired and returned to his hometown in 1855, he spared no effort to borrow money to build the garden, which was completed in the eighth year of Xianfeng (1858), and the whole garden was built for about three years. Since then, the garden has been expanded and altered several times. After the death of the owner of the garden in Tongzhi Era 3 (1864), the collection of paintings and calligraphy sold by his descendants, the garden buildings were also abandoned[] (Guangzhou Research Institute of Culture and History, 2008).

Results and Discussion

The research study to describe, analyse and interpret the narrative expression of courtyard space from an interdisciplinary perspective which include landscape design, literature and narratology. The narrative space of the Keyuan garden is divided into three parts: the block narrative space, the linear narrative space and the point narrative space. These three narrative spaces constitute the paragraphs, sentences and vocabulary of the narrative text of the garden respectively. (Table 1)

Table 1 The narrative space of the Keyuan garden

The Garden Narrative Text	The Garden Narrative Space	The Garden Narrative Content
Paragraph	The block narrative space	Courtyard Space Structure: Buildings and Constructions
Sentence	The linear narrative space	Courtyard Space Sequence: Paths and Corridors
Vocabulary	The point narrative space	Courtyard Image Expression: gardening Elements

1. The Block Narrative Space : Courtyard Space Structure

The plane layout of the Keyuan garden is composed of three buildings complex and two main courtyards enclosed by Huanbi Corridor (the Jasmine Tree's Corridor) and Jiashan Hanyue (the Rockery Shinning by Moonlight Pavilion) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Three building complex and two main courtyards (Source of basemap: Dongguan Keyuan).



1.1 Three buildings complex

The structural elements of the garden, such as waters and stones, flowers and trees, must be considered in conjunction with the architectural environment, and it is constrained by the inner courtyard space and the shape of the buildings[] (Xia Changshi, & Mo Bozhi, 1964). There are three buildings complex in the Keyuan garden: one is located in the greeting entrance area on the southeast side, serving as a hub area for welcoming guests entering and leaving. There are two passage halls on both sides of the entrance hall, which are connected to Caocao Caotang (the Caocao Pavilion) and Putaolin Tang (the Grape Forest Hall), as a temporary reception place for guests. The second building complex is the area for viewing, relaxing and holding banquets in the west of the garden. The main buildings include Shuangqing Shi (the Lotus and Bamboo House), Ke Xuan (the Osmanthus Hall), and Yaoshan Pavilion (the Mountain View Pavilion). The third building complex is the area where the owner lives, recites poetry and paints in the north. The main building is Ke Tang (the Ke Hall), which has three bays and faces to the south. To the west of Ke Tang (the Ke Hall) is a small courtyard with flowers, surrounded by corridors and planted on flower beds, creating an elegant atmosphere. Between the small courtyard and Ke Hu (the Ke Lake) is Chuyue Chiguan (the New Moon Pool Pavilion), which stands on the bank of the pond and is shaped like a ship's shore, also known as the Ship Hall. (Figure 3).

Figure 3. (a) Banhong Xiaoxie (the Lychees' Water Pavilion); (b) Shuangqing Shi (Lotus and Bamboo House); (c) Chuyue Chiguan (the New Moon Pool Pavilion); (d) Ke Ting (the Ke Pavilion). <https://www.dgkeyuan.org/>.



1.2 Two main courtyards

Two main courtyards are surrounded by three buildings complex, namely the Huanbi Lang (the Jasmine Tree's Corridor), the pedestrian corridor in the southwest of the courtyard, and Jiashan Hanyue (the Rockery Shinning by Moonlight Pavilion) and Zishu Tai (the Orchids and Clover Balcony) in front of the Ketang(the Ke Hall) in the northeast. The Huanbin Lang Courtyard is constructed with semi-enclosed walls and zigzagged corridors (Figure 4). Lingnan fruit trees are widely planted in the garden.

Figure 4. (a) Zishu Tai (the Orchids and Clover Balcony); (b) Huanbi Lang (the Jasmine Tree's Corridor) <https://www.dgkeyuan.org/>.



