

Research on Historical Vicissitude of Trade and Business Buildings in Guangzhou in past dynasties

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Abstract. By listing the significant trade and business buildings of Guangzhou in the various periods, including Shanhai Tower in Tang Dynasty, Gongle Building in Song Dynasty, Huaiyuan Posthouse in Ming Dynasty, Huangpu Port in the early days of Qing Dynasty, Thirteen-hong of Canton in late Qing Dynasty, this paper reveals the internal relationship between those buildings and development of urban trade patterns , and explores the continuity and sustainability of urban trade buildings patterns against the backdrop of city renewal of Guangzhou.

1. Origin

Guangzhou is not only the famous business city of China, but also a world-renowned port city. In the early period of Qin and Han dynasties, Guangzhou had become the main trade port in China and the starting point of Maritime Silk Road. The commercial property of Guangzhou city has cultivated the most important and lasting city cultural soul in the culture of Guangzhou city. Unscrambling the origin of commercial culture of Guangzhou city will assist us to understand better the current situation, and sustainable development of cultural competitiveness of Guangzhou city better.

Commercial buildings are the sedimentation and solidification of commercial culture, which mainly embodies the value orientation and cultural pursuit of the city. Guangzhou had its important commercial buildings in each period that formed the cultural symbol in the specific historical period, reflecting the social rules and commercial culture status at that time. The sites, or buildings of trade pattern that exist until now, have become the characteristics identification and inner context pattern of the city, all of which are contributing to the precious heritages in the urban culture.

2.The history of past-dynasties business areas in Guangzhou city

The city of Guangzhou China was founded in 213 BC. It was built by Ren Ao, the generals of the Qin State who occupied Lingnan in accordance with the ritual system for political and military needs. The circumference of Ren Ao city is 900 meters, whose area is less than 50,000 square meters. During the periods from 214 BC to 208 BC, Ren Ao undertook water conservancy projects, expanded planting of rice and fruit, thereby promoting the beginning and development of each industry in Lingnan area. At the same time, the flow of immigration wave promoted the integration of Central Plain culture and Lingnan local tradition.The nature of Guangzhou's cities has gradually transited from the residential and defense functions to commercial nature.



Fig. 1. Diagrammatic drawing of Guangzhou city walls in Tang Dynasty

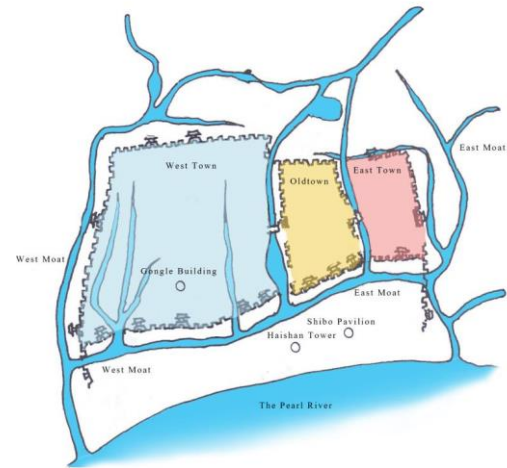


Fig. 2. Diagrammatic drawing of Guangzhou city walls in Song Dynasty

The period that Guangzhou had become the starting port originated from Han Dynasty (from 202 BC to 9 AD). And in Tang Dynasty (618 AD to 907 AD), Guangzhou had developed into the world trade port market, playing its role in national overseas trade center. Guangzhou had set up Shibo officers to manage the foreign trade and created the predecessor of the customs agency in ancient China in the system (Fig.1). In 661 AD, Emperor Gaozong first sent the official to Guangzhou to build the Haishan Building as Concierge building in the Pearl River.

The controllers established South Moat, the foreign trade port (Fig. 2) in 1005, which had become the largest inner harbour in Guangzhou at that time due to its advantages, such as convenient communication with the Pearl River, fire safety, being close to the market and the ability of avoiding wind and waves. South Moat not only provided favorable conditions to the development of city trade, but also became the whole water storage and drainage system of the city by connecting with Guangzhou Six Channel. The rulers had constructed east-west wing city at the east and west ends of the Pearl River bank to protect the official and commercial districts in 1219.

