Yigang Peng

Analysis of the Traditional Chinese Garden

Translated by Huaiyun Kou and Ron Henderson

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Preface

In the early 1950s, a revivalist movement swept through the Chinese architectural community. Architects without knowledge of traditional architecture felt stuck, leading to a surge in the study of architectural history and traditional forms. This craze quickly subsided after the retro movement faced harsh criticism in 1955. In 1959, the National Day Project celebrated the 10th anniversary of the People's Republic of China by highlighting "inheriting the tradition" and reintroducing large traditional roofs to many buildings. However, except for a few colleagues specializing in historical research, architects in general were seldom interested in traditional roofs with large overhangs. In recent years, the increasing exchange with foreign countries, coupled with the changes in building functions and the development of building technology, has led to a consensus among most architects that the main issue facing the architectural community is how to achieve modernization. As a result, the trend of studying history has become less prominent.

In contrast, the study of traditional gardens has not only endured but has also gained momentum over time. This is evidenced by the articles published in relevant academic journals. For example, *The Architects* series has devoted a column to traditional garden research since its inception and publishes several papers on the subject in almost every issue. Although no specific statistics are available on the number of articles in other academic journals, I believe that the quantity is substantial.

The craft of traditional Chinese gardens possesses a unique charm. Anyone who steps into a Chinese garden will be captivated by its beauty. This is especially true for architects, who are particularly susceptible to its enchantment. I still remember the excitement I felt when I first visited the gardens in Suzhou in the early fifties. Since then, I have dedicated my life to studying traditional garden-making techniques. At that time, the research conditions were quite unfavorable. Written materials were scarce, and most garden buildings had not been properly surveyed or mapped. Due to my limited understanding, I only managed to write an article analyzing the subject before setting it aside.

Although I never truly abandoned my idea, my plans were disrupted by a turbulent decade. In 1979, while supervising graduate students at college, I had the opportunity to tour gardens in North and South China. The seeds planted deep in my soul began to sprout, and I decided to resume my interrupted studies by expanding my earlier article "An Analysis on Artistic Techniques of Chinese Gardens" into a monograph on traditional garden-making techniques. During the twenty-odd years of suspension, my life experience broadened my horizons, and it seems that the missing days were not an utter waste of time with my understanding spontaneously enriched.

When I made this decision, I sought the opinions of others. Some colleagues advised me to focus on urgent and practical problems in design instead of wasting time on obsolete research. Others believed that the study of gardens had already progressed significantly, with many articles and monographs published on the subject. They were concerned that new topics had been exhausted and that further research would be repetitive.

This is a valid concern. The number of articles on traditional gardens has increased, and a wider range of topics has been explored in depth, inspiring new perspectives. However, if research methods do not progress, we risk getting trapped in repetitive work.

Although there are many articles, most are descriptive and focus on craftsmanship rather than specific techniques. Few are comprehensive and systematic. These articles are well-written and elegant, but they do not leave a lasting impression on the reader. They are useful for introducing the artistic value of traditional gardens, but insufficient for guiding artistic practice. I do not mean to disparage these works, but I wonder if other perspectives and approaches could complement current research. I. M. Pei also proposed studying traditional Chinese gardens from a design perspective, which might verify that a new direction could be integrated into the previous method.

How can we more effectively integrate research with design creation? One approach is to conduct a detailed analysis of Chinese garden-making techniques. By thoroughly examining a large number of examples, we can generalize the universal principles underlying these techniques from individual cases. In summary, it is important to emphasize the use of analytical methods when studying traditional techniques of garden-making.

However, the analytical methods are rooted in rationality and are a product of modern science. These methods were introduced to our country from the West and differ significantly from traditional Chinese ways of thinking, which emphasize intuitive experiences and holistic frameworks. For example, Ji Cheng's masterpiece *Yuan Ye (The Craft of Gardens)* inclusively summarizes his lifelong experience in garden-making, rarely touching the principles and reasons behind the picture. The book focuses more on "what" than "why". This is similar to traditional Chinese medicine, such as acupuncture, which is widely recognized for its efficacy but lacks a thorough explanation for why it works. Providing a scientific explanation based on modern medicine and physiology is not easy and can lead to reckless conclusions if applied rigidly. Despite these challenges, we are not content with historical achievements and propose combining Chinese and modern approaches. So can we do with the research on traditional gardens. Of course, this is not about criticizing our predecessors. Social progress in modern times behooves us to reflect on and examine the heritage study from a new scientific and epistemological perspective, namely the philosophy of dialectical materialism. Only in this way, can we know not only the correlation but also the causation between the variables, thus making further progress and innovations.

In addition to new methodological tools, modern architectural theory can also provide new insights for studying Chinese gardens. For example, the principles of composition, which were imported from the West and not part of Chinese tradition, were certainly not the practices our ancestors had observed when they were engaged in gardening activities. Undeniably, the tool is useful when applied to scientifically explain the rules governing the craft techniques of Chinese gardens that contribute to their formal beauty and a universal artistic and aesthetic appeal. This is exactly the purpose of this book: to verify the applicability of the composition principles to Chinese gardens and in turn to enrich and supplement the theory with Chinese practices. Modern architectural theory on space and time, which emphasizes their inseparability, can also find a corresponding echo in Chinese garden-making. Rather than being a principle to be consciously observed by the designer, the concept has already been contained in the phrase "the scenery changing with the shift of the visitor`s footsteps". All these aspects have not yet been thoroughly analyzed and studied.

Among the latest architectural theories, such as Kisho Kurokawa's "gray space", Charles Moore's multiple dimensions of space, or Robert Venturi's complexity and contradiction in architecture, almost each of them can inexplicably find its eastern version practiced in the craft of traditional Chinese gardens. For example, Venturi's statement "I am for messy vitality over obvious unity" is often misunderstood as advocating chaos over unity. However, he only opposes explicit unity, not all forms of unity. The most typical representative is the neatly organized symmetrical and balanced pattern. In this sense, traditional Chinese gardens are very opposite, characterized by implicit unity with a certain degree of ambiguity, complexity and

contradiction. These characteristics make Chinese gardens full of vitality that serves as a huge treasure house of inexhaustible wisdom. The enduring popularity and passion for studying traditional Chinese gardens are due to their rich legacy. We should be proud but not complacent about this heritage and strive to draw universal laws from it.

Although the lenses of modern architectural theories are borrowed in this book for the study of traditional gardening practices in China, they should not be rigidly applied due to the differences between Chinese and Western civilizations.

