A Scenario-Based Strategy for the Development of Maritime Silk Road Cultural Space in the Qiantang River Basin

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Abstract. The year 2023 will mark the 10th anniversary of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, and the state is vigorously promoting the integration of the tourism industry into it. Qiantang River plays a crucial role in connecting the Maritime Silk Road and the Land Silk Road. This study aims to explore and propose a development strategy for the Qiantang River Maritime Silk Road cultural space based using scenario theory, in order to revive and pass on the rich Maritime Silk Road culture in the basin. By collating and analyzing the Maritime Silk Road culture in the Qiantang River basin, addressing the current challenges in protecting and utilizing this cultural heritage. Scenario theory was used to reassemble the currently fragmented area into a more cohesive space. Centred on the cultural connotations of the Maritime Silk Road, and based on the protection and use of the cultural resources of the Maritime Silk Road, and is structured and organised at multiple levels, including macroscopic, mesoscopic, and microscopic levels. Our objective is to systematically build a Maritime Silk Road cultural space for tourism that seamlessly blends history and modernity. This initiative will provide new impetus for the development of Maritime Silk Road culture in the Qiantang River region.

1 Introduction

In October 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed, for the first time, a strengthened maritime cooperation with ASEAN countries to jointly construct the 21st-century "Maritime Silk Road." In March 2015, the state initiated cooperation among countries along the route to enhance tourism collaboration and create international high-quality tourism routes and products inspired by the Silk Road's characteristics. The development of cultural tourism along the Maritime Silk Road has emerged as a vital avenue to promote both the culture of the Maritime Silk Road and the economic prosperity of the regions along its path.

The Qiantang River Basin, formerly a crucial hub for commodity production and distribution along the ancient Maritime Silk Road, includes cities like Ningbo, Hangzhou, Lishui and other places. These places historically served as ports along the Maritime Silk Road and were essential starting points, and have successively joined the "Coalition of Cities for the Protection and Joint Nomination of the Maritime Silk Road as a World Cultural Heritage Site". Leveraging the abundant cultural resources of the Maritime Silk Road in the Qiantang River Basin to devise a regional development model represents a proactive response to the national "One Belt, One Road" strategy and carries great significance in strengthening cultural exchanges and cooperation along the Maritime Silk Road within the basin to achieve mutual benefits and win-win results.

2 Maritime Silk Road Cultural Compilation and Research Evolution

2.1 Connotation of the Maritime Silk Road culture

The German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen first proposed the term "Silk Road" in 1877 in his book "China - Results of a Personal Journey and the Studies Conducted Accordingly". In 1903, the French sinologist Emmanuel-édouard Chavannes initially proposed the concept of the "Maritime Silk Road" in his work "Historique de l'Ouest-Turkestan". As research deepened, scholars discovered that the Silk Road is not merely a trade route but encompasses culture, ethnicity, religion, economy, and various other fields. The entire Silk Road represents a vast historical and cultural region with an extensive cultural system.

Maritime Silk Road culture is a multi-ethnic and multi-regional form of culture that results from the amalgamation of cultures from countries along the Maritime Silk Road. It has regional culture at its core, marine culture as its foundation, and trade culture as its basis. This culture encompasses both material and spiritual aspects. Material culture mainly refers to the relics along the Maritime Silk Road that bear witness to the grandeur and prosperity of ancient times. Examples include the Tiantong Temple in Ningbo, the Zhapu Ancient Town in Jiaxing, and other historical relics.
Spiritual culture is centred on the "Silk Road Spirit" advocated by General Secretary Xi Jinping, which emphasizes peaceful cooperation, openness, inclusivity, mutual learning and appreciation, and mutual benefit and win-win outcomes. Throughout historical development and change, the spirit of "pioneering and enterprising" and "standing at the head of the tide" emerged from the fusion of diverse imported cultures and regional cultures, nurtured over a long history of maritime interactions. This spirit represents the local expression of Maritime Silk Road culture in the Qiantang River Basin.

