

Continuing Community Spirit: Study on the Public Space of “Pu-Jing” Community in the Ancient City of Quanzhou

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Abstract

Exploring and continuing the spiritual connotation of community public space is of great significance to shaping the place identity. “*Pu-Jing*”, the grass-roots organisation system of Quanzhou during the Ming and Qing dynasties in China, created the “*Pu-Jing*” community, a governance unit that combined official administration and folk beliefs, and had a profound impact on the community public space system. The purpose of this study is to interpret the spatial characteristics and cultural connotations of public space in *Pu-Jing* community by analysing the spatial carriers and social factors. The research examines the compositions of the community public space, explores their spatial structure, and then summarised the formation logic and building ideas of the public space. The study reveals a public space system with the *Jing* Temple as the core, the streets and alleys as the link, and the belief realm as the unit was formed in *Pu-Jing* community under the combined effect of official management and civil autonomy, creating a stable sense of spatial domain for the residents' ritual and daily activities. The wisdom of place-making implied in the public space of *Pu-Jing* community provide inspiration for contemporary community governance.

Keywords: Community public space; spatial characteristics; place identity

1. Introduction

1.1 Theoretical background

With the emphasis on reviving the spirit and sensibilities of urban construction (Alexander, 1987), there is a growing realisation that shaping identity is key to truly revitalizing a place (Xia, 2020). Only when we learn from existing experiences and promote the conservation of urban spiritual significance can urban structures become life structures, allowing urban identity to emerge naturally (Zhao and Jiang, 2022).

In communities, individuals feel emotionally connected to the community by sharing similar cultural experiences and values with it (Durkheim, 1984), gradually forming a cultural identity with the community (Tajfel and Turner, 1986; McMillan and Chavis, 1986). Thus, community identity becomes a close psychological experience linking individuals and the community. For each individual in the community, mutual promotion of belongingness and identity helps satisfy their need for external dependence to some extent (Wu and Qin, 2022), thereby enhancing their sense of happiness. For the community, reinforcing members' cultural identity contributes to community cohesion and promotes its stability and development. Therefore, community identity becomes the core content of community construction.

As the accumulation of history, culture, traditions and values within a community, community context becomes the common cultural foundation of its members. Consequently, it becomes an important factor in forming a sense of community identity and constitutes the characteristics of the community. Inheriting community context can

help community members feel the continuity of its history and the perpetuation of its culture, thereby establishing their own historical connection and sense of identity with the community.

Public space, as venues for daily activities, interactions and various collective events among community members, is regarded as the core place of community life. Within urban community public spaces, buildings and structures with historical significance, as well as venues for traditional festivals and celebrations, serve as tangible witnesses to historical activities and events, conveying the collective memory of the community and embodying its collective spirit. Community public spaces not only serve as important carriers of community context but also as crucial places for its inheritance and development. Therefore, exploring the historical context and spiritual significance of community public spaces is essential for shaping the cultural identity of the community.

1.2 Overview of the study area

"*Pu-Jing*" (铺境), the grass-roots organisation system of Quanzhou in the Ming and Qing dynasties, created the "*Pu-Jing*" community, a governance unit that combined official administration and folk beliefs. Formed under a specific social background and urban governance, the *Pu-Jing* community responds to the most essential characteristics of the community, and is a special form of traditional Chinese community evolution.

Located in the southeastern coastal region of China, Quanzhou has been an important port city in southern China since the 9th century AD. During the Song and Yuan Dynasties, it was China's world centre of maritime commerce. Maritime trade and fishing life made Mazu, the goddess of the sea, one of the most revered deities of the people of Quanzhou. The geographical advantage facilitated the spread and exchange of different religions such as Buddhism, Taoism, and Islam in the Quanzhou area, making it a region of diverse religious beliefs. People integrated their life needs with religious beliefs, leading to the development of a thriving folk belief system, which has had a far-reaching impact on the Quanzhou community.

After the prosperity of the Song and Yuan dynasties, Quanzhou's economy declined and its status as a regional centre fell away due to the strict restrictions and controls on trading activities overseas and the frequent occurrence of wars during the Ming and Qing dynasties, but the folk beliefs remained vibrant. In the context of the maritime prohibition and external defense, the government's control over the grassroots society was greatly consolidated, which directly led to the creation of the *Pu-Jing* system (Lin, 2007).

