

# Research on the Connection and Influence of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road in Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet Commercial Transportation

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**Abstract:** As two major ancient commercial transportation routes in southwest China, the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road both take the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region as their core radiation area, running through the commercial trade and cultural exchanges between the Central Plains, the southwest borderlands, South Asia and Southeast Asia. From the perspective of Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet commercial transportation, this paper systematically analyzes the formation background and development process of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road through literature research, regional comparison and historical context sorting. It focuses on exploring their internal connections in route orientation, commercial functions and cultural communication, deeply dissects the dual impacts of the two ancient roads on the construction of commercial system, ethnic integration and border stability in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, and discusses the contemporary value and inheritance path of the ancient road cultural heritage combined with the current "Belt and Road" initiative. The study finds that the Southwest Silk Road is the historical foundation for the formation of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road is the extension and development of the Southwest Silk Road in a specific historical period. The two routes are interwoven and complementary, jointly shaping the "pluralistic integration" commercial pattern and cultural style of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, providing an important historical reference for cross-border commercial cooperation and cultural exchanges in contemporary southwest China.

**Keywords:** Southwest Silk Road; Ancient Tea-Horse Road; Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet; commercial transportation; connection; influence.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background and Significance

Located in the southwest border of China, the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region is traversed by the Hengduan Mountains. It is not only an important hub connecting the Central Plains and the southwest borderlands, but also a frontier for China to carry out economic and cultural exchanges with South Asian and Southeast Asian countries. In the long historical process, this region has nurtured two highly influential ancient commercial transportation routes—the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road. As an important branch of ancient China's foreign transportation, the Southwest Silk Road took shape initially as early as the pre-Qin period, carrying the two-way circulation of goods such as silk and porcelain from the Central Plains and jewelry and medicinal herbs from the southwest borderlands, serving as an "overland link" for ancient China's civilization exchanges with South Asia and Southeast Asia. The Ancient Tea-Horse Road emerged in the Tang and Song dynasties and flourished in the Ming and Qing dynasties, centered on the "tea-horse trade", linking the trade of tea and horses among Sichuan, Yunnan and Tibet, becoming an important channel for maintaining ethnic relations between the Central Plains and the southwest borderlands and stabilizing border order.

### 1.2 Research Status at Home and Abroad

Domestic academic circles have started research on the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road early with fruitful achievements. Regarding the Southwest Silk Road, scholars mainly focus on route textual research, commercial exchanges and cultural communication. For example, Xiang Da's Collation and Annotation of ManShu sorted out the Yunnan section of the Southwest Silk Road; Li Xueqin's Roads from Shang Dynasty to Southeast Asia pointed out that there were roads from Sichuan and Yunnan to Southeast Asia as early as the Shang Dynasty, systematically discussing the formation and development of the Southwest Silk Road. Some scholars also pay attention to the Southwest Silk Road and the border governance of the Central Plains dynasties, analyzing its role in ethnic integration. Regarding the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, most researches focus on the "tea-horse trade" system, route distribution and ethnic trade. After a hiking investigation in 1990, scholars such as Mu Jihong named it the "Ancient Tea-Horse Road", and subsequent related researches have been deepened continuously. Scholars such as Yang Haichao systematically studied the network

composition and ethnic communication value of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, clarifying its core routes and commercial functions. However, existing researches mostly discuss the two ancient roads separately, with weak research on their internal connection and complementary relationship in Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet commercial transportation, lacking systematic textual research on their synergistic impact, and there is still room for expansion in the excavation of their contemporary value.

Foreign academic researches mainly focus on the foreign exchange function of the Southwest Silk Road, concentrating on the trade and cultural communication between the ancient road and South Asian and Southeast Asian countries. For example, French scholar Paul Pelliot textualized two southern Chinese foreign channels in the late 8th century AD; Austrian-American explorer Joseph Rock's *The Ancient Naxi Kingdom of Southwest China* recorded the caravan travel routes; Russian *Forgotten Kingdom: Lijiang 1941-1949* described his caravan experience, providing important references for studying the international influence of the Southwest Silk Road.

