



# 中國鄉土



Common Scenes With Local Features In China



Water Regions In The South  
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水鄉集

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Xu Yong Photograph Series

我敘述的仍然是古老的人與環境的故事

## A Word about "Common Scenes with Local Features in China"

If it is the first time for you to set foot on Chinese soil and if you do not want to stop at just seeing the things that strike the eye, I present you with this serial photo albums which might be of help to you for a deeper understanding of the life of the Chinese. A look at the photos of this serial and you will notice the marked difference of natural environment and regional culture between the south and the north, the comparison of the two metropolitan cities and the two vast rural areas, the life pattern of the people which has been in existence for hundreds, even thousands, of years. In a word, you will have some idea about the unique culture of everyday life of the Chinese people.

Human being is an animal of the environment. The kind of life human beings lead is invariably constrained by the environment. Natural geographical condition and the level of social development have decisive impact on the environment of people's life.

Geographically, the south and the north of China are divided by the Qin Mountain Range and the Huaihe River. As a result of the difference in average annual rainfall, loess stretches as far as the eye can see in the north while watery green exists everywhere in the south. Much difference can be detected in pronunciation, religious belief, house style and customs in life among people living in the south and in the north. For instance, the rural area in the south is crisscrossed with rivers and tributaries and dotted with lakes and ports so the major means of transportation are boats and ships. The rural area in the north, on the contrary, is a huge expanse of dry loess, therefore, horse-carts become the chief means of transportation. The legendary dragon king which is supposed to be able to stir water and bring rainfall is loved by the northerners but feared by the southerners.

Compared with the long history which runs unbroken for thousands of years, China's social productive force develops at a very slow pace. In the rural areas which make up about 90% of China's territory, farm tools and mode of production remain generally primitive and backward. The life style of the people on the whole, is still very traditional. In Shanghai and Beijing, the two metropolitan cities typical of the south and the north, "alleys" ("longtang") and

"hutongs", the traditional forms of residence, take up the central parts of the two cities respectively. In the "alleys" and "hutongs" live millions of people. Thus "alleys" and "hutongs" become the major component respectively of these two cities.

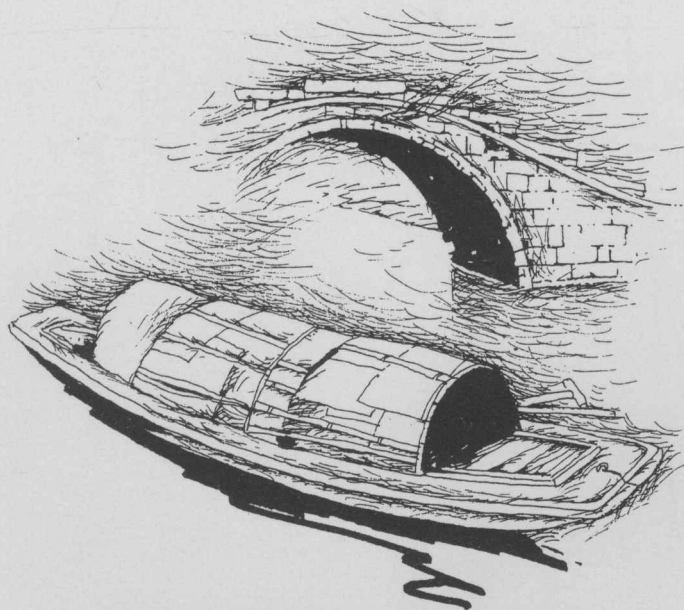
The difference between Shanghai's alleys and Beijing's hutongs lies in that hutong has a history of over seven hundred years. "Siheyuan", a compound with houses built around a courtyard, is the traditional architectural form of residential houses in China proper. The size, the complexity and elaboration of the buildings, the feature of the architecture, have much to do with feudal hierarchy and patriarchal clan system. The ownership and right of use of the house are unified and there is an absence of the characteristic of commodity. The formation and development of Shanghai's alleys, however, occurred mainly after the Opium War when the Shanghai area was opened to the outside world and Western concessions emerged. The appearance of alleys can be said to be a result of the rapid development of commodity economy. Many of the building structures in the alleys carry the features of modern European residential construction. Ownership and right of use are separated. So, alleys are a kind of standardized, commercialized modern city residential community suitable for the habitation of core families. The life style of the people living in alleys is traditionally different from that of people living in hutongs. After the Opium War, an element of Western culture was added to this kind of life style.