It is also important to note that since we are approaching traditional Chinese gardens from a modern analytical perspective, our focus should naturally be on the present perception of physical forms rather than the original intentions of the garden makers. This is essentially a question of motive versus effect, which may be consistent in theory but inconsistent in practice. Moreover, after years of alteration and renovation, it is impossible to verify the original intention or differentiate between the original work and subsequent changes. The situation is even more perplexing in some private gardens. For this reason, we must focus on "the matter in hand", namely the current status of the gardens. Although this may seem overly simplistic from a historical research perspective, it is better than idle speculation on ancient minds. Besides, the practice may be a taboo for historians, but may not be a major obstacle for architects engaged in design work and has precedents in the West, such as the study of architectural proportions and the analysis of ancient buildings using geometric figures. Since colleagues in the West have done so, we can also have a try.

I would like to clarify the use of illustrations in this book. Although the appreciation of traditional Chinese gardens involves multiple senses of auditory, imagination and gustatory, the artistic form is primarily a visual art that uses images (scenery) to convey information (emotion). Written words can describe sceneries, but abstract language cannot provide a visually outlined image of the object. Photos can compensate for this, but they have limitations. We all have such experience that the image captured by a camera may not match the feelings experienced in person. Of course, no other means can record the image more accurately and authentically than a camera does, but even so, no wide-angle lens equipped in any camera is as extensive as human vision. From this point of view alone, photographs seem to be inferior to sketched illustrations. Sketches, while not as realistic as photos, can highlight, edit, or omit content as needed to clarify an issue. For these reasons, this book uses illustrations as a primary visual aid to complement the texts. However, neither photos nor illustrations can capture the dynamic continuity experienced in motion. In view of this contradiction, I have created illustration series to maintain the imagery continuity and provided diagrams to facilitate the understanding of the textual analysis, in the hope of highlighting and elucidating the issue more thoroughly.

Despite all the efforts I have made, the shortcomings are always inevitable. For example, written words, though abstract, can stimulate the imagination in a way that rigid visual images cannot. For example, *The Craft of Gardens* has no illustrations, yet it is thought-provoking. Adding illustrations could make the imagery rigid and less effective. Fortunately, *The Craft of Gardens* discusses general principles of garden-making, so the presence or absence of illustrations is not crucial. However, in our analysis of specific examples, the use of illustrations is often necessary.

I should further clarify that some illustrations were hastily hand-sketched on-site and may not be accurate. However, they can testify to certain techniques applied to garden-making, especially in terms of spatial scales.

Tianjin, China Yigang Peng
February 1984

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History of Chinese Gardens

1

Chinese garden design dates back to ancient times. Accounts can be found in the earliest works of Chinese literature, including the *Shi Jing* (*Classic of Poetry*), which described the building of gardens and palaces as far back as the reign of King Wen of Zhou.[1] After conquering the other six rival states, the First Emperor of Qin[2] created Shanglin Park south of the Wei River, an imperial hunting preserve spreading for hundreds of *li*.[3] In addition to the construction of temporary palaces which served as residences and used for court business, a large number of rare beasts and birds were collected for hunting. The zoological park was further expanded during the reign of the Emperor Wu[4] of the Western Han dynasty[5] to incorporate tracts of land which stretched all the way to the south of the capital city, Chang'an. Beyond gardens such as Shanglin Park which focused on natural landscapes, purely artificial gardens were also created for palaces such as Jianzhang Palace. Confucianism rose as the main state ideology during the time of Emperor Wu who, at the same time, believed firmly in the immortals. Within the palace, Emperor Wu constructed Taiye Lake with three artificial islands—Penglai, Fangzhang, and Yingzhou—built in the center to represent the Isles of the Immortals in the East Sea. This practice of building representations of the Isles of the Immortals inspired and spawned countless gardens and palaces built by successive kings and emperors, representing one of the first attempts to create an idealized copy of nature with symbolic and imaginary elements. Luoyang became the Han capital at the beginning of the Eastern Han dynasty.[6] Although garden construction from this period did not flourish as much as that in the Western Han, designs sought to create refined and elaborate gardens.

Private gardens emerged during the Han dynasties. The aristocratic and bureaucratic classes—with members such as Chancellor Cao Shen, Military General Huo Guang, and Liang Ji—built private gardens in both Chang'an and Luoyang cities.

The following Wei,[7] Jin,[8] Northern and Southern Dynasties[9] stood out in Chinese history for their long period of power struggles, political division, and social instability. The introduction of Buddhism to China, together with the prevalence of Taoism, gave rise to a new cultural movement called "Xuanxue" (Mystic Learning). Those in the scholar class gathered for "pure conversation" that touched upon art, poetry, and philosophy. Those in the disillusioned gentry class removed themselves from the core of power and succumbed to sensual pleasures. These people retreated to live a reclusive life or embarked on journeys to the distant mountains and rivers running through vast lands. The cultural mood shaped the development of literature and arts, such as the emergence of idyllic poetry and landscape painting that depicted cultivated life in natural and rural settings. If the earlier pursuit of natural beauty developed from individual spontaneity, the perception of nature had become more conscious, through which a perspective on the aesthetics of nature started to take shape. These shifts played very positive roles as the development of garden building reached its zenith. Most notably, private gardens emerged and thrived during this period, including the renowned Golden Valley Garden constructed by Shi Chong, a wealthy bureaucrat of the Western Jin Dynast. The private gardens of Zhang Lun, the Chamberlain for the National Treasury, and Zhang Zhao, an Executive Vice Minister, are depicted in the book *Luoyang Qielan Ji* (A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang). Though not as grand as imperial gardens such as Bronze Sparrow Terrace and Hualin Garden, these private

[1] King Wen of Zhou dynasty, 1152–1056 BC.

[2] The First Emperor of Qin dynasty, reigned 247–210 BC.

[3] A *li*, or Chinese mile, is equal to about a one third of an English mile.

[4] Emperor Wu of Han dynasty, reigned 141–87 BC.

[5] The Western Han dynasty, 202 BC–8 AD.

[6] The Eastern Han dynasty, 25–220 AD.

[7] (Cao) Wei dynasty, 220–266 AD.

[8] Jin (晋) dynasty, 265–420 AD.

[9] The Northern and Southern dynasties, 420–589 AD.

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gardens were said to be of an even higher standard in terms of their natural beauty and rockery craftsmanship.