However, there are relatively few researches on the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, mostly from the perspectives of ethnology and anthropology, with little involvement in the research on the connection between the two ancient roads.

### 1.3 Research Methods and Innovations

This paper adopts a combination of multiple research methods to ensure the scientificity and rigor of the research: first, literature research method, systematically sorting out historical documents such as *Records of the Grand Historian*, *ManShu*, *History of Ming Dynasty· Food and Commerce Records*, combined with modern and contemporary scholars' research results, clarifying the development context, commercial exchanges and cultural communication of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road; second, regional comparison method, taking the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region as the core, comparing the similarities and differences of the two ancient roads in route orientation, commercial functions and cultural impacts, exploring their internal connections; third, combination of history and reality method, on the basis of sorting out historical impacts, combined with the contemporary "Belt and Road" initiative, discussing the contemporary value and inheritance path of the ancient road cultural heritage.

The innovations of this paper are mainly reflected in two aspects: first, innovation in research perspective, breaking the limitation of existing researches discussing the two ancient roads separately, focusing on their internal connection and synergistic impact from the core perspective of Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet commercial transportation, enriching the dimensions of ancient road research; second, innovation in research content, not only sorting out the historical connection and impact of the two ancient roads, but also combining the actual development of contemporary Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, excavating the contemporary value of ancient road cultural heritage, providing historical reference for regional development.

### 1.4 Research Ideas and Framework

This paper follows the research idea of "sorting out context—exploring connection—analyzing impact—excavating value". Firstly, it sorts out the formation background and development process of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region; secondly, it verifies their internal connections from three dimensions of route orientation, commercial functions and cultural communication; thirdly, it analyzes the positive impacts of the two ancient roads on the construction of commercial system, ethnic integration and border stability in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, and discusses their historical limitations at the same time; finally, combined with the contemporary "Belt and Road" initiative, it excavates the contemporary value of ancient road cultural heritage and puts forward the paths for inheritance and development. This paper is divided into six parts. In addition to the introduction, there are the formation and development of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, their connection in Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet commercial transportation, their impacts on the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, the contemporary value and inheritance of ancient road cultural heritage, conclusion and prospect.

## 2. Literature Review

Research on the commercial and transportation networks connecting Sichuan, Yunnan, and Tibet has increasingly emphasized the historical significance of the Southwest Silk Road and the Tea-Horse Road. Existing international scholarship explores these routes from multiple perspectives, including economic exchange, cultural interaction, ecological adaptation, and regional historical development. Together, these studies provide an important academic foundation for understanding the relationship between these trade routes and the commercial networks of Southwest China.

Several scholars focus on the historical formation and structural characteristics of the Southwest Silk Road. Anderson (2009) examines the role of China's southwestern routes within the broader framework of

global history, arguing that the region functioned as a key corridor linking China with South Asia and Southeast Asia. Similarly, Hansen (2012) highlights the diversity of Silk Road networks and emphasizes that the southwestern branch played a vital role in facilitating regional trade and cultural exchange beyond the more commonly studied northern routes. Yang (2009) further explores the historical development of Yunnan, demonstrating how geographical conditions and political dynamics contributed to the formation of long-distance trade networks connecting the Chinese interior with neighboring regions.

Another important area of scholarship concerns the Tea-Horse Road, a major trade route linking Sichuan and Yunnan with Tibet. Freeman and Ahmed (2011) provide a detailed historical account of this route, describing its geographic scope, the operation of caravan transport systems, and its role in facilitating the exchange of tea, horses, and other commodities. Yang (2004) analyzes the institutional structure of the tea-horse trade in Chinese history and explains how state policies and frontier defense strategies shaped commercial interactions between the central government and Tibetan regions. Ahmed (2014) further examines the ecological and cultural contexts of the Tea-Horse Road, highlighting how local environmental conditions influenced patterns of tea production, transportation, and regional trade.

