

3 Suzhou Pingjiang Historic Block 苏州平江历史街区

“A historic block should not be used to earn money, but mainly to pass on history and culture. It may become a venue for exhibitions but should not be approached as a commercial street. ... Since it [Pingjiang Road] is a Historically and Culturally Famous Street, it should be related to history and culture, and it should not entirely serve the tourists. It is supposed to serve the city and the transmission of urban culture.”¹

- Ruan Yisan 阮仪三

The first case study of this project, Pingjiang Historic Block, is located in the north-eastern part of Suzhou’s historic city and covers an area of 116.5 ha with about 28,000 inhabitants.² Suzhou is situated about 85 km west of Shanghai to the east of Lake Tai 太湖, China’s third biggest freshwater lake. The historic city of Suzhou is an ancient capital city and was built for the state of Wu 吴 during the Eastern Zhou period in 514 BC.³ The strategic location of the city offered protection through the Yangzi River in the north, Lake Tai in the southwest and the sea in the east.⁴ Moreover, the region has a fertile soil and rich sources of water as well as a humid climate which is suitable for rice cultivation and established Suzhou as a major supplier of agricultural products in imperial China.⁵ These natural conditions including its great network of waterways fostered the city’s development into an

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- 1 Interview with Ruan Yisan, Shanghai, May 5, 2016. Translated by this author.
 - 2 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三; Li, Zhen 李滨; Lin, Lin 林林 (2010): *Jiangnan guzhen lishi jianzhu yu lishi huanjing de baohu, The Work of Protection for Historical Buildings and Environment of Ancient Towns in Jiangnan 江南古镇历史建筑与历史环境的保护*, p. 97.
 - 3 Carroll, Peter J. (2006): *Between Heaven and Modernity: Reconstructing Suzhou, 1895–1937*, p. 3.
 - 4 Xu, Yinong (2000): *The Chinese city in space and time: the development of urban form in Suzhou*, p. 10.
 - 5 Carroll, Peter J. (2006): *Between Heaven and Modernity: Reconstructing Suzhou, 1895–1937*, p. 3.

interregional economic and transportation center during the Song dynasty (960–1279) due to surplus production and the realization of water conservation projects.⁶

The prominent reputation of Suzhou as an advanced urban center is illustrated by a well-known proverb originating from this period: “Above in Heaven there is the celestial palace, below on Earth there are Suzhou and Hangzhou” (Tian-shang tiantang, dixia Su-Hang 天上天堂，地下苏杭).⁷ While the transfer of the capital and thereby the political center to Northern China in the Yuan dynasty (1260–1368) led to stagnation in the Hangzhou region, Suzhou’s economy prospered as a result of supplying the North with agricultural products via the Grand Canal.⁸ The region experienced further growth with the development of its textile industry as well as luxury goods production. By the late Ming dynasty (1368–1644), Suzhou had become the leading economic and most urbanized center in the region and upheld its status as prominent metropolis until the 1860s when it suffered great losses from the Taiping Rebellion and was surpassed by Shanghai.⁹

Besides its economic prosperity, Suzhou further became a cultural center. With the migration of Northern Chinese to the southern economic center, Confucian values were introduced and gradually established in different realms of the city’s social life.¹⁰ One aspect where the strong impact of Confucian ideology on the area becomes apparent is the promotion of education and academic success as a means to reach higher social status.¹¹ During the Qing period (1644–1911), Jiangsu province of which Suzhou was a leading prefecture along with Zhejiang province in the Jiangnan region had the greatest share of successful imperial examination candidates in overall China.¹²

Together with Confucian values, culture was established in the form of literature and arts. Since the Yuan dynasty, painting and related handicrafts prospered in the city and in the Ming dynasty, Suzhou had become a center for book-collecting and quality printing which attracted well-known scholar-bibliophiles.¹³ Moreover, in addition to property, the local wealthy invested in cultural attainments which fostered the city’s status as “consumption center” by the late imperial

6 Xu, Yinong (2000): *The Chinese city in space and time: the development of urban form in Suzhou*, p. 15.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., p. 16.

9 Carroll, Peter J. (2006): *Between Heaven and Modernity: Reconstructing Suzhou, 1895–1937*, pp. 7–8.

10 Xu, Yinong (2000): *The Chinese city in space and time: the development of urban form in Suzhou*, pp. 20–21.

11 Ibid., p. 21.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., p. 22.

period.¹⁴ The extravagant lifestyle of its residents is reflected in the great number of private gardens, which Clunas sees as a form of conspicuous consumption, as well as in an increasing production and distribution of luxury goods.¹⁵

The favorable conditions of Suzhou and its proximity to the capital after the same had been moved to Hangzhou in the Southern Song dynasty attracted members of the local gentry. By the end of the imperial period, this gentry not only comprised officials but also literati painters and poets as well as wealthy merchants which were engaged in commercial activities such as silk trade, shipping or agricultural landholding.¹⁶ The social composition of this gentry class can be well illustrated by example of the Pan family clans in the Pingjiang Historic Block. By the end of the Qing dynasty, two influential Pan family clans lived separately on both sides of the block, the “Fu Pan” 富潘 (Wealthy Pan) in the eastern and the “Gui Pan” 贵潘 (Noble Pan) in the western half.

Pan Linzhao 潘麟兆 started his career as a merchant during the reign of the Kangxi Emperor (1661–1722) and became wealthy through business, therefore later being honored as “Wealthy Pan”. Important businesses by the Wealthy Pan family comprise hotels, pastry shops and a bank in Shanghai.¹⁷ The other influential Pan family clan in the Pingjiang Historic Block succeeded by means of an official career. Pan Shi'en 潘世恩, also named “Noble Pan”, became “Number One Scholar” in the palace examinations (*zhuangyuan* 状元) in 1793 and thereafter served as official under four consecutive emperors.¹⁸ Later, his sons and grandson Pan Zuyin 潘祖荫 pursued official careers as well and achieved high ranks.¹⁹

Other examples for well-known figures who lived in the block are physicians such as Ai Buchan 艾步蟾 (1854–1933), who was honored for his skills in healing typhoid fevers,²⁰ or Fang Jiamo 方嘉谟 (n.d.), an established physician in Western medicine. Guo Shaoyu 郭绍虞 (1893–1984) was a linguist and literary scholar who

14 Xu, Yinong (2000): *The Chinese city in space and time: the development of urban form in Suzhou*, pp. 21–22.

15 Clunas, Craig (1996): *Fruitful Sites: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China*, p. 101. Xu, Yinong (2000): *The Chinese city in space and time: the development of urban form in Suzhou*, p. 23.

16 Carroll, Peter J. (2006): *Between Heaven and Modernity: Reconstructing Suzhou, 1895–1937*, p. 3.

17 “Pingjiang Lu shang de ‘Gui Pan’ yu ‘Fu Pan’” (2012) 平江路上的“贵潘”与“富潘” [The “Noble Pan” and the “Wealthy Pan” on Pingjiang Road], pp. 54–55.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志 [Pingjiang District Gazetteer], p. 251.

became one of the founders of the Literary Research Association 文学研究会,²¹ China's largest literary society of the 1920s.²² But there were also local magnates such as Pang Laichen 庞莱臣 (1864–1949), who was known as “Number One Collector” of the Jiangnan region and famous for his collection of paintings. He possessed rice, sauce, and liquor businesses in Suzhou and a pharmacy for Chinese medicine as well as a pawnshop and other businesses.²³

3.1 Cultural Significance

3.1.1 Historic and Cultural Block

Chapter two of this study has shown that the basic characteristics of historic and cultural blocks are their traditional structure and historic townscape. The evaluation of the historical and cultural values of the Pingjiang Historic Block in its conservation plan confirms the importance of these criteria for the overall significance of the block and its integrity:

平江历史文化街区是苏州古城内迄今保存最为完整、最具规模的历史地段，集中体现了苏州古城的城市特色与价值，堪称苏州古城的缩影。街区至今保持着水陆结合、河街平行的双棋盘城市格局，是古代城市规划与建设的杰出典范。²⁴

“Pingjiang Historic and Cultural Block is the historical area in the ancient city of Suzhou which has been preserved so far with the highest integrity and the greatest scale. [It] corporately reflects the urban characteristics and values of Suzhou ancient city and can be rated as an epitome of the same. Until today, the block maintained its “double chessboard-urban structure”, combining water and land, and with the streets and rivers running parallel to each other. [It] is an outstanding example of ancient city planning and construction.”

21 Shen, Qingnian 沈庆年 (ed., 2012): *Gucheng yizhu: Suzhou kongbao jianzhu tanyou* 古城遗珠：苏州控保建筑探幽 [Lost Pearls of the Ancient City: A Study of Controlled Protected Buildings in Suzhou], p. 13.

22 Hockx, Michel (1998): “The Literary Association (Wenxue yanjiu hui, 1920–1947) and the Literary Field of Early Republican China”, p. 49.

23 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 246.

24 PBCP (2004), p. 5.

Firstly, the evaluation highlights the representativeness of the Pingjiang Historic Block as “epitome” of the urban characteristics and values of the overall ancient city. This representativeness is not only manifested in tangible built heritage but is further reflected in naming. The toponym “Pingjiang” 平江, after which the historic and cultural block is named, has a long historical relation with Suzhou. It first emerged at the end of the Northern Song dynasty, when Suzhou region was raised to the status of prefecture and renamed “Pingjiang Fu” (平江府 “Pingjiang Prefecture”²⁵) in 1113.²⁶

This administrative division of the region was continuously maintained, throughout the Yuan dynasty, only with its name changed to “Pingjiang Lu”²⁷ (平江路 “Pingjiang Prefecture”). During this period from the Song to the Yuan dynasty, the present-day City of Suzhou functioned as political center of this administrative area and therefore also became known as “City of Pingjiang” (Pingjiang Cheng 平江城).²⁸ Only when the first emperor of the Ming dynasty Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 conquered the territory was the name reversed into Suzhou Prefecture 苏州府.²⁹

In 1955, “Pingjiang” was established as designation for an administrative district in the north-eastern part of Suzhou whose boundaries exceeded those of the present-day Pingjiang Historic Block.³⁰ At present, there is no administrative district named “Pingjiang” as the former Pingjiang District 平江区 was merged with two other districts to Gusu District 姑苏区 in 2012.³¹ Nevertheless, the main north-south thoroughfare of the Pingjiang Historic Block which traverses it in its center, Pingjiang Road 平江路, and the adjacent Pingjiang River 平江河 still reflect this historical period in their names.

25 “Pingjiang Prefecture” 平江府 in the Ming period comprised the southeastern part of Jiangsu province with present-day cities Taicang 太仓, Changshu 常熟, Kunshan 昆山, Wujiang 吴江 and others as well as Jiading 嘉定 district of present-day Shanghai. See: Xu, Yinong (2000): *The Chinese city in space and time: the development of urban form in Suzhou*, p. 17.

26 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路 [Pingjiang Road], p. 5.

27 “Pingjiang Lu” 平江路 here refers not to the street, but to its division into a *lu*-level administration area during the Yuan dynasty.

28 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路, p. 5.

29 Ibid.

30 Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People’s Republic of China 中华人民共和国民政部 (2012): *Jiangsu sheng er ling yi er nian xianji yi shang xingzheng quhua biangeng qingkuang* 江苏省二〇一二年县级以上行政区划变更情况 [Changes in administrative divisions above county level in Jiangsu province, 2012], Online.

31 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, Online.

Urban Structure and Environmental Elements

The earliest-known accurate map of Suzhou equally dates back to the period when it carried the name “Pingjiang”. Related to its function as a place name, “Pingjiang” was chosen as title of the often referred to “Map of Pingjiang [Prefecture]” (Pingjiang Tu 平江图). It was carved on a stele in 1229 under prefect Li Shoupeng 李寿朋³² and is preserved in the Museum of Engraved Stone Tablets in Suzhou 苏州碑刻博物馆. The stele provides material evidence and is a credible information source of the city layout at the time of the Southern Song dynasty. Among others, it depicts the characteristic structure of the Pingjiang Historic Block and Pingjiang Road as a major north-south thoroughfare in the eastern part of the city (see fig. 3-21). Because the major structural elements of the block as shown in the map have remained intact over the course of history (e.g. streets and lanes with their respective names, water canals or bridges), it is regarded as representative and very “authentic” part of the ancient city.

The evaluation further refers to the “double chessboard-urban structure” of the block with streets and water canals running parallel to each other. This structure is characteristic for settlements in the Jiangnan region and carries significance as it illustrates the way the city adapted to its physical environment as well as its technological achievement in canal construction. Moreover, Knapp found different water town settlement patterns, such as dwelling – road – canal – dwelling, dwelling – road – canal or dwelling – arcade – canal – arcade – dwelling.³³ These patterns have scientific value as they inform on settlement and construction habits in the Jiangnan region during imperial times.

Equally, the **streets and lanes** in the Pingjiang Historic Block are significant for their names which are related to intangible aspects of local cultural heritage. According to the *Pingjiang Gazetteer* (Pingjiang Qu zhi 平江区志), street and lane names mainly derive from renowned personalities (*mingren* 名人), important events (*mingshi* 名事) or carry literary allusions (*chudian* 出典).³⁴ They can also relate to their historical environment and environmental elements which have been defined as components of a historic and cultural block’s historic townscape.

From Pingjiang Road, the main north-south axis, smaller east-west branch lanes divert to both of its sides and lead into the block. One example in which the lane name derives from its historical environment is Dingxiang Lane 丁香巷. Here, the name refers to the lilac trees (*dingxiang shu* 丁香树) which were part of the historic

32 Xie, Jing; Heath, Tim (2018): *Heritage-led Urban Regeneration in China*, p. 85.

33 Knapp, Ronald G. (2000): *China’s Old Dwellings*, p. 254.

34 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 103.

“lanescape”.³⁵ Another example is the historic name of Pingjiang Road: “Neighborhood of the 10 wells” (Shiquan li 十泉里). This name derived from the number of wells located at the road.³⁶ While only some of the originally ten wells have been preserved, this historical information is passed on through the lane name.

Other environmental elements which were used for lane names are bridges and memorial archways. The branch lanes Da Xinqiao Lane 大新桥巷 (“Great New Bridge Lane”) and Xiao Xinqiao Lane 小新桥巷 (“Small New Bridge Lane”) have been named after a bridge and emerged from originally one lane (Xinqiao Lane 新桥巷, “New Bridge Lane”), which was divided into two sections by a north-south street.³⁷ The branch lanes north of these two lanes have simultaneously been divided into Da Liuzhi Lane 大柳枝巷 (“Great Liuzhi Lane”) and Xiao Liuzhi Lane 小柳枝巷 (“Small Liuzhi Lane”) with their names referring to a memorial archway which had been set up for a chaste widow with family name Liu 柳.³⁸

Moreover, there are branch lanes which are named after renowned personalities such as in the case of Daru Lane 大儒巷. According to the *Pingjiang Gazetteer*, renowned scholar Wang Jingchen 王敬臣 (1513–1595) lived in this lane during the Ming dynasty. He was recommended to study at the Imperial College but refused and opened a school which brought him a great number of followers.³⁹ Another lane was named Hu Xiangshi Lane 胡厢使巷 after an official named Hu whereby *xiangshi* refers to an official rank in the Song dynasty.⁴⁰ The lane further has a local name called Hu Xiangsi Lane 胡相思巷 which is related to a legend. According to this legend, a wealthy household with family name Gui 归 lived in this lane. Every day, a young man would deliver fresh food to their mansion and gradually become acquainted with the family’s young daughter. The daughter falls in love with the young man, but her father forbids her to meet him due to his low social status. She eventually becomes lovesick (*xiangsi* 相思病) and drowns herself in a well.⁴¹

Finally, streets and lanes may carry literary allusions. One example in the Pingjiang Historic Block which is assumed to have been selected in this manner is Lujia Lane 茭葭巷. Originally, this lane was named Lu Family Lane 陆家巷 after

35 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 109.

36 Ibid., p. 105.

37 Ibid., p. 110.

38 Ibid., pp. 109–110.

39 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路, p. 50.

40 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 116.

41 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路, pp. 90–92.

an influential family of the Lu 陆 clan, which had its residence there.⁴² Later, the name was changed to its present designation, which is a homonym to the initial name. Supposedly, the name has been changed to appear more sophisticated in relation to a verse from the “Book of Songs” (*shijing* 诗经).⁴³ This passage reads “The reeds and rushes are deeply green, and the white dew is turned into hoarfrost”⁴⁴ (*jian jia cangcang, bai lu wei shuang* 蒹葭苍苍，白露为霜). The character *jian* 蒹 in this passage, meaning “reed”, has been replaced by the character *lu* 葭 which is homophone to the family name Lu and equally denotes a type of grass (*Arthraxon ciliare*).

During the Cultural Revolution the names of streets and lanes in the Pingjiang district have been changed but were gradually restored after 1980.⁴⁵ This restoration of street names shows their significance as intangible cultural heritage. Furthermore, the conservation plan includes these historic street names as intangible heritage and determines that they shall be preserved.⁴⁶

As major structural element of the block, the preserved street and canal network provides the block with authenticity in form and design. Most of the streets and canals were laid out in line with the city walls.⁴⁷ While there are accounts from the Eastern Han period that the Wu capital had water gates and an inner river, the basic structure of waterways had become fixed by the late Tang dynasty (618–907).⁴⁸ The water canals provided a number of functional benefits for the city which is not limited to daily use and transportation but also includes fire fighting and prevention of flooding as well as the beautification of the townscape.⁴⁹

The latter made the townscape of Suzhou a popular theme in many Tang poems such as the following by Bai Juyi 白居易 as prefect of Suzhou (825–826):⁵⁰

“The city walls of Helü are emerald-green spread with autumn plants,
The Raven Bridge is red bearing the glow of the setting sun.

42 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 119.

43 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路, p. 74.

44 Translated after: Legge, James (1972): *The She jing or the Book of poetry*, p. 195.

45 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 103.

46 PBCP (2004), p. 14.

47 Xu, Yinong (2000): *The Chinese city in space and time: the development of urban form in Suzhou*, p. 129.

48 *Ibid.*, pp. 129–130.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 129.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

In front of storied buildings everywhere waft the melodies of flutes,
And by the door of every house are moored ships and boats.”⁵¹

The poem refers to the image of ships and boats tied to the docks and thereby the close relation between houses and canals. It further addresses other structural and environmental elements of the city, such as city walls, a bridge and buildings/houses. The description of these elements as characteristic components of the city and its beautiful townscape marks them as culturally significant.

In terms of its **historic townscape**, the conservation plan identifies the Pingjiang Historic Block as the part of the ancient city with the highest integrity. This judgement is not only based on streets and canals but also its great number of environmental elements:

平江历史文化街区整体历史风貌完整，具有一定规模。城河、城墙、河道、桥梁、街巷、民居、园林、会馆、寺观、古井、古树、牌坊等历史文化遗存类型丰富且为数众多，构成历史风貌的文化遗存和环境要素具有较高的历史原真性。⁵²

“The overall historic townscape of the Pingjiang Historic and Cultural Block is intact and has a certain scale. There is a great variety and number of historical and cultural remains, such as the city moat, city wall, water canals, bridges, streets and lanes, dwelling houses, gardens, guild halls, Buddhist and Taoist temples, ancient wells, ancient trees, memorial archways, etc. The cultural remains and environmental elements which constitute the historic townscape have a comparatively high historical authenticity.”

Primarily, the **city moat and city wall** are named as environmental elements which provide cultural significance. The section of the wall which has been preserved in the Pingjiang Historic Block is located at its eastern periphery (see appendix A.3) and features one of Suzhou’s historic city gates, Xiang Gate (Xiangmen 相门). Following Xu, city walls in China not only had a protective function but also symbolic value. As governmental seat of a region, the walls of a city were symbolic for the presence of government and social order.⁵³ Furthermore, the Chinese character *cheng* 城 carries both meanings, “wall” as well as “walled city”, which expresses

51 Peng, Dingqiu 彭定求 (compiled, 1960): *Quan Tang shi* 全唐诗 [Complete Anthology of Tang Poems], p. 21; cited in: Xu, Yinong (2000): *The Chinese city in space and time: the development of urban form in Suzhou*, p. 130.

52 PBCP (2004), p. 5.

53 Xu, Yinong (2000): *The Chinese city in space and time: the development of urban form in Suzhou*, p. 97.

their conceptual relation.⁵⁴ The remains of Suzhou's city wall therefore symbolize its former status as a capital city.

Another type of built structure listed in the conservation plan are **ancient bridges**. They carry historical as well as artistic and scientific value related to their architectural style and building materials and constitute a characteristic feature of a city's townscape. Ancient bridges can further be significant for stone engravings as well as ornamentation. There have been documented about 140 bridges on the Map of Pingjiang [Prefecture] in the Pingjiang district.⁵⁵ While many arch bridges were transformed into girder bridges in the Republican period (1912–1949) and many demolished after 1949, they have been reconstructed or rebuilt as arch bridges from 1980 in the course of tourism development.⁵⁶

An important feature of bridges are their names which were usually engraved in a central position on a bridge's arch. The sources of bridge names are similar to those of streets and lanes, e.g. many were named after past events in order to commemorate them. A well-known example from the Pingjiang Historic Block is Xuegao Bridge 雪糕桥, which crosses the Pingjiang River and has already been marked on the Map of Pingjiang [Prefecture]. The origin of the bridge's name has been recorded as deriving from the filial act of a son named Zhang who showed respect to his parents by turning snow into cake.⁵⁷

According to this legend, this son had an ailing mother who wished to eat cake. Because the family had run out of grain, he was unable to fulfill her wish. However, when he saw the snow piling up on the railing of the bridge, he got the idea to form snow into the shape of a cake. After his mother had eaten the "snow cake", she recovered.⁵⁸ The honorable deeds of the son are exemplary for the Chinese notion of filial piety (*xiao* 孝) and the value system of society during the imperial period. The bridge as tangible heritage therefore carries intangible heritage in terms of cultural value.

Other environmental elements in the block are **historic wells and trees**. While they have a high historical value, wells can also carry cultural value related to the background of their construction. For example, in addition to official wells (*guan-jing* 官井) there were wells donated by Buddhists. The well can therefore be related to Buddhism as in the case of Qianfo Well (千佛井, "Thousand-Buddha Well")

54 Xu, Yinong (2000): *The Chinese city in space and time: the development of urban form in Suzhou*, p. 124.

55 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 150.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid., p. 159.

58 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路, pp. 108–109.

in the Pingjiang district, which is recorded as having a great number of Buddhist images engraved and being ascribed the ability to cure diseases.⁵⁹

The names of the wells further can express common wishes such as Fushou Well (福寿泉, “Well of Good Fortune and Longevity”) or traditional virtues as in Rende Well (仁德泉, “Well of Benevolence and Virtue”). Another example in the block is Liuyun Public Well (Liuyun yijing 留韵义井, “Public Well of Lingering Charm”), which was constructed with funds donated by Shen Xingshu 沈惺叔 (n.d.), the owner of a private bank. In gratitude for a son born to him at old age, he donated 18 wells to the City of Suzhou.⁶⁰ On the well preserved in the Pingjiang Historic Block are his name and the year of construction engraved.⁶¹

Similarly, trees are significant for their old age. The preserved trees in public open spaces as well as the courtyards of private houses are often more than a hundred years old. For example, in the course of the Third National Cultural Relics Survey, a lacebark pine (*baipi song* 白皮松) of about 130 years was found in an inner courtyard of Ai Buchan’s 艾步蟾 former residence.⁶² Such trees have historical value as they are decisive elements which constitute the character of a residence or an urban district and they generate continuity in a changing environment.

The Map of Pingjiang [Prefecture] further shows a great number of **memorial archways** in the city as well as the Pingjiang Historic Block. According to Xu, these archways emerged from the gateways to residential wards and only developed into individual structures with the gradual relaxation of the ward system in the Southern Song dynasty.⁶³ In the Tang period, the city had been structured in sixty residential walled wards (*fang* 坊) under strict government control, each with a main gate, which featured a horizontal stone slab engraved with the name of the ward.⁶⁴ Originally, these names were bestowed by the government to honor individuals or families for commendable deeds.⁶⁵ With the replacement of residential

59 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 262.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 Suzhou Administration of Cultural Heritage 苏州市文物局 (ed., 2012): *Suiyue jiyi — mingcheng guibao: Suzhou Shi di san ci quanguo wenwu pucha xin faxian xuanbian* 岁月记忆·名城瑰宝: 苏州市第三次全国文物普查新发现选编 [Memories of years ago — Rarities of a famous city: Collection of selected new discoveries from Suzhou’s Third National Cultural Relics Survey], p. 44.

63 Xu, Yinong (2000): *The Chinese city in space and time: the development of urban form in Suzhou*, p. 134.

64 Ibid., p. 131.

65 Ibid., p. 134.

wards by streets and lanes, this tradition was carried on with gateways no longer bound to wards but transformed into individual memorial archways.⁶⁶

Until now, there have been found four preserved memorial archways in the Pingjiang Historic Block. One archway in Hu Xiangshi Lane was erected in commemoration of a filial wife named Gao 高 and another one in Xiao Liuzhi Lane for a chaste widow with family name Fang 方 (see fig. 3-1).⁶⁷ A third one with ornamental patterns was built into a dwelling house of Huntang Lane 混堂巷 and is only partly visible (see fig. 3-2).⁶⁸



Figure 3-1. Xiao Liuzhi Lane Memorial Archway.



Figure 3-2. Huntang Lane Memorial Archway.

Source: author's photos, 2018.

The last archway was originally built for the Wang 汪 family and has only been discovered during the Pingjiang Historic Block Conservation and Improvement Project in 2002 as it had later been completely built into a dwelling house as well.⁶⁹

66 Xu, Yinong (2000): *The Chinese city in space and time: the development of urban form in Suzhou*, p. 134.

67 Gu, Xiumei 顾秀梅; Hu, Jinhua 胡金华 (2015): *Suzhou Pingjiang lishi wenhua jie-qu guanli he fazhan yanjiu* 苏州平江历史文化街区管理和研究 [Research on Management and Development of Suzhou Pingjiang Historic and Cultural Block], pp. 109–110.

68 Ibid., p. 109.

69 Ibid., p. 110.

Historical Buildings

Apart from the structural and environmental characteristics of the block, the conservation plan's evaluation lists local-style dwelling houses (*minju* 民居). In the conservation system of HCF cities, these dwelling houses are classified under “historical buildings” and defined as neither having been promulgated as officially protected entities nor registered as immovable cultural relics and which represent the historic townscape and local characteristics (see chapter 2.3). In the course of China's Third National Cultural Relics Survey, there have been newly discovered 71 historical buildings in the Pingjiang Historic Block. Of these 71 buildings, 61 are local-style buildings from the late imperial period and ten Republican buildings.⁷⁰

In terms of site designation, the buildings follow structurally identical patterns (listed in appendix A.14). Primarily, this designation informs about their function in the block. In addition to dwelling houses, which constitute the great majority, there are included formerly religious sites such as Buddhist convents (e.g. Fusheng an 福生庵, Miaoxiang an 妙香庵) and the former site of a welfare institution (Anjiju jiuzhi 安济局旧址). The dwelling houses usually follow the designation pattern: ‘lane name + family name of owner’ or ‘lane name + house number + dwelling house/Republican building’. This designation pattern shows that the dwelling houses are mainly valued for the architectural qualities of the buildings themselves or that there is little information on their owners, in contrast to officially listed houses which may have been inhabited by historical figures and therefore have a higher historical value.

Local-style dwelling houses in Suzhou are a type of courtyard housing, an architectural form characterized by open and enclosed space. Chinese courtyard houses are composed of rectangular courtyard-building components (*jin yuanluo* 进院落, or short *jin* 进⁷¹), modular units which Wu has termed “house-yard”⁷² and which Knapp referred to as “hall-courtyard modules”⁷³. In the Jiangnan region, the buildings in these modular units are set up on three sides of the rectangular courtyard, enclosing it at the back and to both sides. Therefore, these units are called

70 Suzhou Academy of Planning and Design Co., Ltd. 苏州规划设计研究院股份有限公司 (drafted 2014): “Baohu guihua tu er” 保护规划图二 [Conservation Planning Map 2], in: *Suzhou Pingjiang lishi wenhua jiequ baohu guihua* 苏州平江历史文化街区保护规划 [Conservation Planning of Suzhou Pingjiang Historic and Cultural Block], Online.

71 Yu, Shengfang 俞绳方 (2006): *Suzhou gucheng baohu ji qi lishi wenhua jiazhi* 苏州古城保护及其历史文化价值 [The conservation of Suzhou Ancient City and its historical and cultural value], p. 170.

72 Wu, Nelson I. (1963): *Chinese and Indian Architecture: The City of Man, the Mountain of Gold, and the Realm of the Immortals*, p. 32.

73 Knapp, Ronald G. (2005): “In Search of the Elusive Chinese House”, p. 57.

sanheyuan 三合院 (“courtyard with surrounding structures on three sides”) in contrast to a *siheyuan* 四合院 (“courtyard with surrounding structures on all four sides”), the common modular unit in Northern China.⁷⁴ To become a house, these modular units are lined up successively to form a row which is called *luo* 落⁷⁵. Depending on the social status and affluence of its owner, large mansions can be composed of up to five rows and seven *jin*.⁷⁶

Moreover, Chinese houses follow the two fundamental principles of orientation to a cardinal direction and symmetry.⁷⁷ Ideally, traditional Chinese houses are facing south or southeast, which is beneficial for lighting and temperature regulation.⁷⁸ The central row of Suzhou-style mansions is named *zhengluo* 正落, comparable to the central axis of a planned Chinese capital city, whereas the rows to both sides of the central row are so-called “side rows” (*bianluo* 边落).⁷⁹ Major buildings are set up on a central axis in the back of each modular unit and are designated as halls (*ting* 厅 or *tang* 堂). In contrast, the minor buildings to the sides are designated as “wing rooms” (*xiangfang* 厢房) in relation to the central hall.

The central row of a great mansion consisted of an entrance hall (*menting* 门厅), a sedan-chair hall (*jiaoting* 轿厅) where affluent owners or guests would arrive in their sedan-chairs, a main hall (*dating* 大厅) and private chambers (*neiting* 内厅).⁸⁰ The side rows usually comprised parlors (*huating* 花厅), studies (*shufang* 书房), guest-rooms (*kefang* 客房) and often a private garden (see fig. 3-3).⁸¹

Other structural features of the houses are archways which connect the different courtyard-building components on the central row to one another. The courtyards of houses in Southern China are “enclosed vertical spaces”, similar to an atrium and are designated as “skywells” (*tianjing* 天井).⁸² While skywells in front of the main hall are usually broader and as wide as the adjacent hall, those in the components behind the main hall are narrower.⁸³ Moreover, the buildings from the entrance hall up to the main hall are single story buildings while the private chambers usually have two stories.

74 Steinhardt, Nancy Shatzman (1984): “Kong Family Mansion”, p. 157.

75 Yu, Shengfang 俞绳方 (2006): *Suzhou gucheng baohu ji qi lishi wenhua jiazhi* 苏州古城保护及其历史文化价值, p. 170.

76 Ibid.

77 Steinhardt, Nancy Shatzman (2005): “The House: An Introduction”, p. 14.

78 Knapp, Ronald G. (2005): “In Search of the Elusive Chinese House”, p. 60.

79 Yu, Shengfang 俞绳方 (2006): *Suzhou gucheng baohu ji qi lishi wenhua jiazhi* 苏州古城保护及其历史文化价值, p. 170.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

82 Knapp, Ronald G. (2005): “In Search of the Elusive Chinese House”, p. 53.

83 Yu, Shengfang 俞绳方 (2006): *Suzhou gucheng baohu ji qi lishi wenhua jiazhi* 苏州古城保护及其历史文化价值, p. 171.

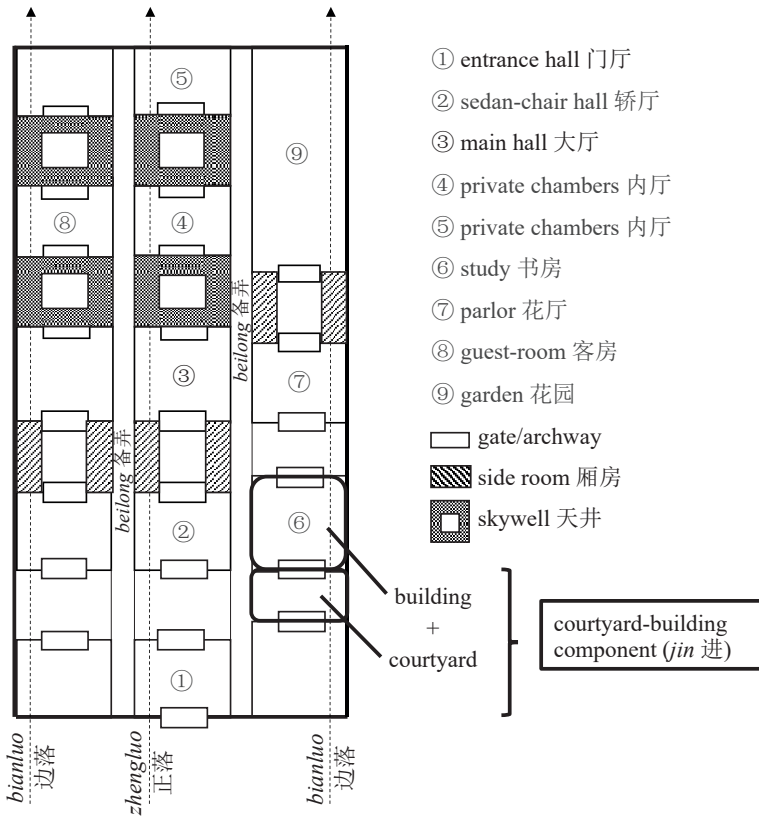


Figure 3-3. Exemplary Ground-Floor Plan of a Suzhou Mansion.

Source: author's draft.

