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TRANSFORMATION OF THE MORPHOLOGY OF THIRTEEN FACTORIES HISTORICAL DISTRICT IN GUANGZHOU

Abstract: *This paper studies transformation of the morphology of Thirteen Factories historical street block in Guangzhou from 1715 to 2018. The Thirteen Factories used to be the single port of Qing empire for hundred years, which is a symbolic and commemorative cultural landscape that records China's transformation from the ancient to modern society. Today, with a lot of master pieces, it has become a valuable historic area. The morphology of Thirteen Factories has gone through a significant transformation process from the suburb commercial port wharf into the inner city commercial touristic district in different periods of time, through several destructions and rebuilding. Through a diachronic study, the morphology of Thirteen Factories in different periods can be presented in several diagrams. Based on the comparison of the textures and background events of different stages, the author tries to find social, cultural and technological factors behind the morphological evolution. Different characteristics of the urban form and constituent elements in each period reflect the changes of transportation mode from water transportation to land transportation as well as the social condition from foreignization to localization and eventually to capitalization. The research of Thirteen Factories presents the influence of social forces on the morphology, which enlightens the policy making for urban regeneration and heritage preservation in Guangzhou's historical districts.*

Keywords: *morphogenesis, transformation, historical district, Thirteen Factories, social force, transportation mode.*

Introduction

Strictly speaking, the “Guangzhou Thirteen Factories Historical District” is delimited by the following areas: west of the West Moat, east of Kangwang Road, north to the area of Jiangnan Road and Guangfu Road, south to the bank of the Pearl River. The participating areas of Yihe Street, Baoshun Street and Puan Street in Yuexiu District are linked together (Fig.1). This is the Thirteen Factories Historical District that covers an area of about 40 hectares. The development process in the area can be divided into the following five stages.

Stage 1: commercial port of the national level and factory area

Since the Ming and Qing Dynasties, there have been more and more traders from various countries coming to China. Foreign businessmen needed to rent houses to solve their accommodation problems and to use offices, trading posts, and warehouses (this kind of house was called factory). This emerging industry, dubbed 'hong', was a commercial organization licensed by the Qing government that specialized in hosting foreign businessmen as well as import and export trade. Later, the 'hong' gradually developed into a lucrative monopoly on the foreign trade in exchange for various payments and obligations to the Qing state. It also had dual duties of business and diplomacy, referring to a disguised form of official business.

The Thirteen Factories, also known as the Canton Factories, were a neighborhood along the Pearl River in southwestern Guangzhou. Starting in 1757, the Emperor Qianlong announced the national seclusion policy of guarding against foreigners and isolating foreigners from China, he

cancelled the customs of coastal provinces. The Guangdong Customs could retain due to its distance from Beijing. Guangzhou's "Thirteen Factories" became the only legal foreign trade zone of the Qing government.

The choice of the location for the "Thirteen Factories" involves important issues such as the reign rule of the Qing Empire and diplomatic concepts, as well as certain historical and geographical origins. The site of the thirteen factories took over the principle of selection of the site of the Huaiyuanyi in the Ming dynasty, i.e. to put it outside the city, but with a close connection with the wharf and the hong district (Fig.2).