Archaeological and scientific research has also contributed important evidence regarding early trade connections in the Tibetan Plateau region. Lu et al. (2016) provide botanical and archaeological data demonstrating that tea was transported to the Tibetan Plateau as early as approximately 1,800 years ago. This finding suggests the existence of an early branch of the Silk Road linking southwestern China with highland regions. Guedes and Aldenderfer (2020) likewise emphasize the importance of the Tibetan Plateau as a crossroads of early interregional trade networks, arguing that the plateau played a significant role in connecting East Asia with Central and South Asia.

Other studies focus on cultural exchange and regional interaction along these trade routes. Elias (2024) discusses the role of the Southwest Silk Road in facilitating artistic and cultural transmission in early China, suggesting that trade networks enabled the circulation of artistic styles and technological knowledge across regions. Sigley (2013) examines the Tea-Horse Road from the perspective of cultural heritage, highlighting its importance in shaping regional identities in Southwest China. Sen (2014) further situates these trade routes within a broader framework of diplomatic and religious exchange, particularly in the context of Sino-Indian relations and the spread of Buddhism.

Finally, several scholars investigate the economic and resource-based dimensions of trade in the region. Sriratanaban and Gu (2024) analyze the role of the salt industry in Sichuan and Yunnan within the context of the Southern Silk Road, demonstrating how the distribution of natural resources influenced regional trade patterns. White and Hamilton (2009) also emphasize the importance of exchange networks linking Southwest China with Southeast Asia, suggesting that these connections formed part of a broader system of interregional commerce.

Overall, existing scholarship demonstrates that the Southwest Silk Road and the Tea-Horse Road were integral components of the historical trade network connecting Sichuan, Yunnan, and Tibet. Through the circulation of commodities, people, and cultural practices, these routes facilitated economic interaction and cultural exchange across diverse geographic regions, shaping the long-term development of Southwest China and its surrounding areas.

### **3. Formation and Development of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet Region**

#### **3.1 Formation and Development of the Southwest Silk Road**

Also known as the "Southern Silk Road", the Southwest Silk Road is an important ancient commercial transportation route in southwest China connecting the Central Plains, the southwest borderlands, South Asia and Southeast Asia. Its core route runs through the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, mainly divided into eastern, central and western sections, among which the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet section is the core component of the ancient road. The formation of the Southwest Silk Road is not an overnight achievement, but a long historical evolution process, which can be roughly divided into three stages.

The pre-Qin period is the initial formation stage of the Southwest Silk Road. During this period, various ethnic tribes in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region gradually took shape, and material exchanges between them became increasingly frequent, forming preliminary commercial channels. Records of the Grand Historian-Biographies of Southwest Barbarians records that in the pre-Qin period, silk and lacquer ware from Shu were introduced to Dian through tribal trade, and then to South Asia and Southeast Asia, while jewelry, medicinal herbs and livestock from Dian and Xizang were introduced to Shu, laying the foundation for the formation of the Southwest Silk Road. The ancient roads in this period were mostly small paths spontaneously formed by the people, with scattered routes and relatively single commercial functions, mainly for short-distance material exchange.

The Qin, Han, Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties period is the development and prosperity stage of the South west Silk Road. After unifying the six states, the Qin Dynasty established counties in the southwest, strengthened the jurisdiction over the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, and built some transportation roads at the same time, connecting the commercial paths spontaneously formed by the people to form a relatively complete route system. During the Han Dynasty, when Zhang Qian was sent to the Western Regions, he found Shu silk and Qiong bamboo canes in Daxia (today's Afghanistan), confirming the existence of the Southwest Silk Road. Since then, the Han government further strengthened the operation of the Southwest Silk Road, sending envoys to Dian and Ailao Kingdom (today's western Yunnan), promoting commercial exchanges between the Central Plains, the southwest borderlands and South Asia. During this period, the commercial scale of the Southwest Silk Road continued to expand.

