

Narrative and Space: Reconstruction of Heritage Network for South China Historical Trail

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ABSTRACT: South China Historical Trail is a channel of communication inside and outside Lingnan in different historical periods. It is also known as a corridor of population migration, a channel of commodity exchange and an ancient road of civilization and culture. In view of the limitations of focusing on space while ignoring narrative in the previous research of ancient post road, the analysis method of narrative spatial structure was introduced herein. Based on the four main functions of South China Historical Trail, including postal exchange, military war, commerce and trade, and official travel, the holistic and systematic narrative space study of South China Historical Trail was carried out in order to construct a relatively complete narrative space structure of the heritage corridor network. Research showed that the four functional narrative points all rely on corridors. Its spatial structure took Guangzhou as the main core, with Leizhou and Yangjiang in western Guangdong and Chaozhou in eastern Guangdong as the sub-core. A waterway-based land as the auxiliary network system was formed; The post road shifted from the original military function to the economic function, experienced the internal communication with the Central Plains to the coastal areas, and then to the world through the Maritime Silk Road. It became the epitome of the historical development process of Lingnan region. The narrative spatial structure analysis method can deeply explore the historical characteristics and cultural connotation of the heritage corridor, and promote the overall cognition of the post road. The analysis results have certain guiding significance for the construction and protection of the heritage corridor network of South China Historical Trail. It can also provide a reference for other scholars to carry out the research on similar heritage corridors.

KEY WORDS: South China Historical Trail; narrative space; heritage network; functional structure; cultural communication type

Introduction

Heritage corridors are linear landscapes usually rich in cultural resources and they are the result of the evolution of “Green Line Park”, “national reserve” and “greenway” thought originating from the United States [1]. They represent a method of regional heritage preservation and utilization that combines cultural and ecological conservation, recreational activities, and economic develop-

ment. The concept of “heritage corridors” has further evolved into the idea of a “heritage network” during the construction of the Jewish heritage network in Spain, aiming to protect both tangible and intangible cultural heritage within the network in a connected form, emphasizing the complete representation of the value of the heritage corridor through linking individual heritage sites within it [2]. At present, the research on heritage corridors or line-

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ar cultural corridors in China mainly focuses on areas such as the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, the Silk Road and the ancient Tea-horse Road, etc. They can be classified into different types, including natural landscape, cultural dissemination, strategic layout, and folk culture[3]. The research in this field mainly focused on describing the characteristics of heritage corridors, their construction [4-6], distribution patterns, and conservation [7,8] as well as tourism development[9].

South China Historical Trail can be classified as cultural dissemination-type heritage corridor, which refers to the channel used for transmitting documents and transporting goods and personnel within Guangdong before 1913. It can be categorized into water and land routes, and further divided into post roads and ancient paths based on their construction forms. It serves as an important channel for economic exchange and cultural dissemination in Guangdong. Previous studies have mainly focused on the historical context of South China Historical Trail [10-12], value analysis [13,14], and activated utilization [15-17], revealing the spatial characteristics of the development of the post road and its relationship with the evolution of villages, and the role of the ancient post road in economic exchanges, political and cultural exchanges. Under the guidance of the relevant policies of activating and restoring the ancient post road in Guangdong, a comprehensive system is gradually being formed. However, it is relatively lack of the integration of various historical resources, the overall functional combing and the complete construction of the macro system.

1 Current situation and existing problems

South China Historical Trail has played more and more diverse roles since its ancient development, such as expanding the military territory, trade exchanges, and so on. The evolution of the functional direction of the ancient post road can reflect the social development and changes of the Southern Guangdong region. The ancient post road was not only a single traffic carrier, but also endowed with many local characteristics of cultural connotation. Events described by the ancient books happened in the whole South China Historical Trail network. By broadening the perspective, it can be observed that the most basic functions of the ancient post road in all ages include postal

service, military affairs, trade and official travel. Basing on these functions, the occurrences and underlying causes of these events are not isolated but have a certain diachronic, and are closely related to the ancient post road. These events not only depended on the ancient post road, but also reacted on it. Events and space have always been inseparable. Is there a narrative spatial relationship between the events and space of the heritage network? Can people understand the relevant factors such as the emergence, development context, causes, and spatial characteristics of the ancient post road from these significant events and connect them to form a complete heritage network system of South China Historical Trail? This paper takes the ancient post road in Southern Guangdong as an example, and tries to answer these questions. Due to the changes in time, the Guangdong Province referred in the definition of the ancient post road has been different from that of today. This study focuses on the current administrative boundary of Guangdong Province, while further research is needed for the ancient post roads in Hainan Island and the coastal areas of Guangxi.

2 Research approach and methods

Narrative space system is a method theory to study the spatial environment based on narrative theory. Space narrative process and its dynamic development course is consistent, which has development, climax and endings. Spatial environment is influenced by geography, humanity, nature, and many other factors. Space narrative arises from the organization of scenes in a space and of events in time. Different generating processes of the narrative will lead to different experiences, including both temporal and spatial dimensions. Traditional narrative space research on the entity space mainly focus on the meso-microscopic scale space, often overlooking the exploration of the historical development of a regional system within a larger environmental context through narrative means. While paying attention to the structure characteristics of the large-scale narrative space system, it is also conducive to exploring the development context of a region.

On the basis of previous theoretical research, this study defines the narrative spatial system as the “space where events occur along the post road.” Mainly by col-

lecting and sorting out the events that have taken place along the ancient post road, the study primarily investigates the cultural connotations and characteristics of the road. Through establishing the connections between linear features and heritage sites, the study conducts a comprehensive analysis of the narrative space within the entire heritage network of South China Historical Trail.

3 Narrative space analysis of South China Historical Trail

Based on the characteristics of the ancient post road in Southern Guangdong, different from traditional approaches to categorizing narrative spatial elements such as event elements and artificial elements, the narrative elements of the ancient post road were classified into four sections: postal, military, trade and official travel according to their functional characteristics.

3.1 Analysis of postal service elements

Postal service connected the communication and information transmission of the whole country. It was initially established for the needs of national military administration, and was a multi-functional organization, which was built with a series of related facilities and buildings such as post roads, horses, chariots, post pavilions, post inns. It not only addressed transportation and correspondence matters but also served as reception centers for envoys and transmission points for military reports. Due to the well-developed water network in the south, South China Historical Trail was predominantly relied on water routes during various periods, using land routes to connect different waterway segments. During the Tang and Song dynasties, the rapid development of sea technology accelerated the improvement of the waterway network system of southern post roads. In fact, during the Tang Dynasty, the Guangzhou-Haiyi Road, among other similar routes, emerged to enable exchanges with overseas regions.

