

The Replanting and Localizing of Chineseness in Whampoa’s Garden of Singapore

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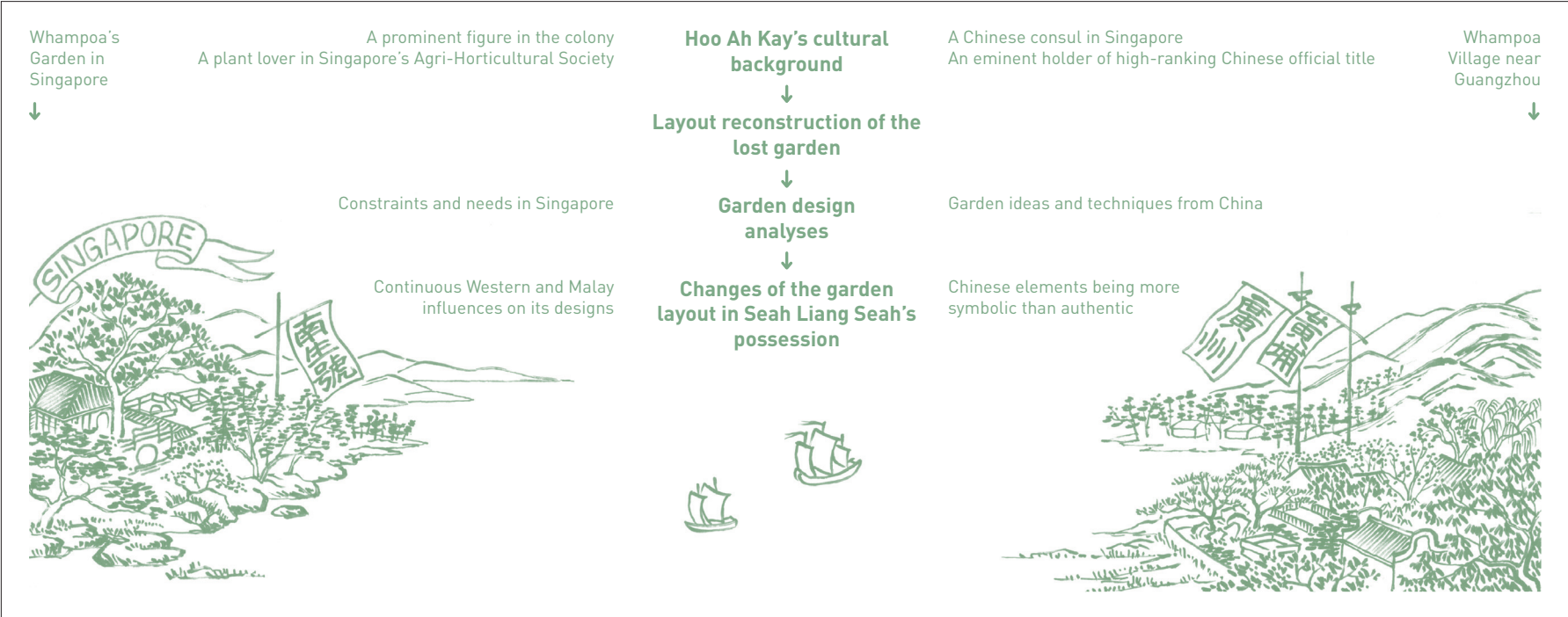
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GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT



HIGHLIGHTS

- Reconstructing the layout of Whampoa’s Garden, a renowned historical Chinese garden in Singapore
- Revealing its morphological connection with the gardens in the owner’s hometown
- Scrutinizing the owner’s selection of Chineseness for different purposes

KEYWORDS

Singapore;
Colony;
Hoo Ah Kay;
Overseas Chinese;
Whampoa’s Garden;
Chineseness

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Private Chinese gardens in 19th-century Singapore were rarely designed in the same way as their contemporary counterparts in China, though there were a few authentic Chinese mansions in the city. In response to this phenomenon, this paper attempts to use Whampoa's Garden, the finest and earliest private Chinese garden on the island, as an example, to explain how and why garden owners selectively adopted certain Chinese features while designing the rest of their gardens in a way deviating from Chinese traditions.

The study of Whampoa's Garden begins with a sketchy introduction to the career and cultural background of the garden's owner, Cantonese businessman Hoo Ah Kay, addressing his social connections, personal hobbies, and cultural identities. As the garden no longer exists, a study of available pictorial and written

records from Chinese and Western sources is conducted in order to reveal the spatial layout and other designed features of the garden, some of which may have facilitated the display of Chineseness. Contemporaneous gardens from Hoo's hometown will be compared to unveil hidden linkages between Whampoa's Garden and Chinese garden ideas. Furthermore, the relationship between the selection of Chinese symbols and the identities of their audience is examined as an approach to studying what affected how Chineseness was presented and how the landscape of south China was transplanted to this equatorial colony.

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1 Introduction

For two centuries, affluent immigrants from Europe, China, and other parts of Asia have been creating impressive mansions and gardens in Singapore, developing styles that reflect not only features from their home countries but also distinctive differences. The art and ideas of Chinese gardens have been disseminated throughout Southeast Asia since the 19th century. Gardens, in contrast to the formulaic temples and homes circumscribed by Chinese custom, are more receptive to non-Chinese ideas while facing other constraints such as plant species and climate. Local conditions, Western influences and selected Chineseness^[1] intermingle with each other, shaping the uniqueness of the Chinese gardens in Southeast Asia.

The earliest well-documented example of Chinese gardens in Singapore is Whampoa's Garden in the northeast suburb, purchased by Hoo Ah Kay (胡亚基 or 胡璇泽, 1816–1880), aka Mr Whampoa, in 1840.^[2] Hoo was a Cantonese business leader and the first Chinese Consul in Singapore. Whampoa's Garden is significant in the garden history of overseas Chinese for Hoo's status and the social activities that took place there. It served as a pleasure garden where the owner met and entertained his guests, some of whom had left us records of the garden.

