FLOWER ARRANGEMENT, A LIVING ART

Heavens, so the Earth-to-Heaven sweep of an Ike-bana arrangement thrills and uplifts the soul. Nobility of line and purity of execution, these are the qualities that make Ike-bana one of the ennobling arts. Truly did the sages of China teach, and truly have we repeated after them "The way of truth is the way of Heaven, and for men to walk in the way of truth is to become as Gods."

NOTES ON THE ORIGIN OF CHINESE PRIVATE GARDENS
CONDENSED FROM THE CHINESE OF WU SHIH CH'ANG*
BY GRACE M. BOYNTON

It is well known that Peking has some of the finest gardens which survive in China, but it is not, perhaps, generally realized that few of them are older than the seventeenth century, and that they are not indigenous to the north. They have a lineage which goes back to Hang-chow and Soochow in the Ming Dynasty, and those gardens in their turn were influenced by developments belonging to the Southern Sung, when a scholar, Li Ke Fei (李格非), compiled notices of both Northern Sung and T'ang Dynasty gardens.** Their origin can thus be traced back to the Wei Ching period.

Like the Middle Ages in Europe, the Six Dynasties presented a spectacle of political confusion, of religious enthusiasm, and of great romantic attitudes.† Life was uncertain, and, in public office, peace of mind impossible. The Buddhist doctrine of withdrawal, and the Taoist philosophy of non-interference were congenial to sensitive minds confronted with social chaos. Appreciation of nature and of art was combined, in many cases, with a romantic recklessness in self indulgence, and an indifference to criticism. It was under such conditions that Chinese private gardens developed as a means of escape from harassing realities.

Scrutiny of the old books makes it evident that before the Six Dynasties, commoners did not have private gardens. Emperors had great parks and pleasure grounds, but under the feudal system only those of royal blood were allowed this privilege. We read in the Book of History (史记) of the T'U Yuan (苑囿), and in the Book of Odes (诗经), the word for garden appears. We are told of lacquer tree gardens and orange tree gardens, and we have the story of the famous scholar Tung Chung Shu (董仲舒) who lectured so earnestly upon the "Spring..."
and Autumn” (春秋) that he did not look at his garden for three years. But the “gardens” mentioned in all these early instances were probably orchards, vegetable plots or mulberry or lacquer tree plantations, and not landscaped at all. The palaces of these early days, however, were influences in later garden development. The emperors of ancient times always built on high foundations, and to get elevation in one place it was necessary to excavate in another. The hole from which building material was taken became a pond; and height and water are necessary and inseparable elements in the Chinese landscape garden.

The chaotic condition of society drove the people of the Wei Ching period to retire to the “Hills and Water,” where the appreciation of natural scenery was cultivated. In personal letters, and occasional poems, scholars and artists begin the record of what has since become a great tradition with Chinese men of letters. We can trace the direction of aesthetic attention to matters which had not been mentioned before—the subtle beauty of the hills of Chekiang in the time between winter and autumn, the cry of the wild geese, and the grace of the bamboo. It is significant that Ku K'ai Chi (顧愷之) now began the painting of landscape. Enthusiasm for excursions into the mountains spread from the scholars and artists to officials who made a fashion of it, so that it is reported that when the Emperor Ming Ti (明帝) asked Hsien K’un (謝邈) how he compared with the Prime Minister, the former modestly replied: “In political affairs I am no better, but I may say that I excel him in the appreciation of scenery.”**

Men of religion had also a share in directing attention to the joys of nature and solitude. Taoist romanticism, a reaction from the Ju philosophy, was most influential, but Buddhist monks founded their monasteries in the mountains where they contemplated nature. Taoist notions and resulting practices must be very briefly summarized. Discussions of fairies (immortals) and of the supernatural are characteristic of Wei Ching scholars. The practice of yang hsien (養性), or cultivation of human nature, which was supposed to make possible the attainment of immortality, began then. Some went up into the mountains to practise alchemy, and wandered about in search of places where they could “put down their stoves.” Still others haunted the hills searching for herbs which would make magic concoctions. And a certain “five stone medicine” was so powerful that the people who took it had to exercise strenuously in order to avoid undesirable results, and therefore climbed mountains.† Furthermore, Taoist teaching was definitely a “back to nature” doctrine. And so arose the “back to nature” cult of ancient Ching.