According to the documented names of the post stations corresponding to modern place names, the locations of the post stations from different era were marked on the map. After classifying each post station according to different grades, the main line and distribution points of the ancient post road in Southern Guangdong were obtained [18-22] (Figure 1). In the early days of the Tang Dynasty,

Zhang Jiuling opened Dayu Ling Road, passing through three towns including Meiguan and another two post station sites, Yulingyi and Hengpuyi [18]; In the Song Dynasty, the Chaohuixia Road was renovated on a large-scale, and more post stations were set up along the coast of eastern Guangdong [19]; In the Ming Dynasty, a large number of post inns were built along existing post roads, not only for military purposes but also as stations for delivering official documents and goods [21]; In the Qing Dynasty, the means of transportation were developed, and the mode of transportation was no longer limited to the traditional ways of post transmission. As a result, there were not many new post stations [22] (Figure 2). Since there are more available references to Ming Dynasty post inn locations, most of the post stations shown on the map are from that era. Although these post stations have the possibility to cover the previous generation, they are still of great value to interpret the narrative space structure of the ancient post road in Southern Guangdong from a postal perspective.

Through a density analysis of postal facilities and nodal cities throughout different dynasties, it can be observed that the postal system in Guangdong Province revolved around Guangzhou, extending along the Beijiang River, Xijiang River, Dongjiang River and their tributaries, heading towards the east, north, and west regions of Guangdong, highlighting the importance of water routes. The higher-ranked nodes in the postal system, such as Xunhua, Yingzhou, Leizhou and Fengzhou in the road administration, most of which were built early, served as important transportation hubs on the post road in the past dynasties. From a geographical perspective, these locations were strategically positioned at the intersection of water routes and either other water routes or land routes, with the superior geographical position, providing convenient conditions for water and land transportation. From the perspective of social and economic conditions, there are many villages and towns around these areas, with a high degree of economic development, which provided a good material guarantee for the postal transmission. Consequently, the postal functions flourished, further fostering economic and social development in these regions. With the development

of the Times, the post road gradually expanded from the main road route to the branch road system. With Guangzhou, Huizhou, Yingde, Duanzhou, Leizhou and Shaozhou

as the central points, the network structure of the post station was formed by means of mutual connection and surrounding development (Figure 3).

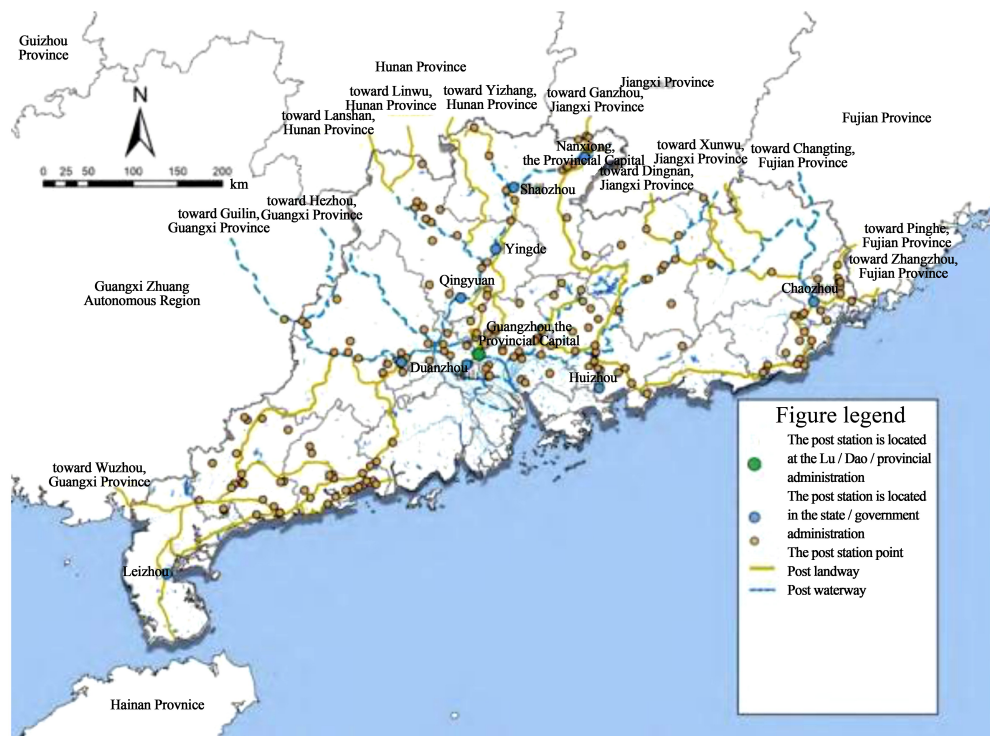


Figure 1 Distribution map of the ancient post stations along South China Historical Trail[18-22]

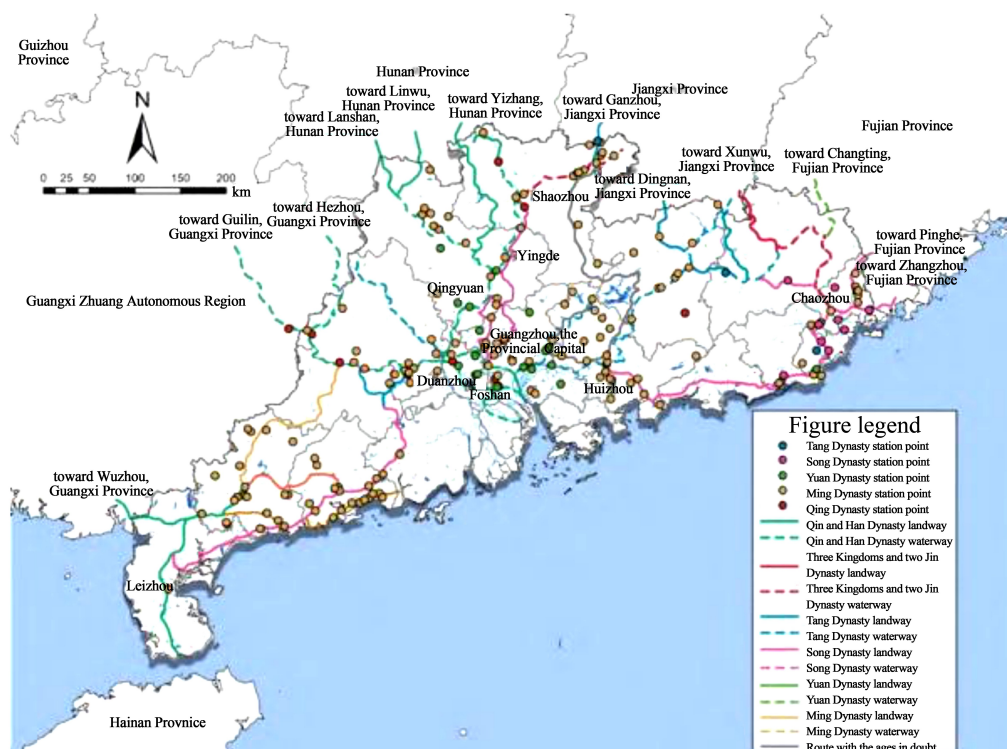


Figure 2 Distribution map of postal facilities along South China Historical Trail in different dynasties

