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Observing the Urban and Rural Traffic System in Suzhou in Qing Dynasty from Gusufanhuatu

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Abstract: Gusufanhutu is a long documentary painting volume written by Xu Yang, a court painter in Qing Dynasty. It truly reflects the unique urban and rural traffic situations and basic characteristics of Suzhou in the Qianlong period of Qing Dynasty, and provides a guide for the study of urban and rural transportation system in Qing Dynasty. This painting depicts many scenes and rich contents, which is of great significance to the exploration of the era style of Qianlong Heyday.

1. Introduction

Xuyang, also called Yunting, whose year of birth and death is unknown. He was a Suzhou court painter in the Qianlong period of Qing Dynasty. His masterpieces include Gusufanhuatu, Qinglongnanxuntu, and so on. Xu Yang was born in Suzhou. When he was young, he participated in the drawing of Suzhou city map Gusuchengtu. This experience laid a solid foundation for his drawing of the long scoll of Gusufanhuatu. Gusufanhuatu, also known as Shengshizishengtu, was painted by Xu Yang under Imperial Edict. According to Ju Deyuan's Chronology of Lang Shining, a court painter in the Qing Dynasty: “On the 10th of November,in the 21st year of Qianlong's reign (1756), eunuch Hu Shijie, with a roll of old rice paper, four feet long and one foot and two feet wide, told Xu Yang to paint Shengshizhengtu by Imperial Order.”[1] In addition, Xu Yang mentioned in the preface and postscript that “this painting was finished painting in September in Qianlong Yimao.”[2]“Qianlong Yimao” is the twenty-fourth year of Qianlong (1759), indicating that it took nearly three years from beginning to completion. The scroll is 12.41 meters long and 0.365 meters high. “According to the geographical sequence, with Taihu and some southwest mountains as the background, from west to east, from the countryside to the city, on the basis of realism,this painting focuses on depicting a village (Shanqian village),between Lingyan and Huqiu mountains, a town (Mudu town) and a Suzhou City by using highly generalized techniques”[3].Just as the inscription in the picture says: “The city is a metropolis in the southeast, with its steep city wall and numerous official offices and citizen houses, beautiful mountains and rivers, fishing and firewood, diverse farming and weaving, numerous merchants and numerous shops, rows of stores in a market or street.”[2] Although there are some artistic processing elements in this painting, it is not a “photography” of the real look of Suzhou's urban and rural areas, but its main purpose is to celebrate “Qianlong Heyday”, so it has a strong realistic style. The author intends to analyze the urban and rural transportation system and its basic characteristics in Suzhou in Qing Dynasty on the

basis of its documentary nature.

2. Overview of Suzhou Urban and Rural Traffic Style in Qing Dynasty

In Gusufanhuatu,there are Shihu and Taihu lakes,and Jinghangdayunhe, Xujiang, Shantang River, Xiangxi and Yuelaixi rivers. These lakes and rivers are densely distributed, interconnected, and make distinction between the primary and lesser one. Suzhou city crisscrosses with paths in the rural area,And forms a dense and complicated traffic network with complex lakes and rivers, forms a dense and complicated traffic network,which makes the whole Suzhou area extend in all directions, and at the same time, it also produces various means of transportation, and the speed and efficiency of traffic are also guaranteed.

In Suzhou,waterways are also very developed,and are characterized as corners, crosses and T-shaped at the crossing and are characterized as corners, crosses and T-shaped at the crossing. Although these waterways have simple curve and angular changes, the overall trend is mostly straight. Although the intersection is not horizontal or vertical, the angle of intersection is regular and there are rules to follow. These crisscross waterways divide the whole town of Suzhou into several blocks, and there are many building groups in each block. These building groups are square in shape and neatly arranged.spaces among the building groups form criss-crossing streets and lanes. Among the rural palces, the traffic is complex and changeable, and the roads are different in different geographical environments. For example, Mudu Town is connected with the countryside of Lingyan Mountain, and there is still a law of horizontal and vertical, while the countryside waterway in Shihu area is like old trees intertwined, showing a winding state.

3. Waterway transportation in Suzhou Urban and Rural Areas in Qing Dynasty

In Gusufanhuatu, Suzhou City is surrounded by a city wall, and outside the city wall, there is a moat with a wide and straight waterway, which surrounds Suzhou City in a quadrilateral shape and extends straight to the outside area. From the modern map, it can be seen that the waterways connected with the moat are Xujiang, Jinghangdayunhe tributary, Shantang River, etc. Among them, Jinghangdayunhe is connected to the national transportation water network, and Xujiang River and Shantang River are connected to Suzhou and nearby cities. There is a water gate in the city wall, through which the waterway extends to theinner city. Waterways in the inner city are faintly visible. In addition, it can be seen from Xu Yang's Gusuchengtu[4] that there are many waterways in the inner city, which are arranged horizontally and vertically, basically covering every corner of the whole Suzhou city. This kind of waterway, with both size and size, is mainly used for water transportation, distribution, transportation, which is the foundation of commercial prosperity in Suzhou.

