

# Retired ancient ferry site in Xinbang Town whispers tales of a bygone era

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IN the southeastern corner of Dazheng Pond's southern bank sits the Sisheng Ancient Ferry. This historical site, nestled in the north of Sishengzhi Village, Xinbang Town, whispers tales of a bygone era, where life flowed as steadily as the river itself.

The ancient ferry was once a lifeline for the villagers. Dazheng Pond, a broad river flowing east to west, mostly winds through Qingpu District. A small segment also meanders through the northern part of Sishengzhi Village, where the river splits into three branches.

In an era before roads and automobiles, ferries were the bridges that connected lives across the river. This ancient ferry bore silent witness to countless crossings and the relentless march of time.

In those early days, the ferry terminal was a simple architecture. A stone path extended about 10 meters into the river, serving as a dock for passengers. Later, a small shelter was built to protect the waiting passengers from the wind and rain. It is recorded in the "Annals of Xinbang Town," which states, "The north of Sishengzhi Village in Dazheng Pond has always had a ferry."

The ferry operators, selected from the village's farmers, rotated monthly. They propelled the ferry, charging only 5 fen (cent) per passenger, with an additional 5 fen for bicycles. The route was the shortest connection between Xinbang and nearby areas such as Liantang, Zhengdian and Xiaozheng in Qingpu.

In the nostalgic hues of the 1960s and 1970s, the verdant expanse of Sishengzhi Village's farmland stretched predominantly to the south



The ancient ferry, once bustling, now rests silently on the southern bank of Dazheng Pond.

of Dazheng Pond, while to the north, a modest patchwork of low-lying fields sprawled - land that lay fallow, with no homesteads to mar its quiet solitude.

At the start of each day, farmers shouldered their meals in cloth-bound bundles and took the ferry to the north. There were no timetables dictating its departures or arrivals - only the rustic calls from the opposite bank, summoning its service.

Passengers young and old would lend their strength to the boatman, tugging the thick, coiled ropes with hands weathered and tough from the fields. Their voices mingled, laughter cascading over the water, weaving a tapestry of shared endeavor that transformed strangers into kin beneath the broad sky.

During the frantic summer harvest season, the villagers labored under

the moon as well as the sun. The boatman waited patiently amid a chorus of frogs until everyone was done, ensuring no one was left behind.

Later, the transformation of the northern fields marked a new chapter for the village. Much of the land, except for a portion claimed by the newly constructed Zhufeng Highway, was converted into a lush forest spanning 200 - 300 meters, a conservation area protecting the upstream sources of the Huangpu River. This shift meant the villagers no longer needed to cross the pond to tend their fields.

As the socio-economic landscape evolved, the lives of the villagers improved markedly. The dusty roads once trodden by work-worn boots now hummed with the soft purrs of private cars. The familial gatherings and communal crossings at the

ancient ferry, once the heartbeat of daily life, began to fade.

The thrum of conversation and the creak of the ferry's timbers were replaced by the silence of progress. The once-busy, bustling ancient ferry crossing gradually settled into a serene stillness, its waters undisturbed, mirroring the quiet skies above.

The ancient ferry port is now surrounded by beautifully repaired roads and houses scattered charmingly, with vibrant greenery enriching the landscape. The once-abandoned ferry has journeyed through the twilight and dawn of ages. It has washed away the mists of time and now stands as a scenic pavilion on the southern bank of Dazheng Pond.

A PLACE TO LINGER

## Ming Dynasty official ardently pursued justice, transformed economy

Tan Weiyun

IN the turbulent times of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Wang Sunxi, a native of Huating in Songjiang, emerged as a steadfast and incorruptible official. Graduating as a scholar in 1592, his career was marked by unwavering integrity and a firm commitment to justice.

Wang's tenure as the magistrate of Houguan County (today's Fuzhou in Fujian Province) was transformative. The region was notoriously difficult to govern, with local tyrants deeply entrenched in power, often colluding with authorities to oppress the common folk.

Upon assuming office, Wang vowed to dismantle these powerful cliques. His thorough investigations provided him with a clear picture of the injustices and, despite facing formidable challenges, he remained committed to the fair enforcement of law and the protection of the people. Through relentless efforts, he improved public order significantly, earning the affection and respect of locals for fostering peace and prosperity.

Wang's dedication to justice was further exemplified during his tenure as an official in the Dalisi (ancient China's supreme court), where he was responsible for judicial reviews.

On one occasion, a powerful eunuch committed a crime and, despite the eunuch's influence, Wang refused to be swayed. When the eunuch attempted to bribe Wang with a fortune, Wang famously declared, "Even a mountain of gold cannot shake my resolve, for my case is as solid as iron." Even when his superior at the Dalisi sought to protect the eunuch, Wang stood firm, ultimately ensuring that justice prevailed and the guilty person was punished.

Later, Wang was appointed as the prefect of Taizhou in Zhejiang Province, where he again demonstrated his reformative zeal.

He confronted local barbaric customs head-on, particularly the drowning of female infants.

Moreover, he recognized the untapped potential of the region's abundant hemp, which the locals discarded as waste. He introduced looms, had women taught to weave, and transformed the local economy by turning a disregarded resource into valuable "Wang Cloth," which dressed the region and became a symbol of his enduring legacy.

FAMOUS NAMES