The Redevelopment and Preservation of Historic Lilong Housing in Shanghai

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Abstract
In this thesis, I examine development projects in the inner city of Shanghai, especially the redevelopment of historic residential blocks, or lilongs, during the economic transition period in China. My object is to find out how different patterns worked to preserve the old residential blocks under the effects of the redevelopment.

Disciplines
Historic Preservation and Conservation

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Advisor: David G. DeLong

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THE REDEVELOPMENT AND PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC LILONG HOUSING IN SHANGHAI

Wan-Lin Tsai

A THESIS

in

Historic Preservation

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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Dedicated to my parents, Feng Yuan Tsai and Hung Yu Feng Tsai, who taught me to appreciate all kinds of beauty and joy in life, and encouraged me to affront all kinds of challenges with smiles.
Acknowledgment

Shanghai has been an attractive metropolis to me for a long time. I learned about Shanghai through many stories and films about the dramatic history of China in the early twentieth century when growing up, and felt familiar with the city which is miles away from my homeland. While Shanghai is rapidly changing today, I hope maybe I can devote myself to its preservation, even as an outsider.

I would like to first acknowledge my advisor, David G. De Long, with whose help this thesis can be accomplished. Professor De Long gave me a lot of freedom to compose my research and thesis while providing insightful suggestion and advice. I also want to thank Gang Liu, my best Shanghai friend and a respectable scholar, who knows adequately about Shanghai and generously shared his astute opinions with me. Gang also provided great help during my field trip in Shanghai and introduced me to some of the interviewees and scholars.

The accomplishment of this thesis is the result of many people’s help. Yanning Li, the independent researcher of Tianzifang, told me the past and the mechanism of Tianzifang’s development; without his help, I could not have the chance to learn about the inside story of this lilong block. Rong Fa Zheng and Mei Sen Wu, the leaders of Tianzifang, spent an afternoon talking with me during their busy schedule. Ye Huang shared her valuable research about Xintiandi with me. Kuang-Ting and Ying-Chu provided helpful publications. I also would like to acknowledge Professor Yongyi Lu, Professor Jiang Wu, and planning official Xian Zhou; they all kindly shared their knowledge regarding the urban development of Shanghai with me.

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Introduction

In this thesis, I examine development projects in the inner city of Shanghai, especially the redevelopment of historic residential blocks, or lilongs, during the economic transition period in China. My object is to find out how different patterns worked to preserve the old residential blocks under the effects of the redevelopment.

In chapter one the historic significance of Shanghai and lilongs is discussed to point out the value of preservation. Also, the transitional background of Shanghai is introduced. The open-up policy and consequent economic transition of China have changed the urban development and governance in Shanghai, and thus influenced preservation work.

Chapter two speaks about the evolution of Shanghai preservation strategies which were closely related to the development of historic heritage. The current condition of lilongs is also examined to gauge the challenge of redevelopment and preservation.

Chapters three and four are case studies of two redevelopment projects of lilongs: Xintiandi and Tianzifang. The two places are both in the Luwan District, but were developed differently. I discussed how the pattern worked, what was preserved, and the effect the development made.

Chapter five concludes with observations of the case studies and points out my opinion about the redevelopment and preservation of the lilong blocks in Shanghai.
This thesis is a summary of my understanding of place-making in Shanghai. It is a study made outside the city except for a few trips I made to Shanghai for information collection and interviews. Any comment is highly valued and appreciated.
Chapter One  The Historic Significance and Preservation Challenges of Shanghai

Different from Beijing, the center of China’s politics which has become the country’s capital since the thirteenth century, Shanghai has earned the world’s attention for less than two hundred years and now is the commercial capital of China. Because of China’s dramatic history in the twentieth century, Shanghai experienced extremely different governance from colonial, socialist to opening-up policy. Consequently, the urban landscape of Shanghai presents a lot of changes, conflicts and contradictions which are significant for Chinese history of modern times.

Nevertheless, since the former leader of China, Deng Xiaoping, announced the Chinese economic reform in 1978, the change of the urban landscape in Shanghai has accelerated and threatens its historical fabric. It will be helpful to realize its current problems and the challenges of its preservation before evaluating the redevelopment of historic housing blocks.

I. The Historic Significance of Shanghai

Shanghai became an important city in China after 1842 when Qing dynasty and the British signed the Treaty of Nanking which obliged China to open five ports including Shanghai for trade. Shanghai is located on the center point of China’s coastal line and beside the bayou of Yanzi River; thus it is on the strategic point along water and land transportation routes to inner China and South Asia. (Fig. 1-1) Its prominent location soon attracted all kinds of
foreign trading and adventurers. The British, the United States and the French occupied different parts in Shanghai as their settlements and concessions. By early twentieth century, Shanghai had become a metropolis.

![Fig. 1-1 The location of Shanghai (image from Shanghai Xintiandi, p. 2.)](image)

Shanghai has been recognized as significant for it is the witness of cultural integration and early modernization in China. The cultural integration is not just between China and its intruders; during the early twentieth century when there was confusion all over Europe, many Russian and Jewish refugees came to Shanghai. They built their churches and synagogues, started their businesses and lived in their European way. Moreover, the French and the British brought people from their colonies to Shanghai to police the concessions. There were four kinds of policemen in

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1 On November 29th, 1845, the first Land Regulations were approved to define the region of the British Settlement. In 1848, the U.S. Settlement was approved; one year later, the French Concession was also defined. Please see Editor Committee of Shanghai concessions’ history, 上海租界志《The History of Shanghai Concessions.》Shanghai: Shanghai Sociology Academy Press, 2001, pp.27-28.
Shanghai: the Russian, the Chinese, the Indian and the Vietnamese.² (Fig. 1-2, 1-3) The British brought Indian policemen to the International Settlement,³ while the French brought Vietnamese policemen to the French Concession.⁴

Fig. 1-2 Indian policemen (image from Illustrated Shanghai: Modern City for 150 Years)

Fig. 1-3 Vietnamese policemen (image from Modern Shanghai)

³ The British and the U. S. Settlements were combined in 1863; the combined settlement was named Foreign Settlement and was renamed International Settlement in 1899. See 上海租界志 The History of Shanghai Concessions, p. 96.
In addition to the presence of people from various countries, the Japanese population grew rapidly. After 1915, Japanese became the biggest foreign group in International Settlement. All of these settlers constituted the modern life style in Shanghai. Until the 1930s, the concessions in Shanghai were filled with coffee shops, where writers and poets got together talking and thinking just like those French artists and literati did in Paris; dancing clubs, where merchants and visitors from all over the world enjoyed the newly explored but fancy city in ancient China, and had some exotic affairs; department stores, where the Chinese learned the western way of high-level shopping. (Fig. 1-4, 1-5)

Fig. 1-4 The commercial poster shows a Chinese woman in a western interior. (image from Illustrated Shanghai: Modern City for 150 Years)

Fig. 1-5 The commercial poster shows a Chinese woman carrying a child and wearing western swimming suit. (image from Illustrated Shanghai: Modern City for 150 Years)

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5 I bid, p.60.
The modernity was not only demonstrated by tangible aspects; the modernity of Chinese literature and urban culture was also initiated in Shanghai. Ou-Fan Lee has examined the background of urban culture and analyzed the works of Shanghai writers. He first describes the commercial city: department stores, coffee shops, dancing clubs, parks, race track, publishing business, popular advertisement and the emerging movie industry. Ou-Fan Lee further analyzes the presence of urban life in Shanghai writers’ works. Basically, Ou-Fan Lee examines modern Chinese literature in the context of commercialized Shanghai and points out the literary reflections and the image construction of modernity.

Shanghai is a favorite setting for Chinese literature and movies. However, it is popular among writers and story tellers not only because of the colorful urban culture, but also because of the conflicts and diversity among the residents. What makes Shanghai more significant is the culture derived from its unique situation: a Chinese port city which was inhabited by people from different countries as well as Chinese people from various social classes. The rapid urbanization had a huge social impact on the lower class, especially on the rural immigrants. The prosperity of Shanghai and the nearby commotions caused a lot of Chinese to move into the concessions for safety and work opportunities, but when they came to the big city, they had to deal with problems of high living standards, housing, gangsters, and so on. Hanchao Lu has devoted himself to research about the life of the “little

---

7 From 1853 to 1855, the Small Swords Uprising occupied the walled county seat of Shanghai, and from 1850 to 1864, the Taiping Rebellion occupied Nanjing, a city two hundred miles northwest of Shanghai.
urbanites” in early twentieth century Shanghai.\(^8\)

Hanchao Lu puts much emphasis on the “stone portals”, which is also named “shikumen”, the homes of the little urbanites. He recovers the everyday life, the business, and the neighborhood community of lilongs, the shikumen housing blocks. In his opinion, “no social or cultural history of Shanghai would be complete without an examination of this particular architecture (shikumen) and the neighborhoods (lilongs) it fostered.”\(^9\) And this is an appropriate key point to understand the significance of the historic housing in Shanghai.