2.2 The Spatial Turn in the Study of Maritime Silk Road Culture
A search on China Knowledge Network (CNKI) using keywords such as 'Maritime Silk Road Culture' indicates a significant surge in domestic research since the initiation of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013. The research content focuses on the combing and status quo study of the cultural resources of the Maritime Silk Road, and the study of the Maritime Silk Road cultural product development and application, and has gradually shifted to the spatial development of Maritime Silk Road cultural and tourism resources. Maritime Silk Road culture in the historical and cultural space application research and other aspects. With the formation of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Central Committee of CPC in 2018 marked a significant development in the integration of culture and tourism. This integration has garnered attention from various stakeholders, both as a noteworthy socio-economic phenomenon and a subject of academic inquiry. The integration of culture and tourism is based on cultural space, which is transformed into a cultural and tourism consumption space by superimposing various functions and promoting spatial consumption with the help of cultural symbols. This integration has become the cornerstone for the contemporary revitalization of resources along the Maritime Silk Road, offering a crucial avenue for the study of its cultural development. However, it's important to note that research on the regionalization of the cultural space of the Maritime Silk Road remains relatively limited. Existing studies tend to focus on constructing macro patterns, such as heritage corridors or cultural and tourism resource spaces, and lacks comprehensive and in-depth research in this area.

The Maritime Silk Road cultural space is defined by its physical spatial environment and the presence of historical remnants related to the Maritime Silk Road. Understanding the Silk Road and its cultural patterns through spatial cognition, and the space exerts influence on economy, culture and social production through the culture. This paper focuses on the cultural space of the Maritime Silk Road in the Qiantang River Basin, which is diverges from traditional researches that based on administrative units. Instead, it considers the natural, historical, and cultural dimensions of the area. By delving into the cultural resources within the Qiantang River Basin related to the Maritime Silk Road and incorporating new theoretical perspectives, this paper explores methodologies and strategies for constructing a regionalized and systematic development plan for the Maritime Silk Road cultural space.

2.3 The value of cultural space development of the Maritime Silk Road in the Qiantang River Basin
After Emperor Yang constructed the canal, it formed a comprehensive transportation network of waterways, seas and land, with Qiantang River as the centre, radiating in all directions, and became a vital hub for communicating between the land and sea Silk Roads. The abundant tributaries of the Qiantang River have created a comprehensive transportation pattern that connects canals, seas, and rivers. The commodities produced in the Qiantang River basin played a crucial role in the trade along the ancient Maritime Silk Road. They served as a significant source of goods and contributed to the prosperity of the Maritime Silk Road, offering a vast mainland market. Silk, porcelain and tea from the Qiantang River region achieved worldwide recognition and represented the primary commodities exported to foreign countries in Silk Road trade. Although the Maritime Silk Road primarily served as a commercial trade route, its profound value extended to the human thought and culture. The Qiantang River Basin played a pivotal role in spreading Chinese civilization to the outside world. The rice civilization of the Qiantang River Valley, for instance, was transmitted to East Asia through the Maritime Silk Road. Buddhist structures like the Baoguo Temple in Ningbo also bear witness to the far-reaching influence of traditional Chinese wooden architectural techniques on the development of Buddhist culture and building technology in East Asia, including Japan. Simultaneously, foreign religions, folklore, and other cultures had a profound impact on the Qiantang River Valley through the exchanges facilitated by the Silk Road.

3 Theoretical Logic of Cultural Scene Empowering the Cultural Development of the Maritime Silk Road

3.1 Concepts and connotations of scenario theory
The Theory of Scenes, introduced by the New Chicago School, represented by Terry Clark, is a novel paradigm for urban sociological research. "Scene Theory" revolves around consumption, employing living and entertainment facilities its core elements, anchoring individual goals within the appeal of cultural values and regarding space as a fusion of diverse consumption symbols. This theory aims to satisfy the public's cultural value demands in a given area, guide consumer behaviour through the objective structure of the scene, foster cultural consumption and expresses local cultural connotations. In the era of cultural tourism integration,
cultural spaces with heritage characteristics are gradually transitioning into spaces that attract people for cultural consumption. It is essential to explore methods for preserving the cultural relics of the Maritime Silk Road in a dynamic state while leveraging their socio-economic value through scene formation. This transformation shifts them from mere cultural heritage to valuable cultural assets. Scenario theory posits that a scenario contains at least five elements: the neighbourhood or community, the physical infrastructure, the diversity of people, the combination of these first three elements and activities, and the values nurtured by the scenario. The first four elements constitute the objective cognitive structure of scenario theory, while the values fostered by the scenario constitute its subjective cognitive structure. Furthermore, the theory extracts three main cultural value dimensions and 15 sub-dimensional interpretive frameworks, constructing a comprehensive scenario “grammar” system.