The *Pu-Jing* system is "a comprehensive urban social spatial classification system implemented in Quanzhou during the Ming and Qing dynasties" (Wang, 2003). The concept of "*Pu*" (铺) points to urban governance and refers to an administrative spatial unit promoted by the authorities (Chen, 2009, pp. 103). According to the "Political Records", there is a strict population control system implemented within the *Pu* unit¹. The affairs of household management, taxation, public security and education in it are subject to official management (ibid.). "*Jing*" (境) is the next level of the "*Pu*". It refers to local beliefs, which denotes the jurisdiction of a temple, as well as the scope

of the "parade around the realm" when the folk welcome deities (Wang, 2022). The people of a *Jing* unit share a common belief in the sacred. According to the Qianlong edition of Jinjiang County Annals, the city of Quanzhou in the Qing Dynasty was divided into 36 *Pu* units and 72 *Jing* units. The assemblage of the *Pu* and *Jing* units is to some extent equivalent to today's neighborhoods.

The people of Quanzhou, based on their spiritual needs, have integrated belief systems carried by the "*Jing*" into the official framework of control organised by the "*Pu*". With the harmonisation of the two, a governance unit combining official administration and folk beliefs was formed in Quanzhou. The local significance of the *Pu-Jing* community was gradually strengthened by its role as a spiritual support for the people. Even today, the people of Quanzhou still attach great importance to the concept of "*Pu-Jing*". One can still hear Quanzhou residents narrate stories about their origins from a particular *Pu* or *Jing* unit, and which deity they believe in. When overseas Chinese write letters to their home countries and when Taiwan compatriots return to their hometowns to recognise their ancestors, they use a certain "*Pu*" and "*Jing*" as their address (Chen and Lin, 1990, pp. 2).

The local characteristics of Quanzhou's *Pu-Jing* community are prominently reflected in the public spaces consisting of facilities that support the belief system and daily life. Based on this, this study starts from the perspective of community public spaces to investigate their spatial features and social significance, explore how they contribute to shaping a sense of belonging, and summarise their spiritual connotations, hoping to provide insights into the continuity of cultural context in contemporary urban development.

2. Methodology

This paper takes the public space of the *Pu-Jing* community as the study object, focusing on its physical characteristics and cultural connotations. The study is based on the "Map of Quanzhou City", which was surveyed and mapped by the Quanzhou Public Works Bureau in 1922. This historical map was calibrated based on the historical nodes of the current satellite map on the GIS platform. And then we overlay the calibrated "Map of *Pu-Jing* in Quanzhou City" (Chen and Lin, 1990) on the "Map of Quanzhou City" to identify the 31 *Pu* units and the *Jing* temples in the 79 *Jing* units within the ancient city of Quanzhou. The exact boundaries of the *Jing* units cannot be examined at present, but its coverage can be roughly inferred from the accounts of its internal streets and alleys documented by Chen and Lin (ibid.).

Based on the above materials, we extracted the data of the public space elements of the *Pu-Jing* community, and analyzed the spatial characteristics with digital methods. The *Jing* temples, streets and the boundaries of the *Pu* and *Jing* were redrawn by using ArcGIS. The distribution of *Jing* temples was identified by Kernel Density, and the local integration of streets was identified by Space Syntax. Local integration is used to indirectly account for the accessibility of a space to other spaces within a given spatial radius. On this basis, the location characteristics and service coverage of *Jing* temples, the relationship between streets and *Jing* temples, and the urban public space system could be explored. Further, the building ideas of public space were discussed.

3. Spatial composition and structure of the public space in *Pu-Jing* community

The analysis shows that the public spaces of Quanzhou's *Pu-Jing* community comprise three constituent elements: the unit, the core and the link.

3.1 Unit: *Pu* and *Jing* realms related to spiritual beliefs

“*Pu*” and “*Jing*” are the two hierarchical organisational units of Quanzhou's *Pu-Jing* system, each with its specific physical spatial domain. The demarcation of their domains adopts a unique local method, where psychological factors play a significant role.