In Chinese, Whampoa's Garden was known by several names. The one that local Chinese are most familiar with is Nam Sang Fa Un [Nan Sheng Garden (南生花园)], derived from Nan Sheng Hao (南生号), the Chinese brand of Whampoa's company.^[3] In written sources, Whampoa's Garden is also referred to as Ying Yuan (英园)^[4], Hu Shi Yuan [Hoo's Garden (胡氏园)], and Dou Kou Yuan [Nutmeg Garden (豆蔻园)]^[5]. The origin of the first is unknown, but the last was apparently named after the cash crop that had been planted on the site prior to Hoo's conversion of it into his private villa.^[2] On an 1846 map, the site of Whampoa's Garden was hatched with a pattern representing nutmeg trees^①. A nutmeg plantation still existed in the right of Hoo's property when Pan Feisheng visited Singapore in 1887 and 1890, according to Khoo Seok Wan (邱菽园).^[6]

The various names of Whampoa's Garden indicate its popularity among visitors of all kinds in the past. However, it has received little attention in the field of architectural and landscape history, as existing studies of Chinese homes and historical landscapes in

① The map can be accessed via "Historical Maps of Singapore," an online database digitised by Department of Geography, National University of Singapore.

Singapore rarely include Chinese private gardens. One of the very few succinct discussions on historical private gardens in Singapore can be found in *The Singapore Houses 1819 ~ 1942*, written over three decades ago by Lee Kip Lin, a Singaporean architect and architectural historian, who introduced Whampoa's Garden as "one of the most outstanding gardens in all of Singapore's history"^[7]. Likewise, Norman Edwards, an urban and architectural historian in Singapore, described it as "one of the more interesting" among the early country houses on the island in his book titled *The Singapore House and Residential Life 1819-1939*.^[2] The most intriguing characters of Whampoa's suburban home in Edwards' view are its theatricality and eclecticism because it was a "showpiece" with influences from different places. In this paper, this theatrical showpiece will be carefully examined using historical written and pictorial materials to reveal Hoo's ideas and intentions for his fairyland in Singapore where the East meets the West.

2 Hoo Ah Kay's Background and Cultural Identity

"Speaking English with the accent and idiom of a well-bred and well-read English gentleman, he was well acquainted with the literature and science of the West, and had a liking for its customs and manners, but still remained true to his own nationality and sometimes jealously in asserting it."^[8] Here is a section from Hoo's obituary notice, outlining his binary cultural identity as a Chinese loyalist among the ruling class of a British overseas settlement.

Hoo arrived in Singapore in the 1830s to join his father's food supply business.^{[8][9]} As a maritime food supplier, he had established close relationship with the English navy since the early years of his career, smoothing his way for commercial success in the colony.^[9] His political reputation in the colony peaked in the late 1860s and 1870s. During this period, he served as a Legislative Council member, the first Chinese extraordinary member of the Executive Council and the first Chinese consul in Singapore, Russian, and Japanese^[10]. In 1876, he was named a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George (CMG).^[8]

Unlike most of the Guangzhou's tycoons who maintained close ties with literatus circles, Hoo enjoyed greater independence from his home country's literate traditions. There was no evidence of mature literate culture in the Singaporean Chinese society until the 1880s, when Consul Tso Ping Lung established Chinese literature and poetry societies on the island.^[11] Tso's predecessor Hoo, as a contrast, did little to advance the local Chinese literate culture.^[12] Hoo's wealth and status were largely due to his mastery of the English language and his relationships

with colonial authorities.^[8] To cement this advantage of his family, he sent his eldest son to England for education.^[8]

Despite this, Hoo was never immune to the culture of Chinese literati and officials. He upheld Chinese traditions in many ways, especially when it came to fame and status. Before being appointed Chinese Consul, he had obtained the title of expectant Circuit Intendants (候补道员) from the Qing government.^[13] The interior of his mansion was arranged in an eclectic European and Cantonese style with flattering plaques and couplets from local Chinese^{[14][15]} as well as scrolls of "verses and proverbs of the most renowned Chinese poets"^[16].

Hoo was also a garden and horticulture enthusiast. He was the vice-president of the colony's Agri-Horticultural Society and contributed a large piece of land for the establishment of Singapore's Botanic Gardens in 1859.^[17] His knowledge in horticulture was so expert that he was seen as a "landscapist"^[7]. It was speculated that Hoo was "the first person to grow orchids on a large scale in Singapore".^[25] His horticultural passion was reflected in the design of his garden, an open-air showroom displaying a vast collection of plants arranged like "paintings in a gallery"^[7].

3 The Layout of Whampoa's Garden

After purchasing the plantation, Hoo made at least two major modifications to his suburban house.^[2] A mansion of grandeur replaced the original wooden house in 1855, designed eclectically in "the Palladian mode adapted to tropical conditions" as a typical plantation bungalow in Malay Peninsular.^[2] A dining room was added twelve years later. However, neither records of changes in garden design nor garden plans have been discovered prior to the sale to Seah Liang Seah (余连城 or 余勉然, aka Seah Miang Riang) in 1894.^[7] A 1948 aerial photo (Fig. 1) and a set of detailed maps surveyed in the 1930s are used as base maps for the reconstructed garden plan (Fig. 2). Only those elements depicted in historical texts and maps, mostly dating from the 1860s to the 1880s, will be retained on the reconstructed plan of Whampoa's Garden.