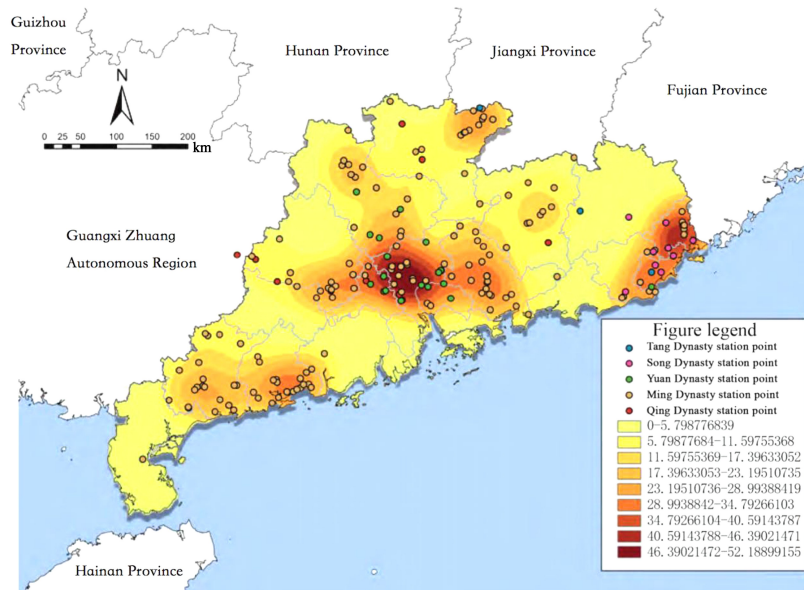


Figure 3 Kernel density map of the distribution of post stations throughout history

3.2 Analysis of military element

The development of Lingnan by the dynasty of the Central Plains was originally aimed at controlling the border areas. During the Qin Dynasty, they launched expeditions into Lingnan and constructed four “new routes.” The first one passed through Jiangxi Dayu Ling Mountains, via Hengpu Pass, from the Beijiang River to Panyu along the Zhenjiang water; The second one started from Chen County through Yangshan Pass, along the Huangshui River through Kuangpu Pass, and descended southward along the Beijiang River; The third one crossed Guilin Mountains, descended southward along the He River, and reached Panyu from the Xijiang River; The Fourth route followed the Xiangjiang River from Lingling, down to the Lijiang River, into the Xijiang River [8]. Zhao Tuo established fortresses and camp sites in present-day Huidong, Boluo, Zijin in Heyuan, Longchuan, and other areas, indicating the early use of the Dongjiang River waterway during the Qin Dynasty. The five routes of the Western Han Dynasty basically followed the Qin Road, with only one Zangke River newly opened; In the Eastern Han Dynasty, the Wushui waterway was renovated and the route from Chenzhou to Shaozhou was shortened [10]. The roads built in the Qin and Han dynasties laid the route pattern for entering Lingnan from the northwest, and the military strongholds and the location of the major wars could re-

flect the development process of Lingnan in the Qin and Han dynasties. Emperor Daizong in Tang Dynasty sent troops all the way along the south of the Beijiang river, successively captured Shaozhou, Pajiangkou, Duanzhou and Guangzhou. Another army from Fujian along the Chaohuixia Road captured Chaozhou and Xunzhou; During the invasion of the Southern Han Dynasty by the Song Dynasty, the Song army entered Lingnan along Lianjiang River and successively captured Lianzhou, Shaozhou, Yingzhou and Guangzhou [23]; During the Mongol invasion of the Song Dynasty, one army fought in Zijin, Longchuan, and Haifeng, while another army crossed the Dayu Ling Mountains and descended southward along the Bei River, finally meeting in Guangzhou; During the Ming dynasty’s overthrow of the Yuan Dynasty, the forces also entered Guangdong through the Dayu Ling Mountains; In the 40th year of the Jiajing reign, to suppress the mountain dwellers’ uprising, the Ming army along the Chaohuixia road attacked Haifeng, Shangui and other counties [24]. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, due to the invasion of Japanese pirates, very intensive military defense facilities were established in the coastal areas, such as guard offices, fortresses and forts, with military patrol and protection lines added at various river estuaries [25]. At this period, Chaohuixia Road and Zhaolei Post Road were still of importance for the military traffic in Southern Guangdong, serving the functions of military information transmission

and material transportation (Figure 4).



Figure 4 General map of military routes [10, 23-25]

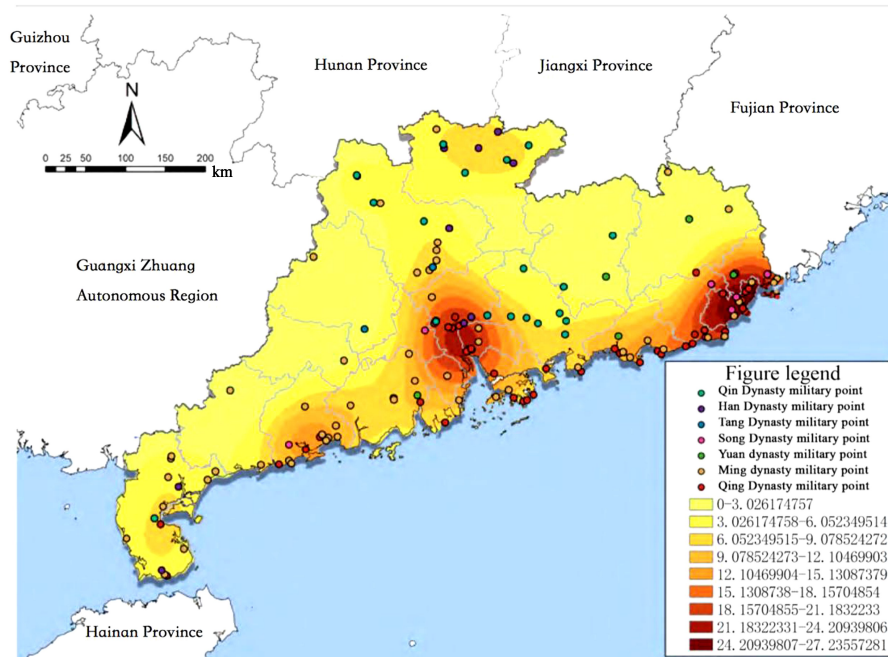


Figure 5 Nuclear density map of successive military narrative points

According to the kernel density analysis, military routes primarily relied on waterways. This is because the northern part of Guangdong is mountainous, with hilly plains and a dense river network, making waterway the most convenient route. Lianzhou, Nanxiong, Shaozhou and Yingde had been military strongholds in the past dynasties, located in the upstream areas of rivers. Occupying

these areas allows for southward movement along water routes directly to the provincial capital, Guangzhou. In terms of the spatial distribution and number of the fortresses, the Japanese threat was most severe in the Guangzhou, Chaozhou, and Huizhou areas during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Until the Ming Dynasty, Guangdong formed a network of military roads with Guangzhou as the center,

connecting the east and west and the coastal areas. The military events around South China Historical Trail brought the change of life style and the transformation of living environment to the Lingnan region. In terms of culture, the advanced technology in the north was brought to the desolate Lingnan through the post road by the war. At the same time, the construction of fortresses and strongholds in the local area also further improved the ancient post road system; In terms of socio-economic aspects, the large number of population migration caused by the war had a great impact on the composition of the local population. After the war, a large number of soldiers and immigrants stayed in the area, which objectively promoted the prosperity and development of Lingnan region (Figure 5).

