



Wanshou Palace at Nanchang Reproduction of the Past and Historical Consumption  
in Modern China

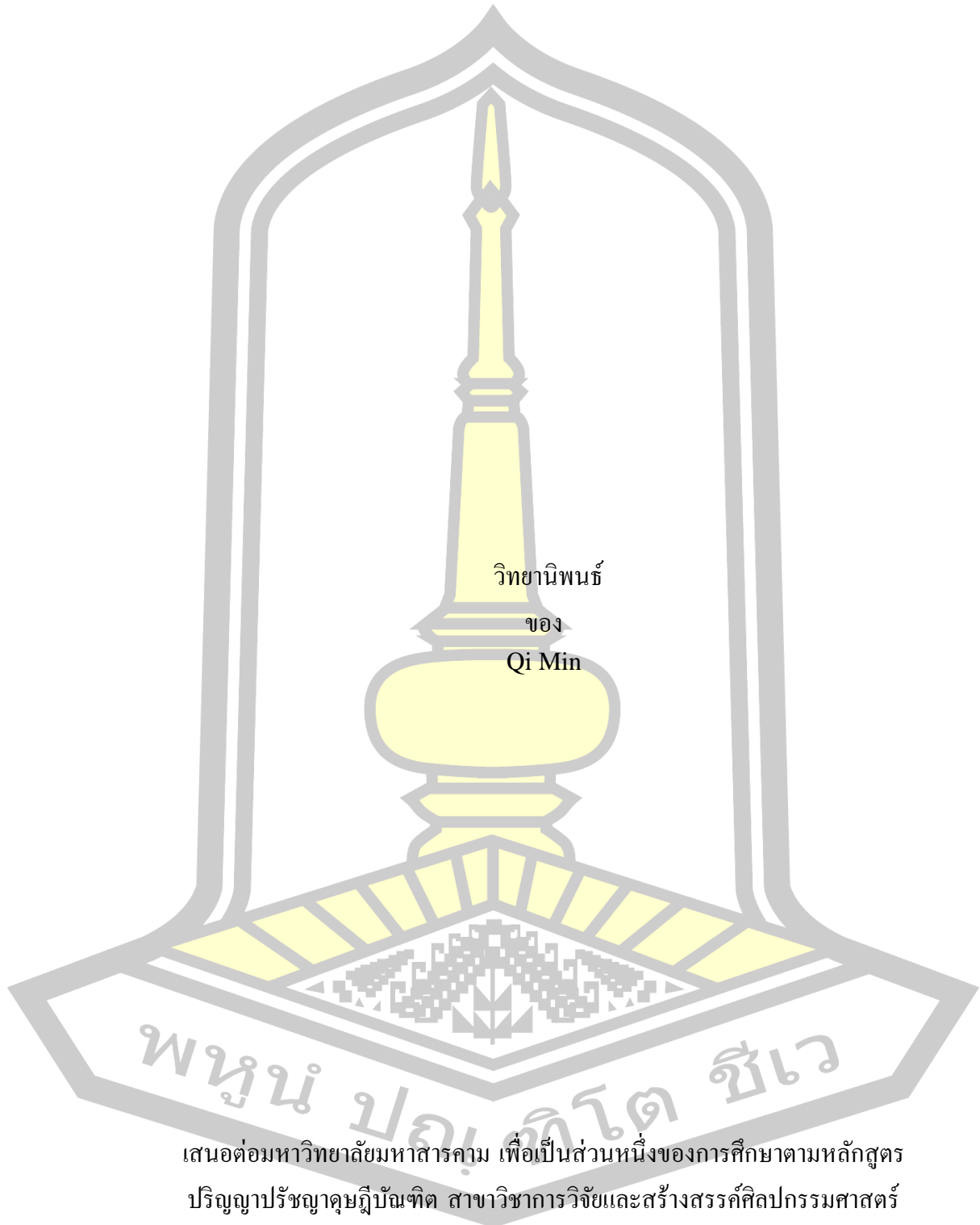
Qi Min

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Fine and Applied Arts Research and Creation

April 2025

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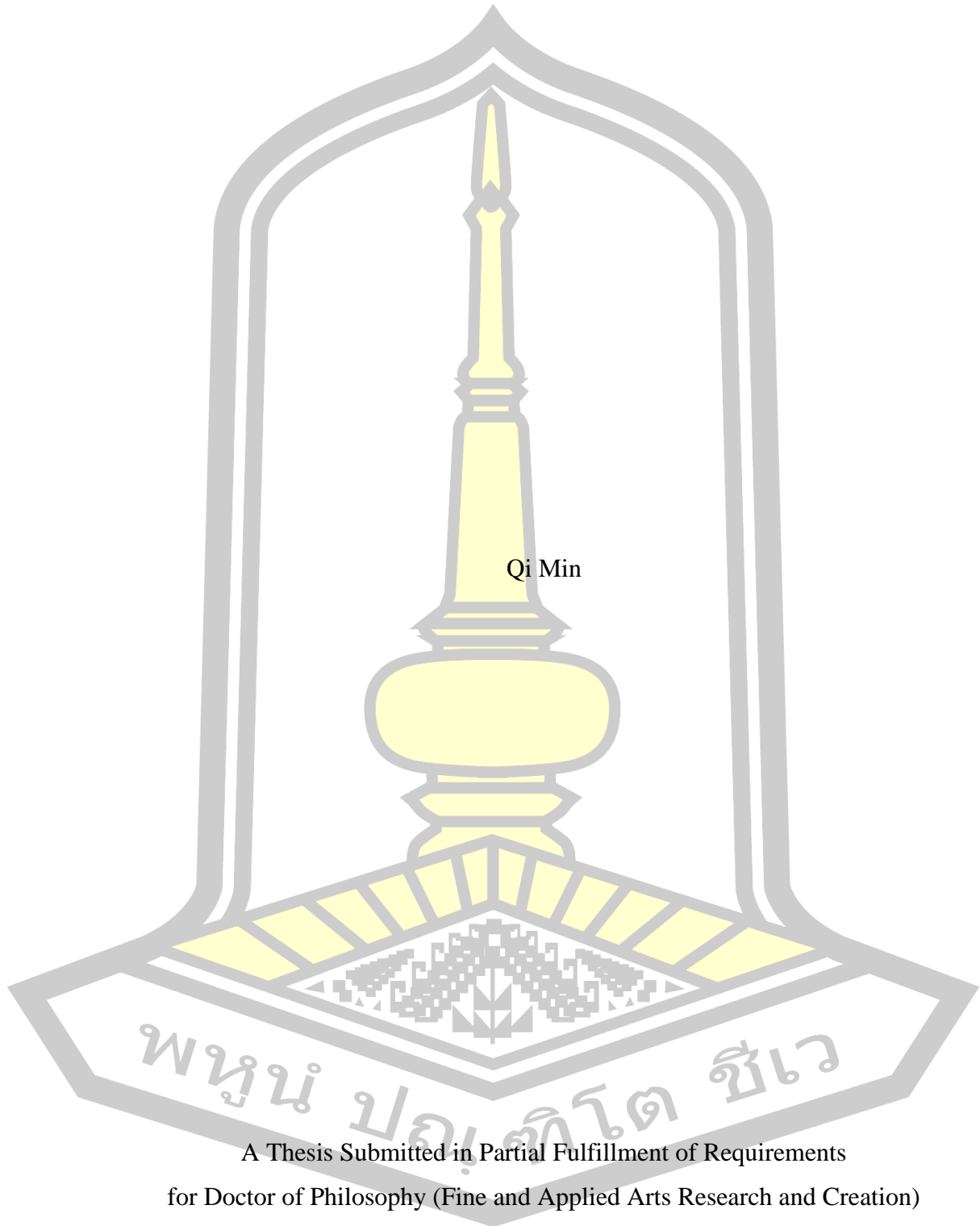


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Wanshou Palace at Nanchang Reproduction of the Past and Historical Consumption  
in Modern China



Qi Min

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
for Doctor of Philosophy (Fine and Applied Arts Research and Creation)

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The examining committee has unanimously approved this Thesis, submitted by Ms. Qi Min , as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Fine and Applied Arts Research and Creation at Mahasarakham University

Examining Committee

Chairman

( Li Yingfeng , Ph.D.)

Advisor

(Assoc. Prof. Sakchai Sikka , Ph.D.)

Committee

(Asst. Prof. Metta Sirisuk , Ph.D.)

Committee

(Assoc. Prof. Arkom Sa-  
Ngiamviboon , Ph.D.)

Committee

( Somkhit Suk-erb , Ph.D.)

Mahasarakham University has granted approval to accept this Thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Fine and Applied Arts Research and Creation

(Asst. Prof. Peera Phanlukthao , Ph.D.)

Dean of Faculty of Fine - Applied Arts  
and Cultural Science

(Prof. Anongrit Kangrang , Ph.D.)

Acting Dean of Graduate School

<b>TITLE</b>	Wanshou Palace at Nanchang Reproduction of the Past and Historical Consumption in Modern China		
<b>AUTHOR</b>	Qi Min		
<b>ADVISORS</b>	Associate Professor Sakchai Sikka , Ph.D.		
<b>DEGREE</b>	Doctor of Philosophy	<b>MAJOR</b>	Fine and Applied Arts Research and Creation
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### ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District to explore its dynamic relationship between cultural heritage preservation and Historical Consumption in the context of modern China. As an important cultural heritage in Jiangxi region, Nanchang Wanshou Palace not only witnesses the historical changes and social development of Jiangxi, but also embodies the unique charm of local culture. With the acceleration of modern urbanization, Wanshou Palace is facing the dual challenges of conservation and development, and how to realize the revival and sustainable development of cultural heritage while preserving the historical site has become the core issue of this study.

Research objectives of this thesis include 1.To study the historical and cultural connotations of Wanshou Palace and reveal its deep roots as a cultural symbol. To explore its central role in the cultural heritage and social life of Jiangxi region.2 .To analyze the reconstruction process of the Wanshou Palace site in Nanchang, and to explore the concept of reproduction of the past, and the practice of architectural restoration and neighborhood preservation in the context of modern China.3 .To analyze the role of popular Historical Consumption in the conservation and utilization of Wanshou Palace.4 .To analyze the dynamic relationship between the reconstruction of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District and Historical Consumption in the context of modern China.

Adopting qualitative research methods, this study has collected a large amount of first-hand information through historical document review, long-term field surveys and interviews. Combining historical document analysis, field surveys and interviews, this study restores the historical background of Wanshou Palace and provides an in-depth understanding of its practical application and impact in modern society. This multi-method integrated research approach provides the study with rich data support and a multi-faceted analytical perspective.

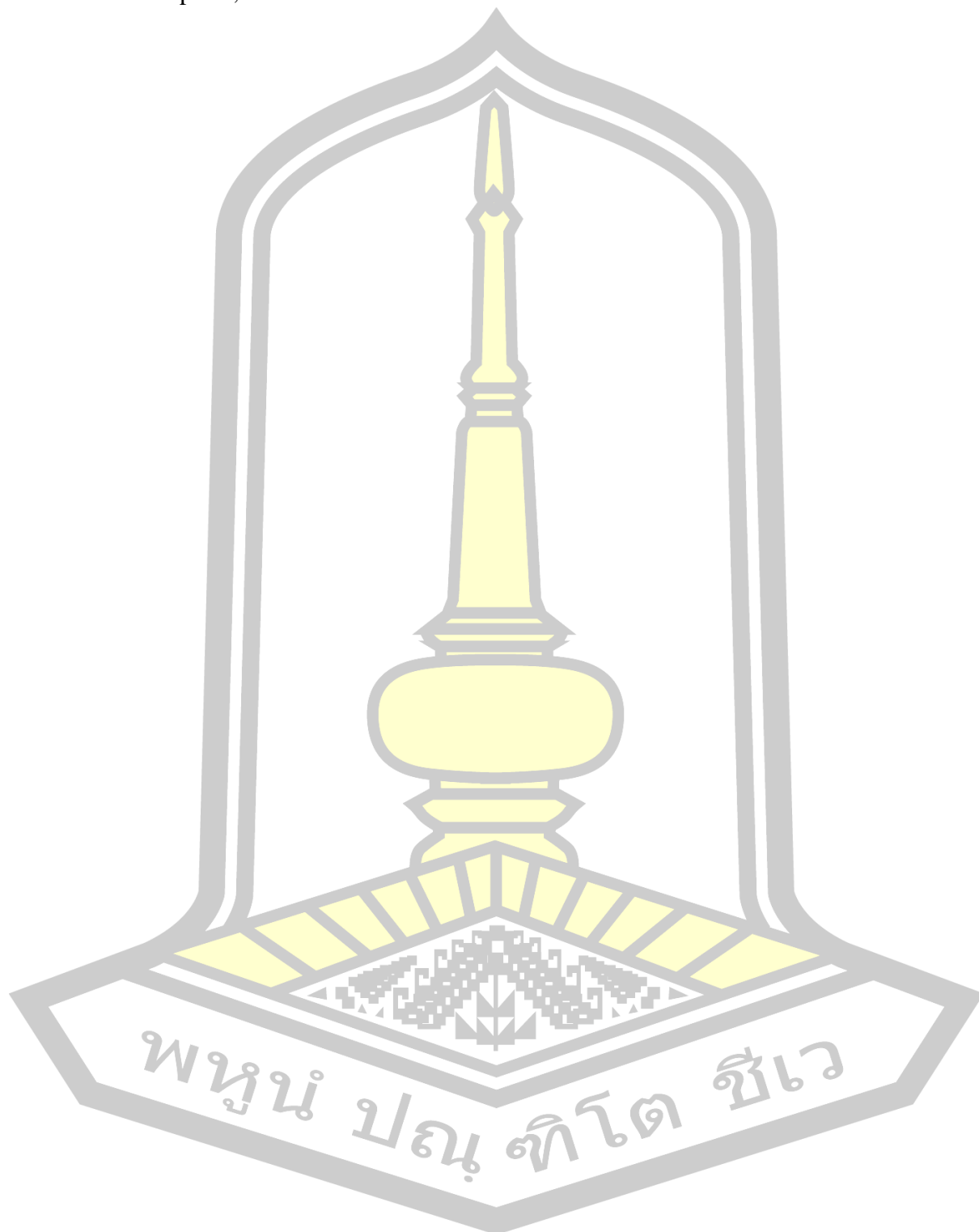
Research Findings: 1. Cultural Symbolism and Core Status: Nanchang Wanshou Palace is not only the center of Taoist beliefs, but also a historical witness to the activities of Jiangxi merchant gangs, reflecting the cultural identity of the local

society. Its architectural style combines elements of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, making it an important symbol of Gan culture and widely influential among Jiangxi immigrant communities around the globe.<sup>2</sup> Reconstruction and reproduction of the past: Based on historical archives and archaeological findings, the conservation practice of the Nanchang Wanshou Palace has reconstructed the Iron Pillar Wanshou Palace, restored its architectural texture and enhanced architectural safety by using modern technology. The conservation practice of Nanchang Wanshougong is based on historical archives and archaeological research results. Neighborhood conservation follows the principle of “repairing the old as the old”, and at the same time introduces modern commercial facilities, realizing the organic combination of historical site protection and adaptive use.<sup>3</sup> Role of Historical Consumption: Historical Consumption plays an important role in the conservation and utilization of Wanshou Palace. The popularity and attractiveness of Wanshou Palace has been significantly enhanced through tourism development, cultural and creative product design and the revival of traditional festivals. However, over-commercialization may lead to the symbolization and superficiality of cultural heritage, and a balance between conservation and development needs to be sought.<sup>4</sup> Dynamic Relationship and Balance: The conservation and development practice of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang demonstrates the combination of tradition and modernity. Through scientific conservation planning, rational functional zoning and dynamic management, Wanshou Palace has become a bridge connecting the past and present, tradition and modernity. This balanced strategy of conservation and consumption not only contributes to the enhancement of local cultural identity, but also provides valuable experience and inspiration for the conservation and utilization of other cultural sites.

By analyzing the process of Historical Consumption reproduction and consumerization of Nanchang Wanshou Palace, this study suggests that a holistic approach to heritage conservation be adopted for future heritage preservation, taking into account both the physical preservation of the site and the maintenance of its cultural significance. Encourage community participation in decision-making processes related to heritage sites to ensure that local voices and needs are represented. Promote the use of technology and digital media to document, interpret and communicate cultural heritage to make it more accessible to a wider audience. Foster sustainable tourism practices that respect the cultural integrity of heritage sites while providing economic benefits to local communities. Encourage interdisciplinary research to better understand the complex dynamics involved in the conservation and consumption of cultural heritage.

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Keyword : Wanshou Palace, Nanchang, Reproduction of the pas, Historical consumption, Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District



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I am grateful for the acquaintance and fate, and I wish all the best for the future and harvest more goodness and happiness!

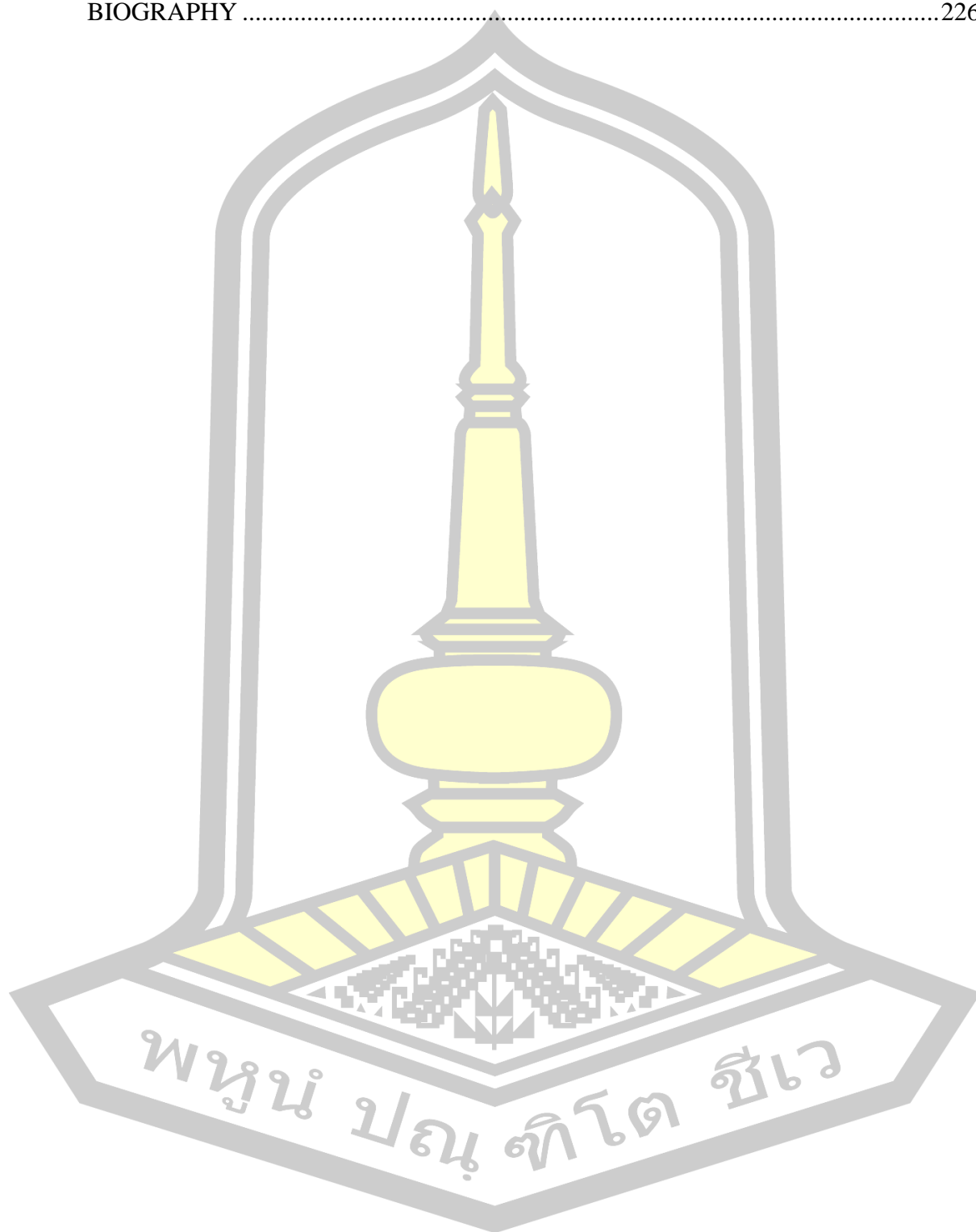
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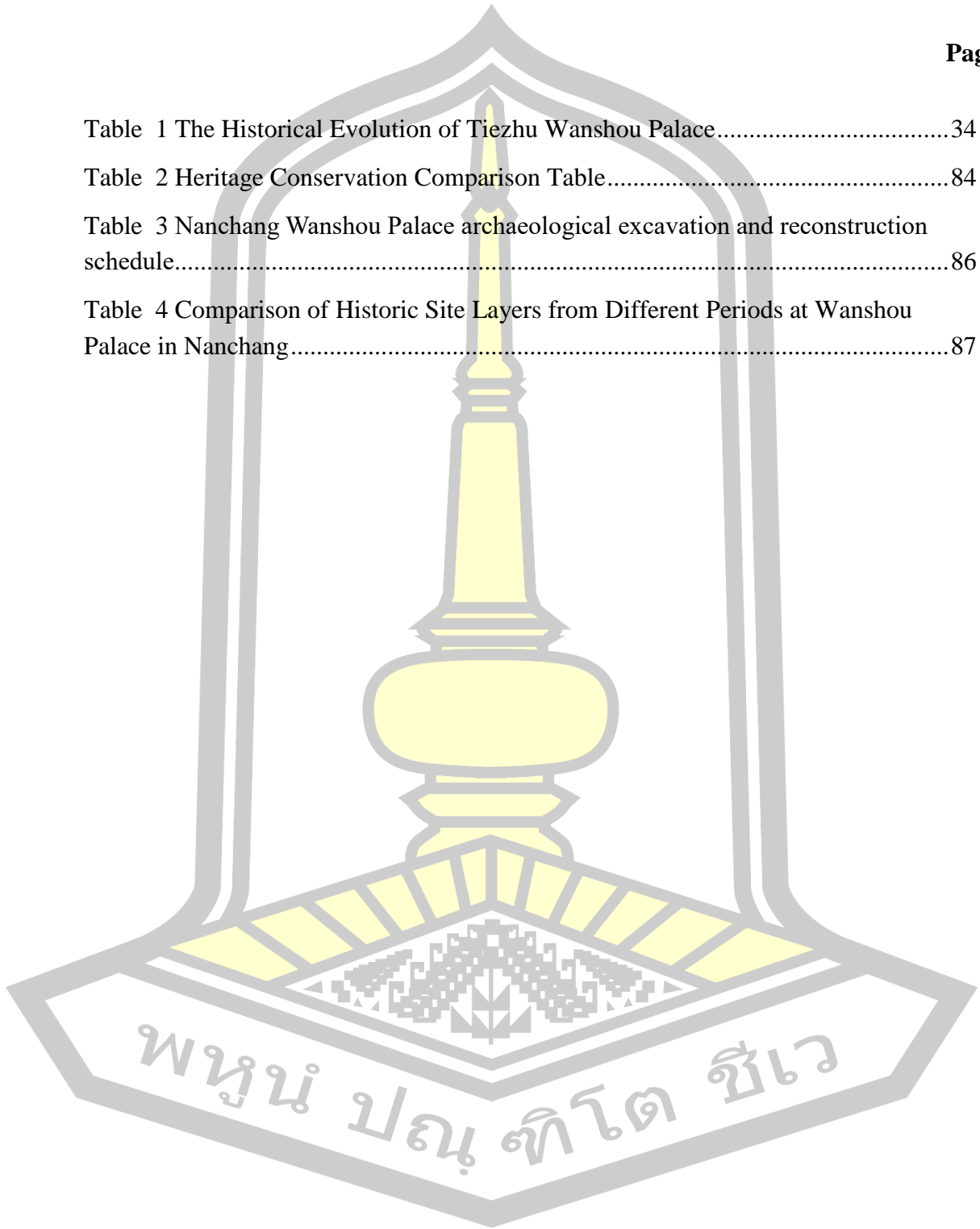
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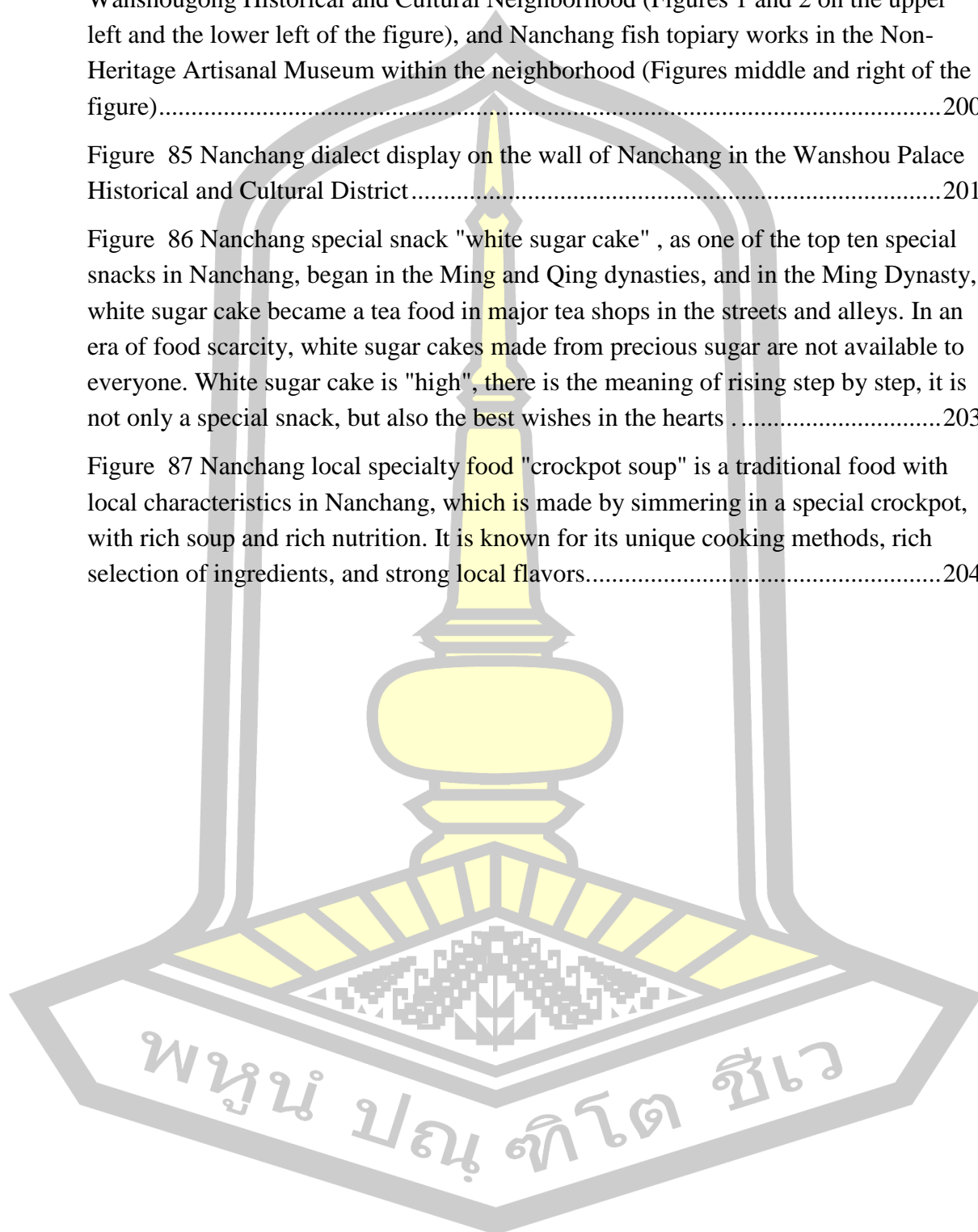
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# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

### 1. Background of Research

In the local society of Jiangxi, Xu Xun is honored as a deity who has made significant contributions to the people. The folkloric titles of “Blessed Lord of Jiangxi” and “Lord of Ten Thousand Blessings” bestowed upon him reflect the local people's recognition of his achievements and divinity (Zhang Zehong, 2018: 19). As a sacred place dedicated to Xu Xun, Wanshou Palace was not only the central hub of the Jingming Dao, but also a space for worship and public gatherings. It served as both a meeting hall for Jiangxi merchants and a focal point for folk religious activities. Originating in Nanchang, Jiangxi, Wanshou Palace's cultural influence has spread across the country and even to overseas Chinese communities. Wherever Jiangxi immigrants settled, Wanshou Palace buildings appeared, and wherever Jiangxi merchants traveled, Wanshou Palaces were created. As an important symbol of Taoist culture, Wanshou Palace has unparalleled influence in Jiangxi Province and is honored as a holy place of faith by locals, who express their deep respect for Xu Xun, the hero of water control. Its unique architectural style combines elements of Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism, and its intricate carvings and harmonious layout exude grandeur. In addition to serving as a place of worship, Wanshou Palace was an important place for Jiangxi immigrants and merchants, reflecting local culture and folk beliefs. Historically, Wanshou Palace spread to China and Southeast Asia with Jiangxi merchants and became a cultural symbol of Jiangxi. With over 1,700 years of history, Wanshou Palace has evolved into a cultural symbol of Jiangxi and an icon of Nanchang. Deeply rooted in Jiangxi and the wider Chinese culture, it has become a symbol of humanism, demonstrating significant cultural and historical values. As a central representative of Gan culture and an integral part of ancient Chinese guild culture, it is often referred to as the Jiangxi Guild Hall, Jiangxi Temple, or Yuzhang Guild Hall (Li Yan, Hu Wenli, and Wu Chengyang, 2009: 141).

Nanchang is located in the lower reaches of the Fu River and on the southwest shore of Poyang Lake, with a subtropical monsoon climate, four distinct seasons and abundant rainfall, and is a long-established land and water transportation hub. Nanchang is known as “the land of three rivers and five lakes, the south control of the south and the east coast”, and is the only provincial capital city adjacent to the Yangtze River Delta, the Pearl River Delta and the Golden Triangle of southern Fujian, and is an important corridor connecting these economic zones. Historically, Nanchang flooded frequently, and Xu Xun won widespread admiration when he returned to Jiangxi to organize flood control after resigning as governor of Jingyang County in Sichuan. Legend has it that the floods were caused by dragons, and Xu Xun was depicted as a mysterious figure wielding a sword to subdue these dragons. The rich environment and frequent floods in the Gandi and Poyang areas spawned the cult of Xu Xun. Two temples were built in his honor, which evolved into the current Tiezhu Wanshou Palace (located in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District, Xihu District, Nanchang) and Xishan Wanshou Palace (located in Xinjian District, Nanchang). Wanshou Palace is not only a monument to flood control, but also a place where generations of Jiangxi people have come to worship, drawing spiritual strength from the past and celebrating the success of their ancestors in creating a prosperous homeland. The legend of Xu Xun is considered the most

representative narrative of the Gan and Poyang cultures (Fu Xiuyan, 2014: 61).

Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, also known as Nanchang Wanshou Palace, was originally built in 312 AD in the Western Jin Dynasty, formerly known as Jingyang Shrine, dedicated to Xu Xun. Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is located at Guangrunmen, Xihu District, Nanchang City, adjacent to the Fujiang River, which was an important land and water pier and a famous Taoist temple. During many dynasties, the temple's incense never ceased. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Tiezhu Wanshou Palace evolved into a combination of a palace and a guild, and became the headquarters of thousands of guilds of Wanshou Palaces “all over the eighteen provinces of China” , and its status as the “Ancestral Court and the “General Palace” was then recognized as the “Ancestral Court” . Its status as the “Ancestral Court” and “General Palace” became more and more prominent and obvious. (Wang Donglin, 2001: 03) Therefore, Wanshou Palace is also known as the Jiangxi Guild Hall, a historical monument integrating Taoist culture and commercial culture, and a famous Taoist landscape. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Wanshou Palace was listed as a place of worship and was commonly built from Jiangxi to the whole country. Jiangxi generations of celebrities and scholars are extremely respected. Zeng Gong rebuilt this palace, and Wang Anshi wrote the “Record of Xu Jingyang Ancestral Hall” , which praised it as a palace that honors virtue and celebrates righteousness. (Yang Long, 2001: 103)

In spite of war and fire damage, Tiezhu Wanshou Palace was restored many times through official and private donations. Its importance is recorded in authoritative texts such as the Dictionary of Chinese Scenic Spots and the Encyclopedia of Chinese Religions. In 1915, a fire destroyed most of the temple, leaving only the statue of Xu Xun. The temple was eventually rebuilt in 1919 through public fundraising led by Chen Xiaomei and other local elites. However, it was completely demolished during the Cultural Revolution in 1967, and the site was later occupied by Nanchang No. 21 High School (Yang Long, 2001: 103).

As the ancestral temple of Wanshou Palaces around the world, Tiezhu Wanshou Palace has historically been a bustling center of religion, commerce, and folk culture. Its grand gates and vibrant commercial scene are still vivid in the memories of the old residents of Nanchang. The debate over whether to rebuild the Wanshou Palace on its original site continued for many years among citizens, government agencies, and scholars. In 2000, an academic symposium on the reconstruction of the Wanshou Palace was held, and scholars and citizens expressed their hopes for the reconstruction (Lei Zhengrang, Sun Hong, 2001: 177). In 2001, Xihu District proposed to conserve the Wanshou Palace Historic District, and it was approved. The preservation project was fully launched in 2003 and a special office was set up. By 2007, the project aimed to create a landmark cultural district in Nanchang, with an estimated investment of 1.5 billion yuan (Song Wanzhi, 2014: 04-05). At the beginning of 2021, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District was opened to the public after nine years of construction and an investment of 2 billion yuan (Ding Wenshi, 2023: 01). As a center for showcasing local culture in Jiangxi, the district explores the architectural, social and cultural tourism values of Wanshou Palace, contributing to the preservation of Nanchang's historic environment and the promotion of sustainable economic and social development.

In 2007, Wanshou Palace culture was included in Jiangxi Province's Intangible Cultural Heritage List. In February 2015, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District was

selected as one of the first batch of provincial-level historical and cultural districts in Jiangxi Province. Wanshou Palace architecture and Xunxun worship spread throughout China and the world, expanding their social and cultural functions. In modern society, Wanshou Palace culture has been given new roles, such as reproduction of the past, Historical Consumption, cultural identity and cultural tourism.

Globally, discussions on heritage reconstruction and sustainable development continue. Heritage is the physical expression of local cultural identity and is often a key driver of economic development. Due to its non-renewable nature, heritage conservation is crucial for future generations. At the 1996 Royal Geographical Society conference in London, the focus was on understanding the needs, motivations and experiences of heritage consumers as a key route to heritage tourism development. Professor Greg Ashworth of the University of Groningen highlighted the evolution of heritage from conservation to commercialization, emphasizing the relationship between heritage conservationists and local authorities (Frochot & Beeho, 1997: 271). While traditional consumption emphasizes individual participation, experience and cultural identity, Historical Consumption focuses on the social, economic and cultural context of past consumption practices.

As an important type of ancient Chinese architecture, the Wanshou Hall has become a research topic in the development of Jiangxi guilds. Over time, the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang has transformed from a Taoist temple dedicated to Xu Xu to a diverse cultural phenomenon and a cultural symbol of Jiangxi. This study focuses on the preservation of the Wanshou Palace as heritage, exploring the role of its replication and Historical Consumption in modern society. It also deals with the reconstruction and expansion of historic heritage buildings, emphasizing the importance of cultural and regional identity.

In recent years, Nanchang has undertaken a large-scale restoration and preservation program of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District, which has revitalized its ancient architectural features and established it as a new cultural and tourist landmark. The preservation and revitalization of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District has breathed new life into this ancient landmark, serving as a bridge between the past and the present, between tradition and modernity. Through renovation and redevelopment, Wanshou Palace has become a vibrant cultural and commercial center, fostering cultural confidence among its residents and providing visitors with a window into the history and Gan culture of Nanchang. The district was included in the first batch of national “Intangible Cultural Heritage Tourism Streets”, highlighting its importance in cultural preservation and tourism. As Nanchang's popularity as a tourist destination grows, Wanshou Palace has become a must-visit destination for “CityWalk” enthusiasts. As an important carrier of local cultural identity, architectural heritage is not only a historical asset, but also a cultural resource for future development. The Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District embodies this holistic approach to heritage preservation, which has led to reflections on the preservation of urban historic buildings.

This study analyzes the architectural and cultural value of Wanshou Palace from an anthropological perspective, emphasizing its importance to the cultural development of Jiangxi and China. It enriches future research in the field and provides a model for similar studies around the world. The results of the study also provide a reference for local governments to formulate policies related to the development of Wanshou Palace. Ultimately, this study contributes to the cultural preservation of Wanshou Palace, architectural

conservation, and the understanding of historical consumption trends in modern China.

## **2. Purpose of Research / Objective**

This study aims to explore the interaction between cultural heritage preservation and the construction of Historical Consumption Historic and Cultural District in the context of modern China, using the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District in Nanchang as the core case. There are four research objectives:

2.1 To study the historical and cultural connotations of Wanshou Palace and reveal its deep roots as a cultural symbol. To explore its central role in the cultural heritage and social life of Jiangxi region.

2.2 To analyze the reconstruction process of the Wanshou Palace site in Nanchang, and to explore the concept of reproduction of the past, and the practice of architectural restoration and neighborhood preservation in the context of modern China.

2.3 To analyze the role of popular Historical Consumption in the conservation and utilization of Wanshou Palace.

2.4 To analyze the dynamic relationship between the reconstruction of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District and Historical Consumption in the context of modern China.

## **3. Research question**

3.1 Study the history and cultural connotation of Wanshou Palace, focusing on its central role in the cultural heritage and social life of the Jiangxi region.

3.2 Study the archaeological excavation of the site of Wanshou Palace in Nanchang, focusing on how the design of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District reproduces the historical buildings and layouts, architectural techniques and folk traditions.

3.3 Analyze the phenomenon of Historical Consumption in the cultural district, and explore how popular historical consumption can play a role in the conservation and utilization of the area.

3.4 Analyze the case of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District, focusing on how to achieve the revitalization and sustainable development of cultural heritage while preserving historical sites.

## **4. Definition of Terms**

### **4.1 Wanshou Palace**

Wanshou Palace, also known as the “Jiangxi Hall”, is a place where Jiangxi people worship the “Lord of Fortune” Xu Zhenjun (Xun), whose belief is one of the most important traditional folk beliefs in China. Wanshou Palace is a symbol of the Jiangyue merchants doing business in the outside world. With the footprints of Jiangyue merchants to Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan and other southwestern provinces, Wanshou Palace is also “rooted” in these provinces, which has a greater impact on the local community. (Peng Zhijun, Ye Hong, 2016: 105)

### **4.2 Tiezhu Wanshou Palace**

Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, also known as Miaoji Wanshou Palace, is a Taoist building of profound historical and cultural value located in the Xihu District of Nanchang, Jiangxi Province. Wanshou Palace has been burned down several times during the wars, and has been repaired and rebuilt many times, with the costs coming from both official and private donations. (Chen Lili, 2020: 46) Tiezhu Wanshou Palace has attracted much attention for its

unique architectural style and rich cultural connotation. In recent years, Nanchang City has carried out large-scale restoration of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace and made it the core attraction of Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District. The neighborhood retains historical buildings in the style of late Qing Dynasty Gan-style houses and combines modern cultural and tourism concepts to become a comprehensive area integrating cultural display, tourism and commercial activities.

#### **4.3 Nanchang Wanshou Palace**

In this study, Nanchang Wanshou Palace is specifically referred to as Tiezhu Wanshou Palace. There are three Wanshou Palaces in Nanchang, including Tiezhu Wanshou Palace in Xihu District, Xishan Wanshou Palace in Xinjian District and Xianghu Wanshou Palace in Xianghu District. Tiezhu Wanshou Palace and Xishan Wanshou Palace are of historical origin, which are recorded in relevant historical documents and image materials. Xianghu Wanshou Palace was built in 2004 under the uncertainty of whether and when the Nanchang Tiezhu Wanshou Palace could be rebuilt, and is not included in this study.

#### **4.4 Xishan Wanshou Palace**

Xishan Wanshou Palace, full name Yulong Wanshou Palace, located in Nanchang Xishan Town, located in the foothills of Xishan Mountain, both mountains and forests, rivers and lakes, the characteristics of the natural environment is superior, the composition of the elements of the scene is rich, for the creation of the “pot of heavenly caves” provides the spatial conditions, but also embodies the “back to basics to return to the truth” Taoist thought. (Wang Miqiang, Yu Yiliang & Zhou Yang, 2024: 89) According to legend, after he had accomplished his mission, his whole family “uprooted the house and ascended to heaven”, and later generations built a shrine to commemorate the place where he ascended to heaven, which was initially called the Xu Xian Ancestral Hall. It was initially named Xu Xian Shrine, and has been renamed and rebuilt many times, gradually developing into a large-scale religious complex. The Wanshou Palace Temple Festival is a national intangible cultural heritage, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors every year. The festival begins on the 20th day of the 7th lunar month and ends on the 1st day of the 9th lunar month, lasting for 40 days.

#### **4.5. Xu Zhenjun Faith**

Xu Zhenjun faith is one of the most influential folk beliefs in Jiangxi, and its central figure, Xu Xun, was a Taoist priest in the Jin Dynasty who was later honored as “Xu Zhenjun”. Xu Xun was born in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, and served as the magistrate of Jingyang County in Shu, known for his honesty and love for the people. After he abandoned his post and returned to his hometown, he organized the townspeople to control the flooding, which was so effective that he was attached to the hero of “Chopping Jiao and Locking the Dragon” by the people. After that, Xu Xun was worshipped as the god of water, and his beliefs were gradually formed and widely spread, and he was later worshipped as the ancestor of the Jingming Dao that emerged in the Song Dynasty, and was honored as “Xu Zhenjun”. Because his deeds of cutting down the dragon to rid the people of harm were widely spread, the people worshipped him, thus forming the belief of Xu Zhenjun. Xu Zhenjun's belief is the most influential folk belief in Jiangxi, and he is known as the Lord of Blessing by the people of Jiangxi, and he is the only one who enjoys this title in the civil society of Jiangxi. (Wang Dan, 2011: 1)

#### **4.6 Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District**

Nanchang Wanshougong Historical and Cultural District is located in Xihu District, Nanchang City, Jiangxi Province, Nanchang Government in 2013 Wanshougong Historical and Cultural District renovation project, is one of the top ten cultural key projects in Nanchang City, but also an important cultural tourism project in Jiangxi Province. The block covers an area of about 80 acres, with a total construction area of about 145,000 square meters, and is composed of three parts: historical residences, commercial blocks and Wanshougong religious and cultural area. In the middle of the Ming Dynasty, there was a saying in the Nanchang Wanshou Palace area that "merchants are like clouds, goods are like rain, ten thousand feet are trampled, and there is no cold soil in winter". In the twelfth year of Tongzhi in the Qing Dynasty (1873), the streets and alleys in the Wanshougong block have been formed. (Ding Ying, 2024: 22) As an important historical landmark in Nanchang, Wanshougong Historical and Cultural District has witnessed the urban development and changes of Nanchang from ancient times to the present, and the block was officially opened in February 2021.

#### **4.7 Nanchang**

Nanchang is a famous cultural city with a long history, since the Han Gaozu five years (202 BC) since the city has a history of more than 2,200 years, known as Yuzhang and Hongzhou in ancient times, it is the seat of county governance, county government and state governance in previous dynasties. Since ancient times, land and water transportation has been developed. Nanchang means "prosperity in the south", "prosperity in the south" and "prosperity in the south of Xinjiang". After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Nanchang, as the capital city of Jiangxi Province, rapidly developed into a city with important political, economic and cultural status. Since the reform and opening up, the pace of urban construction and economic development of Nanchang has accelerated, and it has become the center of commerce, finance, and education in Jiangxi. (Huang Yafen, 2024: 14)

#### **4.8 Reproduction of the Past**

Heritage is recognized as a material or immaterial existence, and the processes of production and reproduction are unique. The production of heritage is essentially a process of "making heritage", while reproduction is a process of continuous construction. This reproduction is not a simple duplication, but a modern reproduction of the past, adapted to the needs of modern society. In Kevin Walsh's *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World*, he explores the concept of "reproduction of the past". "Walsh points out that with the commercialization of the museum and heritage industries, the past has been packaged and reproduced in ways that are often superficial and one-sided. He criticized this simplistic reproduction of the past, arguing that it can distance people from their own heritage and prevent us from gaining a deeper understanding of the cultural and political context of the present.

The heritage industry has often been discussed with reference to a few well-known and spectacular examples. This trend belies the fact that the heritage representation has successfully expanded into many places, employing greatly varying levels of media sophistication. (Kevin Walsh, 1992: 109) Walsh advocates that museums should go beyond the mere function of display and help audiences better understand cultural heritage through more in-depth educational and interactive approaches, thereby promoting cultural identity. In a postmodern context, Walsh emphasizes the need for museums and heritage institutions to

revisit their role and avoid reducing the past to a symbol of Historical Consumption, but rather to enable audiences to engage with and understand History in a more holistic way through diversified narratives and presentations.

#### **4.9 Historical Consumption**

Historical Consumption is a broader concept that can encompass how people consume historical resources in modern society in a variety of ways, including visiting historical sites, watching historical dramas, and participating in historically-themed events. The term also emphasizes how history as a cultural product is accepted and utilized by the general public, and how this act of consumption affects people's perception and understanding of history. British historian Jerome de Groot introduced the important concept of Consuming History in his book *Consuming History : Historians and Heritage in Contemporary popular culture*. According to Groot, the process by which history, as a cultural product, is consumed and experienced by the general public profoundly affects our perception of popular culture and historical practices. This consumption not only includes visiting museums and historical sites, but also covers a wide range of forms such as watching historically-themed movies and television productions, participating in historically-themed activities, and even exploring history through social media and the Internet. Consuming History is an important and engaging analysis of the social consumption of history and offers an essential path through the debates for readers interested in history, cultural studies and the media. (de Groot, 2009:N.P.)

#### **4.10 Modern China**

Since the 20th century, Modern China has experienced profound social change and rapid development, a period that stretches from “Modern China” after the Opium War of 1840 to the socialist modernization of the People's Republic of China after its founding in 1949. As a critical period of rapid social, political, economic and cultural transformation, Modern China has witnessed brilliant achievements in national construction, as well as dramatic changes in the lifestyle and cultural landscape of the Chinese people.

### **5. Scope of Research**

#### **5.1 Research area**

##### **5.1.1 Research Scope**

The main research object of this study is the Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District. The research area is based on the architecture of Wanshou Palace, and involves many aspects of culture, politics, tourism, festivals, historical consumption, and so on.

##### **5.1.2 Research sites**

The spatial scope of this study focuses on the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District in Nanchang. It delves into the preservation of cultural heritage, the reproduction of the past and the construction of Historical Consumption history in this neighborhood in the context of modern China. The core of the neighborhood, the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, carries a rich historical memory and cultural significance as a symbol of traditional Chinese religious beliefs and local history and culture. The research sites is based on the history and culture of Wanshou Palace, and involves a variety of aspects such as cultural heritage preservation, Historical Consumption, Tourism Development, Festivals and Events, Architectural Styles, and Social Identity.

## 5.2 Time

### 5.2.1 Time period for conducting research.

The time span of the research in this thesis will look back at the history of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang, from the establishment of the Palace during the XiJin Dynasty to the contemporary era, in order to explore its cultural evolution and social impact. The period of focus for the study is modern China to the present (late 19th to 21st centuries), as this period has experienced dramatic changes in Chinese society, including the decline of the late Qing Dynasty, social changes during the Republican period, cultural policy adjustments after the founding of New China, and the development of cultural heritage preservation and Historical Consumption history since the Reform and Opening Up.

### 5.2.2 Historical period in research.

This paper will study the process of Nanchang Wanshou Palace from its emergence to its modern conservation and development, which is divided into four stages:

(1) The period of origin and foundation (312-1295): In 312 of the Western Jin Dynasty, the Jingyang Ancestral Temple appeared for the first time, and then continued to develop in the Tang and Song Dynasties, laying the foundation of the Wanshou Palace.

(2) Prosperous Period of Song, Yuan and Ming Dynasties (1296-1852): During the Song and Yuan Dynasties, Nanchang Wanshou Palace saw the peak of its development. The architecture of this period made remarkable breakthroughs in style, volume and layout, and the high quality and scale of the building reflected a high level. Ming and Qing dynasties, with the wave of immigrants from Jiangxi and the rise of Jiangyou merchants, Wanshou Palace continued to expand outward.

(3) the period of continuation and change (1853-1978): from the Qing Dynasty to the reform and opening up before the war and political factors on the Wanshou Palace had a far-reaching impact. Although Wanshou Palace was rebuilt several times, it was finally destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. However, the status of Wanshou Palace as a symbol of local history and culture was preserved.

(4) Period of Reproduction and Revitalization (1970s to the present): In the modern era, the government began to pay attention to the protection and development of Wanshou Palace culture and to explore its cultural value. Through a series of protection measures, the historical and cultural features of Wanshou Palace have been effectively protected. Meanwhile, through rational development and utilization, Wanshou Palace has become an important historical and cultural tourist attraction in Nanchang.

In general, the development process of Nanchang Wanshou Palace is a concentrated manifestation of the history, culture and humanity of the city of Nanchang. It has gradually evolved from a small Taoist building into a landscape with profound historical and cultural heritage, which has experienced many twists and turns, but it is still well protected and inherited under the efforts of the people of Nanchang.

## 5.3 Unit of Analysis

The study will analyze the restoration and redevelopment of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District and the planning of the Wanshou Palace Block, in which the Historic and Cultural District provides the foundation and background of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District, and study how the restoration and redevelopment of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace in the block reproduces the past preservation methods and how the Spring

Festival-based festivals and activities influence the tourists' consumption of the history and the dissemination of the culture of Wanshou Palace and the development of the Wanshou Palace.

## **6. Research Methodology**

Qualitative research methodology will be used in this study, which is based on comprehensive literature analysis and key informant interviews. Descriptive analysis qualitative research means defining the qualitative methodology based on the objectives and the preservation of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District site, the reproduction of the past and the history of consumption of the historic and cultural district after the opening of the street. The study uses inductive knowledge approach, principles and characteristics of qualitative research, data collection methods, concepts, theories and hypotheses of qualitative research.

Data sources: information collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentary research

### **6.1 Research Populations**

#### **6.1.1 Experts and policy makers**

Mei Lianhua: Former Chief Cultural Advisor of Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District. As a senior expert in the field of culture, Mr. Mei has in-depth understanding and rich practical experience on the historical and cultural background and conservation strategy of Wanshou Palace.

Guixiang Wang: Design Leader of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District Rehabilitation Project Mr. Wang has a professional technical background and extensive project experience in architectural restoration and historic district planning.

Li Zheng: Head of Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District Management Co., Ltd. Mr. Li is responsible for the overall operation and management of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District, and has a comprehensive understanding of the commercial development and cultural promotion of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District.

Hu Yan: Head of daily operation and promotion of Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District, Ms. Hu is responsible for the daily operation and promotion of the district, and has a deep understanding of the market positioning and visitor experience of the district.

#### **6.1.2 Community Members and Stakeholders**

Residents of Nanchang: As local residents of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District, they have deep emotions and unique cultural memories of the Wanshou Palace, and are able to provide first-hand information about the neighborhood's changes.

Visitors to the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District: the perspectives of tourists are crucial to understanding the cultural appeal and tourism value of Wanshou Palace. Their feedback helps to assess the effectiveness of the cultural communication of the neighborhood and the visitor experience.

Staff of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District Operation and Management Co., Ltd: These staff members are directly involved in the daily operation and management of the district, and are able to provide detailed information on the efficiency of the district's operation, the organization of cultural activities and visitor services.

Scholars of Wanshou Palace Culture Research: Scholars have provided theoretical support and academic perspectives for the historical and cultural research of Wanshou Palace through academic research and literature analysis.

Mainstream Communication Media and Individuals of Wanshou Palace Culture: Media and cultural workers have had a significant impact on the dissemination and public perception of Wanshou Palace culture through news reports, social media and cultural activities. Their perspectives and experiences contribute to the understanding of the communication path and influence of Wanshou Palace culture in modern society.

## **6.2 Research Tools**

**In-depth Interviews:** In-depth interviews with key informants and informal informants to obtain detailed information about the conservation, reproduction of the past and Historical Consumption of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District.

**Participant Observation:** Obtaining first-hand data through field visits to the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District and Xishan Wanshou Palace, observing the related architecture, decorative styles, spatial layout, and circulating folklore.

**Literature research:** systematically comb through thematic books, academic literature, local histories, chronicles, etc. related to Wanshou Palace in Nanchang, and explore the connection between the literature content and the historical influence data by combing with image data analysis. **Image and multimedia data analysis:** analyze audio data, slides, images, video materials related to Nanchang Wanshou Palace, as well as labels, advertisement banners, maps, text logos, etc., to provide multi-dimensional data support for the research.

## **6.3 Data Collection**

**6.3.1 Literature research:** obtain data through domestic and foreign books and journals, systematically sort out existing research results, and lay the theoretical and historical foundation for the study. The main data sources include libraries and archives, which have preserved a wealth of Wanshou Palace historical archives, policy documents, and materials related to the conservation of historical sites in modern China.

**6.3.2 Fieldwork:** Field visits were made to the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District in Nanchang and the Wanshou Palace in Xishan, where observations and records were made of the relevant architecture, decorative styles, spatial layout, and folklore passed down. Focus on collecting information on the excavation of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, historical and cultural information of Wanshou Palace, as well as data related to the architecture, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the unique style of Wanshou Palace architecture and its cultural connotations.

**6.3.3 Formal Interviews:** With Mei Lianhua, the former Chief Cultural Advisor of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District in Nanchang, as the focus of the interviews, in-depth dialogues were conducted around the redevelopment process of the Wanshou Palace site and issues related to the renovation of the Historic and Cultural District, in order to obtain key historical information and policy background information.

**6.3.4 Informal Interviews:** Through informal interviews with tourists of Wanshou Palace in Nanchang, to understand tourists' perception of Wanshou Palace's popularity and cultural value, and to explore the path of dissemination and promotion of Wanshou Palace. The goal of the informal interviews is to obtain relevant information on cultural consumption behavior and historical perception from the public's point of view, and to assist in the study of the cultural dissemination mode and the degree of public participation in Nanchang Wanshou Palace.

## 6.4 Data Analysis

This study adopts qualitative research methods, combining literature and text data analysis, image and multimedia data analysis, fieldwork data analysis and comprehensive analysis to systematize and interpret the data. Through the two main concepts of the reproduction of the past and the history of consumption, the study reveals the multiple meanings of Nanchang Wanshou Palace as a historical and cultural symbol in the context of modern China, and explores the reproduction of the past, the dissemination paths, and the characteristics of the history of consumption of its historical heritage preservation in the context of modern China.

## 6.5 Research presentation

6.5.1 Research report: The results of the research will be presented in the form of a research report, describing in detail the research process, the results of data analysis and the conclusions of the research.

6.5.2 Pictures and interview data: the collected pictures and interview data will be analyzed descriptively to show the key findings of the research process.

6.5.3 Paper Publication: The research results will be published in journals indexed by Scopus, an international journal, in order to expand the influence and academic value of the research.

## 7. Literature Review

As the iconic cultural heritage of Nanchang, the capital of Jiangxi Province, Nanchang Wanshou Palace is not only a carrier of local beliefs and historical memories, but also a typical case study of cultural heritage preservation and Historical Consumption in modern China. This study collects and analyzes literature on the theme of “Nanchang Wanshou Palace: Reproduction of the Past and Historical Consumption in Modern China,” with the aim of exploring the historical connotations of Wanshou Palace culture and its role in modern society.

Wanshou Palace is an important part of Jiangxi's excellent local traditional culture, with a long history, rich connotation and unique characteristics. Wanshou Palace is not only a place to worship Xu Zhenjun (Xu Xun), but also a platform for integrating the history and culture of Jiangxi, local customs and the spirit of Taoism, forming a culture with distinctive regional characteristics (Yuan Honglan, 2023 : 78). The culture of Wanshou Palace covers a wide range of fields such as politics, economy, culture, rituals, folklore, and art, and was selected as one of the second batch of provincial intangible cultural heritages in Jiangxi Province in 2007 (Lai Yongfeng and Liu Xing, 2022 : 007). This cultural phenomenon not only has a far-reaching impact in Jiangxi, but also spreads to the whole country and even overseas through Jiangxi immigrants and Jiangyou merchants, becoming an important cultural symbol connecting the global Chinese community. The Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District is located in the Xihu District of Nanchang City, and is the only relatively intact historical district remaining in the ancient city of Nanchang. Although the characteristics of the ancient city of Nanchang have almost disappeared, the Wanshou Palace-Guangrunmen (site) still retains its spatial pattern, traditional street names, and commercial and residential buildings from the early Republic of China, which still reflect the prosperity of

the city in the past (Wan Fang, 2011 : 59). The preservation and renovation of this neighborhood aims to continue the historical memory while promoting the sustainable development of the neighborhood. As a microcosm of Nanchang's commercial prosperity, the spatial pattern of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District truly reflects the unique traditional cultural landscape of Nanchang City (Chen Pan, 2017 : 30). Since the 1990s, the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District has been in gradual decline due to aging businesses, traffic congestion, and fire hazards, etc. In 2013, the Nanchang government launched the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District construction project, with the intention of recreating the historical landscape through preservation and redevelopment, and combining it with the modern commercial and cultural needs to make it a new cultural landmark and tourist hotspot in Nanchang (Lai Yongfeng and Liu Xing, 2022 : 007). In the Jiangxi Cultural Blue Book: Wanshou Palace Cultural Development Report (2018), all aspects of Wanshou Palace culture are analyzed in depth, and specific proposals for protection, restoration and development are put forward. Future research could further explore the deep value of Wanshou Palace culture and explore its dissemination and influence in the context of globalization. Scholars believe that Wanshou Palace culture, as an intangible cultural heritage, should realize sustainable development through scientific archaeological excavation, conservation measures and rational development (Mei Lianhua, 2018 : 136). This process involves not only the restoration of ancient buildings, but also the overall planning of the surrounding historical and cultural neighborhoods. The restoration and reconstruction of historical sites has always been an important topic in the field of cultural heritage protection. On the one hand, restoration and reconstruction can protect and pass on history and culture, and provide a place for academic research, tourism and educational activities; on the other hand, this process may destroy the original site structure and characteristics, and trigger controversy over historical interpretation and cultural ideology (Anne E. Grimmer and Kay D. Weeks, 1995 : 78). Therefore, in the restoration process of historical sites, it is necessary to balance the relationship between conservation and utilization, original appearance and innovation, respecting the original features and cultural values of historical sites, while taking into account the needs of the society and the requirements of sustainable development, as pointed out by Kevin Walsh in *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World*, which states that the restoration of historical sites should be carried out in a manner that is consistent with their original characteristics. *Post-Modern World*", Kevin Walsh points out that modernization has alienated people from their own heritage, but the boom in museums and the heritage industry has fostered interest in the historic environment (Kevin Walsh, 1992: 109).

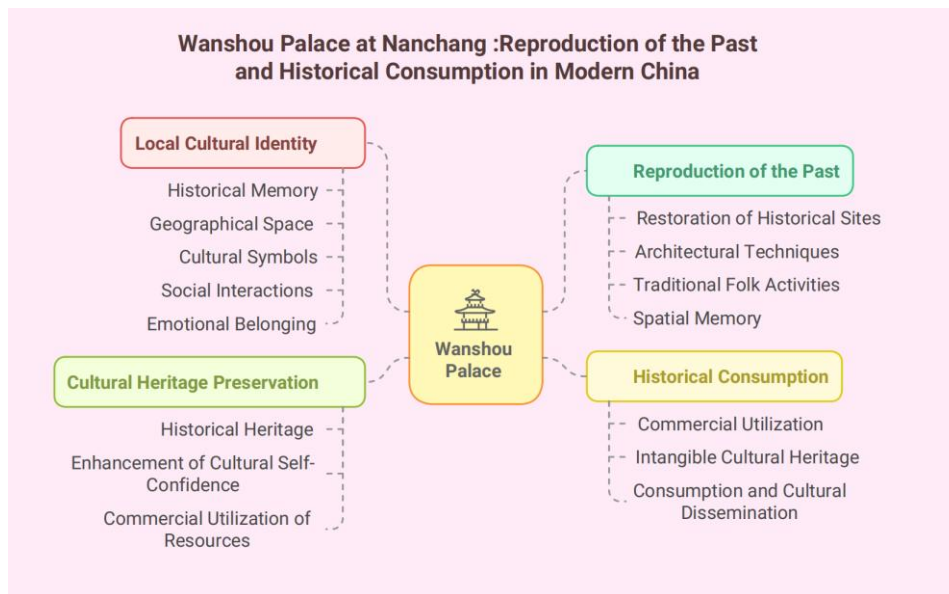
In China, the construction of heritage involves the interaction of complex narratives, power relations and socio-political agendas. The government shapes heritage narratives through Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) to reinforce political legitimacy and national identity (Wu, C, 2023 : 1243-1260). Heritage is not only about the past, but also the memory of the past, which is a cultural process that helps people understand history and engage with the present through the act of remembering (Smith, 2006 : 44). The phenomenon of Historical Consumption has also had a profound impact on cultural heritage preservation. Historical sites have become places of tourist consumption, influencing the public's understanding of history. With the development of the commodification of history, more and

more people are exposed to history through material media, thus forming personalized historical narratives and experiences (Jiang Zhushan, 2019 : 133). Jerome de Groot in *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture*, explores the changing nature of Historical Consumption, especially the impact of new technologies, different ways of experiencing and historical controversies on historical consumption (de Groot, 2009 : 26). This phenomenon has not only shaped people's perceptions of history, but also posed new challenges to the preservation and utilization of cultural heritage. Modern China has experienced profound social, economic and cultural changes since the fall of the Qing Dynasty in the early 20th century. This period witnessed China's transition from a feudal imperial system to a modern nation-state, and underwent a complex process from revolution to reform (Goldman & Fairbank, 2006 : 166). Changes in the political system, economic restructuring, and socio-cultural evolution combined to influence the function and significance of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang (Svensson, 2006 : 1-16). The continuous transformation of modern China is reflected in the dynamic reconfiguration of social, cultural and spatial meanings, and traditional buildings and spaces are gradually given new functions and meanings (Wu, 2009). The restoration process of Nanchang Wanshou Palace is not only a reproduction of local history and culture, but also reflects the complex tension between globalization and locality in modern China.

To summarize, Nanchang Wanshou Palace and its cultural phenomenon are both an important case for cultural heritage preservation and a key object for the study of Historical Consumption and social transformation in the context of modern China. Through a systematic study of the culture of Wanshou Palace, a deeper understanding can be gained of how modern China can meet the needs of contemporary society and realize the sustainable development of cultural heritage while preserving historical memory. This study will analyze the core position of Wanshou Palace in the cultural heritage and social life of Jiangxi region by systematically sorting out the historical lineage and cultural characteristics of Wanshou Palace, exploring the phenomenon of its preservation and consumption in modern society, and revealing the interactive relationship between cultural heritage preservation and historical consumption.

#### **8. Concept, Theory and Conceptual framework**





With the support of a series of related policies, Wanshou Palace has achieved protection and development, and the number of people who know Xu Zhenjun's followers and tourists to Wanshou Palace continues to grow. The framework of this study is to take Nanchang Wanshou Palace as the research text, reproduction of the past and Historical Consumption as the research concept, and the research background is modern China.

Figure 1 Conceptual framework diagram of the dissertation

Source : Drawn by Min Qi in December, 2023.

## 9. Research plan

This study adopts qualitative research methods, mainly descriptive analysis, focusing on Nanchang Wanshou Palace, focusing on the study of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace and its historical and cultural districts. By combing and analyzing the socio-historical and cultural relationship between the past and present, this thesis explores the characteristics of its reproduction and consumption as a cultural heritage in the modern Chinese context. This study comprehensively applies literature research, architectural anthropology, fieldwork and other methods, combined with theoretical analysis and field research, and gradually constructs a complete research framework for the Reproduction of the Past and Historical Consumption of Wanshou Palace.

9.1 Literature Research Methods: Comprehensively analyze domestic and foreign academic literature, and trace the historical origin and theoretical evolution of related concepts. Through the method of literature review, the formation, development and research direction of the concepts of "Reproduction of the Past " and "consumption history" are systematically sorted out. Compare the relatively scattered status quo of China's "Reproduction of the Past " and "consumption history" research, and reflect on the international research results. This thesis constructs a partial theoretical framework to clarify the applicability of "consumption history" in the context of modern Chinese cultural heritage, and provides theoretical support for the study of the cultural significance of Nanchang

Wanshou Palace.

9.2 Art Anthropology Methods: From the perspective of art anthropology, combined with field research, this thesis reveals the historical and cultural value of Nanchang Wanshou Palace and its change process. Focus on the origin and development of Wanshou Palace, and focus on its position in Jiangxi's local culture. This thesis studies the geographical distribution of Wanshou Palace in Jiangxi Province and its functional transformation in different historical periods. This thesis analyzes the changes of the festival activities of Wanshou Palace in the context of modern Chinese Chinese, and discusses the role of festival activities in local cultural identity and modern consumption. The field research focused on the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace and the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District, and investigated the historical evolution of their architectural forms, cultural activities and social functions. Research on the redevelopment and utilization of the Wanshou Palace site, and explore its new functions and cultural significance in modern society.

9.3 Fieldwork and comparative research: Through fieldwork and regional comparison, this thesis analyzes the characteristics and spatial significance of the architecture of Nanchang Wanshou Palace, and reveals the dynamic process of its Reproduction of the Past and Historical Consumption. Field observation was conducted in the historical and cultural district of Nanchang Wanshou Palace, and the architectural form, decorative style and spatial layout of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace and its surrounding areas were recorded. Combined with the buildings of Wanshou Palace in the surrounding areas of Nanchang (such as Xishan Wanshou Palace), this thesis analyzes the similarities and differences of architecture in different regions, and explores the interactive relationship between its history and local culture. This thesis studies the spatial function of Wanshou Palace in religious beliefs, civil communities, and local economy, and explores its cultural significance as a carrier of "Reproduction of the Past" and "Historical Consumption".

## **10. Benefit of Research**

10.1 Deepening Research on the History and Culture of the Wanshou Palace, By systematically sorting out the historical lineage of Wanshou Palace and deeply analyzing its architectural and cultural connotations, we reveal its deep historical roots as a symbol of local culture. This study not only enriches the academic research on the cultural heritage of the Jiangxi region, but also provides important theoretical support for the study of Chinese religious culture, local beliefs, and historical architecture.

10.2 Exploring Practical Strategies for Site Reconstruction and Historical Reappearance, By analyzing the reconstruction process of the Wanshou Palace site in Nanchang, this study explores how to scientifically protect historical heritage in the context of modern China, taking into account the concept of "reproduction of the past". It examines the practical strategies of architectural restoration and neighborhood preservation, reveals the role of cultural heritage in contemporary urban renewal, and provides theoretical and practical references for the sustainable development of cultural heritage in modern China.

10.3 Theoretical Framework for Enrichment of Historical Consumption, As a relatively new research field, Historical Consumption lacks systematic research in Chinese academia. This study combines aesthetic, anthropological and sociological perspectives to explore in depth the pop culture phenomenon of Nanchang Wanshou Palace as a tourist heritage site, analyze the consumption behaviors and activities of tourists in the heritage site, and show the living and

diversity of historical heritage and its reconstruction in modern society. Through the case study, we will promote the further development of Historical Consumption in Chinese academia.

10.4 Research on the Integration of Heritage Conservation and Historical Consumption, By analyzing the impact of Wanshou Palace culture on the economic and cultural development of the Nanchang region, this study adds the theoretical concepts of heritage preservation and Historical Consumption, which will provide strong support for future empirical research on cultural identity. At the same time, this study can provide referable experiences and practical paths for the conservation, development and commercial utilization of similar heritage sites in other regions, helping the sustainable development of cultural heritage in modern society.



## CHAPTER II

### Historical Background of Wanshou Palace

#### Introduction

This chapter starts from the specific geographic environment and social culture, discusses the development of Wanshou Palace architecture and Xu Zhenjun's beliefs are closely related, through the origins, development, and legends of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs, elaborates on the formation of Wanshou Palace's distinctive culture, Wanshou Palace's (Jiangxi Association Hall) architectural features and layout, and explores the profound connotations of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs and the Wanshou Palace's culture. At the same time, it explains the current development of Wanshou Palace folklore. By analysing the social and cultural characteristics of Jiangxi, this chapter explores the conditions under which Xu Zhenjun's beliefs and the architecture of Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Huiguan spread all over the world.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: Part I: Historical background of Wanshou Palace Part II: Social and cultural development of Wanshou Palace Part III: Wanshou Palace folklore and artistic aesthetics Part IV: Wanshou Palace, Jiangxi Guildhall architecture and artistic value.

#### 2.1 Historical Background of the Wanshou Palace

The historical background of Wanshou Palace can be traced back to more than 1600 years ago, and has a deep cultural heritage and important historical significance. The Wanshou Palace was built in honour of Xu Xun, a Taoist figure in the West Jin Dynasty, and carries the memory of Jiangxi people for this water-control hero. The ancestral court of Wanshou Palace is located in Nanchang, and as a representative symbol of local culture in Jiangxi, it not only witnesses the historical changes of Jiangxi, but also demonstrates the rich cultural connotation and humanistic spirit.