The name I give to this serial photo albums is "Common scenes with Local Features in China". This serial consists of four albums, with the names respectively of "Alleys in Shanghai", "Water Regions in the South", "Hutongs in Beijing" and "Cave Dwellings in the North", based on scenes in the two metropolitan cities in the south and the north of China and the rural areas in these two parts of China.

If your understanding of China is furthered after looking through these albums, I would feel I have achieved my purpose.

Xu Yong  
May 29, 1992

# 水鄉集



Water Regions In The South



## 江南水鄉

「江南」這個中國的地域概念，始於三國時代，原是對當時吳國所在的整個長江中下游地區的統稱。後來，隨着歷史的變遷，它所概括的範圍逐漸縮小至長江下游南部，主要指現今的蘇南、杭嘉湖平原和浙東。

從中國的地形上看，西北高而東南低，越是東部和南部，江河分支就越多，形成衆多的水網地區。而江南，又正處於長江三角洲、太湖流域以及錢塘江與杭州灣兩岸，因而在這一地區裏，不僅廣大農村河港如織，就連蘇州、紹興等城市內，也是水道縱橫，「人家盡枕河」，成為中國最著名的水鄉。

江南作為「水」鄉，不僅表現為河湖港汊密布，而且由於地處亞熱帶的沿海，氣候暖濕，雨水多。一年四季，春雨綿綿，秋雨瀟瀟；一當入夏，又有持續近一個月的梅雨季節，正像晚唐詩人杜牧所寫：「南朝四百八十寺，多少樓臺煙雨中」。

由於地理位置、自然條件得天獨厚，幾百年來，江南一直是中國經濟、文化最發達繁榮的地區。土壤沃腴，物產豐阜，景物秀麗，人才輩出。這裏集「魚米之鄉」和「絲綢之邦」於一身；是「上有天堂，下有蘇杭」之所在。故而「江南」一詞在中國，又是好地方的同義語。

「靠山吃山，靠水吃水」。在這裏，從生產到生活，從建築到風俗，都與水相關聯。

江南的村野大地上絕大部分是水田，農民種植水稻，一年兩季，栽種前夕，「綠波春浪滿前陂，極目連雲穠穠」按：即水稻肥」。雨天裏，在田頭岸邊勞動的農人們，頭戴竹笠，身披蓑衣，一派唐人筆下「青箬笠，綠蓑衣，斜風細雨不須歸」的景象。這裏到處有河汊，灌溉極其便利。早年間使用木製龍骨水車，由牛力牽引車盤或人力蹬踏轉軸將河水岸上堤岸，如今則已為抽水機所取代。因盛產稻米，居民不僅普遍以米為常年主食，而且還用米粉制作糕糰點心。這種米粉也具有水鄉特點，它不是乾磨，而是帶水磨成，叫做「水磨粉」。土壤氣候利於竹子生長。村邊宅旁，每見竹影扶疏，幽篁成叢。在江南山間還盛產毛竹，生產和生活的許多用具，如農用籬筐、扁擔、篾席，船用的篾篷、撐篙，家用的竹籃、竹椅、竹榻、竹櫥等等，都用它來製作。至於漁業和各種水產品養殖，這在水鄉，自可想見，毋須多說。

往來多舟楫。船是水鄉交通運輸的首要工具，即使在已通公路和個人備有自行車的情況下，亦復如此。許多物資仍靠舟船運

輸；走親訪友，婚喪嫁娶，也多使用船只。甚至流動售貨，都以舟代車，傍着河岸直接從船上售賣商品。

「綠水人家繞」。河是水鄉交通命脈，又是生活用水的基本來源，因此村莊和集鎮多傍河設置；居民和店鋪房屋亦多臨河而築，往往前街後河，或者兩岸爲街，隔河相望。于是鄰居之間隔河閒聊情景隨時可見。河埠則成爲居民生活的重要地方，除了用來停靠船只之外，日常的洗衣、淘米、洗菜，直至洗澡，以及家庭用水的汲取都在這裏。因而又它是人們相遇、交談、傳遞訊息的場所。

