INFLUENCES OF TURKISH CULTURE ON THE CHINESE UNDERSTANDING OF GARDENS IN EARLY AGES

Mahire ÖZÇALIK*

ABSTRACT

Chinese gardening arts, arranging with brought together natural and cultural elements which involve various characters in a functional manner, are attracted by the many landscape architect today. Chinese culture was affected by the Sky God religion of Turkish and features being holly of the nature and assets in this religion are resulted as respecting to flowers, trees, stones, water, sun, in short to nature in Chinese culture. The significant improvement of gardening art culture in Chine was especially the more influence of this religion. Chinese garden art, holding important place in the garden art, reached the current situation with the effect of various religions and cultures. Studying the historical development of this art, attracting the interest of many landscape architecture, would definitely help us better understanding of the Chinese gardening philosophy. In this article witch topic is “the Chinese of the Turkish Culture on the Chinese Garden Philosphy and Art”, Chinese garden culture and the influe
ncing factors of this culture are studied with the sight of Confucianism and Taoizim which have two thousands years history and resembles in a very good manner the Chinese cultural considirations and religious life. Also, Chinese garden arrangament philosophies, religious movements influenced these philosophies and influencing factors of these religious movements on the garden philosophies are investigated for forming todays the gardens which have these values. In this study, it is targeted to examining the basic concepts of Chinese traditional gardening art and philosophy with studying the Chinese culture and emphasized the effects of Turkish Culture on the Chinese gardening art. Also, the effects of Turkish culture, religions and life style on Chinese culture and gardening art philosophy are studied for revealing the factors affecting the Chinese gardening philosophy.

* Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi, El-mek: mahira.me@gmail.com
STRUCUTRED ABSTRACT

One of the destinations of migration by Turks who came out of Central Asia due to various reasons was Northern China, while these regions became a Turkish land. If we look at the Chinese living in Northern China today, it is clear that they adopted various aspects of Turkish culture (Yusupcan, Y. 2009). This study, by discussing Confucianism and Taoism which have a history of more than two millennia and can reflect the Chinese culture, philosophy and religious life in the best way, investigated the Chinese gardening culture and the factors affecting it, and examined the gardening philosophies of the Chinese, religious movements that influenced these philosophies and the effects of these religious movements on gardening philosophies in terms of formation of gardens of such nature today. Recommendations were made regarding carrying this movement of the Chinese that came out of their lifestyle and culture and this understanding of gardening that reached our days into further generations. In addition to these, this study summarized the general characteristics of the Chinese approach on gardening and emphasized the development, transformation and interactions of these approaches through history in the scope of information on things such as the foundations of the old Chinese culture and civilization, the effects of the old Turkish culture and civilization on the Chinese culture and civilization, some Turkish states established by Turks in the pre-Islam period, the effects of Turkish culture, understanding of state and government on the Chinese, on their life views and beliefs, Turks’ love for trees and sacred trees, and transference of this belief to the Chinese. The Chinese approach on gardening was explained and its art was described. Considering the studies on the Chinese art of gardening and material examples of these, it is possible to see the effects of Turkish culture on Chinese culture. Research findings indicate that Chinese culture was affected by Turkish culture and reflect the effects of this culture on the Chinese garden culture. In this context, Eberhard (1977) stated that the effects of Turks on the general culture covered the entirety of social life. Firstly, a literature review was conducted with the aim of determining the historical, natural and cultural values regarding the topic of the study. In line with the data obtained as a result of the reviews, basic characteristics of Chinese culture and civilization were examined, and in suitability to the purpose of this study, the philosophical thoughts that were influential on development of the Chinese art of gardening, as well as pre-Islam Turkish states in Asia that affected these philosophical thoughts. Turkish culture was established and developed on life in the steppes. This culture differentiates from Chinese culture, which depends solely on permanent settlements. Therefore, since the first periods of encountering Turks, the Chinese were interested in Turkish culture, and they were affected by this culture in every aspect of life. We can see the traces of Turkish culture in Chinese culture in many fields such as economics (horse breeding), military (advanced military organization, state government), religion (Tengrism), as well as fields of art such as music, painting, theater and various other fields. As seen in this study, the relationships between Turks and the Chinese in terms of art history and various cultural aspects, as in many other aspect, are intertwined and intense to an extent that would appear as a commonality most of the time. Especially the role of Northern China was effective on this. Northern
China joined the country of China as we know it today only after a certain period. We now know that the area in the north of China was resided in the early times by the Chinese, but even more abundantly in comparison to them, by Turks and other peoples. The Turkish-Chinese relationships in the historical perspective are highly complex. The reality that we can see today is; as in the cases for other societies, Turks also entered China, and in that, effectively, and in this sense, they created the history of China side by side by the Chinese. The clearest examples that demonstrates only the military dimension of the influence of Turks on China is the Great Wall of China. This magnificent structure of 6 thousand kilometers of length and 300 million cubic meters of size that was built to protect China from attacks coming from the north, is like a memorial that represents the intensity of the Turkish-Chinese relationships.

