

# The Comprehensible and Perceivable Language of Man - made Landscapes

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## Abstract:

Gardens are man-made landscapes, and they are deeply impacted by civilizations. Different cultures give different characters to their gardens expressing their cultural interpretation of the natural world. Humans express what they see, building the man-made structures and giving them meanings. Gardens presenting their form, and layouts can be understood as an iconographic language. This paper focuses on two man-made landscapes- Villa d'Este and Yuyuan village, using language and syntax as a lens to explore those gardens. One can read and understand gardens from their features, components, identity, and meanings. The structure of language presents such meanings legibly and clearly. The Renaissance garden, as an iconic object, belongs to a category of semiotics consisting of multiple elements and stories that have meanings behind them. The Chinese village, as a man-made landscape, can also be deciphered as symbolic and therefore can be read in a language.

## Keywords:

Language, Landscape, Perceivable, Genius Loci, Fengshui, Symbolic, Polytheism

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## 1. Introduction

Gardens, as man-made landscapes, act as a sophisticated language that makes thought tangible and imagination possible. They are metaphors of nature, expressing cultural values like beauty, tranquility, sacrality, and the uncanny. By using elements such as fountains, statues, and geometric layouts, gardens create a narrative that communicates human perceptions and cultural experiences. The Renaissance garden of Villa d'Este in Italy and the Yuyuan village in China exemplify how different cultures use their unique languages to create meaningful landscapes.

## 2. Man-made Landscape

The universe is as ignorant of it as a window- pane is of the wasp that crashes against its illusory surface (Georges Bataille, Landscape). The questioning of the world has been constant in every period of human history. People have seen various natural phenomena, and then tried to understand them, summarise them, and express them. Over thousands of years of searching, humans of all civilizations have created ways of communicating with nature, and the various man- made constructions contain

their ultimate thinking about the world. Early civilization interprets man-made constructions as a concretization of the understanding of nature.

Early Mediterranean civilization featured “megalithic,” monumental stones, known for their stillness, were considered an allegory to mountain solidity and permanence. People take stones as an example, developing their construction from natural elements to man-made construction, the standing stone transformed into a phallic symbol, symbolizing reproduction and associated with immortal-permanency. Man-made landscapes developed worldwide in ancient times, from the Mediterranean to ancient China. For Georges Bataille, man-made landscapes are essentially primitive ways of expressing the world.

Norberg-Schulz views landscape slightly differently, believing there are three reasons and ways for humans to create a landscape based on communication with the natural world. Firstly, Symbolization implies that the meaning taken from an experience is translated into another medium. The people of Ancient Egypt were strongly grounded with their own land. This began with cultivation, bringing peace and order to their world. They believed the order and magic of the world are buried under the earth, and it is the magic in the soil that grows crops and brings them food; the roots of plants are grown from soil and protect soil, with the form of temples and columns having been inspired from roots and stems that prevent soil erosion. The temple was the symbol of the plants; the same allegory was transformed from plants to human constructions. Man-made landscapes, including gardens, can be understood as a way of symbolizing. Secondly, visualization: this emphasizes that all man-made landscapes’ prototypes can be found in nature; fountains from cascades, Pyramids from mountains, and so on. Thirdly, the complementary refers to adding what is lacking in the natural world; man-made landscapes can be understood as a bridge to communicate and balance nature.

As G.Jellicoe said: “The garden is pre-eminently the expression of civilization, and in it are reflected the emotions of man and the way in which he regards himself in relation to the universe” [22].

### **3. Structural Reading of Gardens**

#### ***3.1. The Languages of Spaces***

Landscape as a language makes thought tangible and imagination possible [23]. Nature can be seen as context, and garden as a language, with more possibilities to recall people’s perceptions and more cultural experiences. The garden, as a man-made landscape, shows a more complex construction structure and systematic building logic. Gardens are metaphors of nature, interpreting it through cultural values such as beauty, tranquillity, sacrality, and in some cases, the uncanny. Gardens, as a language like literature, use metaphor and rhetoric to express their connotation - emphasizing the landscape’s cultural connotation and spiritual value. In other words, gardens are languages that materialize what humans can see, symbolizing what man expects from nature. Reading gardens is essentially a way of understanding why these cultural phenomena happen and how people understand the world through the lens of the landscape.

Gardens’ languages are hidden behind formal elements, layouts, and characters. In other words, people “receive” the environment and make it the focus of buildings and other constructed things. The things thereby “explain” the environment and make its

character manifest [16]. The character of the space is an intangible feeling that exists in space and, therefore, cannot be measured qualitatively. If we use “form, shape” to describe gardens, then the characters of the garden are the actual content, “form” is like the words or sentences in the language, and the characters are the meaning of the sentence. Therefore, the character of a garden is invisible and cannot be read easily.

In fact their concretization presupposes a language of symbolic forms. Such a language consists of basic elements which may be varied and combined in different ways [16]. Elements may be considered nouns; while once the elements associated with directions could be regarded as a verb. In the western garden, the axis is a verb used for the landscape’s symmetrical arrangement to manifest the order, giving people a sense of security. The cross is a verb consisting of two perpendicular axes giving the garden directions.