II. Historic Housing in Shanghai—Lilongs

The emergence of lilongs parallels the rise of the modern real estate market in China.\(^10\) After the foreigners’ worry about letting the Chinese live in the concessions gave way to the desire for making money,\(^11\) the western investors started to build residences for the Chinese. Different from the traditional Chinese residences, which were built separately and individually, lilong housing was built by property developers, constructed group by group, sold or rented individually. The real estate developers built clusters of two-story brick housing in order to gain the most profit on limited land.

The first real estate developers were British investors in the former British Settlement, and the plans of townhouses in Britain were adopted for the design of clustered buildings. The design of a townhouse was ideal for

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\(^10\) I bid, pp. 139-142.

efficient land-use, but it was not compatible with the Chinese life style which required open space shared with neighbors for community activities. Therefore, the plan of lilong housing was different from European townhouses in that a block of lilong was built as a community where there were several alley ways inside the block, and some units had their doorways along the alleys; only a few major alleys were connected to the outside roads. (Fig. 1-6) The design gave the residents shared alleys as places for communicating with neighbors, while the block was separated from the outside as a community because there were only few gateways.\(^{12}\)

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Lilong housing shaped urban life for the Chinese people in their metropolitan city. It was affordable for people from various backgrounds, such as government officers, teachers, workers, writers and artists. Until 1949, four different types of lilongs were created through time: old style (Fig. 1-7), new style (Fig. 1-8), garden style and apartment style (Fig. 1-9). The new style lilongs emerged when there were more rich families came to Shanghai and demanded better accommodation. The new style lilongs provided gas and more facilities than the old style, and improved the aeration and natural lighting. The garden style lilongs were high-class residences with bigger scale and more open space; the facilities and decoration were more modernized, and the distance between buildings were widen. The apartment style lilongs developed from the design of the garden style. A significant difference between the garden style and the apartment style is that a garden style lilong building basically housed one family, while an apartment style lilong building was designed to accommodate several families. This was a reflection of the rapid growth of population in Shanghai. With the variety of lilong styles, most people could find their preferred residences, and the choices of location and building designs depended on the economic abilities of potential residents. Lilong housing became the most extensive residence type with the most residents in Shanghai. In 1949, the total floor space of lilongs accounted for 69% of the total floor space of residential buildings in Shanghai and amounted 20,000,000 square meters.13

Fig. 1-7 a. The section of old-style shikumen lilong housing
(image from Modern Urban Housing in China: 1840-2000, p. 43.)

Fig. 1-7 b. Old-style shikumen lilong block, Hongqingli, Shanghai.
(image from Modern Urban Housing in China: 1840-2000, p. 41.)
Fig. 1-8 The master plan of a new-style shikumen lilong block.
(image from Modern Urban Housing in China: 1840-2000, p. 65.)

Fig. 1-9 The master plan of a multi-story apartment block.
(image from Modern Urban Housing in China: 1840-2000, p. 90.)
One of the characteristics of lilong housing is that the space was designed for efficient use, but the efficient land-use generated problems of too many users. After 1937 when the Sino-Japanese war broke out, many cities were destroyed and construction activities stopped in China. For ordinary urban citizens, the problem of housing shortage was made all the more serious because of a large influx of refugees. Most of them saw their income fall and, therefore, their ability to pay rent diminished. It was not uncommon that many families shared one house, resulting in serious overcrowding.\textsuperscript{14}

After 1949, the communist government distributed lilongs to people for low rental. The lilong buildings originally designed for one family have later housed five or seven families. The long existing problem of overcrowding was getting more serious, and the physical fabric deteriorated, but there was no appropriate maintenance because of the cheap rent. As a consequence, many residents of lilongs moved out whenever they could find a better place elsewhere, leading to a loss of rental income.\textsuperscript{15} This was and still is the vicious circle for lilongs.

Today, lilong housing suffers from deterioration, congestion, and the lack of bathrooms in individual units. Requests for housing improvement or even the demands for demolition of lilong blocks in order to build new high rises have become an urgent issue in Shanghai. Moreover, the open policy of China intensified the process of changing the city landscape of Shanghai; to speak more precisely, with open policy, China aims to replace the old/historical city landscape which is filled with deteriorated lilong blocks.

\textsuperscript{15} Wen-Bing Fan, \textit{The Conservation and Renewal of LiLong Housing in Shanghai}. 
with a new urban environment which displays progress.

III. Shanghai in Progress: Economic Transition and Urban Governance

In 1978, the former leader of China, Deng Xiaoping, announced the Chinese economic reform. Before that, China’s economy system was a planned economy under the strict control of its communist government. Shanghai had contributed to a large portion of the country’s industrial production and was not devoted to its urban development. Since the open policy was confirmed, Shanghai has had a new mission: becoming an advanced metropolis and generating as much prosperity as possible. With the goal of economic development, there are a few noticeable characteristics of the planning and governance of Shanghai which strongly influence its historic fabric: market-oriented reform, promotional strategy, and changing urban governance.

Market-oriented reform

In 1993, in order to attract foreign investment, the real estate markets in Shanghai were opened to foreign investors. Fulong Wu has clearly identified the impacts after the opening of real estate markets. One of the impacts is the market-oriented land use. The local governments permit mixed commercial and residential uses to guarantee profits for the development projects, and foreign investments are also particular in location choice: the

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distribution of foreign investments follows a pattern of preferred location advantages; the capitals focus on several areas on predominant locations.\textsuperscript{17} This also leads to another consequence: the reshaping of urban landscape. Since the investors have the advantage in choosing locations, and their invested buildings show a clustering pattern in the city, now the central part of Shanghai is a place for the concentration of luxury housing whose main purchasers are overseas companies and joint ventures. The low and middle income families’ being driven to the peripheral and less-convenient areas is thus inevitable.\textsuperscript{18}

\section*{Promotional strategy and the impact of globalization}

Several years after the introduction of foreign investments, the effects of globalization are becoming more obvious. Kris Olds has made some points through the examination of the development project of Lujiazui Central Finance District in the Pudong New Area of Shanghai.\textsuperscript{19} In Olds’ opinion, the Shanghai government intended to develop Pudong as quickly as possible and in a visually striking manner; they thought “the most appropriate method to display the goals and successes of the reform era was through the emergence of gleaming skyscrapers with striking downtown skylines.”\textsuperscript{20} They held an international design competition and benefited from the high-profile process; the presentation of the design models also provided an ideal promotional

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} I bid, p. 1363.
\item \textsuperscript{18} I bid, p. 1364.
\item \textsuperscript{20} I bid, p. 116.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
image to fund managers, investors and politicians.\textsuperscript{21}

Therefore, as Fulong Wu has mentioned, in the economic transition, “Shanghai witnessed the shift in its accumulation strategy away from the productionist view of economizing urbanization to enhancement of services provision (gateway of China) and urbanism (image creation and city beautification).”\textsuperscript{22} As an influence of globalization, the profitability of using urban space as a commodity is clearly demonstrated to the Shanghai government. However, Fulong Wu also has warned of the side effects brought about by foreign investments and globalization. He thinks that “to the transitional economies, globalization is a double-edged sword,”\textsuperscript{23} which resulted in “an overwhelmingly optimistic atmosphere for property speculation,”\textsuperscript{24} and a high vacancy rate interrupting capital circulation and having negative effects on economic growth due to the failure in targeting the genuine demand.\textsuperscript{25}

It is very clear that with the economic transition Shanghai jumped into a market-oriented economy and was eager to improve the city image as a promotional strategy for the attraction to capital, and sometimes the changes are so drastic that the original city landscape is meant to be replaced with new-built high rises.

\textsuperscript{21} I bid, p. 120.
\textsuperscript{23} Fulong Wu, “The Global and Local Dimensions of Place-making: Rethinking Shanghai as a World City,” p. 1375.
\textsuperscript{24} Fulong Wu, “Globalization, Place Promotion And Urban Development In Shanghai,” p. 74.
\textsuperscript{25} See footnote 23.
Changing urban governance

Another change coming with the open policy is the decentralization of urban governance. In 1995, “Regulations for Shanghai’s city planning” was approved and made clear that local governments have an obligation in city planning: the state power was decentralized to district governments. In order to advance local economies, district governments actively participate in area development. They cooperate with investors to deal with some processes such as relocating residents in development projects. On the other hand, foreign investors need to cooperate with local partners in order to acquire local knowledge such as regulations and the cultural significance of particular areas. The decision-making process is thus demonstrated in a local dimension.

Nevertheless, the decentralization of urban governance also inflamed the competitions and imitation projects among different local/district governments. Local governments fight for investments and thus usually ignore area characteristics but propose similar projects which might be popular among investors, such as “university communities” and “high-tech parks”; they also would permit the floor area ratio to be higher than regulated standard for attracting investors.

Moreover, the power-decentralization made the Shanghai Municipal Government lose control over urban development. Theoretically, Shanghai

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Municipal City Planning Administration supervises the city planning offices of local governments, but practically, when Shanghai Municipal City Planning Administration finds out problems and asks the Municipal Government to stop the local construction, it is sometimes too late. The gap between municipal and local governments causes inefficient urban governance and discontinuous planning strategy.

