

Glossary of Key Terms

Theoretical and heritage-conservation concepts

Term	Specific meaning	Cultural connotation
Garden field	A relational social space in which gardens gather, convert and transmit different forms of capital.	It frames the garden as a network of power, taste, social relations and institutional recognition, not merely as a physical site.
Famous gardens	Historically recognised gardens with strong public reputation, textual memory and institutional visibility.	The term implies canonisation through literati writing, elite recognition, heritage status and tourism branding.
Poetic-spatial aesthetics	An aesthetic mode that links garden space with poetry, painting, allusion and moral self-fashioning.	It turns spatial appreciation into a marker of taste, cultural competence and elite identity.

Literati culture, aesthetic practice and classical allusions

Term	Specific meaning	Cultural connotation
Literati	Educated cultural elites trained in classical learning and often connected to examination culture and officialdom.	They held authority over poetry, calligraphy, painting, taste and social recognition.
Scholar-officials	Educated elites who held, had held or were eligible for government office.	They linked literary culture with state power and often shaped garden reputation.
Literati gatherings	Elite meetings for poetry, calligraphy, painting, banqueting and mutual appreciation, often held in gardens.	They functioned as rituals of reputation-making, social networking and capital exchange.
Poetic exchange	The reciprocal composition, response and praise of poems among literati.	It was a social practice through which friendship, taste and status were publicly affirmed.

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Literati reclusion	A literati mode of withdrawal from office or public life.	It often worked as moral self-fashioning and political positioning, rather than simple retirement.
Zhongnan shortcut	An allusion to using reclusion at Mount Zhongnan as an indirect route to official appointment.	It expresses the paradox of seeking power by performing withdrawal from power.
Tiger Hill literati gatherings	Poetry and social gatherings held at Tiger Hill in Suzhou.	They used a celebrated scenic site to accelerate poetic fame and group recognition.
Canglang	A classical name and allusion associated with clear or turbid water.	In garden discourse, it evokes purity, self-defence and refusal to join the vulgar world.
Waters of Canglang	A classical water allusion in which clarity or turbidity reflects the moral condition of the world.	It supports the image of personal integrity, self-purification and withdrawal from corrupt politics.
Yue Fei's fate	A reference to the Southern Song general Yue Fei, who was executed after political suspicion and false accusation.	It served as a warning memory for military figures seeking safety under a civil-dominated political order.

Imperial examinations, official careers and state institutions

Term	Specific meaning	Cultural connotation
Jinshi	A high-level degree in the imperial examination system and a major credential for official careers.	It signified cultural capital, elite status and access to state power.
Imperial examination system	The state examination system used to select officials through classical learning and written tests.	It institutionalised cultural capital and shaped the social hierarchy of literati society.
Entering official service	The pursuit or achievement of government office.	It was a central path for converting literary reputation into

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Dongchang	A Ming-dynasty eunuch-led intelligence and secret-police agency.	political power and social status. It represents coercive imperial surveillance and the political risks faced by officials.
Military defence circuit	A regional military-administrative office or jurisdiction in late imperial China.	In the manuscript, it marks the connection between garden ownership, official power and institutional occupation.
Prefectural school	A state-sponsored Confucian school at the prefectural level.	It linked local education, examination culture and official moral order.
Confucian temple	A ritual site for honouring Confucius, often connected with state schools.	It sacralised learning, moral hierarchy and official educational authority.
Yamen garden	A garden attached to or located within a government office compound.	It ties garden space to administrative authority and official residence culture.

Social groups, organisations and elite networks

Term	Specific meaning	Cultural connotation
Gentry	Local elites with education, property, examination status or social prestige.	They mediated between the state and local society and shaped cultural and charitable life.
Gentry-merchants	Elites who combined gentry status with commercial wealth and business networks.	They connected charity, commerce, local governance and political opportunity.
Guild hall	An association building for people linked by native place, occupation or institutional identity.	It supported mutual aid, social networking, commercial cooperation and collective identity.

Term	Specific meaning	Cultural connotation
Charitable estate	A lineage or family-funded estate used for relief, education, ritual and welfare purposes.	It converted wealth into moral reputation, social authority and long-term family influence.

Political ideology, moral education and cultural governance

Term	Specific meaning	Cultural connotation
Ming loyalism and anti-Qing sentiment	Loyalty to the fallen Ming dynasty and distrust or resistance toward Qing rule.	It shaped early Qing political tension, especially among Jiangnan elites.
Literary inquisitions	Political persecutions triggered by writings, phrases or perceived ideological disloyalty.	They show how textual culture could become a serious political risk under imperial rule.
Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism	The orthodox Neo-Confucian tradition associated with Cheng Hao, Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi.	It provided moral principles for education, social discipline and dynastic governance.
Five Hundred Worthies Shrine	A shrine at Canglang Pavilion commemorating selected exemplary local figures.	It canonised local virtue and turned the garden into an institutional site of moral education.
Shousu Gathering	A literary gathering at Canglang Pavilion held in honour of Su Shi.	It linked local literati memory with public cultural identification and Qing cultural governance.
The Peach Blossom Fan	A Qing drama about the fall of the Ming and the moral emotions of dynastic transition.	Its performance carried loyalist memory, historical reflection and political symbolism.
Cultural-educational governance	Governance through culture, education, ritual, moral exemplars and public instruction.	It integrates local elites and public values into a broader political and moral order.

Regional and place-based cultural terms

Term	Specific meaning	Cultural connotation
Jiangnan	The lower Yangtze region, especially associated with Suzhou and other wealthy cultural centres.	It signifies economic prosperity, refined literati culture, commercial society and elite networks.
Jiangzuo	A historical and literary regional term often referring to the Jiangnan cultural sphere.	It evokes a refined regional lineage of poets, scholars and local cultural memory.
Wuzhong	The Suzhou-centred Wu cultural region.	It marks a prestigious local identity associated with Suzhou literati and artistic culture.
Wumen	A cultural name for Suzhou and its literati-artistic circle.	It carries associations with local painting, calligraphy, poetry and elite sociability.
Jinchang	A historic district or gate area in Suzhou.	It indicates a commercial and cultural urban setting connected with garden circulation and reputation.
Tiger Hill	A famous scenic and historic hill in Suzhou.	It became a canonical site for poetry, sightseeing, cultural memory and reputation-making.