Like the cross, the pyramids are a verb as well, defining the space with the direction and sense of security. Egyptians used the Nile as a compass to find north and south, as well as to build pyramids according to the sunrise and sunset, so the west and east were assured. “Vertical axis connect sky and earth receive sun”; the 2D plane is formed with a height turning them into the 3D dimension that orientates Egyptians in their land. The sense of security appears when a person finds their belonging in the natural world. “Full of merit, yet poetically, man dwells in the earth” (Hölderlin, *In lieblicher Bläue*, 481. ). Humans will always find a way to organize their space and create characters to gain meaning and security. Gardens, in a word, are places where people can find their sense of belonging by communicating with nature.

In addition to its language, the garden is a spatial expression; we can also learn from the theory of space studies. Kevin Lynch, in his book, *The Image of the City*, researched space qualitatively, using landmarks, edges, districts, paths, and nodes to describe and define space with three different features:

- a. From boundaries; as a concrete existence, space can be shaped, perceived, and measured, with the boundary being the symbol in which the space manifests.
- b. Space has a 3D geometry; if boundaries depict the 2D features then the 3D is to remind us that space is more than a 2D plane.
- c. Perceptual field; The perceptual field usually refers to the characteristics of space and the feelings that space gives to people.

Boundary and geometry shapes are specific and define a space qualitatively; spaces are described as an enclosure, rhythm (from the center, space extends with a varying degree of continuity), and geometry (used to make a general comprehensive system manifest). Lynch believes that clarity and legibility are crucial in a city setting, and his division method is similar to syntax. Structures and legibility are often used to describe languages. A clear image or structure enables us to understand language and space easily.

Using natural elements as coordinates upon which to build a connection with the human world is a primitive way of expressing the language of the garden. Lynch provides a spatial approach to describe garden space from its components. The mountain is a Noun, a place where sky and earth merge, but when a mountain is used as a symbol, a path is built to create a relation to it, and the mountain turns into a Verb. “A center” from one cosmic to another zone”, and “Place which make the structure fo being manifest” [16]. In ancient China, Mountain ridges were used as the right direction for the village axis to point towards.

Trees in ancient China represent longevity, as well as other related virtues; the process of growing trees is usually related to the life circle. The longevity, therefore, transformed into a Verb that means re-enacting the creation process. A rock is a Noun, too, representing the wildness in western culture, but it also can be a Verb when people make it a material to create “inside” where a person can dwell.

Water is a Noun. In the garden, water is the parable of the natural cascade, the river, even in Renaissance Garden, water makes the static statues seem alive, representing the presence of life. Space, with its unique character is an Adjective. Character is a general comprehensive atmosphere of concrete determinants, with character denoted by Adjectives [16]. In western culture, the Garden of Eden is a sacred place, a geometrical garden was created to express the order of cosmic, which is used as an Adjective to describe the sacred in an enclosure. But in China, it is the ancient gods who associate landscape with legends. From the very beginning, the concept developed differently.

Lynch defines the space in modernism words, the garden was built under different language systems, we may consider gardens as man-made spaces and study through Lynch’s way, but the true meanings and gardens’ vocabularies are different from modern vocabularies, and different cultures also using vocabularies differently. Ancient garden or man-made landscape usually focus on their layout and components, and the relationships between each component and the whole form are used as a language to convey messages. In order to understand the meaning of an ancient garden, we have to use their language to read their garden respectively.

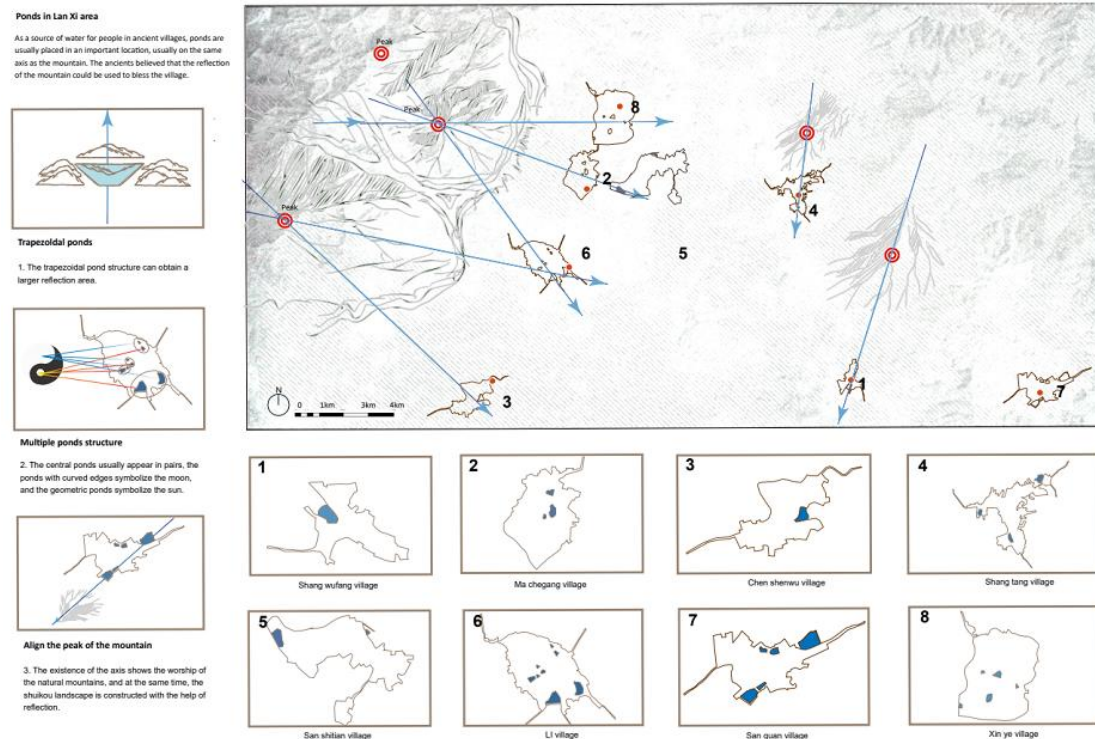
## **4. Chinese Fengshui and Italian Renaissance Garden**

