

# Investigating Campus Names as an Indispensable Component for University Heritage Conservation and Restoration: A Case Study in China

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## Abstract

*Campus names usually carry cultural significance, delivering heritage messages and values as well as basic components of intangible property. One common dilemma regarding university heritage conservation and restoration in the world is arbitrary renaming. This paper aims to justify the inseparable connection between South China Agricultural University (SCAU), South China University of Technology (SCUT), and Sun Yat-sen and develop solutions to their conservation and restoration, taking the Shipai Campus of National Sun Yat-sen University (NSYSU) as a study case. The study concluded that the Shipai campus is the epitome of Sun's education and it deserves Sun's name the most. This paper also raised heritage conservation and restoration solutions for SCAU and SCUT, namely identifying the truth and safeguarding historical sustainability by restoring and utilizing the original campus names. In addition, the study proposed to formulate laws for renaming all universities in the future that necessitate deliberate evaluation and approval by heritage experts before taking action. The NSYSU campus serves as a representative case, illustrating the role of campus names as significant cultural property. It highlights the importance of safeguarding campus names. These names must be carefully protected, and arbitrary changes should be avoided to preserve their historical and cultural significance.*

**Keywords:** *Campus name, National Sun Yat-sen University, Sun Yat-sen University, South China Agricultural University, South China University of Technology.*

## Introduction

Names are important symbols of cultural heritage, embodying cultural values and continuing the life of the cultural property. Conservation aims to maintain the cultural characteristics of the object to ensure that its value is not diminished and that it will outlive our limited time span (ICCROM, 1988; UNESCO, 1988). University names are the university's principal brand that conveys the first impression and informs the public of these universities. Good university names can promote a positive brand image and increase media exposure, highlight the social value of education, and help universities attract high-level scholars and recruit outstanding students. Thus, names are universities' intellectual property and intangible assets. The brand identity behind those names is established gradually during their long-term historical development. Therefore, names are equated with significant credibility and recognition in society, which are essential to public understanding and support, thus exerting the universities' influence. Meanwhile, they are the spiritual carriers of their history and encapsulate the universities' historical records since their establishment. In essence, universities' names are the outer expression of their inner cultural tradition and their practical usefulness is unlimited due to their unlimited usage period. Notably, naming is a noteworthy cultural practice, both because of its ability to create a sense of continuity over time and because of its ability to influence and shape the fundamental cultural identity. Thus, naming is a powerful vehicle for promoting identification with the past and locating oneself within wider networks of memory (Cao, 1996; Fan et al., 2021; Jaquette, 2013; Lyu, 2016; Mandende & Cekiso, 2022; Tian & Liu, 2010; Zhang, 2001). Furthermore, they are universities' cultural genes -- symbols of campus identity with important symbolic meanings that have direct and indivisible connections with campus sites.

To achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 11, measures should be taken to ensure that intangible heritage is well protected to achieve cultural sustainability. University names are essential parts of the universities' intangible heritage and play important roles in forming their heritage value and ensuring their cultural sustainability, and naming universities after individuals has profound future

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implications. However, many people cannot identify their profundity and simply think they are merely several Chinese characters. Thus, random changes in universities' names frequently occur around the world. In extreme cases, university names are even frequently sold because universities want to exchange their reputation for money. (Loeffler & Halperin, 2008; Walsh, 2015). In China, many universities also frequently changed names even in modern times, which has led to many problems (e.g., loss of university identity, destruction of historical and cultural heritage, the impediment to normal accumulation and growth process of academics). Shipai National Sun Yat-sen University (NSYSU) is a typical case in this situation, which is the sole top Chinese university named after a person (Cai et al., 2021). Thus, to avoid various endless and complicated problems caused by changing university names, university names must remain consistent throughout history. Although it is greatly significant, the phenomenon of frequently changing university names in China has been seldom studied; more attention has just been focused on Sun's name lately. For example, Zhongshan City, Sun's hometown, is investing more than 1.5 billion USD to construct a university named Sun Yat-sen, namely the University of Science and Technology. It is a piece of good evidence to verify the value of Sun's name. Thus, it is imperative to study the name issue. This study attempts to solve this problem and conducts a deeper evaluation and discussion of the rationales of the phenomenon of changing university names, and raises solutions through a typical case study. The aim is to justify the inseparable connection between South China Agricultural University (SCAU), South China University of Technology (SCUT), and Sun Yat-sen, meanwhile developing solutions to their conservation and restoration under Sun's name. Specifically, the objective of this study is to investigate the historical context of universities under Sun's name, evaluate the connection between these universities and Sun, and develop conservation and restoration solutions for SCAU and SCUT by analyzing the reasons and impact of changing names.