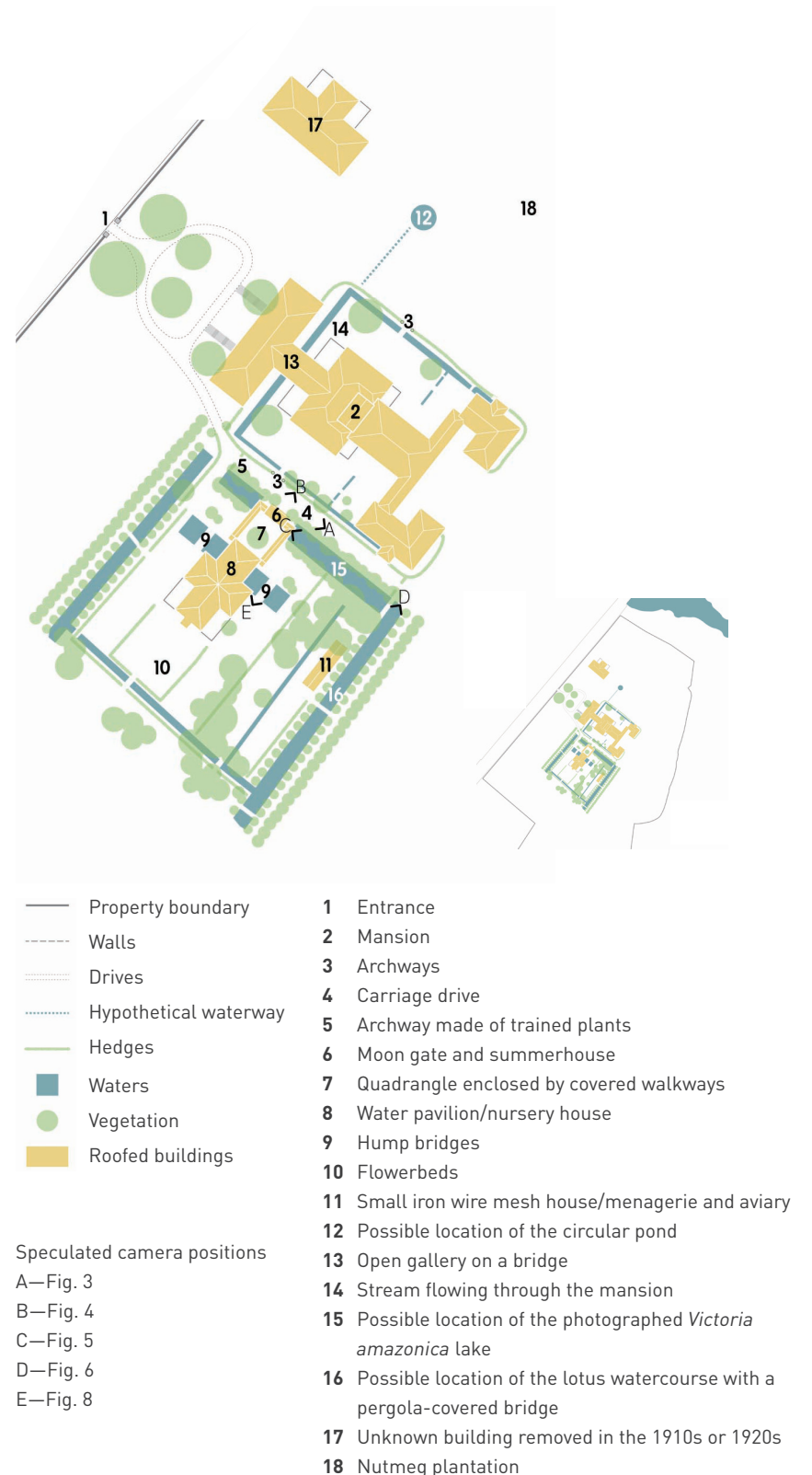
In 1848, British Admiral Henry Keppel visited Whampoa's Garden and left the earliest record of its design.^[19] Keppel mentioned a circular pond for *Victoria amazonica*, maybe in the northeast section that was a nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*) plantation as introduced above. This circular pond was perhaps the "diminutive lake" connected with a stream that flowed through the mansion to the west of the nutmeg plantation as recorded in an 1889 account.^[20] The overall layout of this part is not documented in available historical texts.



A lofty bridge covered with an open gallery crossed a stream at the central portion of the house that was surrounded by flowering hedges^[21]. Its opening was high and wide enough for a boat to pass through.^[20] However, due to the lack of pictorial evidence, the precise location and the exact appearance of the stream and the bridge remain unclear. They do not appear to have survived the alteration by Seah. Given that the front building of the mansion was removed after Seah purchased the property, this covered bridge could have been located between the front building and the centre part of the house behind^②.

The garden's most visited southwest section contributes the only photographic records during Hoo's ownership. On the left side of the mansion, there was a carriage drive lined with well-developed trees, shrubs, and hedges (Fig. 3). In the background, betel trees (*Areca catechu*) and casuarinas (possibly *Casuarina equisetifolia*) defined the boundary of this section. An archway to the mansion and a moon gate to the southwest section of the garden flanked the drive. On the other side of the moon gate was attached a three-bay summerhouse.

The moon gate (Fig. 4) marked the entrance to the finest section of designed landscape, which was arranged symmetrically along an axis perpendicular to that of the mansion. Behind the moon gate and summerhouse is a quadrangle enclosed by two covered walkways on the sides and an elevated house with a cross plan, labeled as "nursery house" on a 1931 map^[22]. The front part of the house spanned a crosswise rectangular pond, conceivably designed to regulate the microclimate. A hump bridge crossed each side of



② Evidence of the existence of the disappeared front building can be found on a map dating from the 1860s on Historical Maps of Singapore.

1. A 1948 aerial map showing the layout of Whampoa's Garden [Source: National Archives of Singapore, accession number: 257918]
2. The layout of Whampoa's Garden



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the pond as the 1948 aerial photo indicated. These buildings are in all likelihood the “Wind Galleries and Water Pavilion” (风廊水阁) that Khoo Seok Wan mentioned^[6], hence possibly already in existence prior to Seah’s modifications. In the evening of the 1895 Double Third Festival (上巳节), Seah and his guests feasted in the water pavilion shortly after he acquired the garden.^[23] Around the water pavilion, hedges and fences divided the ground into smaller rectangular sections with flowerbeds and “paths run like mazes” among them^[24]. It is most likely an important showplace where Hoo displayed his precious horticultural collection.

This entertaining part of the garden is encircled by water according to a map surveyed in the 1930s.^{[25][26]} Another photo (Fig. 5) depicts the most impressive plant in the garden, *Victoria amazonica*, growing in a long rectangular pond with a carriage

drive on its left. The betel trees and casuarinas in the background, as well as the vegetation along the drive, are similar to those seen in Figure 3. Therefore, this long pond could have been adjacent to the drive in front of the moon gate. On both sides of the summerhouse, there were two rectangular patches next to the drive in Figure 1. They were perhaps the remains of the original “two lakes” with *Victoria amazonica*^[27]. Apart from *Victoria amazonica*, lotuses (*Nelumbo nucifera*) were also planted in watercourses of various dimensions. They thrived in “long canals about three feet in width”^[28] as well as wider watercourses like the one depicted in Figure 6, which was nearly as wide as the *Victoria amazonica* pond in Figure 5. The pergola-covered bridge, the lined betel trees, and the wilderness in the background suggest that it was possibly one of the two bridged watercourses to the southeast and the northwest of the water pavilion as shown on some 1930s maps.

