

The Opening of the Roads from Yunnan to Huguang Province Produced Great Influences on Economy of Yunnan Province

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Abstract

Yuan Dynasty was an important period for Yunnan Province in history. The roads access to Huguang Province did not only promote the great development of the politics and economy of Yunnan Province, which actually surpassed any dynasty previous to it, but also strengthened the contacts with the inner parts of China, promoted the national amalgamation, and enhanced the centripetal force of Yunnan Province, finishing the situation of 500-year separation and leading the growth of Yunnan Province to a new stage.

Keywords: Yuan dynasty, Roads access to Huguang Province, Economy, Impact

Transportation and communication are indispensable factors in social life. Even in the feudal society, there is no exception. Interaction, information exchanges and foreign contacts were not so frequent or convenient as that in the age of information. There was a relatively well-developed communication system in the feudal society. Mongolian nationality rose in Mongolian steppe in the 12th century. Since the time of Genghis Khan, Mongolian people had made a series of armed conquests. They again reunified the split China, established a unified centralized state with a vast territory and many nationalities and built more developed and sophisticated transportation and communication than ever before. This paper takes Yunnan Province as an example to explore the influences of the roads to Huguang Province on the economic development.

1. The opening of the roads to Huguang Province

Empire Wu of Han Dynasty set up county system in Yunnan Province. From Wei Dynasty to Tang Dynasty, politics, economy and culture in Yunnan had undergone development of various degrees. But compared to the mainland China, the level of development was quite low. Especially in the northeast of Yunnan Province, it was quite backward. "Men wore hair-coils and women wore natural hair. They had no such etiquette standards as that people had in the mainland. After repeated greetings, they began to understand people from the mainland." (Zhao, 1985, pp.35-36). After the collapse of Tang dynasty, the country was in split situation. In the Yunnan region, Duan Family established Dali state after Nanzhao while the mainland China was in the state of separatist strife. In the year of 960, the North Song Dynasty set up a unified government and Yunnan gradually restored the contacts with the mainland China by the means of political submission, though the link was very limited. Due to the great threat from the north of Liao Dynasty and West Xia Dynasty, North Song regime was on their guard against Dali state in the southwest. New Book of Tang says, "when a cow was lost in the market, a state knew it should be alert to the neighbor in the northwest while it didn't know a disaster was out of non-preparedness. Tang Dynasty was destroyed by Huangchao and the disasters might be from Guilin". Therefore, South Song regime had a strong armed force and put the trading activities in the scope of the only place, Hengshan cottage. Only in a compelling circumstance, could it trade with Dali, as seriously impeded the ties of Yunnan Province with the mainland. Only in Zhiyuan Period of Kublai could such a situation get significant changes.

Early in 1252 of the conquest over Dali, Kublai realized the importance of the strategic location of Yunnan. When he was on his throne, he sent Sai Dianchi, one of his minions to govern Yunnan. Mr. Sai lived up to the mission from the empire. In the 11th year of Zhiyuan Period, he reached Yunnan and carried out sweeping reforms. On the basis of suppressing by force by Wu Lianghatai, province and county was constructed and post roads were opened, which ended the 500-year separatist situation. Yunnan was again put in the control of the unified central government and it had more political, economic, cultural and other contracts with the mainland China.

As for the post roads in Yunnan, according to Professor Fang Tie, there are roads from Zhongqing to Sichuan by

Daduhe River, from Zhongqing to Qingfu (north of Gao County today) of Sichuan province by Ulmen (Zhaotong today) to Sichuan, from Zhongqing to Zhengyuan Fu (Zhenyuan in Guizhou province today) of Huguang Province, from Zhongqing to Yongzhou (Nanning of Guangxi Province today), from Zhongqing to Annan, from Zhongqing to Dali, from Dali to Myanmar, and from Dali to Lijiang.(Fang, 2005, pp.458-459). Thus the transportation network covering major cities were formed with Zhongqing as the center. According to Jingshi Encyclopedia, there were about 78 post roads in Yunnan province in Yunnan Dynasty as the following table (Yongle Encyclopedia, Vol.19423):

	Lu, Fu, Si	Horse station	Water station	Horse	Boats	cattle
About Luoluosi Xuanweisi	Luoluosi Xuanweisi	6		240		
	Wuding Lu	10		500		
	Zhongqing Lu	6		311		
	Rede Fu	1		30		
	Qujing Fu	6		190		
About Wusa Xuanweisi	Wusa Xuanweisi	3		90		30
	Lijiang Lu	3		60		
	Dali Lu	14		410		
	Weichu Lu	5		138		
	Linjiang Lu	6		120		
	Huijing Lu	1		20		
	Guangxi Lu	5		46		
	Puaqn Lu	3		40		
	Wumeng Xuanfusi	5	4	150	24	
Total account		74	4	2345	24	30

Among all the post roads, the road from Zhongqing to Huguang province is one of epoch-making significance from Yunnan Dadu in Yuan Dynasty because it was not only flat but time-saving (it took less than four months from Yunnan to Kaiping but half and two years previously). There was less fever traps in this road unlike the old channels. Therefore, it changed the traffic pattern of Yunnan to the mainland. Roads to Huguang produced significant influences on Yuan dynasty, Ming and Qing dynasties and even the modern times. Now, the railway lines from Yunnan to the mainland are essentially in line with Huguang road, as made undeniable contributions.