As a management unit, the delineation of the “*Pu*” took into account both administrative management and mental identity. According to the “Map of *Pu-Jing* in Quanzhou City”, the boundaries of the “*Pu*” were not strictly divided along the streets and lanes, but were irregularly shaped (Figure 1). This is a psychological boundary formed through the construction of locality based on psychological identity (Cai, 2022), which is constructed based on the common worship of deities and ritual ceremonies among the residents within the boundary, and forms the foundation of the local identity network (Chen, Guan and Lin, 2011). The scales of these *Pu* units vary. By comparing the scope of the *Pu* units with the urban construction area, it can be observed that its demarcation is related to the distribution of the population's residence in the ancient

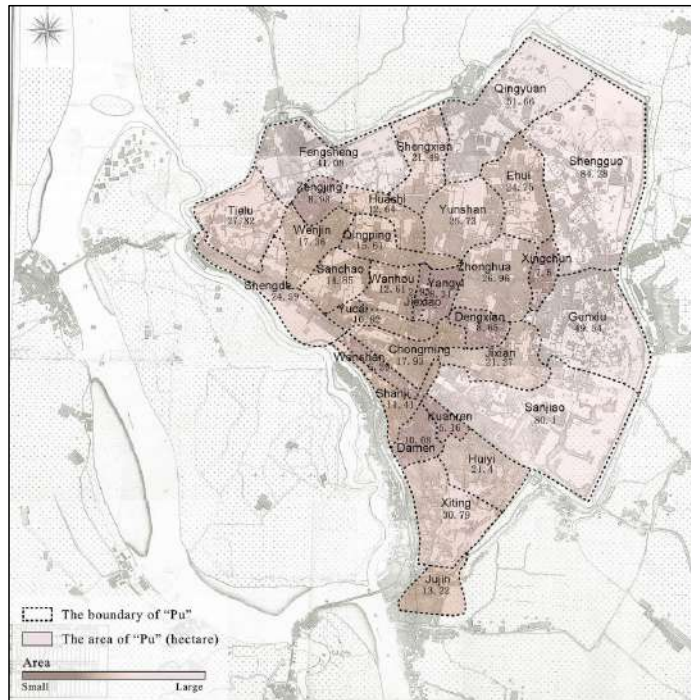


Figure 1 The boundary and area of *Pu* units.
Source: Drawn by the authors based on the “Map of Quanzhou City”.
Quanzhou Public Works Bureau, 1922.

city of Quanzhou. In areas where the residential areas are dense, the scale of the *Pu* units is often smaller, with the smallest being about 3 hectares, while in the areas close to the edges of the city walls, the size of the *Pu* units is larger, with the largest reaching up to 80 hectares. The number of *Jing* units divided within different *Pu* units also varies. Within a single *Pu* unit, there are usually 2-5 *Jing* units, with the most having up to 9.

As a belief unit, the realm of the *Jing* is recognised through a twice-yearly ceremony of stabilizing boundary (Wu, 1985, pp.98). Like the *Pu* unit, the scope of the *Jing* unit is also usually related to the built-up area scale in order to ensure a balanced population size within the realm. Taking *Sanjiao Pu* as an example, the scale of its nine *Jing* units ranges from 1.69 hectares to 12.43 hectares. The built-up areas and distribution of people in *Yichun Jing* and *Wenxing Jing* are relatively centralised, so they are smaller in scope; the sites in *Longgong Jing* and *Fengchi Jing* are fragmented, so their scope is larger. On this basis, the residents further define the boundaries of the *Jing* units through the ritual activity of "parading the *Jing*'s realm". The activities include the rituals of "greeting the deity" and "seeing off the deity". Usually, the residents of the *Jing* unit carry the Main Deity of the *Pu* or *Jing* along the streets to patrol the area under their jurisdiction in order to strengthen the boundaries of the realm. However, when the members of one *Jing* realm invades the territory of a *Jing* realm belonging to an opposing power during a ritual parade, it can result in conflict between the two *Jing* units (ibid.). Boundaries formed by consensus among different *Jing* units ensure harmonious coexistence. The immaterial elements of religious rituals, together with the physical space, define the realm of the *Jing* units, shaping in the consciousness of the inhabitants an organisational unit that is closely related to their own experience of spiritual life.

From the perspective of the entire city, the scale of a *Jing* unit generally remains within a certain range. Nearly 90% of the *Pu* areas have an average *Jing* scale ranging from 3 to 12 hectares. Compared to the ideal community scale today, which covers a range within a 300m walking distance (8-18 hectares), this is slightly smaller. It seems to have achieved a belief unit scale suitable for the social environment of that time and place.

3.2 Core: *Jing* temples as a place of spiritual cohesion

3.2.1 Functions of the *Jing* temples

In the system where *Jing* serves as the belief unit, each *Jing* unit is equipped with a *Jing* temple, which undertakes daily worship, large-scale rituals, and grassroots management functions. The founding years of these *Jing* temples span a wide range, from the Tang Dynasty to the Ming and Qing Dynasties. With the establishment of the *Pu-Jing* system, they have continued to exist as the spatial carriers of the system, and undergone changes to adapt to social needs under the amalgamation of official governance and folk beliefs.