3.3 Analysis of trade elements

Trade exchange reflects the economic function of the post road. The trade in Lingnan region can be divided into two types: internal and external. The Internal trade mainly refers to the circulation of commodities in the province, including bamboo, timber, marine products, tea and other products. The external trade, on the other hand, refers to the trade from Lingnan region to other places, which can be divided into other regions in China and overseas. From the perspective of overseas trade, South China Historical Trail is an integral part of the Maritime Silk Road. Goods from Jiangnan and the Central Plains passed through the post road and reached the ports of Xuwen and Hepu before being exported. Instead, the goods from overseas, and Lingnan products such as salt, iron products, ceramics and fruits travelled northward along the post road to the Central Plains.

3.3.1 Analysis of salt transport and trade

Historically, Guangdong is one of the largest seawater salt producers in China. The distribution of salt farms is centered on the Pearl River Estuary, which is divided into eastern salt fields, such as Chaoshan and Hailufeng and others, and western salt farms in Dianbo, Maohui and Baishi [26]. Until the Song Dynasty, a large number of salt farms had been established in the coastal areas of eastern and western Guangdong, forming a basic pattern of salt fields (Figure 6). Before the Ming Dynasty, Guangdong salt was mainly sold within the province; since the Ming Dynasty, Guangdong salt was not only for local consumption, but also exported to Fujian, Jiangxi, Hunan,

Guizhou and Yunnan regions [27]. Transportation mainly relied on the Pearl River system, using the way of provincial distribution, tidal bridge and field distribution. Most of the salt was transported along the sea road to Donghui Pass in Guangzhou (i. e. provincial distribution) waited for distribution. Then salt was transported along the Beijiang waterway to Yingde, Shaoguan, Nanxiongzhou, far to Jiangxi across Dayu Ling Mountains or to Hunan across Qitian Ling Mountains for sale. In addition to the provincial distribution, part of the salt in the eastern Guangdong salt field was transported to Guangji Bridge by Chao merchants, and then ascended the Hanjiang River to reach Fujian and Jiangxi (namely Chao Bridge) [28]. Salt in western Guangdong province was sold along the Jianjiang River and Hejiang River to Guangxi. The main official salt transportation route was formed in the Qing Dynasty (Figure 6).

The circulation of salt in various dynasties was mostly controlled by the government to collect the salt tax and generate significant fiscal revenue. This, in turn, gave rise to the private salt industry, which primarily conducted transactions in the places of origin or at checkpoints along the way, often taking more perilous routes for selling to other regions. With its dense network of waterways, the Lingnan region established private salt transportation nodes in challenging-to-control areas where land and water intersect, such as Huizhou Fuqiao, Dongguan Lanwei, and Xinhui Jiangmen, thus forming a complex network of ancient road branches [29].

3.3.2 Analysis of porcelain transport trade

Guangdong has had a tradition of firing ceramics since ancient times. By the Tang Dynasty, the porcelain kilns in Guangdong were able to produce the standardized celadon ware [30]. In the middle of the Northern Song Dynasty, due to the increasing demand for porcelain export, kilns mainly producing porcelain for overseas trade were established in Guangzhou and the eastern coastal areas of Guangdong. The four major kilns in the Song Dynasty were located along the Pearl River, Xijiang River and Hanjiang River, and their products could be shipped out through Guangzhou Port or Chaozhou Port. The porcelain industry in Leizhou Peninsula is also quite developed. Up to now, there are still a large number of Tang to Yuan kiln sites preserved in Leizhou and Suixi, where ceramics were

exported through Leizhou Port [32].

Jun porcelain produced by Foshan Shiwan Kiln is the most famous among the Ming Dynasty Canton porcelain. At that time, the porcelain produced in Jingdezhen, the most important porcelain industry center in China, was also transported to Guangzhou for export through Dayu Ling-Zhenjiang-Bei-

jiang-Pearl River channel. In the Qing Dynasty, white porcelain was imported from Jingdezhen to Guangzhou as porcelain embryo for color painting, resulting in the distinctive Kwon-glazed porcelain, which was exported far overseas through the Maritime Silk Road (Figure 7).

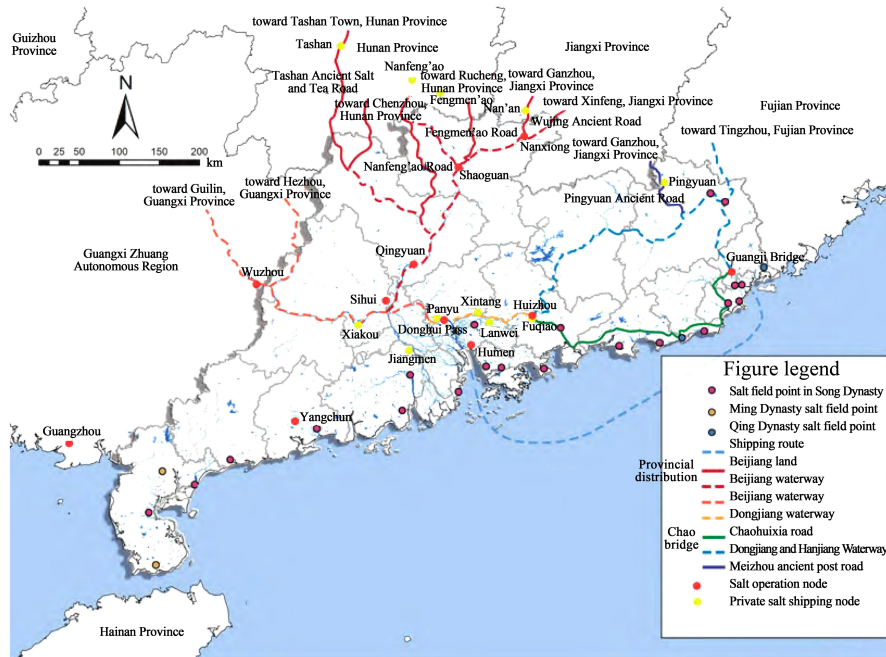


Figure 6 Main salt field distribution and salt transportation roadmap [26-29]