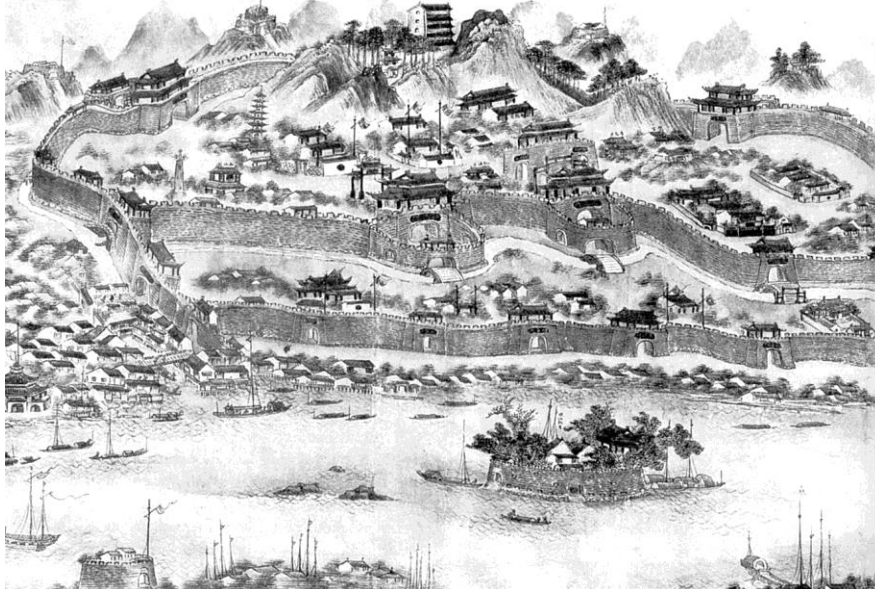


Fig. 3 Aerial view of Guangzhou city in 1748

In Ming Dynasty, the commercial industry in Guangzhou developed rapidly and Huaiyuan Posthouse in the Howqua Street of the west of Guangzhou city had formed the new aggregation area for foreign businessmen where there were more than 120 guest rooms. In 1379, the rulers had expanded Guangzhou city from the east, north and west directions and established Yancheng City in

the south of Guangzhou's city wall(Fig. 3). In 1472, the city had dug the Grand River outside the west city for goods circulation and shipping. Therefore, the Westside (Xiguan) merchants rose and the prosperous business street in Howqua Street gradually connected with the business area in Westside and West Moat.

In Qing Dynasty, the business area between China and western countries was formed along the Thirteen-hongs road. The east Yicheng and west Yicheng were built in the east and west directions of the south side of the Guangzhou city and near the river in 1646.

The outside of Great Qing Gate of old Kwong Chau in Qing Dynasty was the Tianzi Pier. Academy, School, Chief Secretary, Kwong Chau office and other governmental departments were located along the north of Shuang Men Di insides the Great Qing Gate. The attendants and family members of officials also came here so that the bustling business district of the city was formed in T-junction section at the junction of the Shuang Men Di and Huiai Road. All types of shops were established gradually to meets the dairy needs of the officials and their families. The Pearl River coast from Tianzi Pier to East Moat (the east embankment) was quite prosperous with partying and boats. The place was close to wharf where foreign businessmen embarked and disembarked, loaded and unloaded goods. Therefore, the business area outside the city was established for rendering the special service for past businessmen. After several fire disasters, the Chao yin Street along wharf to Shameen and the east embankment was declining day by day, which were replaced by the west embankment that had become the prosperous business center outside the city (Fig.4).

The west embankment, Tonghaiyi road in ancient Guangzhou, ShiBo Department and Gongle Building all witnessed the prosperous trade and oversea communication in this area.



Fig. 4 Guangzhou map drawn by W. Bramston (British) in 1840

Since Qin Dynasty, the business area in Guangzhou city experienced the coexistence of Fan Fang in Tang Dynasty and HaiShan Tower on the bank of Pearl River, migration and change of South Moat Foreign Trade Terminal Area with Gongle Building, Huaiyuan Posthouse in Ming Dynasty, the thirteen-hongs Business District in Dynasty. In Ming and Qing Dynasties, the productions and circulation of goods exceeded as before, the number of the industrial and commercial towns was expanded, the market network began to form, and the city appearance was more prosperous. However, due to lacking reform of a social system, and the innovation of technology, the development of city was carried out in the framework of the old social economy.