Each *Jing* temple enshrines the respective protective deities of each belief unit, and the variety of deities worshipped reflects the coordination between folk spontaneity and official authority. The number of deities that are mainly worshipped amounts to more than 30. With the exception of Buddhist and Taoist deities such as Guanyin, Guandi, Mazu, Erlangshen, and Xuantian Emperor, which are included in the national

sacrificial system, the folk deities worshipped in the *Jing* temples are generally those closely related to local history, culture and legends. One type is deities highly associated with life services, such as the theater deity "Xianggongye," the medical deity "Baosheng Dadi," and the childbirth protector "Pingtian Shengmu". The other type is local protective deities established based on the worship of historical figures.

The identification of these ritual deities was often the result of dual interaction between the folk and the authorities. On the one hand, the official authorities of the Ming and Qing dynasties continuously absorbed symbols deemed practical from the folk, such as eminent scholars, righteous individuals, and heroes, and exalted them as deities to establish role models for governance and personal conduct (Wang, 2017, pp. 248-249). On the other hand, the people needed to obtain official recognition for the deities they worshipped in order to keep their own deities from being abolished by the authorities. This is often done by giving the local deity the name of an officially recognised historical figure with the same surname, thus transforming the community's protective deity into a famous historical figure.

Besides daily worship, the *Jing* temple also undertakes more solemn festival ceremonies, and gradually becomes an important venue for the city's periodic celebrations. In the aforementioned custom of "parading the *Jing*'s realm", the *Jing* temple is the key node for the entire event, serving as both the starting point and the end point. City-wide "*Pudu*"² activities are also held alternately in the *Jing* temples of various units (Wang, 2017, pp. 292-295). Additionally, due to the diversity of deity worship, Quanzhou hosts deity birthday celebrations every month, with such events spanning over 100 days within a year (Chen and Lin, 1990, pp. 98-101). These activities all rely on the *Jing* temples to be carried out.

Due to official administrative intervention, the *Jing* temple also undertake the function of "*Yuesuo*" (covenant house)³. According to records in the "Political Treatise," the formulation and implementation of township covenants often rely on existing temple spaces. The purpose is to utilise the religious and public attributes of temples and the deterrent effect of local deities to strengthen the moral education role of the township covenants, and thus to guide the grass-roots administrative affairs. In the ancient city of Quanzhou, the *Jing* temple called "*Yuesou*" in *Qingyuan Pu* used to be the place where township covenants were made and local civil disputes were dealt with (Wang, 2017 pp. 284). The *Jing* temple such as *Fengsheng* Temple and *Shangdi* Temple also have relevant records as the covenant house.

The *Jing* temple, as a public building for folkloric enshrinement of deities and rituals for blessings, has become a core place where the urban governance system integrates with the local belief system, with the superimposition of official control and supervision functions.

3.2.2 Distribution of the *Jing* temples

Within the *Jing* realm, the *Jing* temple are often located closely adjacent to residential buildings, establishing a tight relationship with them (Figure 2). Influenced by the high-density built environment of the ancient city, most of the *Jing* temples are of the single-hall type, with a narrow internal space, where the deity statue and the offering table are located at the entrance, which can only provide space for the basic

worship activities. In contrast, the *Jing* temples in the urban fringe present larger and more complex architectural styles, such as *Tongtian* Temple with three halls and three openings, *Fumei* Temple with two halls and three openings, and *Xiling* Temple, which consists of a combination of two single-hall temples side-by-side.



Figure 3 Photographs of the *Jing* temple and its relationship with the surrounding area. Source: Quanzhou Culture and Tourism. (2023). *Explore the lesser-known Jing Temples in the south of the city*. Available at: <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/pb44AgMzeS440H089IWZbw> (Accessed: 6 May 2024).

