

Hongxun Yang

A Treatise on the Garden of Jiangnan

A study on the Art of Chinese Classical
Garden

 Springer

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Preface

The Classical Garden of China—An Art of Time and Space that Portrays Nature

Jiangnan, “the south of the River,” refers to the water network region along the lower reaches of the Changjiang River,¹ primarily Jiangsu Province and the northern part of Zhejiang Province. The Jiangnan garden relates to the classical Chinese gardens built in this region during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties.

The garden of Jiangnan represents the elite of the classical Chinese gardens and serves as a prime exemplar for its northern counterpart, the Ming and Qing imperial gardens. Differing from the traditional Western concept of “garden,” which is intended for the growth of herbs, fruits, flowers, or vegetables, or “park,” which is mainly a tree-planted space, the Jiangnan garden is a comprehensive creation of natural landscapes that includes shaping land surface (for topographical features such as mountains and water bodies), planting vegetation, placing ornamental animals, and disposing architectural structures. A Jiangnan garden is an architectural space where artificial and natural elements are combined. While unable to get a precise English translation, *zao yuan*, “garden making” in Chinese, is in fact closer to “landscape architecture” in concept.

Constitution of the Scenic Imagery

As *image* is the basic unit in art, *scenic image* is the basic unit in the art of garden. A private Jiangnan garden, whether it is a *zhai yuan* (residential garden) that is built

¹Formerly known as Yangtze River

adjacent to and relatively independent of a residential compound or a *ting yuan* (court garden) that is arranged in the courtyard within a residential compound, is an integral part of everyday living space and an extension and supplement to the residence. It is a pleasure-seeking space intended for relaxation and recreation that is reminiscent of a natural environment. The scenic imagery of a Jiangnan garden comprises two antithetical and yet unified aspects: scenic constituents and scenic guidance.

Scenic constituents are the material foundation of the garden's scenic structure. A garden's functional nature and facility setup as well as its landscape nature—whether it is a mountainscape garden, a waterscape garden, or a combination of the two—are primarily determined by the presence of the garden's scenic constituents. Simply put, scenic constituents are the building materials of the garden, or the material means of garden building.

Scenic constituents include natural and artificial constituents. Natural constituents, namely, topography (such as mountain and water features), vegetation², and animal life³, are the dominant factors that determine the natural features of the scenic imagery. They are the means to manifestations of the natural ecologic environment and constitute the basic content of the garden's viewing capacity, without which architecture alone—no matter how ingeniously planned and executed—cannot bring a landscape garden to fruition.

Artificial constituents, on the other hand, refer to buildings and all other architectural treatments, including paths, grounds, courtyards, walls, fences, trellises, bridges, stepping stones, staircases, bank revetments, and so on. Artificial constituents provide the garden with functional value that affords the utilitarian efficiency as in traffic facilitation, sun and rain shelters, daily routine such as dining, resting, and entertaining, as well as general garden recreational activities like hill climbing, vale exploring, boating, and fishing, all of which rely directly on the placement of the artificial constituents. If a garden is not even furnished with the most elemental architectural feature, such as a footpath, it is a garden bereft of utility and not meant for any human activity. The implementation of artificial constituents, however, should follow the naturalistic principle of garden making so as to bring the artificial constituents in harmony with the natural constituents of the garden.

Scenic guidance is an organizing factor that represents the structural relationship of the garden. From the perspective of a visitor to the garden, scenic guidance is an arranger of and a guide to the sequential and non-sequential scenic images. It is a pathfinder that steers the movement of the visitor, that determines how he sees and appreciates the scenery, and that ultimately shapes his experience of the garden.

²Flowers, plants, and trees

³Birds, beasts, fish, and insects

Some of the popular scenic effects, such as *qu jing tong you*,⁴ *yin ren ru sheng*,⁵ *feng hui lu zhuan*,⁶ and *kai men jian shan*,⁷ are but a few examples effected by means of scenic guidance. This has also demonstrated that scenic constituents can only be organized into coherent scenic imagery by means of scenic guidance; otherwise, they would simply be a casual and meaningless material buildup that fails to convey the functionality and artistic ideology of the garden. In other words, it is through scenic guidance that scenic constituents are configured into a functional and purposeful artistic space.

Scenic constituents and scenic guidance are inter-premised and interdependent, and the roles of the two are constantly interchanged. For instance, a bridge or a pavilion, as a scenic constituent, is an object of viewing when admired from distance but becomes scenic guidance when serving as a medium of sightseeing—a passage-way or a lookout and resting point. This is to say that a scenic image can be both an aesthetic viewing object and simultaneously a spatial entity that can be entered and experienced personally. This is where the landscape garden lies superior to landscape painting or potted landscape.

Special mention should be made of that while scenic constituents carry the garden's aesthetic value and scenic guidance the functional value, scenic constituents are also the basis for garden's functionality and scenic guidance is the organizing agent of garden's aesthetic experience. Scenic constituents and scenic guidance are mutually inclusive and inter-penetrable; they are inseparable organisms. Scenic constituents are finite, whereas scenic guidance is infinite. It is the unity of the two antitheses that brings forth the rich and varied scenic imagery, whose inspired and imaginative wonders never cease to captivate and intrigue its admirers.

An Art of Time and Space

Chinese landscape painting—the ink-wash painting known as *shanshui hua*⁸—is a representation of the three-dimensional natural scenery on a two-dimensional picture scroll by means of painting artistry and techniques. In other words, it is manipulation of space on a flat surface. The garden of Jiangnan, described as the “natural-type” or “landscape-type” garden, portrays a space in the space, re-creating natural landscapes in a limited garden space with natural materials of stone, sand, water, soil, and vegetation, and animal life.

