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Centuries of History
Decades of Change

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Kate Baker

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photo by Meredith Kennedy

American born Kate Baker has lived in five countries in Asia and South Africa for the last twenty years. While living in Shanghai, she first “discovered” and fell in love with Jiading in 2011 and since then has visited regularly bringing family, friends, and tour groups. She has co-written a walking guide book called “Beyond the Concessions: Six Walks in Shanghai’s Other Districts” and a children’s book. Kate is currently working on her next project.

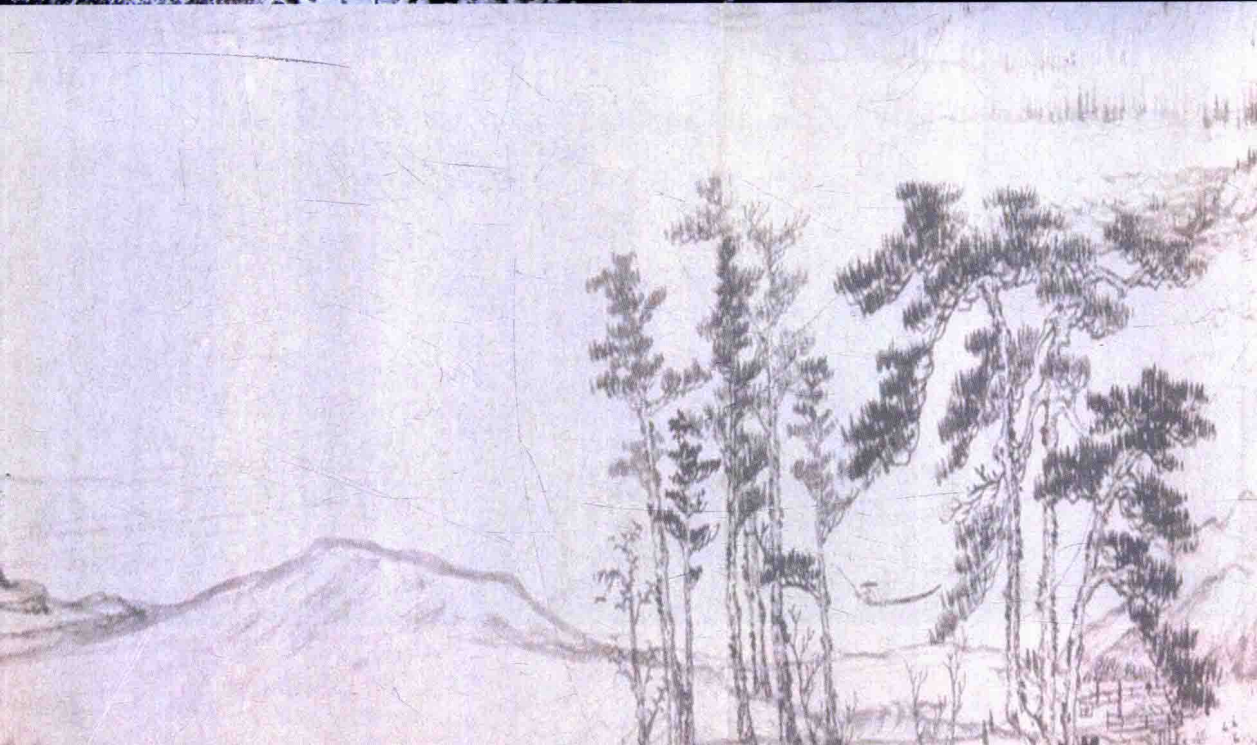
Dedication

For the people of Jiading who welcomed me to their community and trusted me with their narrative.

Acknowledgments

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Jiading in Context :

The Backstory







Today's Jiading District offers an abundance of economic opportunities, recreational diversions, and a rich cultural heritage. In fact, Jiading has been a leading economic and intellectual influence in the region long before Shanghai became a major trading port. Her history reflects the triumphs and tragedies of China itself. The story began in the years between the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and the Song Dynasty (960-1279) when the structure of Imperial China was reordered by the historical events of the era. It was at this time that the towns of Jiading, Nanxiang, and Anting developed from small villages into prosperous trading centers. It is not insignificant that these changes in structure remained in place until the end of the Imperial Empire in 1911.



By the tenth and eleventh centuries, China's population had doubled in size. Agricultural improvements in rice cultivation yielded an increase in food production and the exponential growth of revenues. In southern China, the many tributaries branching out from the Yangzi River created a delta replete with a network of interconnected waterways. The Chinese utilized the water as a means of travel. Since water travel was a cheaper method of transportation, this provided the South with a trade advantage over northern China's reliance on more expensive land travel. Water transportation and commercial exchange became the key assets that generated profound

wealth within the market towns located along the rivers and canals of the delta. This wealth led to the emergence of a Confucian literati or scholarly class with an enthusiasm and passion for the arts, philosophy, and literature.