Temple gardens also appeared and thrived in this period. Buddhism developed throughout the Eastern Han dynasty and the Three Kingdoms[10] following its first entry into China. By the time of the Wei and Jin dynasties, Buddhism took over many Xuanxue's expressions— greatly influencing the gentry class. The cities of Jiankang and Luoyang became the twin pinnacles of Buddhist culture in southern and northern China. A poet of the Tang dynasty depicted a scene from this time in his poem "Of the four hundred and eighty temples from the Southern Dynasties, many are now shrouded in mist and drizzle." The number of Buddhist temples in Luoyang far exceeded that in Jiankang. The book, *Luoyang Qielan Ji* mentions that a witness to the commonplace temple-building campaigns at the time confirms that the sixty-odd temples all had established gardens.

More than three hundred years of turmoil and disunity drew to a close. With rapid economic recovery in the subsequent unified Sui[11] and Tang[12] dynasties, cities and palaces developed. Emperor Wen of Sui[13] constructed Daxing Garden in the city of Daxing, followed by Emperor Yang's extravagant project of the West Garden at Luoyang. The latter represented an artificial, large-scale, man-made imperial park covering hundreds of miles. A group of sixteen buildings was placed in the northern part of the garden. Along the undulating terrain, water was diverted into the garden pond from the Luo River, which featured three miniature islands, Penglai, Fangzhang, and Yingzhou, mimicking the garden patterns of Emperor Wu in the Han dynasty. Five smaller ponds in the garden interconnected with ditches to form a more integrated water system. In addition to its grandiose size, the garden boasted complex compositions as a legacy from the Han dynasty yet surpassing the best from that period due to the unprecedented application of the technique "gardens inside garden", where smaller enclosed courtyards were constructed within the central building to form groups within the garden.

At the end of the Sui dynasty, peasant revolts and uprisings broke out in every region of the empire. Li Yuan took the opportunity to set up a rebel regime, later named the Tang dynasty. The economy was quickly restored and which caused a rapid increase in productivity, leading to an unprecedented period of prosperity in China. Achievements in literature and art reached a new peak. Landscape painting also evolved into an independent genre, divided into two schools of techniques: the Gongbi (meticulous brush) style and the Xieyi style (freehand brush), represented by the painters Li Sixun and Wang Wei, respectively. Another school, natural landscape, became a popular theme of poetry and travel notes. All these trends indicated a deepening understanding of natural beauty.

Due north of the capital, Chang'an (the world's largest city in the Tang dynasty), sat the Taiji Palace, also known as "Xinei" (Western Inner Palace). The main structure in the palace included Taiji Hall, which contained the residences of the royal family in the back. Further north, near the palace wall, the imperial garden contained an arrangement of rockery hills, ponds, platforms, and pavilions. Because the terrain in the vicinity of the Taiji Palace was relatively low relative to the surrounding area, at the beginning of the Tang dynasty, the royal court constructed another "Eastern Inner Palace" named "Daming Palace" in the northern part of the city. The construction of the garden area north of the palace featured an artificial lake named Taiye with a small hill called Penglai in the middle and Zhujing Hall, Yuyi Hall, Shicui Hall, and other buildings to the south.

A palace named Xingqing rose in the eastern corner of the capital. Apart from the administrative areas and court amenities, a large oval pond called Dragon Pond, surrounded by pavilions and flora for the entertainment of the emperor, comprised the majority of the area.

In addition to the above three inner palaces, a garden named Furong was built in the southeast corner of Chang'an City. Overlooking the Serpentine River Park to the west, this garden featured wide water areas enclosed by pavilions, platforms, and other structures to facilitate the enjoyment of its extremely beautiful scenery. To make this garden more accessible for the royal family, an exclusive passageway was built to access the Eastern and Southern (Xingqing) Inner palaces.

A Forbidden Park, built just outside the city walls in the northwest corner and to the south of the Wei River covered an area of 120 li, with a garden featuring pavilions, platforms, halls, and ponds.

Private gardens flourished in the Tang dynasty. The upper classes and governmental officials constructed large numbers of gardens in the Western Capital Chang'an, particularly in the southeast part of the city and the surrounding Serpentine River Park. Many were also scattered in the eastern and southern areas of the city. Luoyang, as twin capitals in the east, influenced aristocrats to build their private villas in the area. For example, Bai Juyi, a renowned Chinese poet and government official, chose the city to accommodate his residential garden, and Prime Minister Li Deyu constructed a private garden named Pingquan Villa in the southern part of the city.

The literati also cited gardens outside the capitals, such as Bai Juyi's "Grass Hut" on Mount Lu and Wangwei's Wangchuan Villa at Lantian. These gardens did not contain many man-made structures but took full advantage of the

[10] The Three Kingdoms period, 220–280 AD.
[11] Sui dynasty, 581–618 AD.
[12] Tang dynasty, 618–907 AD.
[13] Emperor Wen of Sui dynasty, reigned 581–604 AD.

natural settings of mountains and groves, which appealed to a simpler enjoyment of the natural landscape in comparison with the artificial environment of the gardens located within or near the city.

The political chaos during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period[14] disrupted social and economic development but allowed for regional development in southern China. Many cities in the south developed into political and trading centers with flourishing handcraft industries. For example, the city of Suzhou in the Kingdom of Wu-Yue[15] witnessed a fad of garden-making. Farther south, a number of gardens were built in the city of Guangzhou.

The founding of the Song dynasty[16] eventually put an end to the political division of the previous era, but did not subsequently boost the decreasing performance of the rural economy. In addition to the constant menaces from northern invaders, the regime was moving towards decline. The imperial extravagance and lavish consumption at court stirred up passions for garden-making.

Although China was far from a powerful state in the Song dynasty, this period witnessed one of the country's greatest flowerings of literary and artistic creativity in poetry and painting. The Imperial Painting Academy, established under the auspices of the court, recruited the most talented painters and granted them the same treatment as literary officials, thus promoting the development of painting techniques towards a new level of sophistication. Outside the Academy, a group of literati painters, represented by artistic masters such as Wen Tong, Mi Fu, and Su Shi, stood in opposition to the principles and techniques of court painters. Starting a new tradition in Chinese painting history, these painters rejected the descriptive realism of the court painters, instead valuing spontaneity and a type of brushwork that revealed their cultivation and expressions of personal feelings. Many written works of artists and painters illustrated their conceptions of landscape painting, including the essential principles of composition, such as *The Lofty Message of Forest and Streams* and *Secrets of Landscape* attributed to Guo Xi and Li Cheng, respectively. This new turn of landscape painting aesthetics had a large influence on the development of garden-making.

