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Re-finding Place: The American Japanese Garden

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Re-finding Place: The American Japanese Garden

Abstract
Japanese gardens embody a distinct appeal and value as prominent and esteemed aspects of Japanese culture; yet, the precise qualities that allow for these gardens, as a whole, to maintain and perpetuate this renowned cultural status remains indeterminate. By investigating the symbolic meaning and consumption patterns associated with the overall Japanese garden space in both Japan and in the United States, specifically at the internationally renowned Portland Japanese Garden, this thesis will explore the larger question of how Japanese gardens holistically function not only as a traditional art form and practice and an approach in the engagement of cultural restoration and preservation, but furthermore, as a new function of a form of resistance to globalization. Given the data from my work in Japan and at the Portland Japanese Garden, I hope to contribute to the larger anthropological discussions of space versus place consumption along with the importance of cultural restoration of symbolic landscapes.

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Re-finding Place:
The American Japanese Garden

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Forest Grove, Oregon
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This project is dedicated to my Bachan and Mother;

the rocks of love and wisdom in my garden.
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Glossary of Terms

Tsukiyamasansui—“pond-hill garden”

Hira-niwa—“flat garden”

Karesansui—“Dry-landscape”, a garden style that uses rock and stones to mimic the appearance and movement of water in a landscape

Baban—Great grandmother

Nikujaga—A potato and meat stew

Bachan—Grandmother

Genkan—area near entrance of garden where you remove your shoes
Abstract

Japanese gardens embody a distinct appeal and value as prominent and esteemed aspects of Japanese culture; yet, the precise qualities that allow for these gardens, as a whole, to maintain and perpetuate this renowned cultural status remains indeterminate. By investigating the symbolic meaning and consumption patterns associated with the overall Japanese garden space in both Japan and in the United States, specifically at the internationally renowned Portland Japanese Garden, this thesis will explore the larger question of how Japanese gardens holistically function not only as a traditional art form and practice and an approach in the engagement of cultural restoration and preservation, but furthermore, as a new function of a form of resistance to globalization. Given the data from my work in Japan and at the Portland Japanese Garden, I hope to contribute to the larger anthropological discussions of space versus place consumption along with the importance of cultural restoration of symbolic landscapes.
Chapter 1: Returning to the Garden

Statement of Purpose

The study of anthropology is centered upon human beings. As the discipline of anthropology is concerned with studying and analyzing human life in historical contexts, it also retains a focus on examining human life in the present, which then provides important information for predictions of human behavioral patterns in the future. The sociocultural branch of anthropology focuses specifically on the behavioral patterns of human beings throughout time, furthermore, how humans adapt to the plethora of cultural, political, economic, and environmental changes that occur.

In our current day and age, the branch of sociocultural anthropology is consistently finding itself bombarded with new behavioral patterns that are directly resultant from our dynamic world. Such current behavioral patterns become increasingly important to sociocultural anthropologists as these patterns form the foundations for their analyses of present and human action. Our world is changing at an increasingly rapid pace with the onslaught of capitalism, globalization and severely intensifying environmental issues. Human behavior, as a dual force of causation and also the direct recipient of such drastic changes, becomes exceedingly important to assert.

The question of how these various issues effect human behavior and action becomes of increasing importance. One area that sociocultural anthropologists have examined as both effected and affected by such cultural, political, economic and environmental changes are cultural forms and traditions. Recognition of the symbolic importance of traditions within any given culture is essential as traditions are the mediums through which culture can be sustained and perpetuated through successive generations.
The evolution and transnational movements of traditional and modern cultural forms, especially within regard to the onslaught of globalization, becomes an area of interest and thriving discourse. Anthony Giddens discusses globalization as a compression of time and space mechanisms; the effects of globalization can be seen on a daily basis in overwhelming ways. In effect, our world is becoming more dense; no longer are countries and cultures separated by large oceans and mountains. By living in a society where internet usage and technology have become habitual, we can access foreign cultures with nearly the click of our computer mouse. As globalization continues to bring countries and cultures within close proximity, the question of how a given culture's forms and traditions are affected becomes important.

One of the signifying characteristics that globalization personifies is akin to modernity, where the rapid movement of not only industrial society but also ideas took place. This fast paced world that we currently inhabit has created a disconnect with the slower paced movements of pre-modern cultural forms. By living in such a globalized world, we are rapidly losing not only physical but cultural connection to these forms and traditions. Having become accustomed to such swift changes and movements of society, stability and motionless moments become of great value. Many search for these quiet moments when the world is able to briefly suspend its movement and it is in these still moments that human action and thought can be carefully performed and, more importantly, understood.

How then can society go about accessing these moments in a society that now foundations to functioning primarily in these radical modes of change? This thesis proposes that acquisition of such profound moments is achieved through engaging in what Keith Basso refers to as place-making\(^1\), which can be inferred as a form of cultural restoration. Place-making is actively sensing a

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\(^1\) Expressing “a lived connection” to an environment or landscape.
place or as John Dixon Hunt writes “place-making of high quality involves the meeting, the conscious engagement and interchange of object and subject.” (2000) To engage in place-making behavior requires 1) finding a place that you can connect with and 2) listening to the stories that the place has to share. As Hunt also explains “places tell stories to those who will listen….No place lacks history, be it geological or cultural, each history will contain something unique, some element that makes its story locally significant, *sui generis.*” (2000) Thus, this thesis examines the practice of place-making as a process of revealing the narratives and stories of a place.

Cultural restoration, within the context of this research, is re-finding such places in our lives that are important for the wisdom and stories they possess. Re-finding such places includes not only remembering them but experiencing them through the act of place-making, as Keith Basso writes, by “drinking from their wisdom.” One of these places that holds the key to this form of cultural restoration is the Japanese garden. My fieldwork and research proposes that a Japanese garden represents more than just a collection and arrangement of plants and flowers, it functions as a *place*. This place has a captivating power to transport and remind individual(s) of where they came from and moreover, to cultivate the moments of motionless that are highly sought after. This thesis specifically examines the place-making patterns correlated to a Japanese garden, as a globalized cultural form, and as a place that functions to connect us back to lost and forgotten wisdom.

In this thesis I will investigate the overall space and place-making patterns of the Japanese garden as it is consumed in both Japan and the United States, specifically at the Portland Japanese Garden. I will explore the larger question of how the place-making patterns of the Japanese garden are a means of engaging in cultural restoration. Given the data from my preliminary fieldwork in

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2 An attachment, emotional, cultural, ancestral or personal, to a particular environment or landscape. Place is what Keith Basso refers to as “a lived connection between a subject and an object” (1996), it is built upon personal experiences and narratives. Basso writes, “places possess a marked capacity for triggering acts of self-reflection, inspiring thoughts about who one presently is, or memories of who one used to be, or musings on who one might become” (1996).
Kyoto, Japan and my qualitative fieldwork at the Portland Japanese Garden, I hope to contribute to the larger anthropological discussion of place along with the value and necessity for cultural restoration engagement and practice.

Using the theoretical perspective of Edward S. Casey’s work in phenomenology, this thesis will first examine the concepts of space and place and their unique codependent relationship. Although space and place are often interchangeable terms, within the context of this research, I differentiate between the terms as they are independent of each other with the concept of space employed as 1) having no attachment to a physical environment or landscape, 2) void of any expression of “a lived connection between a subject and object” and 3) built upon historical philosophies of scientism. This thesis will focus on the phenomenological experience of Japanese garden place-makers, which I demarcate as public visitors, staff members and gardener technicians. Through investigating the phenomenological experiences of such place-makers, this thesis will uncover the sociocultural and symbolic characteristics of the garden. A discussion of these traits will become exceedingly important as this thesis also focuses on how the Japanese garden is one exemplary form of cultural restoration and, furthermore, a potential coping mechanism to the disabling effects of globalization.

