Landscape Architecture Education in China

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Chinese garden design inspired English landscape gardens in the 18th century, which influenced the works of Frederick Law Olmsted, founder of the modern profession of landscape architecture. Despite its early reputation, landscape architecture in modern China and the education of its professionals remains largely unknown to the world. How did modern landscape architecture education develop in China? Which connections exist between traditional and modern China, and between China and the Western world? This chapter is addressing both questions through a case study involving the example of Professor Sun Xiaoxiang (1921–2018), an important education pioneer. Through thematic analysis of both primary sources, such as books and articles written by Sun Xiaoxiang and interviews with Sun conducted by the authors, and secondary sources, such as studies and recollections of Sun by his relatives, friends, colleagues and students, the authors aim to reveal the contribution of Sun in the development of landscape architecture education in contemporary China.

Sun Xiaoxiang was one of the founders of the first landscape architecture programme in the People’s Republic of China (PRC). A talented landscape architect who integrated traditional and modern knowledge, and who had a good vision and global awareness, Sun played an important role in East–West communication since the 1980s. He helped introduce Chinese landscape philosophy and aesthetics to the Western world, and he was innovative in conceptualising landscape architecture in China. He encouraged students to study abroad, and many of them have become key figures in landscape architecture practice and education in China today. His career of 70 years spans and reflects the development of landscape architecture in China. He was one of the two Chinese landscape architects who received the IFLA Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe Award (SGJA) (IFLA 2014). The other awardee, Yu Kongjian, was a student of Sun during the 1980s at Beijing Forestry University.

The emergence of landscape architecture education in China

In Chinese culture and language, the terms ‘landscape’ and ‘landscape architecture’ are borrowed words. The Chinese word 山水 (shan shui, literally translated as ‘mountain and water’) is a commonly accepted translation for ‘landscape’, seeing in various
landscape-related terms such as landscape painting (山水画, shan shui hua, literally translated as ‘mountain-and-water painting’), landscape poetry (山水诗, shan shui shi, literally translated as ‘mountain-and-water poetry’) and so on. However, the translation of ‘landscape architecture’ required more efforts, as it defines a profession that did not exist in ancient China. After its introduction into China in the early 20th century, several versions of the translation coexisted, and debates about the different translations continued until 2011, when 风景园林 (feng jing yuan lin, literally translated as ‘scenery/landscape and garden’) became the official translation for landscape architecture (Ministry of Education of the PRC 2011, p. 6).

China has a written history of landscape design of more than twenty centuries. Traditionally, landscape and garden making relied on masters of planning and designing, and on craftsmen who were responsible for implementation and sometimes detailed designing. Masters included all who have control over the garden, such as property owners and their artist friends, governmental officials and even emperors themselves, often also the educated elite. Craftsmen included carpenters, tile and brick artisans, gardeners, artificial mountain artisans and so on (Ji and Hardie 1988; Yu and Padua 2006, p. 12). They were educated in practice through family heritage or apprenticeship.

Chinese garden traditions continued until the end of the 19th century, when Chinese students started to pursue design education overseas, and when modern education systems gradually began to emerge. In 1917, the Canton Christian College, founded by American Christians, opened the course ‘Landscaping’ (renamed as ‘Landscape Gardening’ in 1920), taught in English by George Weidman Groff, a teacher who graduated from Pennsylvania State University and worked in the Canton Christian College since 1907 (Lin and Huang 2020, pp. 129–131). In 1920s, a few universities opened a landscape gardening course under their horticulture departments, such as Southeast University, Zhejiang University and a few others (Lin 2005, pp. 1–2). Students and teachers returning from Japan, the USA, France and other countries introduced Western landscape architecture concepts to China (Zhao 2008, p. 5). In 1935, Chen Zhi (1899–1989), a graduate from Tokyo Imperial University in Japan published the book An Introduction to Landscape Architecture (造园学概论), the first of such kind in China, in which Chen investigated the meanings, history and types of landscape architecture worldwide, and argued to establish an independent landscape architecture programme in China (Chen 1935). Due to wars and changing regimes in the following decades, his vision came true only in 1951, two years after the founding of the PRC.