河多橋也多。由于多雨潮濕，江南水鄉的橋多用石頭築成，很少木製。橋的樣式和構造，也着眼于便利船只的往來而不是車輛的通行，因而大多數爲拱橋，橋脊高聳。即使梁橋，也往往是高出河岸甚多，兩頭帶石級，行人過往需拾級上下。同樣，由于雨多地濕，村鎮內的街巷路面多用石板或鵝卵石鋪砌。現在新修的路和橋，則改用混凝土。

江南的傳統民居，一般以平房爲主，也有一些地方以樓房爲主，房屋多爲青瓦粉牆，故而遠望村落，一幢幢輪廓分明，黑白相映。舊有房屋都是磚木結構，其中有一部分其前牆全用板壁構成。它們大多經歷百年風雨，不免顯出破敗，因此有的已經拆除，改建新房。近年來，隨着人民生活水平的提高，建起了不少新房子。新建的樓房，在建築上打破傳統格式，增設陽臺，四面開窗，外觀近似現代城市住房。

實行改革開放後，江南水鄉的生產迅速發展。

還在六十年代，江南水鄉的大部分地方已先後通了電。但那時，除了作爲生產上的動力外，在生活上僅用于夜間的照明。進入八十年代以後，隨着生活的富裕，越來越多的人家置備了從電扇、收錄機到電視機乃至電冰箱等家用電器。于是在如今水鄉的夏日夜晚，便每每可見，一些人家把電視機搬到屋外，邊納涼邊看電視，孩子們再也不是眼望夜空聽老奶奶講牛郎織女的故事了，而一些年青人，則把收錄機放置在巷子裏，跳起迪斯科。

今日中國的江南水鄉，處在發展變化中，一部分舊有的事物、景象或已經或正在消失，一些現代的事物已在開始滲入和改變傳統的生活方式。

呂林

一九九二年二月

## Water Regions in Jiangnan (in the South)

The geographical concept of Jiangnan (meaning south of the Yangtze River) in China began with the period of the Three Kingdoms. It was originally a general term referring to the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River under the reign of the Kingdom of Wu. With the vicissitudes of history, the area this term refers to narrows down to the southern part of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, namely, the present southern part of Jiangsu Province, the Hangzhou-Jiaxing-Huzhou plain and the eastern part of Zhejiang Province.

China's topography displays a gradual declination from the northwest to the southeast. The further east and south, the more tributaries of rivers, thus forming numerous areas interlaced with networks of waterways. Jiangnan is located at the Yangtze Delta, the Lake Tai basin and on the two sides of the Qiantang River and the Hangzhou Bay. In this region, not only is the countryside interwoven with rivers and tributaries, but cities like Suzhou, Shaoxing are also crisscrossed with a web of waterways, with "families resting with heads pillowed on the river", as the line of a Chinese poem goes. Hence the most famous water regions in China.

Jiangnan owes its name of water regions not only to the numerous rivers, lakes and tributaries but also to the heavy rainfall since the region is in the coastal area of the subtropical zone with warm and humid climate. In the four seasons of a year, there is continuous drizzle in spring, whistling and pattering rain in autumn, and in early summer, there is nearly a month of intermitten plum drizzle. As is described by the late Tang poet Du Mu, "of the four hundred and eighty temples in the south, how many towers and balconies are wrapped in sheets of misty rain."

Richly endowed by nature in geographical location and natural conditions, Jiangnan, for hundreds of years, has been the most prosperous region economically and culturally in China. With its fertile land, rich production, lovely scenery and large number of talented people, this region is a combination of "land of fish and rice" and "state of silk and brocade" and is the locality of the saying "high above there is paradise in heaven, down on the earth there are Suzhou and Hangzhou." So the term Jiangnan in Chinese is also synonymous with a wonderful place.

"Those living on a mountain live off the mountain, those living near the water live off the water--make use of local resources." Here, everything, from production to everyday life, from architecture to custom, is connected with water.