Creation of the Jiangnan garden is a process of artistic condensation and even necessary formulization as practiced in Beijing opera or *xie yi* painting. Opposite to

⁴ A winding path leading to a secluded spot

⁵ Enticing one into a wonderful place

⁶ Where the peak stands brings the next turn of the mountain path

⁷ A mountain springing to view as the door opens

⁸ Mountain-and-water painting

realism, both Beijing opera and *xie yi* painting are art forms that express the artistry in an abbreviated and abstract style, aspiring to capture the spirit and essence of the object rather than its physical likeness. In the art of the Jiangnan garden, the abstractionism and symbolism are equally evident: a mound of a few meters high is used to evoke a full-scale mountain and a stretch of pond water an expansive lake, and a single piece of upright *taihu* stone (a waterworn rock indigenous to the Taihu Lake famous for its irregular and fantastical shapes) is suggestive of a mountain peak, all of which is what is described as *xiao zhong jian da*, evoking the large in the small.

Jiangnan gardens are mostly built adjacent to a private residence. It is in effect a continuation of the living space, which gives rise to the practice of *yuan ju*, a lifestyle of leisure and refined pursuits sought after by intellectual elites that features idealized daily routine, including reading, painting, poetizing, playing musical instruments, tasting tea, savoring wine, playing chess, appreciating opera performances, banqueting, and entertaining. The practical nature of garden living hence requires the garden to be functional with more architectural structures of a greater variety, all designed to be in tune with the grace of the natural landscape of the garden. As such, making of the Jiangnan garden has always striven to create a utilitarian as well as aesthetic living space where natural and artificial worlds are closely incorporated.

The Jiangnan garden is not only a space of reality but also a space of artistic re-creation. It is a space of art. Jiangnan gardens, in their artistic virtues, are pictures and poems expressed in the vocabulary of garden making, and the experience with a Jiangnan garden is oft likened to stepping through the picture frame and taking “a stroll in the painting.” Though usually inspired by or modeled after nature, Jiangnan gardens are idealized nature and a product of human subjectivity. Nature is grander, richer, and more dynamic while the garden—the re-creation of nature—is more condensed, more epitomized, more poetical, and more intriguing.

The difference between the art of garden making and the art of painting lies not only in that the garden portrays a space in the space, but also in that the experience with a garden is not confined to static viewing as with a painting. On the contrary, the aesthetic enjoyment of a garden, to a large extent, transpires in the physical movement of the viewer, which is described as *you lan*, or perambulatory viewing.

Sequential and non-sequential proceeding of garden viewing is an art of temporal planning. Rigorously speaking, a single scenic image has an infinite number of scenic planes that are to be progressively revealed to the viewer as he moves and his perspective shifts. The aspect, duration, and sequence of the revelation of each scenic plane represent the intrinsic fabric of the garden art. In music, notes, chords, tempo, timbre, etc. are interwoven into tunes and rhythms that express a certain motif or interest and are played over the course of time for the listener to enjoy. Similarly in a garden, with the passage of time, various scenic planes gradually unfold in a sequence of views, ambience, and perspectives along with the movement of the viewer, thus completing the artistic impression of the garden.

Manifestations of the scenic imagery are also dictated by nature-obliged factors: change of seasons, passing of time, or variations in climate such as rain, snow, sunshine, or clouds, all of which, to varying degrees, cast a different light on the

artistic effect of the garden's scenic imagery. This, too, is an issue of temporal planning that is to be taken into consideration in garden creation. As with a piece of sculpture that produces the most aesthetic effect when placed in specific lighting, some of the garden scenes render the best artistic appeal, or *yi jing*, only at a certain time of the day, during a certain season of the year, or under a certain condition of the weather. Making of the classical Jiangnan garden has precisely mastered the temporal use of these natural assets. Therefore, creation of the Jiangnan garden is an art of both spatial and temporal planning. It is an art of time and space with functional value.

Yi Jing: The Ultimate Criterion of Garden Creation

In the Chinese classical art theory, *yi jing* is explained as “*xiang wai zhi xiang, jing wai zhi jing*,” which literally says “the image beyond the image, and the scenery beyond the scenery,” purporting the non-material and intangible quality of a scenic image or garden space that is capable of evoking an aesthetic atmosphere or emotional appeal. It is the supreme principle and ultimate criterion of Chinese garden making.

As shown in this illustration of the Free Roaring Pavilion (Shuxiao Ting) in the garden that was preserved miraculously (Liu Yuan) of Suzhou, perched on a tree-planted earthen hill, the light of the low setting sun comes through the tall-growing trunks and casts long, narrow shadows that stretch far on the hilltop, creating a pensive mood tinged with quiet solitude and somber aesthetics, redolent of ancient poetic thoughts such as expressed in this quatrain by Du Mu, a noted poet of the Tang dynasty:

Up on the chill mountain where a stone path slants,
A bower looms far where the white clouds arise.
Stopping the carriage I sit to admire the maples in the dusk,
Redder are the frosted leaves than the February blossoms.

Completion of the construction of a garden or garden scene does not necessarily mean the completion of its artistic creation. Only when the garden or the scenery is given the poetic and picturesque quality and artistic profundity to express the inspiration of nature and life does it come into possession of the quintessential artistry and arrive at the highest precinct of the garden art—*yi jing*. What kind of garden scenery is capable of effecting *yi jing*?

Creation of the garden's natural landscapes, including those of a pastoral interest as manifested in the mountain village or canal-filled country scenery, should follow the laws and principles of the natural ecologic world, namely, the natural structural relationship among the mountains, water bodies, vegetation, animal life, etc. and approximate the garden landscape features to their natural prototypes.

In regard to “approximation” in artistic creation, there is a significant similarity in the creative principle of the painting and that of garden making. In the Chinese

classical painting theory, two antithetical concepts are used in defining the artistry of a landscape painting: *xing si* (formal likeness) and *shen si* (essential likeness). The former relates to the painting's physical resemblance to its natural subject, which can be described as the "realistic truth" of nature, while the latter refers to the "artistic truth" that aims to capture the spirit or essence of nature rather than its outward similitude.