##### 2.1.1 Legend of Xu Zhenjun

Among the heroes and legends of ancient China, Xu Xun is a unique and loud name. He is the hero of Jiangxi water culture, famous for his stories and legends of water treatment, and honoured as 'Xu Zhenjun' by later generations. Wanshou Palace is an important relic of Xu Xun's presence in Jiangxi, and a place for later generations to commemorate him. This palace-like complex is a blend of Taoism and local folk beliefs, and has become a unique cultural heritage in Jiangxi. It was not only the centre of Xu Xun's beliefs, but also a symbol of the spiritual solace sought by the people of Jiangxi in the face of flooding. The circulation and influence of Xu Xun's beliefs have changed over the millennia, forming not only a unique social and cultural phenomenon in Jiangxi, but also spreading its influence to the whole country and even overseas.

Xu Zhenjun, his name is Xun, the word Jingzhi, the end of the West Jin Dynasty, according to historical records, his ancestry Henan Xuchang. At the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty, when the Yellow Turban Uprising broke out and the middle of the country was in turmoil, his father Xu Su migrated to Nanchang, Jiangxi Province. Xu Xun was born in

Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, in the second year of Wu Chi Wu (239 AD). Often the births of great men have mythological overtones, and according to Jingyang Xu Zhenjun Zhuan<sup>1</sup> According to the records, Xu Xun's mother dreamt at night that a golden phoenix dropped a pearl in her hand and she became pregnant and gave birth to Xu Xun. Xu Xun's UBM was a highly educated man who could read and write at a glance from a young age. As a young man, he aspired to be a scholar, and was well versed in history and economics, as well as astronomy, geography, yin and yang, the five elements, and the arts and crafts of the immortals and magicians, and he was especially fond of the arts of the immortals.

The two Han, Wei Jin, North and South Dynasties of Jiangxi, Jiangxi, is both the age of seclusion, but also witch and ghost prevalence of barbaric Jiangxi, which can be Yuzhang people worship the gods - end in the Wanshou Palace in the Xu Zhenjun can be proved. According to the book, Xu Xun was a young man who hunted for a living, and one day he went into the mountains to shoot a deer, and the deer's foetus fell to the ground, and the mother deer licked its young and died. Xu Xun felt the pathos, folded the crossbow and returned to the beginning of monasticism. In the first year of Taikang of Jin (280), Xu Xun was appointed by the court to be the head of Jingyang County<sup>2</sup>, He was forty-two years old at the time. He was a clean and honest official, and after ten years of careful administration, he turned Jingyang County from a place of famine and starvation into a place of production development, social stability and household prosperity. At that time, there was an epidemic in Jingyang County, but Xu Xun saved countless people by treating them with medicines and removing their diseases. Each judgement required to achieve 'loyalty, filial piety, charity, benevolence, patience, prudence, diligence, thrift' eight words, requiring close to the wise, alienate the evil people. Due to Xu Xun's clean and frugal governance, the implementation of a number of measures to benefit the people, so the people very much like and admire his benevolence, set up a shrine for his statue, and later generations also called Xu Xun as 'Xu Jingyang'. In 291 A.D., due to the political disorder of the Jin Dynasty, Xu Xun resigned from his post as the magistrate of Jingyang County and returned to his home in Xinjian, Yuzhang<sup>3</sup>. The local people of Jingyang came to see them off, some of them brought food and sent them thousands of kilometres to go back, and some of them sent them to Xu Xun's home in Nanchang's Easy Mountain, and they never went back. In the open space around Xu Xun's house, they built a few thatched huts to live in and changed their surname to Xu, known as the 'Xu Family Camp'. When Pengli Lake (present-day Poyang Lake) was plagued by scaly dragons and flooded for years, Xu Xun beheaded the scaly dragons and cured the floods, which won him wide respect. In the fourth year of Daxing of Emperor Yuan of the West Jin Dynasty (321), Xu Xun made a caricature of a Taoist temple named Taiji Guan, and established the Jingming Taoist School, whose truth was 'Jingming Zhongxiao' (Pure Brightness, Loyalty and Filial Piety).

Xu Xun's life story is shrouded in a strong mythological narrative. He is a real person in history, and at the same time, he is a character in ancient Chinese myths and legends. Xu Xun

<sup>1</sup> Jingyang Xu Zhenjun Zhuan , a biography of Xu Xun, a famous Taoist priest of the Jin Dynasty, who was revered as Xu Zhenjun or perhaps Jingyang.

<sup>2</sup> Ancient Jingyang, according to the Book of Jin - Geography: Jingyang ancient county, the former site is in the north of Zhijiang County of present-day Hubei Province, which was abolished in the 18th year of the Han Wendi Emperor (441 AD). Now Jingyang: Deyang County, Sichuan Province.

<sup>3</sup> Now Xinjian District, Nanchang, Jiangxi Province

was known as the blessed lord of Jiangxi, and he lived in an era when Jiangxi Poyang Lake was formed, the ancient Hohhan Plain was gradually sinking, and Nanchang was in a period of frequent floods. After Xu Xun resigned from the county magistrate of Jingyang and returned, he led the villagers around to control the water. As a result, there are a lot of rumours about Xu Xun's water treatment in folklore. According to legend, there was a Jiao dragon<sup>4</sup> in Nanchang at that time. The dragon would often turn over the clouds and make waves, causing harm to the people. Xu Xun finally subdued the dragon and locked it up in the octagonal well of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace<sup>5</sup> in Nanchang, thus quelling the flooding. From then on, the dragon was extinct and there was no more flooding. Xu Xun and worried about future generations of treacherous people, the Tiezhu prophecy record a few words: 'the land wins the hearts of the good, always out of the treacherous hatred, even if there is the rise of the plotters, the end must not be the end of the head.'

Legend has it that Xu Xun lived to be one hundred and thirty-six years old. On the 1st of August in the second year of Ningkang of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (374 AD), his family of forty-two ascended to heaven. He also flew away with his house and dogs and chickens, and a few tiles fell down from the new building, which was later named 'Luo Wa Heung'. The story of Xu Xun's attainment of immortality became the idiom of 'One man attains the Dao, all his dogs and chickens fly away'. In Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, the first day of August, when Xu Xun ascended to heaven, was designated as the birthday of the Lord of Fortune, and every family fasted and worshipped. The Emperor of the Song Dynasty named Xu Xun 'Shen Gong Miao Ji Zhen Jun', so people called Xu Zhen Jun.

<sup>4</sup> In ancient Chinese legend, the jiao dragon is a mysterious creature often described as having the head of a dragon and the body of a snake, a member of the dragon family. In Chinese culture, the Jiaolong symbolises power and mystery, often associated with water, and is believed to be a deity in charge of the waters. In some legends, the Jiao Dragon was able to cause floods or quell floods, so in ancient times, temples were often built along rivers and lakes to worship the Jiao Dragon for good weather.

<sup>5</sup> Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is now located in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Street in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, China, and is the ancestral home and birthplace of Wanshou Palaces all over the world. Since ancient times, it has been a bustling downtown with religious culture, Gan merchant culture, marketplace culture and trade culture.



Figure 2 Portrait of Xu Zhenjun

**Source:** Sanshou Yuanliu Sou Shen Daquan is an ancient Taoist scripture that records the deeds and portraits of numerous deities and immortals

In the myths and legends of ancient China, Xu Xun was a water god who was highly respected and worshipped by later generations. Not only did he have a far-reaching influence in the Jiangxi area, but his stories and legends of water treatment also reflected the spirit of the ancient people of China in their struggle against natural disasters. The story of Xu Xun has both mythological colours and historical authenticity, and has become an important part of China's water culture. The story and legend of Xu Xun's water treatment is a classic that has been passed down by word of mouth among the people of Jiangxi. With wisdom and courage, he overcame many difficulties to control the ferocious flood and protect the lives and properties of the people. These stories are full of mythological colours, but they also contain real history. As a symbol of water culture, the image of Xu Xun has undergone a literary and artistic evolution from a historical figure to a deity. This evolution is not only a need for cultural heritage, but also a mirror image of social development. In literature, the image of Xu Zhenjun has evolved. In the novels of different dynasties, his image developed from a filial son and a magician in the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties to a richer and more mythological image in the Taoist immortal biographies and legendary novels of the Tang and Song dynasties. The fragmentary content of Xu Xun Biezhuan (Xu Xun's biography) included in the Tang Dynasty's Art and Culture Classes Gathering, Volume 21, is the earliest surviving biographical information about Xu Xun, judging from the genre of the work, which was written in the Six Dynasties period. In the Southern Song Dynasty, Liu Yiqing's 'Records of Purity and Brightness' also recorded that Xu Xun did not know his ancestor's tomb. The first record of Xu Xun's ascension to the heavens is in the Imperial Edicts on the Construction of the Wushiguan Monument, written in the third year of the Zhenguan period. The story of Xu



Figure 3 Portrait of Xu Zhenjun  
 Source: Sanshou Yuanliu Sou Shen Daquan

Xun, a member of the Jingyang order, who was killed by a jiao at the end of the Western Jin Dynasty, as recounted in Volume 3 of Zhang Ronggu's 'The Legitimacy of the Chaoyang Command' of the Tang Dynasty, is the prototype of the legend of Xu Zhenjun's beheading of a jiao, a legend that has been circulated in later generations. During the reign of Emperor Gaozong of the Tang Dynasty, the legend of Xu Xun's beheading of a scaly dragon with a complete and twisted storyline appeared for the first time in the chapter of Xu Zhenjun in the Twelve Zhenjuns of Xishan, Hongzhou, Jin Dynasty compiled by Hu Huichao of the Gao Daode. And in the 'Biography of the Two True Monarchs of Filial Piety Wu and Xu', written in the Yuanhe period of the Tang Dynasty, the myths of Chen's mother and Lan Gong were constructed to establish Xu Xun's status as the teacher of filial piety. These literary works reflect the importance of Xu Zhenjun in folk beliefs and culture, as well as his role in different historical periods.

In ancient times, flooding was one of the most harmful natural disasters, and the fact that Xu Xun was able to stand out from the crowd and become the incarnation of the water god fully reflects his contribution to the ancient water culture of China. He brought well-being and peace to the people with his superb Taoist skills and his work in eliminating harm to the people, and his deeds were widely spread and worshipped by the people. In particular, the people of Jiangxi honoured Xu Xun as the 'Blessed Lord of Jiangxi' to express their admiration for him. At the same time, he is one of the four great masters of Taoism<sup>6</sup> in China, and is worshipped as the ancestor of the Pure Brightness Sect. In Taoism, attaining immortality is the highest state of cultivation, and Zhenjun's noble character of 'loyalty and filial piety' led people to believe that he had attained immortality.

<sup>6</sup> The Four Great Heavenly Masters of Chinese Taoism usually refer to Zhang Daoling, Ge Xuan, Sa Shou Jian and Xu Xun. They have an important position and influence in the history of Chinese Taoism.

Wanshou Palace, as a place of worship for Xu Xun, became an important Taoist temple in Jiangxi. The spread of Xu Xun's beliefs and influence was not only in Jiangxi, but also throughout the country. His image has also evolved in literature and art, from the original water-control hero to the water god in folk belief. Stories and legends about water treatment were an important source of Xu Xun's influence. In these stories, Xu Xun solved water problems and protected people's lives and properties with his extraordinary ability and wisdom. These legends are not only mythological, but also historically true, and are a true portrayal of the ancient people's struggle against nature. Xu Xun's folk beliefs have a strong social role. In areas where flooding was frequent, Xu Xun became the spiritual support for people to pray for peace and hope for a solution to the problem of flooding. The popularity of his beliefs has played a positive role in promoting the ancient culture of water control in China. The story of Xu Xun's water treatment is still of great significance in modern society. His story tells us that in the face of natural disasters, we must have the courage to fight and win. Today, we can still draw strength from the story of Xu Xun and work hard to realise the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Xu Xun, the god of water, is an important representative of water culture in ancient China. His stories and legends are the historical testimony of our people's struggle against nature. The biography of Xu Xun is not only a personal introduction to him, but also a discussion on the inheritance and development of China's ancient water culture.

### **2.1.2 Faith in Xu Zhenjun**

Xu Xun is a famous figure in the history of Taoism, who believes in Xu Xun, the god of water, and enshrines him in Wanshou Palace. The belief in Xu Zhenjun is an integral part of the culture of Wanshou Palace, and it mainly revolves around the life and legends of Xu Xun. Xu Xun's belief originated during the Western Jin Dynasty, when the social environment and frequent floods caused Xu Xun's image as a person of high moral character and benevolence, and the early cult of filial piety to be given more colours of the folk god. During the Tang Dynasty, Xu Xun's beliefs began to emerge; during the Song Dynasty, filial piety and purification were advocated by the imperial court; before the Yuan Dynasty, Xu Zhenjun's image was confined to Taoism; and during the Ming and Qing dynasties, Xu Xun's beliefs experienced a process of decline and a return to secularisation. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, Xu Xun faith played a role in promoting the prosperity of Jiangxi merchants. Wanshou Palace is the concrete embodiment and carrier of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs, and understanding Xu Zhenjun's beliefs is the basis for understanding the culture of Wanshou Palace.

Xu Xun's folk beliefs have an important social role. In ancient times, when science and culture were backward, it was widely believed that floods were caused by the dragon rather than natural disasters, and that human beings could not change them. Xu Zhenjun led his disciples and the people to control the floods and was loved and respected by the people. He was worshipped by the people as a water-healing deity with infinite power. From a real historical figure to a deified legend and folk worship, Xu Zhenjun's belief is not only a religious belief, but also a social belief. His faith not only comforts people's hearts, but also guides their behaviour and promotes social harmony and stability. The formation and development of Wanshou Palace demonstrates the deep integration of Taoism and local folk beliefs, and how this integration is reflected and spread in social life through various cultural symbols. Through the study of these symbols, we can gain a deeper understanding of Taoism's

place in traditional Chinese culture and its interaction with local societies.

On the first day of August in the second year of Ningkang of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (374), Xu Zhenjun lifted his family's house and ascended to heaven, and the townspeople set up the 'Xu Xian Ancestral Hall' for his house, which can be regarded as the beginning of the belief in Xu Zhenjun. During the Northern and Southern Dynasties, Xu Zhenjun's beliefs were developed to a certain extent. In the Tang Dynasty, due to the development of the Taoist movement, since the Song and Ming Dynasties, Xu Zhenjun's belief as a cultural phenomenon has undergone continuous construction and transformation of its connotation. During the Song and Ming dynasties, Xu Zhenjun was transformed from the 'ancestor of Jing-ming sect' to the 'god of rituals' under the moulding of scholars such as Wang Anshi<sup>7</sup>, Zhang Wei<sup>8</sup> and Wan Gong<sup>9</sup>. (Li Pingliang, 2024 : 05)

The Xuxun faith is an indigenous religious belief in China, deeply rooted in the rich humanistic traditions of the Chinese nation. In the Wei and Jin dynasties, against the backdrop of social unrest and frequent floods, the filial piety belief of Xu Xun was born, which originated from the profound cultural heritage of filial piety and significantly embodied the characteristics of the region. The image of Xu Zhenjun has gradually evolved from 'the ancestor of Pure Brightness' to 'the god of sacrifice' to 'the blessed lord of Jiangxi' and 'the god of the countryside', a process that reflects not only the fact that Xu Zhenjun is a god of the countryside, but also that he is a god of the countryside and a god of the people. 'This process not only reflects the evolution and shaping of the veneration of Xu Zhenjun by intellectuals, official rituals, and local elites at different stages of history, but also reflects how different groups of people in a particular rural society unite with the symbol of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs. It also reflects how different groups in a given rural society united around the symbol of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs. It maps the interactions between dynastic rituals, the scholarly class, commercialisation, and the creation of local cultures, and reveals the process of the formation of the multifaceted and integrated culture of Chinese society.

<sup>7</sup> Wang Anshi : A statesman, writer and thinker of the Northern Song Dynasty. In his works, the descriptions and praises of Xu Xun mainly focus on Xu Xun's moral qualities and political achievements. For example, he praised Xu Xun for 'transforming the people with morality and managing the government with virtue' and praised the achievements of his governance in Jingyang, which enabled the people to live in peace and work in contentment in the article 'Sacrificing Xu Zhenren'.

<sup>8</sup> Zhang Wei : Literary scholar during the Ming Dynasty. In his article *Jingyang ji* (Records of Jingyang), he gave a detailed account of Xu Xun's life, including how he gave up hunting, learnt Taoism, and governed Jingyang, etc. The article praised Xu Xun's loyalty and filial piety, and considered his behaviour exemplary. The article praised Xu Xun's loyalty and filial piety and considered his behaviour exemplary.

<sup>9</sup> Wan Gong : A literary scholar during the Ming Dynasty. In his article 'Praise of Xu Zhenjun', he spoke highly of Xu Xun's moral qualities, political achievements and cultivation results. He regarded Xu Xun as a 'loyal and filial deity' and a model for future generations to follow.



Figure 4 Xu Xun in the Yuan dynasty mural painting ‘Chao Yuan Tu’ in the Hall of the Three Pristine Ones at Yongle Palace

**Source:** [nationalartarchive.com/digital/file/1605.htm](http://nationalartarchive.com/digital/file/1605.htm) Accessed on September ,2024

In the Song Dynasty, the belief of Xu Zhenjun could not be separated from the promotion of the official government and the shaping of the image of Xu Xun's ‘loyalty and filial piety’ by Taoist priests, such as Bai Yuchan, He Zhengong, Liu Yu, and so on. In the Ming Dynasty, in the Poyang Lake basin and even in Jiangxi, Xu Xun was portrayed as the local protection god of Jiangxi, also known as Jiangxi Fukuo, forming the belief of Jiangxi Fukuo that has been influential to the present day. Xu Xun rose from a folk god. Xu Xun rose from a folk god to a Taoist god who was above the imperial power, and then returned to the folk and became a god who protects a party. Xu Xun's moral character, political achievements, and cultivation results were highly regarded by the people as well as by the government as a figure worthy of respect and study. These praises and descriptions not only show the lofty image of Xu Xun, but also reflect the admiration and worship of Xu Xun in later generations. The Wanshou Palace building, as a religious building and a place of faith established for Xu Zhenjun's beliefs, is a physical manifestation of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs.

### 2.1.3 History of Xishan Wanshou Palace in Nanchang City

Wanshou Palace is located in Xishan Town, Xinjian District, more than 30 kilometres south-west of Nanchang City, also known as Easy Mountain, which belongs to the remnants of the Xishan Mountain Range, and is a Taoist temple with profound historical and cultural significance. According to Mr Zhang Wenhuan in the book ‘Wanshou Palace’, Xu Zhenjun, at the age of 36 (274), led his family to live in Tongyuan, Jintian Village, Mount Easy, to live in seclusion for one hundred years, and then ascended to heaven on the first day of August (374), and his nephew, Xu Jian, set up a shrine in his former residence, which was called the ‘Xu Xian Ancestral Hall’. With the passage of time, the Wanshou Palace in Xishan Mountain

has undergone many developments and changes. From the initial place of worship, it gradually developed into a fixed place of worship, and in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, it became an inter-regional centre of worship.

The name of Xishan Wanshou Palace has gone through many evolutions. In the North and South Dynasties<sup>10</sup>, the descendants of Xu Jian changed the Xu Xian Shrine into Youwei Guan, and later changed it to Youwei Guan, the name of which has a deeper meaning in the history of Taoism, and Youwei Guan means a place for the Taoist deities to play in the Taoist terminology. The name reflects the deep spread and development of Taoist culture in the region. It was burnt down during the reign of Emperor Yang of the Sui Dynasty, and was left in a state of abandonment for several decades. During the reign of Emperor Taizong of Tang Dynasty, he paid attention to cultural construction and built palaces and temples, in order to promote the Taoism of Xu Zhenjun of Xishan Mountain, the celestial master Hu Huichao rebuilt Youwei Guan and wrote a biography of Zhenjun in this period. Late Tang Huang Chao Uprising, Youwei Guan increasingly deserted.

The Northern Song Dynasty worshipped Taoism, and Xu Zhenjun's Taoism was especially honoured in Xishan Mountain. In the third year of the Dazhongxiangfu era (1010), Emperor Song Zhenzong gave internal funds to repair the temple, changing the name of the temple to 'Yulong,' which was taken from 'Lingbao Duorenjing' (The Sutra of Lingbao Duoren) in which Yulong Tengsheng is the name of a heavenly body, and elevated the temple to a palace, so that Xu Zhenjun was 'located on top of the king of the marquis'. Wang Anshi's Jingyang Ancestral Hall In the sixth year of the reign, Emperor Huizong of the Song Dynasty ordered the reconstruction of Yulong Palace in the style of Chongfu Wanshou Palace in Luoyang, West Beijing, and bestowed a plaque saying 'Yulong Palace of Wanshou Palace'. Yulong Wanshou Palace has been 'the system of respect, gold and blue magnificent "for the first southeast rituals". According to the History of the Song Dynasty, the name of the palace was 'Wanshou', and the search results show that the creation of the palace dates back to the time of Emperor Huizong of the Song Dynasty. According to the Song History, the palace was named after Wanshou, and a search shows that the creation of Wanshou Palace dates back to the reign of Emperor Huizong of the Song Dynasty, beginning in February of the seventh year of the reign of Zhenghe (1117), when the construction of the lower courtyard of the Palace of the Divine Heavenly Palace was launched. During this time, the origin of the name 'Wanshou' was closely linked to the advice of the Taoist monk Lin Lingsu. He suggested to Emperor Huizong that there were nine skies in the sky, and that Shenxiao was the highest, and that the prefecture it governed was called Shenxiao Yuqing<sup>11</sup>, the eldest son of God, who was in charge of the south, and was known as His Majesty, the Great Emperor of Wanshou, or His Majesty. When Emperor Huizong heard about this, he ordered the whole country to build the 'Wanshou Palace of the Divine Heavens'. Therefore, the word 'Wanshou' may be derived

10 The Northern and Southern Dynasties period was an important turning point in Chinese history , roughly covering the period from 420 to 589 AD. The Northern and Southern Dynasties period was an important turning point in Chinese history , roughly covering the period from 420 to 589 AD.

<sup>11</sup> Shenxiao Yuqing :In Taoism, the King of Divine Heavenly Jade Clearance is regarded as the 'firstborn son of God' , who is the lord of the south, and is known as the Great Emperor of Longevity. By building the Shenxiao Yuqing Wanshou Palace, Emperor Huizong of the Song Dynasty attempted to use the power of Taoism to govern his country or region, but this act ultimately led to chaos in the imperial government, failing to effectively respond to internal and external crises, and ultimately the Northern Song Dynasty fell in the Jingkang disaster.

from the title of the Great Emperor of Wanshou. Further research shows that in 1118, Emperor Huizong of the Song Dynasty was induced by Lin Linsu to become a Taoist monk, so he converted Buddhist monasteries into Taoist temples, and Chongshou Temple was transformed into Shenxiao Yuqing Wanshou Palace. In 1119, Emperor Huizong of the Song Dynasty wrote the 'Imperial Decree on the Shenxiao Yuqing Wanshou Palace'. According to the information I have found, the establishment of 'Wanshou' Palace was closely related to Song Huizong's respect for Taoism and Lin Lingsu's suggestion.

During the reign of Emperor Huizong of the Song Dynasty, the Liao and Jin dynasties were invading the north and adopted a policy of revering Taoism and abolishing Buddhism. Xu Zhenjun's deeds of loyalty and filial piety were favoured, and in the second year of Emperor Huizong's reign, he was posthumously named 'Shen Gong Miao Ji Zhenjun' and given the title 'Yulong Wanshou Gong'. This name has a strong religious flavour, showing the importance of Xu Xun's beliefs in society at that time. In the sixth year of Emperor Huizong's reign (1116), Emperor Huizong dreamed that Xu Xun had cured him of a disease and subdued a demon, and so he added the words 'Wanshou' to the front of Yulong Palace, in order to honour his wish for longevity and immortality. Song Huizong practiced Taoism, claiming to be the master of Taoist Emperor, Zhenghe six years (1117 AD), the edict to the example of the Palace of Chongfu in Xijing, large-scale construction, in the West Mountain, the construction of six large halls, twelve small halls, five pavilions, seven floors, three corridors, seven gates, and thirty-six halls. Gave the name 'Yulong Wanshou Palace'.

Awarded the god of the real king's image, copper casting incense burners, vases, bells, candlesticks, silverware, vestments, jade case and a large number of objects. Before liberation, every year on the first day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar, the people of more than ten counties near Xinjian, Nanchang, come from afar to incense and worship. There were many self-organised 'Wanshou Incense Society' in each village. Xishan Wanshou Palace was initially a place of folk worship gradually evolved into a place of worship for the ruling class.

Yuan Shun Di to the first twelve years, the West Mountain Yulong Palace burned in the war, the early Ming Dynasty did not see the record of repair, to the Ming Wuzong Zhengde five years (1520) the court only allocated to Nanchang House, rebuild the Gao Ming Hall, given the name of the 'second Ji Wanshou Palace'. Ming Shizong Jiajing twenty-six years (1547) Ming Shizong heavy repair velvet, the name of the quota is given as before. Zhang bit wrote 'rebuild Yulong Wanshou Palace on the beam text', Wan Gong has 're Yulong Wanshou Palace monument'. Built Gao Ming Hall, San Qingdian, Sanguan Palace, Jade Emperor Pavilion, free Jing Lu, Wanshou Palace door and so on. But the Wanshou Palace of Taoist activities are missing records. (Zhang WenHuan, 2004: 65)



Figure 5 Xishan Wanshou Palace  
Source: Re-photographed by MinQi, 2023.

Early Shunzhi period of the Qing dynasty, jiangxi turmoil, yulong palace and present a state of ruins. The Taoist priests were recalled and the rituals were resumed. In the 16th year of Shunzhi's reign (1659), the Jade Emperor Pavilion of Yulong Wanshou Palace was finally renovated with Xiong Wenju's strong support. Xiong Wenju not only paid attention to the Jing-ming sect, he also helped Taoist monks Wang Doseon and Liu Daoxian to raise funds for the reconstruction of the Miaoji Temple, and also raised funds for the reconstruction of the Kaikai Temple. He also raised funds to rebuild the Kaiyuan Guan, and restored the Jing-ming sect of the stars. Xiong Wenju also had other activities to rebuild the temple, but because of the repetitive nature, I will not list the materials to explain. During the Daoguang period, there were times when the temple was on fire, but it was repaired immediately.

The Xinhai Revolution overthrew the Qing Dynasty, and Wanshou Palace was extremely busy with festive pilgrimages. The Wanshou Palace in Xishan has always belonged to the type of rituals shared by the government and the people. During the Qing Dynasty, there were already government forces involved in the rituals of the Wanshou Palace. (Chenlili. 2005: 179) When Wanshou Palace was liberated in 1949, only the main hall, Guandi Hall, Sanqing Hall, Sanguan Hall, Chenmu Hall, Daoyuan, Yimen, Gongmen, the courtyard wall, the theatre, and the Jade Emperor Hall, which lacked a roof, remained. In 1952, the people's government allocated funds to carry out repairs, and in July 1957, the Wanshou Palace was listed as a provincial-level cultural relics protection unit in Jiangxi Province. Cultural Revolution period suffered damage. After the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, Wanshou Palace entered a new period of development. 1983, the people's government of Xinjian County raised funds to rebuild Wanshou Palace, repairing and constructing eight halls - Gao Ming Hall, Guan Di Hall, Chen Mu Hall, Husband and Wife Hall, San Qing Hall, Jade

Emperor Hall, Three Palace Halls, the Hall of the God of Fortune, as well as Wanshou Pavilion, Vegetarian Food Building (Lenten Hall), the Palace Gate,

In September 2002, the Wanshou Palace held the ‘First International Symposium on Chinese Taoism Jing-ming sect Culture and Cultural PEN’. In November 2005, Xishan Wanshou Palace, together with Nanchang Wanshou Palace and Taiwan Jing-ming Zhongxiao Taoist Association, held a grand ‘Cross-Strait Jing-ming sect Returning and Transmitting Prayer for Blessings’. 2007, Xishan Wanshou Palace was listed as one of the first batch of key Taoist temples in Jiangxi Province. In June 2011, ‘Xishan Wanshou Palace Temple Fair Customs’ was listed as a national intangible cultural heritage protection project. (Xiong Guobao, 2018 : 353)

Xishan Wanshou Palace not only has an important position in religion, but also has a profound impact on the surrounding areas in culture and economy. For example, temple festivals are not only part of religious rituals, but have also become an important part of local economic and cultural activities. The temple fair of Wanshou Palace in Xishan Mountain has the title of national intangible cultural heritage, which signifies that the significance of temple fair folklore has been recognised at the national level. The temple fair is not only a manifestation of religious beliefs, but also an important part of local folk culture. Through the temple fair, the villagers are able to carry out social exchanges and trade transactions, thus promoting the prosperity of the local economy and culture.



Figure 6 Xishan Wanshou Palace  
(Xishan Town, Xinjian District, Nanchang City, Jiangxi Province)

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, December, 2023.

### 2.1.4 History of Nanchang Tiezhu Wanshou Palace

Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, also known as Nanchang Wanshou Palace, has always been an important ancestral temple for the officials and citizens of Jiangxi Province to worship the late philosopher Xu Xun, which has a strong centripetal force for the scholars and people of the province. The province has a strong centripetal force and cohesion of the people. Tiezhu Wanshou Palace was built in the Western Jin Dynasty in the sixth year of Emperor Huai's Yongjia (312 years), initially named 'Jingyang Ancestral Hall'. It is located in the southwest corner of Nanchang City, in front of Guangrun Gate, north of Zhongshan Road, west of Contract Lane, south of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace Road, west of Contract Lane, south of Cuihua Street, is located in the Zhangjiang dock in the Guangrun Gate. In the old days, Nanchang Tiezhu Wanshou Palace after the governor's office, the Supervisory Yuan, the Office of the General Prosecutor, Nanchang County Yamen and many other government offices, occupying an extremely important geographic location. It occupies an extremely important geographical location. As it is located in the hub of north-south shipping and in a flood-prone area, Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is famous for Xu Zhenjun's Tiezhu Locking Jiao, which was used to control floods. (Mei Lianhua, 2018 : 284) Tiezhu Wanshou Palace has been widely and persistently valued by the folk of Jiangxi, as well as by scholars and local officials throughout the generations. It was recognised by the Nanchang scholars as the 'Unification Clan', the 'Huiyuan' and the 'Immortal Government Clan Union'.

After the unification of the country in the Tang Dynasty, Jiangxi came under the jurisdiction of the 'Western Province of Jiangnan'. During the two great periods of prosperity, the 'Rule of Zhenguan' and the 'Rule of Kaiyuan,' Jiangxi's economy reached unprecedented levels of prosperity. Thanks to the North-South Canal dug by Emperor Yang of the Sui Dynasty and the Danyuling Passage widened by Zhang Jiuling in the fourth year of Emperor Xuanzong's reign (716), land and water transport was interconnected between the Gan River and the Beiji River in Guangdong. With the interconnection of land and water transport between the Gan River and the Beiji River in Guangdong, Nanchang became an important shipping centre connecting Chang'an<sup>12</sup> with Guangzhou and Jiaotong<sup>13</sup> (Vietnam). Commodities such as rice, tea, porcelain, and kudzu from Jiangxi and feathers, pearls, and tortoiseshell imported from Guangzhou were frequently traded between Hongzhou and Yangzhou. Nanchang attracted merchants from all over the world and promoted the commercial prosperity of the city.

Nanchang attracted merchants from all over the world and promoted the commercial prosperity of the city. When the An Shi Rebellion broke out in the 14th year of Emperor Tian Bao of Emperor Xuan Zong of the Tang Dynasty (755), many people from the north moved south to Jiangxi. During the Yuanhe period (806-820) of Emperor Xianzong of the Tang Dynasty, Jiangxi's agricultural and commercial industry saw rapid development, and when Wei Dan served as an observer of Jiangxi, he built the Ganjiang River embankment in Nanchang, and the Jingyang Ancestral Temple was renamed 'Tiezhuguan' (Tiezhu Temple).

<sup>12</sup> Chang'an, the ancient name of Xi'an, is located in the middle of the Guanzhong Plain, known as the 'Golden City of Thousands of Miles', 'The Land of Heavenly Capital', is one of the birthplaces of Chinese civilisation.

<sup>13</sup> Jiaotong, an ancient Chinese place name, is located in the Red River Valley in present-day northern Vietnam. The name 'Jiaotong' existed before the era of the South Vietnamese state.

Tiezhuguan is located at the traffic junction of the north-south route of China's inland waterways and the east-west route of Jiangnan, and it has become the traffic hub for national merchants and travellers travelling north-south and east-west, and has been the famous Zhangjiang dock since ancient times. Since ancient times, it has been a famous pier on the Zhangjiang River. During the Jiading period of the Tang Dynasty, the emperor named the temple 'Tiezhu Palace of Yanzhen'.

During the most prosperous period of land and water transport, during the Xiantong period (860-873) of Emperor Yi Zong of the Tang Dynasty, the Taoist legend 'Tiezhu Suppresses the Dragon' was circulated in the 'Tiezhu Guan' near the Guangrun Gate of Nanchang. This is how the ancient legend describes it: The Tiezhu guards Hongzhou, and it will never stop for ten thousand years. Eight ropes hook the ley lines of the earth, and a stream of clear water leads to the river. When the world is in turmoil, this place is safe and sound; When there is a great drought in the world, there is not much harvest here. The terrain is superior, the people are kind, and there will be no treacherous schemes; Even if someone has a treacherous plan, it will not succeed in the end.' 'The Tiezhu guards Hongzhou' is also called 'Tiezhu Ties the Red Boat.'

Tiezhu Palace is located in the city of Nanchang, far more business travellers than the Wanshou Palace crowd in the West Mountain, and at the same time for the emperor's blessing of the national dojo, so it has been repeatedly refurbished opportunities. But Tiezhu Palace also suffered the disaster of the return of the disaster, the fate of the miscarriage of justice and no better. In the Northern Song Dynasty, Tie Zhu Guan had become a centre of pilgrimage for the people of Jiangnan. In the second year of Dazhongxiangfu of Song Dynasty (1009), Emperor Zhenzong of Song Dynasty changed the name of Tiezhuguan to 'Jingde' and gave it the name of 'Jingdeguan'. Many famous Confucian scholars from Jiangxi revered Xu Jingyang. In the ninth year of Emperor Xining's reign (1076), Zeng Gong of Nanfeng knew the Hongzhou army, rebuilt the Tiezhu Guan, and asked Wang Anshi to write a powerful 'Reconstruction of the Jingyang Ancestral Hall,' which enhanced the cultural taste of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace in Nanchang. (Mei Lianhua, 2018: 285) In the late Northern Song Dynasty, Emperor Huizong reigned for twenty-six years and was a Taoist monarch who excelled in calligraphy and painting. In the eighth year of Zhenghe (1118), Emperor Huizong gave the name 'Yanzhen Guan' and named Xu Xun as 'Shen Gong Miao Ji Zhen Jun'

Southern Song Dynasty Jia Ding first year (1208), Ning Zong Zhao Deng Royal 'Tiezhu of the Palace of Yanzhen' plaque erected on the Palace, will be changed to the Palace of Wanshou Palace; Yuan Zhenyuan year (1295), Cheng Zong inherited the throne, respect for Confucius and Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism and the use of Nanchang Tiezhu Palace doubled the importance of the Palace of Wanshou Palace, and will be the original title of the Palace of Wanshou Palace, 'Tiezhu of Yanzhen Palace' to give 'Tiezhu of the Palace of Yanzhen'. 'changed to' Tiezhu Yanzhen Wannian Palace "," plus "Wannian". Add 'ten thousand years' two words, is to let the people praise the emperor long life meaning. (Mei Lianhua, 2018: 285)

After Zhu Yuanzhang ascended the throne in the Ming Dynasty, he passed through Nanchang City, first went to the Tiezhu Palace to drop the imperial incense, and then went to the Tengwang Pavilion to feast with the ministers, becoming the first emperor to enter the incense in the Tiezhu Palace, which set an example for the Ming Dynasty to worship Xu Zhenjun. In the first year of Ming Yingzong's orthodoxy (1436), it was renamed "Tiezhu

Palace". In the second year of the reign of Emperor Xiaozong of the Ming Dynasty (1489), the Tiezhu Palace was burned. Destroyed, Fengcheng Fan Zhaoxiang wrote "Reconstruction and Repair of the True Wannian Palace" to raise funds for reconstruction, Ming Wuzong Zhengde three years (1506) Dynasty. The court gave gold to repair the Tiezhu Palace. (Zhang Wenhuan, 2004: 83) Ming Shizong ascended the throne, the twenty-sixth year of Jiajing (1547), died. Zong gave Nanchang Tiezhu Yanzhen Wannian Palace as "Miaoji Wanshou Palace", and the imperial book "Immortal Lifting the World", and named Xu Xun as "Divine Skill Miaoji Zhenjun". Ming Shizong was one of the emperors who admired Taoism in Chinese history, on a par with Huizong of the Song Dynasty. Because Nanchang Wanshou Palace since the Northern Song Dynasty, as an ancestral temple, in the early Ming Dynasty has been allowed to be included in the ceremony, has long been used as a national ancestral temple for the Jiangxi people to worship virtue and repay merit, and Xu Zhenjun and his people have been recognized as both Confucian and immortal from the original simple Taoism to the Ming Dynasty, so that the Nanchang Wanshou Palace is different from the Yulong Palace, and has become the ancestral hall of Taoism and Confucianism, Taoism and customs, and since then the name of Wanshou Palace has become the common title of the ancestral temple of Xu Zhenjun inside and outside the province. (Zhang Wenhuan, 2004: 84) The Tiezhu Palace was burned in a fire in the 45th year of Jiajing of the Ming Dynasty (1566), and was rebuilt with funds from Shizong.

After the reconstruction of Wanshou Palace is beautiful, attracting business travellers to and from Nanchang. In the 23rd year of the Wanshou Palace (1595), Italian missionary Matteo Ricci came to China for the first time, and on his way to Nanjing from Beishan in Guangdong Province to preach, he passed through Nanchang and disembarked at Guangrunmen Wharf, where he went to visit the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, which is a 'local attraction'. In the letter he later sent to his friends, he talked about his feelings of the visit: 'The construction of the temple is majestic, and there are businesses both inside and outside, as if there were trade fairs every day. In a letter to a friend later, he talked about his feelings during the visit: 'The temple is built majestically, and there are businessmen both inside and outside, as if it were a business exhibition held every day, and it is extremely bustling.' Ming Wanli twenty-eight years (1600) Tiezhu Wanshou Palace and fire was destroyed, Zhang bit (1533 ~ 1605, the new people, the official to the Ministry of the Ministry of Justice) should be requested by the townspeople across the province to raise funds to rebuild, and wrote the 'Reconstruction of the Wanshou Palace' said: In the winter and December of the 28th year of Wanli, the construction of the Zhenjun Hall was first built, and the height and area were designed according to the old specifications. Then the front gate and the second gate were built, and then the fairy corridors, Tiezhu pools, and bell and drum towers on both sides were built. Then the icons were replaced, and the bronze statues were replaced by statues; The deeds of the immortals were painted on the four walls, and then the Jade Emperor Pavilion was built. Gates were built on the front streets, and walls were enclosed on the outside, and a gate was opened on the left and right sides, called Yongmen. There is also a small pond dug in front of it, three feet deep, where all the water in the palace gathers. By the winter of the Wushen year of Wanli (1608), the project was completed. (Zhang Wenhuan, 2004: 84) The overall architecture of the palace is tall and majestic, and the scale is grand. The gate "one" character shape is divided into middle, east and west three gates, there are three words

of "longevity palace" in regular script on the lintel, mellow and thick, and it is said to be Yan Song's handwriting. There is a stone fence pool with carved flowers in the door, the algae are raised, there is a well on the left in front of the front, it is said that the river water grows and disappears, there is an Tiezhu, it is cast by Xu Xun, and the harm of the Jiao Jiao is to suppress it. On both sides of the passage is a row of stalls selling incense candles, toys and snacks.



Figure 7 Tiezhu Wanshou Palace in the Republican Period  
(located at the bottom left of the figure)

**Source:** [https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao\\_19903788](https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao_19903788) online Accessed on September, 2024.

Qing Dynasty Jiaqing eight years (1803), the governor Qin Chengen prayed for rain success, played the additional Xu Xun. Nine years (1804) was ordered to seal 'inspiration Puji God', the official for the sacrifice. This is following the Ming Zhengtong years, Shi Pu, the press commissioner approved to be included in the ceremony, another approved by the Qing Dynasty into the ceremony, Nanchang Wanshou Palace was once again set as a place for local administrative officials in Jiangxi to hold sacrifices. After the Opium War, the opening of five ports for trade, the opening of the north-south shipping from Guangzhou to Tianjin and the Yangtze River shipping, the construction of the Jinpu and Jinghan Railways, the north-south river shipping, with Jiangxi as the hub, declined sharply. China gradually became semi-colonial, and Western religions penetrated into the mainland, making the Wanshou Palace and folk beliefs in Nanchang face unprecedented challenges. During the Xianfeng period of the Qing Dynasty, the Taiping army besieged the city of Nanchang for three months, and the Qing Dynasty had Zhang Fu, the governor of Jiangxi, and Jiang Zhongyuan, the press commissioner of Hubei, defending the city. The walls of the city were bombarded and collapsed on three occasions, but the city could not be conquered because of the efforts of the army and the people to rescue the city. Zhang Fu was at his wits' end, and placed Xu Xun's

portrait on the De Shengmen<sup>14</sup> tower, praying for God's blessing. After the retreat of the Taiping Army, Zhang Fu made a special request to add a title to his name, and the Tongzhi Emperor, Zai Chun, awarded him a plaque entitled 'Sincerely Praying for the Sense of God', which was reproduced in dozens of squares and forwarded to Wanshou Palaces throughout the country for hanging. Tongzhi six years by the governor led the province's gentry and merchants donations at the same time to build and repair Yulong, Tizhu two Palace, Wanshou Palace construction history of the feat. To set an example for the reconstruction of Wanshou Palace by raising donations, there is a map of 'the reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace in Tongzhi Year' preserved on the Record of Wanshou Palace of Easy Mountain, from which people can see that there are the front gate, the gate of Wanshou Palace, the main hall, the Jade Emperor's Palace, the Lady's Palace, the Doumge Pavilion, the Chenmu Palace, the Sanyuan Palace, the Zhangxian Palace, the Easy Pavilion, and a large area of unnamed palaces in the southwest in the area of Chess Pan Street and Contract Lane, basically laying the original scale of Wanshou Palace in the later years. Wanshou Palace's original scale.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Wanshou Palace was once reduced to a shanty town, and due to the lack of maintenance and urban planning, Nanchang had a debate on whether to relocate the Wanshou Palace or not, which gave rise to the exploration of the Wanshou Palace, Xu Xun, and Jing-ming sects. On this debate, there are Lei Zhengliang and Sun Hong's 'Summary of the Academic Symposium on Reconstruction of Wanshou Palace in Nanchang', Yang Long's 'Discussion on Wanshou Palace', and Yang Long's 'Discussion on Wanshou Palace in Nanchang'. On this debate, there are articles by Lei Zhengliang and Sun Hong entitled 'Overview of the Academic Symposium on the Reconstruction of Nanchang



Figure 8 Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District  
Tiezhu Wanshou Palace

Source: Photographed by Min Qi, October, 2023

<sup>14</sup> Deshengmen is one of the seven city gates of Nanchang. The seven city gates of Nanchang, also known as the seven city gates, are important landmarks in the history of the city, and they are: Deshengmen, Yonghemen, Shunhuamen, Jinxianmen, Huiminmen, Guangrunmen and Zhangjiang.

Wanshou Palace’, Yang Long’s ‘On the Value Orientation of Decision-making on the Reconstruction of Nanchang Wanshou Palace’, and articles such as ‘The Crisis of Nanchang Wanshou Palace’s Cultural Inheritance in the Light of the Lost Traditional Neighbourhoods’, written by Wang Xiangyang, Hu Wenli and Li Fei. Finally, the scholars agreed that it should be rebuilt on the original site, because only in this way can the cultural connotation of Xu Zhenjun’s belief be better inherited. (Wang Dan, 2011 : 3) In 2013, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter project was launched, and the Nanchang government invested 2 billion yuan in reconstruction to restore its historical appearance. 2020, the project was basically completed, and on 6 February 2021, it was opened to the public. On 17 June 2022, it was identified as a national 4A level tourist attraction by Jiangxi Provincial Culture and Tourism Department. In addition, in September 2022, it was selected as one of the first batch of national non-heritage tourism blocks.

Modern Chinese society is constantly progressing, and at the same time, the economy is developing faster and faster. Jiangxi people all over the world still don’t forget their hometown complex, which makes ‘Wanshou Palace’ exist in every place they have travelled. For more than 1,700 years, the Wanshou Palace has maintained its prosperity, and at the same time, it also shows that Jiangxi people are deeply in love with their hometown.

Year	Name	Description
In the sixth year of Yongjia of the Western Jin Dynasty (312)	the Jingyang Ancestral Hall	Commemorates Xu Zhenjun’s achievement in beheading the dragon
Tang Xianzong Yuanhe period (806-820)	Tiezhu Guan	Tiezhu Guan is located in the country’s transportation hub
Jinde Guan in the second year of Dazhongxiangfu in Song Dynasty (1009)	Jingde Guan	The year of “Jinde” in the reign of Emperor Zhenzong of Song Dynasty
The eighth year of Zhenghe of the Northern Song Dynasty (1118)	Yanzhen Guan	Name given by Emperor Huizong of Song Dynasty
Southern Song Dynasty Jia Ding first year (1208)	Tiezhu Yanzhen Palace	Guan upgraded to the Palace
Southern Song Dynasty (1295)	Tiezhu Yanzhen Wannian Palace	The word “Wannian” was added
In the 26th year of the Jiajing period of the Ming Dynasty (1547).	Miaoji Wanshou Palace	Appointed Xu Xun as “Shen Gong Miao Ji Zhen Jun”

Table 1 The Historical Evolution of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace

## 2.2 Social and Cultural Development of Wanshou Palace

The development of the Wanshou Palace, as an architectural and cultural symbol of ancient China, was influenced by the geographic and socio-cultural environments in which Xu Zhenjun's beliefs were formed, as well as by China's immigration policies during the Ming and Qing dynasties. It was under the influence of these factors that the Wanshou Palace gradually developed from the Jiangxi region to spread throughout the country.

### 2.2.1 Geographic Conditions of Xu Zhenjun's Belief

While the people of Fujian worship A-Ma Zu out of the need for seafaring, the people of Jiangxi worship Xu Zhenjun out of their need for water management. It is this unique demand triggered by different geographical features that shaped the distinctive regional cultural landscapes. The formation of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs is closely related to the local water system and geographical environment of Jiangxi, and Jiangxi's geographical environment has a profound influence on the formation of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs.

The dense water network and frequent floods at Gan Poyang gave birth to Xu Zhenjun and his beliefs. The water god is the basic image of Xu Zhenjun, and Xu Zhenjun's beliefs constitute a genealogy of the water god. Jiangxi is located in southeastern China, on the south bank of the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River, and has been an important transport hub connecting east and west, north and south, since ancient times. It neighbours Zhejiang and Fujian to the east, Guangzhou to the south, Hunan to the west, and the north to the south. It is bordered by Zhejiang and Fujian to the east, Guangzhou to the south, Hunan to the west, Hubei and Anhui to the north, and the Yangtze River to the north. Jiangxi is not only the hinterland of the Yangtze River Delta, the Pearl River Delta and the Southern Fujian Delta, but also within 600 to 700 kilometres in a straight line from major cities and ports such as Shanghai, Guangzhou, Xiamen, Nanjing, Wuhan, Changsha and Hefei. This unique geographical location. This unique geographical location made Jiangxi an important area of economic and cultural convergence in ancient times.

Xu Zhenjun faith, also known as Zhenjun faith, is a unique folk belief in Jiangxi Province. The origin of Zhenjun faith can be traced back to the Tang Dynasty and flourished in the Song Dynasty, mainly in Jiangxi Province. Xu Zhenjun, formerly known as Xu Xun, was a famous Taoist priest in the Tang Dynasty who later became a local deity in Jiangxi Province. He won the admiration and worship of the general public for his noble character, magical Taoist skills and deep folklore. Jiangxi's special geographical location provides a favourable social environment for the formation of Zhenjun's beliefs. First of all, Jiangxi's rich natural resources and superior agricultural production conditions, attracting a large number of people from the Central Plains to move south, these immigrants brought the cultural traditions of the Central Plains, and the mutual integration of the local culture, for the formation of Zhenjun beliefs provide a rich cultural heritage. Secondly, during the Tang and Song dynasties, Jiangxi's culture and education were well developed, and many literati and writers praised and extolled the deeds of Xu Zhenjun, which made Zhenjun's beliefs more deeply rooted in people's hearts under the promotion of literature and art. Finally, Jiangxi has a profound Taoist culture, and Xu Zhenjun, as a representative figure of Taoism, had his beliefs intertwined with Taoist culture, which further strengthened the influence of Zhenjun's beliefs.

Jiangxi is located in the south of China, located in the middle and lower reaches of the

Yangtze River, Jiangxi Province is characterized by the southeast and west of the territory surrounded by mountains, the inner hills are wide, the central and northern plains are open, the northern basin is densely covered with rivers and lakes, and the surface runoff is centripetal. It flows into Poyang Lake along the north, and then flows into the Yangtze River through the mouth of the lake. The terrain is high in the south and low in the north, and the landform types are diverse. Jiangxi has a unique geographical environment, a warm climate and abundant rainfall. According to the statistics of Jiangxi Water System, there are 3,771 rivers with an area of more than 10 square kilometers and 77 natural lakes with an area of more than 2 square kilometers. In particular, the river system, the Fuhe River system, the Xinjiang River system, the Rao River system, and the Xiuhe River system are the largest upstream water systems, and these rivers meet in the Poyang Lake basin to form a complete water system. Therefore, Jiangxi Province can be said to be very rich in water resources. The structure of the water system is complex. During the rainy season in spring and summer, the river swells and is prone to flash floods. Floods have occurred since ancient times. Moderate floods occur every 3~5 years, and major floods occur every 10~15 years, especially in the Poyang Lake basin in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River. These frequent floods are not only causing the lives of local residents. It also gave birth to rich folk beliefs and cultures, providing an important geographical foundation for the spread and formation of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs.

Xu Xun's water management deeds were mainly concentrated in Nanchang and its surrounding areas in Jiangxi Province, especially in the area of Pengli Lake<sup>15</sup>. It is said that there was a dragon in Poyang Lake, which caused floods for many years. Xu Xun led his disciples to capture the dragon, and in order to prevent the dragon from breaking free from the iron chain and harming the people again, Xu Xun buried the sword for suppressing the dragon under the thousand-year-old tree of Wanshou Palace in Xishan Mountain so that his disciples could capture the dragon in the future. In order to prevent the dragon from breaking free from its chains and harming the people again, Xu Xun buried the sword under a thousand-year-old tree at the Wanshou Palace in Xishan Mountain. Xu Xun lived in the time when Poyang Lake<sup>16</sup> was formed, due to the uplift of the earth's crust in the northern part of the river, the main channel of the Yangtze River was shifted to the south, which led to the expansion of Pengli Ze<sup>17</sup> in the northern part of the river to the south and flooding, so Xu Xun cut down the Jiao and eliminated the harm for the people. The terrain of Jiangxi is complicated, and it is difficult for the flood water to be discharged quickly due to the terrain. In addition, the storage capacity of Poyang Lake is limited, so when there is more water coming from the upstream, it is easy to cause the water level of the downstream rivers to rise, resulting in flooding. Except

<sup>15</sup> Pengli Lake : Ancient name for Poyang Lake.

<sup>16</sup> Poyang Lake: As the largest freshwater lake in China, Poyang Lake is not only an important tributary of the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River, but also an important place for the people of Jiangxi to live and believe.

<sup>17</sup> Peng Lize, a lake in ancient China, is located in the northern part of today's Jiangxi Province and is an important lake in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River. One of the famous lakes recorded in ancient geographical chronicles such as "Notes on the Book of Water". It is not only an important node of water transportation, but also the subject of literati and ink chanting. The changes of Peng Lize reflect the complexity and dynamics of the hydrological environment of the ancient Yangtze River Basin.

for the plain of Poyang Lake in the north of the province, the geographical situation of other counties is similar.

The geographical situation of the counties is similar except for the plain of Poyang Lake in the north, where the county towns are near the rivers, communicating with the province through the rivers of various levels, and beyond the county towns are the rolling hills and mountains, with the difference of the heights of the mountains only. When flooding occurred, fields were flooded, houses were destroyed, and a large number of people were killed or injured and displaced, which not only led to serious losses in agricultural production, but also affected the development of other industries such as commerce and handicrafts in the area, and had a great impact on the stability of the society and the people's life. Xu Xun, in his endeavour to control the flooding in the area, used the method of 'using wood to overcome water'. Xu Xun used the philosophy of 'using wood to overcome water' to prevent droughts, floods and soil erosion by planting trees and greenery to conserve water and conserve soil.

The abundance of rice in Jiangxi is another reason for the formation of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs. Jiangxi, located in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River, was the first region in China to develop rice, and has been known as the 'land of fish and rice' since ancient times. Rice is the main crop in Jiangxi, and its cultivation requires a large amount of water. Water is highly dependent, and rice cultivation requires large amounts of water and a stable irrigation system. Both floods and droughts can affect rice cultivation. When floods occur, the rice is washed away from the fields, and the floods leave a huge amount of silt and sand in the fields, which makes it difficult for the people to survive.

Repeated floods and droughts have not only caused tremendous damage to people's lives and property, but also had a far-reaching impact on people's psyche. One of the most striking phenomena is that superstitious activities among the people are prevalent, and many people do not hesitate to pretend to be gods and ghosts in order to seek the protection of the gods. Disasters in the world are far worse than natural disasters, and Xu Xun was well aware of the dangers of superstitious activities; on the one hand, he actively dealt with floods and eliminated evils, and on the other hand, he worked hard to guide the people to correct beliefs and rebuild the social atmosphere.

Xu Xun led his disciples to control flooding for more than ten years, and succeeded in controlling floods by planting trees. Even when flooding occurred, the paddy fields would not suffer from soil erosion and siltation, which delayed the best time for replanting rice. Xu Xun's water control provided a stable water source for local agricultural production and stabilised rice cultivation and harvesting. Stable agricultural production provided local residents with a more plentiful livelihood, and also provided the material basis for the formation and development of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs in folklore. With the migration of Jiangxi immigrants, Xu Xun's beliefs spread to other areas, including Hunan and Hubei, which were also important areas for rice cultivation. The spread of this belief also facilitated the exchange of rice-growing techniques and cultures, as the Jiangxi migrants established Wanshou palaces in their new locations and continued to worship Xu Xun. Historical records show that after Xu Xun, many water conservancy projects appeared in Ganfu, such as Qianjinpi, Chedanpi, and Weigongti, etc. These projects not only promoted the development of water control in Jiangxi, but also changed Jiangxi's geographic and political position because of the opening up of the waterways, and Jiangxi's handicrafts and agricultural products became famous because of its convenient water transport.

The geographical environment also has a profound influence on the cultural connotation of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs. The landscape and historical culture of the Jiangxi region have injected rich cultural connotations into Xu Zhenjun's beliefs. Xu Zhenjun's belief is not only a commemoration of a historical figure, but also a kind of reverence for the natural environment and a desire for a better life. Under the influence of the geographical environment, Xu Zhenjun's beliefs have integrated with the folk customs, art and architecture of Jiangxi, forming a unique cultural phenomenon. The rise of Xu Zhenjun's belief reflects people's fear of natural disasters and their desire for a good agricultural harvest, and to a certain extent, this belief also promotes social stability and economic development. The geographical environment has also had a significant impact on the transmission of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs. The beautiful landscapes of the Jiangxi region provided a favourable natural environment for the spread of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs. Many temples and palaces were built in the mountains and waters to pray for the blessing of Xu Zhenjun. These temples and palaces became important places for the spread of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs. In addition, the difficult accessibility of the Jiangxi region and the long distances between the mountains also allowed Xu Zhenjun's beliefs to be passed down and developed relatively independently of each other geographically.

The spread of Xuxun's beliefs in Jiangxi is inseparable from the support of the imperial power. In the imperial power, Xu Xun became the protection of Jiangxi, omnipotent Lord, young and old worship, Wanshou Palace incense flourished. According to statistics, during the Qing Dynasty, there were 405 Wanshou Palaces in 76 counties throughout Jiangxi, of which more than 80% were established during the Qing Dynasty in Qianlong, Jiaqing, Daoguang, Tongzhi and Guangxu years. The formation and development of Xu Xun's beliefs in the Jiangxi area is related to his water-rule deeds. The formation and development of Xu Xun's beliefs in Jiangxi is closely related to his water-healing deeds, the legend of his beheading the scaly dragon and the support of the imperial power. These factors together contributed to Xu Xun becoming a protective deity in the hearts of the people of Jiangxi, and he was widely spread and worshipped in the region.

The spread of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs in Jiangxi is inextricably linked to the deep cultural traditions and special geographical environment of the region. The long history and rich cultural heritage of Jiangxi Province provided a suitable soil for it, enabling Xu Zhenjun's belief to take root and grow strong in Jiangxi. It not only provides a solid support for the generation and development of Zhenjun faith, but also shapes the regional cultural characteristics of Jiangxi to a certain extent. This intertwining of culture and belief not only enriches the cultural connotation of Jiangxi, but also makes Xu Zhenjun's belief a major cultural highlight of the region. Jiangxi's unique geographical location attracted many people to move south, and the integration of these people with the local culture injected rich cultural elements into the shaping and development of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs. Coupled with the deep roots of Jiangxi's Taoist culture and the flourishing of culture and education during the Tang and Song dynasties, the spread and deepening of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs in Jiangxi also became widespread and deep.

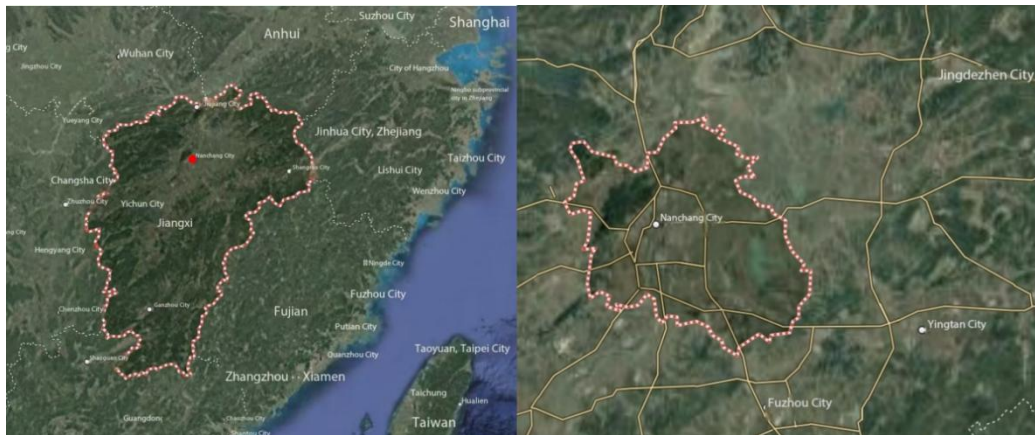


Figure 9 Jiangxi Province (left) , Nanchang City,(right)  
 Source : <https://www.google.com.hk/maps/place/> November, 2023.

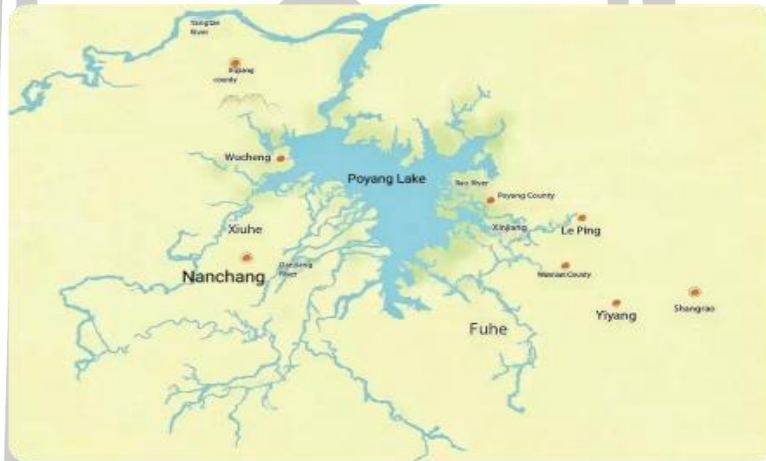


Figure 10 Nanchang Water System Map Nanchang City

The capital city of Jiangxi Province, located in the center of the map to the west.  
 Poyang Lake: China's largest freshwater lake, located in the northern part of the map, is an important lake in the Yangtze River basin.  
 Xiuhe River: Flows through the city of Nanchang and is one of the main tributaries of Poyang Lake.  
 Fuhe River: Flows into Poyang Lake from the southeast and is another important water system.

**Source:** Drawn by the author November, 2023.

### 2.2.2 Social Factors in the Cult of Xu Zhenjun

According to experts' evidence, Xu Zhenjun's beliefs first appeared in the internal worship activities of the Xu family in the Xishan area of Xinjian County, Nanchang, Jiangxi Province. Later, with the gradual expansion of Xu Zhenjun's faith group and the involvement of Taoist priests, Xu Zhenjun's faith gradually developed from family faith to a regional faith group with Wanshou Palace in Xishan, Nanchang, as the centre of faith and Gan Poyang Plain as the main area of faith.

In the Ming and Qing dynasties, with the trans-regional mobility of Jiangxi immigrants, Xu Zhenjun's belief group gradually spread from Jiangxi to the southwestern provinces such as Yunnan, Guizhou and Sichuan, as well as to some areas in Southeast Asia. Xu Zhenjun

worship was initially only a small range of local folk beliefs, Xu Xun from a family of countryside grass-head god to regional gods, Taoist priests will be the spirit of loyalty and filial piety and Taoism fusion gradually become one of the four great masters of Taoism in the process of Xu Zhenjun beliefs gradually systematised process, but also the gradual enrichment of the deeds of his deity. After the development of the North and South Dynasties to the Tang and Song dynasties, under the main impetus of the people spread all over the south of the Yangtze River; to the Ming and Qing Dynasties, with the migration of large numbers of people from Jiangxi, Xu Zhenjun beliefs developed into a folk beliefs in the country is quite influential. In this process, the story of Xu Zhenjun's deity left many marks in the cultural heritage of Gan Poyang and became an important symbol of Gan culture.

The cult of Xu Zhenjun, as a regional culture with local characteristics in Jiangxi, carries far-reaching historical origins and cultural background. The life stories and legends of Xu Xun, as well as his significant contributions to the control of floods in Jiangnan, have led to a profound worship of him among the people. This belief not only reflects the psychological beliefs and customs of the people of Jiangnan in ancient times, but is also closely related to the local cultural characteristics of Jiangxi. The Taoist cultural tradition in Jiangxi since ancient times provided the religious soil for Xu Zhenjun's beliefs. The Taoist culture of recluse reflects the pious beliefs of the people in Jiangxi in Taoism. The story of the beheading of Jiao in Xu Xun's biography and the customs behind it reveal a unique cultural phenomenon and social fear in ancient southern China.

The idea that Xu Zhenjun's 'beheading of the Jiao' to control the water contributed to the economic and social development of the local community has been passed down for a long time among Jiangxi's gentry and officials, and has had a wide impact. Xu Zhenjun's beliefs were also closely linked to the local economy and social welfare. After getting rich, Jiangxi merchants often spent part of their wealth on social welfare, reflecting the social value of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs and the sense of social responsibility of the merchant class. A closer look at one of the evolutions of the deity stories related to Xu Zhenjun's beliefs can also reveal the ethnicity of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs in the early days of his life, and more importantly, the process of reprocessing his beliefs to meet the needs of the development of local traditional agriculture in Jiangxi.

One of the reasons for the cult of Xu Zhenjun is social custom. Jiangxi since ancient times, Taoism, this custom for the construction of Xu Zhenjun provided religious soil. Lei Zizong mentioned in *Yuzhang Zhi* that: 'Many Shang Huanglao<sup>18</sup> teachings, focusing on recluse<sup>19</sup>'. This custom reflects the deep faith and attention to Taoism in Jiangxi. Xu Zhenjun worship is a kind of regional culture representing the local characteristics of Jiangxi, Xu Zhenjun faith in Jiangxi society has far-reaching historical origins and cultural background. Xu Xun's many deeds and legends during his lifetime, as well as his noble character and significant contributions to the control of floods in various parts of the south of the Yangtze

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18 Huang Lao refers to Huang Quan and Laozi, who were important figures in Taoism. Taoism emphasises a natural, quiet and inactive attitude to life, and this idea is known as the 'teachings of Huang Lao' or 'Lao Zhuang'.

19 The term 'recluse' refers to living in seclusion, avoiding the world and refraining from asking questions about world affairs. In ancient times, some literati or religious people would choose to live in seclusion in the mountains and forests, away from the distractions of the world, in order to pursue moral cultivation and spiritual upliftment. This culture of seclusion has a deep tradition in Taoism.

River, have led the public to worship him as a deity, thus forming a profound folk cult. This kind of worship not only reflects the psychological beliefs and rural customs of the people of Jiangnan in ancient times, but is also closely related to the characteristics of the local culture of Jiangxi. The belief in Xu Zhenjun played an important role in social structure, moral education, and economic and social welfare. It is not only an important part of Jiangxi's rice cultivation culture, but also a symbol of Jiangxi's local culture, which has been widely inherited by the people through the changes of the times, influencing local social life and cultural development.

Xu Zhenjun's beliefs also played an important role in social structures and power patterns. For example, during the Sui and Tang dynasties, the cult of Xu Zhenjun attracted the attention of the rulers, and Emperor Gaozong of Tang, Wu Zetian, and Emperor Xuanzong of Tang all summoned Hu Huichao, who had been expounding the filial piety of Xu Xun in Chang'an and other places, and praised him. (Zhang Zhijun, 2015: 164) In Pingxiang during the Qing Dynasty, the belief in Xu Zhenjun underwent a process of orthodoxy, marketisation and localisation, reflecting the diversification of the social power structure and the transfer of social power caused by factors such as the imperial examination and family. This change of belief not only reveals the evolution of rural society and the characteristics of the times, but also reflects the interaction between dynastic rituals, the scholarly community, commercialisation and the creation of local culture. (Li Pingliang & Zhao Pengfei, 2014: 72)

In addition, the belief of Xu Zhenjun also plays an important role in moral education. The story of Xu Xun's capture of a jiao to control the water is deeply rooted in Jiangxi's geography, reflecting the response of ancient agricultural societies to flooding. This belief in social governance through the power of morality resulted in a unique wisdom of national governance. Xu Xun was regarded as an immortal god who had done good deeds for the people. He was given the titles of Lord of Jiangxi and Lord of Pudian, which expressed the local people's recognition of his achievements and divinity.

Xu Zhenjun's beliefs are also closely related to the local economy and social welfare. Jiangyu merchants regarded Xu Zhenjun as a god of protection, and after getting rich in business, they consciously spent part of their money on public welfare, such as repairing bridges and roads, building ferries and boats, constructing schools, and helping the poor and the needy. This kind of behaviour not only reflects the social value of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs, but also reflects the active participation of the merchant class in social welfare.

Thus, the cult of Xu Zhenjun has a multi-layered impact on social factors, including historical origins, cultural background, social structure, moral education, and economic and social welfare endeavours. Together, these factors have shaped the important position and far-reaching influence of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs in Jiangxi society.

### **2.2.3 Wanshou Palace and the Jiangyou Merchants' Association**

In ancient Chinese geography, the naming of ancient geographies was often closely related to the political, cultural and historical conditions of the time. The Yangtze River was regarded as a natural boundary, dividing the areas on both sides of the river into the left side and the right side of the river. Jiangxi is located on the right side of Jiangnan, so it was called the right side of the river in ancient times. Wei Xi, a scholar of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, discussed this in his *Rilu Miscellany*, mentioning that when viewed from the northern bank of the Yangtze River, the east side of the river was on the left side and the right side of Jiangxi, reflecting the customary expression of direction in ancient China. In fact, the

concept of the left and right sides of the river originated from the ancient concept of ‘divine right of kings’. In ancient times, emperors sat on the south side of the river, with the left hand side being east and the right hand side being west, which is why Jiangxi Province was named Jiangyou. The name Jiangyou originated from the ‘Jiangnan Western Road’ established during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty. Jiangxi merchants were called ‘Jiangyou Shang’ or ‘Jiangyou Merchants’. The Chinese Dictionary Thesaurus explains the merchant guild as ‘the old Chinese name for “merchant gangs”, a guild formed by merchants’. Jiangyu Shangguan is a general term for a group of Jiangxi merchants, including those who travelled around but lived in their hometowns, as well as Jiangxi merchants who settled in other places in the context of migration, and Jiangxi merchants who had no fixed place of residence.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Jiangxi's economy was developed, and Jiangxi merchants dealing in porcelain, tea, rice, wood, and silk traveled throughout the country, which had a certain impact on the local social economy. Jiang Youshang recognized Xu Zhenjun as the best of Jiangxi's local worship deities, and regarded him as the protector of the Jiangxi people. In ancient times, there was a saying in Huguang<sup>20</sup> that "a market cannot be complete without merchants from Jiangxi." As Jiangxi merchants and immigrants continued to migrate and multiply, they could not bring anything else, but Xu Zhenjun must take it with him to show his devotion and respect for Zhenjun. Jiang Youshang outside, as long as the conditions permit. However, they will build a Wanshou palace in the local area, worship Xu Zhenjun, and pray for their wealth to be rolled and the world will be reached. The Jiangyou merchant gang promoted the development and evolution of Wanshou Palace<sup>21</sup> (Jiangxi Guild Hall) under the influence of its group and business.