In addition to these architectural features, the houses show social characteristics such as the hierarchical organization of space which reflects social relationships. This provides historical information on the lifestyle, traditions and social practices during the Ming and Qing dynasties (Comm CP, 2.3.1. iii), e.g. the entrance hall of a house was the only space accessible for common visitors whereas relatives and friends were invited into halls deeper inside.⁸⁴ As central hall of a house, the main hall was used as shared space of the family to celebrate festivities and worship ancestors, to hold wedding ceremonies and funerals, to meet guests, as school building or assembly hall to discuss important family affairs.⁸⁵ The subsequent chambers

84 Knapp, Ronald G. (2005): "In Search of the Elusive Chinese House", p. 57.

85 Wang, Quangen 王泉根 (1993): "Zhongguo minjian xingshi tanghao tanglian de wenhua toushi" 中国民间姓氏堂号堂联的文化透视 [A Cultural Perspective of Chinese Popular Family Name Hall Names and Hall Couplets], p. 2.

were private and exclusive spaces for women in the family. This increasing degree of privacy from the front to the rear of a Chinese house has been termed “graduated privacy” by Wu and is also manifested in the physical form of the house by the increasing elevation of successive courtyards from front to rear.⁸⁶

The relation between spatial hierarchy in the house and social hierarchy is further reflected by small corridors constructed between different rows (*beilong* 备弄). These corridors were constructed to connect the courtyards and integrate them into the greater whole of the residence.⁸⁷ They served as connections to the outside lanes and rivers and still fulfill this function. In imperial times, they were used by women and servants to bypass male guests and owners, respectively, which is the reason why they have also been called *bilong* (避弄 “circuitous corridor”).⁸⁸

Local-style dwelling houses have scientific value deriving from their structural design and architectural form (Comm CP, 2.3.3. i). Traditional Suzhou-style buildings are built in wood and brick structure. In adaptation to the topographic conditions as well as the hot and humid climate of Southern China, houses were constructed in consideration of proper ventilation and lighting. For example, ventilation, which reduces high temperatures and humidity, was facilitated by skywells, lattice windows or the placement of doors.⁸⁹ Reflective surfaces such as white-washed walls and broad eaves overhangs were used to shelter from intense sunlight.⁹⁰

While traditional residences were composed of a number of public and private spaces, important activities were held in the main hall. This hall usually is the most spacious and splendid room in a residence and traditionally carried its own hall name (*tanghao* 堂号) which could also be used to refer to the household as part of a family clan. Hall names are closely related to the family name and became increasingly diversified over time.

Firstly, prestigious family clans chose their hall names after their place of origin (*junwang tanghao* 郡望堂号)⁹¹. For example, households with the family name

86 Wu, Nelson I. (1963): *Chinese and Indian Architecture: The City of Man, the Mountain of Gold, and the Realm of the Immortals*, pp. 32–34.

87 Yu, Shengfang 俞绳方 (2006): *Suzhou gucheng baohu ji qi lishi wenhua jiazhi* 苏州古城保护及其历史文化价值, p. 191.

88 Ibid.

89 Knapp, Ronald G. (2005): “In Search of the Elusive Chinese House”, pp. 62–63.

90 Ibid.

91 *Jun* 郡 was the designation for a commandery ruled by a governor and was used until the Tang dynasty (618–907) when the administrative division was altered to *zhou* 州. From the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), the term has further been used as archaism for *fu* 府 (prefecture). See: Wilkinson, Endymion (2015): *Chinese History: A New Manual*, p. 261. The second character *wang* 望 refers to *wangzu* 望族, an influential family clan.

Wang 王 often used “Taiyuan tang” 太原堂⁹² whereby Taiyuan refers to the former administrative region “Taiyuan jun” 太原郡 in present-day Shanxi 山西 province. Secondly, family branches sharing the same general family name additionally chose self-established hall names (*zili tanghao* 自立堂号). While the former expresses the appreciation of one’s roots and ancestors, self-established hall names can further carry a cultural meaning and reveal traditional Chinese moral values.⁹³

In general, self-established hall names were chosen after important virtues and exemplary conduct of ancestors, their literary writings or official positions and titles as well as important events and anecdotes in the family history.⁹⁴ In his research on hall names of Suzhou local-style dwelling houses, Xu found 12 different forms of hall names. In addition to the above-mentioned types, these comprise the noble character and integrity of an ancestor, the names of mansions and halls of ancestors and notables, mottoes and ethical codes to admonish descendants, aspirations and interests of the owner, but also good wishes and descriptions of the surrounding natural environment.⁹⁵

In addition to hall names, cultural connotations can further be found on residential buildings in the form of carvings. By means of carvings, the material built heritage of a house was supplemented with an intangible dimension, reflecting an owner’s values and aspirations.⁹⁶ There are three basic types of carvings depending on their material. Brick carvings appear on archways and usually comprise written characters, which may derive from poetry, as well as ornamental patterns. Wooden carvings are engraved in windows and doors of traditional houses and may also have a literary background or refer to cultural traditions and beliefs in the form of plants and other symbols. Finally, there are stone carvings which can either be decorative or contain historical information, e.g. on stelae or ancient wells.

While brick carvings were plainer in the Ming dynasty, they greatly developed during the Qing dynasty, covering literary as well as cultural themes and reflecting local customs, tradition and aesthetics.⁹⁷ As significant building components, archways therefore not only have high artistic but also cultural value. On request of

92 Wang, Quangen 王泉根 (1993): “Zhongguo minjian xingshi tanghao tanglian de wenhua toushi” 中国民间姓氏堂号堂联的文化透视, p. 3.

93 Ibid., p. 4.

94 Ibid.

95 Xu, Sujun 徐苏君 (2010): “Suzhou gu minju tanghao kao” 苏州古民居堂号考 [Investigations on hall names of old Suzhou local-style dwelling houses], pp. 108–113.

96 Suzhou Municipal Housing Management Bureau 苏州市房产管理局 (ed., 2004): *Suzhou gu minju* 苏州古民居 [Suzhou old dwelling houses], p. 33.

97 Zhang, Xu 张旭; Zhou, Yue 周越 (2012): “Suzhou minju menlou zhuandiao zhuangshi yishu wenhua tanxi” 苏州民居门楼砖雕装饰艺术文化探析 [An analysis of brick carving as well as ornamentation art and culture on storied gateways of Suzhou local-style dwelling houses], p. 108.

more affluent house owners, these calligraphies were created by local high-ranking officials or relatives and friends to demonstrate the owner's moral character or to encourage himself to virtuous conduct and to instruct his descendants.⁹⁸ The decorative patterns surrounding the central calligraphy comprise auspicious motives popular among the local population at its time of construction, such as floral patterns, auspicious animals or stories related to historic, literary or mythical figures.⁹⁹

Finally, Knapp found that Chinese houses are related to the philosophical concepts of *yin* and *yang*¹⁰⁰ as well as the aesthetic concepts of “emptiness and substance” (*xushi* 虚实)¹⁰¹. The hierarchical dominance of *yang* over *yin* elements as well as their mutual dependence and dynamic interrelatedness are reflected in the spatial expressions of houses, such as open and enclosed structures, light and shade, active and passive or host and guest.¹⁰² Simultaneously, open spaces and enclosed structures can be related to empty or intangible elements being as significant as substantial or tangible elements, comparable to the white areas in a Chinese ink painting, which have as much meaning as the black brushstrokes.¹⁰³

Following Steinhardt, Chinese architectural structures share similarities concerning interrelatedness, orientation, symmetry, axiality, enclosure and hierarchy.¹⁰⁴ The basic characteristics analyzed above for Chinese houses can therefore also be applied to temples and other built structures. This includes the urban design principle of *ensembles* as basic architectural entities in contrast to individual structures. Regardless of their function as governmental, religious or private structures,

98 Suzhou Municipal Housing Management Bureau 苏州市房产管理局 (ed., 2004): *Suzhou gu minju* 苏州古民居 [Suzhou old dwelling houses], p. 35.

99 Zhang, Xu 张旭; Zhou, Yue 周越 (2012): “Suzhou minju menlou zhuandiao zhuangshi yishu wenhua tanxi” 苏州民居门楼砖雕装饰艺术文化探析, p. 108.

100 *Yin* 阴 and *yang* 阳 are two contrasting but complementary concepts in Chinese cosmological thinking. While *yin* symbolizes aspects such as femininity, passivity and darkness, *yang* is standing for masculinity, activity and brightness. According to *yin* and *yang* theory, all production and changes in the universe are caused by the interaction of these two concepts. See: Jiang, Xinyan (2013): “Chinese Dialectical Thinking — the Yin Yang Model”, pp. 438–439.

101 “Emptiness” (*xu* 虚) or “nothingness” (*xuwu* 虚无) originates from Daoist and Buddhist philosophy and can refer to the Dao itself as well as a “state of spiritually free existence”. Resulting from the influence of Daoist philosophy on Chinese aesthetics, this notion of nothingness can also refer to empty space in an artwork. Together with “substance” (*shi* 实), these mutually generating components form the basis of artworks and artistic creation. See: Fan, Minghua; Sullivan, Ian M. (transl., 2010): “The significance of *Xuwu* (Nothingness) in Chinese Aesthetics”, pp. 560–561, 566.

102 Knapp, Ronald G. (2005): “In Search of the Elusive Chinese House”, p. 58.

103 Knapp, Ronald G. (2000): *China's Old Dwellings*, p. 28.

104 Steinhardt, Nancy Shatzman (2005): “The House: An Introduction”, pp. 14–16.

single buildings are no independent architectural entities but subordinate to the greater whole of the *ensemble*.¹⁰⁵

3.1.2 Officially Protected Entities

As mentioned above, the Pingjiang Historic Block comprises a great number of officially listed sites. The names of these sites can provide a first indication of the characteristics which have been decisive for their listing. Sites such as the Couple's Garden Retreat (Ouyuan 耦园) or Huiyin Garden (Huiyin yuan 惠荫园) where traditional characteristics of **private gardens** have been preserved, are named after their garden. With their initial inscription on the World Heritage List in 1996, the "Classical Gardens of Suzhou"¹⁰⁶ have been recognized on an international level as unique system of landscape gardening.

The nomination documents for their inscription and extension in 1999 prepared by the State Bureau of Cultural Relics 国家文物局 (State Administration of Cultural Heritage, since 2003) and the Ministry of Construction 建设部 (Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development 住房和城乡建设部, since 2008) inform on significant characteristics which constitute the historical, artistic, scientific and cultural values of these gardens. In these documents, the prominent role of Suzhou gardens in the field of landscape gardening is further related to scientific works written on them, among others, by experts known as pioneers in traditional Chinese architecture such as Tong Jun 童寯 (1900–1983) and Liu Dunzhen 刘敦桢 (1897–1968).¹⁰⁷ Their early investigations on Suzhou gardens and resulting evaluation serve as basis for the assessment of gardens in the Jiangnan region and the significance ascribed to them, not only as World Heritage Sites but also in the national conservation system. Liu Dunzhen rates the Classical Gardens of Suzhou (Suzhou gudian yuanlin 苏州古典园林) in the general introduction to his identically named

105 Wang, David (2017): *A Philosophy of Chinese Architecture: Past, Present, Future*, p. 159. Johnston, Stewart R. (1991): *Scholar gardens of China: a study and analysis of the spatial design of the Chinese private garden*, p. 23.

106 The Classical Gardens of Suzhou (Suzhou gudian yuanlin 苏州古典园林) comprise the Humble Administrator's Garden (Zhuozheng yuan 拙政园), Lingering Garden (Liuyuan 留园), the Master of Nets Garden (Wang shi yuan 网师园), the Mountain Villa with Embracing Beauty (Huanxiu shanzhuang 环秀山庄), the Couple's Garden Retreat (Ouyuan 耦园), the Garden of Cultivation (Yipu 艺圃), Canglang Pavilion (Canglang ting 沧浪亭), Lion Grove Garden (Shizi lin 狮子林) and the Retreat and Reflection Garden (Tuisi yuan 退思园).

107 Ministry of Construction of the People's Republic of China; State Bureau of Cultural Relics of the People's Republic of China (1996): *The Classical Gardens of Suzhou*, p. 115.

book as “representative for private gardens in Southern China” and the preserved gardens as “treasures of ancient cultural heritage”.¹⁰⁸

The **mansions of historically famous figures** are listed under their names and as their “former residence” (*guju* 故居). In contrast, mansions which are valued for the architectural qualities of the buildings themselves, or with little information on their owners, are mostly listed under the name of the lane where they are located and solely as “mansion of the X family”. This is also the case where great family clans had several mansions in the district or there were several clans with the same family name, e.g. Fang Mansion in Niujia Lane 钮家巷方宅 and Fang Mansion in Xuanqiao Lane 悬桥巷方宅.

Finally, building compounds can be named after the function they fulfilled in the district. These **functional buildings** can be related to commercial activities, as in the case of the Quan-Jin Guild Hall (Quan-Jin huiguan 全晋会馆) or spiritual practices in the form of ancestral halls such as Deng Family Ancestral Hall (Deng shi citang 邓氏祠堂) as well as former Taoist and Buddhist temples such as Weidao Temple (Weidao guan 卫道观) and Zhaoqing Temple (Zhaoqing si 昭庆寺). Another function which appears comparatively frequent are *yizhuang* 义庄, shared property of a family clan which could be used for educational purposes, housing, and others (e.g. Wang shi songfen yizhuang 汪氏诵芬义庄, Jiang shi yizhuang 蒋氏义庄).

Residential buildings constitute the majority of listed sites and follow structurally identical patterns in their designation. Most mansions listed on a municipal level follow the pattern: ‘lane name + family name of owner + building function’. One example for this group is Donghua Qiao Lane Wang Mansion (Donghua qiao xiang Wang zhai 东华桥巷汪宅).

The designation can also be shortened to two components of this pattern such as Deng Family Ancestral Hall (Deng shi citang 邓氏祠堂) or Qian Mansion (Qian zhai 钱宅). For controlled and protected buildings, this reduced pattern to ‘family name of owner + mansion’ is prevalent. In addition, a second pattern is used: ‘hall name + family name of owner + mansion’, e.g. Duyou Hall Yuan Mansion (Duyou tang Yuan zhai 笃佑堂袁宅). While these names can provide a first indication on significant values of the sites, their cultural significance is analyzed more closely in the following. The analysis thereby proceeds from criteria as defined in the China Principles and explained in chapter 1.3. (For a table with all officially listed sites and relevant assessment criteria see appendix A.9 and A.10).

108 Liu, Dunzhen 刘敦楨 (1979): *Suzhou gudian yuanlin* 苏州古典园林 [The Classical Gardens of Suzhou], p. 3.

Historical and Social Value

While the Pingjiang Historic Block comprises several listed former guild halls and temples, the majority of its built heritage sites are mansions and local-style dwelling houses. A characteristic feature of formerly splendid mansions in Suzhou are “private gardens” (*sijia yuanlin* 私家园林). The origin of Chinese garden tradition lies in the hunting grounds of the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BC) aristocracy and was practiced by individual emperors who set trends in gardening throughout Chinese history.¹⁰⁹ In contrast to the Chinese imperial gardens mostly located outside of the cities, private gardens were built in urban areas¹¹⁰ and formed an integral part of a residence¹¹¹. When the imperial capital was moved to Hangzhou 杭州 in the Southern Song dynasty, the cities in the Jiangnan region prospered and Suzhou became a center of Chinese garden development.¹¹² In response to the high population density and scarcity of natural scenery in urban areas, this type of residence evolved as a retreat for scholar-officials as well as aspirant merchants from the highly hierarchical space in the rest of the city.¹¹³

As mentioned above, the Pingjiang Historic Block features two sites which have been listed as former private gardens: The Couple’s Garden Retreat (Ouyuan 耦园, the origin of this name will be traced in section 3.1.2.3 on cultural value) and Huiyin Garden 惠荫园. Their high listing ranks (the Couple’s Garden Retreat is listed on national and Huiyin Garden on provincial level) reflect their high significance and representativeness of Suzhou private gardens. The Couple’s Garden Retreat has further been included on the World Heritage List in the course of an extension of the Classical Gardens of Suzhou in 1999.

Private gardens as well as other mansions and individual buildings primarily have historical value, because they illustrate the material production, lifestyle, traditions and social practices of their historical periods (Comm CP, 2.3.1. iii). The historical value of heritage sites further can derive from important figures whose activities are reflected by the site (Comm CP, 2.3.1 ii). The Pingjiang Historic Block has a considerable number of residences which are related to their historically famous owners on different administrative levels.

109 Johnston, Stewart R. (1991): *Scholar gardens of China: a study and analysis of the spatial design of the Chinese private garden*, pp. 2, 4.

110 Liu, Dunzhen 刘敦楨 (1979): *Suzhou gudian yuanlin* 苏州古典园林, p. 3.

111 Wang, Joseph C. (2005): “House and Garden: Sanctuary for the Body and the Mind”, p. 75.

112 Johnston, Stewart R. (1991): *Scholar gardens of China: a study and analysis of the spatial design of the Chinese private garden*, p. 3.

113 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

The two listed gardens are both historic gardens and date from the Ming and Qing dynasties, the period when Chinese garden art reached its height.¹¹⁴ The origin of the Couple's Garden Retreat can be traced back to the reign of the Yongzheng Emperor (1722–1735) when a prefect named Lu Jin 陆锦 built “She Garden” 涉园 on its present site.¹¹⁵ After the mansion had been destroyed at the time of the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864) due to war-related events, the circuit intendant¹¹⁶ Shen Bingcheng 沈秉成 (1823–1895) bought the site. Having retired from his official post to recuperate, he moved into the rebuilt and expanded mansion together with his more than 10-year-younger wife Yan Yonghua 严永华 (1836–1890) in 1876 which was then named “The Couple's Garden Retreat”.¹¹⁷

Huiyin Garden originates from the Jiajing 嘉靖 reign (1521–1567) in the Ming dynasty which, at the time, was the residence of another retired official, Gui Zhan-chu 归湛初.¹¹⁸ The present site named Huiyin Garden was a part of his large-scale residence named Gui Family Garden 归氏园. When the garden changed owners, it was divided into an eastern and a western part.

The eastern part was bought by Gu Qiwen 顾其蕴 (1607–1682), a member of the “Revival Society”¹¹⁹, by the end of the Ming dynasty and restored as well as

114 Wang, Joseph C. (2005): “House and Garden: Sanctuary for the Body and the Mind”, p. 86.

115 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 186.

116 A circuit intendant (daotai 道台) was a supervisory official from a branch office of the provincial administration commission during the imperial period. Supervisory officials were dispatched from the capital as the circuit was not a fixed administration but an investigatory area. See: Wilkinson, Endymion (2015): *Chinese History: A New Manual*, pp. 260–261.

117 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路, p. 123.

118 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 200.

119 The Revival Society (Fushe 复社) was an influential literary society (*wenshe* 文社), which was founded during the last reign of the Ming dynasty. In contrast to earlier societies which relied on networks of friends, relatives or political allies, improvements in printing and communication fostered its development into an independent national organization of an unprecedented scale. Not only succeeded a remarkable number of Revival Society members in the civil service examinations, but they also dominated the cultural scene with prominent intellectuals and writers. Compared to the earlier and conservative Eastern Forest 东林 Society to which some members of the Revival Society were sympathetic, the Revival Society itself was more ideologically diverse. See: Lu, Tina (2010): “The literary culture of the late Ming (1573–1644)”, pp. 77–78.

expanded by his grandson.¹²⁰ Today, this part is officially recorded under Gu Family Garden 顾家花园 as historical building by Suzhou Planning Bureau.¹²¹

The western part of the garden was bought by another member of the Revival Society in 1649 and reconstructed into Qiayin Garden 洽隐园.¹²² Its name was changed again into Wanshan Villa 皖山别墅 after a great fire in 1707 by its new owner, prefect Ni Lianfang 倪莲舫.¹²³ In 1864, Li Hongzhang¹²⁴, provincial governor of Jiangsu province at the time, built a memorial shrine for army leader Cheng Xueqi¹²⁵ next to the garden.¹²⁶ He then bought adjacent dwelling houses to expand it into the Anhui Guild Hall and later also integrated Ni Family Wanshan Villa with the garden renamed as Huiyin Garden.¹²⁷ Under prefect Kuai Zifan 蒯子范 (1816–1877) of Suzhou, the garden was expanded and additional landscape

120 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路, p. 138.

121 Suzhou Academy of Planning and Design Co., Ltd. 苏州规划设计研究院股份有限公司 (drafted 2014): “Baohu guihua tu er” 保护规划图二, in: *Suzhou Pingjiang lishi wenhua jiequ baohu guihua* 苏州平江历史文化街区保护规划, Online.

122 The name “Qiayin” 洽隐 originated from the main hall of the residence in the garden. See: Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 200.

123 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路, p. 139.

124 Li Hongzhang 李鸿章 (1823–1901) was one of China’s foremost military leaders, a renowned diplomat, industrialist and reformer under the Qing dynasty. Following his early appointment to the prestigious Hanlin Academy, he achieved military victories with his “Huai Army” against the Taiping Rebellion in 1864 and the Nian Rebellion in 1868. In his position as governor-general of Zhili Province, he served as China’s chief negotiator with foreign powers. Moreover, he was an important leader of the self-strengthening movement (*yangwu yundong* 洋务运动) in the second half of the 19th century which aimed at institutional reforms as well as economic and military modernization. While Li contributed to self-strengthening in technology and defense, he was criticized for controversial negotiations such as the Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895) and the Russian railroad lease which resulted in the cession of Chinese territory to Japan and Russia. See: Meissner, Daniel J. (2009): “Li Hongzhang [(1823–1901) Qing diplomat and industrialist]”, pp. 1313–1315.

125 Cheng Xueqi 程学启 (1829–1864), former general of the Taiping Rebels, became a leader of the Huai Army fighting the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom after he surrendered to the Qing troops in 1861. He was a key figure in the defense of Shanghai and for the capture of many cities in the Jiangnan region until he died in the reconquest of Jiaxing 嘉兴. See: Huang, Jianghua 黄江华; Guo Yisheng 郭毅生 (2008): “Cheng Xueqi pan jiang shi mo — Jianlun Taiping Tianguo houqi pan jiang fengchao zhi chengyin” 程学启叛降始末——兼论太平天国后期叛降风潮之成因 [On Cheng Xueqi’s Rebellion — Concurrent Discussion on the causes for the trend of deserting to the enemy in the later period of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom], pp. 28–30.

126 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 200.

127 Ibid.

architecture constructed.¹²⁸ The present *ensemble* Huiyin Garden includes the garden, the guild hall and two memorial temples.

In contrast to historical buildings whose major historical value derives from criterion 2.3.1 iii (Comm CP), the two gardens fulfill several additional criteria which qualify them as listed sites. Primarily, both are related to important figures (Comm CP, 2.3.1 ii). The historic owners of the Couple's Garden Retreat were imperial officials and the history of Huiyin Garden is related to members of the Revival Society and Li Hongzhang. The connection to scholar-officials is a common feature of Chinese private gardens as many of those who had experienced setbacks in their official careers retired and built so-called "literati gardens".¹²⁹

Equally, the owners of formerly splendid mansions not named after a garden which are listed on national and provincial levels were influential historical figures, such as Number One Scholar Pan Shi'en, intendant Shen Bingcheng or the owner of Weidao Guan Qian Pan Mansion, Pan Linzhao 潘麟兆, a wealthy merchant from Anhui 安徽 province who renovated the mansion in 1787 and expanded it for 300,000 tael of fine silver over a period of 12 years.¹³⁰ As mentioned above, the Anhui Guild Hall as part of the *ensemble* Huiyin Garden is related to Li Hongzhang who set up the Cheng Xueqi Memorial Temple and therefore not only carries historical but also commemorative (social) value.

Furthermore, there are two former mansions of historical figures listed on a municipal level which carry the full name of their owners in their site designation (Former Residence of renowned historian Gu Jiegang 顾颉刚 (1893–1980), Former Residence of scholar and diplomat Hong Jun 洪钧 (1839–1893)). Another three sites are related to historically famous people, indicated by additional wooden plates hung up next to the building entrance but which are not listed under their owners' names. Two of these sites are the former residences of famous physicians trained in "Western" medicine 西学: Qian Boxuan's residence, listed as Qian Mansion and Fang Jiamo's residence, which is designated as Xuanqiao Lane Fang Mansion. The third site is said to have been built by Huang Jinrong 黄金荣¹³¹

128 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 232.

129 Wang, Joseph C. (2005): "House and Garden: Sanctuary for the Body and the Mind", p. 94.

130 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路, p. 131.

131 Huang Jinrong 黄金荣, chief of detectives in the former French Concession simultaneously controlled a great number of opium and gambling activities as well as brothels in Shanghai. He made use of his position to establish close relations to gangster organizations such as the Green Gang which held the monopoly for opium trade without becoming directly involved. Thereby he emerged to become one of the three most powerful local magnates, together with Du Yuesheng 杜月笙 and Zhang Xiaolin 张啸林. See:

(1868–1953), one of Shanghai’s great magnates at the beginning of the 20th century and superintendent in the former French Concession. The mansion is listed as “Heming Hall Kang Mansion” 鹤鸣堂康宅¹³² and was probably not inhabited by him but developed as real estate property.

Former residences of historical figures are further listed as controlled and protected buildings. Of the at-present 40 buildings in this category, five sites are listed as “former residences”. The residence of writer Han Chong 韩崇 (1783–1860) includes his study (Baotie zhai 宝铁斋) where he had worked on poems, literature and inscriptions.¹³³ Then, there are the former residences of famous scholars Pan Zuyin 潘祖荫 (1830–1890), who served as minister of the Board of Works, and linguist Guo Shaoyu 郭绍虞 (1893–1984). The last two residences belonged to Chinese physician Ai Buchan 艾步蟾 (1854–1933) and Tang Na 唐纳 (1914–1988), famous film critic and earlier husband of Mao Zedong’s fourth wife Jiang Qing 江青 (1914–1991). By carrying their names in the site designations, the association of the above-mentioned figures with their remaining former mansions provides them with social value and a commemorative function.

Moreover, as stated in the commentary on the China Principles (Comm CP, 2.3.1 iv), sites which “prove, correct or supplement facts documented in historical records” have historical value. Because the mansions and buildings listed on national, provincial and partly also municipal level are of a considerable size and often developed from historic sites, they are recorded in the *Pingjiang Gazetteer*. This criterion can be well illustrated by example of the two private gardens.

Huiyin Garden originally had a lotus pond, but it has been filled and converted into a sports ground when First Suzhou Middle School moved in after 1949.¹³⁴ At present, only a small part of the original pond can be found underneath a rockery called “Xiao Linwu Dong” (小林屋洞, “Little Linwu Cave”), the garden’s sole physical remains. Nevertheless, the garden obtains great significance from this artificial hill (*jiashan* 假山) made of lakeside rocks. Xiao Linwu Dong survived the above-mentioned disastrous fire and therefore has high historical value as a

Martin, Brian G. (1996): *The Shanghai Green Gang: Politics and Organized Crime, 1919–1937*, pp. 64–69, 76.

132 Suzhou Academy of Planning and Design Co., Ltd. 苏州规划设计研究院股份有限公司 (drafted 2014): “Baohu guihua tu yi” 保护规划图一 [Conservation Planning Map 1], in: *Suzhou Pingjiang lishi wenhua jiequ baohu guihua* 苏州平江历史文化街区保护规划 [Conservation Planning of Suzhou Pingjiang Historic and Cultural Block], Online.

133 Shen, Qingnian 沈庆年 (ed., 2014): *Gucheng yizhu: Suzhou kongbao jianzhu tanyou: 3* 古城遗珠: 苏州控保建筑探幽: 3 [Lost Pearls of the Ancient City: A Study of Controlled Protected Buildings in Suzhou: vol. 3], p. 16.

134 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 200.

relic of the historical Qiayin Garden. It has been included into local records¹³⁵ and therefore fulfills criterion four of the China Principles as the preserved remains of Xiao Linwu Dong can verify these records.

Furthermore, it fulfills criterion five being a rare and outstanding example of rockeries. The *Pingjiang Gazetteer* records that it is rare in overall China and as excellent as the rockery in the “Mountain Villa with Embracing Beauty” 环秀山庄, another classical Suzhou garden listed as World Heritage.¹³⁶ With the final expansion of Huiyin Garden under prefect Kuai Zifan, a set of outstanding landscape scenes comprising eight views (*ba jing* 八景) has been defined, which is known from a wall-embedded stele.¹³⁷ The *ba jing* (“eight views”) set of landscape scenes, which contains eight sight names, traditionally originates from a set of paintings entitled “The Eight Views of Xiaoxiang” (*Xiaoxiang ba jing* 潇湘八景), generally ascribed to Song Di 宋迪 (ca. 1015–1080), who was a painter and civilian court official during the Northern Song dynasty.¹³⁸ *Xiaoxiang* presumably refers to the Xiao and Xiang rivers (whereby it is unclear whether *xiao* stands for the name of Xiang river’s tributary or functions as adjective to Xiang river, meaning “deep and clear”).¹³⁹ The term also refers to the region which Xiang river traverses and which corresponds to present-day Hunan province.

Another pioneering work for this tradition is “Ten Views of the West Lake” (*Xihu shi jing* 西湖十景) from the Southern Song dynasty. In 1127, the imperial family had to move its capital to Lin’an 临安 (present-day Hangzhou 杭州) due to an invasion by the Jurchen Jin 金 dynasty. The new capital attracted many painters, including landscape painting experts of the former imperial art academy, who had followed the court to restore their posts.¹⁴⁰ The landscape of the West Lake fascinated many painters of the succeeding Southern Song Imperial Art

135 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, pp. 200–201.

136 *Ibid.*, p. 201.

137 *Ibid.*, p. 200.

138 Zhao, Xia 赵夏 (2006): “Wo guo de ‘ba jing’ chuantong ji qi wenhua yiyi” 我国的“八景”传统及其文化意义 [China’s *ba jing* tradition and its cultural meaning], p. 89.

139 Yang, Xiaoshan (2003): *Metamorphosis of the Private Sphere: Gardens and Objects in Tang-Song Poetry*, p. 78.

140 Wang, Shuangyang 王双阳; Wu, Gan 吴敢 (2015): “Cong wenxue dao huihua — Xihu shi jing tu de xingcheng yu fazhan” 从文学到绘画——西湖十景图的形成与发展 [From literature to painting — The formation and development of the “Ten Views of the West Lake”], p. 68.

Academy and became a major subject of their paintings (*yin jing zuo hua* 因景作画,¹⁴¹ “taking the scenery as inspiration in the creation of one’s paintings”).

In the following, the great amount of paintings addressing the West Lake was condensed into the *shi jing* (“ten views”) set of landscape scenes, which gained great popularity among artists. The depicted sights were then provided with a name on the basis of the respective painting (*yin hua ming jing* 因画命景).¹⁴² Eventually, the sight names were taken up by poets who integrated the verses in their literary pieces or even named their poems after them and made the “ten views” a major literary theme.¹⁴³

While the “Eight Views of Xiaoxiang” is the earliest-known set of landscape scenes, the “Ten Views of the West Lake” had the greatest impact and is still widely known today.¹⁴⁴ Regarded as epitomes of landscape naming, the *ba jing* and the *shi jing* sets of landscape scenes provided the basic standards for this naming practice. One of the eight views defined for Huiyin Garden is called *Linwu tan qi* (林屋探奇, “Exploring the super-natural at Linwu [Cave]”) and refers to Xiao Linwu Dong. Its historical value is further increased as the rockery is the only scenic spot which has been preserved of these formerly eight landscape scenes.

The Couple’s Garden Retreat is designed as a mansion with two gardens, an eastern and a western garden. It features two rockeries as well, a yellow stone (*huang shi* 黄石) rockery in the center of the eastern garden and a limestone (*hu shi* 湖石) rockery in the western garden. The yellow stone rockery is the main landscape scene of the eastern garden. This rockery has a major hill in the east and a minor hill in the west.¹⁴⁵ The limestone rockery in the western garden is piled up of lakeside rocks from Lake Tai and planted with bushes and trees.¹⁴⁶

In terms of significance, the yellow stone rockery in the eastern garden has been judged as one of the most elaborate in the Classical Gardens of Suzhou. Relying on Liu Dunzhen’s research, this rockery has been piled up in a very natural

141 Zhang, Xianliang 张先亮; Wang, Min 王敏 (2014): “Shilun ‘Xihu shi jing’ de ming-ming yishu” 试论“西湖十景”的命名艺术 [Some viewpoints on the art of naming in the “Ten Views of the West Lake”], p. 191.

142 Ibid.

143 Wang, Shuangyang 王双阳; Wu, Gan 吴敢 (2015): “Cong wenxue dao huihua — Xihu shi jing tu de xingcheng yu fazhan” 从文学到绘画——西湖十景图的形成与发展, p. 69.

144 Zhang, Xianliang 张先亮; Wang, Min 王敏 (2014): “Shilun ‘Xihu shi jing’ de ming-ming yishu” 试论“西湖十景”的命名艺术, p. 191.

145 Suzhou Municipal Garden and Landscape Administration Bureau 苏州市园林和绿化管理局 (ed., 2013): *Ouyuan zhi* 耦园志 [Records of the Couple’s Garden Retreat], p. 38.

146 Ibid., p. 39.

manner.¹⁴⁷ He further states that it may be a relic of She Garden¹⁴⁸ and, in effect, following his judgement, it is regarded as such today. Therefore, it bestows the garden with high historical value. Although the limestone rockery has not been judged as elaborate as its counterpart in the eastern garden, it equally possesses historical value as it fulfills criterion six (Comm CP, 2.3.1 vi). When the garden was decomposed in the 1950s and transformed into housing, the residents built a wall in the shape of a cloud (*yunqiang* 云墙) on top of the rockery to avoid disturbing each other.¹⁴⁹ This wall has been preserved up to the present in order to reveal historical changes of the site.¹⁵⁰

A special form of historical records comprises inscribed stelae. Although not exclusively, they constitute significant material heritage of temples in the Pingjiang Historic Block. Inscribed stelae are usually set up after a temple has been restored and record important information on the time this work has been undertaken, the person or organization who provided the funding, and other relevant information.



Figure 3-4. Preserved Stelae at Weidao Temple.

Source: author's photo, 2018.

147 Liu, Dunzhen 刘敦桢 (1963): “Ouyuan” 耦园, in: Suzhou Municipal Garden and Landscape Administration Bureau 苏州市园林和绿化管理局 (ed., 2013): *Ouyuan zhi* 耦园志, p. 117.

148 Ibid.

149 Suzhou Municipal Garden and Landscape Administration Bureau 苏州市园林和绿化管理局 (ed., 2013): *Ouyuan zhi* 耦园志, p. 40.

150 Ibid.

In the central row of the Taoist Weidao Temple, a part of the inscribed stelae with records on the temple's former reconstructions and reparations has been preserved (see fig. 3-4).¹⁵¹ Another temple showing this kind of material evidence is the controlled and protected site Tiangong Temple 天宫寺 which features stele inscriptions informing on the development of the temple itself and its reparations.¹⁵²

Artistic and Scientific Value

A comparison among different listing levels shows that sites with gardens or physical remains of former gardens are listed on higher administrative levels which is related to their increase in artistic value (see appendix A.9). Liu Dunzhen further characterized the Chinese classical garden as “system of garden art” (*yuanlin yishu tixi* 园林艺术体系)¹⁵³. This evaluation is taken up in the justification for inclusion of the gardens in the 1996 World Heritage nomination document which states that “the Chinese classical gardens form a system of art that takes pride in its high artistic achievement and unique style”.¹⁵⁴

The high artistic value of private gardens derives from their interrelation with Chinese landscape painting (*shanshui hua* 山水画) in terms of design principles. While, by the middle of the Tang dynasty, Chinese scholar-painters (*wenren huajia* 文人画家) such as Wang Wei 王维 or Bai Juyi 白居易 still built gardens for themselves to lead a live in seclusion, the art of landscape gardening had developed into a profession after the Southern Song dynasty and scholar-painters increasingly engaged in garden design.¹⁵⁵ Thereby, they drew on techniques from Chinese landscape painting and approached the composition of gardens in the same way as they would approach a painting. Because the gardens were later constructed as a three-dimensional realization of these techniques, the Chinese art of landscape gardening is seen as having evolved from Chinese painting.¹⁵⁶

151 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 228.