The economic transition symbolized a significant turning point in Shanghai, and even all of China. In market-oriented economies, urban space is used as a commodity to attract foreign investments, and the creation of an appropriate city image is urgent for promotional purposes. The original city landscape therefore faces unprecedented threat; old and deteriorated lilong blocks are not qualified to display the progress brought by economic reform, and the land they occupy is usually in a good location of the inner city. These current situations are all challenges to lilong preservation in Shanghai. In addition, even if the Municipal Government has the power to control urban development, actual supervision is sometimes hard to enact. The progressing Shanghai earns capital, urban development, and also gives rise to the issues of historic preservation, especially the preservation of lilong blocks.

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29 I bid.
Chapter Two  Preservation Strategies in Shanghai and The Current Condition of Lilongs

I. The evolution of preservation strategies in Shanghai

With the Chinese open policy and the consequent rapid development in the inner city, the issue of historic preservation has emerged because of pressures changing the urban landscape. However, since preservation strategies were conceived parallel with economic development, problems arise in approaching a more comprehensive preservation strategy.

The evolution of preservation strategies in Shanghai demonstrates the process of learning about the value of historic heritage. In the late 1980s, the government started to survey historic buildings. In the 1990s, historic buildings were recognized as an individual category which should be managed independently, and the government initiated the first project to redevelop and reuse the historic buildings on the Bund. During the beginning years of the 21st century, the first local preservation law was approved in Shanghai, and the concept of preservation further developed.

On November 10, 1988, the Ministry of Construction of the People’s Republic of China, together with the Ministry of Culture of the People’s Republic of China, proclaimed the notice of “Concerns with important survey and protection of historic modern buildings,” which marked the beginning of survey and preservation of historic modern buildings in Shanghai.30 The

30 Ying-Song Ling, Experiences of the Historical Early-Modern Architecture and Conservation in
definition of the “modern” period is from 1840 to 1949, especially between 1911
and 1945, a period that represents the period of prosperity of concessions with
the resulting historic significance mentioned in Chapter One. The
announcement initiates the beginning of the survey and the preservation of the
historically significant buildings in Shanghai.

In response to the announcement, eight government and academic
groups conducted surveys of important historic modern buildings and the
works of important architects in Shanghai and made the first list of significant
historic buildings which should be put under protection. In 1989, the list was
approved by Shanghai Municipal People’s Government, and the listed historic
buildings were protected by the law of cultural relics. There are various types
of buildings on the list, including hotels, theaters, hospitals, banks, and
lilongs.

At the end of 1991, Shanghai Municipal People’s Government issued
the “Measures for the preservation of historic modern buildings of Shanghai
City,” which divided historic buildings into three categories: nationally
important cultural relics, cultural relics of Shanghai City, and historic
buildings of Shanghai City. A noticeable point is that a new category of
“historic building” was set up for those buildings which are still in use; this
means the government has recognized the difference between cultural relics as
antiques and historic building as in-use space, although at that point the value
of heritage reuse was not yet well-understood. In the same year, the

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Shanghai—Approaching a More Comprehensive Evaluation. Shanghai: Tongji University,
31 There have been four lists of significant historic buildings in Shanghai until now.
32 Ying-Song Ling, Experiences of the Historical Early-Modern Architecture and Conservation in
33 Ying-Song Ling, Experiences of the Historical Early-Modern Architecture and Conservation in
Shanghai Municipal City Planning Administration edited the “Conservation Plan of Historic City Shanghai,” which suggested the planning and management about historic buildings, and mapped out eleven historic and cultural districts. It is the first official document identifying “historic and cultural districts” and shows that the concern about historic heritage has extended from individual buildings to a district.

In 1994, the “Interim Provisions of Shanghai Municipality on the Replacement of the State-owned Houses in the Bund” was promulgated. Previously, historic buildings on the Bund were used as government offices; adaptations started in 1995, changing the function of historic buildings from political use to commercial business. Private investors acquired the right to rent the historic buildings at a much higher price; they also provided a great amount of capital for the restoration or conservation of the buildings in order to take advantage of the historic value. After conversion, historic buildings on the Bund had abundant funds for preservation and maintenance, and the Bund area has become a financial and commercial district. More significantly, the transition was the official trial to make functional change and adaptive reuse for historic buildings, and further raised the value of the surrounding area. Since 1995, adaptive reuse of historic buildings has gradually become one of the major approaches applied to cultural heritage.


Ibid. 

Ibid.
Cultural Districts and Historic Buildings of Shanghai City” was carried out. This is the first local law to stipulate regulations about protection and adaptation of historic buildings in China.\(^{37}\) Twelve historic and cultural districts were confirmed and put under legal protection. Moreover, the regulations made clear the responsible executive departments and the general rules which should be obeyed when any changes are made to districts under protection.

Based on the Regulations, the Mayor of Shanghai City, Han Zheng, claimed that heritage preservation in Shanghai would take the most strict standard and management according to the law, and establish the most strict preservation system for historic and cultural districts and historic buildings.\(^{38}\) It shows official reorganization towards the significance of historic heritage.

The concept of historic preservation among the officials further developed in 2004. Mayor Han Zheng stated that “development and new construction is one kind of progress, but preservation and adaptation is also another kind of development” after a meeting about the situation of the historic and cultural districts and historic buildings in Shanghai.\(^{39}\) The government has now realized that there must be a balance between development and preservation, and an appropriate approach will combine them.

The evolution of preservation strategies in Shanghai shows a direction towards comprehensive understanding of historic heritage, and the legislation


\(^{38}\) I bid.

of the first local law for historic heritage preservation is significant not only in Shanghai but also in other provinces of China. The overwhelming development and new construction in the city indeed forced the decision-makers to learn how to deal with historic heritage, and the objects under protection are diverse, ranging from magnificent buildings on the Bund to residential lilongs, from individual buildings to historic and cultural districts. However, resolving the conflict between development and preservation presents a large challenge, especially when the historic significance of historic heritage is not well understood and the power of investing capital is predominant. Lilongs are typical historic buildings generally unappreciated by the government and threatened by capitalized investment.

II. The Adaptation and Redevelopment of Lilongs Today

The challenges of urban heritage preservation in Shanghai are described as of three characteristics by Zhang Song: (1). There is a large number of heritage located all over the city; the preservation task is challenging. (2). The maintenance of the buildings is seriously insufficient, and the need for improvement is urgent. (3). The ownership and the right to use the buildings is complicated; it is difficult to govern management. These are exactly the situations of lilongs nowadays.

Many lilongs have been demolished today and the blocks are waiting for new construction of high-rises (Fig. 2-1). Some lilongs have not changed a

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lot and are still full of residents, but the living environment and utilities urgently need improvement (Fig. 2-2). A few lilongs have been adapted with bathrooms in individual units, and with higher floor area ratio (Fig. 2-3).

![Fig. 2-1 a \* b](image1)
A lilong block in its demolition
(photo taken by author)

![Fig. 2-2](image2)
A lilong block without lots of changes in inner city of Shanghai (photo taken by author)

![Fig. 2-3](image3)
An adapted lilong block
(photo taken by author)

In the last scenario, it is more likely that the original residents can move back after the adaptation, and their living environment will be better. Moreover, the basic layouts of lilongs will be preserved, which means the historic feature of lilongs’ plans will not be destroyed. Therefore, some
scholars think adaptation is the best method for preserving lilongs since the living environment and utilities can be improved while preserving historic features. Nevertheless, others point out that sometimes adaptation changed the structures of the historic buildings and their scales. In order to increase the floor area ratio, sometimes floors or even new high rises have been added in lilong blocks.

A major problem of the adaptation of lilongs is that there must be high floor area ratio to ensure the returning residents of revenue from the adaptation work. As mentioned earlier, because of the historical background, lilongs have housed more residents than they should accommodate, changes of physical fabric of lilongs sometimes leads to the total transformation. Take Fu Kang Li (福康里) as an example of the transformation. Fu Kang Li is a lilong block planned to maintain the housing function for the residents after its renewal. The result of its renewal is that the original buildings were torn down and replaced by newly constructed multi-level buildings, although the new construction was designed according to the original lilong layout which maintained the plan of main alleys and secondary alleys (Fig. 2-4). The residents’ returning rate is 50%, and there is new green space up to 23%. It is good for the housing and environmental improving problems, but the historic features of the lilong are mostly gone.

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43 I bid.
Apart from being demolished, adapted and left exactly the way they are, there is still another possible way for the new life of lilongs, which is the redevelopment of lilong blocks; speaking more specifically, it is the redevelopment which changes the lilongs’ function of housing. Different from adaptation, changing functional redevelopment is more flexible and will potentially yield profit. And since there will definitely be some changes for the proposed new function, there is a lot to discuss about the preservation issues.