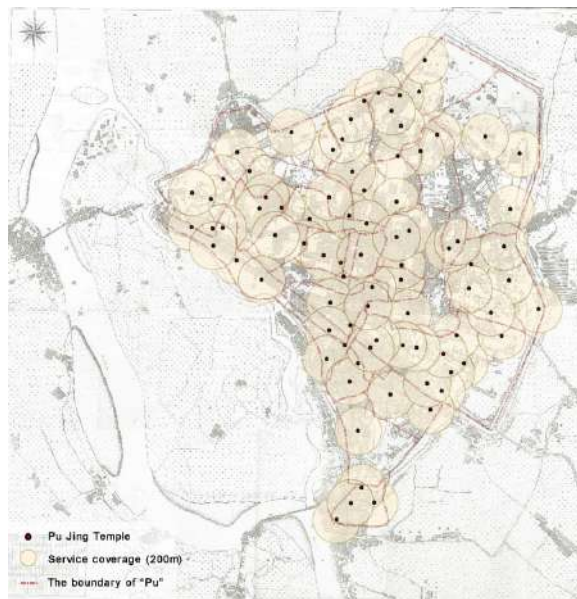


Figure 2 The service range of the *Jing* temples
Source: Drawn by the authors based on the “Map of Quanzhou City”. Quanzhou Public Works Bureau, 1922.

At the urban level, *Jing* temples are widely distributed throughout the entire city. The service range of the *Jing* temples essentially covers residential areas within the city if measured at a radius of 200m (Figure 3). The *Jing* temples, as

community-level public buildings serving the basic units of the city, have achieved a grid-like distribution as if following today's standards for the layout of public service facilities.

3.3 Link: Streets and alleys connecting the individual and collective spaces

3.3.1 Roles of the streets and alleys

As transportation passages for people, streets and alleys form the basic skeleton of the community's public space. The distribution of *Jing* temples is based on this historically established and stable spatial foundation. Streets and alleys, as important venues for the daily life of Quanzhou residents, are closely related to their collective life. Residents gather here to exchange information, host community gatherings, and participate in festive events. The streets and alleys reflect the life trajectory and psychological experience of residents. The values of comity, filial piety and positive enterprising embodied in the historical alleys such as Comity Alley, Filial Piety Alley, and Taikui Alley, reflect the deep historical memories and cultural spirit of residents. Due to the prosperity of folk beliefs, the streets and alleys not only assume administrative and daily life service function, but also become important places for religious activities.

Firstly, the streets and alleys link up the *Jing* temples, serving as the essential passageways for pilgrimage, prayers and religious ceremonies, connecting the daily life of the residents with their spiritual beliefs. The streets and alleys link the public spaces in front of the *Jing* temples, the public spaces shared by several families and the public spaces in front of each house. They connect the individual lives with public social activities.

Secondly, streets and alleys serve as routes for ceremonial activities and the important places for local residents to worship deities. During the rituals such as “greeting the celestial troops” in the spring, “offering incense” in the summer, and “seeing off the celestial troops” in the winter, the residents of the *Jing* units carry the Main Deity of *Pu* or *Jing* along the alleys, and the deities will be enshrined by each family.

Thirdly, the alleys serve as stages for performances during religious festivals and celebrations. In the first month of the lunar calendar, the “makeup people” would parade along the alleys and make a variety of folklore performances such as Lantern Show, Parade floats and Gaojia Opera. The alleys around the *Jing* temples are usually responsible for more public activities. The stage of *Tongjing* Temple in *Ciji Pu* is erected above alley and water system. Residents built a stage out of wooden boards that were usually kept in the *Tongjing* Temple, and then they could gather in the alley in front of it to watch the play (Wang et al., 2022). The alleys closely connect the religious activities with community life and become a space that bridge the gap between people and the deities.

The *Pu-Jing* system in Quanzhou integrates the administrative, religious, and daily living functions, with the streets and alleys playing a role in connecting and coordinating these functions. While not directly stemming from the *Pu-Jing* system, the streets and alleys build an important support system for it.

3.3.2 The relationship between the streets and *Jing* temples

The analysis results show that the majority of temples have high accessibility relative to their surrounding areas. By examining the distribution of *Jing* temples and the local integration of streets and alleys, it is observed that the areas with a high concentration of *Jing* temples coincide with the areas where the local integration of streets and alleys is higher (Figure 4). It can be seen that from the perspective of the entire city, temples are mostly distributed in areas with high road accessibility within a small range, and their main service area is within a certain range around them.

Furthermore, the temples are closely associated with the streets, resulting in three types of "temple-street" layout forms. (1) The *Jing* temple is located on the corner of street. This is the most common layout form (Figure 5(a)). (2) The *Jing* temple is located on the T-shaped junction. Accessibility of the *Jing* temple is greatly enhanced by the location of transportation node and focal point (Figure 5(b)). (3) The *Jing* temple is located on one side of the street. Compared with other forms, the *Jing* temple is more difficult to be noticed, but the combination of *Jing* temple and public space can increase the publicness of the *Jing* temple (Figure 5(c)). The public space system linked by streets and alleys further emphasises the centrality of the *Jing* temple.