152 Shen, Qingnian 沈庆年 (ed., 2013): *Gucheng yizhu: Suzhou kongbao jianzhu tanyou: xu* 古城遗珠: 苏州控保建筑探幽: 续 [Lost Pearls of the Ancient City: A Study of Controlled Protected Buildings in Suzhou: vol. 2], pp. 100–101.

153 Liu, Dunzhen 刘敦楨 (1979): *Suzhou gudian yuanlin* 苏州古典园林, p. 3.

154 Ministry of Construction of the People's Republic of China; State Bureau of Cultural Relics of the People's Republic of China (1996): *The Classical Gardens of Suzhou*, p. 113.

155 Liu, Dunzhen 刘敦楨 (1979): *Suzhou gudian yuanlin* 苏州古典园林, p. 5.

156 Ministry of Construction of the People's Republic of China; State Bureau of Cultural Relics of the People's Republic of China (1996): *The Classical Gardens of Suzhou*, p. 114.

Correspondingly, there have been consulted painters for the design of the two private gardens listed in the Pingjiang Historic District. In the case of the Couple's Garden Retreat, Shen Bingcheng engaged the painter Gu Yun 顾云 to design his garden after he had bought the former site of She Garden by expanding it to the central residence and western garden.¹⁵⁷ Respectively, it is speculated for at least a part of Huiyin Garden that it has been designed by Ming dynasty painter Zhou Bingzhong 周秉忠.¹⁵⁸

The first published work on composition principles of Chinese gardens is the "Craft of Gardens" (*Yuan ye* 园冶) by Ji Cheng 计成 (1582–n.d.) from 1634. Therein, he highlights the importance of creating different views in the process of garden design:

"The most important element in the layout of gardens is the siting of the principal buildings. The primary consideration is the view, and it is all the better if the buildings can also face south."¹⁵⁹

Comparable to unrolling a handscroll, visitors were later guided through the garden to view different scenes framed by windows or openings in garden walls:¹⁶⁰

"Wooden walls should have many window-openings so that one can secretly enjoy looking through them into different worlds [...] Pavilions and terraces should be visible through a crack, while towers and tall buildings should be surrounded by empty space."¹⁶¹

This technique to overcome the spatial limitation of the garden through "borrowing" sceneries (*jiejing* 借景) was invented by Ming scholar Li Yu 李渔 (1611–1680) who had a wide range of occupations, such as writer, historian, literary critic, publisher, inventor, architect and garden expert. He applied the technique to a "landscape window" which enabled the contemplation of a real landscape from the interior of a room.¹⁶² It was then extended to sceneries within the garden through the above-mentioned openings in different decorative shapes such as fans or flower petals as well as outside sceneries, contemplated from elevated spaces

157 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 186.

158 Ibid., p. 200.

159 Ji, Cheng (1988): *The Craft of Gardens*, p. 54.

160 Wang, Joseph C. (2005): "House and Garden: Sanctuary for the Body and the Mind", p. 87.

161 Ji, Cheng (1988): *The Craft of Gardens*, p. 76.

162 Johnston, Stewart R. (1991): *Scholar gardens of China: a study and analysis of the spatial design of the Chinese private garden*, p. 82.

such as observation towers.¹⁶³ Another technique of variation and segmentation divided the limited garden space into segments delimited by walls, buildings or rockeries and created varying impressions along a winding path through strategies of both walling in and opening up.¹⁶⁴ Since the Ming dynasty, garden construction had become a prevailing custom among influential officials and landlords in the Jiangnan region who began to compete with each other.¹⁶⁵ The reception of guests and their contemplation of landscape scenes was an important function considered in the construction of private gardens. Their builders strove to increase vistas and perspectives in order to enrich the space limited by its urban environment.¹⁶⁶

In the *Classical Gardens of Suzhou*, Liu Dunzhen examined the cases of 15 gardens and elaborated on five characteristic aspects of this built form. These are the garden layout (*buju* 布局), the regulation of water (*li shui* 理水), the piling of rockeries (*die shan* 叠山), architecture (*jianzhu* 建筑) and plants (*huamu* 花木). Hereby, architecture is included as a decisive factor for the significance of a private garden. Correspondingly, the Couple's Garden Retreat and Huiyin Garden are composed of four types of architectural and scenic elements: water, rockeries, plants and landscape architecture.

The Couple's Garden Retreat features a pond in the center of its eastern garden which is called "Reception of the Moon"-Pond (Shou yue chi 受月池). Similar to other elements of the garden, it carries artistic and scientific value in the way it has been designed and created. Following the *Ouyuan Gazetteer*, the pond is formed in a natural manner, which bestows it with a "natural appearance".¹⁶⁷ Equally, Xiao Linwu Dong has been designed by famous Ming dynasty painter and landscape architect Zhou Bingzhong and therefore has great artistic value. The artist's inspiration for this artificial hill precisely was "Linwu Cave"¹⁶⁸ on Xishan Island 西山岛 in Lake Tai 太湖, which it imitates and after which it was named.¹⁶⁹ The

163 Johnston, Stewart R. (1991): *Scholar gardens of China: a study and analysis of the spatial design of the Chinese private garden*, p. 82.

164 Morris, Edwin T. (1983): *The Gardens of China: History, Art and Meanings*, p. 77.

165 Liu, Dunzhen 刘敦楨 (1979): *Suzhou gudian yuanlin* 苏州古典园林, p. 4.

166 Ministry of Construction of the People's Republic of China; State Bureau of Cultural Relics of the People's Republic of China (1999): *The Classical Gardens of Suzhou*, p. 11.

167 Suzhou Municipal Garden and Landscape Administration Bureau 苏州市园林和绿化管理局 (ed., 2013): *Ouyuan zhi* 耦园志, p. 40.

168 "Linwu" 林屋 is a place name and refers to "Linwu Cave" 林屋洞 on Xishan Island 西山岛 in Lake Tai 太湖 located in the southeast of Suzhou. This cave is an ancient sacred Taoist site, the eighth of ten major *dongtian* (洞天, "grotto-heavens"), which is related to many legends. See: Hahn, Thomas (2000): "Daoist Sacred Sites", pp. 696–697.

169 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 200.

garden's original pond had additional scientific value as it was connected to a water canal outside of the mansion which is now cut off.¹⁷⁰

In the case of the Couple's Garden Retreat, its artistic value is further increased by the seasonal character of flowers and trees. Just as the four seasons are a famous theme in Chinese landscape painting, the garden landscape is composed of flowers and trees which create sceneries in every season. For example, the Couple's Garden Retreat features peony trees, which blossom in spring, pomegranate trees standing for summer, osmanthus trees flowering in autumn and wintersweet flowers creating a winter scenery.¹⁷¹

Moreover, private gardens contain various architectural elements in the form of landscape architecture. These structures possess artistic value due to the great variety of architectural types in which they are built. The type of architectural structure can usually be identified by its name. For example, gardens can comprise different types of buildings (*tang* 堂 = one-storied, *lou* 楼 = two-storied), pavilions (*ting* 亭 = one-storied, *ge* 阁 = two-storied, *xuan* 轩 = with windows, *xie* 榭 = on a terrace), winding corridors (*huilang* 回廊) or other architectural structures (e.g. *fang* 舫 = boat-shaped structure).

The landscape of the eastern garden in the Couple's Garden Retreat is characterized by landscape architecture surrounding the yellow stone rockery and the Reception of the Moon Pond, including pavilions, winding corridors as well as one- and two-storied buildings. The central buildings of the eastern garden are set up in an *ensemble* with a "moon terrace" (*yue tai* 月台), four skywells, the main building featuring "Thatched Cottage at the City Corner" (Chengqu caotang 城曲草堂) on the first and a study (Bu du jiushu lou 补读旧书楼) on the second floor.¹⁷² In this mansion, even different floors of the same building were named separately according to their characteristics. Another two-storied building in the east contains the "Sun and Moonlight Tower" (Shuang zhao lou 双照楼) on the upper as well as "Return of the Inkslab Studio"¹⁷³ (Huan yan zhai, 还砚斋) on the first floor. The

170 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 201.

171 Suzhou Municipal Garden and Landscape Administration Bureau 苏州市园林和绿化管理局 (ed., 2013): *Ouyuan zhi* 耦园志, p. 44.

172 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

173 The name "Return of the Inkslab Studio" 还砚斋 is probably related to a legend on the Song dynasty official Bao Zheng 包拯 (999–1062). His exemplary conduct as "upright official" (*qingguan* 清官) made the court cases of Judge Bao (Bao Gong 包公) a popular theme in Yuan and early Ming dynasty ballad-stories and his figure has since served as embodiment of justice in China. The legend refers to Bao Zheng's service as prefect of Duanzhou 端州 in Guangdong province, a place well-known for its production of inkslabs. While his predecessor ordered local craftsmen to produce more inkslabs than the yearly required number paid as tribute to the imperial court for his

smaller western garden is divided into three courtyards by a one-storied building in its center which is named “Old House with Woven Curtains” (Zhi lian lao wu 织帘老屋).¹⁷⁴ Moreover, there is the “Longevity Pavilion” (He shou ting 鹤寿亭) in the east of the Old House with Woven Curtains and a study named “Library Tower” (Cangshu lou 藏书楼) in its north (see appendix A.4).¹⁷⁵

Huiyin Garden originally also featured landscape architecture. Most well-known is Xiao Linwu (小林屋, “Little Linwu”), which was built on the identically named preserved rockery in 1751, when the site was restored after the fire and turned into Wanshan Villa.¹⁷⁶ Following the *Pingjiang Gazetteer*, the buildings in Huiyin Garden have partly been demolished when the middle school was constructed. While Xiao Linwu and a winding corridor are documented for 1969, they no longer existed by 1999.¹⁷⁷

According to the China Principles, the artistic value of built heritage further derives from architectural style, spatial composition and aesthetic form (Comm CP, 2.3.2 i). The Pingjiang Historic Block’s conservation plan identified characteristic architectural elements **of a first building type**, local-style buildings, which include the ridge, the gable, windows, doors, balustrades and column bases.¹⁷⁸

own profit, Bao Zheng ordered to solely produce tribute inkslabs. The official dynastic history of the Song dynasty records that Bao Zheng left Duanzhou at the end of his term of office without taking a single inkslab. According to the legend, he was offered an inkslab of excellent quality by the locals as a sign of gratitude for his great service. However, he refused and returned the inkslab. The name of the studio therefore alludes to a moral and incorruptible character as aspired to by the mansion owner. See: Idema, Wilt L. (2010): *Judge Bao and the Rule of Law: Eight Ballad-Stories from the Period 1250–1450*, pp. ix-xvi. Tuotuo 脱脱 et al. (comp., 1995): *Song shi* 宋史 [History of the Song Dynasty, 1345], new edition, vol. 30, p. 10315. Suzhou Municipal Garden and Landscape Administration Bureau 苏州市园林和绿化管理局 (ed., 2013): *Ouyuan zhi* 耦园志, p. 10.

174 Suzhou Municipal Garden and Landscape Administration Bureau 苏州市园林和绿化管理局 (ed., 2013): *Ouyuan zhi* 耦园志, p. 13.

175 Ibid.

176 “Dongshi linglong Suzhou Huiyin yuan, jijing xingfei shengji you cun” 洞石玲珑苏州惠荫园，几经兴废胜迹犹存 [Suzhou Huiyin Garden with exquisite tervertine, the famous historical site still exists after several times of rise and fall], (July 19, 2017), Online.

177 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 200.

178 Tongji University National Famous Historical and Cultural Cities Research Center 同济大学国家历史文化名城研究中心 (2004): *Suzhou gucheng Pingjiang lishi wenhua jiequ baohu yu zhengzhi guihua — tuji* 苏州古城平江历史文化街区保护与整治规划 — 图集 [Planning for the Preservation and Renovation of the Pingjiang Historic and Cultural Block in the Historic City of Suzhou — Collection of Images], pp. 45–46.

While all buildings gain architectural value from these basic elements, they show distinctions corresponding to their listing levels. Moreover, higher listed sites are not only greater in size but consequently also show additional architectural styles and aesthetic forms.

One example for a site with high artistic value is the national-level listed Quan-Jin Guild Hall. Set up by Shanxi merchants who travelled to Suzhou in 1879, it combines the architectural styles of Shanxi and Suzhou buildings with those on the central row showing characteristics of Shanxi architecture while the structures in the eastern and western row are built according to Suzhou building tradition (see fig. 3-5 and 3-6).¹⁷⁹

Characteristic features comprise the main hall, which was built in the style of a temple hall with Shanxi building characteristics, the eastern row parlor, built in *yuanyang*-style¹⁸⁰ and the characteristic ridge of the entrance gate.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, the entrance hall shows some distinctive architectural characteristics, such as so-called “bandstands” (*chui gu ting* 吹鼓亭) on both sides and *jiangjun* gates (*jiangjun men* 将军门) which have higher thresholds than common gates.¹⁸²

In addition, Quan-Jin Guild Hall is highly significant for its opera building (see fig. 3-5). It features a ceremonial gate on the lower story as well as a stage on the upper story. This stage is one of the most elegant preserved in Suzhou and has a caisson ceiling (*zaojing* 藻井) which, in addition to its decorative function, enables a unique sound.¹⁸³ Therefore, the building not only carries historical and artistic but also scientific value.

179 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 232.

180 The term *yuanyang* 鸳鸯 literally means “mandarin ducks” and is further used in expressions for pairs of things. As architectural style, it refers to a hall which is divided by a partition wall into a front and a rear part. Moreover, the inner roof construction of both parts has two different forms (round and pointed, see fig. 15). From the inside, it therefore resembles two halls which have been merged. The southern hall is exposed to sunlight and usually used during the colder seasons winter and spring while the northern hall is comparatively cold and more suitable to be used in summer and autumn. See: Liu, Tengyu 刘腾宇 (2018): “Liuyuan Linqianqishuo zhi guan yanbian de kongjian fenxi” 留园林泉耆硕之馆演变的空间分析, p. 213.

181 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, pp. 232–233.

182 *Ibid.*, p. 232.

183 *Ibid.*, p. 233.



Figure 3-5. Quan-Jin Guild Hall Opera Building in Shanxi Style.



Figure 3-6. Quan-Jin Guild Hall Western Row Architecture in Suzhou Style.

Source: author's photos, 2018.

High-listed mansions in the block comprise halls in their side rows which are built in a particular architectural form and include characteristic roof constructions, verandas or arcades (*xuan* 轩) and column bases. The Former Mansion of Pan Shi'en features two halls in the second and third *jin* of its western row which are built in characteristic architectural form. The hall in the second *jin* is built as *yuanyang* hall (see fig. 3-7) and the third *jin* features a *shamao* hall¹⁸⁴. Relating to its architectural style, this hall has a veranda at its central front and wing rooms on both sides at the back of the building, resembling the wings of a late imperial official's gauze cap (see fig. 3-8 and 3-9).¹⁸⁵

184 A *shamao* hall 纱帽厅 is named after the gauze cap worn by imperial officials. Imitating Ming dynasty buildings, the beam capitals of the hall are decorated with wooden elements in the shape of gauze caps, so-called “gauze cap wings” (*shamao chi* 纱帽翅). Moreover, the overall layout of the hall resembles a gauze cap. See: Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 240.

185 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 240.



Figure 3-7. Yuanyang Hall in the Former Mansion of Pan Shi'en (front and rear part divided by partition wall).

Source: author's photo, 2018.

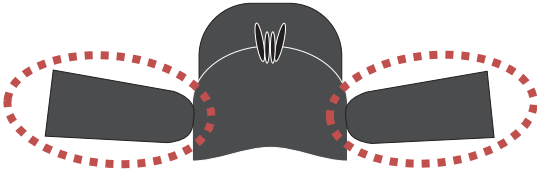


Figure 3-8. Gauze Cap of a Late Imperial Official (draft, gauze cap wings marked in red).

Source: author's draft.



Figure 3-9. Shamao Hall in the Former Mansion of Pan Shi'en.

Source: author's photo, 2018.

Another important architectural characteristic of traditional mansions are archways connecting the different halls with adjacent courtyards. In addition to their function of providing a passageway from outer to inner space or one courtyard to another, gates were important elements of Chinese houses to display a household's social status.¹⁸⁶ Due to sumptuary regulations which restricted a dwelling's external appearance as well as the custom to conceal one's wealth from the outside, the outer gates of Suzhou-style mansions appear as modest and plain gateways made of wood or stone frames.¹⁸⁷ In contrast, the inner lined-up courtyard-building components are connected by impressive ornamented archways facing inside the courtyards both at the back of the entrance gate and the rear of precedent halls.

These archways were built in the form of "storied gateways" (*menlou* 门楼) and imitate wooden architectural elements, such as brackets (*dougong* 斗拱) and ornamental carvings while usually being made of brick.¹⁸⁸ Storied archways in Suzhou-style houses further contain writing. In its center, there are usually embedded four horizontally engraved characters, which are written in calligraphy.¹⁸⁹ The national-level listed Weidao Guan Qian Pan Mansion (or Ligeng tang 礼耕堂 after its hall name) originally featured eight archways of which three from the reign of the Qianlong Emperor have been engraved in 1787.¹⁹⁰

These preserved archways all feature embedded calligraphy and are decorated with ornamental patterns surrounding the central inscriptions. The archway facing its main hall, for example, has an elaborate roof construction with six sets of brackets and peony ornamentation (see fig. 3-10). Bracket sets were used for construction of official buildings, as laid out in official building manuals, as well as temples.¹⁹¹ The example of Weidao Guan Qian Pan Mansion therefore illustrates how not only wealth and aesthetic sophistication but also the status of a household were manifested in these storied archways of local-style mansions and dwelling houses.

Other characteristics which distinguish higher listed sites from historical buildings are related to decoration and ornamentation (Comm CP, 2.3.2 iii). In addition to archways, traditional Chinese houses gain artistic value through wooden carvings on beams, balustrades, doors and windows as well as other forms of ornamented elements, such as eaves tiles or pavement. They are usually found in spaces

186 Knapp, Ronald G. (2000): *China's Old Dwellings*, p. 63.

187 Ibid., p. 256.

188 Ibid., p. 66.

189 Zhang, Xu 张旭; Zhou, Yue 周越 (2012): "Suzhou minju menlou zhuandiao zhuangshi yishu wenhua tanxi" 苏州民居门楼砖雕装饰艺术文化探析, p. 108.

190 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 242.

191 Steinhardt, Nancy Shatzman (1984): "Bracketing System of the Song Dynasty", pp. 122–125.



Figure 3-10. Decorated Archway in Ligeng Hall.

Source: author's photo, 2018.



Figure 3-11. Wooden Ornamentation in Former Residence of Pan Shi'en.

Source: author's photo, 2018.

visible to visitors where a household has a chance to display artistic taste and sophistication.¹⁹² Accordingly, wooden carvings and ornamentation are used to embellish windows and doors which separate the interior of rooms from the exterior living space of courtyards. Thereby, the upper parts of window and door panels in local style are perforated with lattice patterns ranging from geometric forms to traditional images.¹⁹³ On the lower parts, there are engraved decorative patterns or motifs in bas-relief (see fig. 3-II).¹⁹⁴

Similarly, verandas facing inner courtyards are spaces with high visibility, which feature rich wooden carvings, for example on timber beams supporting the eaves.¹⁹⁵ Finally, wooden carvings are used to decorate beams inside different halls. For example, the beams of the main hall, *yuanyang* and *shamao* hall of the Former Mansion of Pan Shi'en are decorated with richly engraved *zhaomu* 棹木 (decorative wooden boards in the shape of gauze-cap wings at the column capital). While the wooden carvings of the *yuanyang* hall show scenes with historical or literary figures, the *shamao* hall possesses carved *zhaomu* in the form of Ming dynasty gauze caps and ornamental carvings (see figure 3-12).¹⁹⁶



Figure 3-12. Engraved Zhaomu in Former Residence of Pan Shi'en (from below).

Source: author's photo, 2018.

192 Knapp, Ronald G. (2000): *China's Old Dwellings*, p. 59.

193 Ibid., p. 60.

194 Ibid., p. 234.

195 Ibid., p. 59.

196 Gong, Xi 弓玺; Jiang, Feng 姜锋 (April 25, 2017): "Liyu Tang: Xiri zhuangyuan fu jin wei bowuguan" 留余堂：昔日状元府今为博物馆 [Liyu Hall: In former days Number One Scholar residence and today a museum], Online.

A **second building type**, which has only recently been recognized as cultural heritage, are “Republican buildings” (*minguo jianzhu* 民国建筑). As these buildings have at least two stories, they were often set up in the rear of former Qing dynasty mansions in place of the former private chambers and therefore may not be visible from the outside. In the course of China’s Third National Cultural Relics Survey, many of these buildings from the Republican period have been “discovered” and included in the local inventory. Two of these residences, the Former Residence of Fang Jiamo and Da Liuzhi Lane Yang Mansion, were promulgated as officially listed municipal-level sites in 2009.¹⁹⁷

In contrast to the traditional white-washed walls of Suzhou local-style dwelling houses, Republican period houses emerged as eclectic forms of Chinese and “Western” architecture and either have characteristic grey brick walls, sometimes incorporating red brick patterns or show other “Western” characteristics. In the case of the Former Residence of Fang Jiamo, a hospital in its western row was built as a “Spanish-style” two-story building (*Xibanya shi loufang* 西班牙式楼房).¹⁹⁸ It was erected in 1935 and has a characteristic concrete façade which invokes an impression of a third story as well as a balcony and private bathrooms.¹⁹⁹ Its plain roof tiles have been imported and the floor is paved with tiles in refined patterns.²⁰⁰

Da Liuzhi Lane Yang Mansion has two preserved rows with traditional local-style buildings as well as Republican two-story buildings in the northern part of every row. Its Republican buildings show characteristic grey brickwork and have two-storied brick arcades.²⁰¹ Moreover, the buildings are significant for their well-preserved windows and doors with colored glass and floor tiles.²⁰²

The remaining 10 Republican buildings found in the Third National Cultural Relics Survey have not (yet) been promulgated as officially listed sites but included in the city’s inventory. They share common characteristics of Republican period buildings with the above-mentioned sites, such as grey brick walls, “Western”-style roof tiles and balustrades, windows and doors with colored glass and colored floor tiles in different patterns (see fig. 3-13 and 3-14).

197 Suzhou Administration of Cultural Heritage 苏州市文物局 (ed., 2012): *Suiyue jiyi — mingcheng guibao: Suzhou Shi di san ci quanguo wenwu pucha xin faxian xuanbian* 岁月记忆·名城瑰宝：苏州市第三次全国文物普查新发现选编, pp. 47–48.

198 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

199 Shen, Qingnian 沈庆年 (ed., 2013): *Gucheng yizhu: Suzhou kongbao jianzhu tanyou: xu* 古城遗珠：苏州控保建筑探幽：续, p. 44.

200 *Ibid.*

201 Suzhou Administration of Cultural Heritage 苏州市文物局 (ed., 2012): *Suiyue jiyi — mingcheng guibao: Suzhou Shi di san ci quanguo wenwu pucha xin faxian xuanbian* 岁月记忆·名城瑰宝：苏州市第三次全国文物普查新发现选编, p. 48.

202 *Ibid.*



Figure 3-13. Republican Period Building.

Source: author's photo, 2018.



Figure 3-14. Colored Floor Tiles of Republican Period Building.

Source: author's photo, 2018.

Moreover, as eclectic forms of two architectural styles, they possess their own distinct characteristics. For example, a “Western”-style two-story building which has been preserved in Xiaojia Lane No. 29 features Roman-style columns and floral ornamentation on its façade.²⁰³ Another two-story building at Weidao Guan Qian No. 27 with a polished stone façade features a vase-shaped balustrade, colored mosaic floor tiles and a wisteria canopy.²⁰⁴

The **third building type** listed on higher administrative levels are temples. While they share basic construction components such as halls and side rooms, similar to residential buildings, they differ in architectural style. The Taoist Weidao Temple was primarily built between 1260 and 1265 in the Song dynasty but the site as it has been listed on the municipal level goes back to 1665 in the Qing dynasty.²⁰⁵ The three characteristic halls of its central row originate from three different historical periods. While the entrance hall (*shanmen* 山门) dates back to the Ming dynasty, the second *jin* has been reconstructed in the Qing dynasty and the main hall named “Sanqing Hall” 三清殿 originates from the Yuan dynasty.²⁰⁶ The main hall further shows prominent architectural features, such as its characteristic roof and stone column bases.²⁰⁷

Moreover, the temple derives artistic value from a colored mural painting on a horizontal partition wall (see fig. 3-15). According to painter Zhang Minglou 张明楼 who did the restoration, the mural painting is the greatest preserved in Suzhou and differs greatly from those he has seen in other Taoist temples. As he explains, this difference consists in the elements depicted in the image. While most mural paintings would show typical elements such as floating clouds or the Taoist “eight

203 Shen, Qingnian 沈庆年 (ed., 2014): *Gucheng yizhu: Suzhou kongbao jianzhu tanyou*: 3 古城遗珠: 苏州控保建筑探幽: 3, p. 31.

204 Suzhou Administration of Cultural Heritage 苏州市文物局 (ed., 2012): *Suiyue jiyi — mingcheng guibao: Suzhou Shi di san ci quanguo wenwu pucha xin faxian xuanbian* 岁月记忆·名城瑰宝: 苏州市第三次全国文物普查新发现选编, p. 188.

205 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 228.

206 Guan, Youming 管有明 (January 6, 2013): “Weidao Guan zhonglu san jin zhudian zhuti xiu hao zai” 卫道观中路三进主殿主体修好哉 [The main part of the three main halls in the central row of Weidao Temple are restored!], Online.

207 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 228.

treasures”,²⁰⁸ the image in Weidao Temple shows the Buddhist “eight treasures”²⁰⁹ instead.



Figure 3-15. Mural Painting in Weidao Temple.

Source: author’s photo, 2018.

Combined with a depiction of bats, then again, a typical Taoist motive, the painter sees this image as an expression of a “unification” of Buddhism and Taoism.²¹⁰ (Fig. 3-15 shows the depiction of bats next to the Buddhist auspicious symbol of fish). Other elements with artistic value are stone column bases decorated in traditional style and a couplet written in golden characters on tablets which are curved around the pair of principal columns called “golden columns” (*jin zhu* 金柱). This couplet has been preserved together with the painting and at the time of its restoration in 2013 it was still readable.²¹¹

208 The eight Taoist treasures show various emblems of the Eight Immortals and comprise the sword, fan, flower-basket, lotus, flute, gourd, castanets and musical tube. See: Williams, C.A.S. (1974): *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs*, p. 157.

209 The eight Buddhist auspicious symbols (*ba jixiang* 八吉祥) comprise the wheel of the law, conch-shell, umbrella, canopy, lotus, jar, fish and mystic knot. See: Williams, C.A.S. (1974): *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs*, p. 159.

210 Wang, Ying 王英 (September 28, 2013): “Weidao Guan xiufu daxing caise bihua” 卫道观修复大型彩色壁画 [Weidao Temple restores grand-scale colored mural painting], Online.

211 Ibid.

In terms of scientific value deriving from plan and design (Comm CP, 2.3.3 i), officially listed sites usually follow the traditional north-south orientation and show high degrees of axiality and symmetry. Supposedly due to practical reasons, smaller residences may consist of two rows whereas even numbers of rows have been avoided in great mansions. This was rooted in the belief that building units in odd numbers create balance and symmetry whereas even numbers were regarded as inauspicious.²¹² Large-scale mansions usually are built along a central axis and comprise an entrance hall, a sedan-chair hall, a main hall and inner chambers.

The Couple's Garden Retreat is arranged in a particularly unique layout, which greatly relies on *fengshui* principles.²¹³ Its central axis runs between two gardens whereby the residential buildings aligned on this axis are oriented southward. The elevation of buildings increases along the central axis from south to north, which is beneficial for lighting.²¹⁴ Weidao Guan Qian Pan Mansion, the residence with the largest scale in the Pingjiang Historic Block, originally consisted of five rows and six *jin* and had a considerable size of 7500 m².²¹⁵ The Former Mansion of Pan Shi'en covers an area of 2135 m² and originally consisted of three rows with six *jin* and a great garden.²¹⁶ Both mansions follow the traditional layout with an entrance hall, a sedan-chair hall, a main hall and inner chambers aligned on a central axis and oriented towards the south.

These characteristics equally pertain to complexes of non-residential function such as the Quan-Jin Guild Hall and Weidao Temple. They are both set up in traditional layout of three rows with an orientation towards the south. The central row of the guild hall comprises an entrance gate (*toumen* 头门), an entrance hall, an opera building (*xilou* 戏楼) and a main hall (*zhengdian* 正殿).²¹⁷ In the case of Weidao Temple, there have mainly been preserved its central row with an entrance gate (*shanmen* 山门), Xuandi Hall 玄帝殿 and the main building, Sanqing Hall 三清殿. Originally, the complex further had an eastern and a western row with structures following the basic principles of orientation, axiality and symmetry.²¹⁸

212 Knapp, Ronald G. (2000): *China's Old Dwellings*, p. 22.

213 Cao, Lindi 曹林娣 (July 24, 2014): "Ninggu de zhihui, aiqing de yuezhang – Ouyuan xieying" 凝固的智慧, 爱情的乐章——耦园撷英 [Solidified knowledge, a movement of love – The best of Ou Garden], p. 13.

214 Ibid.

215 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 241.

216 Ibid., p. 240.

217 Ibid., p. 232.

218 Ibid., p. 228.

The scientific value of officially listed entities further relates to construction techniques and materials. One example for preserved building elements with scientific value are wooden column bases. While most residences from the Qing dynasty were built with wooden columns set on stone column bases, many buildings originating from the Ming dynasty not only have wooden columns but also wooden column bases. Such wooden column bases have been preserved in the Former Residence of Fang Jiamo.²¹⁹ Due to the rarity of well-preserved Ming period buildings, they are a significant characteristic of this municipal-level site.

Another example is the municipal-level Republican building listed as Heming Hall, which borders on Pingjiang Road and is significant for its grey brick walls. As mentioned above, the building is said to be part of one of the private mansions of Huang Jinrong built in the 1930s.²²⁰ The bricks used for this building were imported with a great number of marked bricks still visible on its outer walls (see fig. 3-16 and 3-17).



Figure 3-16. Heming Hall Kang Mansion.

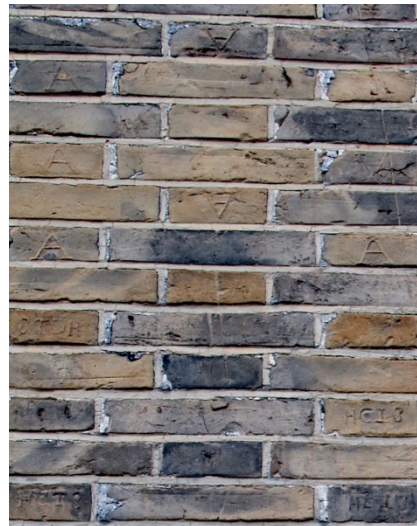


Figure 3-17. Marked Bricks of Heming Hall Kang Mansion.

Source: author's photos, 2018.

219 Suzhou Administration of Cultural Heritage 苏州市文物局 (ed., 2012): *Suiyue jiyi — mingcheng guibao: Suzhou Shi di san ci quanguo wenwu pucha xin faxian xuanbian* 岁月记忆·名城瑰宝: 苏州市第三次全国文物普查新发现选编, p. 47.

220 Information plaque on the building.

These signs are masons' marks which occur on European buildings of different historical periods. Masons' marks were either used to assemble sectional masonry without written instruction (assembly marks) or to identify the work of an individual mason and inform the paymaster of his output (banker marks).²²¹ These masons' marks therefore provide the mansion with scientific value and can inform on the origin of the bricks and their builders.

Cultural Value

Officially listed entities in the Pingjiang Historic Block have cultural value which derives from elements such as a garden, inscription tablets, carvings, ornamentation as well as building names. Classical gardens are rich in cultural connotations as argued in the justification of the World Heritage nomination document.²²² In terms of tangible heritage, the gardens gain cultural value from their basic elements as defined by Liu Dunzhen. Primarily, the **water ponds and rockeries** in both gardens carry deeper symbolic meanings. As complementary elements in *yin* and *yang* cosmological thinking, water and hills represent the totality of nature with hills symbolizing *yang* (upright, solid) and water standing for *yin* (plane, flexible).²²³ The implied meaning of water ponds and rockeries in the garden therefore relates to the Taoist ideal of withdrawing from society with all its pressures and demands to reside in the mountains.²²⁴ In imperial times, scholars and officials often returned to their hometown to follow this ideal due to different reasons, such as refusal to assume an official post, illness, resignation or retirement.

Originally, mountains symbolized by rockeries and monoliths in the garden had a spiritual and metaphysical meaning as living spaces of immortals.²²⁵ In the Tang dynasty, this spiritual devotion to rocks was supplemented by an additional aesthetic dimension and they became much sought-after collectibles.²²⁶ The view of a rockery or monolith in the garden conveyed a feeling of transcending city space and entering nature.²²⁷

221 Alexander, Jennifer S. (2007): "The Introduction and Use of Masons' Marks in Romanesque Buildings in England", pp. 63–81.

222 Ministry of Construction of the People's Republic of China; State Bureau of Cultural Relics of the People's Republic of China (1996): *The Classical Gardens of Suzhou*, p. 114.

223 Keswick, Maggie (1989): *Chinesische Gärten: Geschichte, Kunst und Architektur*, p. 165.

224 Liu, Dunzhen 刘敦楨 (1979): *Suzhou gudian yuanlin* 苏州古典园林, p. 5.

225 Keswick, Maggie (1989): *Chinesische Gärten: Geschichte, Kunst und Architektur*, p. 155.

226 Ibid.

227 Morris, Edwin T. (1983): *The Gardens of China: History, Art and Meanings*, p. 85.

Moreover, as stated in the World Heritage nomination document, the choice and arrangement of plants and rockeries in Suzhou classical gardens connote “the refined taste and the spiritual pursuit of the garden owners”.²²⁸ Thereby, **trees and flowers** symbolize different virtues and character traits, e.g. bamboo symbolizes a noble character and high integrity, while peony is standing for an imposing and dignified person.²²⁹ In addition, the selection of plants can be related to philosophical principles such as *yin* and *yang*. This is exemplified by a winding corridor in the eastern garden of the Couple’s Garden Retreat. Here, a kind of bamboo related to the principle of *yang* is planted on the eastern side of the corridor, while a sort of osmanthus tree corresponding to *yin* has been set on its western side.²³⁰ Consequently, flowers and trees in the Couple’s Garden Retreat have scientific as well as cultural value and increase the significance of the garden.