In 1951, Beijing Agricultural University launched the first landscape architecture programme (Lin 2012, p. 51). The programme transferred to Beijing Forestry College (renamed Beijing Forestry University in 1985) in 1956, and it remained one of a handful of landscape architecture programmes in China during the following decades. Along with rapid urbanisation since 1990s, and especially with university expansions since the late 1990s, landscape architecture education has gained increasing societal attention and numbers of programmes grew fast. Between 1998 and 2009, the number of universities that offered undergraduate degrees in landscape architecture had been growing 14% annually and 20% for those that offered graduate degree programmes (Lin 2014, p. 43). In 2006, for example, about 140 universities had undergraduate landscape architecture programmes, and twenty-four had graduate programmes in landscape architecture in Mainland China (Lin 2007, pp. 9 and 12). In 2014, the numbers were over 280 and over 120 respectively in Mainland China (Lin 2014, p. 43). Today, Chinese professionals and students are interacting actively with landscape architecture education and practice worldwide.
Sun Xiaoxiang and the early period of landscape architecture education in the PRC (1950s–1970s)

Sun Xiaoxiang was born in 1921 into a farming family in the Zhejiang province. He received primary education through home schooling before attending a modern school for secondary education. Such a combined way of learning equipped him with both traditional Chinese culture and modern scientific knowledge. Sun had shown talents in poetry, painting, calligraphy and theatrical play ever since his teenage years (Zhu 2019, pp. 11–12). In 1942, Sun enrolled at Zhejiang University, initially studying agriculture, moved to agricultural chemistry in the second year, and graduated from the Department of Horticulture in 1946, when he became a teaching assistant at Zhejiang University and taught floriculture and landscape architecture (Wang et al. 2007, p. 27).

In 1949, when the PRC was established, landscape professionals became urgently needed to provide expertise for city reconstruction and expansion projects. In 1951, during a committee meeting of the Bureau of Construction at Beijing Municipal Government, the landscape architect Wang Juyuan (1913–1996) from Beijing Agriculture University and the architect Wu Liangyong (born 1922) from Tsinghua University proposed that the two universities should initiate a joint landscape architecture programme. The plan was submitted to their universities first and then to the Ministry of Education. It was quickly approved. In autumn 1951, the landscape architecture programme was launched on a pilot basis. Ten second-year students from the Department of Horticulture at Beijing Agriculture University enrolled. In addition to their two years of horticulture, they took two years in the Department of Architecture at Tsinghua University. Eight of them graduated in 1953 and became the first landscape architecture professionals trained in the PRC (see Table 31.1) (Wu 2006, p. 1).

In 1953, the landscape architecture programme returned to Beijing Agriculture University under the reorganisation of the educational system in China which aimed to turn comprehensive universities into specialised universities (Wu 2006, p. 2). With weakened teaching support from Tsinghua University, Wang Juyuan had to ‘borrow’ teachers from other universities. Sun Xiaoxiang was one of them. Seconded for the programme from Zhejiang University, he taught floriculture and garden art. In 1954, Sun was sent to Nanjing Institute of Technology to study architecture. One year after, he was formally employed as a lecturer at Beijing Agriculture University, teaching garden art and landscape design (Meng 2019, p. 15). In 1956, after further adjustments made according to higher educational models from the Soviet Union, the landscape architecture programme, together with all its teachers and students, were relocated to Beijing.

Table 31.1 The curriculum for the 1951–1953 landscape architecture programme, jointly established by Beijing Agriculture University and Tsinghua University.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban planning (including urban greening)</th>
<th>Plant classification</th>
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<tr>
<td>Garden design</td>
<td>Forestry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Architecture design</td>
<td>Surveying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Chinese gardens</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Western gardens</td>
<td>Ornamental trees and flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to architecture</td>
<td>Garden art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartography perspective</td>
<td>Garden engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing (sketches, watercolours)</td>
<td>Landscape management</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chinese architecture</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Forestry College (renamed Beijing Forestry University in 1985) and renamed Department of ‘Greening of cities and inhabited places’ in 1957 (Chen 2002, p. 5; Lin 2012, p. 52). The name changed again to Department of Urban Landscape Architecture in 1964. In 1965, the Department, together with the landscape architecture programme, was abolished and not restored until 1974. Since 1979, it was renamed as Department of Landscape Architecture (Lin 2012, p. 52).