3. Important trade and business building in each period

The business activities in Guangzhou were prosperous and the famous business buildings in each

period were listed based on the time development, including Haishan Tower in Tang Dynasty, Gongle Building in Song Dynasty, Huaiyuan Posthouse in Ming Dynasty, Huangpu Port in the early days of Qing Dynasty, the Thirteen-hongs in late Qing Dynasty, thus revealing the internal relationship of the development of urban business pattern.

3.1 HaiShan Tower and Fan Fang in Tang Dynasty

In Tang Dynasty, Guangzhou was the most prevalent place for China's overseas trade and the center of world marine traffic. In 712, the government had set up the first position in China to manage ShiBo, thus protecting the rights and interests of Chinese and foreign businessmen in overseas trade. As one of the four Chong buildings in Guangzhou, Haishan Tower next to Shibo Pavilion was used for the greeting and farewell of foreign businessmen. In ancient time, with wide river surface, the high sky and vast ocean could be seen when ascending building and admiring the sightseeing. The ships from Persia and other countries gathered, which was a splendid scene.

In the second volume of 《Ping Zhou Ke Tan》, the author Zhu Yu described that the Shibo Pavilion in Guangzhou had Haishan Tower as its pillow water with facing the whole world. Its low area could be called the small sea and its middle current had more than abbot water. If the ship took and stored water here, the water would not deteriorate even though passing through one ocean. In the 89th volume of the Record of Scenic Spots Across the Country, Wang Xiangzi wrote that Haishan Tower was located in the south side of the city and people came here from the far area just for admiring its sightseeing. In addition, in Chorography of Canton, Huang Zuo said that Shibo department in Ming Dynasty was located in the southwest of Guangzhou, which was the previous site of Haishan Tower. Therefore, it is predicable that this might be Haishan Tower or old Haiyang Building in Zhenyuan Period and the building of Song Dynasty was built by following the form of Tang Dynasty.

In the 7th volume of Antiquities of Canton, QiuChishi wrote that Haishan Tower was located outside Zhennan Men and its downstairs was Shibo pavilion built by Wei Yan, whose outline was put forward by Jiayou in Song Dynasty. Zhennan Men now is located at the junction of Beijing Road and Danan Road in Guangzhou, which belonged to the area outside Zhennan Men in ancient times.

Based on the records in the area, it was known that every year, Haishan Tower was the inspection platform for the Internet Water Army during the Dragon Boat Festival, which was the one of the Eight Sceneries in Guangzhou (Figure 5). Chen Qufei, the poet of Song Dynasty, wrote a poetry to describe Haishan Tower, saying that the railing of the building stood with facing the sea, the land on the shore and the sky above the head could be seen with the tide and the spring scene around Haishan Tower came into eyes with drizzle. However, Haishan Tower was destroyed in the war in the Yuan Dynasty, which had become strong evidence that the sea could be seen in ancient Guangzhou.



Fig. 5 Pearl River under the night-Haishan Tower

In A.D. 741, the government had set Fan Fang in the west of Guangzhou (Fig. 6), which became the foreign trade area used by tens of thousands of Arab businessmen living in the west of the Guangzhou. Fan Fang was located in the southwest of Guangta road and Waifuksai Road (Fig.7). The Fan Fang allowed foreign businessmen to open their shops and to connect with the bounding wall of Guangzhou city, which had greatly broken the basic principles of Chinese traditional urban planning and design. The west side of Guangzhou city had become the most prosperous commercial and trade area at that time. The population in Fan Fang in Tang, Song, Yuan Dynasties had reached 120,000, thus forming the grand occasion that Fan Fang had numerous jewelry.