3.2 The Current State of Research on Scene Theory in Cultural Spaces

Since the introduction of scene theory into China, numerous China scholars have applied this theory to various scales and types of cultural spaces for localized research. These applications range from large cultural industrial parks[8] to small physical bookstores[9], and urban public cultural spaces for youth[9]. The inherent richness and comprehensive grammatical system of scene theory have made it a vibrant and adaptable framework in the process of Chinese adoption. Notably, scene theory has accumulated considerable experience in the study of historical heritage cultural spaces. It has undertaken spatial perception research[9], spatial vitality research[10] and other related studies for different types of historical heritage cultural spaces. These efforts have introduced new perspectives and methodologies for the preservation and revitalization of historical heritage cultural spaces in China.

Generally speaking, most existing studies tend to analyze cultural spaces or scenes in specific cities, communities or villages. The cases examined often share a relatively homogenous nature, with limited attention paid to cultural spaces at larger scales. Currently, scholars both in China and abroad have reached a consensus regarding the idea that “the construction of cultural scenes and the preservation of historical heritage complement each other”. However, research on the cultural space of the Maritime Silk Road remains relatively scarce. There is an urgent need to establish a new theoretical framework for its preservation and utilization.

3.3 Analysis of the Relevance of Scenario Theory to the Study of Cultural Space Development on the Maritime Silk Road

Cultural scene creation and the development of cultural space on the Maritime Silk Road both seek to convey specific cultures, histories and values in particular locations and environments. Both endeavors focus on achieving the dual goals of preserving cultural heritage and promoting regional economic development through scene creation. Scene innovation expands the horizons of culture and tourism integration, fostering its growth into a more profound and extensive dimension. By crafting cultural scenes, we can guided individuals to experience and comprehend the cultural significance of a space, sparking cultural consumption. Moreover, cultural scenes rooted in heritage possess a strong sense of historical continuity. Developing scenes with historical significance and cultural depth within the Maritime Silk Road cultural space can attract talents, promote cultural innovation, and create new cultural products within the space.

3.3.1 Scenario Theory Provides a New Global Perspective on the Development of Cultural Space along the Maritime Silk Road

The Maritime Silk Road cultural space, steeped in history and brimming with rich cultural symbols and material remnants, holds immense potential for spatial consumption. Through the creation of cultural scenarios, it can unleash its endogenous energy, providing sustainable impetus for the preservation and development of the Maritime Silk Road cultural space. Within various regions of the Maritime Silk Road cultural space, historical relics, cultural landscapes and unique traditions interweave, creating a tapestry of diverse elements. It is essential to integrate the dispersed and fragmented Maritime Silk Road cultural resources through scenario creation. It enables a more comprehensive understanding of the multi-dimensional and intricate nature of the Maritime Silk Road cultural space from a global perspective.

3.3.2 Constructing a Development Model for the Cultural Space of the Maritime Silk Road Using a Scenario-Theoretic Analysis Framework

Scene theory provides a valuable analytical tool to help researchers and planners analyse specific spaces in depth. Scenario theory proposes five elements for constructing scenarios, encompassing three dimensions of values and fifteen sub-dimensions for analyzing scenario characteristics, employing a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. These five elements of a scene correspond to the five components of the cultural space of the Maritime Silk Road. By scrutinizing these elements, we can identify and emphasize key aspects within the space, thus guiding the optimal allocation of resources. Investigating how these elements interact to influence the development of the Maritime Silk Road.
Silk Road cultural space facilitates the formulation of a comprehensive strategy. Scenario theory can also be applied to the subsequent evaluation of the Maritime Silk Road cultural space scenario, which is continually optimised through regular assessments.