Chinese garden art, holding important place in the garden art, reached the current situation with the effect of various religions and cultures. Studying the historical development of this art, attracting the interest of many landscape architecture, would definitely help us better understanding of the Chinese gardening philosophy. Chinese culture was affected by Turks' Gok tanri religion. In this religion being holy of the flower, tree, stone, water, sun etc. emerged as giving respect to nature in Chinese culture. Important development seen in garden art culture in China was widely affected particularly by this religion. Basic concepts and general characteristics of Chinese conventional garden art and philosophy are studied in this dissertation. Additionally, to present the factors affecting Chinese gardening philosophy, effects of the faiths and life styles of Turks on Chinese culture and garden philosophy are explained. For the Chinese, the garden is a space where they can find their feelings for and spiritual meanings in the nature and improve these. The Chinese have a wide variety of plants due to the suitability of the ecological conditions that they have in the geography they live in. Plant species with different symbolic meanings and trees that have calligraphic characteristics such as the weeping willow (*Salix babylonica*), the pine (*Pinus*), the cypress (*Cupressus*) that are used in gardens, reveal that these gardens carry an artistic value much beyond merely imitating the nature. Various shapes of rockworks that represent mountains or a small surface of water represent a part of the nature. There is an underlying spiritual force in the formation of the Chinese art of gardening. As seen here, the fundamental approaches by Confucius, Laozi and Buddha on respect for, resemblance to and reverence to the nature are overlapped by the Tengrisim approach of Turks. Therefore, it may be argued that the fundamental philosophies that formed the Chinese philosophy of gardening were affected by the culture that was created by the belief of Turks in Tengri. Due to both historical value and characteristic features, Chinese gardens have a different place among other arts of gardening. Chinese gardens where naturalism and respect for the nature are dominant, with a philosophy influenced by the beliefs of Turks in Tengri, have asymmetrical characteristics and are natural. A Chinese garden serves the purpose of unification with the nature. Additionally, rockworks, hills and mountains are significant elements of Chinese gardens and landscape values. Usage of elements and designs that are unique to Chinese gardens is not sufficient by itself to make that garden a Chinese garden. Attention should be paid to place the elements to be used in the applied designing process for relation to the nature and understanding nature within a composition in compliance with the
meaning they contain. For this especially the philosophical approaches of Confucius and Laozi should be learnt and known. If Chinese gardens are implemented this way, only than they will truly continue their existence.

**Keywords:** China, China Gardening Art, China Gardening Culture, Turkish Culture

**İLK ÇAĞLARDA ÇİN BAHÇE ANLAYIŞINA TÜRK KÜLTÜRÜNÜN ETKİLERİ**

**ÖZET**

Çeşitli karakterlerdeki doğal ve kültürel elemanları fonksiyonel şekilde bir araya getirip düzenlemesini sağlayan Çin bahçeleri, günümüzde birçok peyzaj mimarı tarafından ilgi duyulmaktadır. Çin kültür Türklerin Gök Tanrı dininden etkilenmiş ve bu dinin doğayı ve varlıklarını kutsal sayması gibi özellikleri Çin kültüründe de çiçeğe, ağaça, taşa, suya, güneş ekleme tabiata saygı duyulması ile sonuçlanmıştır. Bahçe sanatı kültürünün Çin’de önemli gelişme göstermesinde özellikle bu dinin etkisi büyük olmuştur.


