

4 Tongli Ancient Water Town 同里水乡古镇

“As one of the first large-scale conservation projects to integrate modern facilities into ancient townships, the project has not only improved resident’s quality of life, it acts as a valuable reference and benchmark for future, similar projects in China.”¹

- UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation, 2003

Tongli is a water town located in the southeastern corner of Jiangsu province, southeast of the city of Suzhou, on a horizontal axis between Lake Tai 太湖 and the city of Shanghai (see fig. 1-1). The historic town of Tongli in its present location dates back to the Song dynasty² and is characterized by local features of a Jiangnan water town such as water canals and small winding lanes. Due to the well-preserved state of its Ming and Qing period-built structures, the town has been compared to a “museum for ancient architecture” (*gudai jianzhu bowuguan* 古代建筑博物馆).³

Tongli primarily owes the preservation of its built environment to the **natural setting** of the town area. Surrounding lakes and rivers functioned as natural borders and largely sheltered the historic town from war destruction over the course of history.⁴ Furthermore, the natural setting of Tongli had great influence on the town’s economic development. Given its comprehensive network of rivers, boats were the most convenient means of transport and town access limited to waterways. On the one hand, this safeguarded the town from demolition for the construction of new infrastructure. On the other hand, the comparatively late opening up of Tongli for

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- 1 “Project Profile: 2003 Award of Distinction, Water Towns of the Yangtze River”, UNESCO Office in Bangkok, Online.
 - 2 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志 [Tongli Town Gazetteer], p. 15.
 - 3 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志 [Tongli Town Gazetteer], p. 134.
 - 4 Zhu, Tonghua (1986): “A Preliminary Study on the Development of Tongli — An Ancient Cultural Town”, p. 316.

road traffic in the early 1980s slowed down economic development and led to an increasing decline of its role as cultural center of surrounding villages.⁵

The preserved **architecture** reflects the social setting of the town at the time of their construction, which can equally be related to its favorable geographic location. The secluded town area became particularly attractive to officials who retired from public life, men of letters and wealthy merchants. Following Zhu's reference to the First National Population Census 全国人口普查 in 1953, out of the 2,021 households registered in Tongli, 506 were landlord families, amounting to 25 percent of the total population.⁶ This population composition is reflected in Tongli's built environment with formerly splendid mansions making up a great part of its architecture.

Tongli's private mansions carry important aspects of both, material and immaterial cultural heritage. As in the nearby city of Suzhou, great mansions were embellished with natural elements and landscape architecture in the form of private gardens. These gardens had an aesthetic as well as a structural function, complementing a residence and providing it with a characteristic form. Well-known private gardens from the late imperial and Republican period are the Ren family private garden "Tuisi yuan" 退思园, the Yan family private garden "Huancui Shanzhuang" 环翠山庄, the Gu family garden "Yuyuan" 愚园 and the Wang Family Garden 王家花园.⁷

While investigating on the role and condition of small towns in Wujiang county in 1983, Chinese sociologist Fei Xiaotong classified Tongli as representative example of a "consumer type town", similar to Suzhou, contrasting it to other town types, such as a political center, an industrial base or a transportation hub. With regard to its surrounding villages, Tongli equally functions as political, economic and cultural center, but its major role in the broader area is mainly for consumption, by serving as a place for recreation and entertainment, for example.⁸

Traditionally, local people in the town area and surrounding villages engaged in rice production and fishing. Despite its enclosed natural setting, the town largely benefited from its role as **economic center** due to its splendidly constructed net-

5 Zhu, Tonghua (1986): "A Preliminary Study on the Development of Tongli — An Ancient Cultural Town", pp. 324, 333.

6 Ibid., p. 316.

7 "Tongli Zhen zhi" bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 200.

8 Fei, Hsiao Tung (1986): "Small Towns, Great Significance — A Study of Small Towns in Wujiang County", pp. 23–26.

work of rivers. At the end of the imperial period, Tongli was home to 72 rice companies that supplied rice to the nearby urban center of Shanghai.⁹ The diversification of agricultural production and the formation of processing industries and manufacturing businesses further fostered commercial development and the prosperity of the town.

Moreover, Tongli looks back to a long tradition as **educational center**. Tongchuan Academy 同川书院 was set up by the county magistrate during the reign of the Qianlong Emperor in the Qing dynasty (1747).¹⁰ Before the establishment of public schools in China, scholars often privately raised funds and set up academies, an educational system which continued to exist in parallel to state-run institutions. Tongli, a naturally secluded township but still central to surrounding villages, provided favorable conditions and attracted scholars who set up such academies. Lianpu Private School 莲浦书塾, one of the historical mansions recorded in the *Tongli Town Gazetteer*, is one such example, established in 1806.¹¹

Throughout the imperial era, candidates from Tongli took part in the imperial examinations and later pursued careers as officials. Successful candidates of the imperial examinations from the Song to the Qing dynasties are listed in the *Tongli Gazetteers* and comprise one scholar who ranked first in the highest imperial examinations (*zhuangyuan* 状元), 38 successful candidates in the highest imperial examinations held in the capital (*jinsi* 进士) and 80 scholars who successfully passed the imperial examinations on a provincial level (*juren* 举人).¹² This historical characteristic has found its manifestation in the town's built environment, for example through the construction of a Zhuangyuan Street 状元街 to commemorate the successful candidate.

With an improved accessibility of Tongli resulting from road construction, the town has started **urbanization processes** in areas surrounding its historic center. According to development planning, tourism, culture and art as well as commerce and trade are foreseen to become the three key industries in the area.¹³ Therefore, an industrial park has been established in the west of the historic town

9 Zhu, Tonghua (1986): "A Preliminary Study on the Development of Tongli — An Ancient Cultural Town", p. 320.

10 Tongli Zhen renmin zhengfu 同里镇人民政府; Wujiang Shi dang'an ju 吴江市档案局 (ed., 2011): *Tongli zhi (liang zhong)* 同里志 (两种) [Tongli Gazetteers (two gazetteers, Tongli Gazetteer and Tuncun Gazetteer)], p. 52.

11 "Tongli Zhen zhi" bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 205.

12 Zhu, Tonghua (1986): "A Preliminary Study on the Development of Tongli — An Ancient Cultural Town", p. 317.

13 "The Historic Urban Landscape: Pilot Cities in China", Tongji University, Online.

in 1992 with a considerable size of 76 km².¹⁴ By 2014, Wujiang Economic and Technological Development Park 吴江经济技术开发区 accommodated more than 1800 international companies as well as schools, hospitals and commercial outlets.¹⁵ Tourism development concentrates on the historic town and an ecological area in the northeastern part of Tongli. Moreover, there are two new residential areas, one in the southeast of the historic town and another one in an adjacent town named Tuncun 屯村.¹⁶

4.1 Cultural Significance

4.1.1 Historic Town with Historic and Cultural Block

A consideration of the existing building stock in Tongli illustrates the different historical periods of its preserved material heritage. As part of an evaluation in Tongli's current conservation plan from 2011, the building stock of the historic town has been classified into architectural structures from four periods. These periods are the Ming and Qing dynasty (1368–1911), the Republican period (1911–1949), architecture from 1949–1975 and buildings after 1975.¹⁷ The resulting distribution is displayed in figure 4-1.

The figure shows that Ming and Qing dynasty architecture constitute the majority of historic structures in the historic town. Buildings originating from the late imperial period and the Republican period taken together amount to 45 percent of Tongli's building stock, slightly more than the overall construction after 1975. The figure also shows that during the Mao era (1949–1976), only a small proportion of new construction was added. Moreover, according to the commentary on

14 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 147.

15 Ibid., pp. 147, 198.

16 Ibid., p. 147.

17 The commentary on the conservation plan states that following conservation standards, usually 30 years are set as standard differentiation of historical architecture. Due to this standard, the year 1975 has been chosen as demarcation line. Ming and Qing dynasty buildings have not been differentiated further, yet, due to incomplete historical material. See: Shanghai Tongji Urban Planning and Design Institute 上海同济城市规划设计研究院 (ed., 2011): *Wujiang Shi Tongli lishi wenhua mingzhen baohu guihua — shuomingshu* 吴江市同里历史文化名镇保护规划 — 说明书 [Conservation Plan for Tongli Historically and Culturally Famous Town in Wujiang City — Commentary], pp. 17–18.

Tongli's conservation plan, buildings from the 1950s and 1960s constructed in the historic town do not show prominent features and therefore have not been classified as a distinct group.¹⁸ Buildings constructed after 1975 were mainly added at the outer margins of the historic town.¹⁹

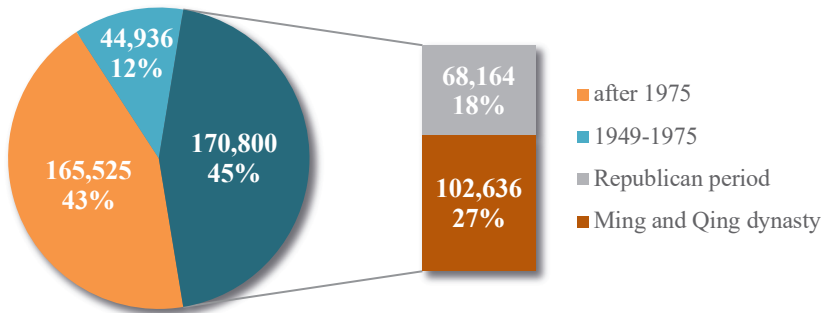


Figure 4-1. Building Stock of the Historic Town According to Historical Period (in m²).

Source: drafted by author. Data from: Shanghai Tongji Urban Planning and Design Institute 上海同济城市规划设计研究院 (ed., 2011): *Wujiang Shi Tongli lishi wenhua mingzhen baohu guihua — shuomingshu* 吴江市同里历史文化名镇保护规划 — 说明书 [Conservation Plan for Tongli Historically and Culturally Famous Town in Wujiang City — Commentary], pp. 17–18.

Consequently, significant historical structures of Tongli's existing building stock mainly originate from the Ming and Qing dynasties as well as the Republican period. In addition, intangible heritage can be identified in the forms of local traditions and customs, techniques and arts. In the following, the cultural significance of Tongli's tangible and intangible heritage shall be analyzed for the three tiers of HCF Towns: the town, the historic and cultural block and officially protected entities.

18 Shanghai Tongji Urban Planning and Design Institute 上海同济城市规划设计研究院 (ed., 2011): *Wujiang Shi Tongli lishi wenhua mingzhen baohu guihua — shuomingshu* 吴江市同里历史文化名镇保护规划 — 说明书 [Conservation Plan for Tongli Historically and Culturally Famous Town in Wujiang City — Commentary], p. 17.

19 Ibid., p. 8.

Natural Setting and Urban Structure

The core region of Wu culture where Tongli is located, is known as *zeguo* 泽国, “a place which abounds in **rivers and lakes**”.²⁰ In the Tongli gazetteer²¹ from the 16th year of the Jiaqing 嘉庆 period (1811) in the Qing dynasty by Zhou Zhizhen 周之桢 (hereafter *Jiaqing Gazetteer*), the importance of this natural environment for the overall layout of the town becomes apparent. The setting of Tongli is described as surrounded by lakes on every side, the closest being Jiuli Lake 九里湖 in the north, Tongli Lake 同里湖 in the east, Nanxin Lake 南新湖²² in the southeast, Yeze Lake 叶泽湖 in the south and Pangshan Lake 庞山湖 in the west. On its northwestern side, Tongli is further delimited by Wusong River 吴淞江.

Up to the Song dynasty, Tongli had been located at Jiuli Village 九里村 on the southern waterfront of Jiuli Lake, northwest of the historic town.²³ This is known from a Neolithic site identified by researchers of Jiangsu Museum 江苏省博物馆 in 1954.²⁴ The town later moved southward to its present location. The exact time when the town moved remains unclear. While the *Jiaqing Gazetteer* records that a gradual relocation occurred from the Yuan to the Ming dynasty,²⁵ Wang notes that the preserved Song dynasty stone bridges and private garden remains indicate that this process already started earlier.²⁶

Following the *Jiaqing Gazetteer*, the town itself is crossed by three rivers that flow into smaller tributary streams and divide the town area into 15 *wei* 圩,²⁷ island-like units enclosed by water. The term *wei* means “dike” or “embankment”

20 Cihai bianji weiyuanhui 辞海编辑委员会 (2000): *Cihai* 辞海 [Sea of Words], p. 1101.

21 Tongli Zhen renmin zhengfu 同里镇人民政府; Wujiang Shi dang'an ju 吴江市档案局 (ed., 2011): *Tongli zhi (liang zhong)* 同里志 (两种) .

22 The name of this lake was altered. It is now designated as “Nanxing Lake” 南星湖 and is found on maps as such.

23 Wang, Jiadong 王稼冬 (1966): “Tongli Jiulihu xinshiqi shidai yizhi de kaozheng” 同里九里湖新石器时代遗址的考证 [Research on Jiuli Lake Neolithic Site in Tongli], in: Yan, Pinhua 严品华 (ed., 2001): *Tongli gutu wenhua zashuo* 同里故土文化杂说 [Miscellaneous writings on the culture of my hometown, Tongli], p. 2.

24 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 78.

25 Tongli Zhen renmin zhengfu 同里镇人民政府; Wujiang Shi dang'an ju 吴江市档案局 (ed., 2011): *Tongli zhi (liang zhong)* 同里志 (两种) , p. 33.

26 Wang, Jiadong 王稼冬 (1966): “Tongli Jiulihu xinshiqi shidai yizhi de kaozheng” 同里九里湖新石器时代遗址的考证, in: Yan, Pinhua 严品华 (ed., 2001): *Tongli gutu wenhua zashuo* 同里故土文化杂说, p. 18.

27 Tongli Zhen renmin zhengfu 同里镇人民政府; Wujiang Shi dang'an ju 吴江市档案局 (ed., 2011): *Tongli zhi (liang zhong)* 同里志 (两种) , p. 35.

and refers to protective embankments built around houses and fields of inhabitants living close to the waterside. Such embankments, together with the network of rivers, form a pattern of islands with each unit named as a certain *wei*-island (*wei-dao* 圩岛). The former core residential area, the ancient town of Tongli, comprises seven *wei*-islands (see fig. 4-2).²⁸

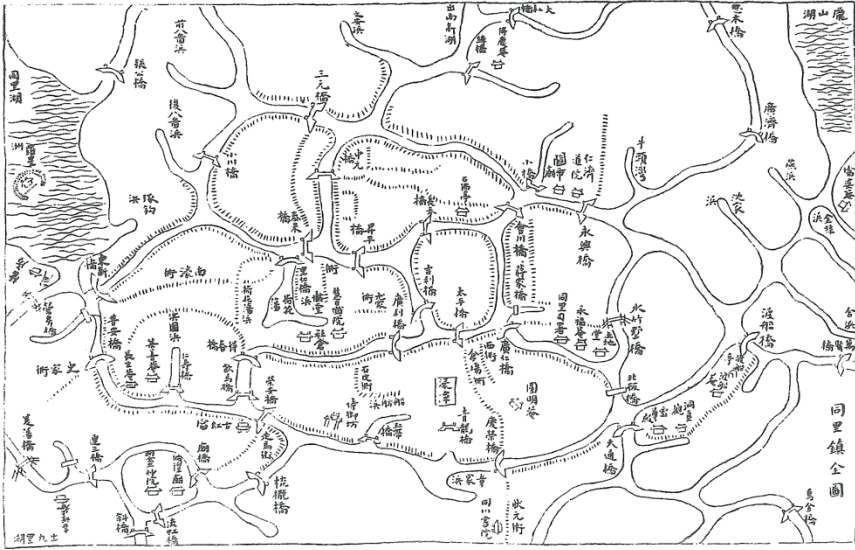


Figure 4-2. Layout of Tongli Town in *Jiaqing Gazetteer*.

Source: Zhou, Zhizhen 周之桢 (ed., 1992): *Tongli zhi* 同里志 [Tongli Gazetteer]. In: *Zhongguo difang zhi jicheng* 中国地方志集成, p. 10.

The orientation of housing has largely been determined by this spatial pattern. Depending on rivers as main traffic routes and for the transportation of goods, buildings including residential structures and streets have been situated by the water. Of the 112,000 Ming and Qing dynasty buildings recorded in the historic town in 2003, 13,300 were built on the waterfront and 41,300 facing the water.²⁹

Inevitably, Tongli’s settings altered from the accounts of the *Jiaqing Gazetteer* over time through natural processes and economic development. Today, the total surface area covered with water has declined and more land has been cultivated

28 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 142.

29 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 200.

with fields. For example, Yeze Lake has shrunk to less than half of its former size and was completely opened up for cultivation of aquatic products in 1976.³⁰ The former location of Pangshan Lake in the west of Tongli is mainly identifiable through remaining place names on contemporary maps. It has been reclaimed for cultivation from very early on.³¹ Figure 4-3 shows that infrastructure has been set up outside of the historic town (marked in orange) where new residential and industrial districts have been constructed.

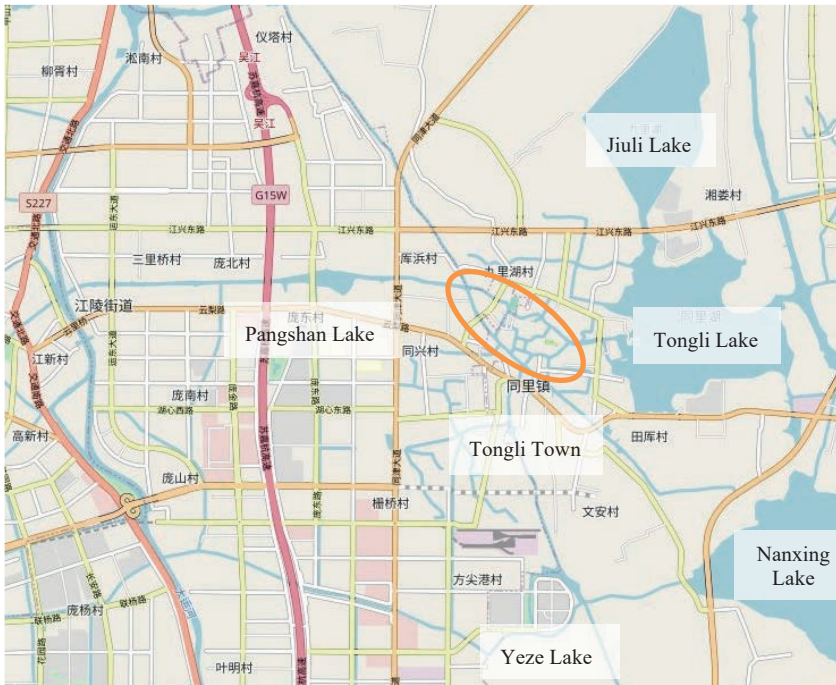


Figure 4-3. Present-day Map of Tongli.

Source: map adapted from © OpenStreetMap contributors, 2020, available from <https://www.openstreetmap.org/>, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0. Lettering and marking supplemented by this author.

Nevertheless, the main topological layout has been preserved and still follows the original characteristics of the town delimited by surrounding lakes and structured by a network of water canals and streets. Similar to the spatial layout of Suzhou,

30 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 22.

31 Ibid.

streets are running parallel to water canals and are closely intertwined. Their evolutionary relation is reflected in local street names, many of which end on the character *dai* 埭 (“dam”) such as “southern dam” (*nan dai* 南埭) or “eastern dam” (*dong dai* 东埭) and bear witness to the development of streets from precedent water canals.³²

Furthermore, Tongli is traversed by a great number of smaller lanes which can be differentiated into *lilong* 里弄 (“lanes as part of a neighborhood”) and *zhailong* 宅弄 (“lanes as part of a residence”). While *lilong* are public spaces and function as boundaries between houses, *zhailong* or *beilong* 备弄 are usually private spaces and used by one family. In some cases, *zhailong* or *beilong* also serve as boundaries between two residences.³³ In contrast to the comparatively regular pattern of lanes in Suzhou, due to its planned urban form, lanes in Tongli differ greatly in length, shape and direction.

The most renowned lane of the town is Chuanxin Lane³⁴ (串心弄 or 穿心弄). It crosses an entire *wei*-island (Hongzi wei 洪字圩), delimited by high walls and paved with stone steps which function as a covered drain (see fig. 4-4). The lane is prominent for its changing width, starting from a width where two people can walk next to each other to 0.8 meters at its most narrow point.³⁵ It is therefore associated with a romantic scenario of a young man and a young woman getting close to each other as they coincidentally cross their way from opposite directions.³⁶ Another characteristic lane is Fan Family Double Lane (Fan jia shuang long 范家双弄). While houses are usually separated by a single lane, this double lane between two houses is separated by a wall in its center (see fig. 4-5).³⁷ Because these lanes are indoor lanes, they are equally very narrow and dark. They not only represent local customs but are also a rare lane form in the Jiangnan area housing construction.

32 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 142.

33 Ibid.

34 There are two notations with a differing first character for the lane name. In the TLCP, the lane is marked on the town map as Chuanxin Lane 串心弄. However, the Tongli Gazetteer from 2016 uses a second version, Chuanxin Lane 穿心弄.

35 Ibid., p. 166.

36 This scene is also shown in a performance named “Tongli in ink” (Shuimo Tongli 水墨同里) which is regularly staged in a theatre of the town center (see chapter 4.2.4.1).

37 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 166.



Figure 4-4. Chuanxin Lane.



Figure 4-5. Fan Family Double Lane.

Source: author's photos, 2016.

Street and lane names also carry historical value as they may refer to commercial activities which had formerly been practiced in these areas. Such names can be found in the southern part of the town where businesses were traditionally concentrated, in contrast to the mainly residential area in the north.³⁸ Examples of such names include Yuhang Street 鱼行街 (“Fishing Business Street”), Zhuhang Street 竹行街 (“Bamboo Business Street”) or Tiejia Lane 铁匠弄 (“Blacksmiths’ Lane”).

In addition to lakes and water canals, the environment of the town is characterized by cultivated land and fish ponds.³⁹ The favorable conditions of Tongli resulting from its rich water resources are further related to a legend about the origin of the **town name**. According to this legend, Tongli was formerly named *Futu* 富士 (“abundant land”). The present name is said to have been created by a shift of character components whereby the lower part of the first character *fu* 富 (= *tian* 田 “field”) was split off and set on top of the second character *tu* 土 (“earth”), thereby forming the second character *li* 里 of the new name “Tongli” 同里. The dot *zhu* 丶 on top of the first character has been omitted and the two vertical ends of the component *mi* 冫 in the remaining part have been lengthened to create the framing *jiong* 冫 which became the first character of the new name: *tong* 同.

38 Comm TLCP (2011), p. 8.

39 Ibid., p. 9.

While this name changing process has been documented in several historical records, others give a second explanation for the origin of the name. Local researcher Wang Jiadong 王稼冬 has found a record in a chronicle from the Tianshun 天顺 period (1457–1464) in the Ming dynasty which conforms to the above-described origin:

旧名富士，以其名太侈，乃析田加土为今名。⁴⁰

“Its former name was *Futu*. Because its name was too excessive, it was turned into the present name by separating [the character] *tian* and adding [the character] *tu*.”

He further lists two other chronicles, one from the same period and one from the Jiajing 嘉靖 period (1521–1566) which explain the name as follows:

唐初名铜，宋改为同。⁴¹

“At the beginning of the Tang dynasty [the town] was named *tong* [“copper”], in the Song dynasty it was changed to [the present homophonous character] *tong* [which means “similar” or “alike”].”

Both explanations are included in the *Jiaqing Gazetteer* but could not be verified. Moreover, the background behind the name change remains obscure. The latest gazetteer from 2016 gives a detailed account of a potential incident in its section on “folk legends” (*minjian chuanshuo* 民间传说). According to this account, *Futu* was founded by natural calamity refugees from Fuyang 富阳 county in Zhejiang province who chose the name in reference to its fertile soil and favorable conditions for cultivation.⁴² In one year of the Sui dynasty when the imperial treasury became emptier, and many regions were unable to pay their grain taxes, the Yangdi 炀帝 Emperor issued an edict that “abundant lands” (*futu* 富士) had to pay higher taxes. When the imperial tax collector who came to the Jiangnan region heard that there was a place named “Futu”, he ordered that its inhabitants were to pay the increased taxes. As *Futu* was equally affected by a famine in this year, inhabitants were unable to deliver the taxes and thought of a strategy to avoid punishment. They told the collector who did not believe that a place called “abundant land” would be unable to deliver the required taxes that this place was called “Tongli”

40 Wang, Jiadong 王稼冬 (1966): “Tongli Jiulihu xinshiqi shidai yizhi de kaozheng” 同里九里湖新石器时代遗址的考证, in: Yan, Pinhua 严品华 (ed., 2001): *Tongli gutu wenhua zashuo* 同里故土文化杂说, p. 14.

41 Ibid.

42 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 327.

and not Futu. They further changed this name on display signs so that the tax collector had no other option but to leave empty-handed.⁴³

Another version of the legend circulating among residents as found by Bellocq recounts that bandits were attracted by the name and regularly pressed landowner families for money. In order to conceal their riches, the name was changed by shifting character components as described above.⁴⁴ In both versions of the name changing process, the natural setting of Tongli (an abundant land) has cultural meaning which is reflected in the town name and passed on by means of local legends.

Environmental Elements and Intangible Heritage

The urban fabric of Tongli comprises a great amount of historical environmental elements. The Assessment Standard for HCF Cities/Towns defines environmental elements as components other than buildings which constitute the historic townscape. Such components found in Tongli's historic town include historic bridges, historic wells, historic trees and plants as well as elements related to its water system such as bank revetments, wharfs and stone boat cleats (*lanchuan shi* 揽船石).

Primarily, there were preserved 25 **bridges** in the historic town.⁴⁵ Bridges are a basic characteristic of water towns and function as connecting elements between the *wei*-islands. Moreover, bridges have cultural significance because their construction is a public undertaking and generates social benefit which is often related to stories and other forms of intangible heritage.⁴⁶ They have historical value as they originate from different historical periods, dating from the Yuan dynasty to the Republican period (Comm CP, 2.3.1 iii). Moreover, they inform on aesthetic forms as well as materials and construction techniques used during these periods and therefore have artistic as well as scientific value (Comm CP, 2.3.2 i + 2.3.3 ii). For example, while bridges dating from the Song and the beginning of the Yuan dynasties were built of Wukang stone 武康石, those of the later Yuan and the Ming dynasties were made of limestone and the usual construction material thereafter was granite.⁴⁷

43 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, pp. 327–328.