4 Analysis of Cultural Spatial Resources of the Maritime Silk Road in the Qiantang River Basin

4.1 Analysis of the Cultural Space Resources of the Maritime Silk Road in the Qiantang River

The Qiantang River Basin is situated in the northwestern part of Zhejiang Province, encompassing a watershed that spans five provinces (cities): Zhejiang, Anhui, Jiangxi, Fujian and Shanghai. The primary river has a total length of 609 kilometers, covering a basin area of 55,491 square kilometers. For the sake of this study, we define the research area as the municipal-level administrative districts traversed by the main stem of the Qiantang River and its major tributaries within Zhejiang Province. This includes Hangzhou City, Shaoxing City, Ningbo City, Lishui City, Quzhou City, Jinhua City, and Jiaxing City in Zhejiang Province (Fig. 1).

4.1.1 Data sources

In tracing the development history of the Maritime Silk Road on the Qiantang River region, this study draws upon various sources, including heritage sites that have been included in China’s "Preliminary List of Heritage Sites and Associated Sites of the Maritime Silk Road." It also references the list of cultural relics of the Maritime Silk Road in Ningbo, as provided by the Ningbo Cultural Relics Bureau, and gathers data from sites and relics disclosed on the websites of various local governments. To construct the initial roster of representative cultural spaces along the Maritime Silk Road, tools such as Google Earth and GIS were employed to acquire the spatial coordinates of these resource points, and the coordinates of the larger resources are replaced by the coordinates of their prime points. Extensive research was conducted through both online sources and field investigations, which verified the location information of these resource points and assessed the state of their development and preservation. However, some remains, such as archaeological sites, have been back filled or relocation for protection. To ensure that the selected resource sites effectively embody the culture of the Maritime Silk Road and possess a certain level of attraction, the selection criteria are primarily based on cultural heritage units. In the end, a total of 72 representative Maritime Silk Road cultural spaces were chosen for inclusion in this research (Fig. 2).

4.1.2 Classification of Resource Components

Drawing from relevant research [11], the 81 cultural spaces were categorized into two main groups: 76 material remains and 5 regenerative material spaces. In alignment with the findings of pertinent research, the identified cultural spaces were further classified into four major categories: nautical traffic (encompassing harbour facilities, sea defence facilities, remains of sea routes, remnants of wind-praying practices), commerce and trade (including commercial markets, trade management, the production of export goods), religion and culture (covering religious beliefs, folk beliefs), and cultural integration (encompassing settlement sites, celebrity monuments, cultural exhibitions). These categories were further divided into 12 sub-categories. Through a comprehensive survey, it was determined that within the Qiantang River basin, there exist 14 resource sites related to maritime transport, 23 resource sites associated with commerce and trade, 24 resource sites representing cultural integration, and 20 resource sites linked to religion and culture (Fig. 3).
4.1.3 Distributional Characterization

In terms of the overall spatial distribution, the cultural spatial resources of the Maritime Silk Road in the Qiantang River Basin are primarily concentrated in the city of Ningbo, followed by Hangzhou, Lishui, and Shaoxing. Ningbo stands out as one of the three major ports of the Maritime Silk Road within China, serving as the junction where the cultural legacies of the Maritime Silk Road and the Grand Canal of China intersect. The well-developed maritime economy and extensive cultural exchanges left behind numerous cultural heritages. Consequently, it possesses the greatest number and highest-value cultural spaces associated with the Maritime Silk Road, such as the Tiantong Temple and the ruins of the Yongfeng Depot. Hangzhou, as the former capital of the Southern Song Dynasty, held the status of a bustling hub where “ten thousand merchants gathered.” It engaged in frequent exchanges with foreign countries and briefly served as the economic and political epicenter of Asia. Hangzhou’s production of porcelain at the Tianmu kiln, as well as its silk, tea exports, constituted a significant portion of trade along the Maritime Silk Road. Additionally, the Zhedong Canal, which originates in Shaoxing, served as a vital link connecting the Maritime Silk Road and the Land Silk Road. The ancient towns situated along the route played pivotal roles as trading posts during ancient times, thus preserving rich historical heritage.

