

# Xishu Celebrity Memorial Gardens under the influence of water culture

Yanting Wang<sup>1</sup>, Along Bu<sup>1</sup>, Xin Xin<sup>2</sup>, Lin Lu<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College of Landscape Architecture, Sichuan Agricultural University, No.211, Huimin Road, Wenjiang District, Chengdu, China

<sup>2</sup>College of English, Minnan Normal University, Xiangcheng District, Zhangzhou, Fujian, China

**Abstract.** The celebrity memorial gardens are the most prominent in Xishu gardens, showing strong memorial. As the most characteristic cultural element of Xishu area, water contributes a lot to the development of Xishu gardens and becomes an indispensable element in gardening. By tracing back to the background of the formation and development of water culture, this paper analyses the relationship between the historical celebrities and water in Xishu, and summarizes the art of water in Xishu celebrity memorial gardens under the infiltration of water culture. This paper not only reflects the aesthetic value of water from the perspective of formal beauty, but also creates the poetic and artistic conception and the connotation of humanistic spirit through the combination with other gardening elements. At last the article reveals its significance and value of water culture in celebrity memorial gardens and tries to provide inspiration for future regional garden design.

## 1 Introduction

Xishu gardens have more than 3000-year history, and the glory has been in the vicissitudes of the millennium. Its another regional garden system besides northern gardens, Jiangnan gardens and Lingnan gardens. Its cultural value has attracted numerous scholars to study. Xishu gardens are represented by celebrity memorial gardens and showing strong memorial. Xishu gardens fully reflects the spiritual atmosphere of sentiment and humanism in Xishu. Compared with other gardens, it pays more attention to the creation of historical culture and spiritual connotation. This paper takes “water”, an important element in the gardening of Xishu, as the starting point to trace the formation and development of water culture, analyzing the art of water management in the gardens, and further highlight the pursuit of cultural connotation and spiritual value of people in Xishu.

## 2 The formation and development of water culture in Xishu

### 2.1 Background of water culture generation

Minshan is the birthplace of Minjiang River. The civilization of Minjiang River basin is an important branch of the Chinese civilization. “Geography of Hanshu” once recorded: “Minshan is located in the west, and the river flows from the southeast to the sea.”The “river” here refers to the Minjiang River. For

a long time, Minjiang River has been regarded as the main source of Yangtze River. Therefore, Minjiang River basin is also known as Jiangyuan River. Jiangyuan area is first developed by Xishu people. This generation of civilization is also called Jiangyuan Civilization and its essence is the water culture of Xishu.

The terrain of Xishu is flat, meanwhile Minjiang River and Tuojiang River and other tributaries are rolling incessantly, which caused flooding and blockin, and eventually formed numerous marginal swamp in Xishu area. In order to survive in Chengdu Plain, the ancient ancestors began to prevent waterlogging and drainage, also effectively controlled the floods in Chengdu Plain. The civilization of Chengdu Plain began with water control.

### 2.2 Humanistic factors of water culture development

#### 2.2.1 Da yu's water control

Da yu's water control is a famous chinese legend which said that Da Yu from Guangmao County of Wenshan in Xishu. Da Yu had built a new river channel in Minjiang River, diverted the Minjiang River to the east and flowed into Tuo jiang River, in order to reduce the flow of Minjiang River and achieve the purpose of flood control and drainage. Da Yu's water control strategy of “guiding the river to Tuojiang River” not only successfully channeled the Minjiang River, but also brought the life of the ancient people to

\* Corresponding author: 13630@sicau.edu.cn

live and work. For the benefit of all the people, Da Yu became the hero of the people at that time.

### 2.2.2 Bie Ling's water control

“Wang Di is over a hundred years old, today has a person named Bie Ling.” According to the legend, Bie Ling's family was very familiar with water, and they were good at managing floods. After more than a thousand years of Da Yu's water control, Chengdu Plain encountered a huge flood once again. In order to solve the flood problem, Du Yu appointed Bie Ling as minister and gave the project of water control to him. According to the ancient records, Bie Ling's water control was mainly divided into two parts. The first one is “chiseling the Wuxia Gorge”, and the next one is “excavating the Yushan mountain”. In short, the legendary description of his water control not only grasped the key, but also dealt with the problem at the root. If it's true, it's definitely a great masterpiece of ancient water conservancy projects.