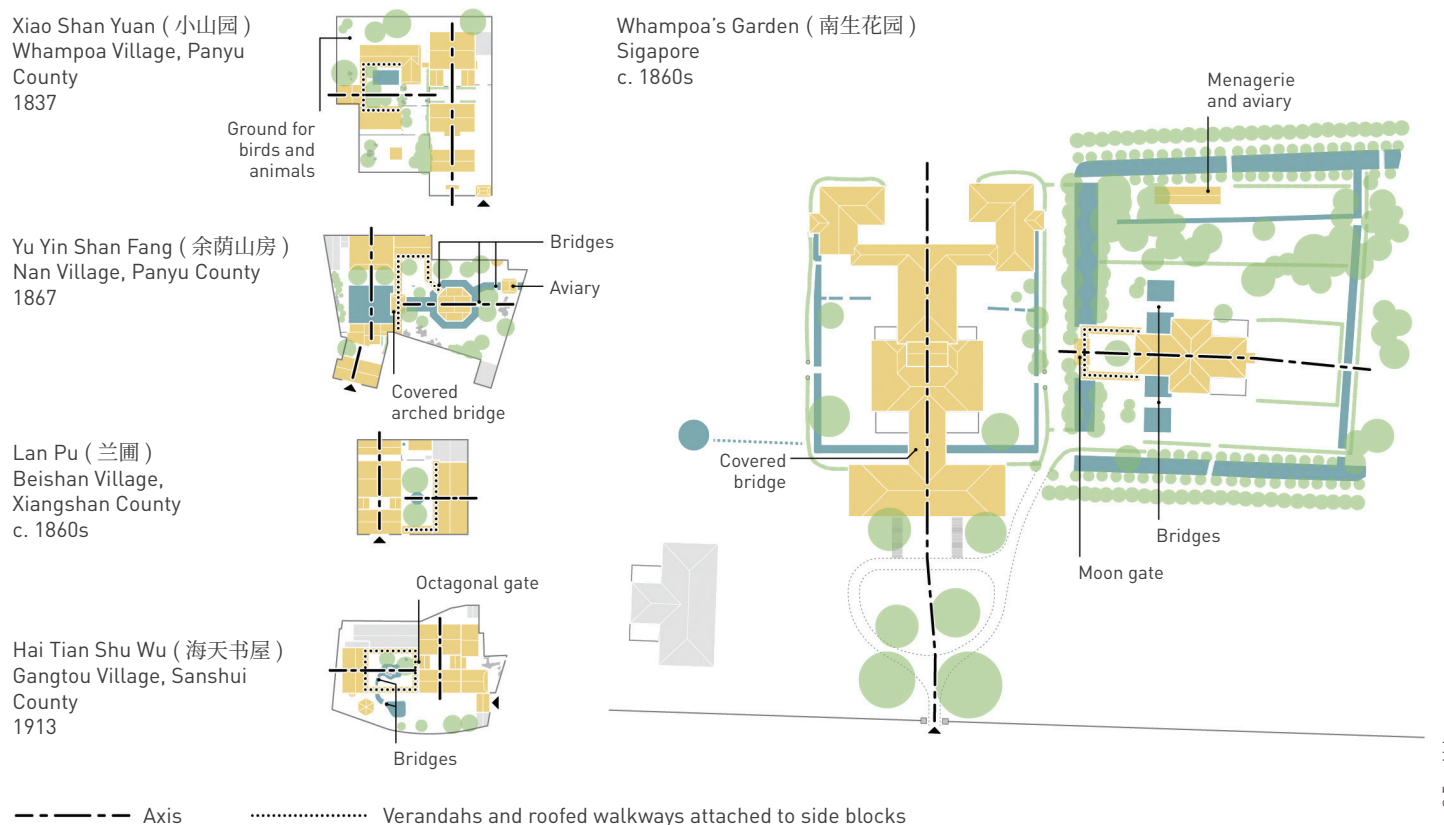
On a long plot surrounded by one of the bridged watercourses and a narrower canal to the southeast of the water pavilion, stood a long building labeled “wild animals cage” on the 1931 map, which is likely to be the “small iron wire mesh house” (铁网小屋) or “menagerie and aviary” near the mansion containing terrestrial birds and other animals^{[15][29]~[32]}. This building gives a clue about the precise location of the photographed bridged pond. In Figure 5, a long wooden fence was fixed on the betel trees on the right, seemingly associated with the location of the wild animals cage. That being the case, lotus pond was probably the southeast one.

There was also a piggery “on one side of the garden”^[33]. Poultry were primarily kept in the “backyard”^[34], perhaps in the same sections as the menagerie and aviary. The rest of the garden, which was larger than the designed landscape, was most likely reserved for growing cash crops such as “the pineapple, the cocoanut, breadfruit, the orange, mango, jackfruit, mangosteen, custard-apple, coffee,



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3. The drive in front of the moon gate, photographed by G. R. Lambert & Co. [Source: Getty Museum, object number: 84.XO.1356.16].
4. The moon gate with the Water Pavilion in the background [Source: National Museum of Singapore, accession number: 1994-04908]
5. A *Victoria amazonica* pond, photographed by G. R. Lambert & Co. [Source: Getty Museum, object number: 84.XO.1356.2].
6. A bridged lotus watercourse [Source: National Museum of Singapore, accession number: 1994-05108]



7. Comparisons between Whampoa's Garden and a few 19th and early 20th century examples from counties in Guangzhou prefecture. The plan of Hai Tian Shu Wu is modified from the measured drawings by students from Architecture Class II of 2020 at Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts. The measured plan of Yu Yin Shan Fang can be found in Ref. [38].

chocolate, nutmeg, clove, cassia, etc.”^[35] Hoo's orchid collection grew beneath bamboo shelters and on tree trunks, creating pleasing and spectacular sceneries.