One of the initial questions that this thesis first works towards, is defining and exploring how place is experienced. My fieldwork proposes that this is visible and existent through the sharing of narratives, oral histories, the presence of natural elements and our own experiences: these are the precise and enabling elements that allow for a simple garden space to become a garden place. Through the dialogue that takes place within the garden, consisting of the aforementioned elements of sharing narratives, oral histories and experiences, garden place-makers are able to cultivate and

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3 The belief that natural science is the guiding and primary source of reason and knowledge, an emphasis on quantitative data and studies.
experience intimacy with and within the garden. Such intimacy is akin to a motionless moment when the world seems quiet and still. Through these actions, place is both created and re-discovered. Simultaneously, as we create place within the garden, we are consuming the space of the garden. As this shift to place occurs, specific consumption and place-making patterns are the resulting product, such patterns are euphemisms for ways people should use the garden as a place.

This thesis presents itself as an additional perspective and interpretation of the transition from space to place, as in the words of Casey himself, “in a fairly short amount of time.” The history, natural and physical elements and the experiences had by individuals that visit a Japanese garden holistically represents one of the ways that the metamorphosis of space and place can occur. This transition is important, as it occurs every day in a multitude of ways in our own lives; yet, we take these concepts of space and place for granted. To understand the essence of place, where it comes from and what it means can result in a myriad of opportunities, such as understanding the spaces that we come from and the places we desire to go.
Historical Background of Japanese Style Gardens

Japanese gardens are comprised of three unique styles. These styles vary not only in their physical arrangements and composition, but also in their aesthetics and history. Although this thesis is focused on exploring the sociocultural patterns and traits, a brief discussion of the overall history of Japanese gardens is important to set the scene for current Japanese gardens.

The Heian period (794-1185) was the era in which the most noted forms of Japanese style gardens began in Japan. As the gardening tradition was imported to Japan by way of China and Korea, it was during the Heian period that the garden making tradition began to gain importance as it experienced stylistic changes with the subsequent changes in Japanese house architecture (Tatsui: 1959). However, before such architectural changes, Japanese garden scholars have published literature noting that the first form of a “garden” dates back to early beginnings in Shinto history where rocks were specifically arranged as a form of honor. It is believed in Shinto that kami or gods are omnipresent in nature, they inhabit trees and rocks. (Nitschke: 1997). This early and foundational cultural belief in the importance of nature as a vessel for worship to kami is exceedingly valuable to understand within the context of Japanese style gardens. This revered devotion to nature is an essential component not only within Japanese garden history but also within Japanese culture overall.

One of the earliest forms of the Japanese garden was the tsukiyama-sansui, or hill and water garden. The notable characteristics of this garden style include a hill that is usually adjacent to a pond or stream. As the tsukiyama-sansui style garden was created during the Heian period where gardens contained features that functioned alongside the architecture of a Japanese home, the tsukiyama-sansui was intended to be viewed from the parlor area so that a triangular view of the garden, with the hill as the furthest focal point. A variety of cultural superstition design principles are
emplaced in this garden style, such as asymmetry to prevent the presence of evil spirits along with a variety of symbolic stones and trees (Tatsui: 1959). As this thesis is focused upon the sociocultural impacts of the Japanese style garden, extensive detail about Japanese style garden principles will not be employed as a great number of leading design architects and gardeners have published widespread publications; however, the placement and usage of the tsukiyama-sansui style as an integral component of the overall architecture of a Japanese style home is important to recognize as it indicates the importance of the physical existence and place of the garden as an extension of the home where all residents and their guests can not only see the garden, but also walk through the garden on its path and experience it.

The hira-niwa, or flat garden style, was a subsequent style that developed following the tsukiyama-sansui style. The notable feature of this style is that the garden is designed and created in a flat area without a pond or a hill, in essence in contrast to the tsukiyama-sansui style, yet the intention to designate a symbolic space still remained a focal point. Tatsui writes that “it is believed that the scenic feature of the sea, the lake, or the pond are taken as the model. Garden designers in the Edo period explained that the hill garden, tsukiyama-sansui, represents the heart of the mountain and the flat garden, hira-niwa, represents the coast or islands.” (16) Although these styles are stylistically opposite, they still cohesively function together to create one distinct garden image. One of the eminent sub-styles of the hira-niwa is the karesansui style which later further developed with the introduction of Zen Buddhism to Japan.

The karesansui style is simple in its physical contents and arrangements. Comprised of large rocks and small stones, the karesansui style uses the raked pattern of the smaller stones to mimic the

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4 Japanese Garden Design, Marc Peter Keane
Japanese Gardens, Gunter Nitschke
Islands of Serenity, Kanto Shigemori
appearance and movement of water. Larger rocks are used to represent mountains, landmasses and even people (Itoh: 126). The power of the garden seems to be subsequently derived from the varying arrangements of the fore said stones. These gardens allow for a wide variety of interpretations, which also is a significant contribution to its appeal as a powerful and majestic garden style (Foster: 5). Meaning “dry landscape,” the karesansui style embodies a distinct appeal and value as a prominent and esteemed aspect of Japanese culture; yet, the precise qualities that allow for this garden style to maintain and perpetuate its renowned cultural status, as compared to other garden styles, remains unknown.

The tea-garden style elicits the most visible consumption patterns by individuals as the tea-garden is used for the traditional tea ceremony that takes place at a tea house (Tatsui: 1959). The tea ceremony is a highly detailed and retains significant cultural importance in Japanese culture and history. As the ceremony itself retains detailed precise precision, as does the garden that accompanies it. Guests of the tea ceremony would follow specific and proper protocol while within the tea-garden in order to attend and participate in the actual tea ceremony. Such protocol includes waiting in the machi-ai, a waiting place where a guest will wash their hands and wait to be summoned by the tea master. A slow and contemplative walk then follows this into the inner garden rest-place or koshikake. It is believed that through these ritualized protocols that a tea ceremony participant would be able to not only physically but also mentally and spiritually prepare and cleanse themselves for the ceremony (Tatsui: 1959). Here we can clearly see the connection between a cultural form, tradition, behavior and the impact on the construction of place.

These three garden styles will be employed as lenses through which individuals can begin to understand the sensation of place. The garden positions itself as an intermediary point between human beings and nature. Japanese gardens are more than just a gathering of plants, rocks, they are
cultural forms embedded with narratives. This thesis explores the power of place, illustrating that physical places, like Japanese gardens, are integral part of our lives: they function more than just as spaces of aesthetic pleasure. The places in our lives are living remnants of our culture and by re-finding them; we are able to experience the momentary stillness in our continuously moving globalized world.
Personal Narrative: A Sense of Place

I listened, like trying to hear the dropping of a pin in a room full of chatter, wind blowing through windows and cell phone finger button pushing, and then, what seemed like an eternity later, I heard it: “Ryoanji”; three syllables that eased my tensions and allowed me to breathe once again. I stumbled out of my seat, stepped off the bus stairs and then it appeared through the smog of the now departing bus’ exhaust fumes. So this was it? The famous Japanese temple and karesansui style garden, Ryoanji. Again, I repeated those three syllables, ryo-an-ji, that just a few mere seconds ago had the magical powers to alleviate the tension building in my body, but now, where did that magic go?

I was standing on a busy road surrounded by trees, questioning again was this it? I really don’t feel it at all. I followed the path up to the main gate, paid my admission and received an English-Japanese brochure of the history of the temple and garden, but I still didn’t feel it yet. I followed the other visitors to the garden, all of my senses alert and ready, waiting for any type of cue or signal to let me know that I was in the right place, and that this right place would allow me to feel “it.” Entering the genkan, the area in the entrance of the temple where you remove your shoes upon entering the temple to view the garden, I thought to myself, what am I doing here?