### 2.2.3 Li Bing's water control

Chengdu Plain is a big river alluvial fan plain. The terrain is high in the northwest and low in the southeast. During the rainy season, the floods will flow down and the plain will become the sea. The main reason is that Minjiang River flows through Chengdu Plain. The upper reaches of the Minjiang River are dominated by high mountains and gorges. Chengdu Plain is too flat and has a large drop with the upper reaches of Minjiang River. When the rainy season comes, the more turbulent water of the Minjiang River will not be resisted by dykes and dams and rush down, causing flooding. In order to solve the flood problem, Li Bing made a detailed investigation on the water potential, topography and rainfall of Minjiang River. Finally, Dujiangyan was built at the fan-shaped apex connecting the mountain pass with the plain.

Dujiangyan irrigation system is composed of three major projects, namely the Yuzui Water-dividing Dike, the Feishayan Spillway and the Baopingkou Water Inlet. The whole project uses different characteristics such as water vein, water potential and topography, and uses the techniques of dike, water separation, sand discharge and flow control, so as to achieve the grand goal from single flood control purpose to water conservancy development[1].

## 3 Xishu historical celebrities and the love of water

Originated from a strong water culture mentality, there are many gardening activities of literati in Xishu. The literati became the expressors of Xishu people's love for water culture and their desire for spiritual home.

The Huanhuaxi park is surrounded by villages and is known as “Jiangcun”. “Snow accumulated through thousands years on the Xiling Mountains which could

be viewed within a glance from the window while ships from Dongwu of miles away.” This is the poet Du Fu chanted the scene in front of the Huanhuaxi park. Du Fu was located on the bank of Huanhuaxi park. He lived in a cabin thousands of miles of the bridge.” He listened to “The clear waters of Huanhuaxi park flow around the village in a meandering manner. In the long summer days, everything is quiet and peaceful.”, and watched “The mossy roadside is still built with bamboo trees under the eaves, still covered with shade.”, and saw “Admiring the water gulls floating in the distance and watching the swallows flying in the breeze.” He wrote poems about water, accompanied by water. When Li Bai was young, he with his father moved to Jiangyou, Sichuan. He traveled to Jiange, Zizhou, Chengdu, Emei and other places. These areas belong to Minjiang River basin, and he has experienced water disasters and water conservancy. The patriotic poet Lu You was appointed as the Jincheng counsellor. He opened a vegetable garden on the bank of Huanhuaxi park and ploughed it into Shuzhou. Because he was grief and anger during his tenure, he deposited his personal feelings on the flowing water, and often used to drink and write poetry. He expressed his anger caused by his life, and revealed that he was nearly fifty years old, but the prospects were lonely and resentful. Liu Yuxi, a poetry priest, also had a special loving for the water. His poems described the clear flow of the two rivers, the setting sun west, the colorful sunset reflected in the water, glowing with the thousands of lights of Jincheng, flowing brilliantly. In the middle of the Tang Dynasty, the female poet Xue Tao was in love with Yuan Zhen in the middle age. They often walked on the banks of Jinjiang River and had a sweet talk. Jinjiang river became the most memorable place in Xue Tao's life, which shown the love of Xue Tao and the water of Jinjiang.

In the garden, chanting water has become a unique way for literati to express feelings, and water has become a symbol of celebrity emotional support. The sculptures of Xishu celebrities mostly use water as the background and accompany the water, which fully reflects the cultural symbols of the water and the value of personality aesthetics (Figures 1, 2).