Figure 1. The range of Thirteen Factories Historical Districts

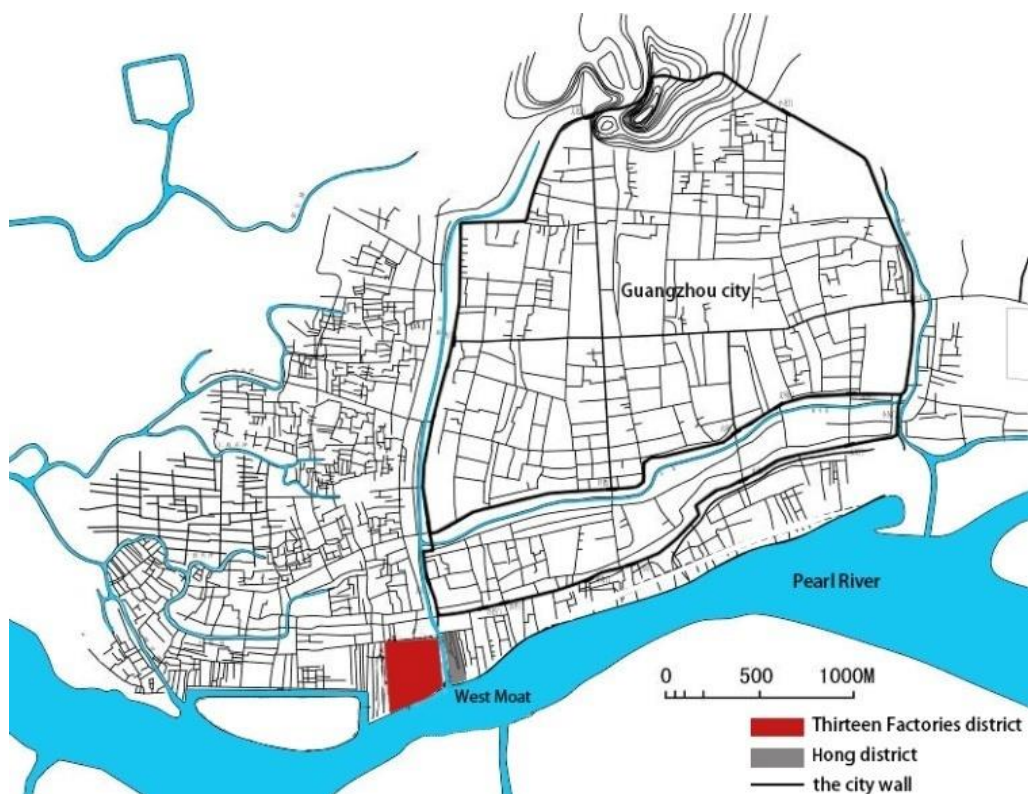


Figure 2. The location of Thirteen Factories District in 1856

Proximity to the hong. The waterfronts on both banks of the West moat are hang district and the west side of the Youlan gate of the New Town is the place where the hong are located. With the west moat as the boundary, there are Guangli hong, Tianbao hong and Tongshun hong within 80 meters at the east side. There is still a tower in the east of Renji West Road, guarding the east entrance to the commercial area. At the west side of the west moat, there are different factories arranged in the order of first-to-last.

Separating from ordinary merchants and citizens. The Qing government consolidated its rule and reduced the influence of foreign culture on the citizens. Therefore, it restricted the scope of foreign businessmen's activities and only allowed them to stay in the Thirteen Factories district outside the city walls. The Thirteenth Street opened in 1777 was designed to satisfy the needs of foreigners and limit their activities. Small shops were built on both sides of the street during the period of Lennon. All the products needed for life were sold there, so that foreigners could purchase them nearby. Such measures could prevent foreigners from going out to cause trouble.

In this way, the urban form of Thirteen Factories region in the Qing Dynasty gradually formed the scale. From the middle of the 18th century to the time of 1856, Thirteen Factory area basically maintained the urban pattern of outer wharf, the open space and the Garden in the middle, and the factory built inside (Fig.3). The factory buildings are facing the Pearl River. Each site is long and narrow, and it is lined up along the river. What is certain is that there is no clear plan from the top down on the beginning of the Thirteen Banks Business District. Because the factory building was owned by various business operators, in order to facilitate trade and cooperate with the Qing government's management policy for foreign businessmen, the traders rent out the building to the foreign businessman within the block to which they belonged. Initially, all the factories chose to build in the riverside as much as possible, so they would form a layout along the river. In 1777, Thirteen Factories Street was demarcated, and the business district had a boundary on the north and a neat interface in the north. In the south area facing the Pearl River, it became the main direction for the space expanding.

Having relocated the river bank to the south, the square area to the south of the commercial area was increasing. In several versions of the Thirteen Factories area floor plan, Bate's measured map has a scale, reflecting the actual size of the commercial area. The mapping time of the Pearl River style map could be in the early 19th century, with only a distance about 200m from Thirteen Factories Street to the waterfront. But in Bate's map which was finished in 1856, the distance became to 360m.