Taking off my shoes my feet slid along the wooden flooring, although it made a cracking sound as I glided across, it felt like silk beneath my feet. Following the gliding tourist group immediately in front of me, looking at my brochure, trying to decode the puzzle of the kanji characters, I looked up, and saw the rocks. That first moment that my eyes locked in on them, they glistened in the sun, even though they were so far away and distant, I felt close to them, their emanating warmth from the sun was so inviting.

As I approached the garden, I felt small, yet it was mysteriously comforting. The walls of the garden encapsulated me, creating a warm barrier; I felt protected. The rocks reassured me that I was
in the right place and that these walls would comfort and protect me. The raked patterns of the gravel beneath the rocks were mesmerizing; my eyes became lost in their lines and patterns. I spent the next twenty minutes, sitting on the wooden veranda, overlooking the garden, I felt as if time had frozen itself for those brief twenty minutes. Despite the ominous clouds of chattering visitors and the continuous clicking of camera shutter buttons, time was still able to slow down, inviting me to join as its partner in a melodic waltz with the garden as our music. I did not realize it but at that moment, I was experiencing that feeling I had ventured out to find.

When I was getting ready to leave the garden, I returned back to the genkan, and as I sat down to put my shoes back on, I was immediately surrounded by distracting sound, the chattering of incoming visitors, the dropping of high heeled shoes on the delicate silk floor and I realized the waltz was finished, time was back at its normal pace. I was no longer in the garden, the rocks and raked patterns were no longer present to slow time down and play the music, I realized, I had just felt it, I had just experienced place.
Chapter 2: *Delineating Space*

Literature Review

If the rocks could only speak, their stories could rake the patterned shapes and lines of the garden, divulging incredible and unimaginable stories. The historical setting of the karesansui style garden space is crucial; in order to be able to experience these gardens and their metamorphoses into places from mere spaces, an understanding of their historical context is essential. Francoise Berthier’s *Japanese Dry Landscape Gardens: Reading Zen in the Rocks* (2000) and Gunter Nitschke’s *Japanese Gardens*, provide exceptional imagery of the historical setting of the karesansui garden style along with the other styles of Japanese gardening.

Berthier discusses the importance of the karesansui style historically, emphasizing its place as a cultural product of the time in Japanese history where Japanese culture and society experienced a “renaissance” of their culture (Berthier 2000). During this time, Japan broke their strong ties from China, which meant no longer borrowing China’s ideas and aesthetic principles. Japan confronted the task of creating and cultivating aspects of their culture that they could be proud in declaring as distinctively “Japanese.”

The importance of the physical presence of the rocks in the garden is also an important historical component of the garden. Berthier highlights that the rocks are an essential element of the garden as they are highly symbolic and encompass an esteemed cultural value that has roots in *Shinto*, one of the foundational religious systems in Japan. Clearly painting the relationship between the karesansui garden style and Japanese Zen Buddhism, Berthier illustrates how these gardens initially began as meditative practice rituals for Zen Buddhist monks and that the garden’s roots are directly
related and connected to the Zen Buddhist values of minimalism and further towards the goal of achieving inner enlightenment through the use of natural materials (Berthier 2000).

Having visited a variety of karesansui style gardens in Japan, I can understand the importance of this garden space as an active and living remnant of Japanese history and culture but moreover, the garden’s role as a mnemonic device to the rich history of Japanese Zen Buddhism. As Berthier describes the significance of the rocks, they are described as the key components of the garden style and further of the entire landscape. These rocks have an all encompassing power of sustenance, the ability to retain the stories of the garden and the creators and users of the garden for generations. In alignment with this power of sustenance, the rocks have a forceful quality of “stillness,” being able to pause, and almost freeze time with their simplistic existence. Berthier’s work is beneficial in providing the historical context for exploring the present day consumption patterns of this garden style (Berthier 2000).

Nitschke’s work in *Japanese Gardens* provides detailed information along with vivid photography of an overall history of all the various styles of Japanese gardens. With information about the mythical origins and religious connections that Japanese gardens also encompass, this book provides a great introduction to Japanese gardening overall. Using mythical and religious origins as grounding base and furthermore as part of the exploration of the presence of Japanese gardens in Japan, this text is functions from an etic perspective, a foreign approach to exploring this rich history of gardening (Nitschke 1999).

Part of experiencing any type of garden or garden style requires indescribable moments. These are soft moments where you close your eyes, take a deep breath in, and as you exhale, trust that your senses will provide you with guidance, instead of your mind. This approach to *experiencing* a garden, the space of the garden, is an example of the larger theoretical perspective of
phenomenology, which is one of the foundational theoretical frameworks this thesis will employ. Edward S. Casey’s *How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena* (1996), draws upon phenomenology to describe the concepts of space and place and their individual, yet dependent identities. Space and place are two terms that will be used throughout this thesis; however, it is important to establish that they are not interchangeable terms as we will later explore through the work of Casey and other frameworks. Casey positions place as a product of space. Writing “places become the compartmentalization of space,” he purports that place comes before space, and furthermore, that place is directly reflective of culture. This approach is abstract and innovative but resonates in explicating the differentiation between the similarities of space and place. One of the key passages Casey describes that nicely encapsulates his overall work and the objective of this thesis is, “there is no knowing or sensing a place except by being in that place, and to be in a place is to be in a position to perceive it” (Casey 1996).

Casey’s phenomenology of space and place is applicable to the Japanese garden space, although the discussion of terminology of whether it should be the Japanese garden space or Japanese garden place is a primary focus in this thesis. The Japanese garden place terminology indicates that the overall symbolic space of the garden is then a place, as people seem to attach meaning and a unique “garden culture” is the product of the overall garden space. Casey’s framework is critical in the chapters exploring the differentiations of space and place. The phenomenological approach embodies a great magnitude of feeling and experience, which are also pertinent in this discussion as a majority of the data of this ethnography will encounter these issues of human feelings and personal experience (Casey 1996).

An additional component to the phenomenological experience of the place of the garden includes how to go about physically viewing the garden. What may seem like a mundane almost
insignificant act of viewing the garden is actually a considerable constituent of any discussion regarding garden consumption. John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing*, provides the precise supplementary discussion and examples of the power of sight in seeing and experiencing place. Berger’s theoretical expansion of sight and place, although framed around the context of European art history, is applicable to the Japanese garden context. Stating, “Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak. But there is also another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it.” The discussion of sight, and “ways of seeing,” although abstract, are essential, as seeing the garden is a fundamental aspect of being able to later experience the garden as a place (Berger 1972).

After opening your eyes, and relinquishing control back to your mind from your senses, you have experienced the space of the garden. But now, using Casey’s perspective, “how do we get from space to place?” In a garden space, one plausible way is through sharing stories. Keith Basso’s ethnography *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (1996) like Casey’s phenomenological approach, tackles the abstract concepts of space and place. Basso gives meaning to these terms by personifying them through his stories he experienced during his ethnographic work with Western Apache in New Mexico. The standout excerpts in his work are the discussions of place making, place naming and place worlds. Eloquently noting, “what people make of their places is closely connected to what they make of themselves as members of society and inhabitants of the earth” becomes a key point in beginning to understand the complexity and importance that the concept of place encapsulates. Basso illustrates these concepts and more through the stories of his informants and through the pictures of the landscapes they create through their words, which is also an applicable theme to Japanese garden forms (Basso 1996).
Although Basso’s ethnography is centrally focused on a different culture, environment and informants, his discussion of the value of place as a reflection of society is a theme that can be applied to this thesis. Like many of the place worlds that Basso’s informants shared, the garden too has similar characteristics of being a place world that contains stories of the history and culture of Japan. Additionally, the “consumption” of places, primarily how Basso describes his informants of “drinking of the wisdom” that remains in a place, is a potential consumption and experiential pattern found in the Japanese garden place. Garden visitors, admirers and workers, by nature of physically being in the garden are consuming the place of the garden; whether it is wisdom in the form of relaxation, contemplation or even confusion as to what they are observing. Conceptualizations of Basso’s concepts of place names, place worlds and “drinking of wisdom” are important to understand the embedded lessons and deeper consumption patterns in the garden.