To improve living environments for socialist workers, including both recreational and educational opportunities, urban parks, botanical gardens and the like were especially needed in the newly founded PRC. By the time Sun came to Beijing, he had led two landscape projects in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. Both were very successful and had great influence on landscape architectural design in China. One project is the park Viewing Fish at Flower Harbour, designed in 1951–1954 and completed in 1956, by the historic scenic site of West Lake. The other is Hangzhou Botanical Gardens, designed in 1952–1953 and the first part opened in 1957. Within the next decade, Sun designed five more botanical gardens. With his growing practical experience, Sun quickly became a popular teacher, inspiring students with vivid examples about using traditional garden art for contemporary landscape design (Meng 2019, p. 15). Sun became the head of the landscape design teaching office in the landscape architecture programme at Beijing Forestry College in 1957 (Wang et al. 2007, p. 28).

At that time, no textbook was available for teaching. Sun wrote two manuscripts, Garden Art and Landscape Design, and published them in the form of mimeographed lecture notes in 1958. In the following decades, he combined the two manuscripts into one volume that he updated several times and eventually published in 1986. Entitled Garden Art and Landscape Design, the book since then has remained a classic textbook. The latest edition appeared in 2011 (see Table 31.2). This book reflects Sun’s perception of landscape architecture in the early period of his career, where the focus was mainly on landscape design of public parks and green spaces, embedded with traditional Chinese aesthetics.

What made Sun quickly stand out from his contemporaries were his profound skills in Chinese art (especially painting, poetry and calligraphy), his professional competence solidly rooted in horticulture, his broad interests in different fields, as well as his passion and creativity (Hu 2019, pp. 27–30). Not formally trained as a landscape architect, he learned landscape design from different sources. For example, he got inspirations on landscape composition from Chinese paintings, and learned how to use contour lines by surveying public parks in Shanghai designed by English landscape architects (Meng 2019, p. 16). He synthesized such knowledge into his

<table>
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<th>Table 31.2 Table of contents of Sun Xiaoxiang’s book Garden Art and Landscape Design.</th>
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<td><strong>Part</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Part 1. Theories of garden art</td>
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<td>Part 2. Planting design</td>
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<td>Part 3. Landscape design</td>
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Source: Sun (2011) (table drawn and translated by the authors).
landscape projects, including the Viewing Fish at Flower Harbour park. Historically the site was a well-known scenic spot but turned derelict at the time when Sun successfully re-created the historical scene of *fish kissing flower petals floating on water*. At the same time, the new design satisfied contemporary needs to function as a public park, with lawns and various thematic gardens grouped in an area of 11 hectares for recreational and educational purposes. Sun’s design took inspiration from both traditional Chinese gardens and from English and Japanese gardens. Soon after its completion, the work was regarded as the best public park in the country. It was included in exhibitions both in the Soviet Union and the first International Congress in Parks and Recreation in the United Kingdom in 1957 (Zhao 2008, p. 85).

Public park design in China in the 1950s adopted the Soviet principle of ‘socialist content/values and national styles’, which were largely interpreted as public parks based on traditional garden art and serving the needs of socialist workers. In *Garden Art and Landscape Design*, Sun summarised the guiding principles specifically for public parks and gardens, botanical gardens and zoological gardens. These gardens were to serve the working class; they are to be appropriate and useful, economical and beautiful; creating socialist gardens and parks by critically inheriting traditional Chinese garden culture and selectively studying foreign landscape architecture; and paying attention to the relationship between design, construction and maintenance (Sun 1986a, pp. 5–8). In an article published in 1962, Sun explained how traditional garden design was consistent with contemporary guiding principles. For example, as stated in a 17th-century Chinese garden book *Yuan Ye*, using existing features on site and borrowing views from the surroundings could save money and enrich the experience (Sun 1962, pp. 84–86).

During the Cultural Revolution period (1966–1976), Sun’s career was halted, and so was the landscape architecture programme at Beijing Forestry College (Chen 2002, p. 5). It was not until the late 1970s that landscape architecture education resumed.

