

# Conservation of Neighbourhood Streets in Historic Buildings Based on the Renewal of Guoqing Road Neighbourhood in Yangzhou Urban Area as an Example

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**Abstract.** With the development of the city, newer and newer high-rise buildings have been erected, while some historical buildings, as carriers of traditional culture, have been scientifically and rationally protected, there are also many historical districts that have not formed a perfect system and lack of spatial protection, resulting in their original appearance being somewhat out of place with the current urban development. At the same time, the private alteration of historic buildings by residents has resulted in a mishmash of styles in the neighbourhoods, losing the long-established historical and cultural flavour and value. This project explores the problems of inappropriate use, lack of space and unclear architectural style in historic buildings, and analyses and researches the conservation and renovation of the neighbourhood of Guoqing Road in Yangzhou, based on the city's positioning, architectural style and people's habits. The design and planning are based on Yangzhou's urban positioning, architectural style and people's living habits.

**Keywords:** Historic Buildings; Neighbourhood Conservation; Historic Streets and Alleys; Guoqing Road.

## 1. Background and Significance of the Study

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Most of China's ancient cities and streets with a sense of history were perfected during the Ming and Qing dynasties, carrying the culture accumulated in the city where the ancient cities and streets are located in the long history of the past, and these ancient buildings also reflect the cultural characteristics of the city to a certain extent. The streets and alleys, as the way for people to commute, are multi-functional spaces with the attributes of transportation, leisure, entertainment, communication and cultural transmission, and they also contain the memories of generations of people.

Today, with the development of cities and towns and the gradual improvement of people's economic level, some of the historical buildings are privately owned and people have their own aesthetic understanding of the appearance of the buildings, so that after their own renovation, the overall uniform appearance of the buildings in the past becomes less coordinated and unified. The appearance of the façades of the neighbourhoods is a mixture of old and new, reflecting a lack of awareness of the need to protect the existing neighbourhoods in a state of constant urban development and, on the other hand, a lack of value guidance from the relevant authorities. Therefore, under the existing problems, it is necessary to gradually improve the protection system of historical buildings in urban areas, to raise people's awareness of historical protection, to enhance the correct guidance of the value of historical buildings, to protect traditional buildings with deep cultural deposits formed over a long period of time, in line with the lifestyle and aesthetics of today's people, and to give new life to the neighbourhood.

Many buildings seem to be in a position to create antique neighbourhoods with a historic atmosphere, eager to give modern people a taste of the beauty of ancient architecture.

### 1.2 Significance of the Study

The subject is a study on how to plan the historical buildings in the city block to maintain their original architectural features to suit modern people's life and aesthetics, and to explore the harmony and unity of the block as a whole, yet with their own spatial characteristics. Guoqing Road, as the

downtown area of Yangzhou's ancient city, has been a witness to the city for nearly a hundred years, accompanying generations of people and carrying the memories of many. However, with the continuous development of society and changes in people's lifestyles, the neighbourhood is facing problems such as its functions not meeting people's needs, ageing buildings and lack of space, etc. It needs to be revitalised through renovation to improve land use efficiency, improve the residential environment for people in the neighbourhood, improve people's living environment through the renovation of the old neighbourhood under the premise of old city protection, raise people's awareness of historical buildings and promote economic development. The renovation of the old neighbourhoods will improve people's living environment, raise their awareness of the preservation of historic buildings and promote economic development.

## **2. Practical Problems Faced by the Street Space of the Neighbourhood in the Conservation of Historic Buildings**

### **2.1 Current Situation of Streets and Alleys in Historic Districts in China**

#### **2.1.1 Inappropriate Use of the Building**

People's understanding of architecture and aesthetics varies, so the facades of the buildings are uneven and mixed in style.

The façade of a street is an important factor that reflects the relationship between the buildings and the street trees along the street, and determines the visual experience and characteristics of the street space. The façade of the building sets the overall tone for the whole neighbourhood, so the façade of the building is particularly important. In the renovation of streets in domestic historical districts, the design is initially started from the façade of the building, according to the specific architectural characteristics of different cities and the type of function, style characteristics.

