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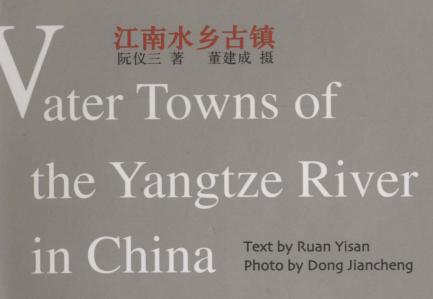
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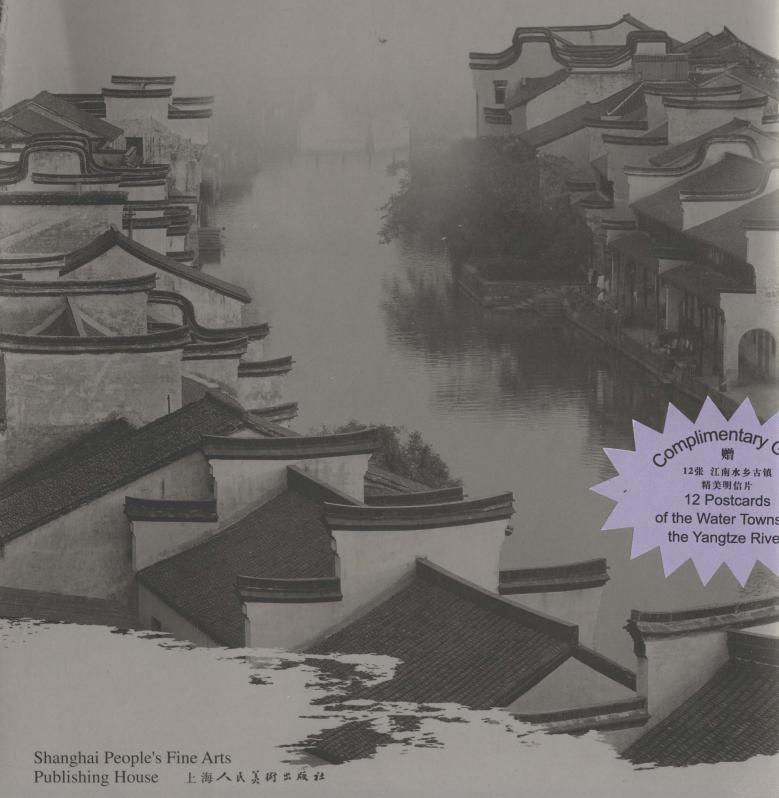
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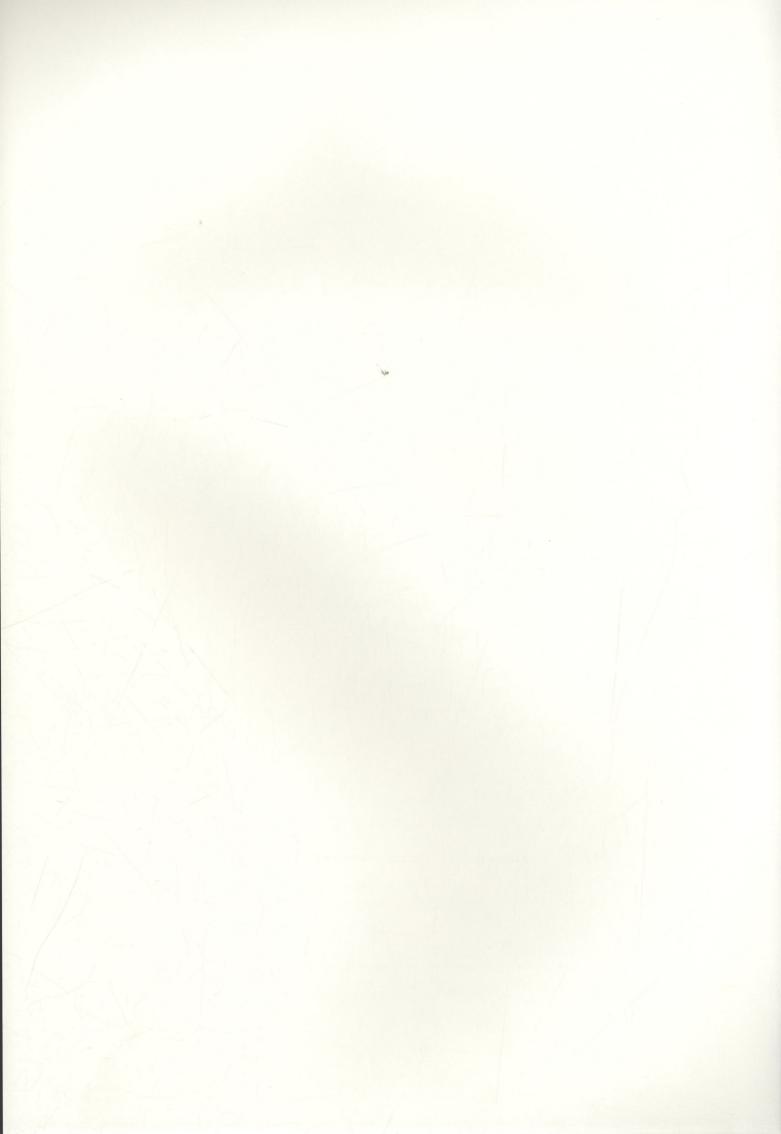
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# 江南水乡古镇 ater Towns of the Yangtze River in China

