

# Research on the Current Situation of Revitalization and Contradictions of Tangzha Town's Heritage

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## ABSTRACT

This study involves the revitalization of industrial sites in Tangzha Town, Gangzha District, Nantong City, Jiangsu Province, China. The purpose is to revitalize the industrial sites and make it a cultural facility of the town. Tangzha Town is one of the earliest developed industrial bases in China. It has been developed through cotton spinning industry since the late Qing Dynasty. and there are still many relics. This study aims to organize the transition of these ruins, clarify the position of the redevelopment of Tangzha Town in the overall urban planning of Nantong City, understand the current status of the reconstruction of industrial sites in Tangzha Town from the perspective of urban spatial theory, and summarize the issues involved.

**Keywords:** *Museum and Heritage , Modernization Heritage , Factory Renovation , Local Government*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the advancement of urbanization, great changes have taken place in the industrial structure. The industries that once flourished during the Industrial Revolution have been abolished, and both capital and labour have been transferred to higher value-added industries, leaving many industrial sites. The resulting problem is how to make full use of these industrial sites as local resources and corporate assets. Although it is natural to demolish old sites and turned them into residential or commercial land, another option is to preserve them as “memories” of the town and develop them as sites for local community.

In China, the “factory”, once regarded as an industrial site and an economic and political facility has been actively renovated in recent years to turn it into a cultural facility of the city. However, the use of these buildings has gradually become limited, they have lost their freshness and no longer perform their cultural or commercial functions.

## 2. FACTORY RENOVATION ISSUES IN CHINA

Factory renovation in China has been plagued by the following two problems.

First, there is a strong homogenization phenomenon. Factory renovation in China is often concentrated in first-tier cities. Especially in Shanghai, from 2004 to 2012 the Shanghai municipal government has approved creative industry parks four times, between 2004 and 2012, with a total of 86 cultural and creative parks [1]. Therefore, short-term certification and excessive spatial concentration lead to the homogenization of “factory renovations”.

In China, factory renovation is listed as “creative industries”, with “creative” being “creation”, which refers to creating new things and emphasizing creativity. The successful example of imitation is not “creative industry”. According to Jacobs (1916-2006), “old ideas can be implemented in new buildings, but new ideas can only express their core in old buildings” [2]. There is a tendency to take “factory renovation” as a “means” to achieve the goal, which is actually to eliminate the “backstories” of factory modernization [3]. Under the current circumstances, it may be necessary to sort out the legacy of modernization and re-evaluate the value of the “factory” itself at first.

Second, from the perspective of “cultural devices”, China’s “factory renovation” currently has little participation of former residents and former employees who support China’s modernization. From the meaning of “modernization”, the “modernization legacy” exists not only in backward factories, but also in old-fashioned

interpersonal connections and lifestyles [4]. For a new interpretation through “factory renovation”, both “preservation of old stories” and “creation of new stories” may be important [5]. The “factory renovations” to which the former residents were relocated could be regarded as a film studio.

### 3. TANGZHA TOWN IN HISTORY

Tangzha Town is located in Gangzha District, Nantong City, Jiangsu Province, on the southeast coast of China. It covers an area of 25.96 square kilometers and has a population of 58,000 (Nov 2010). The city is formed on both sides of the Tong Yang Canal with convenient waterway transportation.

#### 3.1. Late Qing Dynasty - Early Civil War (late 19th century - early 20th century)

Tangzha Town is one of the cradles of modern industry in China [6]. After the establishment of “Dasheng Factory(大生纱厂)” in 1895, in order to deal with the cotton spinning industry, more than a dozen industrial enterprises were established, including an iron mill, paper mill, flour mill, rice mill, oil mill, soap factory, and shipyard [7]. . On the west side of the canal, around the factory and opposite the canal is a two-story shopping area. The warehouses is located on the vacant lot between the canal tributary and the factory; and the workers’ residential area is near the factory, mainly single storey brick houses. On the east side of the canal, there is the Tangzha Park (Figure 1).