4.2 Current Situation and changes in the Development of the Cultural Space of the Qiantang River Maritime Silk Road

4.2.1 Underutilized Maritime Silk Road Cultural Resources

Many of the Maritime Silk Road cultural resources in the Qiantang River Basin carry dual or multiple cultural labels, holding importance in both the ancient Maritime Silk Road and other heritage contexts. This multiplicity has often resulted in the Maritime Silk Road culture remaining a latent attribute, lacking the attention and research it deserves. For example, consider the Qing’an Guild Hall in Ningbo—a place of worship for Tianhou Mazu and a meeting point for merchants and sailors. It stands as a testament to maritime traffic and trade in Ningbo but also holds World Heritage status as part of the Grand Canal. Current protection planning predominantly focuses on the Grand Canal’s culture, sideling its Maritime Silk Road significance. A similar situation is also reflected in the Xianxia Ancient Road and Qinghu Wharf in Jiangshan City. Moreover, investigation and research into the quantity and distribution of Maritime Silk Road cultural resources across various cities remain inadequate. To address these issues comprehensively, systematic investigations and research on Maritime Silk Road cultural relics are essential.

4.2.2 Insufficient Protection of Maritime Silk Road Cultural Relics

Our field research revealed some of these relics are situated in the heart of urban areas, facing challenges such as significant changes in their surrounding environments and the mingling of old and new structures. Over time, these cultural relics have suffered varying degrees of damage, and their current protection status appears less than promising. The Juzhang ancient city ruins in Ningbo, for instance, are located in remote townships and receive few visitors. Even some local residents have limited knowledge of their historical and cultural significance.

4.2.3 Inadequate Creation of the Cultural Atmosphere of the Maritime Silk Road

Currently, the Qiantang River Basin boasts a wealth of Maritime Silk Road cultural resources. However, outside of Ningbo, these resources are relatively dispersed. Relics, historical attractions, and cultural elements in each area exist in isolation, lacking regional synergy. This deficiency has led to insufficient development and integration of Maritime Silk Road cultural tourism. Consequently, the overall experience and atmosphere of the Maritime Silk Road cultural space are not particularly robust. In addition to visiting various historical relics, the level of interaction and participation among residents and tourists within the space remains limited. Most cultural activities within the space tend to revolve around exhibitions or performances with the Maritime Silk Road theme. Unfortunately, these activities often lack innovation and interactivity, diminishing the overall appeal of Maritime Silk Road culture.
5 Development Strategy of Qiantang River Maritime Silk Road Cultural Space Based on Scenario Theory

5.1 Macro-Level - Establish Overall Correlation and Dig Deeper into the Characteristic Culture

5.1.1 Establishment of a Comprehensive Maritime Silk Road Cultural Association

To ensure the preservation and utilization of Maritime Silk Road cultural resources, a comprehensive investigation and cataloging of these resources should be conducted. For poorly protected remnants, consider using the original sites for display or transforming old sites to create display areas. In areas with more concentrated resources, explore the creation of neighborhoods or small towns dedicated to centralized display and protection. For scattered remains with regional significance, establish spatial correlations between them. Develop the Qiantang River Basin Maritime Silk Road Cultural Protection and Utilization Plan to connect various types of Maritime Silk Road cultural spaces, such as those related to religious culture and maritime transport. This will facilitate the transformation from individual site protection to a more comprehensive regional approach.

On the other hand, leverage widely distributed material carriers to revitalize and utilize Maritime Silk Road culture through cultural and tourism integration. Develop thematic tour lines based on the "food, accommodation, travel, shopping, and entertainment" concept to emphasize the regional characteristics of Qiantang River Maritime Silk Road culture. Harness the unique features of the Qiantang River basin to create cultural experience lines such as the "Cixi Shanglin Lake Yue Kiln Site - Hangzhou Tianmu Kiln Site - Longquan Kiln Site - China Celadon Town" to highlight celadon culture. Similarly, establish thematic tour lines like the Mazu cultural experience line, connecting cultural spaces such as the "Ningbo Tianfei Palace Site Monument - Qing'an Guild - Xiangshan Dongmen Tianhou Palace." These initiatives will tap into the cultural resource advantages of the Maritime Silk Road and drive sustainable development in the Qiantang River Basin.