#### **2.1.2 Insufficient Space for Private Building**

Many of the old buildings in the streets and alleys of the country's historic districts are privately owned by the residents, many of whom live together as a large family, and therefore have an incongruous spatial relationship with the proportion of the population living there. As historic buildings, the quality of the architecture and environment should be taken into account. For example, many buildings with public ownership often have multiple families living in a single courtyard, which leads to a lack of space use due to high population density.

In response to this problem, many residents build and remodel their houses privately, but as they are not professionals, the unreasonable division of space makes the already unspacious streets of the neighbourhood even more crowded.

## **3. Case Studies of Better Conservation of Historic Districts in Yangzhou**

### **3.1 The "Double East" Historic District**

The "Shuangdong Historic District" is the combined name of the Dongguan Street and the East Circle Gate Historic District, which used to be the main water and land transportation route and the centre of commerce, handicrafts, religion and culture in the ancient city of Yangzhou, and is by far the most representative historic district in Yangzhou. The area covers an area of 83 hectares, with a total length of 1122 metres and a width of about 5 metres, from Taizhou Road in the east to Guoqing Road in the west, from Yanfu Road in the north to Wenchang Middle Road in the south, preserving more than 50 important historical relics such as gardens and temples, the former residences of famous people and the houses of salt merchants, as well as a relatively complete system of residential buildings and streets from the Ming and Qing dynasties. Traditional handicrafts represented by Yangzhou lacquerware, traditional music and arts represented by the Guangling School of Qin and puppet shows, etc.

With its rich cultural heritage and comprehensive tourism facilities, the Shuangdong Historical Quarter is one of the best-preserved commercial tourism areas in the cities along the Grand Canal in China. Yangzhou has flourished several times in history, becoming one of the economic and cultural centres of the country, and the culture of the 'Double East' is a concentrated reflection and epitome of the historical development of the city. The various cultural resources are important motivating elements for the new development of modern tourism.

There are old commercial establishments that have witnessed the prosperity and changes of the city, such as the "century-old shop Luyangchun", Xie Fuchun, known as "China's first makeup", the famous traditional specialties "Sanhe Si Mei The famous "Sanhe Si Mei" pickles and the earliest recorded pharmacy in Yangzhou, the "Xie Mao Pharmacy" and the "Da Qing Salt Shop".

In recent years, Yangzhou Guangling District Party Committee and District Government have strengthened the protection and utilization, management and operation of the "Shuangdong" historical district, and formulated a scientific development plan. It has made use of the renovated historical buildings such as the Yat Pu, the former residence of Li Changle and the South Street House, introduced more than 300 shops with various characteristics, created brand features such as folklore, cuisine and culture, vigorously implemented the "pedestrianization" transformation of the district, improved the tourism service functions of the district, and comprehensively enhanced the tourism image and service standards of the district.

Since 2010, the Shuangdong Historic District has been awarded the "Jiangsu Province Habitat and Environment Award", the "Jiangsu Province Tourism Project Construction Excellence Award" and the "Jiangsu Province High Quality Urban Space Demonstration Project". "At the same time, Dongguan Street was successfully selected as one of China's "Ten Famous Historical and Cultural Streets"; in 2013, Shuangdong Historic District was successfully upgraded to a national 4A-level tourist attraction, and in 2015, Dongguan Street was awarded the "Jiangsu Province Honest Shopping Tourism District In 2013, Shuangdong Historical Street was successfully upgraded to a national 4A level tourist attraction, and in 2015, Dongguan Street was awarded the "Jiangsu Province Honest Shopping Tourism Street", receiving more than 5 million Chinese and foreign tourists annually, and becoming a new tourism highlight in Yangzhou City.

### 3.2 Pi Shi Street

Leather Street was a leather goods shopping street in Yangzhou in the Qing Dynasty, mainly selling leather clothes, horseshoe sleeves, leather blankets and other software leather goods. Hence the name "Pi Shi Street", which today is a representative neighbourhood of Yangzhou's slow life. As far as the author can remember, Pi Shi Street and Ren Feng Li were, until 2016, old streets inhabited by local residents, and not to mention "internet famous" neighbourhood streets. Before the renovation, the pavement of Pi Shi Street was uneven stone paving, which made it bumpy to pass by; temporary motor vehicles and uneven electric bikes were parked on both sides of the street, giving it an overall cluttered feel;