In the case of Huiyin Garden, only the rockery Xiao Linwu Dong has been preserved. However, the *Pingjiang Gazetteer* records that the garden originally featured ginkgo, Chinese hackberry and wisteria.²³¹ One can further speculate about flowers and plants of the former garden on the basis of the above-mentioned scenic names defined for its eight-view set of landscape scenes. These scenic names comprise willow (*liuyin xi fang* 柳荫系舫), pine tree (*songyin yan qin* 松荫眠琴), lotus (*he’an guan yu* 荷岸观鱼), wisteria (*tengya zhu yue* 藤崖伫月) and palm tree (*zongting ji xue* 棕亭霁雪). Similar to the plants in the Couple’s Garden Retreat, they can carry cultural connotations. The lotus, for example, is appreciated for its ability to grow out of the mud of a pond without becoming tainted with mud itself and therefore connotes a noble character.²³²

The above-mentioned landscape painting techniques, which have been applied to garden design, derive from “freehand brushwork” (*xieyi hua* 写意画) in contrast to “hard-work brush” painting (*gongbi hua* 工笔画). While the “hard-work brush” tradition was practiced by court painters and focuses on meticulous detail, “free-hand brushwork” is related to scholar-painters and can be understood as “writing out one’s ideas”.²³³ Similar to a poem or essay, a “freehand brushwork” painting expresses the emotions of the painter and sets a personal statement.²³⁴

228 Ministry of Construction of the People’s Republic of China; State Bureau of Cultural Relics of the People’s Republic of China (1996): *The Classical Gardens of Suzhou*, p. 115.

229 Ibid., p. 103.

230 Cao, Lindi 曹林娣 (July 24, 2014): “Ninggu de zhihui, aiqing de yuezhang – Ouyuan xieying” 凝固的智慧, 爱情的乐章——耦园撷英, p. 13.

231 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 200.

232 Liu, Dunzhen 刘敦楨 (1979): *Suzhou gudian yuanlin* 苏州古典园林, p. 5.

233 Morris, Edwin T. (1983): *The Gardens of China: History, Art and Meanings*, p. 55.

234 Ibid.

Corresponding to this painting tradition, scholar-painters incorporated “poetic sentiments and artistic conceptions”²³⁵ (*shiqing huayi* 诗情画意) in their garden design. The practice to draw on allusive landscapes and poetry originates from the Tang dynasty when many artists and poets retired from official posts to live in retreat.²³⁶ In order to express the ideals and aspirations of the garden owner, literary connotations were integrated into private gardens by means of **inscriptions**. They usually appear as names on horizontal wooden tablets (*bian’e* 匾额), in horizontal brick carvings (*zhuan’e* 砖额) or stone carvings (*shike* 石刻), as parallel couplets (*duilian* 对联) in vertical format or as poems inscribed on stelae.

The tradition of naming **gardens** as well as their architectural and scenic elements can be traced back to the Qin and Han dynasties.²³⁷ Two important functions of the garden name were to express the garden’s character as well as sentiments and ideals of his owner.²³⁸ One example is the historic name of the Couple’s Garden Retreat, “She Garden” 涉园. This name carries a literary connotation as it was inspired by a verse of the famous Chinese poet Tao Yuanming 陶渊明 (365 ?–427) and reflects the ideal of retiring from official duties and leading a life in retreat.²³⁹

The current name of the site under which it was listed (Ouyuan 耦园) has an equally profound meaning. The character *ou* 耦 is standing for two *si* 耜 (“spade-shaped farming tool”)²⁴⁰ and literally means “to plough side by side”. It originates from a passage of the *Analects of Confucius* (Lunyu 论语). In this passage, Confucius and his disciple pass by two recluses, who are ploughing in their field,

235 Wang, Joseph C. (2005): “House and Garden: Sanctuary for the Body and the Mind”, p. 89.

236 Johnston, Stewart R. (1991): *Scholar gardens of China: a study and analysis of the spatial design of the Chinese private garden*, p. 2.

237 Wang, Joseph C. (2005): “House and Garden: Sanctuary for the Body and the Mind”, p. 93.

238 Ibid.

239 The verse originates from Tao Yuanming’s poem “The Return” (Gui qu lai xi ci 归去来兮辞) and reads: “Every day I stroll in the garden for pleasure” (*yuan ri she yi cheng qu* 园日涉以成趣, transl. after James Robert Hightower). The poem is a piece of fields and garden poetry, describing the ending of one’s official career and the return to one’s fields and garden, respectively. It was written by Tao Yuanming shortly after he resigned from his government post to go back to his native place and live in seclusion. The poem reflects the author’s inner sentiments and informs about his ideals. See: Pike, David L. (ed., 2004): *The medieval era*. In: Damrosch, David (ed.): *The Longman Anthology of World Literature*, pp. 136–137.

240 The meaning of *ougeng* 耦耕 (“paired tillage”) remains unclear. Some scholars interpret it as a practice of two men digging in parallel with two spades while others translate it as tillage implement with two spades. See: Jun, Wenren: *Ancient Chinese Encyclopedia of Technology: Translation and Annotation of the Kaogong ji (the Artificer’s Record)*, chap. 21, footnote 27.

which reads: “Chang Ju, Jie Ni ou er geng” 长沮，桀溺耦而耕 (Chang Ju and Jie Ni were at work in the field together²⁴¹). Successively, the term became a symbol among men of letters to retreat in order to work their fields and gardens.²⁴²

In the name of the mansion, the practice therefore reflects an aspiration of the owner Shen Bingcheng and his wife to withdraw from society and live in seclusion. Both had written poems referring to the ideal of *xieyin* 偕隐 (“to live together in seclusion”) before the construction of the mansion. The title of Shen Bingcheng’s poem further includes the explicit term *ougeng*.²⁴³

As mentioned above, names were not only chosen for the garden itself but also the architectural and scenic elements inside the garden, corresponding to the vistas composed by the garden designer. The purpose of these names was to enhance the aesthetic effect of a scene²⁴⁴, and, in the case of literary connotations, “the refined literary ambiance of the garden”²⁴⁵. Therefore, names were chosen in relation to the setting of the respective architectural and scenic elements, drawing on scholarly images which connoted a certain characteristic or ideal.²⁴⁶

For example, inscriptions carrying tree and flower names connote the same virtues and character traits as associated with the physical plants such as a noble character and high integrity symbolized by bamboo and peony standing for an imposing and dignified person.²⁴⁷ In the Classical Gardens, they appear as “Bamboo Pavilion” in the Humble Administrator’s Garden (Zhuzheng yuan 拙政园) and “Peony Study” in the Master-of-Nets Garden (Wangshi yuan 网师园).²⁴⁸ According to Wang, literary inscriptions are integral parts of gardens which complement

241 Translated after James Legge. The transcription of names has been changed into Pinyin.

See: Legge, James (1960): *Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, and the Doctrine of the Mean*, p. 333.

242 Cao, Lindi 曹林娣 (July 24, 2014): “Ninggu de zhihui, aiqing de yuezhang – Ouyuan xieying” 凝固的智慧，爱情的乐章——耦园撷英, p. 13.

243 “Ouyuan” 耦园 [The Couple’s Garden Retreat], (May 11, 2017), Suzhou Municipal Garden and Landscape Administration Bureau, Online. For an explanation of the term *ougeng*, see footnote 240.

244 Morris, Edwin T. (1983): *The Gardens of China: History, Art and Meanings*, p. 78.

245 Ministry of Construction of the People’s Republic of China; State Bureau of Cultural Relics of the People’s Republic of China (1999): *The Classical Gardens of Suzhou*, p. 12.

246 Ibid.

247 Ministry of Construction of the People’s Republic of China; State Bureau of Cultural Relics of the People’s Republic of China (1996): *The Classical Gardens of Suzhou*, p. 103.

248 Ibid.

its scenes to guide the visitor and provide a greater appreciation of the landscape.²⁴⁹ They further increase the interrelatedness of architectural and scenic elements with their setting and therefore are an important attribute for their integrity.

Moreover, poetry was employed to add meaning to the scenes.²⁵⁰ In literary gatherings, the naming of scenic elements was practiced by scholars as demonstrations of their literary and calligraphic skills.²⁵¹ This is reflected in the artistic character of inscriptions in private gardens, which are written in calligraphic form. The inscription tablets therefore enhance the authenticity of the elements twofold. Primarily, they bestow authenticity as tangible carriers of these intangible names which have cultural value. Secondly, the name giver enhances the authenticity of elements by inscribing the name in his own handwriting, which associates the element with the inscriber and thereby further increases its significance.

The Couple's Garden Retreat features a great number of horizontal wooden tablets, horizontal brick carvings and parallel couplets. Their inscriptions are related to works of poetry but also the setting and carry a great variety of cultural connotations. One example for an inscription deriving from poetry is "My Love"-Pavilion (Wu'ai ting 吾爱亭). This name derives from the first poem of the collection *Du Shanhai jing* 读山海经 (On Reading the "Seas and Mountains Classic") by Tao Yuanming.²⁵² The verse reads: "The birds rejoice to have a refuge there, and I too love my home" (众鸟欣所托, 吾亦爱吾庐)²⁵³. The name, again, expresses the in Tao Yuanming's poems often thematized ideal to lead a life in retreat and close to nature.

Another pavilion, the "Contemplating the Moon"-Pavilion, was named after its location next to the "Reception of the Moon"-Pond. The reflection of the moon in the water of the pond can be well contemplated from inside this pavilion.²⁵⁴ Thereby, the moon is the intermediate element connecting the pavilion to the pond. In contrast, the name of the "Sun and Moonlight Tower" (Shuang zhao lou 双照楼) derives from a work related to Buddhist worship (*Chanhui lifo wen* 忏悔礼佛文) by Wang Sengru 王僧孺 (ca. 463-ca. 521), a writer of the Liang period in the Southern

249 Wang, Joseph C. (2005): "House and Garden: Sanctuary for the Body and the Mind", pp. 92, 94.

250 Ibid.

251 Ibid., p. 94.

252 Suzhou Municipal Garden and Landscape Administration Bureau 苏州市园林和绿化管理局 (ed., 2013): *Ouyuan zhi* 耦园志, p. 75.

253 Translation after James Robert Hightower. See: Pike, David L. (ed., 2004): *The medieval era*. In: Damrosch, David (ed.): *The Longman Anthology of World Literature*, p. 139.

254 Suzhou Municipal Garden and Landscape Administration Bureau 苏州市园林和绿化管理局 (ed., 2013): *Ouyuan zhi* 耦园志, p. 74.

dynasties (420–581).²⁵⁵ In relation to the characteristics of the “tower” which has windows on three sides and is illuminated by both sun and moonlight, the expression “elucidate both truth and falsity” (*zhen jia shuang zhao* 真假双照) from the above-mentioned work was chosen as its name. Moreover, the character *shuang* 双 (“couple”) symbolizes the garden owner and his wife and connotes their aspiration for enlightenment.²⁵⁶

The inscriptions of scene names and parallel couplets which have been preserved in the Couple’s Garden Retreat and of which their origin is known were done by famous calligraphers. Of the whole range of wooden name tablets, four are original pieces. The oldest tablet of a cottage named “Amongst the Mountains and Waters” (*Shanshui jian* 山水间) dates from the Kangxi era and was inscribed by famous calligrapher Shen Quan 沈荃 (1624–1684).²⁵⁷ Another structure with the name “Thatched Cottage at the City Corner” (*Chengqu caotang* 城曲草堂) features an inscription written by Liang Tongshu 梁同书 (1723–1815), one of the Four Great Qing Calligraphers (*Qing sijia* 清四家).²⁵⁸ The inscription tablet of the Old House with Woven Curtains was done by He Shaoji 何绍基 (1799–1873), a successful candidate in the highest imperial examinations (*jinshi* 进士), poet, painter and calligrapher.²⁵⁹

The fourth inscription tablet of the Sun and Moonlight Tower has not been signed and its origin is therefore unknown. As the first two inscriptions have been written before the construction of the Couple’s Garden Retreat, it can be assumed that they were collected by the owner, similar to works of calligraphy written on paper. Similarly, the parallel couplets hung up on the pillars of the different built structures are works of well-known calligraphers. In addition to the name tablet by Liang Tongshu, there are couplets written by the other three “Qing Masters”, Wang Wenzhi 王文治 (1730–1802), Liu Yong 刘墉 (1719–1804) and Weng Fanggang 翁方纲 (1733–1818).²⁶⁰ The Couple’s Garden Retreat further features a stele with an inscription and painting by Wang Wenzhi. After the couple had acquired his poem and painting, they had it carved in stone and each added their own inscriptions and seal underneath.²⁶¹

255 Suzhou Municipal Garden and Landscape Administration Bureau 苏州市园林和绿化管理局 (ed., 2013): *Ouyuan zhi* 耦园志, p. 22.

256 Ibid.

257 Ibid., p. 72.

258 Ibid., p. 76.

259 Ibid., p. 71.

260 Ibid., pp. 82–87.

261 Ibid., pp. 90–91.

Private gardens may further have scientific and cultural value related to their layout as shall equally be illustrated by example of the Couple's Garden Retreat. The overall layout of this mansion is related to cultural concepts and, again, reflects the aspirations of its owner. The site of the Couple's Garden Retreat has an almost rectangular form, covering a total area of 7917 m² with 4496 m² of constructed area.²⁶² It is located at the eastern end of the Pingjiang Historic Block and is surrounded by canals on three sides. Only the western side of the mansion borders on a roadway. In the *Craft of Gardens*, Ji Cheng writes that if a garden is to be constructed within the city, it "must be in a place as secluded and out of the way as possible".²⁶³ Set up in a remote corner of the block with limited accessibility, this location symbolizes the intention of its owner who retired from his official post to live in seclusion.

Moreover, the notion of "couple" is reflected in numerous aspects of the residence. As the character *ou* 耦 in the garden name is a homonym of the character *ou* 偶, it can carry the meaning of a "pair" or a "couple". This meaning has also been manifested in the arrangement of architectural and scenic elements in the mansion. Firstly, it is designed as a mansion with two gardens, an eastern and a western garden. The smaller western garden is related to the philosophical concept of *yin* 阴 and its corresponding implications, such as feminine, dark or autumn.²⁶⁴ The eastern garden is twice the size of its western counterpart and symbolizes the characteristics of the concept of *yang* 阳, such as male, light or spring.²⁶⁵ Combined in one residence, the two gardens to the left and right form a complementary "couple" and transform the residence into a microcosm.

Secondly, the landscape architecture and environmental elements in the garden are arranged in correspondence to one another. While there is a yellow stone rockery in the center of the eastern garden, the western garden features a limestone rockery. Another example is the "Reception of the Moon"-Pond in the eastern garden which corresponds to a well in the western garden.²⁶⁶ Moreover, the mansion is accessible via two docks in the north and south, which further reflects the traditionally close relationship of Suzhou mansions with bordering water canals.²⁶⁷ Similar "couples" can be found in different forms of location and arrangement throughout the mansion and gardens, be it "high" and "low", "light" and "dark", the cardinal directions such as "east and west" or "north and south".²⁶⁸

262 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路, p. 138.

263 Ji, Cheng (1988): *The Craft of Gardens*, p. 46.

264 Cao, Lindi 曹林娣 (July 24, 2014): "Ninggu de zhihui, aiqing de yuezhang – Ouyuan xieying" 凝固的智慧, 爱情的乐章——耦园撷英, p. 13.

265 Ibid.

266 Ibid.

267 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路, p. 123.

268 Ibid., p. 124.

The gardens gain additional literary significance through garden records (*yuanji* 园记). In the case of the Couple’s Garden Retreat, a description of the landscape and architecture of former She Garden, which corresponds to the eastern garden of the present site, has been handed down in the “Records of She Garden” (*Sheyuan ji* 涉园记) by Cheng Yizeng 程亦增.²⁶⁹ Han Shisheng 韩是升 (1735–1816), father of Qing dynasty writer Han Chong 韩崇 (1783–1860), further wrote a record on the former site of Huiyin Garden which he named after its most elaborate scene “Records of Xiao Linwu” (*Xiao linwu ji* 小林屋记).²⁷⁰

Similar to private gardens, inscription tablets are an important element of **traditional mansions** in the Pingjiang Historic Block. Significant halls and built structures were bestowed with these horizontally inscribed wooden boards which were then hung up under the ceiling inside a building. Inscription tablets are material carriers of hall or building names. As the names on inscription tablets are written in calligraphy, they usually also show the year of inscription, the name of the calligrapher and his seal. One example for such an inscription from the Couple’s Garden Retreat is shown in figure 3-18. It reads the “Twin Mountain Retreat” (*Xieyin shuangshan* 偕隐双山) and again alludes to the notions of “couple” and “leading a life together in seclusion”.



Figure 3-18. Tablet in Sedan-Chair Hall of the Couple’s Garden Retreat.

Source: author’s photo, 2018.

269 Suzhou Municipal Garden and Landscape Administration Bureau 苏州市园林和绿化管理局 (ed., 2013): *Ouyuan zhi* 耦园志, p. 107.

270 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 200.

While hall names of smaller residences are often related to general moral principles or wishes and aspirations of their owners, the main halls of the highest listed mansions carry connotations to literary texts and Chinese classics. The horizontal tablet of the main hall in the residential part of the Couple's Garden Retreat reads "Carrying Wine"-Hall 载酒堂. The name of this hall was selected in relation to a piece of fields and garden poetry by Dai Fugu 戴复古 (1167–after 1248) from the Southern Song dynasty which refers to the unique layout of the mansion with an eastern and a western garden.²⁷¹

Another example is the name of the main hall in Weidao Guan Qian Pan Mansion. Its name "Ligeng Hall" (礼耕堂, "Hall of Etiquette and Ploughing") is an abbreviation of the Pan family motto: "poem and etiquette shall be succeeded by generations, ploughing and reading shall be inherited" (*shi li jishi, geng du chuanjia* 诗礼继世, 耕读传家).²⁷² Hereby, the character *li* 礼 ("ritual, etiquette") originates from an extract of the *Analects of Confucius*.²⁷³ This extract reads: "Fu er wu jiao, moruo fu er hao li" 富而无骄, 莫若富而好礼 ("the rich man who is not proud is not equal to him, who loves the rules of propriety")²⁷⁴ and highlights the significance of decency. The horizontal board with the hall name was inscribed by the contemporaneous and well-known calligrapher Liang Tongshu 梁同书 and has been preserved to the present day.²⁷⁵

Then, the cultural value of officially listed entities equally resides in **carvings and ornamentation**. Regarding brick carvings on storied gateways, the horizontally inscribed characters and surrounding ornamentation are depictions of cultural content and often have a focus on moral education.²⁷⁶ In its period of prosperity when the city underwent great social and economic development, decorative patterns

271 Cao, Lindi 曹林娣 (July 24, 2014): "Ninggu de zhihui, aiqing de yuezhang – Ouyuan xieying" 凝固的智慧, 爱情的乐章——耦园撷英, p. 13.

272 Xu, Jinliang 徐进亮; Ni, Jun 倪峻; Yu Guoxiang 俞国祥; Lu, Jianping 陆建平; Wu Bingsheng 吴炳生 (2011): *Ligeng Tang: Pingjiang Lishi Jiequ Pan zhai* 礼耕堂: 平江历史街区潘宅 [Pingjiang Historic Block Pan Mansion], pp. 39–42; cited in: Xie, Jing; Heath, Tim (2018): *Heritage-led Urban Regeneration in China*, p. 95.

273 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路, p. 131.

274 The entire passage derives from the First Book of the *Analects*: Zi Gong yue: "Pin er wu chan, fu er wu jiao, ruhe?" Zi yue: "Ke ye. Wei ruo pin er le, fu er hao li zhe ye" 子贡曰: "贫而无谄, 富而无骄, 如何?" 子曰: "可也。未若贫而乐, 富而好礼者也。" [Zi Gong said, "What do you pronounce concerning the poor man who yet does not flatter, and the rich man who is not proud?" The Master replied, "They will do; but they are not equal to him, who, though poor, is yet cheerful, and to him, who, though rich, loves the rules of propriety."] Translated after: Legge, James (1960): *Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, and the Doctrine of the Mean*, p. 144.

275 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路, p. 131.

276 Zhang, Xu 张旭; Zhou, Yue 周越 (2012): "Suzhou minju menlou zhuandiao zhuangshi yishu wenhua tanxi" 苏州民居门楼砖雕装饰艺术文化探析, p. 108.

related to figures well-known for meritorious or exemplary deeds such as Number One Scholars were prevalent.²⁷⁷

One example for a popular motif of brick carvings in the Pingjiang Historic Block is “a carp leaping over the dragon’s gate” (*liyu tiao longmen* 鲤鱼跳龙门). Engraved on an archway in Donghua Qiao Lane Wang Mansion, this carving connotes success in the imperial civil service examinations.²⁷⁸ The carp as most outstanding of all fish symbolizes the Number One Scholar and the dragon’s gate is standing for the imperial palace where the highest civil service examinations were held. In a broader sense, it expresses the wish of the mansion owner that his male offspring would gain fame and fortune in their lives.²⁷⁹ Given the fact that the owner was a wealthy merchant, it may further express the wish that his descendants would pursue a scholarly career, one of the socially most respected career paths at the time.

Another example is the first engraved archway in front of the sedan-chair hall of Weidao Guan Qian Pan Mansion. Its inscription contains the two characters *ju de* 居德 (“to bear a sense of virtue”), which express the owner’s wish for the accumulation of “virtuous deeds”.²⁸⁰ The phrase appears in a commentary on the classical Chinese “Book of Changes” (*Zhou yi* 周易), the “Treatise on the Symbolism of the Hexagrams” (*Xiang zhuan* 象传), which has been ascribed to Confucius, and explains hexagram 43 (☱ *guai* 夬). The respective passage reads: “(The trigram representing) heaven and that for the waters of a marsh mounting above it form *guai*. The superior man, in accordance with this, bestows emolument on those below him, and dislikes allowing his gifts to accumulate (undispensed)”.²⁸¹ It further shows ornamentation with a deeper meaning. On the rim of the stone tablet are depicted bats and lotus leaves. While the Chinese characters for bat (*bianfu* 蝙蝠) are homophone to the characters *bian fu* 遍福 (“good fortune everywhere”), the lotus leaf symbolizes an aspiration for “husband and wife living together in harmony” (*fuqi hemu* 夫妻和睦) and a “prospering household” (*jiating xingwang* 家庭兴旺).²⁸²

277 Zhang, Xu 张旭; Zhou, Yue 周越 (2012): “Suzhou minju menlou zhuandiao zhuangshi yishu wenhua tanxi” 苏州民居门楼砖雕装饰艺术文化探析, p. 108.

278 Suzhou Municipal Housing Management Bureau 苏州市房产管理局 (ed., 2004): *Suzhou gu minju* 苏州古民居, p. 33.

279 Ibid.

280 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路, p. 132.

281 “Ze shang yu tian, guai; junzi yi shi lu ji xia, ju de ze ji” 澤上于天，夬；君子以施祿及下，居德則忌。Translated after: Legge, James (1882): *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Confucianism. Part II: The Yi King*, p. 320.

282 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路, p. 132.

The engraved archway in the fourth *jin* is also characterized by its floral depictions. Flowers and plants from all four seasons are engraved above and below the door lintel as well as to both sides, forming sets which usually appear in Chinese painting, such as the “Four Noble Ones” (*mei* 梅 “plum”, *lan* 兰 “orchid”, *zhu* 竹 “bamboo”, *ju* 菊 “chrysanthemum”). In addition to their decorative function, these depictions relate to the noble character of the mansion’s owner and his ambitions.²⁸³ On both sides of the archway are engravings of toads (*chan chu* 蟾蜍), which carry a traditional meaning of auspicious mascots. They are meant to “ward off evil spirits” and to protect the family.²⁸⁴

In addition to ornamental patterns and pictorial elements, decoration can occur in the form of single characters. The central entrance gate of the Anhui Guild Hall and the two gates to its left and right feature such ornamental characters. From east to west, the three characters *fu* 福, *lu* 禄 and *shou* 寿 are embossed onto their doors (see fig. 3-19 and 3-20). Furthermore, there are brick carvings above the door lintels.²⁸⁵



Figure 3-19. Fu-Character Ornamentation.



Figure 3-20. Shou-Character Ornamentation.

Source: author’s photos, 2018.

283 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路, p. 135.

284 Ibid.

285 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 232.

The Quan-Jin Guild Hall is equally significant for its typical Qing dynasty ornamentation in the form of wooden and brick carvings. These either refer to the building's function as theater, showing reliefs of drama lines on the wooden beams and enclosing walls or other popular ornamentation patterns.²⁸⁶ A central decorated structure of the site is the stage of the opera building. Its overhanging elements at the front of the stage are carved in the shape of floral baskets and the caisson ceiling is richly ornamented with wooden carvings and colored decorative patterns revolving around its center.²⁸⁷

Moreover, a particular form of record exists for the Former Residence of Pan Shi'en. In this case, evidence of the historical mansion has been preserved in a painting. When the family moved from their former residence in Daru Lane to Niuja Lane in 1809, a first painting named "Painting of Lindun New Mansion"²⁸⁸ (*Lindun xinju tu* 临顿新居图) was created.²⁸⁹ The *District Gazetteer* states that it was ordered by Pan Shi'en's elder brother, Pan Zengyi 潘曾沂.²⁹⁰

While nothing is known about the whereabouts of this first and a second painting, a third painting named "Third Painting of Lindun New Mansion" (*Lindun xinju di san tu* 临顿新居第三图) by painter Zhang Yin 张崑 (1761–1829) has been preserved and is now part of the Suzhou Museum collection.²⁹¹ In addition, a description of the mansion with its garden as shown in the paintings has then been composed by Qing dynasty poet and book collector Shi Yunyu 石韞玉 (1756–1837) under the name "Record of the Painting of Lindun New Mansion" (*Lindun xinju tu ji* 临顿新居图记).²⁹²

On one hand, the example of this Former Residence of Pan Shi'en illustrates how tangible heritage in the form of buildings and a garden can possess additional cultural value by becoming the theme of an artwork. On the other hand, it shows that thereby the significance of more splendid mansions with influential owners such as officials or local magnates increases, because they have been considered

286 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 232.

287 Ibid.

288 The mansion is located at the crossroads of Niuja Lane with present-day Lindun Road 临顿路.

289 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 240.

290 Ibid.

291 "Suzhou Bowuguan guancang wenwu xilie congshu" bianji weiyuanhui 《苏州博物馆馆藏文物系列丛书》编辑委员会 (ed., 2006): *Suzhou Bowuguan cang Ming Qing shuhua* 苏州博物馆藏明清书画 [Calligraphy and Paintings from the Ming and Qing Dynasties Collected by Suzhou Museum], pp. 178–179.

292 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 240.

significant enough to be recorded or their owners had the resources to document their mansions themselves, as in the above-mentioned case.

3.2 Conservation and Management

Suzhou owes the maintenance of its basic 2500-year-old layout of the historic city to its early beginning of conservation work. In particular, the Pingjiang Historic Block's traditional spatial structure and great amount of local-style built heritage was maintained through its early inclusion in Suzhou's development plans. While Suzhou Government had started treatment of individual sites in the block since the 1980s (first treatment of the Couple's Garden Retreat's eastern garden already in 1960), a comprehensive conservation project targeting the block's central road was only initiated in 2002. This chapter focuses on conservation initiatives from this early period of the 1980s to the present as well as the usage of treated and protected built structures.

3.2.1 Local Conservation System

Suzhou has abundant scenic, cultural and historic resources, which are concentrated in the historic city and further spread across the greater municipal area. By 2013, there were officially listed eight World Heritage Sites, 24 officially protected entities on a national level, 25 provincial-level entities, 100 municipal-level entities, 235 controlled and protected entities, and 1179 registered cultural relic spots (*wenwu denglu dian* 文物登录点) located in the historic city.²⁹³

Although Suzhou was one of the earliest Chinese cities to turn to conservation as part of its development strategy, two different positions emerged in the 1970s with regard to the scope of its conservation. While one approach focused on the conservation of "spots", single scenic and historic sites, whereby the remaining urban fabric should be opened up for development, the second approach aimed at the conservation of the historic city as an entity.²⁹⁴ The final policy decision on

293 Suzhou Academy of Planning and Design Co., Ltd. 苏州规划设计研究院股份有限公司 (drafted 2013): *Suzhou lishi wenhua mingcheng baohu guihua (2013–2030)* 苏州历史文化名城保护规划 (2013–2030) [Conservation Plan for Suzhou Historically and Culturally Famous City (2013–2030)], Online.

294 Ruan, Yisan (1993): "The conservation of Chinese historic cities", p. 853.

which approach to pursue was made by the State Council. In 1981, Suzhou was designated as “Scenic Tourist City” (*fengjing liuyou cheng* 风景旅游城)²⁹⁵ and one of four national cities with a priority on environmental protection.²⁹⁶

Therewith, the city’s path of development was directed towards the second approach in accordance with the concept of HCF Cities and a stratified conservation of not only “spots” but the overall city layout. Accordingly, one year later, Suzhou was included in the first batch of National HCF Cities. A comprehensive **development plan** was drafted for Suzhou, which was approved by the State Council in 1986 and, apart from the protection of the historic city, provided for the establishment of new urban areas.²⁹⁷

Following the planning scheme, two new urban areas have been constructed to both sides of the historic city. Suzhou New Area Industrial Zone 苏州高新区 to the west was set up in 1990.²⁹⁸ Four years later, Suzhou Industrial Park 苏州工业园区 was developed as joint venture with Singapore Government to the east of the historic city.²⁹⁹ The State Council’s policy to protect the environment in residential and scenic tourist areas as well as such areas where water sources are preserved, determined that pollution caused by factories must be controlled or the factories closed down.³⁰⁰ In order to conserve the overall structure and historic townscape of Suzhou as historic and scenic city, factories were moved and residents relocated from the city center to these new urban areas.³⁰¹

Suzhou’s city planning for the years 1996–2010 covers three spatial tiers, the municipal area, the central city and the historic city. Three years after historic and cultural protected areas had primarily been included in the Master Plan of Beijing, Suzhou followed by designating three areas. The scope of protection in relation to its function as National HCF City is defined as “one city, two routes and three

295 Huang, Mingjie 黄铭杰 (1990): “Qiantan Suzhou gucheng de baohu yu gaizao” 浅谈苏州古城的保护与改造 [A brief discussion on the protection and transformation of Suzhou Historic City], p. 26.

296 The other three cities were Beijing and the “historical and scenic cities” Hangzhou and Guilin. See: Folsom, Ralph H.; Minan, John H. (ed., 1989): *Law in the People’s Republic of China: Commentary, Readings and Materials*, p. 499.

297 Huang, Mingjie 黄铭杰 (1990): “Qiantan Suzhou gucheng de baohu yu gaizao” 浅谈苏州古城的保护与改造, p. 26.

298 Carroll, Peter J. (2006): *Between Heaven and Modernity: Reconstructing Suzhou, 1895–1937*, p. 245.

299 Ibid.

300 Folsom, Ralph H.; Minan, John H. (ed., 1989): *Law in the People’s Republic of China: Commentary, Readings and Materials*, p. 499.

301 Ruan, Yisan (1993): “The conservation of Chinese historic cities”, p. 853.

areas” (*yi cheng, er xian, san pian* 一城、二线、三片).³⁰² Thereby, the “city” refers to the historic city inside the boundaries of the outer city moat. The two routes “Shantang Route” 山塘线 and “Shangtang Route” 上塘线 proceed from the north-western and western part of the historic city whereby Shantang Route leads to “Tiger Hill Mountain” 虎丘山 and Shangtang Route crosses “Lingering Garden” 留园, one of the Suzhou Classical Gardens, up to Hanshan Temple 寒山寺 (see fig. 3-21, ②).³⁰³

Accordingly, the three areas included in the general protection framework are Tiger Hill Area, Lingering Garden Area and Hanshan Temple Area. Suzhou’s city plan from 1996 shows that the municipality followed the approach to conserve the historic city as an entity and that protection was not limited to individual sites or single “spots” but expanded to routes and areas. In addition to the above-mentioned routes and areas forming the conservation framework around the historic city, the planning designated protected routes and areas within its boundaries. These comprise construction control zones along historic water canals and around officially protected entities³⁰⁴ as well as the Pingjiang Historic Block which has been marked as an area with a major focus on conservation.³⁰⁵

A further differentiation of protection categories in accordance with the conservation system of HCF Cities was realized in the following **master plan for the years 2013–2030**. While the three spatial tiers have been maintained, conservation targets and strategies defined for every tier are more precise. The first tier, the municipal area, covers the protection of Suzhou’s natural setting, which includes surrounding mountains and water systems, seven HCF Towns and 14 HCF Villages of different administrative levels, officially listed sites and environmental elements as well as intangible cultural heritage.³⁰⁶

The central city on the second tier further covers the conservation of the landscape directly surrounding the historic city, including intangible aspects such as its connectedness to several lakes or an unblocked view of Tiger Hill Mountain. Furthermore, structural elements including historic waterways such as the Grand

302 Suzhou Municipal People’s Government 苏州市人民政府 (ed., 1996): *Suzhou Shi chengshi zongti guihua (1996–2010)* 苏州市城市总体规划 (1996–2010) [Suzhou Comprehensive City Plan (1996–2010)], Online.

303 Ibid.

304 Ibid.

305 Xia, Xiaoming; Ma, Yan (2009): “Suzhou Pingjiang jiequ baohu zhong wenhua baohu de sikao” 苏州平江街区保护中文化保护的思考 [Reflections on cultural conservation regarding the conservation of Suzhou Pingjiang Block], p. 22.

306 Suzhou Academy of Planning and Design Co., Ltd. 苏州规划设计研究院股份有限公司 (drafted 2013): *Suzhou lishi wenhua mingcheng baohu guihua (2013–2030)* 苏州历史文化名城保护规划 (2013–2030), Online.

Canal, historic streets and Mudu 木渎 National HCF Town are protected on this tier, as well as, again, officially listed sites and environmental elements.³⁰⁷

The third tier comprises the historic city with its overall spatial structure and historic townscape. The 1996 framework of “one city, two routes and three areas” has been differentiated to “two circular routes, three straight routes, nine areas and numerous spots” (*liang huan, san xian, jiu pian, duo dian* 二环、三线、九片、多点), now covering additional protection areas within the historic city, construction control zones and individual sites. The distribution of these heritage categories is illustrated in figure 3-21.

The two circular routes refer to one route along the city moat (blue) and another inner-city circular route along several roads (pink). The three straight routes comprise the Shantang Route and Shangtang Route to the northwest and west of the historic city (two routes of 1996 framework) as well as a central west-east route (yellow). Accordingly, the nine areas include the three areas located outside of the historic city (three areas of 1996 framework) and six inner-city areas, among them the Pingjiang Historic Block in the lower north-eastern part of the historic city. Finally, the single spots refer to preserved city gates, pagodas, classical gardens as well as contemporary architecture (orange).