Shen si is premised on *xing si*, and *shen si* is nonetheless regarded as the higher aesthetic criterion in judging the artistry of a natural landscape painting. Similarly in garden making, *shen si* is the desired quality in natural landscape re-creation, especially given the dilemma of the usually restricted garden space in Jiangnan's urban residential districts.

Renowned poet Bai Juyi of the Tang dynasty once remarked: "There is no fixed rule in painting, and the rules lie in similarity. There is no set examples in learning, and the examples are truth itself." Master painter Qi Baishi of the Qing dynasty commented that the artistry of a painting lay "between likeness and non-likeness" of the painted subject, which resonated with the observation by great German poet J.W. Goethe that beauty existed "between truth and non-truth," both of which serve as an excellent footnote to Bai Juyi's argument. The "likeness and non-likeness" or "truth and non-truth" of an artistic image is precisely the knack for the artistic creation of the garden.

A landscape garden work embodies the logical thinking of the garden maker that is formed on his aesthetic judgment and outlooks on nature and gardens; it is also a product of his imaginative thinking fostered by his fascination with and love of beauty and life. As such, the accomplishment and profundity of a garden—whether it is a living epitome of nature and whether it is relishing of rich and deep *yi jing*—rests largely with the rich and broad life and creative experience as well as the artistic erudition of the garden maker. In other words, the makings of a garden maker have an immediate bearing on his logical and imaginative thinking, which exerts a direct impact on the outcome of the garden creation.

From the perspective of garden appreciation, the empathetic experience of *yi jing* is predicated upon the visitor's knowledge of nature and life, cultural attainment, aesthetic capability, and understanding of the garden art language. The depth and extent of one's experience with *yi jing* is in direct proportion to those of his life experience, cultural sophistication, and artistic aptitude. Therefore, to a garden visitor, to fully appreciate the garden's *yi jing* hinges upon the enhancement of his cultural and artistic accomplishment.

Jiangnan gardens are often created by imitating landscape paintings or idyllic writings as well as famous scenic landscapes from nature. Regardless of the form of its inspiration, creation of the garden scenes always follows a certain thematic subject, in consequence of which the classical Chinese gardens are more or less "subject gardens." This notion is further reinforced by the practice that each scenic cluster or scenic space cell is customarily given a name or title by means of placards with calligraphic literary inscriptions to infuse the poetic sentiment into the scenic imagery. This is also an effective contrivance to tap the *yi jing* potential of the scenery and bring the enjoyment of the garden up on a spiritual plane.

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Chapter 1

Introduction



1.1 Demand for a Garden

Gardens, a man-made natural environment for relaxation and enjoyment that is born of man's desire for nature, are an object of aesthetic pleasure. Traditionally, gardens are a luxury for the privileged stratum of a society. To build a garden, one will first need land; even the "Half-acre Garden"¹ will need a land of half acre to build upon. Even Hanging Gardens of Babylon, another case in point, needed a tract of land upon which the garden was struttred. Land means wealth, as do the finances, manpower and materiel necessitated for building the garden on the land. Therefore, gardens were historically owned and enjoyed by the affluent. Admittedly, it is out of the question for the destitute who did not have "a place to stick an awl" to even think of owning a garden; even families comfortably off that could afford building a garden were scant in number. Such was the situation in China in its former days, so was it in other nations around the world. As for the modern times marked by increasingly advanced civilization, however, enjoying a garden has become a necessity in life for the broad masses of the people. As a form of public welfare, many countries have set up public gardens, or parks, of various types. In more developed countries, gardens of private households have also become increasingly common.

Countries of different parts of the world have their own aesthetic demands as regards natural beauty. Nations with culture developed to a certain degree also have

¹Half-acre Garden is a classical garden built in the Qing Dynasty. The home garden of Jia Hanfu, Shangshu of the Ministry of War in the early Qing Dynasty, is located in Huangmi Hutong, Dongcheng district, Beijing, and only remains today. According to records, the park is surrounded by rocks and mountains, diverts water as marshes, and the terraced chambers are quiet and spacious; the structure is tortuous, the furnishings are quaint, and the magnificent and bookish, exuding the spirit, temperament and charm of traditional culture.

their own creation of gardens. From the perspective of the human race as a whole, man's desire for nature is born of man's attachment to nature. Our fulfillment of the means of livelihood—food, clothing, shelter, and transportation—relies on nature. For man, nature is the subject of labor and thinking. Man cannot for a second dispense with nature, whose *modus operandi* itself depends on the metabolic principle. Nature is both the opposite of man and the unity of his that embodies man himself. Man is but a component part of the external natural world.

Advances in civilization have drifted man away from Mother Nature, where he originally came from. When the hub of man's social activities have evolved to be metropolises that are congested with artificial structures, man will inescapably develop nostalgia for nature. This nostalgic feeling was first expressed in the form of hunting by chief slave owners in the primitive society, a way of returning to mountains and woods that was not necessarily related to production. One may well say that it was man's nascent enlightenment on seeking pleasure in gardens. The primeval ages in remote antiquity were a dark world of horror and inclemency for man that was fraught with vipers and beasts, thunder and lightning, and wild fires in an unpredictable jungle. Only after eons of arduous efforts and generations of struggle and sacrifice has nature become tamed, charming, and genial to the human race. To be able to enjoy the beauty of nature is the reward nature returns to man for his hard work. Man has overcome nature, and, regaled with her beauties in manifolds—lush mountains, clear waters, sweet flowers, singing birds, fragrant grass, shady woods, and so forth, who wouldn't fall in love with nature and want to indulge in her magnificence? Restricted by social conditions, however, for the past generations only the wealthy and the powerful could afford to pursue such refined interest. That people admire nature has led them to developing an affinity for her. They climb the mountains, wade the waters, walk the country, fish in the river, boat in the lake, and hunt in the forest, basking in nature and abandoning themselves to her wonderment of many facets. These non-production related leisure activities, be they for physical exercise or spiritual enhancement, have in nature served as a vehicle for man to "recollect his childhood" and relive the "childhood" dreams from his ancient past. For man, who have civilized and long severed from a life once at home with mountains and forests, this is already an enjoyment.