**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Çin, Çin Bahçe Sanatı, Çin Bahçe Kültürü, Türk Kültürü, Türk Kültürünün Çin’e Etkisi

1. **Introduction**

Gardens of early ages were colorful spaces where vegetable and fruit plants were grown, surrounded by ornamental and flowery plants, containing natural beauty. People have been shaping their surrounding as the first thing since early ages, and kings would build large and visually rich gardens not only for use as a symbol of power but also for their personal enjoyment. The practice of shaping one’s surroundings that started with the emergence of humanity was a very small-scale
practice at first, but it developed throughout the history in various stages, and created the concept of landscape architecture by reaching its large-scale form today.

Agriculture started between the years 2737 and 1697 BCE in China, and it developed a lot. The history of garden arrangements in China is older than 4000 years. The first examples of this may be traced back to the times of the Shang dynasty (1600-1027 BCE) in 2000 BCE. Shang kings used mountains and forests for hunting and travelling. Chinese garden arrangement came out from a reference to this primitive form (Zhang, J. J. 2003). In the year 206 AD, gardens looking like natural views were formed. The inspirations for these gardens were various legends.

One of the destinations of migration by Turks who came out of Central Asia due to various reasons was Northern China, while these regions became a Turkish land. If we look at the Chinese living in Northern China today, it is clear that they adopted various aspects of Turkish culture (Yusupcan, Y. 2009). This study, by discussing Confucianism and Taoism which have a history of more than two millennia and can reflect the Chinese culture, philosophy and religious life in the best way, investigated the Chinese gardening culture and the factors affecting it, and examined the gardening philosophies of the Chinese, religious movements that influenced these philosophies and the effects of these religious movements on gardening philosophies in terms of formation of gardens of such nature today. Recommendations were made regarding carrying this movement of the Chinese that came out of their lifestyle and culture and this understanding of gardening that reached our days into further generations. In addition to these, this study summarized the general characteristics of the Chinese approach on gardening and emphasized the development, transformation and interactions of these approaches through history in the scope of information on things such as the foundations of the old Chinese culture and civilization, the effects of the old Turkish culture and civilization on the Chinese culture and civilization, some Turkish states established by Turks in the pre-Islam period, the effects of Turkish culture, understanding of state and government on the Chinese, on their life views and beliefs, Turks’ love for trees and sacred trees, and transference of this belief to the Chinese. The Chinese approach on gardening was explained and its art was described.

2. Materials and Methods

This study fundamentally investigated the traditional Chinese gardening culture which brings the accumulation of history and culture to our day and has unique values, and the factors that affect this culture. The developments and changes that took place and reached our time in the Chinese art of gardening were investigated and results were interpreted.

Firstly, a literature review was conducted with the aim of determining the historical, natural and cultural values regarding the topic of the study. In line with the data obtained as a result of the reviews, basic characteristics of Chinese culture and civilization were examined, and in suitability to the purpose of this study, the philosophical thoughts that were influential on development of the Chinese art of gardening, as well as pre-Islam Turkish states in Asia that affected these philosophical thoughts.

3. The Effects of Turkish Culture on Chinese Culture

The effects of the Chinese on Turkish culture constituted the only topic on the issue up to know. However, Turks also had deep influences on Chinese culture.