Jiashan Hanyue (the rockery shinning by moonlight pavilion), which is composed of a stone mountain and a flat-topped pavilion, Baiyue Tai (the Worshipping the moon Pavilion), is located in front of Ke tang (the Ke Hall). Because the shape of the stone mountain which connected to the flat-topped pavilion looks like a lion climbing up to the pavilion for worshipping the moon, and the combination of these two forms a scene of the “Shizi Shang Loutai (lion on the stairs)” courtyard (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Jiashan Hanyue (the rockery shinning by moonlight pavilion) and Zishu Tai (the Orchids and Clover Balcony) Courtyards.



2. The Linear Narrative Space : Courtyard Space Sequence

The linear narrative space of the Keyuan garden is divided into three levels: the first is the enclosed outer courtyard wall that defines the scope of the space; the second is the semi-closed and permeable inner courtyard wall that defines the courtyard function space; the third it is the open corridor walking path to experience the unity of time and space.

2.1 Outer Courtyard Wall (Solid Space)

The outer courtyard wall, as a solid space, defines the courtyard area, determines the outline and spatial scope of the courtyard, and is the first barrier to define the opening and closing space of the courtyard. The wall of the courtyard becomes a very important space element[] (Peng Yigang, 1998), separating the courtyard from the external environment, forming two different worlds to divide the inside and the outside, reflecting the introversion of the courtyard's spatial characteristics, and its spatial diagram is centripetal. Chinese traditional literati tend to be more introspective in their behavior. They pursue the secular and tranquil life style which forms an inseparable relationship with closed and introverted spaces. The concept life as courtyard space is like heaven and earth, showing the centralized courtyard form of spiritual pursuit and secular life. It is a kind of literati reflection of introspective mental state[] (Han Baode, 2011, pp.192-194).

2.2 Semi-enclosed Vertical Interface (Semi-solid and void Space)

The walls, flower bed bases, landscape terraces and other semi-enclosed vertical interfaces can be constructed with simple shapes to organize the garden space, forming a permeable vertical enclosure, half-empty and half-solid, without pursuing too many decorative layers and details, such as: the flower bed of Huazhi Jing (the Flower's Path), the square enclosed platform of Zishu Tai (the Orchids and Clover Balcony), and the blue brick fence of Boxi Yuyin (the Boxi Hermitlike Fishman House) near the Ke Lake. The semi-enclosed vertical interface of the Keyuan garden is mostly geometric, which echoes the geometric layout of the courtyard. In architecture-orientied courtyard in Lingnan garden the interface is mostly divided into horizontal and vertical geometric forms, such as the interspersed vertical and horizontal walls of Yaoshan Pavilion (the Mountain View Pavilion). The buildings and corridors are presented in a horizontal and vertical manner, with zigzagged footpaths, covered bridges, water features and flower parterre interspersed in them[] (Lu Qi, 2013, p.130). The entire courtyard layout is distributed with semi-enclosed interfaces of different lengths, dense, balanced and contrasted, making the square courtyard space abundant and interesting (Figure 6).

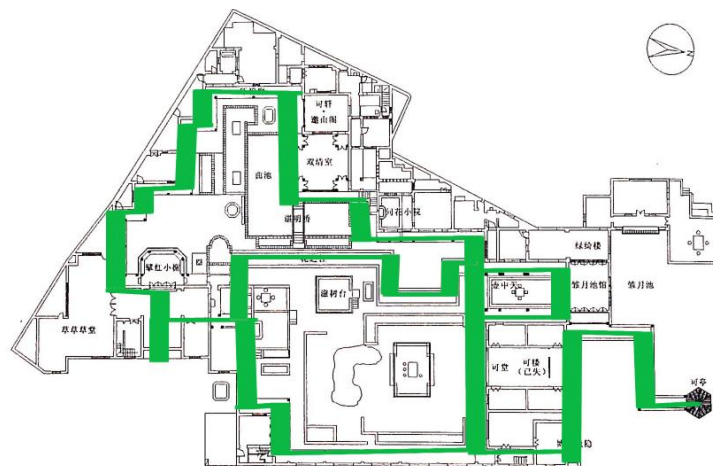
Figure 6. The Semi-enclosed Vertical Interface in the Keyuan Garden.



