

Associate Professor Miho Fukuda, Housing and Environmental Design, Graduate School of Human Life Science

Associate Professor Fukuda specializes in Chinese architectural history. Focusing primarily on palaces, gardens, and cities, she studies why humans designed spaces like they did, as well as how these spaces have been used.

Since architectural history is a field that came from the West, even in a place like China where many historical texts are preserved, there are basically no classical documents relating specifically to architecture. Thus, she approaches the enigma of human-designed spaces in the country using brief textual descriptions. For example, it has been said that after Mongolians began ruling China in the thirteenth century, they imitated and used Chinese-style palaces. However, looking into this issue carefully, one finds passages in texts that say that tents were used on palace

grounds. From this it can be understood that Mongolian rulers needed both Han-style wooden palace architecture as well as the tents that they customarily used.

When reading historical materials, sometimes misunderstandings arise due to one's own preconceptions and customs. It is very difficult to know what kind of spaces existed in the past. Associate Professor Fukuda says that the true pleasure of her research lies in the process of exploring spatial designs while thinking about the ideas and customs of the people from the time in question. Through her continued research, she has come to feel that studying the spaces humans have lived in is to explore past people's ways of living and the changes in them over time.



Another side

Associate Professor Fukuda commutes to the university on Japan Railways' Special Rapid Service train from Kyoto. Since this takes some time, she's always trying to figure out who is getting off at the next stop so she can sit down. Recently she's had trouble with this, and is right only about twenty percent of the time. Also, from a very young age she has enjoyed old buildings and music—the older the better—and she similarly is attracted to older things (as long as they are written down) in her research.