Thomas F. Gieryn’s article entitled “A Space for Place in Sociology” (2000) presents an additional means by which to distinguish and differentiate space and place. Place is a concept, an entity that people seem to naturally and almost instinctively recognize; yet the full scope of comprehension on a social scientific level has yet to be fully accomplished. Thus, Gieryn attempts to carve a space for place. Defining place with three significant attributes, geographic location, material form and investment with meaning and value, Gieryn argues that places gain a social consciousness through various types of individual and group social action. Gieryn writes “places are made as people ascribe qualities to the material and social stuff gathered.” Gieryn’s work is concise and straightforward, writing, “space is what place becomes when the unique gathering of things, meanings, and values are sucked out. Put positively, place is space filled up by people, practices, objects and representations,” the examination of the metamorphosis from space to place within the Japanese garden context can be explored (Gieryn 2009). If Gieryn’s theory of the gathering of things and meanings is applied, does it indicate that the gathering of people and physical objects in the
garden space directly makes it a place? For example, if a garden were void of such natural elements such as rocks, trees, lanterns and people, would it still be perceived of as a place, or just an empty space? This characteristic of the physical presence of objects in a space is a relevant approach to further examine.

Any discussion of space and place theory would additionally not be complete without the inclusion of Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1974). Lefebvre’s work is focused on the topic of “space” in a holistic approach incorporating a variety of elements from literature, art, architecture, and philosophy. In his discussion, Lefebvre identifies types of space; in particular “social space” is important, especially in the context of this research because it is a social construct. Lefebvre’s discussion of “social space” as a theoretical framework to apply to the Japanese garden space is unique as Lefebvre’s themes of the abstract nature of space encompass social elements that are applicable to the Japanese garden space, which contains both of these almost paradoxical elements of abstractness and sociality (Lefebvre 1974).

En route to experiencing the garden as a place, the history of the garden space is equally important. In *Gardens of Japan*, author and arguably if not the most eminent name associated with modern Japanese garden architecture, design and history, Mirei Shigemori, discusses his extensive survey of gardens in Kyoto, the former ancient capital of Japan that continues to house many of Japan’s historical and cultural relics. Therefore, it is essential that this thesis includes not only his impact on and in the Japanese garden space, but moreover, his actual contributions to the field. Shigemori’s work is important because it presents an emic perspective, he was a native Japanese garden designer designing gardens in Japan; yet many would critique his work as “modern” and classify it as “foreign” which positions a unique debate among scholars in the Japanese garden scene (Shigemori 1949).
Shigemori’s work functions as authenticating evidence in the importance of the space of the Japanese garden as a cultural artifact from Japan. Because this book was published in 1944, it shows the history and legacy that Japanese gardens encompassed from previous time and furthermore, that the topic of gardening has a rich and detailed history.

A component of the history of the garden space as it becomes a place includes the smaller stories and histories of the elements in a space that are often overlooked. Simon Schama’s *Landscape and Memory* (1995), captures this precise quality. The overall space and place of the Japanese garden is a landscape, and Schama’s approach the concept of “landscape” is exceedingly rich and innovative. Although his work is framed in a European context, his approach of exploring the stories that are centered about the elements in landscape are applicable to this thesis. His writing style is innovative, as he transitions between different scenes of the European landscape; he simultaneously weaves through history (Schama 1995).

Schama’s discussion of the importance of wood is valuable, as he taps into the symbolism of rock, which is an essential building block within the Japanese garden space. Schama’s approach to landscape in this thesis helps to reorganize the connection between narrative, natural elements, and cultural meaning as he describes in grand detail, the narratives and symbolic stories that are carried through generations by the physical elements in a landscape. Within a Japanese garden, this precise theme of the natural elements encompassing the stories of history is prevailing and with Schama’s lens, I believe that it will be a vital source of contextualization for the data of this thesis.

The physical elements within the Japanese garden space prove to be resilient points of easing the transition from space to place. A more descriptive and specific example of the power that such physical elements encompass within the garden space is best depicted through Jiro Takei and Marc P. Keane’s modern translation of the historical *Sakuteiki*, one of the oldest known expositions about
gardening in Japan. Entitled, *Sakuteiki: Visions of the Japanese Garden* (2008), this book is a “modern translation of the Japanese gardening classic.” It provides an English translation of the historical *Sakuteiki*, the oldest written documentation of gardening history in Japan. The book explains the historical context and setting of Japanese gardens along with the significance of the elements that are part of a garden. Additionally, this translation provides instructional data of rock placement and the attached symbolism to each position of the rock, which is an essential component of garden making in Japan. This work is important to my research as it is a cultural artifact from the Japanese garden scene; it was written to be used as a manual and guide and because of this nature, proves to be reflexive of the varying consumption patterns associated with garden making (Takei 2008).

These frameworks and supplementary references cohesively function to create what are the walls of the garden that this thesis explores and manifests. With these foundational walls in place, we can now begin to explore the interior of the garden, investigating the distinctive elements found within that allot for the karesansui garden to serve as a puzzling example of Japanese gardens and furthermore, as a mystifying aspect of Japanese culture and history.
I was raised in Kaneohe, Hawai‘i, on the island of Oahu. As the fourth generation of Japanese ancestry in my family, my family was beginning to forget Baban’s recipe for niku-jaga, we kept having a more difficult time communicating with my Uncle Wally’s wife from Japan, Michan, and we could not even remember my Bachan’s favorite Japanese song she used to sing when she would play cards with her friends. My family and I had become disconnected from our Japanese heritage. It was often difficult growing up in Hawai‘i, a place that had retained deep cultural ties to Japan and being unable to cultivate a true sense of a “Japanese” identity. Granted it was a conglomerate identity of Japanese, Chinese, and Hawaiian but nonetheless that anchoring and sense of place was gone.

I did not realize that I had frequently visited Japanese gardens from when I was 3 years old. Before my Bachan passed away, she would take me to Byodo-In, a replica of a Buddhist temple in Japan. It was a 15 minute drive from our house. After Bachan passed away, I would often go back to the temple, which had the garden that she used to take me to. I always felt a secure feeling when I would walk through the garden, the feeling that it was right to be here and that this place will always hold a special place in my heart. This garden is the only place where I can remember my Bachan, this garden, though small, holds the big and colorful memories of my hand in her soft and wrinkled hand, the balancing act of her big brown sunglasses on my small head, the time when I stuck my head through the rail to touch the water from the waterfall in the garden and she scolded me, this garden is my Bachan’s place. This garden is the place where I can once again hold hands with my bachan and with my Japanese heritage.
After Bachan left us, I forgot about the garden, and something was missing. I began studying Japanese in middle school and traveled Japan for school trips and as we visited the temples and gardens in Japan, I was taken aback by their presence. I did not realize but at those times of visiting the gardens in Japan when I was in middle school, I was beginning to remember Bachan’s garden and my place in her garden. As I continued my Japanese studies into high school, my family slowly began to dig for our lost roots. We started celebrating Haha no hi, Girl’s Day, eating wakame, seaweed and making ozoni, Japanese New Year’s celebration soup. Through these foods and my learning of the language my family and I discovered years of lost heritage. I however, felt that there was still more digging to be done.