Gardens became concentrated in the two capitals of the Northern Song dynasty, the eastern capital of Bianliang (modern Kaifeng) and the western capital of Luoyang. The former, as the seat of the royal court, featured the majority of imperial gardens, such as the renowned Jin-Ming Chi (Golden Clear Pond) located in the western part of the city. Characterized by a regular layout with a central axis, the whole garden was centered on a hall built in the middle of the pond called Water Hall, joined with the bank by an arch bridge. The emperor paid visits to the garden to enjoy the waterscape. To the south of Jin-Ming Chi was situated another garden named Qiong-Lin Yuan, which also featured a pond and lush vegetation. Another imperial Gen Yue Garden located in the northeast of the city contained a man-made garden designed with exquisite arrangement of water and hills. The rockeries were consciously built to reveal the visual relationship between the primary and secondary with undulating outlines. According to historical records, the garden construction required the labor of hundreds of thousands of men to search for and send back the choicest flowers and rocks from the south Yangtze Valley. The capital of Bianliang contained a total of nine imperial gardens, with even more private gardens built by aristocrats.

Though not as numerous as in Bianliang, the number of gardens in the western capital of Luoyang was still considerable. The *Famous Gardens of Luoyang* (authored by Li Gefei) alone recorded as many as 24 gardens in the city. The majority of gardens, reconstructed and built upon the predecessors from the Tang dynasty, primarily focused on garden design, which shifted from hill making to water making. The planting also shifted with a transformation of the garden names from “Shan Chi” (Hill Pond) into Yuan Chi or Yuan Pu (Flower and Tree Pond/Yard). At the time the fashion of flower cultivation in Luoyang also earned the city the nickname “City of Flowers”.

During the Southern Song dynasty,[17] the regime moved its political force southward. The nobles and officials settled in the Lin’an (modern Hangzhou), Wuxing, and Pingjiang (modern Suzhou) areas. As the capital city, Lin’an became the new focal point where most of gardens concentrated. More than ten royal gardens were situated in the West Lake and surrounding areas alone, with dotted temple gardens and private gardens located elsewhere. Not far from Lin’an, Wuxing became a retreat for officials to take a break from court life; thus, garden-making activities thrived in the area. *The Records of Gardens in Wuxing* documented 34 gardens in the region. Although the distance from Lin’an to Pingjiang was relatively far, the latter became an important economic and military hub of the dynasty. Favorable natural and geographic conditions also contributed to the flourishing of garden-making in the region.

[14] The Five dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period, 907–979 AD.
[15] Kingdom of Wu-Yue, 907–978 AD.
[16] Song dynasty, 960–1279 AD.
[17] The Southern Song dynasty, 1127–1279 AD.

After the Mongols ended the rule of the Song and founded the Yuan dynasty,[18] the imperial power fell into the hands of foreign peoples, which sparked intense conflicts between different ethnic groups and social classes. To consolidate their power, the rulers of the new dynasty created a caste system to divide the population into four classes, among which the Han ethnicity, especially those in the south, were considered the lowest. Due to the stagnation of the economy, garden construction progressed slowly except for a few examples. In the North, the Daning Palace, originally built by the Jin people, was reconstructed and transformed into a combination of Taiye Lake and Wansui Hill (Longevity Hill) as part of the Forbidden Garden within the Palace. A few private gardens were distributed in the Capital Dadu (Peking) and other areas.

In the early Ming dynasty,[19] Nanjing became the primary capital until 1420, when Emperor Yongle[20] moved the seat to Beijing. Emperor Yongle constructed a new imperial city on the site of the previous capital Dadu of the Yuan dynasty, which included a southward expansion of the Taiye Lake to create a three-lake ("seas") layout from the north to the south. The grounds were completed as a primary imperial park called Xi Yuan (Western Park). Around the middle of the Ming dynasty, garden-building started to thrive again, mainly in Beijing, Nanjing, and Suzhou, due to the development of agricultural and handcraft industries. As the capital city, Beijing was the site of the majority of aristocratic private gardens scattered around the Jishui Pond area and Paozi Canal in the southeastern corner of the city. Numerous gardens such as the Shao Yuan, Li Yuan (Qinghua Garden), and Liang Yuan were situated in suburban areas. Nanjing, the secondary capital, witnessed the construction of a large number of gardens. Suzhou, a well-developed city with thriving agricultural and handcraft industries, attracted the wealthy who made their homes in the area, leaving a number of famous masterworks from this period, such as the Humble Administrator's Garden, the Lingering Garden, and the Garden of Cultivation. This boom in garden building went beyond Suzhou to the wider surrounding regions, from as far as Yangzhou to the north of the Yangtze River. Increasingly more scholars and painters were engaged to create gardens. The most outstanding representative of these creators, Ji Cheng, was an experienced garden architect who commanded excellent literary and painting expertise. Ji Cheng's great work on garden design, the *Yuan Ye* or *The Craft of Gardens*, remains the first, and possibly only, surviving manual on landscape gardening in the Chinese tradition.

Following the collapse of the Ming dynasty, the Qing dynasty[21] witnessed another thriving era of garden-making, particularly under the reigns of Emperors Kangxi[22] and Qianlong.[23] At the time, the number of imperial gardens in Beijing alone exceeded ten. Inside the city, the Western Park from the Ming dynasty was renovated, adding a few more structures. Outside the city, five more royal parks were constructed in the northwest suburban area, including the Jingyi Garden, Jingming Garden, Gardens of Perfect Brightness (Old Summer Palace), Changchun Garden, and Qingyi Garden. In addition, the Qing emperors built a detached summer palace in the mountains 200 km northeast of Beijing called Chengde Mountain Resort. The Qing dynasty outweighed its predecessor in terms of both the quantity and scale of its gardens, marking the garden-making peak in Chinese history.

During the reign of Emperor Qianlong, the Qing dynasty experienced its most politically and economically prosperous years. With a great passion for gardens, the cultured Emperor paid six visits to Jiangnan in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, bringing back the gardening techniques he had seen in the south to his royal residences in the north. Consequently, the gardens from this period were characterized by collections of famous garden scenarios from all over the country. Emperors Kangxi and Qianlong named the gardens in the Chengde Mountain Resort. These gardens were often divided into several parts for different thematic or stylish sections, including the thirty-six scenic spots and the forty sights in the Gardens of Perfect Brightness, respectively. Each one of these gardens dealt with an individual theme and artistic image to express a different aesthetic mood. This technique likely imitated that of the West Lake in Hangzhou, where forty-eight scenic views were constructed. The south showed even more influence, as shown by the architectural elements inside the gardens. For example, in the Chengde Mountain Resort, the Jinshan Pavilion and Yanyu Tower mimicked their counterparts in Zhenjiang and Jiaxing. Applying the same techniques, the rockeries in the Wenyuan Garden and the Wenjin Pavilion became copies of the Lion Grove Garden in Suzhou and the Tianyi Pavilion in Zhejiang.