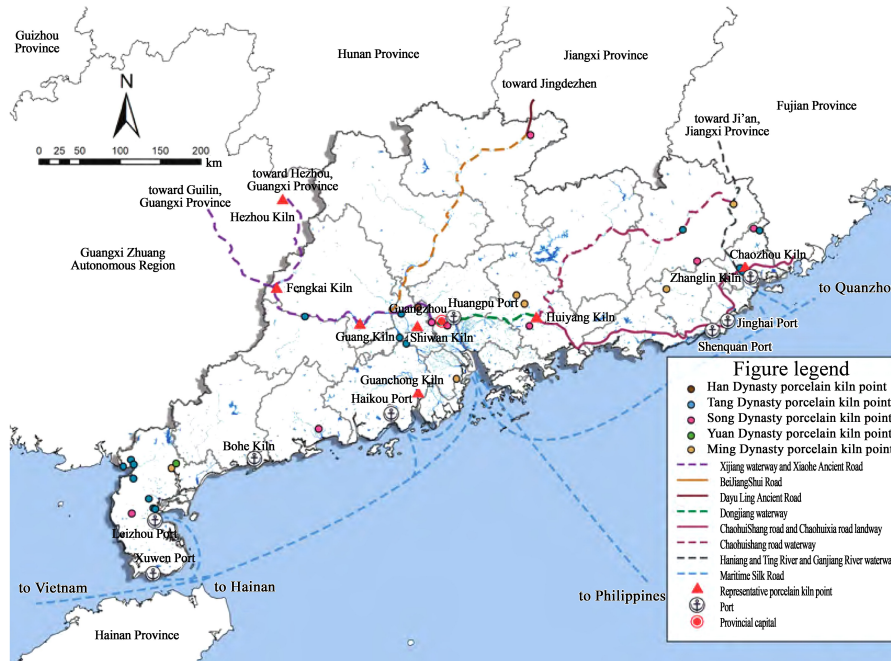


Figure 7 Main porcelain transportation routes in the past dynasties[30-33]

The rise and fall of Guangdong porcelain industry is closely related to the overseas trade status of the ports, especially Guangzhou port. During the Song dynasty, Guan-

gzhou port was the largest port, when porcelain kiln distributed throughout the province; In the Southern Song Dynasty, with the rise of Quanzhou Port, the status of

Guangzhou port declined, where most of the porcelain kilns stopped burning and abandoned; In the early Yuan Dynasty, The status of Quanzhou port surpassed that of Guangzhou Port, coupled with the influence of war, where porcelain kilns were almost completely abandoned; Until the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Canton porcelain rose again.

According to the analysis of trade kernel density,

trade routes based on salt and porcelain transportation relied on river channels. The location of salt fields and kiln sites depends on the landscape environment, and is closely related to the distribution of wharfs. Furthermore, the salt transportation line further enriches the network system of ancient post roads in Guangdong (Figure 8,9).

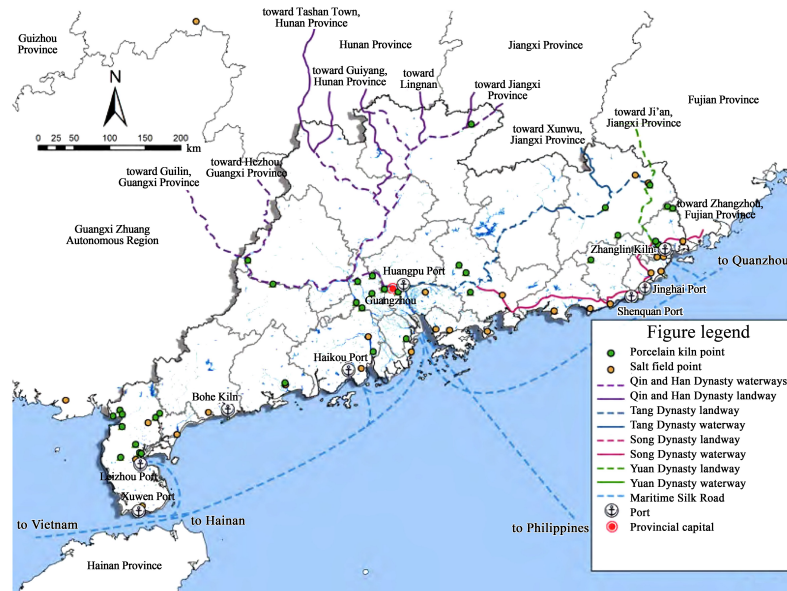


Figure 8 Trade route in the past dynasties [30-33]

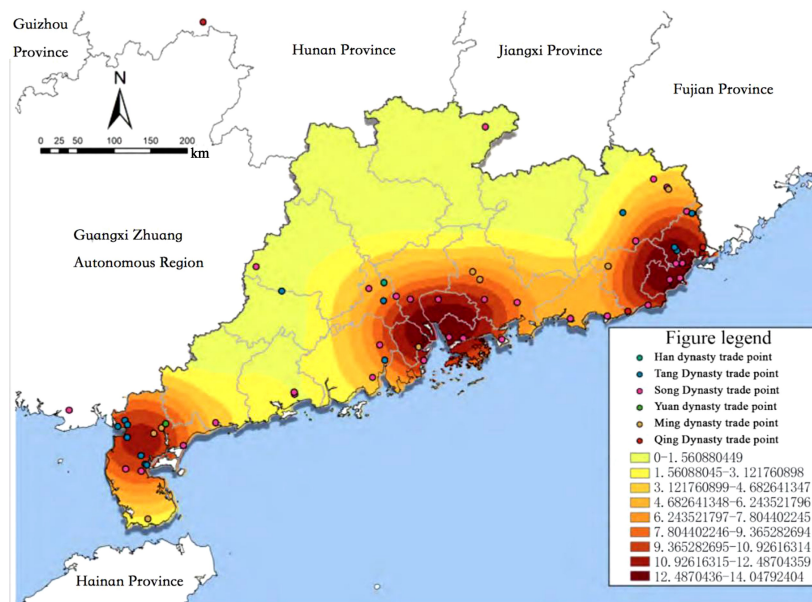


Figure 9 Kernel density map of the narrative points of successive trade

3.4 Analysis of official travel elements

Historically, Lingnan has lagged behind the Central Plains for quite a long time, and was regarded as “barbaric land” and often used as a place for officials’ exile. Since the Qin Dynasty, officials have been demoted here, and the

number of exiles reached its peak during the Song dynasty. On their way to exile, they wrote about what they saw and heard in many poems, forming a unique culture of exile (Table 1). After taking office, many officials took more active positions to promote the local development and made great

contributions to the development of Lingnan.

Table 1 Distribution of official travel narrative points in previous dynasties [33-36]