44 Bellocq, Maylis (2006): “The Cultural Heritage Industry in the PRC: What Memories Are Being Passed On? A Case Study of Tongli, A Protected Township in Jiangsu Province” (Jonathan Hall, transl.), p. 29.

45 Comm TLCP (2011), p. 27.

46 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三 (2015): *Tongli* 同里 [Tongli], p. 75.

47 Comm TLCP (2011), p. 27.

Furthermore, there have been identified 139 **historic trees and plants** in the historic town which are older than 50 years.⁴⁸ In addition to those planted at the riversides, historic trees and plants have been preserved as parts of residences and formerly private gardens. The eldest trees are more than 400 years old and comprise species such as ginkgo 银杏, Chinese little leaf box 黄杨, sweet-scented osmanthus 桂花, camellia 山茶, glossy privet 女贞 and many more.⁴⁹

Ginkgo trees are the most frequent and oldest trees in Tongli with one tree exceeding 1,000 years (Wangta yinxing gushu 旺塔银杏古树).⁵⁰ Another more than 400-year-old ginkgo tree located north of Tailai Bridge 泰来桥 is significant due to its formerly social function. A bell attached to this tree was used to alert local residents about fire, thieves or to assemble them (see fig. 4-6).⁵¹ Examples of rare trees that are part of historical buildings include a 200-year-old camellia tree in the courtyard of Hengfu Hall 亨复堂 and another one with two stems exceeding 100 years in Zhuhang Street No. 135.⁵²



Figure 4-6. Ginkgo Tree with Bell.

Source: author's photo, 2016.

48 Comm TLCP (2011), p. 27.

49 Ibid., pp. 28–29.

50 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 101.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid., p. 103.

Similar to the historic environment in Suzhou, Tongli town features a great number of **historic wells**. The 31 wells recorded until 2011 comprise public wells (*gongjing* 公井), private wells inside local residences (*zhaijing* 宅井), both located in courtyards and skywells as well as indoors, and wells associated with other-worldly qualities (*qijing* 奇井) such as a Buddhist well or “bone wells” (*gujing* 骨井).⁵³

Public wells were traditionally built as a form of social welfare by wealthy families (after 1949 by the government or work-units) and took the forms of single, double or triple-mouth wells.⁵⁴ While public wells built before 1949 have not been preserved (some were filled in the 1960s and 70s), private wells remained in various sizes and shapes, the oldest dating from the Song dynasty found in Tuncun Town and are still used by local residents for washing and cooking.⁵⁵ Especially the wells located inside private houses are still in the process of being recorded and many of Tongli’s wells are rehabilitated for usage.

The Buddhist well was discovered in 1803 during canal construction work in front of a Buddhist convent. It was sealed with a flagstone and contained a wooden Buddha statue that later was donated to the convent.⁵⁶ Another well from the Song dynasty was discovered in the course of constructing this canal, and a record titled “Record of the Ancient Well” (*Gujing ji* 古井记) was written to commemorate this finding.⁵⁷ The “bone wells” refer to nine wells found during the Ming dynasty that contained ancient objects as well as dried bones and were presumably used as open graves.⁵⁸

While **bank revetments** illustrated how local people adapted to their physical environment as well as their technological achievements at the time, **wharfs and stone boat cleats** also reflect the close relationship of local people’s traditional lifestyle to water. Wharfs further have artistic value due to their architectural form such as stone steps on one or both sides.⁵⁹ Finally, the boat cleats have cultural value relating to their ornamental stone carvings and reliefs. They may be in the shape of plants, animals or other forms with popular connotations and auspicious meanings.

53 Comm TLCP (2011), p. 27.

54 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 88.

55 *Ibid.*, pp. 88–89.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

57 Tongli Zhen renmin zhengfu 同里镇人民政府; Wujiang Shi dang’an ju 吴江市档案局 (ed., 2011): *Tongli zhi (liang zhong)* 同里志 (两种), p. 243

58 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 88.

59 Comm TLCP (2011), p. 28.

Tongli Town's cultural value is further enhanced by its different kinds of **intangible heritage**. While the "Twelve Views" set of landscape scenes in the Pingjiang Historic Block were defined as part of its conservation plan, Tongli features historic sets of landscape scenes of exceptional scenic sights which have been named as early as the Ming dynasty.⁶⁰ The number of scenic sights included in these sets changed over time. In the Ming dynasty, the "Former Eight Views" (*Qian ba jing* 前八景) and the "Later Eight Views" (*Hou ba jing* 后八景) were defined.⁶¹ These are related to natural sceneries such as "Little Waves on Jiuli Lake" (*Jiuli qing lan* 九里晴澜) as well as man-made structures such as temples or bridges as in "Gazing at the Moon on Dongxi Bridge" (*Dongxi wang yue* 东溪望月), which refers to the respective bridge.

During the Qing dynasty, four more scenic sights were defined based on the sixteen views (former eight plus later eight) from the Ming dynasty, adding up to a total of twenty views. The cultural value of the scenic sights further derives from poems which described them. Ming dynasty erudite teacher and examiner Wu Ji 吴骥 wrote poems for six of the Former Eight Views and four of the Later Eight Views, all of which have been recorded in the *Jiaqing Gazetteer*.⁶² Of these twenty views, only four have been preserved⁶³ due to developmental changes.

As well, Tongli features a number of officially listed forms of intangible heritage. Examples include the Tongli *xuanjuan* 宣卷, protected as intangible heritage on a national level. *Xuanjuan* is a form of recitative listed under the category of "vocal art" (*quyi* 曲艺). The term is an abbreviation for *xuanjiang baojuan* (宣讲宝卷, "reciting the precious scrolls") and derives from a traditional practice of Tang dynasty Buddhism.⁶⁴ This recital involves a group of three to eight people giving a vocal performance of a script, the *baojuan*, to the sound of musical instruments. The content of these scripts which originally were passages of Buddhist and Taoist classics now mainly includes folk legends and stories from traditional opera. One of these stories, the Legend of the Pearl Pagoda 珍珠塔, which is said to have happened in Tongli, is listed as the town's intangible heritage on a provincial level.⁶⁵ Other forms of officially listed intangible heritage include arts and

60 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 79.

61 Ibid.

62 Tongli Zhen renmin zhengfu 同里镇人民政府; Wujiang Shi dang'an ju 吴江市档案局 (ed., 2011): *Tongli zhi (liang zhong)* 同里志 (两种), pp. 39–42.

63 Ibid.

64 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 70.

65 Ibid., p. 74.

folk customs such as paper-cutting or “crossing the Three Bridges” which will be explained below.

Historical Buildings

While the majority of formerly splendid mansions located in the north-eastern part of the historic town are listed as officially protected entities, a great number of historical buildings have also been preserved. The highest concentration of historical buildings is situated in the south-western part of Tongli, including the area designated as historic and cultural block. In total, the conservation plan lists 65 historical buildings.⁶⁶

Local-style dwelling houses in Tongli show basic construction features found in Jiangnan architecture concerning layout, building style and decoration. Similar to traditional houses in Suzhou, they are built in the form of enclosed residential compounds with rectangular courtyard-building components as their basic modules. While greater mansions follow the regular pattern of rows, smaller dwelling houses have a more flexible layout and have usually been adapted to local conditions.⁶⁷ Due to sumptuary regulations in the Ming and Qing dynasty, the houses of ordinary people could not have more than three *jin* and smaller houses in Tongli often only have one or two *jin*.⁶⁸

In contrast, formerly large-scale mansions may consist of several rows of *jin* and follow the fundamental principles of orientation to a cardinal direction, axiality and symmetry.⁶⁹ Their basic layout is similar to Suzhou mansions with the entrance hall (*menting* 门厅), a sedan-chair hall (*jiaoting* 轿厅) in the second *jin* and the third *jin* comprising the main hall (*zhengting* 正厅) followed by two-storied chambers (*louting* 楼厅) in the fourth *jin*. The halls are interconnected through archways (*menlou* 门楼), side rooms (*xiangfang* 厢房), enclosing walls, corridors, enclosed courtyards (*tingyuan* 庭院) and skywells (*tianjing* 天井). Large-scale mansions may further have side rows with supplementary buildings such as a parlor (*huating* 花厅), study rooms (*shufang* 书房) or an ancestral hall (*citang* 祠堂).⁷⁰

While houses and other types of buildings in Tongli are composed of the basic architectural components represented above, their overall layouts are very diverse.

66 TLCP (2011), appendix, pp. 3–6.

67 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三 (2015): *Tongli* 同里, p. 40.

68 *Ibid.*, pp. 40, 52.

69 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 135.

70 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 200.

More common are vertical layouts, for example with a residence in the front and a garden in the back (*qian zhai hou yuan* 前宅后园).⁷¹ Furthermore, depending on the location and the occupation of the owner, a business may be located in front and the residence at the back (*qian dian hou zhai* 前店后宅). Some examples are found in the Ming and Qing Commercial Street 明清街 or Yuhang Street 鱼行街. The building with the highest number of *jin* and most exceptional example in Tongli is the Qing-period Yong'an pawnbroker's shop 永安典当. Comprising ten *jin*, it almost crosses Hongzi *wei* 洪字圩 from its southern to the northern riverside.⁷²

Similar to historical buildings in Suzhou, Tongli's local-style dwelling houses reflect **lifestyle, traditions and social practices** of their respective historical periods (Comm CP, 2.3.I. iii). They follow the principle of graduated privacy with the public space in the front and private chambers in the back.⁷³ Furthermore, the space used by male and female family members was traditionally separated spatially, following social hierarchy as revealed by the corridors set up at building sides (*beilong* 备弄) and the peripheral location of servant quarters.⁷⁴ Their historical value may further be related to their renowned owners; this is the case of the former residences of Ji Cheng 计成 (1582–ca. 1642), author of *The Craft of Gardens*, and well-known politics professor and revolutionary martyr Fei Gong 费巩 (1905–1945; Comm CP, 2.3.I. iii).

Traditional houses in Tongli display characteristic **architectural features**. They are built in brick-and-wood structure with a wooden framework usually set on stone column bases. The poetic expression “whitewashed walls and black tiles” (*fenqiang daiwa* 粉墙黛瓦) describes their appearance as part of the overall townscape.⁷⁵ Similar to Suzhou-style houses, they follow the custom of a modest and plain exterior with gateways made of wood or stone frames which conceal a beautiful interior from the outside.⁷⁶

Doors and windows of local-style dwelling houses are built in a great variety of architectural styles. While some main gates are built in the style of *shikumen* 石库门 or arched gateways (*qiangmen* 墙门), the inner doors were traditionally made of wood.⁷⁷ Window styles differ in material, form and placement. Although

71 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 201.

72 Ibid.

73 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 135.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid., p. 133.

76 Knapp, Ronald G. (2000): *China's Old Dwellings*, p. 256.

77 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 200.

windows were equally made of wood, brick windows also appear in the walls of corridors, for example. The shapes of windows range from squared and octagonal to panel doors and others.⁷⁸

Furthermore, historical buildings have **scientific value** in terms of structural design and architectural form (Comm CP, 2.3.3. i). In a number of aspects, the orientation and structure of buildings were adapted to their environment. The integration of courtyards and skywells as well as a successive elevation of buildings from front to back improve ventilation, lighting and drainage (see fig. 4-7).⁷⁹

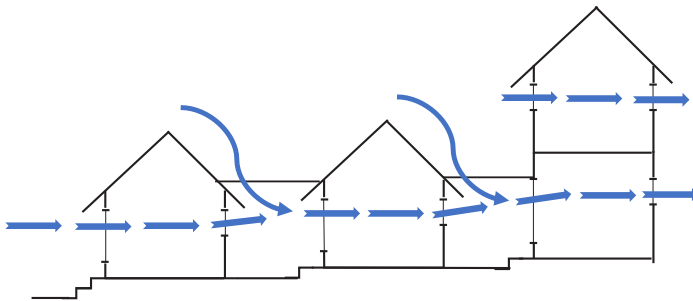


Figure 4-7. Illustration of Ventilation in Traditional Dwellings.

Source: author's draft. Based on: Knapp, Ronald (1990): *The Chinese House: Craft, Symbol and the Folk Tradition*, p. 18.

In addition, lattice windows and panel doors are beneficial to regulate both ventilation and lighting.⁸⁰ In some houses in Tongli, preserved wooden windows feature transparent oyster shells (*like chuang* 蛎壳窗) which have been inserted into the empty spaces in between the squared pattern of the window frames (see fig. 4-8). These shells traditionally blocked rain and wind while ensuring adequate lighting.⁸¹ A lot of houses further have fire-retarding bulkheads (*matou qiang* 马头墙, literally “horse-head walls”) between different buildings to prevent fire and to ward off thieves (see fig. 4-9).⁸²

78 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 200.

79 Ibid., pp. 200–201.

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

81 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 200.

82 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 136.



Figure 4-8. Windows with Transparent Oyster Shells.

Source: author's photo, 2018.



Figure 4-9. Fire-Retarding Bulkheads, Jiayin Hall.

Source: author's photo, 2016.

Similar to those in Suzhou, local-style dwelling houses in Tongli have **cultural value** related to their hall names. But while the majority of historical buildings in Suzhou are named after their location (lane name + family name of owner), about half of Tongli's historical buildings are recorded under their hall name (listed in appendix A.16). Thereby, forms of hall names are equally diverse and carry cultural connotations. Some hall names are clearly related to Confucian virtues such as “Hall of Courtesy and Benevolence” (Li shan tang 礼善堂) or “Hall of Cultivating Virtue” (Xiude tang 修德堂).

Another pattern found by Xu is the expression of one's admiration of ancestors.⁸³ Two Qing-period historical buildings are named after their Xigu Hall (希古堂, “Hall in Admiration for Our Forefathers”) which may be chosen after this pattern. One example for a hall name referring to the natural environment is Hedong Hall (河东堂, “Hall East of the River”). However, the majority of hall names refer to good wishes for a household, such as “Hall of Happiness and Longevity” (Le shou tang 乐寿堂), “Hall of Abundance” (Youyu tang 有余堂) or, in the case of a formerly commercial building, “Pawnshop of Everlasting Peace” (Yong'an dian-dang 永安典当).

Finally, an important feature of these dwelling houses is decoration. The restrictions of sumptuary regulations for housing construction during the Ming and Qing dynasties included the use of bright colors so that carvings became the major form of domestic decoration.⁸⁴ The **three types of carvings** – wood, brick and stone carvings – not only have artistic but also cultural value. While brick carvings are used on archways between different *jin*, screen walls and roof ridges, stone carvings are engraved on the main gate, floor panels and boundary stones.⁸⁵ Wooden carvings are mainly found on building columns, doors and windows (see fig. 4-10).

Brick carvings comprise pictographic as well as calligraphic works which have artistic and cultural value. The content, motives and craftsmanship differ among social stratum. Similar to brick carvings on archways of more splendid mansions in Suzhou, these horizontal inscriptions were composed on behalf of the owner who originally needed to hold an official post.⁸⁶ Most ordinary houses feature ornamental carvings such as wooden carvings on window panels. These

83 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], p. 111.

84 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 137.

85 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 200.

86 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 137.

depictions further have cultural connotations such as an engraved magnolia, a symbol to ensure safety.⁸⁷ The most frequent motives of depictions on all three types of carvings are celestial beings, Buddhist figures, animals and plants, but also scenes from historical records or literary works.⁸⁸



Figure 4-10. Wooden Carvings on Door Panels.

Source: author's photo, 2016.

4.1.2 Officially Protected and Controlled Entities

By 2014, Tongli had built up an inventory of 30 officially protected and 14 officially controlled entities.⁸⁹ Of these 44 entities, eight are located in the wider town area and comprise historic stone bridges, tombs as well as a section of the Grand Canal. The majority of listed sites in the historic town are formerly splendid mansions as well as local-style dwelling houses and, equally, stone bridges from different historical periods. Although there had originally been a number of private gardens

87 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 138.

88 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 200.

89 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, pp. 68–69.

in Tongli, only one of them has been preserved: The Retreat and Reflection Garden (Tuisi yuan 退思园). This garden is not only listed on the highest administrative level, but also included in the Classical Gardens of Suzhou as a World Heritage Site.

The town's historic stone bridges date from the Song to the Qing dynasty and are listed on different levels, from national level to officially controlled entities. Similar to the first case study, there are sites named after their renowned owners. These "Former Residences of X" have been promulgated as officially protected entities on a provincial and municipal level. The former functional diversity of the historic town is further reflected in functional site names. Primarily, such a name has been selected for the national-level officially protected entity Lize Girls' School 丽则女学 which has an educational function. The municipal level further comprises a former Buddhist Nunnery (Woyun 'an 卧云庵), Nanyuan Teahouse 南园茶社, the former site of Taihu Water Conservancy Department 太湖水利同知署 and ancestral halls (*zongci* 宗祠).

The great majority of officially protected and controlled entities are sites with a residential function, both formerly splendid mansions and local-style dwelling houses. Notable residences include Chongben Hall 崇本堂 and Jiayin Hall 嘉荫堂, both of which are listed on a provincial level. An example for a significant local-style dwelling house listed on a municipal level is the "Hall of Threefold Gratitude" (Sanxie tang 三谢堂).

Historical and Social Value

In the analysis of historical buildings, it has been shown that local-style dwelling houses have historical value as they illustrate the **material production, life-style, traditions and social practices** of their historical periods (Comm CP, 2.3.1. iii). This criterion equally applies to officially protected and controlled entities. Stone bridges dating to earlier historical periods are listed on higher protection levels. Accordingly, the two national-level bridges originate from the Song and Yuan dynasties. Siben Bridge 思本桥, Tongli's oldest bridge from the Northern Song dynasty, is an arched bridge built of Wukang stone. It is a representative example for the material production of stone bridges during the Song and early Yuan dynasties (see fig. 4-11).⁹⁰

90 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三 (2015): *Tongli* 同里, p. 75.



Figure 4-II. Siben Bridge.

Source: author's photo, 2018.

With regard to residential buildings, a considerable number of officially listed entities are formerly splendid mansions where its inhabitants practiced a lifestyle and followed social conventions different from those of ordinary people. These differences are not only perceived in building size but also privileged spaces such as sedan-chair halls, inner chambers for women or parlors. One example where a specific mansion element illustrated the owner's higher social status is a "repentance well" (*xixin quan* 洗心泉), which has been preserved in Pang Family Ancestral Hall 庞氏宗祠. Following Confucian ethics, women in feudal China had to adhere to the "three obediences" and "four virtues"⁹¹ (*san cong si de* 三从四德). According to the *Tongli Town Gazetteer*, women in the family who violated these rules were drowned in this well.⁹² Categorized as one of the wells associated with other-worldly qualities it was used to enforce clan authority.

The historical value of sites further can be derived from related **significant events or important figures** which had been active there (Comm CP, 2.3.1 ii). In the historic town, there are a number of officially protected and controlled entities which meet this criterion. Some of the former owners of Tongli's great mansions

91 The "three obediences" were to obey one's father before marriage, one's husband after marriage and one's sons in widowhood. The "four virtues" refer to morality, proper speech, modest manner and diligent work.

92 "Tongli Zhen zhi" bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 142.

were high-ranking government officials. Ren Lansheng 任兰生 (1837–1888), the builder of Tuisi Garden, held an official post as general supervisor and military commander in Anhui province.⁹³ His family is one of the town's most influential clans and had lived in Tongli since the beginning of the Ming dynasty. When charges were levelled against him and he was dismissed from office, he returned to Tongli and built Tuisi Garden for 100,000 silver taels.⁹⁴

Another prominent clan which settled in Tongli during the Ming dynasty is the Chen family. Chen Wangdao 陈王道 (1526–1576) was one of many clan members which pursued an official career and became imperial censor after he had successfully passed the highest imperial examinations. After his death in 1580, the Imperial Court erected the Chen Family Decorated Archway 陈家牌楼 to honor his outstanding achievements in his official career.⁹⁵ His grandson in the fifth generation, Chen Yizhen 陈沂震, equally succeeded in the highest imperial examinations. After he had served as high-ranking official for more than 20 years, he built a new mansion in the west of the decorated archway in order to further increase his family's prestige.⁹⁶ With this expansion, the Chen Family Mansion became the grandest residence in the entire town. The residence's own waterway to access the public river network and that Chen Yizhen imported wood from mountains in Jiangxi province to build his mansion illustrate the splendor of the Chen Family Mansion at the time.⁹⁷ Currently only a small part of this former mansion has been preserved and listed as officially controlled entity.

Similar to the first case study, entities can be named after historically prominent owners, such as the Former Residence of Chen Qubing or the Former Residence of Wang Shao'ao. Chen Qubing 陈去病 (1874–1933) was a man of letters and political activist in the 1911 Revolution. After China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War, he was a founding member of the "Revenge Society" 雪耻学会 and later joined Sun Yat-sen's Tongmenghui (同盟会, "Revolutionary Alliance") in 1906.⁹⁸ He also founded the "Southern Society" 南社 together with Gao Xu 高旭 (1877–1925) and Liu Yazi 柳亚子 (1887–1958) in 1909,⁹⁹ the largest literature and poetry organization at the time. His former residence was among the earliest listed

93 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 248.

94 Ibid., p. 47.

95 "Tongli Zhen zhi" bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 138.

96 Ibid., p. 139.

97 Ibid.

98 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 222.

99 Ibid.

sites in Tongli and has since been upgraded to the status of provincial-level protected entity. Furthermore, the teahouse in which members of the society used to meet, the Nanyuan Teahouse, whose historical value equally derives from these historical figures, is a protected site in Tongli.

Liugeng Hall 留耕堂 is the hall name of one of Tongli's historic mansions. However, it is known today as Former Residence of Wang Shao'ao 王绍鏊 (1888–1970). He was a labor activist and one of the founders of the Chinese Association for the Promotion of Democracy 中国民主促进会 in 1945.¹⁰⁰ Born into a literary family, he went abroad to study political economy in Japan. In 1933, he joined the CCP and, among others, held the post of Assistant Minister of Finance.¹⁰¹ As assistant minister, Wang Shao'ao also liaised with the Guomindang and functioned as prime organizer of the Chinese Association for the Promotion of Democracy through his connections to industry and commerce.¹⁰² His former residence is now listed as municipal-level protected entity.

In addition to residences, buildings with other functions are related to historical events and figures. One such site is the Lize Girls' School. The School was founded by the son of the owner of Tuisi Garden, Ren Chuanxin 任传薪 (1887–1962), who inherited the garden and converted it partly into school buildings in 1906. After the new school building had been set up, the school was moved from the garden to its present site.¹⁰³ In 1915, a group of about 140 people gathered at the school to protest against the capitulation of President Yuan Shikai 袁世凯 (1859–1916) who had signed the Twenty-One Demands on May 25, an ultimatum set by Japan in the course of World War I which guaranteed Japan special privileges. Moreover, a memorial to this “national humiliation” was set up which now stands opposite of the school building (see fig. 4-12). The site therefore not only has historical value but is further a commemorative site with social value.

Another example is Tianfang Building, which was set up by famous poet and educator Jin Songcen 金松岑 (Jin Tianhe 金天翮, 1874–1947) in 1924.¹⁰⁴ Jin Songcen was a poet, writer and educator with a literary family background. Together with Chen Qubing, he founded the Revenge Society in 1897.¹⁰⁵ In his attempt to foster revolutionary activities and to promote women's rights for political action

100 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 224.

101 Ibid.

102 Groot, Gerry (2004): *Managing Transitions: The Chinese Communist Party, United Front Work, Corporatism and Hegemony*, pp. 30–31.

103 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 53.

104 Ibid., p. 112.

105 Ibid., p. 224.

through his writings, Jin Songcen translated Japanese descriptions of anarchism into Chinese such as Kemuriyama Sentarō's 煙山專太郎 *Kinsei museifushugi* 近世無政府主義 (*Modern Anarchism*) which further provides the basis for parts of the well-known novel *Niehaihua* 孽海花 ("A Flower in an Ocean of Sin"), later taken over and completed by Zeng Pu 曾朴 (1871–1935).¹⁰⁶ Moreover, he strove to reform the educational system and opened a private school in his residence where he started to work as educator.¹⁰⁷ In 1903, he went to Shanghai to follow an invitation by Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868–1940) to work for the "Patriotic Study Society" (Aiguo xueshe 爱国学社) and later moved to Suzhou.¹⁰⁸

Tianfang Building was set up on the former site of historic Tongchuan Academy 同川书院 and has originally been Jin Songcen's study.¹⁰⁹ It was destroyed during the Japanese occupation and was rebuilt in 1948 with funds donated by Jin Songcen's alumni to commemorate him.¹¹⁰ Petzet has noted how rebuilt structures can contribute to cure the losses caused by events of war and, despite their new fabric, are often perceived as historic documents.¹¹¹ While Tianfang Building was rebuilt, it still retains high historical and social value as a commemorative site.

Furthermore, sites have historical value if they can prove or supplement facts as stated in **historical records**. A considerable number of historic residences are recorded in the *Jiaqing Gazetteer*. In the case of Gengle Hall, there was further listed an individual structure of the residence as a significant building. According to this record, the historic mansion of Gengle Hall featured a structure named "Yanyi Building" 燕翼楼.¹¹² This building has been preserved and provides evidence for the historic record on Gengle Hall (see fig. 4-13).

106 Müller, Gotelind (2001): *China, Kropotkin und der Anarchismus: Eine Kulturbewegung im China des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts unter dem Einfluß des Westens und japanischer Vorbilder*, pp. 154–155.

107 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 221.

108 Ibid.

109 Ibid., p. 112.

110 Ibid.

111 Petzet, Michael (2013): "Conservation of Monuments and Sites — International Principles in Theory and Practice", "Denkmalpflege — Internationale Grundsätze in Theorie und Praxis", p. 80.

112 Tongli Zhen renmin zhengfu 同里镇人民政府; Wujiang Shi dang'an ju 吴江市档案局 (ed., 2011): *Tongli zhi (liang zhong)* 同里志 (两种), p. 68.



Figure 4-12. Lize Girls' School Memorial Site.

Source: author's photo, 2018.



Figure 4-13. Yanyi Building.

Source: author's photo, 2018.

