

Study on the Conservation and Development of the Maritime Silk Road in Guangzhou under the Perspective of World Heritage

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Abstract: Guangzhou, as the starting and ending point of the Maritime Silk Road, was the front line for ancient China to realize trade with Southeast Asia, West Asia, India, North Africa, Arab region, Europe, etc. It was the gateway for China to go to the world and the world to go to China, and the bridge of mutual recognition and mingling of economy and culture. This paper focuses on the conservation and development of the Maritime Silk Road in Guangzhou from a world heritage perspective, analyzes the historical value of the Maritime Silk Road in Guangzhou as a cultural heritage, cultural heritage conservation, and the challenges of the conservation process, focuses on the development and sustainability of the Maritime Silk Road, and proposes an integrated conservation and development strategy dominated by community participation, cultural tourism, and sustainable planning.

Keywords: Maritime Silk Road; World Cultural Heritage; Conservation Planning; Heritage Values.

1. Introduction

1.1. Concepts and Values of the World Cultural Heritage

World cultural heritage is the essence of the spiritual values, creativity, spirituality and cultural identity of cultural entities. In the face of the rapid globalization and urbanization of our times, world heritage sites are increasingly inclined to manage the relationship between conservation and heritage. An essential feature of being part of World Heritage is the multidimensional exchange of trade, ideas, knowledge and assessments between individuals from different historical periods, leading to the cultural integration of individuals with space and time. Cultural boundaries, in the form of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, are an important element in documenting the development and exchange of human civilizations and the history of communities of destiny.

According to UNESCO, World Heritage is a collection of monuments, ensembles and sites of "outstanding universal value", and has gradually incorporated intangible cultural heritage, cultural routes and cultural landscapes in the course of long-term heritage conservation practices. World Cultural Heritage is no longer a concept of geospatial entity, but has gradually expanded into an organic system closely linked to human culture, natural environment and socio-economy. As a special form of cultural heritage, cultural routes are built on the long-term exchange activities of human beings, and promote the cultural reciprocity around the routes in the interaction of historical exchanges. Its connotation is reflected in the material and intangible elements of the areas along the cultural routes. Therefore, the heritage conservation of cultural routes should be based on the idea of combining tangible and intangible cultural elements in order to maintain the original authenticity and integrity of the heritage.

1.2. History and Importance of the Maritime Silk Road

Since ancient times, the Silk Road, as an ancient trade route connecting the East and the West, has carried a rich historical heritage and cultural memory, and has become an important bridge for exchanges between Chinese and foreign civilizations. Among them, the Maritime Silk Road, as an important part of the Silk Road, has provided an important platform for trade exchanges between the East and the West and mutual understanding of civilizations with its unique maritime trade characteristics and cultural heritage.

The Maritime Silk Road's origins date back over 2,000 years, marked by the exportation of Chinese silk, porcelain, and other high-end products to distant nations like Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East via sea commerce. The sea-based trade path fostered not just China's economic growth but also encouraged the merging and interchange of Eastern and Western cultures. Coastal regions of southern China, such as Fujian, Guangdong, Hainan, and others, were pivotal in the development of the Maritime Silk Road, serving as key origins and hubs for the road.

The importance of the Maritime Silk Road lies not just in its financial value but also in its role as a channel for cultural exchange. Over its long history, this ancient trade route served as a platform for reciprocal exchanges and collective wealth between diverse Eastern and Western societies. The Maritime Silk Road's trade routes facilitated the exchange of goods and the spread of cultural knowledge in various fields such as technology, religion, and art, playing a crucial role in the growth and diversity of worldwide civilizations. As time progressed and globalization intensified, the importance of preserving and sustainably expanding the Maritime Silk Road's cultural heritage became more pronounced. The urgency of ensuring the sustainable development and preservation of global cultural heritage is paramount in our contemporary society. Therefore, this thesis aims to delve into the protection and development of the Maritime Silk Road's

cultural heritage from a global cultural heritage perspective, seeking both theoretical support and practical guidance to enhance the preservation and preservation of this deep cultural legacy.

2. Overview of the Cultural Heritage of the Maritime Silk Road in Guangzhou

Situated along the South China Sea coast, Guangzhou in Guangdong, historically referred to as Panyu, boasts exceptional maritime conditions, making it the cradle of ancient China's Maritime Silk Road and the sole significant port in global maritime transport history that has prospered for two millennia. Guangzhou's advantageous port position has historically facilitated trade, economic, and cultural interactions with Southeast Asia, West Asia, North Africa, and Europe. These interactions have been instrumental in disseminating the Chinese national culture, particularly the Lingnan culture. The liberal nature of Guangzhou positioned it at the forefront of sea commerce and economic growth, integrating the varied cultures from India, Arabia, North Africa, Europe, among other areas, significantly contributing to Guangzhou's and China's current development.