Yet to understand the nuances of this historical period, let's go back even further to look at a few major changes that took place in the course of those in-between years. During the Tang Dynasty, powerful clans or families held both the land and wealth of the kingdom and served as government officials for the emperor. Throughout the warring years between the Tang and the Song Dynasties, the Song armies slaughtered the dominant Tang families resulting in the elimination of the wealthy clans altogether. Their demise left a void in the power structure, and thus the imperial examination, which had existed



in some form since the Han Dynasty (202 BCE - 220 CE), became the measure that determined a man's worthiness to serve the emperor. In the Song Dynasty, the rigorous examination based on Confucian scholarship became institutionalized leading to a class of scholar-officials who fulfilled the duties of governance from the local to the national levels. As a result of the growth of the examination's influence, the number of students taking the exam rose from 30,000 in the eleventh century to 400,000 by the late thirteenth century.

Improvements in technology were very significant in the course of China's growth during this period. The first Navy was es-



established and gunpowder made its appearance. The ability to find True North using a compass was also a major development. Paper money was introduced, and a postal system provided communication throughout the empire. In the Tang Dynasty, people were reading from scrolls while in the Song Dynasty, people were reading from books.

The Song Dynasty is divided into two time periods, the Northern (960-1127) and Southern (1127-1279). Each period, including the warring years between the Tang and the Song, contributed consequentially to the changes that took place during this span of time.

When invaders from the North, the Jurchen (nomadic ancestors of the Manchu), defeated the Song armies in 1127, the remains of the dynasty retreated to southern China establishing the Southern Song Dynasty capital in Lin'an (now Hangzhou) from which the kingdom was administered. With the South's advantage of fertile agricultural lands, the defeat did little to affect the Southern Song Dynasty economically. Trade continued to flourish amongst the many small communities linked by waterways in the alluvial Yangzi River Delta. Besides the capital city, many centers of commerce developed, creating a less centralized authority. A locally administered government gave the district gentry more responsibility and appointed officials from the capital relied on the scholarly class to supervise the affairs at provincial and county levels.



A simple change in marital matchmaking customs created a major cultural shift in the empire. During the Tang and the Northern Song (960-1127) Dynasties, the capital cities of Chang'an (Xi'an) and Kaifeng (in Henan Province) respectively were the dominant centers for the cultural, commercial, and administrative activities of imperial China. Government officials from throughout the kingdom traveled to the capital to conduct their affairs, and the capital city became the elite's marriage market. Families arranged marriages all across the empire. This tradition changed during the Southern Song Dynasty. In order to consolidate their influence and protect their local power, the elite's priorities became narrowly focused, and they arranged family

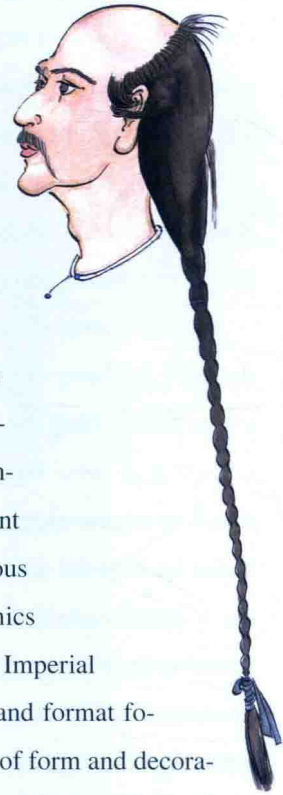
marriages within their own regional districts.

While Buddhism's impact was significant, Neo-Confucianism was on the rise. Neo-Confucianism was a secular renewal of Confucian values without the mystical influences of Daoism and Buddhism. Gaining knowledge and the "investigation of things" were the pastime of the literati.

The culture of the Song Dynasty reached a highly sophisticated level. Entertainment and social clubs grew in popularity. The scholarly class opened private schools and established social welfare programs. In order to protect their interests, merchants and artisans formed guilds and built elegant guild halls. The Song's elite enjoyed a society that was gracious and refined. The decorative arts such as painting and ceramics reached their zenith in technical refinement. The Emperor's Imperial Painting Academy instituted very strict guidelines for style and format focusing on nature as subject matter. Perfect in their simplicity of form and decoration, pottery of this period is considered to be the most refined and greatest artistic achievement of any time.

Meanwhile, economic development and commercial activity expanded in the subsequent dynasties. Regions began to specialize in the production of goods and agricultural products. For instance, tea was grown in one region while cotton was produced in another. Jingdezhen became the center of ceramic arts while Suzhou became the center for silk production. With the rise of wealth, the educated literati became more influential in the imperial government.

By the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the rivers around Jiading had silted up altering the conditions for growing rice. Local leaders determined that cotton was a well-suited alternative for the rice farmers and plantings shifted from rice to a cash crop, cotton. The Jiading area developed a reputation for high quality cotton raw material and finished woven products.