When I left Hawai’i to go to college at Pacific University in Oregon, I knew that I need to take the digging my family had started with me and continue in Oregon. I continued studying Japanese and studied abroad in Japan for a year. While in Japan, I visited and studied Japanese gardens. When I went to these gardens, I felt a sense of familiarity, as if I had been here before. This feeling I attribute to Bachan’s garden at home. I had visited a total of ten gardens while I was in Japan, and these ten gardens were the missing pieces I had needed to find, the pieces of Bachan’s garden. Studying Japanese gardens encompasses not only the intricate histories and cultural significance these natural, manmade spaces harness; these gardens are my roots to my Japanese heritage. This is one of the narratives that I found by experiencing the Japanese garden as a place.
Methods and Data Collection

Having a personal connection and history with Japanese gardens, along with Japanese culture, provides me with the passion and urgency to envelop myself fully into learning more about them. Because of my personal history with the gardens, conducting research was simultaneously easy and challenging. At times, I would have twofold etic and emic perspectives. Being of Japanese ancestry and having the personal story and connection to the garden would warrant me with an emic point of view, but learning about the history and design aesthetics would distance me and place me in an etic point of view. The methodological mantra that became a foundation for my ethnographic work was incorporating one of the keystones of sociocultural anthropology: holism. In every facet of my ethnographic methods, I strove to research, learn, speak, think and feel holistically. The garden is a prime example of the value of holism, it is comprised of a variety of elements, plants, rocks, and water, and individually, while these elements are important and unique, together, they function to create an entirely new landscape and way of seeing.

By maintaining the value of holism in my methodological approaches in my ethnographic fieldwork, I am able to assure that the most accurate depiction of the garden is created. Employing inductive and ethnographic research methods holistically; the primary qualitative methodologies I used included open-ended and structured interviews along with participant-observation. In accordance with John W. Creswell’s *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, participant-observation will be used as a means of “gaining firsthand experience” with participants by recording information as it occurs in the ethnographic site. This means of data collection is useful because it allows for the documentation of “unusual aspects” that are not noticed during interviews and moreover, participant observation, as Creswell states is “useful in exploring topics that may be uncomfortable for informants to discuss” (Creswell:1994).
Because the nature of the data collected in this research is qualitative and reflective of personal opinions, sentiments and experiences, this type of approach is crucial in accurately and honestly gaining and presenting this type of information. My preliminary fieldwork in Kyoto consisted of participant observation and semi-structured interviews. I incorporated this initial data as the groundwork for this thesis, which is my senior research and fieldwork at the Portland Japanese Garden in Portland, Oregon. While this thesis draws primarily from my fieldwork observational notes at the Portland Japanese Garden, the introductory field notes from Kyoto became essential in developing my research goals and questions.

My Portland Japanese Garden fieldwork relied upon open-ended and semi-structured interviews. I found this approach to data collection exceedingly fruitful as my informants were able to provide a verbal accounts of pertinent historical information along with one-on-one, personal contact. I, as the researcher, had more guidance and control over the direction of the interview by creating specific guiding questions that will allow for the most efficient collection of data (Creswell 1994). Moreover, because this thesis is exploring the phenomenology, the study of experiences, conducting face-to-face personal interviews was most appropriate qualitative methodology to elicit the personal experience based data. Research based on ethnographic data using these aforementioned qualitative methods was vital in my area of research as it encompasses a holistic approach to data collection, drawing from not only observations of human behavior patterns but also written and vocal accounts of such human behavior patterns. These qualitative method techniques lead to a greater understanding of individual attitudes about the Japanese style garden that can be a lens through which we understand the greater scale of their impact as a means of cultural restoration.

Participant observation data consisted of visits to the Portland Japanese garden where observations of human behavior and action within the garden proximity were recorded. Such
observations included noting the body positioning, the stance, gesturing and movement in and around the varying garden styles. The importance of conducting participant observation is also a cornerstone of sociocultural anthropology as it encompasses attempting to experience the lived experiences of one’s informants, more specifically, attempting to see the world as they do. As a visitor to the garden, I was able to experience the garden as many other garden consumers would. This also involved going on a tour of the garden with a volunteer tour guide, asking questions and more so just being in the garden and observing all of the scenery.

Along with participant observation, open-ended interviews that consisted of broad questions were carried out. Because I only had the month of January to complete my fieldwork data collection, I created two interview guides that were a combination of open-ended and structured questions. My informants were all classified as garden place-makers yet I grouped them into two groups, one being the volunteer guide informant group and the other being the garden staff informant group. The only difference between the two groups was that the volunteer guide informants were volunteers whereas the garden staff informants were all full time employees of the Portland Japanese Garden.

I met a total of nine informants, each interview lasting no more than one hour. All of the informants used in this research had a variety of unique experiences not only in the Portland Japanese Garden but also with gardens and horticulture in general. I am forever grateful to these nine individuals for their time, cooperation in sharing their experiences with me and more so, for sharing their effervescent passion about gardens. They are all, in essence, what I would refer to in my research as garden place-makers, meaning that they inhabit and use the physical garden space but they experience the garden and subscribe to its etiquette and cultural history and significance. Out of these nine interviews, I interviewed four volunteer guides, three females and one male. The volunteer guides provide weekly tours to the general visiting public that visits the garden along with private visiting tour groups.
The tours that volunteer guides provide are designed to provide cultural and historical contexts to help visitors better understand the garden, enhance their experience, and as what one of my informants referred to, “to understand what they are seeing when they are in the garden.” I also interviewed five garden staff workers. These informants included the Volunteer Guide/Event Coordinator, the Garden Curator, the Director of Grounds Maintenance, and two Garden Technicians. The garden staff work more regularly at the garden as compared to the volunteer guides who, depending upon the schedule of tours, will volunteer at the garden once or twice a week on average. This group of staff informants all encompassed unique positions in relation to the garden, and despite their different job titles and roles, each staff member cultivates a relationship to the garden, they all share the similar sentiments of enjoying physically “being in the garden” whether through routine maintenance or pruning or simply taking a stroll through the garden in morning before it opens. This notion of “being in the garden” becomes exceedingly important and defining it means more than just again being in the garden physically, but also intellectually, emotionally and spiritually.

One of my informants, the garden curator, shared extensively with me about one of the alluring characteristics of the garden and that is the seasonality aspect of the garden. Being able to experience and visit the garden in all four seasons, especially during the winter season which, contrary to belief, is a highly favored season despite the cold temperatures and rain. Drawing from this quality of seasonality, I believe that the garden elucidates the senses that a human being has the capacity to experience. Such senses include 1) the aptitude to cultivate a connection to a particular place and/or landscape, 2) engage in reflection behavioral patterns relative to their landscape of choice and 3) share their connection and reflection patterns with others.
This relates back to my informant data sharing about the notion of “being in the garden” and what “being in the garden” truly means. It is more than just a physical stance or stroll through the pond garden up into the natural garden. The presence of “being in the garden” encompasses connecting to the garden intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. This also is a pattern of place-making\(^5\). The garden, then because it is consumed in place-making patterns, has the ability to function as a place. As Basso writes people go to places and drink up of the wisdom, and to be in a place means to be in a place to experience it, because my informants all shared how just being in the garden granted and rewarded them with delight and peace, this illustrates the power of the garden to be more than just a gathering space, but a place.

To acquire the contact information to meet my informants, I relied on the snowball sampling methodology. I initially contacted the garden curator who assisted me in gaining the contact information for the Director of Ground Maintenance and the Garden technicians. For the volunteer guides, I contacted the Volunteer/Event Coordinator who then sent out an email explaining my solicitation for informants to the volunteer guide email list and those guides who were interested and available to meet with me contacted me via email.