Finally, historical value derives from **unique elements** or elements representative of a type of site (Comm CP, 2.3.1 v). While a considerable number of historic mansions in Tongli were private gardens, only Tuisi Garden has been preserved. In the World Heritage nomination document, the garden is valued for its unique layout, which stands out from those of other Classical Gardens.¹¹³ Tuisi Garden can therefore be seen as a unique element, which increases its historical value. Other examples of unique elements include the exquisite carvings of Chongben Hall and Jiayin Hall, both of which will be analyzed more closely in the following section.

Artistic and Scientific Value

Artistic value can be derived primarily from architectural arts. This can include spatial composition, building style, decoration and aesthetic form (Comm CP, 2.3.2 i). In comparison to historical buildings in Tongli, officially protected entities feature buildings with exceptional architectural forms. Tuisi Garden has the greatest number of such buildings, both in the residential part of the mansion and its garden. The inner residence comprises two-storied chambers connected through two-storied corridors, forming a quadrangle around a central courtyard. This building type is called *zoumalou* 走马楼 (see fig. 4-14).¹¹⁴ The adjacent courtyard functions as transitional space between residence and garden and has a boat-shaped structure or landboat (*hanchuan* 旱船) in its center.¹¹⁵

The garden includes a great variety of landscape architecture built as pavilion (*ting* 亭), terrace (*tai* 台), two-story building (*lou* 楼), two-story pavilion (*ge* 阁), corridor (*lang* 廊), pavilion on a terrace (*xie* 榭), bridge (*qiao* 桥), and others. The main structure of the garden is Tuisi Cottage (Tuisi caotang 退思草堂), which has a characteristic roof, a terrace and is divided into a northern and a southern part.¹¹⁶ A structure named “Nao hong yi ge” (闹红一舸, “Barge in-between flourishing red lotuses”), again, is shaped as a boat and set on limestones reaching into the pond. Another structure designated as “skybridge” (*tianqiao* 天桥) with a bridge on the upper and a corridor on the lower level was selected as a “first choice” scenic spot of Suzhou Classical Gardens in 1985 (see fig. 4-15).¹¹⁷

113 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. 13.

114 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 55.

115 Ibid.

116 Ibid., p. 57.

117 Ibid., p. 59.



Figure 4-14. Zoumalou in Tuisi Garden.

Source: author's photo, 2015.



Figure 4-15. "Nao Hong Yi Ge" and Skybridge.

Source: author's photo, 2018.

An outstanding example for a residence with high artistic value is Jiayin Hall. In terms of significant architectural characteristics, it primarily has an arched gateway in *shikumen*-style in the first *jin*.¹¹⁸ Its main hall is built as a *shamao* hall 纱帽厅, the same architectural form which can be found in the Former Mansion of Pan Shi'en in Suzhou. The beam capitals of this hall are decorated with the characteristic “gauze cap wings” (see fig. 4-16). In addition, Yanqing Building 衍庆楼, the two-storied chamber of the inner residence, further features different types of verandas (*xuan* 轩) on its upper and lower stories.¹¹⁹

As for decoration, formerly splendid mansions usually feature three types of carvings: wooden, brick and stone carvings.¹²⁰ Jiayin Hall's artistic value is found in its carvings; they are considered its most outstanding feature. In the entry of the *Tongli Town Gazetteer*, it reads:

嘉荫堂四进三十二间，环境静谧，建筑精巧，特别是各种雕刻，细腻精致，富丽典雅，有较高的艺术价值。¹²¹

“Jiayin Hall has four *jin* and 32 *jian*¹²² in a tranquil environment and with exquisite architecture. In particular, the various kinds of fine and elaborate carvings are of comparatively high artistic value.”

This completeness of carvings can also be found in other higher-listed officially protected entities such as Chongben Hall or Gengle Hall. The cultural value of the carvings is determined by what they depict, which will be addressed below.

118 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 136.

119 Ibid.

120 Ibid., p. 200.

121 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 136.

122 A *jian* 间 (“bay”) is the standardized basic unit of width measurement used for traditional building construction. Related to the size of a room, this spatial unit may further refer to floor space as well as volumetric measurement, comprising the space in between four columns. Accordingly, the width of a *jian* is measured as the span between two lateral columns. In Southern China, it ranges from 3.6–3.9 m whereas its depth can reach up to 6.6 m. See: Knapp, Ronald G. (2000): *China's Old Dwellings*, pp. 21–22.



Figure 4-16. Gauze Cap Wings in Jiayin Hall.

Source: author's photo, 2018.



Figure 4-17. Jingsi Hall.

Source: author's photo, 2016.

As well, there are entities in the historic town that owe their significance to their blending of Chinese and Western elements (*Zhong Xi he bi* 中西合璧). One example for a mansion built in combined style is the Former Residence of Chen Qubing. The residence shows some unique and characteristic architectural features such as a moon gate (*yuedong men* 月洞门) through which Lüyu Qingyao Building 绿玉青瑶馆, one of its main buildings, is entered.¹²³ Its side rooms are separated by paneled doors, and on the second floor of the southern side contains a Western-style flat roof (*lu tai* 露台).¹²⁴

Another building with combined elements from the Republican period is municipal-level protected Jingsi Hall 经筵堂. The outside wall of its entrance hall is built with red bricks and has a semi-circle-shaped decorative door frame as well as stone stairs due to an unusually high elevation difference of inner and outer space.¹²⁵ In contrast, the *beilong* to its east has a *shikumen*-entry (see fig. 4-17). While the second and third *jin* feature traditional elements of Chinese architecture, such as richly engraved beams, skywells and an engraved archway, there is another Western-style two-storied building with red bricks, a balcony and windowsills in the fourth *jin*.¹²⁶

The artistic value of sites is further defined as residing in landscape arts (Comm CP, 2.3.2 ii). As mentioned in the first case study, Liu Dunzhen characterizes the Chinese classical garden as “system of garden art”. Similarly, Tong Jun deduced the significant elements of a garden from the meaningful components of its Chinese character: *yuan* 园. In traditional form, the character is composed of four parts carrying the meaning of an enclosure (口), architectural elements (土), a water pond (口) and rockeries or plants, expressed by the remaining strokes.¹²⁷

Tuisi Garden in Tongli comprises all these meaningful components. The significance of the garden for the overall site is reflected in its name which has been chosen after the original name of the garden although the mansion is composed of two parts, the residence and the garden. Similar to other Classical Gardens, there is a lotus pond in the center of Tuisi Garden around which additional architectural and natural elements are arranged. The structures are built so as to directly border on

123 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 144.

124 Ibid., p. 145.

125 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 124.

126 Ibid.

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

the pond surface, which is why it has also been called “Garden built on water” (Tieshui yuan 贴水园).¹²⁸

In contrast to Suzhou’s Couple’s Garden Retreat, the pond in Tuisi Garden does not have a name despite its central role. The same applies to the artificial hill in the east of the garden. On top of this hill is set a pavilion named “Sleeping Cloud Pavilion” (Yanyun ting 眼云亭). The artificial hill has artistic value deriving from the way it has been piled up and forms a cave underneath this pavilion.¹²⁹

The site features 25 historic trees such as the Chinese little leaf box 黄杨, camellia 山茶 and glossy privet 女贞.¹³⁰ As part of the greater design of the garden, some trees also carry connotations. In the courtyard between the inner residence and the garden, for example, a magnolia tree has been preserved. This tree was planted by the garden owner and also bears the owner’s name (Ren Lansheng 任兰生), since the Chinese name for this type of magnolia is *guang yulan* 广玉兰.¹³¹ Another “hidden view” involves a bamboo grove which is placed at the eastern wall of “Zither Room” (Qinfang 琴房). Depending on the position of the sun, this grove casts shadows on the white-washed wall,¹³² relating to an ink drawing on white paper.

Tuisi Garden further has high artistic value, since it was designed by the famous local painter Yuan Long 袁龙 (1820–1902).¹³³ The painter himself belonged to an influential family in Tongli and made his living from selling his paintings. In 1885, Ren Lansheng hired him to design Tuisi Garden.¹³⁴ Similar to other Classical Gardens, the composition is based on techniques from Chinese landscape painting and involves a careful positioning of garden-related elements, thereby creating different views framed by windows or wall openings.

In their design of gardens, builders attempted to enrich space limited by the urban environment with increasing vistas and perspectives.¹³⁵ One example for this technique in Tuisi Garden is the “Pine, Bamboo and Plum House” (*Suihan ju* 岁寒居). The name of this building originates from the “Three Friends of Winter” (*sui han san you* 岁寒三友), a popular painting motive that refers to the three

128 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 57.

129 Ibid., p. 59.

130 TLCP (2011), appendix, p. 9.

131 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 55.

132 Ibid., p. 58.

133 Ibid., p. 53.

134 Ibid.

135 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.

winter-thriving plants: pine, bamboo and plum. Because the skywell south of this structure is comparatively small and narrow, the owner created a window scene of plants representing these “Three Friends of Winter”.¹³⁶

Another example is “Zizania Rain Brings Coolness Pavilion” (Guyu sheng liang xuan 菰雨生凉轩) in the southeast of the pond. The building contains a mirror imported from Germany by Ren Chuanxin when he returned from his investigation on women’s education in 1907.¹³⁷ And this mirror “borrows” the scenery of the garden, providing the spectator who is standing in front of it with the impression of being part of the scene.

The fourth criterion for artistic value defined in the China Principles is related to immovable and unique sculptural artistic works (Comm CP, 2.3.2 iv). Although there is no sculptural work, Tuisi Garden features a unique lakeside rock erected at the side of the pond. Since its form resembles an elderly person, the rock is called “Elderly Peak” (Laoren feng 老人峰).¹³⁸ Placed on top of this rock is another stone that resembles the hat of the elderly person from afar and a turtle which symbolizes longevity standing close (see fig. 4-15).¹³⁹ The rock gains significance from this natural and combined form.

In contrast to the mainly regular layout of mansions and dwelling houses in the planned Pingjiang Historic Block, Tongli mansions and houses show more diverse layouts that have scientific value (Comm CP, 2.3.3 i). As mentioned above, the classical layout for mansions is vertical, comprising a residence in the front and a garden in the back. By contrast, Tuisi Garden is built on a west-east axis. It has three parts: a residence, a courtyard and a garden which are aligned horizontally (see appendix A.6).¹⁴⁰ The residence has an inner and an outer part. Its outer part covers three *jin*, including an entrance hall, a main hall and a tea hall, which is similar to a sedan-chair hall. The private chambers of the family are set up in the following inner residence with two-storied buildings in *zoumalou* form. The courtyard in the middle serves as transitional space between residence and garden and was used to receive visitors.¹⁴¹ This layout is unique for a classical garden and therefore has high scientific value.

An example for an officially protected entity with regular layout is Chongben Hall. Facing south and oriented towards the water canal, it is set right beside the northern end of Changqing Bridge, one of the Three Bridges in the town center.

136 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 56.

137 Ibid., p. 59.

138 Ibid.

139 Ibid.

140 Ibid., p. 48.

141 Ibid.

The mansion consists of five *jin* and has a traditional layout with an entrance hall, a main hall, front chambers and rear chambers as well as side rooms.¹⁴² Among other attributes, Chongben Hall's significance derives from its comparatively scientific architectural structure. This is stated in the *Tongli Town Gazetteer* as follows:

门厅、正厅和堂楼之间，均有封火墙分隔。门楼过道左右两侧均设有“蟹眼天井”，天井虽小，但在建筑上是个重要环节，它既可通风，又可采光，既能泻水，又能防火。门厅东侧，辟有一条深邃的备弄，使一进进房屋院落既分隔独立，又串连为整体 [...]。从正厅到后楼，呈前低后高结构，建筑上利于通风采光，在民间则称之为“连升三级”。¹⁴³

“The entrance hall, the main hall and the private chambers are separated by fire-walls. On both sides of the archway aisle are ‘crab-eye skywells’¹⁴⁴. Although the skywells are small, they are an important architectural element which enables ventilation, daylighting, water outlet and fire prevention. On the eastern side of the entrance hall, there is a deep *beilong* that partitions one compound with several *jin* of buildings from the other to stand independently, while at the same time inter-connecting them into an entity [...]. From the main hall to the private chambers, the structure is lower in the front and higher in the rear which has architectural advantages for ventilation and lighting. According to a popular saying, this is called ‘to be promoted three ranks at once’.”

As the record describes, the architectural form and structural design of the mansion were adapted to threats, including fire to which the wooden buildings are particularly vulnerable. Moreover, similar to historical buildings, the hall's construction factored in topographic and climatic conditions, which helps the above-mentioned lighting, drainage and ventilation. Finally, this characteristic architectural structure symbolizes achievement in one's career.

On the contrary, the layout of Chen Qubing's former residence is much more irregular (see fig. 4-18), since it has been adjusted to a non-rectangular land plot. It consists of three main buildings, an ancestral shrine, multiple study rooms and a servants' room. The first main building in the southwest is the Lüyu Qingyao Building 绿玉青瑶馆, a two-storied structure with side rooms that features a hall

142 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 134.

143 Ibid.

144 Designation for two smaller skywells situated on a horizontal axis next to each other, in contrast to a larger central skywell.

on its lower story as well as a study and a bedroom.¹⁴⁵ Opposite of the Lüyu Qingyao Building is the ancestral shrine, and to the east his former book storage and writing room, Baichi Building 百尺楼. In the courtyard behind Baichi Building is another study room, followed by the third main building, Haoge Hall 浩歌堂. Finally, on the northern side of this hall are more bedrooms. While the different building components of the residence are similar to those of traditional mansions, their arrangement only partially follows conventional principles.

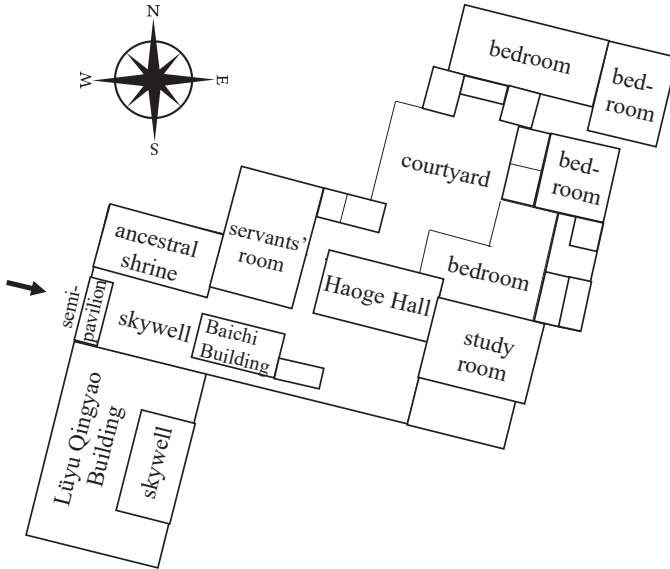


Figure 4-18. Layout of Chen Qubing's Former Residence.

Source: author's draft. Information from: "Tongli Zhen zhi" bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 148.

As well, other officially protected mansions and local-style dwelling houses in Tongli are laid out in various forms. The ground plan of the former residence of local calligrapher Yang Tianji 杨天骥 (1882–1958), for example, has the shape of a boat.¹⁴⁶ Another municipal-level protected entity named Wuben Hall 务本堂 resembles a crane lying prone. Thereby, the long *beilong* symbolizes the crane's neck, the row of courtyard-building components its body and the *ensembles* to the left and right of the *beilong* form the crane's wings. Finally, the kitchen

145 "Tongli Zhen zhi" bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 145.

146 *Ibid.*, p. 201.

and servants' rooms in the back symbolize the crane's tail.¹⁴⁷ It is recorded that the owners built their mansion in this particular form to adhere to *fengshui* principles.¹⁴⁸

Another example which reveals the importance of landscape characteristics for the construction of housing is Sanxie Hall 三谢堂. This officially protected entity is not a great mansion but a local-style dwelling house built by the Shao 邵 family clan. According to the *Tongli Town Gazetteer*, the clan held the belief that their house was set on particularly favorable land in terms of *fengshui*. The buildings in the residence were built in triangular and step-shaped form to adapt to this environment.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, while the buildings in the front are lower, the rear buildings are taller, and some of them even feature lofts.¹⁵⁰

According to Knapp, the great attentiveness to a site and its characteristics such as ventilation and natural light laid the basis for the employment of *fengshui* in China.¹⁵¹ The design of Sanxie Hall shows such an awareness of environmental influences. Moreover, the local-style dwelling house comprises one of the few remaining structures dating back to the Ming dynasty. The site's scientific value can be therefore derived from construction, materials and techniques used in this historical period (Comm CP, 2.3.3 ii). For example, the columns of its main hall are built on wooden column bases,¹⁵² which is a rare feature and characteristic of Ming-dynasty architecture.

Cultural Value

These official entities do not only possess the historical, artistic and scientific value mentioned above but are also rich in cultural content deriving from different attributes. Firstly, they gain significance from naming. Similar to the first case study, hall and structure names can derive from a variety of sources which include aspects related to the owner, the natural environment, the family clan or aspirations and good wishes.

147 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 110.

148 Ibid.

149 Ibid., p. 120.

150 Ibid.

151 Knapp, Ronald G. (2005): "Siting and Situating a Dwelling: Fengshui, House-Building Rituals and Amulets", pp. 135–136.

152 Ibid.

Names which are related to their owners have often been selected for great mansions and can include the personal name of the mansion owner. Gengle Hall, for example, was built by recluse Zhu Xiang 朱祥 who rendered great service to the inspector-general of Jiangsu Province assisting in the construction of a bridge and was awarded with a government post.¹⁵³ But Zhu Xiang was unwilling to serve as an official, so he resigned on grounds of bad health and decided to live in seclusion. The name of his residence is chosen after his own “assumed name” or *hao* 号: Gengle 耕乐.¹⁵⁴

The naming of Tuisi Garden expresses the owner’s disposition. Ren Lansheng returned to Tongli after charges were levelled against him and he was dismissed from office. In light of his dismissal, he deliberately named his residence Tuisi Garden, “Retreat and Reflection Garden”, to express his loyalty to the emperor. The two characters *tui si* 退思 originate from the expression *tui si bu guo* 退思补过 (“to think about how to retrieve one’s errors in retreat”), which originates from a passage in the *Zuo Commentary* (*Zuo zhuan* 左传)¹⁵⁵ about the historic Battle of Bi 郟 between the states of Jin 晋 and Chu 楚 in 597 BC. Due to the disgraceful defeat of Jin by Chu, Jin army leader Xun Linfu 荀林父 should have been executed. This passage describes an appeal to the Marquis of Jin that persuaded him to spare Xun Linfu and describes his loyal behavior.¹⁵⁶

The circumstances of Ren Lansheng’s career show some parallels to the events described in the passage from the *Zuo zhuan*. By choosing an expression from this passage as name for his residence, the owner wanted to indirectly demonstrate his loyalty to the imperial court and his will to serve the emperor, since he was “reflecting on his mistakes”. Ren Lansheng was not the only owner to use this practice of expressing his disposition through garden names. Another example from Yangzhou is a private garden named Ge Yuan 个园. The Chinese character *ge* 个 (“single”) resembles one half of the character for bamboo (*zhu* 竹), connoting moral integrity. The garden name therefore reflects the owner’s self-perception

153 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 137.

154 Ibid.

155 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 47.

156 The respective passage reads: “Linfu’s service of his ruler has been of this character, that, in an advance, his thought has been how to display his loyalty, and, when obliged to withdraw, his thought has been how to retrieve his errors; he is a bulwark to the altars of Jin ...” (Linfu zhi shi jun ye, jin si jin zhong, tui si bu guo, sheji zhi wei ye 林父之事君也，进思尽忠，退思补过，社稷之卫也). Translated after: Legge, James (1972): *The Ch’un Ts’ew, with the Tso Chuen*, p. 321.

as the single remaining upright person in contrast to his peers as well as his wish to be appreciated for this quality by others.¹⁵⁷

Hall and building names can also express an owner's aspiration, and they often allude to Chinese classics or poetry. The municipal-level listed Tianfang Building 天放楼, for example, was named by Jin Songcen after a verse from the outer chapters of *Zhuangzi*.¹⁵⁸ The passage from "Horses' Hoofs" 马蹄 praises the occupation with weaving clothes and cultivating food as virtue of ordinary people.¹⁵⁹ Jin Songcen named his study after elements in this passage to express his aspiration for freedom and independence in thinking and acting.¹⁶⁰

The building names of main structures in the Former Residence of Chen Qubing are rooted in poems. The name of Lüyu Qingyao Building originates from a verse of a poem written by one of his mother's ancestors; he chose this name in order to express gratitude for her education.¹⁶¹ Likewise, the names of Baichi Building and Haoge Hall have been named after poem verses. When Haoge Hall was being built, Chen Qubing was reading the poem *Haoge xing* 浩歌行 ("Grand-song Lay") by Bai Juyi 白居易 and named the completed hall in reference to this poem.¹⁶²

As mentioned above, the owners of Sanxie Hall regarded their house to be located in a favorable position in terms of *fengshui*. According to Knapp, the consideration of *fengshui* characteristics is believed to provide "a vehicle for ensuring a reasonable share of good fortune, that includes wealth, progeny, good harvests and official positions".¹⁶³ Expressing their wish that descendants would thank heaven (*xie tian* 谢天), thank earth (*xie di* 谢地) and thank their ancestors (*xie*

157 Wang, Joseph C. (2005): "House and Garden: Sanctuary for the Body and the Mind", in: Knapp, Ronald G.; Lo, Kai-yin (ed.): *House Home Family: Living and Being Chinese*, p. 93.

158 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 134.

159 The passage reads: "Weaving clothes and cultivating food, refers to sharing equally in virtue. It is oneness without partisanship, and refers to heaven's liberation." (Zhi er yi, geng er shi, shi wei tong de. Yi er bu dang, ming yue tian fang. 织而衣, 耕而食, 是谓同德; 一而不党, 命曰天放。) Source: Thompson, Paul B.; Thompson, Kirill O. (ed., 2018): *Agricultural Ethics in East Asian Perspective: A Transpacific Dialogue*, p. 49.

160 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 134.

161 "Tongli Zhen zhi" bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 145.

162 Ibid.

163 Knapp, Ronald G. (1990): *The Chinese House: Craft, Symbol and the Folk Tradition*, p. 55.

zuzong 谢祖宗) for this beneficial location, they chose this name.¹⁶⁴ Literally named the “Three Thanks Hall”, this local-style dwelling house has been named in reference to its location.

Residences in Tongli are associated to their occupants’ family clan, and the same residence name can also refer to different residences of clan members. For example, the name Wuben Hall 务本堂 belonging to the Gu 顾 family clan, related to a lineage from the Ming dynasty, was used for three residences in different locations.¹⁶⁵ In addition, residences can be named after an ancestor’s official title. The officially controlled entity “Residence of the Imperial Servant” (Shiyu di 侍御第) built in the Ming dynasty, was formerly inhabited by an imperial censor and is named after his official position.¹⁶⁶

The bridges in Tongli, some of which are officially protected or controlled entities, are mainly given names associated with auspicious meanings or positive connotations. The Three Bridges in the historic center, for example, are called “Bridge of Great Peace” (Taiping qiao 太平桥), “Bridge of Good Luck” (Jili qiao 吉利桥) and “Bridge of Lasting Prosperity” (Changqing qiao 长庆桥). Other examples are the “Bridge of Universal Peace” (Pu’an qiao 普安桥) or the “Bridge of Longevity” (Yongshou qiao 永寿桥).¹⁶⁷

Similar to buildings, Tongli’s bridges derive cultural significance from decorative carvings and intangible heritage related to them. Locals refer to the Ming-period Pu’an Bridge as the “Study Bridge” (Dushu qiao 读书桥), which derives from a stone carving. A couplet which portrays Tongli’s residents as fond of studying was engraved on the western bridge pier and gives the bridge its local name.¹⁶⁸

Wujin Bridge 乌金桥 features a stone-engraved image inset on the top of its crossover; this image alludes to a legend. Originally, this bridge was located at a strategic access point for Tongli and is said to have been reconstructed in a rush by the town residents to welcome the troops of the Taiping Movement.¹⁶⁹ The engraved “Announcing Good News Right Away” - image (*Mashang baoxi tu’an* 马上报喜图案) depicts a horse turning its head and looking at a bird approaching it from behind (see fig. 4-19). The Chinese term *mashang* 马上 has a double

164 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 218.

165 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 134.

166 Ibid.

167 Ibid., p. 69.

168 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三 (2015): *Tongli* 同里, p. 76.

169 Ibid., p. 78.

meaning which can be “right away” as well as “on horseback”. This ambiguity has been used in the image.



Figure 4-19. “Mashang Baoxi”-Image.

Source: author’s photo, 2016.

Bridges can also be associated with intangible heritage through related customs, as illustrated by the case of the Three Bridges. As mentioned above, these bridges all have names expressing good wishes. According to a local custom, newlywed couples must cross the bridges to receive the blessings indicated by the bridge names. The custom suggests that the couple will embark on a common path through life in prosperity and adversity.¹⁷⁰ While the official account of this custom “crossing the Three Bridges” (*zou sanqiao* 走三桥) designated Taiping Bridge, Jili Bridge and Changqing Bridge, Bellocq pointed out that the *Jiaqing Gazetteer* only includes two bridges.¹⁷¹

170 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 166.

171 Bellocq, Maylis (2006): “The Cultural Heritage Industry in the PRC: What Memories Are Being Passed On? A Case Study of Tongli, A Protected Township in Jiangsu Province” (Jonathan Hall, transl.), p. 31.

In the *Jiaqing Gazetteer*, the custom is recorded as follows:

里中迎娶，必经太平、吉利二桥，以为佳讖。¹⁷²

“In the town, when a bride is escorted to her wedding, [the escort] has to cross both, Taiping and Jili Bridge, as this is considered a good omen.”

As shown above, the custom has been recorded but only refers to Taiping and Jili Bridges. Bellocq further found that “crossing the Three Bridges” was not practiced during the Cultural Revolution and only was revived with the development of tourism, then being practiced again by younger generations.¹⁷³ Although the custom may not have been subject to uninterrupted continuity, it increases the cultural significance of the bridges.