Before 1822, the square in front of the building was surrounded by railings and the Chinese were prohibited from entering (Fig.4). After the fire in 1822, the railings were destroyed. Although there are regulations prohibiting the entry of the Chinese people, there are still many Chinese who come and go freely. The square is lively and the atmosphere is very strong. According to Hunt, "Chinese people often regard the square as a thoroughfare, and some small vendors selling along the street also like to gather here to do some small business." After the 1841 fire, the front square of the factory building was enriched with American and British gardens (Fig.5) The square was once again fenced up to form a space similar to that of 18th century London houses. In terms of morphological, the square in the late 19th century was about 200 meters wide, and the depth was nearly 150 meters. The north and west sides were buildings, the east was the river, and the south was the Pearl River. The building had only two floors and the square had a wide field of vision. Although the square on the waterfront of the factory district did not have an important impact on the overall public space of Guangzhou, the spatial shape of the square, the green landscape in the garden, and the church built in the American garden all contributed to this small area. The square has become the first public open space with modern significance in the history of Guangzhou and even China, bringing a new spatial experience to the citizens.

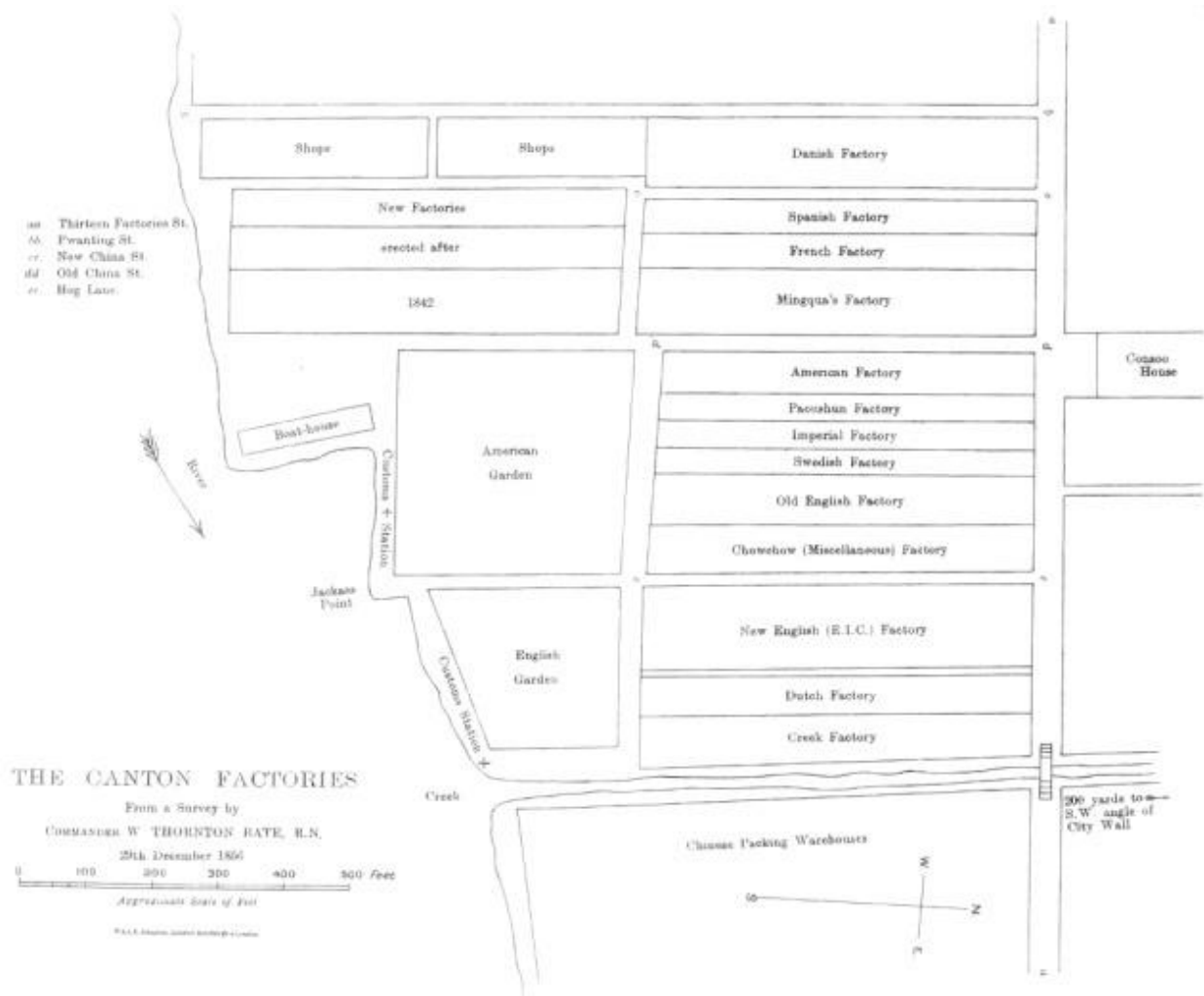


Figure 3. The layout of Thirteen Factories (1858) by Commander W. Thornton Bate R.N.



Figure 4. A reverse-glass export painting of the Thirteen Factories



Figure 5. The garden of the American factory

In the beginning of the factory construction in the 17th century, the building was basically built by the Chinese people and then rented to foreigners. Therefore, the architectural style is no different from the building in Guangzhou. From the latter half of the 18th century to the middle of the 19th century, Western forms were greatly developed in the Thirteen Factories. The situation at that time was reflected in the oil painting; we can see that at that time, the building was basically a western-style facade added to the local architectural shapes (Fig.6). As the factory building was an industry owned by the hong merchants, the construction from the beginning had the character of real estate development. Affected by the economic laws, merchants were definitely hoping to win more floor space on limited land, so the factories were initially almost two floors. When the land within the metropolitan area began to be tense, this approach provided a paradigm for the surrounding areas development.

Stage 2: port terminal and mixed commercial and residential area