In recent years, however, a number of young entrepreneurs have set their sights on Pi Shi Street, running small shops based on their own interests, including simple restaurants, bookstores, coffee shops, clothing shops, etc. The number of visitors has increased a lot this year, and there is even a bookstore that represents the brand image of Yangzhou, "Floating Life", whose owner is a post-90s designer who opened the bookstore in 2013. The owner is a 90-year-old designer who opened the bookstore in 2013. He keeps up with current events and innovates to develop creative products and new beverages, and diversifies his business to meet people's needs for bookstore space. The entrance curtain of "Floating Life" is marked with the word "Slow", which matches the slow life of the bookstore and the rhythm of the slow life of the people in Yangzhou. At the same time, it echoes the phrase "to steal half a day of leisure" in the name of his bookshop, "The Book of Floating Life". As a result, his bookshop has been well received by local people and visitors from abroad.

Today, Pi Shi Street is also involved in many aspects of dining and culture, both in terms of traffic management and the visual experience it brings, which is a stark contrast to what it was before the transformation.



Figure 1. Floating Life bookstore

### 3.3 Ren Feng Li

The Ren feng li neighbourhood is located at the intersection of Yangzhou's old Ming and Qing dynasties and the new city, as well as in the heart of the city. Renfengli's famous fishbone shaped streets and alleys are the best-preserved historical neighbourhoods of the ancient Yangzhou Tang Dynasty and the birthplace of Yangzhou's traditional culture. From the Sui and Tang dynasties to the Ming and Qing dynasties, the Renfengli neighbourhood has a collection of over ten cultural relics. There is the Jingzhong Ancestral Hall, renamed in honour of Yue Fei in the Song Dynasty, and the residence and family temple of Ruan Yuan, a master of the Gan family scriptures. Thanks to the attention paid to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the publicity given to Renfengli by the relevant Yangzhou authorities, it has become a popular 'hit' street this summer, along with Pi Shi Street.

As an important part of the public space, there are four main entrances to Renfengli, namely Guoqing Road, Ganquan Road, Yuxian Street and Wenchang Middle Road. Among them, the buildings can be classified according to their age into Ming and Qing dynasties, Republican period buildings, 1949-1979 buildings and buildings from 1980 onwards.



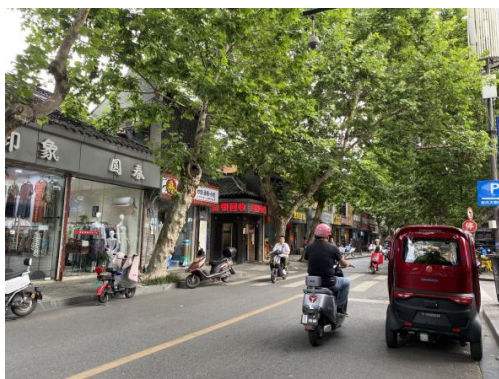
Figure 2. Ren Feng Li

## 4. Conservation and Renovation Programme for the Streets of Guoqing Road

### 4.1 Overview of the Historic Buildings on Guoqing Road, Yangzhou

This was the busiest street in Yangzhou from the 1950s to the mid-1970s. There are many old-fashioned streets and alleys along this road where the original old town life is on full display.

In the Guoqing Road area, there are many streets and lanes, such as East Circle Gate and Xiying Lane, with a high density of buildings and a rich hierarchy of streets and lanes. The buildings and courtyards are neatly arranged and orderly, and are characterised by a 'street-buildings-alley' approach to architectural expression.



**Figure 3.** Guoqing Road

The Guoqing Road neighbourhood is located in the central part of Yangzhou, where the older generation used to talk about how prosperous it used to be, but in the eyes of the younger generation it is all old shops, and the People's Shopping Centre, which has been with generations of people, is becoming more and more depressed, and the whole neighbourhood, despite its many restaurants, seems to have a much more lived-in atmosphere. Guoqing Road can be said to have witnessed the rise and fall of the city of Yangzhou over the last hundred years. The streets of the East Circle Gate neighbourhood near Guoqing Road are rather dilapidated and the increase in residential population is not in harmony with the proportion of buildings, and the renovation of the old neighbourhood needs to be urgently addressed.