There were six major routes that Guangzhou traveled on the Maritime Silk Road: Guangzhou to Chamcham (present-day central Vietnam), Guangzhou to Chenla (present-day Cambodia), Guangzhou to Samphoqi (present-day Sumatra), Guangzhou to Java, Guangzhou to the Indian Peninsula, and Guangzhou to the Persian Gulf. Guangzhou, marking the beginning and conclusion of the Maritime Silk Road, served as a key trading hub connecting ancient China with Southeast Asia, West Asia, India, North Africa, Arabia, Europe, and more. It was an important hub for China and the world to connect with each other, as well as a bridge for economic and cultural interaction.

Guangzhou was also the first foreign trade port in ancient China, and its position has continued to be solid throughout the changes of history. Whether during the Qin and Han Dynasties, the two Jin and North and South Dynasties, the Song Dynasty or the Qing Dynasty, Guangzhou has always maintained its position as a major maritime trading center. The government of the Qing Dynasty even authorized Guangzhou to conduct "one-bite trade", making it the only legal maritime port for foreign trade in China. Guangdong's unique geographical location provided a solid foundation for the development of the Maritime Silk Road, through which China interacted with the world, not only in the economic sphere, but also in the cultural, political, medical, and philosophical spheres. This influence was not only confined to China, but also extended to a global scale.

3. Current Situation of Protection and Development of Cultural Heritage of Maritime Silk Road in Guangdong

3.1. Current Status of the Protection of Cultural Heritage of the Maritime Silk Road

The wind comes from the sea and the tide rushes in the mouth of the Pearl River. Guangzhou stands as the hub of Lingnan culture and the origin of the Maritime Silk Road. Boasting a rich cultural legacy and thriving trade and

commerce, Guangzhou has been a key participant and observer of the Maritime Silk Road for over a millennium. Among them, six historical sites, including the ruins of the Palace Office of the State of South Vietnam, the Tomb of the King of South Vietnam, the Guangxiao Temple, the Huaisheng Temple and the Pagoda of Light, the Tomb of the Sage of the Qing Dynasty, the South Sea Temple, and the ruins of the ancient wharf of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, have been evaluated by the experts to be the "unique" and "first" relics of the Maritime Silk Road. These historical sites have witnessed the glorious history of the world's culture coming to China and Lingnan culture going to the world, as well as the vicissitudes of the Maritime Silk Road over the past thousand years.

As early as in the 1990s, Guangzhou started to carry out the protection of the historical sites of the Maritime Silk Road, taking the lead in the city's responsibility for the inheritance and promotion of the Haisilk culture that has lasted for thousands of years. In recent years, Guangzhou has been promoting the protection of the cultural heritage of the Maritime Silk Road and the branding of the Maritime Silk Road culture, and has made a lot of achievements in the application for the inscription of the Maritime Silk Road, the construction of city alliances, and transnational cooperation in joint application for the inscription of the Maritime Silk Road, so that the culture of the Maritime Silk Road will become more and more brilliant under the common dream of building the "Belt and Road". At the same time, the Guangdong government has stepped up its efforts to protect the cultural heritage of the Maritime Silk Road, investing funds in restoring the cultural sites of the Maritime Silk Road, establishing cultural relics protection zones, and strengthening supervision to ensure the integrity of cultural relics and their inheritance.

3.2. Challenges to the Protection of the Cultural Heritage of the Maritime Silk Road

The current status of the Maritime Silk Road sites in Guangzhou is not optimistic. First, the pressure of urban development brought about by the urbanization process puts ancient buildings and sites at risk of destruction, and a balance needs to be sought between urban development and heritage protection. Second, excessive development may lead to wear and tear of cultural relics and environmental damage, requiring scientific planning and management. Thirdly, specialization and funding for heritage conservation require the support of relevant institutions so as to ensure that cultural heritage is effectively protected and passed on.

4. Strategies for the Protection and Development of the Cultural Heritage of the Maritime Silk Road in Guangdong

4.1. Feasibility of Tourism Development

Guangzhou is one of the most prosperous cities in southern China, where a large number of domestic and foreign tourists visit every year. And with the rapid development of China's economy and the improvement of people's living standards, the demand for tourism has increased accordingly. According to statistics, Guangzhou received more than 100 million tourists in 2023, and the income from tourism reached more

than 100 billion dollars. Guangzhou has a wealth of tourism resources, including world cultural heritage, historical monuments, gourmet streets, and modern commercial centers. Guangzhou's Maritime Silk Road cultural heritage, as a resource with historical and cultural value, has great potential. 2023, coinciding with the 10th anniversary of the "Belt and Road" initiative, the Guangzhou government has deeply explored the cultural connotations of the Maritime Silk Road, and carefully planned the Maritime Silk Road Tourism Festival around the theme of "Sailing in South China, Silk Language for a Thousand Years", with a focus on the "Sailing

in the South China". Around the theme of "Sailing from South Vietnam, Silk Language for a Thousand Years", the Guangzhou government carefully planned and launched the first Maritime Silk Road Cultural Festival series of activities, hundreds of cultural, tourism and trade activities to attract more than 3 million people to participate in the publicity of the Maritime Silk Road, so that the audience to get a glimpse of the exotic flavors of the countries along the HaiShi, feel the exchange of Chinese and foreign cultures and arts collision has achieved remarkable results.