Xintiandi (新天地) and Tianzifang (田子坊) are two cases of lilong redevelopment. Being the most famous development case in Shanghai and the whole China, Xintiandi was redeveloped from the old shikumen residence and open to the public in 2002. Located in one of the busiest district in Shanghai, Xintiandi is planned to become a commercial and cultural center in this metropolitan city. The developer of Xintiandi, Shui On Group of Hong Kong, has rights to 128.5 acres of land in this area, which is going to be developed as a high-level commercial and residential community. The success of Xintiandi project even won the ULI 2003 Award for Excellent and the 2003 AIA Citation for Heritage.
Not far from Xintiandi, another block of old shikumen residence is now undergoing a different phase. Tianzifang, composed of shikumen buildings and factories, is becoming an artistic block. Beginning in 1988 after the alleys were re-paved, those shikumen residences were repainted and used as retail stores for art work, clothing or tea houses, while the factories are suitable as art studios. What is noticeable is that the buildings are not really changed, and the residents are renting their units out to retail business. The case of Tianzifang is different from Xintiandi because the force to change is bottom-up, not top-down. Moreover, the original fabric materials are mostly preserved. Many people think of Tianzifang as the “Soho” in Shanghai; it is also referred as a place of creative industry in the press.

The cases of Xintiandi and Tianzifang are both function changing redevelopments but performed by totally different forces; even so, they both succeeded in attracting people’s attention and visits, and thus raised the issues about the preservation of lilongs. The next two chapters will examine the two cases in order to explore the mechanisms, the processes and the effects of the two different patterns of redevelopment; the objective is to find out the advantages and disadvantages for these different methods of preserving lilongs.
Chapter Three  Case Study I: Xintiandi Project

Xintiandi is now the most famous commercial plaza in Shanghai. It is the product of a lilong adaptive reuse project which changed the residential function of lilong to a mixed commercial use. The Xintiandi project won the ULI (Urban Land Institute) 2003 Award for Excellence and the 2003 AIA Citation for Heritage. The Urban Land Institute described Xintiandi as “embracing the city’s past while melding it with the commercial realities of modern urban living.” The significance of the Xintiandi project is not only the impressive functional change and adaptive reuse of lilong housing, but also the close collaboration between the government and the developer. Understanding how this project worked and its effects is important to understand preservation in Shanghai.

I. The Birth of Xintiandi Project

Located in Luwan District, Xintiandi occupies two blocks in the Tai Ping Qiao area. The Tai Ping Qiao area was within the French concession and was located between the residential area and Chinese historical downtown in the 1930s. It was also a buffer area between the commercial district in the north and the shanty town in the south. (Fig. 3-1) Tai Ping Qiao was a crowded Chinese residential area because of its convenient location, but as the
population density increased, the environmental quality became worse. In the late twentieth century, the population in this 128.5 acre area was over 70,000, and the residences, mainly late shikumen lilongs, were seriously

Fig. 3-1 The location of the Tai Ping Qiao area
This was the illustration of land use in Shanghai in the 1930s. The Tai Ping Qiao area was located between the residences in French Concession, Chinese old city, the shanty town and the commercial district in the 1930s.

( original image from Shanghai Xintiandi, p. 20.)

deteriorated.\footnote{Chi-Hui Cheng. Xintiandi—Shanghai in the changing track: case study of the old city renovation in Tai Ping Qiao area in Shanghai. Taipei: National Taiwan University, Master Thesis, 2002, p. 4:9.} Therefore, considering the situation and the preferred location, Shanghai Municipal City Planning Administration approved a Tai Ping Qiao redevelopment plan in 1997.\footnote{Huang Ye, The Perception and Experience from ‘Xintiandi’: Its formation and impact on the new urban transformation in contemporary Chinese urban restructuring. Flanders: Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Master Thesis, 2004, p. 28.} The Xintiandi project was produced as a part of the Tai Ping Qiao redevelopment plan.

The Tai Ping Qiao redevelopment plan was affected by the capital shortage caused by Asian financial crisis. In the original plan, the developer, Hong Kong Shui On Group, intended first to construct new high-rise hotels in blocks 107 and 108. However, considering the high cost and late cost recovery after the burst of the Asian financial crisis, Shui On Group decided to begin with blocks 109 and 112, where they were to build lower level (four to five storey) commercial buildings, thus limiting their invested capital.\footnote{Chi-Hui Cheng. Xintiandi—Shanghai in the changing track: case study of the old city renovation in Tai Ping Qiao area in Shanghai, pp. 4:20-4:22.} (Fig. 3-2) The reason for lower level buildings in blocks 109 and 112 is that the Site of the First National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, an important national historic site of China, is located in this area. (Fig. 3-3) In order to preserve the historic site, the two blocks were planned for lower level buildings, and there would be compensatory floor area ratio in other parts of the Tai Ping Qiao area. Work of Xintiandi started in 1999 and finished in 2001; in 2002, the commercial Xintiandi plaza was opened to the public.
Fig. 3-2 The numbers of blocks in the Tai Ping Qiao area
(Xintiandi is located in the red blocks)
Shui On Group intended to develop block 108 and 107 on the upper left as first project, but ended to develop block 109 and 112 instead. (original image from *Shanghai Xintiandi*, p. 20.)

Fig. 3-3 The Site of the First National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party
(Photo taken by author)
The Xintiandi project was a case of close collaboration between the government and the developer, that is, between public and private actors.\textsuperscript{49} As mentioned in chapter one, after the “Regulations for Shanghai’s city planning” were approved, the state power was decentralized to district governments, and district governments took active roles in local development projects.\textsuperscript{50} In the 1990s, Luwan District Government and Shui On Group signed a contract: Luwan District Government agreed to lease the land in the Tai Ping Qiao area to Shui On Group piece by piece for different development projects. Shui On Group thus recommended Skidmore, Owings and Merrill LLP (SOM) to Luwan District Government to design a controlling detailed master plan of the Tai Ping Qiao area.\textsuperscript{51} (Fig. 3-4) The SOM plan was approved by Shanghai Municipal City Planning Administration in 1997.

In the SOM plan, blocks 109 and 112 (Xintiandi area) were supposed to contain newly constructed four- to five-storey buildings which would replace original lilong residences.\textsuperscript{52} As mentioned above, lower level buildings were planned because of the Site of the First National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. Actually, six blocks around the congress site (blocks 107-112) were originally included in Sinan Road Historic and Cultural District, which was mapped out in the “Conservation Plan of Historic City Shanghai” by the Shanghai Municipal City Planning Administration in 1991.\textsuperscript{53} (Fig. 3-5)


\textsuperscript{50} Please see chapter one, p. 17.

\textsuperscript{51} Chi-Hui Cheng, \textit{Xintiandi—Shanghai in the changing track: case study of the old city renovation in Tai Ping Qiao area in Shanghai}, pp. 4:12-4:15.

\textsuperscript{52} Huang Ye, \textit{The Perception and Experience from Xintiandi: Its formation and impact on the new urban transformation in contemporary Chinese urban restructuring}, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{53} Please see chapter two, p. 21.
Fig. 3-4
The SOM plan for the redevelopment of Tai Ping Qiao area
(image from *Shanghai Xintiandi*, p. 76.)

Fig. 3-5
The six blocks of Tai Ping Qiao area which were originally included in Sinan Road Historic and Cultural District.
(original image from *Shanghai Xintiandi*, p. 73.)
However, there were no legislated regulations about the management of historic buildings and no legally defined boundaries of historic and cultural districts before the “Preservation Regulations of Historic and Cultural Districts and Historic Buildings of Shanghai City” came out in 2003. Everything was flexible and could be changed if the government and the developer reached a mutual agreement. Finally, only blocks 109 and 112 remained as “cultural/residential/retail mixed use,” the other four blocks were changed to hotel, office and open space in the SOM plan.

Nevertheless, the proposed plan for blocks 109 and 112 was altered because of the architectural design team and chief designer, Benjamin Wood. Benjamin Wood is an American architect and had worked for Benjamin Thompson, who successfully renovated and combined commercial use in historic Boston Quincy Market. Benjamin Wood introduced the concept of “adaptive reuse” to the Xintiandi project, and suggested that rather than demolishing the original lilong buildings in blocks 109 and 112, it would be more appealing to maintain some historic fabric and emphasize shikumen features to preserve the unique local culture which would attract people all over the world. His idea was supported by Shui On Group, and thus the direction of the work on blocks 109 and 112 was confirmed. The two blocks were going to become a “new world” (the literal meaning of “Xintiandi”) displaying significant shikumen features while providing retail fashion stores and restaurants for visitors from all parts of the world.

In the collaboration of the government and the developer, a district-owned real estate company, Shanghai Fuxing Development

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54 Please see chapter two, pp. 21-22.
Corporation, became a shareholder in the developer. Although the interest was not large, Shanghai Fuxing Development Corporation played an important role in the communication between Luwan District Government and Shui On Group: it ensured that the government had enough information about the developer's work, and helped the developer in negotiating with the government about planning regulations.56

The mechanism of Xintiandi was the close collaboration of the district government and the developer. It is said that the Xintiandi project was the first case in which the government allowed a developer and foreign design companies to be involved in controlling detailed planning in China.57 Today, Xintiandi is the most famous spot in Shanghai and has many imitators throughout China. It is true that the Xintiandi project succeeded in commercial development, but what features will visitors perceive in Xintiandi?