In the vast countryside of Jiangnan lie tract on tract of paddy fields. The peasants plant rice, twice a year. On the eve of planting, there is the scene of "ridges of the fields straight as line, reflection of light on the water surface not uniform". From transplanting rice seedlings to the ripening of the rice, the splendour of colour changes every few days. "Green ripples and spring waves fill the slopes, the well-grown rice stretches far into the clouds". In rainy days, peasants, working in the fields or by the banks, wear large bamboo hats and straw rain capes, presenting a scene well described in the lines of a Tang poem: "With green bamboo hats and straw rain capes, one does not have to rush home in blowing wind and slanting rain". Rivers and tributaries available everywhere provide conveniences for irrigation. In early years, wooden square-pallet china pumps were used with buffalo pulling the wheel or human treading the pallet to lift water over into the fields. Now they have been replaced by water pumps. Rich in rice, the people there not only regard rice as their staple food but use rice flour to make cakes, rolls and light refreshments. This kind of rice flour also has the characteristic of the water region. It is not ground dry but by adding water while grinding. Hence the name "finely ground rice flour". The soil and climate in this region are advantageous to the growth of bamboo. Around villages and by houses are seen lush foliage of groves of bamboo. In the hilly areas of Jiangnan mao bamboo is abundant. Many production tools and daily utensils, such as large basket, carrying pole and mat in farming, mat sail and punt-pole on the boat, bamboo basket, bamboo chair, bamboo couch and bamboo cupboard in everyday use are all made of mao bamboo. As to fishing and aquatic product raising, it is easy to visualize and

needs no elaboration.

Rivers are teeming with boats. Boats constitute the primary means of transportation in this water region, even when highways are available and bicycles are very common in families. A large amount of goods still have to rely on boats for transportation. For visiting friends, weddings, funerals and marriages, people also greatly rely on boats. Even in mobile sales, people also use boats instead of trucks and berthing the boat by the river bank, they start selling goods directly from the boat.

"Blue water circles round the house." Rivers are the lifeline of transportation in the water regions, and also the main source of water for daily use. Villages and towns, therefore, are mostly located by rivers. Houses of the residents and shops are also built along river bank. Usually, the river flows behind the street or streets line the river banks, facing each other across the river. So it is a common scene that neighbors chat across the river. River ports become important places in the life of the people. Apart from berthing boats, they are places for washing clothes, rice, vegetable and even for taking baths and fetching water for household use. Hence the center for meeting people, conversation and spreading information.

Each river has bridges. Because of much rain and dampness, the bridges in Jiangnan water regions are mostly built of stone, with few wooden bridges. The pattern and structure of the bridges are designed with an eye on the convenience of the sailing of boats, not the movement of vehicles. Therefore, most are arch bridges, curving high above the water. Even bridges supported by piers rise high above the banks, with flights of stone steps leading to the bridge. Pedestrians have to walk up and down the flights of steps in order to cross the river through the bridge. Similarly, the streets in villages and therefore are paved with slated or cobble stones. In recent years, cement has been used for newly-built roads and bridges.

The traditional house in Jiangnan is mainly a one-storeyed building. In some places, the dominant pattern is houses with two or more storeys. The houses are mostly built with black tiles and white walls. Looking at a village from afar, you will find the shape of the house brought out clearly by the black and white colour. The old houses are all of wood and brick structure. The front walls of some are entirely built with wooden boards. After standing the wind and rain of a century, they cannot help appearing dilapidated. Some, therefore, have been pulled down and new houses rose in their places. Recently, with the improvement of the living standard of the people, many new houses have been built. The newly-built houses break away from the traditional pattern, having balconies added and windows on four sides, with the exterior looking very much like buildings in modern cities.

After the implementation of the policy of reform and opening to the outside world, production in the Jiangnan water regions has increased rapidly. Family income has been rising and people are becoming better-off.

As early as the 1960s, electricity had come to most of the places in Jiangnan. But at that time, apart from being the motive power in production, electricity was only used for lights in the evenings. Entering the 1980s, with life becoming more prosperous, more and more families have come to possess electric appliances, from electric fan, tape recorder to television set and even refrigerator. Today, in a summer night, you will often find families in the water regions moving their TV sets to the outdoors, enjoying the cool while watching TV. Young children no longer spend their nights gazing at the sky while listening to grandmas telling them the story of the cowherd and the girl ewaver. Some young people put the recorder in a small lane and start disco dancing.

The water regions of Jiangnan in today's China are undergoing great changes. Some old things and old scenes have disappeared or are in the process of fading out. Some new things have begun to penetrate into and change the traditional life style.

Lu Lin  
February, 1992