### ***4.1. FengShui language and Genius loci***

The mysterious connections among the various elements surrounding the environment, such as mountains, water, wind, air, soil, and sunlight, as well as their relationships with traditional humanistic theories like Qi, Yin-Yang, the Five Elements, and the Eight Trigrams; these connections reveal and imply the current living conditions and future fortunes and misfortunes of the inhabitants.) Fengshui is a words belongs to traditional Chinese language, (The mysterious connections among the various elements surrounding the environment, such as mountains, water, wind, air, soil, and sunlight, as well as their relationships with traditional humanistic theories like Qi, Yin-Yang, the Five Elements, and the Eight Trigrams; these connections reveal and imply the current living conditions and future fortunes and misfortunes of the inhabitants.) which is used to describe the layout. Mostly, Fengshui is considered a superstitious concept. However, Fengshui can be used to judge a place because it is a special language. A good Fengshui (usually refers to a good space arrangement that benefits people or brings good luck) is actually a standard syntax in Chinese culture. (Figure 1) A good Fengshui layout usually involves the layout, direction, mountains, river, path, and other geographical features. A standard Fengshui mode is finished when all these elements are gathered properly. Because mountains, rivers, trees, and other elements are not merely natural things; instead, in Chinese culture, they present metaphorically.

When it is in the right place, the allegory of the layout can be read and understood. Another concept similar to Fengshui is the Genius loci, the character of the space. In Norberg-Schulz theories: “The genius loci of the classic landscape is therefore first of

all manifest where clearly defined natural places are emphasized by the loving care of man” [16]. Under the certain impact of culture or era, garden space is given with different meanings; Genius loci exist as the inner identities. Fengshui and Genius loci are essentially special languages that depict certain spaces in their own words. Only when readers can read in Fengshui terms can the deep meanings be understood.



**Figure 1.** The relationship between villages and mountains. Accessed 25 June 2022.

#### 4.2. The layout of the imperial tombs in the Qing Dynasty

In ancient China, there was a longstanding tradition of constructing tombs to resemble mountains, known as “building tombs to imitate mountains,” “using mountains as tombs,” or “relying on mountains for tombs.” The tombs of the Qing Dynasty inherited the system of the Ming Dynasty, also reflecting this tradition. The tombs of various emperors and empresses were collectively referred to as mountain tombs. They were meticulously selected and built in locations with perfect environmental landscape quality and geological conditions, nestled among mountains and rivers, conforming to the natural terrain [25]. The traditional Chinese philosophy, which developed from a long agricultural civilization, emphasizes the relationship between nature and humankind. Most thinkers, from the Zhou Dynasty to the pre-Qing Dynasty and up to the Qing Dynasty, preached the cosmological concept of the unity of heaven and humankind.

In a nutshell, this view of the universe sees humankind as an organic part of nature; it believed that there were universal laws of nature, i.e., the Way of Heaven and that the moral principles of human morality are also consistent with the laws of nature. The ideal of life is the pursuit of harmony and contract between heaven and humankind. Fengshui as a concept was firstly used for layout design in the Qing Dynasty imperial tomb. The emperors believed good Fengshui could bring good luck and power in the afterlife. The mountains, as the highest point on the earth, were therefore related to the most powerful man, so the tombs often align with those

mountain peaks. The relationship between mountains and tombs creates an invisible axis. This axis sometimes extends for kilometres.

We have a saying to describe these long extending axis, “One hundred feet define the form, one thousand feet define the momentum.” [25] A distance of a thousand feet represents the general form, and a distance of a hundred feet represents the concrete form. In Chinese traditional landscape construction, the man-made structure is a catalyst that makes “hidden” natural orders and beauty manifest. Examples of the “hidden” manifest abound in Chinese tomb layout design. The axis sometimes presents its forms by a sacred pathway that connects gateways, palaces, walls, bridges, and trees, thus showing the majesty of the building and combining modesty towards nature with the sublime spirit of the building. The axis of the sacred pathway is essentially the catalyst that makes the “hidden” mountain manifest; people used the mountain peaks as the symbol for arranging the tomb direction, connecting nature and man-made structures, and revealing the relationship between man and nature. The same theory was mentioned by Kevin Lynch: “A new object may seem to have strong structure or identity because of striking physical features which suggest or impose their own pattern. Thus the sea or a great mountain can rivet the attention of one coming from the flat plains of the interior.” [13]