Text by Ruan Yisan Photo by Dong Jiancheng 阮仪三 著 董建成 摄

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  South of the Yangtze River

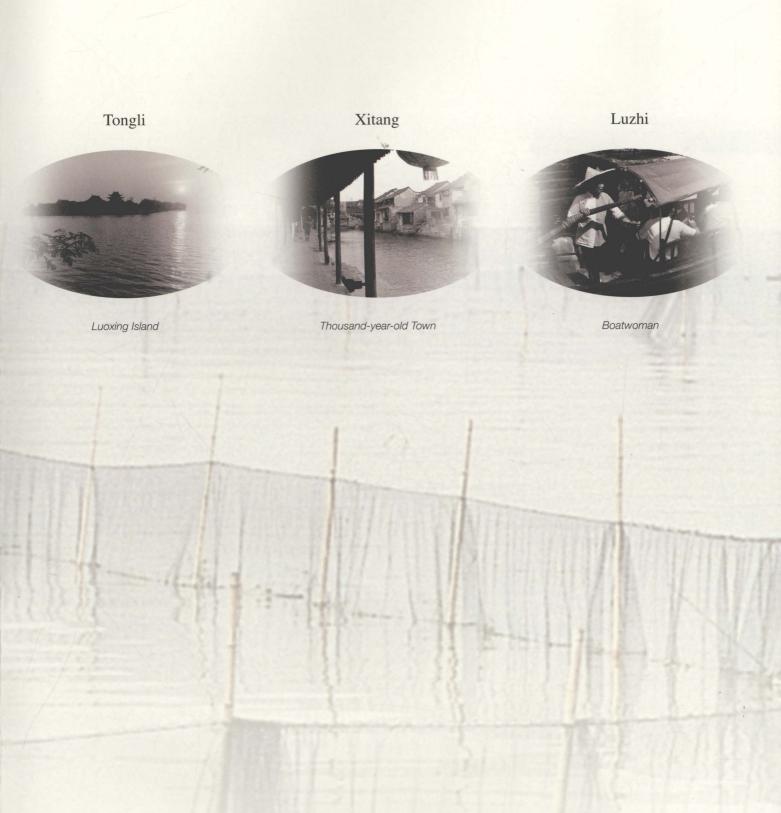




A Seal Script of "Water Towns of the Yangtze River" by Ruan Yishan



## Water Towns of the



Zhouzhuang



Tongxiu Bridge

Wuzhen

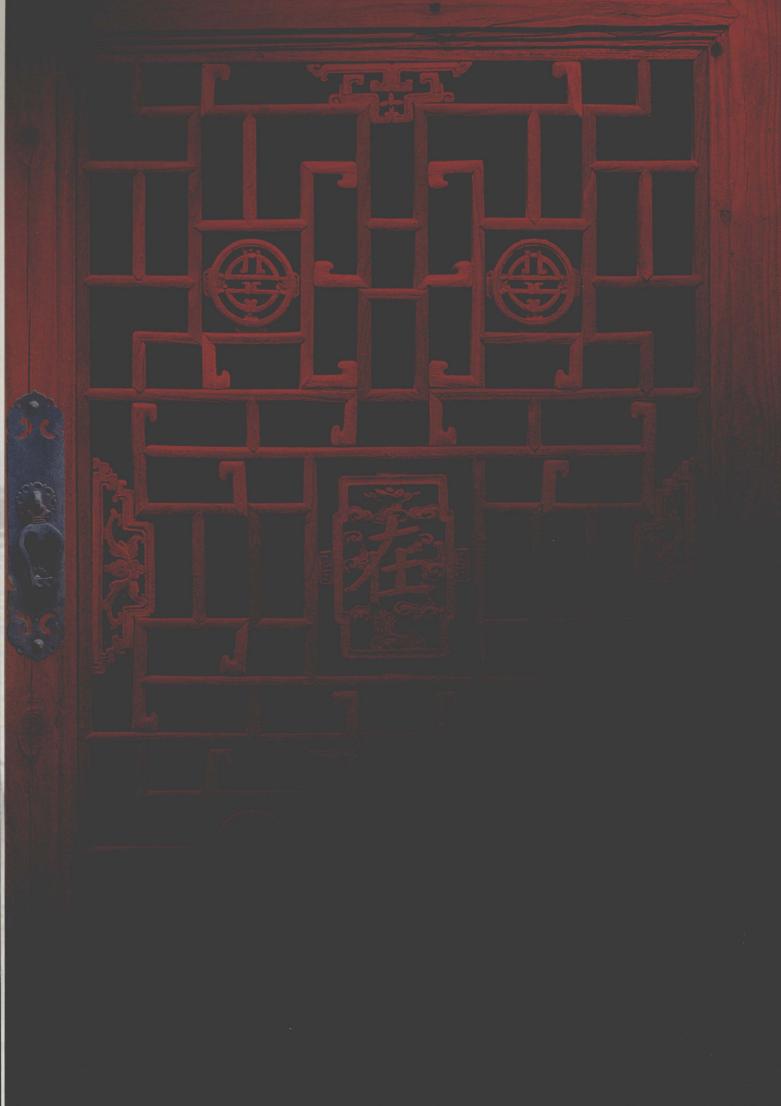


Waterfront Houses

Nanxun



Sericicultural Girls



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Anchang



Boatman

Mudu



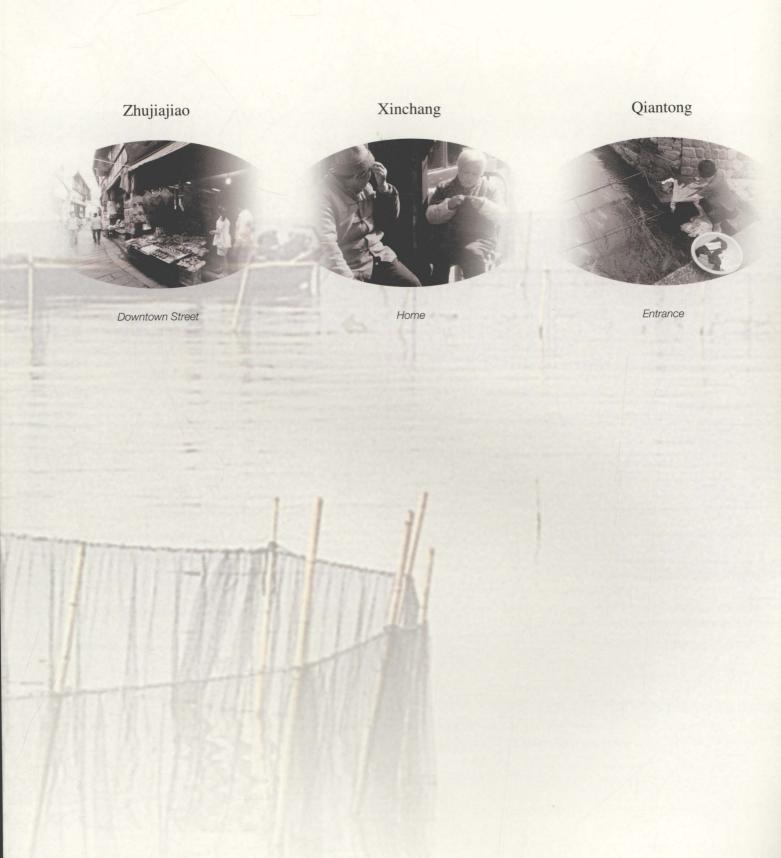
Nine Zigzagged Corridor

Longmen



Decree Gate

# Yangtze River in China

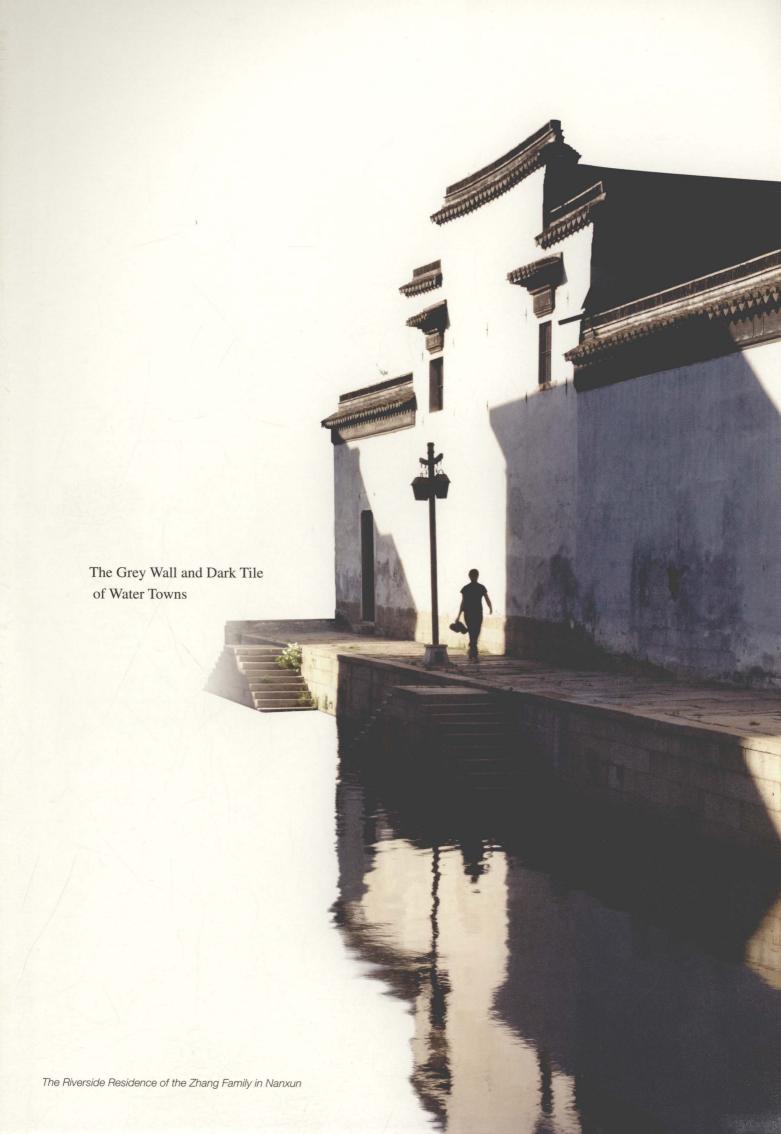


## **Preface**

Southern China refers to the southern areas of the Yangtze River in general including southern Jiangsu Province and northern Zhejiang Province and locates in subtropical zone. The Yangtze River and Taihu alluvial Plain systems are flourishing. The mild and moist climate nourishes plentiful products. After the 5th century A.D., the canal and manual rivers and channels were cut, which helped develop the water traffic, which in turn caused the form of numerous richly-endowed water towns. For thousands of years, every household was adjacent to water with boats went through it, which forms the unique spectacles and features of "small bridge, flowing water and household". With the prosperous economy, stable life and developed culture, people here always attached great importance to education which helped produce many cultural celebrities and various literatures and works of art bearing rich cultural customs with local