## Research Methods

### *Research Strategies and Materials*

The truthfulness or reality that exists in the world can be subjectively measured, and the selection of a research methodology should be aligned with the research objective (Abdulai & Owusu-Ansah, 2014). This study can only be understood in context-specific settings, and the variables are pretty difficult to measure by numbers. Thus, the qualitative method was adopted in this research. The literature review, the first approach, followed the unique "Literature Review Synthesis Process" (Ibrahim & Kamal, 2018; Masiran et al., 2020). Topics were identified using Ibrahim's (2011, 2020) research question construct categorization technique for identifying three different research question constructs -- WHO, WHAT, and HOW -- in formulating a main research question. WHO is defined as the element being impacted by the study, WHAT is the information or body of knowledge required to solve the problem, and HOW is the targeted impact of the study. In addition, regarding inquiries form, the constructed questions for HOW, WHAT, and WHY can adopt archival analysis, history, and case study approaches (Yin, 2014). Therefore, the methods adopted in this study included a literature review, case study, archival analysis, historical approach and also qualitative approaches interviews, content analysis, et cetera.

The research materials in this study consisted of cameras, voice recorders, recording books and pens, computers, microphones, projectors, drawing tools, et cetera.

### *Data Source and Collection*

This research is an amalgam of desktop and empirical data, and the data source and collection come from both. The study selected related articles under the university name for reporting. For one thing, one of the authors gathered papers and historical maps from SCAU and SCUT archives, libraries, and related departments. Since this case study was in China and based on high relevance, the authoritative Chinese database CNKI was selected. Regarding English databases, apart from the authoritative database Scopus and WoS, Humanities and Social Sciences database SAGE journals, Taylor & Francis were adopted too, which involved using the keywords related to the selected major themes such as university name, campus name, National Sun Yat-sen University, and National Kwangtung University (NKU). After title searches

and filtering out full research papers, the abstracts were reviewed and assigned according to the best relevant smaller sub-themes. Their abstracts were reviewed in terms of their major findings, as well as how their works could support future studies, and what aspects need to be enhanced. The top reviews that can potentially solve the study's main problem were selected for the literature synthesis review process. As the study relates to the historical aspect, the distribution into the smaller sub-themes was based on their existential importance since the study notes that new, but critical, emerging themes may have lesser literature articles. In addition, a site survey was conducted to collect empirical evidence. Historical and heritage professionals of the SCAU and SCUT were interviewed to collect their opinions regarding the naming and the campus merger issue of the two universities.

### *Data Analysis*

The outcomes of the literature analysis were that a synthesized summary for each main theme was produced, looking into cross-analysis, integration of possibilities, and prioritization of the synthesized summaries of highly probable solutions for the research objectives. The processes of data analysis were as follows: 1) to extract, synthesize data, and analyze the reasons why many universities named after Sun Yat-sen changed their names; 2) to conduct a site survey to investigate current entities on the campus; 3) to discuss how to make good use of them and conclude appropriate solutions.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### *The Historical Study of Universities Named after Sun Yat-sen*

#### History of Shipai NSYSU and Taiwan NSYSU

##### *Establishment Of NSYSU and Its Predecessor*

Sun is a visionary educator. Specifically, in 1894, at the age of 28, he and his friends submitted a “National Development Plan” to the Qing government in China. This plan suggested drawing on the Western capitalist system to develop education and reform the country. However, the Qing government rejected their proposal. As a result, in the same year, Sun established a political organization called Revive China Society, the forerunner of the KMT (Kuomintang, Nationalist Party of China). In 1895, he demanded that “establishing schools and educating talents” was one of the primary goals of the Revive China Society. In 1903, he established the Tokyo Revolutionary Military Academy to train self-financed Chinese overseas students. In 1924, he single-handedly built NKU, the predecessor of NSYSU and Whampoa Military Academy in Guangzhou, China.