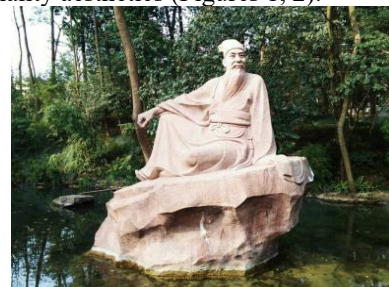


Fig. 1. Su Dongpo and Bamboo landscape (Sansu Temple)

## 4 Art of water in Xishu celebrity memorial gardens

The people of Xishu respect the concept of “Tao Follows Nature” and attach importance to the

harmonious coexistence between man and nature. Therefore, celebrity memorial gardens are mostly natural landscape gardens, which are complemented by waters, lakes and waterfalls, rocks, buildings, and plants with each other. The water of Xishu celebrity memorial gardens not only reflects the aesthetic value of water from the perspective of formal beauty, but also creates the poetic and artistic conception and the connotation of humanistic spirit through the combination with other gardening elements. Looking at the buildings in the garden, all of them are built along the river. The rocks, flowers and trees in the garden both embrace the water everywhere. Under such a water culture atmosphere, the author analyzed art of water in Xishu celebrity memorial gardens.



**Fig. 2.** Baniang accompanies mother (Sansu Temple)

#### 4.1 Skillfully occupy space, full of pictures

The water in Xishu gardens mainly occupies space in six forms: rivers, pools, canals, waterfalls, drops and streams. Among them, Wangjianglou Park is built by rivers; Yanhuachi of Chongzhou and Wenjunjing are famous for waterfalls and canals; while Dufu Cottage and Liubeichi are dominated by streams and drops. “Xiangdi of Yuanye” recorded that “About every ten mu of foundation needs to be dugged into three mu of ponds.” which shows the proportion of classical garden waterscapes to the entire space. Yanhuachi of Chongzhou covers an area of about 35,000 square meters, and its surface area exceeds one third of the whole garden area. It’s water form is gathered or scattered, or is well-known for its multi-form integration or single form. With the background of architecture, and then collocation with mountain stones, flowers and trees, we can draw a beautiful and elegant ink painting(Figure 3). Guihu Lake in Xindu covers an area of 40,000 square meters, and its water surface area is nearly one-half of the total garden area. With the change of weather in a day, the waves of Guihu Lake sometimes surge, sometimes calm, and the reflection of landscape sometimes nihilistic, sometimes clear, all the time to mobilize the viewer’s high mood, to create a picturesque garden mood. The Sansu Temple in Meishan covers an area of 65,000 square meters, and its water surface area accounts for about one third of the whole garden. It diverts the water from Ruilian Channel into the garden in the Southeast direction, and eventually converges in Ruilian Pool and runs through the whole garden. Forming an island-dwelling mode of “three parts of water and two parts of bamboo” [3] . Its

water surface plays a role of base to a certain extent. Everything that exists according to water can find its mottled shadow on the vast water surface. It looks like a picture, more than a picture.



**Fig. 3.** Artistic landscape (Yanhuachi)

#### 4.2 Path twists around the water, winding and tranquil

In Xishu gardens, the water area accounts for a large proportion of the whole garden area, and the shape of the water surface must affect the composition of the whole garden road form. Yanhuachi of Chongzhou is mainly composed of the inner and outer lakes. The water of the outer lakes is quiet and bright, while the water of the inner lakes is deep and tortuous. Wenjunjing was built in Qionglai Liren Street. It’s famous for the love stories of Sima Xiangru and Zhuo Wenjun. It’s divided into two gardens. The North Garden is centered on Lake and the South Garden is dominated by architectures. Wenjunjing is located in North Garden, facing winding pools in the west, which leads to the winding road in the West and the straight road in the east. It seems that the poet Lu You can feel the emotional experience of walking around Wenjunjing with shabby shoes. Dufu Cottage is Xishu’s Memorial Garden beside Huanhuaxi park in the western suburbs. The layout of the whole garden water system is not rigid, the water line is tortuous and changeable, and the garden road along is also winding, vivid, not only creating a different space effect, but also giving people evocative experience(Figure 4).