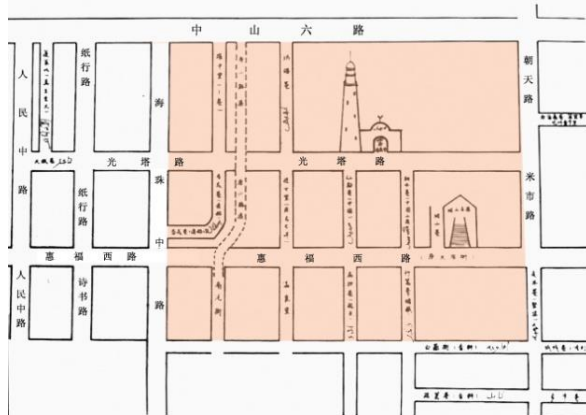


Fig. 6 Site of Fan Corner in Tang Dynasty



Fig. 7 Mohammed Mosque in 1860

3.2 Gongle Building in Song Dynasty

Carved from year 1425 to year 1457, South Moat under the city was the important hydraulic engineering in Guangzhou history, whose navigable vessels were connected with the Pearl River. The advantages of city waterway promoted the prosperity of urban commerce. Antiquities of Canton said that the Gongle Building with the height of more than five feet, leaned against several mountains and faced a vast ocean, which was grand and magnificent mountain of the south. Chen Shimeng wrote a poetry that with a large amount of pearl and jasper, the mountain became the treasures of China and the waster transportation including ladder and ships revealed the profound emotion between China and foreign businessmen. This poem described the prosperous foreign trade and the close relationship between Chinese and foreign businessmen at that area in Song dynasty. Located in the western suburb of Guangzhou, this belt became inner harbor of Guangzhou and special zone outside the city. The businessmen from all over the country came here and voyaged together, which had laid a solid foundation for the opening of Maritime Silk Road. At that time, the commercial streets in Guangzhou were mainly located in South Moat, Yudai Moat, East Moat and Wenxi and Guangzhou had formed the commercial street whose framework was water channel.

Gongle Building around South Moat, as the Libin Building to treat foreign businessmen, was not only the place for Shibo department to entertain foreign businessmen and seamen, but also the symbol of overseas trade in this prosperous business area. It and Haishan Tower located outside South Gate echoed each other at a distance, which demonstrated that the business activities at that time were flourishing.

3.3 Huaiyuan Posthouse in Ming Dynasty

In the early years of Ming Dynasty, Chinese government fully implemented the Ban on foreign trade and tributary trade policies, and established posthouses in Quanzhou, Ningbo and Guangzhou with the support of government power.

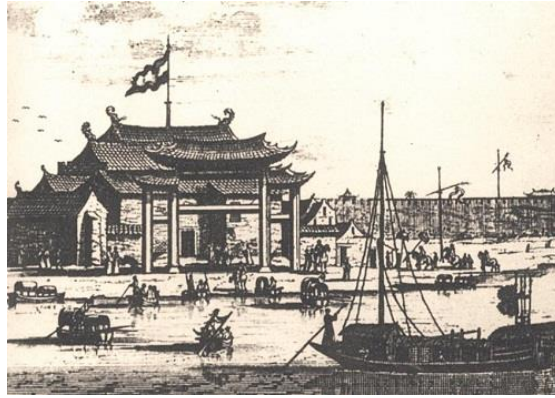


Fig. 8 Huaiyuan Posthouse

Guangzhou Huaiyuan Posthouse in Ming Dynasty (Fig. 8) was located in the Huaiyuan Posthouse street of the Pearl River in the southwest of Guangzhou city (Figure 9) with facing the wide river (at that time, the Pearl River is five times wider than that in present). The scale of building group was grand, including three memorial archways with double-layer overhanging eaves, main temple hall with double-layer slope crest, coherent flaky houses. All of those buildings were richly ornamented and beautiful. Huaiyuan Posthouse was managed by Shibo department, which was used to receive ambassadors and foreign businessmen.

In Qing Dynasty, the Pearl River channel narrowed down with mud filling and merging and the north bank faced the river and became the land. Therefore, Huaiyuan Posthouse was gradually away from the river bank. The Thirteen-hong Pavilion was constructed in the new forming land, which had gradually become the well-known Thirteen-hong commercial and trade district at home and abroad.



Fig.9 Looking at Whampoa from Changzhou Island.