##### *Wenminglu Campus Period (1924-1931)*

In 1923, Sun signed a presidential decree that merged four universities into one: namely National Guangdong Higher Normal School, Guangdong Public Medical University, Guangdong Public Legislative University, and Guangdong Public Agricultural College. The merged new university was the NKU. Later, Sun designated the campus of National Guangdong Higher Normal School as NKU's temporary campus, which is located at Wenminglu, Guangzhou. In terms of personnel, Sun appointed Zou Lu as the director of the Preparatory Committee of NKU to establish the new university and later reappointed Zou as the chancellor in 1924. After careful consideration, Sun carefully selected the ancient Chinese proverbs “learn extensively, enquire accurately, think deliberately, discern clearly, practice earnestly” and inscribed the proverbs personally as the school motto for the inauguration ceremony of NKU. These classic proverbs were extracted from Chinese ancient classical philosophy “Four Books” (*Great Learning, Doctrine of the Mean, Confucian Analects, and Works of Mencius*) (He et al., 2022).

##### *Shipai Campus Period (1932-)*

The very limited land area of the Wenminglu Campus caused many problems, forcing Sun Yat-sen to handpick the Second Farm of NKU, which was located in the Shipai area, to establish a new campus.

According to Chen Shaofeng, a student who graduated from the SCUT in 1986, the Shipai area started in Shipai village, which at the time was a suburban village northeast of Guangzhou. Chen's father has studied at NSYSU since 1950. After the reorganization of Chinese national universities in 1952, he became a well-known architecture professor at SCUT. There were many reasons why Sun selected the Shipai area and the most important reasons can boil down to two aspects: First, the area covered vast tracts of land, and the topography was in line with Chinese philosophy, with lots of hills and lakes. Second, the famous Chinese general, Liu Yongfu was once stationed there. Liu's army won a great victory in the Battle of Zhennan Pass and defeated the French invaders, which was extremely rare in the later Qing Dynasty and a great confidence booster for Chinese people. Sun said, "Since childhood, I have been admiring Liu and his Black Flag Army, and he is the national hero of our country". The environment of the Shipai area was very quiet and appropriate for studying due to its mountain landscape. This feature could boost national patriotism and enhance the nation's self-esteem. Therefore, after Sun's death on Mar 12, 1925, the KMT government inherited Sun's legacy to build the new campus in the Shipai area at his behest. Furthermore, in 1926, the KMT government changed the university name to NSYSU in memory of Sun (Yi, 1999). Around the 1930s, the Shipai campus was constructed and the first phase was completed in 1934. Later, NSYSU teachers and students gradually moved from the Wenminglu campus to the Shipai Campus from 1932 to 1934.

In 1952, the People's Republic of China (PRC) government reorganized national universities, and Shipai NSYSU was divided into two new universities, namely SCAU and SCUT. Moreover, many institutes or departments of NSYSU successively became independent entities over time. For example, the Institute of Botany and Forestry became the South China Botanical Garden, and the Institute of Rice of SCAU became the Guangdong Academy of Agricultural Science. Besides, many scientific institutes, schools, enterprises, residential quarters, and municipal facilities gradually emerged within the Shipai area. Specifically, South China Normal University and Jinan University were also established on the south side of the Shipai area later, making it the most concentrated scientific and educational community in Guangzhou today. In 1980, owing to the support of some Shipai NSYSU alumni, the Taiwan government established a new NSYSU campus to commemorate Sun, the founding father of the Republic of China, and the campus is located in Kaohsiung City, Taiwan, China. Taiwan NSYSU likewise inherited Sun's inscribed school motto for Shipai NSYSU.

#### *History Of Current Sun Yat-Sen University*

The current Sun Yat-sen University (SYSU) is composed of five campuses, namely Yuexiu Campus, Haizhu Campus, Panyu Campus, Zhuhai Campus, and Shenzhen Campus. Historically, the predecessor of the Yuexiu Campus is Pok Tsai Medical School, and it was affiliated with Canton Hospital, which was founded by American medical missionary Peter Parker in 1866. It was ever renamed the School of Medicine of NSYSU in 1931 by the KMT government, and Sun Yat-sen Medical University in 1985 by the PRC government. In 2001, the Sun Yat-sen Medical University was merged into SYSU by the government. The precursor of the Haizhu campus is Canton Christian College, which was created by an American Christian missionary named Andrew Happer in 1988. Its campus moved several times before settling on the current permanent campus in Haizhu in 1904. Besides, Zhuhai Campus, Panyu Campus, and Shenzhen Campus are all newly-constructed campuses lately, which were respectively built in 1999, 2004, and 2020. The Yuexiu Campus was renamed and merged into SYSU in 2001.

