



The Research on the System of Coastal Guard Towns in Ming Dynasty-A Case Study of Puzhuang Guard Town, Zhejiang Province, China

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Puzhuang Guard Town built in Ming Dynasty is the existing fairly complete system of coastal defense towns in China's southeast coast. Actually, instead of a separate town, Puzhuang Guard Town is a set of great and spectacular coastal defense towns system. The study involved historical background, site selection, structure and transformation of the special towns system, in which the structure and transformation of the system will be the focus of the study.

In the part of historical background, the relationship between administrative system and the defense towns system in Ming Dynasty will be illustrated. In southern China, coastal defense towns system was set up in order to prevent harassment from pirates. The system based on coastal towns transformed from garrison system and was established by Ming Taizu Zhu Yuanzhang around 1380, which is the first complete coastal defense towns system along the country's coastline in the history of China.

With regard to site selection, towns in this system which covered most of the coastline and nearby islands usually are backed by mountains and face the sea, close to the harbor, estuaries and post road where easy to defend, difficult to attack with a very vast field of vision.

Concerning structure of the system, there is strict hierarchical and functional classification. After 180 years of construction, the multi-level, large depth coastal fortification towns system gradually formed which combine guard town (core of the system) with stronghold, patrol agency, battlement and beacon tower. Puzhuang Guard Town consists of a central guard town—Pu guard town, three castles, two strongholds, a patrol agency and the 16 beacon towers distributed radially. According to the location and function, these facilities can be divided into cordon town, island town, coastal town and seaport town. Cordon town is the alarm and inspection system, island town control the main islands, coastal town are usually set up in the coastal areas easily attacked by enemy, seaport town block estuary and protect inland area. The complete system is specimen of the Ming Dynasty military towns.

Though the system's structure inherited from Ming Dynasty remains basically intact, facing to the change of social environment and the disappearance of defense function, Puzhuang Guard Town is on the decline. In the part of transformation, the reason for the decline and status quo will be analyzed, and most important, the possible direction for the sustainable development of ancient coastal defense towns based on the premise of protection of historical and cultural heritage will be suggested.

KEY WORDS: Coastal defense towns system, Puzhuang Guard Town, Ming Dynasty, China.