As previously noted, I created two open interview guides because of the two different groups of informants; the volunteer guides and the garden staff; however, there was little substantial difference in the context and amount of questions that each set contained, the questions that pertained more to the volunteer guides, such as explaining their role as a guide were included and vice-versa. When I met each informant, I used informed consent forms, explaining to them the nature of my project and that their names and identity would be kept anonymous and confidential.

\(^5\) Connecting with the garden as a place through symbolic behavior
and that their answers to my questions shared would be used solely for the purposes of my research project.
Chapter 4: Finding Place within the Garden

Data Analysis

I first began this project with two questions, the first was why do so many people visit Japanese gardens and second, what makes these gardens so alluring? Through my research, readings books and talking with people and my own personal experiences, I have developed hypothesized answers to such questions along with a reorganization of my initial statement of problem.

Before diving into the results of literary and interview data, it is important to first explain the reorganization of my research. My research consists of three interlocking sections that build upon each other. The first section is concerned with restoration of cultural forms and exploring how and why this type of restoration and preservation is important. The next section uses the Japanese garden form(s) to answer the questions of the importance and significance of cultural restoration and preservation, more specifically, how the Japanese garden form overall is exemplary of cultural restoration and preservation principles. Within this discussion, the topics of space versus place, phenomenology, built environments and landscapes are brought to surface. Moreover, the question of what is a garden comes to be an issue in defining its distinct qualities and characteristics. The last section culminates and ties together all of my research in exploring specifically how the Portland Japanese Garden is a place exemplary of such cultural restoration and preservation of the Japanese garden form and tradition. Through finding the place along with the place-making patterns of the garden, how people are connected to the garden, can function as the starting base for unraveling the mysterious qualities that have allowed for Japanese gardens to be transcendent and preserved for thousands of years.
What is cultural restoration?

As our globalized world compresses time and space mechanisms (Giddens: 1970), it distances and creates a separation between individuals and their sense of place. Basso writes “what people make of their places is closely connected to what they make of themselves as members of society and inhabitants of the earth” (1996). The ability to cultivate a sense of place translates to the action of being conscious of who a person is in relation to their culture, group and larger place within a society. Understanding “what people make of their places” becomes significantly important in the context of enculturation discourse as a grand component of enculturation are cultural traditions; however, globalization has severe effects in these precise forms. As Basso discusses in regard to the Western Apache shifts in landscape, such physical changes, have had deleterious affects on their cultural forms, such as storytelling. When these cultural forms, such as narratives, music, art, dance, and architecture are unable to function to their full capacity as methods of enculturation, cultures can suffer a tremendous loss, such as losing connection to these forms that contain the wisdom of their ancestors that are integral in identity formation processes.

Judy Giles discusses this precise concept of the effects of marked increase in time space compression through globalization. As globalization shapes our world to appear as “a smaller space,” or what Giles refers to as “a global village,” her question of [is there] “any evidence that people are trying, in the face of this [globalization] to retain or imagine a sense of local, individual place in which they can counter the supposedly homogenizing effects of global cultures,” and the answer that my research proposes is “yes,” through evidence of place-making rituals involved in a Japanese garden. Both arguments illustrate resistance to globalization.

Such changes in the way that human beings conceptualize of time and the movement through space has deleterious affects on the way that we organize and situate ourselves in our
environments. Scholars have published extensively on the effects of such transnational movements and flows across nations, borders and time zones and perhaps one of the most noted objects of flow are what Giles refers to as cultural forms. These forms are products, practices and traditions that originate in one location of the world, but find themselves dislocated, removed and re-emplaced in new locations that adopt them. This rapid movement of flow of forms, albeit, draws peoples to be in closer proximity than ever imagined, yet, what are the repercussions for these movements?

The answer, I propose, is that these flows of cultural forms disable their locales, and as previously written, these locales are not only examples of *place*, but they retain monumental significance in the way that we understand and situate ourselves in our environment. Thus, I argue that globalization disempowers *place*. As cultural forms continue to move fluidly and at exceedingly faster rates, places are unable to remain fixed, as they are bombarded with such forms that warrant for consumption by the locale and its inhabitants. Subsequently, two questions arise, the first, how do we go about fixing place, and second, how do we “give place back its power.”

Thus, the study takes this pressing issue to examine how place-making within the garden can function as a means of restoring these cultural forms that are embedded with priceless wisdom and cultural logic. Traditionally, the garden has been viewed in terms of its physical features, such as being a natural area for aesthetic enjoyment along with being an enclosed area for cultivating crops for sustenance. However, examining the garden and its symbolic features reveals that it is a *place*, instead of a mere space. The garden form is a culturally shared entity, with a variety of unique ranging styles, from Japanese, to Chinese, Korean, French, and Italian along with an assortment of other styles. Yet, in only recent literature and academia has the garden form been explored from a symbolic standpoint, specifically in the union of garden theory and cultural anthropology discourse. Looking beyond the fanciful colors and scents of the garden, a long history concerning the garden
and the distinct interaction and consumption patterns that it evokes from its consumers contains astonishing characteristics. One such characteristic is through viewing and consuming the garden as a place for gathering. Specifically, in looking at our case study of Japanese gardens, these gardens were initially designed and created for the purpose of gathering peoples to celebrate an event. As time progressed, the garden became an exceedingly integrated form that was representative of Japanese culture, as gardens during the Heian period were integrated into the architectural plans of homes, thus signifying that a home would not be complete without the incorporation of a garden (Keane: 1996).
Places, “possess a marked capacity for triggering acts of self-reflection, inspiring thoughts about who one presently is, or memories of who one used to be, or musings on who one might become” (Basso: 107: 1996). As John Agnew discusses three key elements of place, he writes

Interwoven in the concept of place suggested here, therefore, are three major elements: locale, the settings in which social relations are constituted (these can be informal or institutional); location, the effects upon locales of social and economic processes operating at wider scales; and sense of place, the local ‘structure of feeling’…Place, therefore, refers to discrete if elastic areas in which settings for the constitution of social relations are located and with which people can identify. (1993:263)

Locale becomes a fundamental cornerstone in placemaking as it serves as a tangible and what Giles refers to as a “concrete context where the micro-episodes of your life occur” (125). Such locales then serve the function as connective devices to latching onto place where meaning, experience and identity form a collective union in shaping cultural logic and wisdom. A simple equation now reveals itself to us; identifying a significant locale plus remembering what makes that locale exceptional and distinctive leads to placemaking, or the cultivation of place. The straightforwardness of what I refer to as a “place equation” is appealing in its simplicity, albeit, the question of how does one actually engage in this practice and second, how can we measure it? Anthropologists, along with other social scientists confront this precise question of how to translate and quantify raw, human emotions into translatable and transferrable data? If we own the categories and types of raw human emotions that placemaking involves, they are all based out of individual experience, no two individuals share and draw from the exact experience in a locale. Thus, we can employ the philosophical approach of studying this very notion of experience, and this brings us into discussion of the phenomenological approach.
Painting a place through experience: The practice of phenomenology

As placemaking within the garden was briefly discussed as a potential coping mechanism to the disabling effects of globalization, phenomenology likewise is another form of resistance to globalization and modernity through its centralization as a study of personal experiences or what founder Edmund Husserl called “the natural attitude.” Edward S. Casey locates what he calls “the convergence of anthropology and phenomenology” through the discussion of space and place. Casey explores how phenomenology, as not only the study of experience, involves the greater mission to reveal the ephemeral traits and qualities within a culture that have become overlooked and taken for granted. The argument of how culture has become overwhelmed by positivism, modernization, scientism and a plethora of more “isms” that the practice of phenomenology attempts to counteract the burying affects of such scientism(s) by revealing the extraordinary imbedded qualities that places hold, by way of studying the experiences has in such places through phenomenology.