Similar to the other two tiers, conservation further covers officially listed sites and environmental elements, which are located inside the historic city. Moreover, the plan includes traditional dwelling houses, which are part of the historic townscape, as conservation targets.³⁰⁸ Of the nine greater protected areas shown in fig. 3-21, five are listed historic and cultural blocks as defined in the HCF conservation system. In addition, there are a great number of “historic areas” (*lishi di-duan* 历史地段).³⁰⁹

A comparison of Suzhou’s subsequent comprehensive city plans shows a great increase of conservation targets over time as well as an expansion of content regarding the different tiers. The specification of the HCF City on a conceptual level is further reflected in the gradual differentiation of categories in Suzhou’s conservation process such as from protection areas to historic and cultural blocks. While the city plan from 1996 still proceeded from “one city”, the current master plan is based on the integration of its different components (spots, routes, areas).

307 Suzhou Academy of Planning and Design Co., Ltd. 苏州规划设计研究院股份有限公司 (drafted 2013): *Suzhou lishi wenhua mingcheng baohu guihua (2013–2030)* 苏州历史文化名城保护规划 (2013–2030), Online.

308 Ibid.

309 Ibid.



Figure 3-21. Suzhou Conservation Planning (2013–2030).

Source: author's draft. Information from: Suzhou Academy of Planning and Design Co., Ltd. 苏州规划设计研究院股份有限公司 (drafted 2013): *Suzhou lishi wenhua mingcheng baohu guihua (2013–2030)* 苏州历史文化名城保护规划 (2013–2030), Online. Map data from © OpenStreetMap contributors, 2020, available from <https://www.openstreet-map.org/>, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

Map Key

- ① Huqiu Area 虎丘片
- ② Hanshan Area 寒山片
- ③ Xiliu Area 西留片
- ④ Changtao Area 阊桃片
- ⑤ Zhuoyuan Area 拙园片

- ⑥ Yiguan Area 怡观片
- ⑦ Pingjiang Area 平江片
- ⑧ Tianci Area 天赐片
- ⑨ Panmen Area 盘门片

- protection area
- street
- waterway

The **Pingjiang Historic Block** was primarily defined as a protected area of the historic city in Suzhou's development plan from 1986.³¹⁰ With a basically unaltered spatial structure and great amount of formerly splendid mansions as well as traditional local-style dwelling houses, the area was then designated as historic and cultural block in Suzhou's current conservation plan (see above).³¹¹ As one of the earliest cities protected in the framework of National HCF Cities, Suzhou's local conservation system and strategies have to be continuously adapted to national guidelines and regulations. The local designation of building types therefore slightly differs from the general designations as employed in the nationwide Planning Regulations from 2005.

The built heritage in the Pingjiang Historic Block includes officially protected entities (*wenwu baohu danwei* 文物保护单位), controlled and protected buildings (*kongzhi baohu jianzhu* 控制保护建筑) as well as registered buildings found in the Third National Cultural Relics Survey (*wenwu pucha xin faxian wenwu dian* 文物普查新发现文物点). Furthermore, there are buildings which have not been registered but represent the historic townscape and show local characteristics.

In accordance with the national conservation system, **officially protected entities** are listed on three administrative levels: national, provincial and municipal level. These heritage sites have to be evaluated by conservation experts in designation rounds and subsequently promulgated as officially listed sites. Following the regulation of the "Four Prerequisites", the sites are then provided with an official plaque. As immovable cultural relics, they are further protected by the Cultural Relics Protection Law.

The Pingjiang Historic Block comprises officially listed sites of every administrative level in the conservation system. So far, there have been listed 18 officially protected entities in the block (see appendix A.3 and A.9). The Couple's Garden Retreat is one of three national-level and highest listed sites. Simultaneously, it is part of the Classical Gardens of Suzhou classified as World Heritage, which have been expanded from their original entry in 1997 and include the garden since 2000. The other site with a double status is the former guild hall of Shanxi 山西 merchants "Quan-Jin Guild Hall" 全晋会馆. It became a national-level protected entity in 2006 and was included as heritage site of the Grand Canal into the World

310 Gu, Xiumei 顾秀梅; Hu, Jinhua 胡金华 (2015): *Suzhou Pingjiang lishi wenhua jiequ guanli he fazhan yanjiu* 苏州平江历史文化街区管理和研究 [Research on Management and Development of Suzhou Pingjiang Historic and Cultural Block], p. 14.

311 Suzhou Academy of Planning and Design Co., Ltd. 苏州规划设计研究院股份有限公司 (drafted 2013): *Suzhou lishi wenhua mingcheng baohu guihua (2013-2030)* 苏州历史文化名城保护规划 (2013-2030), Online.

Heritage List in course of the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee, held in Doha, Qatar in June 2014.³¹²

At the time when the seventh batch of protected heritage sites was promulgated by Suzhou City in 2014, 13 sites located in the Pingjiang Historic and Cultural Block were listed on a municipal level.³¹³ Four of these sites had formerly been tagged as controlled and protected buildings and upgraded to heritage sites in the same round (Zhong Zhangjia Lane Shen Mansion 中张家巷沈宅, Wang Family Songfen Yizhuang 汪氏诵芬义庄, Deng Family Ancestral Hall 邓氏祠堂 and Niujia Lane Fang Mansion 钮家巷方宅).³¹⁴

Controlled and protected buildings are also registered on a municipal level. This group refers to buildings which have passed a similar process of evaluation and verification by Suzhou Government, but have not (yet) been promulgated as officially protected entities. Therefore, they are primarily registered as controlled and protected buildings and equally tagged with an official plaque.³¹⁵ They correspond to “protected buildings”, the second type in the Planning Regulations (see chapter 2.4), and therefore have the legal status of immovable cultural relics.

While officially protected entities are a nationwide category, the controlled and protected buildings were introduced as early as 1983 into the heritage conservation system in Suzhou as a local concept.³¹⁶ At the time, these buildings were still promulgated under the authority of Suzhou Construction Committee 建设委员会 and the Cultural Relics Management Committee 文物管理委员会. Responsibility then shifted to Suzhou Government which promulgated a first batch of 200 controlled and protected buildings in 2003 and another 50 buildings in a second batch one year later.³¹⁷

With the coming rounds of assessment on municipal, provincial and national level, the controlled and protected buildings can be upgraded to officially protected entities on these different levels. Exemplarily, when the sixth batch of officially protected entities was assessed by Jiangsu Province in 2006, two controlled

312 “China Kunqu Opera Museum” (March 31, 2016), Bureau of Culture, Broadcast and Publication of Suzhou, Online.

313 Suzhou Municipal People’s Government 苏州市人民政府 (June 30, 2014): *Shi zheng-fu guanyu gongbu Suzhou Shi di qi pi wenwu baohu danwei he di si pi kongzhi baohu jianzhu de tongzhi* 市政府关于公布苏州市第七批文物保护单位和第四批控制保护建筑的通知 [Circular by the Municipal Government on the promulgation of Suzhou’s seventh batch of officially protected entities and fourth batch of controlled and protected buildings], Online.

314 Ibid.

315 PBCP (2004), p. 11.

316 Shen, Qingnian 沈庆年 (ed., 2012): *Gucheng yizhu: Suzhou kongbao jianzhu tanyou* 古城遗珠: 苏州控保建筑探幽, p. 212.

317 Ibid.

and protected buildings from Suzhou were upgraded to provincial-level listed sites. And another 11 buildings became officially protected entities when the City of Suzhou promulgated its sixth batch of municipal-level sites in 2009.³¹⁸ The controlled and protected buildings registered by Suzhou make up the largest group of officially registered sites and amounted to 40 buildings with the fourth promulgation in 2014.³¹⁹

Buildings found in the Third National Cultural Relics Survey have been registered by Suzhou Government and included in the block's conservation plan but have not been tagged with an official plaque. This category relates to historical buildings which constitute the historic townscape but are not covered by the Cultural Relics Protection Law. Consequently, these buildings are most vulnerable to demolition in the course of development projects or other interventions. In the current conservation planning by Suzhou Planning Bureau, 71 buildings have been marked³²⁰ as historical buildings which have been found in the Third National Cultural Relics Survey and are protected by the municipal government.

Since the beginning of the 1980s and its inclusion in the HCF City conservation system, Suzhou has considered the conservation of local cultural heritage in its development plans. These plans reflect the increasing specification of the HCF City concept and related heritage categories as well as its implementation on a local level. While earlier planning proceeded from the historic city as protected entity, comparable to an individual site, the current plan foresees a more diversified conservation while maintaining the overall structure and historic townscape of the historic city. The plan is further not limited to the historic city but aims at an integration of protection areas, routes and spots on all three spatial tiers.

318 Shen, Qingnian 沈庆年 (ed., 2012): *Gucheng yizhu: Suzhou kongbao jianzhu tanyou* 古城遗珠: 苏州控保建筑探幽, p. 212.

319 Suzhou Municipal People's Government 苏州市人民政府 (June 30, 2014): *Shi zheng-fu guanyu gongbu Suzhou Shi di qi pi wenwu baohu danwei he di si pi kongzhi baohu jianzhu de tongzhi* 市政府关于公布苏州市第七批文物保护单位和第四批控制保护建筑的通知, Online.

320 Suzhou Academy of Planning and Design Co., Ltd. 苏州规划设计研究院股份有限公司 (drafted 2014): "Baohu guihua tu er" 保护规划图二, in: *Suzhou Pingjiang lishi wenhua jiequ baohu guihua* 苏州平江历史文化街区保护规划, Online.

3.2.2 Conservation Plan

The current Conservation Plan for the Protection and Improvement of Pingjiang Historic and Cultural Block (hereafter PBCP) was drafted by the National Famous Historical and Cultural Cities Research Center 国家历史文化名城研究中心 affiliated to Tongji University in Shanghai. The research center was established by the Ministry of Construction as a national research institution on heritage conservation in Chinese cities.³²¹ It is substantially involved in the development of the HCF City conservation system since 1980 and drafted conservation plans for more than half of the national-level HCF Cities and Towns/Villages and historic and cultural blocks in overall China.³²² In addition to Shanghai Tongji Urban Planning and Design Institute, the work of the center is supported by the Ruan Yisan Heritage Foundation.³²³

The conservation plan for the Pingjiang Historic and Cultural Block is based on scientific research and proceeds from an investigation of the block's historical development as well as an examination of its current state.³²⁴ In addition to several national, provincial and municipal plans and regulations, the conservation plan names the World Heritage Convention and the China Principles as reference documents.³²⁵ It therefore exceeds the realms of national conservation regulations and additionally commits itself to the compliance with international standards. Moreover, the plan understands conservation as a long-term process and is based on the assumption that conservation and development are not in conflict with one another but mutually related and complementary.³²⁶ Therefore, it pursues a dual strategy of block **conservation** and **revitalization**. Conservation shall not be limited to individual and dispersed historic and cultural sites but focus on the entire historic landscape.³²⁷ This perspective reflects the paradigm shift from cultural relics protection to broader categories of cultural heritage similar to the concept of the Historic Urban Landscape (see chapter 2.1).

In terms of **conservation**, the plan primarily determines four conservation principles which correspond to internationally established principles and treatment

321 “Guojia lishi wenhua mingcheng yanjiu zhongxin” 国家历史文化名城研究中心 [National Famous Historical and Cultural Cities Research Center], (March 7, 2016), Shanghai Tongji Urban Planning & Design Institute Co., Ltd., Online.

322 Ibid.

323 Ibid.

324 Comm PBCP (2004), pp. 8–41.

325 PBCP (2004), p. 3; Comm PBCP (2004), p. 65.

326 PBCP (2004), p. 4.

327 Comm PBCP (2004), p. 52.

interventions: authenticity, integrity, readability (explanation below) and sustainability. In this context, **authenticity** (*yuanzhenxing* 原真性) is defined as:

保护体现街区历史文化价值的真实的历史原物，保护其所遗存的全部历史信息。³²⁸

“protection of historically original substance, which is genuine and reflects the historical and cultural values of the block, as well as the protection of all its remaining historical information”.

The first part of this definition is closely related to the Venice Charter and refers to authenticity in materials and substance. The second part determines the protection of all preserved historical information related to a property. This includes further attributes, such as authenticity in form and design or location and setting, which have first been introduced with the Nara Document on Authenticity (1994, see chapter 2.3) and later included into the UNESCO Operational Guidelines.

Integrity has been translated as “entirety” (*zhengtixing* 整体性) and is specified as:

保护历史街区整体格局和风貌，保护区内所有历史文化遗存及其所属的环境，保护全面的物质文化遗存和非物质文化遗产。³²⁹

“protection of the historic block’s overall structure and townscape, protection of all historical and cultural remains and their related environment inside the block, as well as protection of the entirety of tangible and intangible cultural remains”.

This definition of integrity reflects the three tiers of the HCF City concept with the spatial structure and townscape (historic and cultural block), all historical and cultural remains (e.g. officially protected entities, historical buildings, environmental elements) and the entirety of tangible and intangible cultural remains (HCF City). Moreover, the environment of these remains shall be protected, following the principle of the setting, which underlines the understanding of the block as an urban landscape.

The third principle, **readability** (*keduxing* 可读性), refers to the protection of cultural heritage from different historical periods which reflects the characteristic historical and cultural background of these periods. Finally, the **sustainability** principle (*kechixuxing* 可持续性) emphasizes that conservation is a long-term process, whereby an integrated development shall be realized which is beneficial for society, the environment, the economy and culture.³³⁰

328 PBCP (2004), p. 4.

329 Ibid.

330 Ibid., p. 5.

As discernible in the definition of the integrity principle, the conservation plan considers different tiers of cultural heritage as they can appear in an HCF City, including the historic and cultural block as well as officially protected entities. Concerning the tier of the **historic and cultural block**, conservation focuses on the spatial structure and historic townscape, as well as historical environmental elements (*lishi huanjing yaosu* 历史环境要素) and intangible cultural remains (*fei wuzhi wenhua yicun* 非物质文化遗产).

Thereby, historical environmental elements are defined as block components other than buildings which constitute the historic townscape, such as bridges, wells or docks,³³¹ complying to the category as it has later been included in the Drafting Requirements (2012). With regard to intangible cultural remains, the plan lists local culture and arts as well as oral and other forms of intangible heritage with local characteristics, such as traditional opera, crafts and industries. Moreover, historical names of sites, streets and bridges are seen as important intangible heritage which shall be recovered and maintained.³³²

In terms of non-listed heritage buildings, the plan differentiates controlled and protected buildings from historical buildings. Historical buildings are defined as such which were constructed at least 30 years ago and which carry historical, artistic and scientific values, thereby reflecting the historic townscape. The definition further clarifies that controlled and protected buildings can be understood as historical buildings whose values are more prominent.³³³ Vernacular buildings, which do not reflect the historic townscape and local characteristics, is referred to as “non-exceptional buildings” (*yiban jianzhu* 一般建筑).

For its conservation as an integral block, the Pingjiang Historic and Cultural Block is divided into a core protection area (*hexin baohu qu* 核心保护区) and a construction control area (*jianshe kongzhi qu* 建设控制区, see appendix A.3). According to the conservation plan, the core protection area has a size of 47.4 ha and refers to the part of the district where cultural and historical sites are most concentrated.³³⁴ Conservation in this area aims to preserve the spatial structure (*kongjian geju* 空间格局) and the traditional townscape (*chuantong fengmao* 传统风貌) as well as the individual elements which constitute this townscape. It further includes cultural landscapes (*renwen jingguan* 人文景观) and folk customs with local characteristics.³³⁵

331 Comm PBCP (2004), p. 57.

332 PBCP (2004), p. 14.

333 Comm PBCP (2004), p. 57.

334 PBCP (2004), p. 6.

335 Ibid.

The conservation of the core protection area (red) is strictly regulated and has to abide by the Cultural Relics Protection Law. In addition, it has to be carried out according to relevant regulations of Suzhou City.³³⁶ Reparation and restoration need to be guided by an expert and follow the principles of “restore the old as old” (*xiu jiu ru gu* 修旧如故) and of showing a “distinction between the new and the old” (*xin jiu you bie* 新旧有别).³³⁷ While the latter relates to the readability principle, the former originates from Liang Sicheng’s principle *xiu jiu ru jiu* in the course of his introduction of authenticity and minimal intervention to China (see chapter 2.3). Although the plan does not define these terms, the principles underlying the conservation plan have been clearly defined and contradict an interpretation of “restoration to its original state”.

The purpose of the surrounding construction control area (green) with a size of 69.1 ha is described as ensuring the integrity of the core protection area’s appearance and characteristics by means of strict construction regulation.³³⁸ In this area, all kinds of new construction (*xinjian* 新建), transformation (*gaijian* 改建) or expansion (*kuojian* 扩建) need to harmonize with the traditional townscape. Central aspects in this regard are building height, density, structural measurements, materials used for building façades or paint colors.³³⁹ In the case of new construction, the planning department has to give its approval and thereby aims to ensure the maintenance of the area’s traditional townscape. On the basis of strict control of the above-mentioned aspects, this area functions as transitional space between the core protection area and the outer ancient city. Moreover, all factories, storehouses and Cang Street Prison No. 3 仓街第三监狱 must be moved out of the construction control area.³⁴⁰ Consequently, new space will become available where the authors of the conversation plan ascribe responsibility to the local government to primarily use these spaces to provide the block with public facilities, infrastructure and open spaces.³⁴¹

The second tier of cultural heritage in the Pingjiang Historic Block comprises **officially protected entities** of different protection levels. In addition to the core protection area and the construction control area, protection areas and buffer zones are delimited for listed heritage sites.³⁴² The conservation of officially protected entities is also regulated by the Cultural Relics Protection Law. The conservation plan emphasizes that in the conservation process, the historic condition of the site

336 PBCP (2004), p. 6.

337 Ibid.

338 PBCP (2004), p. 7.

339 Ibid.

340 Ibid.

341 Ibid.

342 PBCP (2004), p. 8.

must not be altered (*bu gaibian yuanzhuang* 不改变原状).³⁴³ If treatment is necessary, again, it shall follow the principle of “restore the old as old” (*xiu jiu ru gu* 修旧如故) but further specified as “in order to maintain its genuineness” (*yi cun qi zhen* 以存其真). Thereby, buildings and structures which affect the “original appearance” (*yuanyou fengmao* 原有风貌) of an entity have to be demolished.³⁴⁴

Based on the assessment of the block’s existing building stock, the plan proposes six different **conservation and improvement schemes** (*baohu yu zhengzhi moshi* 保护与整治模式) for the above-mentioned types of heritage buildings and “non-exceptional buildings”. These building types and related protection schemes are displayed in the following:

Table 3-1. Conservation and Improvement Scheme for the Pingjiang Historic Block.

conservation measure	building type	content
1) treatment (<i>xiushan</i> 修缮)	officially protected entities	- maintain the “original appearance” (<i>yuanyang</i> 原样) - give an accurate image of historical remains
	controlled and protected buildings	- maintain the “original appearance” (<i>yuanyang</i> 原样) - give an accurate image of historical remains
2) improvement (<i>gaishan</i> 改善)	historical buildings	- leave the original building structure unaltered - transform the interior of the building: add basic kitchen and sanitation facilities, improve the living conditions of inhabitants
3) preservation (<i>baoliu</i> 保留)	non-exceptional buildings in accordance with historic townscape (<i>yu lishi fengmao wu chongtu</i> 与历史风貌无冲突)	- preserve buildings of relatively good quality which are in accordance with the built environment

343 PBCP (2004), p. 8.

344 Ibid.

conservation measure	building type	content
4) transformation (<i>zhengchi</i> 整饬)	non-exceptional buildings in conflict with historic townscape (<i>yu lishi fengmao xiang chongtu</i> 与历史风貌相冲突)	- if the building is of relatively good quality and hard to demolish, regulate building height and transform characteristic elements such as roof or façade
5) new construction (<i>xinjian</i> 新建)		- demolish and rebuild buildings of very bad quality
6) demolition (<i>chaichu</i> 拆除)		- demolish buildings of bad quality which have been built in violation of regulations and transform the lots into open spaces or traditional courtyards

Source: based on PBCP (2004), p. 15, figure 3. Translated by this author and extended with information from pp. 14–15.

The building types and conservation schemes displayed in table 3-1 conform to the standard defined in the Planning Regulations for HCF Cities one year later. There is no difference in conservation measure for officially listed entities and controlled and protected buildings. Requirements for *xiushan* are generally defined as maintaining the “original appearance” of a site and providing an accurate image of its historical remains. In contrast, the interior of historical buildings shall be improved to meet contemporary standards and improve the living conditions of inhabitants while maintaining its characteristic outward appearance. Instructions for treatment of non-exceptional buildings are comparatively precise and include improvement, new construction as well as demolition in cases where structures are in conflict with the historic townscape.

The **funding** for conservation shall rely on a wide range of resources, including the market as permitted within the boundaries of legal regulations and in order to partly resolve the problem of rational use.³⁴⁵ However, the plan emphasizes that conservation is undertaken for communal benefit, not to open the block up for development and that the government shall have the main responsibility for conservation while simultaneously profiting from its social and economic benefits.³⁴⁶ The government shall further encourage homeowners to maintain their houses in accordance with the conservation plan by provision of specific loans and subsidies.

345 PBCP (2004), p. 36.

346 Ibid.

In cases where owners are incapable or unwilling to conserve their properties, the government shall carry out acquisition and replacement.³⁴⁷

The **revitalization** of the block includes suitable adaptive reuse of historical buildings, the improvement of the living environment as well as living conditions in the block.³⁴⁸ Moreover, the vitality of the block shall be preserved by maintenance of its function as a residential area.³⁴⁹ In contrast to urban renewal projects which are implemented through large-scale development, conservation and improvement measures in the PBCP are to be applied on a smaller scale (*yi xiao bu yi da* 宜小不宜大)³⁵⁰ and with the perspective of gradual improvement.

In terms of land use, the plan gives precise instructions. Historic sites such as temples or gardens which still maintain their original functions shall primarily continue their forms of usage. Those historic sites which have been transformed into housing shall be used in accordance with their historical and cultural content and in ways which do not harm their architectural characteristics, such as cultural exhibition spaces, touristic and recreation facilities or for community services.³⁵¹

Officially protected entities and controlled and protected buildings in the block with a residential function shall be strictly protected and historical buildings improved by means of reducing the number of inhabitants, the removal of additional structures and the improvement of infrastructure.³⁵² Commercial and service facilities of the city shall be located at the greater thoroughfares surrounding the Pingjiang Historic Block and those of the community shall be set up at both sides of one north-south street (Cang Street 仓街) and two east-west lanes (Daru Lane 大儒巷, Lujia Lane 葭葭巷).³⁵³ In the long term, the block strives to become a vivid area and characteristic cultural landscape (*wenhua jingguan* 文化景观) of the city. Therefore, forms of usage with cultural content as well as high quality tertiary industry shall be promoted.³⁵⁴

The conservation plan regards **tourism** as integral part of the block's development but emphasizes the importance to strictly control its scale. Tourism and related commercial facilities shall be limited to central Pingjiang Road, Xuanqiao Lane and two areas designated for renewal at Cang Street and Weidao Guan Qian.³⁵⁵ Moreover, the plan newly defines 12 places which are envisaged to

347 PBCP (2004), p. 37.

348 Comm PBCP (2004), p. 52.

349 Ibid., p. 53.

350 Ibid., p. 59.

351 PBCP (2004), p. 23.

352 Ibid.

353 Ibid., p. 24.

354 Ibid., p. 5.

355 Ibid.

become major sights of the block. The places included into these “Twelve Views of Pingjiang” (Pingjiang shi'er jing 平江十二景) are those perceived as carrying the highest historic and cultural significance. In order to become a scenic spot, each place is further provided with its own name:

- (1) 耦园佳偶 *Ouyuan jia ou*: “The happily married couple of the Couple’s Garden Retreat” (Couple’s Garden Retreat 耦园)
- (2) 吴韵晋风 *Wu yun Jin feng*: “The sound of Wu [Region] and the style of Shanxi [Province]” (Quan-Jin Guild Hall 全晋会馆)
- (3) 贵潘流泽 *Gui Pan liu ze*: “Widespread beneficence of the Noble Pan”³⁵⁶ (Weidao Guan Qian Pan Mansion 卫道观前潘宅)
- (4) 惠荫书声 *Huiyin shu sheng*: “The sound of studying at Huiyin [Garden]” (Huiyin Academy 惠荫书院)
- (5) 凤池留馀 *Fengchi liu yu*: “Liuyu [Hall] of Fengchi [Garden]” (Fengchi Garden 风池园, Former Residence of Pan Shi’en 潘世恩故居)
- (6) 卫道香霭 *Weidao xiang ai*: “Incense haze at Weidao [Temple]” (Weidao Guan Qian 卫道观前)
- (7) 桂荫花锦 *Guiyin hua jin*: “Guiyin [Hall] in ornamented brocade” (Former Residence of Hong Jun 洪钧故居)
- (8) 宝树传馨 *Bao shu chuan xin*: “Precious trees leaving a far-reaching fragrance” (Former Residence of Gu Jiegang 顾颉刚故居)
- (9) 诵芬春晖 *Songfen chun hui*: “Spring sunshine on Songfen [Yizhuang]” (Wang Family Songfen Yizhuang 汪氏诵芬义庄)
- (10) 天宫听泉 *Tiangong ting quan*: “Listening to the spring at Tiangong [Temple]” (Tiangong Temple 天宫寺, Yong’an Spring 永安泉)

356 Note that Weidao Guan Qian Pan Mansion actually was the former residence of the “Wealthy” Pan, not the “Noble” Pan.

- (11) 相思澄月 *Xiangsi cheng yue*: “The bright moon over [Hu] Xiangshi [Bridge]” (Hu Xiangshi Bridge 胡厢使桥)
- (12) 雪糕黄菊 *Xuegao huang ju*: “The yellow chrysanthemum of Xuegao [Bridge]” (Xuegao Bridge 雪糕桥)

Source: PBCP (2004), p. 31. Author’s translations.

Although these 12 sights are all built structures, either buildings or bridges and in some cases with adjacent gardens, they are not named after their official designation but are provided with these newly composed sight names. The designation of scenic spots follows a traditional Chinese cultural practice of naming representative sights, which has been designated by Zhao as “*ba jing* culture” (*ba jing wenhua* 八景文化).³⁵⁷ This practice aims at creating usually eight to ten four-character names (*si zi jingmu* 四字景目) in poetic style to highlight significant scenic places in a landscape, often carrying cultural connotations. They usually show a symmetrical structure, whereby they can be separated into two parts with the first two characters indicating the respective sight and the last two characters describing it.

The distinctive design of the above-given sight titles enables recognition by inclusion of eponymous elements (e.g. “Ou Garden” for the Couple’s Garden Retreat, “Tiangong” for Tiangong Temple, “Xuegao” for Xuegao Bridge). Other titles comprise eponymous elements of the main halls of residences, e.g. *gui yin* 桂荫, which refers to Guiyin Hall of the Former Residence of Hong Jun or *liu yu* 留馀, relating to Liuyu Hall in the Former Residence of Pan Shi’en. Simultaneously, these titles provide short information on the significance of sights. For example, *bao shu* (“precious trees”) alludes to the historical mansion “Precious Trees Garden” (Baoshu yuan 宝树园) which is listed in local records. The character *xin* 馨 in “Bao shu chuan xin” (宝树传馨, “Precious trees leaving a far-reaching fragrance”) carries a double meaning of “far-reaching fragrance” and “a long-lasting reputation” and refers to the ancestral home of renowned Chinese historian Gu Jiegang which was located in the southern part of the former Precious Trees Garden.³⁵⁸

357 Zhao, Xia 赵夏 (2006): “Wo guo de ‘ba jing’ chuantong ji qi wenhua yiyi” 我国的“八景”传统及其文化意义 [China’s *ba jing* tradition and its cultural meaning], p. 90.

358 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 248.

Some of the sight names indicate physical heritage which is significant for the respective sights. For example, the precious trees in the name for Gu Jiegang's former residence refer to the great number of camellia trees in its garden,³⁵⁹ and "Listening to the spring at Tiangong [Temple]" indicates that the temple features a historic well (永安泉, "Yong'an Spring"). Moreover, sight names can establish a connection between the physical site and intangible heritage related to it such as in the cases of the Quan-Jin Guild Hall whose name 'Wu yun Jin feng' (吴韵晋风, "The sound of Wu [Region] and the style of Shanxi [Province]") not only refers to its Shanxi architectural style but also its present function as museum for traditional Chinese *kunqu* opera. Other examples are the bridge names which allude to their related legends (see chapter 3.1.1). However, the plan solely defines these 12 sites as future tourist destinations without giving further information on how they shall be operated. In the following, the focus is set on the implementation of conservation and revitalization measures as foreseen in the plan.

3.2.3 Conservation and Improvement Measures

In chapter 2.4 it was found that relocation and reconstruction are controversial intervention measures which are regarded as problematic by conservationists due to a related loss of historical information. The conservation plan of the Pingjiang Historic Block, in accordance with the China Principles, does not rule out the measure of relocation in principle, but in cases where it is to be applied in order to serve touristic purposes.³⁶⁰ Furthermore, local gazetteers recorded several cases of **relocation** in 1960 and the 1980s before the formulation of the conservation plan where elements and sites were moved to later scenic spots which are now listed on different administrative levels.

One of the residences concerned is municipal-level protected heritage site Niu-jia Lane Fang Mansion 钮家巷方宅, which still retains a small private garden. This small garden originally included a parlor and a rockery.³⁶¹ According to the *Pingjiang Gazetteer*, its rockery was relocated to the Couple's Garden Retreat in 1959. Only later, in 1983, was Fang Mansion listed as controlled and protected building as well. While one of its most significant elements has been relocated,

359 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 209.

360 Comm PBCP (2004), p. 65.

361 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 242.

the remaining garden at Fang Mansion still features the parlor and scattered lakeside rocks.³⁶²

Another example from the Couple's Garden Retreat is the historic well in the western garden which has been moved there in the course of the garden's restoration during the 1980s.³⁶³ The original well dated back to the Song dynasty (960–1279) but has already been destroyed at the time when the Couple's Garden Retreat was restored. While the relocated well can be dated to the end of the Qing dynasty and the beginning of the Republican period, its place of origin is unknown.³⁶⁴

The well has not been relocated because it was difficult to conserve in its original setting but due to the “need” of the Couple's Garden Retreat for a well in its western garden. The relocated well has a close relation to the garden as an entity and should therefore not solely be regarded as individual tangible heritage. As has been mentioned earlier (see chapter 3.1.2), the two gardens and their environmental elements complement each other in relation to the principles of *yin* and *yang*. The “Reception of the Moon”-Pond in the eastern garden corresponds to the well in the western garden and an absent well therefore decreases the integrity of the garden as such.

The relocation further shows that the well derives its credibility and thereby its “authenticity” not primarily from its material or substantial attributes but its philosophical meaning as counterpart to the “Reception of the Moon”-Pond. This meaning can not only be transmitted by the original well, but also a substitute with the same characteristics which functions as carrier of this intangible heritage.

Another example is the Deng Family Ancestral Hall 邓氏宗祠 built in the late Qing period. In its eastern row, there had originally been a *Bianfu* Hall 蝙蝠厅³⁶⁵ which was relocated to the Twin Pagoda Site in 1981.³⁶⁶ Similar to Fang Mansion, the ancestral hall was primarily listed as a controlled and protected building and upgraded to the municipal level in 2014.³⁶⁷ While the Twin Pagoda Site was

362 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 242.

363 Suzhou Municipal Garden and Landscape Administration Bureau 苏州市园林和绿化管理局 (ed., 2013): *Ouyuan zhi* 耦园志, p. 40.

364 Ibid.

365 *Bianfu* Hall 蝙蝠厅 (“Bat hall”) is the designation for a hall built in a bat-shaped layout which has an auspicious meaning.

366 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 258.

367 Suzhou Municipal People's Government 苏州市人民政府 (June 30, 2014): *Shi zheng-fu guanyu gongbu Suzhou Shi di qi pi wenwu baohu danwei he di si pi kongzhi baohu jianzhu de tongzhi* 市政府关于公布苏州市第七批文物保护单位和第四批控制保护建筑的通知, Online.

opened up for tourism, the ancestral hall was turned into a spinning factory four years after the relocation of its *Bianfu* Hall.³⁶⁸

The Twin Pagoda Site further contains an archway relocated from another residence in the Pingjiang Historic Block. This archway from 1793 features a brick carving by Jiang Sheng 姜晟 (1730–1810), then governor of Hunan Province.³⁶⁹ As recorded in the *Pingjiang Gazetteer*, it was relocated in 1980 from Du You Hall Yuan Mansion 笃佑堂袁宅. While the mansion is now listed as controlled and protected building, local-style dwelling houses of smaller scope were not yet listed in the 1980s. The examples of the Couple's Garden Retreat and the Pearl Pagoda Site illustrate an early strategy to “assemble” significant material heritage in some places, which were then protected and transformed into tourist destinations. At the time these structures and material elements were removed from their original location, and this practice was not considered problematic.

Before the launch of the Pingjiang Historic Block Conservation and Improvement Project, two sites of the block had already been opened to the public: The Couple's Garden Retreat and the Quan-Jin Guild Hall. The conservation of the Couple's Garden Retreat started exceptionally early with the restoration of its eastern garden in 1960 and a first opening in 1965, but it was then closed during the Cultural Revolution and reopened in 1980.³⁷⁰ The gradual restoration of the western garden was started in 1986 and continued in 1993/94 together with its central residential part.³⁷¹ Around the same time in the middle of the 1980s, the Quan-Jin Guild Hall was restored.³⁷²

As recorded in the *Pingjiang Gazetteer* and the *Records of the Couple's Garden Retreat*, the restoration of the central residence in the Couple's Garden Retreat included the **reconstruction** of its main hall. In the 1950s, during the period when the buildings were used by the labour union for training courses as well as housing, the main hall burned down.³⁷³ Following the *Records of the Couple's Garden Retreat*, it was later reconstructed on the basis of historical sources.³⁷⁴

The earlier analysis on the significance of the Pingjiang Historic Block and its built heritage has shown that local-style dwelling houses were built as *ensembles* in

368 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 258.

369 Ibid., p. 248.

370 Ibid., p. 186.

371 Suzhou Municipal Garden and Landscape Administration Bureau 苏州市园林和绿化管理局 (ed., 2013): *Ouyuan zhi* 耦园志, p. 141.

372 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 233.

373 Ibid., p. 186.

374 Suzhou Municipal Garden and Landscape Administration Bureau 苏州市园林和绿化管理局 (ed., 2013): *Ouyuan zhi* 耦园志, p. 18.

which different buildings have a fixed position and function. The main hall of a building was the center of a residence and used for important ceremonial purposes. At the same time, it reflected the status of its owner through significant elements such as decorations and inscriptions. Moreover, the name of the main hall was often used for the entire residence and conveyed identity to its family members. The loss of this central part therefore reduces the integrity of the overall residence.

In addition, the main hall carries cultural value due to its literary connotation of the hall name “Carrying Wine”-Hall and its relation to the poem by Dai Fugu (see chapter 3.1.2). The function of the main hall as tangible space to receive guests is reflected in a verse which carries the meaning of “carrying wine and welcoming friends”.³⁷⁵ Secondly, the literary connotation relates to the unique layout of the mansion with its eastern and western garden which cannot be understood without the hall name. The decision to reconstruct the hall shows its credibility as carrier of this intangible heritage, while a reduction of authenticity in terms of material and substance is accepted.