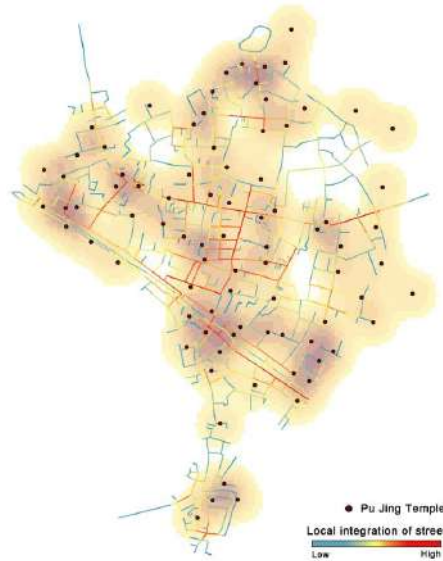


Figure 4 The distribution of *Jing* temples and the local integration of streets and alleys.
Source: the authors.

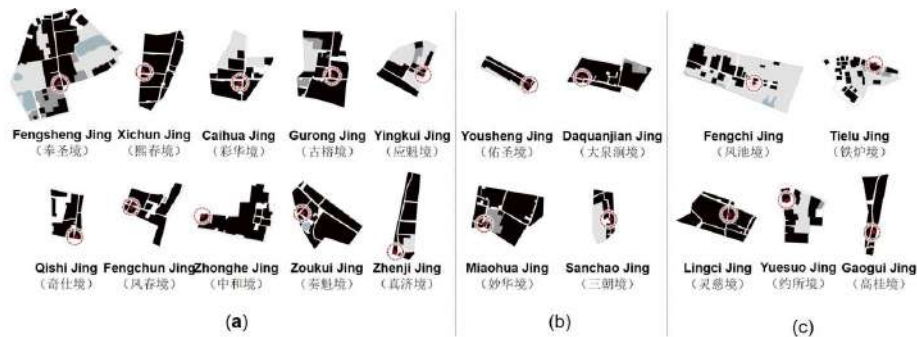


Figure 5 Three types of "temple- street" layout forms.
Source: the authors.

4. Characteristics of public space in typical community - *Sanjiao Pu*

"*Sanjiao Pu*" is a typical representative of the *Pu-Jing* community in Quanzhou, which is large in scale and rich in elements. The area of *Sanjiao Pu* is 80.10 hectares, surrounded by the city centre to the west and the suburbs to the east. It enshrines the deities of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, and includes the Confucian Temple, Guandi Temple and Tongfo Temple. Historically, it was a sacred place where the beliefs of the deities were gathered, and it was also the centre of official administration. The *Sanjiao Pu* is divided into nine *Jing* units: *Wenxing Jing*, *Houcheng Jing*, *Baiyuan Jing*, *Longgong Jing*, *Guangxiao Jing*, *Yichun Jing*, *Yuxiao Jing*, *Shangdi Jing*, *Fengchi Jing* (Figure 6).

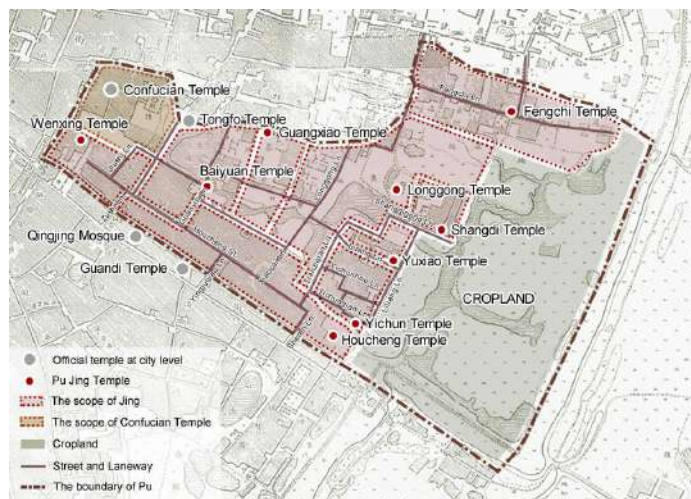


Figure 6 The Pu-Jing system in "Sanjiao Pu".

Source: Drawn by the authors based on the "Map of Quanzhou City".
Quanzhou Public Works Bureau, 1922.