Garden is an epitome of nature that man has triumphed over. Naturalistic landscapes processed and represented through the art of garden making are idealized garden scenery that teems with life interest of mankind. It potentially brings a sense of gratification to people who have labored to tame nature and, more directly, affords aesthetic pleasure that delights both the eyes and the mind of the beholder, as do painting and poetry. The period of a society adverse to reason and common sense is only ephemeral in the long history of civilization; it will ultimately become the past and be replaced with an ideal and scientific society that nurtures the well-being of the people. Naturalistic landscapes and the art of garden making eventually belong to their creators and mother earth, where they will play a broader role. Today, the classical gardens in the Jiangnan region have become historical vestiges. The living

examples remaining today are cultural heritage for artistic appreciation and a testimony of China's magnificent ancient civilization, which, in this day and age, do not fit entirely the relaxing purpose in contemporary life as does a public park nowadays. Nevertheless, the hidden principles and techniques applied to constructing the landscapes of natural beauty still provide invaluable experience and expertise that today's garden builders can draw on. They are the foundation on which we study these garden examples from the past. The reason we now study the gardens that used to entertain the privileged minority is not only for summarizing our cultural heritage, but more importantly, it is for creating a garden-friendly living space that the whole society can enjoy at present and in the future.

1.2 Basic Concept of Chinese Classical Gardens: Integration of Human Environment and Natural Environment

Chinese gardening has a long history. Archaeologists have uncovered remains of the pool in the backyard of the Royal Palace of Shang Dynasty in Yanshi City, Henan Province, which proves that Chinese gardening with a natural living space for relaxation and enjoyment appeared at least 3000 years ago. As an integrated art form of the landscape, plants, animals and buildings, Chinese gardening matured about 2000 years ago in the Zhou Dynasty according to the patterns and documents recorded on the bronze casting at that time. Chinese classical garden, different from the west in taste and interest, has its own philosophical basis.

1.2.1 Philosophical Foundation of Chinese Classical Garden

Two systems of human civilization, Eastern civilization and Western civilization, the former originated from the Yellow River and the Yangtze River basins, the latter from the Euphrates and Tigris river basins. The "Eastern" and "Western" I'm talking about here are the concepts that represent two cultures, which constitute the perfection of human wisdom complementing each other, as shown in the Taiji diagram, (Fig. 1.1). To illustrate with religion, which is actually the reflection of social culture. According to Clifford Geertz, religion is the expression of symbols first, and what symbols carry is "meaning", that is, general thinking including cognition, emotion and morality, which are the core contents of culture. For example, philosophically speaking, although we believe that God dominates the world, we still regard man as the subjective factor in the objective world. The Bible can represent the fundamental idea of the western world that has not yet been exposed to Oriental culture. God created the world (Fig. 1.2) and created human beings in his own way, which means that man is the image of God; God gives the world to man to manage and enjoy. In

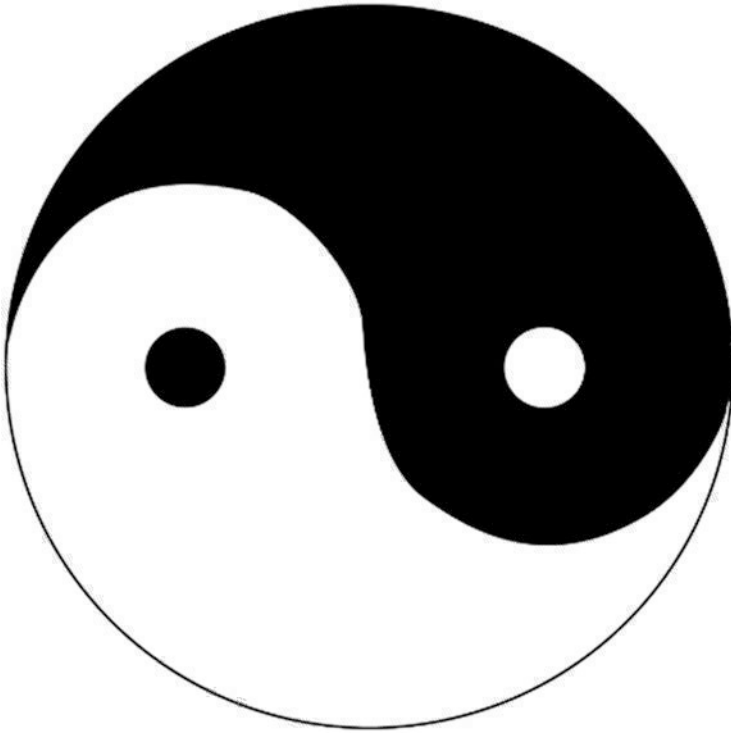


Fig. 1.1 Taiji diagram



Fig. 1.2 God created the world

fact, man is the master of the world. So what we emphasize is the power of human beings. The relationship between human beings and nature is opposite. Human beings should conquer nature. Our art emphasizes the praise of human beings,



Fig. 1.3 Physical beauty

such as traditional painting, sculpture etc. describing the beauty of human body (Fig. 1.3), while Zhouyi, which is called “the true Oriental philosophy” by Hegel, represents the Oriental philosophy. The basic idea is that everything in the universe comes from nature: Wuji² generates Taiji³; Taiji generates two complementary forces⁴; Two complementary forces generate four aggregates⁵; Four aggregates generate eight trigrams⁶; Eight trigrams determine myriads of phenomena.⁷ Therefore, Oriental philosophy believes that man is an integral part of nature and emphasizes the unity of objective nature and subjective human beings. Based on the idea of nature worship, Chinese literature and art usually focus on praising the nature (Fig. 1.4).