II. Experiencing Xintiandi

The two blocks of Xintiandi are now called North Block and South Block. (Fig. 3-6) A main alley connects the two blocks from north to south. Most visitors enter Xintiandi from Tai Cang Road by the north end of the main alley in North Block. (Fig. 3-7) On the right side along the alley, there are renovated shikumen lilong buildings now housing coffee shops, restaurants, and bars. (Fig. 3-8) On the left side, the lilong buildings were adapted with

56 Please see footnote 7 and Huang Ye, The Perception and Experience from 'Xintiandi'- Its formation and impact on the new urban transformation in contemporary Chinese urban restructuring, p. 30.
Fig. 3-6

a. The directory map of Xintiandi (original image from the Xintiandi directory)

b. The overview photo of Xintiandi (image from Shui On Group website)
Fig. 3-7 Entering Xintiandi from the north end of the main alley.
(photo taken by author)

Fig. 3-8 The directory of North Block (original image from Xintiandi directory)

Fig. 3-9 Restaurant in North Block with modern decoration.
(photo taken by author)
modern annexes and now are also restaurants and bars. (Fig. 3-9) On the left part of North Block, several original secondary alleys were preserved; away from the main alley, some individual visitors wander through the beautified and quiet lilong houses. (Fig. 3-10) Continuing south along the main alley, a shikumen museum displaying an ideal lilong life setting is located at the end of North Block. (No. 29 in Fig. 3-6; Fig. 3-11) Across the main alley, the Site of the First National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party occupies the southeast part of North Block, and is now a memorial hall of the First National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. (Fig. 3-3)

Fig. 3-10
A secondary lilong alley in North Block
(image from Shui On Group website)

Fig. 3-11
The interior of the shikumen museum
(image from http://www.51766.com/img/shxt/157616768703.jpg)
Walking across Xing Ye Road, visitors enter South Block and encounter several renovated lilong buildings on both sides, which are mostly restaurants and art stores. (Fig. 3-6; 3-12) However, not more than 30 meters away from Xing Ye Road, two newly constructed buildings occupy the rest of South Block: compared to the renovated lilong buildings, the modern buildings look huge and modern. (Fig. 3-13) Inside the modern buildings, there are some restaurants, many fashion stores, a gym, and a cinema.

Fig. 3-12 The directory of South Block
(original image from Xintiandi directory)

Fig. 3-13 South Block
(photo taken by author)
Obviously, Xintiandi allows all kind of commercial activities in a somewhat historic lilong setting. It is interesting to look at how the historic features of lilong are presented. Because most of South Block is filled with new construction, it might be better to look at North Block for the display of historic lilong features.

According to the layout that shows the relationship before and after the work of Xintiandi project, the current main alley is the result of tearing down a few lilong buildings. (Fig. 3-14) Walking in the main alley of Xintiandi, what visitors see is an altered scale of lilong housing, unless they turn left to the preserved secondary alleys. Different from the main alley which is paved with granite, the secondary alleys are paved with bricks from demolished buildings. 58 Wandering in the secondary alleys, the outsides of the buildings were cleaned and maintained with their original look, while the interiors were changed and redesigned as restaurants and bars.

(Fig. 3-15)

Fig. 3-15
A secondary alley in North Block (image from Shanghai Xintiandi, p. 81.)

Fig. 3-14 This illustration shows the relationship and difference between the layouts of former block 109 and 112, and the latter North and South Blocks of Xintiandi. The black bold lines represent the layout of Xintiandi. (image from Shanghai Xintiandi, p. 78.)

The major historic feature is definitely the lilong stone gate, the literal meaning of “shikumen.” In fact, the logo of Xintiandi is a designed stone gate. (Fig. 3-16) The spectacular parts showing a complete row of stone gates (Fig. 3-17) in North Block are now an ice cream store (No. 15 in Fig. 3-6) and a restaurant (No. 24 in Fig. 3-6). In the renovation of this row of buildings, the roofs were taken off, reinforced concrete roof frames were added, and then the roofs were put back the way they were. The interiors of the original nine shikumen buildings were opened up for their new commercial functions. It is the “skin preservation” of lilong buildings.

Fig. 3-16 The logo of Xintiandi is a designed stone gate.

Fig. 3-17 The row of nine stone gates in North Block.
A. The original look of the stone gate row.
B. The renovation work of adding new roof frames.
C. The current look of the stone gate row.
D. The renovated interior for the use of restaurant and bar.
(image A, B, D from Shanghai Xintiandi, p. 85; image C taken by the author.)
Some of the preservation in Xintiandi becomes simply the display of certain historic features broken away from their original context. An example is the entrance of Vidal Sassoon Salon and Academy Shanghai. (No. 31 in Fig. 3-6; 3-18) The entrance gate was originally a gate of a lilong alley near its current location, and is now used as a decoration of the store entrance.

To sum up, visitors to Xintiandi will perceive the historic features of lilong buildings on three different levels: the original scale of lilong alleys, the well-preserved outside of stone gate row, and the singled-out alley gate as an attractive motif.

On the official Xintiandi website, the overview states that “Shanghai Xintiandi provided an answer for preserving the old architecture of Shanghai that would be representative of its historical and cultural heritage.......the blocks of Shikumen buildings, with their preserved original walls and tiles, give tourists a unique feel of walking the bustling Shanghai streets of the 1920s and 30s.” The historic features of shikumen lilong buildings are used as the primary attraction to the visitors; considering the success of Xintiandi, the attraction is appealing to the public, and has brought deep effects on

59 Please see Xintiandi official website: http://www.xintiandi.com/english/aboutus_2.asp. 42
III. Effects of Xintiandi Project

One of the prominent effects brought by Xintiandi is the rise in real estate prices in the surrounding area. In the SOM master plan model, the area south to Tai Ping Qiao Lake is planned for upscale residences named Lakeville. (Fig. 3-19, C) The first phase of Lakeville entered the real estate market in 2002, the second phase in 2008, and the third phase is now under construction. (Fig. 3-20) Before the Xintiandi project, the real estate price was about 5000 to 6000 RMB per square meter in the surrounding area. Now, the average price in Lakeville is 60000 RMB per square meter. The most rewarding benefit from the Xintiandi project to Shui On Group is undoubtedly the later real estate development in the Tai Ping Qiao area.

Fig. 3-19 The model of the redevelopment plan of Tai Ping Qiao area.
A. Tai Ping Qiao Lake and Park
B. Xintiandi
C. Lakeville
D. Corporate Avenue
E. Shui On Group Tower
(image from Xintiandi website)

60 Chi-Hui Cheng. Xintiandi—Shanghai in the changing track: case study of the old city renovation in Tai Ping Qiao area in Shanghai, 「新天地」，在轉軌中的上海 pp. 5:10.
Shui On Group was very clear in making Xintiandi and the surrounding area a place with a high standard of living for the elite. Vincent Lo, the president of Shui On Group, said in 1998: “for the sake of attracting excellent human resources within the country and overseas, Shanghai has to create a good environment for living. As an international finance and business center, Shanghai needs to create a gathering space for various activities in city center which provides fashionable shopping, dining, cafés, and recreation, as well as galleries and design offices.”

The target customers of Xintiandi are the professionals working in Shanghai, many of whom are foreign professionals who have much higher incomes than local Shanghainese. One of the restaurant’s introductions says: “The Bistro aims to be a ‘canteen’ for the

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61 Huang Ye, The Perception and Experience from ‘Xintiandi’: Its formation and impact on the new urban transformation in contemporary Chinese urban restructuring, p. 10.
executives working around Xintiandi, serving gourmet breakfast, homemade pastries, ice cream and dinner. The wine bar is targeting corporate executives to meet before and after dinner with quality chill-out lounge music. It’s also ideal for power breakfast meetings, product launches and a corporate meeting venue during lunch.62 In fact, the majority of the customers in Xintiandi are indeed professionals working nearby, and many of them are westerners. (Fig. 3-21) The precise consumer-targeting is ascribed to the selection of stores. The consumption standard of the restaurants and fashion stores in Xintiandi is much higher than local shops. A tall size black tea latte at Starbucks Coffee (No. 9 in Fig. 3-6) costs 28 RMB and a lamb pie at KABB (No. 2 in Fig. 3-6) costs 85 RMB, while the average service consumption expenditures per person was 4841 RMB a year in 2006.63 Even local Shanghainese who work in the international companies located just beside Xintiandi seldom consume drinks and food in Xintiandi.64

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62 Quoted from the introduction about Fountain restaurant in the 2007 winter directory of Xintiandi.
64 Information collected from an intern who worked for Gensler Shanghai in the summer of 2007.
A female clerk in her twenties working in Shanghai Museum Gift Shop beside Xintiandi (Fig. 3-6; 3-22) said: “Most of the visitors in Xintiandi are foreigners; local people will take visiting friends here for a cup of coffee, and girls usually come to Xintiandi once a month. This is more like a top-end shopping place, and that’s why Shanghai Museum wants to provide exhibitions information here.”65 A store owner in Dong Tai Road near Xintiandi (Fig. 3-23) said: “Xintiandi is too expensive! No one dares to go there!” 66

Obviously, even though Xintiandi has gained its success and fame, it is a very exclusive place for limited group of people, and not very accessible to most local residents.