During the Ming Dynasty, the imperial court implemented the policy of ‘emigration from Jiangxi to Huguang and from Huguang to Sichuan’. The reasons for this were to restore economic prosperity after the war, to adjust population distribution and to promote regional development. The population transfer in the policy of ‘Jiangxi to Huguang’ had a significant impact on the society and economy of Huguang province. The ‘Jiangxi to Huguang’ policy took place at the end of the Yuan and the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, when years of war, especially the fight between Zhu Yuanzhang, the founder of the Ming Dynasty, and Chen Youliang, and the subsequent scourge of war, had resulted in a sharp decline in the population of the area of Hunan and Hubei (then known as the province of Huguang), leaving the land in the area barren and deserted. In order to fill the population and restore the economy, the Ming government directed a large number of people from Jiangxi to move to the Huguang area. This migration involved not only individuals and families, but also entire villages and communities and even larger groups of people, who were moved to Huguang and given land. This process greatly contributed to the economic and cultural revival of the middle reaches of the Yangtze River.

Subsequently, the policy of ‘filling Sichuan with Hunan and Guangdong’ was implemented in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, when Sichuan was depopulated and the land was left barren as a result of successive years of war. In order to restore the economic

<sup>20</sup> Huguang refers to Hubei, Hunan, Guangdong and Guangxi.

<sup>21</sup> Wanshou Palace, also known as Jiangxi Hall, is a unique form of social organization in Chinese history, which is not only a meeting and residence place for Jiangxi people in other provinces, but also an important place for local business exchanges and cultural inheritance.

and social order of the province, the government introduced residents from Hunan and Guangdong into Sichuan. The migration increased Sichuan's labour force, facilitated land development and economic growth, and led to the establishment of a commercial and trading network centred on Chongqing. In order to restore Sichuan's population and economy, the Qing government guided the migration of people from neighbouring regions, including the Hukuang people, to Sichuan. These migrants were allocated land and received support and encouragement from the government. This wave led to fundamental demographic changes and brought new cultural and economic vigour to Sichuan. As a result of this wave of migration, the Jiangyu Merchants' Association was formed. The Jiangyu Merchant Gang was a famous business group active in China during the Ming and Qing dynasties, and was on a par with the Jin Merchants<sup>22</sup> and the Hui Merchants<sup>23</sup>, whose power spread throughout the country and also had a greater influence overseas. The Jiangyu Merchants' Association originated in the Tang Dynasty, developed in the Song Dynasty, and flourished in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. They are centred on commercial activities and have strong economic strength and social influence.

Wanshou Palace is a symbol of the Jiangyue merchants doing business in the outside world. With the footprints of the Jiangyue merchants to Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan and other southwestern provinces, the people of Jiangxi recognised Xu Zhenjun as one of the best of the trade of the local gods in Jiangxi, regarded him as the local god of protection, and outside of the country as a local god to promote him. Wanshou Palace has also taken root in these provinces and has had a great impact on the local community. The vast majority of Wanshou Palaces across the country were built with funds donated by Jiangxi, so they were gradually transformed into venues for Gan donations to gatherings, line gangs, and associations. South to north to the donation of Jiangxi merchants, to the Wanshou Palace or exchange of information, or to seek help, and at the same time bring the culture of various places, promote the cultural exchanges of various places. Jiangxi merchants in foreign countries in the Wanshou Palace to worship Xu Zhenjun, seek refuge in Zhenjun. At the same time, to relieve their homesickness, Wanshou Palace to facilitate contact with the people of Jiangxi. Speaking the language of home, in the Wanshou Palace, gathering, deliberations, rest, entertainment. Jiangyou merchant gang every year in the worship of the True Lord, will hold a grand temple fair, during which to invite all over the famous theatre troupe to Wanshou Palace performances, attracting people to come to watch the local people, in order to promote the growth of the volume of trade in goods. It can be said that the Gang of Commerce in Wanshou Palace in the export of Jiangxi culture, Jiangxi culture will be transplanted to bring out.

Wanshou Palace as a landmark building of the Gang of Jiangyue merchants, the building itself shows the former glory of Jiangxi merchants, but also contains a rich cultural connotation, it is a local landmark building, located in the lot, the pier are in an important geographical location. Many Wanshou Palace in the country, although in the building scale, architectural style is not the same, but all contain a lot of Jiangxi cultural elements, Wanshou Palace as a kind of folk worship by Xu Zhenjun developed from the local architecture of Jiangxi and all over the country for the integration of architecture and culture.

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<sup>22</sup> Jin merchants refer to Shanxi merchants.

<sup>23</sup> Huishang refers to Anhui merchants.

## 2.3 Folklore and Artistic Aesthetics of Wanshou Palace

Folklore is a part of people's life, involving cultural behaviours and emotional expressions in their daily life. Wanshou Palace folklore fully demonstrates the unique charm of Jiangxi local culture, and its richness and diversity not only highlights the regional characteristics of Jiangxi, but also preserves many ancient customs. It is rich and diversified, not only showing the regional characteristics of Jiangxi, but also preserving many ancient customs, such as temple festivals, dragon dances, lion dances, folk dances, Gan Opera performances and so on. The folklore of Wanshou Palace constitutes an important way to maintain the life of the people of Jiangxi and to communicate with them.

### 2.3.1 The connotation of the folk art of Wanshou Palace

Wanshou Palace is not only a building with deep historical and cultural heritage in Jiangxi, but also a holy place for local people to have rich and diversified folk activities and aesthetic experiences. The Wanshou Palace is home to a rich variety of folklore activities, including faith, folk art and traditional commerce. As an outstanding representative of Jiangxi's temple culture, Wanshou Palace carries a complete body of knowledge spanning thousands of years of history. The folk culture of Wanshou Palace originates from the worship of Xu Zhenjun by the people of Jiangxi, and is a living traditional culture that has been passed down from generation to generation both because Xu Zhenjun is a real historical figure and because of the people's adoration of Xu Zhenjun. This culture has various forms and rich connotations, and is deeply rooted in the folklore, with a broad mass base. The folk culture of Wanshou Palace is diverse and rich in content, such as folk stories, sacrificial rituals, customs, etc. It is a typical representative of Gan culture, and its main essence is the culture of loyalty and filial piety of Xu Zhenjun.

For thousands of years, Xu Zhenjun has enjoyed a high position of faith in Jiangxi folklore, and has been honoured in many Wanshou Palaces at home and abroad, and his reputation has spread far and wide. Xu Zhenjun was clean and honest, and his remarkable performance in leading the people in his hometown of Nanchang to dredge the river and control the water was later evolved into the legend of the 'Tiezhu Locking the Jiao', which was widely spread. The people set up a shrine for him and honoured him as the 'Lord of Jiangxi Province', and his worship has never ceased. The worship of Xu Zhenjun by the folk groups has continued since the Jin Dynasty, and the process of worship is more or less the same as that in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. After the Tang and Song dynasties, Xu Zhenjun was honoured as the patriarch of the Ming and Jing Taoist sects, and scholars, literati and writers wrote poems, novels and dramas in his praise, and there were countless couplets and couplets of poems and lyrics.

Since the Jin Dynasty, during the pilgrimage to Wanshou Palace, the members of the incense organisation dressed in uniform, played fixed music and performed fixed dances. The music is mainly based on the traditional ancient tunes of Jiangnan, and the dance is mainly based on the simple movements of tea-picking theatre. The unique folk art style of Wanshou Palace is closely related to the special geographical environment, and the architecture of Wanshou Palace is famous for its exquisite carvings and modern features, showing the unique style of Gan architecture. Wanshou Palace is not only a symbol of religious beliefs, but also an important place for the spiritual support of the Jiangyou merchant gang, showing the mutual influence of regional and religious culture. During the various festivals held in

Nanchang every year, lion dance, dragon dance, tea picking opera, Gan opera and many other non-heritage folklore performances must be held in Wanshou Palace. During the special periods of temple fairs and rituals, various forms of cultural performances are also held. For example, the temple fair held around the beginning of autumn every year, there are tides of visitors, farmers from all over the world bring their agricultural products to the city to catch the temple fair, and business is prosperous.

Poems in honour of Xu Xun have been written since the Tang and Song dynasties, and a large number of poems can still be collected among intellectual groups that love and protect Jiangxi culture. These poems are mainly in the ancient style, and their contents are mainly about praising Xu Xun's achievements and emulating Xu Xun's grand ambitions. Commemorative essays are mainly in the ancient style, and their contents include praising Xu Xun's achievements, reporting on the performance of the organisation, and reiterating the moral code. Many of these rituals can still be found in trade organisations such as chambers of commerce and incense associations. Successive emperors and kings have also sealed him, given him inscriptions, local officials in Jiangxi have repeatedly asked for the sealing of gifts, and wealthy merchants and tycoons have also enthusiastically donated to the 'Blessed Lord of Jiangxi'. These initiatives have greatly enhanced the scale and status of the Wanshou Palace, making it from folk culture to national culture.

The folk activities of Wanshou Palace are mainly embodied in temple fairs and traditional festivals. For example, the temple fair of Wanshou Palace in Xishan Mountain is a major local folk culture festival, attracting a large number of tourists every year, and the activities include opera performances, non-heritage exhibitions and food bazaars, etc., demonstrating the fusion of rich traditional culture with modern elements. The temple fair not only inherits the millennium cultural tradition, but also realises the living inheritance of non-heritage culture through the whole region tourism. The folk aesthetic culture of Wanshou Palace has also been widely studied and recognised. It combines the characteristics of aesthetics and folklore, and through the participation in the rituals and performances, people can experience the unique artistry and aesthetic value.

The essence of beauty is closely related to the nature of human beings, social practices and life, which are also the fundamental attributes of folklore and folk life. The essence of beauty coincides with the essence of folklore, and primitive witchcraft and games have directly influenced the origin of art and aesthetics. Since the Ming and Qing dynasties, a cross-regional cultural circle of temples dedicated to Xu Zhenjun has been formed with Wanshou Palace in Xishan Mountain as its centre. The theatre culture of Wanshou Palace has strong local characteristics. Acting to reward and entertain the gods is a traditional custom of the temple fair, which on the one hand commemorates Xu Zhenjun and thanks him for his benevolence; on the other hand, it expresses the wish for the growth of crops to eliminate calamities and pray for good luck, and celebrates a good agricultural harvest in the hope of a good harvest in the coming year.

At the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, Jiangxi's local opera Yiyangqiang spread rapidly throughout the country, especially in the northern and southern capitals and in the western region, and had a far-reaching influence on the formation of Sichuan opera, Cantonese opera, Kun opera, and Peking opera. After the Wanli period of the Ming Dynasty, the population of Jiangxi gradually increased, and emigration to the southwestern provinces became a trend. Jiangxi immigrants and merchants set up Wanshou Palace all over the country, making it the

cultural bond of Gan people and the spiritual pillar of the development of commodity economy. Nanchang Wanshou Palace gradually evolved from a regional sacrificial centre to a cross-regional sacrificial centre, becoming the centre of Wanshou Palace folk culture. The rituals and entertainments held in the Wanshou Palace in other provinces are all derived from the Jiangxi tradition, reflecting the rich and colourful rituals and entertainments of Nanchang Wanshou Palace at that time.

Folklore is an objective fact of human life, covering all aspects of the daily life of communities and individuals, and has become a way of cultural activities and emotional expression. The combination of Wanshou Palace folklore and artistic aesthetics not only plays an important role in the protection and inheritance of traditional culture, but also positively affects the development and innovation of local culture. Wanshou Palace, as a gathering place of intangible cultural heritage in Jiangxi, has been able to pass on traditional arts such as Ganfa embroidery and Yuzhang porcelain carving through exhibitions and experiential activities. At the same time, by combining traditional art with modern design, new art forms and cultural products are created, attracting the attention and participation of the younger generation. The development of cultural tourism has made Wanshou Palace a new landmark of cultural tourism in Nanchang, attracting a large number of tourists. Wanshou Palace has become an important place for traditional culture education through various exhibitions and experiential activities. Folk activities and artistic performances in Wanshou Palace demonstrate the diversity and richness of Jiangxi culture and enhance the confidence and pride of local residents in their local culture.

Wanshou Palace, as a cultural landmark integrating Taoist culture, regional culture and folk traditions, has a unique aesthetic style of folklore and art, with rich connotations. From the perspective of folklore, the architectural design of Wanshou Palace emphasises the harmony and unity of heaven, earth and human beings, the decorative art means good luck, the folklore activities contain rich aesthetic experience, the intangible cultural heritage has been inherited, and the pursuit of spirituality and culture has been embodied in the artistic aesthetics. In a word, the folklore and art aesthetics of Wanshou Palace is a system of diversified fusion and far-reaching meaning, which not only contains the traditional aesthetic concepts, but also reflects the changes of modern aesthetic trends, and it is a bright pearl in the cultural treasury of Gan Poyang area and even in China.

### **2.3.2 Wanshou Palace Temple Festivals in Xishan Mountain**

Chinese temple fair culture has a long history, spanning thousands of years, and has gradually evolved to the present day. In the beginning, it appeared in the form of clan temples and was a place for people and gods to communicate with each other in a clustered manner. Subsequently, it has evolved into a temple fair that combines multiple gods and goddesses and multiple religious beliefs. This cultural form has gradually evolved from the initial belief in worship to a large-scale gathering of religious activities, cultural entertainment and commercial trade. Especially in the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, the temple fair culture reached its peak. Since the Republic of China, temple fairs have gradually incorporated modern elements and developed into a modern society. Under the impact of modern civilisation, the solemnity and sacredness of folk beliefs in temple fairs have gradually weakened, while the entertainment function has gradually increased. Temple fairs not only closely link people and nature, history and reality, cities and villages, but also combine faith

and spiritual liberation, integrating traditional, religious and ethnic cultures, and forging a common memory of the Chinese people. For the Chinese people, visiting temples is a way to feel nostalgia and appease their wandering souls. It has become a cultural tradition that combines faith and entertainment. The development of temple fairs is closely linked to the process of Chinese religious culture, which is rooted in different religious traditions, but also draws nourishment from these religions, so that its connotation is constantly enriched and deepened.

The origins of the Wanshou Palace temple fair can be traced back to the belief in Xu Zhenjun, which originated in Jiangxi Province. The historical origins and development of the Wanshou Palace temple fair in Xishan can be traced back to the West Jin Dynasty, specifically to the second year of the Yuankang era (292) of the Jin Dynasty, when, in order to commemorate the ascension of Xu Xun, a puja was held by the local people in order to honour Xu Zhenjun's merits and virtues and gradually developed into a series of Xu Xun worshipping activities. The main focus of this festival was the worship of Xu Xun, the ancestor of Jing-ming sect, who was a native of the West Jin Dynasty and lived in seclusion at the site of the Meixian Temple in the southern suburb of Nanchang, where he founded a Taoist temple and established the Jing-ming sect, which he honoured as his ancestor. With the migration of people from Jiangxi Province and commercial activities spread throughout the country. Numerous rituals and ceremonies have been developed around the belief in Xu Zhenjun and the temple fair. During the festivals, the people are free from the constraints of daily life, put aside utilitarianism, are equal to each other, communicate freely, and display a free state of human nature, which is a kind of back-to-basics experience in which people feel their own essence. This true embodiment of humanity exists not only in imagination or thinking, but also in real-life interactions. Festivals and carnivals make people feel their existence as human beings and the oneness of human beings and the world, which is a purely aesthetic experience. Therefore, festivals and carnivals are the most aesthetically valuable way of life. Wanshou Palace plays a crucial role in rituals and festivals, temple entertainment and folk traditions. On the occasion of festivals, people often organise various activities to entertain the gods and the public, and these activities have been passed down through the years and gradually evolved into local customs in Jiangxi. In terms of temple fairs, the reverence for Xu Zhenjun gave birth to the Wanshou Palace, which in turn gave rise to the Wanshou Palace Temple Fairs. On certain festivals, people would gather at Wanshou Palace from all over the world and hold grand temple fairs to show their respect for Xu Zhenjun. Opera performances from Jiangxi were often staged in the Wanshou Palace or in the Guild Halls, which were open to immigrants as well as local residents, as they were occasions for gatherings of the townspeople and platforms for demonstrating the strength of the unity of the people of Jiangxi. Such gatherings facilitated the process of entering into local customs and promoting the blending of different types of theatre.

National Intangible Cultural Heritage 'Wanshou Palace Temple Fair'. The temple fair not only showcases the rich traditional culture, but also enhances people's awareness of the inheritance of the fine traditions of the Chinese nation. The Wanshou Palace Temple Fair is characterised by the worship of Xu Xun, which is why it is also known as the True Monarch Fair, the Immortal Pilgrimage Fair and the Fragrance Respecting Fair. Around the first day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar, groups of worshippers from counties around Nanchang go to Xishan Mountain to pay homage. The temple fair covers the fields of faith,

folklore, folk art and so on, and is of great significance in enhancing national cohesion and cultural identity.

Wanshou Palace is located in Xishan Town, Xinjian District, Nanchang City. In ancient times, this place was called Xishan Town Easy Mountain (also known as Xishan), and it was known as 'the twelfth of the thirty-six caves of heaven' and 'the thirty-eighth of the seventy-two blessed places' in Taoism. The establishment of Xishan Wanshou Palace dates back to the middle of the 4th century, with a history of more than 1,600 years. It was initially the residence of Xu Xun, the ancestor of Jing-ming sect, and later honoured as the ancestral home of Jing-ming sect and one of the four major sects of Jiangnan Fu-Lu Taoism (Chenlili, 2005: 117). The Wanshou Palace temple festival originated from the story of Xu Xun, a Taoist priest of the XiJin Dynasty, who became an immortal and flew to the sky, and the first day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar was set as the day of pilgrimage to the Immortals to pay tribute to Xu Xun's merits, which is believed to be a tradition for more than 1,700 years. The temple fair is characterised by the worship of Xu Xun, so it is also known as Zhenjunhui, Chaoxianhui and Jingxianghui. Participants in the temple fair from various counties and cities in Jiangxi Province, including Nanchang County, Xinjian County, Zhangjian County, and the city of Zhangjian.

Chang County, Xinjian County, Zhangshu City, Fengcheng City and Gao'an City, the majority of people; in addition, there are a lot of people from other provinces whose ancestry is Jiangxi Province to participate in, including Hunan, Hubei, Guizhou, Yunnan and Sichuan, the majority of people. The Wanshou Palace temple fair is a fusion of Taoist beliefs in gods and immortals and local folklore, and contains multiple meanings of religious beliefs, folklore, folk arts and culture, etc. It has a multidisciplinary research value, and occupies an important position in the history of Taoism in China. The Wanshou Palace temple fair is a typical example of the combination of Taoist deities and local folklore, with multiple meanings of religious beliefs, folk customs, and folk arts and culture, and has multidisciplinary research value, occupying an important position in the history of Taoism in China. Li Pingliang in the article "Local Temples and Social and Cultural Changes - Nanchang Xishan Wanshou Palace Inscription Research" expounded that Xishan Wanshou Palace enshrined the ancestor Xu Xun (Xu Zhenjun), the ancestor of Jingming's loyalty and filial piety, was destroyed in the war at the end of the Yuan Dynasty, and was rebuilt in the early Ming Dynasty, but then tended to decay, and was not fully revived until the Wanli period. From the existing inscriptions, it can be seen that the reconstruction process of Xishan Wanshou Palace in the late Ming Dynasty was mainly initiated by the local gentry and the party class, thus making it a local ritual center. In the early Qing Dynasty, Jiangxi magistrates presided over the construction of Xishan Wanshou Palace many times, and at the same time, it was incorporated into the national ritual and attempted to become a provincial ritual center. In the late Qing Dynasty, the gentry and merchants from all over Jiangxi widely participated in the construction of the Xishan Wanshou Palace, and gradually formed a provincial incense distribution and incense system, making Xu Zhenjun the "blessed master" of Jiangxi and a symbol of regional culture. On the donation tablet of Xishan Wanshou Palace, you can see incense associations from all over Jiangxi. According to this information, it is not difficult for us to return to the "historical scene", visit the villagers, collect genealogies, guild books and other folk historical documents, find out the connection between different social organizations such as families, guilds, and clubs and incense associations, interpret the content of the

inscription from different angles, and deepen the understanding of Xishan Wanshou Palace and local social culture Wanshou Palace temple fair is an important form of expression of Xu Zhenjun worship in Jiangxi region, in June 2011, Xishan Wanshou Palace temple fair activities won the title of national intangible cultural heritage, It marks the affirmation of the significance of the folk culture of the temple fair from the national level.

As an important religious activity, the Xishan Wanshou Palace Temple Fair attracts hundreds of thousands of pilgrims every year to worship, and this custom of "pilgrimage to immortals" reflects the folk and communal characteristics of Taoist beliefs. The temple fair is also more closely linked to many folk festivals, making the temple fair a local festival. The Xishan Wanshou Palace Temple Fair is a folk festival that has been passed down for thousands of years in Jiangxi, which is not only a deep memory of Xu Zhenjun, but also carries the connotation of Xu Zhenjun's belief. The cultural activities of temple fairs are deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, and are an important part of the social and cultural inheritance of Jiangxi people, and they are also an indispensable element of people's lives. Jiangxi folk will Xu Xun as Jiangxi Blessing Lord, Putian Blessing Lord. The temple fair is a manifestation of Xu Zhenjun's contribution and divinity to the hero of water control. On the eve of the temple fair, the Jingming Taoist priest will hold a Jiao ceremony to cleanse the body and change the robe for the statue of Xu Zhenjun, and the believers will hold a solemn prayer ceremony in the Gaoming Temple, attracting more than 500,000 people every year. The temple fair is not only a commemoration of Xu Zhenjun, but also a concentrated embodiment of Jiangxi's folk beliefs, cultural traditions and social life, which reflects people's respect for the gods, adherence to cultural inheritance, and the importance of community harmony and family harmony. The Xishan Wanshou Palace temple fair is still active in the lives of the people, and the Chaoxian temple fair, which integrates Taoist culture and local customs, has become a beautiful festival scenery in Nanchang, Jiangxi.

With the passage of time, the Xishan Wanshou Palace temple fair has gradually developed into a mass cultural activity, and its main body of worship is mainly folk believers. Every year from the 20th day of the seventh lunar month to the first day of the ninth lunar month, the head of the palace will fast and bathe and perform a series of religious ceremonies. This kind of temple fair activity has not only been handed down in Jiangxi for 1,700 years, but also flourished with the migration of Jiangxi immigrants, and spread all over the world with the rise of the "Jiangyou merchant gang". The continuation and revival of the Xishan Wanshou Palace temple fair benefited from the revitalization of Jingming Taoism and the support of the government, and its activities were protected and promoted, so that this traditional folk custom was passed on in an orderly manner. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, despite the great changes in society, the temple fair still maintained the ancient rituals and became a folk activity with local influence. After the reform and opening up, the temple fair continued to be carried out with the support of the government and was listed as a national intangible cultural heritage, demonstrating the country's recognition of folk culture. The annual religious ceremony of the Xishan Wanshou Palace Temple Fair shows the far-reaching influence of Xu Zhenjun's faith in Jiangxi and the unique style of the regional community. The temple fair activities include the Jiao ritual ceremony, the folk sacrifice ceremony, and the god welcome competition. These activities are not only a commemoration of Xu Zhenjun, but also a part of the local social and cultural traditions. During the temple fair,

pilgrims will perform various rituals, such as cutting melons<sup>24</sup>, forbidden altars<sup>25</sup>, Southern Dynasty<sup>26</sup>, Xifu<sup>27</sup>, and receiving immortals<sup>28</sup>, etc., These ceremonies are often accompanied by the holding of Taoist Zhai Jiao rituals, reflecting the integration of Taoist culture and folk beliefs. The customs of the Southern Dynasties and the customs of Xifu play an important role in the religious ceremonies of the Xishan Wanshou Palace, and their worship activities related to the worship of Xu Zhenjun are the more important traditional religious ceremonies of the palace. Specific practices include holding a dojo ceremony on the eve of the temple fair, cleansing the statue of Xu Zhenjun and changing robes, so that the statue can be refreshed. In addition, from the 20th day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar to the first day of the ninth month of the lunar calendar every year, people will form an incense society or come to worship with their families, beat gongs and drums, blow trumpets, bow in three steps, kneel in nine steps, go to the front of the temple to make offerings, silently recite their wishes, and pray for the gift of "lucky stars". Taoist priests perform rituals of Taoist rites<sup>29</sup>, and believers would hold the ceremony of burning sachet and praying for blessings. The large number of participants in the temple fair reflected the far-reaching influence of Xu Zhenjun's belief in the people.

Every July and August, the "Pilgrimage" celebration lasts for more than 40 days, attracting countless believers to go to Xishan for pilgrimage with devotion and sincerity. On the morning of the first day of August, Wanshou Palaces in various places have to accept the worship of people from all over the world, and the believers usually organize themselves in families, villages, and towns to go to worship. During the period of the immortals, the villagers first fasted and bathed, and then selected "good men and women" to form a team of immortals. Each team has as few as twenty or thirty people and as many as several hundred. They first went to Huangtang Palace, Dream Mountain, and finally gathered in Xishan Wanshou Palace. They held incense flowers, drums, and flags to celebrate. In front of each procession is a special banner embroidered with gold thread with the words "Long Birthday Incense" and other words, followed by a believer carrying a bamboo dragon on his back. The incense crowd is unified with local characteristics of the tops, mostly red and yellow. Along the way, beating gongs and drums, playing music and sounding horns, after everyone enters the palace, three steps and one bow, nine steps and one kneeling, all to the front of the palace, Chen respects offerings, silently recites the wishes, prays for the gift of "lucky stars", in the incense burner, the cigarette smoke curls, at the foot of the West Mountain, the cannon is noisy, this activity is called "longevity into the incense". The incense in front of the statue is

<sup>24</sup> Cutting melons: is a symbolic ritual that is sometimes used to show sacrifices to gods. In some regions, believers symbolically "cew" melons and fruits to the gods as a sign of piety.

<sup>25</sup> Forbidden Altar : Refers to a sacred area set up during temple fairs where pilgrims offer prayers and offerings. The forbidden altar is usually presided over by a Taoist priest who performs Taoist rituals, such as chanting mantras, burning incense, and making offerings.

<sup>26</sup> Southern Dynasty: Bow to Xu Zhenjun's master and mother, and express respect and nostalgia for the relationship between master and student.

<sup>27</sup> Xifu: It originated from the legend that Xu Xun went to Gao'an to visit his daughter and son-in-law every three years. One of the important folk activities of Xishan Wanshou. Once every three years, on the first day after the Shangyuan Festival. The villagers who participated in the activities in Xifu all burned incense and paid respects.

<sup>28</sup> Immortals: Worshippers pray to the gods for good fortune or liberation.

<sup>29</sup> Taoist rites : It is the most important profession of Taoism believers, that is, Taoist priests, an important magic weapon for propagating the law, preaching and practicing themselves, and it is also one of the important symbols of Taoism as a religion.

endless day and night, the thesis ingots turn into fly ash, the cigarette smoke is swirling, the sound of firecrackers, the silk and bamboo are melodious, and the bells are bursting. During this period, the temple fair merchants gathered during the day, and the opera troupe performed on stage at night. Xishan Wanshou Palace The temple fair drama during the temple fair, also known as the true monarch drama and the blessing main play. Xu Zhenjun is revered as the Lord of Universal Blessing, and the first to fifteenth day of August is the peak period of pilgrims' worship, when the singing of Zhenjun Opera also reaches its climax. This kind of performance must be performed by the Taipan with the script Play. For example, around 1950, the "Xu Zhenjun" rehearsed by the Fourth Peking Opera Troupe of Nanchang City was a sacrificial drama to worship Xu Xun staged during the temple fair. The temple fair "Pilgrimage to Immortals" fully expresses people's desire for a good harvest and success, and they traditionally pray for suitable weather, good wind and rain, and the safety and health of their families. The rituals and ceremonies in the temple fair show the people's reverence for the gods and the persistent inheritance of traditional culture. Dutch scholar Shi Zhouren and Japanese scholar Akizuki Guanying and other researchers discussed the historical and cultural connotation and development process of Xishan Wanshou Palace from different perspectives. They pointed out that the state's admiration for Taoism during the Song and Song dynasties contributed to the development of the Xishan Wanshou Palace, while the Xishan Wanshou Palace after the Song Dynasty had a stronger folk belief in the ancestral temple color. In addition, many scholars have discussed the cultural significance of Xishan Wanshou Palace to varying degrees from the perspective of local history or folklore.

The Xishan Wanshou Palace Temple Fair reflects the profound folk prayer culture in China, and as a traditional cultural blessing custom, it has long been integrated into the daily life of the people in Jiangxi. On the day of Xu Xun's birthday, people are full of expectations, worship the true monarch, and pray for peace and smoothness. The people in Jiangxi have a long tradition of worshipping Xu Zhenjun, and the temple fair is not only the cradle of folk art, but also the hotbed of Xu Zhenjun's belief inheritance and development. During the event, participants can watch a dazzling array of cultural performances, such as folk opera, tea picking opera, etc., and can also see a variety of folk handicrafts, such as candy blowers,



sugar art and dough sculptures, etc., and taste Jiangxi local snacks, and can also buy daily necessities, to meet the material and spiritual needs of the people. Nanchang Xishan Wanshou Palace Temple Fair takes worship of Xu Zhenjun as the core and advocates "Jingming Eight Treasure" is loyalty, filial piety, honesty, prudence, generosity, abundance, tolerance, and forbearance as the normative values, which play a positive role in optimizing the social atmosphere and building a harmonious society. During the fair, people gathered together, demonstrating the cohesion and influence of the temple fair on the local community. Artistic performances are the transmission of national culture, and commodity trading reflects the expansion of daily consumption, thus boosting the economy.



Figure 11 2024 Xishan Wanshou Palace Temple Fair Wanshou Palace incense words flag

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, September, 2024.

The Xishan Wanshou Palace temple fair has a great attraction to tourists who pursue "Chao Xian", and its characteristics are reflected in: firstly, the temple fair is a collection of various cultural forms, and its time selection not only meets the needs of people's production and life, but also realizes the harmonious integration of the sacred and the secular; Secondly, the ancient temple fair of Wanshou Palace has a perfect support system, including folk activities during the temple fair and people's love for food; Third, the ritual performance of the temple fair. These rituals are the most stable part of the temple fair, essential to maintaining Xu Zhenjun's faith, the most revered and observed by believers, and the bond between people and gods. The worship of Xu Zhenjun by the people of Jiangxi has a variety of forms, covering religious beliefs, cultural inheritance and social activities, and has become an important cultural heritage in the Jiangxi region. The Xishan Wanshou Palace Temple Fair closely links man and nature, history and reality, city and countryside, faith and practice, integrates

tradition, religion and national culture, and forms a unique culture of belief and



entertainment in Jiangxi.

Figure 12 The scene of the immortal dynasty in the Xishan Wanshou Palace

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, September, 2024.

### 2.3.3 Tiezhu Wanshou Palace Temple Fair

The history of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace Temple Fair can be traced back to before the Ming Dynasty, and its worship is in line with the national rituals. "Xiaoyao Mountain Wanshou Palace Chronicles" volume eight recorded: "In the right cypress of the terrace today, for the true monarch hand planted, the old legend has a sword to cut Jiao buried under it, the so-called five hundred years later, if the snake demon reworks, to my plant cypress as a test is this." This record not only shows the long history of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, but also reflects its important position in folk beliefs.

The local folk customs of Jiangxi are also related to the long-evolving sacrifice to Xu Zhenjun. According to the eighth volume of the "Xiaoyao Mountain Wanshou Palace Chronicles": "In the right cypress of the terrace today, it is planted by the hand of the true monarch, and the old legend has a sword to cut Jiao buried under it, and the so-called five hundred years later, if the snake demon is remade, I plant the cypress as the test." "The people in it are afraid of their words, so it is said that this will be." "Every year in early August, the people hold a cypress cutting meeting to ensure the safety of the party. The temple fair itself is a kind of art form of display, and the temple fair of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is an important carrier of traditional Chinese culture. Through temple fair activities, the essence of traditional Chinese culture will be passed on to the new generation, so that traditional culture can be continued and developed. As the official sacrificial place in the Ming and Qing dynasties, the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is not only an important cultural heritage in Jiangxi, but also a valuable part of traditional Chinese culture. Its temple fair activities have carried rich folk culture and artistic aesthetic values since ancient times, reflecting the integration of folk customs and artistic aesthetics. As a social activity, temple fair activities can enhance the cohesion and sense of identity of the community. By participating in temple fairs together, people can get to know each other better and strengthen social ties. As a historical and cultural landmark, Wanshou Palace carries the historical memories and emotions of the local people, and has become a part of the collective memory, and people often have a strong cultural resonance when visiting and participating in activities. From dragon and lion dances to bench

dragon performances, each event has a profound artistic connotation. The dragon and lion dance is not only a folk activity, but also a kind of visual art, with bright colors and vivid shapes, giving people a strong visual impact. The bench dragon performance is a unique folk art that combines elements of dance, music and drama to showcase the diversity and richness of folk art. On important festivals and anniversaries, such as the Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, etc., Wanshou Palace will hold various celebrations, such as dragon dances, lion dances, firecrackers, etc., which not only inherit traditional folk customs, but also enrich local cultural life. The Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District will also hold a bench dragon performance during the Spring Festival, which is a folk activity with Nanchang characteristics, reflecting people's expectations for a good harvest and good luck.

## **2.4 Architectural and artistic characteristics of Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Hall in the Ming and Qing dynasties**

Wanshou Palace, also known as Jiangxi Guild Hall, is a traditional Chinese guild hall building, and its design and aesthetic characteristics reflect the aesthetic concept of traditional Chinese architecture. With the development of commerce in the Ming and Qing dynasties, a large number of Jiangyou merchants were distributed throughout the country, and in order to maintain the contact between fellow villagers, facilitate business exchanges and provide mutual help, they established guild halls in major cities and transportation areas.

### **2.4.1 Wanshou Palace Jiangxi Hall**

Wanshou Palace is the Jiangxi Hall outside the province, and there are hundreds or thousands of Jiangxi Hall inside and outside the province. In other words, Wanshou Palace is a symbol of Jiangxi culture outside the province. (Fu Xiuyan, Wang Junwei, & Xiao Huirong, 2019: 8) Wanshou Palace is the cradle of Taoism and Jiangxi commercial culture, and it is also the source of ancient Jiangxi guild culture. Originated in the Song Dynasty and shaped from the middle of the Ming Dynasty to the Kangxi Dynasty, it was a unique social group in the Ming and Qing dynasties in China, and was a kind of group composed of fellow villagers or peers. At first, they were mainly social organizations formed to meet the political, economic, and cultural needs of the time. Such organizations are set up by fellow villagers or people in other industries in other cities, and integrate social interaction, mutual assistance, and charity. Its architectural style blends local characteristics with the culture of members' hometowns, often linked by geography or industry. Jiangyou merchants helped to build the Wanshou Palace Jiangxi Hall, and used the Wanshou Palace Jiangxi Hall as a gathering place for fellow villagers or chambers of commerce, providing a place for exchanges and mutual assistance for Jiangxi people abroad. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, Jiangxi merchants spread all over the country, and a large number of Jiangxi merchants traveled to and from all parts of the country to trade, forming a huge Jiangyou merchant gang. Manshougong Jiangxi Hall is not only a reflection of a sense of place, but also an important symbol of its business network and cultural identity. Since ancient times, Jiangxi has had a lot of land and little land, and many people have left their hometowns to do business in order to survive, but they are oppressed and humiliated in a foreign land. The Jiangxi Hall of Wanshou Palace was originally built to worship the gods and pray for protection.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the vast majority of guilds were a kind of loose association of fellow villagers, which had nothing to do with industry and commerce. Friendship with the villagers and worship the gods are the most common activities of the regional guild hall, and it is also the most basic motive for the construction of the guild hall and the most basic function of the guild hall. Guests should gain a foothold in a foreign land and expand their geographical and ancestral origins on a geographical basis. Through the same clan and kinship, the same township and the same style, common god worship or religious beliefs to maintain and connect feelings. The building itself is a symbol of nostalgia and family affection. Wanshou Palace, as a sacred place dedicated to Xu Zhenjun, the protector of Jiangxi, has become the inspiration and symbol of Jiangxi businessmen to build museums in other places because of its lofty status. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, as Jiangxi immigrants migrated to the southwest, filling in Huguang, Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan, and the whole country and even the world, the customs and environment of Jiangxi immigrants provided a fertile soil for the development of the Jiangxi Hall of Wanshou Palace. Jiangxi immigrants, far from their homeland, have a deep affection for their hometown. Wanshou Palace is not only the center of faith, but also a symbol of the unity of the Jiangxi merchant gang. As an activity center for contacting the countryside and worshipping the gods, the Jiangxi Hall of Wanshou Palace is the fundamental purpose and basic function of the establishment of the Jiangyou Merchant Gang. Jiangxi people in a foreign land use Wanshou Palace to expand geographical ties, rely on blood, geography and the common belief of Xu Zhenjun to maintain their feelings, to help all Jiangxi people who have left Jiangxi and outsiders who have left their hometowns. It not only reflects the basic content of Wanshou Palace culture, but also reflects the essential characteristics of Wanshou Palace culture. It has laid a deep foundation of cultural identity for the Jiangyou merchant gang and Wanshou Palace.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the tide of immigrants in Jiangxi and its environment provided fertile soil for the rise of the Jiangxi Hall of Wanshou Palace. Jiangxi immigrants who are far away from their homeland share their nostalgia for their hometown. Wanshou Palace, as the temple of Xu Zhenjun, the local guardian god of Jiangxi, has gradually become the source of inspiration and symbolic symbol for Jiangxi merchants to set up guild halls in other places because of its lofty status in Jiangxi. Wanshou Palace is not only a center of faith, but also a symbol of the unity of Jiangxi merchants. As one of the most powerful merchant gangs in ancient China, the Jiangyou merchant gang has opened up new horizons in all parts of the country by virtue of its spirit of hard work, courage to struggle, and courage to open up.

"A burden and an umbrella, go all over the world to be the boss" spirit; the spirit of mutual assistance in the development of "helping the people"; The spirit of responsibility to give back to the society after growth. It vividly depicts the simple demeanor of Jiangxi businessmen when they roamed the rivers and lakes, and reflects their spirit of courage to overcome difficulties and constantly forge ahead. The Jiangyou Merchant Gang is composed of a certain scale of personnel, with a strong Jiangxi regional color, follows concise business norms, and uses the Wanshou Palace Jiangxi Hall as a fixed meeting place. In this loose organization, the merchants each have a clear area of operation. These characteristics form the basis of the Jiangyou merchant gang: the number of people is huge and widely distributed; Wide range of business and strong penetration; capital is dispersed and the scale of operation

is small; The business model is traditional and the competitiveness is limited. This prompted Jiangxi businessmen to seek blood and geographical ties in business activities to ensure smooth business and obtain reliable support in times of crisis, so "help" became a necessity.

With the gradual increase in the number of Jiangxi people going out to do business in various places, the gradual increase in business and the increasingly closed activities, an important responsibility undertaken by the Jiangxi Association is to safeguard the interests of the people of the same country, resist the oppression of foreign forces, coordinate the commercial contradictions between the people of the same country and the people of the same country, and maintain the order of the market in order to achieve commercial development. For Jiangyou merchants, it was the Wanshou palaces that once allowed them to rest, avoid the wind, rain, ice and snow and taste the taste of their hometown, hear the hometown sound, talk about their hometown, worship their ancestors and gods, and touch the warmth of their hometown. The complex fate of the businessman and his hometown has been integrated in the Wanshou Palace, and more importantly, the pursuit of faith by the Jiangyou businessman has also found a soulmate in the spirit of Xu Xun culture in the Wanshou Palace. As a result, the culture of Wanshou Palace has been sublimated in the integration with the Jiangyou merchant gang, and the merchants have taken the initiative to invest in the construction of their own local guild halls, and unlike the guild halls built by merchants in other regions, they are all called Wanshou Palace. Emotions are present in all human experiences, even in the higher minds. (Duan Yifu, 2017: 6) In the space of the Jiangxi Hall of Wanshou Palace, they experienced the intimacy of their hometown in Jiangxi and expressed their longing for their hometown. It is a place to communicate and discuss in the native dialect, and it also brings pleasure to the auditory. Sound itself evokes memories of a particular space. (Duan Yifu, 2017: 12) This makes Jiangxi businessmen feel closer to their hometown and alleviate their homesickness in a foreign land. Wanshou Palace Jiangxi Hall is not only a gathering place for Jiangxi businessmen, but also a symbol of their deep nostalgia for their hometown, and at the same time, it is also a base for them to gather strength and expand their business territory.

Wanshou Palace is the main place of activity of the Jiangyou Merchant Gang, the link between the society, and the platform for obtaining market elements. As a result, Wanshou Palace has also become the spiritual palace of the Jiangyou business gang, creating a group of influential Jiangyou industry business gangs; Influenced by the culture of Wanshou Palace, the Jiangyou Merchant Gang did business in other countries, and a number of elite giants emerged, which in turn expanded and enhanced the influence of Wanshou Palace culture and expanded the connotation of Wanshou Palace culture. The cultural integration of Jiangyou Merchants and Wanshou Palace has given birth to the unique cultural spirit of Jiangyou Merchants, which is: not afraid of hardship, diligent and pragmatic; Honesty and trustworthiness, integrity and kindness; Respect filial piety, frugality and abstain from luxury; solidarity and mutual assistance, tolerance and harmony; Righteousness and profit, righteousness and benefit; Be kind and give back to the township.

#### 2.4.2 Site selection of Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Hall building

Wanshou Palace is built all over the country and even the world, and is related to Xu Xun (Xu Zhenjun). Xu Xun's contribution is outstanding, his reputation has been passed down to this day, and people generally respect his great achievements, so the people have a very high respect for him, and the people of Jiangxi respect Xu Xun out of reverence for him, and call him "the blessed master". Xu Zhenjun's belief originated in the Nanchang area, and the Ming Dynasty government had a relatively strict management of religion, and Xu Zhenjun's faith did not spread throughout the country. With the change of the government's religious policy on Taoism, the residence of Xu Zhenjun was included in the official worship object. Under the official reverence, Xu Zhenjun gradually became a god worshiped in Jiangxi Province, and the Jiangyou merchant gang regarded him as a commercial god. Due to the large number of Jiangyou merchants for commercial needs and worship of the common shrine, a large number of Wanshou Palace buildings appeared in various parts of the province. The largest number of Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Hall in Jiangxi Province reached 569. The large number of Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Hall reflected, to a certain extent, the economic strength of the people of Jiangxi at that time.

The site selection of Chinese buildings reflects the profound heritage of Chinese traditional culture. It will consider local Feng Shui and pursue the harmonious coexistence of man and nature. The selection of Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Guild Hall buildings is closely related to the founders and the reasons for their construction. Since the Wanshou Palace buildings were influenced by the spread of Xu Zhenjun's residence culture, the sites of its buildings are mostly located between large and small towns and villages, such as the entrance or central area of the village, and are in an important position in the village space. In

The Jiangyou merchants in the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace



Figure 13 helped build the Wanshou Palace as a guide board for the hall

Source : Photographed by Min Qi, May, 2024.

In addition, the Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Guild Hall buildings are closely related to the business of Jiangxi immigrants and Jiangyou business gangs. Therefore, most of the site selection is based on business routes, and most of them are close to rivers or docks. This is convenient for discussion and business travel. The sacrificial nature of the Wanshou Palace gradually took on the nature of a guild hall.

The concept of its location of the sacrificial nature of the Wanshou Palace. Wanshou Palace is a temple dedicated to Xu Zhenjun, therefore, the main function of the Wanshou Palace is basically distributed in Jiangxi Province. The site selection is mainly based on the legend of Zhenjun and Xu Zhenjun's meritorious service as the location for the establishment of Taoist temples. For example, the Xishan Wanshou Palace is the place where Xu Zhenjun cultivates, and it is also the place where he pulls out his house and soars. Its location is backed by Xiaoyao Mountain, which is a treasure land of feng shui, in line with the principle of relying on mountains and rivers in the site selection of ancient buildings, and has both magnificent natural landscapes and rich Taoist cultural heritage. As a place to commemorate Xu Zhenjun, Xishan Wanshou Palace considered factors related to Taoist culture in the selection of the site, such as the twelfth cave of the thirty-six caves and the thirty-eighth blessed land of the seventy-two blessed lands, which have special significance in Taoism. The surrounding beautiful natural environment is conducive to spiritual practice and religious activities, and has become an important base for the spread of Taoist culture. The Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is located on the left side of the Guangrun Gate in Nanchang City, the legend is that Xu Zhenjun used the Tiezhu to town the dragon place, at the same time, the ancient Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is close to the water and land transportation arteries, is the place where merchants trade. The Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is not only a place for religious activities, but also a center for social and commercial exchanges. Its existence has promoted the development of local commerce and has become an important commercial place in Nanchang City Sign. Its location is closely related to its function as a commercial center, because it is located in the center of Nanchang, and it is also convenient for people to gather and participate in ritual activities. Fuzhou Yulong Wanshou Palace in Jiangxi Province is a representative of the combination of traditional ancestral temples and Taoist temples. Fuzhou Yulong Wanshou Palace was the first to call it Wenxing Nunnery, and later the people of Fuzhou donated to build Xu Jingyang Temple on the right side of Wenxing Nunnery, and then integrated the peripheral buildings such as Wenxing Nunnery, Xu Jingyang Temple, and Fire Temple, and finally formed the current Fuzhou Yulong Wanshou Palace. There is also Guizhou Sinan Wanshou Palace, also known as "Shuifu Temple", the Qing Dynasty's growing power of Jiangxi businessmen donated to raise huge funds, on this basis to expand for the Jiangxi people's hall, and renamed Wanshou Palace, still in use today. Located in Xihu Town, Jiangjin District, Chongqing, the Jiangxi Hall was rebuilt from the ancestral hall of the Zheng family Jiangxi people here, and the local area is still called the Zheng family ancestral hall.

Figure 14 Fuzhou Yulong Wanshou Palace  
It is an ancient building complex with a long history and profound cultural heritage.  
Source: Photographed by Min Qi, May, 2024.



The concept of the location of the Wanshou Palace in the nature of the guild hall. The development of the Jiangyou merchant gang is inseparable from the developed waterway transportation in the Ming and Qing dynasties, so when the Jiangyou merchant gang chooses the address for the construction of the Wanshou Palace, the first consideration is whether the



Figure 15 Fuzhou Yulong Wanshou Palace

Source: Photographed by Min Qi, May, 2024

trade is convenient and can meet the needs of the goods exchange, and at the same time, in order to facilitate the resolution of commercial disputes and other problems, the location of the Jiangxi guild hall is likely to be close to the river system that flows goods and the wharf where the goods are transported by water. For example, cities along the Xiangshui and Yuanshui rivers along the Dongting Lake water system in Hunan are set up. At the junction of

Hunan and Guichuan, there are many guests in Jiangxi. For example, Qiancheng and the Jiangxi Hall of Pushi City, Hunan Province are located at the Ayuan Water Wharf, and in front of the gate is the Wanshou Palace Wharf, and the Yuan and its water tributaries, the Wuyang River and the Qingshui River, are important waterways for the Jiangyou merchants and ports to continue to enter Guizhou after entering Hunan. Secondly, the important nodes on the land trade route, during the Ming and Qing dynasties, were dominated by water transportation, and some places that were not connected to water transportation also formed an important land transportation trade route. In the land transportation fortress and cargo transfer point, the town was built for commerce, and the Jiangxi merchant gang also chose such a location to build the Jiangxi guild hall, such as the Pu'er Jiangxi guild hall on the ancient tea horse road in Yunnan, and the Jiangxi guild hall in Qingchi Town, Jinsha County, Guizhou Province.

Ancient Chinese architecture, from the royal halls to the ancestral halls, was inevitably influenced by the doctrine of Feng Shui. For example, the Chongqing Jiangxi Hall was selected under the influence of Chinese feng shui, and its location is located in the Dongshui area of Chongqing, according to the feng shui theory, the inner side of the river bend is the "auspicious land", and the outer side of the river bend is the "evil land". I think the wind of the site water affects the fortune of the building and the fortune of the occupants. The location of the Jiangxi Hall will consider factors such as topography, water flow, and wind direction to find a good place to "to shelter from the wind and to collect positive energy"<sup>30</sup>.

#### **2.4.3 The architectural layout of Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Hall**

The spatial layout of Chinese architecture emphasizes the harmonious coexistence with the natural environment, as well as a deep understanding of culture, feng shui and symbolic meaning, which reflects the aesthetic value and ideological connotation of ancient Chinese architecture. Traditional Chinese architecture is mainly divided into two types of layouts: neat and symmetrical and tortuous and varied. Most of the courtyards and group layouts of ancient Chinese buildings are designed in a balanced and symmetrical way, along the longitudinal axis (also known as the front and rear axis) and the horizontal axis, and most of them are mainly based on the vertical axis, supplemented by the horizontal axis. This kind of arrangement is not only rich in the characteristics of feudal ethics and culture, but is also related to the national consciousness of the Chinese people in venerating, centering, and respecting.

As representatives of traditional Chinese architecture, Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Hall inherit the common characteristics of traditional Chinese architecture. The functionality of the buildings of Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Hall determines the design principles of their spatial layout. The builders were influenced by the same regional culture and similar socio-cultural background, and they all had faith in Xu Zhenjun. This is reflected in the commonality of their layout, which is based on the axis and organizes the space in terms of courtyards and patios. Wanshou Palace, Jiangxi Hall buildings along an axis layout, the buildings are symmetrically arranged along the central axis, along the central axis are arranged with the main buildings such as the mountain gate, the stage, the main hall, etc., and other buildings

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<sup>30</sup> "to shelter from the wind and to collect positive energy" It is derived from the ancient Chinese doctrine of Feng Shui. In Feng Shui, "Tibetan wind" refers to making the natural environment around a home or cemetery able to block unfavorable winds and prevent auspicious breaths from being blown away by the wind; "Gathering qi" refers to gathering and maintaining a favorable breath or energy to make it an auspicious place for occupants or cemeteries.

such as wings and corridors are symmetrically distributed on both sides of the axis. For example, the layout of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is based on a symmetrical axis, with the main buildings arranged on the central axis and the side halls on both sides. From the front end of the central axis to the back end, they are the stage, the Pan Pond, the Mountain Gate, the Yi Gate, the Xu Zhenjun Hall and the Lingxiao Treasure Palace, and the layout is orderly. The stage of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace and the mountain gate, the east and west archways and the viewing verandah on both sides form a closed space, and there is a semicircular pan pond between the stage and the mountain gate. On both sides of the transitional space between the mountain gate and the instrument gate, there are the White Tiger Temple and the Green Dragon Temple according to the four spirit directions in ancient mythology. The courtyard centered on Xu Zhenjun's palace has six matching halls, divided into left and right, after entering the left side is the Sanguan Palace, the Medicine King Palace, the Wenchang Palace, the right side is the Huofu Jiaojing Temple, the Sanxing Palace, the God of Wealth Palace; The courtyard centered on the Lingxiao Treasure Hall has a side hall on each side, the left side is the Doumu Palace, and the right side is the Chen Mother Palace. The courtyard space of Xu Zhenjun Hall is more spacious than that of Lingxiao Treasure Palace, which highlights the solemnity and grandeur of the main hall. The courtyards are connected by verandahs, which are used for cultural displays, including the Ganshang Cultural Zone and the Jiangxi Surname Cultural Zone.

Wanshou Palace is generally laid out along the axis, but sometimes affected by factors such as the building environment or feng shui, so that the mountain gate of Wanshou Palace, Jiangxi Hall or part of the building deviates from the main axis layout, such as Shiqian Jiangxi Hall, Zhenyuan Jiangxi Hall, etc., and some Jiangxi Hall buildings due to terrain or functional settings and other reasons, the relationship between the wharf is more chaotic, such as Jiangsu Yaowan Town Jiangxi Hall, because the store is set up along the street to worship the ancestor of the medical world Wei Zhenren, the main entrance gate building is in the corner of the building, and the building relationship is very chaotic.

The spatial layout of Xishan Wanshou Palace is more special, with the unique architectural style of the Gan school and the characteristics of the Han palace in the Ming Dynasty, its location sits in the north and faces south, and the architectural layout is divided into the space through the courtyard wall as the basis for the division of space, dividing out the space that is not passable. Between the mountain gate and the instrument gate is the transitional space enclosed by the courtyard wall, wherein, the mountain gate, the instrument gate, the Guan Emperor Palace, the Sanqing Hall are on the same axis, the West Yi Gate, the Gaoming Hall and the Lady Hall are on the same axis, the God of Wealth Hall and the Jade Emperor Hall are located on the west side of the Gaoming Palace, and the East Yi Gate, the Sanguan Hall and the Chen Mu Hall are on the same axis. Its spatial division is relatively elastic, reflecting the Taoist idea of "Taoism and Nature" from the side. Wanshou Palace, which has the function of worship, is mainly dedicated to Xu Zhenjun, and when its function is extended from worshipping Xu Zhenjun to the architectural function of the guild hall, the Jiangxi Hall will connect with the friendship of the villagers and worship the gods, and the two functions are integrated and both are equally important. Therefore, the architectural plans of Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Hall inevitably include the stage and the main hall. The stage is used to connect the feelings of fellow villagers, while the main hall is dedicated to worshipping the village god Xu Zhenjun, which is

consistent with the function of Wanshou Palace as a sacrificial place, and jointly assumes the function of worshipping Xu Zhenjun, the guardian god of Jiangxi. Xu Zhenjun, as the patron saint of the place, represents the core of people's beliefs and sense of belonging to the countryside, and the main hall (also known as the Xu Zhenjun Hall or Gaoming Hall) is usually located in the center of the complex, or at the end of the axis and the highest terrain when there is no apse. When there is an apse, although it is located at the end of the axis, the scale and shape are smaller than the main hall, in order to show respect for the village god. The size of the Zhenjun Hall depends on the sacrificial needs and importance of the Wanshou Palace and the Jiangxi Guild Hall, and generally speaking, the Zhenjun Hall in the Wanshou Palace is larger in scale than the main hall in the Jiangxi Guild Hall building. This difference stems from the difference in the function of the sacrificial place and the guild hall. In addition, some Wanshou Palaces and Jiangxi Guild Halls are dedicated to more than just Xu Zhenjun, a phenomenon that reflects the pluralism of folk beliefs and the influence of regional culture and time changes on these buildings.



Figure 16 Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District Stage  
**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, November, 2023.

#### 2.4.4 Wanshou Palace, Jiangxi Hall architectural decoration

After thousands of years of development and evolution, ancient Chinese architecture has gradually formed a unique system and style, and has a complete traditional construction technology in the selection of building materials, structural methods, construction practices, decorative treatments, etc. From the various ridged beasts on the roof of the building to the carving, painting and other ornaments of various components of the beams, doors and windows, all of them are symbolically expressed as either the supremacy of imperial power, or the boundless power of the gods, or the elimination of disasters and blessings, the pursuit of good fortune and the avoidance of evil, or the prolongation of life, the full of children and grandchildren, or the promotion of officials and wealth, glory and wealth, and so on.

Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Hall are all over the place, thanks to the strong support of the Jiangyou Business Gang. As the founder, participant, user and builder of the guild hall, the architectural art and its decorative style are deeply influenced by the local cultural

characteristics and commercial culture of Jiangxi, and the decoration techniques and themes are diversified, which not only reflects the regional cultural characteristics and commercial atmosphere, but also integrates the decorative cultural elements of the place where the building is located.

The buildings of Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Hall have been deeply influenced by Jiangxi's unique geographical environment, folk customs and Xu Zhenjun's admiration, and occupy an irreplaceable position in traditional Chinese architecture. Its architectural decoration not only shows profound cultural connotation and artistic charm, but also takes Xu Zhenjun's Taoist thought and loyalty and filial piety as the theme of decoration, reflecting the cultural commonality of Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Guild Hall. In the specific choice of decoration themes, commonly used flowers, birds, fish and insects and other plant elements, while animal decoration is more choose dragons, phoenixes, fairy deer, goats, lions, unicorns, bats and other symbolic, auspicious animal images. The application of dragon and phoenix decorative themes in the building highlights the importance of Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Guild Hall, and is mostly used in important architectural decorations such as mountain gates, theaters, and main halls. The dragon is a symbol of auspiciousness and authority in traditional Chinese culture. The dragon decoration on the plaque of the Wanshou Palace symbolizes the importance of the building and the dignity of the sacred figures who inhabit or worship it. For example, there are two dragons symmetrical on the left and right above the plaque of Xishan Wanshou Palace. In the mountain gate of the Shiqian Jiangxi Hall, the left and right sides of the mountain gate are symmetrically distributed with round dragon and phoenix stone carvings. The bat decoration on the caisson of Fuzhou Yulong Wanshou Palace, the pronunciation of the bat word is the same as "Fu", meaning blessing; The lion is generally decorated in the form of a pair of stone lions placed in front of the door, many Wanshou palaces, Jiangxi halls are placed in front of the door of the stone lions, such as Sichuan Luodai Jiangxi Hall (also known as Wanshou Palace), Guizhou Zhenyuan Wanshou Palace, placing stone lions is not only a decoration, colleagues show the significance of dignity and warding off evil spirits. The goat of the Jiangxi Hall in Shiqian, Guizhou means "three sheep Kaitai", which is one of the auspicious ones.

The buildings of Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Hall also use some traditional plant decoration themes, such as pine, lotus, peony, and the four gentlemen "plum, orchid, bamboo, chrysanthemum" and so on. The pine tree symbolizes perseverance, the lotus flower represents the silt without staining, the peony represents wealth, and the four gentlemen symbolize noble character. For example, the chrysanthemum and lotus decorations on the doors and windows of the Fuzhou Hall in Shitang, Jiangxi, and the plant decorations on the stage railings of the Jiangxi Hall in Qiancheng. Sometimes, these animal and plant decorations are also used in combination, such as the wood carvings of flowers, plants, fish, birds and trees in Fengcheng Wanshou Palace. From the use of these animal and plant decorative themes, we can see the spiritual pursuit and desire of the builders at that time - fearless of hardships and dangers, high wind and bright festivals, wealth and auspiciousness, which is also a combination of the cultural and spiritual characteristics of the Jiangyou Shang Gang.

The decorative themes in the Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Hall often appear to express good wishes or symbolize blessings, such as "Double Phoenix Chaoyang", "Double Dragon Playing with Pearls", "Dragon and Phoenix Chengxiang", "Fu Lu Shou", "Phoenix Peony", "Pine Crane Wanshou " and other decorative themes. It mainly appears in important buildings such as mountain gates, theaters, and main halls, expressing people's wishes for a good life such as auspiciousness, wealth, and peace. Operas, novels, and folklore ornamental themes are also commonly found in Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Guild Hall, such as the very important "Eight Immortals" in Taoism, whether it is the Ming Eight Immortals<sup>31</sup>, or the Dark Eight Immortals<sup>32</sup> or the Eight Immortals Scene Stories, which are widely used in the



Figure 17 The dragon sculpture decoration of the mountain gate of the Xishan Wanshou Palace

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, March, 2024.

<sup>31</sup> Ming Eight Immortals refer to the group of Taoist immortals stereotyped in the middle of the Ming Dynasty, including Han Zhongli, Lü Dongbin, Li Tiegui (Tiegui Li), Zhang Guolao, Lan Caihe, Han Xiangzi, Cao Guoshu and He Xiangyu. The images and stories of this group were widely disseminated and developed in the Ming Dynasty and became an important part of folk culture. The image of the Eight Immortals appears not only in literary works, but also in a wide range of works of art, such as paintings, sculptures, etc. The images of the Eight Immortals in these works of art have their own characteristics, reflecting the cultural aesthetics and religious beliefs of the society at that time.

<sup>32</sup> Dark Eight Immortals refers to the eight magic weapons held in the hands of the Eight Immortals, gourd (Tie Qiao Li), sword (Lu Dongbin), fan (Han Zhongli), fishing drum (Zhang Guolao), flute (Han Xiangzi), yin and yang board (Cao Guoyu), flower basket (Lan Caihe), lotus flower (He Xiangyu). These treasures have appeared in the Yuan Dynasty Eight Immortals play, the Ming Church drama gradually clear, and then in the folk stories of the Eight Immortals and opera fusion fixed, about the end of the Ming Dynasty and early Qing Dynasty to become an independent pattern system, and in the porcelain, clothing, architecture and other widely used.



Figure 18 Phoenix Sculpture Decoration at the Gate of Shiqian Wanshou Palace ( Left) Dragon Sculpture Decoration at the Gate of Shiqian Wanshou Palace (Right)  
Source: Photographed by Min Qi, March, 2024.

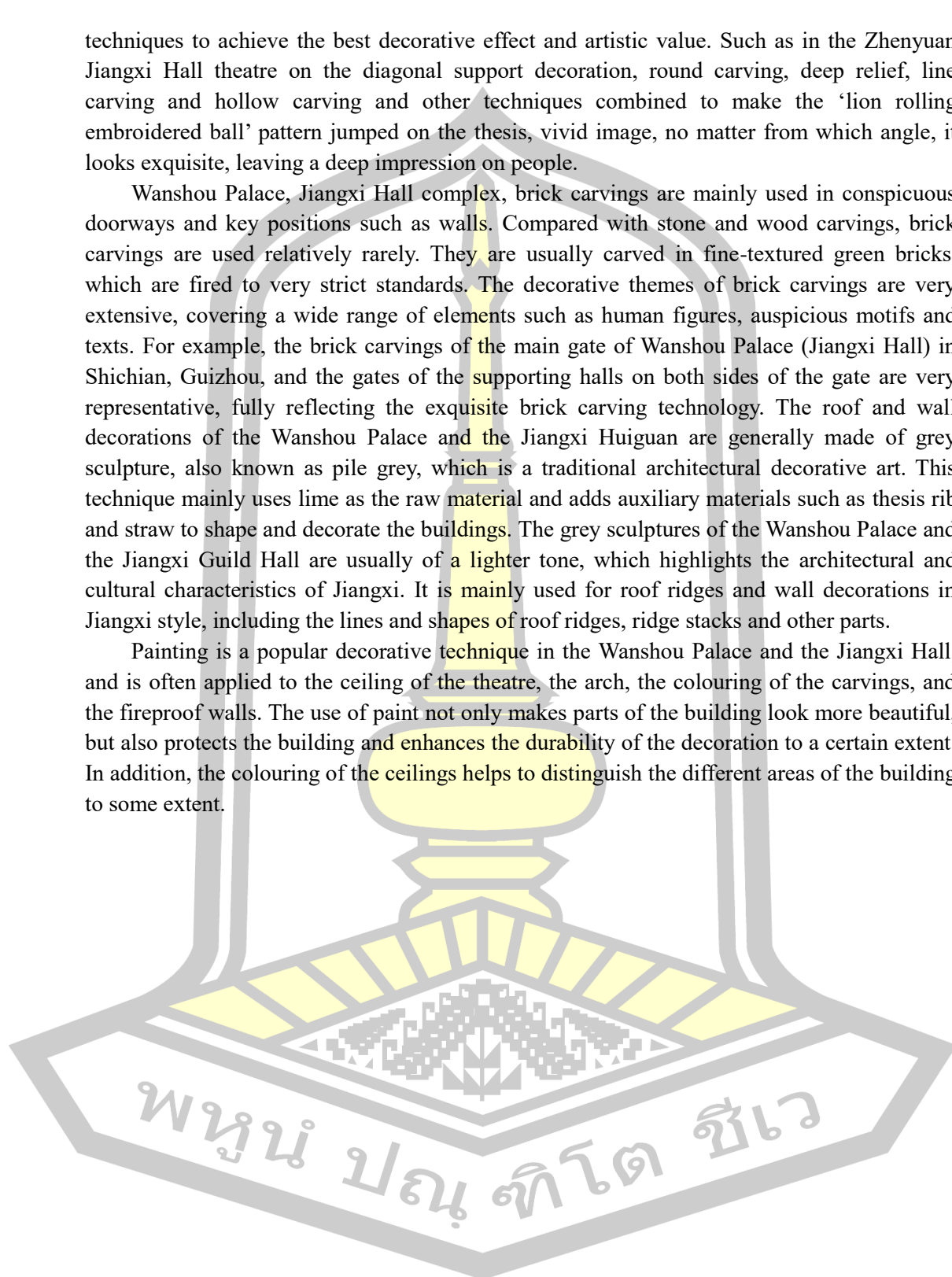
Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Guild Hall. The related themes of the Jade Emperor also often appear in the decoration, and its decoration is related to the themes of loyalty and filial piety, righteousness, and faith, implying that Xu Zhenjun is "loyal and filial piety immortals", and the cultural spirit of the Jiangyou merchant gang also has the characteristics of "loyalty, righteousness, and faith". In the story of the Three Kingdoms that expresses the spirit of loyalty and righteousness: "Taoyuan Three Knots" and "Three Visits to the Thatched House" and other stories also appear frequently. For example, in the eaves and railings of the stage building of the Sinan Wanshou Palace in Guizhou and the Jiangxi Hall in Shiqian.

The architectural decorations of the Wanshou Palace and the Jiangxi Hall are extremely rich, covering a wide range of techniques such as wood carving, brick carving, stone carving, grey carving, and painting and colouring. Among these decorations, wood carvings are mostly concentrated in key areas such as algal wells, beams and pillars, birdbaths, supporting arches, frontal squares, doors, windows and theatres, etc. Depending on the parts, all kinds of wood carving techniques are used to present diversified decorative effects. The fusion of various carving methods, such as round carving, translucent carving, bas-relief carving and line carving, demonstrates the high level of carving skills, and together they create exquisite decorative effects. Stone carvings are commonly found on iconic elements such as mountain gates, stone lions, column bases, stone balustrades, etc., realising the unity of practicality and aesthetics. Despite the difficulty of stone carving, the stone carving techniques of Wanshou Palace and Jiangxi Hall are also admirable. The eaves square of the theatre, diagonal supports and other parts of the stone carving decoration, adding a little elegance. Decorative techniques are flexible and varied, using a combination of relief, round, through the carving and other

techniques to achieve the best decorative effect and artistic value. Such as in the Zhenyuan Jiangxi Hall theatre on the diagonal support decoration, round carving, deep relief, line carving and hollow carving and other techniques combined to make the 'lion rolling embroidered ball' pattern jumped on the thesis, vivid image, no matter from which angle, it looks exquisite, leaving a deep impression on people.

Wanshou Palace, Jiangxi Hall complex, brick carvings are mainly used in conspicuous doorways and key positions such as walls. Compared with stone and wood carvings, brick carvings are used relatively rarely. They are usually carved in fine-textured green bricks, which are fired to very strict standards. The decorative themes of brick carvings are very extensive, covering a wide range of elements such as human figures, auspicious motifs and texts. For example, the brick carvings of the main gate of Wanshou Palace (Jiangxi Hall) in Shichian, Guizhou, and the gates of the supporting halls on both sides of the gate are very representative, fully reflecting the exquisite brick carving technology. The roof and wall decorations of the Wanshou Palace and the Jiangxi Huiguan are generally made of grey sculpture, also known as pile grey, which is a traditional architectural decorative art. This technique mainly uses lime as the raw material and adds auxiliary materials such as thesis rib and straw to shape and decorate the buildings. The grey sculptures of the Wanshou Palace and the Jiangxi Guild Hall are usually of a lighter tone, which highlights the architectural and cultural characteristics of Jiangxi. It is mainly used for roof ridges and wall decorations in Jiangxi style, including the lines and shapes of roof ridges, ridge stacks and other parts.

Painting is a popular decorative technique in the Wanshou Palace and the Jiangxi Hall, and is often applied to the ceiling of the theatre, the arch, the colouring of the carvings, and the fireproof walls. The use of paint not only makes parts of the building look more beautiful, but also protects the building and enhances the durability of the decoration to a certain extent. In addition, the colouring of the ceilings helps to distinguish the different areas of the building to some extent.



## Summary

By systematically sorting out the historical lineage and cultural characteristics of Wanshou Palace, this chapter delves into its deep roots as a symbol of local culture and analyzes its central role in the cultural heritage and social life of Jiangxi region. The study covers the origin and development of Wanshou Palace, its related beliefs and its influence in the society, and reveals the evolution of Wanshou Palace culture in different historical stages and its far-reaching influence on local culture.

The history of Wanshou Palace can be traced back to the Western Jin Dynasty, and its origin is closely related to the legend of Xu Xun (Xu Zhenjun). Xu Xun, as a water god and Taoist figure in Jiangxi, was honored by later generations as the “Lord of Jiangxi Fortune”, and his deeds and beliefs were widely circulated among the people. Wanshou Palace was initially built to commemorate Xu Xun, and became the spiritual support and cultural symbol of the people of Jiangxi. Over time, Wanshou Palace has not only spread widely in the Jiangxi area, but also spread across the country and even overseas Chinese communities along with the footprints of Jiangxi immigrants and merchants.

The development of Wanshou Palace architecture is related to the belief of Xu Zhenjun, who is the core of Wanshou Palace culture. The formation and development of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs were influenced by factors such as the geographical environment, social background and cultural traditions of the Jiangxi region. Xu Zhenjun (Xu Xun) is honored as a water god for his deeds of managing floods and benefiting the people, and his beliefs have gradually risen from folk beliefs to officially recognized religious beliefs. In the Tang and Song dynasties, Xu Zhenjun's beliefs were gradually systematized and became an important part of Taoism's Pure Brightness, Loyalty and Filial Piety Dao. In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Xu Zhenjun faith further developed, Wanshou Palace became an important meeting place of Jiangxi merchant gangs, reflecting its important position in the economic and social life.