#### ***4.3. Italian classic landscape mode***

In the Italian Renaissance garden, under Greco-Roman world influence, statues of deities were the main iconic feature. Greek mythology is an essential topic when talking about the Renaissance gardens; Polytheism originated in Greece, a country featuring several islands with various topography features, giving people a rich imagination; a special mountain peak could therefore be related to a certain god. The ocean, the rock, the wind, the stars, all of these natural elements are the avatar of gods. The anthropomorphic gods and Greek deities are united through kinship; the gods, just like human beings, were believed to have different personalities and characters. Though we cannot deny that, to a large extent, Italian culture is inherited from Greek polytheism, which also explains the sculptures in Villa d'Este, the culture and ideology of Italy are more complex. In the Renaissance garden, the gods were conceived as a non-entity presence: “Renaissance understands the world as a microtheos that god manifest in everything” [16]. The gods were considered as micritheos that are “hidden” everywhere, usually with light as a medium that manifests the power of the gods, and light giving the flora life; water is a medium through which gods bring magic to the earth and lead plants to grow from the earth. All these changes and concepts were understood as being the result of actions of the gods. The gods were believed to be everywhere: “In general, the presence of water adds a certain micro-scale to landscape whose reliefs lacks this dimension or adds to the mystery of landscape which already possess this micro-level” [16]. In Villa d'Este, fountains with statues together created many animism scenarios, water is the key element that makes the static statues alive, creating a mysterious atmosphere.

#### ***4.4. The Renaissance garden as monstrous and Ovid metamorphosis***

Paintings and statues in the Renaissance time were usually associated with mythologies, and myths provided multiple explanations for people to understand the world. The Renaissance, in fact, had the advantage over our own time in two ways: it knew its objective, and its people were able to communicate this objective through the mysteries of art [22]. In addition to the statues of gods, Renaissance gardens are also

famous for their monstrous animal statues; monstrous figures appeared to have complex meanings, with some possibly being related to the mysterious and some possibly involving deformed animals resulting from natural disorders. As for legend, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* no doubt had the most impact on these monstrous statues. The geometric layout, monstrous statues, and statues of the gods can all be interpreted as components of the Renaissance garden languages. The garden languages can be artificial as well as natural. This may arise from irrational thinking; some we can figure out. Like an old novel, the Renaissance garden was written in ancient, complex languages.

## 5. Case Study

### 5.1. *Social- nature context*

Located in the southern town of Tivoli, about twenty-two kilometres east of Rome, Villa d'Este is famous for its Renaissance iconography garden in the outskirts of the Roman campaign. In 1555, Cardinal Ippolito d'Este commissioned a prominent classical scholar, Pirro Ligorio, who had studied the Villa Hadriana and other Roman sites in the vicinity, to plan a new villa and garden which would exceed anything the Romans had built. He obtained an abundant supply of marble and statuary from the ruins of Hadrian's villa. Ligorio, also an antiquarian, was interested in Greek myth. He believed the garden should follow the principle of connecting with the glorious past of Hadriana; ruins or other evidence of past human glory emerge as a logical visual foil to the present perfections of the pastoral scene [18]. The Fountain of the Dragon in the centre of the garden stands as the principal God of the Tivoli - Jupiter, the most powerful God, as well as the avatar of the Cardinal himself, showing the power and absolute control of his land. The garden is located in undulating terrain, and has a cliff is on its west side, where the views of the whole of Tivoli can be enjoyed. If the construction of the Villa d'Este is a symbol of Cardinal supremacy, the construction of the village of Yuyuan comes from the respect of the same ancestors. Yuyuan village belongs to Wuyi County, Jinhua City, Zhejiang Province. It is located in the southwest of Wuyi County. The terrain of the town descends slowly from the southwest to the northeast. The southwest belongs to the middle and low mountains, and the northeast is the terrain of hills and valleys. The highest mountain reaches 1098 metres above sea level, and is the highest point in the territory. Yuyuan village was built in the Song Dynasty by Liuji, a Fengshui master.

The main work of Liu Ji's planning was to straighten the mountain stream into a curve, meandering through the village in the "S" shape of the yin and yang diagram. In order to reduce drought and flood disasters, the Taichi field was arranged at the entrance of the village. What makes Yuyuan famous is its celestial symbols; the river and the path were reshaped in the shape of the Big Dipper. Using the constellations as a language, Yuyuan village conveys its messages in a romantic way. In Yuyuan village, man-made structures are used as symbols for villagers to communicate with the universe. In Yuyuan village (Figure 2), the allegory of the local myth shaped the form of the path, the stories can be read in an iconographic way, and the language of Yuyuan village is highly graphic.