The *Sanjiao Pu* exhibits a structural characteristic in its public space organisation, forming a spatial pattern centred around the *Jing* temple, connected by streets and alleys, and organised into units based on folk beliefs. As stable spatial elements in the history of urban development, the alleys such as *Longgong Alley*, *Shangdigong Alley*, and *Comity Alley*, have constructed the spatial framework of the community and partly serving as boundaries of the *Jing* realm. Each of the nine *Jing* units has a *Jing* temple with the same name as it. The *Jing* temple serves as a core and is located on the main alleys, serving as a spatial and visual focal point. For example, *Shangdi* Temple is located along the alley and orients to the main alley, which strengthens its recognizability and accessibility; *Yuxiao* Temple is located on the corner of the alley, facing *Comity Alley*, greatly improving the degree of perceptibility; *Yichun* Temple faces the water, which forms a good fengshui node. At the same time, the *Jing* temples are closely related to residential buildings, and their volumes harmonise with each other. For example, the *Shangdi* Temple has a street frontage of only four meters, but a depth of sixteen meters, with very little interval to the left and right, and is close to the buildings behind it.

What’s more, the public space system becomes an important spatial carrier for social activities and cultural connotation. In the term of social activities, the *Sanjiao Pu* are responsible for the *Pudu* activities and Deities’ Birthday ceremonies like other *Pu-Jing* communities in Quanzhou. The *Pudu* activities are held at different *Jing* temples on the first day (*Baiyuan Jing*, *Longgong Jing*), second day (*Houcheng Jing*) and nineteenth day (*Fengchi Jing*, *Yichun Jing*) of the seventh month of the lunar calendar every year (Wang, 2017, pp. 292-295). And the activities such as the street-based “parading the *Jing*’s realm” strengthen the sense of community. *Fengchi Jing* even had disputes with the others during the activity of “parading the realm”. This conflict based on the different beliefs of each *Jing* unit, usually arises when the residents of one *Jing* unit intrude into the other *Jing* unit during the parading along the streets and alleys. This shows that, the belief system of the *Jing* unit and its “spiritual boundaries” are inviolable in the residents' mindset.

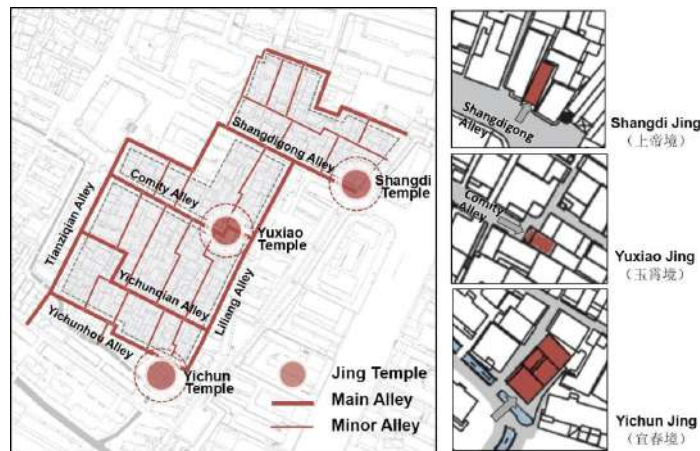


Figure 7 The public space system in "Sanjiao Pu".
Source: the authors.

In the term of cultural connotation, as the spatial carrier of community spirit, the alleys reflect historical memories and collective spirit that further strengthen the sense of community attachment. In the *Sanjiao Pu*, the names “*Shangdigong Alley*”, “*Longgong Alley*” and “*Fengchi Alley*” were all named by the name of *Jing* temples, which reflects the influence of the deities in the *Pu-Jing* communities. The name “*Houcheng Jing*” is derived from “*Houcheng Street*”, which emphasises the meaning of loyalty and honesty, and has greatly influenced the family rules of the residents in this area. The name “*Comity Alley*” originated from a story about comity. In the early years, when the residents of the *Comity Alley* built new houses, they would take the initiative to set back a bit of space, so that a public space was formed at the entrance of each house. All of these form the spiritual core of the community.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Through the analysis of the public space composition and the spatial structure of the *Pu-Jing* community in the old city of Quanzhou, it is found that a well-defined and structurally stable public space system was developed in the *Pu-Jing* communities

during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Through even coverage and relatively high accessibility, a systematic distribution of *Jing* temples has been realised. The public space system with the *Jing* Temple as the core, the streets and alleys as the link, and the belief realm as the unit was formed throughout the city. This grid-based public service system supports traditional beliefs and grassroots governance systems.