Wanshou Palace has a central role in the cultural heritage of Jiangxi region, the cultural connotation of Wanshou Palace is not only the embodiment of the belief in Xu Zhenjun, but also a blend of Jiangxi region's folklore, art, architecture and other cultural elements. Wanshou Palace has a unique architectural style, integrating elements of Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism, reflecting the diversity of local culture in Jiangxi. Its interior decoration and architectural layout not only have artistic value, but also carry rich cultural connotations, such as the promotion of loyalty, filial piety, benevolence and other values. As an important cultural symbol of Jiangxi region, Wanshou Palace plays a central role in the inheritance and dissemination of local culture. Through rituals, temple fairs and opera performances, Wanshou Palace not only preserves traditional cultural practices, but also promotes the innovation and development of local culture. The architecture and cultural activities of Wanshou Palace have become an important carrier of the cultural identity of the people of Jiangxi, enhancing the cohesion and influence of local culture.

Through an in-depth study of the history and cultural connotation of Wanshou Palace, we reveal its deep roots as a cultural symbol and explore its central role in the cultural heritage and social life of Jiangxi region. Wanshou Palace is not only the center of Xu Zhenjun's beliefs, but also a collection of local culture in Jiangxi. Its evolution and development in history not only reflect the social changes in Jiangxi region, but also the inheritance and innovation of local culture.

## **Chapter III**

### **Reconstruction of the Wanshou Palace Site in Nanchang - The Reproduction of the Past**

The success and progress of modernization have also brought about the compression of time and space, so that people can only see but cannot perceive their connection with the world, and modernity has destroyed the history of the real world and made it impossible for people to establish a sense of place. Modern China Nanchang Wanshou Palace faces the dual challenges of conservation and development. On the one hand, with the advancement of urbanization, the traditional neighborhood of Wanshou Palace is facing the pressure of being modernized, which may lead to the loss of traditional culture. On the other hand, as an important cultural heritage, how to reasonably protect the site of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace and make reasonable use of it is of great significance for the inheritance and development of Jiangxi's local culture.

The opening of the Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Block not only provides a place for local residents to relax and experience traditional culture, but also attracts a large number of tourists, becoming an important resource for promoting local economic development and cultural tourism. Its successful transformation demonstrates the progress of modern China in the protection and revitalization of cultural heritage, and also reflects the respect and inheritance of traditional culture. Therefore, the Nanchang Wanshou Palace in modern China is not only a reproduction of the past, but also a manifestation of the cultural diversity and vitality of modern society. Through maintenance and innovation, Nanchang Wanshou Palace has become a special cultural space that connects the past and the present, tradition and modernity.

#### **3.1 Heritage Conservation in Modern China**

Architectural relics have "irreproducible" and quite high value, because they have lasted for a long time, have undergone many repairs, additions or reconstructions, the state is complex and changeable, can not be generalized in the protection, often according to the importance of the architectural remains, the objective state of the protection mode is selected, in the local protection, and according to the specific situation of different parts of the targeted selection of different protection methods, therefore, especially the volume or area of the larger architectural remains, usually select a variety of protection methods for scientific and rigorous protection. The conservation and excavation of the Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Block began in 2003, but it was not until 2013 that the project really entered the large-scale implementation stage. In 2015, the Jiangxi Provincial People's Government listed the Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Block as one of the first batch of provincial-level historical and cultural blocks, marking the official recognition and support of the government's conservation efforts.

Due to the fact that most of China's cultural relics are civil structures, they need to be repaired and maintained continuously, so it is better to protect the buildings when they are used well. Protection and utilization go hand in hand, and historical sites can be revitalized

through tourism interaction, so that cultural relics can be truly protected. Architectural relics have "irreproducible" and quite high value, because they have lasted for a long time, have undergone many repairs, additions or reconstructions, the state is complex and changeable, can not be generalized in the protection, often according to the importance of the architectural remains, the objective state of the selection of protection methods, in the local protection, and according to the specific situation of different parts of the targeted selection of different protection methods, therefore, especially the large volume or area of the building remains, usually choose a variety of protection methods for scientific and rigorous protection.

### 3.1.1 Concepts related to heritage

Since 1970, the concept of heritage has been expanded to include site-specific heritage, nature and culture in the form of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage Convention (1972). These conventions reflect a conceptual shift in which heritage categories replace property categories and shift the focus from individual cultural objects to the overall environment, including natural and man-made environments. The 1994 Nara Authenticity Document acknowledges authenticity in culturally specific and relativistic terms, moving from objects to practices. In turn, growing criticism has shifted the natural/cultural dichotomy towards a heightened awareness of the "cultural landscape". (Harrison, 2013: 125)

Heritagization refers to the separation of certain things, places, customs or traditions from the context of everyday life and the redefinition of "heritage" through an authoritative process, such as government legislation, certification by international organizations or social consensus. This process involves not only tangible cultural heritage, such as architecture and cultural relics, but also intangible cultural heritage, such as folklore, rituals, language, etc. The hot discussions on heritage in the world mainly focus on heritage and identity politics, heritage and economic development, the politicization of heritage and cultural hegemony. Heritage and identity politics are mainly reflected in the fact that heritage is often accompanied by dynamic processes such as resource reallocation, identity construction, and economic benefit development. Heritage is often associated with the construction of national or local identity. For example, through the process of heritage, a country can shape its national image by displaying specific cultural elements. As heritage is linked to economic development, this has led to debates about the "commodification of heritage", whether it is being used as a tool to promote tourism or whether heritage is being overconsumed. Some scholars have argued that over-reliance on heritage development can lead to the homogenization or 'performing' of cultural landscapes. In addition, heritage is considered to be an act of politicization and cultural hegemony. International heritage certification, such as the UNESCO World Heritage List, is also considered a form of cultural hegemony while promoting heritage protection. Some critics have argued that the overemphasis on Western standards in the heritage process may ignore the diversity and autonomy of local cultures. Compared to tangible heritage, intangible cultural heritage, such as traditional crafts, languages, rituals, etc. Intangible cultural heritage is more difficult to protect and pass on, and some intangible cultural heritage has been "museumized" in the process of heritage, losing its original living characteristics. A major shift in critical heritage studies and heritage policy is the transition from focusing on the materiality and physicality of heritage to "focusing on heritage as discourse and a system of values.". (Harrison, 2013 : 115)

Heritage preservation has become an important component of urban revitalization in

China. By treating history and culture as profitable and marketable assets, the value of historical buildings can be enhanced, and heritagization has consistently contributed to transforming historical Blocks into new venues for middle-class consumption. As a type or process of gentrification, this form of urban transformation is relatively new in China, and it stands in contrast to the large-scale demolitions that have occurred since the end of the Mao era. However, despite the renewed focus on the historical built environment and its preservation over the past 40 years, heritagization itself has become synonymous with urban renewal and beautification. In this process, the past is selected and negotiated to serve present purposes (Zhu and Maags, 2020: 6). In his seminal work "The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Postmodern World," Kevin Walsh systematically explores the concept and process of "heritagization." His theory emphasizes that heritage is not a static, inherent existence, but a dynamic, meaning-bestowing social process. Heritage is a product that is continually created and reshaped, rather than simply something "inherited from the past." The designation of a place, object, or custom as heritage is determined by society through specific processes of evaluation, classification, and discourse construction, rather than being a continuation of its natural state. This indicates that the value of heritage is bestowed by humans (Walsh, 1992: 8).

### **3.1.2 Architectural heritage protection**

The emergence of heritage is a product of the order and pattern of global social development. The concept of heritage protection is not only aimed at the protection of specific cultural forms, but also the self-examination and adjustment of the development order of human society. The development of the concept of architectural heritage conservation and its inspiration examines the development of the concept and scope of heritage conservation in recent decades, examining the conservation charters and documents issued by UNESCO and ICOMOS in the pre-2000 and present-day periods. The results of the study illustrate that the scope of built heritage is constantly expanding, and that the definition of conservation is shifting from individual to holistic and from holistic to sustainable. The focus of protection is to move from tangible to intangible. The change in the scale of conservation, from objects to landscapes, encompasses a more comprehensive range of heritage values, and the status of conservation has changed from static protection to living protection. (Liang, W., Ahmad, Y., & Mohidin, H. H. B., 2023: 1) For example, the Venice Charter adopted in 1964 sets out basic guidelines and methods for the protection of global cultural heritage, emphasizes the important value and role of historical heritage buildings, pays attention to the protection of cultural relics and sites, emphasizes the value of historical buildings and cities, and provides a theoretical framework for restoration and reconstruction, which has been internationally recognized. Adopted in 1979 by the Australian National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in Brara, South Australia, the Barra Charter is based on the context of Australia's unique cultural heritage and provides guidelines for the protection and management of culturally significant places that apply to all cultural heritage, including natural, Aboriginal and historic sites. Emphasizing the importance of cultural significance in heritage conservation, the Charter advocates a prudent approach to change culturally significant sites to preserve and use them as much as possible, while minimizing alterations in order to preserve their cultural significance (ICOMOS, A.,2000: 63). Since its first adoption in 1979, the Barra Charter has had a profound impact on modern cultural heritage conservation, providing a set of principles and processes for managing and protecting

places of cultural significance. The Charter expands the concept of cultural heritage to include not only historical and aesthetic values, but also scientific, social or spiritual values, which provides a broader perspective on the evaluation and protection of cultural heritage. One of the main potential drivers for the evolution of heritage conservation is a shift in focus from the physical structure of the heritage itself to the meaning conveyed by the heritage. (Liang, W., Ahmad, Y., & Mohidin, H. H. B., 2023 : 4 )

As the protection of cultural heritage has become an important part of cooperation and exchanges between countries, the concept of authenticity and the principle of protection also have a profound impact on the development of the theory and practice of cultural heritage protection in China: on the one hand, the protection of cultural heritage in China implements the principle of authenticity, and improves the original theory and practical experience to ensure the international recognition of the value of architectural heritage; On the other hand, on this basis, China must also explore more applicable protection theories and methods in light of China's national conditions and cultural characteristics. In 2005, China promulgated the Circular on Strengthening the Protection of Cultural Heritage, which clarified the basic guidelines, overall objectives and key measures for the protection of cultural heritage, and started a new journey for the protection of China's cultural heritage. On the basis of complying with international heritage protection regulations and building rules, and drawing on international norms such as the International Charter for the Protection and Restoration of Monuments and the Bhullar Charter, China has formulated the Guidelines for the Protection of Cultural Relics and Monuments in China, which was first promulgated and implemented in 2000 and revised in 2015. In conservation practice, the guidelines highlight the authenticity, integrity and sustainability of architectural heritage, clarify the conservation process, and put forward protection principles including in-situ protection, minimal intervention, periodic maintenance, use of appropriate technology, and maintenance of cultural relics and environment, which have been widely used in Chinese heritage conservation practice. At the same time, China has revised the Principles for the Protection of Chinese Heritage Sites, strengthened the means of protection with Chinese characteristics, and elaborated on the unresolved problems in the protection of heritage sites, such as substitution, reconstruction, authenticity, and architectural painting methods.

In the planning stage of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Block in Nanchang City, restorative reconstruction work was carried out in accordance with domestic and foreign heritage protection regulations and building codes. In this process, the project not only strictly follows the basic principles of international heritage protection, but also integrates the protection strategy with Chinese characteristics, contributing valuable experience and reference to the protection of China's architectural heritage. Relying on relevant international regulations and Chinese building codes, the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace was rebuilt in a restorative manner. The planning and construction of historical and cultural blocks adhere to the principle of "three constants" - the original appearance of the block texture and architectural pattern, the characteristics of Jiangxi residential buildings remain unchanged, and the atmosphere of the block landscape elements remains unchanged. Such a plan not only reflects the importance of historical authenticity, but also takes into account the needs of modern functions and the goal of sustainable development. In 2022, Wu Tao, deputy head of Xihu District, Nanchang City, said that in accordance with the idea of "three unchanged", the construction unit will repair the old as the old and build the new as before, and completely

preserve the style of the old block of Wanshou Palace, including spatial characteristics, architectural style, basic layout, etc.; The valuable wooden residential buildings are completely restored to the original structure, space, shape and decorative features; At the same time, long live on the Tiezhu Historical buildings with cultural significance, such as the palace and the ruins of the ancient city gate of Nanchang, have been restored in situ. The restorative reconstruction of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, based on the foundation of the archaeological excavation, is aimed at maintaining its historical status and cultural heritage value, becoming the spiritual sustenance of Jiangxi wanderers who miss their hometown, and also an important display of Jiangxi merchant culture.

### **3.1.3 The Value of Architectural Heritage Conservation**

China's historical and cultural heritage is the cultural crystallization of the long-term evolution of Chinese history, the hard work of the Chinese people, and the progress of economic and social development. It has significant value and importance. Fully exploring the multiple values of historical and cultural heritage is the prerequisite and foundation for doing a good job in the protection and inheritance of historical and cultural heritage. Historical and cultural heritage is a witness to history and possesses profound historical value. History is the best teacher, the best textbook, the best nourishment, and the best sobering agent. Cultural relics are witnesses to history, and protecting cultural relics is protecting history. President Xi Jinping creatively added the word "historical" before "cultural heritage," highlighting the profound historical value of historical and cultural heritage and demonstrating a grand historical view that connects the past, present, and future. As products of specific historical conditions and the environment of the times, historical and cultural heritage is an important symbol of a country and nation's historical and cultural achievements, recording the continuous development process of the Chinese nation. Through historical and cultural heritage, one can obtain first-hand historical materials, restore the truth of history, clarify the historical context, and better understand and recognize the million-year history of the Chinese nation, its ten-thousand-year cultural history, and its more than five-thousand-year civilization history.

Site reconstruction can be aimed at improving the integrity of a building complex by rebuilding a small number of missing structures, which can be seen as repairing the locally missing parts of a larger protected object. Additionally, site reconstruction helps enhance the public's understanding and perception of history by reconnecting the past with the present. The key is to find the right balance to ensure that commercialization does not destroy the core value of the site. The Wanshou Palace architecture not only reflects the historical development of Nanchang city but also embodies the aesthetic of Gan-style architecture and ancient Chinese architectural aesthetics. With the development of Jiangyou immigrants and merchant guilds, Wanshou Palace architecture is spread throughout the country. The Wanshou Palace architecture reflects the social history of Jiangxi and the human spirit of Gan merchants who are unafraid of difficulties, brave in exploring the world, and supportive of each other. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Block project is located at the original site of the Nanchang Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, with the surrounding area being the core of ancient Nanchang's commercial trade. The block has been a bustling market since ancient times, formed by the developed water transportation, integrating religious culture, merchant guild culture, folk culture, and commercial services. It is the city block that best represents the historical evolution, commercial development, traditional customs, folk culture, and ancient

architectural style of Nanchang, with a profound historical and cultural foundation and great cultural value.

As a signatory to the World Heritage Convention, China actively complies with and implements international heritage protection regulations, protecting and restoring cultural heritage. In 2005, China issued the "Notice on Strengthening Cultural Heritage Protection," clarifying the basic principles, overall goals, and key measures for cultural heritage protection, marking a new journey for cultural heritage protection in China. Based on international heritage protection regulations and architectural rules, and drawing on international standards such as the "International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites" and the "Bruges Charter," China formulated the "China Cultural Relics and Historic Sites Protection Standards," which were first published and implemented in 2000, and a revised version was formed in 2015. The revised version places greater emphasis on value protection, with its content reflecting the value-centered cultural relics protection philosophy throughout. It emphasizes that the value assessment of cultural relics and historic sites has become a prerequisite and important link in current cultural relics protection work. (Zhao Ling, 2017: 47) The revised version reflects significant progress and change, providing direction for the protection of cultural relics and historic sites. In protection practice, the standard highlights the authenticity, integrity, and sustainability of architectural heritage, clarifies the protection process, and proposes protection principles including in-situ protection, minimal intervention, periodic maintenance, use of appropriate technology, and maintenance of the cultural relics environment. These principles have been widely applied in China's heritage protection practice. At the same time, China has revised the "China Heritage Site Protection Principles," strengthening the protection methods with Chinese characteristics and providing detailed explanations for unresolved issues in site protection such as substitution, reconstruction, authenticity, and architectural painting methods.

Guo Zhan, Chairman of the World Heritage Research Association of the Chinese Society of Cultural Heritage and former Vice President of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), emphasized the "authenticity" of cultural heritage and other related content in the "Ancient City Protection Season" of the Hall of Fame: "Cultural heritage is like historical documents, it is a witness to history." Any change is like an adaptation of the document and has a certain impact on its authenticity. If authenticity is weakened, then the significance and role of historical witness are also weakened. In the restoration and maintenance of cultural heritage, it is necessary to be consistent with the traditional craftsmanship, shape and design, and the content of the restoration should be distinguished from the original building, so as to achieve the degree that "it is consistent from a distance and different from a close look". For example, the Colosseum in Rome still retains its desolate beauty from a distance, and only when you look closely can you see the traces of later restoration. In Mr. Guo Zhan's view, this "visual effect" should still be retained. In the reconstruction of the TiezhuWanshou Palace, combined with the columns of archaeological excavations, it has been used again, and you can feel the traces of time when you look closely. The core content of the concept of cultural heritage is the joy of life, so that everyone can understand what cultural heritage means to us. In addition to appreciating history and art, we also need to summarize how people have developed and what they will become.

Over the past few decades, China has transformed from a centrally planned economy to a leading global economic power. This shift has led to significant regional development

disparities and rapid industrialization and urbanization, resulting in socio-economic and environmental challenges (Iossifova, D., 2014: 34). In urban development and construction, China pays attention to the protection of historical and cultural heritage, such as the restoration and protection of ancient city walls and ancient buildings. Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Block is one of the projects of Nanchang City's urban development planning, and attention is paid to the protection of the block texture when carrying out block planning. In the process of urban planning and construction, scientific methods and technologies are adopted, and restoration work is combined with urban renewal, respecting and protecting historical features, protecting historical buildings, and improving the living environment.

The Tiezhu Wanshou Palace has undergone many repairs and reconstructions in history, but its core Xu Zhenjun culture and architectural style have been preserved and inherited. In traditional Chinese architecture, a "palace" usually refers to a building used for worship or worship of a god, and this type of building carries important religious and cultural significance. The Tiezhu Wanshou Palace has always been valued and recognized by the ancient officials and the imperial court, and is dedicated to the holy place of Xu Zhenjun, the patriarch of the Taoist Jingming School, in strict accordance with the Taoist palace layout.

The building complex is usually composed of buildings such as the mountain gate, the main hall, the side hall, and the wing room. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace was close to the Guangrunmen Wharf and merchants gathered, and became an important gathering place for the development of the Jiangyou merchant gang (especially the ancient Jiangxi merchant gang), which had both important economic and social functions.

The architectural scale, style and design elements of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace in different historical periods have undergone many changes, from the original "Jingyang Temple" to the Tiezhu View of the Tang Dynasty, marking that the building has been officially recognized and valued in the Tang Dynasty, and then to the Song Dynasty's "Jingdeguan", "Yanzhen Temple" and other names of the change, reflecting the architectural style of this period to pay more attention to the solemnity of religious ceremonies and the expansion of the scale of the building, reflecting the importance of this Taoist palace and its rich cultural connotation. In the Ming Dynasty, the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace was given the name "Miaoji Wanshou Palace", and the architectural style of this period paid more attention to decoration and practicality, and these changes reflected the evolution of different historical periods, religious needs, social changes and cultural significance. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace was not only a place of worship for religious beliefs, but also an important center of local cultural and commercial activities, reflecting its important position in the local society and reflecting the close integration of religion and secular life in ancient Chinese cities.

With the improvement of the status of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, its architecture gradually became complex and magnificent, and the evolution of architectural styles reflected the integration of Taoist culture and local culture. The main hall of Wanshou Palace is usually made of wooden structure, supported by traditional architectural elements such as bucket arches and beams and columns, and is equipped with a silk burning furnace and an octagonal lock well in front of the main hall, and there are courtyards and stone tablets inside, providing a space for worshippers to worship and rest. The design style integrates Taoist cultural elements, such as cornices and corners, carved beams and painted buildings, etc., highlighting



Figure 19 Aerial view of Wanshou Palace Historical and cultural Block

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, December, 2023

the mystery and solemnity of Taoist architecture. The materials used in the construction of Wanshou Palace benefit from the abundant camphor wood, maple, nanmu, bluestone, granite, etc., which provide a rich material basis for the art of architectural carving. Carved with all kinds of auspicious patterns and mythological stories, such as the dragon and phoenix Chengxiang, the eight immortals across the sea, etc., make the whole building more vivid and three-dimensional. Jiangxi's bluestone and red stone are hard and easy to process, and are widely used in the stone foundation, door posts and other components of the building, showing the exquisite skills of China's ancient architecture.

From the perspective of the architectural structure, the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace has undergone many reconstructions and repairs. In the early days, most of the buildings were wooden structures, and later gradually adopted masonry enclosure structures, making the buildings more durable and exuding a simple and elegant atmosphere. The existing building was rebuilt on the original site after 2014 at the expense of the city of Nanchang, combining a wooden beam structure with a masonry enclosure structure (Li Gang and Liang Yiyang, 2023: 225), maintaining the style of the traditional building. The layout of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace adopts the symmetrical plane layout of the central axis, the main building is in the center, the left and right are symmetrical, each becomes a courtyard, echoing before and after, the stage, Panchi, the mountain gate, the Yimen, the Xu Zhenjun Palace, the Lingxiao Treasure Hall are arranged in turn, and the space layout is strictly neat, which embodies the aesthetic principle of symmetry and rigor of traditional Chinese architecture. This layout not only highlights the symmetrical beauty of the building, but also reflects the ancient Chinese architecture's pursuit of the balance of yin and yang and the unity of heaven and man.



### 3.1.4 Revisiting heritage

Since the beginning of the "heritage boom" at the end of the twentieth century, scholarly discourse has shown a closer interest in this process, which has come to be referred to as "heritage". The late 20th century saw the emergence of critical heritage studies, which challenged traditional narratives and emphasized the role of societal values in defining

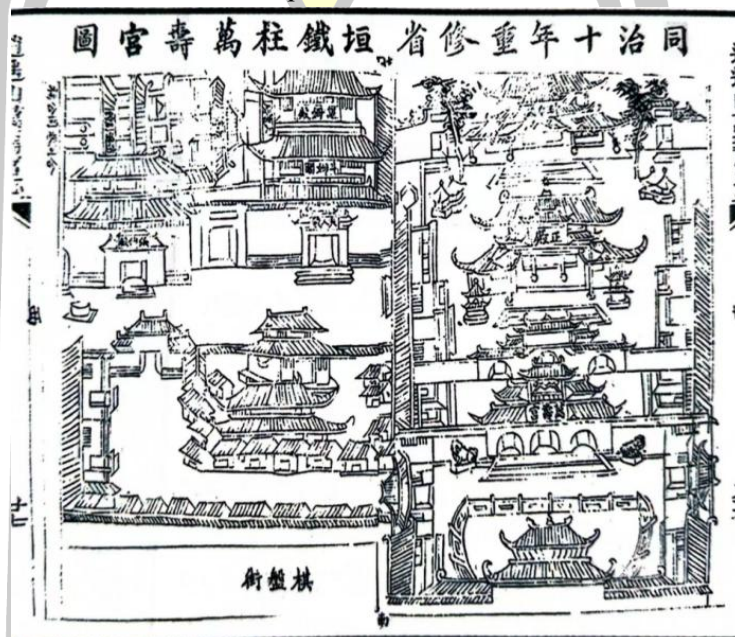


Figure 20 Floor plan of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace during the Tongzhi period of the Qing Dynasty

Source: Photographed by Chen Lili, "Wanshou Palace and Folk Culture"

heritage. (Liu, 2022: N.P.) The phenomenon of heritage is everywhere, but not everything that belongs to the past can be recognized as heritage for the process of inheritance. To be recognized as a "heritage value", it needs to be identified, valued, classified and then included in the process of protection and development. Therefore, heritage is never something inherent, but is created and reproduced through the process of heritage creation. As a process, it refers to actors, agents, powers, and discourses in certain contexts of society. Heritageization is an actively selective, dynamic and political process. (Le, Q. M., & Kelboro, G, 2019 : 1)

In *Cultural and Natural Heritage: A Critical Approach*, Harrison deeply reflects on and critiques the definition of cultural heritage, the politics of heritage and representation, the construction of discourse, the heritage industry, and the ontological turn. The book argues that in the postmodern world, people have realized that the value of heritage is not intrinsic, but human for the endowment. The various processes by which heritage is produced are revealed, thus allowing the public to understand heritage in its own social, historical, political and economic context. Heritage is not just a subjective, tangible and intangible entity inherited from predecessors, but must also be understood as something that is constantly being created and reshaped. Heritage is an attitude towards and relationship to the past, and objects, places

and practices that bear witness to the past are therefore chosen as "heritage".

In terms of the protection of cultural heritage, China has been committed to the protection of cultural heritage since the 30s of the 20th century. The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics promulgated in 1982 clarified the principle of preserving the historical status of heritage sites, that is, preserving the authenticity of heritage sites. In addition, China has signed the World Heritage Convention, which has further promoted the internationalization of cultural heritage protection. Heritage is what usually begins with an assessment of the cultural value of a place, object or custom. This assessment may involve multiple dimensions such as historical, archaeological, social, economic, etc., with the aim of determining whether it has sufficient cultural heritage value to be worthy of conservation and research. It is a selective process in which specific historic buildings or areas are selected for conservation and development, based on their historical, cultural or aesthetic value. In recent years, with the development of the market economy, the role of local governments in cultural heritage management has become more and more important, but it is also facing the problem of institutional fragmentation, which affects the effectiveness of heritage management. The development of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District is based on its unique historical background and cultural value, as well as the appeal of Nanchang citizens to the broader social significance and value of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace. Therefore, the process of preserving and developing the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District on the original site can be regarded as a process of re-examining the heritage. The reconstruction of Wanshou Palace on the original site of the Wanshou Palace went through a relatively long process, and finally through the mutual support and cooperation of the Nanchang municipal government, scholars and the community, the development and protection of the original site of Cuihua Street in the West Lake District was carried out. About the restoration and reconstruction of Nanchang Wanshou Palace is a puzzled plot of the Gan people, as the older Nanchang people, we call the old Nanchang, they remember the Nanchang Wanshou Palace vividly, because the Wanshou Palace is not only a famous religious place in Nanchang City, but also a major feature of the ancient buildings of Nanchang City, but unfortunately destroyed in the "Cultural Revolution" period.

In 1980, the Nanchang Municipal Construction Committee organized personnel to investigate the ancient buildings destroyed during the "Cultural Revolution" and put forward suggestions for gradual restoration and repair. After the completion of the Wanshou Palace Mall in 1992, citizens called for the rebuilding of the Wanshou Palace. In 1993, the management office of Wanshou Palace Mall and academic experts put forward a proposal to rebuild Wanshou Palace on the original site, and convened several meetings to demonstrate the historical significance and value of rebuilding on the original site. In 1995, Mr. Zhang Wenhuan wrote "The Chinese Masterpiece Xu Zhenjun", in which he put forward the opinions on restructuring and rebuilding the Nanchang Wanshou Palace. In 2000, experts and scholars published in *Guangming Daily* "Rebuilding Nanchang Wanshou Palace" discussed that one of the brands that Nanchang can play in the world is Wanshou Palace, and the restoration and reconstruction of the original site not only respects historical resources but also attracts relevant people at home and abroad to seek their roots and ask their ancestors. The Cuihua Street and Qipan Street around Wanshou Palace can be renovated into a commercial block with strong Jiangxi folk customs and customs, making it a window to display local famous and high-quality products, and allowing foreign tourists to see a

microcosm of Jiangxi's economy and folk customs from the Wanshou Palace Business District. ( Guo Fangying & Wang Shaoxiong,2000 : A02 ) However, there are four site selection plans for the reconstruction of Nanchang Wanshou Palace, three of which are to choose a new site. The three new sites are: Qingyunpu Shiyao Village in the south of Nanchang City, which is an important area where Xu Xun's water control activities took place; The second is next to the "Bada Shanren Memorial Hall", and the third is to rebuild the "Guoxi Ancient Temple" located in Luojiayi in the east of Nanchang City into Wanshou Palace. When the Nanchang Municipal Government initially decided to rebuild the Wanshou Palace in Shiyao Village, Qingyunpu, the new site, it caused an uproar, and many experts, scholars and citizens put forward different opinions. Yu Yue, director of the Jiangxi Institute of Development Strategy, who has been engaged in the study of Xu Zhenjun and Wanshou Palace for a long time, pointed out that there are many problems in rebuilding the Wanshou Palace, which does not conform to the principle of "protection first, repairing the old as the old" and the state's policy on religion, and will cause irreparable losses. (Zhu Jie, 2001: 45)

The process of protection and development of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District is a typical case of heritage. This process involves not only the physical restoration and preservation of historic buildings, but also the re-evaluation and new meaning of cultural heritage values. From the perspective of heritage, the reconstruction of Wanshou Palace is not only a restoration of the past, but also a contemporary interpretation and recreation of cultural heritage. Although there was controversy over the site for the redevelopment of the Wanshou Palace, the final choice was made to rebuild it on the original site, which respects the historical resources and takes into account the preservation of the cultural relics and the integrity of the surrounding environment. This decision-making process also reflects the politics of discursive construction and representation in the process of heritage, as well as the different understandings and expectations of society towards heritage.

Harrison's argument in *Cultural and Natural Heritage: A Critical Approach*, that the value of heritage is not inherent but artificial, is also reflected in the case of the Palace of Wanshou. Wanshou Palace is not only a historical site, but also carries the emotional memory and cultural identity of Nanchang citizens. The process of rebuilding the Wanshou Palace is not only a tribute to the past, but also a rediscovery and empowerment of the heritage value. In this process, we can see several key features of heritage. First of all, the reconstruction of the Wanshou Palace began with the evaluation of its cultural value, which involved historical, social, economic and other dimensions. Second, the participation of the public, experts and scholars reflects the important role of communities in the process of heritage, and their discussions and suggestions reflect a shared recognition and expectation of heritage. Thirdly, the reconstruction of Wanshou Palace is not only a respect for history, but also a response to the needs of modern urban development, aiming to promote economic development and cultural inheritance through the protection and utilization of cultural heritage. In this process, not only the tangible cultural heritage is preserved, but also the historical memory and cultural identity associated with it are activated. By reconstruction and repurposed, the Palace of Wanshou has become a bridge between the past and the present, as well as a catalyst for local cultural and economic development. This practice shows that heritage is not only the protection of history, but also the rediscovery and innovative use of the value of cultural heritage, which allows us to inject new vitality into cultural heritage while respecting traditions.

### **3.2 The Tiezhu Wanshou Palace protects the past**

The word "heritage" not only connects the past, but also defines the connection between the present and the future. Heritage is often seen as a positive concept and often as a "brand" that promotes economic benefits. Professor Harrison noted that as the types of heritage increased, so did the definition of heritage. The identification, maintenance, management and display of various types of heritage has given rise to a huge "heritage industry". We need to understand not only the nature of heritage as objects and traditions left over from the past, but also how it is redefined, manipulated and understood in the "late modern" phase, which also prompts us to observe and interpret heritage with critical thinking.

The history and culture of Nanchang City is a treasure of ancestral wisdom, and it is also the soul of the city. Wanshou Palace, as a representative of Nanchang's history and culture, has attracted much attention. Since 2013, the demolition project has begun, and the Nanchang municipal government has injected more than 2 billion yuan into more than six years of construction to transform the dilapidated residential area that was once a low-lying area and shantytown into a historical and cultural district that has both urban symbols and living room functions. On the original site of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, the "First Street of Gansu Culture" - Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District has been created with ingenuity. The project preserves the characteristic architectural style of Ganpai dwellings, and comprehensively displays the culture of commerce, immigrants and citizens. Following the principle of "repairing the old as the old and building the new as the ancient", after more than 2,000 days of struggle, this block was officially opened to the public on February 5, 2021. It not only restores the historical style of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, but also reproduces the ancient legends of the three streets and five alleys and the style of the Gan style houses. This subsection focuses on the excavation of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, how to effectively protect and utilize the site of Wanshou Palace, so that future generations can understand the sense of place in Nanchang.

#### **3.2.1 Archaeological excavation of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace**

Archaeological excavation is the systematic excavation of ancient sites by archaeologists to reveal and document the remains and relics underground or on the surface, a process that includes the cleaning, stratification, recording, sampling, and analysis of the site. Its purpose is to obtain information about ancient human society, culture and environment, as an important means of studying human history and cultural heritage, and is of great significance for the heritage of historical and cultural sites. Through the excavation of underground sites, a wealth of historical information can be obtained, which provides physical evidence for historical research and cultural inheritance.

Wanshou Palace has a profound historical and cultural heritage, as an important witness of historical evolution, commercial development, the birthplace of Jiangxi guild culture, traditional folk customs and market culture. The archaeological excavation and protection of the historical and cultural district of Nanchang Wanshou Palace is an important measure of Nanchang in terms of urban renewal and cultural heritage protection. Covering an area of about 6.3 hectares, the old block of Wanshou Palace is historically dominated by residential, commercial, religious and traditional handicrafts, and is composed of nine streets and alleys,

including Cuihua Street, Qipan Street, Qiaobu Street, Contract Lane, Wanshou Palace Lane, Luo Lane, Vinegar Lane, Radish Lane, Guangrunmen, etc., forming a traditional street and lane spatial pattern of five horizontal and four vertical curves. In addition to traditional residences, the neighborhood also has historical buildings such as the Taoist ruins of the Manshou Palace, the General Chamber of Commerce, and the mosque. In 2000, the Sanyuan Palace, the Madame Palace, the Yangxin Palace, the inscription of "Rebuilding the Tiezhu Palace," more than 2,000 glazed tiles on the roof of the Wanshou Palace, and the 100-meter old wall engraved with the words "Wanshou Palace" and other historical relics have been found on the original site. ( Guo Fangying & Wang Shaoxiong, 2000: A02)

In 2001, Xihu District of Nanchang City submitted an application for the protection of the Wanshou Palace neighborhood in response to the problems faced by the old Wanshou Palace district, such as damage to the historical features, improper use of buildings, and deterioration of traffic capacity and functions, and the project was approved. In 2003, the conservation project of the Wanshou Palace neighborhood began. In his research, Kevin Walsh highlights the dynamic and social nature of heritage. He believes that heritage is a process of continuous creation and reinvention, rather than a static past. Combined with Walsh's point of view, the archaeological excavation of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is not only a process of revealing history, but also a process of re-examining and giving new meaning to the past in contemporary society. On December 8, 2012, the State Council approved the overall urban planning of Nanchang City. The reply emphasized that Nanchang, as the capital of Jiangxi Province, is an important central city in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River and a national historical and cultural city. In terms of urban and rural planning, construction and management, Nanchang should be guided by the scientific outlook on development, follow the objective laws of urban development, and adhere to the sustainable development strategy of coordinating economy, society, population, environment and resources. In accordance with the principle of rational layout and intensive development, Nanchang needs to promote the adjustment of economic structure and the transformation of development mode, and continuously enhance the city's comprehensive strength and sustainable development ability. In addition, it is also necessary to improve public service facilities and urban functions, and gradually build Nanchang into a modern city with prosperous economy, social harmony, good ecology and distinctive characteristics. The reply also pointed out that Nanchang should attach importance to the protection of history, culture and features. In terms of the relationship between development and protection, it is necessary to coordinate and effectively protect the traditional features and patterns of the ancient cities of the Ming and Qing dynasties in accordance with the principle of overall protection. To this end, it is necessary to compile a protection plan for famous historical and cultural cities, implement the purple line management requirements for the protection of historical and cultural heritage, and focus on the protection of historical and cultural districts such as Shengjin Pagoda and Wanshou Palace. In 2013, Nanchang Municipal Group and the School of Architecture of Tsinghua University jointly planned the restoration project of "Wanshou Palace Historic District" based on the relics, which was planned and designed by Professor Wang Guixiang's team, with the aim of restoring the historical features of Wanshou Palace and its surrounding areas as much as possible, and creating it into the "first street of Gansu culture" - Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District, and realizing the restoration of the

original appearance of the block through the protection of style, the protection of historical buildings and the restoration and reproduction of historical memory.



Figure 21 The ongoing shantytown renovation project in Wanshou Palace District, Xihu District, Nanchang City, "Shantytown Reconstruction Project of Wanshougong District, West Lake District". The project aims to improve the quality of life of local residents through a transparent expropriation process and the renovation of the old town.

**Source:** Provided by Professor Mei Lianhua, June , 2024.

In April 2015, Tsinghua University Architectural Design and Research Institute Co., Ltd., which was responsible for the restoration and design of Wanshou Palace, submitted the "Application Letter on the Excavation of Nanchang Wanshou Palace Architectural Site" to Nanchang Municipal Public Investment Holding Co., Ltd., and the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Block Construction Project Department of Nanchang Municipal Public Investment Holding Co., Ltd. was established in 2015. On April 14, 2015, the Nanchang Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television, Press and Publication submitted the "Request for Instructions on Requesting Intervention in the Excavation of the Site of the 21st Middle School (the original Tiezhu Wanshou Palace) as soon as possible", and the Nanchang Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television, Press and Publication submitted the "Request for Applying for Investigation and Exploration of the Underground Cultural Relics of the 21st Municipal Middle School (the location of the former Tiezhu Wanshou Palace)" (Hong Wenwu Zi [2015] No. 24) to the Provincial Department of Culture on April 20, 2015, and the Cultural Relics Bureau of the Jiangxi Provincial Department of Culture approved Jiangxi The Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology undertook the work. To ensure that the original state of the ruins and relics is preserved as much as possible, and that the relevant information can be accurately recorded and interpreted.

The specific excavation unit of the Nanchang Wanshou Palace site is the Jiangxi Provincial Bureau of Cultural Relics, and the excavation unit is composed of the Jiangxi Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, the Nanchang Museum, and the Nanchang Folk Museum, of which the assisting unit is the Nanchang Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television, Press and Publication, and the Nanchang Municipal Public Investment Holding Co., Ltd. Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Block Construction

Project Team. From June to July 2015, the clean-up of late construction waste was completed. From July to September 2015, the archaeological excavation of the foundation site of the Wanshou Palace building was completed. In October 2015, the data recording and mapping of the excavation site were completed. From November to December 2015, the preliminary collation of materials and drawings was completed, the compilation of the "Work Report" was completed, the materials stipulated in the contract were submitted to the client, and the materials required for approval were submitted to the Department of Cultural Affairs in a timely manner. Experts from the Jiangxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology gave guidance on the spot. In order to ensure that the antiquities are not harmed during the construction process, the excavation of the Wanshou Palace site adopts manual work, and the construction personnel are holding shovels and small shovels in their hands to dig carefully. On July 16, 2015, news came from the excavation site of the Wanshou Palace site of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Block Construction Project, and an ancient well was found in the excavation of the site of the original TiezhuWanshou Palace. The wall of the well is built by bricks of different colors, blue, gray, red, black and other colors are distinctly layered, especially the red bricks of the 5th layer from top to bottom, the color is bright and very eye-catching. The location of the ancient well is before the ruins of the main hall of the TiezhuWanshou Palace, and the base of the two incineration furnaces in front of the excavated main hall is triangular. After the experts of the Provincial Institute of Archaeology combined with historical data, it is inferred that this ancient well may be the "soul" building of the legendary TiezhuWanshou Palace-"Lock Jiaojing", and it is also an important landmark of the ancient city of Nanchang. The original site of Nanchang TiezhuWanshou Palace is the location of Nanchang No. 21 Middle School, and most of the main hall and apse are located within the campus. The attached ancestral temple to the west of the Wanshou Palace, the Chizhitang is still well preserved, while the east wall of the Zhizhi Hall may be the west wall of the Wanshou Palace, and the north wall may be flush with the north wall of the Wanshou Palace. From this, it can be basically judged that the "four to" of the Wanshou Palace after the reconstruction in 1915 - east to Cuihua Street, west to the east wall of Chizhitang, north to the north and the north wall of Chizhitang, south to Luo Xiang. The specific excavation area is 90 meters long from north to south, 54 meters wide from east to west, and the excavation area is about 4,920 square meters. The location of the ancient well of Nanchang Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is under the old teaching building of the original No. 21 Middle School, the diameter of the wellhead of the ancient well is about 70 centimeters, and there is water in the well when it is just excavated. However, near the ancient well, the legendary Xu Zhenjun locked the dragon's "Tiezhu" was not found.

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Comparative Dimensions	International Heritage Conservation Concepts and Practices	Chinese Heritage Conservation Concepts and Practices	Conservation Strategies for Nanchang Wanshou Palace
<b>Heritage concepts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Shift from single cultural objects to the conservation of the whole environment (natural and man-made)</li> <li>·Emphasizing the dynamic and social nature of “cultural landscapes” and heritage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Emphasize the authenticity, integrity and sustainability of cultural heritage</li> <li>· Explore conservation theories and methods with Chinese characteristics in the light of China's national conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Follow the principles of “authenticity, integrity and sustainability”, maintain the original texture and architectural style of the neighborhoods, and implement minimal intervention protection</li> </ul>
<b>Historicization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Making cultural elements heritage through government legislation, international accreditation and social consensus</li> <li>·Politicization, economization and commodification of heritage identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Heritageization promotes the transformation of historic districts and enhances the market value of historic buildings, while there is a risk of commercialization of heritage and performativity of the landscape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Relying on the tourism and cultural economy, promote the commercialization of the neighborhood, while maintaining the reproduction of traditional culture</li> </ul>
<b>Architectural Heritage Preservation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·The 1964 Venice Charter establishes a basic approach to international heritage protection; the 1979 Burra Charter emphasizes cultural significance and minimal intervention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Drawing on international standards and taking into account local characteristics, the principles of “in situ protection, minimal intervention, regular maintenance and appropriate technology” are proposed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Adopt the methods of restoring the old as the old, minimal intervention and in-situ preservation, and follow the principle of “three constant” (neighborhood texture, architectural style and landscape elements)</li> </ul>
<b>Tangible/intangible heritage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Gradual expansion from a focus on tangible heritage to intangible cultural heritage (languages, folklore, rituals, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·After 2003, China increased its efforts to protect non-heritage and emphasized the living transmission of culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Restorative Reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace Revitalization of non-legacy through cultural tourism activities, such as showcasing the culture of Jiangxi merchant gangs, traditional handicrafts</li> </ul>
<b>Government policy support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·UNESCO World Heritage List Accreditation Advances Global Heritage Conservation While Being Criticized as Cultural Hegemony</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Government-led heritage conservation and integration of cultural heritage into urban renewal, economic development strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Listed as a historical and cultural neighborhood in Jiangxi Province in 2015, the government supports protection and development</li> </ul>
<b>Protection method</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Shift from monolithic to holistic protection and from static to dynamic protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·The scope of protection extends from buildings to the overall cultural landscape, emphasizing living conservation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Adopting restorative reconstruction based on archaeological excavations, preserving historical values while adapting to modern functions</li> </ul>
<b>Heritage Economy and</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Heritage tourism is an economic growth point for cities, but there is a controversy over excessive “commercialization”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·The economicization of heritage promotes urban renewal, but needs to balance commercialization with cultural authenticity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Promote the development of cultural tourism and control commercial development through policies to maintain the cultural flavor as much as</li> </ul>

		possible
<b>Future Directions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Shift from material conservation to conservation of heritage as a discourse and value system.</li> <li>·Emphasize the dynamic and social significance of heritage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Explore more conservation theories and methods that are in line with China's national conditions.</li> <li>·Strengthen international cooperation and exchanges in cultural heritage protection</li> </ul>

Table 2 Heritage Conservation Comparison Table

Experts believe that the Wanshou Palace has been rebuilt and renovated multiple times since the Jin Dynasty, and the Tiezhu may have been lost due to its ancient age and modern urban construction. The "Locking the Dragon Well" has always been a focus of our excavation work, and this ancient well plays a significant role in restoring the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace. If we can confirm that the water in the "Locking the Dragon Well" is a living water source, we will integrate the living water into the landscape of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Block, using the well water for landscape irrigation and other purposes, allowing the "thousand-year-old well to benefit future generations," which would be a very meaningful endeavor. The site of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace has begun to take shape under the excavation of construction workers, and experts are meticulously documenting the excavation of the Wanshou Palace site. The main hall and rear hall of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace are mostly located within the campus. The affiliated temple, Chi Zhi Hall, to the west of the Wanshou Palace, is still well-preserved, and the east wall of Chi Zhi Hall may be the west wall of the Wanshou Palace, while the north wall may be aligned with the north wall of the Wanshou Palace. Further understanding of the foundation layout and architectural form of the Wanshou Palace provides reference materials for restoring its original appearance. The unearthed architectural sites and related historical remains are very rich. Among the representative remains discovered are the main hall, rear hall, incense-burning stove, octagonal Locking the Dragon Well, second gate, as well as corridors, side halls, domestic water wells, wall foundations, drainage facilities, bell and drum towers, and other architectural sites. Important remains reflecting the plan layout of the main hall include corridors, wall foundations, column bases, moon platforms, altars, and the front passage of the main hall. The cultural relics unearthed this time can mainly be divided into two categories. The first category consists of relics related to the architecture of the Wanshou Palace, namely architectural components. The second category consists of relics related to the religious sacrificial activities of the Wanshou Palace. Judging from the unearthed porcelain, the time span ranges from the Ming Dynasty to modern times. Architectural components mainly include building stones, tile ends, inscribed bricks, stone carvings, and porcelain decorations. The reporters noticed that the stone pillars unearthed at the site were all made of granite, mostly square, with some having concave grooves. Archaeological excavation is a key link in transforming cultural heritage into heritage protection projects. The archaeological excavation of the Wanshou Palace block protection project has provided a solid foundation for the value assessment of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace and the Wanshou Palace block. Through systematic excavation and in-depth research of the Wanshou Palace old street area, the original architectural layout of the Wanshou Palace was revealed during the excavation process, thus scientifically tracing the rise and fall of the Nanchang Tiezhu Wanshou

Palace. After systematic excavation, a series of representative historical relics were discovered, including the main hall, rear hall, paper-burning stove, octagonal Locking the Dragon Well, second gate, and the foundations of affiliated corridors, side halls, domestic water wells, wall foundations, drainage systems, and bell and drum towers. Especially those key relics that can reflect the plan layout of the main hall, such as corridors, wall foundations, column bases, moon platforms, altars, and the front passage of the main hall. There are also architectural components of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, such as building stones, tile ends, inscribed bricks, stone carvings, and porcelain decorations. The unearthed stone pillars were all made of granite, mostly square, with some having concave grooves. The stone pedestals are mostly square with round tops, square with waist constrictions, and hexagonal with square bases. The site also unearthed three pairs of drum-holding stones, two of which are relatively intact, with patterns carved on the sides, including Bagua patterns and scroll cloud patterns. The unearthed tile ends are mainly cylindrical tiles. The tile ends are divided into shapes such as grooved heads and droplets, and the glaze colors are mainly yellow, blue, green, and blue-green, in addition to a small number of red glaze tile end fragments. The inscribed bricks are mostly green-glazed, with inscriptions such as "Wanshou Palace," "True Lord Hall," and "Xu." Stone carvings are widely used on stone slabs and stone strips, and the materials are mostly limestone and limestone, which are relatively soft and easy to carve. The staff introduced, "Such stone carvings are mostly embedded in the walls, with patterns mainly featuring flowers, birds, mythical beasts, and human stories. Many of the hollow carvings are very exquisite, and clear figures and patterns can be seen. The porcelain decorations are mostly typical green-glazed strip decorations, blue and white dragon decorations, and porcelain paintings, all of which have traces of lime and other residues on the back, indicating that they were once embedded in the walls for decoration. The eaves decorations are mostly decorated on the flying eaves of the roof, consistent with the style of the Xishan Wanshou Palace. The excavation of these objects has laid a solid foundation for the historical value and cultural significance of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace.



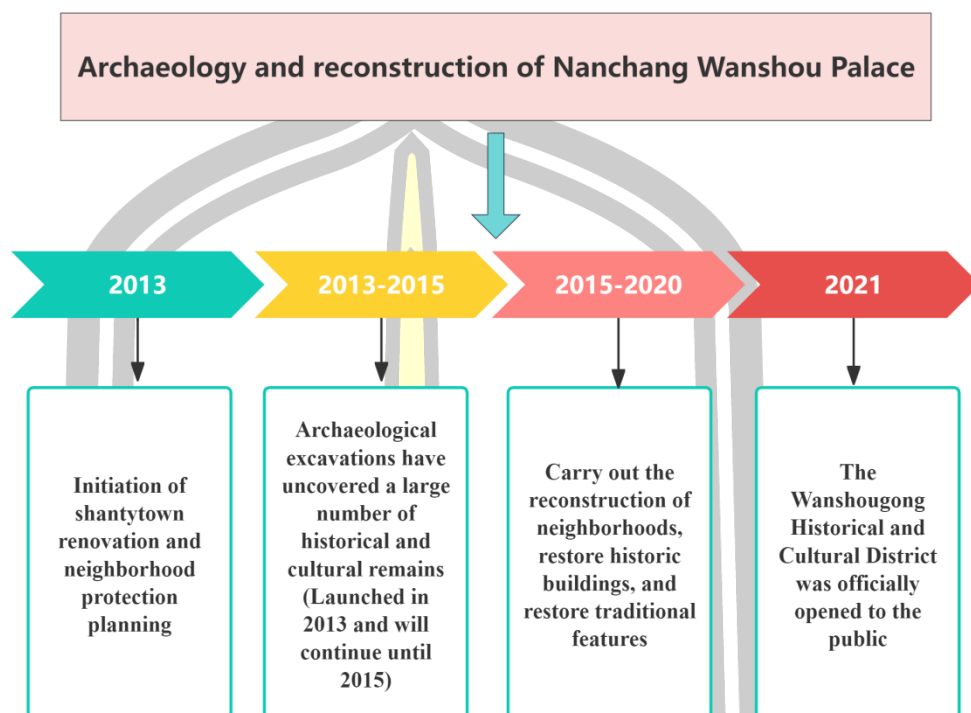


Table 3 Nanchang Wanshou Palace archaeological excavation and reconstruction schedule

In the reconstructed Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, in a glass-shrouded ruins layer on the right side of the main hall, you can clearly see the ruins strata of the Ming Dynasty, Qing Dynasty and Republic of China periods. The preserved building foundations of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace are mainly from three periods. The first is the Ming Dynasty, stratigraphically speaking, at the lowest level. Most of the relics of this period were superimposed or broken in the late period, and few relics have been preserved. The building materials are mainly processed from delicate red stone materials, and the floor is paved with blue bricks. The second is the Qing Dynasty (represented by the Yongzheng period), the overall layout of this period follows the style of the previous generation, the red stone material is still continued to be used, but the bluestone material has been used more, and the wall structure is mostly made of bluestone slab veneered bilateral walls. The third is that from the Tongzhi period to 1915, the plane layout has been expanded, and the building foundation site is the most intact, and bluestone and granite are the main building materials used.

Comparison dimension	Ming Dynasty site layer (red stone)	Qing Dynasty site layer (lapis lazuli)	Qing Tongzhi to Republic of China site layers (bluestone and hempstone)
Historical Period	Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)	Qing Dynasty (1644-1912)	Tongzhi to Republic of China (1862-1949)
Building Materials	·Redstone (red sandstone or other red stone)	·Lapis lazuli (greenish-gray stone, possibly limestone or granite)	·Bluestone and Hempstone (hempstone is granite, hard and gray in color)
Architectural style	·Ming Dynasty architectural style, focusing on symmetry and solemnity, reflecting the typical characteristics of Ming Dynasty religious buildings	·Qing Dynasty architectural style, highly decorative and rich in detail ·May incorporate local characteristics or folk art elements.	·Qing Tongzhi to Republic of China architectural style, both traditional and modern features ·Possibly influenced by Western architectural styles
Site characteristics	·Red stone material with bright color and hard texture ·Retaining the foundation structure or part of the walls of Ming Dynasty buildings	·Made of lapis lazuli with calm color and strong durability ·Retaining the floor covering of the Qing Dynasty building	·A mixture of bluestone and hessian, reflecting diverse building techniques. ·The practicality and functionality of modern architecture may be preserved.
Historical background	·Wanshou Palace as a religious site in the Ming Dynasty, possibly used for rituals or Taoist activities Reflecting the prosperity of religious culture in the Ming Dynasty	·The Wanshou Palace of the Qing Dynasty may have been rebuilt or expanded on the basis of the Ming Dynasty ·Reflecting the inheritance and development of religious architecture in the Qing Dynasty	·During the period from Tongzhi in Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China, Wanshou Palace may have undergone a number of repairs or functional adjustments ·Reflects the changes in modern society
Archaeological values	·The red stone site layer provides important physical data for the study of Ming Dynasty building technology and religious culture	·Lapis lazuli site layers provide an important basis for studying the evolution of Qing Dynasty architectural styles and local culture	·The bluestone and hessian site layers provide important clues for the study of modern building technology and cultural integration
Pictures of the site layers (Photographed by Min Qi ,December, 2023.)			

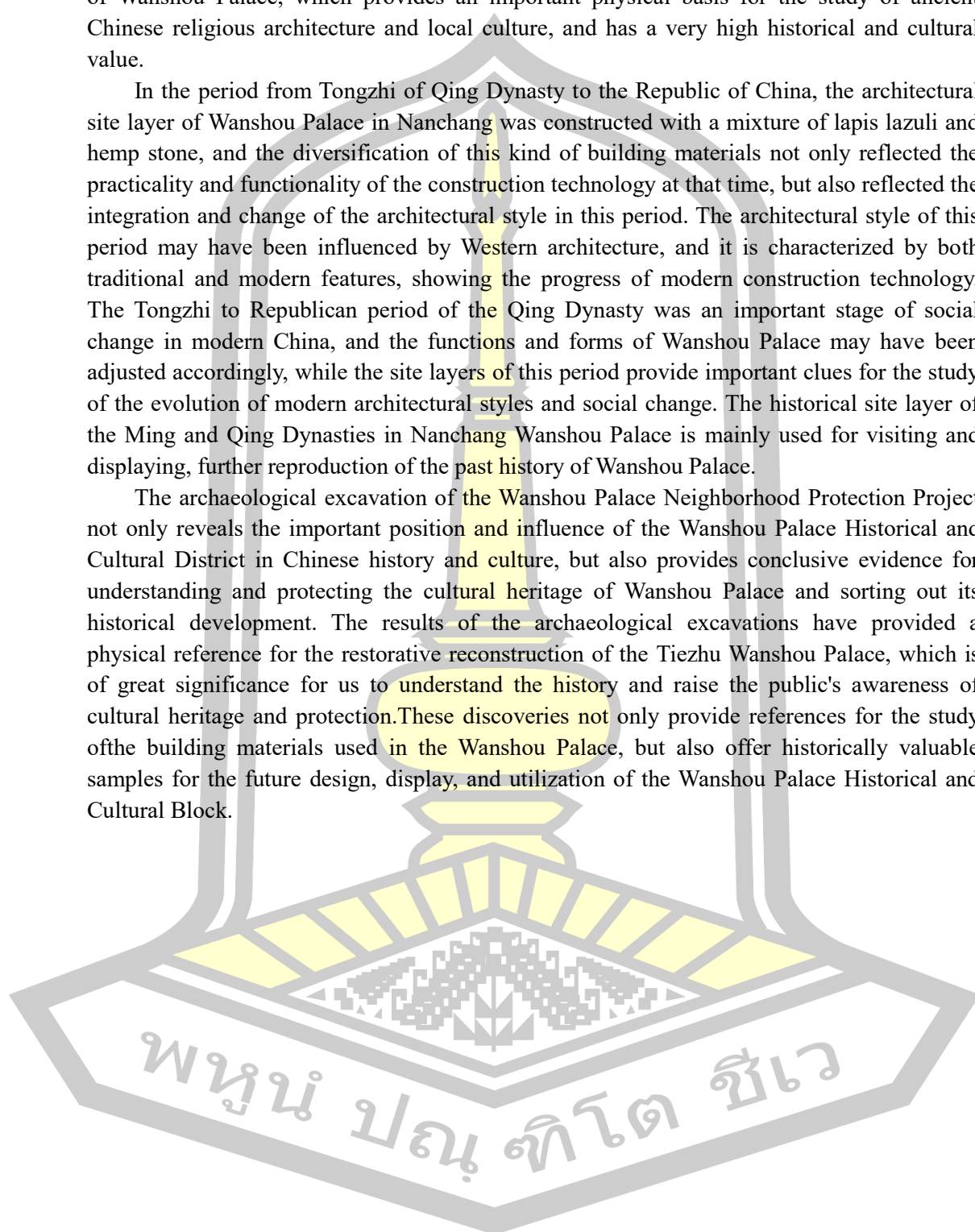
Table 4 Comparison of Historic Site Layers from Different Periods at Wanshou Palace in Nanchang

In the site layer of Wanshou Palace in Nanchang, the use of red stone and lapis lazuli became a distinctive feature of the architecture of the Ming and Qing Dynasties respectively, which not only reflects the architectural techniques and aesthetic tendencies of different periods, but also demonstrates the functional evolution and cultural significance of Wanshou Palace in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The architectural style of the Ming Dynasty favored solemnity and symmetry, while the architectural style of the Qing Dynasty paid more attention to decorativeness and details. By comparing the layers of the two periods, the changes and development of Wanshou Palace at different stages of history can be better

understood. The red stone and green stone site layers together constitute the historical lineage of Wanshou Palace, which provides an important physical basis for the study of ancient Chinese religious architecture and local culture, and has a very high historical and cultural value.

In the period from Tongzhi of Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China, the architectural site layer of Wanshou Palace in Nanchang was constructed with a mixture of lapis lazuli and hemp stone, and the diversification of this kind of building materials not only reflected the practicality and functionality of the construction technology at that time, but also reflected the integration and change of the architectural style in this period. The architectural style of this period may have been influenced by Western architecture, and it is characterized by both traditional and modern features, showing the progress of modern construction technology. The Tongzhi to Republican period of the Qing Dynasty was an important stage of social change in modern China, and the functions and forms of Wanshou Palace may have been adjusted accordingly, while the site layers of this period provide important clues for the study of the evolution of modern architectural styles and social change. The historical site layer of the Ming and Qing Dynasties in Nanchang Wanshou Palace is mainly used for visiting and displaying, further reproduction of the past history of Wanshou Palace.

The archaeological excavation of the Wanshou Palace Neighborhood Protection Project not only reveals the important position and influence of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District in Chinese history and culture, but also provides conclusive evidence for understanding and protecting the cultural heritage of Wanshou Palace and sorting out its historical development. The results of the archaeological excavations have provided a physical reference for the restorative reconstruction of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, which is of great significance for us to understand the history and raise the public's awareness of cultural heritage and protection. These discoveries not only provide references for the study of the building materials used in the Wanshou Palace, but also offer historically valuable samples for the future design, display, and utilization of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Block.



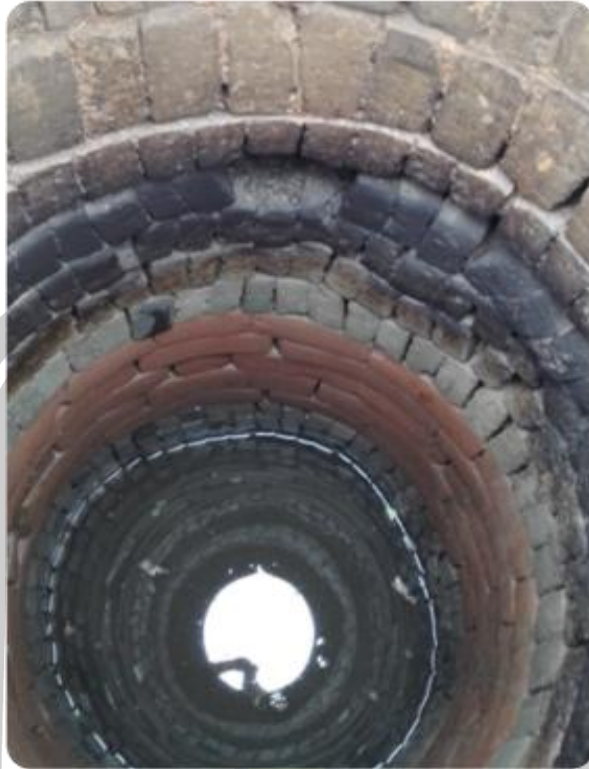


Figure 22 An ancient well excavated in Wanshou Palace block

Source: <http://jx.sina.cn/news/2015-07-17/detail-ifxfccux2746616.d.html>



Figure 23 Excavated Yuan Dynasty Stone Lion

Source: Provided by Professor Mei Lianhua, May, 2024.



Figure 24 Base of the Incense-Burning Stove  
 Source: Provided by Professor Mei Lianhua , May, 2024.



Figure 25 Partial view of the actual site of Wanshou Palace  
 Source: Provided by Professor Mei Lianhua, May, 2024.

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Figure 26 Historical objects excavated during the archaeological excavation of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace in 2015 are displayed in front of the Xu Zhenjun Palace in the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace.

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, July, 2023.



Figure 27 In 2015, the archaeological excavation of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace showed the Yongdao

In front of the main Palace there are three cowtows, and the cows on both sides are paved with a small amount of red sandstone granite and are 280 cm wide.

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, July,2023.



Figure 28 Showing a living well excavated in 2015  
**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, July,2023.

### 3.2.2 Conservation of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace site

Monuments and sites are witnesses to the historical development of mankind, and the diversity of the world's cultures and heritage is the condensation of human spirit and wisdom, and an irreplaceable source in the process of human creation. The significance of the existence of cultural heritage reflects people's lives and the social development of the region. Internationally, the concepts and practices of heritage conservation have been developed over a long period of time, and there are many experiences to learn from. For example, the Magna Carta of Freedom of 1215 AD, the Declaration of Independence of 1776, the Charter of Athens<sup>33</sup> of 1933, the Charter of the United Nations of 1945, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (the Venice Charter) of 1964, the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural Heritage of 1972, the Nara Declaration of 1994, etc. These charters and declarations reflect the different approaches to the conservation of monuments and sites at different times. These charters and declarations reflect the quest of mankind for the protection of cultural heritage and the improvement of living conditions in different times.

In 1933, the International Conference on Modern Architecture adopted the Athens Charter in Athens, Greece . The important theory of the Charter is that the city is the living space of the citizens, so urban planning should be citizen-oriented. The city is the living space for the citizens, and in order to realise the orderliness of the citizens' living activities, it is necessary to carry out comprehensive planning for the space and facilities of their living

33 The Charter of Athens: the historical heritage of the city, whose life is a succession of events, manifested through concrete works and constructions handed down from generation to generation, which give the city its own personality and gradually emanate the spirit of the city, respecting these precious monuments of the past, firstly, because of their historical or sentimental value, and secondly, because these monuments contain the highest human wisdom. The city's spirit has been gradually emanating from it. Since they are the heritage of mankind, those who own them or are responsible for their preservation must transmit this noble cultural inheritance to future generations by all legitimate means.

activities. It promotes comprehensive urban development planning from a broader sociological perspective of lifestyle and quality improvement. (Feng Yunting, 2014 : 3) The Venice Charter adopted in 1964 has six chapters and sixteen articles. The responsibility of cultural heritage as the common heritage of mankind is highlighted by its spiritual connotation, which emphasises that monuments are historical witnesses, full of the past. The spirit of cultural heritage as the common heritage of humanity is underscored by the emphasis on monuments as historical witnesses, full of information about the past that survives to this day as living testimony to people's antiquity. There is a growing awareness of the unity of human values and of ancient monuments as a common heritage, as well as of the shared responsibility to preserve them for future generations and to pass them on authentically and in their entirety. The Charter expands the concept of historic monuments by proposing that the protection of cultural heritage is not limited to individual buildings or works of art, but also includes monuments that embody the values of a unique civilisation, a meaningful civilisation and a unique cultural heritage. It also encompasses urban or rural environments that bear witness to a distinctive civilisation, a meaningful development or a historical event. Emphasising the promotion of the use of all scientific techniques for the study of monuments in order to ensure scientific and accurate conservation. This includes archaeological and historical research. This includes archaeological and historical research, as well as documentation and publication during conservation, restoration and excavation.

The UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1972) is the key international instrument for the protection of cultural heritage, providing a definition of cultural heritage, principles for its protection and mechanisms for international cooperation. It entered into force in 1975 and aims to protect cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value. The purpose of the Convention is to establish a system of international cooperation for the identification, protection, conservation and presentation of such heritage and to ensure its protection against natural and human-induced damage. In addition, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) further broadens the meaning of cultural heritage and emphasises the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. The 1994 Nara Declaration, in the spirit of the Venice Charter, emphasises 'authenticity' and, closely linked to it, 'diversity'. Authenticity is a fundamental characteristic of the value of cultural heritage sites, and knowledge of authenticity is the basis for scientific research on cultural heritage sites. Protecting a heritage building means protecting its environment appropriately.

China formally acceded to the World Heritage Convention in 1985. World Heritage conservation reflects mankind's awareness of its own environment and history and culture, which is not only based on the protection of sustainable development from the perspective of resources, but also from the perspective of cultural diversity. The historical and cultural heritage of cities includes tangible cultural relics and monuments, historic buildings and old neighbourhoods, as well as intangible cultural traditions and social behaviours. The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics, enacted in 1982, was based on China's actual situation and absorbed international concepts and principles of heritage protection, including the Venice Charter. The State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH) issued the Guidelines for the Protection of Cultural Relics and Historic Monuments in China in 2000, and issued a revised version in 2015, incorporating China's cultural heritage protection principles and principles. In 2000, the State Administration of Cultural Heritage issued the Guidelines for the Protection of Cultural Relics and Monuments in China, and a

revised version was issued in 2015 to systematically summarise the concepts and methods of heritage protection in China. A series of laws and regulations issued by China provide a legal basis for cultural heritage protection. First, the principle of authenticity: the protection of cultural heritage should maintain the authenticity of its historical, cultural and social values. Secondly, the principle of wholeness: protection should not be limited to a single cultural relic or site, but should take into account its surrounding environment and overall cultural landscape. Third, the principle of sustainability: protection measures should be integrated with local social development to ensure the long-term preservation and utilisation of cultural heritage.

Nanchang, as a famous historical and cultural city, history and culture are the key to the city's charm and an important part of its life. The historical and cultural heritage of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace has witnessed the labour creation of the city and the spirit of different times for thousands of years, constituting the urban memory of the place and community. Wanshou Palace is not only a palace, but also a cultural heritage, an emotional support and a historical witness. Its cultural connotation is rich and colourful, with the mysterious colour of Taoism, the historical traces of trade and commerce, and the unique flavour of folk art. The protective restoration and in-situ reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is an important part of its conservation work. Through the means of reconditioning, protective restoration and in-situ reconstruction, the ancient architectural style of Wanshou Palace has once again returned to people's vision and revitalised. Based on the protection of the original site, the main body of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace was rebuilt following the system of historical records and drawings to continue the religious memory. According to the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics and other laws and regulations, the conservation of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter follows the principles of authenticity, integrity and sustainable development. This means that during the conservation process, the original appearance, structure and materials of the historical buildings and the neighbourhood should be preserved as much as possible. First of all, the protection of the authenticity of historical remains is the foundation; the principle of 'repairing the old as the old' is emphasised, that is, without destroying the structural elements of the original beams and columns, reinforcing and decorative restorations are carried out on historical buildings to achieve the restoration of the buildings in their original locations and in their original forms. These protections include the protection of historical objects excavated in the neighbourhood, as they provide valuable historical information. Secondly, to protect the integrity of the traditional features of the Wanshou Palace neighbourhood, the unique spatial pattern of the neighbourhood should be preserved and continued; the brick and wooden buildings involved in the neighbourhood as well as the wooden structures of the patio layout need to be protected. Finally, while improving the infrastructure and urban environment, the vitality of the Wanshou Palace should be maintained, so as to meet the development of the contemporary era and take into account the cultural heritage of the Wanshou Palace. Through scientific restoration, the introduction of traditional architectural mortise and tenon construction techniques, and the integration of modern social development needs, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood is scientifically and effectively protected, so that the history of the Wanshou Palace can be brought to life in modern China, which is a flow of memories for the people of Nanchang, as well as a deeper understanding of the Gan culture.

Respecting and protecting these heritages is firstly because of their historical and

emotional value, and secondly because they contain the crystallisation of the highest wisdom of mankind. The protection of the site of the Wanshou Palace in Tiezhu is the key to ensuring that its historical and cultural values are passed on. The Wanshou Palace neighbourhood is named after the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, and its site, as the core content of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood project, represents the cultural symbol of Nanchang and even Jiangxi, and the protection of its site is of vital importance. Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter is famous for its long history and rich cultural connotations. Tiezhu Wanshou Palace not only unites the essence of ancient architectural art, but also contains the traditional virtues and wisdom of the Chinese nation. This neighbourhood has witnessed the prosperity and changes of the ancient society and is a valuable cultural heritage of the Chinese nation. Historically, the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace has suffered many damages, especially during the Cultural Revolution, when it was severely damaged. Since the 1970s, the government and relevant departments have embarked on a series of conservation efforts, including excavation, restoration and reconstruction of the site. However, the conservation of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace still faces many challenges due to natural erosion, urban construction and human factors. One of the core principles of historic site conservation is to maintain its authenticity and integrity. Conservation efforts are mainly focused on the maintenance of the site, restoration of the buildings and remediation of the surrounding environment. In formulating the detailed conservation plan, the site was protected as a whole in accordance with the principles of 'wholeness, authenticity and sustainability'. Under the premise of protection, the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace has carried out systematic archaeological excavation and research work to explore the historical, cultural and scientific value of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace site, and to provide a basis for the development of more scientific protection measures.