Huguang road was proposed by Yelutumandaer, the prime minister of Sichuan Province, and was built in April of the 27th year of Zhiyuan Period. He said, "I think the north part of Yunnan is of foul feature. The waterways are treacherous and vessels are easy to be broken. Miasmas occur often in Li and Ya Station Roads. Men and horses often die while passing. We are neighbored in the south to Jianlima Station of Puan Lu controlled by Yunnan province, and in the east to Chen, Yuan and Jingzhou Station. I once tried to order Menggao to reach the borders of Yunnan and Huguang Province and found that Yidongluodian, Guizhou and Gelong were all in the possession of Yunnan Province. Under the control of Sichuan Province, four stations including Anli Station can contact Huguang province. The new station of Anli can be set up to reach Huangping, Zhenyuan, Tongchen, Yuan and Jingzhou to Jiangling Lu. I find that mountains here are less steep and the road is even and convenient for horses to run on. Compared with Li and Yawumeng post roads, it is about two thousand Li shorter. If we change our way by the stations and roads in Yunnan province to Jiangling Lu and goods ordered to transport can still pass Wumeng Water Station, station roads in Sichuan can be alternately in rest. In addition, in Li and Ya Stations, 500 horses and 15000 men can farm and collect taxes, which can be a very good idea."(Yongle Encyclopedia, 19418). Subsequently, "both Canlazhen and Hada expressed the same opinion and asked to dispatch missioners to Yunnan and Huguang provinces to make local investigation."(Yongle Encyclopedia, 19418). The result is that "the empire agreed. It must be decided at the provincial conferences with the findings of the missioner as reference." (Yongle Encyclopedia, 19418). In such a way, Huguang post road, connecting Yunnan, Sichuan and Huguang provinces was built approved by the Yuan government. Because the road was less dangerous with few miasmas, flat and smooth, passengers are much more, which makes horses exhausted and men tired. In order to

release it, on November 10 of the 29th year of Zhiyuan Period, “Huguang provincial government and Bafan Xuanweisi proposed that Jianguan contacts Yunnan, Jiaozhi and Xidong. It is an important post station. Although the round trip is seven thousand Li, missionaries are numerous and horses are exhausted. Now we suggest that from Yuezhou to Zhenyuan twenty four water stations can be set up... Except the missionaries with emergent tasks, people to the North, officials with tributes and other missionaries with ordinary tasks should take ship, which is of quite convenience.”(Yongle Encyclopedia, 19423).

The opening of the Huguang road makes the ties of Yunnan and the central government much closer and finishes the split situation of 500 years in Nanzhao and Dali. The well-developed transportation and the smoothness between Yunnan and mainland China leads Yunnan to a brand new historical period in the Yuan Dynasty. Its economic growth surpassed that of any previous dynasty.

2. The opening of the Huguang Road produced great impacts on Yunnan economy

Huguang road together with the old post roads greatly strengthened the link between Yunnan and the mainland. The advanced production techniques, tools, scientific and cultural knowledge and a large number of officials and businessmen in the mainland were introduced into Yunnan, thus contributing to the Yunnan economic development, as can be seen mainly in the following aspects.

2.1 Agriculture in Yunnan province got tremendous development.

After Mongolian people became the ruling class, persuaded by some progressive intellectuals, they began to realize the importance of agriculture in increasing national revenue and stabilized the state and began to be committed to the restoration and development of agriculture. Back in the battles that Mongol Empire conquered other places, to deal with those cities they could not conquer for a long time, they farmed in the neighborhood in order to ensure the military food supply. After the national reunification, the Yuan Government conducted a nationwide farming policy in a large scale and Yunnan province is no exception. According to professor Fang Tie, Yunnan province farmed no less than 483,335 mu (Fang, 2005, p.74). Li Jing also said, “there are so many rice fields. Five mu is called a pair. It is beautiful next to the south to Changjiang River. Ramie, wheat, fruits and vegetables show a real China.” (Fang, 1990, p.128). Farming in such a large scale did not only improve the level of agricultural production in Yunnan Province and promoted the progress of society, but also increased the government revenue. As what Nasulading said in the 22nd year of Zhiyuan period, “if someone is in charge of farming, he can earn 5000 Liang of gold a year.” (Yu, Vol13).

