

Shijun Ma (1915–91)

We deeply mourn the death of Professor Shijun Ma, aged 75, who died on 30 May 1991 in a terrible car accident in Fengyun County of Hebei Province, North China, on his way back to Beijing after concluding the Exchange Experience Conference of Ecological Construction in China. A member of Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland's World Commission on Environment & Development, and latterly Advisory Editor of this Journal primarily concerned with China, he was born on 5 December 1915 in Ziyang (now Yanzhou) County. When he was a student in Yanzhou and Jinan, Shandong Province, he used the name Yiting Ma, and was expelled twice because he took part in anti-Japanese activities. He transferred to Beiping (now Beijing), using the name Shijun Ma (which in Chinese means the finest horse), to finish his high-school education.

After obtaining a BS from the Department of Biology, College of Agriculture, University of Beijing, Shijun Ma worked on pest control at the Shandong Province Tobacco Improvement Field, the Hubei Province Agriculture Improvement Institute, and the Shanghai China Tobacco Company. In 1948 he went to America and studied insect ecology at the University of Utah, being awarded the MS degree in 1949. In that year he transferred to the University of Minnesota to work towards a PhD degree and at the same time took part in research on the ecology and control of the Maize-snout Moth's Larva (*Ostrinia nubilalis*), which was sponsored by the US Department of Agriculture. On the basis of this work he was elected to the Sigma Xi Scientific Honor Society and awarded its golden key.

Having obtained the PhD, Shijun Ma in 1951 left America to attend the International Insect Conference in Holland, after which he visited Belgium, France, and Great Britain, subsequently crossing the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean before arriving in Hong Kong, and thus realizing his dream of returning to his motherland.

Since 1952, Shijun Ma had been Associate Professor and subsequently full Professor in the Institute of Entomology, Academia Sinica (being the first Head of a Department of Insect Ecology in China). He was also Research Professor of the Institute of Zoology, Academia Sinica, Research Professor and Director of the Northwest China Institute of Plateau Biology, Academia Sinica, Chairman of the Academia Degree Committee, and Deputy Director of the Institute of Zoology, Academia Sinica. He was also the Founder-President of the Chinese Society of Ecology, the Founder-Honorary Director of the Ecology and Environment Research Centre, Academia Sinica, and Founder and Editor of *Ecologica Sinica* (the Journal of Ecology, China).

Professor Shijun Ma, with his more than 40 years' experience in ecological and environmental research and education, contributed remarkably to the development of ecology and environmental science in China, and thus had a significant impact in fostering public awareness of ecological and environmental issues linked with economic development. He considered due awareness of ecology by the public to be more important than anything else. 'It is not only the science and technology,' he used to say, 'but also the consciousness of ecology by the public, which can relieve the ecological crisis in the country.' So he shouldered the heavy responsibilities of popularizing the knowledge of ecology, and gained fruitful achievements in this respect and that of influencing decision-makers with the ecological point of view.



FIG. 1. Shijun Ma (1915–91).

Latterly, such phrases as 'ecological balance' and 'continued development' have become popular in China, which success is due to Professor Shijun Ma, who travelled extensively in remote parts of the country, from village to village and from mountain to plain, pressing such causes. The emergence of the ecological villages, ecological towns, ecological counties, and ecological cities — especially the models of Ecological Agricultural Projects — lays the groundwork for the continued development of agriculture and the implementation of ecological agriculture in China.

During his lifetime Professor Shijun Ma published some 150 papers and 5 scientific books through which he promoted such themes as 'Combine improvement with control to erase the plague of locusts', 'The growth of population in changeable habitats', 'The space, number, time-structure, and dynamics, of insect population', 'Population self-control', 'Edge ecology', etc. He creatively applied ecological laws to the conservation of plants and environment, and proposed that both the ecological and economic results should be the index for every industrial and agricultural, as well as urban, development. He led the research on insect ecology and environmental science in China, for which he was awarded the Special Prize of China Science Conference 1978, the Second Prize of State Nature Science, the Third Prize of the State Science and Technology Progress, and the First Prize of Science and Technology Progress, amongst others. His death is a grievous and indeed irreparable loss — not only to science and technology but also of a fine teacher and helpful friend.

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