A large number of goods such as silk, porcelain and ironware from the Central Plains were introduced to the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, while goods such as tea, medicinal herbs, jewelry and horses from the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region were continuously introduced to the Central Plains, and then to South Asian and Southeast Asian countries through the ancient road, making the Southwest Silk Road an important channel for ancient China's foreign exchanges.

The Sui, Tang, Ming and Qing dynasties are the continuation and transformation stage of the Southwest Silk Road. During the Sui and Tang dynasties, the country was unified and the economy was prosperous. The commercial exchanges of the Southwest Silk Road reached its peak, and the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet section of the route was further improved, forming commercial hubs centered on Chengdu, Kunming and Lhasa. Business travelers on the ancient road traveled frequently, and material circulation became more convenient. During the Song Dynasty, due to the obstruction of the Northern Silk Road, the status of the Southwest Silk Road was further enhanced, becoming the main channel for exchanges between the Central Plains, the southwest borderlands and South Asia. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, with the rise of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, the commercial function of the South west Silk Road gradually transformed into diversification. In addition to traditional silk and jewelry trade, it gradually integrated tea and horse trade, forming a complement with the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, and jointly promoting the commercial development of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region.

### **3.2 Formation and Development of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road**

Centered on the "tea-horse trade", the Ancient Tea-Horse Road is an important commercial transportation route linking Sichuan, Yunnan and Tibet. Its formation and development are closely related to the ethnic distribution, product differences and border policies of the Central Plains dynasties in the southwest region, which can be roughly divided into three stages.

The Tang and Song dynasties are the formation stage of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road. During the Tang Dynasty, ethnic groups such as Tibetans and Yi people in the southwest gradually rose. Located in the alpine region with an altitude of more than 3,000 to 4,000 meters, Xizang has highland barley, dairy products, ghee, beef and mutton as the staple food of Tibetans, who need to intake high-calorie fat but lack vegetables. Highland barley is dry and hot, while tea can not only decompose fat but also prevent dryness and heat, so the demand for tea among Tibetans became increasingly urgent. However, Xizang does not produce tea, while Sichuan and Yunnan are important tea-producing areas in China, rich in Pu'er tea, Ya'an Tibetan tea and so on. At the same time, the Central Plains needed a large number of mules and horses for civilian service and military campaigns, and the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region is rich in fine horses. This complementarity of products gave birth to the "tea-horse trade". To strengthen the jurisdiction over the southwest borderlands, the Tang government set up the "Tea-Horse Department" to standardize the tea horse trade, and gradually formed a tea-horse trade channel centered on Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet, with the Ancient Tea-Horse Road taking initial shape. During the Song Dynasty, the "tea-horse trade" system was further improved. The government strictly controlled the production and sales of tea, set up special tea-horse trading markets, and Kangding became the most prosperous tea-horse trading market at that time. The routes of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet section were gradually fixed, and the commercial scale continued to expand.

The Yuan to Ming dynasties are the prosperity stage of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road. After unifying China, the Yuan Dynasty strengthened the jurisdiction over the southwest region, built a large number of transportation roads, further improved the route system of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, making the tea-horse trade among Sichuan, Yunnan and Tibet more convenient. During the Ming Dynasty, the government further strengthened the "tea-horse trade" system, taking it as an important means to stabilize the borderlands and appease ethnic groups, stipulating that "exchanging tea for horses can win the hearts of ethnic minorities and strengthen China". The tea-horse trade reached its peak. During this period, the routes of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road were further extended, forming two core routes: the Sichuan-Tibet line and the Yunnan-Tibet line. The Sichuan-Tibet line starts from Ya'an in Sichuan, passes through Kangding and Qamdo to Lhasa, and then

extends to South Asia; the Yunnan-Tibet line starts from Pu'er and Dali in Yunnan, passes through Lijiang and Shangri-La to Lhasa, converging with the Sichuan-Tibet line. Caravans traveled frequently on the ancient road. In addition to tea and horse trade, it also involved the exchange of silk, medicinal herbs, porcelain and other goods, becoming the core channel of commercial transportation in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region.