Officially protected buildings equally gain cultural value through decorations which carry cultural connotations or are related to history, literature or legends. This is illustrated by example of three provincial-level listed sites, the Former Mansion of Chen Qubing, Chongben Hall and Jiayin Hall. While the Former Residence of Chen Qubing features buildings in plain architectural style, its significance greatly derives from written works. Since the owner was a devoted poet, couplets written by him and for him play an important role. Although not preserved, there had originally been a horizontal inscription on the main door lintel reading “Ancestral Mansion of Filial Piety and Fraternity” (Xiao you jiu ye 孝友旧业).¹⁷⁴ This name expresses fundamental virtues its owners aspired to and therefore has cultural value.

The name of Lüyu Qingyao Building derives from a verse of a poem composed by an ancestor of Chen Qubing’s mother. The inscription that was originally carved on the door lintel by calligrapher Yang Tianji was destroyed in the Cultural Revolution.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, similar to the garden records written for their owners in the first case study, Chen Qubing composed a couplet on Lüyu Qingyao Building as well as Haoge Hall.¹⁷⁶ His former residence is another example of the practice of enriching tangible architectural structures with intangible content deriving from literary works.

172 Tongli Zhen renmin zhengfu 同里镇人民政府; Wujiang Shi dang’an ju 吴江市档案局 (ed., 2011): *Tongli zhi (liang zhong)* 同里志 (两种), p. 74.

173 Bellocq, Maylis (2006): “The Cultural Heritage Industry in the PRC: What Memories Are Being Passed On? A Case Study of Tongli, A Protected Township in Jiangsu Province” (Jonathan Hall, transl.), pp. 30–31.

174 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 164.

175 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 144.

176 Ibid., p. 145.

In the second example, Jiayin Hall derives great significance from its numerous decorative carvings, including calligraphic inscriptions as well as images and patterns. Such carvings appear on both the interior and exterior structural elements of the mansion. The entrance hall, for example, features a traditional auspicious motif in the middle of the ridge, which is called “Song he chang chun” 松鹤长春.¹⁷⁷ The motif shows a pine tree and a crane which symbolize longevity.¹⁷⁸ Equally, the main hall shows a relief of the “Three Star Gods” (*fu lu shou san xing* 福禄寿三星); in the middle of its ridge are the Star of Fu 福 (“fortune”), the Star of Lu 禄 (“status”) and the Star of Shou 寿 (“longevity”).¹⁷⁹

The main hall is tall and wide, containing numerous wooden carvings on the beams and window panels. The carvings include “The Eight Steeds” (*Ba jun tu* 八骏图¹⁸⁰) and floral depictions with related cultural meanings.¹⁸¹ As well, since the hall was built in the style of a *shamao* hall, there are very rare carvings on the decorative wooden boards of the beam capitals in the shape of gauze caps, showing eight scenes from one of the Four Great Classical Novels, “The Romance of the Three Kingdoms” (*Sanguo yanyi* 三国演义). The wooden door panels feature depictions of ancient objects (*Bogu tu*¹⁸² 博古图), arranged with the flowers traditionally representing the four seasons: the orchid for spring, the lotus for summer, the chrysanthemum for autumn and the plum for winter.¹⁸³

As stated above, formerly splendid mansions usually are adorned with all three types of carvings. Stone carvings of Jiayin Hall can be found on the flagstones of the courtyard in front of Yanqing Building, for example. This carving shows the

177 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 136.

178 Williams, C.A.S. (1974): *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs*, p. 101.

179 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 136.

180 The art motif of the “Eight Steeds” refers to the eight horses of the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BC) sovereign Mu Wang 穆王 (1001–746 BC) which pulled his chariot. Each of the horses had a distinguishing name and they appear in popular stories and legends. See: Williams, C.A.S. (1974): *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs*, p. 225.

181 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 159.

182 These are decorative motives of flowers and plants or fruit set on ancient utensils. The motives originate from the work *Illustrated Catalogue of Antiquities from the Xuanhe Hall* (*Xuanhe bogu tu* 宣和博古图), a record of ancient vessels which had been collected by the imperial family in Xuanhe Hall 宣和殿. It was compiled in 30 volumes by Wang Fu 王黼 (1079–1126) under Emperor Huizong 徽宗 in the 1120s. See: Visconti, Chiara (2015): “The Influence of Song and Qing Antiquarianism on Modern Chinese Archaeology”, pp. 68–69.

183 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 136.

Qing-dynasty pattern “Five Blessings Encircling Longevity” (*Wu fu peng shou*¹⁸⁴ 五福捧寿, see fig. 4-20).¹⁸⁵



Figure 4-20. “Wu Fu Peng Shou” - Stone Carving.

Source: author’s photo, 2018.

The final category of brick carving is represented on an archway facing the Yanqing Building. The carving comprises four characters and reads “pass on morality and kindness from generation to generation” (*houdao chuanjia* 厚道传家, see fig. 4-21).

Above the calligraphic inscription are the “Eight Immortals”¹⁸⁶ from Taoist mythology, engraved in the shape of their iconographic attributes. This special

184 Literally: “Five blessings holding longevity in their hands”, symbolized through the depiction of five bats encircling and holding the character *shou* 寿 for “longevity”. The character *fu* 蝠 of “bat” is homophone to the character for “happiness”, therefore their visualization in the form of bats. The five blessings are standing for “old age” (*kangning* 康宁), “wealth” (*fu* 富), “health” (*shou* 寿), “love for virtue” (*you hao de* 攸好德) and “a natural death” (*lao zhong ming* 老终命). See: Williams, C.A.S. (1974): *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs*, pp. 35, 450.

185 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 136.

186 The “Eight Immortals” primarily appeared as a group in dramatic texts from the Yuan dynasty. Each of the figures carries an iconographic attribute: Lü Dongbin 吕洞宾 is the head of the group and depicted as a scholar with a demon-slaying sword, Zhongli Quan 钟离权 carries a fan, Li Tieguai 李铁拐 has an iron crutch and a gourd, Cao Guojiu 曹国舅 is depicted as an official with insignia of office, the woman He Xiangnu

form of representation is called “Hidden Eight Immortals” (*an ba xian* 暗八仙). The relief below again shows the Three Star Gods, the Star of Fu, the Star of Lu and the Star of Shou.¹⁸⁷

The second residence deriving high aesthetic and cultural value from its different types of carvings is Chongben Hall:

崇本堂的最大特色，是其各种富有古典民族风格的雕刻，仅木雕就有一百余幅，尤以门窗隔扇上的《西厢记》、《红楼梦》浮雕，最为醒目。¹⁸⁸

“The most significant feature of Chongben Hall are its various kinds of carvings which are rich in classical folk style. The mere number of wooden carvings amounts to more than one hundred. The reliefs of *The Story of the Western Wing* and *The Dream of the Red Chamber* on doors, windows and partition boards are particularly striking.”

The complete set of 14 scenes from the popular love-story drama *The Story of the Western Wing* is engraved on the window panels of the main hall (see fig. 4-22). The panels are also decorated with carvings of the peony flower symbolizing wealth and well-being.¹⁸⁹ Window panels on the lower story of the front chamber are engraved with famous scenes from one of the Four Great Classical Novels, *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, enriched by floral depictions and other auspicious motives.¹⁹⁰ Finally, in the rear building, there are a total of 58 wood carvings on partition boards, with similar images such as the above-mentioned Eight Immortals.¹⁹¹

The origin of Chongben Hall's *The Story of the Western Wing* wood carvings can be traced to a legend. This legend, as recorded in the local gazetteers, involves a talented young man who met the beautiful daughter of the Qian family and fell in love with her at first sight. One evening a few days later, he longed to see her and climbed over the wall of the Qian Mansion. There, she happened to be contemplating the moon in the garden, and the two secretly agreed to marry. The next day, he engaged a matchmaker to propose marriage, but her father refused and set

何仙姑 carries either ladle or lotus flower, Han Xiangzi 韩湘子 has a flute, Zhang Guolao 张果老 carries a tubular drum and Lan Caihe 蓝采和 is depicted with a basket of fruit or flowers. See: Penny, Benjamin (2000): “Immortality and Transcendence”, pp. 117–118.

187 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 136.

188 Ibid., p. 135.

189 Ibid.

190 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 157.

191 Ibid.

two conditions for his daughter's future husband: he had to achieve a high social and economic status and adopt "Qian" as his family name.¹⁹²



Figure 4-21. Engraved Archway of Jiayin Hall.

Source: author's photo, 2018.



Figure 4-22. Wooden Carving of Chongben Hall.

Source: author's photo, 2018.

192 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 330.

Three years later, a wealthy merchant named Qian asked her father for his daughter's hand in marriage, and the father agreed right away. The daughter was pleasantly surprised when it turned out that this merchant was the same talented young man. Later, when the family renovated the mansion, the young man remembered the early encounter with his wife in the garden and let the *Story of the Western Wing* be engraved on the window panels of Chongben Hall.¹⁹³ The legend basically recounts the plot of the drama but adapted it to the setting of Qian Mansion.

In the example of Jiayin Hall, the different kinds of ornamentation express not only good wishes and traditional virtues but also Taoist concepts such as the Eight Immortals. Other carvings depict famous scenes from literary works such as *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *The Dream of the Red Chamber* or *The Story of the Western Wing*. As expressions of related intangible heritage, they greatly enhance the cultural meaning of their overall traditional mansions.

4.2 Conservation and Management

Tongli was predefined as a destination suitable for tourism development at the beginning of the 1980s. Consequently, heritage conservation was started shortly with the restoration of a former private garden, the “Retreat and Reflection Garden” (Tuisi yuan 退思园). Next, the town government restored three more mansions and opened them up to the public. The government then sought professional support from Tongji University College of Architecture and Urban Planning and began collaborating with the Research Observatory of Architecture in Contemporary China, which promotes French-Chinese exchanges in fields such as architecture and heritage.¹⁹⁴

Following the attempt to list the Retreat and Reflection Garden as a UNESCO World Heritage site, a number of improvement measures were taken to enhance its environment and reduce negative impacts on the site. The garden was successfully inscribed on the World Heritage List as extension of the Classical Gardens of Suzhou in 1999, which significantly increased the prominence of the overall town. The inscription distinguished Tongli from other water towns in the vicinity

193 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 330.

194 Bellocq, Maylis (2006): “The Cultural Heritage Industry in the PRC: What Memories Are Being Passed On? A Case Study of Tongli, A Protected Township in Jiangsu Province” (Jonathan Hall, transl.), p. 22.

of Suzhou – towns that boosted tourism development or even started conservation beforehand, such as Zhouzhuang 周庄. In 2000, the overall townscape was comprehensively improved and adapted to touristic use by successively developing infrastructure and tourism facilities.

With the introduction of UNESCO's HUL management approach to China promoted by WHITRAP, Tongli became a pilot city for the implementation of integrated conservation. Therefore, the town government is continuously exploring strategies to establish its own development model, the "Tongli Model" 同里模式 for historic town protection and development. Central aspects to maintain its function as "living heritage" are the integration of the town's scenic area (*jingqu* 景区) with the local community (*shequ* 社区) as well as the participation of the historic town's residents in conservation.¹⁹⁵

Tongli presents an interesting case study not only because it is one of China's first listed National Historically and Culturally Famous Towns. The entire historic town has also been promulgated as an officially protected entity even before the HCF City conservation system was extended to cover towns and villages. The development of Tongli's conservation system illustrates how cities/towns with existing conservation strategies are incorporated into the national conservation system.

4.2.1 Local Conservation System

At the Second National Cultural Relics Survey in 1982, Jiangsu Province promulgated its third batch of officially protected entities, among them "Tongli Town" 同里镇. As the conservation system for HCF cities was first established and limited to a few selected cities, Tongli Town was listed under the category of "ancient architectural structures and historically commemorative architecture" (*gu jianzhu ji lishi jinian jianzhuwu* 古建筑及历史纪念建筑物).¹⁹⁶ Although it came under protection comparatively early, Tongli is not the only town which has been selected to be protected as an entity. Other early examples include Xidi 西递 traditional village, which was promulgated as an officially protected entity of Anhui Province in 1986 and inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2000, and the local-

195 Interview with the Deputy Chief of the Construction and Management Bureau, Tongli Historic Town Conservation and Management Committee, Tongli, April 25, 2016.

196 "Jiangsu Sheng di san pi wenwu baohu danwei mingdan" 江苏省第三批文物保护单位名单 [List of Jiangsu Province's third batch of officially protected entities], Jiangsu Sheng difangzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, Online.

style dwelling houses of Dingcun 丁村 in Shanxi Province, listed as national-level officially protected entity in 1988.¹⁹⁷

The decision to list the entire town of Tongli illustrates the comprehensiveness of the category “officially protected entity” that was initially understood in broader terms than individual site or built *ensemble*. Moreover, the early listing helped to protect Tongli’s built environment in a period of increasing urbanization. The urbanization of the area around Tongli is further reflected in several changes of administrative division. Until 1992, it belonged to Wujiang county 吴江县, which was then upgraded to the level of municipality. In 2001, the administrative area of Tongli was enlarged when Tuncun town was merged into Tongli.¹⁹⁸ Wujiang city was further incorporated into the city of Suzhou in 2012 and transformed into Wujiang district 吴江区. In terms of heritage conservation, these administrative changes meant that Tongli’s officially listed entities on municipal level, which were managed by Wujiang City, came under direct jurisdiction of the City of Suzhou.

Following its promulgation as national-level officially protected entity, the government drafted a first comprehensive plan in which Tongli was defined as an “ancient water town”.¹⁹⁹ Apart from the historic town itself, individual sites and ensembles located in the town and its surrounding area have been listed since 1980 as officially protected entities which constitute the third layer of HCF Cities/Towns. In 1985, a cultural relics protection and management department was primarily set up, reporting to the cultural relics management committee of Wujiang County.²⁰⁰

Tongli features a considerable number of officially protected entities listed on all three administrative protection levels (see appendix A.5). Corresponding to the national conservation system, the highest levels are national key protected cultural relic entities (*quanguo zhongdian wenwu baohu danwei* 全国重点文物保护单位) and officially protected entities of Jiangsu Province (*Jiangsu Sheng wenwu baohu danwei* 江苏省文物保护单位). Due to the above-mentioned changes in administrative division, the designation of officially protected entities listed on a municipal level also changed over time, from officially protected entities of Wujiang County (*Wujiang Xian wenwu baohu danwei* 吴江县文物保护单位), to Wujiang

197 Qiu, Baoxing 仇保兴 (2014): *Feng yu ru pan — lishi wenhua mingcheng baohu 30 nian* 风雨如磐——历史文化名城保护 30 年 [“Tumultuous wind and heavy rain” - 30 Years of Conservation in Historically and Culturally Famous Cities], p. 33.

198 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 26.

199 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 145.

200 *Ibid.*, p. 154.

City 吴江市 and finally to officially protected entities of Suzhou City (*Suzhou Shi wenwu baohu danwei* 苏州市文物保护单位).

At the municipal level, there are the so-called “controlled cultural relic entities” (*wenwu kongzhi danwei* 文物控制单位, hereafter officially controlled entities). These are consistent with protected buildings, the second type in the Planning Regulations which have not been promulgated as officially protected entities but have the legal status of immovable cultural relics. Corresponding to officially protected entities on a municipal level, they were initially registered by Wujiang County and are now under jurisdiction of the City of Suzhou.

Officially controlled entities in Tongli are equivalent to controlled and protected buildings (*kongzhi baohu jianzhu* 控制保护建筑) in Suzhou. While Suzhou introduced controlled and protected buildings in 1983, its subordinated Wujiang County registered the first batch of officially controlled entities in 1986. This category covers heritage sites that were newly discovered in national cultural relics surveys.²⁰¹ Their protection level can later be upgraded after further assessment.

Finally, there are historical buildings (*lishi jianzhu* 历史建筑) which are protected by the conservation plan and are under jurisdiction of the town government. In contrast to the above-mentioned types, they have neither been promulgated as protected heritage site nor registered as immovable cultural relics but represent the historic townscape and local characteristics. As mentioned earlier, Tongli featured a total of 30 officially protected entities and 14 officially controlled entities by 2014.²⁰² Of these 44 officially registered heritage sites, 36 are located in the historic town and 8 are part of the greater town area.²⁰³

The listing process of protected heritage sites in Tongli contains many examples of upgraded sites. For example, Chongben Hall and Jiayin Hall were listed primarily as protected sites of Wujiang City on a municipal level, the former in 1986 and the latter in 1997.²⁰⁴ Both were later included into the seventh batch of provincial-level protected sites promulgated by Jiangsu Province in 2011.²⁰⁵

201 Interview with the Deputy Chief of the Construction and Management Bureau, Tongli Historic Town Conservation and Management Committee, Tongli, April 25, 2016.

202 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, pp. 68–69.

203 Ibid.

204 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, pp. 135–137.

205 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

Another example is Gengle Hall 耕乐堂 which was listed earlier as provincial-level protected site. In 2013, it was upgraded by the State Council to one of the three national key protected heritage sites in Tongli.²⁰⁶

However, the listing of heritage sites can be revoked or sites can be downgraded. Corresponding to the conservation system on an international level, this is carried out in cases where sites no longer fulfil the criteria for which they have been listed or, in the most serious cases, no longer exist. An example of a site no longer fulfilling the criteria and no longer existing is the Renji Temple 仁济道院 in Tongli, originally a Taoist temple that can be traced back to the Chunxi 淳熙 reign (1174–1189) of Emperor Xiaozong 孝宗 in the Song dynasty.²⁰⁷ With its high historical value, the site was listed as protected heritage site of Suzhou City as part of the second batch in 1986. Eleven years later, in 1997, it was adjusted to the status of controlled heritage site of Wujiang City.²⁰⁸ Now, Renji Temple is no longer listed. According to the *Tongli Town Gazetteer*, it was illegally demolished in 2005.²⁰⁹

Tongli's heritage conservation system is based on three major pillars: its management mechanism, its conservation planning and a set of management regulations. Conservation management is coordinated by the town government and includes the cultural relics departments of the municipal, county and town levels as well as related departments such as those for construction and tourism.²¹⁰ In addition to its master plan and other specific plans, Tongli issued a first conservation plan in 2000 in which heritage conservation, the protection of its townscape, cultural and tourism development as well as the improvement of its living environment were addressed.²¹¹ Three years later, the town was selected for the first batch of Historically and Culturally Famous Towns promulgated by the State Council.

In 2011, the Tongji University College of Architecture and Urban Planning, which had already been involved in drafting this first conservation plan, created a revised plan titled “Conservation Plan for Tongli Historically and Culturally Famous Town in Wujiang City” (*Wujiang Shi Tongli lishi wenhua mingzhen baohu guihua* 吴江市同里历史文化名镇保护规划). Due to its status as Historically and

Suzhou's seventh batch of officially protected entities and fourth batch of controlled and protected buildings], Online.

206 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 160.

207 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 106.

208 Ibid., pp. 131–132.

209 Ibid.

210 Interview with the Deputy Chief of the Construction and Management Bureau, Tongli Historic Town Conservation and Management Committee, Tongli, April 25, 2016.

211 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 145.

Culturally Famous Town, conservation in Tongli is further subject to a number of regulations which have been issued since 2005, such as the Conservation Regulations at a national level and the “Conservation Regulations for Historically and Culturally Famous Cities and Towns in Jiangsu Province” (Jiangsu Sheng lishi wenhua mingcheng mingzhen baohu tiaoli 江苏省历史文化名城名镇保护条例) at the provincial level.

While the State Administration of Cultural Heritage assumes responsibility for officially protected entities, the conservation and maintenance of local-style dwelling houses is more complicated and depends on **property rights**. Due to housing reform and the redistribution of housing in the 1950s, the property rights situation in Tongli’s historic town is very complex. There are four different kinds of property rights in the historic town: publicly owned, collectively owned, privately-owned and mixed property rights. In general, the party holding the property rights of a building is responsible for its maintenance. The conservation of publicly owned properties therefore is undertaken by the state and collectively-owned properties are maintained by the respective collective. Equally, homeowners bear the responsibility for maintenance of their privately-owned buildings.²¹²

However, in some cases, different stories of the same building belong to different parties, or several parties own different sections of a story. In these situations, additional complications arise.²¹³ Moreover, low-income households may not have the financial means to maintain or renovate their houses. Depending on the state of property rights and the economic situation of owners, the government undertakes different conservation measures.

In the case of publicly owned housing, the buildings are conserved and maintained by the government. Since the houses are rented out to tenants, this is based on an application and implementation process. When a house requires repairs, the tenant generally applies for conservation work. After his request has been verified on-site, a conservation scheme is prepared, and conservation work is carried out by a construction unit of the public housing management authority.²¹⁴ As the conservation scheme and construction work are carried out by the government, it is relatively easy to ensure compliance with the historic townscape as a major objective. In these cases, “conservation of the old as old” (*xiu jiu ru jiu* 修旧如旧) inter-

212 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 154.

213 Representative of Tongli Town Government (December 17, 2015): “Jiangnan shuixiang guzhen — Tongli: gaishan juzhu shenghuo de shijian” 江南水乡古镇 — 同里: 改善居住生活的实践 [Jiangnan Ancient Water Town — Tongli: Putting the improvement of Residential Life into Practice], presentation in the course of ‘WHITRAP Asia-Pacific Region Training on HUL’, Tongli.

214 Ibid.

ventions are carried out *in situ* and a building's height and outward appearance are maintained.²¹⁵

However, owners of privately-owned housing are obliged to renovate and maintain the houses themselves. Here, the government aims to achieve the conservation of the historic townscape through monitoring. Equally, an application system for the construction and maintenance of privately-owned housing has been established. In this process, the owner or inhabitant has to apply for the desired intervention at the Conservation and Management Department and engage a company to draft a conservation scheme.²¹⁶

Because construction work often leads to conflicts with neighbors living in surrounding houses, an agreement has to be signed with affected parties before the project is approved. The Conservation and Management Department further conducts on-site investigation and has to issue an acceptance certificate after construction work.²¹⁷ Low-income households which are unable to finance maintenance themselves can apply for subsidies.²¹⁸ If approved, the conservation work is implemented according to the same process as for publicly owned housing.

In contrast to other water towns in the region where governments relocated the residents of historic areas to transform the buildings into tourism or entertainment destinations, Tongli moved towards integrated conservation. Here, the town government explored strategies to establish its own development model, the above-mentioned Tongli Model. This model aims to integrate protection of the historic town and economic development.²¹⁹

While maintaining the historic town's residential function, the model directs economic development towards cultural tourism. The integration of both objectives is realized in different management aspects such as funding. An example is the establishment of an Historic Town Preservation Fund that derives income from tourism revenues: precisely five to seven percent of the annual income generated from tourism.²²⁰ Another funding strategy of the government is to offer favorable conditions for investors who take on the responsibility for conservation of a

215 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 153.

216 Representative of Tongli Town Government (December 17, 2015): "Jiangnan shuixiang guzhen — Tongli: gaishan juzhu shenghuo de shijian" 江南水乡古镇 — 同里: 改善居住生活的实践, presentation in the course of 'WHITRAP Asia-Pacific Region Training on HUL', Tongli.

217 Ibid.

218 Ibid.

219 Interview with the Deputy Chief of the Construction and Management Bureau, Tongli Historic Town Conservation and Management Committee, Tongli, April 25, 2016.

220 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 154.

property. Consequently, they are freed from paying rent for the respective properties for a fixed period of time, usually about 20 years.²²¹

As a pilot city for the introduction of UNESCO's HUL management approach to China, Tongli was involved in bilateral projects for the exchange of heritage conservation knowledge between China and Italy. In 2013, WHITRAP Shanghai signed a Memorandum of Understanding with CNR (National Research Council of Italy) – ICVBC (Institute for the Conservation and Valorization of Cultural Heritage) to promote the implementation of the *HUL Recommendation*.²²² During this cooperation, Tongli Old Town Conservation and Management Committee signed two agreements in 2015, one with Priverno²²³ and one with the Municipalities of Palestrina and Castel San Pietro Romano.²²⁴

The cooperation aims to implement the HUL approach for the development of joint research activities. This approach aims to enable the identification and understanding of interconnections between the natural setting and the broader city, including smaller units, such as the historic center or historic houses, as well as the historical development of different architectural and landscape elements.²²⁵ A thorough understanding of the city as a continuum in time and space will then inform decision-making and enhance management in terms of conservation and development.²²⁶

So far, research in the historic town of Tongli as part of this strategic cooperation was directed towards land lots. A project was launched to determine the average size and shape of land lots in the town through field surveys to identify locations in conflict with the setting.²²⁷ The surveys revealed that the majority of the lots are rectangular and smaller than 300 m². These surveys imply that the

221 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 154.

222 "China-Italy: Historic Urban Landscape: Bridging Cultures", Institute for the Conservation and Valorization of Cultural Heritage, National Research Council of Italy, Online.

223 "Tongli (CH) and Priverno (IT) Comparative Research on the Application of the HUL Approach Bilateral Project Meeting in Tongli, Jiangsu", (March 13, 2015), WHITRAP Shanghai, Online.

224 "2015 CNR-ICVBC and University of Rome "Tor Vergata", Municipality of Palestrina and of Castel San Pietro Romano with WHITRAP and Tongli Old Town Committee", Institute for the Conservation and Valorization of Cultural Heritage, National Research Council of Italy, Online.

225 Tongli Town Conservation and Management Committee, CNR-ICVBC, WHITRAP Shanghai (signed: March 10, 2015): *Agreement on Strategic Cooperation Concerning the Implementation of UNESCO's Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*, p. 4.

226 Ibid.

227 Zhou, Jian (2015): "Analysis on Historic Urban Landscape Approach", pp. 76–77.

urban landscape of Tongli will change if the proportion of the above-mentioned average land lots decreases.²²⁸ These possible effects of urban renewal will help with future planning that considers characteristics of the local setting.

4.2.2 Conservation Plan

Tongli's current conservation plan already includes its natural setting and relationship with the historic town. Moreover, it employs the concept of historical layering. As already mentioned, the Conservation Plan for Tongli Historically and Culturally Famous Town in Wujiang City was drafted by Tongji University College of Architecture and Urban Planning in 2011 and is effective until 2030.²²⁹ Similar to the conservation plan for the Pingjiang Historic Block, it is based on research on the town's historical development as well as an evaluation of existing building stock.