characteristics. Every water town in southern areas of the Yangtze River has its own economic traits, and the neighbouring towns are separate in their economies. In the past, they possess their own handcraft industries and commodity specialties, some of which last till now. The water towns are constructed in concert with water, therefore the water and street lanes are main passages of livelihood and transportation. Houses are intentionally built near water with the street in front and the river at the back. The water corridor, water house, water pavilion, water building and small bridge constitute the distinctive living environment where people and nature are staying harmoniously together.

Because of the differences in the geographical environment and social economic function, every ancient town took on different looks and connotations through the long evolution of history, which reveal the rich and profound traditional characteristics of the ancient water towns in southern areas of the Yangtze River.

Between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the ancient towns flourished for a time and the total number of towns reached hundreds. Since the 1980s, with the rapid development of society and economy in China, most of the ancient towns had industrial construction, started land traffic and built modern construction and facilities. The original network of rivers and traditional settlements is scraped, so the original features of the ancient water towns disappeared gradually. In the mid-1980s, we timely and properly took measures to protect and plan for the ancient towns near Suzhou such as Zhouzhuang, Tongli, Luzhi and those of Nanxun, Jiaxing, Wuzhen, Xitang in Huzhou. At the beginning of the 90s, Zhujiajiao and Xinchang in Shanghai, Anchang, Longmen and Qiantong in Zhejiang as well as Mudu in Suzhou also received planning and guide. Therefore, the original features of the ancient water towns are kept completely and the tourist industry is properly developed. Luckily, a very precious historical heritage is kept for people.



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The large-scale conservation planning of the historic water towns at the mouth of the Yangtze River sets an important milestone in the protection of living cultural landscapes. The comprehensive approach adopted by the project allows for thorough understanding and interpretation of the area's natural and cultural heritage at both the local and regional levels. Operating with an overall conservation masterplan, a clear policy framework, and sound methodology, the project restores the authentic significance and function of the towns' waterways and historic settlements, while accommodating modern needs and anticipated growth. Major investment by the government for public works and by residents for individual structures creates a commendable model of sustainable long-term public-private partnership. The ambitious scope of the project promises to have a major impact on shaping future development in the towns as well as conservation practice throughout China.



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More and more Chinese water towns has come into the sight of people.