**Sun Xiaoxiang and landscape architectural education after the 1980s**

In 1979, the ‘Reform and Openness’ policy was launched, and a series of cultural and scientific exchanges were promoted to re-establish communication between China and Western countries. For Example, in 1981, a Chinese delegation of landscape architects visited National Parks and urban green infrastructure in North American cities. Sun was one of the delegates. In his first experience abroad, Sun saw great differences among landscape professions and their education in China and in the West. Upon his return to China, Sun published two articles in the *Journal of the Beijing Forestry College*, describing the national park system in the United States and reflecting on the management of scenic areas and historical sites in China (Sun 1982a, 1982b). This visit and visits during the following years expanded Sun’s understanding of the core issues of contemporary landscape architecture, deepened his thinking on the significance of Chinese gardens for the contemporary urban environment, and initiated Sun’s development of theories, including those of ecosystem engineering of urban green spaces that he called ‘Earthscape Planning’ (Wang et al. 2007, p. 31).

In autumn 1981, Darwina Neal, vice president of the American Society of Landscape Architects, met Sun at Beijing Forestry College and introduced the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA). Sun joined the IFLA World Congress in 1982. He ‘charmed those with whom he spoke and showed [. . .] beautiful watercolour paintings he had done of Chinese landscapes’ (Darwina 2011, p. 23). In 1983, Sun became an individual member of IFLA and since then had been a featured speaker at several IFLA conferences. He continued to work on the Chinese Society of Landscape Architects joining IFLA, which became reality in 2005 (Darwina 2011, p. 23; Richard 2011, p. 19).
Between 1985 and 1991, Sun made several academic visits to Australia and the USA\(^6\) (Lin n.d.; Sun 1994, p. 22). He gave lectures on Chinese gardens at universities and to the public, held solo exhibitions on Chinese paintings, absorbed new ideas in landscape architecture and introduced them to China, gradually building more bridges between China and the West in the greater world of landscape architecture.

**Interpreting Chinese garden art and evaluating Chinese landscape philosophy**

Starting around the 1980s, one of Sun’s endeavours was to introduce Chinese gardens, their philosophy and art, to the Western world, and to uncover their contemporary meanings for his students, for the landscape architecture profession and for society in general. As an educator and practicing professional, one of his messages was the Chinese reverence for nature. This message came at a time of growing environmental concern in Western countries. Different from Western views, in traditional Chinese perception, not man but ‘(N)ature is the ruler and purpose of the world and man is only a member of the community of living creatures in nature and the world’ (Sun 1986b, p. 484). ‘Chinese love of, and sensitivity towards, the aesthetics of nature were widely expressed in the areas of philosophy, art, literature and painting for more than 3000 years’ (Sun 1986b, p. 484, 1994, p. 22). Therefore, it is not surprising to see how ‘China was the first country to pursue a natural approach to landscape design’ (Sun 1986b, p. 484, 1994, p. 23).

In the 1980s, the challenges of rapid urbanisation were topics of several conferences Sun attended\(^7\) (IFLA 2012, p. 44; Sun 1985, p. 252). He contributed by discussing to rethink human relationship with nature and to answer questions such as ‘how to build modern cities without destroying the pleasure and ecosystem of nature’. Sun pointed out that ‘the pleasures of wild nature and the heritage of art should be mingled with the planning of the modern city’ (Sun 1994, p. 27), and ‘the traditional Chinese approach of creating cities rich with the pleasure of wild nature may be of some use to the modern landscape planners and designers’ (Sun 1994, p. 22).

To uncover Chinese garden design principles, based on his understanding of classical garden art and practice of modern landscape projects, Sun proposed ‘three aesthetic levels’: the level of natural beauty and beauty of life, the level of artistic beauty, and the level of spiritual beauty. The first level is to find prototypes from nature and life. Beautiful landscapes in China provide rich sources of inspiration. When designing a garden, one should always think about the life in it: reading, drawing, listening or playing music, drinking tea, playing chess, meeting friends and so on. After collecting prototypes from nature and life, the second level is to use the painter’s eyes and musician’s ears to make the garden artistically admirable. Sun introduced various ways to achieving this. For example, selecting and surveying the site is a key step to make good use of natural elements and surroundings. Chinese painting theories can be used in guiding water, rockery and plant arrangement; the succession of the seasons should also be considered to create all-seasonal enjoyment. The third level is, with the love of a poet, the wisdom of a philosopher and a childlike innocence, to create the spirit of the garden and make the garden a personal utopia and paradise. Sun believes that the third level reflects the state of a civilisation and makes a garden a real piece of art (Sun 1984, pp. 53–55, 2001, pp. 62–68, 2005b, pp. 36–38). Sun disseminated this theory through articles, lectures and conference speeches in China and abroad, and demonstrated his theory in various design projects with his students.
Redefining landscape architecture education