The preservation of historical and cultural neighbourhoods is supported by a diverse range of mechanisms. The government of Xihu District in Nanchang, academic institutions and community residents are jointly involved. This model of multi-party collaboration not only improves the efficiency of the conservation work, but also strengthens the community residents' sense of identity and responsibility for cultural heritage. 'In our planning and design, we adhere to the principle of 'three no changes' that the neighbourhood texture and architectural layout remain basically unchanged, the architectural style of Jiangxi residential buildings remain unchanged, and the atmosphere of the neighbourhood landscape elements remain unchanged.' In accordance with the 'three unchanged' idea, the construction unit to repair the old as the old, build new as the old, complete preservation, including spatial features, architectural style, basic layout, including the Wanshou Palace old neighbourhood style; on the valuable wooden residential buildings complete restoration of the original structure, space, modelling and decorative features; at the same time, on the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, the ancient city of Nanchang gate. At the same time, the historical buildings with cultural symbols such as Tiezhu Wanshou Palace and Nanchang Ancient City Gate are restored in situ. This conservation strategy not only preserves the original appearance of historical buildings, but also provides a material basis for the transmission of urban memory. The government's investment in supporting this restoration helps to maintain the historical continuity and cultural characteristics of the neighbourhood. By analysing the case study of the conservation and regeneration of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural Quarter in Nanchang, we can see that the conservation of historic sites not only needs to follow the principles of authenticity and integrity, but also focuses on ecological inheritance,

functional optimisation and multi-stakeholder collaboration. At the same time, the reference of international experience also provides a useful reference for the conservation of historical sites in China. In the future, in the conservation of historical sites, conservation strategies should continue to be explored and improved in order to realise the long-term inheritance and sustainable development of history and culture.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the number of preservation societies gradually increased. The experience of modernisation was having a negative impact. There was a desire to compensate for accelerating change and to 'slow down' change, especially in urban environments. (Walsh, K, 1992: 72) The history of a city is an expression of its culture, and cultural heritage is recognised as having qualities that can sustain and promote a national historical identity, giving local people a sense of regional identity. The process of preservation needs to avoid homogenisation and protect the differences in the world's cultures due to the compression of time and space, which narrows these differences.

Wanshou Palace, as an important witness to the historical development of Nanchang, is particularly important for its conservation. Not only is it an area with deep historical and cultural heritage, but it also plays an indispensable role in the modernisation of the city. Covering an area of about 6.3 hectares, the old Wanshou Palace neighbourhood has historically been dominated by residential, commercial, religious and traditional handicrafts, and consists of nine streets and alleys, including Cuihua Street, Chessboard Street, Qiaobu Street, Hetong Lane, Luobo Lane, Wanshou Palace Lane,, Luo Lane, Cu Lane and Guangrun Gate, which ultimately form a traditional spatial pattern of four streets and five alleys with five horizontal and four vertical curvilinear patterns of streets and alleys. In addition to traditional residences, the neighbourhood also has historical buildings such as the Wanshou Palace Taoist temple site, the Chamber of Commerce, and the mosque. The main problems faced by the Wanshou Palace Old Neighbourhood include damage to historical features, inappropriate use of buildings, and degradation of traffic capacity and functions. In 2001, the Xihu District of Nanchang City submitted an application for the protection of the Wanshou Palace Neighbourhood, which was approved by the project, and the protection project of the Wanshou Palace Neighbourhood was started in 2003. In 2013, Nanchang Municipal Government Group and the School of Architecture of Tsinghua University cooperated in planning the relics based 'Wanshou Palace Historical Neighbourhood', a project that will be developed in 2013. In 2013, Nanchang Municipal Group and Tsinghua University School of Architecture cooperated to plan the restoration project of 'Wanshou Palace Historical Block', which is planned by Prof. Wang Guixiang's team, with the aim of restoring the historical appearance of Wanshou Palace and its surrounding areas as much as possible, and building it as the 'the first street of culture of Gan Poyang', presenting the culture of trade, immigrants, marketplace and ancient architectural art styles. It is a representative of ancient architectural art style and shows the architectural style of Gan School. On 16th October 2014, the Standing Committee of Jiangxi Provincial Committee of CPC made a special study on the Design Plan of Tizhu Wanshou Palace Cultural Heritage, and the main leader of the provincial party committee emphasised that the planning and construction of Tizhu Wanshou Palace Cultural Heritage should grasp a few principles: firstly, it should take into account the cultural connotation from the six major elements of tourism. To coordinate with the culture around the Wanshou Palace cultural heritage site; Second, the planning and construction of cultural

positioning should be accurate, Wanshou Palace cultural heritage site should become the centre of the display of Jiangxi intangible cultural heritage; Third, to restore the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace building, downplaying the religious incense, to do the full Wanshou Palace culture in Nanchang, the site of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace into a Wanshou Palace historical and cultural district of Nanchang. 2015 launched an excavation of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, and was completed in 2016. The construction crew used hand digging, careful not to damage the antiquities. Archaeological experts conducted professional appraisals of the unearthed artefacts, providing a historical basis for restoring the original appearance of Wanshou Palace. Numerous relics were found at the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace site, including the main hall, the back hall, the incense burner, the octagonal locking auger well and other building plinths, which provided an important reference for the restoration design.

In his book *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World*, Kevin Walsh argues that history is not only about looking back at the past, but also about understanding reality through understanding the past. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter has been modernised in line with the needs of urban development, through excavating the ruins of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, restorative reconstruction at the original site, and following the principle of ‘repairing the old as the old’, restoration and protection of streets and lanes of the Quarter are aimed at restoring its historical features and cultural characteristics, and becoming a new landmark of Nanchang's cultural and tourism industry. The restoration process focuses on maintaining the original pattern, restoring the undulating contour lines, including street texture, spatial characteristics, architectural style, decorative details and the old building layout and other historical features. Walsh believes that although we cannot fully recreate the past, we can indirectly recall it through language and interpretation. This kind of recreation is not only a copy of the facts, but also a historian reconstructing the past in his mind, understanding the meaning of the leftover words or ideas, and constructing a coherent system of knowledge on the basis of it, helping us to understand the thoughts of human beings in the past, and thus acquiring an understanding of the past. The conservation of Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood for the intact preservation and restoration of structural, spatial, stylistic and decorative features of wooden residential buildings of historical value in order to show the traditional architectural style of Gan school. This approach not only preserves the historical appearance of the neighbourhood, but also reflects the respect and inheritance of the traditional culture of the past, enabling people to understand the past. It can be said that Wanshou Palace neighbourhood is a ‘visible history’, which horizontally shows the vastness and depth of Nanchang, and vertically records the city's historical lineage and inheritance. The purpose of recreating the past is to better understand the past and to build up an understanding of history. Recreating the past is not only a record of historical events, but also a profound reflection on and understanding of human experience, reflecting the importance that modern society attaches to regional identity and respect for historical heritage.

### 3.2.3 Wanshou Palace Architecture and Sense of Place

Sense of place is a subjective understanding based on people's experience of a place, which covers the unique qualities and personality of a place, as well as people's attachment to and identification with the place. Duan Yifu emphasises that sense of place is people's deep perception of and emotional attachment to a particular place, which is formed through long-time residence, interaction and experience. Sense of place includes not only the physical environment, but also dimensions such as culture, history and social relations. Places are concrete and meaningful and carry people's emotions, memories and identities. Place and space interact, with place being concrete and imbued with meaning through people's experiences and interactions. Space is abstract and lacks concrete meaning. Duan Yifu defines space as an abstract term applied to a complex collection of ideas. People with different cultural backgrounds differ in how they divide their world, how they assign values to parts of their world, and how they measure those values. Different ways of dividing space make a world of difference in terms of complexity, similar to the way we judge size and distance. However, certain cross-cultural similarities exist, fundamentally because humans are the measure of all things. Humans organise space according to their own bodies or experiences gained through contact with other people, so that the space they organise meets their biological and social relational needs. (Duan Yifu, 2017: 27)

The success and progress of modernisation has led to a compression of space and time, preventing people from deeply perceiving their connection to the world, in which case it is difficult to form a sense of place, and places feel eroded. The impact of globalisation on architecture is reflected in the homogenisation of architectural styles worldwide. The absence of traditional regional cultures has led to a monotonous urban landscape. Different regional architecture should reflect a sense of place. Therefore, different regional architectures should reflect different senses of place in order to maintain their uniqueness and individuality.

Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter is named after Tiezhu Wanshou Palace. The building of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is not only the existence of physical space, but also the carrier of culture and emotion, and its historical and cultural connotations and architectural characteristics together shape the sense of place of Nanchang. Its existence enables people to intuitively feel the historical lineage and cultural atmosphere of Nanchang, so as to enhance their identity and emotion towards this piece of land. Wanshou Palace has always been an important place for Taoist rituals in Nanchang, and has also been the object of veneration for scholars and local officials, reflecting the characteristics of Taoist-R Confucianism fusion and Taoist-secular worship, and has become an officially recognised cultural and political symbol, as well as an important symbol of the culture of Jiangxi Province. The Tiezhu Wanshou Palace was one of the centres of commerce and culture in the old city of Nanchang due to its excellent geographical location, which is situated in the Guangrun Gate of the Zhangjiang Dock. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, it was one of the three major trading centres in the south of the Yangtze River, attracting a large number of merchants and forming a prosperous commercial district. In addition, Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is also the birthplace of Jiangxi Association, which has become a spiritual carrier for the nostalgia of Jiangxi travellers and an important embodiment of Gan business culture. The restoration and redevelopment of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is not only necessary for the restoration of the historical landmarks of

the old city of Nanchang, but also conducive to the shaping of the urban memory, the strengthening of the sense of place and cultural identity, so that the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter will become a cultural treasure of Nanchang and even of Jiangxi.

The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter is facing a double challenge in its protection and development: on the one hand, the promotion of modern urbanisation may result in the loss of the traditional culture of the Wanshou Palace; on the other hand, it is important to protect the ruins of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, the urban memory of the people of Nanchang, and to make rational use of it as a cultural heritage resource, so as to promote the inheritance and development of the local culture of Jiangxi Province. Therefore, in the process of renewing the urban neighbourhoods and protecting the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace site, the buildings of historical value were preserved and restored through 'repairing the old as if it were the old' renovation and protection to ensure their architectural originality. It attaches importance to the excavation and presentation of the historical and cultural neighbourhood of Nanchang, integrating the needs of modern life, reflecting the respect and strengthening of the local cultural characteristics of Nanchang, and realising the mutual integration of traditional architecture and modern life. It becomes a window to show the culture of Wanshou Palace and Gan architecture, conveying and recounting the historical memory of Nanchang and its unique sense of place.

The staff of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood Project carried out the restoration and reconstruction of the Wanshou Palace in accordance with the plan of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, which was left over from the Ming and Qing dynasties. The architectural features of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace reflect the style of the Ming and Qing palaces, with a symmetrical layout along the central axis, with the leading space including the theatre and the pamphlet, and the main hall and the back hall connected on both sides by the corridor, with a reasonable and regular overall layout, emphasising the order of deference and the hierarchical system. The gate is neat and tall, and the architecture of the palace is magnificent. In particular, the interior of the palace is a magnificent hall with gorgeous decorations, giving people a solemn and dignified feeling. The roof has beautiful curves and

The roof has beautiful curves and high angles, and integrates the traditional architectural elements of Gan Poyang area, such as grey tiles, white walls and wooden frames, forming a kind of simple and unadorned aesthetics. The decorative art is even more unique, with doors, windows, beams, pillars, arches and other parts of the house carved with beautiful patterns, including folk stories, myths and legends, as well as auspicious motifs, which fully demonstrates the wisdom and aesthetic taste of the people of Jiangxi. In the local culture of Jiangxi, Tiezhu Wanshou Palace plays a crucial role. It is not only the centre of Taoist activities, carrying the function of faith and worship, but also a place for business transactions. The Wanshou Palace became an important part of the local economy as merchants gathered and trade flourished. In addition, Wanshou Palace is closely connected with the folk art and customs of the neighbourhood, such as temple fairs, dramas, dragon and lion dances, etc., which together constitute a rich and colourful local cultural landscape. The buildings of Wanshou Palace are not only the witness of the culture of Gan Poyang, but also an important source of local sense. They carry people's memory and emotion, convey the power of history and tradition, and become indispensable cultural symbols in Jiangxi. The significance of Wanshou Palace is not only in its physical form, but also in the cultural resonance and spiritual sense of belonging it inspires. Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, in its unique

way, connects the past, present and future of the place, and becomes an ever-evolving cultural field. People search for their roots here, pray here, and feel the emotional attachment of being born and growing up here. By exploring the regional characteristics and spiritual connotations of Wanshou Palace architecture, we can understand more deeply that traditional architecture is not just a static existence, but also a living cultural symbol and a tangible expression of the sense of place. They are living cultural symbols and tangible manifestations of the sense of place. With their unique charms, these buildings tell the legends of the place, convey the memories of the times, and lead the future to respect and yearn for the past.

The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter was officially opened on 6 February 2021, providing a space for city residents and tourists to experience the traditional culture of Jiangxi Province and enjoy leisure and entertainment. Since its opening, the neighbourhood has attracted many tourists every year and has become an important resource for local economic development and cultural tourism. The preservation and development of the neighbourhood reflects the respect and inheritance of Jiangxi's local traditional culture and demonstrates the progress of cultural heritage preservation and adaptive use practices in modern China. Through maintenance and innovation, the Nanchang Wanshou Palace has become a bridge between past and present, tradition and modernity. Therefore, the regeneration of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter in Nanchang is a process of preservation, restoration and construction of local cultural characteristics. Through restoration and reconstruction of iconic buildings such as the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, the memory of the old Wanshou Palace street will be recreated, and the vitality of the community will continue to be maintained, and the bustling commercial district will be recreated, which not only recreates the history of the place, but also demonstrates the cultural diversity of the modern society and the vitality of the city.

### **3.3 Reproduction of the Past on the Historic Site of Wanshou Palace**

The Fifth Plenary Session of the Nineteenth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) proposed the strategic goal of building a cultural powerhouse by 2035, and made new plans and deployments to achieve this strategic goal. This marks the deepening of the CPC Central Committee's understanding of the importance of cultural construction in China and its laws. For a city, historical and cultural districts have become one of the most important carriers for the presentation and inheritance of the city's history and culture, as well as an important channel and window for city residents to learn about history and culture and build cultural confidence. The compression of time and space undermines the construction of a sense of place, and we urgently need to find our 'roots'. The recreation of the past can further demonstrate local identity and sense of place, and local characteristics can be reflected and emphasised through various forms of art, architecture, documentation and design of public space. The architecture of Wanshou Palace is typical of the Gan school of architecture, and the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter is an important way of reflecting the local identity of Nanchang. Through the restoration of the Wanshou Palace and the Gan school of architecture of the late Qing Dynasty in the Quarter, the intangible cultural heritage of Jiangxi Province can be displayed in the Quarter to strengthen the historical and cultural characteristics of Nanchang, and to enhance the sense of place of the citizens. The planning of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter and the restoration of the Tiezhu

Wanshou Palace are discussed in relation to the concept of ‘Representing the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Postmodern World’. The book discusses museums and heritage projects to reproduce and represent the past and emphasises the importance of restoring and reproducing historical memory.

### **3.3.1 Restorative Reconstruction of Nanchang Wanshou Palace: Reproduction of Historical Space**

The restoration and reconstruction of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang is not only a preservation and reproduction of a historic building, but also a reinterpretation of the significance of historical and cultural heritage in the process of modernisation of Chinese society. The restoration of the Wanshou Palace reflects an important approach that China has taken in recent years to strengthen its cultural self-confidence and pass on its traditional culture. This approach was proposed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2014 and further clarified in the 19th Party Congress Report. The reconstruction of Wanshou Palace, as an important symbol of local history and culture, is a concrete implementation of ‘cultural self-confidence’, aiming to promote Gan culture and strengthen local cultural identity. The process of restorative reconstruction is not only the recovery of material forms, but also involves the reproduction of history and culture and the reshaping of social memory. As an important symbol of Nanchang's history and culture, Tiezhu Wanshou Palace carries rich cultural memories and local identity, and is the embodiment of local identity and sense of place. Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is not only a representative of Gan School architecture, but also a part of the spiritual culture of Nanchang citizens. Its restoration is not only a restoration of the historical building, but also a restoration and inheritance of the local cultural memory. Through restoration, it can arouse the public's sense of identity with local history and enhance local cohesion.

Wanshou Palace is an important carrier of local culture and religious beliefs in Jiangxi Province. Since its establishment in the Western Jin Dynasty, Wanshou Palace has been playing the multiple roles of religious worship, economic exchange and cultural dissemination. However, with the evolution of history, wars and political movements have caused irreversible damage to it. Especially during the Cultural Revolution, the Wanshou Palace was completely demolished and the 21st Nanchang Middle School was built on its site, which led to the disappearance of its physical form and the interruption of its cultural functions. However, the increasing compression of modern time and space seems to hinder any attempt to maintain a sense of place, especially for those in ever-expanding cities. As a result, an awareness of the relativity of location in time has developed. As mass communication and transport systems have expanded, awareness of the existence of many other times and places has grown. This awareness makes it more difficult for people to accept their location and their place in the world once the lives of other people and other places become increasingly dependent on their own. (Walsh, 1992: 65)

Since 2000, with the emergence of the concept of cultural heritage protection in China, focusing on ‘making cultural relics come alive’ and emphasising the dynamic display and functional use of cultural heritage, local governments and academics in Jiangxi have re-recognised the important value of Wanshou Palace. Jiangxi local government and academics have re-recognised the important value of Wanshou Palace, and through policy promotion and

civil society advocacy, Wanshou Palace neighbourhood planning and Tiezhu Wanshou Palace have been listed as key restoration objects. The government of Nanchang launched a restoration project for the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter in 2013, which will be reopened to the public in a restored form in 2021. The key to this process is how to balance historical authenticity, cultural reproduction and commercial interests, so that Wanshou Palace can become a central node of cultural heritage and modern consumption again. In the restoration process, Wanshou Palace not only pays attention to the reproduction of the original historical appearance, but also integrates modern functions such as commerce and tourism, combining the historical building with modern consumer demand, becoming a model of historical ‘revitalisation’.

The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics and the Regulations on the Protection of Famous National Historic and Cultural Cities mention that the core objective of cultural heritage protection is to pass on the outstanding culture of the nation. The restoration project of Wanshou Palace not only restored the building itself, but also continued the historical functions and promoted the intergenerational transmission of culture through festivals, temple rejuvenation and cultural lectures. Restorative reconstruction has always been a controversial practice in the field of cultural heritage preservation. Kevin Walsh, in his book *The Representation of the Past*, points out that modern interest in heritage often leads to ‘reproduction’ and ‘reconstruction’ that deviate from history. Kevin Walsh, in his book *The Representation of the Past*, notes that modern society's interest in heritage has often led to ‘reproduction’ and ‘reconstruction’ that deviates from the essence of history. Such deviations may be criticised as undermining the authenticity of heritage, but they are also seen as adjustments that meet the cultural needs of contemporary society. The restoration of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang illustrates this point well. The authors emphasise the importance of restoration and reproduction of historical memory, which coincides with the restoration of the Tizhu Wanshou Palace. The restoration of Tizhu Wanshou Palace is not only a restoration of the building itself, but also a profound tribute to the cultural history of Nanchang and even Gan.

In recent years, China has emphasised the position of local cultural characteristics in the national cultural strategy. As the capital city of Jiangxi Province, the reconstruction of Wanshou Palace not only respects the regional culture of Jiangxi, but also conforms to the national development strategies such as ‘promoting the rise of central China’, and enhances the influence of Nanchang as a regional cultural centre, and combines the local cultural characteristics with the national strategies of China. Tsinghua University Architectural Design and Research Institute Co., Ltd, Institute of Architectural History and Conservation, School of Architecture, Tsinghua University, Wang Guixiang, project leader, Li Dehua, professional leader, designers Bo Shiheng and Hu Nanshi. Combined with the general situation and historical development of Nanchang Wanshou Palace, the restoration of the Wanshou Palace plan pattern has been thoroughly studied. The architectural pattern of Wanshou Palace in the Ming and Qing dynasties was analysed and sorted out by combining the historical materials of the restoration project, the public opinion maps of the local records, and the surrounding environment of Wanshou Palace. On the basis of clarifying the historical development and changes in the layout of Wanshou Palace, the important buildings of Wanshou Palace, such as the main hall, the back hall, the

main gate, the second gate and the theatre, were restored and analysed with the help of documentary materials and historical images. Combined with the existing 1926 Nanchang old map, clearly see the Republic of Wanshou Palace around the scope of the Republic of Wanshou Palace, and the Republic of Wanshou Palace of the plane of the base site and the Tongzhi ten years basically the same, which is an important basis for recovery. Tiezhu Wanshou Palace according to the Tongzhi ten years (1871) historical data, oceanic reconstruction, layout, modelling and size. In 1962 Nanchang old map, Wanshou Palace east to Cuihua Street and Wanshou Palace Street, west to Contract Lane, north to the book street, south to Wulu Lane. Now Nanchang Wanshou Palace neighbourhood largely preserved these streets, which, the south side of the Luo Lane, the west side of the Contract Lane and the east side of the Cuihua Street is still preserved during the Republic of China period of the streets and lanes, and the north side of the Book Street, that is, Zhongshan Road. By protecting and preserving the historical features of the Wanshou Palace neighbourhood, including the street texture, spatial features, architectural style and decorative details, the whole Wanshou Palace will be renovated and the neighbourhood will be restored to the late Qing Dynasty Republican and Western style buildings.

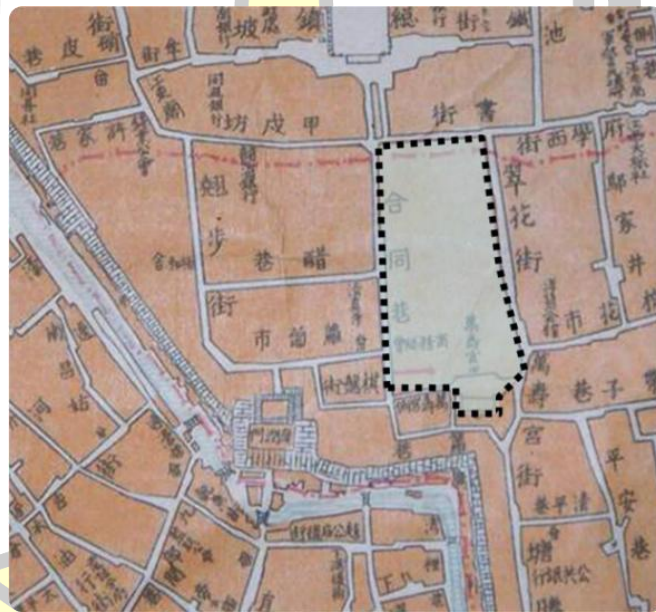


Figure 29 Wanshou Palace on a map of Nanchang in 1962

Source: <http://i.mtime.com/1010853/photo/1680955/>

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Figure 30 Map of the streets and alleys of the Wanshou Palace  
 one is Qiaobu Street, two is Cuihua Street, three is Cu Lane, four is Luobo Lane, five is  
 Hetong Lane, six is Guangrun Gate, seven is Qipan Street, eight Wanshou Palace  
 Lane, nine is Luo Lane,

**Source:** Drawn by Min Qi, July, 2024.

The restoration of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang was a systematic historical reproduction exercise that took 10 years from design to implementation. Before the commencement of the restoration project, the Nanchang government organised a large-scale archaeological excavation, which uncovered important historical relics, including the remains of iron pillars, the remains of the foundation site, and so on. These remains not only provided a reference basis for the restoration, but also strengthened the symbolic significance of the Wanshou Palace as a centre of local history and culture. During the archaeological process, the local government of Nanchang and the cultural protection department paid attention to the public presentation of the value of the site, attracting public attention through exhibitions and media reports, and laying the social foundation for the subsequent restoration and opening. The design of the restoration and reconstruction is based on the 'Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics', 'Regulations for the Implementation of the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics', 'Measures for the Administration of Cultural Relics Protection Projects', 'Protection Plan for the Famous Historical and Cultural City of Nanchang' (2011), 'Protection Plan for the Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood of Wanshou Palace in Nanchang City' (2014), 'Detailed Constructional Plan for the Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood of Wanshou Palace in Nanchang City' (2014), and design contracts and relevant documents. As well as the design contract and related documents as the basis of design. The principle of restorative reconstruction is mainly based on the literature and the current environment to do the research restoration design, but taking into account in the further process of cleaning the surface of the site, there may be excavated remains of the Ming dynasty architectural foundation, therefore, the restoration design also follows the current situation of the cultural relics, to protect the safety of the cultural relics, preservation of cultural relics and their environment, authenticity, integrity, and continuity, etc., will be the original site of the cultural relics that may appear,

such as the iron columns of the wells, etc. absolutely protected, and the new building will be the first to be built, and the new building will be the first to be built. The restoration project adopts a combination of 'in-situ reconstruction and style reproduction' for the absolute protection of cultural relics that may appear on the original site, such as the Tiezhu Well, etc., and the reversible construction of the new ground structures. In terms of building materials, the restoration of the local traditional building materials as far as possible, supplemented by modern technology to ensure the stability and safety of the project. The design team studied the architectural features of the Gan school of the Ming and Qing dynasties to ensure that the restored building is in line with historical records in terms of style, for example, the arch structure of the main hall and the high eaves of the eaves are all faithful to the traditional craftsmanship. Nanchang City has adopted the principle of 'Three No Changes', i.e. the texture and architectural layout of the neighbourhood will remain basically unchanged, the architectural style of Jiangxi residential buildings will remain unchanged and the atmosphere of the landscape elements of the neighbourhood will remain unchanged, which reflects the respect and protection of the historical memory. In order to ensure the authenticity and sustainability of the restoration, local traditional building materials, such as green bricks, grey tiles and timber, were selected and processed with traditional craftsmanship by preserving the intact texture of the historical streets and lanes, as well as preserving the structural forms and historical information of the buildings. The original appearance of the neighbourhood has been restored through the construction of traditional style buildings, supporting street-level commercial and guild buildings. This kind of restorative reconstruction is not only a restoration of the physical structure of the Wanshou Palace, but also a restoration of the architectural style of the Ming and Qing Dynasties by adopting the traditional mortise-and-tenon joinery technique, such as the brick carvings and the design of the warped eaves of the Gan School of Architecture. Although this kind of reconstruction cannot completely restore the original historical authenticity (as there are no complete remains on the site), through the reproduction of detailed craftsmanship (e.g. carvings, coloured paintings) and the application of traditional architectural concepts, a kind of Symbolic Authenticity has been reconstructed, which is in line with the public's aesthetic expectations of traditional culture and the public's desire for aesthetics and aesthetics. The public's aesthetic expectations of traditional culture and the core values of history and culture are also conveyed. It is not only a physical reproduction of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, but also a reconstruction of cultural symbols. On the spiritual and cultural level, it provides the public and tourists with an overall space where they can see, walk in and sit down, so that they can interpret their own life stories while experiencing the historical stories.

The restoration of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang is a response to the concept of holistic conservation of the city's historical and cultural neighbourhoods. The Regulations on the Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages (2008) clearly state that urban renewal should pay attention to the protection and revival of historical and cultural neighbourhoods. The area where Wanshou Palace is located has been planned in a holistic manner, so that the architecture, functions and environment are in harmony, and it has become an organic combination of heritage preservation and urban development. The restoration and redevelopment of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang aims not only at preserving the historical heritage, but also at meeting the needs of the modern society. The restoration and redevelopment of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang not only reproduces a

religious and historical building, but is also designed as a multi-functional cultural and consumer neighbourhood. Divided into a historical and cultural exhibition area, a commercial area, and a religious worship area, it has retained its historical and cultural functions while injecting commercial elements into its sustainable operation, attracting a large number of young tourists. The phenomenon of the ‘consumerisation of culture’ mentioned by Walsh is particularly noticeable in this area. The Wanshou Palace has been transformed into a comprehensive religious, cultural and commercial neighbourhood, shifting its function from historical display to serving contemporary cultural identity, economic development and city branding. Through the restoration of Wanshou Palace, China's cultural heritage protection policy has moved from ‘static protection’ to ‘dynamic inheritance’, placing the historic building in the context of the needs of the contemporary society, preserving the cultural memory and giving it new functions. This practice provides a reference for future heritage conservation.

### **3.3.2 Reproduction of Nanchang Wanshou Palace Architectural Techniques: Memory of Craft Space**

As an important symbol of Jiangxi Gan culture, Nanchang Wanshou Palace is not only the centre of local beliefs and commercial activities, but also carries the unique historical memory of regional culture. In the restoration process of Wanshou Palace, the reproduction of architectural techniques becomes one of the core contents of ‘reproduction of the past’. Through the combination of traditional craftsmanship and modern technology, the reconstruction of the Wanshou Palace demonstrates the multiple practices of cultural heritage conservation in the ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’ dimensions, as well as the theoretical and practical exploration of the field of heritage conservation in China and abroad. There is a dialectical relationship between the reproduction of architectural skills and ‘authenticity’, which is the core principle of heritage conservation in the international heritage conservation field, as stated in the Charter of Venice (1964) and the Nara Document on Authenticity (1994). However, in the context of traditional Chinese culture, ‘authenticity’ is more concerned with the reproduction of traditional craftsmanship and cultural connotations than with the complete preservation of the original object. This is because traditional Chinese building materials are mainly made of wood, which is easily affected by natural factors (e.g. wind, rain, pests, earthquakes, etc.) and is difficult to preserve in the long term. Therefore, it is common to repair, renovate and even rebuild buildings. Traditional Chinese culture emphasises the ‘Taoism of nature’ and views buildings as dynamic beings whose life cycle includes construction, use, destruction and reconstruction. This cyclical concept makes ‘repairing the old as the old’ or completely rebuilding a building considered part of maintaining the living legacy of tradition. The transmission of traditional Chinese cultural connotations takes precedence over material remains, so the continuation of architectural form and cultural significance can be ensured through the continuation of traditional craftsmanship and the use of the same materials. In the restoration of ancient Chinese buildings, the use of traditional techniques is seen as an expression of cultural authenticity in itself, rather than merely the preservation of original materials. According to UNESCO and the Venice Charter, restoration work must be based on adequate documentary, archaeological and historical research. Antique restoration is usually carried out using a combination of traditional craftsmanship and modern technology in order to reproduce the historic building as

authentically as possible, while ensuring the safety and sustainability of the new structure.

In recent years, China has emphasised the ‘revitalisation’ of cultural heritage and its integration into modern life. According to the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics and the Action Plan for the Protection of China's Cultural Heritage (2019-2023), the goals of heritage protection are ‘sustainable use’ and ‘functional revitalisation’. The restoration of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang was carried out by means of ‘antique restoration’, which aims at recreating the appearance or function of the historical building in its original location or in an alternative location. Antique restoration is a widely used approach in the field of cultural heritage conservation. The choice of the restoration approach for the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang reflects the pursuit of historical authenticity combined with functionality. During the restoration and reconstruction of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter, Nanchang City carried out a detailed archaeological study of the original architectural site as a basis for restoring the original appearance of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, pursuing the original reproduction of the architectural form and cultural function. The reproduction of Nanchang Wanshou Palace's architectural skills continues the vein of traditional craftsmanship, but also focuses on its modern social value, making it an important platform for cultural exchange in contemporary society. The specific practice of reproduction of Wanshou Palace architectural techniques is based on historical documents and archaeological excavations of the site. During the restoration process of Wanshou Palace in Nanchang, the relevant departments referred to a large number of local records, ancient maps, documentary records and components excavated from the site. For example, the Guangxu four years of ‘Wanshou Palace at the Promenade Mountain Tongzhi’, Wanli ‘Nanchang Prefecture’, Qianlong sixteen years of ‘Nanchang County’, Daoguang six years of ‘Nanchang County’, the Republic of China eight years of ‘Nanchang County’, as well as unearthed tablets and engravings in-depth study for the reconstruction of the reconstruction of the provision of a solid scientific basis. In addition, Wanshou Palace on the original site of the unearthed remnants of the tiles and stones, but also an important basis for this restoration study research, the layout of the Wanshou Palace building, decoration and historical background of the restoration of the design.

The architectural style of Wanshou Palace was determined by considering the following factors, mainly the contents of historical records, the architectural styles of existing examples, the differences in the styles of different grades of buildings, and the differences between local and official practices in the Qing Dynasty in Nanchang. Finally the historical time period for the overall restoration design of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang was positioned in the late Qing Dynasty. However, the main hall and the rear hall lack sufficient restoration data of the late Qing Dynasty, referring to the old photos of the Republic of China period, the main hall and the rear hall of the Republic of China period basically followed the modelling of the late Qing Dynasty. Therefore, the restoration of the main hall and the rear hall is based on the ‘Wanshou Palace Map’ of Tongzhi in the Qing Dynasty, with reference to the old photos of the Republic of China, and the restoration design is carried out in accordance with the style of the late Qing Dynasty. 1915 reconstruction of the main hall of the historical photos of the main hall adopts a heavy-eaved hermitian peak, and retains the practice of the pai lu newspaper building, whose shape of the pai lu is basically the same as that of the rebuilt floor plan in the 10th year of the Tongzhi era. The shape of the pagoda is basically the same as that of the reconstructed plan in Tongzhi 10th year. In addition, from the photographs, it is

assumed that the columns of the main hall in the Republic of China period were changed to stone columns or even concrete columns.



Figure 31 Image of the facade of the main hall rebuilt in the 10th year of the Tongzhi era

**Source:** (Qing Dynasty) Jin Guixin et al., *Tongzhi of Wanshou Palace, Mount Youshan*.

The architectural style of the Wanshou Palace was determined by taking into account the following factors: the content of historical records, the architectural styles of existing examples, the differences in styles of different grades of buildings, and the differences between the local and official practices of the Qing Dynasty in Nanchang. Finally, the overall restoration of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang was designed for the late Qing Dynasty. However, the main hall and the rear hall lack sufficient restoration data of the late Qing Dynasty, and the main hall and the rear hall of the Republic of China (ROC) period basically follow the modelling of the late Qing Dynasty by referring to the old photographs of the ROC period. Therefore, the restoration of the main hall and the rear hall is based on the 'Wanshou Palace Plan' of Tongzhi of the Qing Dynasty, and the restoration design is based on the old photos of the Republic of China, according to the style of the late Qing Dynasty. The main hall in the historical photos of the main hall rebuilt in 1915 adopts a heavy-eaved hiatus roof, and retains the practice of the pai lau (a building with a roof of cards), and the style of the pai lau is basically the same as that of the rebuilt floor plan in the 10th year of the Tongzhi era. The shape of the pagoda is basically the same as that of the reconstructed plan in Tongzhi 10th year. Besides, from the photographs, it is assumed that the columns of the main hall in the Republican period were changed to stone columns or even concrete columns.



Figure 32 Photographs of the reconstruction of Wanshou Palace in Nanchang during the Republican period in 1915

**Source:** Nanchang City Construction Archives

In the restoration and reconstruction of Wanshou Palace, the relationship between historical records and the actual site was emphasised. With the help of the mapping of the Wanshou Palace neighbourhood, we studied the courtyard system of the Wanshou Palace (scale of the courtyard, setting of the main and annexed halls, traffic flow, etc.) and analysed the architectural system of the individual buildings (floor plan, opening and depth, and architectural shape). Combined with the study of wooden architecture in Nanchang in the Ming and Qing dynasties and the reference of official architecture practice in the Ming and Qing dynasties. In addition to the traditional architectural techniques and the restoration of traditional crafts, the restoration of the building uses the mortise and tenon technique of wooden structures, the production of traditional roof tiles, the use of beam structures, arch styles, tile and stone practices for the single building, and the use of the craft of carved beams and paintings for decoration, with decorative themes including kissing animals, ridge decorations, wood carvings, colour paintings, etc. These techniques not only enhance the culture of the building, but also provide an opportunity to analyse the building's architecture (site plan and depth, and building form). These techniques not only enhance the cultural flavour of the building, but also give visitors a more intuitive sense of the heaviness of history.

#### 1) Reproduction of Wooden Structure Construction Techniques

Wooden structure is the main form of the Wanshou Palace building. During the restoration and reconstruction of the Wanshou Palace, the traditional mortise-and-tenon technique was adopted, which is a construction technique without nails, forming a stable load-bearing structure through precise cutting and assembly of wood. As the traditional mortise-and-tenon technique has been partially lost in modern times, the restoration team invited local intangible cultural heritage inheritors to participate in the work, and accurately restored the key processes by combining ancient documents and remaining building materials. This technique emphasises the direct interaction between human beings and materials, reflecting the exquisite craftsmanship of traditional Chinese artisans and the philosophy of nature. The

architectural arch adopts the shrimp arch, which is a kind of arch style often used in the local big-style architecture in Jiangxi, and basically plays a decorative role. Therefore, the restoration of the arch is also using shrimp arch, as seen in the photo of Nanchang Wanshou Palace in 1915, it is also a shrimp arch, therefore, the restoration of the arch is designed as a shrimp arch, a save in the column head section, and a save in the flat body section. Therefore, the restored arch is designed as a shrimp arch, with one arch in the column head section and one arch in the flat body section. The size of the arch is estimated with reference to the scale of the photographs of the Republic of China and the arch of the Wanshou Palace in Xishan Mountain.



Figure 33 The style of the main hall of the Xishan Wanshou Palace

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, December, 2023.

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## 2) Reproduction of brick and wood carvings

Brick carving and wood carving, as an important part of traditional Chinese architectural decoration, were fully reflected in the restoration and reconstruction of the Wanshou Palace. This not only reproduces the essence of the traditional techniques, but also highlights the richness of the local culture of Jiangxi and the historical status of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang. The restoration of the brick carvings and wood carvings combines traditional craftsmanship with modern technology to ensure the authenticity of the ‘restoration of the old as the old’ and the sustainability of the craftsmanship. The brick carvings use grey bricks as the main material, and the carving techniques are fine and expressive, with traditional techniques such as relief carving, high relief carving and openwork carving. Traditional techniques include relief carving, high relief carving, openwork carving, etc. The themes include the stories of the Eight Immortals, myths and legends, auspicious animals, auspicious clouds and flowers. The patterns and motifs of the brick carvings carry auspicious symbols, and these carvings are not only decorative, but also carry cultural and religious significance. The material used for the brick carvings is the local green brick from Jiangxi, which is easy to carve and resistant to weathering due to its compact texture. The carving technique continues the traditional hand-carving, while combining with power tools for detailing and improving efficiency. During installation, attention was paid to harmonising with the structure and proportions of the overall building, so that the brick carvings were both decorative and integrated into the main body of the building.



Figure 34 Brick carvings on display at Wanshou Palace in Tiezhu  
**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, October, 2023.



Figure 35 The brick carving of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace  
**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, October, 2023.



Figure 36 The wood carving skills of the Zhenjun Palace are reproduction  
**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, October, 2023.

The wood carving details of Wanshou Palace building are concentrated in the eaves, beams and columns and arch parts, which have exquisite and complicated carving art. For example, the arches and beams of the Hall of the True Lord adopt the technique of combining relief carving and translucent carving, showing the fusion of mechanics and aesthetics. The carving patterns mainly include geometric patterns, auspicious patterns, and decorative patterns such as scrolling grass and auspicious clouds. These patterns not only have a decorative function in traditional architecture, but also symbolise the spirituality and solemnity of the heavenly realm in Taoist culture. The carvings have a clear sense of hierarchy, with relief and openwork carvings. The wood carvings on the eave side are mostly represented as auspicious beasts, such as dragons and phoenixes. Such as dragons, phoenixes and so on. The symbolism is to guard against evil and pray for well-being. These beasts and the overall shape of the building fit perfectly, not only to enhance the sanctity of the building,

but also in line with the Taoist tradition of warding off evil spirits. The dragon's head on the eaves is commonly seen in religious buildings, symbolising the guardianship of the gods and the Taoist concept of the unity of heaven and man. The beams and columns are carved with storytelling carvings. The beams of the Hall of the True Lord are engraved with classical Taoist stories, fairy characters and ethical teaching episodes from folklore, which are mostly presented through scenic narratives, and the characters, scenes, and dynamics of the stories are vividly and realistically portrayed through delicate carvings. This kind of storytelling carving not only enhances the visual effect of the square beams, but also reflects the cultural connotation of Taoism and the cultural characteristics of local operas and customs in the building, which is a vivid reflection of the integration of regional culture and architectural art. The carvings on the columns, on the other hand, are supplementary to the theme, forming a coherent narrative with the beams and conveying the combination of folk beliefs and religious philosophies.



Figure 37 Wood carved dragon ornament at the eaves corner of the Zhenjun Palace

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, October, 2023.

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Figure 38 The beams and columns of the Zhenjun Palace are carved with stories  
Source: Photographed by Min Qi, October, 2023.

Colourful paintings were not reproduced in Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, which is related to the positioning of the Wanshou Palace historical and cultural district. The restored Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is only used as a display area for Taoist culture, emphasising the dilution of religious incense. The restored Tiezhu Wanshou Palace was restored for display, with simple displays related to Taoism, so as to match the architectural culture of the Wanshou Palace, and to give visitors an overall, non-separated feeling. Wanshou Palace in the West Mountain is a good presentation of the Jiangxi Taoist painting techniques, the use of traditional painting 'green as the background, yellow embellishments' is the main, which is the colour scheme, forming a contrast between warm and cold, symbolizing the five elements of heaven and earth and yin and yang. The green colour symbolises natural vitality and immortality, the red colour means to drive away evil spirits and bring good fortune, and the gold colour highlights the sacredness and nobility. The painted colours form a sharp visual contrast and symbolism, reflecting the traditional aesthetics of bright colours and strong contrasts, and conveying the pursuit of good fortune, luck, longevity and happiness. The decorative effect of the paintings reflects the fact that Jiangxi Taoist paintings not only focus on the visual impact of the building itself, but also create a 'sacred realm' separate from the mundane space.



Figure 39 Painting of the Xishan Wanshou Palace  
Source: Photographed by Min Qi, December, 2023.

Mei Lianhua, the chief cultural advisor of Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District, said, 'As the ancestral home of more than 1,400 Wanshou Palaces around the world, this is not only a precious cultural heritage of Nanchang, but also seals the memories of the old city of Nanchang, and holds Nanchang people's hope for a better life.' (Zhang Liqiang, Wang Huan Tu Ying, 2022: 2) The essence of Nanchang is condensed in an old street and alley in the Wanshou Palace historical and cultural district. Hu Guoxing, Chairman of the CPPCC, said, 'Around the "Gan Poyang Culture", CPPCC members have made many proposals to inherit and revive the historical lineage and create cultural brands. Now, the desire of reproduction of heavy cultural heritage has been realised, we will continue to promote the integration of business, culture and tourism and high-quality development of the industry, and welcome the successful convening of the 20th National Congress of the Party with the practical action of helping to carry out the new mission and writing a new chapter together.' (Zhang Liqiang, Wang Huan, 2022: 2) Deputy Director Lai Zeyuan said with deep emotion, 'Nanchang is a national-level historical and cultural city, and should leave more things for future generations. Wanshou Palace in Nanchang has Taoist culture, Confucian culture and the integration of the three cultures, as well as water conservancy culture, shipping culture and commercial culture, and both secular culture and elegant culture. There is also a culture of elegance, which represents the regional culture of Jiangxi and is an integral part of Chinese culture. We should respect the history and culture and start restoring the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang.' (Lei Zhengliang and Sun Hong, 2001: 175)

The core element of the concept of cultural heritage that is conveyed to the people around us is a sense of *joie de vivre*, an understanding of what cultural heritage means to us. In addition to appreciating history and art, we also need to draw conclusions about how people have developed and what they will become. This process is not a lecture. Kevin Walsh's book *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World* explores how museums can construct a sense of temporal continuity and political legitimacy through the presentation of history. Within this theoretical framework, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood presents a rich history of representation, which sheds light on its cultural value. The architectural reproduction of the Wanshou Palace fulfils China's strategy of 'cultural confidence' and 'revival of traditional culture', which is of great significance at the national policy level in modern China. The Wanshou Palace carries the collective memory of Gan culture, and the reproduction of the architectural techniques of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang is not only a dynamic inheritance of the traditional techniques, but also a demonstration of the details and cultural symbols. The unique charm of the Wanshou Palace architecture is fully demonstrated, and through the restoration of the temple building, the local society recovers the identity and historical roots of the regional culture. By combining tradition and modernity, the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang has become a living museum showcasing the culture of the Wanshou Palace and the history of Gan merchants, and at the same time fulfils modern people's multi-layered understanding of 'authenticity' - both in terms of the symbolic nature of the history and culture, and in terms of the continuity and creativity of the craftsmanship. It also fulfils modern people's multi-layered understanding of 'authenticity', including the symbolism of history and culture, and the continuity and creativity of craftsmanship. The visual reproduction of the

historical scenes of Wanshou Palace awakens the collective memory of the people. The restored Wanshou Palace in Nanchang no longer serves the function of religious worship, but has become a centre for cultural exchange and commercial development. This functional transformation has given new life to traditional architectural techniques in a modern context. The restoration of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang combines the concepts of ‘material authenticity’ in the West and ‘cultural authenticity’ in the East, and realises both ‘material’ and ‘spiritual’ through the reproduction of architectural techniques. The restoration of Nanchang Wanshou Palace combines the concepts of ‘material authenticity’ of the West and ‘cultural authenticity’ of the East, and realises the dual revival of ‘material’ and ‘spiritual’ through the reproduction of architectural techniques.



Figure 40 Professor Mei Lianhua took a group photo with the author introducing the restorative reconstruction of the Tieshu Wanshou Palace and the planning of the historical and cultural district of the Wanshou Palace. Source: Photographed by Min Qi, October, 2023.

### 3.3.3 Restoration and presentation of Gan architecture: material and cultural representations of space

A sense of place depends on the characteristics of the place that reveal the ‘depth’ of time (Walsh, 1992: 84). In the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter of Nanchang, the historical and cultural value of the quarter has been reconstructed through the reconstruction of historical buildings and the restoration of the neighbourhood's texture,

showcasing the Gan style of architecture. The restored Nanchang Wanshou Palace is no longer limited to religious ritual functions, but transformed into a comprehensive space integrating cultural display, commercial development and community functions, with more emphasis on the display function of Wanshou Palace culture. On 16 October 2014, the Standing Committee of the Jiangxi Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China made a special study on the 'Tiezhu Wanshou Palace Cultural Heritage Design Plan', and the main leader of the provincial party committee stressed that the planning and construction of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace Cultural Heritage 'should grasp a few principles: firstly, we should give full consideration to the six elements of tourism, and the cultural connotations should be coordinated with the culture around the Wanshou Palace Cultural Heritage; this means that in the planning and construction process, we should not only focus on tourism, but also on the cultural display of Wanshou Palace, and community functions as a whole. This means that in the process of planning and construction, we should not only pay attention to the attractiveness of tourism, but also ensure the harmony and unity of the cultural connotation and the surrounding environment, so that tourists can better experience and feel the local cultural characteristics. Secondly, the cultural positioning of the planning and construction should be accurate, and the Wanshou Palace cultural heritage site should become a centre for displaying Jiangxi's intangible cultural heritage; this indicates that the construction of the Tizhu Wanshou Palace cultural heritage site should not only highlight its historical and cultural value, but also become an important venue for displaying Jiangxi's intangible cultural heritage, so as to enhance the public's cognition and understanding of Jiangxi's culture through various forms of cultural displays and activities. Thirdly, the buildings of Tizhu Wanshou Palace should be restored, the religious incense should be diluted, the culture of Nanchang Wanshou Palace should be fully developed, and the site of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace should be turned into a historical and cultural neighbourhood of Nanchang Wanshou Palace. This principle emphasises the restoration of the buildings while reducing the impact of religious activities and highlighting the cultural connotations of the Nanchang Wanshou Palace. By creating a neighbourhood that combines history, culture, tourism and leisure, the Tizhu Wanshou Palace will become an important cultural landmark in Nanchang. The neighbourhood has set up the Old Street and Old Lane Exhibition Hall, the Non-Heritage Artisan Hall, the Calligraphy and Painting Wanshou Palace Art Museum, the Wanshou Shangxin, the Wanshou Monthly Magazine, the Linghuo Shrine, and the Linghuo Post Office. The restored historical buildings in the neighbourhood have been integrated into the commercial sector, combining traditional buildings with modern shops to meet tourism and consumption needs. The restored Wanshou Palace is not only a transformation of the religious function, but also a testing ground for combining local history with modern needs. It provides space for residents' activities and strengthens community identity.



Figure 41 Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District Old Street Old Lane Exhibition Hall

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, October, 2023.



Figure 42 Intangible Cultural Heritage Ingenuity Museum  
Where the intangible cultural heritage of Jiangxi is displayed and studied

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, October, 2023.

#### 1) Restoration and Cultural Legacy of Gangetic Architecture

Postmodern architecture is part of the heritageisation of space, which seeks to impose a symbol of an uninterrupted past. The emphasis on the style of the ruling class in various historical periods determines the belief in historical continuity and collective memory - a past without differences, or a history that has ended. (Walsh, 1992: 85) In the Wanshou Palace historical and cultural neighbourhood, this symbol of continuity is expressed in the concentrated reproduction of Ganpai architecture. However, this may also lead to the blurring of the historical hierarchy of different periods, weakening the connotation of locality and making it more like a 'cultural consumer

landscape'. In the whole Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood, south of Jingyang Road is dominated by dry-row residential houses, mixed with other architectural styles from the late Qing and Republican periods; north of Jingyang Road is in the New Chinese style. The overall architecture adopts the traditional architectural appearance of local houses in Nanchang. From the analysis of architectural chronology, more than 50% of the buildings in the Wanshou Palace Historical Block are from the Late Qing and Republic of China periods, presenting the architectural style of the Late Qing and Republic of China periods in the architectural style of the block. After the refurbishment, the original architectural style was preserved and some buildings were repaired. (Wu, N., Zhou, R., and Fu, Y., 2023: 5). As Walsh puts it, it is important to provide people with the skills that enable them to 'read' their environment and re-establish a sense of place. For such projects, it is crucial to understand how places change over time and how each place relates to a multitude of other places and influences, thus being situated in a potentially infinite temporal and spatial context. Any project concerned with reconstructing a sense of place must be prepared to consider the definition of temporal and spatial contexts, which are important for the development of different phenomena within places. (Walsh, 1992: 153) There is a sense of history within the space, the preservation of the past is a defence of history, and the reproduction of the past takes into account history with its context. The restoration of the Wanshou Palace Old Street is a comprehensive revival of Gan architectural skills and cultural values, and a dialogue between local historical memory and modern needs. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood has preserved a large number of buildings and layouts of historical significance, such as 45 historical buildings in the late Qing Dynasty in the style of Gan-style houses, the Nanchang General Chamber of Commerce, the Chizhitang, etc., which have been restored in their original locations and in their original form, or restored in the form of frames, in an effort to restore their original appearance. In April 2011, the former Chizhitang building at 36 He Tong Lane was positioned as a district-level immovable cultural heritage site. The building was built in the late Qing Dynasty as part of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, and after the Wanshou Palace was destroyed again during the Cultural Revolution, it was gradually transformed into shops and residences, which later belonged to the Nanchang Taoist Association and the self-managed properties of 22 families. The basic layout of this building is relatively complete, consisting of two buildings in the north-south direction, two-storey brick structure. It has the complete characteristics of Jiangxi's patio-style architecture of the late Qing Dynasty, with a well-designed internal layout and a patio as the core, which allows for sufficient indoor light and also serves to regulate the climate. The doors and windows are mainly in brown and grey, giving a sense of simplicity and elegance. The green bricks on the walls contrast with the dark brown colour of the wooden structure, which is the most complete and best preserved building of the late Qing Dynasty in the entire Wanshou Palace Historical Quarter, and is an important remnant of the culture associated with Wanshou Palace. It witnesses the development and changes of the area and reflects the aesthetic taste and lifestyle of the local people. At the same time, it is also an important example for the study of the Gan style of residential architecture. It is now restored and operated as a coffee shop in connection with the development of the neighbourhood. The interior structure and decoration of the building reflect the refinement and elegance of Gan

School architecture. Through the fine reconstruction of the spatial layout, reproduction of traditional craftsmanship and restoration and display of architectural elements, the unique charm of Gan School architecture continues to blossom in the modern city. It not only shows the historical evolution and commercial development of Nanchang, but also reflects the restoration of these buildings in terms of marketplace culture and ancient architectural art styles.



Figure 43 Lao Ximen Coffee Shop (after the restoration of the original Chizhitang)

Source: Photographed by Min Qi, October, 2023.

## 2) Sense of Place and the Reconstruction of Visual Narratives

The use of traditional styles in architecture fosters a sense of continuity and belonging among residents and visitors. The architectural styles in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood are dated to the late Qing and early Ming periods, based on their relative proximity to people's lives. The reproduction of traditional Chinese culture through a specific Gan School architectural symbol system. During the restoration process, the symbol system of the neighbourhood mainly focuses on the visual characteristics of Gan architecture, such as: brick and wood structure, horse-head wall, carving decorations, etc., and at the same time, it emphasises the continuation of Wanshou Palace as a historical trade culture, and the remodelling of the bazaar atmosphere, so as to highlight the essence of Nanchang's local culture, and to satisfy the needs of the contemporary society in order to adapt to the function of the modern city. Of course, the historical narrative of the buildings in the neighbourhood focuses more on consumable cultural symbols than on the historical depth of the complexity of the neighbourhood's rise and fall and social changes, which may have been relatively weakened in the neighbourhood. In the Wanshou Palace neighbourhood, the construction of a sense of place is more in the form of visual unity, which is enhanced by the concentrated reproduction of Gan-style architecture, but this unity may also blur the historical hierarchy of the different periods. However, this unity may also blur the historical hierarchy of different periods, which may lead to the weakening of local connotations and the transformation of the neighbourhood into a 'cultural consumer landscape'. Writing in the early 1970s on When

and Where Here, Lynch commented: ‘Resistance to the loss of the historic environment has become stronger today, as affluence has increased and material change itself has accelerated. This is not surprising, since the past is known, familiar, and a possession in which we can feel secure’ (Lynch,1972: 29). People must be provided with skills that enable them to ‘read’ their environment and reconstruct a sense of place.

Place is formed through the subjective identification of ‘time markers’, which are elements of the environment, both man-made and natural. These markers make time ‘visible’. People acquire a sense of place through a set of ‘filters’, i.e. they subjectively engage with these time markers. Throughout the (post)modern period, the power to control spatial time, and therefore to manipulate place, has been in the hands of a relatively small number of individuals and organisations. These organisations have the ability to decide what will and will not be preserved, and how it is presented and interpreted to the public. A sense of the past is developed through the ability to place time markers within a time frame and place them in historical perspective. The key to developing a sense of place is to allow people to develop their own understanding of place, rather than to impose institutionalised meanings on space, thus producing artificial places. (Walsh,1992: 152)

The renewal and transformation of modern cities is not only about physical space renewal, but also about preserving architectural heritage and reasonably transforming space. In the process of development, it is necessary to pay attention to preserving and strengthening the daily life and community vitality of the residents, injecting new vitality into the old historical and cultural districts through rational traffic planning and the integration of cultural heritage and modern commerce, and protecting the emotional attachment and local identity of the urban residents. In the restoration of Wanshou Palace, the historical architectural style is preserved and the material space of Lefebvre is reflected, emphasising the physical form and functional characteristics of the space. The physical space of the buildings in the neighbourhood has been restored and restored through the recreation of historical styles, and the form of the buildings in the neighbourhood is faithful to the Gan style, providing a visible historical scene for visitors. The architectural form of the neighbourhood is faithful to the Gan style, providing a visible historical scene for visitors. At the same time, elements of the New Chinese style and modernisation have been incorporated. For example, modern designs such as glass curtain walls and LED lighting in the commercial streets enrich the function of the neighbourhood, but may also interfere with the overall sense of traditional space. This ‘historical-modern’ mix of physical space demonstrates the tension between historical heritage and contemporary consumer culture. In the Wanshou Palace neighbourhood, the historical narrative of the neighbourhood is reconstructed and spatially expressed through pavilions, guide systems and multimedia interactions, which is an expression of the cultural value and modern social significance of Wanshou Palace. It is an expression of Wanshou Palace's cultural value and modern social significance. The neighbourhood emphasises the religious culture and trade traditions of Wanshou Palace's historical process. Dovetailing community functions with cultural consumption, the neighbourhood, as a historical and cultural recreational area, provides cultural activities for local residents, and carries out festivals on important annual holidays, as well as displaying traditional crafts in the Non-Heritage Artisan Hall and part of the bazaar, which to a certain extent continues the traditional functions of the community. The fusion of commerce and culture, with the introduction of

speciality shops and catering, has created a cultural consumption scene.

The combination of heritage and postmodern architecture promotes the questioning of the ‘real’ sense of historical place through its selectivity and emphasis on a narrow definition of heritage. By emphasising the preservation and reproduction of the image of the ruling class, and the highly selective surface image of a benign industrial past, it attempts to construct an idea of nationhood, a sense of organic continuity.

(Walsh, 1992: 87) The restoration of the Wanshou Palace historical and cultural neighbourhood not only recreates the physical form of the historical buildings, but also tries to find a balance between a sense of place and modern needs through cultural narratives and functional redefinition. This practice shows that cultural heritage preservation needs to pay attention to the deeper meaning of locality in the context of tourism and commercialisation, and at the same time realise the symbiosis between history and culture and modern urban development through diversified narratives and community participation.



Figure 44 Comparison of Jincheng (left) before the renovation of Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District (left) and Jincheng (right) after the renovation  
**Source:** The picture on the left is provided by Professor Mei Lianhua, and the picture on the right is taken by Min Qi, October, 2023.

### 3.3.4 Performances of Jiangyue Folklore Activities: Representations of the Past and Modern Reproductions

As an important carrier of Jiangxi culture, Nanchang Wanshou Palace carries a wealth of folk activities and historical memories of the Jiangyou region. These folk activities are not only an important part of local life, but also a symbol of the spirit of Gan culture. The restored Wanshou Palace is no longer a single space for religious rituals, but a collective memory and cultural identity of the folklore of the Jiangyue region through exhibitions and interactive experiences. On the historical site of Wanshou Palace, the performance of Jiangyou folklore

activities has become an important practice for the dynamic inheritance and contemporary expression of traditional culture. In the following, we will discuss the reappearance and significance of folk activities in Wanshou Palace in the light of the past representations of folk activities.

#### 1) Historical Representations of Jiangyou Folklore Activities

Folklore activities in Jiangyou are rich and varied, covering a wide range of areas such as rituals, festivals, performing arts and social etiquette. Wanshou Palace is a place where Jiangxi people worship Xu Zhenjun (Xu Xun), and its rituals promote loyalty and filial piety, as well as praying for blessings and peace. When natural disasters such as droughts and floods occur, local people will go to Tizhu Wanshou Palace to pray for blessings, hoping to get the protection of the gods and reduce the impact of disasters. In the past, the rituals were solemn and grand, including incense offerings, chanting ceremonies and sacrifices, reflecting the fusion of religion and folklore. Nowadays, Wanshou Palace is the central place for people to celebrate traditional Chinese festivals such as New Year's Day, Spring Festival, Lantern Festival, Dragon Boat Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival. The Wanshou Palace is no longer a place of worship, but functions as an exhibition museum, where people can buy wishing tags, and where there are no more joss sticks or bowing. The neighbourhood is also used for local opera (Gan opera, Cai Cha opera) and folk performances (dragon and lion dances), lantern festivals, etc., which are performed during festivals. The dragon dance at Wanshou Palace during the Spring Festival of 2024, shown below, is part of the intangible cultural heritage of Jiangxi, where dragon dances are not only a way of celebrating festivals, but also an important ritual for praying for good weather and a good harvest. At the same time, the dragon is a symbol of strength, honour and good luck in traditional Chinese culture. Often involving community members, dragon dances are an important part of community culture in Jiangxi, as they help to strengthen ties and cohesion within the community. The dragon dance is a common celebration during traditional festivals such as the Spring Festival and the Lantern Festival, where it adds a festive and lively atmosphere to the festivities. It carries the memory of history and culture and is an important carrier of traditional culture.

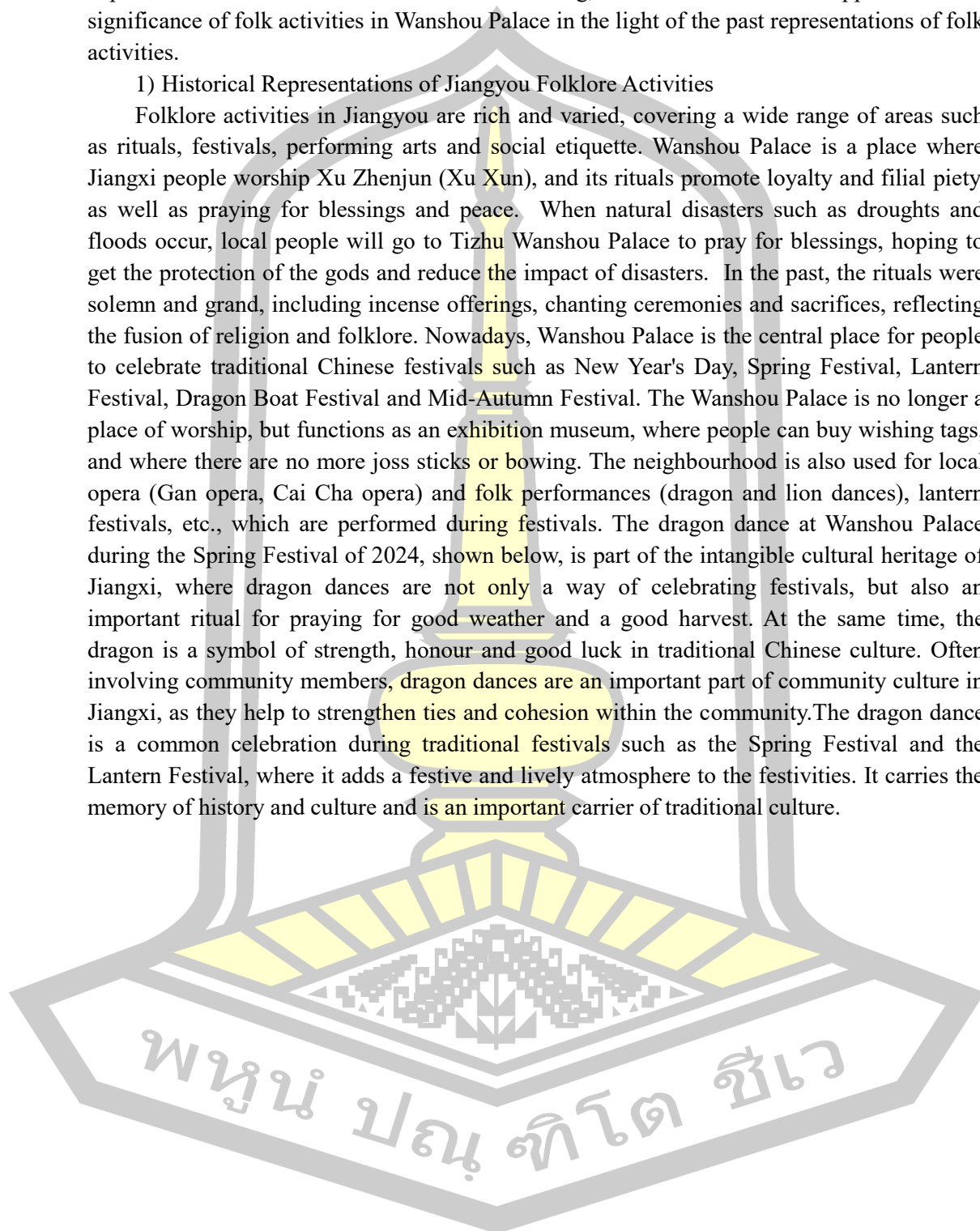




Figure 45 Dragon dance performance during the Spring Festival in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District  
**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, February , 2024.

Lion dance, as a traditional folk activity and an important traditional dance in China, is especially popular in Jiangxi, and is one of the folk cultures and traditional activities of the right side of the river. It is one of the folk cultures and traditional activities of the right side of the Yangtze River. It has rich cultural connotations and various social functions. During festivals such as the Spring Festival and the Lantern Festival, the Wanshou Palace organises lion dances, which are designed to ward off evil spirits, pray for good luck and celebrate festivals, and are regarded as symbols of good luck, bringing good fortune and prosperity, while the lion dances add to the festivities and add to the festivities a joyful and lively atmosphere. In Jiangyou folklore, the lion dance is not only a recreational custom, but also a manifestation of deep cultural and social values, demonstrating the diversity and long history of Chinese culture. In the past, the lion dance was associated with praying for a good harvest, and people regarded the lion as a mighty and courageous beast, believing that the lion could drive away pests and protect the crops. The lion dance is not only a folklore activity, but also an important demonstration of folklore dance techniques, in which the lion dancers present the charm of the art of lion dance with their excellent skills and vivid performances. In front of the theatre in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter, a yellow lion dances with its head held high, eyes, nose and mouth protruding, surrounded by performers in traditional costumes, colourful flags and drums, making for an energetic and joyful scene. The auspicious words of the lion, ‘Spirit of Dragon and Horse’ and ‘All Fortunes’ , symbolised the blessing of good fortune and good luck for the Year of the Dragon in China in 2024, expressing people's longing for a better life and their wishes for the future.



Figure 46 Lion dance performance during the Spring Festival in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, February , 2024.

Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, as the place where Tiezhu locks the auger dragon, is the source of Jiangxi Guilds all over the country, through the immigrants and Jiangyou merchant gangs to the whole country, the most characteristic feature is equipped with a theatre. At the same time, the theatre is usually facing the True Lord's Hall, which is said to entertain the people and the gods. Wanshou Palace theatre originated from the people's need to worship Xu Zhenjun, and then gradually developed into a folklore activity in which the people of Jiangxi hold annual rituals, gatherings and celebrations. On important festivals such as the birthday of Xu Zhenjun, Wanshou Palace invites famous local opera troupes to come and sing, and people come from all directions to watch the opera. During the temple fair of Wanshou Palace, performances of Gan Opera, a local Jiangxi opera originated in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties and has a history of hundreds of years, are usually held on the stage. It is a fusion of various local operas, including Yiyang opera and Qingyang opera. The music system of Gan Opera is complex, with a wide variety of singing styles, including Gaoqiang and Kunqiang, etc. The music is melodious and expressive. The photo below shows two Gan Opera actors performing with a beautifully decorated stage in the background. As a unique local opera in Jiangxi, Gan Opera is an important part of the intangible cultural heritage. The repertoire of Gan Opera is usually adapted from classical literature and local historical events in Jiangxi.



Figure 47 Gan opera performance on the stage of Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, February, 2024.

Nanchang Tea Picking Opera is also one of the opera performances in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter, which is one of the representative local operas in Jiangxi Province and is famous for its lively and grounded performance form. Tea Picking Opera originated from the tea village labour folk songs, and later developed into a form of opera art, combining rap, dance, drama and other ways of expression. The repertoire is mostly based on daily life themes, and is good at expressing the emotions of the people's lives, symbolising the traditional farming civilisation. The use of the Jiangxi dialect strengthens the theatre's sense of local identity, making the tea-picking opera an important symbol of Jiangxi culture. The actors in the photo are in the centre of the Wanshou Palace stage, wearing brightly coloured traditional costumes, with the typical roof of the Wanshou Palace stage as a backdrop, and the musicians can be seen in the corner of the stage playing music for the actors. The tea-picking opera highlights the vitality of traditional Jiangxi opera in a folk space.

The tea-picking opera staged in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District is not only an inheritance of the art of opera, but also a new interpretation of Jiangxi's history and culture. First of all, it evokes memories of the past. The tea-picking opera originates from labour scenes in rice fields, tea gardens and markets, and its stories revolve around labour life, love stories, ethics and morals, with simple and easy-to-understand lyrics full of local flavour; the music is based on folk tunes, incorporating elements such as labour horns and songs, with a bright and fast melody, which is very refreshing to the ears. Incorporating the tea-picking theatre into the historical and cultural district makes it possible to reintegrate the traditional local culture into modern urban life. Secondly, the performance enriches the audience's cultural experience and enhances the sense of ceremony. The lively interpretation of the actors and the harmonious accompaniment of the musicians create an immersive cultural experience that takes the audience back in time. Finally, it contributes to the creation of a sense of local

identity. The Nanchang Tea Picking Opera, which presents many of Jiangxi's fading customs in theatre form, has been revived to help the people of Jiangxi regain a sense of cultural belonging in modern society, deepen their local identity, and turn the Wanshou Palace neighbourhood into a collective space of cultural memory and identity.

The neighbourhood has made use of traditional opera performances and transformed them into cultural symbols, promoting cultural consumption and tourism. Nanchang Wanshou Palace, as a historical and cultural neighbourhood, has preserved and presented the traditions of Gan Opera and Tea Casting Opera, conveying the unique cultural values and memories of Wanshou Palace through selective historical reproductions. The combination of exquisite stage design and superb performances by the actors provides multiple visual, auditory and emotional experiences, connecting the audience to history through the opera. The performance of Jiangxi local opera not only reproduces the traditional cultural atmosphere, but also becomes a carrier of local cultural memory. At the same time, it stimulates regional identification with Jiangxi opera culture, integrates performances into the space of the theatre in the neighbourhood, energises the cultural symbol of Wanshou Palace, and further strengthens Nanchang's position as a cultural icon.

