

Urban Design along Bagua Ditch in the Southern District of Quanzhou City

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Number of participants : 13 Tongji students

Studio Time : OCT 12 2026 to NOV 27 2026

Studio Place : Tongji University (OCT 12 2026 to NOV 14 2026)
Huaqiao University (NOV 15 2026 to NOV 18 2026)
Tongji University (NOV 19 2026 to NOV 27 2026)
Institute of Science Tokyo (FEB 2027, undetermined)

First Meeting : OCT 12 2026, Mon



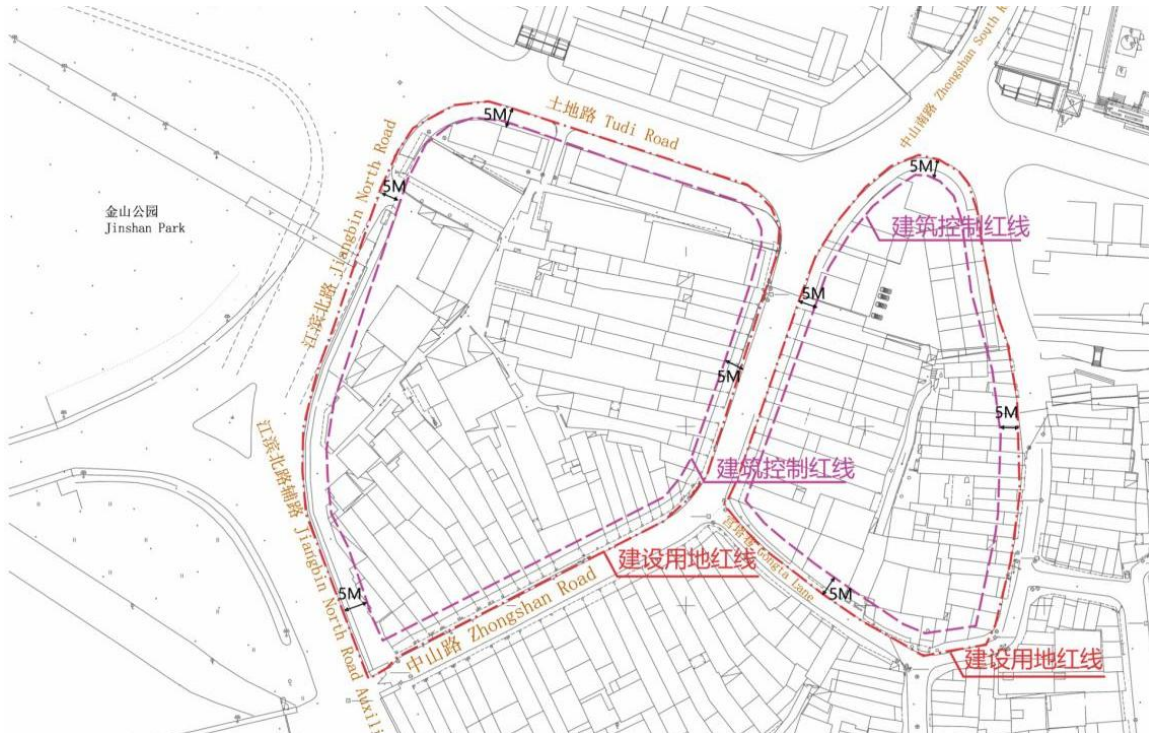
Introduction :

Quanzhou, Fujian, also known as Licheng, Wenling, Citong City, and the City of Light, developed a renowned network of overseas transport and trade as early as the Song and Yuan dynasties, when maritime commerce flourished and “merchants from myriad nations gathered amid the sound of the rising sea.” Celebrated as a leading port of the East, Quanzhou became one of the starting points of China’s Maritime Silk Road and fostered a distinctive maritime culture. Its cultural landscape is characterized by the interweaving of Chinese and foreign traditions, multiple ethnic groups, religions, and artistic achievements, earning it the reputation of a “World Museum of Religions.” Its architectural culture vividly reflects the convergence of traditions from China’s Central Plains, Southeast Asia, and the Arab world. Quanzhou was among the first group of National Historic and Cultural Cities announced in China in 1982, was designated an “East Asian City of Culture” in 2013, and in July 2021 the property “Quanzhou: Emporium of the World in Song-Yuan China” was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as cultural heritage.