Through this public space system, we can further understand the space formation logic and building wisdom reflected in it. On the one hand, the public space has gradually developed a specific structure and a stable pattern, which supports folk beliefs and grass-roots management to be carried out in a long-term and orderly manner. The pattern of public space of Quanzhou's *Pu-Jing* community has the following three main elements. (1) Units of appropriate scope: Folk belief units are further subdivided within the framework established by the authorities. Their scale is determined by population size and the level of social development and their boundaries are delineated by both material and psychological factors, which fosters the formation of a sense of community spatial domain. (2) Universally recognised core: Within each unit, there are *Jing* temples where collective beliefs and public affairs activities are held, serving as a place of spiritual cohesion among residents. Their intentional placement enhances their recognizability and accessibility. The main body of these *Jing* temples (sometimes combined with surrounding areas) typically forms the most influential public space within the community. (3) Stable connecting structure: Relying on the basic organisational elements of the community, streets and alleys connect individual private dwellings to the public centre. Through this spatial pattern, favorable conditions are created for the continuation of social activities and a strong link is established between the secular and spiritual activities of people and specific places. The public space of *Pu-Jing* community has long played an important role in maintaining neighborhood relations and supporting social activities, and thus serves as a vital connection between individuals and their surroundings, allowing the residents to gain a sense of belonging.

On the other hand, the public space system reflects the ability of the civil society to develop autonomously in response to and in coordination with the official management and its relentless pursuit for spiritual meaning-making. The social relations constructed by the bond of common beliefs are fully reflected in the public space system. Folk belief activities, daily life, and administrative affairs are accommodated and integrated within this public space system. The construction process of communities under the *Pu-Jing* system transcends the guidance and management of the authorities, reflecting the practical embodiment of residents' adaptation of daily living spaces to their mental needs. The public and government departments have established a relationship of mutual recognition and influence that works together at the social and spatial levels thereby contributing to the shaping and development of the community. In a stable faith-based social and spatial structure, people perpetuate spiritual activities deep in their memories, and the constant consolidation of their beliefs also allows for the conservation and continuation of the community's collective memory. Today, folk festivals and belief rituals are still active in Quanzhou, and the public space system remains strong and continues to play a promoting role in community identity. The community public space system has become an important carrier of the historical and cultural values and spiritual connotations of the *Pu-Jing* community.

The *Pu-Jing* community has explored a certain degree of autonomous development under official control, and realised the shaping of sense of place. The wisdom of place-making implied in the public space of *Pu-Jing* community provide inspiration for contemporary community governance. The social structure and activities supported by the public space of the *Pu-Jing* community are the core social characteristics of this distinctive community form. This is precisely what modern communities lack— in contemporary community building, the serious homogenisation and economic orientation gradually erode the cultural and social relationships within the community. As a critical entry point for community governance, the planning of public space has become an important means of creating a sense of belonging to the community. When planning public spaces, it's crucial to preserve and perpetuate stable spatial patterns that have been formed over a long period of time to maintain social relationships. We should strive to preserve indigenous populations and their social networks as much as possible while pursuing development, so that the original spirit of the community can be continued over time.

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Notes

1. According to the "Political Records", one headman is appointed for each "Pu", along with one assistant headman, one constable, and one deputy constable. The headman and the constable respectively manage the "Pu" records, and constabulary records. The "Pu" records are mainly related to public security and labor duties, specifying the daily duties of watchmen and miscellaneous laborers. The constabulary records mainly address local emergencies, recording the number of watchmen each household under each "Pu" should provide.
2. In Quanzhou, the term "普度" (*Pudu*) refers to a traditional Buddhist ritual known as the Ghost Festival or the Hungry Ghost Festival, which is part of Chinese folk religion and also observed in the Buddhist tradition. The purpose of this festival is to release the suffering of the deceased, particularly those who have become "hungry ghosts" due to unfulfilled desires or neglect by their descendants. By the end of the Ming and the beginning of the Qing dynasty, it had developed into a city-wide "rotation" system. Each communities takes turns hosting the *Pudu* festival on specific dates, usually from the fifth to eighth lunar month.
3. The "covenant house" is the place where the grassroots society promotes and formulates the "township covenant" to restrain the townspeople. The "township covenant" combines indoctrination and administrative attributes, and is an extension of the administrative management system at the grassroots level (Kang & Wang, 2022).

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