The benefit of employing a phenomenological approach to placemaking within the garden is that it “honors the actual experience of those who practice it” (Casey: 1996: 16). By drawing from “experience” as a primary source of data, we are taking a stand for two things, first, showing resistance to the quantitative methodologies of scientific approaches and second, empowering experience by conveying that the such experiences that continue to be overshadowed through positivistic approaches are indeed worthy of value and insight. This begins to position my argument for how the garden functions as a mode of resistance to globalization through its consumption as a place.
What is a garden?

Gardens are often an overlooked component of our society. They are more than just enclosed spaces with plant and flower material, a garden, as one of my informants expressed is,

“A setting where human activities can take place with comfort,
a garden is a product of time and society,
living things in time and space,
a subordinate to what we do.”

In examining the garden symbolically, it is more than just an enclosed area with an arrangement of plants and flowers, the garden functions as both a space and a place; however, it is when the garden functions as a place, through place-making, that we can experience profound knowledge and encounters with not only ourselves but with our larger community. However, before we begin to dissect the qualities that determine the garden as a place, it is imperative that we look at what the garden symbolizes to its consumers, as the accumulation of their individual experiences in and of the garden will help to further the argument of this thesis that the garden is a place.

The garden is dynamic; it is used by different people and thus is subscribed to differently. When informants were asked what the garden symbolizes for them, a variety of responses emerged. The reoccurring themes were that the garden represents a strong connection to Japan and Japanese culture. To provide the reader with a brief snapshot of the history of the Portland Japanese Garden, my informants shared with me that following the inauguration of the sister-city exchange between Portland and Sapporo in 1958, in 1962 the Japanese Garden Society of Oregon was formed with the intention of enhancing the relationship between Portland and Japan through the creation of what is now the internationally renowned Portland Japanese Garden. In 1967, the garden was officially opened to the public. Designed by prominent Japanese landscape architect Professor Takuma Tono,
his purpose in drafting the design plans to build the garden in Portland was to duplicate gardens from Japan in the United States in order to educate westerners on what Japanese gardens looked like. The main goal, as my informants shared with me, of Tono’s design was authenticity, for the garden in Portland to be the best and authentic duplication and representation of actual gardens in Japan. By having the garden form as the symbol of designation for the larger relationship between Portland and Japan was described by an informant in following words,

\[ A \text{ lot of times when we decide to commemorate something, we do it in written form, either with a document, sign or plaque. Yet, with the garden, it is dynamic, like our relationship with Japan. It is constantly evolving and changing, and the garden captures this. } \]

This dynamic quality of the garden of being able to speak without words the significance of a relationship was a theme that was also shared by one of my informants in examining the history of the Japanese garden.

Noting that the garden form was used as a way for Japan to come out of its isolation, to “present itself to the West,” as the garden curator expressed, it encompassed a variety of cultural aspects of Japanese culture, such as \textit{ikebana}, flower arrangement, along with religious and cultural beliefs. As my informant is a native Japanese garden designer, he provided this data with an emic perspective of the historical legacy of the garden as a voice. Because the garden was also an important part of reconnecting back to his home country of Japan and his family, this particular informant shared that gardening was a large component of his family’s history as his elder generations practiced and participated in this tradition. My informant shared with me that it was actually through the garden that he was able to reconnect back to his family and this great legacy. Thus, again we can see a correlation between the function of a garden as symbol and marker of a relationship, unity and solidarity.
Philosopher Emmanuel Kant writes that “there can be no doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience,” thus what we know about the Japanese garden and gardens in general comes from the experience of, at one point or another, being in a garden. Subsequently, because of this experience, whether it is a positive or negative one, there is a connection to the garden. This connection is to the garden landscape as a form of place. As Basso writes, a sense of place is derivative from how people are connected to landscapes of the earth. Thus, the garden functions as a place. This concept of connecting to a garden as a form of place-making became evident in exploring the experiences of my informants. As I support the claim that the simple experience of the garden can be a form of engaging in place-making within the garden, which further denotes it as a place, I asked my informants how they initially became interested in the garden. The prevailing themes of how my informants became interested in the garden included: retiring from a career and/or profession and finding volunteer opportunities at the garden, being introduced to the garden through studying and exposure to other Japanese cultural influences and art, family influences and the pure experience of “being in the garden.” Casey’s argument of employing phenomenology as a means of measuring how place exists and is experienced becomes the fundamental approach to exploring how garden visitors and staff connect with the Japanese garden. Examining the profundity of their personal experiences within the garden illustrates the garden as a place of wisdom and cultural restoration.
“Being in the garden”

When I asked my informants what they enjoy most about the garden, I received mixed emotional responses of excitement, distress, and confusion. This was a challenging question, albeit simple and straightforward, for my informants who are all dedicated to expressing their passion and love for the garden in their own unique way. For them to condense their favorite qualities of the garden into mere words was a daunting task. Nonetheless, a resounding theme they shared was the notion of “being in the garden.”

I thought to myself, what does it mean to truly “be in the garden?” Obviously, because my informants spend a great amount of time at the garden, whether it is providing volunteer tours to the public, performing administrative duties or maintenance of the garden, it was clear that they enjoyed being physically present in the garden. Yet, taking this idea of “being in the garden” one step further, my informants were sharing not only their physical enjoyment of being in the garden, but also connecting with the garden in an intellectual, emotional and spiritual way. To “be in the garden” encompasses all of the enjoyable qualities that they receive from their time spent at the garden. By connecting with the garden, in this multifaceted approach, they are able to enjoy the natural characteristics of the garden, such as “the visual impact of the garden, being surrounded by life and nature,” (Cathy) along with “the quiet moments of the garden…wander[ing] around the garden, its beauty and tranquility” (Frank) and “the physical jobs and construction the garden demands, the variation that comes along with it” (Harry). These qualities of the garden that are enjoyed and desirable by my informants suggest that they are connecting to the garden on a more insightful level than just being physically present. Again they cultivate an intellectual, emotional and spiritual connection which allows these qualities to transpire.
Additionally, the concept of “being in the garden” allows for another shared theme of enjoyable traits that the garden offers, and this is sharing knowledge of the garden. Because my informants expressed experiencing a deeper connection to the garden, they are thus able to communicate on a different level. Such communication includes sharing knowledge of the gardens within the immediate garden community and also within the greater community of visitors and the Portland area.

The enjoyment of sharing knowledge of the garden was a prevailing theme amongst my informants who were volunteer guides. The role of the guide is built upon this very notion of sharing knowledge of the garden with others. The main goals of the volunteer guide include 1) helping people [visitors] understand what they are seeing and experiencing when they come to the garden, 2) sharing their love and passion for the garden with others, 3) encouraging people to come back and experience the garden during all four seasons and 4) helping people to make a connection with the garden, expanding their experience. We can begin to piece things together now. As the volunteer guides share in the theme of enjoying the process of sharing knowledge of the garden with visitors, they define their roles as garden guides, with the aforementioned traits, which is an extension of connecting, or “being in the garden.” It becomes evident that connecting with the garden is not only an individualized, but it also has the capacity to function as a communal experience, as more than one person engages in these distinct patterns of helping people understand what they are seeing and making a connection with the garden. Furthermore, because volunteer guides fulfill this role of assisting visitors to understand what they see and cultivating a personal experience with the garden, they arguably become integral to place-making rituals that take place within the garden. They become the stepping stone that allows a visitor to connect and experience place and practice place-making rituals within the garden.
The garden concept

One of my informants shared with me how the garden is a “concept.” When one adds particular items or maintains the garden in a different aesthetic, one is altering the form of the garden, yet, if one takes all of the elements away, the same and originating concept would remain. The forms then are dynamic, they change according to the season, such as during the fall, the leaves of the trees turn vibrant colors, these vibrant colored leaves change the form of the garden but nonetheless, the concept is what remains constant and the foundation and is what perpetuates the garden, it in essence roots and gives the garden place. Taking this one step further I suppose then, if the concept of the garden remains consistent, we must look to defining and exploring what constitutes the concept of the garden. Is it this very nature of the concept that has allowed for Japanese gardens to continue to be perpetuated and preserved for generations? By latching onto the garden concept, is this where wisdom sits?