Quanzhou developed on an alluvial plain shaped by long-term changes between land and sea in the



Jinjiang River basin. Human activity in the region can be traced back to the area



around Fengzhou and Jiuri Mountain before the Qin dynasty. The city's administrative center gradually shifted southward from Fengzhou to present-day Licheng, while the walled city underwent successive expansions through the Zicheng, Luocheng, and Yicheng stages, evolving from a small Tang-dynasty settlement into a world-class commercial port during the Song and Yuan dynasties. The Song government established a Maritime Trade Office, and Houzhu Port replaced the silted Fengzhou Port, forming an ocean-trade network of foreign quarters, ancient ferries, and stone bridges. Further expansion in the Yuan and Ming periods, followed by maritime restrictions during the Ming and Qing dynasties, concentrated population within the inner city and ultimately established the present boundary of the ancient city.

Bagua Ditch forms the complete ring-shaped drainage system of Quanzhou Ancient City. In its early history, it functioned not only as a defensive moat but also for water storage and navigation, allowing small boats to connect with the Jinjiang River. In the eleventh year of the Hongzhi reign of the Ming dynasty, Censor Zhang Min presided over a large-scale dredging of the city's waterways and introduced the cosmological idea of the Earlier-Heaven Eight Trigrams into their construction:

ceramic jars inscribed with the names of the eight trigrams were buried along the drainage channels according to the eight directions as devices for controlling water, from which the name “Bagua Ditch” was derived. Historical records further note the discovery of a large geomantic ceramic jar bearing the character “Xun” beside the ditch east of the Huimin Pharmacy, providing direct material evidence of this water management tradition. Water gates at the seven city gates connected with Bagua Ditch to form a closed-loop urban water network. The principal east-west moat, known as the “Xunliu Grand Moat,” lay north of Tumen Street (Xinmen Street), while the main north-south moat largely followed today’s Haogouqian, linking Suqing Gate on West Street to Xinmen Street. During the Song and Yuan dynasties, numerous small stone-slab bridges crossed the ditch, forming the core of the ancient city’s celebrated “Twenty-four Bridges” and linking residences, temples, wharves, and markets.

The project site is located in the southern district of Quanzhou Ancient City, south of the intersection of Zhongshan South Road and Tudi Road. It faces the Jinjiang River to the south, Sunwu Creek to the west, and the southeastern moat section of Bagua Ditch to the east. The site lies directly beside Quanzhou’s flood-control embankment, adjoins the remains of Shunji Bridge, and forms part of the historic street fabric along Zhongshan South Road. As indicated in the site-boundary plan, the development red-line area is approximately 2,700 m². The urban design should address the spatial relationships among the building groups and achieve coordinated integration with the surrounding water environment, historic cultural district, and World Heritage area.

This joint studio will investigate and document the historical context, water-system structure, and urban space of Quanzhou Ancient City. The design should respond to both the conservation constraints of the site and the needs of urban regeneration, with the following requirements.

Design a small-scale urban mixed-use complex with a total gross floor area of approximately 20,000 m². The program includes:

- ① Affordable Youth Hostel — 3000 m²
- ② Ancient City Water Culture Museum — 5000 m²
- ③ Community Activity Spaces — 2000 m²
- ④ Tianhou Temple Visitor Service Center — 1000 m²
- ⑤ Quanzhou Cuisine-themed Commercial and Food Street — 8,000 m²

Key words: Urban Regeneration, Maritime Heritage, Water Network, Cultural Confluence, Historic Fabric

Timeline :

Week1-3 - Shanghai :

- Background Research
- Site model making

- Group discussion

Week4 - Quanzhou :

- Kick off meeting
- On-site research
- Workshop
- Mid presentation 1 (concept)

Week5 - Shanghai :

- Workshop
- Mid presentation 2
- Mid presentation 3
- Final presentation

Week6 - Tokyo :

- The further-developed design proposals will be reviewed again at Institute of Science Tokyo in February 2027.

Submission Requirements :

Each group must submit a PDF file and a physical model at the final presentation, including the following:

- Site plan / Master plan
- Floor plans of key buildings (all levels)
- Sections
- Axonometric drawings
- Perspective renderings
- Necessary analytical diagrams
- Overall model at scale 1:500
- Model of key building(s) , scale to be determined by each group