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65 Interview on site on January 18, 2008.
66 Interview on Dong Tai Road on January 20, 2008.
In addition to the professionals and westerners, Xintiandi is also a must-see in Shanghai for tourists. Many tour groups are taken to Xintiandi by tour buses, and led by tour guides who introduce the renovation work of shikumen lilong buildings. (Fig. 3-24) Xintiandi is now the exemplar of the preservation of historic residences and the high quality of life in Shanghai.

Fig. 3-24 A Japanese tour group visiting Xintiandi. (photo taken by author)

However, creating this upscale area was accomplished by the relocation of the original lilong residents. Before the work of Xintiandi project began, the residents were relocated to suburban far away from the inner city of Shanghai. Many researchers have pointed out the absence of lilong residents from the Xintiandi project.67

IV. The significance of Xintiandi

A cruel aspect of the Xintiandi project is the inevitable relocation of lilong residents. In development projects which change the residential function, how to deal with the relocation of residents is a big issue. Although the developers spent nearly half of the investment on the relocation,68

67 See Chi-Hui Cheng (2002); Huang Ye (2004); Fulong Wu (2005).
68 Huang Ye, The Perception and Experience from 'Xintiandi' - Its formation and impact on the new urban transformation in contemporary Chinese urban restructuring, p. 30.
excluding the residents from the planning process caused criticism. However, in the pattern of area development motivated by the government and the developer, it is hard to find a way satisfying all the stakeholders and meanwhile keeping within budget.

Significantly, the Xintiandi project shows that the preservation of local lilong residences is worthwhile because it not only preserves local culture but also attracts thousands of outsiders who contribute to Shanghai’s economy. In other words, its commercial success makes the public accept the value of lilong preservation, especially in economic transitional China.

Nevertheless, the success of Xintiandi also causes the pursuit of making upscale commercial and residential areas. When asking about the future plans for lilongs in Luwan District, the officer of the Luwan district planning office said that most lilongs will be replaced by high rises; as to preservation, Xintiandi has preserved the architecture of lilong.\(^{69}\) It is true that a part of Xintiandi presents beautified lilong and some of its historic features. But under the preserved “skin” of lilong buildings, the living culture of lilong is gone.

Qiu Xiaolong, a Chinese writer who teaches in the United States and writes detective novels with Chinese settings, especially Shanghai, mentioned his experience taking two French journalists visiting Shanghai in an interview: “They said they wanted to see a more real China. Today we visited the old town walls; they felt interested in the crowded, outmoded houses besides the walls. They were interested in shikumen because one of my novels are about shikumen. Then we went to Xintiandi, but they were not attracted by it; they said it is a fake shikumen. They just like those shikumen filled with residents

\(^{69}\) Interview in the Luwan District planning office on January 17, 2008.
and the atmosphere of daily life there; they want to see something real.”

Like the French journalists, the female clerk of Shanghai Museum Gift shop also thought that although the shikumen in Xintiandi is great, but that that’s not the real look of shikumen.

Ironically, when talking about the design concept of Xintiandi, Benjamin Wood said: “It is real, not a fake!” Shui On Group emphasizes that Xintiandi, “the city’s living-room,” is “a window to the past and the future, to China and the world,” “where ‘yesterday meets tomorrow in Shanghai today.’” What is real to Benjamin Wood seems to be that of a real Shanghai in the present day, an elite plaza for shopping, entertaining and recreation for the new comers/outsiders.

The dispute over “what is preserved?” might be calmed down if we took the Xintiandi project as a simply development project. The historic features are used as an attraction to visitors, like the entrance gate of Vidal Sassoon Salon and Academy. Although people now notice the preservation of lilongs since the success of Xintiandi, the attached pursuit of commercial development and upscale residences has made lilongs disappear even faster.

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71 See footnote 20.
72 Chi-Hui Cheng. Xintiandi—Shanghai in the changing track: case study of the old city renovation in Tai Ping Qiao area in Shanghai, 「新天地」在轉軌中的上海 pp. 4-25.
Chapter Four  Case Study II: Tianzifang

Not far from Xintiandi, Tianzifang is another lilong block in the Luwan District experiencing redevelopment and has become a popular spot for visitors to Shanghai. (Fig. 4-1) However, the mechanism of the redevelopment activities in Tianzifang is entirely different from that in Xintiandi. In Tianzifang, the force to change is bottom-up, not top-down like the case of Xintiandi. It is very interesting that two places so near each other are being redeveloped with entirely different patterns, and that both are successful in attracting attention. Tianzifang is one of the few cases, if not the only case, demonstrating the power of the low level management to change the deteriorated lilongs in Shanghai.

I. What is Tianzifang?

What is called “Tianzifang” is a part of a lilong block in central Luwan District. (Fig. 4-2) In 2001, this area was named “Tianzifang” after an ancient Chinese painter recorded in Chinese history because the factory buildings in this area have been used as art studios since late 1998. This area, like the Tai
Ping Qiao area, was located near the boundary of French Concession, but was closer to Zaochar Bang, a former river which had became a road in the mid-twentieth century. (Fig. 4-3) Because of the proximity of the river, in
the 1930s, many small factories were set up here to take advantage of the convenient water transport. With the economical evolution, these factories stopped producing in the late twentieth century, and had been vacant until the change of function to art studios in 1998. Beside the factories buildings, a group of old style lilongs occupy the rest of the block. (Fig. 4-4) The mixture of factories and residences is one of the characteristics of Tianzifang and also created the opportunity for its redevelopment.
The surrounding areas of Tianzifang are also diverse. (Fig. 4-3) Rui Jin Road on the west side of the block was an important main street of the French Concession and is still a busy street nowadays; there have been garden villa residences along Rui Jin Road since the 1930s. Jian Guo Road on the north side housed many French departments and offices in the 1930s. Rui Jin Road and Jian Guo Road were important residential and governmental areas of the French Concession. However, south down to the former river Zaochar Bang, there were shanties and garbage yards. The area between the central part of the French Concession and the shanty riverside was filled with lilongs which were built only for basic living standards, among them the lilongs of Tianzifang.

In short, Tianzifang is surrounded by historically diverse areas and contains residential and factory buildings. Before the functional change starting in 1998, it was crowded with residents, and had a great deal of waste space from vacant factories, and there was a outdoor market along dusty Tai Kang Road, the south street of Tianzifang. In September 1998, the outdoor market was relocated into a factory building on Tai Kang Road, and Tai Kang Road was re-paved with blacktop. (Fig. 4-5) After that, the vacant factory buildings started to be used as art studios, and the redevelopment activities of the lilong block followed.

Fig. 4-5 Tai Kang Road. The yellow signage is where the market is located. (photo taken by author)
Today, Tianzifang is a place gathering creative industry, galleries, restaurants, coffee shops, and retail stores. Walking into the entrance gate on Tai Kang Road with a clear sign of “Tianzifang,” (Fig. 4-6) visitors will see plates indicating Tianzifang as a place for creative industry on both side walls. (Fig. 4-7)
Along the alley, there are former factory buildings are now used as retail stores, design studios and offices. (Fig. 4-8) On each factory building, there is a simple plate telling what the original factory was and its year of establishment. (Fig. 4-9) Also, a poster column near the entrance gate provides a place to publicize art and performance information. (Fig. 4-10)
These buildings now constitute the creative industry in Tianzifang, which was chosen by Chinese Creative Industry Annual Award Selection Committee as the number one creative industry park in Shanghai in 2005, and one of the best creative industry parks in China in 2006. (Fig. 4-11)

Nevertheless, other than the factory buildings, the lilong buildings here have another kind of atmosphere. Turning left to any secondary alley from the clustered design offices, visitors encounter various coffee shops, restaurants, and fashion stores while wandering along the narrow alleys with crowded old shikumen lilong buildings on both sides. (Fig. 4-12) One of the interesting things walking here is that visitors might find unexpected alleys on the corners,

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74 See Tianzifang Official Website: http://www.tianzifang.cn/.
and then turn to another lilong lane. All the shops are shikumen buildings and were originally used as residences. The exteriors of these residences did not change a lot; only the interiors were adapted decoratively for their commercial functions (Fig. 4-13), and there are some tables, chairs and benches placed in the alleys.

![Fig. 4-13 An adapted interior of a lilong building.](photo taken by author)

Different from the creative industry buildings, which constitute a place for creative professionals, these shikumen lilong buildings are popular among visitors. Many people take pictures of the decorated shikumen buildings while ambling around this lilong, and some of them pop their heads in every store in order to see the stylish interior. Visitors are obviously attracted by the special setting of the combination of the old lilong buildings and the new fashionable interior design.
Although Tianzifang is not yet as famous as Xintiandi for being a sight-seeing spot, Tianzifang has indeed attracted much attention as a special lilong block which has found its way for redevelopment. It is a special case, especially considering that its change has been driven by the lowest level of government organizations.