#### *Other Disappeared Universities Named After Sun Yat-Sen*

On March 17, 1925, a Shanghai University student named An Jianping suggested that the university's name should be changed to SYSU. He wrote a proposal to "reorganize Shanghai University into SYSU". Following that, KMT officials Shen Zhuowu et al. also wrote proposals "for the reorganization of Southeast University into SYSU" on March 20. Similarly, on March 25, Huang Xing, a famous KMT member, wrote a proposal "for the reorganization of NKU into SYSU" (Huang, 1994b). Since then, many Chinese universities in different provinces have changed their names to SYSU in honor of Sun. In the same way, in memory of Sun's revolutionary ideologies, the Soviet Union also built a Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow where important Chinese revolutionary leaders for the KMT and Communist Party of China were cultivated, including many famous Chinese politicians, such as the leader of China Deng Xiaoping and the "President"



of Taiwan Jiang Jingguo. On the other hand, Sun established the Northern Expedition Army in hopes of reunifying China before he died. He also left instructions for his followers to finish his unfinished work as a revolutionary for China. As a result, after Sun's death, Northern Expedition Army inherited his will and continued to unite China. In 1927, the Republic of China government implemented the French education system by splitting Chinese universities into several university districts. It followed that they changed the names of these provincial SYSUs to First NSYSU, Second NSYSU, Third NSYSU, and Fourth NSYSU in a chronological sequence; this sequence aligned with the order in which the Northern Expedition Army occupied cities and regions. The Republic of China government decided in 1928 to only fund the Shipai NSYSU and ordered that all other provincial SYSUs be renamed after their local place names. On the other hand, in 1930, five years after Sun's death, Moscow's SYSU was disbanded due to political divergence between the Soviet Union and the KMT's new leaders (Huang, 1999).

### *Connections Between Sun Yat-sen and Universities Named after Him*

To explore the connection between Sun Yat-sen and the universities named after him, a comparison was conducted to clarify the main conditions and attributions of the main universities. It was found that only the Shipai NSYSU, SYSU, and Taiwan NSYSU have existed for a long time, and the other universities named after Sun have merely existed for a few years in history. Sun had nothing to do with the founding or development of these universities in other provinces and Moscow. In other words, these campuses are irrelevant to Sun and have just used his name. Therefore, Shipai NSYSU is the sole university that is worth adopting Sun's name.

Importantly, the Shipai campus is inextricably linked to Sun, and there are many justifications or pieces of evidence to support this viewpoint. First, Shipai NSYSU is directly associated with Sun's ideal: Sun had spent his entire life fighting for China's reunification. At that time, motivated solely by self-interest and ignorance, many Chinese anarchists and local warlords refused unification and launched endless civil wars. After forty years of failure to reunite China, Sun finally identified the root cause as the lack of consensus and disunity among the masses. Thus, he established NKU in a bid to forge consensus among the Chinese people. Meanwhile, he used NKU to cultivate scientific talent and intellectuals in China. Just as Sun remarked, both East and West countries pay considerable attention to universities and they never hesitate to invest huge money in education and lay the foundation for their countries.

Second, the Shipai campus has inseparable connections with Sun, especially in the spiritual dimension. Lots of researchers pointed the concept and layout of the Shipai Campus are imitations of a "bell", which is the homonym of Sun's given name "Zhong" in Chinese. Sun had lots of names due to revolutionary reasons, but the most common one in China is "Zhong Shan". "Yat-sen" is the Cantonese pronunciation of his other name "Ri Xin", which was mostly used in America and Europe. Therefore, the "bell-shaped" planning layout symbolized Zhong, i.e. Sun himself (Cai, 2018; He, 2013; He et al., 2022; Huang, 2008; Liu, 2013; Zhao, 2004; Zhao & Zheng, 2008; Zheng, 2004).

Third, the Shipai campus has inseparable connections with the Sun in terms of physical attributes. Almost every glazed tile of original buildings on the Shipai Campus is engraved with the four Chinese characters "Sun Yat-sen University". According to many architectural experts, such as Professor Xie Chun from SCUT, these tiles remind us of aforesaid engraved characters. Nowadays, these exquisite handmade glazed tiles of the Shipai campus cannot be produced anymore due to the handicraft industry's challenge faced by contemporary craftsmen. These engraved titles serve as the most conclusive evidence that the unique kinship between the Shipai Campus and Sun can not be replaced by any other campus. Besides, there are many other "bell" elements on the Shipai Campus, including the bell-shaped campus layout, et cetera. Even today, SCUT Press still adopts the "bell" as its logo, which symbolizes the cultural inheritance of Shipai NSYSU.