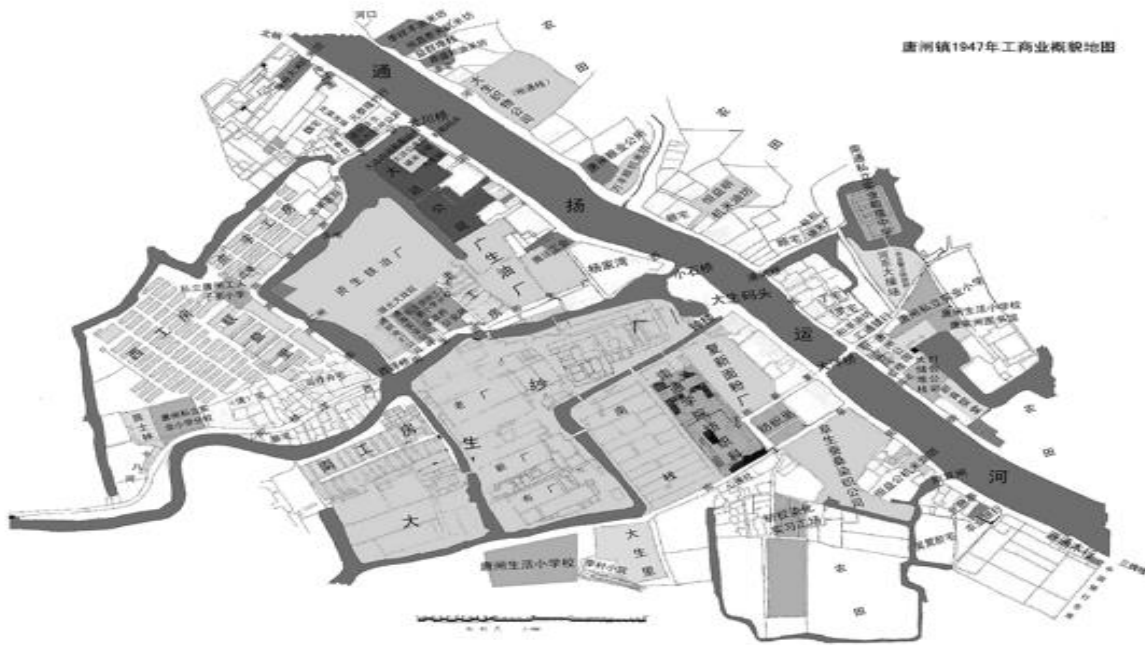


Figure 1 General industrial and commercial map of Tangzha Township 1947

Source: Nantong Government

The urban space design of Tangzha Town in the 1920s was a 20-year experiment to respond to the ideal of “business salvation” of Zhang Jian, a businessman in the late Qing Dynasty. At that time, Zhang Jian was at the top of his class, but he gave up his career in pursuit of modernization. In the urban area, Zhang Jian set up “one city and three towns(一城三镇)” based on the model of Howard’s rural city theory, Nantong City (Chongchuan District, the current CBD) is the center, and Tangzha Town, Tianshengang Town, and Lushan Town are bedroom communities. In Tangzha Town, an industrialization experiment has been launched to realize urban-rural integration. The urban design of Tangzha Town is characterized by political local autonomy and

all-round social improvement. It is a systematic experiment from the aspects of industry, transportation, agriculture, urban planning, architecture, education and so on.

Tangzha Town in the 20th century is the initial form of modern society, but it was also a utopian society. Under Zhang Jian’s idealism, a large part of the profits of this large gauze factory was invested in public works projects, which the enterprise can’t afford. In addition, when the textile industry crisis broke out in 1922, the government did not provide any assistance. With the closure of the factory, Tangzha Town was forgotten by history.

### **3.2. Late Qing Dynasty - Early Civil War (late 19th century - early 20th century)**

Although the urban space of Tangzha Town was formed and established in the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China, it was not until the end of the Liberation War (1945-1949) that popular culture flourished and a unique local community was formed. Residents usually worked at factories. In their spare time, each factory will hold dragon and lion dance competitions. There was a lantern floating festival on the canal every year. There was also a parade of floats decorated with factory trucks. In addition to the residents of Tangzha Town participating in the festival, many people came from the city center.

After the reform and opening-up, Nantong was designated as one of the 14 coastal open cities in China. At the same time, Japanese companies have settled in Nantong and the economy has increased significantly. The change of this mode has led to the sharp change of industrial structure and the decline of cotton spinning industry. In recent years, young people have migrated to the city center, and former residents have been relocated to residential areas due to the restoration plan of industrial sites.

## **4. RECONSTRUCTION OF TANGZHA TOWNSHIP'S INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE**

### **4.1. Positioning of Tangzha Town for redevelopment**

Nationwide, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development of the People's Republic of China (hereinafter referred to as the UDP) submitted the "City Shuangxiu(城市双修)" (ecological restoration and urban repair) plan in 2016, and Nantong became a pilot city in 2017. However, in 2018, UDP no longer exists and its functions were dispersed to other departments, and the future of this plan is uncertain. In addition, the Haohe Scenic Area in Nantong was once registered as a Class 4A national scenic area, but it was not selected due to inadequate maintenance.