4 Site-Specific Design and Traces of Chinese Ideas in the Garden's Layout

Apart from the symbolic moon gate in Cantonese style, Whampoa's Garden appeared to be rather localized in its physical forms and well adapted to the site's conditions at the first glance. Designed landscape was mostly confined to the mansion's immediate precincts and the southwest section of the garden, which was constructed mainly with locally sourced techniques and materials. It featured a novel collection of flora and fauna, as well as an extensive network of watercourses adorned with summerhouses. The network of watercourses was recorded on a few maps surveyed in the 1930s when the Seah family possessed the garden, revealing that the long ponds and watercourses as discussed in the previous section were only a small part of the overall network in the garden.^{[36][37]} In its southeast periphery on the fringe of a swamp, watercourses were even denser, flowing between lawns, vegetable patches, orchards, and service areas. These watercourses might have been trenches for draining the marshy alluvial land when the

site was first reclaimed for agriculture before being converted into a garden.

Nevertheless, one may find out more hidden Chineseness in its layout by comparing Whampoa's Garden with its counterparts in Hoo's hometown. The spatial relationships found in the mansion and the southwest section of the garden appears to be inspired by gardens in Whampoa's hometown. The plans of four gardens in Guangzhou prefecture dated from 1830s to 1910s (Fig. 7) are juxtaposed with that of Whampoa's Garden to facilitate comparisons.

The most intriguing one among these four Cantonese gardens is Xiao Shan Yuan (小山园) in Whampoa (Huangpu), Hoo's ancestral village. It was built in 1837, three years before Hoo purchased his garden^[36]. The similarities between these two gardens are found not only in people, place, and time but also in their layouts.

A photograph (Fig. 8) taken before the demolition of Whampoa's Garden shows the moon gate and the Water Pavilion's ruin facing the middle part of the mansion, with a lush grove of assorted plants in between. A very similar spatial relationship between mansion and garden is found in Xiao Shan Yuan, where the mansion was arranged on a principal axis while the garden on one side was orientated perpendicularly. The garden was laid out around a rectangular courtyard, at the further end of which was



8. The base of the Water Pavilion (Nursery House) (front left), the moon gate, and the mansion (back) in 1963; in the foreground, wetland weeds were thriving in the silted pond [Source: National Archives of Singapore, accession number: 2519].

the courtyard's main building facing the principal axis, with the same concept of the quadrangle in front of the water pavilion in Whampoa's Garden. In both gardens, the main buildings were attached with covered walkways on the sides.

Similar layouts of perpendicular axes are also found in the other three examples in Figure 7. In particular, the garden courtyard in Hai Tian Shu Wu (海天书屋) is also a quadrangle perfectly enclosed by covered walkways, with a gateway in a wall leading to the buildings on the principal axis. In the same manner as the summerhouse and moon gate framing the view in front of the water pavilion in Whampoa's Garden, the octagonal water pavilion in Yu Yin Shan Fang (余荫山房) was as well aligned with another pavilion on an arched bridge that visually encases the distant rockery and greenery.

Beyond the courtyard, there are more traces of Chinese design ideas in the seemingly non-Chinese layout. The water pavilion in Whampoa's Garden, although being attached to a small quadrangle, was de facto near the center of the rectangular patch of hedges and flowerbeds, which could be easily perceived as European or Malay influences. Again, a similar design is found in Yu Yin Shan Fang, where the water pavilion is situated right at the center in the left part of the garden surrounded by watercourses arranged in regular geometric patterns. According to the owner's account, sceneries in Yu Yin Shan Fang such as rockeries and the moonlight could be enjoyed from the interior of the octagonal water pavilion.^[37] The same concept might have been employed in the design of Hoo's water pavilion from which one could overlook garden scenes, or Hoo's horticultural curiosities to be precise, on all sides.

Another linkage between Whampoa's Garden and the gardens in Hoo's home country may lie in the pond spanned by the water pavilion and bridges behind the quadrangle, as it is a common practice in China to place bridges or other stilted structures on water to create a vivid sense of endlessness.^[38] In Yu Yin Shan Fang, a miniature aviary, a few flat bridges, and the abovementioned covered arched bridge were placed across the watercourse around the water pavilion. For similar ornamental purposes, a half-sided arched bridge was built opposite a boat hall in Yu Yuan (瑜园), an early-20th-century garden neighbouring Yu Yin Shan Fang; tiny stone bridges were built on both ends of a narrow stream which flowed beneath the covered walkway in Hai Tian Shu Wu. The intimate spatial relationship that small-scale water features intersect exquisite buildings exemplifies an innate Chinese garden design convention rooted in Whampoa's Garden.

The positioning of the menagerie and aviary in Whampoa's Garden also correlates with that in some Chinese gardens. In Xiao Shan Yuan and Yu Yin Shan Fang, places for animals and birds were situated near their edges at the back, possibly for practical reasons. Considering these examples near Hoo's Chinese home, it came as no surprise that the must-visit menagerie and aviary in Whampoa's Garden was placed near the backyard rather than the main buildings.

Additionally, the design of his mansion retained some recognizable Chinese features, though it was at large in the form of a sizeable bungalow displaying distinct local characters. The arched bridge in Yu Yin Shan Fang may evoke the impression of the "lofty bridge" under an "open gallery" in Hoo's house as mentioned in the previous section. The covered bridges in both cases were built across water that flowed through the principal axes.

In general, the layout of Whampoa's Garden bears many parallels with some contemporary and later courtyard gardens near Guangzhou, while retaining some features from the former plantation on the site. Despite the similarities, the layout of Whampoa's Garden may still seem peculiar and even exotic for those who are familiar with gardens in South China, let alone the heavily localized architectural design. The size of Whampoa's Garden, which measures over 200 meters in depth and at least 350 meters in width, is comparable to the renowned Hai Shan Xian Guan (海山仙馆), the largest among its contemporary counterparts in Guangzhou, which featured extensive lakes and sizeable artificial hills.^[39] However, Whampoa's Garden seemed to have been laid out in accordance with compact courtyard gardens. The mansion and the water pavilion were built as large as the owner pleased, but there was still a seeming mismatch between these hypothetical

small-scale prototypes and the vastness of the garden. Hedges and watercourses mentioned in the previous section subdivided and reduced the garden into smaller plots that suited the scale of the courtyard garden prototype. Such an approach is perhaps the result of Hoo's practical ideas that focused on displaying individual plant specimens.