While the plan of Suzhou Pingjiang Historic Block listed the World Heritage Convention and the China Principles as reference documents, Tongli's conservation plan uses national documents and regulations as the basis for the planning. Article four lists national documents, such as the Chinese Cultural Relics Protection Law from 2007 or the Planning Regulations from 2005, as well as provincial and municipal-level regulations. However, it does not mention the China Principles or other international documents.²³⁰

The plan defines a four-tier conservation system to protect and develop the ancient town and its surroundings. These four tiers are the town area (*zhenyu* 镇域), the historic town (*lishi zhenqu* 历史镇区), the historic and cultural block (*lishi wenhua jiequ* 历史文化街区), and the different kinds of tangible and intangible cultural heritage (*wuzhi yu fei wuzhi wenhua yichan* 物质与非物质文化遗产). As illustrated in figure 2-7 (chapter 2), these tiers may overlap spatially but not in content, since the focus of every tier is different.

The first tier, the town area, geographically exceeds the boundaries of the historic town and covers its surrounding natural environment and the countryside. Individual sites may be located outside of the town area (e.g. Siben Bridge) or inside its boundaries (e.g. He Family Grave). The main purpose of this tier therefore is not to cover the totality of sites but to safeguard the historic town's overall surroundings, the natural lakes and river system, farmland and the layout of villages (see fig. 4-23).²³¹

228 Zhou, Jian (2015): "Analysis on Historic Urban Landscape Approach", pp. 76-77.

229 TLCP (2011), p. 1.

230 Ibid.

231 Ibid., p. 3.

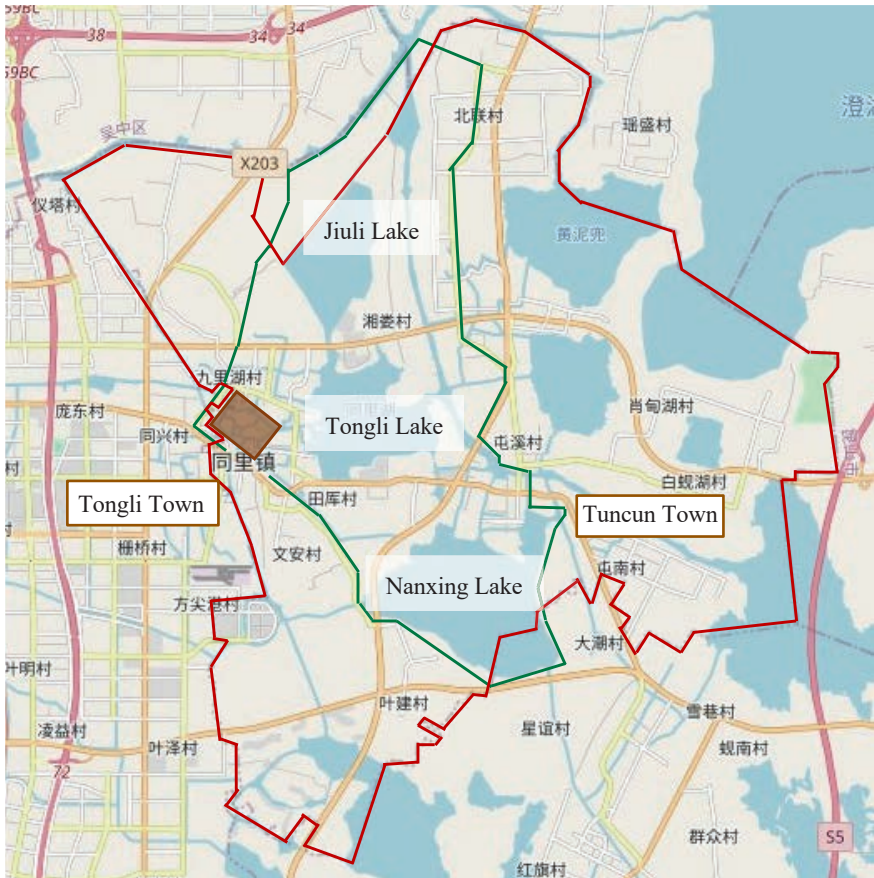


Figure 4-23. Planned Conservation Area around Tongli Town.

Source: map adapted from © OpenStreetMap contributors, 2020, available from <https://www.openstreetmap.org/>, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0. Information from: Shanghai Tongji Urban Planning and Design Institute 上海同济城市规划设计研究院 (ed., 2011): *Wujiang Shi Tongli lishi wenhua mingzhen baohu guihua* 吴江市同里历史文化名镇保护规划, n. pag.

Map key

- historic town
- town area boundary
- protected scenic area (*jingqu* 景区) boundary

In accordance with the HUL approach, the conservation of the historic town as an entity (brown) together with its surroundings and landscapes follows the purpose

that the historic town maintains the interdependent relationship with its natural environment.²³²

The historic town comprises the historic built environment and is demarcated into two sections: the core protection area (*hexin baohu qu* 核心保护区) and a controlled buffer zone (*jianshe kongzhi didai* 建设控制地带). This demarcation has important implications for the regulation of construction and other changes to existing structures. In this tier, priority is given to the preservation of the traditional embanked islands, the waterway network, the layout of streets and alleys, and the overall town structure.²³³ Landscape and building characteristics as well as the historical appearance must be maintained.²³⁴

Tongli further has a historic and cultural block in the center of the historic town: the Three Bridges Historic and Cultural Block (San qiao lishi wenhua jiequ 三桥历史文化街区, see fig. 4-24). In Figure 4-24, the core protection area of the historic town is demarcated in green and the controlled buffer zone is in orange. In the historic and cultural block (demarcated in pink), the density of built heritage is the highest. The conservation plan characterizes the block as “central exhibition area of Tongli’s embanked island town layout and a Ming and Qing dynasty water town living environment”.²³⁵ Again, the focus is on its traditional appearance and layout. New construction and building expansion are strictly regulated.²³⁶

The fourth tier covers different kinds of tangible cultural heritage which include immovable cultural relics and historical buildings, but also ancient bridges, ancient trees, memorial archways and other key environmental elements.²³⁷ Due to the high density of buildings, the majority of tangible cultural heritage is located within the boundaries of the historic town. The conservation plan contains inventories of those tangible cultural heritage sites listed as officially protected or controlled entities on different administrative levels, as well as other key elements such as historic wells or trees.

Intangible cultural heritage is also grouped into the fourth tier. Examples include traditional fine arts and calligraphy, music, dances and drama, as well as traditional ceremonies and customs.²³⁸ The plan divides Tongli’s intangible cultural heritage into three categories: traditional opera (*chuantong xiqu* 传统戏曲),

232 TLCP (2011), p. 3.

233 Ibid.

234 Ibid., p. 4.

235 Ibid., p. 14.

236 Ibid., p. 4.

237 Ibid., p. 3.

238 Ibid.

traditional customs and ceremonies (*chuantong liyi* 传统礼仪) and traditional techniques and arts (*chuantong jiyi* 传统技艺).²³⁹

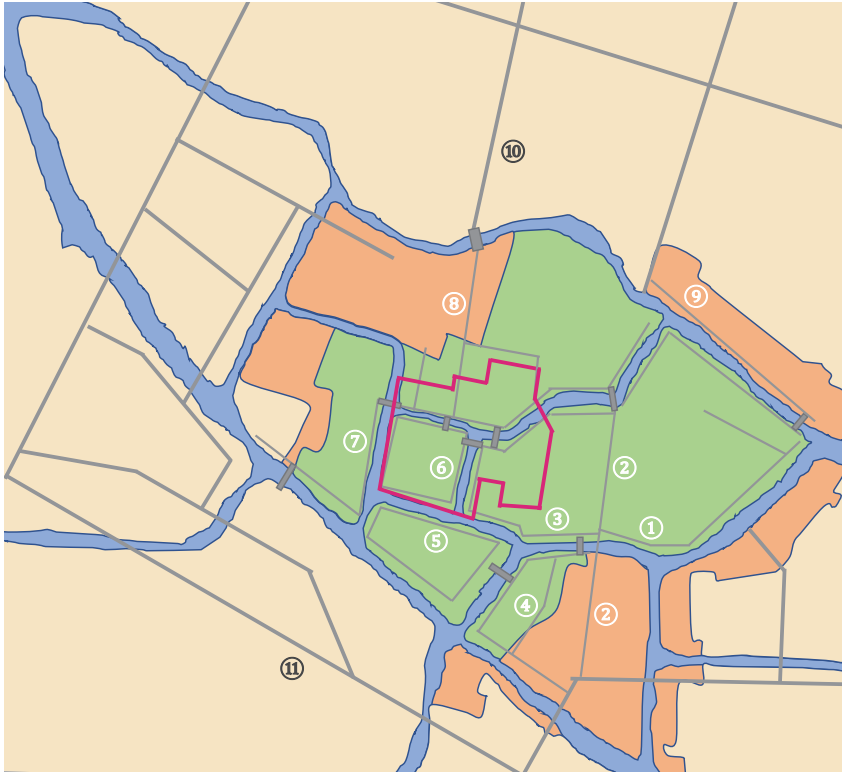


Figure 4-24. Tongli Core Protection Area and Buffer Zone.

Source: author's draft. Map data from © OpenStreetMap contributors, 2020, available from <https://www.openstreetmap.org/>, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0. Information from: Shanghai Tongji Urban Planning and Design Institute 上海同济城市规划设计研究院 (ed., 2011): *Wujiang Shi Tongli lishi wenhua mingzhen baohu guihua* 吴江市同里历史文化名镇保护规划, n. pag.

Map Key

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| ① Ming and Qing Street 明清街 | ② Zhongchuan Road 中川路 |
| ③ Zhuhang Dai 竹行埭 | ④ Tiejia Long 铁匠弄 |
| ⑤ Yuhang Street 鱼行街 | ⑥ Fanjia Dai 范家埭 |
| ⑦ Lujia Dai 陆家埭 | ⑧ Cangchang Long 仓场弄 |
| ⑨ Hongta Dai 红塔埭 | ⑩ Tongchuan Road 同川路 |
| ⑪ Yingyan Road 迎燕路 | |

239 TLCP (2011), p. 17.

In terms of conservation principles, the plan contains four aspects: authenticity (*zhenshixing* 真实性), integrity (*zhengtixing* 整体性), a harmonious character (*xietiaoxing* 协调性) and sustainability (*kechixuxing* 可持续性).²⁴⁰ Authenticity is defined as protecting “genuine” historical information of historical built structures and the historical environment. Therefore, historical elements and “marks” resulting from historic events must be respected in conservation and usage, and the focus is set on readability and reversibility.²⁴¹

Integrity refers to the protection of Tongli’s urban structure and townscape as well as its overall environment, including the cultural and natural environment.²⁴² The principle of harmonious character addresses construction of new buildings or transformed buildings and advocates the consideration of continuity in the treatment of built structures, as well as the natural and cultural landscape. Finally, the sustainability principle seeks to integrate the conservation of cultural heritage and economic and social development.²⁴³

As mentioned above, the notion of historical layering has been incorporated into Tongli’s conservation plan. Accordingly, the plan includes different physical and intangible layers integrated into its framework of protection levels. While layers may overlap among protection levels, this structure allows a consideration of the setting as well as aspects of intangible heritage. The references to historical layers in the plan will be analyzed in the next section.

First, a direct reference to three layers defined by historical period is made at the beginning of the fourth section on historical and cultural values of the town area. Following the first paragraph of article 13, these values are embodied in:

萌芽于新石器时代，始建于北宋，繁荣于明清的悠久历史。²⁴⁴

“Its long history, originating from the Neolithic period, having primarily been established in the Northern Song period and prospered in the Ming and Qing period.”

References to physical layers can be found in the second section on the town’s overall historical and cultural values and characteristics. In its first paragraph, article six refers to the composition of Tongli’s built environment:

数量众多、保存完好的明清住宅和园林建筑²⁴⁵

240 TLCP (2011), p. 3.

241 Comm TLCP (2011), p. 1.

242 Ibid.

243 Ibid.

244 TLCP (2011), p. 4.

245 Ibid., p. 2.

“Great scale of well-preserved Ming and Qing-period residential buildings and landscape architecture”

This paragraph indicates a physical layer of buildings originating from a certain historical period (the Ming and Qing dynasties) that also had a clearly defined function (residential usage).

Spatial layers referring to the town’s natural environment and spatial structure are included in the second paragraph:

以五湖环绕的自然环境、圩岛河网交织的空间格局为特征的江南水乡城镇格局²⁴⁶

“Its Jiangnan water town structure, characterized by a natural environment of five surrounding lakes and a spatial layout of embanked islands intertwined with a network of rivers”

Here, two physical layers can be identified. Surrounded by five lakes and structured by a network of rivers, Tongli’s boundaries and overall layout are well defined. The embankments and typical waterway town structure were created by its inhabitants using engineering methods available at that time. They can be regarded as technological innovations that also show how local people adapted to this geographical context.²⁴⁷

Article 6.3 lists intangible layers of symbolic significance for town culture. It includes:

以毕圩遗址、九里湖遗址为代表的远古崧泽文化、良渚文化；以金松岑、任传薪为代表的明清江南士绅文化；以南社陈去病为代表的近代革命文化；以及包括民间习俗、民间戏曲、民间手工艺等的非物质文化遗产，具有丰富的人文历史和民间传统。²⁴⁸

“Biwei Site and Jiuli Lake Site, standing for ancient Songze and Liangzhu culture; Jin Songcen and Ren Chuanxin, representing Jiangnan gentry culture of the Ming and Qing dynasties; Chen Qubing from the Southern Society as an archetypal figure of modern revolutionary culture; and immaterial cultural heritage, including folk customs, folk opera and folk craft which have a rich cultural history and folk tradition.”

246 TLCP (2011), p. 2.

247 Compare: Bandarin, Francesco; Van Oers, Ron (ed., 2015): *Reconnecting the City: The Historic Urban Landscape Approach and the Future of Urban Heritage*, preface, p. xiv.

248 TLCP (2011), p. 3.

While these cultural layers can be related to tangible sites, the different cultures they represent are intangible. Article 16 in the fifth section on the historic town further supplements an intangible layer specifically for dwellings: local-style dwelling traditions (*minju chuantong* 民居传统).²⁴⁹

Sanqiao Historic and Cultural Block 三桥历史文化街区 is the core protection area of the historic town and comprises both physical and intangible layers. Its most distinct physical layer are its three Qing-period bridges: Changqing Bridge, Taiping Bridge and Jili Bridge. Ming and Qing-period residential buildings of different protection levels are clustered in this central area. Tongli's town structure of embanked islands is listed in section six of the conservation plan for the protection of the historic and cultural block.²⁵⁰ Once again, the layers are derived from geographical context and also express local technological development. Finally, the local custom of "crossing the Three Bridges" (*zou san qiao* 走三桥) is registered as intangible cultural heritage in the plan.²⁵¹ In terms of layering, Sanqiao Historic and Cultural Block can therefore be regarded as a comprehensive miniature of the overall townscape.

The extracts above show that four major historical layers are protected by the conservation plan. The first layer represents the historic period of the Songze and Liangzhu culture dating approximately to 3,900-2,000 BC, the Neolithic period. Three archaeological sites located in the Tongli town area represent this layer. Jiuli Lake Site is located at the southern bank of the identically named lake and is the site of ancient Songze culture. Excavations from 1954 and 1973 revealed different types of pottery, ancient wells, stone objects as well as additional artifacts from the Neolithic and later periods.²⁵² Biwei Site was discovered in 1985 at Jiuli Village 九里村. Among others, pieces of pottery and stone utensils from Liangzhu culture were excavated there.²⁵³ Finally, there is He Family Grave 何家坟 which was listed as controlled heritage site in the conservation plan. It was excavated in 2009 and most of its findings are from Liangzhu culture.²⁵⁴

There is not much remaining built heritage from the Song and Yuan period. When Tongli was established as a town in the Song dynasty, it was still located at

249 TLCP (2011), p. 5.

250 Ibid., p. 14.

251 Ibid., appendix, p. 13.

252 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 78.

253 Wujiang Archives 吴江档案局 (2012): *Wujiang Xian zhi* 吴江县志 [Wujiang County Gazetteer], chap. 21, subchap. 6, Online.

254 Zhang, Tiejun 张铁军 (2010): "Wujiang Shi Tongli He jia fen liangzhu wenhua yizhi" 吴江市同里何家坟良渚文化遗址 [He Family Grave Liangzhu Culture Site of Tongli in Wujiang City], in: Wang, Wei 王巍 (ed.): *Zhongguo kaoguxue nianjian* 中国考古学年鉴 [Yearbook of Archaeology in China], pp. 214-215.

the site of present-day Jiuli Village. For different reasons, the town was moved further southward to its present location. One important reason was geological changes, which gradually turned the area into a lake.²⁵⁵ Another reason was that at the start of the Yuan dynasty, the town center was moved to a place where the waterways were more concentrated.²⁵⁶ This structure was more beneficial for the town's function as political, economic and cultural center of the area.

Due to these reasons and the long temporal distance, remaining material heritage sites of this layer listed in the conservation plan are not buildings but ancient stone bridges. As mentioned in chapter 4.1.2, the oldest preserved construction throughout the town area is Siben Bridge. It was built between 1253–1258 by local poet Ye Yin 叶茵.²⁵⁷ The bridge is now listed as national-level protected entity.²⁵⁸ The other listed bridge from the Yuan dynasty is Fuguan Bridge 富观桥. Originally named Qingrong Bridge 庆荣桥, it was constructed in 1353 by local inhabitant Ning Cheng 宁成.²⁵⁹ It is now listed as municipal-level protected entity.²⁶⁰

As shown above, most of the architectural structures in the historic town date to the Ming and Qing periods. Ming and Qing Street 明清街 (see fig. 4-24, ①), a commercial street during Tongli's period of prosperity, has been restored and now symbolizes its former function as an economic center. Moreover, the intact appearance of residential buildings from the Ming and Qing periods is stressed in multiple passages of the plan. In terms of intangible layers, Jin Songcen and Ren Chuanxin are listed as exemplary figures for Jiangnan gentry culture (see citation above). The final layer refers to the Republican period. While residential buildings continued to be built in the same layout and in the same architectural style at the beginning of the Republican period, successively, buildings with a combined structure of Chinese and Western elements began to emerge, such as the Former Residence of Chen Qubing. This historical figure is further mentioned as representative for Tongli's modern revolutionary culture.²⁶¹

In accordance with the Planning Regulations, Tongli's conservation plan defines different conservation schemes. According to these schemes, conservation

255 Zhu, Tonghua (1986): "A Preliminary Study on the Development of Tongli — An Ancient Cultural Town", p. 319.

256 Ji, Dongsheng 计东生 (2013): "Tongli zhenqu de bianqian" 同里镇区的变迁 [Transition of Tongli town area], Wujiang Archives, Online.

257 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三 (2015): *Tongli* 同里, p. 75.

258 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 68.

259 Tongli Zhen renmin zhengfu 同里镇人民政府; Wujiang Shi dang'an ju 吴江市档案局 (ed., 2011): *Tongli zhi (liang zhong)* 同里志 (两种), p. 44.

260 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 69.

261 TLCP (2011), p. 3.

measures must be carried out by building type as defined by their present state; building type is determined by appearance, year of completion, quality, function, building height, and state of property rights.²⁶² During a survey of building stock in the historic town in article 17 of the plan, diversification standards were set for every of these factors. For example, the building appearance (*jianzhu fengmao* 建筑风貌) is differentiated into first-type to fourth-type appearances.

Well-preserved heritage buildings, historical buildings and traditional buildings are classified as the first and most complete type of appearance.²⁶³ Second-type appearances are designated as buildings that fundamentally retained their original appearance, but to some extent have visible damage on doors, windows, walls and the exterior. If the damage is severe, or doors and windows have been completely exchanged and diminish the traditional appearance of the building, the building is then classified as third-type appearance. This also applies to newly built structures with a poor outward appearance. The fourth and final type refers to buildings whose traditional appearance have been negatively affected to a great extent and whose building quality is seriously damaged.²⁶⁴ These diversification standards for building appearance are then applied to define conservation measures.

There are six different kinds of conservation measures prescribed in the plan: treatment (*xiushan* 修缮), restoration (*xiufu* 修复), improvement and renewal (*zhengzhi he gengxin* 整治和更新), improvement or transformation (*zhengzhi huo gaizao* 整治或改造), transformation or reconstruction (*gaijian huo chongjian* 改建或重建) and maintenance (*weihu* 维护).²⁶⁵

According to the plan, treatment should be applied as a measure of conservation for:

传统结构、布局、风貌保存完好且质量较好的传统建筑。即对一类风貌建筑中的文物保护单位及文物控制单位、建筑质量较好的大部分历史建筑和部分历史风貌保存完好的传统建筑，应保持原样，不得翻建，并使用相同材料进行修缮。²⁶⁶

“traditional buildings where the traditional structure, layout and appearance have been well-preserved, and which are of better quality. The original appearance of officially protected entities and officially controlled entities [classified as] buildings

262 TLCP (2011), p. 9.

263 Ibid.

264 Ibid., p. 5.

265 Ibid., p. 9.

266 Ibid., p. 8.

with a first-type appearance, most of the historical buildings of better construction quality, and some traditional buildings with a well-preserved historical appearance must maintain their original appearance; they cannot be renovated and treatment must be carried out by use of similar materials.”

Well-preserved traditional buildings with some altered parts must be restored to their original layout, style and appearance before alteration also by use of similar materials. This measure should be applied to traditional buildings of second-type appearance and some historical buildings of first-type appearance.²⁶⁷

The six conservation measures for different building types as defined in the plan are illustrated below:

Table 4-1. Conservation Scheme for Built Structures in Tongli Historic Town.

conservation measure	building type	requirements
1) treatment (<i>xiushan</i> 修缮)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trad. buildings with well-preserved structure, layout and appearance, including: - officially protected and controlled entities (first-type appearance) - historical buildings of better quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maintenance of original appearance - no renovation - treatment by use of similar materials
2) restoration (<i>xiufu</i> 修复)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fundamentally well-preserved, but some altered parts, including: - trad. buildings (second-type appearance) - historical buildings (first-type appearance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - restoration of layout, style and appearance before alteration by use of similar materials
3) improvement and renewal (<i>zhengzhi he gengxin</i>) (整治和更新)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - preserved, but mostly altered, including: - trad. buildings (third-type appearance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improvement and renewal according to traditional appearance and built form

267 TLCP (2011), p. 9.

conservation measure	building type	requirements
4) improvement/ transformation (<i>zhengzhi huo gaizao</i>) (整治或改造)	- not in harmony with and negatively affects historic townscape - non-trad. buildings (third-type appearance)	- improvement or transformation according to traditional appearance and built form
5) conversion/ reconstruction (<i>gaijian huo chongjian</i>) (改建或重建)	- in serious conflict with historic townscape - building of fourth-type appearance	- conversion or reconstruction to bring structure in harmony with historic townscape
6) maintenance (<i>weihu</i> 维护)	- non-trad. buildings not in conflict with historic townscape, including: - non-trad. buildings (second-type appearance, mainly newly constructed or converted buildings after 1996 with trad. appearance)	- regular maintenance of their present state

Source: author's draft, according to data from TLCP, art. 20. pp. 9–10.

The conservation scheme in Tongli's conservation plan from 2011 corresponds to the standards defined in the Planning Regulations and classifies preserved buildings into different groups according to their state of preservation and impact on the historic townscape. Conservation measures equally correspond to nationally defined standards, which list restoration (*xiufu* 修复) separately from *xiushan* (修缮, "treatment"). In numerical terms, the evaluation of the historic town's building stock revealed that 19 percent of the buildings should be treated, 22 percent restored, 8 percent improved and renewed, 28 percent improved or transformed, 16 percent converted or reconstructed, and 8 percent maintained.²⁶⁸ The conservation of exemplary structures will be examined in the following section.

268 TLCP (2011), p. 10.

4.2.3 Conservation and Improvement Measures

In Tongli, conservation started with the restoration of individual structures, primarily Tuisi Garden. The garden plays a key role for Tongli's development: it was not only listed on a national and international level, but its restoration also triggered the transformation of the historic town into a tourist destination. Originally, Tuisi Garden was defined as a heritage site in the preparation process to set up the "Tai Lake Landscape and Famous Scenery Area" 太湖风景名胜區 (short: Tai Lake Scenic Area 太湖风景区). In 1980, the Preparatory Team of Jiangsu Province Tai Lake Scenic Area Construction Bureau, together with Wujiang County Bureau of Construction and the Cultural Relics Management Committee, started studying the landscape resources in the Tai Lake Scenic Area in order to safeguard scenic and historic sites. The decision was made to list Tuisi Garden as a key project and restore it. As a result, landscape experts and workers from the urban construction bureaus of Suzhou and Wuxi 无锡 were tasked with drafting a restoration scheme.²⁶⁹

Restoration was then carried out in two stages. The first stage lasted from February 1982 to May 1984 and focused on the garden and the courtyard.²⁷⁰ Architectural structures in the garden have partly been restored (*xiufu* 修复) and partly reconstructed (*chongjian* 重建), depending on their state of dilapidation. Among the structures that had to be reconstructed were the "Qin room", the barge-shaped structure "Nao hong yi ge", the "Guihua Parlor" and the "Jiuqu winding corridor". Total expenses, including greening projects and reparations, exceeded 400,000 Yuan.²⁷¹ After restoration was complete, Tuisi Garden was opened to the public.²⁷² The second stage from October 1985 to the end of 1989 focused on the residence itself. In this project, the *zouma lou*, the entrance hall and the side rooms were restored. Other parts of the outer residence were reconstructed, such as the main hall. Expenses for the second stage amounted to approximately 500,000 Yuan.²⁷³

Due to severe material damage to the built structures (requiring reconstruction), and the paucity of historical sources, the restoration process of Tuisi Garden encountered great difficulties. There were no drawings, and only very few written

269 Wujiang Archives 吴江档案局 (2010): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志 [Tongli Town Gazetteer], Chap. 5, Subchap. 1, Online.

270 Ibid.

271 Ibid.

272 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 54.