The Qing Dynasty is the continuation and decline stage of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road. In the early Qing Dynasty, the government continued to adopt the "tea-horse trade" system, and the tea-horse trade was still prosperous. However, after the mid-Qing Dynasty, the supply of horses in the Central Plains gradually became sufficient, and the invasion of Western powers led to changes in China's foreign transportation pattern, so the scale of tea-horse trade gradually shrank. At the same time, with the rise of modern transportation, highways and railways were gradually built, and the advantage of caravan transportation gradually lost. The commercial function of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road gradually declined, and it gradually became a channel for short-distance civilian material transportation. However, until the completion of the Yunnan-Tibet and Sichuan-Tibet highways in the 1950s and 1960s, the Ancient Tea-Horse Road still played a certain role in the civilian trade of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region.

### **3.3 Distribution Characteristics of the Two Ancient Roads in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet Region**

The distribution of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region presents the characteristics of "overlapping and interweaving, complementary and symbiotic". In terms of route distribution, the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet section of the Southwest Silk Road mainly starts from Chengdu, passes through Ya'an, Kangding, Xichang and Kunming, extends to Lhasa, and then leads to South Asia and Southeast Asia, covering the core area of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region; the Sichuan-Tibet line and Yunnan-Tibet line of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road highly overlap with the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet section of the Southwest Silk Road. Among them, the Sichuan-Tibet line is basically consistent with the Sichuan-Tibet section of the Southwest Silk Road, and the Yunnan-Tibet line overlaps with the Yunnan-Tibet section of the Southwest Silk Road. The two ancient roads intersect at core nodes such as Chengdu, Kangding, Lhasa and Kunming, forming a huge commercial transportation network.

In terms of regional coverage, the Southwest Silk Road has a wider coverage, not only running through Sichuan, Yunnan and Xizang, but also extending to the Central Plains and South Asian and Southeast Asian countries, serving as a commercial channel connecting domestic and international markets; the Ancient Tea-Horse Road mainly focuses on the three regions of Sichuan, Yunnan and Xizang, centered on the "tea-horse trade", covering the main towns and ethnic settlements in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, serving as an important commercial transportation channel within the region. In terms of distribution density, the two ancient roads are densely distributed and have complete routes in the core areas of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region (such as the Chengdu Plain, western Yunnan Plain and eastern Xizang river valley areas), while the routes are scattered in remote mountainous areas (such as the depths of the Hengduan Mountains), mostly short-distance branches, mainly used for civilian material exchange.

## **4. Textual Research on the Connection of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road in Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet Commercial Transportation**

### **4.1 Connection of Route Orientation: Homologous and Symbiotic, Mutual Extension**

The core connection between the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road in Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet commercial transportation is reflected in the homologous symbiosis and mutual extension of route orientation. As an earlier formed commercial channel, the Southwest Silk Road provided an important route foundation for the formation of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road. The core route of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road was developed on the basis of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet section of the Southwest Silk Road. The two routes highly overlap, forming a pattern of "same origin but different currents, complementary and symbiotic".

In terms of route origin, the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet section of the Southwest Silk Road was formed as early as the pre-Qin period, serving as the main channel for material exchange among various ethnic groups in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region. Its route selection fully considered natural conditions such as terrain and climate, avoiding the dangerous areas of the Hengduan Mountains, choosing areas such as river valleys and plains that are easy to pass, forming a relatively stable route system. After the rise of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, it directly adopted some core routes of the Southwest Silk Road. For example, the route from Ya'an to Lhasa on the Sichuan-Tibet line is completely consistent with the Sichuan-Tibet section of the Southwest Silk Road; the route from Dali to Lhasa on the Yunnan-Tibet line also highly overlaps with the Yunnan-Tibet section of the Southwest Silk Road. It can be said that the Southwest Silk Road provided a ready-made route foundation for the formation of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, reduced the cost of route opening for the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, and promoted the rapid development of tea-horse trade.