Turks, known to be the first dwellers of Central Asia, made the area that covers the provinces of Shaanxi and Gansu today their cultural center in the mid-3000s BCE (Eberhard 1977). Turkish culture primarily developed and advanced on life in the steppes. In many ways, the same culture surpassed Chinese culture, which was based on permanent settlement. Therefore, the Chinese were interested in Turkish culture and they went under the influence of it. Sinologue Prof. Eberhard (1943) reported that emergence of a Chinese culture was supported by different peoples in surrounding
regions. Among these peoples, Turks were the most influential. Thus, the effects of Turks on Chinese culture cover the entirety of social life. China is one of the destinations after they came out of Central Asia due to various reasons, while the region they visited became a land of Turks. When we look at the Chinese living in Northern China carefully, various indications of the deep-rooted Turkish culture are clear. The effects of Turkish culture in China were seen in the Neolithic culture which constitutes the foundation of today’s Chinese culture known as Yangshao. In the Yangshao culture, which experienced its most prominent periods in the mountainous regions of Northern and Western China in around 2000 BCE, glazed pottery became important and presented a typical characteristic. This became a mixed culture which also contained Turkish elements in it. Scholars agree on the idea that Turks developed stained pottery, which is known as the most important characteristic of the culture in question. It is known that, in 1800-1500 BCE, the Xia Dynasty, which is known as the first dynasty founded by the Chinese, was formed based on the Yangshao Culture. In this culture, bronze was seen for the first time as a new cultural element. The reason for the formation of the Xia Dynasty may be the import of bronze. Bronze, again, was passed to the Chinese from Turks. As the shapes of the ancient weapons looked like those in Siberia and mythology and some specific evidence showed that bronze came into China from the North and did not originate in China, all these indicate that bronze was brought to Eastern Asia with the help of Turkic peoples. Accordingly, the art of bronze foundry was imported by Turkic peoples for the first time (Eberhard 1977).

In the period of the Shang Dynasty (1600-1027 BCE), the effects of Turkish culture continued, and the culture of Shangdi related to a Supreme Deity in China was gradually replaced by Tengrism of Turks. Di is an agriculture-soil god. Soil is described as the supreme goddess. Later, with the influence of Tengrism, Di turned into a god-king who is the ancestor of humans. In the first periods of the Shang Dynasty, that is, in 1450 BCE, the most important animal of Turkish culture, the horse, was brought into China. Additionally, chariots also entered China. This way, after the Shang Dynasty was transformed by the increasing effect of Turks from the North, it spread and expanded into the region where Turks and Turkic tribes had been living since the ancient times (Eberhard 1977). It was emphasized that the Turkish elements in the Shang culture were not exclusive to this, and it was claimed that the language of the Shang people was actually Turkish (Togan 1981).

It started to be accepted by Turcologists in the 19th that the Zhou Dynasty (1050-256) which was mostly known as a dynasty founded by the Chinese, was actually established by the Turks who came from Central Asia, and the ancient Turkish beliefs, understanding of law and various Turkish words passed to the Chinese through the same dynasty. Chinese scientist Shui-zhong-shu also stated that the Zhous came to existence from Turks who were mentioned in Chinese resources as Bi-Di (“white Turk”) (Yusupcan 2009).

3.1. Understanding of State by Turks and Its Effects on Chinese Government

Starting from the early ages, Turks started from Central Asia and carried out massive migration activities towards India, Asia Minor, Central Europe and the Balkans. People of the steppes how traveled on horseback from province to province to find grazing for their animals, established a certain amount of political organizations in different periods of history. Various branches of Turks who moved towards the west and south before and after adopting Islam associated in the form of governments, established policy and government systems, and founded various states. In the pre-Islam period, the largest and most prominent of these states were the Huns, the Gokturks, the Tabgachs and the Uighurs. The general form of community among old Turks was an “il”. Based on its size, a Turkish il was classified as a “Small il” (consists of four tribes), a “Medium il” (consists of two Small ils), and a “Large il” (consists of two Medium ils”. “The Largest il” consisted of two Large ils (Kafesoglu 1980).
Eberhard (1941) stated the following in his work titled “Die altchinesische Kultur und die Türken”: “The highly developed political organization capability in all nomads primarily due to their economic structure, is the most important element of Turks’ contribution to formation of Chinese culture; religion, philosophy and family structure also got mixed in this element. These constituted the foundation of the emerging Chinese culture and thanks to these, Chinese culture continued its development and did not disappear until now.”

In the Zhou period (1050-247 BCE) where the real history of the Chinese started, the northwestern influences on the local culture increased completely. The Zhous, who were claimed to be descended from Turks, believed in the Tengrism religion, which contained the cults of sun, moon and star. Tengrism, whose initial effects were seen in the period of the Hans, continued to play an extraordinary role on the Chinese. While, previously, the Shangdi cult of a Supreme Deity was dominant in China, the Zhous eliminated it and replaced it with the cult of naturalism and heroes. The capital Luoyang was accepted as the center of the world due to the influence of this religion. The ruler, who finally gained high powers, was raised to the level of “Son of the Skies/God”. The Zhous brought a new system of government and new beliefs into China. W. Koppers also accepted as horseback-riding Turks who brought a new state system from Central Asia to China (Togan 1981).