Heritage seems to be just 'something', an image, a historical surface, rather than a building or object with a history that develops, i.e. changes, through historical processes. The purpose of heritage seems to be to select only those things that are pleasing to a small group of people. Those who decide what is worth preserving and how to preserve it are essentially deciding what is worth remembering. (Walsh, 1992: 80) The exhibition of Jiangyou folk activities in the festivals of the Wanshou Palace historical and cultural neighbourhood demonstrated the unique style of the culture of the Jiangyou region. It not only enhances community cohesion, but also reflects the local characteristics of the Jiangyue region. The transformation of functions in these places is a selective construction of the past, and as Walsh emphasises, historical representation is not a passive record of the past, but an

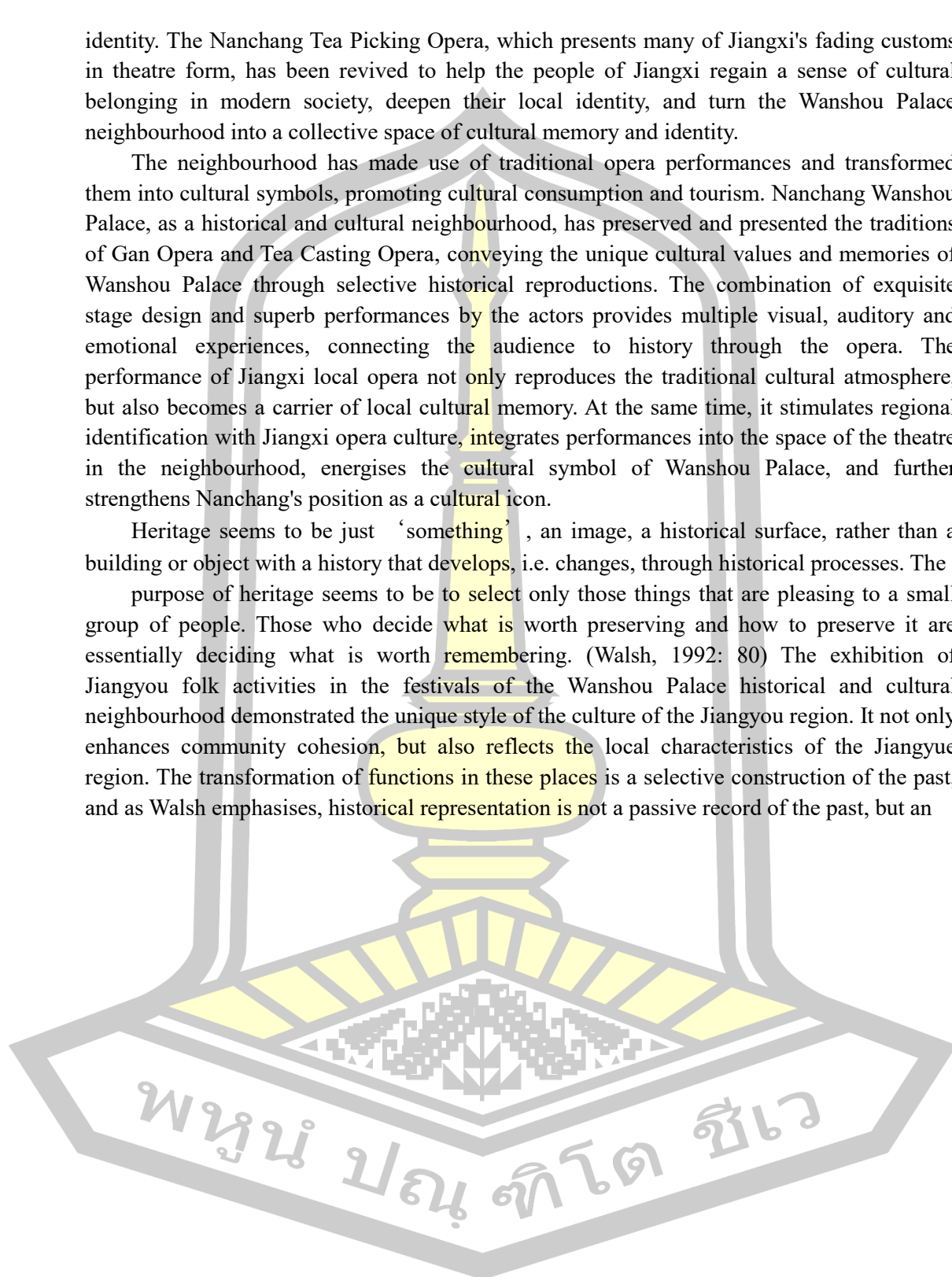




Figure 48 Tea-picking opera on the stage of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, February, 2024.

active process of construction. This construction is often motivated by the needs of the present, filtering, rewriting or even embellishing the past to serve a cultural or political purpose. The folklore events in the neighbourhood are a legacy of traditional Chinese culture and a way of identifying oneself with the Jiangxi region.

History is the past, and it is not only a knowledge but also an experience. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood, through specific rituals, activities or spaces, such as the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace which has become the current Wanshou Palace Museum for the display of past rituals and festivals, reproduces representations of the past so that the people of the modern world can perceive, touch and consume the content of what existed in the past in this place of the Wanshou Palace. According to Walsh, historical representations are often made in visually striking and ritualised forms that allow participants to feel ‘present in the past’. This is the case with the dragon and lion dances, Gan opera performances, and temple festivals of Jiangyou folklore. Through costumes, music, dance and rituals, they create a strong historical atmosphere, making people feel as if they have travelled to the past dimension of time.

## 2) Historical representations and the remodelling of local identities

In the context of modern China, China has formulated national and local tourism development plans, such as the State Council Opinions on Promoting the Reform and Development of the Tourism Industry in 2013, the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), and the Cultural and Tourism Development Plan for the 14th Five-Year Plan. In 2013, the State Council's Opinions on Promoting the Reform and Development of Tourism was released, and in the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), the '14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of Culture and Tourism' was released, and other relevant documents were published. The performances during temple festivals in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Street Area are no longer just a practice of faith, but a display of traditional culture and a cultural product that attracts tourists. Folklore activities not only show fragments of the past, but also reinforce the uniqueness of the local culture. By emphasising the historical depth of the Wanshou Palace culture and the uniqueness of the Jiangyou tradition, these events redefine the local identity. Of course, there are some who argue that such a transformation, while increasing the influence of traditional culture, may also cause it to lose its original religious and local ritual significance.

Of course, these transformations can be understood as a reshaping of Wanshou Palace's historical representation and local identity. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood links the culture of Wanshou Palace with the history of Jiangxi Province and the spirit of Gan merchants, shaping a holistic narrative of the 'JiangRou Culture'. This narrative is both a reconstruction of local historical memory and a strategy for external promotion, building a collective identity adapted to modern needs through the selective reproduction of the past. This form of heritage conservation is primarily concerned with the defence of a particular ideology through the promotion of a ruling-class style image. Emphasis is placed on superficial representations of very specific 'traditional' lifestyles, which country house visitors can now 'appreciate' as they are further encouraged to consume and respect the symbols of these lifestyles, which have been transformed into a mode of spectacle consumption. A pattern of spectacle consumption. Consumption patterns are part of an expanding service class culture. (Walsh, 1992: 82) The author himself believes that this is the reason for the history of consumption, the official desire for heritage to have a value, that heritage is not just a public place for display and education, but that it is preserved and utilised by the officialdom as a distinctive traditional way of life, part of a service class culture, a representation of the past, a tradition, and a way of integrating it with the development and needs of the times, so that the tradition is developed and passed on as a modern reproduction, a way of life. It is a part of service culture, which characterises the past history and tradition, and enables the development and inheritance of tradition by combining it with the development and needs of the times, and is a reproduction of modernity.

The Jiangwu Folklore Events in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter are a regeneration of traditional Chinese culture in the context of modern China, and a dynamic interpretation of representations of the past. Through the multidimensional reproduction of space, rituals and art, these activities awaken the historical memory of the local community, strengthen cultural identity, and provide innovative ideas for cultural heritage protection and dissemination. Through the Jiangyue Folklore Exhibition, the folklore of Jiangyue has not

only been revived, but has also become a bridge of exchange and communication between traditional Chinese cultures. They hint at a forgotten, invisible and reclaimable history - a history that is local but also universal, part of a wider national story than the very personal genealogy suggests. (De Groot, J. 2009: 67)

## Summary

Using the reconstruction of the Wanshou Palace site in Nanchang as a case study, this chapter explores the concept of reproduction of the past and analyzes the practice of architectural restoration and neighborhood conservation in the context of modern China. The concept of heritage conservation in modern China has undergone an evolutionary process from internationalization to localization. From the 1972 World Heritage Convention on Cultural and Natural Heritage to the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity, cultural heritage conservation has gradually shifted from static material conservation to a dynamic cultural process, and has been closely integrated with identity politics, economic development and cultural capitalization. China has established the principles of authenticity, minimal intervention and sustainable development through the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics and the Guidelines for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, and in recent years has combined heritage protection with urban renewal and cultural tourism to promote historic districts as an important part of economic development.

The archaeological excavation and historical reconstruction of the Wanshou Palace site in Nanchang is a typical example of the integration of cultural heritage protection and urban development, with archaeological investigations initiated in 2013 and formal excavations in 2015, which uncovered important remains such as iron pillars and incense burner bases. The archaeological work followed the principle of “minimal intervention” and recorded site information through digital technology. Based on the archaeological results, the government adopted a restorative redevelopment approach, restoring the spatial pattern of the neighborhood and showcasing the layers of the site with modern technology. However, the redevelopment process has also triggered controversies, such as the risk of “Disneyfication” of history, the balance between heritage conservation and modern urban functions, and the enhancement of public participation.

The balance between heritage preservation and urban development is reflected in the revitalization and tourism development of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District, which was listed as a provincial-level historic and cultural district in 2015 and has attracted tourists through cultural displays, cultural and creative industries, and the night-time economy, but over-commercialization may lead to the alienation of the historic and cultural landscape. Nonetheless, the public's emotional identification with the heritage has become an important motivation for preservation, demonstrating the complexity and possibility of finding a balance between heritage preservation and urban development.

The cultural reproduction of Wanshou Palace exemplifies the multiple values of cultural heritage in contemporary society. The culture of Wanshou Palace has been widely disseminated through promotions such as tourism, social media and film productions. The Nanchang government enhances the cultural immersion of tourists through temple fairs and folklore festivals, making it an important showcase for local culture. For local residents, the reconstruction of Wanshou Palace strengthens the local cultural identity; for foreign tourists, it

serves as a window to understand the culture of Jiangxi and the spirit of the Jiangyou Merchant Gang. This process not only reproduces history, but also gives new vitality to the cultural heritage, so that it can continue to play the role of cultural heritage and identity construction in modern society.

Combined with the discussion in this chapter, there are three directions that need to be focused on in the future of heritage conservation: first, balancing historical authenticity and modern adaptability, so that heritage sites can both preserve history and adapt to the development of society; second, promoting the sustainable development of cultural heritage, avoiding over-commercialization, and maintaining the core values of the culture; and third, strengthening community governance and public participation, and motivating the residents to become an active force in heritage conservation. These directions provide important references for the future development of heritage conservation.



## Chapter IV

### Wanshou Palace Historical Consumption in the Process of Modern China

History is a set of stories and a series of discursive practices that have been borrowed heavily by popular culture, and Consumer History looks at the resulting hybrids. (De Groot, J. 2009:1) The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter in Nanchang is an important reproduction of China's historical and cultural heritage, reflecting the concrete practices of modern China as it strives to preserve its identity through traditional culture. The site embodies cultural heritage protection and demonstrates the importance of preserving historical heritage for future generations. In addition, Wanshou Palace plays a crucial role in cultural consumption, as it attracts visitors who engage with and experience the rich narratives of such sites. The restored and reconstructed Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is a focal point for heritage tourism and consumption, attracting tourists eager to explore Chinese history and contribute to the local economy. In addition, historical tourism has increased public awareness and appreciation of cultural heritage, further consolidating the Wanshou Palace's position as an important destination for those interested in China's historical narratives. As such, the Wanshou Palace not only represents a reproduction of the past, but also facilitates the consumption of modern Chinese history.

#### 4.1 Historical Culture and Consumption Symbols of Wanshou Palace

Wanshou Palace in Nanchang has completed its transformation from a place of religious belief to a public cultural space in the context of modern China's urbanisation and consumer culture, and its functional evolution reflects the multiple dimensions of historical consumption. The architectural symbols of Wanshou Palace have become an important carrier of local cultural memory through restoration and reconstruction, and its aesthetic symbols, such as flying eaves, carved beams and painted buildings, not only continue the traditional architectural culture of Jiangxi, but also incorporate modern design to give it a new visual attraction and dissemination power. This symbolic reproduction of history has been commercialised through a variety of media, including cultural and creative products, heritage tourism and digital communication. According to De Groot's theory of the history of consumption, this process of consumption is not only an economic behaviour, but also a way of building culture and identity. The reconstruction of the symbols of Wanshou Palace not only meets the aesthetic demands of modern audiences, but also realises the economic value of cultural heritage, but at the same time there is a risk of simplifying historical authenticity. In the conservation and development of historic buildings, it is important to strike a balance between heritage revitalisation and cultural dissemination through commercialisation. The case of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang demonstrates how the 'recreation' of historical memories through symbolisation and commercialisation can turn history into a visible and perceptible consumer experience in contemporary society, and at the same time provide a new path for the sustainable preservation of local cultural heritage.



Figure 49 The statue of Xu Xun in the main palace, people come here more to visit  
**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, July, 2023.

#### 4.1.1 Functional transformation of places of faith

From religious belief to public space Wanshou Palace, as a religious place of faith in Xu Zhenjun, has gradually transformed its function from a traditional centre of worship and faith to a multifunctional public space in the city. In traditional society, Tiezhu Wanshou Palace was the main place for religious activities, and its core function was to satisfy the spiritual needs of the members of the society and maintain social stability, with a strong function of spiritual solace, and at the same time, it was also an important link of the local society. The transformation of the Tizhu Wanshou Palace in the context of modern China reflects a gradual shift from a single function centred on religious beliefs to a diversified function of museums, Wanshou Palace cultural exhibitions, cultural tourism and entertainment, and social interaction. We argue that public space in contemporary society is often a space that crosses boundaries: it can and does contain multiple and potentially conflicting attributions of meaning, and is not exclusively rooted in the secular or the sacred (Wydra, H. 2015 & de La Ferrière 2020: 53-58). This does not prevent a particular public space from being widely understood as predominantly secular (or sacred), but it does complicate the imagining of public space as teleological secular. It is not possible to fully articulate and defend a complete theory of fragmentation in the space of this paper. (van der Tol, M., & Gorski, P. 2022: 96) For example, within the main hall of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, the statue of Xu Zhenjun, from being enshrined in the past in the scene of solemn religious rituals, has gradually become de-emphasised as a religion, and has been integrated into the public cultural activities of the modern city of Nanchang. All the sculptures in the Wanshou Palace site are now not only symbols of traditional beliefs, but also visual symbols of the historical narrative of the past, and have become an important medium for connecting history with the present.

Folk beliefs of the past adapting to modernisation in the midst of urban development. With the acceleration of urbanisation in modern China, the function of the beliefs of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace has been adapted to the modernisation of the city of Nanchang. In the past, the statue of Xu Zhenjun was an important material carrier of folk beliefs, serving as a basic element of the Jing-ming sect worship in the Wanshou Palace, but with the development of the modern city, its symbolic meaning has gradually broken through the religious context and become more open and secularised. Although the symbol of Xu Zhenjun still has religious significance and influence, its meaning is more and more influenced by the environment of the neighbourhood and the social context of urbanisation, and its original spiritual essence of religious worship has been diluted in this space. This evolution raises questions about the future role of symbolism in both the religious and secular spheres. In the modernisation of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter, the traditional form of belief in the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace of the Quarter was transformed into a form of cultural display of Wanshou Palace. The artist seizes this image, awakens it from the deepest subconscious, connects it with conscious values and transforms it until it is acceptable to the minds of contemporaries according to their capacities. (Jung, Carl Gustav, 1978: 82-83) Statues of deities such as Xu Zhenjun, Jade Emperor, and the Three Stars were redesigned as visually appealing landmarks for not only believers, but also for ordinary tourists. The complex relationship between the materiality of these statues and the expression of faith highlights the cultural connotations of places of worship and reveals a process of transformation in the context of modern consumer culture. This adaptation allows for the compatibility of traditional beliefs with modern consumer demands, while at the same time adapting the faith sculptures and surrounding decorations to the visual demands of consumer culture through appropriate modern design. For example, the statue of Xu Zhenjun is presented in a way that balances respect for history with modern aesthetics, and the statue of Xu Zhenjun and its surrounding decorations have been moderately modernised in their design. The details of the Xu Xun statue have been optimised through modern craftsmanship to make them more aesthetically pleasing to the present day, and modern, more durable materials have been used. Lighting has been added to the upper part of the statue to reflect the contours of the form, further appealing to modern aesthetics and attracting a wider audience, especially the younger generation. In the spatial design, the setting around the statue of Xu Zhenjun is more visually appealing, with wooden Chinese characters carved on the wall to tell the history and legends of Xu Xun as he walks around the back of the statue in the main hall. This multi-dimensional display enhances the artistry and attractiveness of the statue while avoiding the risk of symbolising or over-commercialising it. This shift is also reflected in the adaptation of A-Ma statues, which have been re-contextualised to enhance cultural identity while appealing to contemporary aesthetics. (Zhang, B., Shu, X., & Liu, H., 2024: 6-7)



Figure 50 The three-star statues of Fu, Lu and Shou in the Samsung Palace  
 Source: Photographed by Min Qi, July, 2023.



Figure 51 The statue of the Jade Emperor in the Jade Emperor Palace  
 Source: Photographed by Min Qi, July , 2023.

### 1)Tiezhu Wanshou Palace as a Symbol of Local Social Memory

Tiezhu Wanshou Palace in Nanchang is not only a space of faith, but also an important carrier of local social memory. It was built in the Western Jin Dynasty, more than 1,700 years ago, and is a symbol of local culture in Jiangxi, and is known as the ‘Ancestral Court of Wanshou Palace under Heaven’. Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is not only a place of worship for Xu Zhenjun, but also witnessed the glorious history of Jiangxi merchants as well as important moments in modern history, such as Dr Sun Yat-sen's speech and the general headquarters of the Autumn Harvest Uprising troops were set up here. Tiezhu Wanshou Palace played an important role in the development of Nanchang. It was once an important commercial landmark in Nanchang, with a bustling business district formed around it, where merchants gathered and cultural exchanges took place. In addition, Tiezhu Wanshou Palace was also the birthplace of the Jiangxi Association culture, and became an important place for Gan merchants to liaise and meet. Through the restoration of the Wanshou Palace, the materiality of the Xu Zhenjun statue reflects the continuation and shaping of a part of Nanchang's local memory through its image, its location, and the way it is used. This materiality makes the statue a tangible form of social memory, and the presence of the statue reinforces the traditional memories of the older generation of worshippers, as well as the identity of the younger generation with the local culture. At the same time, the reconstruction and renovation of the Wanshou Palace has, to a certain extent, aroused people's nostalgia for the ‘disappeared history’ and made the idol of Xu Zhenjun a symbol of local identity. The history of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace in Nanchang is symbolic for the city and is also a cultural heritage of Nanchang. The planning and restoration of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood not only awakens the historical memory of the city, but also enhances the cultural taste and image of the city.



Figure 52 The statue of the true monarch in front of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace  
Source: Photographed by Min Qi, July, 2023.



Figure 53 The Tiezhu of the Tieshu Wanshou Palace  
Source: Photographed by Min Qi, July, 2023.

## 2)How Consumer Culture Shapes the Ways of ‘Reproduction’ of History

In the context of modern Chinese consumer culture, the history of Tieshu Wanshou Palace in Nanchang and the image of Xu Zhenjun's idol have been reimagined to suit the consumer needs of the general public. The image of Xu Zhenjun is not only used for religious rituals, but also as a commercialised symbol in tourist souvenirs, cultural and creative products, and promotional materials. This process of commercialisation makes the idol not only a material carrier of beliefs, but also a medium for tourists to experience the ‘past’ . For example, the legend of Xu Xun's beheading of the dragon at the gate of Contract Alley in the Wanshou Palace neighbourhood is presented through creative cartoon images and modern visual language, a visual reimagining that spreads the local culture and at the same time triggers a discussion on the boundaries between historical authenticity and artistry. As can be seen from the images, the traditional cultural elements of the legend of Xu Xun's beheading of the dragon are combined with contemporary consumer culture. This approach represents a ‘commodified representation of the past’ . The image of Xu Zhenjun, a traditional religious figure, is cartoonised in a cartoonish form, and is seen in relation to the cultural symbols associated with the Chinese legend of the dragon. The visual form of the image transforms a serious historical and cultural symbol into a more accessible consumer product, lowering the cultural ‘threshold’ and attracting a wider audience. This is in line with Walsh's reference to ‘history as an object of consumption’ : history is not only a bearer of memories in such spaces, but also a content for symbolic consumption. Heritage thus gives space an identity that differs only in terms of surface, space and not place, as it is the heritageing of space that

negates the notion of historical processes across time and space. Thus, at best, different spaces are constructed through the consumption of heritage patchworks, while at worst they are perceived as tourist spaces, i.e. dots on the map of psychic leisure. (Walsh,1992: 13)

**Figure 54** Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District Contract Lane Gate

With a cartoon image of Xu Zhenjun slaying a dragon (left), Xu Xun and his chicken, taken from the story of "one person who won the Tao chicken and dog ascended to heaven". (right)

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, July, 2023.

The redesigned decoration of the gate of Hetong Lane and the sculpture of Xu Zhenjun are no longer just part of religious or historical buildings, but have been transformed into tools for tourists to take photos and spread local culture. According to Groot's theory of consumption history, this historical and cultural element is transformed into a consumption transformation of symbols that are easy to understand and disseminate, which not only satisfies the public's demand for a "retro experience", but also continues the local culture through symbolization and visualization. On the surface, these designs are a "reproduction" of the past, but in reality they are greatly simplified and modernized. This kind of expression highlights commercial interest and visual appeal, which may dilute the depth of history and culture, but at the same time enhance its communication effect. This phenomenon is in line with Walsh's "re-decoding of the past", that is, the "re-reconstruction" of history in a way that conforms to the aesthetics and needs of modern people, shaping a past suitable for consumption.

#### 4.1.2 Aesthetic symbols in the architecture of Wanshou Palace

Architectural heritage has a symbolic significance for members of the local community and tourists because most of the time it is associated with significant historical events. (Kaymaz, 2013: 749) The heritage experience is also essentially an aesthetic experience and tourists value heritage not only for what it represents but also for its aesthetic value (Chronis, A.,2005: 32, 386, 406) Cultural heritage consumption can have an impact on individuals through attachment and loyalty to cultural heritage or specific heritage sites. The aesthetics of heritage sites greatly influence the psychological experience of visitors, which in turn mediates the relationship between aesthetics and cultural identity. Visitors can enhance their deeper cultural identity by visiting, emphasising the importance of personal involvement in the consumption of heritage during the experience.



Architecture presents specific cultural meanings through specific aesthetic symbols, such as decorative styles, sculptures, painted motifs and spatial layouts. The architectural form of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang combines traditional architectural styles with local characteristics of Jiangxi, such as heavy eaves, flying cornices, brick carvings, wood carvings, etc. These aesthetic symbols, through their visual or tactile transmission, reinforce the cultural memory of the specific region. The pagoda-type holding building of the main hall has been a common practice in Jiangxi since the Qing Dynasty. For example, historical photographs of the Wanshou Palace in Xishan, Nanchang, in the Qing Dynasty, and the Youmin Temple in Nanchang, Republic of China, both adopt similar practices. Existing examples in Jiangxi are usually dominated by theatres and pagodas, the more famous of which are a series of ancient theatres in Leping City, Jingdezhen, such as the Henglu Ancient Theatre in Huxiang Village, the Dunbentang Theatre in Chexi Village, etc. Strictly speaking, this type of theatre is a very simple one, but it is a very simple one. Strictly speaking, this type of holding building cannot be regarded as a holding building, because this kind of additional pagoda is not poking out in the plane, but using the gable of the building itself, the additional pagoda falls on the gable of the bright room. This treatment has a strong decorative meaning. Jenkins argues that if we realise that terms such as 'past' and 'history' are empty references like any other, then we are no longer bound by common-sense, rigid names. (K. Jenkins, 2003: 35) In his discussion of history as an 'empty denotation', he puts forward the subversive view that history and the past are not fixed, universally accepted concepts, but are given meaning through specific contexts and semiotic strategies. This process of assigning meaning is precisely the result of the dynamics of power, culture and society. Grout argues that history can be reconstructed and consumed through various forms of media, such as museums, monuments and festivals. These forms not only reproduce a certain kind of history, but also influence the public's perception of history by selectively displaying and interpreting historical elements. 'History' is part of an important and complex set of representational practices. (De Groot, J., 2009: 4) After the restoration and reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace in Nanchang, it has become a condensed historical text that expresses Jiangxi's locality, cultural identity and historical significance through the symbols of the Wanshou Palace architecture.

#### 1) Emotionalisation of history

In the context of modern China, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter in Nanchang has gradually changed its architectural function from a ritual function to an exhibition function, making it more like a museum of Wanshou Palace culture. Visitors come to Wanshou Palace to enjoy the aesthetic symbols of Wanshou Palace architecture, which evoke nostalgia for the past through the combination of tradition and modernity. This nostalgic tendency is reproduced in symbolic scenes, providing consumers with a place of emotional connection. As Grout has used the BBC Restoration programme to discuss how restored buildings can help revitalise communities and have a real impact on people's lives, this is history as regeneration, as a response to the past, and as a way of making a difference to people's lives. This is history as regeneration, a discourse on the utility of desocialisation. (DeGroot, J., 2009: 168) The process of consuming history is not only about appreciating the aesthetic symbols of architecture, but also about experiencing emotions and memories. In the context of modern urban regeneration, the spatial modelling of the Wanshou Palace's halls, the couplets and inscriptions, and the Gan-style residential buildings in the neighbourhood all imply the gaze of history, which allows visitors to participate in the re-creation of the past

while consuming history. The architecture of Wanshou Palace and its history evoke emotional resonance in visitors through narratives and symbols. The restoration and reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace and the protection of the Wanshou Palace neighbourhood in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Street Area is a continuation and transmission of the traditional local culture, and this kind of emotional expression of local history and cultural preservation not only attracts tourists, but also helps the local government to achieve the accumulation of cultural capital. Consumption of history also has an economic purpose, and the cultural heritage of Wanshou Palace has become an object of commercialisation, which is packaged in the form of aesthetic symbols of Wanshou Palace architecture and attracts people to visit the site. At the same time, symbols related to Wanshou Palace culture, such as the statue of Xu Zhenjun, the well of 'Tiezhu Wanshou Palace', and the poems of Wanshou Palace have become a part of the local tourism, and the local government has tried to find a balance between the historical authenticity of the Wanshou Palace and the expectations of the modern audience in the reconstruction of such symbols.

## 2) Symbol Formation and Regional Expression

The aesthetic symbols in the architecture of Wanshou Palace contain complex regional cultural expressions. Due to the unique geographical climate of Jiangxi, Jiangxi is rich in timber, including cedar, pine, camphor, nanmu and so on. These woods are hard and resistant to decay, making them ideal for architectural structures and decorations. In the traditional architecture of Wanshou Palace, wood is not only used for structural parts such as beams and pillars, doors and windows, but also used for exquisite wood carving decorations, reflecting the Jiangxi people's appreciation of natural materials and exquisite carpentry skills. At the same time, Jiangxi region is also rich in green bricks and red bricks. Brick because of its calm colour, hard texture and favoured, commonly used in ancient architecture of the walls and floors. In the construction of the Wanshou Palace, bricks were used not only for load-bearing walls, but also for decorative wall and floor coverings, which met practical needs and demonstrated the Jiangxi people's pursuit of architectural aesthetics. Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, as a monumental building in honour of Xu Zhenjun, has formed a unique architectural symbol system of Wanshou Palace by integrating the multiple meanings of the religion of the Jingming School, the folklore of Jiangxi Province, and the local myth of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, which is a symbol of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace. The elements of the Wanshou Palace building structure, such as the flying eaves and carved beams, not only convey the visual aesthetics, but also symbolise the cultural meaning of longevity of 'Fortune, Luck and Longevity'. The details in the decorative patterns, such as the mythological story of the Eight Immortals and the Chinese folklore of filial piety, convey the historical story and the moral value of loyalty and filial piety of Xu Zhenjun. The spatial layout adopts the central axis of symmetry, reflecting the pursuit of harmony and order in traditional Chinese architecture, and at the same time, this form has become a symbolic aesthetic symbol.

Xu Zhenjun, as the 'Blessed Lord of Jiangxi', is an important symbol in the construction of Wanshou Palace. Through the connection between symbols and cultural memories, the architectural symbols of Wanshou Palace have been moulded into the representatives of Jiangxi culture, and have become the 'labels' of the local culture. In the context of modern consumption, these symbols have also been reconstructed to meet the needs of globalised tourism consumption. Of course, the reproduction of aesthetic symbols in these buildings has the potential to reinforce

regionality, but also runs the risk of undermining the deeper cultural significance of the traditional context. Contemporary historiography emphasises that the study of the past is impressionistic at best: ‘Since the “past” does not exist by definition, we can, of course, only “know” the past by appearances’. can only ‘know’ it by appearances.’ (G. MacDonald and A. MacDonald, 2003:12-15, 15-22) As Keith Jenkins argues, ‘All history is inevitably analogised, devised, extrapolated and argued from the historian’s own standpoint ..... history not as an epistemology, but as an aesthetic.’ (E. Voigts-Virchow (eds). 2004:35-51) It can then be argued that the architectural symbols of the Wanshou Palace are also imbued with meaning by specific historical, cultural and consumer demands. In modern society, Wanshou Palace is not just a static historical site to be restored and rebuilt, but as a dynamic cultural symbol whose meaning is reconstructed with the changes of time, politics and economy. In this reconstruction, the expressive power of the architectural symbol of Wanshou Palace has transcended the material boundaries of local culture, and has become a cultural text in the global context through consumption, dissemination and re-creation. This dynamic construction process makes the historical meaning and architectural aesthetic symbols of Wanshou Palace an exemplary case of ‘historical consumption’ in a broader context.



Figure 54 Aerial view of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace  
Source: Photographed by Min Qi, July, 2024.

#### 4.1.3 Commodification of Historical Memories

Wanshou Palace, as a landmark building of the ‘Jiangyue Merchants’ Association’, accompanied the footprints of Gan merchants all over China and Southeast Asia, witnessed the glory of the “Jiangyue Merchants” Association’, and also linked up a huge commercial network. The Wanshou Palace has gradually become a representative Jiangxi Association Hall, a symbol of Gan merchants at home and abroad, and carries the historical memories of Gan merchant culture and local beliefs. These memories have been symbolised in contemporary times, as shown in the following: firstly, through the restoration and reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, an attempt has been made to reproduce the grandeur and historical atmosphere of the traditional building. Secondly, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter has simplified the history of the Wanshou Palace into a consumable ‘legendary story’ through guided tours, displays of the historical contributions of the Jiangyue Merchants' Gang, the Wanshou Palaces distributed throughout the country and in Southeast Asia, and the Wanshou Palace Legends and Poetry and other related promotional materials. However, this reproduction is often oriented towards modern aesthetic, tourism and commercial functions.



Figure 55 Nanchang Tiezhu Wanshou Palace shows the typical characters of the Jiangyue merchant gang

Source: Photographed by Min Qi, July, 2023.



Figure 56 Nanchang Tiezhu Wanshou Palace shows the architectural beauty of National Wanshou Palace

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, July, 2023.

Groot says: One way individuals interact with the past is through artefacts and objects, most commonly found at flea markets, antique fairs and auctions. The past is effectively a commodity. (De Groot, J.,2009: 67) Cultural and creative products are an important vehicle for commodifying historical memory, giving traditional culture new ways of expression through creative transformation. In the process of commercialisation of Wanshou Palace, cultural and creative products are not only a source of economic income, but also a source of reshaping local historical memory. The commercialisation of the historical memory of Wanshou Palace is concentrated in the cultural tourism industry, where it is preserved and disseminated in various forms. Historical and cultural districts sell handicrafts and cultural and creative products with the symbol of Wanshou Palace or the symbols of Gan business culture, such as porcelain and bookmarks printed with the symbol of 'Wanshou Palace'. Traditional temple fairs and festivals have been transformed into tourism projects with participatory and ornamental qualities. For example, folk performances and blessing ceremonies during temple fairs not only attract tourists, but also become a booster for local economic development. As well as through short video platforms, WeChat public numbers and other digital communication methods, the dissemination of historical and cultural knowledge about Wanshou Palace as well as its modern applications have guided the younger generation to understand and 'consume' this historical memory through the digital media.



Figure 57 Nanchang Wanshou Palace related cultural and creative products

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, July, 2023.

History is here incorporated into the service industry to encourage consumers; it is not a commodity per se, but part of marketing and commodification. In this context, therefore, the phrases and practices of 'consumer' history express a number of things, from the branding of products in relation to time periods, to the rendering of the past as one of a number of metaphors used to represent and sell commodities, and the place of the past in a range of consumer practices that give it a certain amount of power in the nexus of economic desire. power. (De Groot, J., 2009: 10) The commodification of the Wanshou Palace as a symbol of local history and culture not only reflects the economic logic of heritage preservation, but also demonstrates how historical memories are 'preserved' in contemporary societies through the consumption of history. In Groot's theory of consumer history, consumption is not only an economic behaviour, but also an important way to construct culture and identity. In the preservation and development of historic buildings and heritage culture, commodification is a trend that cannot be ignored. He emphasises that the process of consuming history is a multilayered practice that encompasses how people understand themselves and others through the consumption of historical narratives, objects and sites. In modern societies, the consumption of history transforms the past into visible, perceptible and participatory forms through a variety of media such as popular culture, museums and heritage tourism. This process is not one of passive acceptance, but of active 'decoding' of history within existing socio-cultural contexts. These modes of consumption are extremely varied and complex; the average user may interact with the past on any given day through television, art, novels, games, magazines and advertisements. All of these practices are in some way interconnected and form a network of historical meanings and experiences. (De Groot, J., 2009: 13). The commodification of historical memory in Wanshou Palace is not only a practical path for heritage conservation, but also an important way of integrating history with contemporary culture. In order to achieve sustainable commodification of historical memory, it is necessary to balance commercial interests and cultural heritage.

From the reuse of the building to the design of cultural and creative products, from the consumption of tourists to the marketing of historical narratives, Wanshou Palace has achieved the 'revitalisation' and dissemination of historical memory through the process of commercialisation. In this process, through the deep excavation of the history of the Wanshou Palace, it is ensured that the development of cultural products is based on the real history and cultural connotation. The artistic and cultural values of the Wanshou Palace are not only preserved, but local residents are encouraged to participate in the design and operation of the cultural products, enhancing their sense of belonging and identity. Through exhibitions, educational programmes and interactive experiences, the Wanshou Palace will enhance visitors' understanding of the culture of the Wanshou Palace and prevent it from being used only as an object of entertainment and consumption. Through the above approaches, the commercialisation of the historical memory of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang can find a balance between cultural heritage, service to contemporary society and economic benefits. The consumption behaviour of tourists becomes the visible and perceptible 'past' in contemporary society, providing a new perspective for the protection and development of local cultural heritage.



Figure 58 Nanchang gift cultural and creative store in the historical and cultural district of Wanshou Palace

Source: Photographed by Min Qi, October, 2024.

#### 4.2 The Re-creation of Wanshou Palace in Space

This section focuses on the spatial reconstruction and functional transformation of the Wanshou Palace historical and cultural neighbourhood of Nanchang in the context of modern China, in terms of cultural heritage preservation and consumer history theory. Through the restoration and reconstruction of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace and the neighbourhood's residential buildings, the article reveals the balance between the reproduction of the past and the needs of modernity. The spatial design not only preserves the traditional architectural style and cultural symbols, but also meets the aesthetic and practical needs of contemporary society through modern technology and functional upgrading. During the restoration process, the combination of traditional architectural craftsmanship and modern technology blurs the boundary between authenticity and forgery, enabling the dynamic transmission of historical memory. The transformation of Wanshou Palace demonstrates the path of symbiosis between traditional places and modern consumer functions. From a religious place to a cultural consumption landmark, Wanshou Palace provides a multicultural experience of static display and dynamic participation through spatial remodelling and functional re-engineering. Visitors establish interaction with historical memory at the visual, behavioural and emotional levels, and gain cultural and emotional connections while consuming historical symbols. In addition, Wanshou Palace seeks a balance in the game between community emotional identity and

commercial development, and realises the integration of historical memory and modern consumption.

In the context of globalisation, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter demonstrates a balanced strategy between locality and globalisation through the reconstruction and modern expression of local cultural symbols. The architectural design retains the traditional elements of the Gan School, while integrating modern display technologies and multilingual systems to enhance its cross-cultural appeal. Wanshou Palace not only inherits the local history and culture, but also realises the modern transformation of cultural symbols through artistic innovation and spatial design. The protection and renovation of Wanshou Palace not only highlights the unique value of local culture, but also embodies the adaptive use of cultural heritage.

#### **4.2.1 How spatial design reflects the cultural need for ‘Reproduction of the Past’**

Architectural heritage has been defined as one of the most important elements of authenticity, reflecting the identity of the urban centre (Kaymaz, 2013: 749) Architectural heritage has been defined as one of the most important elements of authenticity, reflecting the identity of the urban centre (Kaymaz, 2013: 749) In the context of the theory of the preservation of China's cultural heritage and the history of consumerism in the modern era, spatial design is not only a means of preservation and reconstruction of historic buildings, but also a visual reproduction of the ‘past’. In the context of modern Chinese cultural heritage preservation and consumer history theory, spatial design is not only a means of preserving and reconstructing historic buildings, but also a visual reproduction of the ‘past’. In this process, the restoration and innovation of historic buildings, the adaptation of spatial design to cultural needs, and the reimagining and reconstruction of historical authenticity have become important ways to achieve cultural dissemination. The restoration and innovation of historical architectural styles has always been the borderline between authenticity and forgery, and at the same time, people are actively looking for a balance between authenticity and forgery. In the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter, Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, as a cluster of historical buildings, residential buildings and streets within the Quarter, the restorative design process has to be faithful to the history while meeting the aesthetic and functional needs of the modern society.

According to Walsh's theory of ‘Reproduction the past’, the contradictions and complexities in the restoration process of historical buildings, especially how such restoration often lies between the real and the fake. The architectural design of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace was carried out through the excavation of documents and sites, and the reuse of the excavated old building structures, and the restorative reconstruction of the basic form of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace building of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, which utilised the mortise and tenon structure of the traditional architecture and restored the heavy eaves, the roofs, and the carved beams and paintings, as well as the reuse of old building structures with excavated stone pillars. However, in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Street, which reflects the residential buildings of the early Republic of China in Nanchang, the architectural features and structural system are intact, but the lack of public awareness of the protection of ancient buildings, scribbling and painting, and unauthorised modification of the ancient buildings by

residents due to the pressure on space have caused damage to the ancient buildings. Therefore, the restoration work in the neighbourhood, while ‘repairing the old as the old’ and emphasizing the visual ‘sense of history’, incorporates some modern technology. For example, 36 Contract Lane (also known as the Chizhitang) before the restoration of the residence, although all the interior wooden pillars, beams and frames basically remain, but because of the long-term irrational use, the overall protection of the house is poor. In the process of restoration of the ancient buildings in the neighbourhood, the height of the second floor was generally low, which made it difficult to meet the demand for the function of exhibition and visit of public buildings after restoration. Taking into account the demands of modern cultural functions, the historical building of No.36 Contract Lane will be upgraded, the height of the first floor will be raised, so as to make an effective integration of history, humanity and modern fashion in the traditional style building, to repair the damages caused by natural forces and human beings, and to stop the new human damages, so that the original appearance of the ancient building will be restored to the maximum extent, and to meet the function of the use of the modern society. (Ou Shanqing & Gu Renjie, 2018: 84) Due to the poor drainage system of the compound, the foundation is soaked with water and sinking, causing the whole house to be crooked and tilted wooden columns. In the process of restoration, it is important to preserve and pass on its cultural value in an authentic and comprehensive manner, with the theme of ‘Historical Neighbourhoods: Urban Memory’ . ‘City Memory’ as the theme, focusing on the planning theme of “ethnicity, residential and folk”, through preserving the complete texture of historical streets and lanes, building traditional Gan-style residential buildings, and achieving the effect of integration of “culture, business and tourism”. During the restoration process, we used skimming to adjust the tilted frame of the wooden columns at 36 Contract Lane, carbon fibre cloth as reinforcement material, and pier joints as reinforcement points, butt joints between the raised columns and the original columns, fixing them, screwing on the top and bottom misaligned bolts, and then fixing the joints with epoxy resin adhesive, while the new wooden structure was repaired by brushing with putty and applying colour slurry to achieve the effect of restoration. (Ou Shanqing & Gu Renjie, 2018: 85) Combining the traditional architectural techniques of the reproduction of the past with modern materials and engineering techniques, historical buildings maintain their original characteristics while displaying modern aesthetics and technological innovation. While meeting the needs of modern society, the boundary between the real and the ‘fake’ is blurred, and this boundary between the real and the modern needs meets the need for the presentation of cultural memory.



Figure 59 No. 36 Contract Lane  
 No. 36, Hetong Lane, Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District, 2nd Floor  
 Interior (Left) Navigation Map (Right)  
 Source: Photographed by Min Qi, July, 2023.



Figure 60 Interior of No. 36 Contract Lane, Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District (also known as Chizhitang)  
 Source: Photographed by Min Qi, July, 2023.

In the process of ‘restoring the old as the old’ to the buildings in the historical and cultural neighbourhood, innovation has become an important way to address the functional needs of modern urban life. In the design of Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter, the interior space is designed with modern exhibition hall elements to meet the educational and exhibition functions, while at the same time the architectural style tries to retain the historical symbols of ‘reproduction of the past’, such as architectural features, traditional decorative elements, etc., which are able to arouse the public's memories and emotions of the past, and enhance the continuity of historical memory. Enhance the continuity of historical memory. These elements can evoke the public's memory and emotion of the past, and enhance the continuity of historical memory. This innovation has revitalised historical buildings in modern society. This balance between historical authenticity and modern needs not only makes restored buildings more attractive, but also allows historical memories to live on through innovative architectural language. The architectural design of the Wanshou Palace Historic Quarter responds to this cultural need by combining historical elements with modern functionality, allowing visitors to experience history in a modern environment. Through innovative design, Wanshou Palace offers a new cultural experience where visitors not only see history on display, but also feel the depth and richness of history in a modern setting. The building becomes a bridge for dialogue between history and modernity, demonstrating not only the continuity of history, but also the understanding of and respect for history in modern society.

Groot's theory of consumer history points out that the commodification of history is usually accompanied by the romanticisation of the ‘past’. The architectural design of Wanshou Palace adheres to the principle of ‘repairing the old as the old’ and caters to this demand in the form of ‘tradition’. Through the restoration of the architectural style according to historical documents, the use of excavated old architectural columns, and the use of decorative wood carvings in line with the traditional expression of loyalty and filial piety, the classic image of the local religious architecture has been reproduced. These designs visually reinforce the classic image of local religious buildings. These designs visually reinforce the solemnity and sanctity of history and satisfy visitors' imagination of traditional culture. History is here absorbed as part of the service industry, encouraging the consumer; it is not a commodity per se, but part of marketing and commodification. (De Groot, J., 2009: 10) The visitor's imagination of history is not limited to the exterior, but to the overall experience of the spatial atmosphere. The design of the Wanshou Palace provides visitors with a sense of rite of passage into history through the development of spatial hierarchies, such as the main gate, the second gate, and the courtyard of the main hall and the courtyard of the back hall. This design transforms the symbols of the ‘past’ into a perceptible spatial experience, creating multiple levels of cultural satisfaction for visitors' historical consumption.

The spatial design of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter reflects the cultural demand for the reproduction of the past. The restored and reconstructed buildings of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace and the ‘restored’ buildings of Nanchang's local houses are used as a tool for the reproduction of historical memories, which not only implies the construction of cultural identity, but also reflects the contradictions in the protection of cultural heritage.

They also reflect the contradictions in the protection of cultural heritage. The restoration of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is not only a reproduction of the past Wanshou Palace, but also a reaffirmation of the local cultural identity. By faithfully reproducing the statue of Xu Zhenjun, the architectural structure of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, and the space for religious ceremonies, the reproduction strengthens the local residents' sense of cultural belonging. The architecture of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace becomes a material expression of collective memory, and its symbolic meaning goes beyond the purely religious function. Through the extraction and reproduction of historical and cultural symbols, the spatial design gives new cultural meanings to the historical buildings and makes them meet the needs of modern society for the 'past'. Modern spatial design is not only concerned with the 'reproduction of the past' in terms of architectural style and style, but also needs to meet the functional requirements. In the renovation of the Wanshou Palace historical and cultural district, the traditional Taoist space was combined with modern exhibition functions, and the space that was originally used only for religious activities now serves the functions of education, sightseeing and cultural dissemination. This multifunctional design reflects the diversity of cultural needs. By integrating historical symbols with modern functions, the spatial design makes the 'past' not only a form of memory, but also a cultural resource for modern society. Of course, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter also faces the question of 'for whom it was built'. For foreign tourists, the restored buildings may only be objects of cultural consumption, while for local residents, the 'new' qualities of the buildings in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood may weaken their historical authenticity. This contradiction is one of the central challenges facing restored buildings in cultural heritage conservation. The significance of the buildings in the neighbourhood in seeking a balance between these contradictions lies in the dynamic transmission of historical memory through cultural expression.

#### **4.2.2 Symbiosis between traditional places and modern consumption functions**

Under the perspective of consumption history, the symbiosis between traditional places and modern consumption functions has become a typical path for the integration of cultural heritage protection and modern social needs. The transformation of Wanshou Palace from a place of religion to a landmark of consumption in Nanchang, from a place of historical culture and a meeting point of commerce and community to a place of popular tourist attractions in modern China, reflects the tension and symbiosis between tradition and modernity. This transformation not only reflects the economic logic of local cultural heritage preservation, but also reveals the dynamic interaction between consumers and places. In the following, we discuss the development path of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood from the symbiosis between traditional places and contemporary consumer functions.

The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter is a historical and cultural quarter in Nanchang centred on the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, which used to be a traditional religious site with its historical significance focusing on the functions of Xu Zhenjun's religious beliefs and Taoist rituals, while in the context of modern China, the consumer society has driven a shift in its function to become a landmark of urban consumption. This transformation is driven by a combination of cultural heritage preservation, modern urbanisation and marketisation. During the design process of the neighbourhood renovation, the religious beliefs of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace were gradually weakened, and its functions as a cultural exhibition and tourist

attraction were strengthened. According to Groot's view of the history of consumption, historical heritage becomes a cultural consumer product through commodification and marketisation. The religious function of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is now retained as the content of the Wanshou Palace's cultural display, but the cultural symbols of the architecture and space are extracted and embedded in consumer activities. For example, Wanshou Palace has become a major place for tourists to visit, take photographs, and buy cultural and creative products, and its architectural image has been transformed into consumer symbols for publicity and product design. The path from religious belief to cultural consumption. Museums find themselves in a highly competitive leisure market and have to define themselves through aggressive branding and marketing. This has led to changes in the way museum collections themselves are organised, as the demand-driven model empowers customers and emphasises choice, value and experience. Museums have been forced to commercialise. (De Groot, J., 2009: 240) The transformation of the Wanshou Palace Historic District has strengthened its landmark attributes. Through architectural restoration, preservation of the historic district texture, construction of exhibition spaces, and the introduction of commercial businesses in the neighbourhood, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter has evolved from a centre of local beliefs to a regional centre of consumption and tourism. This transformation demonstrates the profound redefinition of the meaning of traditional places when they are integrated into modern contemporary social contexts.

The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood is a symbiosis of traditional places and modern consumer functions, from static display to dynamic participation. The functional transformation of traditional places is not only reflected in the use of space, but also in the change of concepts and interaction. Wanshou Palace was originally a religious place to worship Xu Zhenjun, and the architecture and spatial layout of the neighbourhood was traditionally closed, reflecting the functional needs of traditional religion and social life in the past, and the architectural form and structure of the neighbourhood were relatively fixed in the traditional style. With the development of urbanisation and commercialisation, Wanshou Palace has been transformed into an open space oriented to tourism and commerce. Historical buildings have been restored and their functions reset, transforming them from purely religious and living places into multifunctional consumer cultural spaces. The expansion of Wanshou Palace's functions from static display to dynamic participation has given new life to the historic site. The Wanshou Palace retains many static display functions, such as the restoration of the architectural structure, the preservation of the religious ritual space, and the exhibition of excavated artefacts. This form of static display meets the needs of visitors to view and learn about the historic building, and provides a visual and material vehicle for historical memory. The spatial regeneration and reorganisation of the neighbourhood from a place of predominantly religious activity to a place of cultural display and modern consumption reflects a change in spatial production driven by the logic of economy and culture. The dynamic participation of tourists not only enhances their cultural experience, but also drives consumer behaviour. For example, after participating in handicraft production, visitors can purchase related cultural and creative products. This functional extension demonstrates how historic places can be dynamically designed to meet the needs of cultural consumption.



Figure 61 Stone structure excavated from the exhibition site of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace (left) Stone trough excavated from the exhibition site of the Tiezhu Manshou Palace (right)



Figure 62 The architectural carving of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, which shows the exquisite carving technique using the traditional Chinese motif dragon, and the traditional Chinese story is carved above the dragon

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, July, 2023

How consumers experience historical and cultural space through space. Experience is an important way for consumers to come into contact with history and culture, and the spatial design of Wanshou Palace provides visitors with a multi-level cultural experience through visual, behavioural and emotional levels. The architecture and decoration of Wanshou Palace creates the atmosphere of a historical place by restoring the traditional architectural style. This visual 'reproduction of the past' helps visitors to establish a sense of local history. For example, the Wanshou Palace's pagoda-type mansions, shrimp arch, flying eaves and carving details provide visitors with distinctive historical symbols that visually resonate with traditional memories. Visitors can interact with the local culture by visiting the Wanshou Palace, participating in the Wanshou Palace temple fair, experiencing handicrafts, or taking a guided tour of historical stories. During the temple fair, visitors can participate in Wanshou Palace ceremonies and enjoy traditional theatre performances, and this kind of behavioural involvement transforms visitors from spectators to participants in cultural activities. The spatial experience helps visitors to emotionally connect with the historical memory of Wanshou Palace. Through the storytelling and spatial atmosphere shaping related to Wanshou

Palace, visitors can feel the temperature of local culture. This emotional connection not only enhances the satisfaction of the visitors' experience, but also promotes the dissemination of local historical memory. Through the spatial experience, tourists not only consume material cultural symbols, but also consume the emotional connection with history and culture, which is the deep logic of the symbiosis between traditional places and contemporary consumption functions.

In the transformation process of the Wanshou Palace historical and cultural district, the game between the local community and the commercial force is an important dimension of the spatial remodelling. The interaction between the community's emotional identification with Wanshou Palace and the economic goals of commercial capital has shaped the boundaries of spatial function and cultural expression. The local community regards Wanshou Palace as an important carrier of local historical memory, and has emotional demands for its reconstruction, hoping that it will maintain its cultural traditions and original social functions. For example, many community residents want to continue to hold traditional religious ceremonies in Wanshou Palace, which is often in conflict with the interests of commercial development. Commercial forces preferred to turn the Wanshou Palace into a consumer space for economic returns. Driven by the logic of commerce, the transformation of Wanshou Palace puts more emphasis on the attractiveness and economic value of the place. For example, the commercial development of the surrounding area brought in chain restaurants, tourist souvenir shops and cultural exhibitions, making Wanshou Palace gradually become the core node of the city's commercial activities. The game between the community and commercial forces eventually led to a compromise. The spatial design of the neighbourhood retains some of the traditional functions, such as a religious site dedicated to Xu Zhenjun and Taoist deities, and introduces commercial elements such as cultural and creative shops and non-heritage products. This integration makes Wanshou Palace a diversified place with both historical memory and consumer functions.

The transformation of Wanshou Palace, as a traditional site, into a contemporary consumer landmark is a typical example of the symbiosis between tradition and modernity. In this process, the cultural symbols of the religious site are commodified and integrated into the logic of consumption, the community and commercial forces interact with each other in the spatial remodelling, and the function of the historical site is shifted from static display to dynamic participation, providing a rich spatial experience for consumers. This symbiotic relationship not only promotes the adaptive use of cultural heritage, but also makes Wanshou Palace an important venue for historical and cultural reproduction in modern society.

#### **4.2.3 . Locality and Globalisation in Architectural Space**

In the social context of modern China, the preservation and use of cultural heritage faces the opportunities and challenges of globalisation. The acceleration of urbanisation in China has created conflicting demands for the preservation and development of historical heritage. On the one hand, urban expansion may threaten traditional architecture and cultural landscapes; on the other hand, heritage has become a resource for attracting tourists and promoting economic development. As a local historical and cultural heritage, the architectural space of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace in Nanchang has become a field where locality meets globalisation. A place is recognisable in space, time and content, and meaning is what gives a





Figure 63 Night view of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District  
Source: Photographed by Min Qi, July, 2023.

In heritage conservation, locality is mainly reflected in the unique expression of local history, tradition and culture. The conservation and use of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood in Nanchang highlights local beliefs and merchant culture, which attracts the attention of local residents and foreign tourists alike, and becomes a cross-cultural attraction whose uniqueness leverages the transmissibility of the Wanshou Palace's culture. Wanshou Palace attracts visitors from different cultural backgrounds through the visual presentation of local traditions and experiential interaction. The architectural design of the Wanshou Palace historical and cultural district in Nanchang not only reflects Taoist religious beliefs, but also incorporates Jiangxi's regional culture and traditional architectural aesthetics, a style that has a distinctly exotic cultural appeal to global tourists. Grout's theory of consumption history states that the uniqueness of local culture can be transformed into cultural commodities through visual symbols, and Wanshou Palace transforms local traditions into universally appealing cultural experiences through its architectural carvings, architectural layout, and the display of traditional culture in the neighbourhood. At the same time, Wanshou Palace not only attracts tourists through static architecture, but also through dynamic activities, such as festivals and temple fairs, traditional theatre performances, multimedia displays, etc., combining music and light with a variety of media means to create a visual and auditory light show. A multi-sensory experience is created to engage visitors. This form of experience transcends cultural differences and makes local traditions a bridge for cross-cultural exchange. Through these strategies, Wanshou Palace transforms local traditions into a medium of cultural communication and enhances its cross-cultural appeal. In the context of modern China, the Wanshou Palace is positioned not only as a place for the display of local religion, but also as a tourist destination with the cultural symbolism of the Wanshou Palace. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood has developed a unique cultural brand through the commodification of historical narratives and the diversification of spatial functions. Wanshou Palace's promotion is centred on its deep historical heritage and unique local architecture, which attracts tourists from home and abroad, and Walsh's

argument highlights the way in which branding of cultural heritage can build competitiveness in the global marketplace, and in this way Wanshou Palace has strengthened its position in the tourism marketplace.



Figure 64 Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District Light Show Show  
**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, April, 2023.

In the context of globalisation, local culture has not been completely replaced, but has gained a new cultural meaning through reconstruction. The architectural space of Wanshou Palace has modernised the expression of local cultural symbols under the influence of globalisation. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood has transformed traditional architecture into a cultural resource for the modern society through the restorative reconstruction and functional renewal of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace and the Gan-style residential architecture in the Wanshou Palace Neighbourhood. For example, the Wanshou Palace has transformed symbols of religious belief into an artistic spatial design, making it more culturally acceptable. This kind of modernised local expression is in line with Walsh's demand for cultural consumption of 'reproduction of the past'. In globalised cultural exchanges, local cultures gain a stronger sense of cultural identity by strengthening their uniqueness. The architectural design of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter not only reproduces traditional architectural techniques, but also gives it a cultural function in the context of modern Chinese society through innovative forms, and this reconstruction of cultural significance makes it a symbol of the fusion of locality and globalisation. As a core element of local culture, the architectural art of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is an important carrier of local memory and a cultural symbol. The traditional architectural elements of the Wanshou Palace have local significance, for example, the heavy-eaved hermetic roof, the pagoda-style newspaper building, the arch structure, and the carvings (Taoist legends and stories) are all

important symbols of the local culture, which not only represent the regional characteristics of Jiangxi, but also carry the local cultural memories. For example, the statue of Xu Zhenjun and the religious theme of the carving design not only expresses the local religious culture, but also demonstrates the spirit of traditional craftsmanship through delicate artistic expression. The architectural art of Wanshou Palace reinforces the cultural identity of the local residents through local symbols. For the community, these traditional architectural details are the material expression of the local historical memory, while for the tourists, these symbols become the gateway to understanding the local culture. Through the preservation and innovation of the architectural art, Wanshou Palace becomes a symbol of local culture and through this symbolism expresses its unique value of local culture.

In the context of modern China, local art is no longer just a remnant of history, but has been redefined and given a modern meaning through architectural and spatial design. In the renovation of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter, local art is continued through architecture and spatial design. The buildings in the neighbourhood use traditional carving techniques amplified by modern digital media technology to become visual focal points in the cultural space. The traditional architecture of the neighbourhood is combined with modern exhibition space, and through modern aesthetic interpretation, it has gained the recognition of more tourists. This kind of artistic re-creation gives local art a new value of communication in the globalised context. In the design of cultural spaces, the fusion of local art and globalised elements achieves new cultural expressions. For example, Wanshou Palace introduces modern lighting technology to display the traditional architecture, so that visitors can experience the uniqueness of local culture in the context of globalisation. This fusion not only enhances the attractiveness of local art, but also makes it an example of the interaction between globalisation and locality. Through this redefinition, local art transcends geographical and historical limitations and becomes a cultural symbol of contemporary value.

The Wanshou Palace, as a traditional cultural heritage, has achieved a dynamic balance between cultural preservation and development in the context of localisation and globalisation. The transformation of Wanshou Palace, from the cross-cultural attraction of local traditions to the precise positioning in the global tourism market, to the reconstruction and dissemination of local art in the architectural space, demonstrates the symbiosis between local culture and globalisation. Within Walsh and Groot's theoretical framework, this process is not only the preservation and creation of local cultural symbols, but also a powerful practice of cultural heritage revitalisation and reproduction in a modern context.

#### **4.3 Consumptive Reproduction of Wanshou Palace under Tourism Development**

This section explores the aesthetic expression of the heritage identity of the Wanshou Palace historical and cultural district and its consumer reproduction as a tourist development. Firstly, it analyses how the restoration and redevelopment of the Wanshou Palace complex and its neighbourhood have reinforced the original aesthetic qualities, especially in terms of reproducing the historical appearance of the traditional architecture in terms of spatial layout, stylistic design and colour matching. Secondly, from the perspective of overall landscape and urban texture, the article discusses the aesthetic role of Wanshou Palace in the city's historical axis and highlights its cultural landmark significance. The article also analyses in depth how the district can be transformed into a cultural consumption space in the process of tourism development, catering to the aesthetic needs and historical imaginations of tourists through

symbolic displays and modern technological means. The coexistence of the religious and recreational functions of Wanshou Palace not only achieves a balance between the ‘sacred’ and the ‘secular’, but also perpetuates the heritage identity in the context of contemporary tourism. The study concludes that the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural Quarter has transformed local culture into a consumable experience through the ‘display of the sacred’ and the ‘commercialisation of memories’, and reveals the tension between heritage preservation and commercialisation in the context of tourism development. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter provides new inspiration for the preservation and reproduction of cultural heritage sites in a modern consumer society.

#### **4.3.1 Transformation of faith spaces into tourism**

Since ancient times, the ways of dealing with monuments have evolved in different directions, and the most dominant traditional method, which probably existed in every old society and continues to be applied today to a greater or lesser extent, is the preservation of ancient buildings, as long as they continue their previous use or perpetuate their function through new uses. (Rouhi, J., 2016: 1) In the context of modern China, the transformation of faith spaces into tourism reflects a complex interaction between historical preservation, economic development and cultural consumption. The transformation of Wanshou Palace from a religious space to a tourist space can be understood as a process of spatial reproduction. Originally a space for religious ceremonies and beliefs, it has gradually shifted to a space for consumption and entertainment as a result of urbanisation and marketisation in modern China. In this process, the space of Wanshou Palace has been recoded, with the original sacredness partially preserved but with new commercial and cultural functions attached. The shift from a space of belief to a space of tourism is a path that reflects the reconstruction of history in Walsh's past representations, in which the Wanshou Palace has been given a cultural heritage identity, and constructed as a ‘cultural landscape’ for the needs of modern tourism through narrative, display, and symbolisation. The buildings of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter, especially the 118 buildings of the late Qing Dynasty in the style of Gan-style houses, have become a ‘museum without walls’. These buildings are not only witnesses of history, but also carriers of culture, symbolically conveying the historical and cultural information of Jiangxi, especially Nanchang, through their unique style and design.

The function of Tieshu Wanshou Palace as a religious site has gradually transformed into a space for cultural consumption. Tourists visiting the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter are no longer just on a religious pilgrimage, but rather on a way of consuming history. Through visiting Taoist temples or spaces in the block, participating in guided tours, and consuming cultural and creative products, tourists perceive the history of Xu Zhenjun in Wanshou Palace, the history of the Jiangwu merchant gang, and the folklore of Nanchang, and so on. Tourism in Wanshou Palace caters to the expectations of foreign tourists in terms of consumption of local culture through symbolisation and display. The tourist is, to some extent, a semiotician who, when interpreting landscapes, tends to look for the significance of certain well-established concepts or symbols, which are usually derived from tourist discourses (Culler, 1981: 128). The Wanshou Palace retains its religious function as a place of worship, but is also endowed with the recreational function of a tourist space. The

coexistence of the two in the same space creates a dynamic balance between the ‘sacred’ and the ‘secular’. Religious ceremonies are ‘exhibited’ and become a part of the visitor's experience, with their original sacredness. Tourists see the religious culture of Wanshou Palace as a cultural symbol to be consumed, thus realising the double satisfaction of ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’.



Figure 65 Wanshou Palace Chinese wedding show

**Source:** Photographed by Taoist Rites of Wanshou Palace, December, 2024.



Figure 66 Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District Jiangyou Merchant Gang Cargo Ship Display

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, April, 2023.

Tiezhu Wanshou Palace was originally a sacred place for religious beliefs, serving a specific religious community, with rituals and religious activities at the centre of its spatial functions. Due to its geographical location, the neighbourhood was close to the Guangrunmen Wharf, where commerce and trade were traditionally developed. However, as China's urbanisation process accelerates, the religious space is gradually being re-planned and

transformed into a commercially valuable tourist space. In this process, the 'use value' (religious function) of the space has been partially weakened, while the 'exchange value' (economic gain) has been strengthened. The history of Wanshou Palace is packaged as a cultural heritage, attracting tourists by selectively presenting its glorious history and unique architectural symbols. Its religious significance is re-represented as an integral part of Nanchang's local culture, enabling it to transcend its religious context and become part of a wider cultural consumption. The religious function of the Wanshou Palace shifted from satisfying the spiritual needs of its followers to serving the tourist needs of its visitors, and the sacredness of the space was reshaped into a cultural 'display of the sacred'. This transformation can be explained by social exchange theory: local governments and developers gain economic benefits from the exploitation of historical and cultural resources, while tourists participate in the interaction in the form of cultural consumption. The evolution of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace in Nanchang is in line with the logic of the 'commodification of history', where the transformation of a religious site is not only a change in function, but also a reconstruction of historical narratives, attracting tourists by combining traditional displays of religious space with modernised performances of folkloric activities and 'historical' scenes. The transformation of places of worship is not only a change in function but also a reconstruction of historical narratives. The relationship between what the visitor sees directly and what it represents is not at all simple. We do not really 'see' things. Everything we see, especially during sightseeing tours, is to some extent a constructed symbol, especially buildings. These symbols represent something else. (John, Early, Jonas, & Larson. 2009: 38)

The ancient buildings in Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter, such as the ancient buildings with heavy eaves and hermetic roofs and the streets with green bricks and tiles, are important carriers of the culture of Wanshou Palace. The style and details of these buildings reflect the ancient architectural techniques and aesthetic concepts, and become a window for tourists to understand and learn local history and culture. The industrialisation of heritage tourism requires the packaging of history, and this 'representation' may lead to a 'selective truth'. The spatial layout of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter reflects the traditional pattern of 'three streets and five alleys', with each street and alley having its own unique historical and cultural background. This layout not only gives people a sense of aesthetics visually, but also enhances the experience of tourists spatially, so that they can feel the weight of history and the depth of culture when strolling in the neighbourhood. For tourists, the perceived authenticity may not be consistent with the actual historical facts. The Wanshou Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood has consciously constructed the cultural image of the Wanshou Palace in the process of tourism promotion. Through modern digital media means, such as neighbourhood sculpture, art installations, exhibition design and multimedia technology, to show the historical evolution of Wanshou Palace and cultural

characteristics of the neighbourhood, advertisements, short videos, social media content and other promotional materials, highlighting the architectural beauty of Wanshou Palace, the social and historical status of the city and local characteristics, the form of artistic expression can inspire emotional resonance in tourists, making history more palpable, so as to make up for the gap between the historical narrative and the experience of tourists. Artistic expressions can stimulate the emotional resonance of tourists and make history more tangible, thus bridging the gap between the historical narrative and the experience of tourists. Shape the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter into a 'Nanchang Cultural Card'. On the one hand, it emphasises the mystery and solemnity of Wanshou Palace as a place of traditional faith; on the other hand, it uses modern discourse to construct its tourist image as a 'must-visit attraction'. In the process of the neighbourhood renovation design, through the reinterpretation of the past of Wanshou Palace in Tiezhu, the belief culture of Wanshou Palace was transformed into symbols with commodity value, and the cultural image of Wanshou Palace was simplified into a series of symbolic 'memory labels', such as 'Xu Zhenjun's statue', 'Jiangjun's statue', 'Jiangjun's statue', 'Wanshou Gong's statue', 'Wanshou Gong's statue', 'Wanshou Gong's statue', and 'Wanshou Palace's statue'. The traditions such as 'statue of Xu Zhenjun', 'Jiangyou merchant culture', 'beheading of scaly scales with iron pillars' and 'local operas' are repackaged as tourist attractions, and the cultural connotations behind them are simplified into perceivable and transferable symbols. The cultural connotations behind them have been reduced to perceptible and purchasable experiences. The fact that the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood was included in the category of heritage protection before the planning process, and that it was selected as a national tourism and leisure neighbourhood after the opening of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood, demonstrates the efforts of the government and the society to protect the neighbourhood, which also increases the legitimacy of the tourists' consumption of the history and culture in the neighbourhood.



Figure 67 Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District Honor Plaque Display  
It fully reflects that the district has been recognized by the government.

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, October, 2024.



Figure 68 The image sculpture of a backpack and an umbrella in the historical and cultural district of Wanshou Palace  
**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, April, 2023.

Leisure tourism was created in the modern period. It is closely related to the process of industrialisation and urbanisation and the group of people who can participate in this kind of consumption is expanding. (Walsh, 1992: 118) The transformation of Wanshou Palace into a tourist destination is a result of the combination of urbanisation and cultural heritage preservation in modern China. The tourist transformation of a faith space is a spatial reproduction and a complex cultural practice that seeks a balance between historical authenticity and tourist demand, reflecting the innovative use of modern technology and artistic means in historical and cultural preservation. Tourism promotion in the neighbourhood constructs the cultural image of Wanshou Palace by selectively extracting historical symbols and narratives. Through the symbolisation of the architecture, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood strengthens the tourist's sense of identity with Jiangxi culture. In the process of consumption, tourists are not only buying goods, but also experiencing and spreading culture. This cultural experience and dissemination makes the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter a living cultural heritage, attracting new tourists and passing on history and culture. Wanshou Palace', "Tiezhu Wanshou Palace", "Legend of the True King", "Tales of the Jiangyue Merchant Gang", etc. Content. Tourism publicity visualises and commercialises the 'past' to attract consumers, emphasising its role as a landmark of Nanchang culture, i.e. 'A Street of Gan Poyang Culture', and at the same time downplaying its religious attributes. The promotional content was designed around the interests of tourists, emphasising the 'uniqueness' and 'diversity' of Wanshou Palace to appeal to different audiences, such as photography enthusiasts, history buffs or cultural consumers. The Wanshou Palace has been recreated as an 'experiential space' that maintains its historical character

while engaging visitors through interactivity and participation. This immersive experience transforms history into a consumable 'contextual product', increasing visitor satisfaction and strengthening the cultural memory of the Wanshou Palace. This process can provide inspiration for the preservation and use of historical and cultural heritage, as well as an examination of the far-reaching impact of tourism on traditional belief spaces.