Outside Beijing, the private gardens of the Ming and Qing dynasties were mainly concentrated in Yangzhou, Suzhou, Wuxing, Hangzhou, and the Pearl River Delta. The private

[18] Yuan dynasty, 1271–1368 AD.
[19] Ming dynasty, 1368–1644 AD.
[20] Emperor Yongle of Ming dynasty, reigned 1403–1424 AD.
[21] Qing dynasty, 1644–1911 AD.
[22] Emperor Kangxi of Qing dynasty, reigned 1661–1722 AD.
[23] Emperor Qianlong of Qing dynasty, reigned 1735–1796 AD.

gardens in Beijing held the residences of the royal families and high-level officials, while those in Jiangnan (south of the Yangtze River) and Lingnan (south of the Five Ridges areas in Guangdong and Guangxi) housed wealthy landowners and merchants. It is said that when passing through Yangzhou during his southern tours, Emperor Qianlong looked in amazement at the sight of the gardens spreading along the banks of the Slender West Lake (Shou Xi Hu), all the way to Pingshan Hall. The gardens of Yangzhou were characterized by magnificent stone-piling skills, as expressed by the following saying: "Yangzhou was known for gardens and pavilions; while the gardens and pavilions were featured with exquisite piling stones." Suzhou also witnessed the building or reconstruction of a number of gardens. According to a statistic from the early 1950s, more than 100 gardens of various sizes graced Suzhou, the most well-preserved of which all dated back to the late Qing dynasty.

Located in the Lingnan area, the Pearl River Delta region enjoyed humid weather and fertile soil, both creating ideal conditions for garden-making. The earliest garden-building activities can be traced back to the Southern Han State during the Five Dynasties and the Ten Kingdoms period. The region developed into an important port for foreign trade during the Ming and Qing dynasties. The prosperous economy during those periods boosted garden-making campaigns. The gardens in this region both absorbed foreign influence and developed unique local styles.

The above description provides a brief overview of the history of Chinese garden-making, a long and complex course marked with ups and downs but generally following a progressive trend from primitive aesthetics to delicate maturity. The author also proposes the following division of developmental stages based on the characteristics in different historical periods.

The period from the Zhou to Han dynasties marked the stage of emergence, where large-scale imperial parks were enclosed essentially as a means to divide the political sphere of influence. The Qin and Han dynasties witnessed a few sporadic construction activities of dredging artificial lakes and erecting hills, with no specific philosophy of the purpose and methods for garden-making.

The Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern dynasties represent the formative stages of garden building, which involved establishing the basic principle of recreating natural landscapes through gardens, as hunting and production space diminished. Gardens were increasingly viewed as a form of artistic expression. This period also witnessed the emergence of private and temple gardens.

From the dynasties of Sui and Tang to the Five Dynasties period, Chinese garden-making entered into a stage of maturity, sprouting quantities of gardens in various sizes and categories. The artistic craft of garden-making also reached a new level of sophistication with the engagement of the literati class who integrated poetry and painting with garden-making, creating a sense of poetic charm and pictorial beauty.

The Song dynasty marked the first period of prosperity in garden-building history. The garden-making boom accompanied the flourishing of literature, poetry, and painting and a deepening understanding of natural beauty. The theoretical proliferation in the area of landscape painting also had a profound influence on gardens.

Garden-making stagnated during the Yuan dynasty, with very little progress made in both practical and theoretical terms.

The Ming and Qing dynasties witnessed a second peak in the history of garden-making. The unprecedented quantity, scale, and variety of gardens achieved unparalleled heights due to improved gardening craft and techniques set forth by literati and painters. A few talented professional gardeners also emerged to make theoretical written contributions to the field of garden design.

From the late Qing dynasty to the Republic of China, China was reduced to the status of a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. Since the social foundation on which the Chinese gardening tradition had long been established no longer existed, the continuity in the development of Chinese garden-making was disrupted.

History of Chinese Gardens

The artistic achievements and unique style of Chinese gardens are gradually formed and perfected over a long history of development. Accounts have been found on the building activities of gardens as far back as the reign of King Wen of the Zhou dynasty. Since then, gardens have become a symbol of the extravagant material and spiritual pursuit made by the emperors and rulers, so inevitably they reflected the influence of the philosophical thinking of Confucianism,Taoism and Buddhism that had dominated the ancient Chinese society. After the Han dynasty, the bureaucratic classes,landlords and the scholar class started to build gardens in their private residences, and forged tight bonds between the craft of gardens and other artistic forms such as poems and painting. From philosophical and aesthetic perspectives, the basic principle of recreating natural landscapes through garden-making was a representation of the religious concepts such as to transcendence worldly attachments, to shun the clamor of the troubling world by abandoning oneself to mountains and waters and to seek the whereabouts of sacred mountains and pavilions that inhabited the immortals. The creative methods, such as emphasizing aesthetic conceptions rather than descriptive realism, are identical to those garden-making in China can be generally divided into five stages.

Before the Han Dynasty

The period marked the stage of emergence, with a few sporadic construction activities of imperial parks, such as Shanglin Park, E-pang Palace and Jianzhang Palace.

Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties

The period stood out in Chinese history for its long-term power struggles and social instability. The introduction of Buddhism to China, together with the prevalence of Taoism, gave rise to a new cultural movement called “Xuanxue” (Mystic Learning) that was cultivated through the “pure conservations” among the scholar class. At the same time, the emerging idyllic poetry and landscape painting also had a significant influence on gardens. The stage involved establishing the basic principle of recreating natural landscapes through gardens, with a few major practices of Gold Valley Garden, Hualin Garden, Bronze Sparrow Terrace and Lan Pavilion. In addition, the period also witnessed the emergence of temple gardens, representing the formative stages of garden-making.