II. The Bottom-up Force of Tianzifang

In the government organizations of China, the street office is the lowest level. Street offices are responsible for managing local neighborhoods and providing basic civil services to communities. In the Luwan District, there are four street offices, and among them, Da Pu Qiao Street Office is the one in charge of the neighborhood of Tianzifang. The development of Tianzifang is closely related to the chief of Da Pu Qiao Street Office, Mr. Rong Fa Zheng, and the later executive chief of Tianzifang, Mr. Mei Sen Wu, who was designated by Da Pu Qiao Street Office.

In 1997, Rong Fa Zheng was designated as the chief of Da Pu Qiao Street Office, and in the next year, the office organized the relocation of the outdoor market of Tai Kang Road into a former factory building. In the following years, Mei Sen Wu joined Rong Fa Zheng to work for a new life for these vacant factory buildings.

The first step they took was introducing the vacant factory buildings to famous artists. The artists appreciated the real historical fabric and the spacious interiors; the vacant factory buildings were thought to be perfect

75 Because of the lack of publication, much information was learned by interviewing with Yanning Li, the executive researcher of Tianzifang and also a PhD student in the Department of Architecture of College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Tongji University.
places for their creative and design work. Yi Fei Chen, a famous painter, one of whose paintings was once sold at the highest price among contemporary Chinese oil paintings, and Deke Erh, a famous photographer in China, decided to adapt the factory buildings as their studios, and many other artists and design companies followed. This resulted in the romantic name of “Tianzifang,” the name of an ancient Chinese painter none of whose works survive and who is barely understood, adding a romantic and artistic aura to this old block.

Although the functional change of the factory buildings was going well, the land of this neighborhood, including the area of Tianzifang, was sold to a developer in 2000, and the original buildings were considered for demolition and replacement by high rises. The development plan is called Xin Xin Li Planning Project. (Fig. 4-14) Facing the threat of demolition, Rong Fa Zheng and Mei Sen Wu, along with the artists, tried to appeal for the preservation of the old factory buildings and lilong buildings. Mei Sen Wu also asked the research team of the College of Architecture and Urban Planning in Tongji University to investigate the architectural features and historical data of Tianzifang area in 2003.

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76 Information collected from the interview with Yanning Li.
Meanwhile, Xin Xin Li Planning Project met some problems. The construction of the Shanghai subway will pass directly across one block of the plan, and the project was thus delayed, although the block south of Tianzifang was already torn down and waiting for new construction. (Fig. 4-15) Mei Sen Wu brought the investigation data done by Tongji research team to the district government and tried to convince the officers of the value of preserving the old buildings of Tianzifang.

Mei Sen Wu intended to make Tianzifang a symbol of creative industry in Shanghai. He held a creative industry conference in Shanghai in 2004, and cooperated with the Institute of Economics, which is underneath Shanghai Academy of Social Science, doing research about creative industry. In 2006, he organized the design companies in Tianzifang as an Intellectual Property Rights Alliance, and Tianzifang became an Intellectual Property Protection Experimental Park in Shanghai. Mei Sen Wu promoted Tianzifang step by step and successfully presented it as a pioneer place of creative industry to the government and the media. The media now call Tianzifang the “Shanghai
Soho” for its artistic activities.

When the creative industry in Tianzifang was developing, the nearby lilong residents felt that there would be something different in their neighborhood. One story was told many times to the media. A resident saw that the factory buildings were being rented to artists and designers, so he started to fix up his own house on the ground floor of a lilong building. Before he finished his work, a costume designer visited him and wanted to rent his house as an exhibition studio. The monthly rent was 4000 RMB, and the designer hired him as the clerk for a monthly payment of 1500 RMB. The resident therefore had 5500 RMB income every month, which was more than ten times his monthly 400 RMB income while he lived there himself.77

This seems to be a standard example which Rong Fa Zheng and Mei Sen Wu told the media. Many of the lilong residents in Tianzifang have rented their houses out as studios, restaurants and shops since 2004. Today, a bulletin board of store recruitment information is placed in an alley close to the entrance. (Fig. 4-16) Individual residents who want to rent their houses

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77 This story has been reported by different journalists, such as Jing Lo of People’s Daily, September 11, 2006; Jing Xin Zhang of Shanghai Business Daily, September 19, 2006.
out can put contact information on the board. But in fact, Tianzifang Management Committee actually takes charge of the leasing process now. Potential tenants have to arrange the lease through the Committee. An important reason that the Committee takes charge of the leasing is the complicated ownerships of lilong buildings. As mentioned earlier, lilong buildings are crowded with too many families, and each family only occupies a small part of a floor. If a potential tenant wants to rent a floor of a lilong building for business use, there might be several different landlords and they might ask for different amount of rent. In order to avoid possible troubles and make the leasing process easier for potential tenants, the Committee takes over the actual operation of leasing.

Therefore, although the lilong residences are rented out individually and in the name of their owners, the leasing activities here are actually an organized redevelopment led by Tianzifang Management Committee, whose executive leaders are Rong Fa Zheng and Mei Sen Wu.

The success of the creative industry and the popular adapted lilong shops in Tianzifang really impressed the government, not only the Luwan District Government, but also the Shanghai Municipal Government. At the end of 2004, the Shanghai Municipal City Planning Administration approved the Xin Xin Li Planning Project and agreed to keep the creative industry park and surrounding old buildings. In other words, the Municipal Government agreed to preserve the area of Tianzifang.

A recent news report said that the Tianzifang Management Committee

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officially went public on April 1 this year (2008). That means the mechanism of redevelopment in Tianzifang was changed from private operation to government planning control, and the government now really wants to develop Tianzifang as a hot spot in Shanghai. The Luwan District Government will provide ten million RMB to improve the public facilities and maintenance in Tianzifang.

The changing force of Tianzifang is very unusual in Shanghai, not only because it is a bottom-up force, but also because that it is so successful that it changed the official plan and made the government actively participate in the redevelopment of the lilong block. The success of Tianzifang is due to wise strategies of place-making, understanding of the historic significance of the area, and appropriate adapted reuse. Rong Fa Zheng and Mei Sen Wu played important roles in this process.

III. The Tianzifang Place-Making Thoughts

Rong Fa Zheng and Mei Sen Wu’s ideas about what kind of place Tianzifang should present were clear while interviewing them. The following are key points of their thoughts about the place-making of Tianzifang.80

Preserving the Buildings is the Starting Point

Mei Sen Wu said that their motivation is to preserve the buildings, and they think that adaptive reuse is the best way to preserve them. In their
opinion, the buildings will be well maintained if they are still in use. “Simply displaying these shikumen buildings will result in deterioration made by visitors,” said Mei Sen Wu.

However, there is another reason for the functional transition. Mei Sen Wu mentioned that the density of residents had to be decreased; with fewer users, the buildings can be in a better condition. The functional transition definitely decreases the number of residents, and in the way of leasing the buildings to commercial business, the residents get enough money to live somewhere else. This seems to be a win-win situation for the buildings and the residents.

Mei Sen Wu also talked about the significance of the shikumen lilong buildings. “The buildings are not super beautiful, but they are the products of history, they were designed for living...[what is important is that] there is a historical context.”

Mei Sen Wu is very conscious that the original physical appearance makes an important part of the historical context, and he thinks this is a big difference between Tianzifang and Xintiandi. “Xintiandi is a fixed antique; the buildings have been moved and changed. It’s not real shikumen.”

A Peaceful Neighborhood Welcoming to All Kinds of Visitors

Another point both Mei Sen Wu and Rong Fa Zheng emphasized is that the residents have the right to choose whether they want to stay or to go. “This is a peaceful community; the residents, the stores, and the visitors get along well in this place...There is no pressure, everything develops naturally.”
They were proud of the peaceful atmosphere in Tianzifang, as well as of the fact that the residents have options. Undoubtedly, the residents in Tianzifang are in a better situation than other lilong residents in Shanghai because the latter usually encounter the threat of demolition, coercion to move, or fights with developers about compensation.

Moreover, with people still living here, Tianzifang is also a place for daily life. Walking around the lilong buildings, one might see an old man sitting in front of a shikumen door, an old woman washing vegetables in a balcony, or clothes hanging on every corner to dry. (Fig. 4-17) “We still have the lilong culture. The residents still play mah-jongg and Chinese chess in alley yards. When foreign visitors came, they even stood close to see the game!” Mei Sen Wu said with a smile, “Tianzifang is welcoming to all kinds of visitors. Even senior high school students came here to find some ’memory of past time!’”

The mixture of commercial business and lilong daily life is an unique attraction of Tianzifang, and this is especially clear when comparing it to Xintiandi.
The Bottom-up Development Resulted in Diversity

Mei Sen Wu and Rong Fa Zheng realize the developing pattern of Tianzifang is special, too. Rong Fa Zheng pointed out the consequences of the bottom-up development: “We have a diversity of products and shops. Everything is different; every store is decorated differently. We want the diversity of cultures.”

Rong Fa Zheng emphasized that the cultural presentation in Tianzifang is lively, not man-made. But they do have a particular expectation of the cultural presentation in Tianzifang: “We hope to be international. We have the preserved lilong buildings, but inside these buildings are companies from different countries and stores selling products from all over the world.”