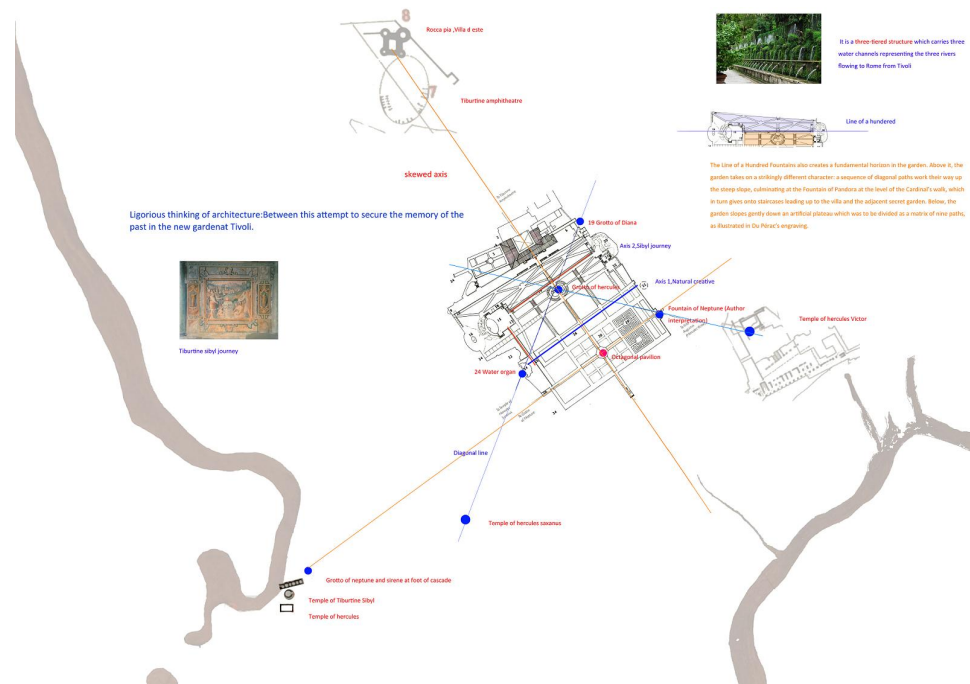
### 5.2. *Form and layout*

Anyone interested in Greek and Roman art today looks at it through a Renaissance lens (Classical Art: A Life History from Antiquity to the Present [24]).

With four edges making the garden a square enclosure, like the garden of Eden in the Bible. The enclosure is divided by the axis into parts. In terms of its topographical design, the garden is like a typical Renaissance terrace garden. The terrace topography divides the garden into three layers. The lowest part and middle layer are distinguished by four fish pools and a Water Organ. Below the pools is the matrix-shape law that was altogether consisting of several labyrinths. Above the pools are the Dragon fountain layers, Rometta, and Oval Fountain, with eight regular lawns is at the climax of the theme. The top layer is the architecture layer, with the Secret Garden, which has the best view to overlook the entire garden. In different layers, the path divides the lawn into different geometrical shapes; the lawns in the south are subdivided by diagonal paths, and the lawns in the north are rectangular.



**Figure 2.** Yuyuan village layout.



**Figure 3.** Villa d'Este, Layout of Villa d'Este and its surrounding relics.

The Villa d'Este garden layout not only presents its inner order, but also the outside parts. (Figure 3). The garden depended on his immense knowledge of local and

classical legends and history. The meaning of the garden was also carefully interwoven with Tiburtine legend and with the ancient past buried in its landscape of ruins [5]. Villa d'Este should not be understood as a simple overlay of these antique placements. Tivoli is an ancient city full of historical traces, and Villa d'Este was built much later than the city of Tivoli; Pirro Ligorio was inspired by these ancient relics and used them as a reference to build the relations.

It is an ingenious attempt to aggregate the antique Tiburtine landscape with classic, local, and Estense legends [5]. In general, the statues and other structures in the garden were placed intentionally, usually aligned with the Hadriana relics. The central line from south to north is a skewed axis. The purpose is to connect the Tiburtine amphitheatre in the south, the central niche of Jupiter, and the orthogonal pavilion. The other axis is perpendicular to this axis from east to west, connecting the Grotto of Neptune, siren at the foot of cascade, orthogonal pavilion, and the Fountain of Neptune. The disposition of the fountains does not only serve to beautify the place and delight the eyes, but also hides in itself a very fine meaning: the portrayal of the nature of the Tiburtine region [5].

The layout of Yuyuan village is shaped by its mountainous topography, a naturally enclosed space situated in the valley between mountains. The linear topography made the village a narrow space, with the Yuyuan stream crossing in the middle. Due to the linear space, the village constitutes several spatial sections.

Not only did the mountains shape the layout of the village, but so did the Big Dipper. A narrow watercourse crosses the entire village. Since the path was built along with the stream, the path and watercourse are like two parallel lines. The shape of the watercourse shows a typical Big Dipper shape. And there are seven wells, named after the seven stars of the Big Dipper, displaced along with the stream. By connecting the human constructions with celestial objects, ancient Chinese civilization believed good luck would be brought to the village. In the south of the village, where the big fields are located, the watercourse was reshaped by an “S” shape, crossing through the fields. The form can be explained by the pattern itself. People call it the “Taichi” shape. “Taichi” in Chinese culture can be simply understood as a symbol of balance, the “Yin” power and “Yang” power mix, transformative yet mutually exclusive. Ancient people believed that this dialectical philosophical thinking could also play a role in flooding control and balancing the village by presenting its form.