Sui and Tang Dynasties

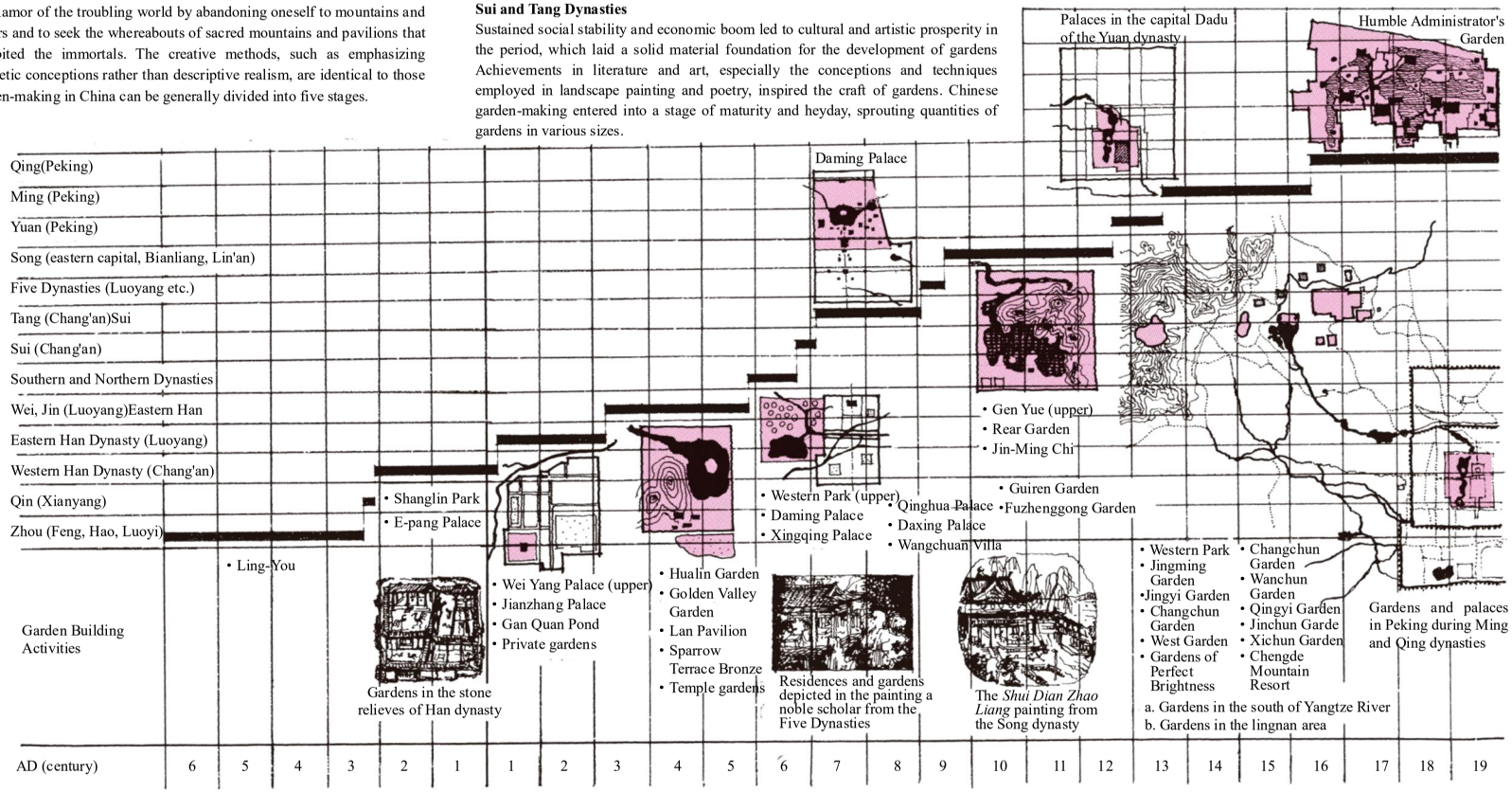
Sustained social stability and economic boom led to cultural and artistic prosperity in the period, which laid a solid material foundation for the development of gardens Achievements in literature and art, especially the conceptions and techniques employed in landscape painting and poetry, inspired the craft of gardens. Chinese garden-making entered into a stage of maturity and heyday, sprouting quantities of gardens in various sizes.

Song Dynasty

The garden-making in this period was considerably influenced by the development of landscape painting techniques, which had reached a new level of sophistication and witnessed the emergence of many written works on painting theories. The prevailing principle of “drawing artistic inspiration from both within and without” among the painters became the same tenet complied by garden designers. The techniques of garden-making had a climax in this period of prosperity in garden-building history.

Ming and Qing Dynasties

Economic development, especially building booms during the reign of Emperor Qianlong, led to unparalleled heights achieved in the quantity, scale and variety of gardens that were unprecedented in Chinese history. Private gardens also thrived in the south of Yangtze River. The book *The Craft of Gardens* written by Ji Cheng epitomized the thoughts and techniques of garden design in the Chinese tradition. The era witnessed a second peak in the history of garden-making after the Song and Yuan periods.



Distribution of Chinese Gardens

2

Traditional Chinese gardens, as a form of material wealth and artistic creation, aimed at meeting the material and spiritual demands of the ruling classes in feudal society, including emperors, nobles, officials, landlords, literati, and merchants. "Yuan-You", the gardens and parks owned by emperors, were mainly built in or adjacent to palaces, in the countryside, and areas of outstanding natural beauty. Additionally, some private gardens arose in capitals, cities with dominant roles in the economy or culture, and regions with superior physical conditions. Some temple gardens were also erected in the holy lands of religious areas, and town-house gardens were created in downtown streets.

With a long history and tradition, Chinese gardens have a wide distribution, mainly in the following regions: the central Shaanxi plain, the centre of which is Xi'an; Luoyang and Kaifeng; Hangzhou and the Qiantang River Delta; Nanjing, Yangzhou, Suzhou, and their neighbouring cities; Beijing and Chengde; and the southeast region in China.

The Western Zhou,[1] Qin,[2] Han,[3] Sui, and Tang Dynasties located their capitals in modern Xi'an or the area of South Shaanxi. Many imperial gardens and parks emerged alongside the construction of cities and palaces, which suggests that this region represents the birth place of traditional Chinese gardens.