Fourth, many researchers pointed out that Sun was the very creator of the campus, and their previous studies also showed that Sun made unique and substantive contributions to the campus. These researchers adopted numerous pieces of evidence, such as documents signed by Sun, which demonstrated that Sun not only arranged staff for the establishment and development of the campus but also solved countless specific

problems in the campus' setup and operation (Table 1). These researchers have consistently demonstrated that Sun's connection to the Shipai Campus is irreplaceable.

**Table 1.** The Connection Between The Shipai Campus And Sun

Category	Content	Source
Sun's contribution to establishing the Shipai Campus	The campus was established in Shipai in accordance with Sun's testament.	(Zheng, 2004)
	Selection of Shipai Campus site	(Huang, 2008)
	Sun conceived and constructed the university, appointed primary management staff, and required the party, the government, and military departments to provide corresponding support. He also engaged in raising funds, established basic university regulations, facilitated the arrangement of the dormitory, discussion about domestic and international academic activity including student practice, recruitment of teaching staff and students, as well as regularly conducting speeches, issuing graduation certificates, et cetera.	(Huang, 1994b) (Zheng, 2004) (Zhao & Zheng, 2008) (Liu, 2013) (Meng, 2017)

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has lauded culture as “an unparalleled recognition”. Culture is who we are and what shapes our identity. Placing culture at the heart of development policies is the only way to ensure human-centered, inclusive, and equitable development (Hosagrahar, 2023). As a church university established entirely by Americans, whose founders, chancellors, planners, and designers are all Americans, the campus plan was not just a geometric form but had its own unique cultural and ideological pursuits. For example, the Haizhu SYSU incorporates apparent American campus features. For example, a pragmatic and convenient setting is situated on a great plain site on the Pearl River in Guangzhou and a long and splendid campus central axis runs through the campus. By contrast, the Shipai campus expresses typical traditional Chinese culture and ideologies. The site in a mountainous-washy environment strictly conformed to Chinese traditional culture. To elaborate, mountains and waters symbolize people's well-being. Meanwhile, the founders, chancellors, planners, and designers are Chinese. Furthermore, all the hills and ponds on campus were named after Chinese famous mountains and lakes to inspire Chinese patriotism and self-esteem (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Content Reflecting Patriotism And Chinese Culture

Category	Content	Source
Famous historical events	The theme concerns reclaiming Chinese territories and unifying China, et cetera. Many NKU teachers and students participated in the Guangdong Revolutionary Army to fight against warlords and sacrificed in protest to refuse the concession.	(Huang, 1994b)
Selection of campus site	The first phase of the campus site was in Liu Yongfu Army base. The buildings and other landscape elements are traditional Chinese style, and the layout obeys the Chinese traditional etiquette system and ethical order.	(Zheng, 2004); (Yan & Liu, 2006); (Mao & Li, 2012); (Liu, 2018)
Name of mountains and lakes	The names signaled famous Chinese mountains and lakes that were distributed according to their relative position across China.	(Feng, 2019)
The style	Decoration details of buildings and other landscape	(Li, 2008)

and features of the built landscape	elements are traditional Chinese style and symbolize patriotism.	
Connection to social context At the time	The bell-shaped layout was meant to awaken and remind the Chinese people that China had been invaded in recent centuries.	(Yan & Liu, 2006); (Feng, 2019)

As a result, the cultural connotations of the planning ideology of the Haizhu Campus are completely different from those of the Shipai Campus. Sun's objective was to build a Chinese-style campus, so he has nothing with the Haizhu Campus' establishment and development at all.

#### *Reasons and Impacts of Renaming These Universities*

There have been two large-scale renaming activities involving NSYSU in China in recent history, both of which were government decisions. The first round of renaming activities regarding NSYSU was held to commemorate Sun in the 1920s and 1930s. Although many universities hoped to be renamed SYSU, many of them were not well-known or were not related to Sun. Against this background, the Republic of China government conducted a strict evaluation and finally decided to rename NKU as NSYSU. The second round of renaming, from NSYSU to the two universities SCAU and SCUT, as well as from Lingnan University to SYSU, was caused by the reorganization of national universities in the 1950s. Specifically, from 1949 to 1978, the PRC government gave up the European and American education models and imitated the Soviet Union education model to restructure Chinese universities.