**Figure 4.** Yangzhou Library

A historic building, the former Yangzhou Library, located opposite the Churchyard, adjacent to Guoqing Road, covers an area of 2,250 square metres. The building is divided into two parts, with two courtyards covering an area of about 250 square metres, and the facade of the building is divided into two different structures, the main part of the building being reinforced concrete, and the first row of corner buildings near the main entrance being a block of small brick-paved buildings. This library

was relocated to the then new town at noon in the 1990s, and the building was transferred to a local enterprise for an office building, then rented as a dormitory building, and then left unused until today. In the National Palace Road neighbourhood is a glorious memory for many people of the city, and this legendary building has long since laid down the burden of being a vehicle for cultural transmission.

## 4.2 Introduction to the National Day Road Neighbourhood Project

### 4.2.1 Existing Problems of the Historic Buildings on Guoqing Road

The Guoqing Road area has many street dwellings, such as the East Circle Gate and Xiying Lane, with high building density and a richer hierarchy of streets and lanes. The churchyard was used by the government to train the army in the Ming and Qing dynasties. The once prosperous Ganquan Road and Guoqing Road have been replaced by a shopping district, leaving only poorly-run clothing and catering outlets with little footfall and a decaying appearance.

The street space is one of the most important parts of the Guoqing Road area, but due to the lack of maintenance on both sides of the street, the alteration and non-repair of historical buildings, and the phenomenon of private construction, the space in the street is narrow and the appearance of the street is not as good as before.

"Parking difficulties" are more prominent in the old city, where the density of public services and the increase in the number of private cars have increased the demand for parking, and since most of the buildings were built in the mid-1990s, there is less room for renovation of public car parks.

### 4.2.2 Analysis of the Architecture of the Guoqing Road Neighbourhood

The quality of the buildings can be divided into three categories according to the characteristics of their appearance. The first category of buildings is of good quality, with a relatively new appearance and also with a solid internal reinforced concrete or brick and concrete building that can be repaired and changed to improve its function and internal design; the second category of buildings is of good quality, with a more dated appearance and a proud internal structure, generally public buildings built in the 1980s to be used for industrial plants or residential houses with good daily maintenance. The third category of buildings are fair-quality residential buildings or traditional residential houses with a lack of maintenance over the years, with some damage to the walls and roofs.

### 4.2.3 Project Response



Figure 5. Former Site of Yangzhou Library



Figure 6. Schematic diagram of Yangzhou City Library

The renovation of this project is aimed at preserving the character of the historic quarter of the old city, while sensibly updating the planned external space to meet the growing cultural and spiritual needs of the residents. Firstly, it is necessary to plan out the public parking area, and secondly, through the types of building quality mentioned above, interior design renovation is adopted for one type of building to retain the original architecture; for the second type of building, it is maintained and repaired to keep it in line with the traditional style of the neighbourhood; for the third type of building, the unreasonable erection of additions is demolished, and the residents' haphazardly connected electrical wires are rearranged. The purpose of the renovation is to make the architectural style of the historic district more uniform, to enhance the spatial sense of the district, and to improve the traditional decoration of the historic buildings and the image of the district.

Taking into account the width to height ratio of the streets, the vertical greening has been appropriately increased, creating a sense of space and increasing the greening coverage, bringing the historic district into better harmony with the green environment.

## 5. Conclusion

Guoqing Road, as the old street of Yangzhou City, has so far retained the spatial pattern and architectural style of traditional residences in Yangzhou during the Ming and Qing dynasties, while there are many old establishments that attract local residents to the area, but the lack of a certain amount of planning and implementation of policies for the conservation of historical buildings in the neighbourhood has led to a lack of space for social public parking, which in turn cannot meet the parking needs of residents and tourists, and also to a certain extent restricts tourists from driving to The decline brought about by the economic and cultural recession is also not comparable to that of Guoqing Road in its prosperous past. This paper hopes that through the renewal of the Guoqing Road neighbourhood, people can experience the taste of the city and humanity, revisit the old times and old flavours of the past, retain the spiritual roots and humanistic bloodline of the people of Guangling, and retain the cultural soul of this thousand-year-old city of Yangzhou, and effectively solve the problems of living space and parking for the residents, so that Guoqing Road and the neighbourhood can be revitalised.

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