According to the Hun (Turk) sources in old times of China, it is seen that the Huns had a very large and organized state structure. When we look at the work by Almas (1989) named “A Short History of the Huns”, Batur Tanrıktut divided the country into four states. He governed the central part himself, and his sons governed the other parts. The khan who governed the side where the sun set had very important powers. Hun youths were usually cavalries, and the color of the horses mounted by each troop was different. Tanrıktut’s army was able to reach 400 thousand soldiers and the horses were divided into four different color groups as ak (white), yağız (black), doru (brown body, black mane, tail and foot tips) and al (red-brown, reddish chestnut color). The officers in the army included 40 major generals, 400 squadron leaders, 4000 captains and 40 corporals, constituting 44 thousand and 400 officers. In this period, instead of slavery and a primitive social order, the Huns adopted a patriarchal and semi-feudalist state structure. The perfection of the state and army organization also shows that the Huns had a feudal order, and there is some evidence for this. For example, even a few centuries before the common era, they achieved great advancement in mining. The letters written by Hun khans to the emperors of the Han Dynasty were on a very high level in terms of content and literary style. Again, the Huns, used the Orkhon-Yenisei alphabet even in a few centuries before the common era.

Within the long historical process, Turks have shown great material and spiritual success in culture and they shared this success with other peoples. The effects of Turks on Chinese culture demonstrate this clearly. On the other hand, the Chinese adopted cultures from various nations along their history, passed that culture through their own filter, integrated with their existing culture, and managed to create a new culture that was quite different than the original. It is a reality that the Chinese have made not only cultures but also peoples resemble them by melting them down in their own culture.

3.2. Effects on the Beliefs of Turks

Turks have been under the influence of several different religions or belief systems throughout the history. The belief systems of the oldest Turkic peoples consisted of a three-part approach on religion including the ancestor cult, nature cults and the Tengrism cult. It may be stated that the ancestor cult was the most deep-rooted and the oldest beliefs among various old Turkic communities. The ancestor cult, which consisted of an approach that mixes fear and respect coming out of the belief that the ancestor will help the family after death, continued its existence among Turks without losing anything from its power even after the spread of unfamiliar religions such as Buddhism and Manicheism (Turan 1994).
Various interpretations have been made regarding the religions and beliefs of the Steppe Turks. It is possible to gather the religious beliefs of the Steppe Turks around these issues: Belief in natural forces, respect for ancestors, Tengrism, Islam and other religions (Kafesoğlu 2004).

The old Turks believed in the existence of various hidden powers in the nature. They believed that several things in the nature such as mountains, hills, rocks, rivers, valleys, springs, trees and forests had souls. In addition to this, they also believed in partly deistic forces such as the sun, the moon, the stars and thunder. Spirits were divided into two as good and evil. They believed in male gods and a goddess named “Umay” (Göde 1992).

Turks played an important role in the spread of both the Buddha and Mani religions in China.

In the period of 550-280 BCE, the foundations of the entire Chinese philosophy and societal order were established, and great philosophers also emerged. Among these, the doctrine, social philosophy and political goal of Confucius, who is known as “Chinese Socrates”, that reached our day, were based on the Tengrism approach of Turks and the philosophy of law that comes from it. Therefore, Confucius’ description of god as the greatest power, association of state-family, god-ruler and moral thoughts were in parallel to Turks’ approaches on god, rituals and morals. Another evidence that shows Confucius’ narration and explanation of old Turkish viewpoints was that he used the word “Tien”, which was not a Chinese word, to talk about god. He always used this word in his book Lun Yu (the Analects) to refer to the Skies and God. This is nothing other than the ancient Turkish word for “God” (Tengri) (Kafesoğlu 1980). As explained, the teachings of Confucius actually are not related to the Chinese understanding of God. Therefore, Eberhard (1977), who conducted great studies on this issue, rightfully said: “Confucius’ doctrine is only a development over Tengrism.”