Classical garden arts in the Eastern and Western worlds differ a lot before massive communication. Classical Chinese gardens are an artistic representation of natural beauty for manifesting and praising nature (Fig. 1.5), which can be shown in the management of water surface while the Western classical gardens with geometric designs admire artful beauty. The forms of water in Classical Chinese gardens are scenes describing natural landscape, such as rivers, lakes, pools, waterfalls, streams and gullies (Fig. 1.6) while pools with geometric patterns and fountains violating the laws of nature, such as “water flows upward” in western gardens (Fig. 1.7). As for plants, Chinese gardens are configured with trees, flowers and plants that simulate

²Mathematically expressed as 0.

³Mathematically expressed as ∞ , proved to be at the same point with 0.

⁴Yin and Yang, positive or negative in Mathematics.

⁵Four quadrants of the Taiyang, Shaoyin, Shaoyang and Taiyin.

⁶Eight basic elements of the arrangement and combination of the universe.

⁷Everything between heaven and earth, including human beings.



Fig. 1.4 Chinese Landscape Paintings

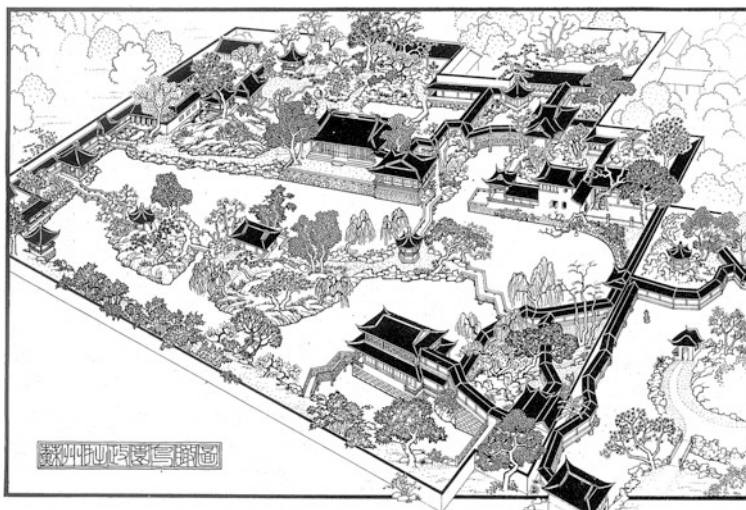


Fig. 1.5 The Classical Chinese Garden describing natural landscape

natural scenery (Fig. 1.8), on the contrary, in western gardens, designs such as “embroidered flowers” and “green carvings” are employed to intensify artful beauty (Fig. 1.9).

1.2.2 Integration of Man and Nature Embodied in Scenes of Chinese Classical Gardens: Integration of Man-Made and Natural Environment

Due to pursuit of living in nature, Chinese make gardens. Therefore, many buildings for living and pleasure can be found in classical Chinese gardens. In a Chinese garden recreating nature, the temporal and spatial organization topographical sculpturing (simulating the geomorphic landscapes such as mountains, water and fields), vegetal and fauna disposition, architectural arrangement for garden tours basically lie in Architecture. The making of Chinese garden strives to integrate architecture with natural scenery, which contributes to the concept of integrating artificial environment with natural one.

The extension of this concept is the overall environment design of living space combined with nature, whose crux lies in borrowing of scenes among its creation principles.

Borrowing of scenes, which intensifies the depth of scenes, refers to borrowed scenes, that is, borrowing the scenes that do not fall within the scope of garden planning and design—involving the beautiful scenery outside the garden into the garden landscape.



Fig. 1.6 Management of water surface in Classical Chinese Garden—a description of natural stream scene

In the fifteenth century, in his treatise on garden making, *The Craft of Gardens* (Yuan Ye), noted garden maker Ji Cheng of the Ming dynasty first proposed the concept of “borrowing of scenes”, advocating that garden making should be “skillful by borrowing”. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Qing scholar Li Yu, who was erudite in garden making, also proposed “key to scenes is borrowing” in his treatise *Yi Jiayan* (*My Own Points*). The theory and technique of “borrowing of scenes” is an important contribution to classical garden making. More than 1000 years ago, Chinese garden making were learned by Japan, as well as the theory