The waterway pattern of Mudu Town is that one Xiangxi runs from the east to the west, the east to the west, and several waterways connect the south and the north. Waterways are basically horizontal and vertical, except for the three-pronged waterway in Mudu center, the intersections of other waterways are T-shaped or angle-folded. The waterway is neat and clear at a glance.As for the mountainous ponds and rivers, their waterways are basically the same as those of Mudu Town,showing a regular state.

Mudu Town is separated from Suzhou City by Shihu, and the waterway between the two places and the suburb of Shihu gradually becomes irregular, and the degree of repair becomes low. By Shihu, the waterway has shown a winding state. The width of the waterway is decreasing, the density is expanding, the number of tributaries and branches is also increasing, and the amorous feelings of the rivers and lakes farmland are full. Correspondingly, the transportation and traffic capacity of waterways are also declining, while the irrigation capacity has been improved.

ShanqianCun is a place with beautiful scenery. Its waterways meander in the dense scenery. Compared with the lake area, this mountain area has lower waterway density and fewer tributaries, but the mountain light and water color are exceptionally beautiful.

4. Land transportation in Suzhou Urban and Rural Areas in Qing Dynasty

In Gusufanhuatu, the land transportation developed well inside and outside the city wall, which can cover the whole Suzhou area and reach the front of ordinary people's in the distance homes nearby. Within the city wall, the land is characterized by the main roads. Although there are curved streets in the center of Suzhou, the roads crisscross. Although there are many streets, there are distinction between the primary and the secondary. Most of the main roads are arranged in a zigzag pattern, and the pavement is wide, simple and regular, with shops, government offices and temples on both sides of the roads. The secondary land route is mainly the streets and lanes left between the building communities and where the two walls are sandwiched. The road surface is narrow and complicated, and both sides of the road are mostly residential buildings. Through the city gate, the land between the city wall and the moat surrounds the city wall, crosses the moat and extends in all directions and gradually becomes irregular. When we reach Mudu and Shantang rivers, the state of land is basically similar to that of waterway, and most of them are roads on both sides of waterway. There are criss-crossing streets and lanes in building communities, such as Suzhou City, and some streets and lanes are wide, which are the main roads in the streets and lanes.

Shihu neighborhood is divided by crisscross rivers and gullies. In terms of shape of land plots, there is no law to follow. Most of these plots are farmland, and the large farmland is divided into several small ones. Each small farmland is polygonal, and is delimited by the land higher than the farmland. Although these roads are irregular, they are generally horizontal and vertical. Several of these roads have been simply repaired and are relatively wide, which are used as main roads to ensure traffic. Most of these main roads are on both sides of the river bank, and a few of them directly pass through the whole plot for traffic. The farmland roads in the outer suburbs of Mudu town are basically the same, but its plots are much more regular than those near Shihu. Lingyan Mountain is famous for its mountain scenery, and its land routes are mostly along the terrain. For example, the mountain road for climbing is looming, leading to the top of the mountain along the mountain, and the trail below the mountain extends to the along the waterway.

5. Bridges and docks in Suzhou Urban and Rural Areas in Qing Dynasty

Suzhou's urban and rural waterways and land routes are very complicated, but pedestrians need bridges to cross the water and ships need docks to dock. These needs are also reflected in the paintings. There are many bridges in painting, with beautiful shapes, and there are corresponding differences in bridge size, style, decoration and materials. Among them, Wangnian Bridge is the largest and most beautiful bridge. Feng Guifen's (Tongzhi)Suzhoufuzhi records:“In the winter of Qianlong five years, the first two days of Changzhi closed the dragon, and after two days, pedestrians could walk on the bridge,and the bridge was completed. Many people cheered and asked to name the bridge ‘Wangnianqiao’. Now, An Ning, The officer of provincial administrative government, has verified this application and agreed to them. The bridge is more than 32 feet long, 24 feet wide and 34 feet and 4 inches high. It cost more than 1600 taels of gold in total.”[5]Its standard volume is enough to laterally reflect the exquisiteness and perfection of the transportation system at that time. Compared with the majestic growth of Wangnian Bridge, other bridges have their own unique features. The size, system and distribution density of these bridges are closely related to the breadth and importance of waterways. The wider the waterway, the bigger the bridge. The more important the waterway is, the more exquisite the way the bridge is built. The higher the

population density of cities and towns where waterways flow through, the more bridges there will be.