The philosophy of the Taoist Romanticists has more than one aspect; to give up the cares and troubles of ordinary life and return to the bosom of Nature is one; to be frank and true in daily living, to be indifferent to worldly interests, and to traditional moral codes, and contemporary conventions is another. The Confucians were completely outraged by

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* Biography of Ku K'ai Chi (顧愷之), of Wang She Chi (王獻之) of Wang Hui Chi (王獻之) in the “Book of the Ching Dynasty” (晉書).
See also Miscellaneous Letters of Wang She Chi in “Complete Ching Dynasty Prose,” Vols. 25 and 35.

** “Shih Shuo Hsing Yu” (世説新語) Inter volume p. 25.
† Cf. Miscellaneous Letters of Wang She Chi; also 謝安氏類 on “Yang Hsin.”
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the extravagances of scholar romantics, whose behavior after all had a good deal of wiley common sense in it. Few people of importance in those days came to a natural end, and the romantics who resigned official positions because they were suddenly seized with a longing for the taste of a certain fish in a distant locality, or who contrived to be drunk for months on end when it was essential to avoid doing business which was dangerous or embarrassing were not so very different from more ordinary if less ingenious contemporaries. Their attitude of nonchalance came to be called "jesting with life," a life which was excessively grim when taken seriously.

These romanticists were in the position of men unwilling to compromise with society; the only thing left, therefore, was to escape from it. They built up a philosophy of intoxication; they absorbed themselves in the delights of scenery, flowers and trees, animals and stars. Their love of the arts was another aspect of the same urge; painting and music and sculpture occupied them. Their calligraphy is still considered the best. Their conversation was delightful—so delightful that it is said the Ching dynasty was destroyed by conversation. Of them all perhaps the most significant was T'ao Yuan Ming (陶淵明). He was somewhat influenced by Confucianism and did not share in all of the extravagances of the time. He says, for instance, of the cult of the supernatural:

I have no way of riding on clouds (becoming a fairy).
I have no doubt about the natural end (death).

But he is also author of a famous couplet which scholars still quote to show how a poet may forget himself, become impersonal and achieve an attitude of complete dissociation:

I plucked the chrysanthemums beside the hedge;
In calm I found the southern hills.

The romantic philosophy that roots in Taoism and in Buddhist doctrines and practice produced the first private gardens.* The higher Buddhist monks explored mountains, chiefly in the eastern part of the Yang-tze valley in Kiangsi, Szechuan, and Kuantung to find sites for temples.** The Chinese landscape garden is the outcome of the attempt to translate the aesthetic ideals of the Taoists into a garden form. Monks took it as a matter of course to adopt the landscape garden as a form for the design of monastery gardens. But the landscape garden is more than a business-like method of arranging the space around a temple; it is an aesthetic ideal which is a reflection of a certain way of life. It aims at expressing a certain way of life in a certain kind of environment. In a monastery garden the monks would try to find a certain "five stone garden." It is a back to nature cult of ancient China. The romantic philosophy has more than one aspect; life and return to the bosom of nature, to be indifferent to the surrounding world. Taoist monks, living, to be indifferent to the surrounding world, were completely outraged by the extravagances of scholar romantics, whose behavior after all had a good deal of wiley common sense in it. Few people of importance in those days came to a natural end, and the romantics who resigned official positions because they were suddenly seized with a longing for the taste of a certain fish in a distant locality, or who contrived to be drunk for months on end when it was essential to avoid doing business which was dangerous or embarrassing were not so very different from more ordinary if less ingenious contemporaries. Their attitude of nonchalance came to be called "jesting with life," a life which was excessively grim when taken seriously.