2.3 Walking Path (Void Space)

The linear walking system is extracted from the general layout to observe and found that the linear path of the garden combined with the courtyard building plane to form a vertical and horizontal overlapping path system (Figure 7). The criss-crossing orderly path is continuously presented in the courtyard. The path of the courtyard space builds a in-motion viewing experience. It is like the linear art unfolding in the course of time [] (Li Zehou, 2013, p.64). The path become both narrow and open, with wide variety of views, provide a kind of diverting experience of space and life. [] (Han Baode, 2011, p.222).

Figure 7. Schematic Diagram of Path Pxttraction in the Keyuan Garden (Source of Basemap: Dongguan Keyuan)



3. The Point Narrative Space : Courtyard Space Image Expression

The emotion, poetry and artistic conception expressed by the courtyard go far beyond the physical environment space itself, and it needs to display the literary and cultural meaning behind the courtyard, buildings and objects through a specific communication medium. As part of the gardening elements, these specific communication medium are embellished in the planning system of courtyard gardening including: image (painting, sculpture, decorative pattern, building components, symbols, etc.), small categories (waters, stones, etc.), text (title, couplet,

poem,etc.). These narrative vocabularies combine with the courtyard space to establish a semantic connection and evoke an aesthetic experience of sensory perception jointly[] (Sojin Nakamura, 2018, p.31). The gardening elements of the point narrative space are summarized as: doors, windows and pavement, water and stones, and couplets.

3.1 Doors, Windows and Pavement

The garden in central Guangdong likes to use tinted glass window grilles with simple and modern geometric decorative patterns, and the floor tiles are decorated with red and blue bricks, which are the local materials in Lingnan. The polished and smooth water-milled bricks are elegant and simple, reflecting the beauty of geometric patterns everywhere, and the brick holes in the wall are ventilated and breathable, in the form of a cross and T-shape. The pattern of the plane layout, floor pavement and window grilles of Shuangqing Shi (the Lotus and Bamboo House) are all apply the shape of Chinese charter “Asia (亞) ” (Figure 8).

Figure 8. (a)(b)The tinted glass windows and doors of Shuangqing Shi (the Lotus and Bamboo House); (c) The full moon window of Lvqi Building.



There are four colors tinted glass for exterior windows: blue, green, red and yellow, which are the unique decorative material for Lingnan gardens[] (Liu Tingfeng, 2003, p.77), and the themes include: plants, flowers and birds, Characters of the Eight Immortals, and Eight Sceneries of Canton. The door cover and floor tiles of Kexuan (the Omanthus Hall) are decorated with osmanthus patterns, and the pavement is composed of large blue bricks (Figure 9). Zhang Jingxiu's “Postscript of lotus and bamboo House’s Plaque” that says: “My mother’s love to me like sunlight in spring, My devotion toward her like young grass. And I sincerely wish her longevity and have dark hair again” It can be seen that this is where the owner's mother lives. The Full Moon Window of Lvqi Building can be opened by pushing up and down, and the window lattice forms a polygonal geometric pattern. From the perspective of construction technology, the straight line geometry is easier to process than the curve shape. It reflects the pragmatic and efficient spirit and intuitive thinking of Lingnan people[] (Xue Ying, 2012, p.276). The hanging door cover of Ke Tang (the Ke Hall) is decorated with plum blossom, orchid, chrysanthemum and bamboo, lotus pod and mandarin

duck pattern. It is the a place where the owner live and hold the banquets.

Figure 9. (a)The hanging door cover of Ke Xuan (the Osmanthus Hall); <https://www.dgkeyuan.org/> (b) Tinted glass for exterior windows with four colors.



3.2 Water and Stone Landscaping: One lake, Two pools, and One Spring Well

One late: Kehu (Ke Lake) is adjacent to the north corner of Keyuan. The owner has built pavilions here: Guanyu Yi (the Fish house), Chuyue Chiguan (the New Moon Pool Pavilion), Boxi Yuyin (the Boxi Hermitlike Fishman House), and Ke Ting (the Ke Pavilion), depicting a scenery of “Creek streams around the house” (Figure11).