Dynasty	Scholars and poets	Psalm location
Qin and Han Dynasties-the	Wu Yinzhi	Tan spring
Northern and Southern Dynasties	Wang Shuzhi	Fenghuang valley
Tang Dynasty	Song Zhiwen	Dayu Ling, Shaozhou, Qingyuan Gorge, Yuewangtai, Mandong, Longzhou River
	Han Yu	Tongguan Gorge, Zhennu Gorge, Linlong Temple, Xuanxi
	Li Qunyu	Shimen, Xiashan Temple, Yuetai, Two Rocks Behind Pujian Temple, Luxi, Lingjiu Temple
	Liu Yuxi	Guiling, Lianzhou West Mountain
Song Dynasty	Su Shi	Jianfeng Temple, Shaoshi Mountain, Yuehua temple, Nanhua temple, Shengshou Temple, Xiashan Temple, Zhenyang Temple, PuJian Temple, Yuri Pavilion, Luofu Mountain, Songfeng Pavilion, Guishan County, Dayun Temple, Baishui Mountain in Boluo County, Xichan Temple, Huizhouxi Lake, Jiayou Temple, Baihe Peak, GuLao Township, Yutai Temple in Guifeng Mountain, Sudu Pavilion, Xianren Cave, Fujin Pavilion, Liubei Bridge, Jiangyue Tower, Guimenguan, Xifuren Temple, Tiaofeng Village, Suer Village, Dijiaochang, Fubo Temple in leizhou, Tianning Temple Door, Sugong Pavilion, Jingxing Yard, JingSu Tower in Beiliu city, Sanjian Rock, Zifu Temple in Dongguan, Zhongmiao Hall, Baotuo Temple in Ling-feng Mountain, Baolin Temple in Qingyuan, Longguang Temple
	Qin Guan	Lei yang, Haikang
	Li Gang	Nan du, Huijian Landscape
	Yang Wanli	Zhenyang Gorge, Xiashan Temple, Yuewangtai, Nanhai Dongmiao Yuri Pavilion, Longchuan, Jieyang, Nankang
	Wen Tianxiang	Lingdingyang, Nanhai, Yuewangtai, Nanhua Mountain, Chaoyang shuangzhong Temple
Ming Dynasty	Tang Xianzu	Baochang, Yingde, Shaoyang, Nanhua Temple, Feng Yantan, Damiao Gorge, Wengyuan Ling Pool, Zhenjiang Gorge, Feilaisi Spring, Qingyuan, Hui Qiyi, Jindi, Damiao Gorge, Wuyang Yi, Guangxiao Temple, Polo Temple, Baisha Haikou
	Qi Jiguang	Chaozhou Ferry, Meiling
Qing dynasty	Wang Shizhen	Zhang Wenxian Temple, Gewugang, Liurong Temple, Songtai, Humen
	Lin Zexu	Yue Huaqing, Gaoyangtai, Humen
	Wei Yuan	Macau Garden, Hong Kong

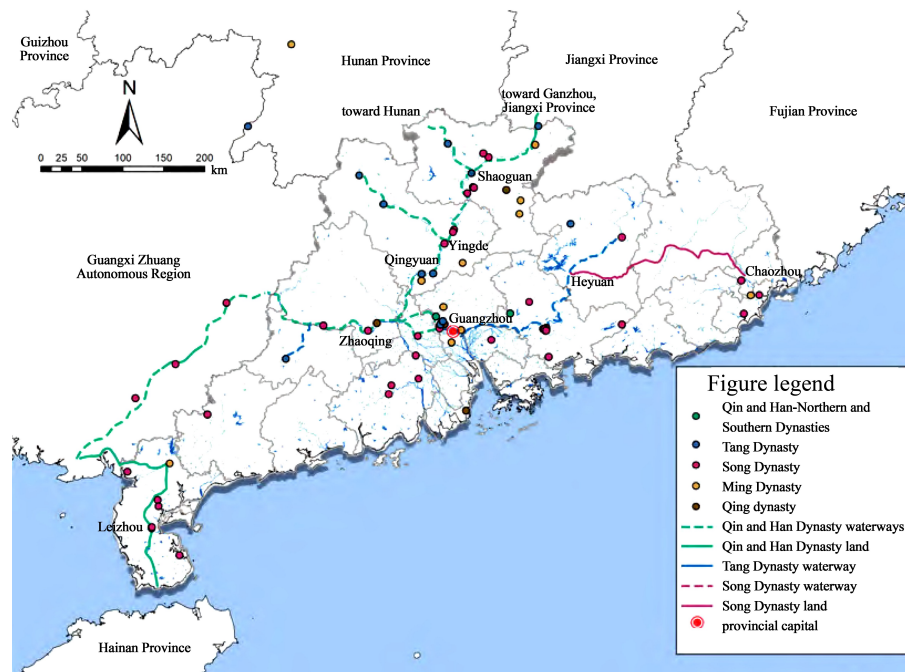


Figure 10 General route of previous dynasties [33-36]

Before the Tang Dynasty, there were just a few officials relegated to Lingnan, only Wu Yinzhi and Wang Shuzhi were recorded. During the Tang Dynasty, there

were many records of the relegated officials. From the poems of Han Yu, Li Qunyu and Song Zhiwen, it can be seen that the main route from north to south at that time was

the water route from Dayu Ling into Beijiang River, while the route from central Guangdong to the west followed the Dongjiang waterway. In the Song Dynasty, the provincial postal network had almost formed, with water routes being particularly convenient. Therefore, the relegated officials mostly went down the waterways, leaving many poems praising the mountains and rivers along the way. Among them, the most famous is Su Shi, the number of poems he left behind is enough to prove his tracks, which can also be used as a circumstantial evidence of the official route. In the first year of Shao Sheng (1094), Su Shi was demoted to Huizhou from Dingzhou, and his route to Guangzhou involved crossing Dayuling from Dayu County in Jiangxi, passing through Meiguan to Nanxiong, traveling down the Zhenjiang River to Shaozhou, Yingzhou, Qingyuan, reaching Guangzhou, and then ascending the Dongjiang River to Huizhou; In the fourth year of Shao Sheng (1097), he was banished to Hainan again, traveling

from Huizhou along the Dongjiang River, Westward from Xijiang River to Zhaoqing, Deqing, Wuzhou, Leizhou, and finally reaching Hainan. Li Gang, Yang Wanli and Wen Tianxiang followed similar routes; thus, it can be seen that, as in the Tang Dynasty, the Beijiang and Dongjiang waterways were still the main routes. In the Yuan Dynasty, the demoted officials left fewer poems, which is difficult to research. In the Ming Dynasty, Guangdong was relatively developed, and with the need of charging the army, officials were mainly relegated to Liaodong, Yunnan, Guizhou and other places and the number of exiles to Lingnan gradually decreased, mainly including Tang Xianzu, Wang Yangming, Qi Jiguang and others. In the Qing Dynasty, with the prosperous trade in the Pearl River Delta region, Lingnan was no longer a place of relegation. It can be seen from the poem that the means of transportation at that time were also greatly developed. For example, Liu Guangdi took a ship to Guangzhou (Figure 10).

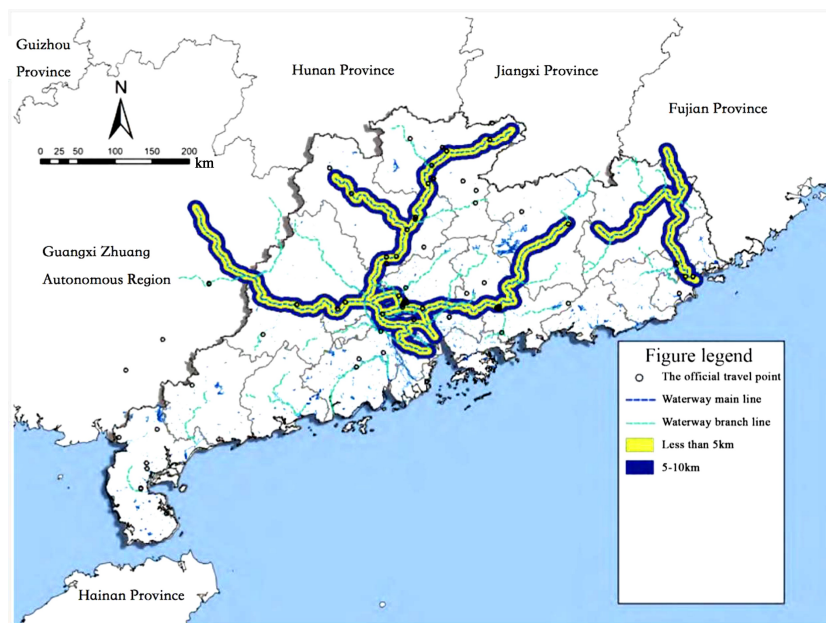


Figure 11 Distribution of waterway buffer zone and official travel narrative points