However, the rationality of renaming needs to be analyzed. This study reckons that the change from NKU to NSYSU in 1926 was reasonable because the campus has an irreplaceable connection with Sun. However, the second round of changing NSYSU to SCAU and SCUT is irrational, because the change has destroyed the cultural inheritance of the Shipai Campus. For the same reason, it is unreasonable that the Yuexiu Campus, namely Pok Tsai Medical School, was renamed in 1931, 1986, and 2001. Sun only attended Pok Tsai Medical School for a short time from 1886 to 1887 because he was preoccupied with revolutionary activities at the moment. Comparably, he studied at the College of Medicine for Chinese, Hong Kong (current Hong Kong University) from 1887 to 1892, which was a period much longer than his study at Pok Tsai Medical School. Most importantly, he did not contribute to the establishment of it. Thus, there is no justification for renaming it to SYSU.

Naming not only creates continuity over time but is also a powerful vehicle for promoting identification with the past and retrieving memories of related events (Mandende & Cekiso, 2022). The arbitrary renaming means the loss of the original school's brand. It will not only hurt the feelings of teachers, students, and alumni but also limit the room for educational development (Fan et al., 2021). The renaming of the Shipai NSYSU to SCAU and SCUT is not as simple as merely changing some words. Instead, it has resulted in a series of serious problems. First, one of them is university identity chaos and loss of sense of belonging. After the reorganization of national universities in the 1950s, numerous students suffered from public confusion: they enrolled in NSYSU but they graduated as students from SCAU, SCUT or other universities. Thus, the public was highly confused about the university identity issue.

Another issue relates to tourism. Sun's extreme popularity attracted tens of thousands of global Sun tourists to visit the university he created in China. However, regrettably, they may face problems like visiting the wrong campus, which was founded by Americans, not Sun. They will get the wrong perceptions of the campus, in terms of its historical celebrities, building styles and features, cultural connotations, et cetera. Similarly, the renaming of the Shipai NSYSU and Canton Christian College has caused chaos and has put their heritage conservation and restoration work in a dilemma. The main reason for such a dilemma is that campus names have inalienable connections with campus sites, and the conservation of campus heritage requires objective assessments and an understanding of the specific campus setting (Dober, 2005; Ekman, 2011; Song, 2015). Therefore, the act of renaming poses serious problems, and one of them is that it

becomes more difficult and complex for the campus heritage to be certified as a national cultural relic or world heritage, such as the increased difficulty in ascertaining the authenticity of the campus heritage.

Second, the renaming of NSYSU was accompanied by the campus split and relocation of the NSYSU university. These situations have caused many unsolvable problems and even terrible results, such as landscape fragmentation and unavailability of campus spaces, which led to the formation of dangerous areas at SCUT and finally led to the traffic death incidents in 2012 and 2020 on its campus (He et al., 2022).

Third, the renaming has downgraded the education ranking of SCAU, which is seriously detrimental to the heritage conservation and restoration of SCAU due to limited education costs. Based on the managerial and organizational hierarchy of educational institutes during the Republic of China period, NSYSU belonged to the highest category, namely the national level. By contrast, nowadays SCAU only belongs to the lower category, the provincial level. To illustrate, the governmental funding and public donations to provincial-level universities are much lower than those to national-level universities in China.

Fourth, the renaming has also led to chaos in cataloging the heritage collections, severed important links, and undermined the physical integrity of ancient books, not to mention other direct losses (Huang & Guang, 2009). Many heritage experts have verified this kind of worry. For instance, Professor Ni Genjin, a famous SCAU historian with research fields like the history of agriculture, ancient books, forest, and science & technology, et cetera, pointed out that the name of the NSYSU campus is considered an important cultural property, and cannot be changed arbitrarily (Ni, 2009). He emphasized that after the renaming of Shipai NSYSU, the first half of volumes of many ancient books originally stored in NSYSU are often collected in SCAU, while the second half of volumes are stored in SYSU, making it very difficult to manage the heritage of the book.