In terms of route extension, the two ancient roads complement and extend each other, forming a complete commercial transportation network. The core function of the Southwest Silk Road is to connect the Central Plains with South Asia and Southeast Asia, and its Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet section is the intermediate hub of the ancient road, while the Ancient Tea-Horse Road focuses on the internal commercial exchanges in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, further improving the internal branches of the Southwest Silk Road, extending to remote ethnic settlements in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, making up for the defect of insufficient coverage of the Southwest Silk Road in the region. For example, the routes of the Southwest Silk Road in the Yunnan-Tibet region mainly cover core towns such as Dali and Lijiang, while the Ancient Tea-Horse Road extends from these core towns to remote areas such as Shangri-La and Qamdo, transporting goods such as tea and horses to various ethnic settlements, and at the same time gathering local medicinal herbs and livestock to core towns, and then transporting them to the Central Plains, South Asia and Southeast Asia through the Southwest Silk Road.

In addition, the route nodes of the two ancient roads highly coincide. Core towns such as Chengdu, Ya'an, Kangding, Kunming and Lhasa are not only important commercial hubs of the Southwest Silk Road, but also core trading nodes of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road. The rise and development of these node towns are inseparable from the joint promotion of the two ancient roads. They are not only distribution centers for goods, but also transfer stations for business travelers, promoting commercial exchanges and cultural communication between the two ancient roads, and further strengthening their route connection.

#### **4.2 Connection of Commercial Functions: Complementary and Symbiotic, Collaborative Development**

The commercial functions of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road in Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet commercial transportation present the characteristics of "complementary and symbiotic, collaborative development". Their commercial activities support and promote each other, jointly building a diversified commercial system in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region.

In terms of commercial subjects, the two ancient roads have consistent commercial subjects, mainly civilian business travelers and caravans, and are supported and regulated by the government at the same time. The commercial subjects of the Southwest Silk Road mainly include merchants from the Central Plains, ethnic merchants in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, and merchants from South Asia and Southeast Asia, who carry out trade in goods such as silk, porcelain, jewelry and medicinal herbs through the ancient road; the commercial subjects of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road mainly include tea merchants from Sichuan and Yunnan, horse merchants from Xizang, and civilian caravans, who carry out trade in goods such as tea and horses centered on the "tea-horse trade". Among them, caravans, as the common transportation subject of the two ancient roads, not only undertake the transportation of tea and horses on the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, but also undertake the material transportation of the Southwest Silk Road, becoming an important link connecting the commercial activities of the two ancient roads.

In terms of commercial goods, the commercial goods of the two ancient roads complement each other, forming a complete material circulation chain. The core commercial goods of the Southwest Silk Road are silk, porcelain and ironware from the Central Plains, as well as jewelry, medicinal herbs and livestock from the southwest borderlands, mainly meeting the material needs of the Central Plains and South Asian and Southeast Asian countries; the core commercial goods of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road are tea from Sichuan and Yunnan and horses from Xizang, mainly meeting the material needs of the Central Plains and the southwest borderlands.

Their commercial goods complement each other. For example, the Southwest Silk Road transports silk and porcelain from the Central Plains to the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, and then to Xizang through the Ancient Tea-Horse Road; the Ancient Tea-Horse Road transports horses from Xizang to Sichuan and Yunnan, and then to the Central Plains through the Southwest Silk Road, forming a material circulation chain of "Central Plains—Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet—South Asia, Southeast Asia". In addition, the commercial goods of the two ancient roads gradually integrate. With the rise of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, tea has become one of the important commercial goods of the Southwest Silk Road, while silk and medicinal herbs of the Southwest Silk Road have also become important trading goods of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, further strengthening their commercial connection.