According to the analysis of river buffers, it can be observed that most of the official travel sites are distributed within 10km of the river, especially along the Beijiang and Dongjiang river routes, and the narrative points of the official travel sites are basically located around the waterway (Figure 11). According to the analysis of the buffer zones of the official travel routes and post stations, it can be seen that there are postal stations near most of the official travel sites. Therefore, it is speculated where the water system cannot be reached, the land route used by the offi-

cials is the postal route. Overlaying the travel destinations with the locations of postal stations, it can be seen that some temples, ancestral halls, and postal stations are distributed in an orderly manner along the same postal road. Additionally, based on poetic descriptions, it can be inferred that officials had overnight stays in temples. Therefore, it is speculated that some official travel points such as temples replaced the function of accommodation, where officials heading south along the road could have a rest (Figure 12).

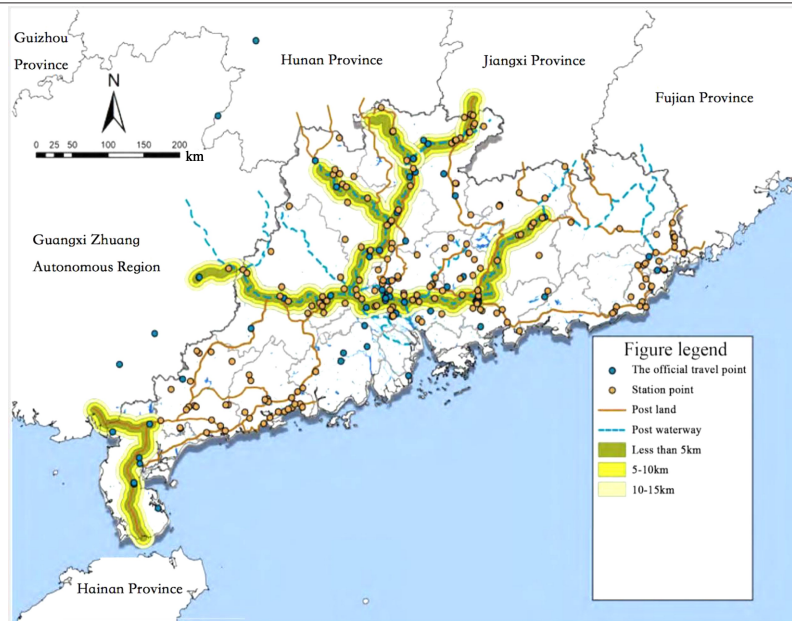


Figure 12 Distribution of official travel narrative points in the route buffer zone and the post station

Conclusion and discussion

Based on the collation of narrative elements related to postal services, military affairs, trade, and travel, and by overlaying the narrative spatial structure of the ancient Guangdong postal routes—the primary narrative carrier—we can summarize the main characteristics of the narrative spatial structure of the ancient Guangdong postal routes as follows (Figure 13):

First, derived from the original attributes and construction purpose of the post road, the narrative space structure of the whole post road network was analyzed and verified, which can be restored from the perspective of function. The earliest development in the south of Wuling was due to the military needs of the expansion of the Qin Dynasty. It began to build post stations and roads, and later gradually developed commodity trade. In addition, that the literati Su Shi, Han Yu and other officials exiled to southern Guangdong also brought the advanced culture of the north. Functional narrative points related to postal services, military affairs, trade, and travel rely on corridors and are interdependent and inseparable. The main spatial distribution of the narrative elements is centered around Guangzhou as the main core, with Leizhou in western Guangdong, Yangjiang and Chaozhou in eastern Guangdong as the secondary core space structure. The rest water system distribution is mainly along the Pearl River such as Xijiang, Dongjiang, Beijiang and Han River (figure 14).

Second, the historical development of South China

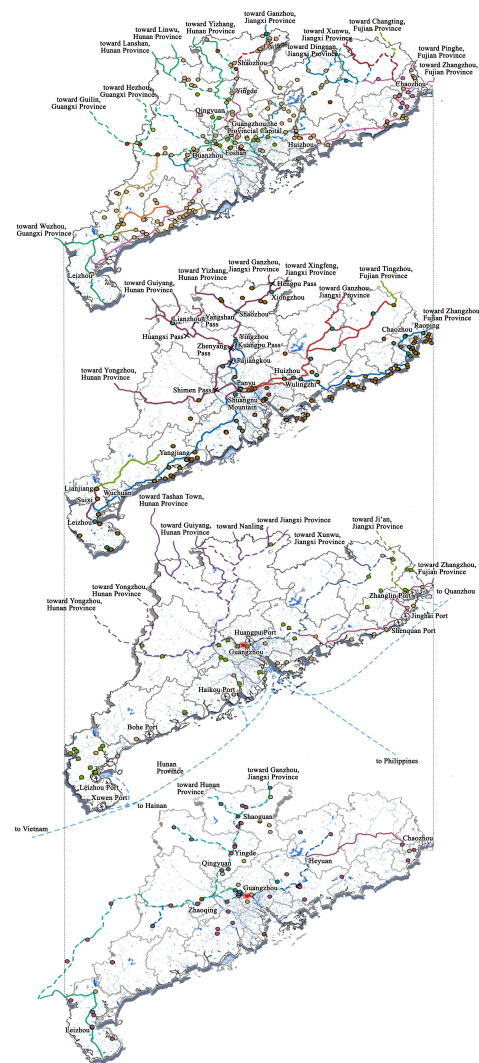


Figure 13 Function Overlaying Map

Historical Trail is from the exploration period of the Qin and Han Dynasties, to the prosperity period of the Tang and Song Dynasties, and then to the final perfection and maturity of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, which has different functional characteristics in different dynasties. The construction of post roads in the Qin and Han dynasties was mainly for military purposes, opening up routes to enter Lingnan via both waterways and land routes, which can be referred to as the development and exploration period; By the Tang and Song dynasties, as the economic center shifted southward, the economic color of the post road gradually strengthened; The economic function of the post road in the Song Dynasty was further strengthened, and

the military role gradually retreated behind. It can be regarded as a turning point of the post road function. The post road extended from the eastern to western Guangdong and entered the prosperous period with the trunk system gradually formed; Around the Ming Dynasty, the ancient post road system entered a mature period. The post road branch was extended to more remote areas, and formed a relatively perfect land and water post road network system. Due to the various reasons of Japanese invasion and feudal centralization, post roads near the sea played a more important military role than before. Therefore, the military pattern of Guangdong coast was formed.