Fifth, the renaming movement at universities has increased per capita spending on education (Lyu, 2016), damaged the intangible property of the Shipai Campus, and also caused the undignified scramble for the school name (because the name has much brand value) and other campus resources. A case in point is that SCAU and SCUT tried to occupy the stone archway of Shipai NSYSU.

Because the renaming of the Shipai NSYSU has seriously damaged the brand value of the school name, Taiwan NSYSU is trying to continue the historical life of the Shipai NSYSU and realize its cultural sustainability. This situation has resulted in significant losses of intangible property of the school name for SCAU and SCUT. Similarly, Hong Kong also established a university called Lingnan University, which caused the original and authentic Lingnan University, namely the current SYSU, to suffer great losses in its school name brand. Hypothetically, the old NSYSU and Lingnan University alumni in Guangzhou feel spiritual resonance and a sense of belonging with Taiwan NSYSU and Lingnan University in Hong Kong because the two universities have expressed respect for their mother schools and helped them build the carrier for their memories of student hood. As a result, these alumni prefer to donate to or invest in Taiwan NSYSU and Lingnan University in Hong Kong rather than SYSU, SCAU, and SCUT in Guangzhou.

## Discussion

### *Rightfulness of Renaming These Universities*

Today, SCAU, SCUT, and SYSU are struggling due to fairly limited campus land areas, and they have to establish new campuses in other places, even other cities. However, a patchwork of these loosely connected campuses is extremely difficult to manage, with lots of queries arising: why did not we carefully nurse the original vast campus? Where is the rightfulness for these new campuses to continue to adopt the names SCAU, SCUT, and SYSU? Can we name these campuses according to their respective regionals or based on another well-known Chinese university, such as Tsinghua University? Then that will be easier to identify or have a higher reputation. Therefore, we need to critically think about the rightfulness and evaluate the impact of renaming before taking action. In this regard, Hohai Engineering College has realized the irrationality and set a good example. The college's original name is Hohai University, which was founded in 1915 as the first institution of higher education to cultivate water conservancy talents in China. In 1952,



it was renamed East China Water Conservancy College during the reorganization of Chinese national universities. On November 20, 1985, its original name was restored, and Deng Xiaoping, the famous Chinese leader and “chief architect of reform and opening up”, inscribed the recovered school name “Hohai University” in his handwriting (Lin, 1986).

### *Significance and Power of Sun’s Name*

Sun is one of the most influential Chinese thinkers, the precursor of modern democracy, and the first president of China. He was honored as the founding father in Taiwan, China as well as the father of modern China in the mainland. His proverb “Revive China” has been inherited as the most powerful slogan in China from the Republic of China period until today. All over the world, wherever Chinese live, there are often memorial facilities, such as halls, statues, or archways, inscribed with his most celebrated dictum: “The world belongs to the public”. Thus, his name carries much weight, and it is not only just a name but has also become the moral benchmark for the Chinese. In China, Sun is the only person after whom a top Chinese university is named. Thus, the power of his name is extremely strong.

### *Shipai Campus as Sun’s Education Culmination*

The Shipai Campus epitomizes the spirit of Sun: to establish a prestigious and leading university, and it is the culmination of his entire educational career. According to his instructions, the Shipai campus was planned and constructed as the finest university in China at that time. Since its inception, Sun had high expectations for this campus, i.e., to establish a supreme institution of learning for the nation, and to save China and the nation (Huang, 1994a; Li & Yuan, 2006). It is the first modern university planned and designed by the Chinese, and also the most outstanding representation of universities that expressed ancient classic Chinese culture. In addition, the campus has been one of the most significant achievements throughout the architectural history of the university in the world. In response to Sun’s call, the most well-known Chinese architects and craftsmen at that moment were involved in the planning, design, and construction of the campus. Under extremely poor and difficult conditions, relying on donations from all walks of life, the Chinese successfully designed and built the world’s top first-class universities completely on their own from the 1920s to the 1930s. Now, the campus is a source of inspiration and enlightenment for other university constructors in the world. The Shipai campus territory is bigger than the Higher Education Mega Center (Guangzhou University Town) today. Thus, Sun’s vision is great and strategic, evidenced by the fact that the development of universities required vast areas of land a century ago (He et al., 2022; Liu, 2018; Luo, 2017; Zhao, 2014). Shipai NSYSU not only cultivated Chinese students but also successfully cultivated many students in other Asian countries (Cui, 2011). Hence, the value of the campus is remarkable and unique, and the sole university deserves his name.