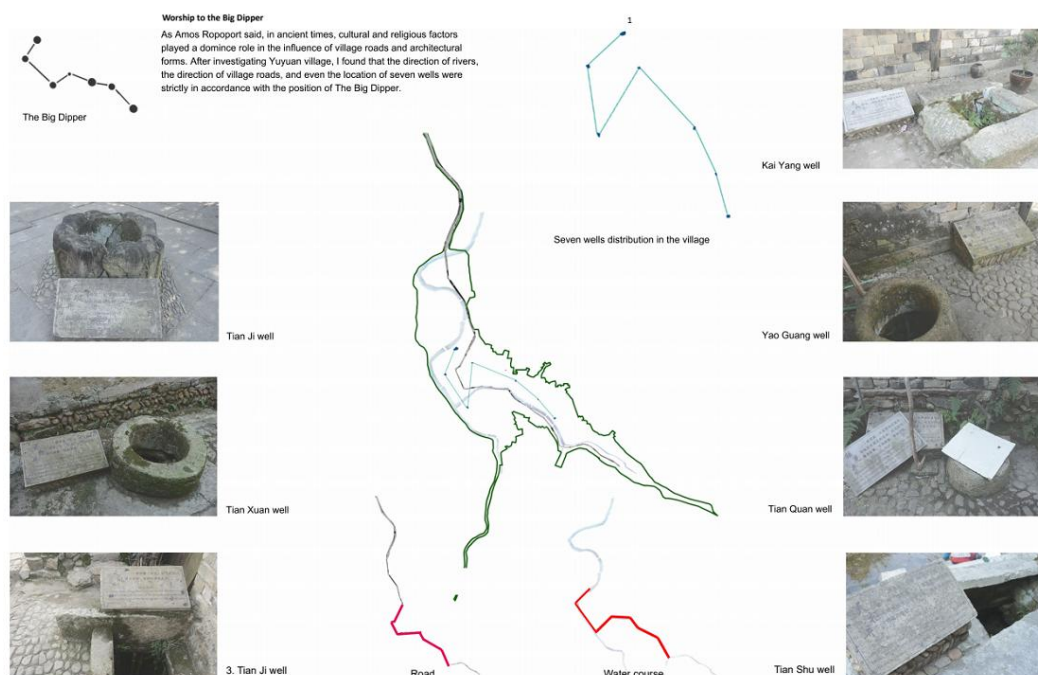
Another explanation of this Taichi pattern claims that the Taichi shape represents two fish and the eleven mountains surrounding the village. These mountains are related to the twelve constellations, and the Taichi shape represents Pisces. As the primitive discourse of the Yuyuan village, both the Taichi pattern and watercourse are related to celestial objects. (Figure 4)

### **5.3. Read from components**

Each art demonstrates its uniqueness through its own medium, and its own medium alone, without resorting to language [8]. As with art, the words we use today to depict gardens belong to the modernism space verbal system. As the author mentioned before, to some extent, Lynch, as one of the creators of this verbal system, shaped our understanding of the space. The same thing happens in gardens, which also illustrates how we think when designing a garden. A study of Yuyuan village and Villa d'Este

can benefit from “edges, path, districts, landmarks, nodes,” the preliminary study will focus on what these components are and how these elements connect.

Edges, Nodes, and Paths are used to describe the space, being the terminology of modern languages. However, in the past, people created things based on their languages. Gardens as space, no doubt, have the spatial feature, but are not constructed by our modern space system. However, this does not mean modern language analysis is meaningless for research.



**Figure 4.** The Big Dipper river and seven wells in Yuyuan village. Author's diagram.

The Villa d'Este, in terms of its edge, shows the typical “Eden” shape, a “remade Eden,” a nostalgic recreation that reminds us of where we are. The enclosed space of Villa d'Este understands the garden space as a miniature of the real world. On its south side corners, two plateaus represent the Acropolis in Greek and the city of Rome, and two of these plateaus are decorated with sculptures, fountains, trees, and water, forming complete scenes; the one in “Acropolis” is the Oval Fountain, the other in “Rome” is Rometta, both of which belong to “Node”. Instead of using the word “design” to describe its layout, it may be better to say arrange or dispatch nodes; that is how people in the Renaissance period time thought of gardens. The garden was conceived as a place to displace the miniature world landscape, as well as mythical legends. The Oval Fountain is located in the southeast corner, at the highest point of the whole garden, where it represents Mount Helicon in Greece. In Du Perac's (a French architect, designer, engraver, studied the garden research of Rome and its ruins in the late 16th century) description, the Oval fountain has a Venus who is recognized as a lustful and horrible figure in Medieval times, and tried to seduce and interfere with Hercules as he undertook apotheosis in Tivoli. Besides, the Oval Fountain is a part of the Tiburtine Sibyl journey. When Ino was chased by Juno and passed through the Tivoli cascade at the Oval Fountain, she was saved by Hercules and she became Tiburtine Sibyl, starting a journey towards Rometta.

Except for the Oval Fountain, the Tiburtine Sibyl journey was referenced several times in the garden. As the starting point of the Tiburtine Sibyl journey, the Water

Organ and three fish pools can be regarded as an axis from east to west, and a node as well. The Water Organ scene talks about The Deluge; three pools lay across the garden and separate the garden. These pools were readily reminiscent of The Deluge, the mythical legend. The Water Organ is a great hydraulic sound system, a symbol of man-made invention, but caused the flooding in the myth, hinting that man-made things cannot defeat nature. The same concept was used in the Fountain of Owl on the west side. The starting point of Sibyl as a metaphor illustrates that the prophet foresaw the Deluge.

The three pools and Water Organ also formed an axis. These scenes as nodes connected by the Tiburtien Sibyl's journey in the garden, not only the Oval Fountain and Water Organ, but also the Dragon fountain, Rometta, and Fountain of Owl, all told their story when the journey passed these nodes. Between node and node is the path, with the path being a clue, helping people explore the nodes chronologically.

If in Villa d'Este, people created an enclosure and designed the garden, then in Yuyuan village, people firstly looked for a naturally enclosed space. As mentioned earlier, the ancient Chinese had their own discourse to construct the village. Ancient Chinese used natural edges - mountains - to create a space. For a valley, mountains are natural barriers that form the micro-climate and keep the village warm; the river, as well as a boundary or edge to separate the village from wild mountains, provides clean water. The Shoikou temple is a node, a sacred place for pilgrimage, and an important boundary to the village. Shuikou is a man-made place where the variety and mystery of the natural forces are strongly felt, a place where the manifestation of an abstract general order was the main intention, and the force and order were a comprehensible equilibrium. When translated into English, Shuikou is usually described as the gate of the water or river to a village. It comprises five basic elements (ancient trees, bridges, ponds, pavilions, and mountains). In addition, the composition of the Shuikou environment also embodies the local people's ideology. It forms a multi-level landscape by setting trees, mountains, and ponds together. As mentioned above, "Shuikou" is where a stream flows from the mountains into the village. It's a place of life and creation.