In October 1856, the British invaders provoked the Second Opium War. In December of the same year, British troops gathered in the Thirteen Factories. In order to prevent the Chinese military and civilians from attacking, the British occupied New Doulan Street leading to the commercial area. They also demolished Chinese shops and houses in the north and east side of the factories, then left an open area. In the midnight on December 14th, the remains of the demolished Chinese shop suddenly caught fire. The fire spread to the factory region and burned into the US, French and British factories. In the afternoon of the following day, all but one factory were burned out. The fire was set by local military and civilians because of the hatred of the invaders. After this fire, the Thirteen Factories area experienced another fire in 1858. Who burned? Why burned? No one knows. At that time, the Qing government had already signed the treaties with the Western powers. The number of China's trade ports increased from one to five, that means Guangzhou was not the only legal city for export and import. The role of "Thirteen Factories" monopoly on the foreign trade did no longer exist; many factories moved to Shanghai or Hong Kong. In addition, Britain and France already forcibly rented Shamian as a concession in Guangzhou, and were no longer interested in rebuilding the Thirteen Factories. The real estate of Thirteen Factories was owned by hong merchants. Due to the war, the hong merchants were bearing with the loss of property, so they could not afford the cost of reconstruction. Therefore, in the early years of Guangxu, the houses were sparsely in the street. According to T. Marris's survey of Guangzhou Port in May-August 1903, the ruins of Thirteen Factories still have no streets (Fig.7).

Although the building was run down, the water transport terminal was highly valued. During the period of the Republic of China, it was still the main transshipment port. This is related to the residual influence of the Thirteen Factories, the rise of Shamian and its unique geographical conditions on water transport. In the period of the Republic of China, the Hong Kong-Macau Ferry Terminal, the Old Township Ferry Terminal and the Guangsan Railway Terminal all gathered there.

Stage 3: urban waterfront landscape belt with commercial function

The opportunity for another key transition in the Thirteen Factories area is the completion of Changdi Road in 1914. Changdi Road starts from Chuan Longkou and ends to Huangsha (Fig.8). The section of Changdi Road in the Thirteen Factories District is called the Xidi. Changdi Road Project was actually started in 1886 by Zhang Zhidong, the Governor of Guangdong and Guangxi. The main purpose of Zhang Zhidong's construction was to repair the embankment of the Pearl River to facilitate flood protection. However, with the in-depth preparations, Zhang Zhidong gave Changdi Road a new meaning. He wanted to use the construction of the Changdi Road to create a new urban appearance for Guangzhou City, which would flourish the business. The final result was as expected. Changdi Road became the new trunk road in Guangzhou and was selected by the modern enterprises to set up a stronghold.