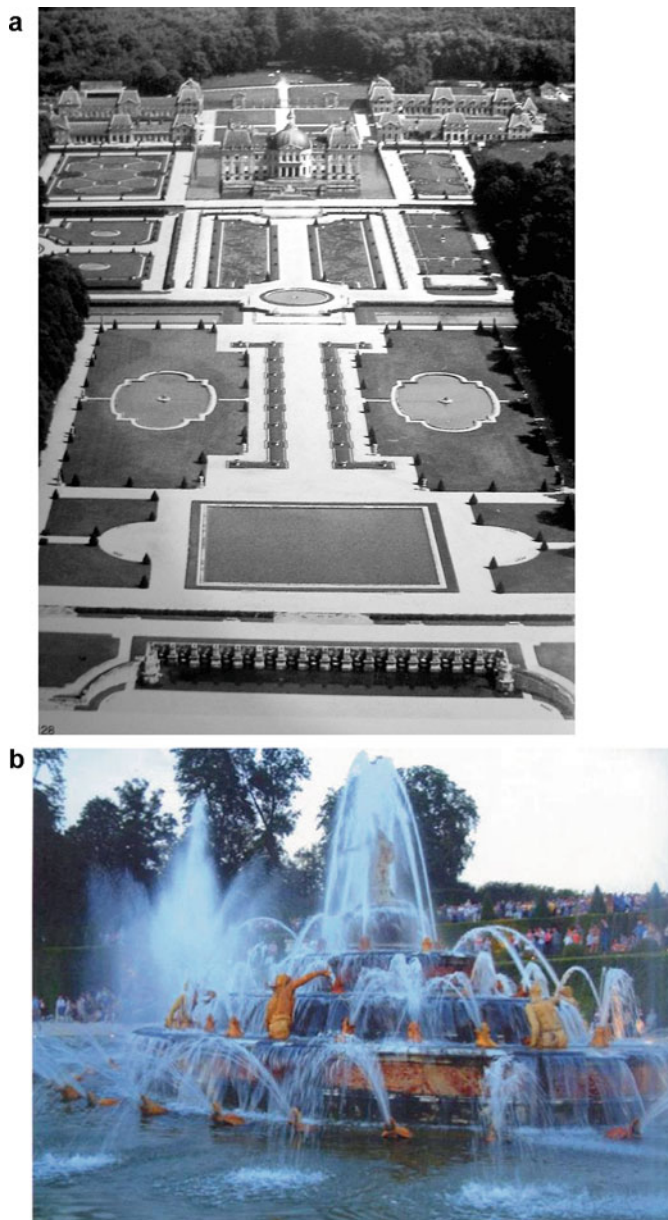


Fig. 1.7 (a) Western classical gardens with interesting geometric designs; (b) Western classical gardens decorated with sculptured fountains



Fig. 1.8 Chinese classical garden imitating the natural plant configuration—the phlox peaches leaning out of the water in Zhuozheng Yuan, Suzhou

of borrowing of scenes, which is equal to *shakkei* in Japanese, and some western scholars learned borrowing of scenes from Japan.

Borrowing of scenes serves as not only a technique to intensify the depth of the scene, but also an important principle. By borrowing of scenes, the garden design, which is usually confined to the selected space, is based on the environment where it is located and its time and condition, and makes full use of favorable factors to improve the artistic effect of the garden. The concept of integrity contained in this means is an extremely valuable and fundamental idea in the design of classical gardens. Therefore, Ji Cheng concluded that “the most important thing in the garden making is borrowing of scenes”.

Dating back to the Qin Empire in the third century BC, as the essence of gardens, the design concept of integrating man-made environment and natural environment has matured. One of its typical representative work is the New Dynasty Palace in Xianyang (the capital of the Qin Empire), which, also known as E pang Palace, blends into natural mountains and rivers and “covers over 300 li⁸ of land”; The central axis of its main building, the “E pang” front hall, directly faces the interspace between the two peaks of the southern mountains, which is the so-called “mark the peaks of the southern mountains as the watchtowers (the sign of entrance)”. “Jieshi Gate”, the “gateway” of the Qin Empire in the Eastern Sea, also uses a pair of natural stone pillars (Jieshi) in the sea as watchtowers, facing which a walkway leading directly to the shore is paved with rubbles. Furthermore, “Jieshi Palace” is built on the coast opposite the natural “Jieshi Gate” as the main building, and two

⁸ About 93 miles.

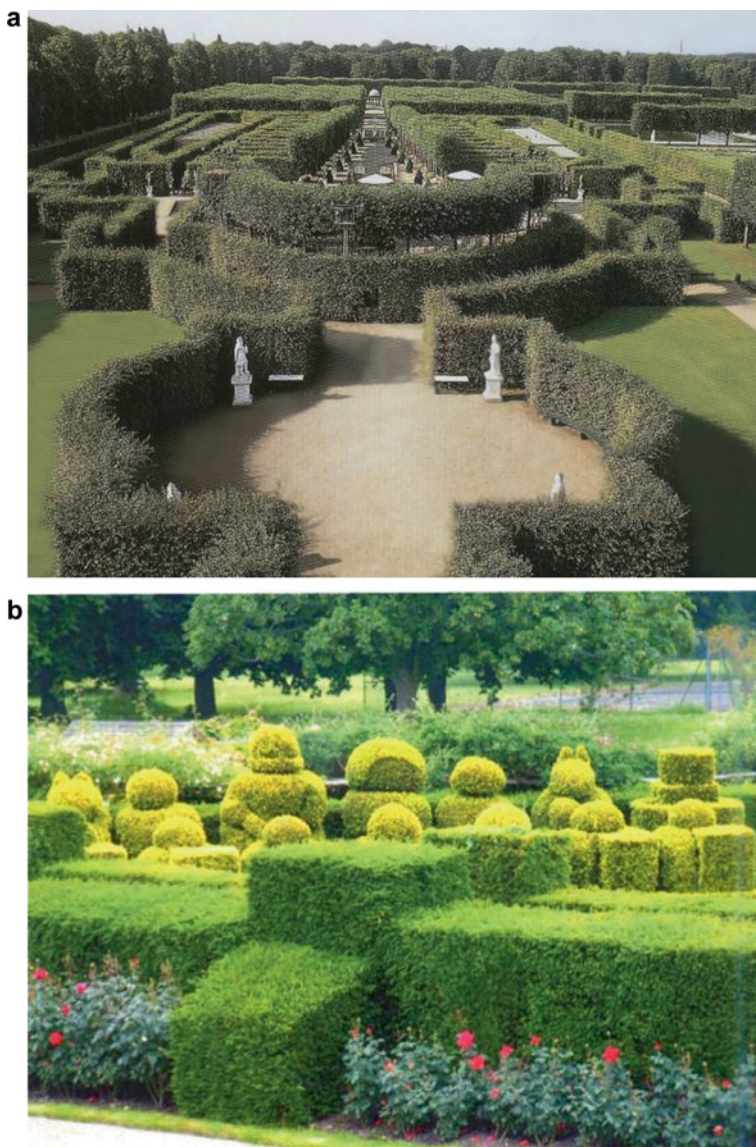


Fig. 1.9 (a) The artificial beauty of plant pruning in Western classical garden, so called “green carving”—trim plants into geometric shapes; (b) The artificial beauty of plant pruning, so called “green carving”—trim plants into adult puppets or animal shapes

symmetrical watchtowers are also set on two headlands 1000–2000 meters away from the main building as the auxiliary buildings. These are all ways of integrating man-made environment into natural environment and taking advantage of nature’s imposing momentum. During the reign of Emperor Wu in the Western Han Dynasty,

a vast “Taiyechi” (Calm Lake) symbolizing the residence of immortals is created in the grand imperial garden “Shanglin Yuan”, and stone statues of “Niulang” and “Zhinu” were set up on both sides of a natural river to symbolize the Milky Way in the sky and the corresponding two constellations on both sides, which is also a representative work of the unified planning and design of the man-made environment and the natural environment in early times.