Taking part in the World Conference on Education for Landscape Planning at Harvard University in 1986 left a profound impact on Sun (Wang 2011, p. 17). He embraced the idea of Landscape Planning as ‘an interdisciplinary field which focuses on issues related to land use and natural resources management, the development and change of rural regions, landscape ecology and the urban and metropolitan landscape’ (Sun 2006, p. 11). These insights lead to reforms in landscape architecture education in China. Before this conference, Sun once summarised ‘five legs’ that support an outstanding landscape architect: painting, ecology, horticulture, architecture and poetry (Sun 1986b, p. 486). At the conference, Sun renewed his idea and said

if I want to be an outstanding modern landscape planner, these five legs are still not enough. In that case, I would require a knowledge of economics and sophisticated technologies such as aerial survey techniques, remote sensing and computer-aided design methods.

(Sun 1986b, p. 486)


Recognising gaps in landscape architectural education between China and the West in the late 1980s, Sun saw that, in educating landscape planners, China must learn new skills from other countries. He recommended to his talented students that they take graduate studies abroad. Among them were Hu Jie who studied at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign 1990–1995, Wang Xiangrong who studied at University of Kassel in Germany 1991–1995 and Yu Kongjian who studied at Harvard University 1992–1995. All returned to China and became influential landscape architects and educators at Tsinghua University, Beijing Forestry University and Beijing University respectively.

At the turn of the 21st century, along with the speedy urban expansion in China, environmental issues became increasingly severe. Recognising the growing responsibilities of landscape architecture professionals, Sun appealed to widen the scope of the profession to embrace ‘Earthscape Planning’ (Sun 2002, 2006). Sun defines Earthscape Planning as a macro-scope strategy beyond territorial boundaries in the management of a broad range of spheres, reaching from inner crust to outer space, a layer 60 km in thickness. This means that integrated planning ought to consider all resources in both continents and oceans, deep under and high above the surface of the Earth (Sun 2005a, p. 7). The scale of landscape architecture, therefore, stretches from designing landscapes from one end to the other of Earthscape Planning. The central tasks for landscape architects, as described by Sun, are first to protect the wild nature (first nature) that has not been exploited by humans, and secondly to wisely plan the second nature (such as agriculture land, industrial land, cities and villages and so on) to ensure a sustainable development (Wang et al. 2007, p. 33).

In order to encourage new generations of landscape architecture professionals to obtain multidisciplinary knowledge and skills for such responsibility, Sun proposed to establish the Graduate School of Earthscape Planning at Beijing Forestry University (Sun 2006, pp. 12–13).
Although such vision could hardly be realised or even be understood at the beginning, its value has been gradually revealed. In 2008, Yu Kongjian led a planning research project ‘National Ecological Security Pattern Plan’ commissioned by the Chinese Ministry of Environmental Protection (Saunders 2012, p. 192). In 2018, an interdisciplinary Research Institute for Ecological Habitat Environment of Beautiful China was established at Beijing Forestry University, led by Wang Xiangrong (see Table 31.3) (Beijing Forestry University 2018). In 2020, a group of scholars from multiple disciplines, led by the landscape architect Yang Rui at Tsinghua University, published ‘Cost-effective priorities for the expansion of global terrestrial protected areas: Setting post-2020 global and national targets’ in *Science Advances* (Yang et al. 2020). Large-scale strategic planning led by landscape architects, as Sun appealed since the late 1980s, are gradually taking shape in China.