Except for the Shuikou temple, the ancestral temple is also understood as a node.

Choosing the right place to build the ancestral temple is considered paramount. Unlike Renaissance gardens, open spaces are rarely seen in Chinese villages, but ancestral temples usually demand an open space as their building location. As chains of mountains surround the village, an open space no doubt gains the best views, and mountain peaks from different directions can be seen, by doing so, creating a relation between mountains and human architecture. The ancestral temple no doubt faces south to take advantage of sunlight, and with its main entrance aligned to the most important mountain peak, which in Fengshui terminology is called "Long mai", meaning the dragon ridges, which describe the multiple layers of the mountain as a consecutive line like ridges. The dragon is the avatar of the Chinese people. By putting two things together, a new meaning is formed; the dragon ridge means the clan tie to the whole villagers, so the ancestral temple is the symbol of the clan tie, the unity of the family. That explains why it is so important to villages.

In Villa d'Este, the garden is conceived and made as an enclosed space, and these sculptures and fountains together form scenes of nodes. Edge and node are the modern verbiages we use to depict space. Renaissance people made an enclosure and then arranged the stories and scenes in the garden. The northern entrance leads

visitors into the garden from north to south, from low laying area to "plateau," from The Deluge to two grandiose cities, from the starting point of Tiburtine Sibyl's journey to his destination, the real narrative of the Villa d'Este essentially hiding in its arrangement, with the layout following a chronological order. In Yuyuan village, the mountains, rivers, and natural elements are used as edges, and nature and man-made construction combine. As for the nodes, the Shuikou temples and ancestral temples were built according to their location among mountains and rivers. The scenes and these natural elements are the most primitive language of their own.

#### **5.4. The Path, Axis and Verb**

The single node and its form have an independent story, but the story also fixes the whole theme by giving allegory to the path. This feature impacts the partial form, for example, the main tour of visiting is from north to south, with many of the sculptures facing towards the north, such as The Dragon Fountain, the story of the labours of Hercules, and Jupiter. On the contrary, the Oval Fountain and Rometta face each other from east to west, with a path of a hundred lines of fountain connecting in the middle, presenting an independent form and content to the whole layout. The allegory of the garden manifests in all these details. When the Tiburtine Sibyl started his journey in the garden, he firstly walked along with the north-south path, from the Water Organ to the Oval Fountain, then turned west to the Rometta. This circuitous path makes the journey become a pilgrimage: "the place becomes categorised as experience, journey makes us aware of being a subject, and the world about as object, the split between subject and object is a fundamental presupposition of abstraction language " (Pugh, 1988, p.8). Path is a word that belongs to modern terminology, it is the linear space that connects nodes together; in the study of space, the path has directions, length, width, and is a vector. Pilgrimage is a word associated with myths and religions, a manifestation of narrative space. In Villa d'Este, a path is also an axis that connects the ancient Rome relics with the garden, symmetrical symbols that show the order of the universe, and a journey of pilgrimage related to the Tivoli legend. The first horizontal axis in the garden is The Line of a Hundred Fountains, which also creates a fundamental horizon axis in the garden. The horizon axis symbolizes the legendary journey of Tiburtine Sibyl [5].

The Line of a Hundred Fountains is also part of the Tiburtine Sibyl journey. The journey starts from the Water Organ, going to the Oval Fountain and ending up at Rometta. Three principal fountains structure this horizon of the journey; Water organ, Oval fountain: where the Sibyl-like Mnemosyne was framed by the mound of stone to recreate Helicon, and Rometta, a model of antique Rome and Tivoli [5]. The middle path can be visually understood as an axis separating the garden in the middle, but as a special language system, the path can also be read into a journey. According to Du Perac, another important theme is present: Hercules, son of Jupiter, the principal deity to Tivoli, occupying the central niche of the Fountain of the Dragon [5].

Hercules's labours are a theme often presented in the Renaissance art. Juno induced a madness in Hercules that made him kill his wife and children; afterward, he prayed to the god Apollo for guidance, and started his labours to gain self-redemption, symbolizing liberation from the physical body and spirit progressively. Because of the lost statues in the Dragon Fountain, Du Perac interpreted the central axis and garden as an allegory of Hercules. The north entrance is considered the starting point where Hercules started his journey and practice. This middle north-south path as the axis that is perpendicular to the first axis, led Hercules to the Dragon Fountain, where two