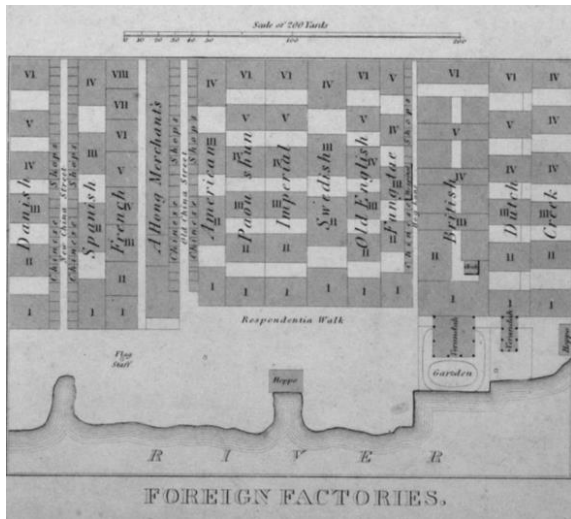


Figure 6. The layout of the factories



Figure 7. The ruins of the Thirteen Factories

Department stores such as Daxing and Xianshi have built high-rises here. The Southern Building of Daxing is located in the former Thirteen Factories Port Area. It is the most magnificent department store in southern China, attracting many people to visit and shop (Fig.9). The urban construction along the riverside connects the Thirteen Factories area in the east-west direction with the city, which also means that the role of the Pearl River has changed from a small sea to the inland waterway.

In addition, in the early years of the Republic of China, the city's internal traffic has gradually changed from the water to the land, and the transportation function of the water network has weakened. In Guangzhou, there is only one road that can drive, that is, Changdi Road. Under this background, the demolition of the city wall and the construction of roads are considered as important municipal projects. After the demolition of the city walls around Taiping Gate and west moat in 1919, the bustling Taiping Road (now South Renmin Road) has been built, and high-end commercial facilities such as hotels, finance, and retail have been also brought together. A north-south commercial street extends from the waterfront to the interior city (Fig.8, Fig.10).

Stage 4: commercial, cultural and recreational area

During the Anti-Japanese War, the Japanese aircraft carried out barbaric bombings at the Thirteen Factories site. The commercial and residential houses formed during the Republic of China ceased to exist. This historical district once again became a rubble field. Until 1951, the Guangdong Provincial Government decided to build a venue for the South China Native Products Exhibition on the ruins. The purpose of this exhibition was to restore the economy of southern China as soon as possible, promote the exchange of goods between urban and rural areas, smash the imperialist economic blockade and consolidate a new regime. In four months, a cottage complex with ten exhibition halls, transaction service department, and cultural club were built (Fig.11, Fig.12). The border trees were planted and the site was newly decorated. The ruins of the past turned into a park venue in the blink of an eye. Since the opening of the exhibition, there was a continuous stream of visitors. In just two and a half months, the number of visitors reached 1.53 million. After the exhibition, the original facilities were converted into a museum-style cultural activity space – Lingnan Cultural Palace. In January 1956, it was renamed into “Guangzhou Cultural Park”. The park has entertainment facilities such as dramas, skating rinks, center stage, calligraphy and painting exhibition halls and fitness rooms. The cultural park has infused the urban morphological elements of the green park and brought the functions of culture and entertainment into the traditional commercial district.