Although the ruins of Feng and Hao, the capital cities of the Western Zhou dynasty, have not yet been found, they were almost certainly located near Xi'an. The capital city of the Qin dynasty, called Xianyang, constituted a group of palaces along the banks of Wei River without a walled boundary. Xianyang stretched to the Yellow River in the east, to Qian River in the west, to the Zhongnan Mountain in the south, and to Jiuzong Mountain in the north. After conquering the other six rival states, Qin built Shanglin Park in this area, which stretched over 300 li from north to south, encompassing both E-pang Palace and Xingle Palace in Shanglin Park. During the Western Han dynasty, the capital Chang'an was located north of Xi'an with the Wei River in the north. Although not large, the walled city Chang'an encompassed Weiyang Palace, Changle Palace, and Gui Palace. Shanglin Park was also expanded during the Western Han dynasty and, in the newly expanded Shanglin Park, Jianzhang Palace was constructed west of Chang'an. In the Eastern Han dynasty, when the capital moved to Luoyang, the political centre moved east until its return to Chang'an in the Sui and Tang dynasties. In Sui, Emperor Wen constructed Daxing City, a new capital city south-east of the site of Han dynasty Chang'an. Daxing was renamed the Tang dynasty Chang'an while maintaining its role as the capital. Since then, Chang'an has been the political, economic, and cultural centre of the country, which led to an unprecedented boom in building gardens. Many imperial gardens were established in the city. Moreover, the Forbidden Park was established north of the city and Huaqing Pond on Li Mountain. The city's political role attracted the upper classes and governmental officials to live there. The superior physical conditions in this area also provided advantageous park sites. The city, located on the south bank of Wei River, faced the Zhongnan Mountain, with Feng River, Yu River, Chan River, Ba River, and some other rivers crossing the city, resulting in areas of outstanding natural beauty.

[1] The Western Zhou dynasty, 1046–771 BC.

[2] Qin dynasty, 221–207 BC.

[3] Han dynasty, 202 BC–220 AD.

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Luoyang, another important city in history, reigned as the capital of the Eastern Zhou,[4] Eastern Han, Cao Wei state of the Three Kingdoms,[5] Western Jin,[6] and Northern Wei[7] dynasties. This city's central geographic location and its importance in economic and military affairs determined its role as the capital. Although the capital city of the Sui and Tang dynasties was Chang'an and that of the Northern Song dynasty[8] was Bianliang, Luoyang was always the twin capital. Besides its role as a political, economic, and cultural centre, Luoyang also represented the northern centre for Buddhism by being the first area to thrive during the introduction of Buddhism to China. Moreover, the geographical conditions of Luoyang were advantageous, with Mang Mountain to the north and two rivers (Luo River and Yi River) crossing the city, which helped in the construction of gardens with natural water systems—especially from the clear Yi River. The warm local climate also provided a suitable environment for plants. As a result, garden-making activities emerged in Luoyang in the Eastern Han dynasty, remaining popular from the Sui to Tang and Northern Song dynasties. The locations of many famous gardens, including West Garden of the Sui and Tang dynasties, Golden Valley Garden, Bai Juyi's residential garden, and Li Deyu's Pingquan Villa, were all outlined in the book "Famous Gardens of Luoyang", which describes the thriving garden-making activities at that time.

The capital of the Northern Song dynasty was named Bianliang (modern Kaifeng). Due to the popular trend in constructing gardens, many imperial parks and gardens were built in Bianliang, including Gen Yue Garden, Jin-Ming Chi, and Hualin Garden. However, this capital declined in the Southern Song dynasty when the capital of the dynasty moved to Lin'an (modern Hangzhou).

The historically famous city of Hangzhou became the capital of the South Song dynasty and Kingdom of Wu-Yue, one state during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period. Hangzhou acted as the political, economic, and cultural centre of the country when the Song capital moved south. In Hangzhou, the construction of the city was closely intertwined with the development of West Lake, which was admired locally and attracted many refined scholars throughout history. Su Shi, a famous Chinese poet, created a poem for the West Lake praising the picturesque and intoxicating scenery of the mountains and lake when viewed in any season or weather, "With rippling water, a clear day looks fair. In misty hills, rain appears peculiar. Because West Lake is like West Shi's beauty,[9] whether adorned or not, it is pretty." Materialistic emperors, nobles, and officials found Hangzhou an ideal place to occupy themselves. Being located at the south end of the Grand Canal, the wealthy city was less influenced by the war and had well-developed agriculture and handcraft industries. Therefore, the West Lake had been well developed since the Song dynasty when a great number of palaces, villas, and manors were built.

Nanjing, in southern China, the capital for several dynasties, also introduced flourishing garden-making activities but slightly less than those of Yangzhou and Suzhou.

Yangzhou, although not a capital city, was prosperous during the Sui and Tang dynasties, when Emperor Yang of Sui[10] visited the city many times, constructing many palaces. In the Song and Yuan dynasties, Yangzhou became economically depressed because of war in the adjacent territory and the blockage of the Grand Canal, which caused a diversion of grain transportation. In the Middle Ming dynasty, Yangzhou regained its role as the south–north transportation hub after the dredging of the Grand Canal. The city became wealthier with the seeds of a capitalist economy. In the Qing dynasty, the local handcraft industries; trade, especially the salt industry; and transportation were all well-developed, which attracted Emperor Qianlong to choose the city as a stop for six of his southern tours. All these factors contributed to producing elegant gardens. An old saying describes this prosperity: "Hangzhou was known for lakes and mountains; Suzhou was known for downtown streets; and Yangzhou was known for gardens and pavilions". At that time, the pursuit of garden-building flourished more substantially in Yangzhou than in Suzhou and Hangzhou. Officials' and merchants' gardens were distributed in the city but also fully filled the area from the banks of the Slender West Lake to Pingshan Hall. However, the decline of the salt industry in the region influenced Yangzhou's economy. Thus, Suzhou became the new bellwether of garden construction in the Yangtze River delta.

Suzhou, as the capital of the Wu State during the Spring and Autumn period,[11] became an important trading port due to the building of canals in the Sui dynasty. From the late Tang to early Song dynasties, central China suffered from continuous wars that largely destroyed its economy, while wars did not influence Suzhou, a city governed by the Kingdom of Wu-Yue, to remain moderately prosperous. Then, in the Ming and Qing dynasties, the local agriculture and handcraft industries developed rapidly with the seeds of

[4] The Eastern Zhou dynasty, 770–256 BC.
[5] Cao Wei state of the Three Kingdoms, 220–266 AD.
[6] The Western Jin (晋) dynasty, 265–317 AD.
[7] The Northern Wei dynasty, 386–534 AD.
[8] The Northern Song dynasty, 960–1127 AD.
[9] West Shi (Xi Shi), a lady famous for her beauty in the Spring and Autumn period (770 - 476 BC).
[10] Emperor Yang of Sui dynasty, 569–618 AD.
[11] The Spring and Autumn period, 770–476 BC.

a capitalist economy, driving Suzhou to become the most prosperous city in the Yangtze River delta. As noted by an author, "there is paradise in heaven and we have Suzhou and Hangzhou on earth". Economic prosperity promoted cultural development leading to an exuberant local literary tradition in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Suzhou produced more imperial examination toppers than any other place. When these men came back to their hometowns after either resigning or retiring, they purchased land to build their primary houses and gardens. As a result, many governmental officials and landlords were concentrated in Suzhou, which also increased garden building in the city.