2.2 It promoted the tremendous progress of handicraft industry.

In Yuan Dynasty, the handicraft industry is well developed. In various Fu, Zhou and County in a province, an official handicraft bureau was set up. In the Yuan Dynasty, Yunnan got further development in handicraft industry compared with the previous times. In the textile industry, Zhang Lidao imparting the technique of rearing silkworms resulted in ten times of interest of the old times for Bai nationality of Dali. In the mining industry, there are 15 places producing gold such as Weichu, Lijiang, Dali, Jinchi, Lin'an, Qujing, Yuanjiang, Luoluo, Huichuan, Jianchang, Dechang, Boxing, Uzza, Dongchuan and Wumeng in Yunnan Province. Marco Polo, in his Travel Notes such as Jiandou Zhou, Halazhang Zhou, Jinchi Zhou, Jiaochiguo Zhou, Amu Zhou, and Tulaman Zhou, etc, recorded the gold production in Yunnan. According to History of the Yuan Dynasty, in the 14th year of Zhiyuan Period, every local government in Yunnan paid their taxes of 150 Ding. In the first year of Tianli Period (in the year of 1328) the tax is 184.129 Ding (Song, 1976, p.2383), which is on the top list of the country. Weichu, Dali, Jinchi, Lin'an, Yuanjiang produced silver. Dali and Chengjiang produced copper. Zhongqing, Dali, Jinchi, Linan, Qujing, Chengjiang, Luoluo and Jianchang produced iron. Yuan Dynasty conducted a large scale mining and processing of them, as became one of the major sources of revenue of industry for Yuan government. Dali and Zhongqing were rich in salt. “People make a living on it and the king got much money from it” (Sha, 2004, p.453). In addition, Luoluosi under the control of Yunnan produced freshwater pearls. Huichuan had jades. Only the emperor has the power to mine them, as can ensure the value and use value.

2.3 It promotes the rise of businesses and cities.

The growth of agriculture and handicraft industry and the well-developed transportation, strong attention from government, and policy carried out by Saidianchi in the rule of Yunnan, that is, “less tax in favor of traveler” (Zhao, 1990, p.266), businesses of Yunnan in Yuan dynasty got further development on the basis of the previous times. Yunnan took on a prosperous situation. With the mainland China or the neighboring countries, there were continuous travel contacts. Travels of Marco Polo recorded that, “(Yachi) is a big city with prosperous commerce and industry”. “Here (Halazhang) is abundant in gold and one-Liang gold is worth six-Liang silver when in exchange. “Businessmen carry much silver here and earn great profits.” “Businessmen (from Tuluoman Zhou)

are very rich and take profitable trade.” “Amu Zhou has horses and it is profitable to trade with Indians.” (Sha, 2004). Businessmen from the south to the Yantz River carry their money to Yunnan Province to buy gold and horses. (Fang, 2005, p.1443).

Due to the active commercial trade, people are easy to assemble in a fare of population concentration. Li Jing in the book of Customs of Various Nationalities of History of Yunnan said, “Dali names market as Jiezi, which opens in the morning and ends in the evening. Seashell, used as currency to exchange goods, is called Ba. One shell is taken as a unit, naming Zhuang. Four Zhuang is a Shou. Four Shou is a Miao and five Miao is a Suo. While in the area of Jinchibai, “a fare is open every five days. Women go to market in the morning while men in the afternoon. They exchange cloth, tea and salt there.”(Li, 1990, PP128-129). Marco Polo also recorded the development of business in Yunnan Province. He said, “the city of Yachi is famous and business is prosperous there. The currency used is the white shells, which are traditionally used as the dog collars. Eighty Shells is worth one Liang. And eight Liang is worth one Liang gold.” “Here (Halazhang) is rich in gold. When in trade, one Liang gold is worth six Liang silver. They also use seashell as currency.” “I have seen an important place, which once was a large fair. People from neighborhood came here for trading in a certain day. The fair was open three times a week. Gold could be exchanged into silver probably because gold was rich. One-Liang pure gold was worth five-Liang pure silver. Since the price of silver is high, businessmen from various places brought silver with them to exchange gold and got great profit.”(Sha, 2004).

In addition, the convenient transportation also created good conditions for the immigrants to enter Yunnan. The scale can not be compared to that in the Ming Dynasty when numerous immigrants went into Yunnan. But a large scale of Mongols, Semuren, soldiers, officials and businessmen settled down in Yunnan. They increased the population of Yunnan and the more importance is that they brought the advanced production techniques, experience and advanced cultural knowledge of the mainland China into Yunnan. Together with the local people, they devoted themselves to the economic development in Yunnan Province, promoting the progress of the society. Yunnan took a look of prosperity. “People from remote places submit themselves to it. The cooking smoke can be seen everywhere. The place gets rich and strong so that wild people come to pay their tributes.” (Fang, 2005, p.441).

The convenient transportation promotes the economic prosperity and development and the social progress, which, in turn, are conducive to political stability. Measures made by the government can quickly reach such a remote place as Yunnan. It is convenient for the government to reorganize the administrative style and check the financial situation, consolidating the rule of Yunnan. It is of “positive significance to enhance national cohesion in Yunnan, increase mutual understanding of all ethnic groups and maintain the unity of the motherland.”(Fang, 2005, p.440)

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