273 Wujiang Archives 吴江档案局 (2010): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, Chap. 5, Subchap. 1, Online.

records available.²⁷⁴ As a result, the restoration bureau adopted a strategy of reconstructing its original appearance by supplementing lost information with the help of former photographs and oral accounts of local elderly residents. Moreover, Jiang Jianqing 蒋鉴清, director of the restoration project and deputy mayor of Tongli at the time when restoration was started, launched an initiative to record information about Tuisi Garden from the memories of elderly residents who had known the site in its complete state.²⁷⁵

Thanks to the remaining foundations of dilapidated buildings and marks left on collapsed walls, the layout, building height and dimensions of structures such as the barge-shaped structure “Nao hong yi ge” or “Jiuqu winding corridor” were drafted and reconstructed.²⁷⁶ However, the inscribed horizontal tablet with the hall name from the main hall was lost and none of the residents could recall its name. The bureau therefore approached Ren Lansheng’s descendants to find out about the original inscription. When Ren’s grandson came to Tongli in 2000, he could not remember the name himself. Instead, he consulted other relatives who had stayed at Tuisi Garden and was able to recover its name: Yinyu Hall 荫馥堂²⁷⁷ (“Hall of Lasting Status”).²⁷⁸

The arduous search for the original hall name inscribed on the tablet shows its importance for the whole site’s authenticity. The name expresses the aspiration that the good fortune and merits accumulated by one’s ancestors will be passed on to one’s children and grandchildren.²⁷⁹ After the bureau learned of its name,

274 Shao, Qun 邵群 (May 6, 2013): “Wujiang: “koushu Tuisi yuan” shou ru yuanlin dang’an” 吴江: “口述退思园” 首入园林档案 [Wujiang: “oral account of Tuisi Garden” first enters files on landscape architecture], Online.

275 Ibid.

276 Ibid.

277 The character *yin* 荫 in this hall name refers to a kind of patronage gained through a high position of one’s ancestors in the form of an hereditary rank or other privileges. In imperial times, the sons and grandsons of officials with a certain status had the privilege to “inherit” the rank of their ancestor. This practice first occurred in the Qin dynasty with the appointment of *baozi* 葆子. In the following Han dynasty, a similar mechanism for the recruitment of state officials existed, known as *renzi* 任子. By the Sui and Tang dynasties, it had developed into a system, the *enyin zhidu* 恩荫制度, and become a significant recruitment mechanism in the Northern Song dynasty in addition to the imperial civil service examinations. See: Bai, Wengu 白文固 (2002): “Beisong wen-wu guanyuan enyin zhidu tanjiu” 北宋文武官员恩荫制度探究 [Investigation of the System for Imperial Patronage of Civil and Military Officials in the Northern Song Dynasty], p. 24.

278 Shao, Qun 邵群 (May 6, 2013): “Wujiang: “koushu Tuisi yuan” shou ru yuanlin dang’an” 吴江: “口述退思园” 首入园林档案, Online.

279 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 54.

Jiang Jianqing asked the grandson to send him a handwritten letter, with the name as written evidence.²⁸⁰ The substitute tablet hanging in the main hall today was inscribed by famous poet and calligrapher Shen Peng 沈鹏 (1931–).²⁸¹ Once again, this gesture shows the importance of writer and form for the authenticity of an inscription.

In terms of conservation principles, the different administrative bodies involved in the project also had differing objectives. The Tai Lake Scenic Area Construction Bureau for the restoration of Tuisi Garden from 1981 placed its emphasis on “restoring its former appearance” (*huifu jiumao* 恢复旧貌).²⁸² Here, the result of the restoration process is highlighted; the result must comply with the site’s original appearance. For the second stage involving the restoration of the residence, Tongli Town Government suggested to Wujiang County Government in 1985 that “renovation must adhere to the principle of ‘repairing the old as old’” (*zhengxiu bixu zunxun ‘xiu jiu ru jiu’ de yuanze* 整修必须遵循‘修旧如旧’的原则).²⁸³ The principle proposed by the town government, originating from Liang Sicheng, stresses the restoration process used to achieve the final result.

From the perspective of international conservation standards, this would include the adoption of traditional local building techniques. According to the accounts of Jiang Jianqing, construction workers and craftsmen used local architecture from a corresponding period for restoration as a reference point. All original windows and doors, for example, were demolished and reconstructed according to comparable Qing-dynasty mansions in the town. As well, carpenters, masons and other craftsmen went to famous Suzhou gardens several times to examine and learn about local building structures, furniture and decorations.²⁸⁴

An exception to this practice was the reconstruction of “Guihua Parlor” 桂花厅. Formerly a rice granary for rent collection of the Ren family clan, the building became extremely dilapidated over time. Because the site already featured architectural structures representing the three seasons, spring (“Tower of Contemplating the Moon in Spring”, *Zuochun wangyue lou* 坐春望月楼), summer (“Zizania Rain Brings Coolness”-Pavilion, *Gu yu sheng liang xuan* 菰雨生凉轩) and winter (“Pine, Bamboo and Plum House”, *Suihan ju* 岁寒居), experts suggested

280 Shao, Qun 邵群 (May 6, 2013): “Wujiang: “koushu Tuisi yuan” shou ru yuanlin dang’an” 吴江: “口述退思园” 首入园林档案, Online.

281 Chen, Zhiqiang 陈志强 (November 20, 2014): “Tuisi yuan” 退思园 [Tuisi Garden], Online.

282 Wujiang Archives 吴江档案局 (2010): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, Chap. 5, Sub-chap. 1, Online.

283 Ibid.

284 Shao, Qun 邵群 (May 6, 2013): “Wujiang: “koushu Tuisi yuan” shou ru yuanlin dang’an” 吴江: “口述退思园” 首入园林档案, Online.

the granary be transformed into a structure showing an autumn scenery.²⁸⁵ By Jiang Jianqing's account, some people were against this plan and wanted to restore the granary. In the end, the case was passed on to conservation experts from Jiangsu Province for verification and the proposal was accepted.²⁸⁶ The granary was transformed into a *guihua* parlor²⁸⁷ with reference to the autumn season in its name: "Divine fragrance attaining full maturity in autumn" (tianxiang qiu man 天香秋满).

The final decision to transform the granary into a *guihua* parlor shows that the completeness of all four seasons was considered more important than the preservation of the granary's material substance. An entry of Wujiang Archives on Tuisi Garden written by Chen Zhiqiang 陈志强, chairman of the Suzhou Association for Writers of Folk Literature and Folk Artists specializing in cultural heritage protection, states:

园内集中了江南园林的楼台亭阁、廊舫桥榭、厅堂房轩等建筑，均贴水而筑，而且春夏秋冬、琴棋书画，各景俱全，赢得建筑大师们的一致赞誉，于2000年11月被联合国教科文组织列入世界文化遗产名录，2001年6月由国务院公布为全国重点文物保护单位。²⁸⁸

"Two-storied buildings, terraces, pavilions and two-storied pavilions, corridors, boat-shaped structures, bridges and pavilions on terraces as well as halls, houses, verandas with windows and other structures of Jiangnan landscape architecture are concentrated in the garden, all built as if they were stuck on the water. Moreover, the completeness of various kinds of sceneries: spring, summer, autumn and winter as well as Chinese zither, Chinese chess, calligraphy and painting²⁸⁹, has gained unanimous recognition of architectural masters. In November 2000, it has been inscribed on the World Heritage List by UNESCO. In June 2001, it was promulgated by the State Council as a national key protected heritage site."

285 Shao, Qun 邵群 (May 6, 2013): "Wujiang: "koushu Tuisi yuan" shou ru yuanlin dang'an" 吴江: "口述退思园" 首入园林档案, Online.

286 Ibid.

287 "Guihua parlors" are a type of landscape architecture which derive their name from surrounding osmanthus trees (*guihua* 桂花). The trees shed their fragrance in autumn when they are standing in full bloom.

288 Chen, Zhiqiang 陈志强 (November 20, 2014): "Tuisi yuan" 退思园, Online.

289 The so-called "four arts" 四艺: *guqin* 古琴 (seven-string instrument resembling a zither), *weiqi* 围棋 (Go game, a type of chess), *shufa* 书法 (calligraphy) and *huihua* 绘画 (painting) were traditionally practiced by well-educated gentlemen. The different architectural structures in the garden represent all four: the "Qin room" 琴房 has been built to play the zither, "Yanyun Pavilion" 眼云亭 is suitable for playing chess, "Xin Terrace" 辛台 to practice calligraphy and "Lansheng Pavilion" 揽胜阁 to do painting. See: Dillon, Michael (ed., 1998): *China: A Historical and Cultural Dictionary*, p. 292. Wujiang Archives 吴江档案局 (2010): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, Chap. 5, Subchap. 1, Online.

The integrity of all four seasons displayed in a distinctive scenery is regarded as a decisive factor for the recognition of professionals, which increases the overall value of the site. The four seasons are a popular theme in Chinese landscape painting, and Suzhou private gardens were “artistically created in the manner of landscape paintings”²⁹⁰. Ryckmans states that calligraphy and painting were traditionally considered as highest forms of art in China.²⁹¹

While the material heritage of the granary does not have the same high historical, artistic or scientific value as the structures listed at the beginning of the citation, the completion of the four seasons greatly enhances the garden’s artistic value in terms of intangible heritage. The example of Tuisi Garden’s conservation shows a preference of the intangible over the tangible in a situation where the former is perceived to be able to further enhance the site’s overall value. This choice also reveals a desire to “improve” the state of a site beyond its original state, equally with the objective to enhance its value.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the government restored three more residences, Chongben Hall and Jiayin Hall as well as Lüyu Qingyao Building in the Former Residence of Chen Qubing. As one of the earliest buildings in Tongli, Chongben Hall was listed as municipal-level protected heritage site in 1986.²⁹² Conservation work started five years later in 1991 and was completed in one year. The main buildings of the site were repaired, and two engraved archways were reconstructed. The repaired buildings comprise the entrance hall, the main hall, the front and back building of the private chambers (*qian lou* 前楼, *hou lou* 后楼) and side rooms.²⁹³ In addition, a flower terrace of lakeside rocks was built in the courtyard and planted. Characteristic plants that were added include a mulberry tree, maple trees and bamboo. With a restoration price tag of 800,000 Yuan, Chongben Hall is one of the government-subsidized restoration projects with a lower cost.²⁹⁴

As mentioned above, Chongben Hall features a great number of wooden carvings which depict scenes of famous literary works. During the Cultural Revolution, the faces of figures in some of these depictions were scratched off²⁹⁵ (see fig. 4-25):

290 Knapp, Ronald G. (2000): *China’s Old Dwellings*, p. 256. He is referring to: Wang, Joseph C. (1998): *The Chinese Garden*.

291 Ryckmans, Pierre (1986): *The Chinese Attitude towards the Past: The 47th George Ernest Morrison Lecture in Ethnology*, pp. 5–6.

292 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 135.

293 Ibid., p. 261.

294 Ibid.

295 Upon inquiry, this explanation has also been confirmed by a local tour guide (Tongli, April 2016).



Figure 4-25. Scratched Wooden Carving on Partition Wall.

Source: author's photo, 2018.

Noticeably, figures with scratched off faces are engaged in traditional literary and artistic activities of Confucian self-cultivation such as playing Chinese zither. As artifacts reflecting “feudal” culture, these carvings were targeted for destruction by the so-called Red Guards (*Hong weibing* 红卫兵), student groups pursuing Mao Zedong’s mission to destroy the Four Olds (*si jiu* 四旧: old thinking *jiu sixiang* 旧思想, old culture *jiu wenhua* 旧文化, old customs *jiu fengsu* 旧风俗 and old habits *jiu xiguan* 旧习惯). In the restoration process, these historical marks were preserved and not restored. Chongben Hall therefore is a rare example where incomplete parts of material heritage have been acknowledged for their historical significance.

The conservation of Jiayin Hall was started in 1993 and took three years.²⁹⁶ During this period, the main buildings of the site were equally repaired, namely the entrance hall, the main hall and the chamber Yanqing Building as well as an engraved archway. The two structures, Shuixiu Pavilion 水秀阁 and the western gate, were reconstructed.²⁹⁷ Moreover, minor structures, such as corridors, a courtyard, a kitchen and a flower terrace made of lakeside rocks were newly built. For greening, traditional plants were added to Jiayin Hall, among them magnolias, yew, maple and osmanthus trees. For the conservation of Jiayin Hall, the government invested a total of 1,680,000 Yuan.²⁹⁸

During restoration, the decision was made to demolish a two-storied building and rebuild it into a courtyard. The motivation for this decision is given in the *Tongli Town Gazetteer* as another measure to “expand the visiting space” (*kuoda youlan kongjian* 扩大游览空间).²⁹⁹ In addition, where carvings could not be fully

296 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 137.

297 Ibid., p. 261.

298 Ibid.

299 Ibid., p. 136.

recognized, they were supplemented to complete the original set. For example, four scenes out of eight from “The Twenty-Four Paragons of Filial Piety”³⁰⁰ on the beam capitals of Yanqing Building were supplemented. Furthermore, eight landscape patterns were carved into the beam capitals of the veranda that differ from the original carvings.³⁰¹

Starting from the second half of the 1990s, the government carried out a number of improvement projects in the historic town. The earliest projects involved important waterways and streets. Dingzi River 丁字河 which was filled in 1971, for example, was dredged so as to restore the former water town appearance, enable a better water flow and create a waterway for touristic purposes.³⁰² The improvement of central streets included new pavements as well as a restoration of the historic townscape. One of the restored streets was Xintiandi 新填地, which was transformed into Ming and Qing Commercial Street 明清商业街. The restoration of buildings in this street included the use of wooden panels to close up shopfronts, the use of wooden or cloth-made shop signs and advertising, windows and doors in an historical style, and the use of roof tiles.³⁰³

Another important measure was to move industry out of the historic town and to introduce services and shops. To provide space for tourism development, more than ten industries were moved.³⁰⁴ As well, measures were taken with the goal of getting inscribed on the World Heritage List. Therefore, the transformation of industrial sites in the surrounding of Tuisi Garden played an important role. To fulfill the listing requirements, the government initiated five major improvement measures.

The first measure concerned a more than 30-meter-high water tower in the north-eastern corner outside of the garden which was considered as heavily disturbing the garden landscape. At this time, the tower still provided the water supply for the town residents. Because it threatened the listing of Tuisi Garden as

300 The Twenty-Four Paragons of Filial Piety (*Ershi si xiao* 二十四孝) are a supplement to the Classic of Filial Piety (*Xiao jing* 孝经) which is part of the Confucian canon. The popular stories in this supplement have a didactic function and contributed to spread fundamental Confucian teachings concerning different aspects of filial piety. See: Mo, Weimin; Shen, Wenju (1999): “The Twenty-Four Paragons of Filial Piety: Their Didactic Role and Impact on Children’s Lives”, p. 15.

301 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 136.

302 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 148.

303 Ibid.

304 Interview with the Deputy Chief of the Construction and Management Bureau, Tongli Historic Town Conservation and Management Committee, Tongli, April 25, 2016.

World Heritage Site, it was demolished in 1999 and water supply for the town residents was converted to pressurized tap water.³⁰⁵

As second measure, the town government bought a large abandoned mixed-structure factory building of Wujiang Electromechanics Company 吴江市机电公司 north of Tuisi Garden and reconstructed it in 2004 in the style of traditional Jiangnan architecture. The reason given was that the building was only partially obscured by a row of trees in summer and affected the landscape of the garden in autumn and winter.³⁰⁶ The third measure started in February 2002 with the improvement of Tuisi Square 退思广场 under consultation of experts, such as designers from Tongji University in Shanghai. Power supply cables, television cables and telecommunication cables were laid underground, shops were put in order and public facilities such as street lights as well as greenery were adjusted in style.³⁰⁷

The last two measures were the transformation of a former cement basketball court and the former Tongli Electromechanical Plant in the south of the square. The basketball court dated from the 1960s and was used for about 20 years. It was partly integrated into the exit area of Tuisi Garden, and the other half was turned into a small parking space, both in accordance with the appearance of the garden and its surroundings.³⁰⁸ The former plant was demolished and rebuilt into a street in ancient architectural style and interlinked with Ming and Qing Commercial Street. In this street, restaurants, guesthouses and various shops were opened.³⁰⁹

Further measures in the overall town equally concerned the improvement of the spatial environment affected by overhead cables and the improvement of the water environment. Starting in 2001, power supply cables, television cables and telecommunication cables were laid underground throughout the historic town.³¹⁰ Water improvement included different projects such as the construction of a sewage treatment plant, the construction of water gates and the cleaning of waterways. Regular waterway cleaning projects have been carried out since 1998.³¹¹

Simultaneously, the government continued to conserve and open up further historically significant mansions; Gengle Hall and the Former Residence of Chen Qubing will be examined in detail. According to the deputy mayor at the time,

305 Qian, Guoliang 钱国良 (March 29, 2012): “Tuisi yuan zhoubian huanjing de zhengzhi” 退思园周边环境的整治 [The ecological improvement of the surroundings of Tuisi Garden], in: *Wujiang wenshi ziliao di ershi er ji* 吴江文史资料第二十二辑 [Wujiang historical accounts no. 22], Online.

306 Ibid.

307 Ibid.

308 Ibid.

309 Ibid.

310 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 148.

311 Ibid., p. 150.

Gengle Hall had fallen into ruins before its restoration and only the main structure could be traced from its remains.³¹² The project therefore began with research and the gathering of material about its original appearance. Furthermore, experts and scholars specializing in landscape gardening, urban construction and heritage protection from Suzhou and Wujiang were approached; they helped to draft a working drawing through the course of several discussions.³¹³

Restoration involved two phases and took four years in total. The first phase started in June 1998 and was finished in October 2001. While the restored part was already opened to the public, the second phase of the project was carried out until June 2002.³¹⁴ In the restoration process, the buildings of the residence predominantly were restored. Among the buildings that have undergone major restoration are the private chambers, the main hall and the side rooms. The entrance hall and the three archways, as well as a porch crossing the walkway in front of Gengle Hall, have been reconstructed. As for the garden, the remaining architectural structures Yuanyang Hall 鸳鸯厅, Huanxiu Pavilion 环秀阁 and Yanyi Building have also been restored.³¹⁵

There further are newly built structures which have only been placed in the garden as part of the restoration process. These structures include a *guihua* parlor, several pavilions and corridors, two archways with brick carvings as well as restrooms which have been attached to Gengle Hall from the outside of the enclosing wall. The *Tongli Town Gazetteer* provides the reasoning behind adding new architectural structures to the garden:

为拓宽游览空间，提升文化品位，动迁 10 户居民，在后花园新建花厅、墨香阁、古松轩、三友亭、半亭、两座砖雕门楼（竹苞松茂、得返自然）和双层廊、曲廊、碑廊、西墙门、洗手间、风火墙等 432 平方米；。。³¹⁶

“in order to expand the visiting space and to raise its cultural quality, 10 households were relocated and 432 m² [of structures] were newly built in the backyard, [among those] a parlor, Moxiang Pavilion, Gusong Veranda, Sanyou Pavilion, a semi-pavilion, two archways with brick carvings [carrying the inscriptions:] (bamboo and pine trees growing in profusion, return to nature) and a two-storied corridor, winding corridors, stele corridors, the western arched gateway, restrooms and fire-retarding bulkheads; ...”

312 Sun, Yueqin 孙跃勤 (May 24, 2013): “Gengle tang — zhe shi wo xiufu gujian zui manyi de yi bi” 耕乐堂 —— 这是我修复古建最满意的一笔 [Gengle Hall — The restored ancient building which I am most satisfied with], Online.

313 Ibid.

314 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 261.

315 Ibid.

316 Ibid.

The extract mentions two central aims in adding new structures to the garden: make the site more attractive for visitors and to raise its cultural quality. Since the goal of opening up Gengle Hall was to turn it into a scenic site, additional places of interest were considered necessary to satisfy visitor expectations. Once again, further improvement of the mansion is regarded as an acceptable means to raise its cultural value and to adhere to standards of outstanding landscape architecture.

According to the deputy mayor, not many people in Tongli had experience with building restoration at the time, which posed a major problem to the project. As a result, technical personnel from Suzhou and Shanghai needed to be hired to instruct local craftsmen.³¹⁷ In the restoration process, a traditional technique was used to rectify the wooden structure of inclined buildings. This technique involves tying steel wires to the wooden posts and slowly adjusting their position. Since adjustment is limited to several centimeters a day, and work must be carried out in an intermittent fashion in hot weather, this technique is very time-consuming.³¹⁸ As has been explained by Liang Sicheng, the characteristic form of a Chinese building derives from its timber framework, while the walls do not carry weight from the upper floors or roof and fulfill a single function of separating the interior from the exterior.³¹⁹ The government's effort to preserve the wooden framework of Gengle Hall reflects the authenticity of the structure and its pursuit of "scientific" restoration.

All in all, the restoration project cost 3,020,000 Yuan, which was provided by different government institutions. Tongli Tourism Development Company 同里镇旅游发展总公司 invested 2,270,000 Yuan, and 250,000 Yuan of subsidies were contributed by Tai Lake Scenic Area Construction Bureau.³²⁰ Around 1,100,000 Yuan or about 36 percent of the total restoration costs were house purchase expenses.³²¹ This figure illustrates the problem of relocation, related to the transformation of residential buildings into scenic sites.

317 Sun, Yueqin 孙跃勤 (May 24, 2013): "Gengle tang — zhe shi wo xiufu gujian zui manyi de yi bi" 耕乐堂 —— 这是我修复古建最满意的一笔, Online.

318 Ibid.

319 Liang, Sicheng; Lin, Zhu (ed., 2013): *Da zhuo zhi mei: Liang Sicheng zui mei de wenzi jianzhu* 大拙至美: 梁思成最美的文字建筑, pp. 58–59.

320 "Tongli Zhen zhi" bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 261.

321 Sun, Yueqin 孙跃勤 (May 24, 2013): "Gengle tang — zhe shi wo xiufu gujian zui manyi de yi bi" 耕乐堂 —— 这是我修复古建最满意的一笔, Online.

Chen Qubing's former residence was restored in two phases. The first focused on Lüyu Qingyao Building: the cultural relics department invested 130,000 Yuan for repairs.³²² During the Cultural Revolution, the originally inscribed lintel tablet written by calligrapher Yang Tianji was destroyed. It was recreated by the poet and researcher of classical literature Qian Zhonglian 钱仲联 (1908–2003) in 1994.³²³ One year after its restoration, the residence was further upgraded to a provincial-level protected heritage site.³²⁴

From 2001 onwards, a large restoration project was initiated by three work-units with the objective of turning the Former Residence of Chen Qubing into a scenic site. This project was primarily promoted and managed by Tongli Tourism and Development Company. The Tongli branch of Wujiang City Real Estate Management Office 吴江市房地产管理处 was in charge of building conservation, relocation of residents, and related tasks. The Tongli Cultural Heritage Protection Management Office 同里镇文物保护管理所 was responsible for data collection on material objects, exhibition and cultural heritage management.³²⁵

In the second project, the foundation of Baichi Building was consolidated and the upper story reconstructed. A semi-pavilion was rebuilt, based on the remaining traces on the wall and written records. The upper story of the ancestral shrine was demolished and rebuilt according to its original appearance.³²⁶ The ridge framing was also rectified, and inner walls, which had been demolished before, were rebuilt. Damaged parts of fire-retarding bulkheads were also rebuilt. Paneled doors were restored in the ancestral shrine and Baichi Building, and the floors were paved anew with bricks.³²⁷

In contrast to the examples above, where the focus of restoration was on material evidence, the conservation of Former Chen Family Mansion followed another path of development. Tongli Town Tourism Development Company 同里镇旅游发展总公司 and Suzhou Kaida Real Estate Development Co., Ltd. 苏州凯达房地产发展有限公司 restored the former residence of Chen Wangdao and opened it up as the “Pearl Pagoda Scenic Site”, a tourist destination.

322 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 263.

323 Ibid., p. 144.

324 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 69.

325 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 261.

326 Ibid., pp. 263–264.

327 Ibid.

There is not much information in the *Tongli Town Gazetteer* about the steps taken in the restoration process. The part of the residence listed as Former Mansion of the Chen Family and the ancestral hall were repaired and the landscape architectural structures in the garden, such as pavilions and terraces, were rebuilt. While restoration workers drew on remaining structures for the residential buildings and halls, other parts were designed and rebuilt according to the Legend of the Pearl Pagoda (see next subchapter for a recount of the legend).³²⁸ According to Ruan, the residential part was restored on the basis of historical sources. However, the garden was rebuilt on the site of the former orchard using the gardening style of Suzhou landscape architecture. The decorated archway was also rebuilt to its original appearance (*yuanyang chongjian* 原样重建).³²⁹

Carvings and ornamentation increase the artistic value of a heritage site. Mansions with a great number of carvings in addition to their historical and scientific values, such as Chongben Hall and Jiayin Hall, are listed on high protection levels. The Chen Family Mansion now has more than 1600 wooden carvings and more than 300 brick and stone carvings.³³⁰ In the restoration process, well-known skilled craftsmen and technical experts from Suzhou were engaged to recreate images of historical figures, landscapes, flowers and birds on the wooden doors and windows of the buildings. As well, artistically valuable stone, wood and brick carving objects dating to the Ming and Qing dynasties were installed.³³¹ In the private chambers, wooden carvings with different motives from Suzhou Gardens were supplemented.³³² However, the purpose of substitution with carvings from historical buildings was not to upgrade the site. The status of the Former Mansion of the Chen Family as a municipal-level controlled heritage site indicates the importance of original building material for the administrative listing level.

Although the *Tongli Town Gazetteer* primarily calls the site the “Mansion of the Imperial Censor Chen” 陈御史府, the site’s official name is the “Pearl Pagoda Scenic Site”. This name reflects the focus on its intangible heritage aspect, the “Legend of the Pearl Pagoda”, rather than the inherent values of remaining tangible heritage, which is only a small part of the originally magnificent residence. Yet, Ruan sees an important difference between the Pearl Pagoda Scenic Site and other tourist destinations:

328 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 264.

329 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三 (2015): *Tongli* 同里, p. 96.

330 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 142.

331 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三 (2015): *Tongli* 同里, p. 100.

332 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 142.

由于开发修复工作根据的是在江南民间广为流传的《珍珠塔》故事以及留存的遗迹，所以修复后的珍珠塔景区有别于一般的名胜古迹，少了一点历史的沉重，却注重一般民俗的体现，而那一段美丽的爱情故事更增添了游览的情趣。³³³

“Since its opening up and restoration work are based on the Story of the Pearl Pagoda, which is widely spread among the people south of Yangzi River, as well as preserved historical remains, the restored Pearl Pagoda Scenic Site is different from common places of historic interest. It is a little short of historical seriousness but lays stress on common folk customs. And this beautiful love story further increases the interest in visiting.”