The example of the Quan-Jin Guild Hall shows similarities to the Couple’s Garden Retreat. Due to its former use as a factory, school building and housing as well as a neglect of repairs, the guild hall had become dilapidated by the beginning of the 1980s and the main hall burned down.³⁷⁶ In 1982, the guild hall was upgraded to an officially protected entity on the provincial level and one year later the work units occupying the buildings were moved out, the central and western row restored and the main hall reconstructed.³⁷⁷ The former guild hall was then opened up as *kunqu* opera museum (see chapter 3.2.4).

In this case, the restoration and reconstruction of buildings was undertaken after the site had been upgraded and therefore not with the objective to achieve a higher listing rank. Conservation was undertaken in preparation to convert the guild hall into an opera museum due to its exceptional opera stage. While this stage has been restored from its original building substance, the overall site functions as tangible carrier for Chinese *kunqu* opera and thereby intangible heritage.

The Pingjiang Historic Block’s comprehensive conservation was started in 2002 with a first conservation project directed at the block’s north-south axis. The **Pingjiang Historic Block Conservation and Improvement Project** had two major underlying motives: Firstly, to launch a pilot project with the objective to explore new conservation strategies for the historic city in the course of the 28th

375 Cao, Lindi 曹林娣 (July 24, 2014): “Ninggu de zhihui, aiqing de yuezhang – Ouyuan xieying” 凝固的智慧，爱情的乐章——耦园撷英, p. 13.

376 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 233.

377 Ibid.

session of the World Heritage Committee which was to be held in Suzhou in 2004. Secondly, Suzhou strives to nominate its historic and cultural blocks as World Cultural Heritage in an extension of the already listed Classical Gardens.³⁷⁸ Therefore, as part of one of these blocks, Pingjiang Road needed to conform to the World Heritage Committee's listing criteria.

While preparing the conservation plan, a number of problems for conservation work and future development of the block were identified. Firstly, local-style dwelling houses were found to be deteriorating and overcrowded. Due to neglected repairs of the wooden structure of most buildings which date back to the end of the Qing dynasty and the beginning of the Republican period, as well as the humid climate, wooden components decomposed or were damaged by termites.³⁷⁹

The overcrowding of dwelling houses in the historic city has historical reasons. In accordance with land reform starting from the 1950s, private houses in urban areas were confiscated and redistributed. The formerly single-family houses thereby were rented out to multiple tenants which received public leasehold rights from the local government.³⁸⁰ As a result of rapid urbanization, residents built additional structures in the courtyards in order to increase the living area which damaged the structure and appearance of the residences and hindered efficient lighting and ventilation.³⁸¹

The conservation scheme, which was directed at both sides of the about one-kilometer long Pingjiang Road and an area of 32,000 m², included the relocation of 475 households and work units (*danwei* 单位), and the subsequent conservation of the local-style dwelling houses.³⁸² Due to the above-mentioned developments, the property rights situation in the Pingjiang Historic Block is complicated. Not only can buildings be publicly owned, privately-owned or the property rights held by work units, but single buildings in houses can also have different property rights states. While houses to the left and right of Pingjiang Road are either privately-owned or public rental housing, the buildings adjacent to Pingjiang Road are mostly publicly owned by a government company, Suzhou Pingjiang Historic

378 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三; Li, Zhen 李滨; Lin, Lin 林林 (2010): *Jiangnan guzhen lishi jianzhu yu lishi huanjing de baohu*, *The Work of Protection for Historical Buildings and Environment of Ancient Towns in Jiangnan* 江南古镇历史建筑与历史环境的保护, p. 106.

379 Comm PBCP (2004), p. 38.

380 Xie, Jing; Heath, Tim (2018): *Heritage-led Urban Regeneration in China*, pp. 100–101.

381 Comm PBCP (2004), p. 38.

382 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三; Li, Zhen 李滨; Lin, Lin 林林 (2010): *Jiangnan guzhen lishi jianzhu yu lishi huanjing de baohu*, *The Work of Protection for Historical Buildings and Environment of Ancient Towns in Jiangnan* 江南古镇历史建筑与历史环境的保护, p. 106.

Block Conservation and Improvement Co., Ltd. 苏州平江历史街区保护整治有限责任公司.³⁸³

According to Ruan, relocation of residents in houses at Pingjiang Road affected those households which did not hold the property rights of their dwellings but had only later moved into public housing.³⁸⁴ Moreover, the conservation and development of the adjacent streets to the left and right of Pingjiang Road will include further relocation of residents. As has been reported, in the course of a conservation and improvement project launched in 2017 of which the Pingjiang Historic Block was a pilot site, relocation of residents occupying local-style dwelling houses in the southern part of the block has already been started and affects 2,000 households.³⁸⁵

At the time of the Pingjiang Historic Block Conservation and Improvement Project, the historical appearance of the block was disrupted by multi-story residential buildings which had been constructed in the 1970s and 1980s as well as manufacturing structures of about 16 factories.³⁸⁶ These factories both occupied historical buildings and officially protected entities such as Weidao Temple, Jiang Family Yizhuang 蒋氏义庄 or Zhaoqing Temple 昭庆寺 and had a negative impact on the integrity of the block as well as the appearance of historic lanes such as Da Xinqiao Lane opposite of the Couple's Garden Retreat.³⁸⁷

With the beginning of the conservation project, these factories and businesses were moved out of the block as well as institutions such as Pingjiang Road Farm Produce Market 平江路农贸市场 and Cang Street Prison No. 3. In the course of prison reform in the early Republican period, so-called “model prisons” were set up in provincial capitals and treaty ports with the aim to adhere to international standards of judicial administration. Following Dikötter, the concentration of reformed prisons was higher in provinces along the coast with Jiangsu and Anhui provinces having three to five model prisons in contrast to the average one or two new prisons in inner provinces.³⁸⁸ Cang Street Prison No. 3, formerly one of the three great Republican prisons, was transferred in 2009 and it is planned to develop

383 Interview with Chief of Suzhou Planning Bureau Engineering Office, Suzhou, June 7, 2016.

384 Interview with Ruan Yisan, Shanghai, May 10, 2016.

385 Guan, Youming 管有明 (December 22, 2017): “Gusu Qu quanmian tuijin lishi wenhua mingcheng baohu he tisheng gongcheng” 姑苏区全面推进历史文化名城保护和提升工程 [Gusu District comprehensively carries forward the Historically and Culturally Famous City conservation and improvement project], Online.

386 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三; Li, Zhen 李滨; Lin, Lin 林林 (2010): *Jiangnan guzhen lishi jianzhu yu lishi huanjing de baohu*, *The Work of Protection for Historical Buildings and Environment of Ancient Towns in Jiangnan* 江南古镇历史建筑与历史环境的保护, p. 99.

387 *Ibid.*, pp. 99–100.

388 Dikötter, Frank (2002): *Crime, Punishment and the Prison in Modern China*, pp. 61, 94.

a commercial and residential district in the style of traditional Suzhou architecture in its place.³⁸⁹

After the relocation of businesses and tenants, the dwelling houses being part of the initial conservation project were treated according to the six schemes defined in the conservation plan (see table 3-1). Ruan further said that conservation measures precisely adhered to international conservation standards.³⁹⁰ Illegally erected structures and buildings disturbing the appearance were demolished while those in accordance were reinforced.³⁹¹ Deteriorated building components including parts of the wooden structure, but also windows and doors, were replaced and the changes documented. Primarily, substitutes were bought in the surrounding area or, if no suitable substitutes were available, newly manufactured components were used, taking the readability principle into account.³⁹²

In order to maintain the original appearance of Pingjiang Road in its present state and the buildings' patina of age, a transparent coating was applied to the outer walls to protect them.³⁹³ This measure is not widespread in China (yet), where a restoration approach and the painting of walls is often preferred to give buildings a "new look" (*huanran yixin* 焕然一新). In the interview with Ruan, he explained that this is related to a differing opinion on aesthetics. While he tried to convince policymakers that the patina of age should be retained in the conservation process, most people regarded the "old" appearance of the buildings as unaesthetic.³⁹⁴

A pilot site of the local government for the conservation of a controlled and protected building at the intersection of Niujia Lane and Pingjiang River is **Dong Family Yizhuang**. Before conservation, the *yizhuang* had been occupied by a school and a plastics factory, leaving its main hall and some buildings adjacent to the river in a dilapidated state. But while these buildings have maintained their

389 Zhou, Jianlin 周建琳 (April 15, 2009): "Minguo san da jianyu zhi yi Suzhou Shizi kou jianyu suozaidi jiang bian shangyequ" 民国三大监狱之一苏州狮子口监狱所在地将变商业区 [The site of one of the Republican period's three great prisons Suzhou Shizikou Prison will become a commercial district], Online.

390 Interview with Ruan Yisan, Shanghai, May 5, 2016.

391 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三; Li, Zhen 李滇; Lin, Lin 林林 (2010): *Jiangnan guzhen lishi jianzhu yu lishi huanjing de baohu*, *The Work of Protection for Historical Buildings and Environment of Ancient Towns in Jiangnan* 江南古镇历史建筑与历史环境的保护, p. 109.

392 Ibid.

393 Gong, Han (2010): "Saving a Piece of History", p. 19.

394 Interview with Ruan Yisan, Shanghai, May 5, 2016.

original appearance, those in the northern part of the site were demolished and replaced by a three-story factory building.³⁹⁵

After thorough research and in accordance with the six conservation schemes in the plan, it was decided to maintain the main hall and the southern buildings, which had retained their original appearance. The buildings were consolidated, deteriorated components including windows and doors replaced and wooden ornamental carvings in the main hall restored.³⁹⁶ Because the former factory building was not in accordance with the townscape, it was demolished, and a new building constructed in its place with modern materials.³⁹⁷



Figure 3-22. Dong Family Yizhuang Teahouse.

Source: author's photo, 2018.

This building named Dong Family Yizhuang Teahouse 董氏义庄茶室 was designed by Tongji University professor and chief architect of TM Studio Tong Ming 童明, the grandson of another first-generation Chinese Architect trained at the University of Pennsylvania, Tong Jun 童寯. The objective of the project was to conserve the traditional *yizhuang* while adapting it to needs of modern urban life. Therefore, the teahouse, which should also accommodate a restaurant, was

395 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三 (August 2, 2004): “Dongshi Yizhuang de baohu yu gengxin” 董氏义庄的保护与更新 [The Conservation and Renewal of Dong Family Yizhuang], Online.

396 Ibid.

397 Ibid.

planned to become a place for tourists to take a rest and contemplate the surrounding environment.³⁹⁸ While differences to traditional buildings are visible, the tea-house conforms to its historical environment in terms of layout, building height or colors and incorporates characteristics of traditional architecture. For example, the design of doors and windows in the building is based on traditional latticed windows.³⁹⁹ Moreover, it is enclosed by a reticulated grey brick wall enabling a penetrating view from inside⁴⁰⁰ which reminds of the creation of vistas in private garden landscapes (see fig. 3-22).

Another problem during the project was that the infrastructure of the block had become outdated and insufficient. Firstly, power, television and telecommunication cables as well as water supply pipes had been laid several decades earlier and disorderly in the narrow and winding lanes, posing safety hazards.⁴⁰¹ Secondly, they were of insufficient capacity and drainpipes were completely missing, the consequence being that residents disposed of waste water in the water canals.⁴⁰² Furthermore, local-style dwelling houses lacked basic amenities such as separate kitchens and bathrooms.⁴⁰³

As part of the conservation project, water supply, gas and drainpipes were installed and power, television and telecommunication cables laid underground.⁴⁰⁴ The renovation of public facilities included the pavement of Pingjiang Road by means of traditional building techniques, whereby original measurements and the traditional appearance were retained, as well as the reconstruction of bridges, bank revetments and the relocation of public toilets.⁴⁰⁵

Partly resulting from residents' disposal of waste water, water canals had become polluted. Another reason for the bad quality of canal water were industrial plants which discharged drain water into the canals and which was further aggravated by gates obstructing the water flow.⁴⁰⁶ Therefore, Pingjiang River and its

398 TM Studio: "Dongshi yizhuang chashi/Tong Ming" 董氏义庄茶室/童明 [Dong Family Teahouse/Tong Ming], Online.

399 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三; Li, Zhen 李滨; Lin, Lin 林林 (2010): *Jiangnan guzhen lishi jianzhu yu lishi huanjing de baohu, The Work of Protection for Historical Buildings and Environment of Ancient Towns in Jiangnan* 江南古镇历史建筑与历史环境的保护, p. 64.

400 TM Studio: "Dongshi yizhuang chashi/Tong Ming" 董氏义庄茶室/童明, Online.

401 Comm PBCP (2004), p. 38.

402 Ibid.

403 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三; Li, Zhen 李滨; Lin, Lin 林林 (2010): *Jiangnan guzhen lishi jianzhu yu lishi huanjing de baohu, The Work of Protection for Historical Buildings and Environment of Ancient Towns in Jiangnan* 江南古镇历史建筑与历史环境的保护, p. 99.

404 Ibid., p. 107.

405 Ibid., pp. 107, 109.

406 Comm PBCP (2004), p. 38.

branches were cleaned and the water quality improved.⁴⁰⁷ Water canal cleaning and improvement projects have been continued after completion of the conservation project up to the present. Figure 3-23 shows cleaning work carried out during field work for this project in May 2018.

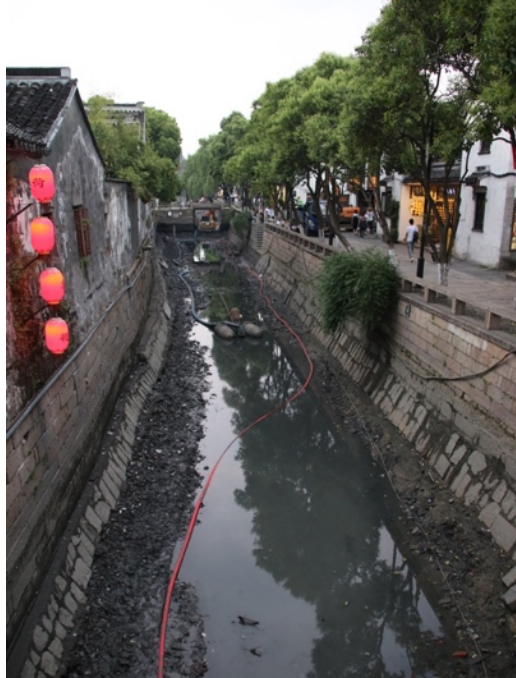


Figure 3-23. Pingjiang River Cleaning Work.

Source: author's photo, 2018.

This cleaning of water canals was part of a first historic city conservation and improvement project launched in 2017. The project aims at an integrated conservation and regeneration of the historic city including the improvement of living conditions, the environment and basic facilities in a period of three to five years.⁴⁰⁸

407 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三; Li, Zhen 李滨; Lin, Lin 林林 (2010): *Jiangnan guzhen lishi jianzhu yu lishi huanjing de baohu*, *The Work of Protection for Historical Buildings and Environment of Ancient Towns in Jiangnan* 江南古镇历史建筑与历史环境的保护, p. 107.

408 Guan, Youming 管有明 (December 22, 2017): "Gusu Qu quanmian tuijin lishi wenhua mingcheng baohu he tisheng gongcheng" 姑苏区全面推进历史文化名城保护和提升工程, Online.

In addition to bridges, ceremonial archways (*pailou* 牌楼) are built structures of the historical environment which were conserved in the project. One of the four archways in the block, **Wang Family Yizhuang Ceremonial Archway** 汪氏义庄牌楼 was discovered in the course of the demolition of an illegally erected building on Pingjiang Road. The remains of the deteriorating archway from 1842 in wooden structure had been built into this dwelling house.⁴⁰⁹

Due to the fact that only the lower part of the archway remained, there were different opinions on appropriate conservation of the relic, including reconstruction and restoration to its original state. With respect to the principle of authenticity, these conservation measures were discarded.⁴¹⁰ The final conservation scheme is shown in figure 3-24:



Figure 3-24. Wang Family Yizhuang Ceremonial Archway.

Source: author's photo, 2018.

After inquiry of the former size of the archway, the stone components were erected in their original place and additional iron pillars (yellow) set up for consolidation. Then, a wooden structure was built in the approximate shape of the former ceremonial archway and covered with glass to protect the historical remains from the rain. Newly added structures were all built by means of materials which contrast

409 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三 (August 18, 2004): “Gucheng baohu, xin yu jiu de bianzheng fa” 古城保护，新与旧的辩证法 [Ancient city conservation, the dialectics of the new and the old], Online.

410 Ibid.

with the original historical remains and can be removed in order to adhere to the readability and reversibility principles.⁴¹¹

Since the termination of this comprehensive project in 2004, the local government has not yet undertaken further measures to conserve the block's built structures or to improve building interiors.⁴¹² As mentioned above, the focus then again shifted to **individual structures** and 12 pilot projects for the conservation of Suzhou-style dwelling houses. In the following, significant pilot projects which included relocation or reconstruction are illustrated.

The first and most interesting case in this context is Daru Lane 大儒巷 **Ding Mansion** 丁宅. The buildings of this site date back to the Qing dynasty, but their original owner is unknown.⁴¹³ This may also be the reason why this mansion is named after its prominent owner from the Republican period, Ding Chunzhi 丁春之 (1876–1938). Formerly a county magistrate in Shanxi 山西 province, he returned to Suzhou in 1920 and took part in the foundation of the Suzhou Electric Company 苏州电气公司 which would gradually become Suzhou's largest power plant.⁴¹⁴ Ding Mansion is now listed as controlled and protected building.

A comparison of the conservation map drafted for the Pingjiang Historic Block in 2004 by the Tongji University National Famous Historical and Cultural Cities Research Center with the map published by Suzhou Planning Bureau in 2014 shows Ding Mansion (B22) in different locations.

In the map from 2004, the mansion is marked in a peripheral position of the Pingjiang Historic and Cultural Block on the western edge of Daru Lane close to Lindun Road, the major thoroughfare which delimits the block in the west (see fig. 3-25).⁴¹⁵ In contrast, Suzhou Planning Bureau's map ten years later displays the mansion next to Pingjiang Road in the center of the block (see fig. 3-26).⁴¹⁶ In the following, the circumstances for the mansion's relocation shall be clarified.

411 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三 (August 18, 2004): "Gucheng baohu, xin yu jiu de bianzheng fa" 古城保护，新与旧的辩证法 [Ancient city conservation, the dialectics of the new and the old], Online.

412 Xie, Jing; Heath, Tim (2018): *Heritage-led Urban Regeneration in China*, p. 109.

413 Tao, Guanqun 陶冠群 (November 29, 2011): "Ding zhai shishi zhengti baohuxing yijian 2012 nian 4 yue chu wancheng" 丁宅实施整体保护性移建 2012 年 4 月初完成 [The protective Movement and Reconstruction of the complete Ding Mansion shall be completed by the beginning of April 2012], Online.

414 Ibid.

415 Tongji University National Famous Historical and Cultural Cities Research Center 同济大学国家历史文化名城研究中心 (2004): *Suzhou gucheng Pingjiang lishi wenhua jiequ baohu yu zhengzhi guihua — tuji* 苏州古城平江历史文化街区保护与整治规划 — 图集, p. 4.

416 Suzhou Academy of Planning and Design Co., Ltd. 苏州规划设计研究院股份有限公司 (drafted, 2014): "Baohu guihua tu yi" 保护规划图一, in: *Suzhou Pingjiang lishi wenhua jiequ baohu guihua* 苏州平江历史文化街区保护规划, Online.

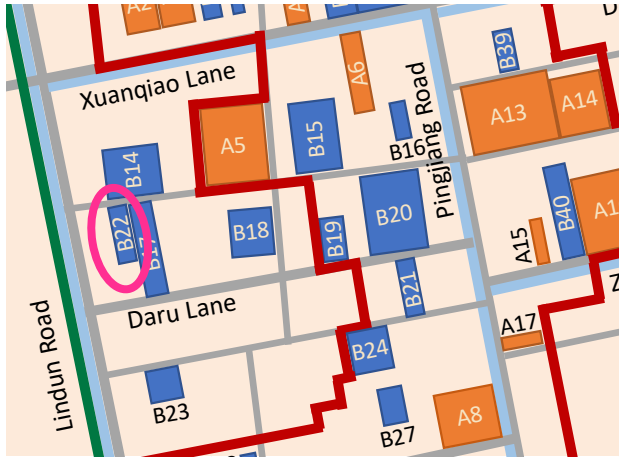


Figure 3-25. Ding Mansion in Conservation Map, 2004.

Source: author's draft. Information from: Tongji University National Famous Historical and Cultural Cities Research Center 同济大学国家历史文化名城研究中心 (ed., 2004): "Suzhou gucheng Pingjiang lishi wenhua jiequ baohu yu zhengzhi guihua — tuji" 苏州古城平江历史文化街区保护与整治规划 — 图集, p. 4. Map data from © OpenStreetMap contributors, 2020, available from <https://www.openstreetmap.org/>, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.



Figure 3-26. Ding Mansion in Map of Suzhou Planning Bureau, 2014.

Source: author's draft. Information from: Suzhou guihua sheji yanjiuyuan gufen youxian gongsi 苏州规划设计研究院股份有限公司 (drafted 2014): "Baohu guihua tu yi" 保护规划图一, in: *Suzhou Pingjiang lishi wenhua jiequ baohu guihua* 苏州平江历史文化街区保护规划 [Online]. Map data from © OpenStreetMap contributors, 2020, available from <https://www.openstreetmap.org/>, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

Originally, Ding mansion in Daru Lane No. 6, which had been built in characteristic local-style layout with a considerable size of seven *jin*, comprised an entrance hall, a sedan-chair hall, the main hall and four *jin* of private chambers. Thereof, only the private chambers and some attached buildings have been preserved whereas the anterior three *jin* have already been demolished and transformed into a parking lot.⁴¹⁷ Before conservation started, the first *jin* of private chambers and its eastern wing room were used as warehouse and bicycle storage room while the remaining three *jin* were occupied by residents.⁴¹⁸ The outer row of low-story buildings which originally separated the mansion from Lindun Road was demolished as well and turned into six-story high-rise Changfa Mall 长发商厦. This development is standing exemplarily for the opening up of major roads in Suzhou, where lots at the roadside have been developed into multi-story buildings enclosing the lower local-style dwelling houses in the center of the units which have been retained.

The great difference in building height between Ding Mansion and the surrounding buildings of Changfa Mall led to great problems and the dilapidation of the remaining mansion. Having been exposed to a dark and damp environment with bad ventilation and lighting conditions for years, some beams of the buildings began to break apart and the roofing started to collapse.⁴¹⁹ In this urgent situation, conservation experts agreed on a conservation scheme which involved the complete relocation and reconstruction of Ding Mansion to Daru Lane No. 54, the former ground of Pingjiang Road Farm Produce Market.

According to Changshu Gujian Yuanlin Co., Ltd., which carried out the construction work, experts discussed two conservation schemes: conservation *in situ* and relocation. The loss of integrity and historical information of the buildings in the case of relocation was balanced against conservation *in situ*. In addition to the fact that the historical environment surrounding the former mansion had already changed, the latter scheme was further considered difficult due to its proximity to the mall and its negative effect on conservation and usage.⁴²⁰ The new location of Ding Mansion is adjacent to Pingjiang Road and part of the block's core protection

417 Zhou, Weiwei 周伟蔚 (November 7, 2012): "Gujian laozhai baohu xiushan de yangban gongcheng — xiu jiu ru jiu de Ding zhai" 古建筑老宅保护修缮的样板工程 — 修旧如旧的丁宅 [A pilot project for the protection and reparation of ancient buildings and old houses — Ding Mansion restored to its former state], Online.

418 Ibid.

419 Tao, Guanqun 陶冠群 (November 29, 2011): "Ding zhai shishi zhengti baohuxing yijian 2012 nian 4 yue chu wancheng" 丁宅实施整体保护性移建 2012 年 4 月初完成, Online.

420 Changshu Gujian Yuanlin Co., Ltd. 常熟古建园林股份有限公司 (ed., January 13, 2009): "Daru Xiang Ding zhai yidi chongsheng ji" 大儒巷丁宅易地重生记 [Records on "rebirth" of Daru Lane Ding Mansion after relocation], Online.

area (*jiequ hexin baohu qu* 街区核心保护区).⁴²¹ This setting was considered more suitable for conservation and additionally beneficial for its promotion, cultural tourism development and thereby the overall development of Pingjiang Road.⁴²²

The project was launched in September 2011 with the objective to maintain the “original appearance” (*yuanyang* 原样) of the mansion. Therefore, the buildings were mapped, and significant building components documented and numbered over a period of three months.⁴²³ Following Changshu Gujian Yuanlin Co., Ltd., the relocated mansion was constructed with about 30 percent of materials taken from the original buildings.⁴²⁴

As documented in the PBCP, the Qing dynasty mansion is significant for its roof construction in Ming dynasty style and wooden carvings of lotus leaves on *shanwuyun* 山雾云-boards (decorative wooden boards installed at the tympanum).⁴²⁵ In the process of relocation, the wooden components which were not rotten or had been heavily damaged by insect infestation were reused in their original position such as two well-preserved ornamented ridgepoles.⁴²⁶ Moreover, significant reused stone components comprise *shikumen*, stone treads and stone column bases.⁴²⁷

The example of Ding Mansion can offer some insights into a situation in which relocation is accepted as conservation measure and how it needs to be carried out in order to ensure the maintenance of its “original appearance”. Firstly, Ding Mansion is not listed as protected heritage site but classified as controlled and protected building and not subject to the Cultural Relics Protection Law. However, the PBCP determines the same conservation measure for controlled and protected buildings as for protected heritage sites: *xiushan* (see table 3-1).

The PBCP and the construction company itself named the maintenance of the “original appearance” as decisive criterion for this conservation measure. As the analysis has shown, the “original appearance” is not derived from an entirety of preserved material built heritage which only amounts to 30 percent. But the relocated mansion derives its “authenticity” from original building components such as

421 Suzhou Academy of Planning and Design Co., Ltd. 苏州规划设计研究院股份有限公司 (drafted, 2014): “Baohu guihua tu yi” 保护规划图一, in: *Suzhou Pingjiang lishi wenhua jiequ baohu guihua* 苏州平江历史文化街区保护规划, Online.

422 Jin, Yajun 金亚军 (April 6, 2016): “Daru Xiang Ding zhai” 大儒巷丁宅 [Ding Mansion in Daru Lane], Online.

423 Changshu Gujian Yuanlin Co., Ltd. 常熟古建园林股份有限公司 (ed., January 13, 2009): “Daru Xiang Ding zhai yidi chongsheng ji” 大儒巷丁宅易地重生记, Online.

424 Ibid.

425 Comm PBCP (2004), p. 137.

426 Changshu Gujian Yuanlin Co., Ltd. 常熟古建园林股份有限公司 (ed., January 13, 2009): “Daru Xiang Ding zhai yidi chongsheng ji” 大儒巷丁宅易地重生记, Online.

427 Ibid.

architectural and decorative elements as well as the overall spatial structure. These building elements correlate with significant elements found in the earlier section of this case study.

The conservation plan shows a clear position concerning the relocation of historical relics and sites. According to the plan, protected heritage sites in the block and controlled and protected buildings in the core protection area must not be relocated. Furthermore, it generally advises against (“yuanze shang buyi” 原则上不宜) the relocation of controlled and protected buildings in the construction control area.⁴²⁸ However, the plan accepts relocation as conservation measure for historical buildings outside of the block which cannot be preserved *in situ* and shall be relocated to a location where structures in conflict with the historic townscape have been demolished, provided that the new location conforms to the values and characteristics of the building and that it enhances the overall historical appearance of the block.⁴²⁹

The PBCP commentary further determines that the measure has to be carried out in line with requirements of the China Principles, such as not to exchange building components which carry value.⁴³⁰ In fact, Ding Mansion’s original location was part of the construction control area. However, its situation corresponded to art. 13.2.1 iii of the commentary on the China Principles which determines that a site may be relocated when “historic remains have become isolated and have lost their historic context and as such are very difficult to conserve *in situ*”.⁴³¹ Furthermore, the mansion was moved to the location of the former farm produce market, enhancing the historic townscape of the block. As required, conservation work considered the conditions of the China Principles.

According to the conservation plan, cultural relics and historic sites further can be reconstructed under certain circumstances in order to better express their values and characteristics.⁴³² The conditions which have to be met for such a conservation measure are that the building structure is severely damaged and there have been preserved historical remains. Moreover, the properties must be documented in reliable written or historical sources and there has to be sufficient restoration craftsmanship, materials and manpower available.⁴³³ The plan explicitly recommends the **reconstruction** of four sites: **Weidao Temple**, the **Former Residence**

428 PBCP (2004), p. 9.

429 Ibid.

430 Comm PBCP (2004), p. 65.

431 Comm CP (2002), p. 85.

432 PBCP (2004), p. 9.

433 Ibid.

of Pan Shi'en, the main hall of former **Changzhou District School** and **Tiangong Temple**.⁴³⁴

The **Former Residence of Pan Shi'en** was one of the earliest pilot projects restored. Its conservation scheme included different conservation measures depending on the buildings' state of preservation. In 2011, when conservation of the provincial-level protected heritage site was started, there were three rows and five of originally six *jin* preserved.⁴³⁵ In the fifth *jin* of the central row had originally been two-storied chambers which were destroyed by a fire at the beginning of the Republican period. After the fire, a parlor from another site was moved to the mansion and re-erected at the location of the former chambers.⁴³⁶ When the conservation project started, this parlor was relocated again and set up in the garden in the eastern row of the mansion where it was restored.⁴³⁷ After the parlor had been relocated from the central row, the chambers were reconstructed as well as a building in the fourth *jin* which had become dilapidated and was reconstructed on the basis of drawings.⁴³⁸

The other three sites are Taoist, Confucian and Buddhist temples. The reconstruction of temples has a long tradition in China and East Asia, although ritually rebuilding of replicas is an exception and limited to the often referred to example of the Shrine of Ise in Japan.⁴³⁹ The conservation of **Weidao Temple** began in 2012 and was the eighth greater restoration of the temple since the Ming dynasty.⁴⁴⁰ As mentioned above, the temple originally consisted of three rows and the central row comprised three characteristic halls with Sanqing Hall 三清殿 as main building. Thereof, the buildings of the central and western row had become dilapidated and there was only a small part of the eastern row preserved.⁴⁴¹ The conservation of the temple included a variety of different conservation measures. In general, a little more than 50% of the buildings were restored and the rest reconstructed.⁴⁴²

434 PBCP (2004), p. 9.

435 Gong, Xi 弓玺; Jiang, Feng 姜锋 (April 25, 2017): "Liuyu Tang: Xiri zhuangyuan fu jin wei bowuguan" 留余堂：昔日状元府今为博物馆 [Liuyu Hall: In former days Number One Scholar residence and today a museum], Online.

436 Ibid.

437 Ibid.

438 Ibid.

439 Stovel, Herb (2008): "Origins and Influence of the Nara Document on Authenticity", p. 9.

440 Guan, Youming 管有明 (January 6, 2013): "Weidao Guan zhonglu san jin zhudian zhuti xiu hao zai" 卫道观中路三进主殿主体修好哉 [The main part of the three main halls in the central row of Weidao Temple are restored!], Online.

441 Ibid.

442 Ibid.

Former **Changzhou District School** was occupied by Pingjiang Experimental School 平江实验学校 at the time fieldwork for this study was conducted. Its main hall is the former main hall of the identically named Confucian temple. While the hall has been relocated and reconstructed several times, the structure of the present hall originates from 1882.⁴⁴³ The *Pingjiang Gazetteer* records that the hall has been largely damaged in the course of the Cultural Revolution and only its framework remained.⁴⁴⁴ The building then was restored and treated several times in 1994, 2000 and 2014.⁴⁴⁵

Furthermore, an inscription tablet was hung up above the door lintel which was inscribed by the Vice-chair of Suzhou Calligraphers Association Fei Zhixiong 费之雄.⁴⁴⁶ The inscription reads: *de run wen guang* 德润文光 and originates from Confucian teaching. *De run* 德润 is an expression from the chapter *Daxue* 大学 “The Great Learning” in the “Book of Rites” (*Liji* 礼记). This passage deals with the transformative nature of *de* 德 (“virtue”) and reads: “Riches adorn a house, and virtue adorns the person”⁴⁴⁷ (*Fu run wu, de run shen* 富润屋, 德润身). Following Ing, *de* 德 is often related to water and its watery effects in early Confucian texts, a notion which is used as a metaphor for its refining nature.⁴⁴⁸ The above cited passage therefore can also be translated literally as “riches embellish a house and virtue moistens the body”. In this context, the accumulation of *de* 德 was perceived as having effects on the body such as becoming wet after practicing for a long time.⁴⁴⁹ *Wen guang*, in a broader sense, refers to culture (*wenhua* 文化) and, accordingly, its refining qualities. The inscription, literally “virtue moistens, and culture adds lustre”, therefore highlights the refining nature of both virtue and culture, and in a broader sense, Confucian practice. Consequently, the inscription tablet is a highly significant part of the hall because it establishes a connection from the building to Confucianism. The hall thereby becomes a genuine carrier of historical information and intangible heritage.

443 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 228.

444 Ibid., p. 229.

445 Yang, Xi 杨曦 (August 30, 2012): “Sushi xuetang” 苏式学堂 [Suzhou-style schools], Online. “Dachengdian” 大成殿 [Main hall of the Confucian temple], (September 29, 2014), Suzhou Pingjiang Experimental School, Online.

446 “Dachengdian” 大成殿, (September 29, 2014), Suzhou Pingjiang Experimental School, Online.

447 Translated after: Legge, James (1960): *Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, and the Doctrine of the Mean*, p. 367.

448 Ing, Michael D. K. (2017): *The Vulnerability of Integrity in Early Confucian Thought*, pp. 221–222.

449 Ibid., p. 222.

As mentioned above, the site of the temple hall had formerly been occupied by Pingjiang Experimental School and is currently transformed as part of a project to display the historic townscape next to the southern entrance of Pingjiang Road.⁴⁵⁰ The demolition of buildings which are “in conflict with the historic townscape” has already begun at the time of a field trip to the Pingjiang Historic District by this author in May 2018. It is planned to reconstruct the temple gate, side rooms and a stela corridor in order to set off the main hall. While ancient trees such as ginkgo and Chinese cypress shall be preserved, local-style *ensembles* shall be constructed as junction between the temple hall and the residential district.⁴⁵¹

Tiangong Temple is still inhabited and there have not been undertaken reconstruction efforts (yet). The Buddhist temple was established as earliest of all formerly spiritual sites in the block and can be traced back to the end of the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420).⁴⁵² However, not much of its material heritage has been preserved. The analysis has shown that different conservation and reconstruction approaches are taken for the four sites which have been recommended for reconstruction. In the case of the main hall of Changzhou District School, reconstruction follows clear intentions of tourism development, while a reconstruction of Tiangong Temple would involve a further relocation of residents and has not been undertaken, yet, although it carries great historical value.