#### 4.3 Floor is built surrounded water, rigid and soft

Pavilions, terraces, galleries and pavilions are all built toward water[4]. Buildings built around water should emphasise the site location. Pavilions, terraces and corridors are ornamented on the waterfront, or into the mountains and jungles, or stood in the center of the water. Although seemingly intricate, they are sparse and compact indeed. The natural both and smart water bring a lot of vitality to the building. Wangjianglou Park in Chengdu was named in memory of Xue Tao, a famous poet of Tang Dynasty. It was built on the South bank of Jinjiang River in the east gate of Chengdu and made use of Jingjiang River. The South yard of Wangjianglou Park has a view of Liubeichi which is built in a meandering and circumfluent way. The buildings around Liubeichi are Chongli Pavilion,

Huanjian Pavilion, Wuyunxian Hall and Qingwan Room[5]. Through the pictures of a pool, a stream, three bridges and four floors in the garden, the leisure of Xue Tao can be seen among the waves and clouds. She is reciting poems, just like people playing in paintings. Donghu Park in Xinfan is digged by Li Deyu, a famous prime minister and gardening expert of the Tang Dynasty. It's one of the few classical gardens of the Tang Dynasty with traces to be examined in China. In 1864, Cheng Xiangdong renovated Donghu Park again, laying the face of today's East Lake. East Lake has beautiful water and beautiful mountains. The whole garden has almost all the architectural forms of ancient gardens in China. The garden is centered on lake pools, with more than 20 buildings including pavilions, terraces and towers embracing each other around the lake. Taking water as "soft" and buildings as "rigid", this "rigid" and "soft" momentum has created the elegant style of the celebrity memorial gardens in Xishu.



Fig. 4. Winding road and water (Dufu Cottage)

#### 4.4 Bamboo cuddling water, elegant but not meretricious

The ancients said "mountains with bamboo seem more greener, water with bamboo seem more prettier"[6]. Such as long bamboo in Wuhou Temple, red wall along with flower path in Dufu Cottage and hundreds of mu bamboo sea in Wangjiang Tower. Bamboo likes warm and humid habitat, but also favors rich and deep soil. The landscape of flourish forest and slender bamboo has been achieved by the lingering green water in Xishu. Fan Chengda, a poet of the Song Dynasty, mentioned that the customs of Bashu people, specifically emphasize that "every family has flowing water and bamboo in the suburbs of Chengdu." [7] Bamboo as a great scenic spot in the famous garden of Xishu, is either planted on the riverside, stood near the pond, or arranged along the lake. Over the years, it has formed graceful shapes, multifarious posters and lush colors (Figure 5). The bamboo of Xishu is enriched and charmed by the moistening of water. The water of Xishu is beautiful and meaningful because of the companionship of bamboo. They cannot be separated. In the highly celebrity memorial garden of Xishu,

bamboo and water not only embodies the beauty of form, but also rich humanistic spirit. The elegance of bamboo and the freshness of water are similar to personality characteristics of Xishu literati.



Fig. 5. Bamboo cuddling water (Dufu Cottage)

## 5 Concluding remarks

Clear, beautiful, gentle, great and vast water is the soul of Xishu gardens. Xishu is rich in both water resources and cultural heritage. With its unique natural property and aesthetic value, water has become an indispensable gardening element in Xishu celebrity memorial gardens. The aesthetic characteristics and cultural connotation of water have been fully reflected in the celebrity memorial gardens. Currently, Xishu is striving to become a brilliant stroke in Chinese landscape idyllic cities. How to make full use of water resources and water culture without superficial, single and self-touching understanding, to play a better ecological role in the future construction of parks and cities, to make the cultural heritage of water better on the land of Xishu are problems that landscape architects must face now.

## References

1. R.S. Xu. *Water and chengdu: urban water culture in Chengdu*[M]. Chengdu,2006.
2. L.L. Cao. Study on dujiangyan water conservancy heritage [D]. Nanjing University,2013.
3. Q.B. Chen, Y.P. Yang. *Xishu garden*[M]. Beijing, 2010.
4. C.Z. Chen. *Garden Rhyme*[M]. Shanghai,1999.
5. L.N. Qin. Study on landscape water form and waterscape features of Xishu Garden[D]. Sichuan Agricultural University,2016.
6. Y. Shen. Bamboo ecological aesthetics value of Chinese culture[D]. Nanjing Forestry University, 2015.
7. Q.S. Dai, C.M. Liu. Xishu historical celebrity memorial gardens under the influence of bamboo [J]. Chinese Landscape Architecture,2011,27(08).