paths appear. One towards the west, the other facing east, with the east one leading Hercules to the Grotto of Venus - the avatar of voluptuousness in the Renaissance period. The west one goes to the Grotto of Diana, who was considered a figure of virtue; Hercules chose Diana, meaning virtue over vice. It also implies the great personality of the Cardinal, Ippolito II d'Este. This north-south path also appears as a paradigmatic Renaissance figure who heralded the path to salvation [5]. As for the third axis, Du Perac states that the lower cross-axis is marked by lines of the Finishing Pool from the Water Organ to the Fountain of Neptune (which does not exist) - related to the Deluge. The Fountains of Nature depict nature's creativity, represented by Diana of Ephesus (goddess of nature), which is placed under the Water Organ. The statues depict Diana, who transformed into a hybrid human with many breasts sputtering water. And water is merged into the three fish pools, one explanation is that this scene aims to illustrate the cause of the Deluge. The path in Villa d'Este represents the journey and is related to the Greek myth; the path in Yuyuan village can be referred to as something else. From an ancient Chinese point of view, the village is conceived as a basin (Cave) surrounded by mountains and trees, and there are two paths connecting the village. The similarities between Yuyuan village and Villa d'Este are both of the paths have the "Verb" meanings. In syntax, a Verb means showing an action (e.g., to sing), occurrence (e.g., to develop), or state of being (e.g., to exist). In Villa d'Este and Yuyuan village's paths, a sense of motion is presented. In Villa d'Este, the path refers to the journey. The path also has an axis, starting from the north, with the journey developing and ending in the south. The path, therefore, is a manifestation of chronological order.

### 5.5. *Mythology language*

Mythology is a form of speech, a method of communication, and a message; mythology is a language. In both Yuyuan village and Villa d'Este, the elements are consistent in presenting their narrative. In Villa d'Este, the myth related to Tiburtine and Roman gods. The Tiburtine Sibyl, is an important theme, as a clue across the main area of the garden, when Sibyl meets these ancient gods, he was transformed into the corresponding deity of Rome, using this approach connecting Tivoli local myth with Roman myth. A striking landscape is the skeleton upon which many primitive races erect their socially important myths [13]. As the most legendary fountain in the garden, The Dragon Fountain has plenty of messages to tell us from its mannerism, appearance, and metaphorical meanings. Jupiter, as mentioned above, symbolizes the Cardinal, and is located in the central area of the garden. The Dragon Fountain cuts across the artificial landscape garden, creating a division and representing the journey between Tivoli and Rome [5]. The Dragon Fountain, the Tiburtine Amphitheatre, the Rocca Pia, and the Octagonal Pavilion are all on one axis - the skewed axis across the whole garden from north to south. According to Du Perac, the skewed axis is created on purpose to make the Dragon Fountain align with the ancient relic in the south. In the niche is the Jupiter crystal cave, where the principal god Jupiter stands: "A white marble statue of Jupiter was housed in the central niche of the Fountain of the dragon" [5], symbolizing the majesty and domination in Tivoli. In addition to the Dragon Fountain, cases of myths interweaving with statues abound in Villa d'Este.

Mythology is a common theme in both Italian and Chinese man-made landscapes; the natural elements are all related to a certain god. In Chinese mythologies, the gods are everywhere, the gods live underground, bringing cultivation; the god in the cloud

brings rain; the god in the river brings flooding, so in the village the watercourse was shaped by The Big Dipper in order to keep balance with nature. According to the local myth, a woodman works in the forest and is attracted by two immortals playing chess. Inspired by the chess layout, which was like the Big dipper, he designed the watercourse from the Big dipper shape and solved the flooding problem. Since then, the Big dipper has signified good fortune to the Yuyuan village. People built seven wells on both sides of the stream and modified the shape of the watercourse in order to control the water flooding problem further. The watercourse, as a path, attracts people exploring the village, looking for the water source; the water moves from the Shuikou, which is the end of the village, to the entrance, opposite the direction that people walk in. The watercourse is like an unusual path or a journey to the mysterious water gate, where the soul of the water stays.

## 6. Conclusions

Generally speaking, natural components, such as trees, rivers, mountains, goldfish, and ponds represent pure nature power. The ancient Chinese reflected these natural things into their culture and ideology, creating a series of man-made structures and different gods to make connections. Trees signify longevity; with rivers, people build bridges well, and pagodas to control the flooding; with mountains, people build ancestral temples and ponds to gain the power of the mountain, where the patriarchal domination comes from; goldfish bring people health and wealth. Languages in Yuyuan village can be both concrete and symbolic. In Villa d'Este, the garden consists of multiple scenes. The path leads to scene transition, with each scene constituted of statues, trees, fountains, and legends, forming complete stories. Path-like Verbs show the variety of scenes. The Verb in Villa d'Este refers to the tendency of things to change, the paths lead to the storylines of myth moving forward, the porous bodies are a metaphor of the living earth epistemology; the nodes show the Verb features as well, with the animal heads and god statues with monstrous creature decorations evidence of the process of the Ovid's Metamorphose. All of these clues emphasise the crucial features of the Verb in the garden. In Yuyuan village, the path is reshaped to tell stories, and the transformation manifests the Verb feature. Rather than being separated clearly, the paths and nodes in both Yuyuan village and Villa d'Este are related to each other. The Water Organ as a node is the initial power that caused The Deluge, as well as a starting point for the Tiburtine Sibyl journey. The Oval fountain and Rometta are two nodes; the path between them changes their layout and form by facing each other. The same thing is evident in Yuyuan village. The ancestral temple is a node of patriarchal society, but was built connecting with the mountain peaks, which made the temple a part of the axis. Path and node are related to each other; the path grows from the node, and is the extension of the node, further illustrating the allegory of nodes.

The landscape is a context; a garden is a language, and the garden elements are the syntax of the language. Gardens as a language involve metaphors, the object of rhetoric, and concrete parables. To read them, literature, deification, legend, and history are inevitable. The ancient garden was written in this primitive language that we can perceive and decipher.

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