From January 16 to 19, 2004, an international academic seminar on the theme of “the ‘borrowing of scenes’” was held in Nara, Japan, where I delivered a keynote speech, comprehensively expounding this outstanding theory in Chinese garden. The convening of Nara international conference shows that the design concept of “the ‘borrowing of scenes’” has attracted the attention of international academic community.

Speaking of the relationship between man-made and natural environment, “Fengshui” or “geomancy omen” has been held in esteem from time immemorial in China, which has long been spread to the Korean peninsula, Japan, Vietnam and neighboring countries and regions in southeast Asia. Therefore the relationship is a special content worth studying in East Asian architecture system with Chinese architecture as the main body. Fengshui is called “Jiaxiang” in Japan,⁹ which means “the choice of houses”. In later ages, many secular superstitions and delusions have been blended into the theory of Fengshui, and our research should smash it and absorb its scientific core, that is to discard the dregs and take the essence. The essence of the concept can be summed up as follows:

1. the organic connection between man-made environment and natural environment (for example, when choosing a residential area, its relationship with sun and natural landscape should be taken into consideration, and it thus should be located to the south where the sun is located, backed by mountains and facing water, so that residents can get good sunshine and avoid the north wind in severe winter).
2. Man-made environment should not only meet physical needs, but also meet mental needs.
3. The living environment should be suitable for the healthy and sustainable development of people-the construction should not only benefit the present people, but also make future generations prosperous.
4. All the components in the universe are “numbers”(modern numerology has proved that everything can be reduced to numbers), and there is a “number” relationship between human settlement form and nature as well as with human beings.

The living environment should meet the needs of living, working and relaxing, as well as the pleasure and aesthetic enjoyment. This has become the core of modern “architectural psychology” and “environmental psychology”. A living environment that can meet the needs of life but cause psychological discomfort will still have a great negative impact on people’s health and behavior. Therefore, we conclude,

⁹Its Japanese pronunciation is kassou.

buildings' environment is not simple, and it has a kind of comprehensive field effect of material and spirit. The essence of *Feng shui* (geomancy omen) is to explore the unified functional field of matter and spirit, which should also be the fundamental problem of environmental art. People attach importance to the practical and sanitary functions of buildings' environment, but the spiritual function cannot be ignored. Modern living environment requires environmental art to provide comfortable and warm feelings, and further to have the aesthetic feeling and pleasure compatible with nature.

1.2.3 Chinese Concept of Landscape Design Contributing to the Harmony Between Human Residence and Natural Environment: The Ecologicalization of Living Environment

The theory of garden design goes far beyond the significance of garden making. In fact, it reveals the relationship between man and nature. Different garden construction theories reflect different views of universe and nature, thus determining the construction ideas of the whole human living environment. In western traditional geometric gardens which show artificial beauty, it is against the nature to spray water upwards and modify the natural form of plants to trim the tree crown into the shape of geometry or other animals and dolls. If these can be regarded as interesting ornamental objects, it will be a problem to carry out major environmental engineering under the same guiding principle. Taking the water conservancy project as an example, Dujiangyan, Sichuan, a water conservancy project built by the Chinese in the Qin Dynasty more than 2000 years ago, due to its design that respects and conforms to nature and reasonably guides the river diversion, the economic benefits of irrigating 10,000 mu of farmland have been achieved, benefiting the people so far. However, The Turkmen Grant Canal, built by the former Soviet Union under the guidance of the ideas of "transforming nature" and "conquering nature", forced the river to flow backwards, and the Aswan Dam, an ecological destruction project built by the former Soviet Union with the same guiding ideology in Egypt, both have caused serious consequences of disasters such as earthquakes and droughts. Following the same mindset, modern China has carried out the huge Three Gorges Reservoir Project, which has broken the original ecological balance. This cannot but be worrying!

Since the Europeans invented the steam engine and led to the industrial revolution 250 years ago, the west has taken the lead in the world's trend and the idea of "conquering nature" has gained popularity all over the world. After the global industrialization and urbanization in the twentieth century, human beings, relying on their intelligence and growing social productivity, seized natural resources and destroyed natural ecology without restraint/in an unbridled way. By the end of the twentieth century, human beings had been punished by nature, resulting in serious

air pollution, water pollution, noise, vibration, land sinking, photochemical smog, greenhouse effect, ozone hole and ecological imbalance. As a result, epidemic diseases are prevalent and some biological species are extinct. The “environmental crisis” that some prophetic scientists have proposed is by no means alarmist. At present, countries all over the world have generally realized that development can no longer be achieved at the expense of environment, and “sustainable development” has become the basic national policy of governments. Visionary people in the international academic community have begun to think seriously about China’s thought of “Heaven and Man Are United as One” and the thought of respecting nature and using nature to benefit mankind on the basis of conforming to nature. China’s ancient wisdom,¹⁰ including the thoughts of “Heaven and Man Are United as One” and the balance of yin and yang, has advanced guiding significance. Therefore, at the end of the twentieth century, some scientists predicted that the twenty-first century would be the century of the East, the century of Asia and even the century of China.