3.2.4 Function and Usage

As reflected in their designations, the buildings in the Pingjiang Historic Block, a formerly residential area, originally had various functions ranging from splendid private gardens to common residential buildings, but also guild halls, schools, temples, ancestral halls and “shared family property” (*yizhuang* 义庄). The last on-site investigation by this author in May 2018 has shown that residential use still is the major function of controlled and protected as well as historical buildings (see appendix A.13 and A.14). The majority of buildings which have changed their function are such which have been treated in order to transform them into buildings for commercial use.

The Chinese Cultural Relics Protection Law determines that immovable cultural relics may be opened as museums and for sight-seeing purposes or used as

450 Zhou, Weiwei 周伟蔚; Hang, Lei 杭雷 (January 2, 2013): “Pingjiang Lu, Shantang Jie: Baoliu lao Suzhou de man shenghuo” 平江路、山塘街：保留老苏州的慢生活 [Pingjiang Road, Shantang Street: Preserving the slow life of old Suzhou], Online.

451 Ibid.

452 Shen, Qingnian 沈庆年 (ed., 2013): *Gucheng yizhu: Suzhou kongbao jianzhu tanyou: xu* 古城遗珠：苏州控保建筑探幽：续, p. 100.

repositories (see chapter 2.3). In the case of the Pingjiang Historic Block, the majority of officially listed buildings which changed their functions were opened as exhibition spaces. Moreover, some converted buildings have become social, artistic and cultural spaces which are related to local intangible heritage.

The investigation has further shown that the buildings located at the central axis, Pingjiang Road, have almost exclusively been changed to commercial use. In addition to shops and restaurants, hotels and guesthouses are a common form of use in the vicinity of this road. While development still remains mostly concentrated on the central axis, some buildings located deeper inside the block have equally been converted into commercial or social spaces.

Tourist and Recreation Venue

Tourism has been considered as a part of the block's future development since the Pingjiang Historic Block Conservation and Improvement Project was launched. The conservation plan includes a short section on tourism planning which shows a clear position towards the opening up of the Pingjiang Historic Block as a tourist destination. It states:

历史街区保护的目的是为了开发旅游，旅游是街区文化遗产保护与合理利用的有效途径之一。⁴⁵³

“The objective of protecting the historical block is not to open [it] up for tourism, but tourism [development] is one effective way to protect and rationally use the cultural heritage of the block.”

The plan recognizes tourism development as form of usage and considers it to be effective. Furthermore, the block shall be integrated into the overall tourism planning of the historic city.⁴⁵⁴ However, tourism is not regarded as the ultimate goal and only one of several options for use. Rather, the planning envisions the historic block as an integrative space which combines living and habitation as well as business and services with leisure activities and tourism.⁴⁵⁵ As historic and cultural block with a high concentration of cultural heritage sites, the Pingjiang Historic Block has a great number of potential tourist venues. In the following, it is analyzed which sites are opened up for tourism and in which way they are operated.

453 Comm PBCP (2004), p. 109.

454 Ibid.

455 PBCP (2004), p. 5.

As mentioned in chapter 3.2.2, the plan defines 12 places to become future tourist destinations. In terms of administrative level, these 12 sites comprise all officially listed sites on a national and provincial level, as well as three municipal-level sites, one controlled and protected building (Tiangong Temple), and two bridges. Although the plan defines these 12 destinations as “sights” (*jing* 景), they are not operated as conventional tourist venues. Only the Couple’s Garden Retreat as one of the Classical Gardens of Suzhou requires an entry ticket. The Quan-Jin Guild Hall hosts the *Kunqu* Opera Museum and can be accessed free of charge. Similarly, the Zhuangyuan Museum (Zhuangyuan bowuguan 状元博物馆), which opened in the Former Residence of Pan Shi’en, can be visited without a ticket. Two sites (Weidao Guan Qian Pan Mansion, Wang Family Songfen Yizhuang) have regular opening hours while operating a business in the main part of the mansions.

In the cases of the former residences of Gu Jiegang and Hong Jun, some buildings are still used as housing and therefore only partly treated and opened to the public. After a partial restoration in 2007, the Former Residence of Hong Jun was temporarily opened as Hall of Notables from Pingjiang (Pingjiang mingren guan 平江名人馆) with an Exhibition on the Chinese Examination System (Zhongguo keju zhidu zhan 中国科举制度展).⁴⁵⁶

Two of the 12 sites are not accessible due to their current form of usage and can only be viewed from the outside. One is Huiyin Garden, which has been part of Suzhou’s First Junior Middle School (Di yi chuji zhongxue 第一初级中学) since the establishment of the PRC. The other one is Tiangong Temple, which is used as housing and therefore not open to the public. The two bridges are important interconnections with Pingjiang Road and retain their original function.

As mentioned above, one of the major functions of the Couple’s Garden Retreat is to serve as tourist venue wherefore an entrance ticket is required. Compared to ticket prices of other UNESCO-listed classical gardens in Suzhou, the price to enter the Couple’s Garden Retreat is one of the lowest with 25 Yuan in the peak season and 20 Yuan off-peak.⁴⁵⁷ The most well-known and therefore also most expensive classical garden in Suzhou is the Humble Administrator’s Garden (Zhuozheng yuan 拙政园) with 90 Yuan for a peak season ticket and 70 Yuan off-peak. Only two classical gardens have lower tickets than the Couple’s Garden Retreat. The ticket

456 “Yincang zai Suzhou chengli de zhuangyuan fu” 隐藏在苏州城里的状元府 [The Zhuangyuan mansion hidden in Suzhou City], (October 22, 2014), Suzhou Tourism Administration, Online.

457 “Suzhou Shi shixing zhengfu dingjia, zhengfu zhidaojia de jingqu menpiao jiage yilanbiao (2017 nian 12 yue 31 ri gengxin)” 苏州市实行政府定价、政府指导价的景区门票价格一览表 (2017年12月31日更新) [Table of scenic spot entrance ticket prices based on set and guided prices by Suzhou Government (upgraded December 31, 2017)], (February 11, 2018), Bureau of the People’s Government of Suzhou, Online.

of Canglang Pavilion (Canglang ting 沧浪亭) is slightly lower with 20 Yuan during peak and 15 Yuan during off-peak season. The comparatively small “Garden of Cultivation” (Yipu 艺圃) can be accessed all year for a price of 10 Yuan.⁴⁵⁸

Tourists visiting the Couple’s Garden Retreat enter the site from the entrance hall and are guided along the central part of the former residence as well as to the smaller garden in the west and to the greater eastern garden with the yellow stone rockery. While most of the central residential buildings and landscape architecture in the two gardens is used for sight-seeing, the upper floor of the two-storied main building in the eastern garden has been opened as a teahouse. This “Sun and Moonlight Tower” owes its name to the characteristic structure which allows both sun and moonlight to shine into the building (see chapter 3.1.2). According to the website of the Couple’s Garden Retreat’s Management Bureau, there has originally been a teahouse in this building which had to be closed due to a longtime lack of maintenance and it has now been repaired and reopened, again as a teahouse.⁴⁵⁹

Apart from tea and pastry tasting, there are cultural activities organized and held in the teahouse. Such activities comprise artistic performances, such as the art of tea making, drinking and serving (*chayi* 茶艺), *pingtan* 评弹⁴⁶⁰ or Chinese zither (*guqin* 古琴) play. This combined tea culture experience including the performance of intangible cultural heritage from the Jiangnan region is meant to promote traditional culture, local folk culture and art as well as handicraft. The place can further be used for distinguished assemblies, business conferences and similar events.⁴⁶¹

The back section of the residence, which had previously been unused, was transformed into an office area in 2007.⁴⁶² The purpose of this transformation was

458 “Suzhou Shi shixing zhengfu dingjia, zhengfu zhidaojia de jingqu menpiao jiage yilanbiao (2017 nian 12 yue 31 ri gengxin)” 苏州市实行政府定价、政府指导价的景区门票价格一览表 (2017年12月31日更新), (February 11, 2018), Bureau of the People’s Government of Suzhou, Online.

459 “Shuang zhao lou chashi” 双照楼茶室 [Sun and Moonlight Tower Teahouse], Suzhou Ouyuan Management Department, Online.

460 *Pingtán* 评弹 is a form of professional storytelling and ballad singing in Suzhou dialect. It comprises the two arts of Suzhou *pinghua* 评话 and Suzhou *tanci* 弹词. While *pinghua* is performed by a single storyteller and mostly nonmusical, *tanci* combine oral narration and singing with the music of stringed instruments. Moreover, there is a difference in the content of *tanci*, also called “small stories” which take place in more intimate settings such as the home. In contrast, the “big stories” (*pinghua*) are more action-oriented, dealing with battles or military contests. See: Bender, Mark (2003): *Plum and Bamboo: China’s Suzhou Chantefable Tradition*, pp. 3–5.

461 “Shuang zhao lou chashi” 双照楼茶室, Suzhou Ouyuan Management Department, Online.

462 Xu, Yunhai 徐蕴海 (October 10, 2007): “Yatai yichan zhongxin huopi zaiji — ‘Suzhou zhongxin’ Ouyuan bangongqu jin kai gong” 亚太遗产中心获批在即——“苏州中心”

to establish one of the three branch centers of WHITRAP in the Couple's Garden Retreat, following the decision of the World Heritage Committee on its 28th session in Suzhou, 2004. Suzhou Center 苏州中心 is managed by Suzhou Government and focuses on traditional architectural restoration training and research. The center comprises a training department, a finance department, a reception room and two conference rooms. In order to accommodate Suzhou Center, different reparation and improvement measures had to be taken to fit contemporary needs, such as the provision of rain gutters and sewage pipes.⁴⁶³

Even before it has become a tourist destination, the beautiful and traditional scenery of the Couple's Garden Retreat was used as set for movies and television series. One example where the garden served as one of the main sets is the series "The Dream of the Red Chamber" (*Honglou meng* 红楼梦) from 1987.⁴⁶⁴ In 1995, some scenes of the movie "Tempress Moon" (*Feng yue* 风月) directed by Chen Kaige 陈凯歌 were equally shot in the garden.⁴⁶⁵ As will be shown in the following case study on Tongli, to set films in former private gardens is a popular film practice.

As mentioned above, the "Twelve Sights of Pingjiang" have not yet been fully opened up for tourism and are not signposted on-site. Consequently, some of the buildings cannot be accessed and only viewed from the outside while significant parts of the built heritage are located inside. On the contrary, Pingjiang Road is well known among visitors and in addition to the traditional appearance of adjacent buildings, it features a great number of significant environmental elements, such as bridges and historic wells. The majority of tourists would therefore walk down this central road passing directly through the middle of the historic block.

Because of its increasing popularity as a tourist destination, especially since it was promulgated as a 4A National Tourist Attraction⁴⁶⁶ (国家 AAAA 级旅游

耦园办公区今开工 [WHITRAP will soon gain approval — The construction of the office area for Suzhou Center in the Couple's Garden Retreat starts today], Online.

463 Ibid.

464 "Zai Suzhou jiejing paishe de zhe xie dianshiju" 在苏州借景拍摄的这些电视剧 [These TV dramas which borrowed Suzhou sceneries for their shooting], (November 23, 2015), Suzhou Tourism Administration, Online.

465 "Ouyuan yu yingshi" 耦园与影视 [To the Couple's Garden Retreat related films and television], Suzhou Ouyuan Management Department, Online.

466 Following the National Standard for the Quality Rating and Evaluation of Tourist Attractions (*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guojia biao zhun luyou jingqu zhiliang dengji de huafen yu pingding* 中华人民共和国国家标准旅游景区质量等级的划分与评定) of the National Tourist Administration 国家旅游局, tourist destinations in China are divided into five categories with one A being the lowest and 5A the highest category. Therefore, the evaluation of tourist destinations is carried out according to a scoring system which includes three criteria: service and environmental quality, the

景区) in 2010,⁴⁶⁷ Pingjiang Road attracts a great number of businesses. Investment companies further enhance this trend by renting formerly residential buildings in favorable locations at Pingjiang Road and subletting them to shop owners. This practice has led to two severe problems concerning Pingjiang Road's development. Firstly, rental prices for buildings located at both sides of the road are rising and drive out smaller businesses which lack the financial capital to pay the high rents. Secondly, the renting out of the buildings by a third party undermines government regulation and obstructs attempts to promote culture-related businesses.

The latter problem has become so severe that Suzhou Pingjiang Historic Block Conservation and Improvement Co., Ltd. 苏州平江历史街区保护整治有限责任公司 (short: Pingjiang Historic Block Company) made public a case of illegal subletting which has been taken to court on its website in September 2017.⁴⁶⁸ The premises in question are located at Pingjiang Road No. 14 and had originally been rented out to Suzhou Qing'an Investment Co., Ltd. 苏州庆安投资有限公司. While there was still running a business in the leased-out premises, the company sublet the location to another party engaged in the sale of snacks, beverages and packaged food. This had then been reported to the Pingjiang Historic Block Company by the original tenant.⁴⁶⁹

Being concerned that the subletting will bring disorder to the management of Pingjiang Road, the Pingjiang Historic Block Company decided to sue Qing'an Investment Company and terminate their leasing contract. Although Gusu District People's Court 姑苏区人民法院 and Suzhou Intermediate People's Court 苏州市中级人民法院 both approved the complaint, Qing'an Investment Company refused to clear the buildings. Finally, vacation had to be carried out through forced eviction.⁴⁷⁰

quality of the scenic site and the visitors' rating, which is obtained through questionnaires. Source: General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of the People's Republic of China 中华人民共和国国家质量监督检验检疫总局 (2003): *Lüyouqu (dian) zhiliang dengji de huafen yu pingding* 旅游区(点)质量等级的划分与评定 [The quality rating and evaluation of tourist areas and destinations], GB/T17775-2003.

467 "Pingjiang lishi wenhua jiequ gaikuang" 平江历史文化街区概况 [Brief account on the Pingjiang Historic and Cultural Block], Pingjiang Road Historic Block Conservation and Improvement Co., Ltd., Online.

468 "Pingjiang Lu yan jie shangpu bu ke sui yi zhuan zu o, yi you weigui qiye bei chachu le" 平江路沿街商铺不可随意转租哦, 已有违规企业被查处了 [Shops adjacent to Pingjiang Road cannot be sublet at will, there has already been prosecuted a business which violated the regulations], (September 12, 2017), Pingjiang Road Historic Block Conservation and Improvement Co., Ltd., Online.

469 Ibid.

470 Ibid.

The reason for this intervention as argued in the judgement is given by the Pingjiang Historic Block Company as follows:

平江路作为历史文化保护街区，聚集了丰富的历史人文景观，平江历史街区公司作为其中部分房屋的所有权人，出于对历史街区的风貌保护和环境整治的需要，其应当对承租商户的经营项目进行限制。⁴⁷¹

“As protected historic and cultural block, Pingjiang Road is abundant in historical and cultural landscapes. The Pingjiang Historic Block Company is the owner of a part of its buildings. Out of the need for protection of its appearance and environmental improvement of the historic block, it [the company] should restrict business ventures of commercial tenants.”

On their website, the company further states:

小编在这里善意地提醒一下平江路上所有商铺商家哦：转租会导致平江路租赁市场紊乱，市场畸形，十分不利于平江历史街区的稳定发展。所以，在签订租赁协议时，就对转租权做了明确约定：未经同意，不得转租给第三人。擅自转租的，平江历史街区公司可以解除合同。同时还约定，承租方不按租赁合同规定的用途经营，而用于其他经营或者合同期内转租或由其他个人经营的，平江历史街区公司可以解除合同。⁴⁷²

“Hereby, the editor sincerely reminds all shop owners and businessmen on Pingjiang Road: sublease will cause disorder in the rental market of Pingjiang Road, and market distortions are extremely uncondusive to a stable development of the Pingjiang Historic Block. Therefore, a clear statement has been made concerning the right for sublease when the tenancy agreement was signed: unapproved. Sublease to third parties is not permitted. In the case of unauthorized sublease, the Pingjiang Historic Block Company may terminate the contract. It further has been stated that the Pingjiang Historic Block Company may terminate the contract, if the lessee does not operate according to the usage specified in the tenancy agreement as well as [in case of] use for other business and sublease to or operation by someone else within the period of the contract.”

The statements by the Pingjiang Historic Block Company show that the government sees control and restriction of commercial activities on Pingjiang Road as important means to ensure the protection of the block's overall environment. This can be seen as an attempt to balance conservation and development. On the other hand, the fact that the company took legal action and warns other shop owners on

471 “Pingjiang Lu yan jie shangpu bu ke sui yi zhuan zu o, yi you weigui qiye bei chachu le” 平江路沿街商铺不可随意转租哦，已有违规企业被查处了, (September 12, 2017), Pingjiang Road Historic Block Conservation and Improvement Co., Ltd., Online.

472 Ibid.

its website that sublease is prohibited indicates that the commercialization of Pingjiang Road has already become a serious problem.

Although the entire historic block has been promulgated as 4A scenic area, tourists concentrate on Pingjiang Road where the density of shops, restaurants and leisure facilities is the highest. Only recently, efforts are made to popularize the “Twelve Views of Pingjiang”, which comprise sights all over the block and to both sides of Pingjiang Road. One of these initiatives includes a brochure with short presentations of 300 characters on each sight which is said to have been drafted by a group of local elderly and sold in the tourism center of the block.⁴⁷³ The brochure comprises eight of the twelve sights in the conservation plan on which they are based. It informs on their historical backgrounds, structure, characteristics and location.⁴⁷⁴

Hereafter, in August 2017, the Pingjiang Historic Block Company included an introduction to the “Twelve Views of Pingjiang” on their website.⁴⁷⁵ Simultaneously, several activities were launched to make these places known better to both locals and tourists. During the two-month summer holidays in 2017, the Science and Technology Association of Pingjiang Subdistrict (Pingjiang jiedao kexue jishu xiehui 平江街道科学技术协会) organized a model building competition of the twelve sights for children and teenagers. Participants were supposed to build a model of one ancient built structure belonging to the twelve sights, using eco-friendly materials. All in all, 55 participants from 4-15 years turned in their models for evaluation.⁴⁷⁶

Apart from this initiative to hand down local culture to younger generations, events are organized to guide tourists not only along central Pingjiang Road but also into the smaller lanes of the historic district. On the occasion of a festival in 2017, the Pingjiang Historic Block Company together with the Business Association of Pingjiang Road (Pingjiang Lu shanghui 平江路商会) organized an event

473 Hu, Yujing 胡毓菁 (December 1, 2015): “Suzhou laoren zi bian lüyou shouce jieshao Pingjiang jiequ lishi wenhua” 苏州老人自编旅游手册介绍平江街区历史文化 [Suzhou elderly compile travel brochure introducing the history and culture of Pingjiang Block], Online.

474 Jiang, Xinyi 蒋心怡 (November 20, 2015): “Pingjiang shi'er jing guang ting mingzi jiu zui le” 平江十二景光听名字就醉了 [One becomes engrossed just by listening to the names of the Twelve Sights of Pingjiang], Online.

475 “Pingjiang shi'er jing” 平江十二景 [Twelve Sights of Pingjiang], (August 25, 2017), Pingjiang Road Historic Block Conservation and Improvement Co., Ltd, Online.

476 Zhang Yuchen 张雨琛 (September 5, 2017): “55 jian ‘Pingjiang shi'er jing’ gu jianzhu moxing jin xian Gusu fengqing” 55 件‘平江十二景’古建筑模型尽显姑苏风情 [55 models of ancient built structures from the ‘Twelve Sights of Pingjiang’ greatly display Gusu culture], Online.

called “Visit Pingjiang and stroll around Shantang” (You Pingjiang guang Shantang 游平江 逛山塘) referring to the Pingjiang Historic Block and Suzhou’s other Historically and Culturally Famous Street, Shantang Street 山塘街. Especially couples are encouraged to visit the Pingjiang Historic District and participate in an activity where they have to take a picture together in front of one of the twelve sights, upload it and collect “Like” - clicks.⁴⁷⁷

The transformation of residential buildings into stores is the form of use which developed the fastest on both sides along Pingjiang Road. After completion of the conservation and improvement project in 2004, the preserved buildings were rented out to ventures with a focus on cultural content. While, in the later development, tourist shops and famous chain stores increasingly emerged, many stores from the “first generation” are original brands (*yuanchuang pinpai* 原创品牌). They were created in and became known from their Pingjiang Road store, which laid the basis for their transformation into a brand and following expansion to other cities.

One of the most well-known of these shops on Pingjiang Road is “Momi Café” (Mao de tiankong zhi cheng 猫的天空之城, literally: “The Cat’s Castle in the Sky”). The name “Momi” supposedly derives from a phonetic transcription of the Chinese word *maomi* (猫咪 “kitty”). The success story of Momi Café began in 2009 when the first store was opened on Pingjiang Road No. 25.⁴⁷⁸ Its functions exceed those of a common bookstore, and it is therefore designated as concept bookstore (*gainian shudian* 概念书店). The notion of the concept store goes back to the late 1990s when European retail traders such as 10 Corso Como in Milan and Colette in Paris created cross-selling shops oriented on a lifestyle theme. This retail model follows a curatorial approach where physical products are selected according to the store’s philosophy and customers are provided with an emotional and sensory experience.⁴⁷⁹ In compliance with its motto “a bookstore to warm a city” (*yi jia shudian wenjuan yi zuo chengshi* 一家书店温暖一座城市),⁴⁸⁰ “Momi Café” comprises a showroom in the front and a two-storied building in the back with the café on the lower and the bookshelves on the upper story.

477 “Wei ai deng ni — ‘You Pingjiang guang Shantang’ 2017 Qixi Minsu Wenhua Fengqingjie” 为爱等你 —— ‘游平江 逛山塘’ 2017七夕民俗文化风情节 [Waiting for you, for love — ‘Visit Pingjiang and stroll around Shantang’ 2017 Qixi Folk Culture Festival], (August 23, 2017), Pingjiang Road Historic Block Conservation and Improvement Co., Ltd., Online.

478 “Maokong jieshao” 猫空介绍 [Introduction to “Maokong”], Suzhou Momicafe Books Co., Ltd., Online.

479 Popescu, Doina I.; Popa, Ion (2012): “The Option for the Universe of Consumption and the ‘Efficient Consumer Response’ Philosophy”, p. 2.

480 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路, p. 149.

The products sold revolve around different themes (*zhuti* 主题), mainly related to paper such as magazines, creative travel picture books and maps, postcards or notebooks but also creative ceramics.⁴⁸¹ They are characterized by a high degree of creativity and singularity. Handmade postcards, for example, include wooden postcards in special shapes or cuts. A creative map of the Pingjiang Historic Block comes with game tokens and can also be used as a game board. It further provides information on the district and introduces places of interest.

The buildings of today's Momi Café were part of the newly discovered buildings from the Third Cultural Relics Survey. They have been kept in traditional building style and signs of age have not been overcoated but integrated into the overall design of the store. It is equipped with wooden furnishings and decorations resonating with the building style. The owner further refrained from dazzling advertisement and put up creatively designed wooden signs in a line on the outside wall. Moreover, a preserved archway has been integrated into the café (see fig. 3-27).



Figure 3-27. Preserved Archway in Momi Café (from the inside).

Source: author's photo, 2018.

In the café, there is served coffee and tea, another one of the stores' main products. Corresponding to a component of its Chinese name, "Castle in the sky" (Tiankong zhi cheng 天空之城), music by Joe Hisaishi (久石讓 Hisaishi Jō, original

481 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路, p. 149.

name 藤澤守 Fujisawa Mamoru) from the same-titled Japanese movie is played in the store.⁴⁸² Apart from being a commercial space, the café takes up a social function of providing space for people to relax, to meet and to interact. Having made postcards one of their major themes, the store offers a special related service. Under the designation “send to the future” (*ji gei weilai* 寄给未来) customers are encouraged to write postcards which will then be kept on a shelf in the store until a chosen future date on which it will be sent. These messages can be wishes and greetings to relatives and friends as well as messages to one’s future self.⁴⁸³ Since the opening of its first store on Pingjiang Road, the brand has expanded into major cities all over China with branch stores in major cities such as Shanghai, Nanjing, Beijing, Lijiang, Kunming or Chengdu.⁴⁸⁴

Another form of reuse applied in an officially listed municipal-level building is the transformation into a restaurant. In the case of former Wang Family Yizhuang, the government holds the property rights and can initiate conservation projects as well as decide on its form of reuse. In 2008, the government rented out the former *yizhuang* to a restaurant-owner so that he could set up a test site for the establishment of cultural industries on Pingjiang Road.⁴⁸⁵ After the buildings had been repaired, they were opened as “Shang xia ruo” 上下若 – restaurant.⁴⁸⁶

The restaurant is decorated in Asian style. In addition to conventional tables and a bar inside, roofed corridors to the left and right of a courtyard are divided into several seating areas. These compartments have an elevated tatami mat floor and are shielded from the weather with a pitched roof-construction. In contrast to its traditional appearance and decoration, the restaurant offers international cuisine including coffee and desserts.

Except for its function as a restaurant, it is also used as recreational space and meeting place for private and work-related talks. According to an article in *Xin-min weekly*, the main target group of the “Shang xia ruo”-restaurant are young people and such working in the media.⁴⁸⁷ Visitors are informed on the historical background of former Wang Family Yizhuang by means of an official plaque. Furthermore, information on its protection status and the original scale of the Wang Family’s property is given. As in the case of Momi Café, the owner set up additional “Shang xia ruo”-restaurants in other cities when the business was successful.⁴⁸⁸

482 Bei, Chen 北辰 (2014): *Pingjiang Lu* 平江路, p. 149.

483 “Ji gei weilai” 寄给未来 [Send to the future], Suzhou Momicafe Books Co., Ltd., Online.

484 “Maokong jieshao” 猫空介绍, Suzhou Momicafe Books Co., Ltd., Online.

485 Zhong Sir 钟 sir (August 13, 2014): “Shang xia ruo” 上下若, Online.

486 Ibid.

487 Ibid.

488 Ibid.

Museums and Exhibition Halls

The main form of use for officially listed sites is to convert them into museums or exhibition halls. The earliest and most well-known museum in the historic block is the above-mentioned **Kunqu Opera Museum**. Originally opened as Suzhou Opera Museum, its specialization on *kunqu* opera followed in 2001, when UNESCO included *kunqu* opera into the first batch of “Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity”.⁴⁸⁹ With the aim to better protect and develop the art of *kunqu* opera, the site was transformed into China *Kunqu* Opera Museum 中国昆曲博物馆 in 2003, as approved by the Ministry of Culture and the government of Jiangsu Province.⁴⁹⁰

The museum holds a collection of cultural relics and more than 30,000 volumes of ancient books and historical documents on *kunqu* opera as well as other opera types. Combining history, culture and art, it assumes more “conventional” museum functions such as preservation and exhibition, but is further used as platform for performances, research and other forms of usage.⁴⁹¹ For example, the museum courtyard in front of the opera stage is used as a meeting place for local people to practice *kunqu* opera.



Figure 3-28. *Kunqu* Opera Practice.

Source: author’s photo, 2016.

489 “Xibo jianjie” 戏博简介 [Introduction to the Opera Museums], Suzhou Opera Museum, Online.

490 Ibid.

491 Ibid.

During a visit of the *Kunqu* Opera Museum in the course of an International Symposium on Chinese Heritage Conservation in Suzhou 2016, a group of locals told this author that they would meet regularly in this place to practice *kunqu* opera singing and instrumental compositions. They appreciated the courtyard in front of the preserved opera stage as appropriate space for their practices (see fig. 3-28).⁴⁹²

A second museum of a local form of art composed of singing as well as storytelling is the **Pingtán Museum** 评弹博物馆. The art of *pingtan* is unique to the area of Suzhou and has been recognized as such on a national level when it was included in the first batch of “Representative works of National Intangible Cultural Heritage” (*guojia ji fei wuzhi wenhua yichan daibiaozuo* 国家级非物质文化遗产代表作) by the State Council in 2006.⁴⁹³ Following its nomination two years earlier by Jiangsu Province and Suzhou Government, Suzhou *Pingtán* Museum was set up in order to better protect, pass on and enhance this form of local art.⁴⁹⁴ As mentioned in chapter 2.3, appropriate protection and management of cultural heritage are an important premise for official listing.

The museum was established in Zhong Zhangjia Lane 中张家巷 Shen Mansion 沈宅. This municipal-level protected traditional residence dates back to the end of the Qing dynasty and the beginning of the Republican period. It is located right next to the *Kunqu* Opera Museum and had formerly been used as both Suzhou opera and *pingtan* research centre.⁴⁹⁵ The preserved buildings of former Shen Mansion comprise one row with three *jin*. The entrance hall gives an overview of the general situation of *pingtan* and the visitor area of the museum. There is a Qing dynasty-style performance venue set up in the second *jin*, the former main hall of the mansion where regular performances are given. The last *jin* displays the historical development of *pingtan* and provides information on famous *pingtan* artists as well as historical accounts on past events.⁴⁹⁶

Similar to the China *Kunqu* Opera Museum, it holds a collection of cultural relics and more than 12,000 volumes of historic books and historical documents related to the art of *pingtan*, including several hundred unique copies as well as scripts. The basis of the museum are more than 560 disks of audiovisual *pingtan* material which originate from the private collection of China’s leading economic policy maker through the 1950s and the early 1960s, Chen Yun 陈云 (1905–1995),

492 Conversation with locals during field trip in the course of the International Symposium “Reclaiming Identity and (Re)materializing Pasts: Approaches to Heritage Conservation in China”, Suzhou, April 8, 2016.

493 “Xibo jianjie” 戏博简介, Suzhou Opera Museum, Online.

494 Ibid.

495 Ibid.

496 “Suzhou pingtan bowuguan” 苏州评弹博物馆 [Suzhou *Pingtán* Museum], Pingjiang Road Historic Block Conservation and Improvement Co., Ltd., Online.

and have been donated to the museum by his wife.⁴⁹⁷ The exhibition of the museum has been completely new arranged and upgraded in 2013.⁴⁹⁸ In addition to the continuous performance of *pingtan* at the venue inside the museum, the courtyard in front is also used as gathering place for local elderly to engage in dancing and gymnastics activities.⁴⁹⁹

Apart from cultural heritage related to local opera, Suzhou looks back to a great number of local figures listed in its historical records who came out first as Number One Scholars in the highest imperial examinations. Manifested in their former residences (*zhuangyuan guju* 状元故居) of which some have been preserved in the Pingjiang Historic Block, this material cultural heritage is included into what is referred to as “*zhuangyuan* culture” 状元文化. For example, the comparatively well-preserved former *zhuangyuan* mansion (*zhuangyuan fu* 状元府) of Pan Shi'en now hosts **Suzhou Zhuangyuan Museum** 苏州状元博物馆.

Located at the western end of Niujia Lane and close to Lindun Road 临顿路, Pan Mansion is one of three parts of the former “Phoenix Pond Garden” (Fengchi yuan 凤池园) and accordingly passed through the different forms of usage prevalent for great mansions in the course of housing transformation. After it had been confiscated in 1958, the buildings were used for housing with more than 30 households moving in and the garden of the mansion was further occupied by a factory during the 1960s.⁵⁰⁰ In order to repair and reuse the mansion, residential units firstly needed to be reacquired. Therefore, in the case of one tenant, the government had to file a lawsuit.⁵⁰¹

The residence has not completely been reused as museum space but divided into two parts. The most well-preserved buildings in the middle and the western row have been integrated into the Zhuangyuan Museum and the third to fifth *jin* of the middle row as well as the four *jin* of the eastern row have been rented out to Shanghai Ruihe Architectural Design and Engineering Co., Ltd. 上海睿合建筑设计工程有限公司. In this part, creative businesses have set up their studios and workshops.⁵⁰²

497 “Suzhou pingtan bowuguan” 苏州评弹博物馆 [Suzhou *Pingtan* Museum], Pingjiang Road Historic Block Conservation and Improvement Co., Ltd., Online.

498 “Xibo jianjie” 戏博简介, Suzhou Opera Museum, Online.

499 Observation by this author during fieldwork in the Pingjiang Historic Block on May 27, 2016.

500 Gong, Xi 弓玺; Jiang, Feng 姜锋 (April 25, 2017): “Liuyu tang: xiri zhuangyuan fu jin wei bowuguan” 留余堂: 昔日状元府今为博物馆 [Liuyu Hall: In former days Number One Scholar residence and today a museum], Online.

501 Ibid.

502 Ibid.

After more than one year of preparation, Suzhou Zhuangyuan Museum was opened to the public in November 2014. While the preserved built heritage of the *zhuangyuan* mansion with its traditional appearance provides the basis and sets the framework for the overall museum, it is enriched with a collection of 469 exhibits of cultural relics.⁵⁰³ Equally targeting at Suzhou residents and tourists, the purpose of the museum is to “pass on history and culture, to promote the city image and to foster cultural tourism development”.⁵⁰⁴

Therefore, the museum organizes thematically related activities for professional audiences as well as the general public. For example, a school opening ceremony was held in spring 2017 for children who started school. In this ceremony, the teacher performed traditional rituals with the students related to learning, such as writing the character *ren* (“human being” 人) with a brush, which expresses the expectation for students to learn how to become an upright person.⁵⁰⁵ Academic assemblies include symposia on *zhuangyuan* culture of which one was held on the day of the museum’s inauguration.⁵⁰⁶

Moreover, the museum is used for broader cultural activities, such as cultural exchange with other countries. In 2017, a group of young Germans from the association YouthORG.EU visited the museum. They were invited to take part in a program introducing major aspects of traditional Chinese culture, among these Chinese zither play, tea culture and traditional Han Chinese clothing.⁵⁰⁷

Another *zhuangyuan* mansion is the Former Residence of Hong Jun. Hong Jun 洪钧 (1839–1893) was a famous Chinese scholar and diplomat who was sent to Europe by the Qing Government as Chinese envoy. During his stay in Berlin, he further travelled to Russia, Austria and the Netherlands.⁵⁰⁸ With the support of a translator, he engaged in research on Yuan history by use of non-Chinese writings and material. He compiled the 30 volume “Supplemental Evidence on

503 “Suzhou zhuangyuan bowuguan” 苏州状元博物馆 [Suzhou Zhuangyuan Museum], Suzhou Xiangmen City Wall Cultural and Recreational Scenic Area, Online.

504 Ibid.

505 “Zhuangyuan Fu | Ding you xinchun xi, le xiang kaixue li” 状元府 | 丁酉新春禧乐享开学礼 [Zhuangyuan Mansion | The happiness of the first days in the New Year 2017 and a joyful school opening ceremony], (July 4, 2017), Xuzhou Imperial Decree Museum, Online.

506 “Suzhou zhuangyuan bowuguan” 苏州状元博物馆, Suzhou Xiangmen City Wall Cultural and Recreational Scenic Area, Online.