In Gusufanhuatu, cargo ships stop and unload goods, usually directly in front of shops on both sides of the waterway, for there is also a dock here. For example, due to the wide water surface, there is a royal dock at the waterway interchange of Mudu Center. According to Muduxiaozhi: “The royal dock is in the east of Mudu City, and in the Qing Dynasty, Shengzu Gaozong arrived at Lingyan, where the emperor's boat was moored.”[6] In this painting, the author describes the essential contents of these transportation systems in detail. There are still very few natural areas along the river bank that are not artificially built. There are not many flowers and trees, and only two or three trees stand on the shore as a place to rest and drink tea. Pavilions are often set near bridges or at important locations for pedestrians to stay and rest.

6. The Basic Characteristics of Suzhou Urban and Rural Traffic in Qing Dynasty

First, the waterway and land in Suzhou's urban and rural areas in the Qing Dynasty were very complicated, and they were compatible with each other, and together they built a complete road traffic system. This form of compatibility is manifested as follows: most of the main waterways are parallel to the main land routes, that is, the banks of the river are built into the roads for people to walk on, while ships are sailing on the surface of the river. The form and content of this mutual cooperation have different manifestations in different regions. Mudu Town, Shantang River area and Suzhou City are simple and clear, and either side of the river bank is land roads. The seland roads will turn or be divided into two roads in the prosperous areas, and then merge into one after a certain distance. There will also be cases where the waterway is separated from the land, and the shops are parallel to the land. In this complicated form of parallel waterway and land, shops built in the middle and on both sides of the two roads will also open doors to both the outer waterway and the inner street, so that goods can be transported and unloaded by waterway, and roadside goods can be displayed and sold at the same time. This complex and ever-changing business model, which is different from the living model, nourishes the operation and development of regional commerce in Suzhou. Of course, this parallel form of waterway and land is not only reflected in the business district of Suzhou City, but also in the outer suburbs of Mudu Town and Shihu. Although these places are not as complicated as the commercial paradigm in Suzhou City, and there are no dams on both sides of the river, they all show a parallel state.

Secondly, in areas that can't be covered by waterways, land roads are mostly grid-shaped, and there are often several roads in the middle that are widely repaired for the main traffic. Such as Suzhou City, Mudu Town, Shantang River Town, etc., this kind of supplementary road pattern is reflected. Moreover, the density and form change of road network are different according to the prosperity of each region. Among them, the density of road network in Suzhou City is the highest, the form changes the most, and there are even curved roads. This complex and changeable form of urban roads can be seen in Gusuchengtu. At the same time, through comparison, it can be seen that although the waterway and land in Gusufanhuatu are all processed, they are basically planned and drawn in respect of facts.

Thirdly, the exquisiteness and complexity of Suzhou's urban and rural transportation system are also reflected in the vehicles in Gusufanhuatu. Most of the scenes composed of these vehicles are carefully designed, which directly reflects the types of vehicles used for travel and transportation in Suzhou in the Qing Dynasty. Roads are different and divided into primary and secondary, and so are all kinds of vehicles. There are numerous main waterway vessels in the city in the picture, and the vessel types, sizes and exquisite degrees are different. In urban areas, the vast majority of these vessels are cargo ships, with only a few cruise ships, official boats and rafts. These ships are either

unloading or passing, mostly for the needs of commercial transportation. In the secondary waterways in rural areas, most of the boats are fishing boats, rafts, cruise ships, etc. with smaller standards, or fishing and hunting, or sightseeing, mostly for the needs of daily life. On the land, there are official cars, donkeys, horses, livestock, unicycles, etc. These land vehicles are used differently in different areas. It can be seen that in the Qing Dynasty, the urban and rural land transportation in Suzhou was mainly based on traffic, supplemented by freight transportation.

7. Conclusion

In ancient China, the transportation system was self-contained, the waterway and land transportation were developed, the transportation network covered a wide range, and the road forms were different. The plank road, post road and water transportation were used differently in different areas. With the continuous development of construction technology, a transportation network system, which is dominated by waterways and supplemented by land, is finally formed. It was the most prosperous period of this kind of transportation network system in Qing Dynasty. As the economic center of the whole country, Jiangnan area supported the transportation system of material circulation and people flow, and it was the most prosperous in the whole country, especially Suzhou area as the center of Jiangnan. Gusufanhuatu, a realistic scroll painted by Xu Yang, shows all the developed urban and rural transportation systems in Suzhou during the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty, which allows people to have a comprehensive glimpse of the detailed contents of urban and rural transportation systems in Suzhou in the Qing Dynasty with the help of this painting and related materials, and provides a guide for the research of urban and rural transportation systems in the Qing Dynasty. Gusufanhuatu, as a long-volume theme, depicts many scenes and rich content, which is of great significance for exploring the times and features of Qianlong Heyday.

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