The development of European ocean navigation since the eighteenth century, especially the emergence of modern mechanical ships powered by steam engines since the nineteenth century, has broken the barriers between nations and between regions, greatly promoted the exchanges of eastern and western cultures, and contributed to an unprecedented leap in human wisdom. In the last 100 years of twentieth century, the economy has begun to merge the wisdom of east and west, and became a common culture of all mankind. In physics and psychology, Einstein’s relativity theory and Freud’s sixth sense are remarkable results of the fusion of eastern and western wisdom. In terms of garden, the cultural exchanges between the east and the west have contributed to the emergence of Anglo-Chinese gardens and landscape gardens in Europe, which contributed to the emergence of “Garden City” theory in Europe in the early twentieth century.

Modern science has made people generally realize that human beings are not only the opposite of nature, which takes objective world as the object of thought and labour, but the product of nature, and a part of nature. Since the beginning of humanity, they have been exchanging materials with earth through breath, diet and excretion. Human beings cannot live without the ecological chain of earth for a moment. However, the earth is not owned by human beings. It is the common home for all lives on earth. For the survival and development of human beings, we must also respect other lives on earth. Therefore, the construction of human living environment should take into account that animals and plants are in their proper places, and that human beings coexist with other lives on earth. This is the true essence of “all beings are equal” in Buddhism. The great development of material production in the last century not only caused the “environmental crisis”, but caused the loss of human spirit—a vicious expansion of selfishness and greed. Purifying the living environment and human soul is a great and arduous task in the twenty-first

¹⁰Which has long been the common spiritual wealth of the East Asian cultural circle of Chinese characters in history.

century. The high-tech and ecologicalization of living environment which combines science and art—strengthening the unified function of man-made environment, will be conducive to the transformation of objective environment of human existence and subjective world. In this regard, gardens will play an important role in shaping the affection of people and nature. Therefore, the philosophy of respecting nature in eastern culture and using nature for the benefit of mankind on the basis of conforming to nature, especially experience and theory embodied in the garden system of east Asia, as well as the achievements of landscape gardens developed in the west over the past hundred years have become indispensable guiding ideology.

In this way, it can be said that achievements in gardening have a promising future. It is by no means limited to the creation of recreational environment, it's more important role lies in the management of the whole living environment. The sublimation of landscape gardening will become a systematic science of environment design guided by construction concept which achieves harmony between man-made and natural environment. This systematic science is vital to the future of mankind, because as “direct production and reproduction of life”, “people’s eating, dressing, housing, and the production of necessary tools for production” are “decisive factors of history”. Proper settlement of human housing problem can play a decisive role in promoting the development of human history.

1.3 International Influence of the Classical Garden of China

Garden making in China boasts a long history and profound accomplishments. In the world history of garden making, the art of the Chinese garden stands out with a unique style and has exerted a certain influence on garden making in both Eastern and Western worlds, which earned China the reputation of “the mother of world gardens”. In the following sections, we will focus on Japan and some major countries in Europe to take a brief look at the Chinese influence on garden making in these countries.

1.3.1 Influence on Japanese Gardens

In the course of over three thousand years, Chinese garden construction formed a unique system of its own and spread to its neighboring countries early in history like Korea, Vietnam, and other continental states. The island nation Japan from across

the sea also drew on ancient Chinese art and techniques of garden construction during its nascent formation.

Japanese scholars believe that, before the Asuka period (A.D. 593–709),¹¹ very little information was available on garden construction and that, based on a domicile image carved on an ancient bronze mirror recovered at an archaeological excavation site, only a few trees were planted nearby the house. It was after the influx of continental culture—with Chinese culture as the main current—during the Asuka and Nara (593–793) periods did Japanese garden construction start to make considerable headway. The remains of the *liubeiqu* stones—stones on which water passages were carved for floating wine cups—that belonged to this period were excavated in Japan in recent years. These gullied stones have revealed that some of the Chinese garden thematic contents already spread to Japan by this time, such as the *qushui liushang* theme—“floating wine cups down a winding stream”, which was originally an intellectuals’ pastime of drinking wine while composing poetry fancied by those who sought after *linquan yinju*, the “secluded living amid forests and streams” life-style first pursued by Tsin (265–420) Chinese.

It is believed that Taoism thought and mythology reached Japan from China in the late seventh and early eighth centuries (late Asuka period) while, in fact, it should be considerably earlier. Apparent influence of Taoist ideology exerted on Japanese garden construction was observed around the early ninth century and was widely reflected in the garden works done during the Heian period (794–1185). The so-termed *chiquan tingyuan*,¹² common to Japanese imperial gardens and residences of the nobility at the time, resembled the garden prototype called *shanchi yuan*¹³ of Tang China (618–906), where hills were arranged in the pool. Such a composition is also designated as *shenxian dao*¹⁴ or *yichi sanshan*,¹⁵ referring to the of Penglai, Fangzhang, and Yingzhou mountains, the legendary abode of immortals. An example of such creation was the Toba Rikyu, an imperial summer palace built in Japan in 1086. This idiom of garden composition was much in favor during the Momoyama and Edo periods (1574–1867). *Sanbaoyuan Tingyuan*¹⁶ at the Daigo-ji Temple, an acclaimed masterpiece of the Momoyama period built in 1598 in the fashion of *yichi sanshan*, also belonged to this category. Up to the Edo period (1603–1867), the theme of *pengdao shenshan*¹⁷ was broadly adapted by imperial, ducal, monastery, as well as private gardens. Although later in the period, the number of the islands arranged was no longer confined to the original three—with now anywhere from one

¹¹ Asuka period, in Japanese history and art, the era from 552 to 645 CE, which began with the introduction of Buddhism from Korea and culminated in the adoption of a Chinese pattern of government. (<https://www.britannica.com/event/Asuka-period>)

¹² Pool-and-spring garden.

¹³ Hill-and-pool court.

¹⁴ Island of the immortals.

¹⁵ One pool and three mountains.

¹⁶ Garden of the Three-treasure Court.

¹⁷ Fairy islands and immortal mountains.