My informants provided me with more insight. Every informant was different and unique with their personal experiences with and in the garden but what united them all as garden place-makers was their pure passion and love for the garden. Every single one of my informants was committed to his/her role in the garden whether as a weekly volunteer guide or a daily garden technician; the garden is truly a labor of love. But more so, it signifies a community. The theme of community was a prevailing and resounding word in each one of my interviews. The garden as a community, where people come to gather, reflect and spend their quiet moments is what I believe is the “place” of the Portland Japanese garden. The garden place is a community.

Linking this back to my initial research question of whether the garden is a space or place, I believe now that the garden achieves its status as a place through the people that come to visit and “be in the garden” along with the values of community that the garden encourages and promotes.
The garden, as a collection of plants, water and rocks is a space; it contains a power that invites individuals to come and consume it. It is the physical gathering of people that come to the garden and appreciate it as a place of tranquility and offers them a connection back to Nature that makes the garden a communal place. One can then draw an immediate comparison to Basso’s work in his chapter on giving place back its power. The garden, as a place, regains power through the place-making rituals centralized on building and maintaining community. The garden visitors and staff are giving the Japanese garden place back its power through their consuming of the garden as a community. These place-making patterns come in the form of 1) physically being in the garden, 2) appreciating the garden for its natural beauty and 3) sharing this appreciation with others. By finding this communal place, how people are connected to the garden overall, can begin the tasks of unraveling the characteristics that have allowed for the Japanese garden tradition to be transcendent and maintained over thousands of years. The communal aspect of the garden as the trait that provides it with sustenance and power is evident in garden history, as the garden form was originally created and used as a gathering place. I believe there is much to say for the fact, (historically and anthropologically speaking), of the power of gathering in a place that signifies and denotes meaning in any given culture. Additionally, in relating this to the previous discussion of the garden as a concept that is manifested in a plethora of ephemeral forms, the concept of the Portland Japanese Garden is the value of community that is offered to consumers. It is this precise and foundational value that will continue to perpetuate this garden far into the future.

Examining the garden as a communal place or what one of my informants referred to as “a setting” we can begin to answer the previous questions of defining cultural restoration and cultural preservation. Cultural restoration can be defined with regard to what Basso writes as, “giving back power to place,” or what I would refer to within the context of this research as re-finding place. Cultural preservation is then taking that newly re-empowered place and recognizing it and making a
conscious effort to pass it onto future generations. As the garden is also a community, my informants recognized this trait and shared how they would like to expand and share this community with others not only in the greater Portland area but ultimately, throughout the world. This desire clearly exemplifies and personifies cultural restoration and preservation. The Portland Japanese garden is a committed organization that seeks to use the garden concept and its many forms as a source of place that ultimately creates community to reach individuals throughout the world and furthermore a place that encourages place-making rituals. The garden truly functions as a gathering place, more or less, as one of my informants described as, “a setting where human activities can take place with comfort.”
Chapter 5: *Leaving the Garden*

Conclusion

A Japanese garden represents more than just a supreme union of nature and man-made aesthetics, more than a peaceful and serene place to experience tranquility, more than an intermediary between human beings and nature, the garden functions as a *place*. As globalization disempowers place, through the act of returning to the garden and engaging in place-making by 1) “being in the garden” physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually, 2) restoring community through gathering and sharing stories and experiences and 3) communicating one’s passion for the garden with others, *place* can regain its symbolic power. When I first began my research, I sought to find the answers to my questions of why do large masses of people visit these gardens and what qualities of the garden make them so alluring? I propose that these questions themselves also function as tentative answers, as people that visit these gardens to attempt to discover the qualities that entice and lure visitors.

Examining the Japanese garden as a symbolic place is fundamental in understanding the importance of gardens overall within cultural systems. A garden, whether Japanese, Korean, French or Italian, functions as a gathering place and retains significant value as not only a cultural form, but also as a place embedded with cultural logic and wisdom. My research proposes that garden forms, and moreover natural landscapes, are underestimated sources of cultural logic and deeply embedded with wisdom, and furthermore, function as areas and modes of enculturation.

The Portland Japanese Garden exemplifies this commitment to engaging and preserving the Japanese garden form as a source of place-making and community building. Through encouraging their visitors to experience the beauty of the garden during all four seasons along with all of their
staff and volunteer guides openly sharing their passions for “being in the garden,” the Portland Japanese Garden is an organization that remains at the forefront of the movement to engage in cultural restoration and preservation. The garden staff members additionally are facilitators of place-making rituals, as they individually cultivate intimate relationships with the garden, through their consumption and appreciation patterns, they invite visitors to the garden to engage in similar patterns that overall representative of garden place-making. The garden also represents the union of art, architecture, culture, philosophy and science and it is this precise quality of gathering, in both material and non-material forms, that provides garden forms sustenance to combat the onslaughts of globalization, modernization and capitalism as experienced through generational changes.

As such natural landscapes, like the garden, continue to recede amidst the dust of commercial developments resultant of globalization, it is imperative that not only individuals, but collective groups re-find their respective garden forms so that they may root themselves and “drink of their wisdom.” The Japanese gardens represents a place of stability and motionless movement in our rapidly moving world, “fixed locales,” and the wisdom it possesses, I propose, is the value of community. Through community, individuals and larger cultural groups are able to sustain themselves during periods of economic, political and social change and moreover, understand the spaces that they come from and the places they desire to go.
References


Appendix A: Japanese gardens in Japan

Garden visitors sitting on the veranda, overlooking the garden in Kyoto, Japan.

An example of a karesansui style garden, Ryoanji garden, Kyoto, Japan.
Appendix B: The Portland Japanese Garden, Portland, Oregon

www.japanesegarden.com

(All photo credits: The Portland Japanese Garden, OR)

The hira-niwa style

The natural garden
Appendix B: Informant Interview Guide

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<tr>
<th>Volunteer Guide Interview Questions</th>
<th>Garden Staff Interview Questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. How long have you been at the garden?</td>
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<td>2. What is your role/position?</td>
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<td>3. How did you become interested in garden?</td>
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<td>4. What is the role of the garden guide? Why is it important? What do you enjoy most about being a guide?</td>
<td>4. The garden itself: Why is it important to have here in Portland? What does it symbolize? What does the garden mean to you? Is it important to perpetuate/preserve this tradition?</td>
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<td>5. The garden itself: Why is it important to have here in Portland? What does it symbolize? What does the garden mean to you? Is it important to perpetuate/preserve this tradition?</td>
<td>5. What is a garden? How do you find the balance between pruning a tree for aesthetic reasons and letting it have its natural growth cycle?</td>
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<td>6. What do you enjoy most about the garden?</td>
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<td>7. Why do you think a garden was chosen to commemorate the cultural relationship between Portland and Japan?</td>
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<td>8. What is your vision for the garden in the next ten years?</td>
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<td>9. What do you hope visitors take away from visiting the garden?</td>
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