5 Practical Selection of Chineseness for Western Visitors

In this and the following sections, the ways that Hoo catered to the tastes of different groups of visitors will be explored to further disclose the melting and welding of gardening ideas from various cultures in Hoo's tropical wonderland. To begin with, this section will examine how Hoo entertained his Western visitors in the garden and evoked their impression of China, and specifically, his hometown Guangzhou.

Despite the fact that Chinese literati considered Whampoa's Garden to be "completely in Western style (皆西式)"^[40] or "in both Chinese and Western styles (兼中西式)"^[6], it was unquestionably a representation of "true Chinese style"^[24] to Western visitors at the time. The sense of being Chinese was inlaid into architectural forms, ornamental details, and horticulture rather than its overall design.

The most authentic structure in Cantonese style on Whampoa's Garden was the moon gate in a short screen wall to the southwest section of the nursery house and menagerie, which were depicted in a few historical photos. It was decorated in the contemporary Cantonese fashion, with plaster reliefs beneath cornices and

plastered *bogu*-pattern ridges (博古脊) on its top, similar to some examples in the Pearl River Delta, such as the moon gate in Macau's Lou Lim Ieoc Garden (卢廉若公园). Josepha Richard, a garden historian, suggests that similar short screen walls pierced by a gateway are more common in and around Guangzhou than in other parts of China.^{[41][42]} The screen wall's distinct regional style manifested the owner's Cantonese origin profoundly.

A pair of ceramic *aoyu* (鳌鱼) was placed behind the screen wall in the summerhouse (Fig. 9). *Aoyu* is a type of auspicious dragon headed fish in Chinese mythology usually placed in pairs as finials on the ridges of important buildings in southern China. A low wall with square glazed tiles (花窗) ran along the back of the summerhouse. Both the fish and the tiles are designed in Cantonese style. At the gates, there were also "colourfully painted paired lions" and "carved figures of Chinese dragons", bolstering the display of Chineseness.^{[20][43]}

Another kind of built structure that reminded Western visitors of China was the "tiny watercourses" with "miniature bridges"^[20]. Summerhouses on "tiny islands reached by miniature bridges" resembling "exactly" the scene on willow-pattern plates (Fig. 10) were found at some unknown locations.^[27] The willow pattern was a popular chinoiserie ornament on porcelain for mass production in the late 18th and the 19th centuries. It combined at least two original Chinese patterns, depicting a boat, a pair of birds, a zigzag fence, an arch bridge, a few pavilions or summerhouses, and a distinctive leaning willow.^[44] The abovementioned hump bridges near the water pavilion and the lofty bridge within the mansion may resemble the arched bridge in the willow pattern in appearance.



9. One of the *aoyu* in the summerhouse [Source: National Museum of Singapore, accession number: 1994-04908]
10. Dessert Dish with an early version of willow pattern, c. 1790 [Source: Ref. [44]].

However, there is no additional evidence to support the existence of these “tiny islands” with summerhouses.

Whampoa’s Garden also had “miniature rockeries” according to Song Ong Siang.^[8] Again, no other sources indicate their existence. Visitors at that time might have found them less attractive as Chinese symbols.

The garden’s flora and fauna were equally effective Chinese symbols. For Western visitors, the most authentic and appealing pieces of Cantonese horticultural art were box trees, myrtles, and bamboo trimmed and trained into various shapes of animals and objects such as baskets, vases, junks, and pagodas (Fig. 3).^[20] They were distinctive enough for visitors to associate them with Guangzhou. In 1858, English author Albert Richard Smith visited the Temple of the Five-hundred Gods (华林寺) in Guangzhou and saw “a large number of dwarfed trees—some trained into deer, houses (not horses)^③, and dolphins, with egg shells for eyes.” This reminded him of Whampoa’s Garden, which he had visited before arriving in Guangzhou.^[45] The authenticity of this horticultural art was achieved by hiring horticulturists from Guangzhou.^[8]

To represent Hoo’s Chinese identity, “some curious specimens of Chinese gardening”^[46], including “a host of the choicest flowers of south China”^[8], were also planted. He had a collection of chrysanthemum “reminding him of home and country”^[47]. Because chrysanthemums were originated in China’s temperate and subtropical regions, they were kept in “a little sheltered spot” in his equatorial garden.^[47] In addition, Hoo was known for his orchid collection.^[36]

Animals also played a role in certifying the garden’s Chineseness. Apart from goldfish that was clearly a Chinese symbol, pigs were raised as religious animals in accordance with Chinese tradition. It is believed that the deceased’s spirit “may be inhabiting” their bodies.^[33] The same practice was observed at Guangzhou’s Ocean Banner Monastery, which was one of the few legal holiday destinations for Westerners in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The piggery there was at the time the most famous attraction in the Monastery. Hoo’s unuttered purpose in rearing pigs may have been to demonstrate his cultural connection to the historic Canton trade that prospered his native village, Whampoa.

Despite the intensive exhibition of Chinese elements, local materials, plants, and craftsmanship were equally (if not more) prominent in the garden. As shown in photographs, all the roof tiles seen in the photographs were V-shaped terracotta tiles that were

widely used in Singapore, and timber structures were built with local craftsmanship. The balusters in front of the moon gate were made of plaster instead of glazed ceramic that was more common in Guangdong. Flowering hedges were made of hibiscus rather than roses, which were more common in China.

The selective display of Chinese features implies that Hoo had no intention in replicating his hometown’s garden design in every detail at unnecessary expense. Chinese elements in Whampoa’s Garden were carefully chosen to demonstrate his place of origin in the most practical way possible, with an emphasis on small-scale elements that may remind Western visitors of Guangzhou.

6 Adherence and Deviation From Chinese Literati’s Taste

Aside from Western guests, there was another group of visitors with completely distinct tastes. As a holder of high-ranking Chinese official title and the first Chinese consul in Singapore, Hoo was not isolated from the Chinese literatus circle. He identified himself as an adherent of Chinese literati’s tastes through ornamental details and collection of plants and animals, while trying to keep the design appealing to his distinguished Western guests.