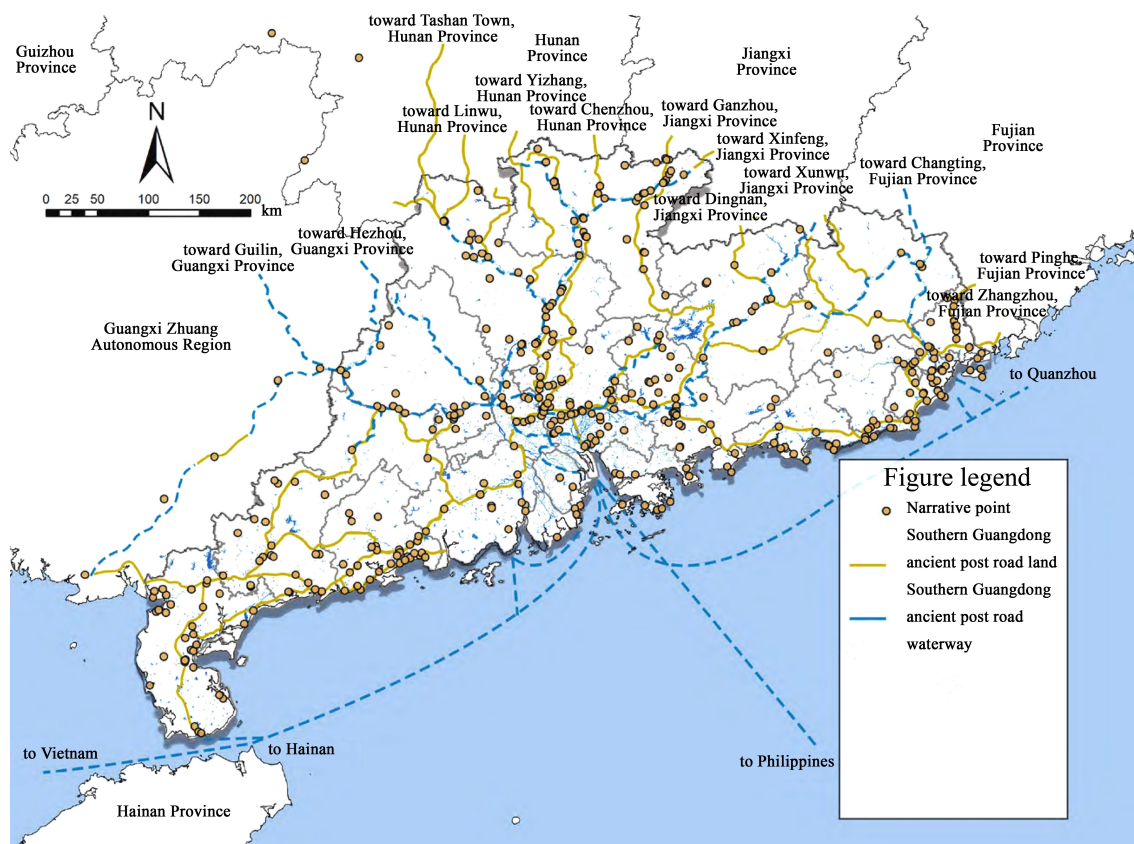


Figure 14 Narrative space structure of South China Historical Trail

Third, the main body of the narrative space of South China Historical Trail had formed a structure with water as the main and land as the auxiliary. Beijiang, Dongjiang and Xijiang served not only as the main access routes to Guangdong from the outside world, but also as the main arteries connecting the central, eastern and western parts of Guangdong, which formed the water backbone network of South China Historical Trail. Overland could be regarded as a supplement to the waterway, as a link between the

mountains, or as an auxiliary parallel to the waterway, and connecting the more remote areas by extending from the waterway. The formation of such characteristics is mainly because of the convenient water transportation, without consuming a lot of manpower and material resources to pass, allowing for easier military operations and smooth transportation of lightweight and fragile goods for trade. Officials traveling by water routes can save costs while enjoying the beauty of mountains and rivers, immersing

themselves in poetry and admiring the scenery. Several main streams of the Pearl River system played an indispensable role in the ancient post road system. And military waterways can reduce the burden of travel. The post road network of water and land constitutes the overall pattern of narrative space of South China Historical Trail (Figure 14).

Fourth, the spatial distribution characteristics of the narrative spatial structure of the past dynasties can be clearly seen from the kernel density map. It is not difficult to find that the transfer of the narrative space subject of South China Historical Trail has experienced the process from the main land of northwest Guangdong to the coast of central Guangdong, southern Guangdong and southeastern coastal Guangdong; The transfer of the main body of

the narrative space also shows the development process of the main body of post, military, trade, and culture, from the initial communication within the Central Plains to the coastal areas and then to the external exchanges of the Maritime Silk Road to the world, which becomes the epitome of the historical development process of Lingnan region (Figure 15).

To comprehensively research and understand, from the perspective of the narrative space system, the spatial structure of South China Historical Trail can fully unearth the connotation of the ancient routes, enabling the revitalization and preservation of cultural heritage along the roads and fostering the revival and development of villages along the routes, ultimately creating a vibrant and diverse Guangdong culture.

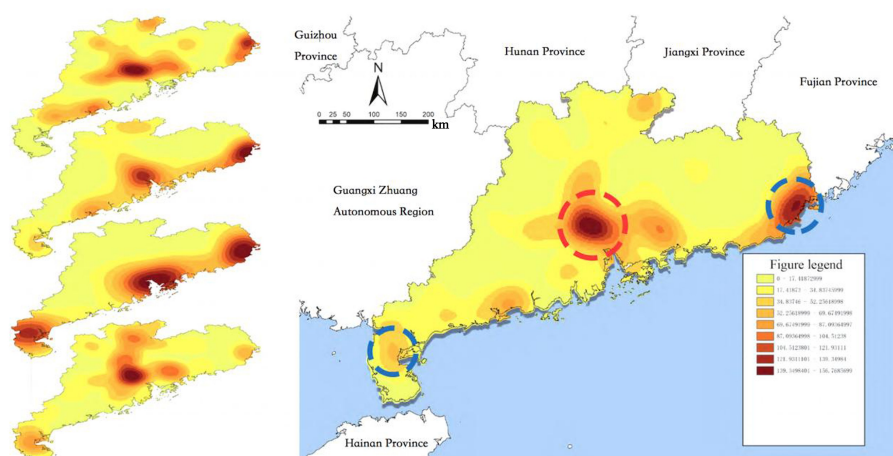


Figure 15 Distribution of the narrative elements of South China Historical Trail

Figure and table sources

Figure 1,2: The author compiled and drew based on the information of the reference [18-22].

Figure 4: The authors collated and drew based on the information of references [10,23-25].

Figure 6: The author sorted out and drew based on the information of the reference [26-29].

Figure 7,8: The author compiled and drew based on the information of reference [30-33].

Figure 10: The author compiled and drew based on the information of the reference [33-36].

Table 1: The author arranges and drew based on the information of reference [33-36].

The remaining images were drawn by the authors.

Note

The route reference is from the *General Plan of Protection*

and *Utilization of the Ancient Post Road in Guangdong Province*.

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