Would Sun have been satisfied with these developments? If we look at the three aesthetic levels he proposed, we might find a place for ‘Earthscape Planning’ at the first aesthetic level, which aims at keeping nature alive, or say environmental sustainability. Nevertheless, there are higher levels that landscape architects should attain. As Sun said, to create a paradise on earth, the third level – the realm of spiritual beauty – is needed. ‘A garden is a paradise in the human world. This paradise should be full of love. The highest level is selflessness’. To further explain, Sun quoted Confucius: ‘In practicing the rules of propriety, it is harmony that is prize’ and argued that the ultimate strategy for a sustainable future of humanity lies in this ancient philosophy (Wang 2011, p. 17).

### Conclusion

The history of modern landscape architecture education in China has been shaped by generations of pioneers, such as Chen Zhi, who comprehensively introduced the discipline of landscape architecture and called for its establishment in Chinese higher education, and Wang Juyuan and Wu Liangyong, who promoted and created the first landscape architecture programme in China, to name but a few. Amongst the pioneers, Professor Sun Xiaoxiang is a unique figure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current structure</th>
<th>Envisioned structure by Sun Xiaoxiang</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>School of Landscape Architecture</strong></td>
<td><strong>Research Institute for Ecological Habitat Environment of Beautiful China</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Landscape Architecture</td>
<td>Landscape Architecture</td>
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<td>Landscape Architecture</td>
<td>Landscape Architecture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Landscape Gardening</td>
<td>Urban Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Planning</td>
<td>Landscape engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ornamental Horticulture</td>
<td>Garden plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Management</td>
<td>Generic Engineering of Garden plants</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 31.3 A comparison between the existing and the envisioned structures of landscape architecture-related institutions at Beijing Forestry University.

Source: *Table drawn by* the authors, with references to the official website (Beijing Forestry University 2020) and Sun’s article (Sun 2006, p. 13).
His life-long experiences went in parallel with the development of the PRC and well reflected the development of landscape architecture education in contemporary China. His early studies of traditional Chinese art and literature laid the foundation for Sun’s understanding of Chinese gardens and cultivated a heart that reveres nature. His subsequent exchanges with Western landscape architects and educators broadened his horizons and facilitated his reinterpretation of the contemporary meanings of Chinese gardens and views of nature. In the field of landscape architecture education, he is a bridge between the past and today, between China and the West.

Notes
1 Except for the two authors of this chapter, all Chinese names in this chapter appear as surname first, followed by first name(s).
2 The appreciation of natural landscape appeared in Chinese culture much earlier than that in Europe. The earliest existing landscape painting in China, entitled ‘Spring tour’ and painted by Zhan Ziqian (ca. 545–618), dates to the 6th century, for example.
3 For example, in the Book of Poetry, the Chinese classics dating from the 11th to 7th centuries BC, there is a description of the King of Zhou’s park. The park was planned by the King and was constructed by his people in a short time. The park contained at least an earthen terrace, a fishpond, trees and various animals. The place was used for ritual ceremonies and gatherings (Chinese Text Project n.d.).
4 The English books that Chen Zhi referenced in An Introduction to Landscape Architecture include Samuel Parsons (1915) The Art of Landscape Architecture, O. C. Simonds (1920) Landscape Gardening and Frank F. Waugh (1927) Formal Design in Landscape Architecture, and others.
5 The Chinese term for the landscape architecture course that Sun taught is 造园学 (Zao yuan xue, literally translated as ‘studies on garden making’), a term that Chen Zhi used for his book An Introduction to Landscape Architecture published in 1935.
6 Sun held the 1985 Haydn Williams Fellowship at the Curtin University of Technology, Western Australia, and made a lecture tour to fifteen universities of Australia’s major cities, jointly sponsored by the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) and the Garden History Society, and financed by a grant from the Design Arts Board of the Australia Council. He served as visiting scholar at the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, from September 1989 to February 1990, and made a lecture tour to ten American universities under the sponsorship of Harvard University (Lin n.d.; Sun 1994, p. 22).
7 For example, the topic of IFLA’s Third Eastern Regional Conference in Hong Kong in 1984 was ‘Urban explosion in Asia’; the topic of Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA)’s Annual Conference in 1985 was ‘the Cityscape’. Sun Xiaoxiang attended both conferences and gave speeches.

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