Although Chinese companies and stores are the majority in Tianzifang, there have been business from other 13 countries so far. (Fig. 4-18)

Fig. 4-18 This poster tells the nationalities of the companies in Tianzifang.
(photo taken by author)
No Schedule for Development

When asking about the future plan of Tianzifang, they said that there is no schedule of development. It seems that they wanted to distinguish themselves from other developers and emphasized again that there is no pressure on the residents and the buildings. However, after this April when Tianzifang Management Committee became a government organization, the “no schedule” policy will probably no longer exist.

The current situation is that Tianzifang is having a bright future so far. Visitors can find different attractions here: shikumen lilong buildings, daily life of lilongs, design companies and art studios, and the peaceful neighborhood. To sum up, Tianzifang is becoming a hot spot in Shanghai.

IV. The Potential Future of Tianzifang, and Worries about the Future

Tianzifang now has a reputation that visitors who feel bored with Xintiandi will be attracted to Tianzifang. Esther, the owner of Teddy Bear Store and Restaurant in Tianzifang, (Fig. 4-19) said that there are many foreign visitors who prefer Tianzifang. Esther has a Canadian customer who has worked in Shanghai for four years but who dislikes Xintiandi and regularly visits Tianzifang.

Fig.4-19 Esther’s restaurant (photo taken by author)
“According to my observation,” said Mei Sen Wu, “there are only 30% of visitors of Xintiandi consuming on site, but in Tianzifang, 70% of visitors will stop and buy things.”

Nevertheless, there are still some issues in Tianzifang. First, although the physical fabric is well preserved, the interior of the buildings can be changed according to the tenants’ needs. Esther herself is an interior designer, and she designed her restaurant. “There are no guidelines for adaptive work, but the leasing contract says that the building has to be returned as it was,” said Esther. If there are no guidelines and regulations about the adaptive process of these diverse stores, there might be invisible dangers of the buildings’ physical condition, which is supposed to be the unique characteristic of Tianzifang.

Second, not all of the residents are happy about the current situation. Most stores occupy the ground floors of the lilong buildings, some also rent the second floors, and only few of them rent the entire buildings. Thus, the residents on higher floors find it hard to rent their houses out. It is said that most second and third floor residents prefer a redevelopment plan of the whole block which intends to replace the lilong buildings with high rises, because in that scenario, at least they will have compensation. But the truth is, the residents who have to stay also play an important role in Tianzifang; they provide the setting of daily life in lilongs. There is a hidden threat to the peaceful neighborhood causing by the different fortunes of the residents.

Third, although all kinds of visitors are welcomed in Tianzifang, not all of them can afford to consume here. The pursuit of international brands has
also resulted in international standards of price. The coffee shops and restaurants are almost as expensive as those in Xintiandi. Also, many stores in Tianzifang require their employees to speak fluent English. A new restaurant even announced the hiring information in English. (Fig. 4-20) In fact, this restaurant also has a branch in Xintiandi. No matter how friendly Tianzifang is to all kinds of visitors, the prices and the preferred language articulate who is really welcomed here.

Fig. 4-20 The hiring information of a new restaurant in Tianzifang. (photo taken by author)
Tianzifang is a special case of redeveloping a lilong block and old factories. By well organized strategies, the bottom-up force succeeded in saving the buildings, developing the base of creative industry in Shanghai, and finally making the government want to get involved. However, with opposite pattern of development, Tianzifang now seems to be having similar situations to those in Xintiandi. Does redeveloping lilong blocks means turning them into places enjoyable only by outsiders? In addition, although residents can decide whether or not they will rent out their houses, not many of them actually have potential tenants. The residents who stay don’t profit from the change going on in their neighborhood, but their daily life is important to make this neighborhood more attractive to visitors. Something is not balanced here.

But still, Tianzifang has brought new thinking about the redevelopment of lilong block and all kinds of historic buildings. Its experience will influence the place-making pattern in Shanghai and in China as a whole.
Chapter Five  Conclusion

“One day grandma called me. She told me that the newspaper said Neighborhood Da Zhong Li has been sold to Hong Kong [developer] by district government, [and] soon it will be demolished. In the city Shanghai where I lives, the whole neighborhood’s demolition and relocation is a quite common thing. When I heard this news, I can’t feel it common any more, because it hits home. Our old house is in Da Zhong Li. Da Zhong Li will be ‘quite commonly’ demolished, later it’ll becomes those shining skyscrapers. Now what I could do is that I take my camera to Da Zhong Li, which hasn’t became skyscraper yet. I want to ‘write’ my nostalgia through lens.”

--Haulun Shu, the introduction of his documentary film: “Nostalgia” (2006)

I. Inevitable Nostalgia (tangible/intangible)

Just as Haulun Shu said in Nostalgia, the demolition of lilong blocks has been quite common; however, to the original residents, it is definitely not “common.” The displacement of residents causes sorrow and hurt, even if there is compensation. Xintiandi and Tianzifang are two cases that avoid the demolition of lilongs when making development.

Nevertheless, in the case of Xintiandi, even though the lilong buildings were not totally demolished and were partly preserved, all of the original residents were still relocated, because this area was turned into a high-end consumer location for elites. The function of lilongs changed from residential to commercial, and the new commercial plaza is not affordable to the original
residents. The displacement is clear in the beginning.

The residents in Tianzifang might have better luck. The development in Tianzifang includes the participation of the residents, and the exteriors of their houses are maintained as well. But still, the changes going on in Tianzifang have caused difference among residents and the daily activities. Now there is the mixture of the traditional lilong life and a high standard consuming culture. Many visitors come to Tianzifang taking pictures, wandering around, and spending quality time in expensive coffee shops. According to the expectation of the Management Committee, Tianzifang is supposed to become an international creative industry and consuming place. Although the physical environment did not change drastically, living there is not the same.

No matter how the buildings are preserved, the tangible fabric or the intangible environment of lilongs are going to be changed through development, and the only difference is that how dramatic the changes will be. The displacement of residents is inevitable, because of the fact that too many people had lived in lilongs. This is a consequence of their history, and the residents’ nostalgia is inevitable.

II. The Trade-Off Between Development and Preservation

With the evolution of preservation concepts in Shanghai, Mayor Han Zheng stated that preservation and adaptation is also a kind of progress in 2004. This represents new thinking about preservation in Shanghai, but the truth is, making progress is the real point, especially when it comes to lilong
housing, which had been thought of as deteriorated and was not appreciated.

Compared to the demolished neighborhoods, the development of Xintiandi and Tianzifang reflect effort to prevent the destruction of lilong buildings. From my examination of the two cases, it is obvious that “making profits” during the development is the trade-off for preservation. Xintiandi has successfully increased the value of the surrounding areas, attracted investors, and become the show case of high quality consuming in Shanghai. Tianzifang has become a famous creative industry park not only in Shanghai but also in China as a whole by well organized place-making strategies; it is now a popular place for high standard consuming, too. And because of its success in attracting creative industry and consumers, the government supported its preservation.

Undoubtedly, the economic transition of China is crucial to the city’s development, which aims to attract investment for economic growth. Every element is considered as to whether it can make revenue and profits or not. Historic buildings are protected, but limited to magnificent buildings such as those on the Bund, or politically significant sites such as the Site of the First National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party and celebrities’ residences. Lilongs, the crowded housing for “little urbanites,” are not viewed as significant historic heritage in the transitional Shanghai.

Therefore, there must be a trade-off between economic development and the preservation of lilongs, and this resulted in the high living standard if the redeveloped lilong blocks.
III. Adapted Lilongs For Outsiders

“There is not one globalization but two – economic globalization and cultural globalization. For those few who recognize the difference, there is an unchallenged assumption that the second is an unavoidable outgrowth of the first. Economic globalization has widespread positive impacts; cultural globalization ultimately diminishes us all. It is through the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings that a community can actively participate in the positive benefits of economic globalization while simultaneously mitigating the negative impacts of cultural globalization.”

--Donovan Rypkema, 2007.\(^{82}\)

Xintiandi and Tianzifang are two examples that actively participate in the positive benefits of economic globalization through the adaptive reuse of historic lilong buildings, but with different patterns. Xintiandi was a top-down development led by the investors and the government, while Tianzifang was promoted by a bottom-up force motivated by the lowest government officials. However, the two cases are both facing the impacts of cultural globalization. The shops in Xintiandi are mostly international brands, and the objective of Tianzifang is to accommodate international creative brands and shops.

As a result, the redeveloped lilong blocks are now places preferring outsiders with dominant consuming abilities. After adaptive reuse, lilongs are not for the “little urbanites” any more. But in the case of Tianzifang, at least the residents are not driven out, they still have options.

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The economic and social transition Shanghai is experiencing today has brought back its international visitors and its old-time glory as a metropolis in the 1930s. Shanghai is still a compatible city which is one of the favorite destinations for the investors and tourists in the world, but it also is still a lost city which always seeks the appreciation of outsiders. The redevelopment of the lilong blocks in the inner city has demonstrated this, while sharing clear progression from “skin” preservation (Xintiandi) to “scale” preservation (Tianzifang) of the physical fabric of lilongs.
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