#### **4.3.2 Spatial Memory Highlighted in Renovation**

In the process of urbanisation in the context of modern China, tourism development of historical and cultural districts is not only an important means of local cultural and economic development, but also a key field for cultural reproduction and spatial memory practice. In the process of transforming the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter, the reproduction of the past of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, tourism development, and the consumer reproduction of local folklore in the Quarter reflect the complex dynamics of spatial memory in the transformation of cultural heritage. This process not only reflects the intersection of history and contemporary consumer culture, but also reveals how spatial memory is shaped, reproduced and consumed. It also reveals how spatial memory is moulded, reproduced and consumed. It focuses on the reinterpretation and presentation of history in the modern consumer society. Without Tiezhu Wanshou Palace there would be no Wanshou Palace Quarter, and without Wanshou Palace Quarter there would be no Nanchang Folk Culture, and they are complementary to each other. In the process of renovation and development of Wanshou Palace, the emphasis is on highlighting the folklore of Nanchang, and the folklore should be displayed in the 'neighbourhood', and the folklore of Wanshou Palace and Wanshou Palace Neighbourhood is an interactive relationship. The protection of cultural heritage is not only a simple act of preserving the past, but also a complex practice of consumption. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter, as a model of China's historical and cultural quarters, strives to preserve the past functions and influences of the Quarter to the maximum extent possible, based on the maintenance of the streets of Wanshou Palace, the ruins of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, the spatial structure of the street's texture and its historical and cultural values. In the process of renovation, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter is committed to the maintenance of the historical sites, the restoration and reconstruction of the buildings in the Quarter, as well as the upgrading of the infrastructural facilities, the optimisation of the neighbouring living environment, the protection of the intangible cultural heritage and its related sites, and the attempts to incorporate them into the modern mode of tourism consumption, seeking a harmonious coexistence with the modern consumption.

Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, as a place with deep historical and cultural heritage, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood carries local historical memories and cultural symbols of folk beliefs. During the renovation and design process, the Wanshou Palace Quarter was reconstructed in conjunction with the restoration and preservation of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace site to reproduce the historical and cultural values of the Wanshou Palace. This is not only respecting the past, but also investing in the future. By developing the cultural heritage of the neighbourhood for tourism, the cultural memory of Wanshou Palace has been reinvented in a consumer-oriented way. The architectural space and structure of the Wanshou Palace, the religious rituals, and the local folklore of Nanchang have been selectively reproduced, becoming the core resource for attracting tourists. This reproduction is

not just a simple retelling of history, but a presentation of memories filtered through the discourse of modernity and the logic of commerce, highlighting a ‘traditionalised’ vision and experience. For example, the restored Tiezhu Wanshou Palace and its neighbourhood, the Gan-style residential buildings, and the folklore activities have been given the label of ‘authenticity’, but in fact this authenticity is often a product of the intertwining of historical memory and contemporary needs. It is increasingly recognised that investment in historic sites is essential for sustainable urban development, balancing preservation with economic growth. (Licciardi & Amirtahmasebi, 2012: 78) Projects that combine heritage conservation with community development can contribute to local prosperity while preserving cultural identity.

Cultural heritage has been redefined in the context of modern social consumption, with its function shifting from the mere transmission of historical memory to the ‘production’ of new spatial meanings. Tourism development has transformed the physical space of Wanshou Palace into a space of consumption. This spatial production is reflected in the transformation of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace site into a place of consumption, education and even social space. In this process, spatial memory is transformed from a local historical site into a commodified scene with economic value. The experience of tourists in Wanshou Palace is no longer limited to learning about Wanshou Palace culture and tracing its history, but also to constructing a personal connection with the past and present space of Wanshou Palace through the consumption of history, symbols, and experiential activities. The architecture, cultural commodities, themed restaurants and cultural souvenirs in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter have all become important media for the consumption of historical memories. This kind of consumer reproduction transforms spatial memory into personalised cultural capital by stimulating the emotional resonance of visitors. In the process



Figure 69 Exhibition area of the ruins in the Zhenjun Palace

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, October, 2024

of transformation, the spatial memory of Wanshou Palace not only highlights the symbolic meaning of history, but also carries the tension between local culture and modern development. In the process of transformation, the neighbourhood emphasises the display of

Nanchang folk culture, closely integrating Wanshou Palace with Nanchang folk culture. Local characteristics and cultural identity are strengthened by organising various folk activities, such as Nanchang dialect theatre and traditional festival celebrations. The protection and development of cultural heritage often faces the balance between ‘global presentation’ and ‘localised identity’. In the context of tourism, the memory of Wanshou Palace has been rewritten, and the original historical narrative of Wanshou Palace has been preserved in the development, while at the same time, contents relevant to the modern society have been injected, so as to meet the expectations of a wider group of tourists and to satisfy the needs of a diversified audience. The spatial memory of the Wanshou Palace is highlighted in the renovation, which on the one hand will promote the local culture of the Wanshou Palace to the national and even international market, and on the other hand will dilute the original religious function of the Wanshou Palace and weaken the identity of the community. Therefore, the display of spatial memory is particularly important in the process of neighbourhood renovation and design, as it emphasises the local characteristics and tries to satisfy the needs of modern consumers for diversified experiences. The selective reproduction and reinvention of historical memory in the development process often highlights a ‘traditional’ vision and experience. This reimagining is designed to meet the needs of modern consumer society, while also providing a unique cultural experience for visitors. The reinvented neighbourhood provides social and interactive spaces where visitors can interact, share experiences, and deepen their understanding of the cultural memory of Wanshou Palace.



Figure 70 Explanation of the culture and history of the True Monarch Palace  
**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, October, 2024

In modern reconstruction, the highlighting of spatial memory requires both respect for historical authenticity and the activation of the contemporary value of memory through new technologies and forms of consumption. The use of virtualisation technology expands the communication dimension of spatial memory, and at the same time introduces the participation of the local community and the public, so as to make the memory more

diversified and organic. In conclusion, the transformation process of the Wanshou Palace historical and cultural district highlights the importance of spatial memory and reveals the complex relationship between the reproduction of consumer history and the past and modern cultural heritage tourism. This transformation has not only contributed to the development of the local economy, but also to the deepening of cultural heritage and community identity. In the future, how to better balance the preservation and development of cultural heritage, and how to maintain the uniqueness of local culture in the context of globalisation, will be important issues that need to be continuously paid attention to and explored in the transformation and development of the neighbourhood. The consumer reproduction of Wanshou Palace's tourism development is a vivid practice of spatial memory in the context of modern China. This reproduction reveals how cultural heritage can be transformed to achieve the marketisation of historical memory, and at the same time exposes the contradiction between 'authenticity' and commercialisation in the consumption of memory. Studying this process not only helps to understand the mode of cultural consumption in modern China, but also provides new perspectives for cultural heritage protection.

#### **4.3.3 Aesthetic expression of heritage identity**

Architectural and artistic heritage represents an element of the city that is recognisable in various ways: as a cultural expression, as a support for development (Youssef, 2018: 183), and Wanshou Palace, as an important cultural heritage in Nanchang, not only carries the memory of the local history, but also perpetuates the meaning of its identity through the reproduction of the past and the consumption of history in the context of modern China. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood is a performance and reproduction of local identity that combines the cultural narrative of Wanshou Palace, the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace architecture, the Gangan-style houses in the neighbourhood, local operas, and the commercialised aesthetic expression of cultural heritage, contributing to the understanding of Nanchang's local identity, and embodying the interactive relationship between artistic creation and cultural consumption. Architectural heritage has multiple meanings (ancient, architectural, aesthetic, symbolic, authentic), is unique and irreversible, and is often associated with the city's cultural and implicit tourist image. Due to the seniority of the architectural heritage and the special relationship created with the place and the people, under the direct influence of socio-cultural and political factors, it ensures the accumulation of symbols, which regulate the urban space. Heritage buildings are therefore associated with elements of territorial identity. Visual imagery is used as an argument in favour of the process of selecting buildings with local/national cultural significance. These are promoted among the public. Most of the time, the selection process aims at identifying representative buildings, a process that documents the influence of socio-cultural and political factors. (MERCUIU, F. C., Ilovan, O. C., & Cereleux, A. L., 2020: 37) Architectural heritage has multiple meanings (antiquity, architecture, aesthetics, symbolism, authenticity), is unique and irreversible, and is often associated with the cultural and implicit tourist image of a city. Due to its seniority and the special relationship it creates with places and people, under the direct influence of socio-cultural and political factors, architectural heritage ensures the accumulation of symbols that regulate urban spaces. Heritage buildings are therefore associated with elements of territorial identity. Visual imagery is used as an argument in favour of a process of selecting buildings of

local/national cultural significance. These buildings are promoted to the public. Most of the time, the selection process aimed at identifying representative buildings, which recorded the influence of socio-cultural and political factors. For the people of Nanchang, the Wanshou Palace is part of the local cultural identity, not only as a religious site, but also as a physical manifestation of the traditional cultural and folklore symbols of the people of Jiangxi.

Cultural identity can be expressed through traditional architectural elements, as its sources originate from the past (Mahgoub, 2007: 6). Traditional architecture serves as a repository of cultural values, reflecting the social and historical context of a community (Prameswari & Hardilla, 2024: 6). The aesthetic expression of the heritage identity of Wanshou Palace is intertwined through the cultural narrative of Wanshou Palace, the architecture of the neighbourhood and community participation. The architecture of Wanshou Palace in Tiezhu contains the spiritual culture of 'loyalty and filial piety', the architectural culture of 'inclusion', the immigrant culture of 'courage', and the culture of 'helping each other'. The merchant culture of 'helping each other' is the common cultural characteristics and identity of the people of Jiangxi. Wanshou Palace historical and cultural district as a community public cultural space, in the function of cohesion of the people's emotions, maintaining the local cultural identity of the important cultural symbols and ties. Through the protection and use of the neighbourhood, it not only preserves the tangible cultural heritage, but also strengthens the heritage identity of Jiangxi people. The aesthetic strategy of restoration and reconstruction is emphasised in the conservation and development of the area, for example, the authenticity and historical reproduction of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace through the combination of historical documents, graphic materials and the excavation of the remaining foundations of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace. In terms of architectural style, the historical content of the historical records, the architectural style of the existing examples, the differences in the style of different grades of buildings, and the differences between the local and official practices<sup>34</sup> of the Qing Dynasty in Nanchang were mainly taken into consideration, and the historical period of the overall restoration design of the Wanshou Palace was positioned in the late Qing Dynasty. The restoration and reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace has endeavoured to recreate as much as possible the original form of the Wanshou Palace complex. The restoration and reproduction of details such as the traditional mortise and tenon structure of the building, the pagoda-type newspaper building, the heavy-eaved hermetical roof, and the Taoist-themed wood carvings, etc., are all aimed at strengthening the original historical aesthetic qualities of the Wanshou Palace. Among them, the Zhenjun Hall adopts the heavy-eaved hermit-style roof, and its architectural structure gives people a visual sense of clear-cut angles and structure. This type of roof has a high rank in Chinese ancient architecture, second only to the heavy-eaved hipped roof. For example, the Hall of Supreme Harmony in the Forbidden City is a heavy-eaved hipped building, which is the highest grade of ancient architecture, and the Hall of Baohe is a heavy-eaved hipped

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34 Official practice: In ancient Chinese architecture, this refers to a type of architectural style that was designed and constructed in strict accordance with feudal rites and official norms, and which was usually used for important buildings such as palaces, official government offices, temples, and so on. The roofs of the Ming and Qing official buildings were mainly of the hard-slab, overhanging-slab, hipped-slab, peaked-slab, and pointed-slab roofs (including domed-slab, quadrangular-slab, hexagonal-slab, etc.), which resulted in a diversity of architectural forms.



Figure 71 Tiezhu Wanshou Palace Zhenjun Palace Reenactment of the Xieshan Mountain Summit Architectural Style(left)  
Xishan Wanshou Palace Gaoming Palace Reenactment of the Xieshan Mountain Summit Architectural Style (right)

Source: Photographed by Min Qi, December, 2023.



Figure 72 Tiezhu Wanshou Palace main hall archway newspaper building (left)  
Xishan Wanshou Palace Gaoming Hall archway style newspaper building side (right)

Source: Photographed by Min Qi, December, 2023.

building, which is second only to the Hall of Supreme Harmony in terms of grade of architectural form and scale of construction. (Wang Wentao. (Wang Wentao. 2008: 8) The main hall (Zhenjun Hall) as one of the core buildings of Wanshou Palace, its roof adopts the heavy-eaved hermetic roof, which not only embodies the architectural grandeur, but also contains the Taoist elegant and quiet realm. The main hall's pagoda-style newspaper building reflects the local architectural characteristics of Jiangxi, with a plaque entitled 'Zhongxiao Shen', similar to the architectural style of Xishan Wanshou Palace on the outskirts of Nanchang, which is based on geographical factors and religious influences.

The Wanshou Palace neighbourhood covers a total area of about 6.3 hectares and consists of nine streets and alleys. In the process of evolution, the traditional spatial pattern of alleys with four streets and five alleys and five horizontal and four vertical lines was eventually formed, and the whole neighbourhood has a rich historical and cultural heritage and a unique historical style. Twenty-nine buildings in the neighbourhood are registered as

immovable cultural relics, 18 buildings are announced as Nanchang historical buildings, and 46 buildings are in traditional style. (Yang, H., & Fu, W., 2024: 168) Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is closely related to the development of the city of Nanchang, and it can be said that Wanshou Palace is a microcosm of the history of Nanchang, witnessing the rise and fall of the city. With the development of the city, the traditional style of Wanshou Palace has been blocked by the high-rise buildings and gradually disappeared, and Wanshou Palace has become a shantytown. Through the restoration and reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, the spirit of Gan merchants of 'loyalty and filial piety' and 'mutual help' will be reproduced. The conservation of historic districts should follow the spatial strategy of 'Formal Integrity', through understanding the traditional space, mastering the way of creating the traditional space, and flexibly restoring the places in the historic districts that do not conform to the traditional style and traditional spatial image, and preserving the overall pattern and traditional style is an important part of the traditional districts. (Feng, L., & Chen, N., 2019: 1164) The conservation of historic districts should follow the spatial strategy of 'formal integrity', and through the understanding of traditional space, mastering the way of creating traditional space, and carrying out flexible restoration of places in the historic districts that do not conform to the traditional style and traditional spatial image (Feng, L., & Chen, N., 2019: 1164). The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood has reproduced the history of the neighbourhood through the protection of the structural texture of the streets and lanes, restorative reconstruction of the historical sites, and protection of the form and volume style of the ancient buildings, etc. The historical style of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace and the Gan residential buildings in the neighbourhood can be reproduced, and a simple and elegant historical atmosphere can be created, which realizes the restoration of the neighbourhood's style, and at the same time enables the cultural inheritance and promotion of the Wanshou Palace. At the same time, the culture of Wanshou Palace can be inherited and carried forward.

Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter, as a part of urban aesthetics, has been transformed from a historical landscape into a visual tourism product by 'symbolising and remembering' the contents of the Quarter, such as 'Jiangwu Merchants' and 'Legend of Xu Zhenjun'. As a part of urban aesthetics, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter, through the 'symbolic memory' of the contents of the Quarter such as 'Jiangyou Merchant Gang Culture' and 'Legend of Emperor Xu Zhenjun', transforms the historical landscape into a visual tourism consumer product, which is adapted to the needs of tourists in the modern tourism market. The cultural heritage of Wanshou Palace has been successfully transformed into an urban tourism and leisure district, which has become a special commercial district integrating fashionable shopping, catering and entertainment, social and leisure activities, and cultural tourism. Visitors walking in the neighbourhood experience the interaction of traditional elements in the neighbourhood. The organic design of the space of 'three streets and five alleys' in the neighbourhood integrates the historical narrative of Wanshou Palace into the landscape, and the historical and cultural narrative of Wanshou Palace is constantly recreated, becoming a symbol of the local identity through the neighbourhood's sculptures, local theatre, festivals, etc. The images of art works in the neighbourhood are also used to illustrate the cultural heritage of the Wanshou Palace. The visualisation and symbolisation of art works in the neighbourhood has integrated the cultural symbols of Wanshou Palace into the local memory. The aesthetic expression of heritage

identity in the neighbourhood not only brings cultural heritage to life, but also brings a multiplier effect of cultural and economic benefits, which further strengthens the importance of Wanshou Palace as a cultural heritage and identity in Jiangxi. The heritage identity of Wanshou Palace has been highlighted through artistic expression, and its significance has been reshaped and renewed in contemporary times, both as a performance venue for local identity and as an artistic commodity for the consumer market. Artistic creation not only demonstrates the historical value of the heritage, but also creates a cultural resonance in a modern context through interaction with the public and the introduction of aesthetic experiences. This two-way interaction makes Wanshou Palace not only a heritage site, but also an ecological space for dialogue between history, culture and art.



Figure 73 A display of building bricks engraved with the word "Wanshou Palace"

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, December, 2023.



Figure 74 Partial View of the 'Ascent to the Immortals' Relief

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, December, 2023.

#### 4.4 Shaping the Historical Significance of the Past

In the context of modern China, the preservation and adaptive use of cultural heritage has become an important area of research. It is not only about the preservation and reproduction of historical buildings, but also about the transmission of cultural memory and the expansion of social functions. As an important symbol of Gan culture, the conservation and renovation of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter in Nanchang is a model of dynamic balance between historical authenticity and modern needs. Through the restoration principle of ‘repairing the old as the old’ and the design concept of ‘three constants’, Wanshou Palace realises the reproduction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace and Gan-style residential buildings, which awakens the local historical memory, and at the same time meets the diversified needs of the modern society for cultural experience and economic development. The reconstruction of Wanshou Palace is not a simple process.

The reconstruction of Wanshou Palace is not a simple historical restoration, but a cultural recreation in the context of modern society. As a material carrier of local religious culture, the restoration of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace not only inherits the historical value of Taoist beliefs, but also gives it new social significance through modern technology and functional design. Similarly, the reproduction of Gan-style houses responds to the public's nostalgia for traditional living aesthetics and regional culture. This reproduction process not only strengthens the expression of local cultural symbols, but also provides new possibilities for the functional transformation of historical buildings in modern urban space. However, in the process of historical reproduction and consumption of history, the Wanshou Palace neighbourhood also faces the contradiction between authenticity and commercialisation. With the advancement of tourism development and marketisation, historical buildings have been gradually symbolised, their social functions and cultural connotations have been diluted to a certain extent, and they have been turned into services for modern consumer demands. This phenomenon of ‘consuming history’ has triggered discussions on the protection of the authenticity and deep cultural value of cultural heritage.

##### 4.4.1. Constructing the multidimensional ‘past’

Historic and cultural districts are comprehensive cultural heritage forms with certain regional and period characteristics, formed under the combined effects of the transmutation of the natural, geographical, political, social and economic environments in the region and the changes of the times during the process of urban development, and they are the humanistic reproductions and spatial and temporal markers of the city's traditional living scenes and the cultural atmosphere of the times. In the protection and development of historical and cultural districts, the idea of ‘revitalisation’ is emphasised, that is to say, while preserving the historical appearance and cultural scenes, the cultural heritage that has lost its vitality is given a new form of life. Through spatial and temporal continuity, functional replacement and spatial reorganisation, a balance between conservation and development is achieved. The main object of this area is Wanshou Palace, and its spatial scale determines the scale of the rest of the area. All street space shall not exceed the space of the main courtyard of the temple and the square in front of the temple.’ (Shevchenko, 2020: 171) In the context of modern

China, the ‘past’ is no longer just a fixed historical fact, but is constantly constructed and re-represented through a variety of narrative forces, cultural expressions and consumer demands. History has thus become a multi-symbolic system that involves multiple understandings of historical landscapes, as well as contests over their meaning by different interest groups. ‘The cultural symbol of ‘Tiezhu Wanshou Palace’ in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter is a dynamic cultural symbol with a deep historical and folkloric background. This symbol has been reinterpreted and adapted at different stages of history to meet the current social needs and political environment. The cultural symbol of ‘Tiezhu Wanshou Palace’ originates from the legend of Xu Xun in Jin Dynasty. This legend embodies the folk worship of heroes and reverence for the power of nature, as well as an explanation of and response to natural disasters (such as floods). The culture of Wanshou Palace is a ‘living’ culture, closely associated with the worship of Xu Zhenjun. Over time, this cultural symbol has been reinterpreted and given new meaning. From the initial pilgrimage of the townspeople, it has developed into a comprehensive mass meeting for worshipping the deity, exchanging feelings and trading. This shows that the Wanshou Palace cultural symbol is not only a manifestation of religious beliefs, but also gradually integrated into social life and economic activities.

The shaping of cultural definitions by mass consumption is particularly significant, as the ‘past’ undergoes a transformation from local to grand narratives between local memory and national history. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter in Nanchang, a cultural landscape that serves as a material carrier of historical memory, not only carries specific local memories, but has also been reorganised and given new symbolic meanings in the context of modern urbanisation in order to adapt to the diversified needs of tourists. In other words, although authenticity is used as a promotional tool, there are many interpretations of what ‘authenticity’ means. Marketers offer only one possible interpretation of past events, one that is manipulated by capital or dominant social norms. Undoubtedly, all descriptions of the past are selective. (Waite, G., 2000: 834) The landscape symbols in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood not only reflect the regional characteristics of Jiangxi folk beliefs, but also demonstrate the rich connotations of Jiangxi folk culture, as the Jiangwu merchants' gangs went out to work by building the Wanshou Palace (also known as the Jiangxi Guild Hall), where Xu Zhenjun is enshrined to express their nostalgia for their native land in Jiangxi. Wanshou Palace as ‘Xu Zhenjun faith’, ‘Jiangxi Guild’, ‘Jiangwu Merchants’, ‘immigrant culture’ of the symbolisation process. In the process of symbolisation, different symbols point to different audience groups. We believe that in collective memory research, historical representations are mainly seen as a source of current meaning or a way of positioning oneself in the current social sphere (de Saint-Laurent). (de Saint-Laurent, C., & Obradović, S., 2019: 1) For local residents, the Wanshou Palace and its cultural neighbourhoods are a symbol of local identity and a tangible expression of collective memory; for tourists, it is a hotspot for cultural consumption that satisfies their curiosity about ‘local culture’ through its exoticism and uniqueness; for tourists, it is a hotspot for cultural consumption that satisfies their curiosity about ‘local culture’ through its exoticism and uniqueness. For tourists, it is a hotspot for cultural consumption, satisfying their curiosity about ‘local culture’ through its exoticism and uniqueness; and for the government, Wanshou Palace is an important venue for

propagating 'cultural self-confidence', and its symbolic significance is endowed with a greater national narrative and ideological function. Indeed, the power of history as a resource for the present has been illustrated time and again in quite explicit and more subtle ways. (de Saint-Laurent, C., & Obradović, S., 2019: 2) Regarding the social construction of reality, they are interested in the social construction of knowledge and how it constructs social reality. Thus, from this perspective, discourse is not a reflection of reality, but a way of constructing it. Thus, discourses about history follow social and cultural norms of practice - defining what can 'count' as memory - to construct the past in a particular way.' (Saint-Laurent, 2019: 4) The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood meets the interests and cognitive needs of different groups of people through rich historical narratives, such as, 'Tiezhu Wanshou Palace Zhenjiao', the culture of the Jiangyou merchant gang, the architectural heritage of Wanshou Palace, and the Gan school of residential architecture. Multi-dimensional narratives stimulate tourists' emotional resonance and deepen their experience. Among them, 'Tiezhu Zhenjiao' is the finishing touch to the legend of Xu Xun - the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace in Nanchang was named 'Tiezhu' to emphasise the Tiezhu that suppressed the Jiaowei. (Fu Xiuyan, 2015: 62-63) So why was the Tiezhu used to subdue the scaly dragon? The metaphor of a sinister dragon locked on an iron chain is to advocate reforestation. Iron pillars are also known as iron pillars (Feng Menglong, 2016: 396) Iron pillars are reminiscent of trees, and planting trees can be a good defence against floods and droughts, showing Xu Xun's greatness as a water-control hero. All the regional narratives that have lasted through the ages must contain the essence and wisdom of local knowledge. (Fu Xiuyan, Wang Junwei, & Xiao Huirong, 2019: 8) The legend of Xu Xun's 'Tiezhu to Subdue the Jiao' suggests that people should have reverence and respect for nature, and should be ecologically aware of the need to live in harmony with nature. The diversity of narratives in the neighbourhood enriches the narratives by guiding different groups of visitors to understand the historical stories of Wanshou Palace culture. Located social representation theory explores how we understand the world by constructing it and being in it. (de Saint-Laurent, C., & Obradović, S., 2019: 2) There is an interactive relationship between the Wanshou Palace architecture as a landscape symbol and the legend of Xu Xun, revealing that the Wanshou Palace architecture as a material vehicle, the credibility of the historical narrative of Wanshou Palace and the vividness of the legend of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, 'The Tiezhu of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace Zhenjiao', are perceived by visitors through the touristic experience. The vividness of the legend of Xu Xun 'Tiezhu to Zhen Jiao'.

In the context of modern urbanisation, Tiezhu Wanshou Palace not only exists as a material carrier of local history, but has also been shaped into multiple symbolic spaces through the interweaving of different discourses. The legend of 'Tiezhu Zhenjiao' has gradually transformed from the myth of Xu Xun's heroic water-control to the metaphor of ecological protection. In the presentation of the landscape, the symbolism of the Tiezhu transcends the traditional belief narrative and combines with the contemporary concept of green development, providing visitors with a multi-layered cultural experience. At the same time, the reconstruction of this narrative reflects the Nanchang government's policy intention to promote ecological awareness through cultural landscapes. For local residents, the legend carries their pride in local wisdom; foreign tourists, in the process of visiting the city, feel a mysterious cultural memory that satisfies their imagination and consumption of foreign

cultures. The Ricci Square in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter, where the statue of Matteo Ricci is placed, recounts the history of Matteo Ricci as an Italian missionary who came to China at the end of the 16th century and visited the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang to commemorate his contribution to cultural exchanges. Opposite the statue of Matteo Ricci is Wang Yangming, a famous thinker, writer, philosopher and militarist in the history of the Ming Dynasty of China, who wrote poems for the Wanshou Palace. The statues of these two historical figures represent the commemoration of historical figures and the cultural heritage of Wanshou Palace. Nowadays, there are 123 buildings in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood, including 118 Gan-style buildings in the late Qing Dynasty, including 45 historical buildings such as the Nanchang Chamber of Commerce, the Zhi Zhi Hall, the Yutai Smokehouse and the former residence of Luo Luo. (Wu Ning, Zhou Rong, and Fu Yingnian, 2023: 4) ‘There are a number of traditional wooden buildings of historical significance that form residential clusters with courtyards.’ (Shevchenko, 2020: 173) Through the preservation and restoration of the structure, inner space, shape and decoration of the Gan School residential buildings, combined with the fact that the Wanshou Palace neighbourhood has been a bustling centre of commerce and trade since antiquity, the buildings are utilised as shops and become a living and mobile architectural museum, showing people the traditional architectural art and history and culture of the Nam Cheong and even the Jiangxi region.

The construction of the ‘past’ in modern China is a dynamic and multidimensional process. Historical landscapes have been reproduced with multiple meanings through symbolisation and commercialisation; the competition for the ‘past’ among different interest groups reflects the complexity of historical memory; mass consumption has profoundly influenced the definition of culture; and local memories have been given macro-cultural significance through the transformation of national narratives. This multidimensional ‘past’ not only shows the process of shaping historical memory, but also reveals the profound interaction between history and culture in contemporary society.



Figure 75 Huofu Jiaojing Temple in the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, the legend of the "Tiezhu Lock Jiao" is displayed inside, and there is an Tiezhu Well inside (left) "Tiezhu Lock Jiao" guide (right)

Source: Photographed by Min Qi, December, 2023.

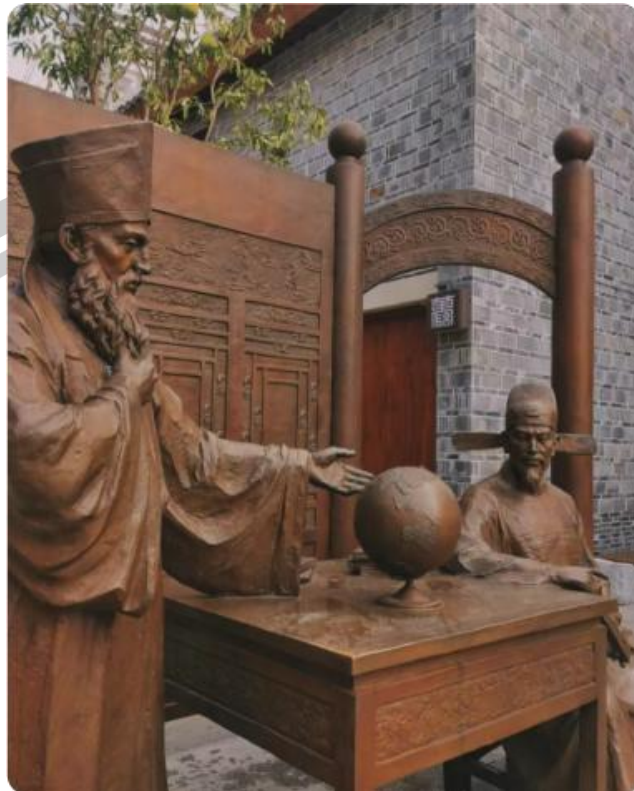


Figure 76 Matteo Ricci Square in the historical and cultural district of Wanshou Palace, Matteo Ricci and Wang Yangming sculptures

Source: Photographed by Min Qi, December , 2023.

#### 4.4.2 Historical and Cultural Contradictions of Reproduction

In modern society, the protection and reproduction of historical buildings and cultural heritage is not only the continuation of material culture, but also the cohesion and expression of cultural memory. Wanshou Palace monastery was restored to its original state, returning a lost landmark to the city. Wanshou Palace was restored to its original state, returning a lost landmark to the city (Shevchenko, M., 2020: 1) Wanshou Palace The Historical and Cultural Quarter consists of three parts: the historical houses, the commercial area and the religious and cultural area of Wanshou Palace, with a total of 123 buildings, of which 118 are in the style of the late Qing dynasty Gan houses. The reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace in its original location and in its original form in the neighbourhood has awakened the ‘memory of Nanchang’ on the principle of ensuring that the texture and architectural layout of the neighbourhood of Wanshou Palace remain basically unchanged, that the architectural style of Jiangxi residential houses remains unchanged, and that the atmosphere of the neighbourhood's landscape elements remains unchanged. The reproduction of the buildings of Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District is not a simple restoration, but a balance between historical authenticity and the needs of modern society, and also reveals the cultural contradictions and challenges in the reproduction process. It reflects that Nanchang city makes good use of historical and cultural buildings, keeps the city roots, inherits the historical lineage, extends the city culture and shapes the city image. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood plays the role of a living urban heritage, integrating it into the production and life of the city, and providing the people with a soft cultural immersion and rich spiritual nourishment.

In the process of reproduction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace and Ganpai residential architecture, historical reproduction is not a mere replication of the past, but a cultural re-creation. This re-creation is largely influenced by contemporary cultural ideologies. The reconstruction of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace was given symbolic significance to demonstrate Nanchang as a historical and cultural city, while the reproduction of the Gan School houses was used for the development of the tourism economy. This cultural creation enriches the significance of historical buildings to a certain extent. The reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, as an important symbol of Nanchang's history and culture, is a sign of respect for traditional cultural values, but it is a challenge to maintain its authenticity and adapt it to modern needs. The restoration and reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is not a mere replication of the past, but involves multi-dimensional historical, cultural and social factors. The importance of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace as a religious site and its architectural uniqueness are well documented. Due to its long history, many of the physical remains of the original building have been destroyed, and in the reconstruction process the designer had to rely on a limited number of documents, images and foundations from archaeological excavations. The restoration of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace respects the historical fact that its authenticity is not only physical, but also expresses the culture and spirit of Wanshou Palace. A key issue in the restoration and reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is how to define authenticity. The Chinese conservation community has tried to define its own standards of authenticity by learning from its restoration history and from international principles. Consideration needs to be given to defending the principle of 'restoring the old as the old' and attempting to preserve the 'historical condition' of the site, including the different phases of its history. (Zhu, 2017: 187) As Mr Liang Sicheng put it, 'we have the responsibility to preserve or restore the original state of the buildings of different historical periods', and 'we should try to preserve or restore the form of these buildings when they have changed'. Buildings are the first to be 'built' (Liang Sicheng, 2001:15-50).' In the restoration of historic buildings, alternative timbers may be used in accordance with the relevant historical and aesthetic values, and the need to replace decayed or damaged elements or parts thereof, or to fulfil the requirements of restoration, may be appropriately catered for. (ICOMOS 1999). (Zhu, 2017: 190)

In modern society, religious buildings are not only places for religious activities, but also carry the functions of tourism development, cultural display and community interaction. The restoration of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace needs to find a balance between religion, culture and economy. However, based on the commercial value of the ancient Nanchang Wanshou Palace, the expert Yang Long said: 'If we rebuild the Nanchang Wanshou Palace without rebuilding the ancient Wanshou Palace commercial street, we will lose the ultimate historical value of the Wanshou Palace reconstruction. It was decided that the reconstruction of Nanchang Wanshou Palace should not only restore and 'build a good' Miaoji Wanshou Palace Taoist Cultural Relics Ancestral Court at the original site, but also restore and repair the 'Wanshou Palace'.

The reconstruction of Nanchang Wanshou Palace should not only restore and ‘build well’ the Taoist cultural relics of Miaoji Wanshou Palace at the original site, but also restore and ‘build big’ the ancient Wanshou Palace commercial street. (Yang Long, 2001: 105) The modernisation of the internal facilities of the reconstructed Wanshou Palace and the introduction of the scenic area operation mode have, on the one hand, enhanced the tourists' experience and, on the other hand, diluted the traditional religious colours, so that the space of the Wanshou Palace has become more of a “consumer” tourist destination.

The Gan-style residential buildings in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter from the late Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China have become an important expression of Gan culture with their unique regional architectural style and strong living atmosphere. The objective of reproduction is not only to preserve the traditional architectural art, but also to evoke the collective memory of the daily life of people in that historical period. The Gan-style residential buildings in the neighbourhood are distinguished by their brick and wooden structures, horse-head walls and carved beams and paintings. With the acceleration of urbanisation in Nanchang, the original environment of Gan residential buildings has been replaced by modern urban space, and it is a challenge to reproduce the original architectural aesthetics and functional layout of Gan residential buildings in the process of past regeneration. Therefore, in the process of planning and designing, the neighbourhood adheres to the principle of ‘three constants’, repairing the old as the old, building new as the old, and preserving the spatial characteristics, architectural styles, basic layout, etc., in order to reproduce the historical appearance of the Wanshou Palace neighbourhood as much as possible. As for the ancient buildings and immovable cultural relics, after accumulating historical relics for many times, they have witnessed the development and rise and fall of Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood, so they should be strictly protected, and at the same time, the line of the protection scope is drawn, and it is strictly prohibited to carry out construction in the protection line. The building maintenance programme is implemented in strict accordance with the relevant policies, and the protection indirectly enhances the cultural quality of the neighbourhood and attracts tourists. (Wuetal, 2023: 6) The main feature of the project is that it focuses on the preservation of the geometry and character of the urban space, in other words, the urban space itself is considered as an independent object for preservation and redevelopment. In the whole Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood, the south of Jingyang Road is dominated by dry-row residential houses, interspersed with other architectural styles of the late Qing and Republican periods; the road north of Jingyang is in the neo-Chinese style. The overall architecture is based on the traditional architectural appearance of the local houses in Nanchang. The spatial texture of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter has been well preserved, and another important goal of reproduction of the historical residential architecture of Gan is to preserve the local memories and satisfy people's emotional needs for history and culture. According to the authors (Wang Guixiang Team, Tsinghua University), even if some of the structures are partially lost and redesigned, preserving the original road network, the scale and rhythm of the buildings will preserve the unique character of the place in the best way. Some scholars argue that

there is a risk of a trend towards cultural homogenisation in historical reproductions in the context of globalisation. The historical need for reproduction is often characterised by a superficial ‘nostalgia’ rather than a deeper historical understanding. For example, most of the restored buildings in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter have been used as commercial premises, such as restaurants, milk tea shops or souvenir shops, so that the reproduced buildings in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter, although retaining a sense of history in their appearance, fail to embody their original social functions and cultural significance. This phenomenon has been criticised by scholars as a kind of ‘symbolization of history’, i.e. history has been reduced to symbols for consumption. However, the redevelopment of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter is necessary for the government to modernise the city and to serve its citizens, and Wang Guixiang, the author of the project in this case, gives a positive answer to these questions. He believes that the history of the Wanshou Palace district is very important for Nanchang, and that the most complete restoration of the district will allow the residents to deeply experience the history of the Wanshou Palace district. experience the historical continuity and cultural identity of the city. Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is the ‘ancestral home’ of Wanshou Palaces all over the world, and in the minds of Nanchang people all over the world, Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is the cultural root and spiritual support of Nanchang. Nanchang people protect this historical and cultural heritage in order to retain the affection and warmth and the nostalgia of Nanchang people all over the world. Therefore, the reconstruction of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter and the reproduction of the Gan-style residential buildings of the late Qing and Republican periods in Nanchang are an important attempt to protect and pass on the historical and cultural heritage in the modern society.



Figure 77 Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District Jincheng Gate Tower (left) and Jincheng Gate Tower (right)

Source: Photographed by Min Qi, December, 2023.

#### 4.4.3 Future preservation and consumption of heritage culture

In the context of modern China, there is an increasingly close relationship between the preservation and consumption of heritage culture. It is not only about the preservation and inheritance of cultural heritage, but also about its adaptive use and economic development in modern society. The integration of cultural heritage and tourism is an important strategy for the prosperity and sustainable development of the tourism industry, and under the trend of cultural heritage tourism, it is important to pay attention to the cultural identity of tourists and their emotional interaction with cultural heritage. According to Earley, the identity of tourists is part of 'modernity'. It is the notion of leaving or changing that is important. But the expectation of such departure is partly constructed by a variety of other media, most importantly film and television. To some extent, the heritage industry seems to be responding to this expectation by constructing a media equivalent to the television image, except that the heritage media offer the opportunity to gaze 'authentically' at the historical scene (Kevin Walsh, 1992: 118) Striking a balance between 'authenticity' and marketisation of the historic buildings in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter is not only a matter of preserving the heritage itself, but also a matter of its sustainable development in the future society. By analysing the case of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter in Nanchang, this study explores the strategies and directions for the future protection and consumption of heritage culture.

##### 1) Balance between conservation and adaptive use

The protection of cultural heritage is not only the preservation of historical sites, but also the inheritance of its cultural connotation. In today's world of consumerism, the adaptive use of cultural heritage has become an important aspect of conservation. By transforming cultural heritage into tourism resources, educational platforms and community activity centres, public awareness and participation in cultural heritage can be enhanced, while bringing vitality to the local economy. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter embodies the concept of revitalisation in conservation and conservation in revitalisation through conservation and redevelopment practices. By restoring historical buildings and recovering the traditional neighbourhood style, Wanshou Palace not only retains its historical value, but also becomes a comprehensive space integrating cultural experience, tourism and leisure, and commercial activities. Adaptive use is an important part of cultural heritage protection. Through adaptive use, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter has become a distinctive commercial district integrating fashion shopping, catering and entertainment, social recreation and cultural tourism. This adaptive use not only brings economic vitality to the neighbourhood, but also enhances the vitality of the community. The adaptive use of the neighbourhood also includes the display and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, such as 'intangible heritage + study', 'intangible heritage + cultural creation', 'intangible heritage + performing arts' and other forms, inviting Ganfa embroidery, Yuzhang carved porcelain, porcelain painting, Nanchang clay sculpture, more than 20 intangible cultural heritage skills inheritors to come here, to establish their own studios.

## 2 )Maintenance of cultural authenticity

Maintaining cultural authenticity is key in the process of consuming cultural heritage. This means that when developing and utilising cultural heritage, its historical background and cultural significance should be respected, excessive commercialisation and entertainment should be avoided, and the core values of cultural heritage should be ensured to be passed on. In the restorative redevelopment of Wanshou Palace in Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood has focused on maintaining its original religious and cultural functions, while combining modern display displays to provide an immersive historical experience, which not only protects cultural authenticity, but also enhances the sense of participation and experience for visitors. The maintenance of cultural authenticity is not only related to the physical restoration of the building, but also involves the respect and inheritance of history and culture at a deeper level, therefore, the protection of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood is strictly in accordance with the principle of ‘Three No Changes’ (the texture of the neighbourhood and the basic architectural layout will remain unchanged, the architectural style of the Jiangxi residential buildings will remain unchanged, and the atmosphere of the neighbourhood landscape elements will remain unchanged).

## 3 )Public education and cultural dissemination

In the wave of globalisation, the international dissemination of Chinese culture is not only the key to enhancing national soft power, but also an important way to promote cultural diversity in the world. The preservation and consumption of cultural heritage history is not only the responsibility of governments and experts, but also requires public participation and support. Through the guided tours provided by the neighbourhood, digital media dissemination activities, and exhibitions in the neighbourhood, which should cover the history of Gan merchants, the religious culture of Wanshou Palace, and architectural skills, etc., to help visitors understand the cultural roots of Jiangxi. It can raise public awareness of the value of cultural heritage, enhance the sense of cultural identity, promote the inheritance and development of cultural heritage, attract visitors of different ages to participate in the learning and dissemination of cultural heritage, and make cultural heritage education more vivid and interesting. In the future, the content can also be planned through short video platforms (such as Jittery, B Station) and social media, and micro-documentaries or virtual anchor explanations around the historical story of Wanshou Palace can be designed to attract young groups to participate in cultural communication. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood can draw on the experience of the Forbidden City, which has inspired cultural passion among the younger generation through the development of the ‘Digital Forbidden City’ app and the production of short videos combining popular film and television content. The British Museum has expanded its cultural outreach by promoting its collections through globalised online exhibitions and free educational resources. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood can combine the two by focusing on localised communication while showcasing its cultural values to a wider international audience through digital technology. The Wanshou Palace neighbourhood takes on a public education function through exhibitions, events and interactive design.

#### 4 )Social adaptation and sustainable development

The protection and consumption of cultural heritage should be adapted to social changes and meet the needs of modern society. At the same time, it should focus on sustainable development to ensure the long-term protection and utilisation of cultural heritage. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood focuses on the expansion of functions and environmental sustainability in the process of preservation and redevelopment, such as holding activities such as traditional handicraft markets and folklore performances, as well as introducing green technologies to adapt to the requirements of sustainable development in the future. Historical sites need to become ‘memory places’ that meet the emotional and aesthetic needs of modern people. For example, the Daming Palace has achieved a balance between site protection and urban development by constructing an open cultural park on the site to attract tourists and meet the leisure needs of urban residents. Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter can be rebuilt in its original location on the historical site to enhance its interactivity with the society. Through the design and planning of Wanshou Palace block, reproduction of Gan-style residential buildings, turning it into ‘a street of Gan Poyang’, and reactivating the urban space.

#### 5 )Sustainable balance between history and commerce

After restoration, Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter organically combines historical relics, local culture, traditional skills and modern social needs in a unique way, which is different from traditional closed museums in that its functions and design are open, interactive and diversified. As an ‘open museum’, the Wanshou Palace Cultural Quarter is not only a space for displaying material heritage, but also a cultural platform for dynamic cultural experience and life scenes. While protecting the cultural heritage, it also rationally develops the commercial potential, so as to realise the economic and social values of the cultural heritage. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood has achieved a sustainable balance between history and commerce through a quota tourism policy and the development of cultural derivatives, which not only protects the cultural heritage but also promotes the development of the local economy.

The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood is understood as an ‘open museum’, meaning that it is not only a display of historical sites, but also a living, interactive cultural space. Kevin Walsh further states that the creation of the modern museum is ‘essentially part of the emergence of modern ideas about order and progress, and the associated experience of time and space’ (Kevin Walsh, 1992: 31). ‘The concept of the cultural quarter emphasises the preservation and adaptive use of the cultural quarter as a cultural heritage, making it a bridge between the past and the present, as well as a place where citizens and tourists can experience and participate in a hands-on way. Displays of the past must be organised in order to make sense of the exhibition. In addition, Walsh argues that the modern museum is an outgrowth of the forms of historical and archaeological research that took place throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He concludes that ‘despite many changes in fashion and style, the basic form of presenting the past through static museum displays has not really changed’ (Kevin Walsh, 1992: 33) Firstly, the ‘openness’ of the neighbourhood is reflected in the fact that it is not only a physical space open to visitors and citizens. Firstly, the ‘openness’ of the neighbourhood is reflected in the fact that it is

not only a physical space open to tourists and citizens, but also an open platform for culture and history. People can freely enter the neighbourhood to feel the charm of ancient architecture and experience traditional cultural activities, such as the display and experience of non-heritage skills. Secondly, as a 'museum', the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood carries a large amount of historical and cultural information. The historical buildings, cultural landscapes and exhibition venues in the neighbourhood together form a three-dimensional historical narrative that tells the historical changes and cultural development of Nanchang and even the Jiangxi region. In addition, the concept of 'open museum' of the neighbourhood is also reflected in the diversity of its functions. In addition to the protection and display of cultural heritage, the neighbourhood is also a comprehensive area integrating commerce, tourism, leisure and entertainment. This multifunctional integration makes the historical and cultural neighbourhood a part of the city life, not just an object to be isolated and protected. Finally, the 'open museum' concept of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter also emphasises public participation and interaction. By organising various cultural activities, bazaars and festivals, the district encourages the participation of citizens and tourists, making the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage more lively and interesting. The Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighbourhood has successfully created a dynamic cultural space integrating historical preservation, cultural heritage, public education and social interaction by combining traditional cultural heritage with modern life through an open museum model. Despite changing cultural trends, the basic form of static exhibitions remains, emphasising the importance of physical evidence in understanding history (Van Praët, M., 2019: 38-47). It is not only physically open to the public, but also culturally and emotionally engages with them as a living space for historical and cultural experiences. This model not only breaks the physical limitations of traditional museums, but also provides an innovative demonstration of the contemporary use of cultural heritage. The cultural preservation and consumption of Wanshou Palace needs to be balanced through innovative means. From preserving cultural authenticity, promoting public education, multi-functional adaptation to social needs to sustainable exploration between history and commerce, all are core directions for future development. The future conservation and consumption of heritage culture needs to explore new ways of adaptive use on the basis of respecting history and preserving cultural authenticity, while focusing on public education, social adaptability and sustainable development to achieve long-term conservation and rational use of cultural heritage. Nanchang Wanshou Palace can find its unique position in local memory and global culture, becoming a cultural model with both historical value and modern appeal. The case of Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter provides valuable experience and inspiration for the protection and consumption of heritage culture in the future. In the future, with the advancement of technology and deeper cultural excavation, the Wanshou Palace neighbourhood is expected to further develop into a window for international cultural exchange and a model for heritage conservation.

## Summary

This chapter explores the multiple roles of popular Historical Consumption in the preservation and use of Wanshou Palace, emphasizing how historical narratives, cultural symbols, and modern consumption practices intertwine to shape the identity and function of this heritage site in contemporary society. The analysis is organized around several key themes that together demonstrate the dynamic interaction between tradition and modernity at Wanshou Palace.

The preservation and utilization of Wanshou Palace in Nanchang is not only a preservation of tangible cultural heritage, but also a response to the Historical Consumption needs of the public. With modernization and urbanization, Wanshou Palace has been transformed from a place of religious belief to a space for cultural Consumption, and its Historical Consumption value has been reproduced and disseminated in tourism, cultural and creative products, and digital communication. By restoring the buildings and remodeling the cultural symbols, Wanshou Palace has become an important vehicle for Historical Consumption. The architectural symbols of Wanshou Palace, such as the flying eaves and carved beams, have been restored and modernized in order to appeal to contemporary audiences. It not only satisfies the aesthetic experience of tourists, but also promotes the development of the local economy. These symbols are not only aesthetic, but also serve as carriers of cultural memory, connecting the past with the present. The commercialization of heritage, the site's historical and cultural elements are commodified through tourism, creative products and digital distribution. While this process enhances the economic value and public accessibility of the site, it also poses risks to the authenticity of the historical narrative.

**Re-creation of Wanshou Palace in Space** The restoration and reconstruction of Wanshou Palace emphasizes the reproduction of historical authenticity through spatial design. This includes the preservation of traditional architectural styles and the integration of modern technologies to meet contemporary functional needs.

The Wanshou Palace in the context of modern China is now a landmark for cultural consumption, and is actively trying and striving to balance its religious heritage with its modern consumer function. This balance is achieved by transforming static exhibition spaces into dynamic, participatory environments that appeal to visitors on multiple levels. Globalized and localized, the architectural space of Wanshou Palace reflects a strategy of balancing local cultural identity with global appeal. This is reflected in the use of traditional Gan School architectural styles and the introduction of modern multilingual display systems to attract international visitors.

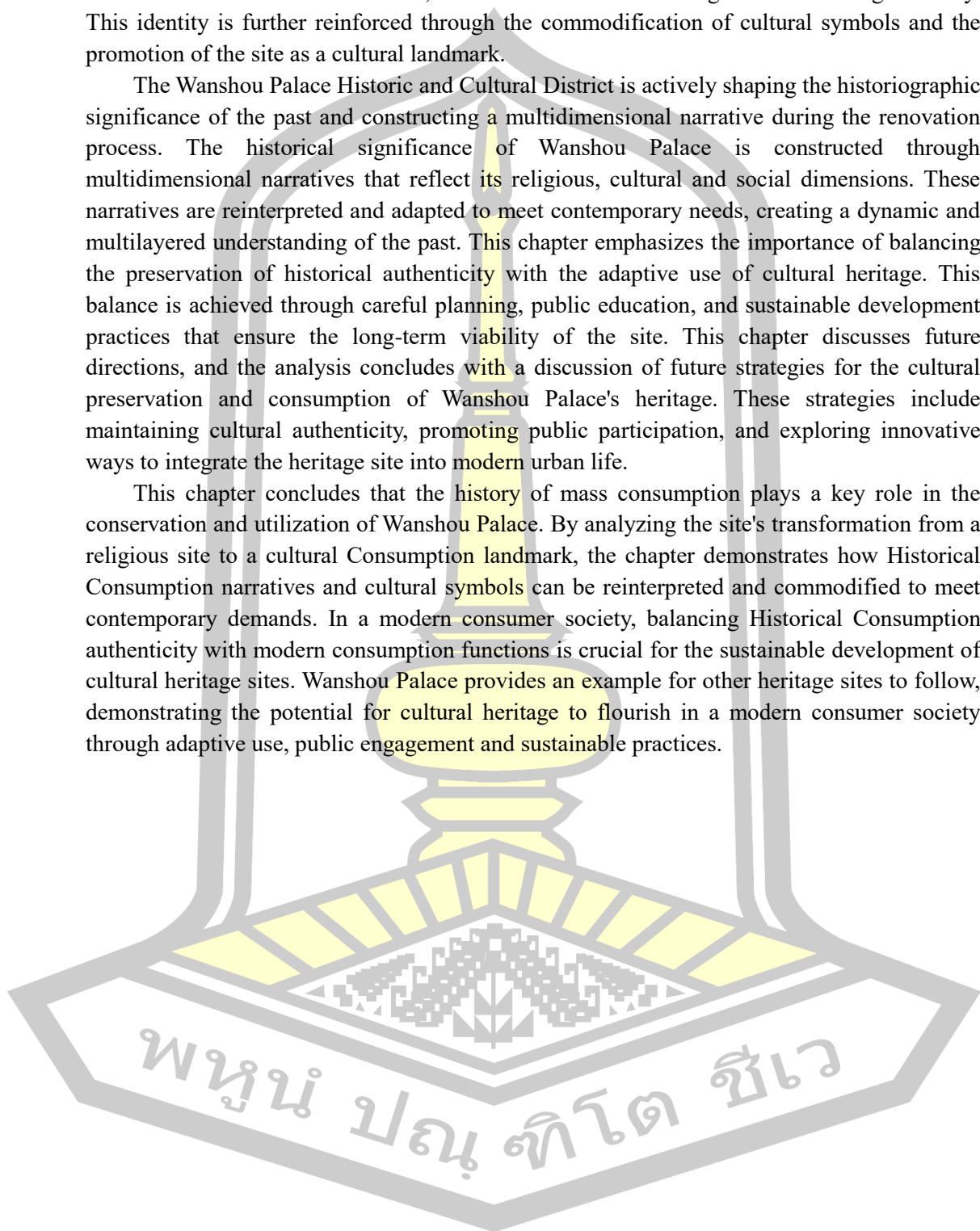
Wanshou Palace's consumptive reproduction in the light of tourism development, the transformation of faith space, and the transformation of Nanchang Wanshou Palace from a religious space to a tourist destination highlights the complex interaction between historical preservation and economic development. The transformation of Wanshou Palace into a tourist destination involved the recoding of its spatial functions to accommodate both sacred and secular activities.

Spatial memory and reconstruction, the process of reconstruction emphasizes highlighting spatial memory through the selective reproduction of historical narratives and cultural symbols. This approach aims to create a sense of authenticity and continuity while adapting the site to modern consumer expectations. **Aesthetic Expression of Heritage Identity**

at Nanchang Wanshou Palace The aesthetic qualities of Wanshou Palace, including its architecture and cultural narratives, were used to create a strong sense of heritage identity. This identity is further reinforced through the commodification of cultural symbols and the promotion of the site as a cultural landmark.

The Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District is actively shaping the historiographic significance of the past and constructing a multidimensional narrative during the renovation process. The historical significance of Wanshou Palace is constructed through multidimensional narratives that reflect its religious, cultural and social dimensions. These narratives are reinterpreted and adapted to meet contemporary needs, creating a dynamic and multilayered understanding of the past. This chapter emphasizes the importance of balancing the preservation of historical authenticity with the adaptive use of cultural heritage. This balance is achieved through careful planning, public education, and sustainable development practices that ensure the long-term viability of the site. This chapter discusses future directions, and the analysis concludes with a discussion of future strategies for the cultural preservation and consumption of Wanshou Palace's heritage. These strategies include maintaining cultural authenticity, promoting public participation, and exploring innovative ways to integrate the heritage site into modern urban life.

This chapter concludes that the history of mass consumption plays a key role in the conservation and utilization of Wanshou Palace. By analyzing the site's transformation from a religious site to a cultural Consumption landmark, the chapter demonstrates how Historical Consumption narratives and cultural symbols can be reinterpreted and commodified to meet contemporary demands. In a modern consumer society, balancing Historical Consumption authenticity with modern consumption functions is crucial for the sustainable development of cultural heritage sites. Wanshou Palace provides an example for other heritage sites to follow, demonstrating the potential for cultural heritage to flourish in a modern consumer society through adaptive use, public engagement and sustainable practices.



## Chapter V

### **Reconstructing the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District of Nanchang in Modern China and Historical Consumption Research**

Using the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District in Nanchang as a case study, this chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the dynamic relationship between cultural heritage conservation and Historical Consumption in the context of modern China. By exploring the specific practices of architectural restoration, revitalization of cultural activities and tourism development in the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District, it aims to reveal how to achieve the revitalization and sustainable development of cultural heritage based on the protection of the historical site, and to provide references and lessons for other similar projects. The Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical Consumption and Cultural District, as an important case study of modern China's cultural heritage preservation and consumption history, demonstrates a blend of tradition and modernity. This chapter explores how the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District realizes the reproduction of the past and the construction of consumer history in the context of modern China through the restoration of the Iron Pillar Wanshou Palace building, cultural activities, and tourism development by means of a specific case study, emphasizing that the preservation of cultural heritage is not only a continuation of historical memory, but also a practice of consumption in modern society. It emphasizes that the preservation of cultural heritage is not only the continuation of historical memory, but also a practice of consumption in modern society, and further understands its cultural significance and economic value in modern society. The conservation and development practice of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District in Nanchang fully embodies the exploration and achievement of modern China in the preservation of cultural heritage and the construction of consumption history. This chapter reveals the cultural significance and economic value of Wanshou Palace in modern society by analyzing specific cases of architectural restoration, cultural activity reproduction, and tourism development.

#### **5.1 Architectural Techniques and Reproduction of Historical Space**

##### **5.1.1 Restorative Reconstruction of Tiezhu Manshougong**

As the core building of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District, the restoration and reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is an important practice of reproducing the past. The restoration and reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace is based on rigorous archaeological excavation and detailed study of historical documents. By studying the foundations of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace site, the archaeological team revealed the historical foundations, architectural layout, and key relics of the Wanshou Palace, providing a rich physical basis for the restoration. These relics include the main hall, the back hall, the burning furnace and the octagonal locking jiao well, etc. They not only show the original appearance of the Wanshou Palace, but also provide an important reference for reconstruction. Meanwhile, historical documents, such as the Tongzhi of Wanshou Palace of Easy Mountain and Nanchang County Records, as well as pictorial materials, provide a detailed historical background. The documents documented the architectural features and history of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, and this information complemented the archaeological

findings to ensure the accuracy of the restoration work. Combined with this documentation, the restoration team was able to restore as much as possible the original appearance of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, allowing the historical authenticity of the building to be preserved. The reconstruction team restored the architectural style and decorative details of the Wanshou Palace to ensure that the restored building is as close as possible to the historical original in form and function. During the restoration process, traditional architectural techniques such as mortise and tenon construction, wood carving and brick carving were used, and its architectural structure and decorative details were faithful to the historical records, reflecting the unique style of Gan School architecture. The Tiezhu Wanshou Palace building retains the essence of traditional techniques and enhances its historical and cultural value. The restoration and reconstruction of the buildings not only reproduce the historical style, but also make these buildings a touchable and perceptible historical carrier. At the same time, the combination of modern technology improves the stability and safety of the buildings, ensuring that the restored Tiezhu Wanshou Palace not only recreates the appearance of the past, but also meets the needs of modern use. This combination of technology and craftsmanship not only preserves the historical authenticity, but also enhances the building's modern display and visit functions. The restorative reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace not only focuses on the appearance of the building, but also on the reproduction of the spatial layout and functions. The reconstructed Wanshou Palace follows the traditional symmetrical layout of the central axis, with clear spatial hierarchy from the mountain gate to the main hall and the back hall, reflecting the rigor and symmetry of traditional Chinese architecture. This layout is of great significance in traditional Chinese architecture, reflecting not only the practical function of the building, but also the concept of order in traditional Chinese culture.

Tiezhu Wanshou Palace reconstruction, the use of the Ming and Qing dynasties in Jiangxi Province, a common form of heavy eaves hermetic roof, Jiangxi architecture in this period, especially religious buildings and official buildings, widely used in the form of heavy eaves hermetic roof of this architectural form not only reflects the high level of architectural art, but also reflects its important position in the local religion and culture. Tiezhu Wanshou Palace heavy eaves hysterial roof of the use of the building appears more majestic, but also in line with the traditional Chinese architecture of symmetry, rigorous aesthetic principles. It restores the aesthetic characteristics and cultural atmosphere of traditional architecture. The reconstructed palace is not only a historical building, but also a place of cultural experience, attracting tourists and scholars through the display of traditional architectural skills and historical culture, and becoming a cultural place for consuming history.

### **5.1.2 Combination of restoration and modernization**

In the restoration process of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighborhood, the combination of traditional craftsmanship and modern technology is crucial. This combination not only preserves the cultural and aesthetic value of the historical building, but also enhances its applicability and safety in the modern environment. In order to meet the demands of modern use, a variety of modern technologies have been introduced into the restoration process. These techniques improve the safety and stability of the building and enable it to adapt to the challenges of the modern environment. For example, modern reinforcement techniques are used to enhance the seismic capacity of the building and ensure its stability in natural disasters such as earthquakes. At the same time, the use of modern

materials significantly improves the waterproofing and fireproofing performance of the building and extends the service life of the building. In order to meet the needs of modern use, modern reinforcement techniques are introduced in the restoration process to improve the safety and stability of the building. Modern reinforcement techniques are widely used to enhance the seismic capacity of buildings and ensure their stability in natural disasters such as earthquakes. For example, carbon fiber reinforcement technology is used to enhance the structural strength of the building, a material that is not only lightweight and high-strength, but can also be perfectly combined with traditional building structures without affecting the historical appearance of the building. Meanwhile, epoxy resin repair technology is used to repair damaged wooden components. With high strength and good adhesion, epoxy resin can effectively repair cracks and damaged parts while maintaining the original appearance of the building. For example, in the restoration of 36 Contract Lane (Holding Chizhitang), due to the tilting of the original wooden columns of the building, carbon fiber cloth was used to reinforce and epoxy resin glue was used to fix the new wooden structure, achieving the effect of “repairing the old as the old”. Traditional methods are essential for maintaining the historical integrity of the Wanshou Palace, ensuring that restoration efforts respect its original design and craftsmanship (Yang et al., 2024: 152). The restoration team used carbon fiber cloth to reinforce and epoxy resin glue to fix the new wooden structure, ensuring structural stability while maintaining the original architectural style. The use of modern materials also significantly improved the building's waterproofing and fire resistance. For example, new waterproofing materials were applied to the roof and walls, effectively preventing rainwater leakage and extending the building's service life. At the same time, the use of fireproofing materials has improved the fire resistance of the building, ensuring the safety of the building in case of fire. The use of these modern materials not only enhances the durability of the building, but also meets modern building safety standards.

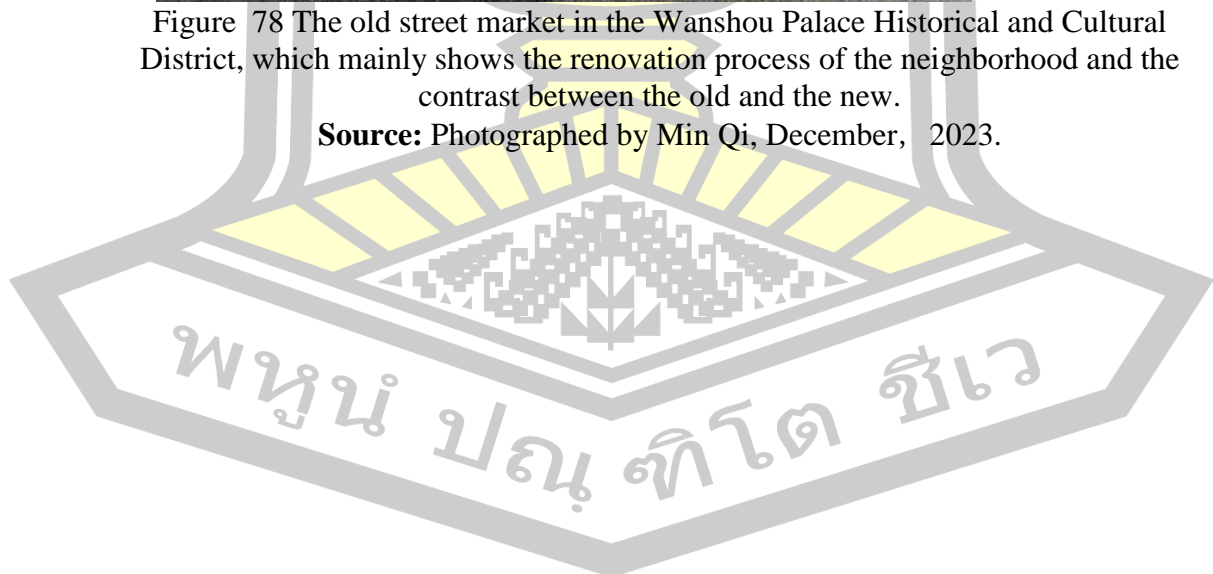
During the restoration process, the principle of “restoring the old as the old” was strictly followed, preserving the original architectural style and materials as much as possible. The restoration team invited inheritors of intangible cultural heritage to participate in the construction, using traditional crafts such as mortise and tenon structure, wood carving, brick carving, etc., to ensure the authenticity of architectural details. These traditional crafts not only demonstrate the superb skills of Jiangxi architecture, but also provide inspiration for modern architecture. For example, the restoration of Gan School houses has preserved such characteristic elements as traditional brick and wood structures, horse-head walls, carved doors and windows. The wood carving craft in the main hall of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace adopts traditional relief and perspective carving techniques, demonstrating the exquisite carpentry skills of Jiangxi region. The brick carving process uses gray bricks as the material to carve out exquisite patterns and motifs. Through the preservation of traditional craftsmanship, the building not only retains a sense of history, but also reflects the unique style of architectural decoration in Jiangxi. On the basis of preserving the historical space, the restored traditional residential buildings have been given a new lease of life by introducing modern commercial functions and adding modern facilities such as air-conditioning, internet and intelligent lighting, which have given new life to the Gan School residential buildings. For example, traditional living rooms are transformed into tea rooms or cafes so that visitors can enjoy modern services in an ancient architectural environment. This integration of cultural and commercial functions not only enhances the practical value of the buildings and

provides tourists with a rich cultural experience, but also brings positive benefits to the local society and economy. The restored buildings have become an important resource for cultural tourism, attracting a large number of tourists and injecting new vitality into the local economy. At the same time, the operation of these buildings provides employment opportunities for local residents and promotes the sustainable development of the community. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District has achieved a harmonious coexistence of tradition and modernity through the combination of restoration and modernization. This strategy not only preserves the cultural heritage value of the historic buildings, but also meets the needs of modern society for use, making an important contribution to the development of local cultural tourism.



Figure 78 The old street market in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District, which mainly shows the renovation process of the neighborhood and the contrast between the old and the new.

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, December, 2023.





The Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District has attracted a large number of tourists and scholars by showcasing the traditional architectural techniques and history and culture of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, making it a place for the consumption of history and culture. Here, people can not only appreciate the aesthetics of traditional architecture, but also gain a deeper understanding of the historical and cultural background of Wanshou Palace by participating in guided tours, exhibitions and cultural activities. For example, the restorative redevelopment of Wanshou Palace for the exhibition and preservation of the site has designed an open space that preserves the site strata from the Ming, Qing, and Republican Dynasties, while providing a place for visitors to view and rest. This area can be regarded as part of the protected area of the site, and is used to display the results of the archaeological excavations and historical relics, such as the “old objects” excavated by the archaeologists, such as stone elements, stone grooves, and stone wells, etc., which are displayed in the lawn area in front of the incinerator. This kind of display not only enhances visitors' understanding and recognition of Wanshou Palace culture, but also brings vitality to the local economy.



Figure 80 Display of excavated stone structures at the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace site

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, December, 2024.

Tiezhu Manshougong as a place where people have always prayed for blessings and sacrifices, with the neighborhood positioning to dilute the religious incense, do not burn incense, do not kowtow, do not worship incense. However, coming here to pray for blessings still continues, and many people who visit here will buy wishing cards, make good wishes, and hang them in the late Tiezhu Manshougong. The consumerization of the history of the Manshougong has made knowledge of the culture and history of the Manshougong more popular, and this cultural experience not only enhances tourists' understanding and identification with the culture of the Manshougong, but also brings vitality to the local economy. These forms not only provide different interpretations of history, but also reflect the different needs and interests of society in history. Tourists visit the Wanshou Palace Historical

and Cultural Neighborhood through tours to explore the neighborhood, purchase related cultural commodities in the neighborhood, and experience related tour services. Further understanding of Wanshou Palace exists because of Xu Xun (Xu Zhenjun), why people in Jiangxi believe in Xu Zhenjun, in-depth understanding of the spirit of Xu Zhenjun - clean governance, love the people like a son, for the people to cure the disease, in the hearts of the people have a very high status. Tiezhu Wanshou Palace as a place to commemorate Xu Zhenjun water management merit, folk legend of Xu Zhenjun's Tiezhu Lock Jiao Long story. The story of Xu Zhenjun is a folklore resource, and when people visit the Tiezhu well, they can help to learn and understand the story of Xu Zhenjun, which is a way of preserving cultural resources in a living form. Tourists in the neighborhood “Wanshou Palace” as a specific theme, the Nanchang Wanshou Palace historical knowledge, Xu Zhenjun Tiezhu lock auger historical stories, historical figures Xu Zhenjun consumption, consumption of history behavior mode makes the Wanshou Palace history and culture can be reproduced and dissemination, but also to meet the needs of the modern society of cultural experience. The consumption of tourists in the buildings and spaces of Wanshou Palace allows tourists to immerse themselves in the historical atmosphere and enhances their perception of the past, and the restorative reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace has an important social and economic impact. As a symbol of history and culture, the restoration of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace not only preserves Nanchang's important historical heritage, but also provides a place of cultural identity for local residents. Here, people can revisit history and enhance their sense of identity with the local culture. From an economic point of view, the reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace promotes the development of local tourism, attracts a large number of tourists, and injects new vitality into the local economy. As an emerging economic model, cultural tourism creates a large number of jobs and drives the development of related industries through historical buildings and cultural activities. Tiezhu Wanshou Palace and Ganpai residences in the neighborhood have also given rise to a variety of cultural commodities, such as historical-themed souvenirs, cultural and creative products and traditional handicrafts. These commodities commodify historical memories, enabling tourists to continue the act of consumption into their lives by purchasing items related to history. This mode of consumption integrates the reproduction of the past into daily life and becomes part of the history of consumption.





Figure 81 The prayer plaque of people making wishes in the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace  
**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, December, 2023.