The most noticeable manifestation of Hoo’s affinity for literati culture was sculpted about the iconic moon gate (Fig. 4). “Long-cherished aspirations are realised from growing fruits and cultivating gardens” (植果锄园成素志) and “leisurely moods are reposed in rearing flowers and planting bamboo” (莳花种竹寄闲情) read the couplet of the gate. It was paired with a plaque writes “Also Refined Feelings” (亦雅怀), implying his agricultural and horticultural hobby was an alternative elegant doing, though his garden “had only ponds but no gazebos or terraces 有池沼而无亭台”^{[21][40]}, apparently missing some important Chinese elements. Hoo rooted his literatus elegance in an older productive garden tradition that was still prevailing in his hometown in the 19th century, and hence associating agricultural practice with virtue^[48]. This strategy earned Hoo the respect of Chinese intellectuals. Consul Tso referred to a well-known allusion of “Shaoping’s gourds” (邵平瓜) that related farming to the virtue of indifference about fame when commenting on the statement of “Also Refined Feelings,” recognising the merit in Hoo’s agricultural hobby.

In addition to Hoo’s excellent cultivation of cash crops, fruits and flowers, animal species in Whampoa’s Garden also catered to Chinese visitors. There was a good selection of pets and domestic animals following Chinese traditions, such as pigs, chickens, tigers, leopards, deer, a sun bear, a six-legged turtle (possibly *Manouria emys*), golden pheasants [known as *luanniao* (鸾鸟) or *cailuan* (彩鸾) in Chinese],

③ The author believes that this is possibly a typo for “horses.”



11. The layout of Bendemeer

silver pheasants, peacocks, mandarin ducks, and goldfish. However, what appears to be the most eye-catching to Western visitors was Hoo's exotic collection that included a chevrotain, a baboon, an orangutan, siamangs, kangaroos, ostriches, long-billed partridges, purple coots, etc.^④^{[10][20][21][40][49]} Such a diverse zoological collection was also found in the early decades of the Singapore Botanic Gardens.^[50]

7 The Garden in Seah Liang Seah's Possession

Whampoa's Garden was sold to Seah in 1894 and was later renamed Bendemeer (明丽名园)^[7]. The garden and mansion were modified in a similar eclectic manner during the first two decades following the transaction, but with a sumptuous increase in recreational areas and a consequent decrease in productive plants (Fig. 11).

In 1896 and 1897, Seah submitted the plans for three "Rustic Houses" (gazebos), a water tower, and a baths room to the northeast of the mansion (Fig. 12). These drawings demonstrate

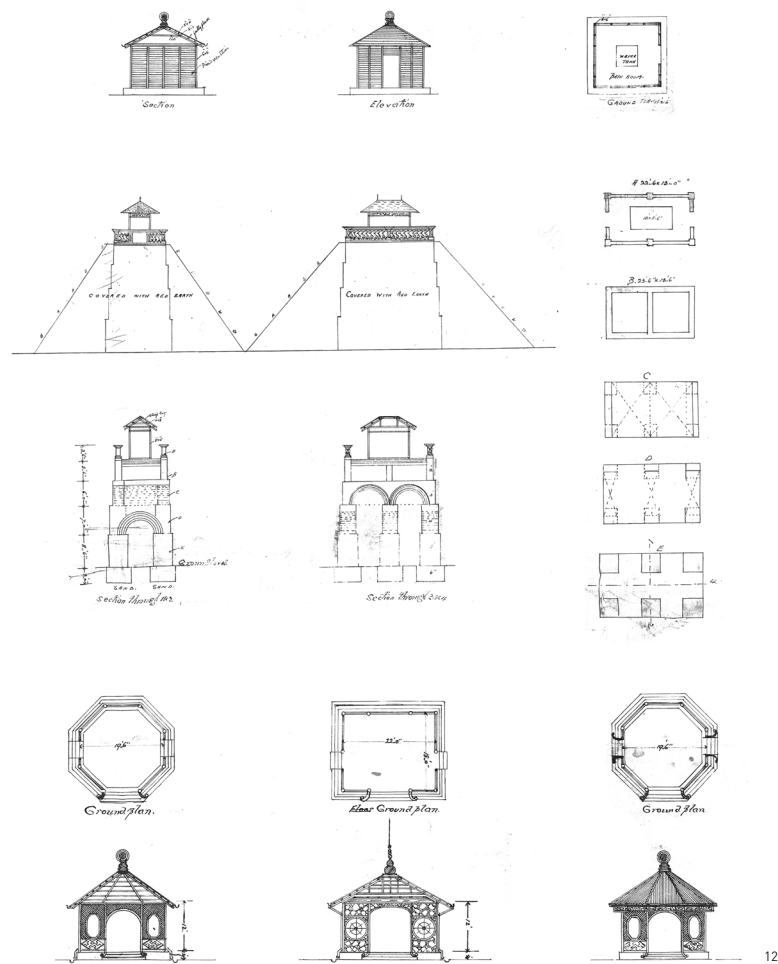
the convergence of Chinese prototypes and Western architectural design inspired by Malay workmanship.

According to Figure 1 and multiple photographs, the water tower was constructed on the southeast edge of a padang (lawn) and was covered with soil in the shape of a terrace on an artificial hill. A large pond, about 50 metres long and surrounded by balustrades, laid on the hill's northwest side. On the other side of the pond, the gazebos, which were absent during Hoo's possession, were lined up on the padang. This lavish design supplemented the garden with a more imposing Chinese symbol, surpassing Hoo's humble hedges, flowerbeds, and watercourses, although the pavilions were still designed in an eclectic way.

Western influence was also apparent in the modification. In late 1903 or early 1904, a classical belvedere tower was erected between the two rear buildings^[51] (Fig. 13). Two rectangular padangs with a flowerbed and two ponds arranged symmetrically at each center, which were not mentioned in earlier materials when Hoo possessed the garden, occupied the grounds on the sides of the entrance drive. Open lawns topped "the paths run like mazes among the beds"^[24] as the main feature of the garden.

In Seah's garden, newly added Chinese elements, arranged within a Western framework and constructed with locally sourced techniques, remained more symbolic than authentic as before.

④ Some of these exotic animals were mentioned in William Chamber's *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (Ref. [49]), but rarely seen in Chinese gardens.



12. Drawings of the rustic houses, the water tower, and the baths room (from bottom to top) [Source: National Archives of Singapore, accession numbers: 27/1897 & 204/1896].
13. A padang behind the mansion, showing a canal in its front and the newly built tower in the background [Source: Ref. [51]].