Figure 11. (a) Chuyue Chiguan (the New Moon Pool Pavilion); (b) Boxi Yuyin (the Boxi hermitlike Fishman House); <https://www.dgkeyuan.org/gjcp/ylgj> (c) Guanyu Yi (the Fish house); (d) Ke Ting(the Ke Pavilion). <https://www.meipian.cn/315gxkmo>.



Two ponds: One is the octagon pond with a solitary stone setting at the entrance. The pond and stone are refined which created a quiet and secular contemplation. The other is a square-shaped pond named “Qu Chi” (the Zigzagged Pond) in front of the Shuangqing Room (the Lotus and Bamboo House). The courtyard ponds in central Guangdong are small in scale, mostly in the form of revetments, and the plane layout is mainly in geometric shape[] (Mo Bozhi, 2003, p.5). The pond in the Keyuan garden is L-shaped, uniform and neat. The pedestrian corridor around the pond has various twists and turns, advancing and retreating concave and convex, forming a variety of rich spaces. The Ke Xuan (the Osmanthus Hall) and Shuangqing Room (the Lotus and Bamboo House)

around the pond are arranged in the same way as the L-shaped (Figure 12).

Figure 12. (a) The Octagon Pond With a Solitary Stone. <https://www.dgkeyuan.org/gjcp/ylgj>. (b) Zhanming Bridge (the Clear and Bright Bridge) and Qu Chi (the Zigzagged Pond). (c) Guanyu Yi (the Fish house) <https://www.meipian.cn/315gxkmo>.



3.3 Couplets on plaques, poems, calligraphy and paintings

Chinese people in ancient times would give their garden a name when it was completed. The name was not chosen at random but it had its implication. Its should be suggestive, yet not explicitly expressed[] (Chen Congzhou, 2018, p.54). In the form of pictures and texts, inscriptions and plaques, it is the most general and most beautiful description of the scenery. The couplets and plaques in the courtyard buildings are the display and expression of literary artistic conception, deepen the viewer's understanding and imagination of the artistic conception expressed in the scene, and generate the imagination and experience of a specific artistic conception. [] (Zhou Weiquan, 1990, p.18). Express the sense of visual conception through abstract and imaginary artistic poetry and words, spread gardening ideas in the form of pictures, words, paintings, etc., highlight the personality temperament and values of the garden owner, and generate the resonance and dialogue with the audience in the aesthetic activities.

These point narrative carriers connect the whole courtyard space in order to form a physics gardening strategy from point to line to plane, and contain metaphysical semantic narrative and literary connotation from words to sentences to paragraphs[] (Lu Shangming, 2018, p.2).

Conclusion

The garden is not only a functional place to live and visit, but also a stage to express, narrate and cultural exchange. The garden builder and owner as narrators and leaders use the layout arrangement and design strategy to display the plot of life, construct the place, arrange the physical environment space and scene through a certain narrative method, and lead the respondents (users and visitors) view the spatial pattern from a in-motion perspective, and perceive the richness and complexity of nonlinear experiences in the process of linear travel. Zhang Jingxiu, the owner of the Keyuan garden, personally participate in the planning and

construction, and create a courtyard space full of experience through various gardening methods. With the plot, experience and sentimental color of Zhang Jingxiu's own life, he set a unique characteristics to the Keyuan garden: the courtyard space is integrated with the plot of life, and the material environment and the humanistic conception are integrated into one.

Ji Cheng, a master of garden construction in the Ming Dynasty, put forward the idea of "To keep pace with the times and take proper ancient style"[] (Ji Cheng, Ming Dynastic, p127), which prompts us to constantly think about how to inherit the content and form of the excellent tradition while advancing with the times? How to make balance between "change" and "inherit"? The future innovation can develop only by inheriting the fine tradition from the pass. It must be deeply rooted in the foundation of excellent traditional culture to develop new ideas. Under the background of today's era with the theme of green development of landscape ecological environment, Chinese traditional classics play a vital role in the design of modern garden landscapes.

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