

Historian opens curtains of time to reveal Jiading's history

Take a city walking tour through Jiading, where you can unlock a hidden menu at a local restaurant, or uncover the little-known stories behind buildings ... Jiading historian Tao Jiming helps you open the curtains of time and experience the warmth of Jiading's history, as Lu Lianghui and Li Xinran report.



Standing at the confluence of the Lianqi and Hengli rivers, Fahua Pagoda carries the cultural heritage of Jiading.

Fahua Pagoda and Zhakou Lane

In Jiading, there is a saying: "one Fahua Pagoda, half of the history of Jiading."

For Jiading native Tao, the story of Jiading has to start at the pagoda, and this cultural and historical city walking should also start there.

Jiading marks its 30th anniversary of transforming from a county into an urban district this year. After a renovation project, Fahua Pagoda, which has a history of over 800 years, has been completely refurbished.

The history of Fahua Pagoda is even older than that of Jiading. It was built during the Kaixi period (1205-1207) of the Song Dynasty (AD 960-1279) and witnessed the great changes of Jiading throughout its long history.

Fahua Pagoda, also referred to as Wenfeng Pagoda or Wenbi Pagoda, symbolizing the peak of literature, is a landmark building situated in the old town of Jiading.

Soon after the construction of the pagoda, Jiading started to focus particularly on building prosperity in both the education and culture.

Zhakou Lane is the most authentic and well-preserved old street in the Zhouqiao scenic area. *Zhakou* in Chinese literally means fence at the gate, and is

pronounced as "*shagou*," which sounds quite similar in the Jiading dialect. In the past, near the gate of local houses, there might have been bamboo or wood fences on both sides of the road.

"In recent years, there have been many renovations in the surrounding areas that look very different from what they used to be," Tao said. "Only Zhakou Lane has retained its original style."

Tao said that he often goes to Zhakou Lane to take a look, and there is also a "Baoyuntang" bookstore that preserves many local historical documents.



Today's Zhakou Lane is a well-preserved old street in the Zhouqiao scenic area.



Fahua Pagoda in 1881 — Courtesy of Xu Zhengwei



People gather by Jushan Bridge to watch a dragon boat race in June 1913. — Courtesy of F. E. Stafford

West Street and Tao's Former Residence

Walking along the Huancheng River footpath, one can reach the West Street. Formerly known as Ximenwai (outside west gate) Street, the West Street has been in existence for 1,500 years, which is about 700 years longer than the history of Jiading County.

The street has been home to many historical buildings, including the former residences of the Huang family from

Lianxi; the famous diplomat Wellington Koo (1887-1985); the late Qing Dynasty businessman Tang Shaolan; and the late Qing Dynasty diplomat Wu Zonglian (1856-1933).

Here, you can also find the former site of the Christian church, the Jiading Church of the Good Shepherd. The Hugu Temple has been rebuilt on the original site, and the Ximen (West Gate) Old Street is the oldest place in Jiading.

There is a Qiu (Little Dragon) Bridge across the West Street, also referred to as the "Jushan (Gathering Goodness) Bridge" by some people.

According to historical records, it was built in the 13th year of the Hongwu (1368-1398) reign of the Ming Dynasty. At that time, some women raised funds to build the bridge for the convenience of crossing the Lianqi River, so it was also known as the "Women's Bridge."

Tao's Former Residence at 344 West Street was previously the home of Tao Jiyuan, who was a famous industrialist and manager of the Jiafeng cotton mill, a well-known enterprise in Jiading.

This house is the largest existing old Western-style house in Jiading, with a construction area of nearly 1,000 square meters. It was built in the 1930s and has a fusion of Chinese and Western architectural styles.

"I was born here in 1947 and didn't leave until 1989," said Tao Jiming. "I lived here for 43 years and am an authentic Ximen indigenous person."

The West Street has witnessed the historical changes of Jiading, and there are also many memories of Jiajingers, who look forward to the revitalization of the historical buildings and the restoration of West Street's heritage and prosperity.



Built in the 1930s, Tao Jiyuan's former residence is now a cultural heritage protection site. — Photos by Lu Lianghui

South Water Pass and South Wall

Heading south along the "cross plus a ring" water system in Jiading, one can see the South Water Pass and the South Wall, which have witnessed the vicissitudes of Jiading.

The Jiading Wall was first built by Gao Yansun (1174-1252), the first governor of Jiading County, and has undergone generations of repairs.

By the Wanli period (1573-1620) of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), its shape and scale were basically determined for what it is today.

The people of the time were carried in sedan chairs, rode horses, and marched troops

along the wall.

The wall played an important role in the struggle against the *wokou* (Japanese pirates) as well as the revolt against Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) to rebuild the Ming Dynasty.

Jiading has four water passes in the east, south, west and north. The South Water Pass, which was first built in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), is an integral part of the entire South Wall.

The construction of Jiading Wall and the water passes played a military role. Over 800 years have passed, and the functions of the wall and moat have changed.

Nowadays, with the completion of the circular footpath, the South Water Pass has become a good place for people to relax and exercise.

One can still vaguely feel the vibe of Jiading as a former Jiangnan (regions to the south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River) watertown in Nanshuiguan (South Water Pass) Park.



The West Wall in Jiading County in 1867 — File photos courtesy of Xu Zhengwei



The Nanshuiguan (South Water Pass) Park in Jiading features ancient architecture, beautiful landscape and cultural relics.

At the "Jiuqing (Nine Ministers) Pavilion" in the park, historical figures of Jiading have been introduced in the form of inscriptions, which has allowed people to better understand Jiading's profound cultural heritage.

New cultural landmarks including the Han Tianheng Art Museum are also nearby.



In the spring of 1951, only the northern side of the West Wall remained standing.