The restoration of Former Chen Family Mansion was clearly motivated by its later use as touristic site. As a result, the lack of authenticity from remaining built heritage has been supplemented by intangible aspects from the Legend of the Pearl Pagoda. Here, the goal of rebuilding was not to achieve a higher listing level but to enrich the cultural content of the site.

4.2.4 Function and Usage

Traditionally, two functions prevailed in Tongli's historic town: a residential function in the north and a commercial function in the south. Accordingly, the northern part of the town is characterized by great mansions, and the function of the southern part is reflected in its original lane names. The site names of officially registered buildings suggest that while the majority of buildings was originally used for accommodation, non-residential buildings had a variety of functions, including commercial, governmental, educational and religious or spiritual purposes. Historical buildings appear to have exclusively been of residential use, except for a Catholic church and Yong'an pawnshop (see appendix A.16).

When conservation work began, a great number of formerly splendid mansions, private gardens and local-style dwelling houses in the historic town were dilapidated due to extensive use and a lack of architectural maintenance. In the course of housing transformation in the 1950s, the buildings of great mansions originally owned by one family were allocated to multiple households. Moreover, gardens and formerly residential spaces were transformed into manufacturing spaces or public facilities such as schools, nurseries, government bureaus, workers' dormitories, and others. With the reform of state-owned enterprises in the 1990s, many people in Tongli were laid off, resulting in high unemployment in the overall town,

333 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三 (2015): *Tongli* 同里, pp. 89–92.

particularly its historic center.³³⁴ A second problem resulting from such high unemployment is that young people move to greater cities such as Suzhou or Shanghai, leading to the aging of the population of the historic town.³³⁵

With the transformation of Tongli into a tourist destination, numerous registered buildings took on new functions, and the range of functions was basically reduced to touristic/commercial and residential functions. An exception is educational buildings, which maintained their original functions. Fieldwork in May 2018 revealed that all officially protected entities on national and provincial levels were used as touristic sites. Municipal-level protected sites that have changed their residential function were either used entirely for commercial purposes or for touristic purposes.

In the case of historical buildings, this development is more explicit, since they formerly have almost exclusively been used for housing. Of the 64 historical buildings recorded as having a residential function in the conservation plan, 28 had taken on a commercial function by May 2018, with two in transformation to be used commercially in the future. This amounts to 47 percent (see appendix A.16) of residential buildings taking on a commercial function. The next section will examine the different forms of reuse more closely.

Tourist Venue

Opening Tongli for tourism is not a recent decision; it has been considered since the beginning of the 1980s. In his discussion of future development in the historic town, Zhu Tonghua, who participated in Fei Xiaotong's investigation on small towns in Wujiang county, wrote in 1983:

“...Tongli should be opened up for tourism. It is one of the best-preserved old water-country towns in existence. Situated close to Shanghai and Suzhou, it has rich resources for tourism. Its great number of ancient houses present valuable material for the study of our ancient architecture. Therefore, if its special features were better preserved, Tongli would become an attraction to tourists.”³³⁶

334 Bellocq, Maylis (2006): “The Cultural Heritage Industry in the PRC: What Memories Are Being Passed On? A Case Study of Tongli, A Protected Township in Jiangsu Province” (Jonathan Hall, transl.), p. 27.

335 Ibid., p. 26.

336 Zhu, Tonghua (1986): “A Preliminary Study on the Development of Tongli — An Ancient Cultural Town”, p. 336.

As mentioned above, Tuisi Garden was Tongli's first historic mansion to be restored and opened for tourism. This project carried out by the governments of Jiangsu Province and Wujiang County aimed to establish a tourist destination in Tai Lake Scenic Area. Since its opening, the garden has attracted increasing numbers of visitors, particularly after its inscription on the World Heritage List.

In addition to being a scenic site, the garden has been used as film set for outdoor scenes. Until 2010, around 100 films and TV series were filmed in the garden, including a number of well-known productions.³³⁷ The first movie filmed in the garden was "The Dream of the Red Chamber" (*Honglou meng* 红楼梦) by Beijing Film Studio in 1984.³³⁸ Other well-known productions are "Temptress Moon" 风月 by Chen Kaige 陈凯歌 from 1994 or the series *Tian zhi jiaonü* 天之骄女 ("Heaven's beloved daughter"), also from 1994.³³⁹

Tuisi Garden is not the only site that serves as film set; other mansions and the entire townscape have also been used as settings. In 2006, Tongli was selected as one of China's top ten film and television bases 中国十大影视基地, and a stone memorial was set up on the public square in front of Tuisi Garden (see fig. 4-26). The floor around the memorial is paved with stones in the shape of embanked islands, each one engraved with the name of a movie or TV series shot in the town while simultaneously symbolizing Tongli's characteristic spatial layout (see fig. 4-27).

The form and price of admission in Tongli illustrate the increasing importance of tourism for local development. At the time of its inauguration in 1984, a ticket for Tuisi Garden cost 0.1 Yuan which gradually rose to 2 Yuan in 1992.³⁴⁰ From 1993 to 2000, an entrance ticket was charged for a set of sites comprising Tuisi Garden, Chongben and Jiayin Halls, as well as the Three Bridges (*yi yuan er tang san qiao* 一园二堂三桥). From 5 Yuan in the beginning, the price of admission rose to 35 Yuan in 2000.³⁴¹

Subsequently, in addition to Tuisi Garden, all national and provincial-level protected entities except for Lize Girls' School have been opened as tourist destinations. At present, a comprehensive entrance ticket to the historic town that comprises eight sites costs 80 Yuan online and 100 Yuan on-site.³⁴² While charging an

337 "Tuisi Garden" 退思园, 2010, Wujiang Museum, Online.

338 Ibid.

339 Wujiang Archives 吴江档案局 (2010): "Tongli Zhen zhi 同里镇志", Chap. 5, Sub-chap. 5, Online.

340 "Tongli Zhen zhi" bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 177.

341 Ibid.

342 "Suzhou Tongli guzhen da menpiao" 苏州同里古镇大门票 [Suzhou Tongli Ancient Town comprehensive ticket], Suzhou Tongli guoji lüyou kaifa youxian gongsi, Online.



Figure 4-26. Film and Television Base Memorial.

Source: author's photo, 2016.



Figure 4-27. Movie and TV Series Memorial Stones.

Source: author's photo, 2018.

entrance fee is common for individual sites, an entrance ticket from the tourism company to access the still inhabited town is required, regardless of whether individual sites are visited. The company justifies this fee for accessing the town with the listing of Tongli as provincial-level protected entity.³⁴³ Despite the town's special character as "living heritage", it is treated as an individual site.

The company for tourism development in Tongli was established by the town government. Originally founded as Tongli Town Tourism Company 同里镇旅游公司在 1994,³⁴⁴ it was later transformed into Tongli International Tourism Development Co. Ltd. 同里国际旅游开发有限公司. The transformation of former mansions and other buildings into touristic sites is made possible through the town government's property rights to almost all these properties.³⁴⁵



Figure 4-28. Restored Nanyuan Teahouse.

Source: author's photo, 2016.

While some former mansions such as Chongben Hall and Gengle Hall host exhibitions, others such as Jiayin Hall solely display the characteristics deriving from

343 Interview with the Deputy General Manager of the Suzhou Tongli International Tourism Development Co., Ltd., Tongli, June 22, 2016.

344 "Tongli Zhen zhi" bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 174.

345 Ibid., pp. 174-175.

the site itself. One example for a municipal-level site which has been restored and opened as a tourist destination is Nanyuan Teahouse. The restoration of the building was carried out in 1999 and funded by Tongli Housing Management Bureau, the town party committee and the town government. When restoration was finished, the teahouse was decorated in the style of the 1920s–30s and re-opened to operate in its original function (see fig. 4-28).³⁴⁶

Another example of a site focusing on tourism is the Pearl Pagoda Scenic Site. The site was realized through the participation of an external investor, Suzhou Kaida Real Estate Development Co., Ltd. 苏州凯达房地产发展有限公司. Together with Tongli Town Government, the company invested 27,000,000 Yuan into the opening of the site, with the town government holding 34 percent and Suzhou Kaida Real Estate 66 percent of the share.³⁴⁷ As discussed in chapter 4.2.3, this included the repairs and restoration of municipally controlled Former Chen Family Mansion and municipally protected Pang Family Ancestral Hall. The public-private partnership combined development of a future source for income generation with the conservation of two municipal-level heritage sites.

While the Former Chen Family Mansion has been restored, the garden was rebuilt according to the Legend of the Pearl Pagoda. Providing the basis for local opera, *pingtan* 评弹 and *xuanjuan* 宣卷 recitatives in the region of Suzhou, this legend picks up a traditional theme from Chinese vernacular literature. It deals with the romance of an ideal couple known as “gifted scholars and talented beauties” (*caizi jiaren* 才子佳人), referring to young imperial examination candidates and beautiful as well as literary talented daughters with gentry family background. According to Ruan,³⁴⁸ the legend has been passed on:

Chen Cui’e 陈翠娥 was a beautiful and cultivated young woman. When her father, the imperial censor Chen 陈御史, turned fifty years old, he gave a great banquet to celebrate his birthday. On this occasion, the nephew of his wife, Fang Qing 方卿, went to their home to pay his respects. Because Fang Qing came from a poor family, he asked for some money for his travel expenses to the capital where he wanted to take part in the imperial examinations. His aunt felt that the shabbily dressed nephew made her loose face in front of the honored guests, so she humiliated him and drove him out into the mansion’s garden.

When Chen Cui’e heard about the incident, she felt ashamed for her mother’s behavior, so she hid the family treasure, a pagoda covered with myriad pearls, in a dessert box and gave it to him. Chen Wangdao who had heard about his wife’s

346 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, pp. 262–263.

347 Ibid., p. 264.

348 Ruan, Yisan 阮仪三 (2015): *Tongli* 同里, pp. 103–106.

actions hurried after him, offered his apologies and betrothed his daughter to him. On his way to the capital, Fang Qing was robbed and lost the pearl pagoda. Later, the family treasure appeared in a pawnshop and the Chen family thought that he had been murdered. About to commit suicide, Fang Qing's mother was rescued by a nun who took her into a nunnery called Baiyun An 白云庵. Fortunately, he had been taken in by a passerby to prepare for the next round of examinations. After three years, Fang Qing achieved the highest results in the examinations which made him a Number One Scholar, so he was able to return and marry Chen Cui'e.

Whether the legend is based in Tongli or elsewhere has not been clarified. While material evidence such as the historic sites of the Chen daughter's study or Baiyun Nunnery 白云庵 from the opera are missing, indications exist in the form of personal names or place names. The imperial censor Chen, his wife carrying the surname Fang 方 and his daughter (whose name is not given) are all historical figures.³⁴⁹ While no historical records for Baiyun Nunnery can be found, a record has been included into the *Tongli Town Gazetteer* where a descendant of the Chen family remembered the accounts of an older relative of a nunnery belonging to the Chen family clan. The record further states that the nunnery was demolished in 1960 and a stele which could have proven its existence was destroyed in the Cultural Revolution.³⁵⁰

Moreover, there are indications in the form of a Chen family dowry notebook that the family collected a precious object called the "Pearl Pagoda" 珍珠塔. An edition of *Wujiang Periodical* 吴江报 in 1957 reported that it was found 30 years earlier in a cotton shop in Tongli.³⁵¹ Both of these indications rely on eyewitness testimonies. The establishment of a scenic site with clear reference to the Pearl Pagoda Legend, spread around the Jiangnan region, can be seen as a way to increase touristic interest in the site. It can also be perceived as an attempt to attach intangible heritage to a tangible site. By rebuilding the former site where the legend is said to have happened, Tongli claims the legend to be local intangible heritage.

This claim is further reinforced by live performances of the story on an opera stage in the town center and in a theatre set up at the central square. With the purpose of attracting tourists and expanding the cultural meaning of the town, a former stone terrace in the north of the square has been transformed into an opera

349 Xu, Wenchu 徐文初 (2017): "Tongli 'Zhenzhu ta' yu xiqu 'Zhenzhu ta'" 同里《珍珠塔》与戏曲《珍珠塔》 ["The 'Pearl Pagoda' in Tongli and the 'Pearl Pagoda' in traditional opera"], p. 76.

350 "Tongli Zhen zhi" bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, pp. 110–111.

351 Xu, Wenchu 徐文初 (2017): "Tongli 'Zhenzhu ta' yu xiqu 'Zhenzhu ta'" 同里《珍珠塔》与戏曲《珍珠塔》, p. 76.

stage in the course of the town's improvement measures.³⁵² On the weekends and on holidays, cultural performances are given, which include popular scenes from the Pearl Pagoda Legend (see fig. 4-29).³⁵³



Figure 4-29. Performance on Central Opera Stage.

Source: author's photo, 2016.

The other performance named “Tongli in Ink” (Shuimo Tongli 水墨同里) is an extravagant show with a professional dancing group and supported by high-tech effects. The theatre built exclusively for the performance of the Pearl Pagoda Legend was inaugurated in 2014³⁵⁴ and offers performances every Saturday evening.

As part of its cultural tourism strategy, the town has launched a number of other branding activities related to culture and intangible heritage. Since 1997, the Town Government regularly hosts a tourism and culture festival called “Spring of Tongli” 同里之春 on April 18 every year in cooperation with the superordinate national, provincial and municipal tourism administrations. The festivals have different cultural themes and are focused on related activities to promote cultural

352 Qian, Guoliang 钱国良 (March 29, 2012): “Tuisi yuan zhoubian huanjing de zhengzhi” 退思园周边环境的整治 [The ecological improvement of the surroundings of Tuisi Garden], in: *Wujiang wenshi ziliao di ershi er ji* 吴江文史资料第二十二辑 [Wujiang historical accounts no. 22], Online.

353 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 192.

354 Ibid., p. 190.

aspects such as film documentation competitions on the local townscape and painting exhibitions.³⁵⁵

Other activities include *weiqi* 围棋 (Go-game) competitions, a Chinese mind sport which is promoted as heritage, and also the “Evening Drum and Morning Bell” (*mugu chenzhong* 暮鼓晨钟) event. Since early 2000, the national *weiqi* finals are held in Tongli as well as the international *weiqi* finals between China and Korea.³⁵⁶ In 2011, an architectural *ensemble* in historical style has been constructed for this event near the southern town entrance, comprising a garden with a two-storied pavilion and exhibits on the Go-game.³⁵⁷ The “Evening Drum and Morning Bell” derives from a Buddhist monastic practice, and this event is hosted on New Year’s Eve on Luoxing Island 罗星洲. Originally the site of a local temple and a single scene of Tongli’s traditional twenty views set of landscape scenes as defined in the Qing dynasty, Luoxing Island was destroyed by Japanese troops in the course of the Second Sino-Japanese War. In 1996, the temple was rebuilt and a “national humiliation” memorial erected.³⁵⁸ The event includes cultural and artistic performances, the striking of the bell and the display of firework.³⁵⁹

To increase the number of tourist destinations with a view to prevent high concentrations of visitors in the historic town, the government opened up scenic areas in the town’s surroundings. These destinations include another garden named Jingsi Garden 静思园, Jiangsu Tongli National Wetland Park 江苏同里国家湿地公园 and Luoxing Island. With the steady growth of tourism, the town government further established additional facilities and services, such as a transfer service from the parking area to the town entrance. Moreover, tourist service centers were set up, one in the town center in 2007 and three more centers at the southern, northern and eastern town entrances which opened in 2013 and 2014.³⁶⁰

Exhibition Halls, Educational and Recreational Spaces

The majority of officially listed and restored mansions in Tongli opened as tourist destinations have not only been decorated and equipped with historic furniture but also used to host exhibitions or were transformed into museums. Gengle Hall, for

355 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 180.

356 Ibid., pp. 180–181.

357 Ibid., p. 181.

358 Ibid., p. 162.

359 Ibid., p. 183.

360 Ibid., pp. 150, 185.

example, which was listed on a national level and opened in 2001 is used for exhibitions. Its different buildings feature more than 120 pieces of tree-root carvings and an exhibition of embroidery from the Ming and Qing periods.³⁶¹

The provincial-level listed Chongben Hall contains an exhibition on Wu culture wedding customs. As a result, the main hall was turned into a marriage hall, displaying wedding customs of the Jiangnan region as well as related clothing and objects, such as a bridal sedan chair.³⁶² Keeping the theme of its carvings, the front building was decorated as “Happiness and Longevity Hall” 福寿堂 with a great depiction of the character “longevity” 寿 in the middle and statues of the Three Star Gods: the Star of Fu 福 (“fortune”), the Star of Lu 禄 (“status”) and the Star of Shou 寿 (“longevity”).³⁶³

The Former Residence of Chen Qubing is used to exhibit objects as well as written and pictorial material relating to Chen Qubing and the Southern Society, since the residence’s former owner was an important historical figure. The exhibits include pictures of him and his family, written articles, as well as original pieces of furniture. Moreover, a bust of Chen Qubing was placed in Baichi Building. The project was primarily promoted and managed by Tongli Tourism and Development Company. The Tongli branch of Wujiang City Real Estate Management Office 吴江市房地产管理处 was in charge of building conservation, relocation of residents, and related tasks. Tongli Cultural Heritage Protection Management Bureau 同里镇文物保护管理所 was responsible for data collection on material objects, the display and cultural heritage management.³⁶⁴

Since Chen Qubing was fond of collecting inscribed stelae, some of these works from different historical periods were preserved in the residence.³⁶⁵ One piece has a particularly high historical value: it was inscribed by Sun Yat-sen. Originally made for the grave of Chen Qubing’s father and paternal uncle, the stele reads: “Grave of the two gentlemen from the Chen Family” (*er Chen xiansheng zhi mu* 二陈先生之墓).³⁶⁶ During the Cultural Revolution, the stele was severely damaged and only a relic with the first three characters survived (see fig. 4-30). It is now exhibited in Baichi Building.

361 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 160.

362 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, pp. 135.

363 Ibid.

364 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 261.

365 Ibid., p. 145.

366 Ibid.



Figure 4-30. Relic with Inscription by Sun Yat-sen.

Source: author's photo, 2018.

Another example for a site related to an historical figure is Liugeng Hall, the former residence of Wang Shao'ao 王绍鏊 (1888–1970). Before its transformation into a memorial hall in 2008, the mansion housed the Tongli Historical and Cultural Relics Exhibition Hall 同里历史文物陈列馆. This exhibition hall presented important episodes of Tongli Town's history, subdivided into a literati hall 文人馆, a hall of culture and history 文史馆 and a hall of cultural relics 文物馆. While important historical figures were displayed in the literati hall, the hall of culture and history was focused on historical events between the period of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom 太平天国 (1851–1864) and 1949. The hall of cultural relics exhibited excavated material objects and presentations of different protected heritage sites.³⁶⁷

On occasion of his 120th birthday, the residence was converted into Wang Shao'ao Memorial Hall 王绍鏊纪念馆.³⁶⁸ This hall is separated into two parts. The first floor is completely centered on Wang Shao'ao, exhibiting objects, photographs and writings related to him. The exhibition's main theme is his outstanding

367 "Tongli Zhen zhi" bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 152.

368 "Wang Shao'ao jinian guan" 王绍鏊纪念馆 [Wang Shao'ao Memorial Hall], (December 1, 2015), China Association for Promoting Democracy, Online.

achievements in the struggle for revolution. On the second floor are exhibited cultural relics of Tongli, probably still from the earlier exhibition.³⁶⁹

The conservation process was carried out by Tongli Town Subdistrict Office 同里镇街道办事处, Tongli Town Cultural Relics Protection and Management Bureau 同里镇文物保护管理所 and Wujiang Museum 吴江市博物馆 in 1996. While the subdistrict office carried out the repairs and restoration of the buildings, the Cultural Relics Protection Management Bureau was responsible for the collection of tangible data, the installation of security facilities and daily management. Wujiang Museum provided exhibits such as material objects and arranged them for display.³⁷⁰ In this case, the realization of the project was achieved through cooperation of different government bodies with Wujiang Museum.

In another example, the use of the site is not related to cultural aspects and historical figures but rather its original function. In the case of Tongli's former Water Conservancy Bureau, the town government decided to restore the buildings in the sixth *jin*, which is also the best-preserved of the overall ensemble, and set up an exhibition hall on water conservancy in the region of Lake Tai (Taihu shuili zhanshi guan 太湖水利展示馆). The hall is structured in five parts and displays the history of river and watercourse regulation in Lake Tai region by means of photographs, material objects and documents, comprising more than 410 exhibits.³⁷¹

The conservation project was started in April 2012 and completed in Mai 2016.³⁷² Tongli Ancient Town Protection and Management Committee 同里古镇保护管理委员会 had initiated its urgent protection based on archaeological investigations, planning and design, including large-scale repairs.³⁷³ It was carried out with the participation and cooperation of several administrative bodies, among them the Management Bureau of Lake Tai Water Conservancy Department 水利部太湖流域管理局, Wujiang District Water Conservancy Bureau

369 “Wang Shao’ao jinian guan” 王绍鏊纪念馆 [Wang Shao’ao Memorial Hall], (December 1, 2015), China Association for Promoting Democracy, Online.

370 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会, (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 262.

371 Cui, Yangyang 崔阳阳 (June 9, 2016): “Taihu shuili zhanshi chenlie guan zhengshi kaiguan — ping Tongli guzhen da menpiao mianfei cangan” 太湖水利展示陈列馆正式开馆——凭同里古镇大门票免费参观 [Lake Tai Water Conservancy Exhibition Hall officially opened — Free admission by comprehensive Tongli Ancient Town ticket], Online.

372 “Taihu shuili tongzhishu jiuzhi yi qi xiushan gongcheng jungong ji Taihu shuili zhanshi guan dui wai kaifang” 太湖水利同知署旧址一期修缮工程竣工暨太湖水利展示馆对外开放 [The first stage of the Former Site of Lake Tai Sub-prefectural Water Conservancy Bureau conservation project has been completed and the Lake Tai Water Conservancy Exhibition Hall has been opened to the public], (July 4, 2016), Wujiang District Cultural Broadcast and Television Press and Publication Bureau, Online.

373 Ibid.

吴江区水利局, Wujiang District Cultural Relics Bureau 吴江区文物局 and the town government.³⁷⁴

While the exhibition hall was designed as touristic site, it also has an educational focus, covering topics such as water pollution control and water regulation mechanisms. Therefore, Wujiang District Water Conservancy Bureau provided water conservancy exhibits which are displayed in the backyard.³⁷⁵ Furthermore, the town community donated material objects and written material to the exhibition hall. The descendants of Wang Jiadong 王稼冬, himself descendant of the residence founder and researcher on Tongli Town history, contributed 325 of his collected books and 489 cultural relics of the former Jiuli Lake site. Another donor provided the government 36 rubbings of cultural relics, among others excavated at Tongli site 同里遗址.³⁷⁶

While most sites were supplemented with cultural and historical content, an infrequent example is the case of Lize Girls' School. From 1993, an exhibition on Chinese sexual culture (*xing wenhua* 性文化) with about 4,000 pieces from private collectors has been displayed in 26 Chinese cities, Hong Kong, Taiwan as well as other global cities.³⁷⁷ In 2003, Shanghai Sexual Culture Museum was transferred to Tongli and was housed in the school and its surrounding garden, due to the very high operation costs in Shanghai had become too high after the museum was moved from central Nanjing Road to a more peripheral location in Jing'an district.³⁷⁸ The exhibition comprised a great number of pieces, among them more than 60 stone sculptures and 20 more than 5,000-year-old exhibits related to eroticism.³⁷⁹

Local authorities had agreed to host the museum for 10 years and therefore receive half of the revenue gained from ticket sales.³⁸⁰ According to official records, the museum was established to “enhance national culture” (*hongyang zuguo wen-*

374 “Taihu shuili tongzhishi juuzhi yi qi xiushan gongcheng jungong ji Taihu shuili zhan-shi guan dui wai kaifang” 太湖水利同知署旧址一期修缮工程竣工暨太湖水利展示馆对外开放, (July 4, 2016), Wujiang District Cultural Broadcast and Television Press and Publication Bureau, Online.

375 Cui, Yangyang 崔阳阳 (June 9, 2016): “Taihu shuili zhanshi chenlie guan zhengshi kaiguan — ping Tongli guzhen da menpiao mianfei canguan” 太湖水利展示陈列馆正式开馆——凭同里古镇大门票免费参观, Online.

376 Ibid.

377 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 154.

378 Wu, Runguo 吴润果 (September 3, 2012): “Yi ge ren de xing bowuguan” 一个人的性博物馆 [A private sexual culture museum], Online.

379 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 154.

380 Bellocq, Maylis (2006): “The Cultural Heritage Industry in the PRC: What Memories Are Being Passed On? A Case Study of Tongli, A Protected Township in Jiangsu Province” (Jonathan Hall, transl.), p. 26.

hua 弘扬祖国文化) and “overcome mysterious feelings towards sexual culture” (*pochu xing wenhua shenmigan* 破除性文化神秘感).³⁸¹ According to Bellocq, younger locals in particular criticized the opening of the museum, which they regarded as contradictory to the school’s function as center for patriotic education.³⁸² In 2016, the museum was repeatedly moved to Changzhou 常州, but it is unclear if this transfer was related to such reactions: the museum also faced economic difficulties.³⁸³

Other former school buildings in Tongli Historic Town are also used for educational purposes. Tianfang Building and Red Building are located on the former site of Tongchuan Academy and were integrated into the campus of Tongli Middle School afterwards, continuing their educational function. Because school buildings belong to work-units, public funding for conservation usually has to be provided by the respective units that manage them.³⁸⁴ This mechanism can also be observed in the case of school buildings in Tongli. In 1997, Wujiang Education Bureau provided 200,000 Yuan of funding for the conservation of Tianfang and Red Buildings.³⁸⁵ The actual repairs were then carried out by Tongli Middle School. Apart from building conservation measures, the repairs included the installation of a stele indicating its status as protected heritage site. In 2002, Wujiang Higher Education Middle School further financed the establishment of Jin Songcen Memorial, whereby Tianfang Building was transformed into a moral education base (*deyu jiaoyu jidi* 德育教育基地).³⁸⁶

At present, both school buildings have further been integrated into Shattuck-St. Mary’s School, a private school for students in grades 7–10.³⁸⁷ This private school which was founded as Episcopal mission school in Faribault, Minnesota, in the 19th century opened its international campus, SSM-Suzhou, in 2017. The transformation of the site into the SSM-Suzhou campus involved the construction of student dormitories and a school entrance gate. The outward appearance of Tianfang Building and Red Building was considered as a choice of style for the

381 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 154.