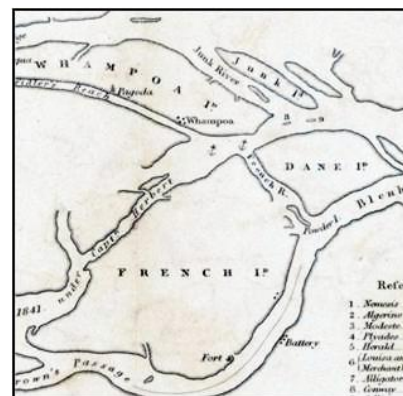


Fig. 10 Map of Changzhou Island in 1841

3.4 Huangpu Port in Qing Dynasty

For the need of trade and government control, the foreign business ships were forbidden to berth in water area outside Huangpu Village. Therefore, this area gradually formed the Asia's world shipping and trade center, named Huangpu Port (Fig.9). Huangpu Port had docks, customs, warehouses and resting places (Fig. 10). After Ming and Qing Dynasty, Huangpu village was gradually developed into the foreign trade port in Guangzhou. The Xiaoguwe Island on the south side of the island was used by French sailors and Changzhou Island on the southeast side was used by English sailors, both of which were called Island for French and Island for English respectively.

Huangpu Port was the central downtown street of the business street where there were lots of stores, whose business scopes were related to foreign ships, including repairs and services. Additionally, there were some shops providing food and groceries to the foreign ships.

The rise of Huangpu Port had produced a large number of Chinese businessmen who were adept at managing the trade between China and foreign countries who mediated between domestic and

foreign businessmen as well as undertook intermediary, agency, service, brokerage and other functions. They were the first people to get in touch with the knowledge of western capitalism. At the same time, with the improvement of contractor rules, the trade environment in Guangzhou had been greatly improved and the area in Huangpu Port was transformed from village to city.

3.5 Business Area of the Thirteen-hongs and Canton Customs in Qing Dynasty

In 1685, Qing government opened the ban on marine trade and established Canton Customs. In April, 1688, Guangzhou established the Thirteen-hongs which was the combination of several state-operated commerce that Qing government franchised. Each businessman had both commercial and diplomatic responsibilities including operating foreign trade in Guangzhou, taking over the taxation of foreign import and export trade and taking responsibility of the affairs of Qing government and foreign businessmen.

Business Area of the Thirteen-hong was located on the edge of the Pearl River in the south of the city (Fig. 11), which provided convenience for loading, unloading and logistics of goods. Since the business area was located outside the Guangzhou city, it was convenient for the governors to manage the Chinese businessmen and western businessmen respectively.

After several fire in history, the Thirteen-hong had been reconstructed and repaired (Fig. 12) , which made its western architectural form developing in stages. The architecture of the Thirteen-hong was famous for its ultra-luxury resplendent central room. All the colonial corridors, churches, western gardens, which could be seen in the concession areas, were fully presented around 1850. The westernization of architecture showed that it was irreversible to subvert the social structure and other aspects of the traditional imperial power under the invasion of the western colonialist forces (Fig. 13) . This was an epitome of the construction culture based on the modernization of Guangzhou and even China.