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§ See: Biography of Chang Han (張翰) "Book of the Ching Dynasty."
† See: Biography of Chi K'ang (崔康) "Book of the Ching Dynasty."
* "Shih Shuo Hsiing Yu" (時說新語) p.47. Kuang Chen Yen built houses for meditation in Nan-ch'ang.
"Biographies of the High Monks" (高僧傳) Vol. 5.
** Tao An (道安) at Tai Hang Shan
Chu Fa T'ai (竺法汰), Kuantung.
Fa Ho (法和), Szechuan.
† Biography of Hui Yuan (慧遠尊), Vol. 6.
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Shan (廬山) in Kuling, Kiangsi. The group of the devout who gathered around Hui Yuan came to be known as the White Lotus Society. When lay members were obliged to leave the mountain monastery, they created gardens of their own as nearly like Lu Shan as possible. This marks the first known instance of the spread of landscape ideas from one center.

It was in some such fashion as this that private gardens came down from mountain tops and invaded the cities in the plains. It is at this point that two variations of the garden idea can be distinguished. These differences represent the desire for magnificence on the part of nobles and wealthy people in the north, and for a refined privacy which was sought by scholars with limited means in the south. The gardens of the north were influenced by the famous Chin Ku Yuan of Honan, and those of the south by a group of scholars known as the Lan Ting Party.

We turn first to the Chin Ku Yuan or Garden of the Golden Valley, of which we may read in the works of its owner:

"I have remained a high official for 25 years. When I was fifty years old I left my position for certain reasons, and during my old age I indulged myself quite freely. I liked forests and natural scenery and so I escaped to the villa of Ho Yang (Chin Ku Yuan) which is the residence assigned to me by the emperor. The place was inside a long bank and beside a clear stream. The water encircles my residence. There are pavilions, halls and ponds with birds and fishes. In my household there are people who can dance, and play musical instruments. When I go out I am solely occupied with hunting and catching birds. When I come in I have the pleasure of lute playing and of family life. Moreover, I take drugs with the intention of becoming an immortal."

It appears that others followed the example of the owner of the Garden of the Golden Valley, and competitions in luxury resulted. A little later it became customary for nobles and eunuchs to acquire merit by presenting their gardens to monasteries, and surviving records of these give us our first idea of ancient gardens in cities. Since the following passage is the most detailed account of this stage of Chinese gardens, we quote at length:

"To the south of Chin I Li is Tsao Te Li (names of two roads). In this li there were five residences. Chang Lun’s (張倫) was the most luxurious. His buildings were bright, his furniture and clothing and curios were very fine. His equipage was more impressive than a king’s. His garden with its hills and ponds was not surpassed in beauty by those of any of the princes. He built a range of hills called the Chin Yang Shan which appear to be natural hills. Inside these hills were double peaks and complicated ranges connected with deep streams and valleys. He had high woods and huge trees which screened the light of the sun and the moon. The creepers hanging downwards would let the mist go in and out. The zigzag stone paths going up and down

1 For other mountain monasteries see “Shui Ching Chu” (水經注).
2 There are some records of private gardens a little earlier than the White Lotus Society. Mr. Wu considers it possible that there was parallel development of monastic and private gardens.
3 Preface to “Homesick Poetry” (思歸錄).
4 See also the preface to the Chin Ku Poems in “Complete Ching Dynasty Prose,” Vol. 33, Page 13.

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hill seemed to come to an end (literally “be stopped”) every few steps, but in fact led on to something else again. The stony and curious streams twist for a time, then go straight once more. The lovers of natural scenery were enchanted with this place and forgot to go home."

Accounts of the Lan Ting Party or the Guests of the Orchid Pavilion give us our information about early private gardens in South China. The host, or “leader” of the party, was Wang She Chi (王羲之), and he, his sons, relatives and friends wrote poems which have come down to us. All these people loved natural scenery, and many of them had their own villas. Their verses were composed at garden parties, where a little bowl of wine and a song were deemed sufficient entertainment for congenial spirits.

It is rather difficult to get a clear idea of what these ancient gardens of the south were like, since there is no compilation of records such as were preserved in monasteries of the north, and the materials are scattered. We can only pick up, here and there, the remark of an historian or a line of poetry. But it is quite clear from the references we have, that the villas of the south were different from the magnificent gardens of the north. There is more emphasis on simplicity and beauty of situation in the south. One poem which may be regarded as typical has this passage:

“In my garden I have driven away all the cares of the world. The place is clean and broad. I selected a site against the northern hills and my window faces the southern river. I stopped the stream with a dam. I planted the hibiscus (槿) evenly before my round window, and all the hills were in view from them.”