Precise replication of Chinese architecture styles like Hoo's moon gate became less important, implying a cultural disconnect between the Straits Chinese and their country of origin.

8 Conclusions

Mountains are high, and the emperor is far away. Whampoa's Garden is an excellent example of Chinese gardens outside Chinese mainland, with fewer constraints from Chinese literati's tradition but new restrictions in Singapore's exotic environment. The owner's horticultural interests were thoroughly expressed through the way he arranged and exhibited his collection of plants. Despite the fact that certain aspects of its layout seem to have Chinese roots from Hoo's hometown, the mansion and garden remained as a localised showcase of Chineseness in a setting more familiar to Westerners, presenting "a curious admixture of European comfort and taste with Chinese notions of ornament"^[16]. The sifted Chinese elements in Whampoa's Garden unveil that when Chinese literati's culture is no longer prevailing among social elites, the most essential and intrinsic Chineseness may rest more in individual symbolic

objects and cultural interpretation of doings than in overall designs. It signifies the critical role of audience of garden design and availability of architectural and horticultural resources in shaping the uniqueness of this garden. This case study may provide a lens to inspect the mechanism of cross-regional dissemination and adaptation of Chinese Gardens in the context of European colonies in Southeast Asia. Nonetheless, there is a lack of connection between this single case and the wider context of cross-cultural landscape and architectural histories in Southeast Asia. The analysis of Whampoa's Garden is far from sufficient to disclose more general phenomena in the garden histories of overseas Chinese. In-depth case studies of other historical transnational and cross-cultural landscape would be needed in the future to paint a broader picture of this topic.

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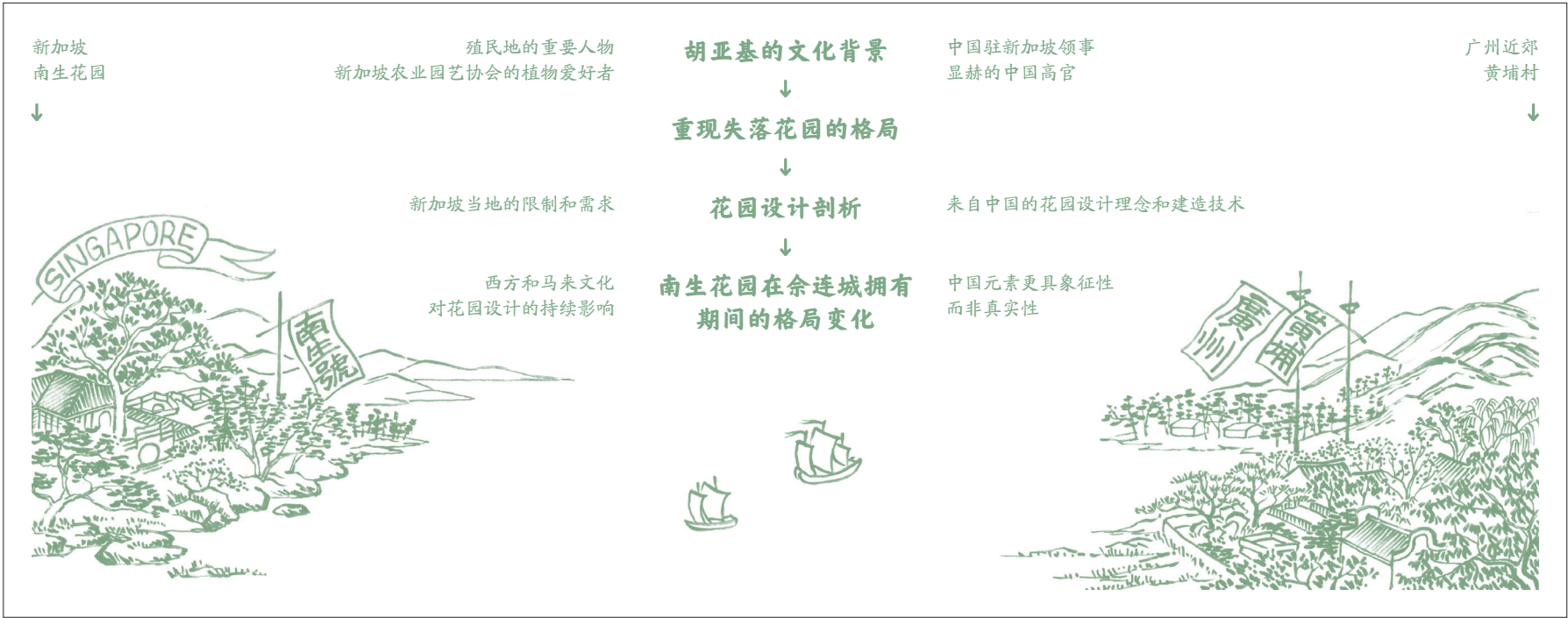
新加坡南生花园中国特征的移植与本土化

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图文摘要



摘要

在19世纪的新加坡，尽管市区有多处地道、典型中式府邸，中式私家花园的设计方式却与同时期中国本土的园林不甚相同。为了研究这一现象，本文以新加坡最早一批中式私家花园中的典范——南生花园为例，阐释园主人在设计花园时如何及为什么选择性地采用某些中国特色，同时却又以非中式风格设计花园的其他部分。

本文对南生花园的研究首先简要介绍了园主人、广东商人胡亚基的职业和文化背景，以及其社会关系、个人爱好和文化身份。由于花园已不复存在，我们研究了中国和西方的图文史料，以重现花园的空间布局和其他设计特征——其中一些可能具有浓厚的中国特色。继而对比南生花园与胡亚基故乡同时期建造的园林，以揭示它们在设计理念上的潜在联系。此外，本文探究了中国符号的选择与游园者文化身份之间的关系，以剖析是什么影响了中国特征的呈现，以及华南景观在当时是如何被移植到新加坡这个赤道附近的殖民地的。

文章亮点

- 重现新加坡历史上著名华人花园——南生花园的格局
- 揭示园主故乡园林与南生花园的形态联系
- 剖析园主为服务于各种目的而采选的中国特征

关键词

新加坡；殖民地；胡亚基；海外华人；南生花园；中国特征