### *Heritage Conservation and Restoration Solutions for SCAU and SCUT*

For one thing, due to the remarkable significance and value of the Shipai Campus, SCAU and SCUT should possess what they deserve. Sun’s educational will should be inherited, wholeheartedly examine the original campus thoroughly, and find ways to make the most of it. To properly safeguard the Campus’s heritage, a clear historical clue about its past must be provided to the public, and this clue is just its name. For another, as the past is the mirror for the future, the future can be foreseen and planned by learning about the past. Through proper conservation and restoration of SCAU and SCUT heritage, not only can Sun’s contributions be commemorated to establishing the campus but also the public’s awareness regarding ancient Chinese culture can be enhanced, boosting Chinese self-esteem and patriotism. Therefore, SCAU and SCUT should restore their original name to SYSU. The original name word “national” can be removed considering it a redundancy. For other parts, the current SYSU’s Chinese name is suggested as Lingnan University, meanwhile for the old habit and convenience for academics, remain Canton Christian College for its English name (Lingnan University, 1920). Regarding other current SYSU campuses, considering they have less or no connections with Sun at all, their names can be renamed according to their respective regional positions. These actions aim to restore the original historical scenario to the public to the greatest extent and promote heritage education regarding NSYSU and Lingnan University. These proposed solutions might not be the best, but our key point is coming back in the right direction, namely, history

must be respected and facts must be recognized. Only from this point, can the campus heritage be preserved and conserved well. Furthermore, through this study, stepping stones for future researchers can be laid, and they may have better solutions based on the findings and discussions of this study.

Based on the aforesaid reasons, names are intangible assets of the universities. As a result of renaming, SCAU and SCUT have encountered great losses in the aspect of intangible assets. In terms of financial support, having Sun's name is very conducive to winning government funding and public donations. Without Sun's name, the two universities are suffering great economic loss now. Considering Sun was the first president of modern China and the campus is a university masterpiece of design and construction, raising heritage conservation and restoration to the highest level should be considered, such as applying for the UNESCO World University Heritage. This will upgrade the current city-level heritage of the campus to international heritage, which will greatly improve the conservation and restoration of the campus. A case in point is the University of Virginia, which was also created by President, Thomas Jefferson. Sun and Jefferson have lots of similarities: both of them are outstanding idealists, with tremendous enthusiasm for education and commitment to genuine service for the people of their respective countries. Another similarity is that the Shipai NSYSU was also a world-famous university like the University of Virginia.

#### *Introducing laws for expert evaluation and examination before renaming*

Since 1978, the Chinese government has conducted the “Reform and Open” policy and adopted the practice of emulating European and American educational success. Some of the universities that were disassembled during the 1952 reorganization were amalgamated again. Hence, the renaming of the university must be very cautious and prudent. The renaming of universities should be evaluated before implementation, and the evaluation of intangible assets of the university's names should be institutionalized and legalized so that the university name assets will not be lost (Cao, 1996). To ensure the sustainability and stability of intangible property of campus name brands, we must pass and enforce related laws to clarify the process and provisions for renaming and invite heritage experts to evaluate and approve all the renaming of universities, especially for those well-known universities.

## **Conclusion**

This study explored the significant cultural value embedded in university names, focusing on the heritage conservation and restoration of SCAU and SCUT about their historical connection with Sun Yat-sen. The research problem addressed was the issue of arbitrary renaming of universities, which threatens the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. Using the case of NSYSU's Shipai Campus, the study examined the historical ties of these institutions to Sun and proposed solutions for preserving this legacy through careful name conservation.

The findings confirmed that the Shipai Campus has an inseparable connection to Sun Yat-sen, both in terms of its physical heritage and cultural significance. The discussion highlighted the detrimental impact of renaming, such as loss of historical identity and confusion in public perception. By comparing various campuses and their historical attributions, the study underscored the importance of retaining original university names to ensure cultural continuity. The recommendations emphasize the value of name restoration to honor Sun Yat-sen's educational vision and protect the legacy of the Shipai Campus.

Despite its contributions, this research has limitations. The focus on a single case study may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should expand on this work by conducting comparative studies across different regions or institutions with similar heritage concerns. Furthermore, there is a need for more interdisciplinary approaches combining heritage conservation with legal frameworks to create robust policies for university name protection.

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