3.3. Chinese Art of Gardening and Its Philosophy

Rather than political and social circumstances, schools of the Chinese art of gardening are based instead on a spiritual force that gives them continuity. According to the Chinese, the universe consists of two fundamental principles as Yin and Yang. A person is a product of the nature. We see the respect for nature shown by China in its prioritization of the beauty of nature in literature and arts. A traditional Chinese garden is natural, it praises naturality. It finds an expression in naturally beautiful views. Only by looking at water, we see that; the shapes of water in Chinese gardens describe the rivers and streams in the nature. The rocks, bumps, puddles and running water in Chinese gardens are like a miniaturized example of nature. Paintings and religious beliefs have played an important role in the emergence of Chinese gardens. Elements in Chinese gardens have a set of religious and philosophical meanings. In summary, it may be stated that, whether they are large or small, Chinese gardens have the quality of expression on being together with elements of nature (Wang 2005).

While Chinese gardens are gardens of philosophy filled with symbols, they form a perfectly harmonized composition of plants, rocks, water, mountains, animals and structures. Pictures and inscriptions on bronze plates showed that the classical Chinese garden of the Zhou Dynasty (1122-256) appeared inferentially 2000 years ago in a completely different form in comparison to the philosophical foundations of the West (Wang 2005).

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In order to know about the Chinese gardening culture more closely, it is especially needed to comprehensively investigate their culture and social structure. Chinese philosopher Confucius lived in the Shandong province of China between the year 551 and 479 BCE. According to his philosophy, the sky is the father and earth is the mother. The always based the humankind’s
relationship with the society, the state and the sky on this self-recognition. Accordingly, when the person knows themselves, they will comprehend that they are a part of their family, the nature and the sky, and they are not separate. A result of this approach is that a person’s goodness is in harmony with the family, society and nature that they are a part of. Based on this, according to this philosophy, the feeling of “reverence and respect before the universe” is a result of responding to the absolute truth that makes our life purposeful and meaningful (Wang 2010).

Another philosopher who discussed the issue of gardens and green spaces in China was Buddha. There is no spatial restriction in the garden philosophy of Buddhism. He achieved to animate a set of universal scenarios that made the simple spirit of the nature felt in a small garden. The most important elements of Buddha gardens are rocks, pebbles and sand. Each rock has a different meaning based on its shape, color and structure. Rocks symbolize the earth, the sky, mountains, islands, and even animals. The resulting composition reaches its purpose by the person finding themselves and forming their own miniature world (Roach 2003).

The 3rd philosopher and one of the most significant philosophers of the garden and green space philosophy in China was Laozi. Taoism, which emerged in China in the 2nd century, had a history of about 1800 years. Taoism is based on worshiping the nature and ancestors, which was widespread in China in the ancient times (Li 1999).

According to Laozi’s philosophy of Taoism, the universe emerged as a result of combination of existing yang and nonexistent yin. The ultimate goal of Taoism is reaching immortality. Every person should abide by the order in the nature and release the whims in the soul. This way, the person reaches internal peace.

Chinese gardens, which leave an impression as if they would be difficult to understand at first, present their true meanings to those who are open to enjoy them with all their senses and open their hearts and minds, and those who can read symbols. “These gardens are spaces for philosophers who teach overcoming life by perceiving senses” (Zhao 2008).

In summary, China’s unique climate, geographical characteristics, soil structure and its opportunities for various different plants to grow, have provided significant contributions to formation of the Chinese style of gardening. Chinese gardens are a product of the thousands of years of accumulation of Chinese culture, cultural, geographical, philosophical and religious interactions, and belief. Particularly, a Chinese garden is a garden of philosophy that aims to lead the art of living into a triumph which is filled with attributions, metaphors and symbols.

4. Conclusion

Considering the studies on the Chinese art of gardening and material examples of these, it is possible to see the effects of Turkish culture on Chinese culture. Research findings indicate that Chinese culture was affected by Turkish culture and reflect the effects of this culture on the Chinese garden culture. In this context, Eberhard (1977) stated that the effects of Turks on the general culture covered the entirety of social life.

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would appear as a commonality most of the time. Especially the role of Northern China was effective on this. Northern China joined the country of China as we know it today only after a certain period. We now know that the area in the north of China was resided in the early times by the Chinese, but even more abundantly in comparison to them, by Turks and other peoples.

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