382 Bellocq, Maylis (2006): “The Cultural Heritage Industry in the PRC: What Memories Are Being Passed On? A Case Study of Tongli, A Protected Township in Jiangsu Province” (Jonathan Hall, transl.), p. 26.

383 Cai, Wenjun (April 9, 2015): “Sex museum will be moved to Changzhou”, Online.

384 Interview with Director of Monitoring Department, WHITRAP Suzhou, Suzhou, May 27, 2016.

385 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 264.

386 Ibid.

387 “SSM-Suzhou”, Shattuck-St. Mary’s School, Online.

new structures so as to maintain the original character of the site. Both are built in the style of the Republican period with grey and red bricks.

An example of exceptional use for non-exceptional buildings is the Huancui Villa (Huancui Shanzhuang 环翠山庄), located at the periphery of the historic town. Ancestral home of one of the founders of Wenhui Daily 文汇报, Yan Baoli 严宝礼 (1900–1960), it is one of the historical mansions recorded in the *Tongli Town Gazetteer* that were built during the reign of the Tongzhi Emperor (1861–1874).³⁸⁸ The site had been listed as controlled heritage site of Wujiang City in 1986, but its status was revoked in 1994³⁸⁹, probably due to the great damage and transformation it underwent in the course of historical development. In 1970, a glasses factory started to operate in the residence; the factory altered the landscape architecture in the mansion's garden, demolished existing buildings and replaced them with factory buildings.³⁹⁰

The uniform usage of the site (by the glasses factory) and the fact that property rights were publicly owned facilitated a comprehensive renewal project, which is often impossible when property rights are fragmented. In May 2007, Wujiang Bureau of Land and Resources sold the land use right to the glass factory's former site to Suzhou Xin Canglang Real Estate Development Co., Ltd. 苏州新沧浪房产开发有限公司.³⁹¹ Seizing the opportunity to benefit from the historical and cultural value of the former mansion, the real estate developer decided to reconstruct the Huancui Villa according to historical sources.³⁹²

Following a recent trend where real estate developers offered property in combination with a complete set of facilities and services,³⁹³ the former mansion was converted into a clubhouse for the homeowners of surrounding dwelling compounds. The underlying concept of the project is a combination of passing on traditional culture and adapting the place to modern usage through adding the

388 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 205.

389 Ibid., p. 132.

390 Ibid., pp. 205–206.

391 “Suzhou Tongli — Huancui Shanzhuang” 苏州同里·环翠山庄 [Suzhou Tongli — Huancui Villa], (January 6, 2016), Suzhou Landscape Architecture, Online.

392 Chen, Guilan 陈桂兰 (January 25, 2017): “Huancui Shanzhuang yu Yan Baoli xiansheng” 环翠山庄与严宝礼先生 [Huancui Villa and Mr. Yan Baoli], Online.

393 For more information on facilities and services in Chinese residential areas (*xiaoqu* 小区) as characteristics for social segregation, see: Wallenwein, Fabienne (2014): “The Housing Model ‘xiaoqu’ 小区: The Expression of an Increasing Polarization of the Urban Population in Chinese Cities?”, MA-Thesis. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/heidok.00017143>.

functions of a modern clubhouse.³⁹⁴ Such a clubhouse is of great benefit for homeowners as a social meeting place and to satisfy their daily needs.

In the restoration and reconstruction process, the lotus pond was recovered, and the historical buildings were restored (see fig. 4-31). The developers also preserved historical plants and trees on the site, such as a 230-year-old pine tree and a 130-year-old osmanthus tree.³⁹⁵ Moreover, to adapt it to modern use, a basement floor was included. This basement functions as a wine cellar and is also used for audio-visual entertainment due to its sound insulation qualities.³⁹⁶



Figure 4-31. Restored Historical Buildings of the Huancui Villa.

Source: author's photo, 2018.

The clubhouse has a dual function: offering space for commercial and recreational activities. It comprises a main hall to receive guests, an office area to hold conferences and carry out commercial activities, as well as a section with guest rooms. Furthermore, the clubhouse provides health and recreation facilities where homeowners can exercise, relax or entertain themselves.³⁹⁷ Although not directly used

394 “Xin Suzhou gudian yuanlin • Suyuan xilie — Huancui Shanzhuang” 新苏州古典园林·苏院系列——环翠山庄 [New Suzhou Classical Gardens • Suzhou Compound Series — Huancui Villa], (January 6, 2016), Suzhou Xin Canglang Real Estate Development Co., Ltd., Online.

395 Chen, Guilan 陈桂兰 (January 25, 2017): “Huancui Shanzhuang yu Yan Baoli xian-sheng” 环翠山庄与严宝礼先生, Online.

396 Ibid.

397 “Xin Suzhou gudian yuanlin • Suyuan xilie — Huancui Shanzhuang” 新苏州古典园林苏院系列 —— 环翠山庄, (January 6, 2016), Suzhou Xin Canglang Real Estate Development Co., Ltd., Online.

as housing, the Huancui Villa is one of the few projects which is used for residential purposes after renewal. While its functions have been supplemented and diversified, it still maintains the original purpose of the garden to serve as recreational space for its inhabitants.

Boutique Hotels and Guesthouses

Another frequently occurring form of use of historical buildings and buildings that have not been registered is the boutique hotel (*jingpin jiudian* 精品酒店) or guesthouse (*kezhan* 客栈). Two representative boutique hotels in Tongli are Yinlu 隐庐 and Blossom Hill Inn (Huajian tang 花间堂). Yinlu Boutique Hotel has been restored by an architect in one and a half years' time; the original structure of the building was maintained.³⁹⁸ The mansion originally belonged to one of Tongli's influential family clans and was known as "New Pang Family Mansion" 庞氏新宅, which has been listed as historical building. The mansion was built in 1931 and comprises 4 *jin*, all two-storied buildings except for the second *jin*. While the mansion's engraved archways were severely damaged, its buildings have been well-preserved.³⁹⁹

The restored Yinlu Boutique Hotel that was designed by an artist has five apartments and maintained its characteristic Jiangnan water town style. In addition to accommodation, it has been equipped with cultural facilities such as a tearoom or a Chinese restaurant which offers seasonal food.⁴⁰⁰ This integration of cultural aspects into the hotel concept is another characteristic aspect that distinguishes boutique hotels from other hotels.

Blossom Hill Inn emerged as a public-private partnership between the town government and the hotel group. The group has several boutique hotels in the Jiangnan region; one of them is located in Suzhou and was discussed in the previous case study. Tongli Blossom Hill Inn was set up in the transformed mixed-structure factory building north of Tuisi Garden, which was bought by the government and reconstructed during the town's improvement measures. As part of the agreement,

398 "Tongli Yinlu: Keneng shi Zhongguo zui you chanyi de minsu" 同里隐庐：可能是中国最有禅意的民宿 [Tongli Yinlu: Maybe the most meditative guesthouse in China], (May 23, 2018), Online.

399 "Tongli Zhen zhi" bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 260.

400 "Tongli Yinlu: Keneng shi Zhongguo zui you chanyi de minsu" 同里隐庐：可能是中国最有禅意的民宿, (May 23, 2018), Online.

the hotel group assumed responsibility for the conservation of adjacent Lize Girls' School, where the Sexual Culture Museum was previously located.⁴⁰¹

Conservation started with the hotel building, which was consolidated and its original structure remaining unaltered. Changes were made to the interior of the building and a garden was added.⁴⁰² For the conservation of the girls' school site, requirements were stricter due to its status as officially protected entity. Therefore, conservation of the school building mainly consisted of repairs, while the "National Humiliation" Memorial was left untouched.⁴⁰³ The upper part of the school gate was repainted (see fig. 4-32).



Figure 4-32. Lize Girls' School Gate During Treatment.

Source: author's photo, 2016.

For its surrounding one-story buildings, measures such as consolidation were applied, and damaged or altered parts such as windows and doors were substituted with new pieces made of wood in the traditional style (see fig. 4-33).

401 Interview with the Blossom Hill Inn Regional General Manager, Tongli, April 25, 2016.

402 Ibid.

403 Ibid.



Figure 4-33. Substitution of Wooden Windows.

Source: author's photo, 2016.

In exchange for its conservation duties, Blossom Hill Inn is allowed to use the buildings after treatment is finished. According to the regional general manager, the places will be used in accordance with their original function. For example, there are plans to set up classrooms and a library in the school building that will also be used by the local community. The former sports grounds will be rehabilitated and used for yoga or taiji classes. The restored single-story buildings will be used as further guesthouses.⁴⁰⁴ A later on-site investigation in May 2018 revealed that these guestrooms were already in operation.

The transformation of historical buildings into guesthouses illustrates another accommodation type in Tongli's historic town. By 2016, a total of 98 guesthouses were established.⁴⁰⁵ While there are no spatial restrictions on guesthouse locations, the government still determines the number of guesthouses that are allowed to operate. According to Tongli International Tourism Development Co., Ltd., guesthouses will only receive official permits until their number reaches 300 places.⁴⁰⁶

404 Interview with the Blossom Hill Inn Regional General Manager, Tongli, April 25, 2016.

405 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 185.

406 Interview with the Deputy General Manager of the Suzhou Tongli International Tourism Development Co., Ltd., Tongli, June 22, 2016.

As well, the government has introduced a star ranking and evaluation system to ensure the quality of guesthouses.⁴⁰⁷

An excellent example of a transformed guesthouse is the privately-owned buildings in the eastern part of former Taihu Water Conservancy Bureau. These buildings are owned by the descendants from Wang Quan 王铨, who purchased the mansion in 1736 from the government after it was confiscated.⁴⁰⁸ His descendants decided to convert parts of it into the guesthouse, among those its well-preserved fourth *jin*.

In an interview, the owner discussed his motives for opening the guesthouse: he felt deeply attached to the mansion, since the property had been held by his family for such a long time. He saw it as a personal matter to maintain it. To cover the very high costs for renovating and maintaining traditional housing, he decided to open a guesthouse in some units to cover these expenses. He had been working in a company for building materials for about 30 years but was laid off in 2014. Since then, he manages the guesthouse on a full-time basis while still living in the other section with his family.⁴⁰⁹

Addressing the improvement measures he took before opening the guesthouse, he stressed that it was important for him to maintain the original appearance of the buildings (*baochi yuanmao* 保持原貌). For conservation measures, he therefore limited himself to repairs. Since modern amenities are required for rentals, he added restrooms to the original buildings.⁴¹⁰ His statements are confirmed by the *Tongli Town Gazetteer* according to which the outward appearance of the buildings in the fourth *jin* has been preserved.⁴¹¹ Newly constructed are only an archway with the name of Jingyi Hall 敬仪堂 and the eastern side room (the place where the restroom has been added). The original buildings and layout of the courtyard have been maintained (see fig. 4-34). These measures are in accordance with the conservation plan of the ancient town which is centered on the conservation of an integrated outward appearance of the built environment.

On finance and conservation restrictions, the owner said that as the property rights holder, he had to pay for the renovation and construction work. As a result, he was comparatively free to decide on alterations. Regulations covered only

407 Jiangsu Sheng Suzhou Shi Wujiang Qu Tongli Zhen zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 江苏省苏州市吴江区同里镇志编纂委员会 (ed., 2016): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 185.

408 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 219.

409 Interview with the owner of Jingyi Hall Guesthouse, Tongli, April 24, 2016.

410 Ibid.

411 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, p. 220.



Figure 4-34. Courtyard of Jingyi Hall Guesthouse.

Source: author's photo, 2018.

general aspects, such as building height or the outward appearance, but did not mention explicit details. Nevertheless, alterations were not allowed to modify the structure of neighboring buildings and had to “comply with the overall appearance of the old town”.⁴¹² Because the former site of the water conservancy bureau was listed as protected heritage site, building structure and appearance are inspected regularly by the competent authorities; they also check for compliance with safety regulations.⁴¹³ In the case of Jingyi Hall Guesthouse, the owner uses the income he earns from the guesthouse to maintain the residence.

Another example is the development of Hengfu Hall, formerly owned by the Ren family clan, who has been left with a largely fragmented distribution of property rights. While the majority of the mansion is publicly owned buildings, the Ren family clan still own housing units both in the northern as well as the southern section. These units are mainly used for residential purposes. The buildings of the northern section sold in 1992 were turned into a guesthouse with the name Genhe Guesthouse 根和民居客栈.⁴¹⁴ Recently, Tianyiju Home 天易居装饰 renovated the privately-owned buildings of former Genhe Guesthouse, and it was reopened as Tianyiju Guesthouse 天易居客栈. Today, there are four Tianyiju Guesthouses

412 Interview with the owner of Jingyi Hall Guesthouse, Tongli, April 24, 2016.

413 Ibid.

414 “Tongli Zhen zhi” bianzuan weiyuanhui 《同里镇志》编纂委员会 (ed., 2007): *Tongli Zhen zhi* 同里镇志, pp. 248-249.

天易居客栈, all in Suzhou region. One of these is located at Pingjiang Road, as the first case study discussed in chapter three.

The owner of the guesthouse had engaged Suzhou Tianyiju Renovation Projects Co., Ltd. 苏州天易居装饰工程有限公司 to restore and renovate the rooms. Among others, this company specializes in the renovation of Chinese-styled hotels and guesthouses, including design and construction work.⁴¹⁵ It aims to integrate the local residential environment with international living standards and functionality. As well, it strives to highlight significant cultural and artistic elements of the residential environment through on-site inspections as well as research on the background and characteristics of respective places.⁴¹⁶

Since Hengfu Hall is designated as a historical building, alterations must comply with the conservation plan. In addition to protected heritage sites and historical buildings, the plan contains an ancient Camellia tree 山茶树 in the courtyard of Genhe Guesthouse that is over 200 years old.⁴¹⁷ When Tianyiju Home renovated the guesthouse, this tree was integrated into the design as central element of the courtyard and left untouched (see fig. 4-35).

For the renovation of the buildings, a local professional was hired to restore the wooden structure and to repair dilapidated parts.⁴¹⁸ As well, traditional building elements such as characteristic stone column bases were preserved. The owner is well aware of the historical value of her property and concerned about the preservation of the buildings. In her field research, the author was shown the gold-lacquered wooden ornamentation on a 260-year-old door in the main hall.⁴¹⁹ The owner further explained that since they own the property, they must pay for renovation and maintenance of the buildings themselves. However, they still consider it worthwhile. The chief designer of the project equally stated that he prefers to work on buildings with historical significance, because of “the stories they have to tell”.⁴²⁰ In the conservation process, the above-mentioned ornamented door was one of a number of original parts that were maintained (see left side of fig. 4-36).

415 “Gongsi jianjie” 公司简介 [Company Profile], Tianyi Home, Online.

416 Ibid.

417 TLCP (2011), appendix, p. 11.

418 “Tuisi yuan bian shang minguo lao zhai gaizao de kezhan — Tianyiju kezhan” 退思园边上民国老宅改造的客栈——天易居客栈 [Tianyiju Guesthouse — A guesthouse next to Tuisi Garden which has been transformed from an old mansion of the Republican Period], (May 9, 2017), Tianyiju Guesthouses, Online.

419 Ibid.

420 Conversation with the owner of the guesthouse and the chief designer of the project. Site of former Genhe Guesthouse, Tongli, June 23, 2016.



Figure 4-35. Preserved Camellia Tree in Tianyiju Guesthouse.

Source: author's photo, 2016.



Figure 4-36. Conservation Work in Hengfu Hall.

Source: author's photo, 2016.

Original calligraphies from painters and writers such as Zhang Daqian 张大千 (1899–1983), Jia Pingwa 贾平凹 (1952–) and Tan Yiwen 谭以文 (1956–) that were displayed in Hengfu Hall were also integrated into the new guesthouse.⁴²¹ Tongli Tianyiju Guesthouse now has 11 rooms for different target groups, ranging from single rooms to rooms in ancient style (*gudian fang* 古典房) and family rooms (*jiating fang* 家庭房). While they are all kept in traditional Chinese and plain style, the rooms are comprehensively equipped with modern facilities, such as integrated bathrooms or air-conditioning.⁴²²

The example of Hengfu Hall shows a greater flexibility in terms of building alterations and adapted usage of historical buildings. Compared to protected heritage sites, these buildings are not covered by the Cultural Relics Protection Law. Instead, they are subject to the conservation plan that regulates the preservation of significant elements and the outward appearance of a building. Hence, these buildings provide more opportunities for adaptations of the interior, opening up new chances for usage and integration into the general development scheme of cultural tourism, such as the opening of a guesthouse. Enhancing a site with modern amenities enable its continued use as accommodation, albeit short term and with regularly changing occupants.

The opening of a guesthouse is an opportunity chosen by a number of Tongli residents in order to participate in cultural tourism development. During several fieldtrips to Tongli between 2016 and 2018, this author gathered information about local residents turning their dwellings into guesthouses. The author conducted interviews with the operators of these guesthouses in the houses themselves. The results found in two guesthouses shall be discussed in the following section.

The first example is Shengping Guesthouse 昇平客栈, which is located in the former commercial area of the town, next to Shengping Bridge 昇平桥. It was primarily opened by an elderly couple who ran the guesthouse for about ten years.⁴²³ In 2013, the current manager took over the business under its original name, but the guesthouse is still the property of the couple, and she pays them a yearly rent of 80,000 Yuan.⁴²⁴ According to the manager, the couple moved out of the ancient town and no longer wanted to look after the day-to-day running of the guesthouse.

Shengping Guesthouse is now run as a double business: it includes the accommodation and a small restaurant. In addition to the manager, her sister works in

421 “Tongli kezhan” 同里客栈 [Tongli Guesthouse], Tianyiju Guesthouses, Online.

422 “Tuisi yuan bian shang minguo lao zhai gaizao de kezhan — Tianyiju kezhan” 退思园边上民国老宅改造的客栈——天易居客栈, (May 9, 2017), Tianyiju Guesthouses, Online.

423 Interview with the manager of Shengping Guesthouse, Tongli, April 23, 2016.

424 Ibid.

the guesthouse as well as her aunt, who takes care of catering. They came to Tongli from Hunan province, where the manager had worked in a company. Her husband and her son still live in Hunan, but she is willing to travel a great distance to start her own business.⁴²⁵ In Tongli, they live outside of the ancient town but in close vicinity, so they can reach the guesthouse very quickly.

When they took over the guesthouse, they did not make any alterations to the building structure or to the exterior façade (see fig. 4-37). However, they renovated the interior of the building. The guesthouse comprises five rooms from 170 to 260 Yuan, depending on room size and equipment. There are standard rooms, as well as rooms featuring a wooden bed in the ancient style (*gudian chuang* 古典床). During the peak season of the three national holidays designated as “Golden Week” (Huangjin zhou 黄金周) every year, the same rooms are rented out for more than 300 Yuan.⁴²⁶



Figure 4-37. Shengping Guesthouse.

Source: author's photo, 2018.

The second guesthouse is located close to the southern entrance of the ancient town and carries the name Senzhilü Guesthouse 森之旅客栈. It is run by a young couple who just started their own business. The husband is qualified as a designer but is working as trainer in the area of electronic commerce management. The guesthouse is managed by the wife and her mother.

425 Interview with the manager of Shengping Guesthouse, Tongli, April 23, 2016.

426 Ibid.

The buildings which they have transformed into the guesthouse are publicly owned vernacular buildings. The original tenant is the mother of the wife, and the family has been living there for more than 50 years.⁴²⁷ Now, she left the buildings to her daughter and son-in-law, enabling them to open the guesthouse. While they just have the right to use the property, the government allows them to run their guesthouse. The husband ascribes this development to the government's benefit for tourism development.⁴²⁸ By running the guesthouse, the young couple could afford to move into a newly built house outside of the ancient town, together with the wife's mother.

According to the husband, they were not allowed to make major alterations to the outward appearance of the buildings. Given that the building is neither a protected heritage site nor a historical building, there were no strict regulations for the renovation of the interior.⁴²⁹ To increase the space which can be rented out as rooms, they built a small building in the adjacent courtyard for which they have the right of use. The interior room of this structure on the ground floor is about 13m² and the roof has been transformed into a terrace which can be used by visitors.

After this transformation, the guesthouse altogether has four rooms of different sizes: three rooms with double beds that can be used as single or double rooms, and one family room. The rooms are all quite small, ranging from 10 to 20 m² and the overall size had to be further reduced to equip them with separate bathroom units. This is reconciled by a well thought-out and consistent design that integrates the entire guesthouse. In the interview, the husband stated that the guesthouse was a good opportunity for him to bring in his background as designer and that he considers the style of a guesthouse as the decisive factor of its future success. The lobby displays plants and traditional Chinese tea sets: while these serve as decoration, they can be sold to interested visitors.

In terms of security, tourist registration and room prices, the government issues instructions and carries out regular inspections in the guesthouse.⁴³⁰ For example, first-aid kits with protective masks in every room must be provided in case of fire, and the room prices need to be hung up visibly to protect visitors from price gouging. Just like the example of Shengping Guesthouse, the new dwelling of the couple is close to the ancient town and within walking distance.

427 Interview with the operator of Senzhilü Guesthouse, Tongli, April 24, 2016.

428 Ibid.

429 Ibid.

430 Ibid.

The two examples suggest an increasing trend of local residents to convert their housing into guesthouses in order to afford newly built homes outside of the historic town. On the one hand, the number of local people living in the historic town of Tongli is in decline while tourists increasingly take their place. On the other hand, by opening a guesthouse, they participate in the local development process and use their housing as a source of income generation. Although they no longer inhabit their family homes, younger generations are provided with a future perspective in their native place. Otherwise, they might have to leave Tongli for greater cities to find employment.

4.3 Case Study Results

The ancient water town derives great cultural significance from its natural setting, surrounded by lakes and traversed by rivers. A decisive element, tributary streams divide the town area as well as the historic town into *wei*-islands that generate the town's unique spatial structure. This structure then determined the orientation of housing, since the majority of residential structures and streets in Tongli are situated near water. The significance of this spatial layout is reflected in street names with their names including the character *dai* 埭 (“dam”). Another characteristic element of Tongli's spatial structure are its small lanes or *lilong* which represent local culture and appear both as public and private space. Similar to the first case study, names often carry cultural content. The name of the town, for example, is related to a legend, and Chuanxin Lane is associated with a story involving a fateful encounter between two people in the narrowing lane.

Moreover, the town features a great number of bridges, wells, and other environmental elements. In addition to their historical significance, these elements may have social significance for fulfilling different functions, such as the ginkgo tree with the bell that was used to warn or assemble local residents. Tongli further derives cultural significance from its environment: it was part of the recorded historic sets of landscape scenes, such as the “Former Eight Views” and the “Later Eight Views”. In terms of intangible heritage, several forms have been listed for Tongli on the tier of the HCF Town. These include the *xuanjuan*-recitative on a national and the Legend of the Pearl Pagoda on a provincial level.

Similar to architectural structures in Suzhou, buildings in Tongli consist of courtyard-building modules that follow the principles of orientation, axiality, symmetry and “graduated privacy”. However, due to its natural spatial layout, these

principles are employed in a more flexible manner, and layouts are diverse. Concerning structural design and architectural form, built structures equally were adapted to their environment by inserting skywells and other techniques to regulate ventilation, lighting and drainage.

The historical and social values of officially protected entities come from their relations to historical figures, such as Chen Qubing, or important events, as in the case of Lize Girls' School and its "National Humiliation" Memorial. Similar to the first case study, residences derive high artistic value from gardens or landscape architecture as well as exceptional architectural forms. Built structures in Tongli also gain cultural value from hall and building names, calligraphic inscriptions and different kinds of carvings. Specifically, officially protected entities often are named after poems or Chinese Classics. One example is Tuisi Garden, whose name derives from the *Zuo Commentary*. Others relate to *fengshui*, as in the example of Sanxie Hall. As well, the carvings of officially protected entities such as Chongben Hall and Jiayin Hall carry rich literary and cultural connotations.

Conservation in Tongli was triggered by the restoration of Tuisi Garden and its inscription on the World Heritage List. The town applies a government-led conservation approach which includes international cooperation such as bilateral projects with Italian cities to implement the *HUL Recommendation*. Tongli is one of the early cases where an entire town was listed as officially protected entity. In addition, it was included in the first batch of HCF Towns promulgated in 2003. After the restoration of Tuisi Garden, the town gradually opened up further restored mansions for tourism and started comprehensive improvement of its historic townscape. Moreover, the town is exploring its own conservation model, the "Tongli Model" which aims at the integration of its residential and touristic functions.

Tongli's conservation plan was drafted by Tongji University College of Architecture and Urban Planning. The plan includes the notion of historical layering and defines different spatial, temporal and cultural layers which will be preserved. Moreover, four conservation principles are defined which conform to international principles: authenticity, integrity, a harmonious character and sustainability. Accordingly, the definition of authenticity explicitly mentions that historical "marks" shall be respected. This has been implemented in some cases, such as the preservation of wooden carvings in Chongben Hall that were scratched during the Cultural Revolution. Concerning conservation schemes, different measures are defined for the different building types, where the buildings were assessed according to criteria such as appearance.

In terms of conservation in practice, the case study has found that when it comes to higher listed sites, "improving" historical remains and enhance their significance were pursued. In the case of Tuisi Garden, this was related to a popular

theme from Chinese painting and the completion of the fourth season. For Gengle Hall, the visiting area should be enlarged by construction of landscape architecture in between the historic buildings. The Pearl Pagoda Site illustrates how intangible heritage is attached to a tangible site and is claimed as local heritage. Another aspect is that not only buildings but also the inscription tablets with hall or building names are restored in the conservation process. This practice shows how inscriptions boost the perceived authenticity of heritage buildings.

In Tongli, officially protected entities on national and provincial levels are mainly used as touristic sites. This is related to the town's strong focus on tourism development, which is also reflected in its different branding activities. Since most of the sites are restored local mansions, they are often turned into exhibition halls. This is the case with Chongben Hall, which displays exhibits on local wedding customs. Sites related to historical figures have been converted into memorial halls, and the former Water Conservancy Bureau houses an exhibition on water conservancy in Tai Lake area. In contrast, a great number of historical and non-exceptional buildings have been opened as guesthouses or restaurants. Similar to the first case study, the outward appearance of these buildings is maintained while the interior is adapted to modern use.