On the other hand, the advantageous local physical conditions also contributed to the boom in Suzhou gardens. The city, located in the Yangtze River delta, offered many rivers and lakes, which easily supplied a dense water network for the gardens. The warm climate and abundant rainfall ensured lush growing conditions. Moreover, many garden rocks originated in the area around Suzhou, such as the Western and Eastern Dongting Mountains. Garden builders could travel to Changzhou, Yixing, and Kunshan for many types of easily accessible rocks including Huang rocks.

The early writings and narratives of Suzhou gardens date back to the Spring and Autumn period and the Eastern Jin dynasty.[12] The local garden activities flourished during the Sui to Tang dynasties, the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period, and the Song dynasty. In the Song dynasty, Pingjiang Fu[13] governed Suzhou, where Emperor Hui[14] established a specific department, "Fengying Ju", to collect magnificent plants and rocks to transport to the capital, Bianliang, for imperial gardens and parks such as Gen Yue Garden. During that time, garden building was very popular in Suzhou. For example, the Surging Wave Pavilion, built in the Song dynasty, was based on the old garden of the Qian Family in Wu-Yue. In the Yuan dynasty, the national trend of making gardens declined, but this disinterest in garden building did not influence Suzhou significantly due to Suzhou's advantageous location in the wealthy Jiangnan region (southern Yangtze River), which produced the Lion Grove Garden built during that time. Local garden activities continued to grow in the Ming and Qing dynasties, when many famous gardens, such as the Humble Administrator's Garden and Lingering Garden, were built. Moreover, countless traditional Chinese gardens in various sizes were constructed in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

In northern China, most traditional Chinese gardens were concentrated in Beijing, which was the capital of the Yan State during the Warring States Period[15] but was called Yi Zhou[16] before the Tang dynasty. This area was one of the twin capitals in the Liao dynasty[17] and became the capital in the Jin dynasty.[18] Then, in the Yuan dynasty, the old city was destroyed and a new capital was constructed north of the previous site. Based on the water resources from Yuquan Mountain, a canal system was established in the city connecting Tongzhou (the north end of the Grand Canal) with the large lack in the city (Jishuitan in modern Beijing). The city was reconstructed in the Ming dynasty based on the Yuan capital and remained until the Qing dynasty.

The Jin dynasty established its capital in Beijing to confront the Southern Song dynasty. The brutally violent, yet extravagant, ruling class built many gardens and parks for entertainment. Based on the remains of Jin's Daning Palace, Yuan people built the imperial forbidden garden of Taiye Lake, which was expanded and renamed Western Park in the Ming dynasty, becoming the largest park in the city. Additionally, many nobles and officials built their gardens around Jishui Pond and Paozi Canal, which proved desirable locations for drawing water in and enjoying the natural scenery. However, in Beijing, many gardens that lacked water resources turned into 'dry' gardens.

Unlike the dry areas in the city, the scenic northwest suburb of Beijing became a preferred place for gardens because of the nearby West Mountain, with its abundant water resources. As a result, many villas, gardens, and parks were built here during the Jin to Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties, especially in the Qing dynasty, during which Emperor Kangxi built Changchun Garden, Jingming Garden, and Fragrant Hills Palace, and Emperor Yongzheng[19] built Gardens of Perfect Brightness. The trend reached its peak during Emperor Qianlong's reign, when over ten imperial gardens were built. Besides the imperial gardens, many nobles and officials also built their private gardens here.

Beijing was not the only city with imperial gardens of the Qing dynasty. Both Emperor Kangxi and Qianlong chose to build palaces at Chengde. Chengde contained a huge imperial park, Chengde Mountain Resort which benefited from the cool climate and a beautiful local natural environment. Chengde was chosen to be the site for an imperial resort, which also had some political advantages due to its close location to the Mongolian settlements. Emperor Kangxi

[12] The Eastern Jin (晋) dynasty, 317–420 AD.
[13] Fu, an ancient Chinese administrative division, similar to a "city".
[14] Emperor Hui of Song dynasty, reigned 1100–1126 AD.
[15] The Warring States Period, 453–221 BC.
[16] Zhou, an ancient Chinese administrative division, similar to a "province".
[17] Liao dynasty, 907–1125 AD.
[18] Jin (金) dynasty, 1115–1234 AD.
[19] Emperor Yongzheng of Qing dynasty, reigned 1722–1735 AD.

described the resort in the *Record on Chengde Mountain Resort* as follows: "[We] fully utilized the scenic elements of nature in construction; buildings were constructed close to pine trees to integrate into the view of the forests and mountains; natural streams were diverted into pavilions to simulate fog wandering from valleys to the built environment; beautiful natural scenery was far beyond the capacity of humans."

Many traditional gardens graced the Pearl River Delta in southeast China, a desirable location with a warm and humid climate friendly for plants. The local garden activities also had a long history according to documentary records. Liu Gong, the first emperor of the Southern Han dynasty[20] in the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period, built a south palace called Remedy Island in Guangzhou. The remains of this palace are a famous tourist destination called Nine Obsidian Rocks, as inscribed by Mi Fu, a famous calligrapher and painter. As a foreign trading port city in the Ming and Qing dynasties, Guangzhou and its local gardens were deeply influenced by foreign culture, which introduced some regional characteristics to the local gardens.

Temple gardens were mainly located in the regions where Buddhism and Taoism were popular. In China, an old saying states that most of the famous mountains were occupied by monks. A majority of temples were built on mountains to integrate their gardens into the natural environment. Consequently, compared to imperial and private gardens, temple gardens were more decentralized.

Overall, the gardens built before the Northern Song dynasty were mainly located at Chang'an (both in the city and its suburbs), Luoyang, and Kaifeng. After the Southern Song dynasty, most of the gardens were located in the following regions: (1) Beijing and Chengde in northern China; (2) Nanjing, Yangzhou, Suzhou, Wuxing, and Hangzhou in the Yangtze River delta; and (3) the Pearl River Delta. Based on their regional characteristics, these gardens were considered northern gardens, gardens located at the Yangtze River delta, and gardens at the Pearl River Delta. However, all traditional gardens built before the Ming dynasty have been demolished and can only be understood from documentary records. Today, the existing traditional gardens, mainly built in the late Qing dynasty, have suffered from various types of damage but still retain their salient characteristics, providing the only physical characteristics that can teach us about traditional gardens.

[20] The Southern Han dynasty, 917–971 AD.