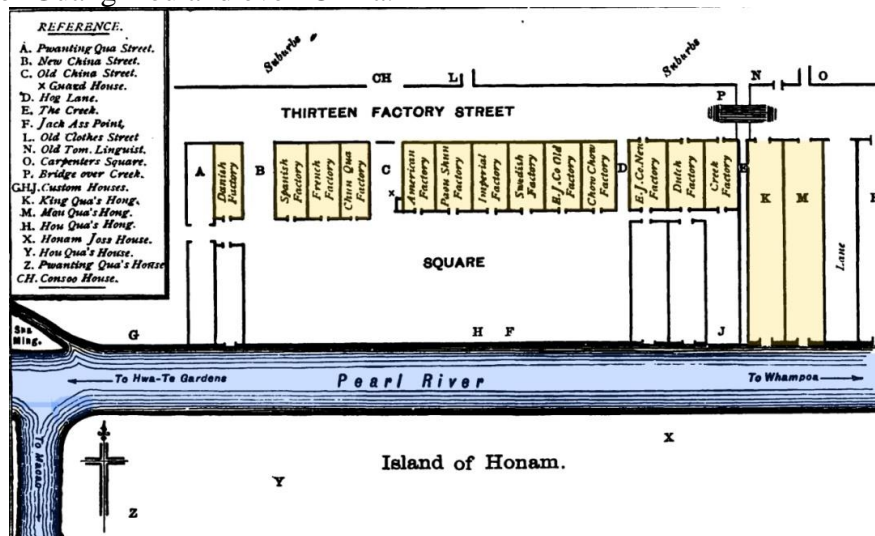


Fig. 11 Map of the Thirteen-hongs



Fig. 12 The Thirteen-hongs Buildings in 1833

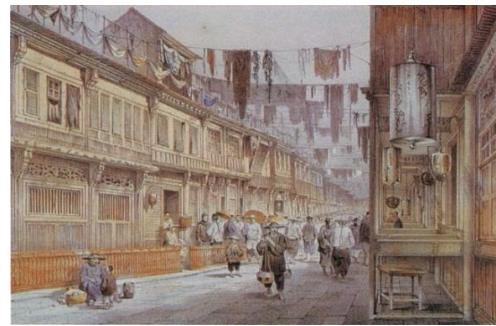


Fig.13 Streetscape of Tongwen street in the Thirteen-hongs

4. Summary

From Haishan Tower in Tang Dynasty, Gongle Building in Song Dynasty, Huaiyuan Posthouse in Ming Dynasty, Huangpu Port in the early days of Qing Dynasty, the Thirteen-factories of Canton in late Qing Dynasty, it is known that the architectures for foreign trade , and the commercial areas gradually move toward the south with the southward movement of the banks of the Pearl River. With the convenience of water transportation, the commercial area around architectures has gradually deposited into the intern relationship of trade pattern of Guangzhou city, revealing the changes of commercial activities and the geographical relationship of the city, connecting and undertaking the continuation and future sustainable development of modern urban commercial pattern.

Due to the time variation, city development and other all kinds of reasons, the appearance of the business areas of Guangzhou city in successive dynasties has been drowned within in the city development. The existing traditional business areas in this city include Beijing Road, Shangxiajiu Road and Yanjiang Road. All of those typical existing historical building groups with typical environment , still remain the cultural characteristics at that period in the aspect of city texture and architectural style. From the value of history, science and art or aesthetics, those buildings with the value at that time, become the important illustrative examples of city business development in history, urban planning, architectural design, construction technology and landscape design with the collision and integration of Chinese and western cultures, which has a strong influence on the urbanization and modernization of modern Guangzhou and even China.

Acknowledgment

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Image index

Fig. 3: Aerial view of Guangzhou city in 1748, the Views of Canton picture, collected by Drottningholm China Pavilion in Stockholm.

Fig. 4: Picture came from Hong Kong Museum of Art, Name of picture: British Map of Canton, 1840.

Fig. 5: (Qing) Dai Yuchen, Li Guangting, Guangzhou local history,1879.

Fig. 6 : propaganda department of CPC Guangdong Provincial Party Committee.

Fig. 7: Guang minaret in huaiheng mosque, Mohammed Mosque, photographed by Felice Beato in 1860.

Fig. 8: the 1962 London edition of 《East India Company Ceramics》 .

Fig. 9: Allom. Thomas [artist], Fisher, Son & Co [publishers], Le Petit, W A [engraver]. 1800. Hong Kong Museum of Art. Pearl River In The Nineteenth Century [M]. Hongkong: Hong Kong Urban Council, 1985.

Fig. 10: Guangzhou River map on 26th, May, 1841 (part of the map), Source of the picture: Memory of China BBS.

Fig. 11: William C. Hunter. The 'Fan Kwae' at Canton Before Treaty Days, 1825-1844 [M].LONDON: KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, & CO., 1 PATERNOSTER SQUARE, P21,1882 .

Fig. 12: 1833 Thirteen Factories from land, oil painting, G. Chinnery, Source of the picture: National Library of Australia.

Fig. 13: Tongwen street of the west of Jingyuan street, New China Street in Canton, 1836–1837 by Lauvergne; lithograph by Bichebois. Source of the picture: National Library of Australia.

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