507 “Suzhou zhuangyuan bowuguan ‘cha xiang qin yun Han feng’ chuantong wenhua tian” 苏州状元博物馆“茶香琴韵汉风”传统文化体验 [“The scent of tea, the sound of the zither and Han-dynasty style” experience of traditional culture in Suzhou Zhuangyuan Museum], (July 4, 2017), Xuzhou Imperial Decree Museum, Online.

508 Di, Yongjun 邸永君 (March 29, 2006): “Zhuangyuan waijiaojia — Hong Jun qi ren qi shi” 状元外交家——洪钧其人其事 [A Number One Scholar Diplomat — The Life and Deeds of Hong Jun], Online.

Yuan history from translated texts” (*Yuan shi yiwen zhengbu* 元史译文证补). Another of his achievements of this time concerns the Chinese telegraph code, which he transformed in order to align it with the code used in non-Chinese countries.⁵⁰⁹



Figure 3-29. Entrance to Former Mansion of Hong Jun.

Source: author's photo, 2018.

Equal to other residences of formerly famous figures, it is partly inhabited by Hong Jun's descendants. His great-grandson Hong Chuanxin 洪传心 lives in his private property, together with his wife and son. The majority of the buildings, however, is rented out to tenants by the Municipal Housing Management Bureau.⁵¹⁰ As mentioned earlier, the Former Residence of Hong Jun was partly opened as **Hall of Notables from Pingjiang** and **Exhibition on the Chinese Examination System** in 2007. It showed the achievements and related cultural objects of several tens of famous figures who were born in the historic block or had lived there.⁵¹¹ This restored part of the mansion bordering on Xuanqiao Lane 悬桥巷 is closed at present

509 Di, Yongjun 邸永君 (March 29, 2006): “Zhuangyuan waijiaojia — Hong Jun qi ren qi shi” 状元外交家——洪钧其人其事, Online.

510 Zheng, Fengming 郑凤鸣 (January 22, 2010): “Yu Hong zhuangyuan houren hua Hong zhai — fang Hong Jun guju guiyin tang” 与洪状元后人话洪宅 —— 访洪钧故居桂荫堂 [Talking about Hong Mansion with the descendants of zhuangyuan Hong — A visit of Guiyin Hall in the Former Residence of Hong Jun], Online.

511 “Yincang zai Suzhou chengli de zhuangyuan fu” 隐藏在苏州城里的状元府 [The zhuangyuan mansion hidden in Suzhou City], (October 22, 2014), Suzhou Tourism Administration, Online.

and not accessible to the public. The entrance of its inhabited part further in the back is still decorated with a horizontal board indicating its former status as *zhuangyuan* mansion (see fig. 3-29).

Another form of re-use which is still at its beginning in the Pingjiang Historic Block are art museums. As one of its strategies to open up new options for use of conserved built structures, Suzhou Government aims to attract international talents engaged in the cultural field to promote cultural and creative industries in Suzhou. Therefore, they initiated the establishment of an art gallery exhibiting the works of female artist Wang Xiaohui 王小慧 in the newly conserved Ding Mansion.⁵¹² With its relocation (see chapter 3.2.3) the original form of use of the mansion was changed from housing into an art gallery. Wang Xiaohui who graduated in architecture participated in the design of the gallery, combining Chinese and “Western” elements in a modern style.⁵¹³ Having lived and worked in China as well as Germany for a long time, she has great experience in working with international brands, which is incorporated in her work.⁵¹⁴

In October 2013, **Wang Xiaohui Art Museum** 王小慧艺术馆 was officially opened.⁵¹⁵ While the building structure and outward appearance of the mansion have been reconstructed according to previous documentation, the interior was equipped with fire prevention facilities as well as technology for environmental protection and energy saving to enhance usage and comfort.⁵¹⁶ The exhibits in the museum are contemporary artworks including photographs, sculpture, installations, images and new media art. Although the artworks have a strong experimental and avant-garde character, they have been well integrated into the traditional appearance of the building.⁵¹⁷

Even before the museum was opened, it has served as venue for a conference on the foundation of museums as well as the protection and development of

512 Cheng, Qi 程琦 (September 24, 2013): “Wang Xiaohui yishu guan ‘luohu’ mingdai laozhai, gudian yu dangdai yuansu kuajie ronghe” 王小慧艺术馆“落户”明代老宅, 古典与当代元素跨界融合 [Wang Xiaohui Art Museum “settles” in an old Ming dynasty residence, classical and contemporary elements cross boundaries and merge], Online.

513 Ibid.

514 Ibid.

515 Jin, Yajun 金亚军 (April 6, 2016): “Daru Xiang Ding zhai” 大儒巷丁宅, Online.

516 Tao, Guanqun 陶冠群 (November 29, 2011): “Ding zhai shishi zhengti baohuxing yijian 2012 nian 4 yue chu wancheng” 丁宅实施整体保护性移建 2012 年 4 月初完成 [The protective Movement and Reconstruction of the complete Ding Mansion shall be completed by the beginning of April 2012], Online.

517 Cheng, Qi 程琦 (September 24, 2013): “Wang Xiaohui yishu guan ‘luohu’ mingdai laozhai, gudian yu dangdai yuansu kuajie ronghe” 王小慧艺术馆“落户”明代老宅, 古典与当代元素跨界融合, Online.

historic urban spaces. Together with the management company of Pingjiang Road, there further was set up a network to support young artists and designers.⁵¹⁸ On the one hand, Wang Xiaohui Art Museum itself serves as a model for future creative industry projects and on the other hand, it is directly involved in the process of their formation.

Guesthouses and Social/Cultural Facilities

A function which enables the combination of housing conservation with tourism development in a feasible way is to transform traditional housing units into guesthouses or hostels. In the Pingjiang Historic Block, this form of usage has increasingly been applied with the start of the conservation project in 2002 and its following transformation into a tourist destination. It is now a frequently chosen form of conservation with establishments for different target groups ranging from boutique hotels (*jingpin jiudian* 精品酒店) to youth hostels, which shall be introduced in the following.

As part of the Pingjiang Historic Block Conservation and Improvement Project, two building complexes located at the bank of Pingjiang River were redeveloped into **Pingjiang Guesthouse** 平江客栈. Therefore, two former residences, Niujia Lane Fang Mansion and Dong Family Yizhuang have been combined into one guesthouse. The *Pingjiang Gazetteer* records that Fang Mansion had been used for housing before, while the *yizhuang* had assumed a range of different functions (compare chapter 3.2.3). Apart from hosting a school, it had been occupied by a plastics factory and a waste transfer station. Its adjacent ancestral temple had been used as gunnysack factory, canteen and storehouse.⁵¹⁹

Both mansions are officially listed. Fang Mansion was primarily promulgated as controlled and protected building in 1983 and has been listed on a municipal level since 2014. Dong Family Yizhuang, which includes Dong Family Ancestral Temple, was listed as controlled and protected building in 1983 as well. Treatment therefore was carried out by the government.⁵²⁰ The conservation process aimed at maintaining the original appearance of traditional buildings while simultaneously providing the requirements for modern usage.

518 Cheng, Qi 程琦 (September 24, 2013): “Wang Xiaohui yishu guan ‘luohu’ mingdai laozhai, gudian yu dangdai yuansu kuajie ronghe” 王小慧艺术馆“落户”明代老宅, 古典与当代元素跨界融合, Online.

519 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, pp. 242, 234.

520 Shen, Qingnian 沈庆年 (ed., 2012): *Gucheng yizhu: Suzhou kongbao jianzhu tanyou* 古城遗珠: 苏州控保建筑探幽, p. 67.

The transformed guesthouse comprises 42 guest rooms, which are arranged in the style of local dwelling houses.⁵²¹ Characteristic architectural elements and cultural relics have been retained and integrated into the guesthouse. In addition, every room is equipped with hot and cold air-conditioning as well as sanitation facilities in the form of a private bathroom. Apart from the guest rooms, it features a restaurant, a coffee bar and rooms of five different sizes which can be used for multiple purposes. With a maximum reception of 150 people, it can further be used to hold conferences or banquets.⁵²²

While the guest rooms are adapted to modern needs in terms of functionality and comfort, a strong focus is set on the inclusion of traditional culture. In addition to room numbers, the guest rooms have been provided with “cultural names” (*wenhua xingming* 文化姓名).⁵²³ These names express traditional morals such as righteousness and kindness with rooms named “Hall of the Esteem of Righteousness” (Shangyi ting 尚义厅) or “Hall of the Esteem of Kindness” (Shangshan ting 尚善厅). Furthermore, the often taken up ideal to withdraw from society and live in seclusion can be identified in names such as “Hall of Ploughing and Studying” (Gengdu ting 耕读厅). Finally, some names reflect qualities suggestive of poetry and painting (*shiqing huayi* 诗情画意). This is exemplified by guest rooms such as “Hall of the Refreshing Breeze” (Qingfeng ting 清风厅) or “Hall of the Bright Moon” (Mingyue ting 明月厅).⁵²⁴

These names imply the individual character of the rooms. Thus, the Hall of the Refreshing Breeze features a balcony and the windows of the Hall of the Bright Moon are oriented towards the scenery of Pingjiang River. Moreover, there are cultural relics and significant elements of material cultural heritage exhibited in some of the rooms. Such material cultural heritage includes ornamental carvings on screen doors or a traditional bed for newly-wed couples (*longfeng chuang* 龙凤床) which spend their honeymoon in the guesthouse.⁵²⁵

One of the earliest guesthouses in the block is **Suzhou Joya International Youth Hostel** 苏州小雅国际青年旅舍. The hostel is named after former official Pang Qinglin 庞庆麟 (1842–?) whose courtesy name (*zi* 字), *xiaoya* 小雅, is also the name of a poem in the “Book of Songs” (*Shijing* 诗经).⁵²⁶ Pang Mansion is the privately-owned residence of Pang Qinglin’s descendants. It comprises two rows

521 “Pingjiang kezhan” 平江客栈 [Pingjiang Guesthouse], Pingjiang Road Historic Block Conservation and Improvement Co., Ltd., Online.

522 Ibid.

523 Shen, Qingnian 沈庆年 (ed., 2012): *Gucheng yizhu: Suzhou kongbao jianzhu tanyou* 古城遗珠: 苏州控保建筑探幽, p. 68.

524 Ibid.

525 Ibid.

526 Ibid., p. 62.

with five *jin* which have been well preserved. Dating back to the early Qing dynasty, the mansion has been listed as controlled and protected building. Its entrance hall, sedan-chair hall and a study and parlor in the western row have been repaired by the Pang Family before they opened Joya International Youth hostel. The owners still live in the eastern part of the mansion.⁵²⁷

To assume the basic functions of the hostel, the entrance hall has been turned into a reception room. In a small courtyard following the entrance hall are hung up written abstracts on the mansion's history and well-known earlier inhabitants, e.g. educator Jin Songcen 金松岑, who had provided his own residence in Tongli to open a school.⁵²⁸ The sedan-chair hall has been turned into a public recreational space where guests can assemble to play games, have a rest or to read a book. The former study and parlor, which are built in traditional Suzhou north-south structure facing each other, now accommodate the guest rooms. The hostel offers two types of rooms differing in number of guests and price. The former study has been divided into three double-rooms while the parlor offers cheaper standard hostel rooms from six to eight people.⁵²⁹

Characteristic architectural and environmental elements have been preserved and integrated into the setup of the hostel. Guests enter the building complex through a stone-framed door (*shikumen* 石库门, for an explanation of this element, see chapter 5.1.1) and the small courtyard following the entrance hall still features a historic well, both original components of the mansion. There further are old camellia 山茶 and wisteria 紫藤 trees as well as a lakeside rock scenery in the courtyard in-between the guest rooms (see fig. 3-30). The double rooms carry names with cultural connotations related to traditional poetry and painting, such as, again, the "bright moon" (*ming yue* 明月) or the "refreshing breeze" (*qing feng* 清风).⁵³⁰

As the description above shows, the structure of the mansion and the original appearance of the buildings have been preserved. As part of the network "Hostelling International", however, it is bound to international accommodation standards. In order to adhere to these standards in terms of sanitation and comfort, the buildings have been adapted to the contemporary lifestyle. The double-rooms each feature a private bathroom while another shared bathroom has been included for the standard rooms. The hostel further offers a laundry station with washing machines in the public area and a kitchen, which is equipped with cooking facilities.⁵³¹

527 Shen, Qingnian 沈庆年 (ed., 2012): *Gucheng yizhu: Suzhou kongbao jianzhu tanyou* 古城遗珠: 苏州控保建筑探幽, p. 62.

528 Ibid.

529 Ibid.

530 Ibid.

531 Information provided by hostel manager, Suzhou Pingjiang Historic Block, May 18, 2018.



Figure 3-30. Registered 70-year-old Wisteria Tree.

Source: author's photo, 2018.

In 2013, another controlled and protected building was opened as **Tan Hua Mansion** 探花府邸 which belongs to the Blossom Hill Inn 花间堂 Group. The former residence of Pan Zuyin 潘祖荫, grandson of Pan Shi'en, was converted into a boutique hotel. The concept of “boutique”, also interchangeable with “lifestyle” or “design” as a particular type of hotel emerged in the 1980s and was primarily popular in North America and Europe before it came to East and South-east Asia.⁵³² Vaguely defined, boutique hotels are smaller than usual hotels and do not belong to large chains, they have an individual character and give prominence to personal service. In their pursuit of uniqueness, they are either set up in exceptional modern architecture or settings of historic significance which makes them a popular form of adaptive reuse.⁵³³

Before transformation, Tan Hua Mansion's eastern row including the garden and the latter half of the central row belonged to a bed sheet factory. The factory used half of the place as guesthouse and the other half as dormitory.⁵³⁴ The rest of the mansion had been public rental housing, inhabited by more than 50 households.

532 Henderson, Joan C. (2011): “Hip heritage: The boutique hotel business in Singapore”, p. 218.

533 Ibid., pp. 218–219.

534 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 245.

During this period of use, new structures were added in the courtyards and the garden was demolished, but the basic layout of three rows with five *jin* and its original buildings could be maintained.⁵³⁵

Since the mansion has been transformed, it fulfills various functions. The first *jin* of the eastern row, which enables an unblocked view on its restored garden, functions as reception hall. The latter half of this row has been transformed into a restaurant area due to its irregular structure. To provide for the kitchen, a two-story building has been newly constructed adjacent to the northeastern corner of the mansion which is not part of the protection area. The former half of the central row is used for cultural exhibitions and “experiences”, including a reading corner, a tearoom, public space to hold salons (*shalong* 沙龙)⁵³⁶ and an exhibition area.⁵³⁷

The guest rooms of the hotel are mainly located in the western row as well as the northern part of the central and eastern row. In the central row, rooms have been designed in accordance with traditional occupation patterns. While the central rooms are used as public space, bedrooms are set up in the eastern and western side rooms. Such an arrangement has been chosen in order to solve the problem of low insulation and to increase privacy. At the same time, it shall offer an “authentic” experience of living in a courtyard house. The number of guests in these rooms therefore is lower, with one family per courtyard.⁵³⁸

Guest rooms in the western row show a greater variety of room types, including smaller rooms with several families sharing a courtyard. All rooms of the hotel are fully equipped with modern living facilities in order to satisfy the guests’ demand for comfort.⁵³⁹ The mansion’s new form of use as boutique hotel had been determined from the very beginning of the conservation project which enabled designers to consider future functional needs and include facilities and devices for water supply and drainage, a power system, air-conditioning and heating.⁵⁴⁰ In the

535 Cai, Shuang 蔡爽 (2015): “Tanhua fudi • Huajian tang — Suzhou Pingjiang lishi jiequ Pan Zuyin guju xiushan gaizao shijian” 探花府邸 • 花间堂——苏州平江历史街区潘祖荫故居修缮改造实践 [Tan Hua Mansion • Huajian Hall – Conservation and Transformation Practice of the Former Mansion of Pan Zuyin in the Pingjiang Historical Block, Suzhou], p. 84.

536 Salon refers to social gatherings with cultural content relating to literature, arts, science, etc.

537 Cai, Shuang 蔡爽 (2015): “Tanhua fudi • Huajian tang — Suzhou Pingjiang lishi jiequ Pan Zuyin guju xiushan gaizao shijian” 探花府邸 • 花间堂——苏州平江历史街区潘祖荫故居修缮改造实践, p. 84.

538 Ibid.

539 Ibid.

540 Xia, Rongjing 夏榕静 (2014): “Laozhai de jingcai tuibian — Pan Zuyin guju (zhonglu houbanbu ji donglu) weixiu zhengzhi” 老宅的精彩蜕变——潘祖荫故居（中路后

design process, special attention was paid to not violate regulations on the protection of ancient buildings.⁵⁴¹

In terms of fire prevention and control, the project has followed and to a high degree conforms to local fire prevention regulations (*Management Regulations on fire prevention in protective conservation and improvement of Historically and Culturally Protected Areas of Suzhou* 苏州市历史文化保护区保护性修复、整治消防管理办法). In accordance with these regulations for protected heritage buildings, there have been installed five types of fire prevention and control facilities in the buildings.⁵⁴²

However, the difficulty to adhere to conservation standards while achieving a high level of security becomes apparent by example of fire-retarding building parts. In the case of Tan Hua Mansion, the Cultural Relics Department disagreed with the plans for installing fire-retarding doors, windows and rolling fire shutters, because they contrasted strongly with the traditional appearance of the building. In the end, the department reached an agreement with the fire brigade whereby the installation of fire-retarding doors and windows could be avoided.⁵⁴³ Another component, which posed problems to the preservation of the mansion's outward appearance, was lightning protection. Here, a solution could be reached by employment of hidden laying lightning protection earth tapes.⁵⁴⁴

Furthermore, new materials with power saving functions have been employed for conservation. The mansion features a modern geothermal heat pump system, which can be used for air-conditioning, warm water and heating. On the one hand, such heat preserving and energy saving construction materials are employed to solve common problems in ancient building preservation, such as low heat preservation capacity, damp building floors or low insulation capacity.⁵⁴⁵ On the other hand, new energy saving technology has been chosen which supports continuing use of the buildings in their future function as boutique hotel.

This form of combining conservation with modern technological standards in a guesthouse can also be found in buildings which are not officially listed, yet, but

半部及东路) 维修整治 [The marvelous transformation of an old mansion — reparation and improvement of the Former Mansion of Pan Zuyin (latter half of central row and eastern row)], p. 13.

541 Ibid.

542 Cai, Shuang 蔡爽 (2015): “Tanhua fudi • Huajian tang — Suzhou Pingjiang lishi jiequ Pan Zuyin guju xiushan gaizao shijian” 探花府邸 • 花间堂——苏州平江历史街区潘祖荫故居修缮改造实践, p. 84.

543 Xia, Rongjing 夏榕静 (2014): “Laozhai de jingcai tuibian — Pan Zuyin guju (zhonglu houbanbu ji donglu) weixiu zhengzhi” 老宅的精彩蜕变——潘祖荫故居 (中路后半部及东路) 维修整治, p. 14.

544 Ibid.

545 Ibid.

have been discovered in the Third Cultural Relics Survey. One early example from 2007 is “**Zhu Garden**” (Zhuyuan 筑园) on Pingjiang Road No. 31. Originally a hall of the Zhang Family Residence in the Qing dynasty named “Sanhe Hall” (Sanhe tang 三和堂), it had later been used for housing.⁵⁴⁶ Now, it hosts “Archi-Garden Club” which, in addition to its function as guesthouse, can further be used as space for professional assemblies and exhibitions.⁵⁴⁷

When Shanghai Zhongfang Architectural Design Co., Ltd. 上海中房建筑设计有限公司 took over the conservation and reconstruction project, the building was seriously damaged, but some significant parts could be saved and are well-preserved. These parts include an 100-year-old wall and roof beams with fine wooden carvings.⁵⁴⁸ At the same time, less significant building elements have been designed to take up a new function in the guesthouse such as a fire-retarding lane (*huoxiang* 火巷) which has been roofed in a modern design and now serves as picture gallery.⁵⁴⁹

The design company describes their work as “protective transformation” (*baohu xing gaizao* 保护性改造) project. Therein, they took an approach which combines the preservation of the overall structure with partly renewal. Conservation was carried out in accordance with the original appearance of the buildings.⁵⁵⁰ Traditional building structures such as the skywell and an archway have been integrated into the overall design and the buildings provided with new functions. The front hall is now used as reception and the back hall has been converted into a reading room with coffee bar.⁵⁵¹

In order to adapt the buildings to the needs of a contemporary lifestyle, they are equipped with modern facilities and technology. For example, they feature a drainage and ventilation system as well as central air-conditioning. Insulation is regulated by means of energy-saving technologies and the buildings make use of a geothermal system.⁵⁵² The guest rooms are further furnished in a modern style and have plain windows. Instead of restoring these rooms to a traditional style as well, the difference between public space in traditional style and the private rooms in a modern style has been made visible.

546 Information plaque on the building.

547 “Suzhou Zhuyuan huisuo” 苏州筑园会所 [Suzhou Archi-Garden Club], Shanghai Zhongfang Architectural Design Co., Ltd., Online.

548 Information plaque on the building.

549 “Suzhou Zhuyuan huisuo” 苏州筑园会所, Shanghai Zhongfang Architectural Design Co., Ltd., Online.

550 Ibid.

551 Ibid.

552 Information plaque on the building.

The final group of use forms found in the Pingjiang Historic Block are social and cultural facilities. One example related to cultural facilities is **Weidao Guan Qian Pan Mansion**. Hosting a “lifestyle center” (*shenghuo fangshi zhongxin* 生活方式中心) to experience a certain “Suzhou lifestyle”, it takes up a comparatively rare function for a mansion listed on the national and highest protection level. This may relate to its earlier and established usage for cultural and artistic purposes. The *Pingjiang Gazetteer* records that the parlor was used for small-scale *pingtan* performances by famous artists during the 1920s and 30s and another drawing room functioned as venue for scholarly assemblies, artistic and drama performances.⁵⁵³ Only later was it partly turned into a storehouse for a silk weaving factory and partly into housing.⁵⁵⁴

In the course of an adaptive reuse project, there were restored 2800 m² of the mansion’s historical built heritage.⁵⁵⁵ Since 2014, it has been a locale for different chain brand cultural and creative industry branches of the Jiangsu province tourism developer Yuanjian Holdings Group 远见控股集团. This developer provides goods, services and activities relating to six domains: catering, accommodation, transportation, travelling, shopping and entertainment.⁵⁵⁶ In Pan Mansion, they operate a bookstore, a teahouse and a shop selling traditional Suzhou handicraft products. While having their own brand names, all these branches are brought together in the lifestyle center named “Pingjiang Road • Ligeng Hall LIFE+” (Pingjiang Lu • Ligeng tang LIFE+ 平江路 • 礼耕堂 LIFE+).

“First Sight Bookstore” (Chujian shufang 初见书房) is the brand name of one of the cultural tourism facilities belonging to entertainment. By now, this store has expanded to more than 10 stores in the Jiangnan region.⁵⁵⁷ The shop selling traditional handicraft products carries the brand name “Good Style of Suzhou” (Suzhou hao fengguang 苏州好风光). It covers seven types of cultural and creative industry products: tea, wine, food, wooden products, textiles, potteries and fragrances. The cultural and creative brand aims to creatively restore traditional handicraft and therefore integrates research and development of cultural resources with production and sales.⁵⁵⁸

553 Suzhou Pingjiang District Gazetteer Compilation Committee 苏州市平江区地方志编纂委员会 (ed., 2006): *Pingjiang Qu zhi* 平江区志, p. 241.

554 *Ibid.*, p. 242.

555 “Pingjiang Lu • Ligeng tang LIFE+, zhongqiu xiao changjia huohua Su shi shenghuo” 平江路 • 礼耕堂 LIFE+, 中秋小长假活化苏式生活 [Pingjiang Road • Ligeng Hall LIFE+, revitalizing Suzhou lifestyle during the short “long vacation” of the Mid-autumn Festival], (September 5, 2014), Suzhou Tourism Administration, Online.

556 “Jituan jianjie” 集团简介 [Company introduction], 2014, Yuanjian Holdings, Online.

557 “Chujian shufang” 初见书房 [First Sight Bookstore], 2014, Yuanjian Holdings, Online.

558 “Hao fengguang” 好风光 [Hao Fengguang Store], 2014, Yuanjian Holdings, Online.

According to an article on the website of Suzhou Tourism Administration, one of the purposes of setting up the lifestyle center was to “revitalize” (*huohua* 活化) the historical mansion, which is promoted to be representative for a “Suzhou lifestyle”. This lifestyle shall be experienced in the form of cultural and creative products, cultural books and art exhibitions.⁵⁵⁹ By including the historical name of the mansion’s main hall in the name of the center, the developer aims to adapt the general concept of the “lifestyle center” to local history and culture.

In line with this overarching concept, there are cultural events organized on different occasions in “First Sight Bookstore”. For example, two events held in fall 2014 were a Mid-autumn Festival gathering and a photography exhibition. The Mid-autumn Festival gathering included a lecture by a Zen-Buddhist priest with subsequent discussion and calligraphy writing.⁵⁶⁰ The photography exhibition, which carries a name homophone to Pingjiang Road and is called “Pingjiang • Record” (Pingjiang • Lu 平江 • 录), shows the development of the historical district over 13 years. The photographer and speaker at the event, a Suzhou native, has been taking pictures of Pingjiang Road since 2001. In addition to giving a content-related lecture on his work, the event also comprised a technical briefing.⁵⁶¹

On the one hand, specific products and activities at Pan Mansion are remodeled into a “Suzhou lifestyle” in order to make them more attractive to tourists as well as certain target groups of local people. On the other hand, the demand for traditional arts and handicraft techniques increases, thereby fostering the transmission and advance of local culture. Although the reuse of Pan Mansion follows clear commercial objectives, it further enables an inclusion of traditional aspects of Chinese culture, such as the Mid-autumn Festival, Buddhism, calligraphy and a local lifestyle in the examples above.

The government further strives to foster projects of adaptive reuse with a cultural focus in buildings which are not listed on one of the three administrative protection levels. By means of assigning possible tenants, it has a determining influence on future use in cases where it holds the property rights. Acceptable tenants can be private individuals who manage to accumulate sufficient funding to set up and maintain a business venture with cultural content. An example for such a case is the historical mansion in **Xiao Xinqiao Lane 小新桥巷 No. 2-1**.

The site with its now publicly owned buildings dates back to the Qing dynasty. Its current tenant told this author that some buildings of the site had been part of

559 “Pingjiang Lu • Ligeng tang LIFE+, zhongqiu xiao changjia huohua Su shi shenghuo” 平江路 • 礼耕堂 LIFE+, 中秋小长假活化苏式生活, (September 5, 2014), Suzhou Tourism Administration, Online.

560 Ibid.

561 Ibid.

the historical mansion She Garden (see chapter 3.1.2) during the Qing dynasty and subsequently, the renowned Couple's Garden Retreat. However, after the establishment of the PRC, this part of the mansion had been occupied by a silk factory and turned into a workshop. Later, it became an office of Pingjiang District Government before the government finally decided to rent out the buildings.⁵⁶²

Today, the place has been converted into what the interviewee called a “gathering place for distinguished assemblies of men of letters (*wenren yaji de difang* 文人雅集的地方) comparable to European cultural salons (*wenhua shalong* 文化沙龙)”.⁵⁶³ Moreover, it is a center for the research and promotion of traditional fans and fan culture. While fans are one of Suzhou's local products, they have another relation to local *kunqu* opera. The interviewee explained that the fan is an attribute of Du Liniang 杜丽娘, the female protagonist of the famous play “Peony Pavillion” (Mudanting 牡丹亭). Then again, the love story in the *kunqu* play relates to the Couple's Garden Retreat, connecting the cultural content of its contemporary form of use to the tangible site.

The project was initiated by the more than 80-year-old proprietor who, as a master fan craftsman, has great passion for fans and the continuity of this tradition. As the property is publicly owned and he is holding the right of use, he had to finance the reparation himself with a little support of the government.⁵⁶⁴ In the conservation process, the Qing and Republican period-buildings were repaired, consolidated and equipped with modern facilities (see fig. 3-31). Because the proprietor did have the necessary capital but no business experience, he engaged a team to support the project. Their team consists of about four to five people between 20 and 40 years of which some have studied abroad and learned about cultural businesses in Europe.⁵⁶⁵

The objective to open the salon was to provide a space for cultural exchange. Therefore, they set up a workshop to examine and produce fans as well as to lecture on and show the process of making fans, starting from the selection of materials until they are ready for sale. Following the interviewee, their aim is to let more people know about fan production and fan culture. However, the use of the historical building is not limited to this topic. There are further held different cultural activities, such as calligraphy writing, traditional music performances, exhibitions of traditional Han clothing and local crafts such as Suzhou embroidery.⁵⁶⁶

562 Interview with operator of Xiao Xinqiao Lane Fan Workshop, Suzhou, June 15, 2016.

563 Ibid.

564 Ibid.

565 Ibid.

566 Ibid.



Figure 3-31. Republican Building Adapted for Reuse (from the inside).

Source: author's photo, 2016.



Figure 3-32. Republican Building in Elderly Home.

Source: author's photo, 2016.

Other examples for social and cultural facilities set up in registered buildings deeper inside the block are Zhaoqing Temple and the former mansion of Shen Xingshu. The formerly Buddhist **Zhaoqing Temple** has been converted into Pingjiang Culture Center.⁵⁶⁷ The center is used by the local community for *pingtan* practice as well as performances. The earlier mentioned Shen Xingshu was a member of the Republican period gentry and chief of a private bank. His former mansion (Shen Xingshu zhai 沈惺叔宅) is located in **Weidao Guan Qian No. 27**. It comprises a Republican building, which is significant for its vase-shaped balustrade and wisteria canopy (see chapter 3.1.2, fig. 3-32) and is marked as controlled and protected building. It has now been integrated into a complex which is used as home for the elderly (*laonian gongyu* 老年公寓) in the district.

Although touristic and commercial forms of adapted reuse are predominant in the Pingjiang Historic Block, Xiao Xinqiao Lane 小新桥巷 No. 2-1, Zhaoqing Temple and the former mansion of Shen Xingshu are good examples of how built heritage is also reused for social and cultural purposes.

3.3 Case Study Results

As an ancient capital city, Suzhou derives great cultural significance from its double chessboard-urban structure with water canals running parallel to the street grid. This spatial pattern follows traditional design principles with Pingjiang Road as central axis and determined the settlement patterns of its residents. Moreover, the block has a high integrity and features a great amount of different environmental elements such as parts of the former city moat and wall, bridges, memorial archways, historic trees and wells. The block itself, its environmental elements as well as its streets are related to different aspects of intangible heritage. As expressed in their names, they can be related to historical figures, important events or carry literary allusions. They further may refer to their environment such as in the Lane of the Lilac Trees (Dingxiang Lane 丁香巷) or local legends as in the case of Xuegao Bridge (see chapter 3.1.1).

Historical and officially protected buildings consist of combined courtyard-building components, which are aligned on a central axis and may have several rows, depending on aspects such as social status. Thereby, built heritage gains cultural significance from the entire building complex and is not limited to individual buildings. Among others, this is reflected in the hall name, which is chosen

567 Xie, Jing; Heath, Tim (2018): *Heritage-led Urban Regeneration in China*, pp. 104–105.

after a residence's main hall and can equally stand for the entire residence (e.g. Ligeng Hall). Moreover, these built structures have adapted to their environment by consideration of aspects such as lighting and ventilation. While architectural structures share similar design principles such as orientation, symmetry, axiality and "graduated privacy", officially protected entities show additional significant characteristics.

In terms of historical and social value, officially protected entities are often related to historical figures (see appendix A.9) such as Number One Scholar Pan Shi'en or Li Hongzhang, who built Cheng Xueqi Memorial Temple as part of Huiyin Garden. The case study has shown that the high artistic value of listed sites in the Pingjiang Historic Block primarily derives from gardens as well as exceptional architectural forms such as *yuanyang* or *shamao* halls. Moreover, carvings play an important role as they not only have artistic value but also carry cultural and literary connotations. The cultural value of officially protected entities further may derive from philosophical principles such as *yin* and *yang* which, for example, have been considered for the design of the Couple's Garden Retreat. In addition, garden owners engaged literati to write a garden record or do a painting on their residences, which equally increases their cultural value.

The built environment of the Pingjiang Historic Block has been well preserved due to Suzhou's early preservation efforts as one of the first HCF Cities promulgated by the State Council. The conservation of the Pingjiang Historic Block is carried out through a government-led approach and under consultation of renowned domestic universities.⁵⁶⁸ Accordingly, its conservation plan was drafted by the National Famous Historical and Cultural Cities Research Center 国家历史文化名城研究中心 affiliated to Tongji University in Shanghai. The plan commits itself to international conservation principles such as authenticity and integrity whereby it explicitly refers to authenticity in material and substance. In terms of conservation and improvement measures, the plan defines a scheme which has later been included in the Planning Regulations and where different measures are prescribed depending on the building type.

The analysis of conservation in practice has shown that at the very beginning in the 1960s and 1980s, significant structures such as archways and halls were relocated to places which were later opened as tourist destinations. This followed a strategy of "accumulating" heritage in one place while its original location was then used for development purposes such as industrial use. During the comprehensive conservation project from 2002–2004, conservation work strictly adhered to international principles with the objective to achieve an inscription of the historic and cultural block on the World Heritage List. In addition to the improvement of

568 Xie, Jing; Heath, Tim (2018): *Heritage-led Urban Regeneration in China*, p. 101.

Pingjiang Road and its infrastructure, individual sites were treated for adaptive reuse. The example of Dong Family Yizhuang Teahouse shows how an industrial site was rebuilt to integrate with its surrounding townscape. Thereby, a design was chosen which clearly distinguishes itself from historic structures instead of following the widespread approach to “imitate” historical buildings. The consideration of the authenticity principle is illustrated by the conservation of Wang Family Yizhuang Ceremonial Archway which has not been reconstructed but is safeguarded through a plain structure built on top of its original columns.

In contrast, after the government project had been terminated, the focus shifted back to the conservation of individual structures. In the pilot project cases concerning the conservation of Suzhou-style architecture undertaken in the Pingjiang Historic Block, the relocation and reconstruction of structures both reoccurred. While the reconstruction of former temple halls has been recommended in the conservation plan, the relocation of Ding Mansion was, at least partly, carried out to enable and enhance further development of the block.

With regard to function and usage, a great variety of use forms has been found in the block. Officially protected entities are often restored and turned into tourist destinations such as the Couple’s Garden Retreat or museums as in the cases of the Quan-Jin Guild Hall and the Former Residence of Pan Shi’en. Controlled and protected buildings may equally be restored and used to foster development such as Ding Mansion which now hosts Wang Xiaohui Art Gallery. Moreover, buildings can take on social and cultural functions in the block and provide spaces for the practice of local opera or accommodation for the elderly. Finally, historical buildings usually maintain their outward appearance while their interiors are adapted to modern use and transformed into shops, restaurants and guesthouses.