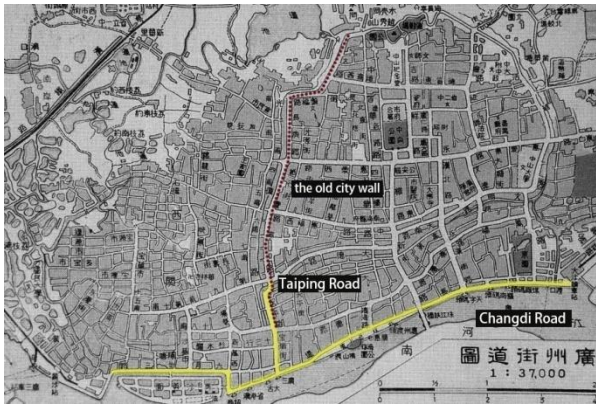


Figure 8. The city map of Guangzhou c.1928



Figure 9. The picture of Changdi Road c.1920



Figure 10. The picture of Taiping Road c.1930

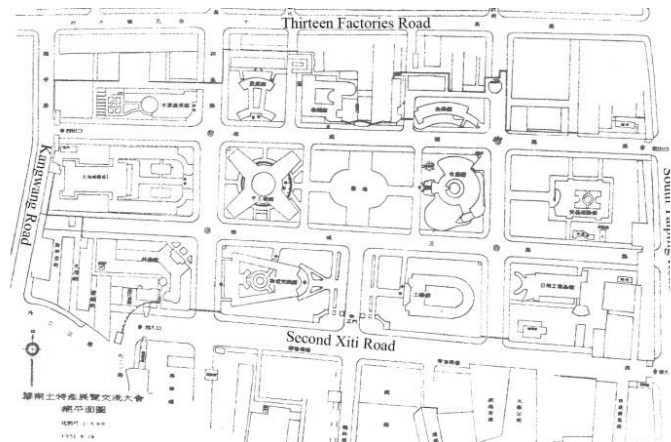


Figure 11. The site plan of South China Native Products Exhibition c.1951



Figure 12. The bird view of South China Native Products Exhibition c.1951

Stage 5: specific wholesale markets gathering area

After the reform and opening up, the land transport has completely replaced the water transport in the area of intra-city traffic. In 1965, the West moat, which had lost its transportation and defense function, was changed to underground culverts after being dredged several times. The number of cars in the city was increasing day by day. At that time, the area around Xidi was a pier where ecdemic ships arrived in Guangzhou. Tourists from all over the country landed here and then went straight to the shopping malls of the Southern Building on the bank. Local residents also loved to visit the cultural park across the road. In this context, the traffic on Renmin Road began to become tense. In September 20th, 1987, the Renmin Road elevated

platform was finished with a cost of more than 130 million yuan and a construction period of only 10 months (Fig.13). After the completion of the elevated road, the Guangzhou traffic entered a three-dimensional era. After opening to public, it also has an immediate effect on easing traffic pressure.

However, the completion of the elevated road cuts and destroys the overall layout of Commercial Street. Not only has the natural environment been adversely affected, but the business environment has also been deteriorated. The noise source on the viaduct can reach a height of more than three floors. The exhaust from the vehicle under the bridge cannot be discharged. The pollution is very serious and can be described as “three-dimensional pollution”. As a result, the residents on both sides of the street can be overwhelmed, and commercial institutions on Arcade Street have been withdrawn (Fig.14). In the past, walking on South Renmin Road, you could see the sky, many well-known restaurants, hotels, cinemas, and theaters. However, the viaduct makes the commercial environment deteriorate quickly. Even the department store, the South Building, is gradually getting into trouble. Retail business is gradually declining in the Thirteen Factories area.

The 1990s coincided with the wave of real estate development. High-rise buildings such as the New China Tower have appeared in this area (Fig.13). As the developers had escaped after illegal fund-raising, the new China building was in a quagmire, and the small owners who had already fallen into it with the lost of promised returned rent. They had to start a clothing wholesale business and rely on advantages of fast development of the light industry (especially in textile and clothing) in Guangzhou after the reform and opening up. The Thirteen Factories clothing wholesale market gradually take its form with a commercial circle centering Thirteen Factories Road and the New China Building, and radiating to Guyi Street, Doulan Street, and Heping East Road. Today, there are thousand-tons of goods imported and exported every day; hundreds of thousands of people visiting this area. The commercial radiation reaches for all parts of this country, Russia and Southeast Asia. Nowadays, apart from clothing wholesale market, electronic accessories wholesale markets have formed in the vicinity of Second Xiti Road, Xinji Road and Dexing Road. These specific wholesale markets cluster in high-rise buildings and have a clear target customer group. The demand for environmental quality is relatively low in this kind of business model, and with the help of the



Figure 13. The high-rise building and elevated road, 2017



Figure 14. South Renmin Road under the elevated road, 2017



Figure 15. Specific wholesale markets, 2017

three-dimensional transportation network extending in all directions it is possible to achieve a large amount of input and output in a short time.

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