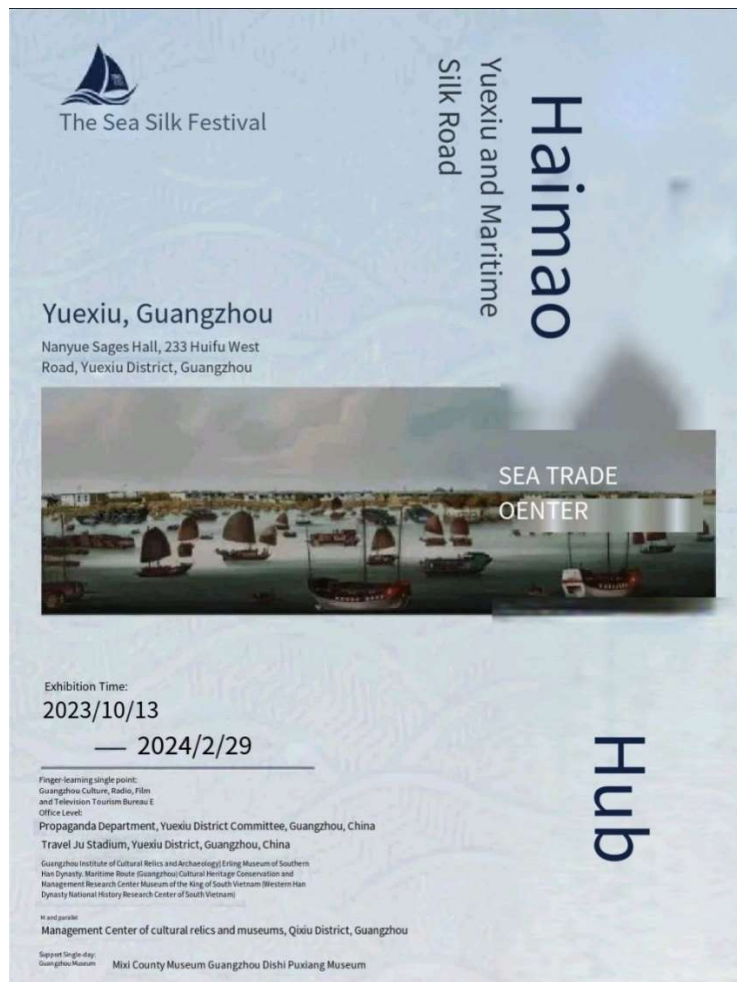


Figure 1. Theme Poster of Guangzhou's "A Thousand Years of Sailing and Silk Language" Event

4.2. Innovative Preservation Models for the Integration of Cultural Heritage and Modern Technology

With the continuous development of science and technology, the construction of the Maritime Silk Road (Guangzhou) Virtual Museum is also in progress. With the help of new technologies such as AR (Augmented Reality), VR (Virtual Reality), and Naked Eye 3D, it can realize the digital display and interactive experience of cultural heritage. Through AR technology, tourists can watch the virtual reconstruction of ancient buildings through cell phones or tablet PCs to understand the historical background and cultural connotations; while VR technology and naked-eye 3D technology allow tourists to immerse themselves in

ancient trade scenes and feel the prosperity and vitality of the Maritime Silk Road. This innovative mode of protection combined with modern technology not only improves the display effect of cultural heritage, but also attracts more young people and tourists to participate, promoting the in-depth development of cultural heritage and protection, and making cultural relics exhibition "out of" the offline physical museums.

In addition to the construction of virtual museums, more and more cultural heritage choose to combine with game elements. 2024 Spring Festival eve, the famous hand game IP "Arknights" linked to the South Vietnam Museum has gained the majority of young people's favorite, triggering a number of queuing craze. Collaboration with famous game IPs enables players to explore the former splendor through historical relics.



Figure 2. Famous handheld game "Arknights" linked to the South Vietnam Museum event poster

In addition to this, 2024 China has also given birth to the handheld game "Wuhua Mixin", which is themed on anthropomorphism of cultural relics. The game gives life and personality to cultural relics and allows players to interact with them in the game, enhancing their understanding of and concern for cultural heritage. The delightful and innovative way of combining cultural heritage and games has attracted the attention of young people, allowing them to experience the charm of cultural heritage through their favorite games, which not only attracts more young people to participate in the protection and inheritance of cultural heritage, but also provides a new way and platform for the dissemination and promotion of cultural heritage.

5. Conclusion

Under the World Heritage perspective, Guangzhou, as an important node of the Maritime Silk Road, is vital to the preservation and development of its cultural heritage. From developing tourism to combining with modern technology and games, it can not only enhance the dissemination and attraction of cultural heritage, but also attract more young people to participate in the protection and inheritance of cultural heritage.

Combining the above innovative cases, we see the potential and role of modern technology and game elements in cultural heritage preservation. Through these innovative ways, Guangzhou's Maritime Silk Road cultural heritage has been revitalized, attracting more attention and participation, and opening up new paths for cultural heritage protection and transmission. For this reason, we should continue to explore innovative protection modes to promote the sustainable development of cultural heritage, so that the cultural heritage of the Maritime Silk Road can be better inherited and developed in today's society.

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