Five mou of land seem to have been enough to enable a scholar to retire, and the villas were built either against or upon the slopes of the mountains, or else near rivers. It was not necessary, therefore, to attempt great artificial effects. Generally speaking, gardens in the north surpassed those of the south in imposing architecture, and elaborate landscaping; and those in South China excelled in their situations and in space relations to natural scenery. In North China only princes and wealthy people could afford gardens. In South China we find Tao Yuan Ming so poor that he begged food from his friends, and was sometimes so faint from hunger that he could not get out of bed, and yet he had a “plot of more than ten mou; a courtyard of eight or nine rooms, with elms and willows to cover the caves, and peach and pear trees standing before the hall.”

We should remember that the difference in the soil may have been another influence. In North China, pines and yew require stately architecture, while in South China bamboo and chrysanthemum combine with forms of building which are at once pure and delicately simple. But


See also the same work the poem “T’ing Shan Fu” by Chang Tao T’eu (常寳志) describing the scenes of a certain prince’s garden. This contains the first mention of flowers in Chinese private gardens.

1 “Complete Ching Dynasty Verse,” Vol. 5.

Such as Sung Chu’s 蘇軾 Poem on “Retirement” (退朝見詩) quoted in “Notes of Shih Shuo Hsing Yu.”

** “Chang Lung” 楊柳 “Planting Trees in a Southern Garden” (南方種柳教秧歌).

† Tao’s poem on “Retiring to the Field” (歸田吟).
the interests and tastes of the two sections probably were the determining factor. In the north the owners were luxurious and ostentatious; in the south they were scholarly and bent upon retirement.

The red gate is no glory
It is not better than to stay in a little cottage.

DIVINATION AND RITUAL
DURING THE SHANG AND CHOU DYNASTIES

BY
H. E. Gibson

The Chou Li (周禮) or Ritual of the Chou Dynasty was based upon that of the preceding dynasty, the Shang, which in turn had borrowed many of its ceremonial rules from the ritual of the Hsia. Divination by scorching the tortoise shell was part of the very strict ritual of the first three dynasties of China, and had close connection with animal sacrifice in ancestral worship ceremonies. As is shown by the oracle bone inscriptions on a great many of the bones handed down to us, it was a part of the Shang ritual to consult the oracle by scorching the tortoise "whether or not five oxen or a specified number of other animals should be sacrificed." Divination and sacrifice was held very sacred by the people of the first three dynasties, and the ceremonies connected with these were carried out according to a very strict ritual.

We are told by Dr. Leo Wieger in his "History of Religious Beliefs and Philosophical Opinions in China," that "The tortoise shell was chosen, due to the fact that its dorsal carapace and its flat ventral plate, resembled the celestial bell revolving on its edge on the terrestrial plane, which was the ancient Chinese notion of cosmos. The animal lodged between the two shells represented humanity. The shape being analogous, then there must be essential correspondence." The tortoise shell selected for the purpose of divination was held sacred, and we find that during the Chou Dynasty, the cock and the dog were sacrificed by the sorcerers for the direct purpose of sprinkling their blood on the shells to break all spells and to keep the shell inviolate from evil influences. For the same reason the sorcerers took care to drive away from the approaches to habitations inauspicious birds, especially owls. When their cries were heard during the night arrows with bone heads were shot in their direction. During the Shang period bone arrow-heads were probably commonly used for other ceremonial purposes, as many have been discovered buried with and mixed amongst the oracle bone fragments. The majority of the bone arrow-heads are uninscribed, while others bear inscriptions in the Shang pictographic forms.

Buried together with oracle bone fragments in the yellow earth of Honan are found many curious bone objects that probably played an important part in divination by scorching the tortoise, sacrifice and other ceremonies. They form a very interesting collection, and, as time advances, we shall probably learn more concerning their intended pur-