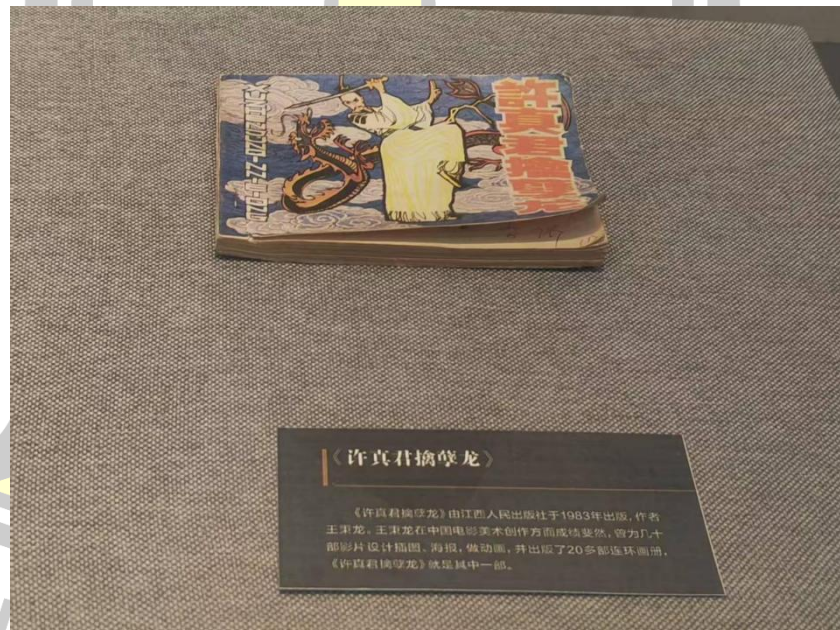


Figure 82 Xu Zhenjun captures the evil dragon" displayed in the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace  
**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, December, 2024.

### 5.2.3 Reproduction of traditional folk activities

A Wanshou Palace, half of Yuzhang history. As the core business district of Nanchang, Wanshou Palace, with Tiezhu Wanshou Palace as the core, integrates Gan Poyang culture, Jiangyou merchant culture, Gan architecture culture, folk culture and non-heritage culture, and has become a new name card of Nanchang by virtue of the innovative fusion of ancient charm and trend. Since the opening of Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighborhood, the positioning of Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighborhood has been “Historical Neighborhood - City Memory” as the theme, and it is planned around the planning theme of “Ethnicity, Folk Habitat, and Folklore”. As the core of Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighborhood, Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, through a series of traditional folk activities, vividly reproduces the unique charm of Jiangxi local culture. For example, there are non-heritage cultural performances such as Gan Opera, tea picking opera, dragon dance, lion dance, bench dragon and so on during the Spring Festival every year. Gan Opera, as one of the four ancient Chinese vocal cadences, combining high cadence, chaotic bomb, Kun Cavity and a variety of other tunes, has the artistic characteristics of “gongs and drums singing, human voices to help and”, which tells the story of Jiangxi that has been passed down for thousands of years and is brilliant and magnificent. Tea Picking Opera is one of the traditional Chinese operas, Jiangxi as one of the birthplaces of tea picking opera, opera actors simulate the tea picking women and tea men with tea blues in their hands to pick tea, dancing and interpreting tea picking daily life. Gan Opera and Tea Picking Opera, as representative types of Jiangxi local culture, are given new life in the performances in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District. Gan Opera, with its unique singing and performance style, demonstrates the deep heritage of Jiangxi local culture. The tea-picking opera attracts a large number of tourists to participate and experience with its fast rhythm and vivid performance form, enabling tourists to feel the charm of Jiangxi local culture at any time, and tourists promote the protection and inheritance of cultural heritage in the form of “consuming history” through consumption. Jiangxi's rich cultural heritage is vividly displayed in the Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighborhood, where dragon and lion dances and non-heritage cultural performances such as bench dragons are particularly eye-catching. These traditional art forms not only bring a visual feast to visitors, but also become an important carrier of cultural inheritance and consumption. In the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighborhood, dragon and lion dances are important performances during the Spring Festival. The Dragon Dance is usually performed on the main streets and squares of the neighborhood, and the dancers show the agility and majesty of the dragon through their flexible movements and tacit cooperation. The Lion Dance attracts tourists with its lively performance style, in which the lion jumps and tumbles, showing its agility and strength. These performances not only inherited the folk culture of Jiangxi, but also enhanced the dissemination of culture through interaction with tourists. The bench dragon is a unique form of non-heritage cultural performance in Jiangxi, especially in Beizhou Village of Tacheng Township in Nanchang County and Shigang Township in Xinjian District, where it is widely spread. The bench dragon is made up of many benches connected together, with candles placed on each section of the bench to form a winding “dragon body”. During the performance, the performers hold the benches and form a dragon that is hundreds or even thousands of meters long, dancing in various postures to the sound of gongs

and drums. This kind of performance is not only highly ornamental, but also carries the good meaning of praying for peace and good weather. It not only demonstrates the unique charm of local culture in Jiangxi, but also enhances the cohesion and cultural identity of the community. These activities further strengthen the dissemination and identification of local culture through the participation and consumption of tourists. Visitors consume the history and culture of Wanshou Palace through participation in the Gan Opera and Tea Picking Opera performance activities. The reproduction of traditional folk activities is not only an inheritance of local culture, but also a reinterpretation and utilization of traditional culture in modern society. This act of consuming history not only brings direct benefits to the local economy, but also promotes the protection and inheritance of cultural heritage through cultural dissemination. For example, the Wanshou Palace Neighborhood has transformed traditional art forms, such as Gan Opera and Tea Casting Opera, into consumable cultural products by organizing non-heritage cultural performances, so that historical and cultural heritages can be reproduced and passed on in modern society. Visitors can directly participate in these traditional folk activities by watching performances and participating in interactive experiences. In addition, the cultural and creative products in the neighborhood are combined with the non-heritage cultural performances, further strengthening the identification with the local culture. By combining traditional folk activities with modern forms of consumption, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighborhood has successfully transformed historical and cultural heritage into consumable cultural products. This model not only enhances the richness of the cultural experience, but also expands the scope of cultural consumption, allowing the historical and cultural heritage to be reproduced and passed on in modern society.

Since the opening of Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighborhood, it has not only enriched the cultural experience of tourists through the modern reproduction of non-heritage cultural performances such as Gan Opera, tea picking opera, dragon and lion dances, and so on. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighborhood has invited more than 20 non-heritage skill inheritors to set up studios here through the forms of “non-heritage + study”, “non-heritage + cultural creation”, “non-heritage + performing arts” and so on. The exhibition and inheritance of skills. For example, Li Qiang, the representative inheritor of “Yuzhang Porcelain Carving”, set up a booth in the neighborhood to display porcelain carving skills and attract more people to understand Nanchang's non-heritage culture. In addition, the non-heritage cultural and creative stores in the neighborhood sell stamps, postcards and other products related to the attractions in Nanchang, so that tourists can experience non-heritage culture in the process of consumption. Stalls are also set up in the Xiantan Bazaar in the neighborhood through, for example, Xinyu summer cloth embroidery, Xixia blowing sugar figures, and Youlan painting sugar figures, which enable visitors to further enrich their traditional non-heritage cultural experience. The form of consuming history promotes the protection and inheritance of cultural heritage and provides new ideas and paths for the modern development of traditional culture. Ganpai dwellings have also been restored and reused as cultural and creative stores, specialty restaurants and handicraft stores, preserving the traditional style and meeting the consumption needs of modern tourists. By participating in these folk activities, tourists consume the historical value of Ganpai dwellings. This consumption behavior not only brings direct benefits to the local economy, but also further promotes the revitalization and utilization of cultural heritage.

Consumption of history is embodied in the fact that tourists consume the historical symbols of Wanshou Palace through the purchase of these cultural and creative products, which further strengthens their identification with the local culture. Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighborhood not only reproduces traditional culture, but also enhances the sense of participation and interactivity of tourists through modern art and cultural experience activities. For example, the neighborhood used modern technology to create light and shadow shows and concerts, combining traditional musical instruments to play modern pop music, such as “The Wind is Rising” and “Blue and White Porcelain,” which attracted many young visitors. In addition, the neighborhood has introduced resident performance forms such as national style dance, commentary and rap, stand-up comedy and musicals, providing visitors with a rich cultural and entertainment experience. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighborhood has further expanded the scope of cultural consumption through regular and thematic cultural activities. For example, there are monthly thematic activities in the district, such as the “Year of Blessings in Wanshou Palace”, “Flower Tide Festival” and the National Heroes' Meeting based on the novels of Jin Yong, etc., realizing the goal of “monthly themes, weekly activities and daily contents”. “These activities not only attracted a large number of tourists, but also attracted a large number of visitors. These activities not only attracted a large number of tourists, but also formed a pattern of integrated development of non-heritage tours, cultural tours and study tours. Traditional folk activities in the neighborhood should retain the “theme-based” and “experiential” approach, and at the same time, through modern means, such as multimedia displays and interactive experiences, allow tourists to better understand and feel the historical and cultural value of traditional non-heritage.



Figure 83 Xinyu City Xiabu Embroidery Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition (left ) Nanchang City Intangible Cultural Heritage Xixia Blowing Candy Man (right )

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, July, 2024.

### 5.3 Tourism Development and the Construction of Consumer History

#### 5.3.1 Heritage Identity Shaping in Tourism Development

In the process of tourism development, the shaping of heritage identity is not only a practice of historical heritage protection, but also a deep expression of cultural identity and local characteristics. Heritage tourism development needs to integrate heritage conservation with tourism development by taking into full consideration the needs of tourists from different cultural backgrounds and the participation of local communities while protecting the heritage itself, and combining the goals of sustainable development of economy, society and environment. By demonstrating the unique value of heritage and meeting the experience needs of tourists while promoting local economic development, heritage tourism has become an important vehicle for shaping and spreading heritage identity.

As an important cultural heritage in Jiangxi, the protection and development of Nanchang Wanshou Palace is not only related to the restoration and utilization of historical buildings, but also bears the responsibility of inheriting and shaping the local heritage identity of Jiangxi. In the practice of conservation and development of Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District, how to balance the needs of modern tourists and the connotation of history and culture has become a key issue in shaping the heritage identity of Jiangxi. The remains of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace in the neighborhood, the cultural traditions of Wanshou Palace, and the unique folklore of Jiangxi constitute an important attraction for local tourism, which in turn profoundly influences the preservation, presentation, and interpretation of Wanshou Palace's heritage. As Kevin Walsh argues in *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-modern World*, the central role of museums is to promote an understanding of cultural identity. He argues that the reproduction of heritage is not a static presentation of history, but rather a cultural product that can be continuously redefined and given new value through tourism consumption in modern society. Based on this theory, Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighborhood, as an "open museum", not only realizes the reproduction of history, but also promotes the dissemination and interaction of culture through the shaping of heritage identity. In practice, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighborhood combines the diversity of heritage and culture with the experience of tourists through symbolization and commercialization. The Neighborhood has adopted a rich variety of display means, such as the display of ruins and remains, guide board interpretation, timed guided tours, and cultural and creative product development, to transform historical heritage into attractive cultural consumer goods. At the same time, modern digital communication means, such as short videos and social media, are used to spread the history and cultural connotation of Wanshou Palace to a wider audience, attracting a large number of tourists to experience it. The restoration and reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, the core of the neighborhood, is based on archaeological and historical documents to ensure the historical authenticity of the building and to highlight its significance as a cultural symbol. The symmetrical layout of its central axis and the architectural style of the heavy eaves and hermetic roofs characteristic of the Ming and Qing dynasties reproduce the unique charm of Gan School architecture through precise restoration. This kind of identity shaping with material heritage as the core makes Tiezhu Wanshou Palace become an important symbol of Gan Poyang culture. Meanwhile, the Gan School residences in the neighborhood have been transformed into cultural and creative stores, specialty restaurants and handicraft stores through restoration and innovative use. Effective heritage tourism

development requires a synergy between conservation efforts and tourism activities, ensuring that historical sites are preserved while being accessible to visitors.(Ruseva, 2023: 63)While preserving the historical features, these spaces allow visitors to visualize the deep integration of history and culture in the form of immersive experience. This way of combining material heritage with modern commerce not only strengthens the cultural dissemination function of heritage, but also enhances its economic benefits.

Overall, the development practice of the Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighborhood demonstrates how the sustainable development of cultural heritage can be achieved through restorative redevelopment, preservation of historical texture, and innovative cultural activities and tourism product development. The symbolization and commercialization of heritage in this process not only enables its preservation and inheritance, but also provides new cultural consumer goods for modern society, while injecting vitality into local economic development. As a model for the protection and dissemination of Jiangxi's cultural heritage, the experience of the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter provides an important reference and inspiration for other historical and cultural quarters. Under the dual background of globalization and social development, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Quarter focuses on attracting tourists from all over the world, while at the same time reinforcing the “localized” expression of its heritage, respecting its cultural roots and local characteristics. This strategy of combining conservation and adaptive use not only realizes a win-win situation for both culture and economy, but also provides an important idea for modern society to deal with cultural heritage issues. In the future development of heritage tourism, more attention should be paid to the shaping of heritage identity and the transformation of historical heritage into products with both cultural value and market potential, so as to realize the sustainable protection and development of heritage.

### **5.3.2 Balance between authenticity and commercialization in consumer history**

In the process of tourism development, the Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighborhood faces a complex balance between authenticity and commercialization. As Kevin Walsh points out in *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-modern World*, the reappearance of heritage in modern society is not a static replica of history, but is redefined and consumed in a dynamic social context. The authenticity of cultural heritage is not a simple reproduction of history, but a cultural connotation that is reclaimed through narrative and experience in the midst of constant change. The development practice of Nanchang Wanshou Palace is a concrete embodiment of this viewpoint, and its exploration between authenticity and commercialization provides important insights into cultural heritage protection and tourism development. As one of the ten major cultural projects in Nanchang City, Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighborhood preserves the neighborhood's texture through the restorative reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, and “repairs the old as the old” treatment of the Gan School houses, in order to maximize the architectural appearance of the Ming and Qing Dynasties. This practice not only maintains the authenticity of history on the material level, but also highlights its cultural symbolism through architectural symbolization, successfully introducing the historical narrative of the past into modern society. In addition, when the Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighborhood was renovated to incorporate the Nanchang Folk

Museum, the traditional intangible cultural heritage of the neighborhood, such as the Gan Opera, the Tea Casting Opera, the Dragon Dance, and the Lion Dance, were re-presented through the support of modern display and performance technology, realizing the scene of singing and performing in front of the True Lord's Hall. These performances retain the traditional artistic characteristics while incorporating modern aesthetic demands, providing visitors with a more attractive cultural experience. As a concentration of cultural heritage, historical and cultural districts are important carriers for presenting the past and promoting cultural dissemination. In the tourism development of these districts, how to strike a balance between the true reproduction of history and meeting the market demand for consumption is always an important issue for development and management. For example, Lijiang Ancient City, as a world cultural heritage, is famous for its Naxi culture, Dongba script and ancient water system. In terms of reproducing the past, Lijiang Ancient City has maintained the material authenticity of the historic district by repairing traditional houses and protecting the unique structure of the ancient water system. In addition, by organizing cultural activities such as the Dongba Cultural Festival and Naxi ancient music performance, the local intangible cultural heritage is reproduced, which enhances tourists' perception and identification with the local culture. In terms of consumption history, Lijiang Ancient City meets the consumption needs of tourists through the development of cultural products and services (such as souvenirs of the Dongba language, specialty inns and experiences of national costumes). These products and services have deeply explored the local cultural connotation, avoided simple commercial replication, and made the consumption behavior of tourists become active participation and dissemination of culture. However, in recent years, Lijiang Old Town has also been criticized for excessive commercialization. Some aborigines have been forced to move out, and too many bars and commercialized restaurants have eroded the cultural atmosphere of the ancient city. In response, Lijiang has gradually reduced the encroachment of excessive commercial elements through policy regulation, restored the original cultural characteristics of the neighborhoods, and emphasized the development principle of "culture before business".

In order to meet the diversified needs of modern tourists, the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural Neighborhood actively introduces modern commercial elements and transforms heritage values into cultural products for consumption. For example, cultural and creative commodities such as refrigerator stickers, notebooks, bookmarks, etc., designed with Tiezhu Wanshou Palace as the core symbol, integrate the cultural symbols into the consumption behavior of tourists, so that the history can be disseminated and regenerated in the consumption scene. These commodities combine the needs of the times and tourists, and enhance the sense of cultural identity through design innovation. At the same time, the neighborhood has created a series of immersive interactive scenes, such as the non-heritage artisanal museum, cultural and creative stores, and new cultural tourism spaces such as the "One Mai" mini-theater. In particular, a stand-up comedy show that incorporates local culture has attracted a large number of young visitors, injecting modern vitality into the neighborhood. This innovative model demonstrates how commercialization can power the dissemination of culture, making cultural heritage not just a historical narrative, but also an important force for local economic development, and Kevin Walsh argues that the recreation of the past not only provides a sense of meaning and identity for the present, but also a content base for cultural consumption. At Nanchang Wanshou Palace, restorative reconstruction, cultural activities and cultural and creative products together form this

foundation, providing rich material for the practice of consuming history. Consuming history is not only a passive consumption of heritage, but also reacts to heritage narratives through visitor participation and market demand. The immersive experience mode of “non-heritage + study” in the non-heritage artisanal museum in the neighborhood fully integrates cultural inheritance and modern educational needs, making the heritage narrative more in line with the value orientation of contemporary society and promoting a dynamic dialogue between history and modernity. In addition, consuming history also reflects the role of tourists as the main body of cultural transmission. In the cultural tourism experience of Wanshou Palace, tourists not only connect with the heritage through viewing and consumption, but also become the co-constructors of historical reproduction. In this process, the authenticity of heritage and commercialization are organically balanced, and the needs of historical values and contemporary contexts are accommodated.

The ultimate goal of both the recreation of the past and the consumption of history points to the enhancement of cultural identity and the promotion of cultural heritage. As Walsh said, heritage is not only a symbol of the past, but also an important tool for identity construction. In Nanchang Wanshougong, through the restoration of the Tiezhu Wanshougong, the preservation and utilization of Gan School architecture, and the reproduction of non-heritage performances, the heritage identity of Jiangxi's local culture has been successfully shaped. This identity is not only reinforced in the local community, but also extended to a wider network of cultural dissemination through the consumption behavior of tourists, creating a cultural dialogue between the past and the present, the local and the global. The balance of commercialization in the district explores the historical and cultural connotations of Wanshougong as deeply as possible, and mobilizes the participation of multiple parties in the protection and development of the cultural heritage, including the local government, experts and scholars, community residents and enterprises, to ensure a balance between the needs of the stakeholders. Within the Nanchang Wanshougong Historical and Cultural Neighborhood, the sense of participation of community residents in neighborhood protection can be strengthened, for example, by setting up residents' cultural workshops, so that local residents can become active participants in the cultural inheritance and consumption of history. The problem of cultural dilution caused by excessive commercialization is avoided. Guiding pluralistic participation: balancing the needs of stakeholders focusing on the deep combination of culture and commerce, avoiding a single low-end model of commodity sales. Original designs can be encouraged to transform historical and cultural symbols into cultural and creative products with market appeal, while ensuring the cultural content of the products. For example, Wanshou Palace can continue to develop high-quality cultural derivatives centered on the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, such as themed cultural and creative books and virtual reality cultural experience programs.

Overall, the tourism development practice of Nanchang Wanshougong Historical and Cultural District demonstrates the possibility of dynamic balance between authenticity and commercialization. Through accurate heritage reproduction and innovative commercialization practices, the neighborhood has successfully achieved the protection, transmission and dissemination of cultural heritage. This model not only provides an important reference for the development of local cultural tourism, but also proves that cultural heritage can be transformed into an important resource for economic development and cultural identity in modern society. In the future, in the

context of both globalization and localization, the development of cultural heritage needs to pay further attention to the in-depth combination of culture and market, so as to promote the sustainable development of cultural heritage.



Figure 84 Cultural and creative products related to the theme of Wanshougong in the Wanshougong Historical and Cultural Neighborhood (Figures 1 and 2 on the upper left and the lower left of the figure), and Nanchang fish topiary works in the Non-Heritage Artisanal Museum within the neighborhood (Figures middle and right of the figure)

Source: Photographed by Min Qi, December, 2023.

### 5.3.3 Integration of local dialects and food culture

Local dialect and food culture are important parts of cultural heritage and indispensable cultural elements in tourism development. Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District has formed a unique brand of the district by creating the brand image of “the first cultural street of Gan Poyang” and combining the history, culture and dialect characteristics of Nanchang. This branding not only enhances the popularity of the neighborhood, but also strengthens the cultural identity of tourists to the neighborhood. In the construction and development of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District in Nanchang, the integration of dialect and food culture not only enhances the immersive experience of tourists, but also helps the inheritance and dissemination of local culture. As a carrier of local language and culture, Nanchang dialect plays an important role in the neighborhood's visitor experience. For example, a Nanchang dialect wall has been set up in the neighborhood, and the Nanchang dialect is skillfully used in cultural guides, opera performances, and the creation of cultural and creative products. For example, Gan Opera, as a representative of traditional Jiangxi opera, retains a large number of Nanchang dialect elements in its performances. This not only makes the performance present distinctive local characteristics, but also allows the audience to perceive the unique flavor of local culture through the language. For example, the Nanchang dialect vocabulary on the dialect wall, such as “Fuqi Tuotuo” and “Chaga”, etc. By integrating the dialect into the branding and promotion of the neighborhood, it not only demonstrates the unique linguistic charm of Nanchang, but also further highlights its cultural characteristics and helps visitors to better understand the cultural background and folklore of the neighborhood. By integrating the dialect into the brand promotion of

Nanchang, it not only shows the unique language charm of the neighborhood, but also further highlights its cultural characteristics and helps tourists better understand the cultural background and folk characteristics of the neighborhood. This kind of language and culture display can enhance the sense of identity and experience of visitors to the neighborhood culture, thus improving the cultural attractiveness of the neighborhood. At the same time, the moderate use of Nanchang dialect in the guide interpretation in the neighborhood provides visitors with a more grounded cultural interpretation experience and increases the sense of interaction and intimacy. In addition, some cultural and creative products, such as postcards, badges and audio files themed on the Nanchang dialect, show the fun and uniqueness of the dialect and attract the attention of young tourists. These initiatives have transformed the Nanchang dialect from a living language into a cultural symbol, effectively promoting the protection and dissemination of the dialect.



Figure 85 Nanchang dialect display on the wall of Nanchang in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District

**Source:** Photographed by Min Qi, July, 2024.

Food is an important entrance to perceive local culture, and Nanchang's local specialties are also one of the core elements in the cultural Consumption of Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District. The restaurants opened in the neighborhood focus on traditional Gan cuisine and combine it with modern catering, forming a multi-sensory tourism experience integrating cultural experience and taste enjoyment. It provides tourists with the opportunity to savor local culture. For example, “Wakan Soup” and “Sugar Cake” , as important representatives of Jiangxi's food culture, have been introduced into the neighborhood's specialties. In addition, some of the themed restaurants in the neighborhood combine historical stories with local dishes, and through the design of menus and the creation of an atmosphere in the dining environment, tourists can savor the local culture and enjoy the local cuisine. atmosphere creation, allowing visitors to learn about the cultural stories of

Nanchang Wanshou Palace while savoring the local cuisine. For example, themed dishes developed in conjunction with the history of Nanchang, such as the “Wanshou Palace Banquet” or the “Gan School of Taste Experience”, are not only a form of cultural narrative, but also a new mode of promoting the spread of local food culture. It allows tourists to experience the uniqueness of local food culture, and also reflects the innovative application of traditional food in modern contexts, becoming part of the tourists' experience of life in Nanchang. By combining local dialect and food culture, the neighborhood further enhances the richness of the cultural experience, allowing visitors to experience the unique charm of Nanchang culture in a multi-sensory immersion. The Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District has achieved successful shaping of its heritage identity through tourism development, while focusing on the balance between authenticity and commercialization in its Consumption History. In tourism development, the deep integration of local dialect and food culture enhances the cultural attractiveness of the neighborhood. For example, special catering slogans or service phrases in Nanchang dialect can make tourists feel the dual local characteristics of language and food in the process of ordering and eating; the neighborhood can also set up dialect teaching experience or interesting language interactive activities, such as “Nanchang Dialect for a Day” or “Local Cuisine The neighborhood can also set up dialect teaching experience or interesting language interactive activities, such as “Nanchang Dialect One Day” or “Local Cuisine Classroom”, so that tourists can learn the dialect and understand the local culture in a relaxed interaction. In these ways, Nanchang Wanshou Palace has made the local dialect and food culture a bridge for tourists to interact with the local culture in depth. The integration of local dialect and food culture further enriches the cultural experience of visitors and makes the neighborhood a cultural window where tradition and modernity meet. It not only enhances the cultural experience of Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District, but also positively promotes the local economy and cultural heritage. On the one hand, this multi-sensory cultural experience effectively prolongs the stay of tourists and drives the development of various industries such as catering, cultural creation and performance in the neighborhood; on the other hand, through the reproduction and innovation of local language and food, these cultural elements can be continuously revitalized in the modern society, so as to avoid being neglected or lost due to the change of time.

Local dialect and food culture are the key elements of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District in Nanchang to realize the revitalization and utilization of cultural heritage. Within the framework of the reproduction of the past and Historical Consumption, the dialect and food culture give visitors a rich cultural experience through multi-sensory interactions, which promotes the neighborhood's tourism development and local economic growth. Through innovative integration practices, these cultural elements not only strengthened tourists' perception and identification with Nanchang culture, but also provided a sustainable path for the preservation and inheritance of local culture. Future research should further focus on the multidimensional value of cultural heritage in modern society and explore the application of digital technology and innovative means in cultural heritage protection. At the same time, it should focus on public education and cultural dissemination to enhance public awareness of the value of cultural heritage and strengthen the sense of cultural identity through a variety of means. The Wanshou Palace Historic and

Cultural District in Nanchang can further expand its cultural influence and become a cultural window where tradition meets modernity and a model of local cultural heritage through digital means and community cooperation. The case of Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District shows that the protection of cultural heritage and the construction of Historical Consumption need to explore new ways of revitalization and utilization on the basis of respecting history and maintaining cultural authenticity. Future research should further focus on the multidimensional value of cultural heritage in modern society and explore the application of digital technology and innovative means in cultural heritage protection. At the same time, public education and cultural communication should be emphasized to enhance public awareness of the value of cultural heritage and strengthen the sense of cultural identity through a variety of ways. The combination of dialect and cultural activities can be deepened, and more dialect-themed cultural activities can be developed, such as “Gan Storytelling” or dialect-immersive theater performances, to enhance tourists' interest in local language and culture through interaction. Further explore the narrative potential of food culture: design activities such as the “Wakan Soup Workshop” or the “Nanchang Taste Study Tour” to allow visitors to deepen their understanding of local food culture through traditional cooking experiences. Multiple dimensions of the reproduction of the past in the Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District, emphasizing the multiple impacts of such reproduction on the local economy, cultural memory and modern tourism. The case of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District demonstrates that the preservation of cultural heritage and the construction of a history of consumption require exploring new ways of adaptive use on the basis of respect for history and the preservation of cultural authenticity.



Figure 86 Nanchang special snack "white sugar cake", as one of the top ten special snacks in Nanchang, began in the Ming and Qing dynasties, and in the Ming Dynasty, white sugar cake became a tea food in major tea shops in the streets and alleys. In an era of food scarcity, white sugar cakes made from precious sugar are not available to everyone. White sugar cake is "high", there is the meaning of rising step by step, it is not only a special snack, but also the best wishes in the hearts .



Figure 87 Nanchang local specialty food "crockpot soup" is a traditional food with local characteristics in Nanchang, which is made by simmering in a special crockpot, with rich soup and rich nutrition. It is known for its unique cooking methods, rich selection of ingredients, and strong local flavors.

Source: Photographed by Min Qi, July, 2024.

### Summary

Using the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District in Nanchang as a case study, this chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the dynamic relationship between cultural heritage preservation and historical consumption in the context of modern China. By exploring the specific practices of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District in terms of architectural restoration, revitalization of cultural activities, and tourism development, this chapter aims to reveal how to achieve cultural heritage revitalization and sustainable development based on the protection of historical sites, and to provide references and lessons for other similar projects.

**Architectural Restoration and Reproduction of Historical Space** The restoration and reconstruction of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, the core building of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District, is based on rigorous archaeological excavations and detailed historical documentary research. By studying the site's infrastructure, the archaeological team revealed the historical foundations, architectural layout and key relics of Wanshou Palace, providing a rich physical basis for the restoration work. Combining historical documents and archaeological findings, the restoration team restored the original appearance of the Wanshou Palace in Tizhu as much as possible, preserving its historical authenticity. Traditional architectural techniques, such as mortise and tenon construction, wood carvings and brick carvings, were used during the restoration process to ensure the originality of the architectural details, while modern techniques were combined to enhance the stability and safety of the building. This combination of tradition and modernity not only preserves the cultural value of the historical buildings, but also adapts them for modern use. During the restoration process,

the neighborhood introduced a variety of modern technologies, such as carbon fiber reinforcement technology and epoxy resin repair technology, to enhance the building's seismic capacity and waterproofing and fireproofing performance. The application of these technologies not only extends the service life of the buildings, but also meets modern building safety standards. The restored traditional houses have been given new functions, such as tea rooms and cafes, etc. By introducing modern commercial functions and facilities (such as air-conditioning, internet and intelligent lighting), they provide visitors with a rich cultural experience and at the same time inject new vitality into the local economy.

A place for heritage preservation and Historical Consumption, the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District attracts a large number of tourists and scholars by showcasing the traditional architectural skills and historical culture of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace. The secularization of the local beliefs of Xu Zhenjun in Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, the modernized manifestation of the beliefs of Xu Zhenjun, has become an important place for Historical Consumption by not burning incense or bowing down to worship, but tourists can still express their prayers by means of wishing cards and other means. Visitors can gain a deeper understanding of the historical context of Wanshou Palace by visiting and participating in guided tours, exhibitions and cultural activities. The phenomenon of Historical Consumption of Wanshou Palace not only popularizes the historical knowledge of Wanshou Palace, but also carries the risk of simplification and commodification of history. However, through rational planning and management, Wanshou Palace has succeeded in meeting the cultural experience needs of modern visitors while preserving its historical heritage. Revival of Traditional Folk Activities The Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District has vividly reproduced the unique charm of Jiangxi's local culture through the revival of a series of traditional folk activities, such as Gan Opera, Tea Picking Opera, Dragon Dance, Lion Dance, etc. The Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District has also revitalized the traditional folk activities, such as the Gan Opera, Tea Picking Opera, Dragon Dance and Lion Dance. These activities not only provide visitors with rich cultural experiences, but also further promote the development of the local economy through the development of cultural creative products and interactive experience programs. Through the forms of “non-heritage + study” , “non-heritage + cultural creation” , “non-heritage + performing arts” , etc., the neighborhood has successfully transformed traditional art forms into consumable cultural products, so that cultural heritage can be inherited and developed in modern society. modern society to be inherited and developed.

Tourism development and Historical Consumption construction, heritage identity shaping combined with tourism development. In the process of tourism development, Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District has successfully shaped its heritage identity by means of symbolization and commercialization. Through the display of site remains, interpretation of guide boards, timed guided tours and cultural creative product development, the neighborhood has transformed its historical heritage into a cultural consumer product that attracts tourists. Through modern means of digital communication (e.g., short videos and social media), the District spreads the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District's connotations to a wider audience, attracting a large number of tourists to experience it. This identity shaping, centered on material heritage, has made Tizhu Wanshou Palace an important symbol of Ganpao culture. The Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District has the challenge of balancing authenticity and commercialization, and how to realize

commercialization while protecting historical authenticity. Through the restoration method of “repairing the old as the old” and preserving the traditional architectural style, the neighborhood maintains the historical authenticity at the material level. At the same time, through the introduction of modern commercial elements and cultural and creative products, the neighborhood transforms the value of heritage into consumable cultural products that meet the needs of modern tourists. This balance not only promotes the protection and inheritance of cultural heritage, but also injects new vitality into local economic development. The display of non-heritage handicrafts, such as: porcelain carving, sugar painting, embroidery, etc., allows visitors to further understand and participate in the inheritance of cultural heritage through the consumption of products. Integration of local dialect and food culture, the neighborhood has developed a unique cultural brand by integrating local dialect and food culture. By setting up a Nanchang dialect wall and using the Nanchang dialect in cultural guides and opera performances, the neighborhood not only showcases the unique charm of the Nanchang dialect, but also enhances visitors' sense of cultural identity. By introducing specialty restaurants combining traditional Gan cuisine and modern dining, the neighborhood provides visitors with a multi-sensory cultural experience, further enriching their cultural experience. This combination of culture and commerce not only enhances the cultural attractiveness of the neighborhood, but also promotes the development of the local economy.

To summarize, cultural heritage protection and Historical Consumption is a dynamic relationship, cultural heritage is not only the reproduction of the past of history, but also a part of cultural consumption in modern society. The reconstruction and tourism development of Nanchang Wanshou Palace demonstrates the integration of tradition and modernity, and the balance between historical authenticity and commercialization. The Nanchang Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District has successfully achieved the revitalization and sustainable development of its cultural heritage through a multifaceted effort of architectural restoration, revitalization of cultural activities and tourism development. This practice not only injects new vitality into the local economy, but also promotes the preservation and inheritance of cultural heritage in the form of cultural consumption. The case of Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District shows that in modern China, a dynamic balance can be achieved between cultural heritage protection and Historical Consumption. Through rational planning and management, cultural heritage can become an important resource for promoting local economic development and cultural identity. Future research should further focus on the multidimensional value of cultural heritage in modern society and explore the application of innovative means such as digital technology in cultural heritage protection. At the same time, public education and cultural dissemination should be strengthened to enhance public awareness of the value of cultural heritage and strengthen the sense of cultural identity.

## CHAPTER VI

### Research Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions

#### Research Conclusion

The research theme of this thesis is “Nanchang Wanshou Palace: The Reproduction of the Past and Historical Consumption in Modern China”, and it adopts a qualitative research methodology to collect a large amount of first-hand information through the review of historical documents, long-term field surveys and interviews. This combination of multi-methods ensures the comprehensiveness and depth of the study. Combining historical document analysis, fieldwork and interviews, this study restores the historical background of Wanshou Palace and provides an in-depth understanding of its practical application and impact in modern society. This multi-method integrated research approach provides the study with rich data support and a multi-faceted analytical perspective.

1. Research objectives: To study the historical and cultural connotations of Wanshou Palace and reveal its deep roots as a cultural symbol. To explore its central role in To explore its central role in the cultural heritage and social life of Jiangxi region.

This study reveals its deep roots as a cultural symbol. To explore its central role in the cultural heritage and social life of Jiangxi region by systematically combing the historical background, social and cultural development and architectural aesthetics of Wanshou Palace in Nanchang. It is found that Nanchang Wanshou Palace is not only the center of Taoist beliefs, but also a historical witness to the activities of Jiangxi merchant gangs, reflecting the cultural identity of the local society. Its architectural style, which incorporates elements of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, has become an important symbol of Gan culture and has had a wide influence among Jiangxi immigrant communities around the world.

Nanchang Wanshou Palace was built in 312, the sixth year of the Yongjia reign of the Western Jin Dynasty, initially named “Jingyang Temple”, and then underwent many name changes and reconstruction, gradually developing into a comprehensive place integrating religion, commerce and culture, and becoming the ancestor of Wanshou Palaces in the world. Wanshou Palace is not only the center of Xu Zhenjun's faith, but also the meeting place of Jiangxi merchant gangs, witnessing the historical changes and social development of Jiangxi. The social and cultural development of Wanshou Palace is closely related to the belief of Xu Zhenjun. Xu Zhenjun, as the hero of water control, is honored as “Jiangxi Blessed Lord” by the people, and his beliefs are widely spread in Jiangxi and even in the whole country. The temple activities, folk art and architectural decoration of Wanshou Palace reflect the unique charm and deep heritage of Jiangxi local culture. Its architectural style integrates the characteristics of Gan School architecture, such as flying eaves and warped corners, green bricks and gray tiles, wood and brick carvings, etc., showing the aesthetic value of traditional architecture in Jiangxi. The building layout is symmetrical along the central axis, reflecting the rigor and symmetrical beauty of traditional Chinese architecture.

The significant transformation of Wanshou Palace from a religious place to a public cultural space reflects the change of social needs and the expansion of cultural functions. This transformation not only preserves its religious significance, but also gives it new social and cultural values, making it an important symbol of local social and cultural identity. The historical and cultural connotations of Wanshou Palace not only provide an important

perspective for the study of historical changes and social development in the Jiangxi region, but also provide an important basis for the cultural identity and inheritance of the global Jiangxi immigrant community.

In summary, as an important cultural heritage of Jiangxi region, the historical background, social and cultural development and architectural aesthetics of Nanchang Wanshou Palace together constitute its unique cultural symbolism. Through the systematic study of Wanshou Palace, this research not only reveals its central position in the cultural heritage and social life of Jiangxi region, but also emphasizes its important role in cultural heritage and economic development. The historical and cultural connotations of Wanshou Palace not only provide an important perspective for the study of historical changes and social development in the Jiangxi region, but also provide an important basis for the cultural identity and inheritance of the global Jiangxi immigrant community.

2. Research objective: To analyze the reconstruction process of the Wanshou Palace site in Nanchang, and to explore the concept of reproduction of the past, and the To analyze the reconstruction process of the Wanshou Palace site in Nanchang, and to explore the concept of reproduction of the past, and the practice of architectural restoration and neighborhood preservation in the context of modern China.

This study analyzes the reconstruction of the Wanshou Palace site in Nanchang in relation to Kevin Walsh's concept of reproduction of the past, and to explore the theoretical significance and practical value of architectural restoration and neighborhood preservation in the context of modern China. The research question focuses on the archaeological excavation, architectural design, building technology and the reproduction of folk traditions in the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District. By comparing international and domestic heritage conservation strategies, this study reveals the uniqueness and universality of the conservation practice of Wanshou Palace in Nanchang and presents the following theoretical findings: the research problem focuses on the ways of archaeological excavation, architectural design, architectural technology, and reproduction of folk traditions in the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District. First, the chapter analyzes the core strategies of international historic heritage conservation. By comparing international and domestic heritage conservation strategies, the chapter points out that international heritage conservation emphasizes originality, integrity and sustainability, such as the principles set forth in the Venice Charter and the Nara Document of Authenticity. China has combined international experience in heritage conservation to form a protection system with Chinese characteristics, such as the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics and the Guidelines for the Protection of Cultural Relics and Monuments in China. Specifically analyzing the reconstruction process of Nanchang Wanshou Palace, the conservation practice of Nanchang Wanshou Palace is based on historical archives and archaeological research results, reconstructing the Iron Pillar Wanshou Palace, restoring the architectural texture, and utilizing modern technology to enhance the safety of the building. The protection of the neighborhood follows the principle of "repairing the old as the old", and at the same time, modern commercial facilities are introduced to enhance the social function of the cultural heritage, realizing the organic combination of the protection of historical sites and adaptive use.

The study found that the reproduction of the past and the continuity of cultural memory, the restoration and reconstruction of Wanshou Palace in Nanchang contributes to the cultural memory and sustainable development of Wanshou Palace, and the preservation of the

Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District not only recognizes the aesthetic value of the Wanshou Palace architecture, but also strengthens the sense of identification with the Gan culture and even the traditional Chinese culture. The continuity value of cultural heritage and its association with personal memory give the neighborhood important educational significance. In the context of rapid modernization, the reconstruction of traditional neighborhoods and the preservation of historical and cultural heritage face many challenges. Neighborhood Through the joint efforts of the government, scholars and citizens, the Wanshou Palace Neighborhood has been recreated and has contributed to the growth of the local tourism economy. The protection of Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District is based on the principle of “three constants” , i.e., the texture and architectural layout of the district will remain basically unchanged, the architectural style of Jiangxi residential buildings will remain unchanged, and the atmosphere of the district's landscape elements will remain unchanged. Through the way of “repairing the old as the old, building new as the old” , the neighborhood retains the original appearance of the historical buildings, while introducing modern functions, making it a comprehensive space integrating cultural display, tourism and leisure, and commercial activities. “Reproduction of the past” and the sustainable development of local cultural assets, the conservation and reconstruction of Wanshou Palace in Nanchang not only reproduces the former prosperity of Tizhu Wanshou Palace, but also shows the new face of modern China in the combination of tradition and modernity. This practice provides important research significance for exploring local cultural assets, traditional architecture, local humanistic charm and sustainable development of industries. The architectural and artistic features of Wanshou Palace reflect the local cultural characteristics of Jiangxi and play an important role in shaping local identity and meeting modern aesthetic and functional needs. Through the protection, inheritance and innovation of these features, Wanshou Palace has become a bridge connecting the past and present, tradition and modernity, and has laid a solid foundation for the dissemination and development of Jiangxi culture. By taking into account the layout of the local traditional neighborhood texture, traditional architecture, cultural industries and the quality of life of the residents, this study provides a reference for the promotion of the sustainable development of historical and cultural neighborhoods. The protection and reconstruction of Wanshou Palace not only enhances the local cultural identity, but also promotes the growth of the local tourism economy, realizing a win-win situation between cultural heritage protection and economic development.

To sum up, the conservation and reconstruction of Nanchang Wanshou Palace not only reproduces its historical appearance, but also realizes its sustainable development in modern society. Through scientific conservation planning, rational functional zoning and dynamic management, Wanshou Palace has become a bridge connecting the past and present, tradition and modernity. This practice not only provides an important reference for the protection and inheritance of local cultural assets, but also provides valuable experience for exploring the new face in the combination of tradition and modernity. The history and cultural connotation of Wanshou Palace not only provides an important perspective for the study of historical changes and social development in Jiangxi region.

Research Objective: to Study the history and cultural connotation of Wanshou Palace, focusing on its central role in the cultural heritage and social life of the Jiangxi region. The aim is to analyze the role of the history of mass consumption in the conservation and

utilization of Wanshou Palace in Nanchang, and to explore the phenomenon of Historical Consumption and its role in the protection of cultural heritage. Through the tourism development, cultural and creative product design and revival of traditional festivals in the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District of Nanchang, the study reveals the complex interplay between history and culture, consumerism and cultural heritage preservation. Combined with De Groot's theory of Historical Consumption, this study has the following findings:

This chapter examines the role that the history of consumption has played in the preservation and utilization of the Wanshou Palace, and the analysis of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang reveals the complex interplay between Historical Consumption, consumerism and cultural heritage preservation. The transformation of the Wanshou Palace from a religious site into a multifunctional public space reflects broader trends in urban development and consumer culture in modern China. This evolution is characterized by the commodification of historical memory, in which architectural and aesthetic symbols are repurposed to meet contemporary aesthetic and economic needs. Through tourism development, cultural and creative product design, and the revitalization of traditional festivals in the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District, Consumption History not only enhances the popularity and attractiveness of the Wanshou Palace, but also provides economic support for the preservation of cultural heritage. At the same time, Historical Consumption of History also promotes the public's awareness and recognition of cultural heritage and enhances local cultural confidence. However, over-commercialization of Historical Consumption may also lead to the symbolization and superficialization of cultural heritage, and a balance needs to be sought between conservation and development. Functional transformation has occurred at the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang, which has been transformed from a center of religious worship to a public cultural space that combines a museum, cultural exhibitions, tourism, and social interaction. This transformation reflects a broader trend whereby public spaces in contemporary society serve multiple and often conflicting functions, merging the sacred with the secular.

**Symbolic Reproduction and Commodification of the Wanshou Palace** The architectural and aesthetic symbols of the Wanshou Palace, such as the flying eaves and carved beams, have been restored and modernized to enhance their visual appeal and cultural transmission. These symbols are commercialized through cultural and creative products, heritage tourism, festivals and digital media, transforming Historical Consumption narratives into consumable experiences. Wanshou Palace is a carrier of local social memory and an identity for the people of Jiangxi, and Wanshou Palace connects the community to its historical and cultural roots. The restoration and commercialization of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang has enhanced local identity and cultural pride, while attracting tourists and generating economic value.

The commodification of Wanshou Palace's history aligns with de Groot's theory of Historical Consumption, where history is not only an economic commodity but also a means of constructing culture and identity. Historical elements are re-conceived and simplified to meet the needs of modern consumers, balancing historical authenticity with commercial interests. The architectural aesthetics of Wanshou Palace evoke nostalgia and emotional connections that enhance the visitor experience. The fusion of traditional and modern design elements appeals to a wider audience, including the younger generation, while preserving cultural heritage. The commercialization of Wanshou Palace's historical memory provides a

practical avenue for heritage preservation, ensuring the site's relevance in contemporary society. In order to promote the sustainable development of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District in Nanchang, there is a need to balance commercial interests with cultural authenticity, which can be facilitated through community engagement, educational programs, and interactive experiences.

The study points out that Historical Consumption plays an important role in the preservation and utilization of Wanshou Palace. The popularity and attractiveness of Wanshou Palace has been significantly enhanced through tourism development, cultural and creative product design, and the revitalization of traditional festivals. These measures not only provide economic support for cultural heritage preservation, but also promote public awareness and recognition of cultural heritage and enhance local cultural confidence. However, the study also found that excessive commercialization of Historical Consumption may lead to symbolization and superficialization of cultural heritage, weakening the depth of its cultural connotation. Suggestions for the future development of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District in Nanchang are proposed. The neighborhood should continue to adhere to the principle of combining protection and adaptive use, focus on the maintenance of cultural authenticity, and strengthen public education and cultural dissemination. Through digital technology and innovative means, the modern communication power of cultural heritage should be enhanced, and a sustainable balance between history and commerce should be realized. Therefore, it is necessary to seek a balance between conservation and exploitation to ensure the sustainable development of cultural heritage.

4. Research objective: To analyze the dynamic relationship between the reconstruction of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District and Historical Consumption in the context of modern China. The dynamic relationship between the reconstruction of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District and Historical Consumption in the context of modern China is explored in depth through a case study of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District in Nanchang.

The study discusses the balance between cultural heritage protection and historical consumption, the reproduction and consumption of cultural heritage, and the redevelopment of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District in Nanchang is not only the restoration of historical buildings, but also the reproduction and consumption of historical memories. Through the restoration of the Iron Pillar Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural Palace, the revival of cultural activities, and tourism development, the District has successfully transformed its historical heritage into a cultural consumer product for modern society. This Historical Consumption not only enhances the public's knowledge of history and culture, but also injects new vitality into the local economy. The duality of consuming history, Historical Consumption, while popularizing historical knowledge, may also lead to simplification and commodification of history, and even the risk of historical distortion. The study points out that how to maintain historical authenticity in Historical Consumption and avoid over-commercialization is a key issue in the protection and development of cultural heritage.

The combination of traditional craftsmanship and modern technology played a key role in the restoration process of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District. Through the use of modern reinforcement techniques, waterproofing materials and fireproofing materials, the neighborhood has improved the stability and safety of the buildings while maintaining the original appearance of the historical buildings. This combination not only preserves the

historical value of the cultural heritage, but also enhances its modern display and visiting functions. Modern transformation of traditional architectural functions, the restored traditional houses are given modern commercial functions, such as tea rooms and cafes, so that visitors can enjoy modern services in the ancient architectural environment. This combination of cultural and commercial functions not only enhances the use value of the building, but also provides visitors with a rich cultural experience and promotes the sustainable development of the local society and economy.

**Historical Consumption and Shaping of Local Cultural Identity** The Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District attracts a large number of tourists and scholars through the display of traditional architectural techniques, history, culture and folklore activities, making it a place for historical consumption and cultural experience. Visitors further deepen their understanding and identity of Wanshou Palace's history and culture by visiting, purchasing cultural goods and participating in cultural activities. This historical consumption behavior not only spreads history and culture, but also enhances the sense of local cultural identity. The reproduction and innovation of folk activities, the neighborhood reproduces the unique charm of Jiangxi local culture by holding non-heritage cultural performances such as Gan opera, tea picking opera, dragon dance, lion dance and so on. These traditional folk activities not only provide a visual feast for tourists, but also enhance the dissemination and identification of culture through interactive experience. By participating in these activities, tourists promote the protection and inheritance of cultural heritage in the form of "Historical Consumption".

Tourism development and the construction of Historical Consumption, the shaping of heritage identity. In the process of tourism development, the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District has transformed its historical heritage into attractive cultural consumer products by means of symbolization and commercialization. By displaying the remains of the site, developing cultural and creative products, and utilizing modern digital communication means, the Neighborhood has succeeded in spreading its historical and cultural connotations to a wider audience, attracting a large number of tourists to come and experience them. The neighborhood faces a complex balance between authenticity and commercialization in tourism development. By restoring the Iron Pillar Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District of Gan School, the District has maintained its historical authenticity on a material level, while transforming its heritage value into cultural consumer goods by introducing modern commercial elements. This balance not only meets the diverse needs of modern tourists, but also promotes the preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage.

**Integration of Local Dialect and Food Culture** The Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District enhances the immersive experience of visitors by integrating the Nanchang dialect and food culture. A Nanchang dialect wall has been installed in the neighborhood, and the dialect is skillfully used in cultural guides, opera performances and cultural and creative products, showcasing the unique charm of Nanchang's language. Meanwhile, the restaurants in the neighborhood focus on the combination of traditional Gan cuisine and modern dining, creating a multi-sensory tourism experience that combines cultural experience and taste enjoyment. The richness of the cultural experience, through the integration of dialect and food culture, the neighborhood further enriches the cultural experience of tourists, enabling them to feel the unique charm of Nanchang culture in multi-sensory immersion. This cultural experience not only extends the tourists' stay, but also promotes the development of several industries such as catering, cultural creation and performance.

Application value of the study: The conservation and redevelopment practice of Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District provides valuable experience and reference for the conservation of other historical and cultural districts, especially in the strategy of combining conservation and adaptive use. Through the introduction of modern consumer culture, the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District not only preserves the original appearance of the historical buildings, but also promotes the development of the local economy and enhances social cohesion. The study not only focuses on preservation, but also explores the redevelopment of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District. Through cultural and creative products, tourist souvenirs, festivals and multimedia displays, the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District has been successfully transformed into a space for cultural consumption, realizing the commercialization of historical memories. This redevelopment innovation provides a new model for the preservation and redevelopment of other historical and cultural neighborhoods. The study puts forward suggestions for future development, providing concrete guidance for the sustainable development of historical and cultural neighborhoods and helping to enhance their cultural quality and international influence.

Theoretical contribution of the study: the duality of Historical Consumption, Historical Consumption is not only a means of popularizing historical knowledge, but also may lead to simplification and commodification of history. How to maintain the authenticity of history and avoid over-commercialization in Historical Consumption is a key issue in the protection and development of cultural heritage. The combination of tradition and modernity, and the combination of traditional crafts and modern technology are of great significance in cultural heritage preservation. Through the introduction of modern technology, it is possible to maintain the original appearance of historical buildings while enhancing their modern use functions and safety performance. Shaping of local cultural identity, Historical Consumption is closely related to local cultural identity. Through Historical Consumption, tourists can not only deepen their understanding and recognition of local culture, but also promote the protection and inheritance of cultural heritage. Balance between authenticity and commercialization, in tourism development, how to maintain Historical Consumption while meeting the consumption needs of modern tourists is an important issue in the protection and development of cultural heritage. Through symbolization and commercialization, historical heritage can be transformed into attractive cultural consumer goods while maintaining its cultural connotation. The importance of multi-sensory cultural experience, through the integration of elements such as local dialects and food culture, can enhance the immersive cultural experience of tourists and improve the attractiveness and dissemination of cultural heritage.

Limitations and Future Directions of the Study: Although this study is theoretically innovative, there are still limitations, such as the scope of the study is mainly limited to Nanchang Wanshou Palace, comparing the conservation and redevelopment of historical and cultural districts in different regions, and exploring more diverse ways of conservation. Future research should consider expanding the scope to deeply analyze the impact of modern consumer culture on cultural heritage protection, especially the use of digital technology and innovative approaches in it.

In summary, the conservation and development practice of the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District in Nanchang demonstrates modern China's exploration and achievement

in cultural heritage conservation and historical consumption construction. Through the restoration of historical buildings, revival of cultural activities, and development of tourism products, the neighborhood has successfully transformed its historical heritage into a cultural consumer product for the modern society, realizing the sustainable conservation and utilization of cultural heritage. This case provides an important reference and inspiration for other similar projects, as well as new ideas for exploring the multidimensional value of cultural heritage in modern society.

## Discussion

The research thesis “Wanshou Palace at Nanchang : Reproduction of the Past and Historical Consumption in Modern China” centers on cultural heritage, and studies the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang. Wanshou Palace at Nanchang : Reproduction of the Past and Historical Consumption in Modern China Through the concepts of “Reproduction of the Past” and “Historical Consumption”, the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District clearly demonstrates the excavation of the historical heritage centered on the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, the restoration and reconstruction of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace with the combination of documents and images, and the restoration of the Gan-style residential buildings in the Wanshou Palace neighborhood. The restoration and reconstruction of the residential buildings of the Gan School in the neighborhood reflects the reproduction of the past history and the present Historical Consumption of historical elements. The Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District attracts researchers, archaeologists, architects and tourists from all over the country to visit, tour and visit the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District by virtue of its rich historical and cultural values, the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace site layer, the buildings of the Tiezhu Wanshou Palace, the Ganpai dwellings and the intangible cultural heritage of the district. The architecture, traditional neighborhood texture layout, and local intangible cultural heritage in the neighborhood demonstrate the Gan cultural characteristics and their connotations. In the context of modern China, the preservation of historical and cultural heritage and the cultural tourism industry are facing unprecedented opportunities and challenges. The concept of “reproduction of the past” is more related to the history of Wanshou Palace and the reproduction of the architecture of Tizhu Wanshou Palace. The thesis analyzes in particular the excavation of the site of Tizhu Wanshou Palace, the restoration and reconstruction of Tizhu Wanshou Palace, the diversification of its spatial functions, the repair and rebuilding of Gan residential buildings in the neighborhood, and the Gan architectural decorations and carvings presented in the buildings. Expression. Especially, the worship of Xu Zhenjun and the spirit of Jiangyou merchants in the Wanshou Palace architecture have created unique architectural values for the Wanshou Palace architecture.

The discussion section will be centered on the conservation strategy of Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District, the challenges and opportunities in the process of redevelopment, and its functional transformation in the modern consumer culture.

First, the controversy between reproduction and reconstruction: is historical reproduction faithful to the original appearance, and does it take into account the intervention of social power structures in heritage? Who is leading the reproduction process? Conservation of historical sites and reproduction of the past in Nanchang Wanshou Palace.1. Conservation

strategies and historical authenticity. In the conservation of the Historical Consumption of Wanshou Palace in Nanchang, maintaining cultural authenticity is key in the process of cultural heritage consumption. The restorative redevelopment of Nanchang Wanshou Palace focuses on maintaining its original religious and cultural functions, while incorporating modern exhibition displays to provide an immersive historical experience. This maintenance of cultural authenticity is not only about the physical restoration of the building, but also about the deep respect and inheritance of history and culture. This is in line with the ICOMOS view that alternative timbers can be used in the restoration of historic buildings in accordance with the relevant historical and aesthetic values, and that the need to replace decayed or damaged elements or parts thereof can be appropriately catered for, or restoration requirements can be met (ICOMOS 1999). The study emphasized the principle of “Three No Changes”, i.e., the neighborhood texture and architectural layout will remain basically unchanged, the architectural style of Jiangxi residential buildings will remain unchanged, and the atmosphere of the neighborhood landscape elements will remain unchanged. This principle ensures that the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District retains the original appearance and cultural connotations of the historic buildings to the maximum extent possible during the restoration process. For example, the restorative redevelopment of Tiezhu Wanshou Palace not only recreates the architectural features of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, but also ensures historical authenticity through archaeological excavation of the site's foundations. This conservation strategy is consistent with internationally recognized principles of heritage conservation, such as “authenticity” and “integrity” emphasized in the Venice Charter (Liang, W., Ahmad, Y., & Mohidin, H. H. B. 2023: 4).

2. 2. Reproduction of the past and cultural identity. The restorative reconstruction of Nanchang Wanshou Palace is not only to restore the physical form of the historical building, but also to reproduce the historical memory and enhance the local cultural identity. Through the restoration of the Iron Pillar Wanshou Palace and Gan School residential buildings, the neighborhood has successfully evoked the memories and emotions of the local history of the citizens of Nanchang. This reproduction of the past echoes Kevin Walsh's view that heritagization is a social process involving collaboration and conflict among multiple stakeholders (Walsh, 1992: 59). The restoration of Wanshou Palace was not only supported by the government, but also involved extensive public participation, reflecting the important role of the community in the process of heritagization.

Second, the balance between consumption and preservation: between commercialized development and cultural preservation, how to avoid over-commodification of heritage? This thesis takes into account the history of social demand and consumption in modern China.<sup>1</sup> In the conservation and consumption process of Nanchang Wanshou Palace, the study emphasizes the balance between preserving Historical Consumption and meeting modern demands. Through the restoration principle of “repairing the old as the old” and the design concept of “three constants”, the Wanshou Palace realizes the reproduction of historical buildings, while satisfying the diversified needs of modern society for cultural experience and economic development. This balanced strategy is consistent with Feng and Chen's view that the conservation of historic districts should follow the spatial strategy of “formal integrity”, and through understanding the traditional space and mastering the way of creating traditional space, we can carry out flexible restoration of the places that do not conform to the traditional

appearance and traditional spatial image in the historic districts (Feng, L., & Chen, N. 2019: 1164). Chen, N. 2019: 1164). 2. Commodification of historical memory. In modern Chinese society, the Historical Consumption of Wanshou Palace in Nanchang has been commoditized through a variety of forms such as cultural and creative products, tourist souvenirs and digital communication. This process of commodification not only satisfies the aesthetic needs of modern audiences, but also realizes the economic value of cultural heritage. For example, the cultural and creative products in the Wanshou Palace neighborhood, such as porcelain and bookmarks with the “Wanshou Palace” logo, not only attract tourists, but also promote the development of the local economy. This commodification of historical memory is consistent with De Groot's view that history can be reconstructed and consumed through a variety of media (De Groot, J. 2009: 67). 3. Symbiosis of Traditional Places and Modern Consumption Functions. The transformation of the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang from a religious site to a public cultural space exemplifies the symbiosis between traditional places and modern consumption functions. Through restorative reconstruction, Wanshou Palace not only retained its religious and cultural functions, but also added tourism, commercial and recreational functions. This functional transformation not only reflects the economic logic of local cultural heritage preservation, but also reveals the dynamic interaction between consumers and places. For example, Wanshou Palace has become a major site for tourists to visit, photograph, and purchase cultural and creative products, and its architectural image has been transformed into a consumer symbol for promotional and merchandising purposes. This transformation echoes Wydra and de La Ferrière's view that modern public spaces are often polysemous, containing both secular and sacred meanings (Wydra, H. 2015 & de La Ferrière 2020: 53-58).

Again, local identity and globalization: how can Wanshou Palace be positioned in a modern consumer society to satisfy both local cultural identity and aesthetic and experiential needs in the context of globalization? In the wave of globalization, the preservation and consumption of cultural heritage is not only the responsibility of governments and experts, but also requires public participation and support. Through the guided tours provided by the district, digital media communication campaigns, and neighborhood exhibitions, the Wanshou Palace Historic and Cultural District helps visitors understand the cultural roots of Jiangxi and enhance their sense of cultural identity. This strategy of public education and cultural dissemination echoes Shevchenko's view that the history of Wanshou Palace is very important to Nanchang City, and that its most complete restoration will give residents a deep sense of the historical continuity and cultural identity of the Wanshou Palace district (Shevchenko, M. 2020: 173-174).

Finally, future directions of heritage conservation and consumption: in the context of modern China, the relationship between heritage conservation and consumption is increasingly intertwined. The Wanshou Palace Historical and Cultural District demonstrates the concept of revitalization through preservation and revitalization. Through the restoration of historic buildings and the recreation of traditional urban texture, Wanshou Palace not only preserves its historical value, but also becomes a comprehensive space integrating cultural experience, tourism, and commercial activities. This balanced strategy of conservation and consumption is consistent with Zhu's view that heritage conservation involves not only preserving historical sites but also conveying their cultural connotations (Zhu, 2017: 187).

The conservation of historical sites and the reproduction of the past at the Wanshou Palace in Nanchang, as well as the practice of incorporating the history of consumption in

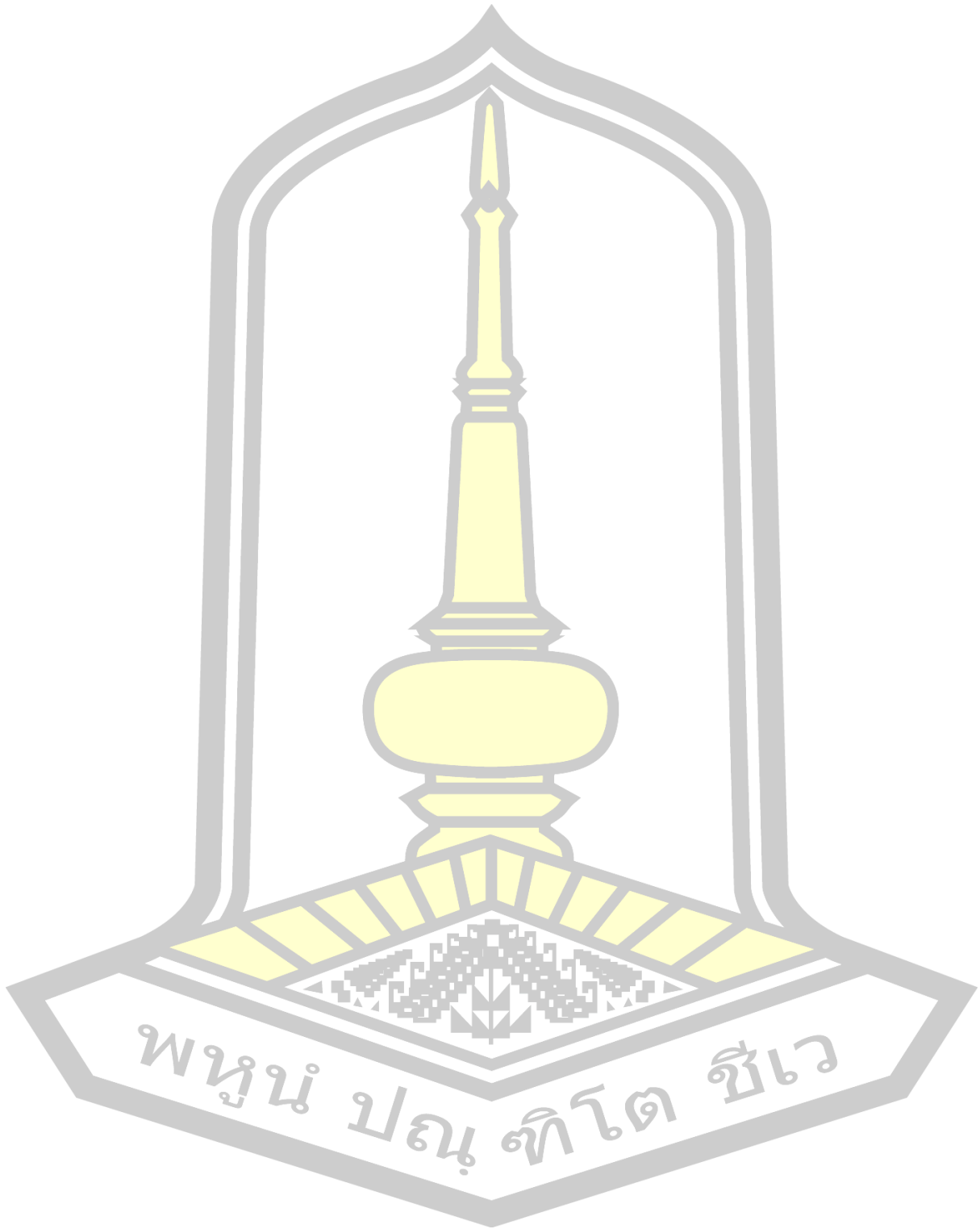
relation to the needs of modern Chinese society, demonstrates the complexity of the intersection of tradition and modernity. Through the restoration principle of “repairing the old as the old” and the design concept of “three constants”, Wanshou Palace successfully realizes the reproduction of historical buildings, while meeting the diversified needs of modern society for cultural experience and economic development. This balanced strategy of conservation and consumption not only contributes to the enhancement of local cultural identity, but also provides valuable experience and inspiration for the conservation and utilization of other cultural sites. In the future, with the advancement of technology and in-depth cultural excavation, the Wanshou Palace neighborhood is expected to further develop into a window for international cultural exchange and a model for heritage conservation.

### **Suggestions**

The study provides insights into how historic sites can be put to modern use while respecting their cultural significance, suggesting several recommendations for the future management and conservation of cultural heritage sites such as Wanshou Palace. Recommendations: 1. Adopt a holistic approach to heritage conservation that considers both the physical preservation of the site and the maintenance of its cultural significance. This approach ensures that heritage sites remain authentic and meaningful for future generations. 2. Encourage community participation in decision-making processes related to heritage sites to ensure that local voices and needs are represented. Community involvement enhances the cultural significance of the site and fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among residents. 3. The use of digital media to promote the use of technology and digital media to document, interpret and communicate cultural heritage, which can make heritage more accessible to a wider audience and enhance public engagement with historic sites. 4. Foster sustainable tourism practices that respect the cultural integrity of the site, while providing local communities with economic benefits. This can be achieved through guided tours, cultural festivals, and educational programs that highlight the historical and cultural significance of the site. 5. Encourage interdisciplinary research to better understand the complex dynamics between heritage conservation and Consumption. This may involve collaboration between historians, archaeologists, architects and social scientists to develop comprehensive heritage management strategies.



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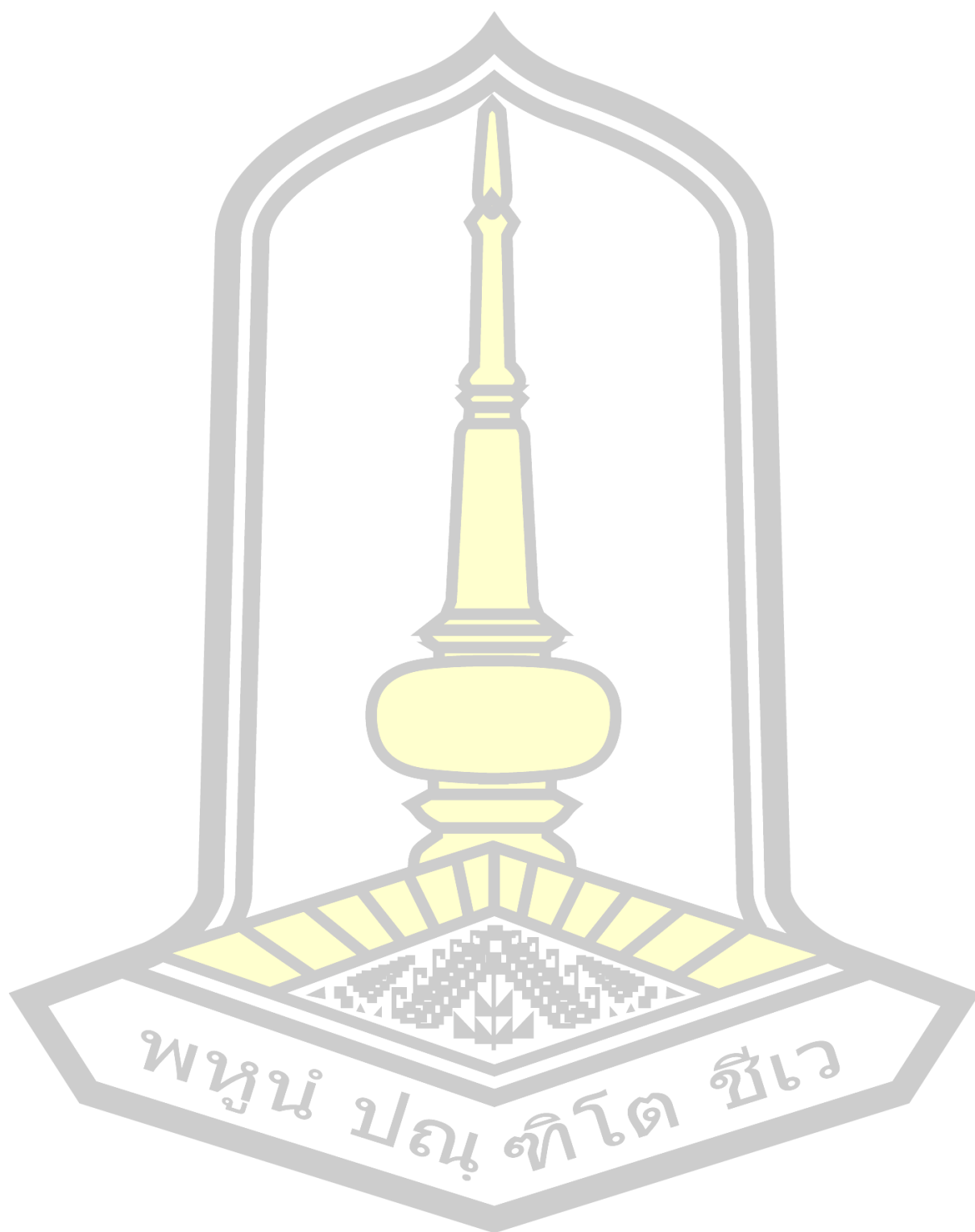
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## BIOGRAPHY

<b>NAME</b>	Ms.Qi Min
<b>DATE OF BIRTH</b>	July 26,1986
<b>PLACE OF BIRTH</b>	Nanchang,Jiangxi Province, China
<b>ADDRESS</b>	Jingshan North Road,NanchangCity,Jiangxi Province, China
<b>POSITION</b>	Teacher
<b>PLACE OF WORK</b>	Nanchang,China
<b>EDUCATION</b>	2007, B.A., Hubei Normal University 2010, M.A., Jiangxi Normal University 2022-2025, Ph.D. (Fine and Applied Arts Research and Creation),School of Fine and Applied Arts Research and Creation, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