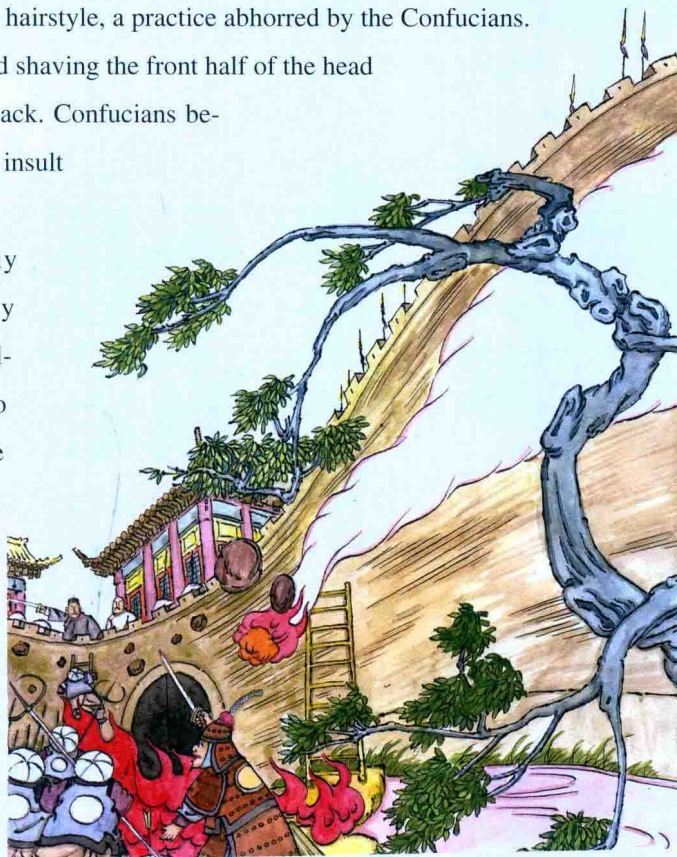


Another period of growth and prosperity for Jiading was in the Ming (1368-1644) and the Qing (1644-1911) Dynasties. However, it is the war in between that placed Jiading in the annals of Chinese history for her principled adherence to Confucian teachings and resistance against the Qing Dynasty.

Near the end of the Ming Dynasty, corruption amongst government officials was unrestrained and widespread. Early in the seventeenth century, a group of scholars and literati called for reform and a renewal of moral values. As the movement coalesced in the southern regions, it became known as the Restoration Society and gained a very influential position in imperial politics. The landowners, literati, and official families who hoped to re-establish Ming's legitimacy by restoring Confucian values became known as the "Jiading Loyalists".

Meanwhile, Qing magistrates sent an edict into each community enforcing the mandate to adopt the male Manchu hairstyle, a practice abhorred by the Confucians. The style, called the queue, required shaving the front half of the head and braiding the long hair in the back. Confucians believed that to cut one's hair was an insult to one's parents.

As the Qing (Manchu) army moved south conquering every Ming stronghold, conflicting loyalties amongst the Chinese led to confusion and schisms within the Jiangnan prefecture. Some towns that had vowed to resist the Qing, capitulated at the last moment. The first casualties of the assault in Jiading County were the deaths of seven women who resisted being violated by the northern army. Nanxiang's defense corps



decided to surrender to avoid harm, but the defense corps leader and the most prominent literati family (the family of Li Liufang) were murdered by local mobs who accused them of being collaborators with the Qing.

By the time the Qing army reached the city walls of Jiading, the word that some towns had acquiesced to the Qing army without resistance came too late for the Jiading loyalists. On a sultry August day in 1645, a 54 year-old scholar official surnamed Hou along with two of his sons waited for the enemy at the East Gate. At the West Gate, the Hou family tutor, Huang, and his younger brother prepared to fight and die. The Ming reinforcements they had requested consisted of 300 frazzled soldiers who were quickly routed at the first charge by the enemy. Having lost most of their supplies, the loyalists fought with their bare hands for an entire day throwing rocks and roof tiles at the enemy. By dawn Qing troops rushed the city walls and proceeded to brutally murder, rape, and mutilate 20,000 men, women, and children until sunset. All but one of the leaders committed suicide. (See page 38 for the Hou and Huang Memorial in Huilongtan Park.)

Considering the magnitude of the atrocity in Jiading and its environs, the recovery process was relatively brief as peace engendered the continuation of commercial and social activity. Until it was banned in 1661, the Restoration Society in the delta region continued to promote Confucian ideology and to send their members to take the civil examination. Their successes shaped the early Qing culture. By the 1680s the literati had fully recovered their position and status in government and society. However, for the elite of Jiading, the recovery was lengthier. It is estimated that only nine holders of the provincial or palace degree survived the Qing conquest. In the ensuing years, the literati of Jiading appeared to have become less engaged in statecraft and more focused on philanthropy and personal scholarship. It was not until about 50 years after the massacre that Jiading was once again influential in the imperial government in Beijing.

In the last few decades, Jiading has regained its position as a regional player in the Yangzi River Delta. As a high growth district of Shanghai, Jiading offers a quality of lifestyle and tourism that is unique within the region.

Useful Information

