THE ROLE OF SPATIAL COMPONENTS
IN THE OPERATIONS OF
WATER TOWNS IN
JIANGNAN, CHINA

by

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ABSTRACT

It is in the nature of man to reside near the water, as his life is inseparable with
water. This inclination to be close to water has been clearly demonstrated in the
site selection, site planning and transportation strategies for the water towns of
Jiangnan. The dissertation attempts to bring forth a better understanding of the
basic functions of the water towns of Jiangnan, China. The paper will focus on
identifying the various spatial components and characteristics that are common
to the water towns in Jiangnan, and study how these spatial components such
as the waterways, the streets, the vernacular dwellings; the bridges, and the
water piers etc. facilitate its social and economic operations.
The main limitation of the dissertation is the linguistic medium. Due to the lack of sufficiently written English resources on the subject, most of the references used in this dissertation are translated and reinterpreted from Chinese books, literary works, and poetry. The information has as far as possible been translated or reinterpreted to correspond to its original meanings.

The first part of the study will be approached by a historical survey of the key events that led to the formation of the water towns. The second part of the study will identify the general characteristics of the spatial components of the water towns with reference to some of the findings that were gathered during the field study in August 2001. The final part of the study will involve case studies on two of the water towns that were visited in the Shaoxing district to investigate the role of the spatial components in the operations of the water towns.

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