From the perspective of the city, the most serious problems faced by Nantong in recent years are the decline of the birth rate, the aging of the population, and the loss of human resources. The tourism development of Nantong lags behind that of neighboring Suzhou and Nanjing, and the city is not well-known in the region. Nantong's regional development has always dependent on its satellite city Shanghai. At present, Nantong is promoting itself as the core city of "Shanghai One Hour Economic Zone" with plans to develop infrastructure, exploit tourism resources, and attract tourists.

In 2006, the State Council announced the establishment of the sixth national cultural relics

protection section, which listed the Dasheng Gauze Factory as an industrial heritage protection unit. In 2013, Tangzha Town began to develop with the goal of becoming a UNESCO World Heritage site. including industrial structure and the decline of cotton spinning industry. In recent years, young people have migrated to the city center, and former residents have been relocated to housing complexes due to the restoration plan of industrial sites.

### **4.2. Current status of reconstruction of industrial sites in Tangzha Town**

The downtown area of Nantong continues the pattern of "One City, Three Towns" designed in the 20th century. The redevelopment of Tangzha Town emphasizes the configuration of "One River, Two Banks". The east side of the canal is centered on Tangzha Park. On the west side of the canal, "Dasheng Gauze Factory", a paper mill and an oil mill will be the center of the project. The total area of industrial land restoration in Tangzha Town 87 hectares, of which 25.75 hectares are central protected areas.

The first phase of the project covers an area of 3.3 hectares for the construction of the first oil plant and 7.7 hectares area for the construction of the second paper mill and ancillary facilities (theaters, public bathhouses, etc.). Tong yang Canal is the axis formed by the landscape of Tangzha Town, and the oil mill is adjacent to the canal, so the architectural protection in this area is relatively complete. In 2010, the "International Textile Art Biennale" was held at the site of the former oil mill, marking the beginning of its restoration work.

Taking Tangzha Town as an example, the value of individual ruins of the factory is not high, but from the perspective of the whole area, the industrial system of a modern business town has been well preserved and is of high value. Therefore, restoration is not limited to a single cultural relic, but also includes development and remodeling.

According to government officials, the plan of Tangzha industrial land restoration area is currently undergoing a new round of adjustment. The current adjustment is mainly to change the residential area around cultural facilities into a commercial area.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

### **5.1. Tangzha Town in the future**

Tangzha Town, as an industrial heritage site, has distinctive characteristics. The challenge is how to express these characteristics in the future. Currently, the reconstruction of Tangzha Town is in progress. According to the characteristics of Tangzha Town, there may be no good idea for the development of Tangzha

Town. In addition, the “heritage” has a historical background. Taking Tangzha Town as an example, urban space was formed in the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China, but popular culture did not flourish until after the Liberation War. It is important to clarify when it will “be reconstructed”.

According to the current industrial land reconstruction plan of Tangzha Town, the administration has taken the west side of the canal as the center for the development of the MICE industry, but in fact, tourists are often attracted to the scenic spots on the east side of the canal. Companies hopes to revive the lantern floating ceremony and other festivals in Tangzha Town, but the original residents have been relocated, there are no participants and the spectators will not come. The government, companies, and residents all have their own ideas about the town, but there are differences due to the lack of interaction. The cooperation among the government, businesses, and residents will be an issue in the future reconstruction of Tangzha Town.

### ***5.2. Sustainable Use in Modern Heritage***

There are “global and local perspectives”, “administrative and private perspectives”, “policy maker and administrator perspectives” etc., as well as “cultural and economic perspectives”, “planning and execution perspectives”, and “short-term and long-term perspectives”. Before the actual maintenance of the heritage, the modernization heritage must be considered at many levels for a long time, and the maintenance of the heritage must be repeatedly displayed after completion.

However, the modernization heritage itself originally shows “cultural value”. We believe that it would be reckless to put everything in this region and even become an “economic pillar”. When studying the heritage of modernization, it is better to explore what it should NOT be than to think about what it should be. For a region, learning less successful cases rather than imitating the successful models of modernization heritage utilization may be the most effective way to solve practical problems.

In order to revive the industrial remains of modernization and give full play to the unique “vitality” of modernization heritage, we believe that it is important to take regional identity as the axis and make time-consuming attempts from different angles. It is conceivable that by seizing the awareness of each relevant entity, focusing on the operators of the relevant modernization heritage, and collaborating with them from three dimensions, we can use modernization heritage in a sustainable manner: “above and below (government and private sector)”, “inside and outside”, and “software and hardware”.

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