5.1.2 Create Special Scenes According to Local Conditions

The integration and dynamism of the culture legacy mean that cultural memories and characteristics vary from one region to another. Therefore, during the construction process, it is imperative to unearth cultural cultural products and construct cultural narratives that align with the specific geographical context of each area. Attempting to generalize these narratives could potentially lead to cultural conflicts and misunderstandings. For example, Ningbo benefits from its geographical advantage of being at the convergence of rivers and seas, with easy access to ports—a setting that has given rise to distinctive merchant culture and strong Mazu faith. The geographical advantage of access to the river and the sea has created Shaoxing's characteristic canal trade culture. It is essential to delve deep into their cultural connotations, taking into account their unique regional characteristics. This approach will help in creating a culturally diverse and rich tapestry that reflects the Maritime Silk Road's legacy in the Qiantang River Basin.

5.2 Meso-level - Narrative Scene Design, Awakening Cultural Memory

5.2.1 Enhanced Regional Scenario Analysis

Enhancing cultural scenario analysis within the Qiantang River context demands a thorough examination and analysis of various components. These components include geographical location, spatial arrangement, cultural relics, tourists and residents, activities, and cultural values and beliefs. Leveraging scenario theory's constituent elements, this analysis will optimize each dimension's performance. The analysis and enhancement process will encompass both material and non-material dimensions, culminating in the creation of a comprehensive scene. A reticulated composite system will be established, considering regions, levels, and types, to craft an integrated scene.

5.2.2 Crafting a Three-Dimensional Narrative

Utilizing event correlation methods, historical events tied to the cultural relics within the Qiantang River Basin can be unearthed, categorized, and interconnected with diverse sites of interest. This approach enables the creation of a historical continuum characterized by authenticity and completeness, rekindling dormant cultural memories spanning millennia. The development of the cultural space in Qiantang River should not only emphasize overarching narrative aligned with specific eras but also pay heed to the genuine everyday lives of its inhabitants. Furthermore, fostering spatial functionality in three dimensions is essential, generating composite spaces that amalgamate production, daily life, consumption, and innovation via the inclusion of multiple elements.

5.3 Micro-Level - Scene Space Creation To Stimulate Immersive Experience

5.3.1 Crafting an Immersive Experiential Space

Based on the cultural relics and bolstered by objective elements like the environment and facilities, integrating the cultural traits in the region. Through a variety of forms and technological means, it restores and recreates historical settings, transforming abstract cultural symbols into tangible, visible, legible and experiential cultural products. Creating an atmosphere that encapsulates the
cultural memory of the Maritime Silk Road fosters cultural identification and emotional resonance among visitors to these spaces. Immersive performances, scripted experiences, and stage operas are employed to set up situations that facilitate interaction and firsthand experiences. Additionally, digital technology, including VR and AR, is harnessed to bring digital virtual environments into public spaces, allowing individuals to experience ancient docks, trade towns, and the prosperity of the Maritime Silk Road era at any time and in any location. Moreover, emphasis is placed on the creation of cultural tourism products for nighttime activities to promote the extension of the value cultural space to the night.

5.3.2 Integration and Coexistence with the Surrounding Environment

Maritime Silk Road cultural heritage cannot exist in isolation from its urban surroundings. Integration with the local environment is crucial to jointly creating a thematic atmosphere, enhancing the value of cultural heritage sites, and ensuring their sustainable development. Additionally, urban planning must consider the coherence and accessibility of Maritime Silk Road cultural spaces, harmonizing landscape design and traffic planning with them. Furthermore, the development of these cultural spaces should integrate with the local community. Through community cooperation projects and volunteer activities, local residents can participate in the construction and operation of these spaces, fostering a sense of ownership and engagement among the community members.

6 Conclusions and Outlook

In conclusion, this study has applied scenario theory from the Chicago School to analyze and propose a development strategy for the Maritime Silk Road cultural space in the Qiantang River Basin. This research has provided a comprehensive framework for enhancing the cultural spaces along the Maritime Silk Road. The proposed strategy spans macroscopic, mesoscopic, and microscopic levels, aiming to create immersive experiences, preserve cultural heritage, and foster community engagement. However, it is essential to conduct further applied research and testing of this strategy in specific areas within the basin to ensure its feasibility and effectiveness.

References