In terms of commercial models, the commercial models of the two ancient roads learn from each other and develop collaboratively. The commercial model of the Southwest Silk Road is mainly civilian trade with moderate government supervision, forming a commercial model of "civilian-led, government-guided"; the commercial model of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road is mainly "state-run, civilian-supplemented". The government standardizes the tea-horse trade by setting up the "Tea-Horse Department", and at the same time allows civilians to carry out short-distance material exchange. The two commercial models learn from each other. The Southwest Silk Road learns from the state-run supervision model of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road to strengthen the regulation of commercial activities; the Ancient Tea-Horse Road learns from the civilian trade

model of the Southwest Silk Road to expand the commercial scope, promoting the diversified development of commercial activities in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region.

#### **4.3 Connection of Cultural Communication: Two-Way Interaction, Integrated Symbiosis**

The Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road not only undertake commercial functions but also cultural communication functions in Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet commercial transportation. They are interconnected and interact in two ways in cultural communication, promoting cultural integration and civilization exchanges in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region.

In terms of cultural communication subjects, the two ancient roads have consistent cultural communication subjects, mainly business travelers, caravans and envoys. While carrying out commercial activities, they also bring cultures from different regions, promoting two-way cultural communication. For example, business travelers of the Southwest Silk Road brought Confucian culture, Chinese characters and architectural skills from the Central Plains, and at the same time brought ethnic culture and religious culture (such as Tibetan Buddhism) from the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region back to the Central Plains; caravans of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road mutually spread tea culture, Yi culture, Bai culture from Sichuan and Yunnan and Tibetan Buddhism culture, nomadic culture from Xizang in the process of transporting tea and horses, promoting the exchange and integration of various ethnic cultures.

In terms of cultural communication content, the cultural communication content of the two ancient roads integrates and permeates each other. The Southwest Silk Road mainly spreads Central Plains culture and South Asian and Southeast Asian cultures, and at the same time drives the spread of ethnic culture in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region; the Ancient Tea-Horse Road mainly spreads ethnic culture in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, and at the same time further penetrates Central Plains culture and Tibetan Buddhism culture into every corner of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region. For example, Tibetan Buddhism was introduced to Sichuan and Yunnan through the Southwest Silk Road, and then further spread to remote ethnic settlements in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region through the Ancient Tea-Horse Road; Chinese characters and architectural skills from the Central Plains were introduced to the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region through the Southwest Silk Road, and were learned by local ethnic groups, forming architecture and writing culture with ethnic characteristics. In addition, the cultural communication of the two ancient roads also promoted the integration of folk culture. For example, festivals, costumes, diets and other folk customs in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region learn from and integrate with each other in the cultural communication of the two ancient roads, forming a diversified folk culture style.

In terms of cultural communication impact, the cultural communication of the two ancient roads jointly promoted the formation of a "pluralistic integration" cultural pattern in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region. The Southwest Silk Road connected Central Plains culture, South Asian culture and Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet ethnic culture, promoting the exchange and integration of different civilizations; the Ancient Tea-Horse Road focuses on the internal cultural communication in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, promoting the mutual understanding and identity of various ethnic cultures. Their synergistic effect makes the culture of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region not only retain the characteristics of each ethnic group, but also form a common cultural connotation, enhancing national cohesion, and laying a cultural foundation for regional stability and development. As the Tibetan heroic epic Gesar says: "Are the goods from the Han land transported to Bo (Xizang) because we don't produce these things here? No, it's just to connect the hearts of the Tibetan and Han people." This vividly reflects the important role of the two ancient roads in cultural communication and ethnic connection.

### **5. Dual Impacts of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road on Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet Commercial Transportation**

#### **5.1 Positive Impacts: Promoting Regional Development and Facilitating Ethnic Integration**

##### **5.1.1 Building a Diversified Commercial System and Promoting Regional Economic Development**

The coordinated development of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road has built a diversified commercial system for the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, promoting the prosperity and development of the regional economy. On the one hand, the commercial exchanges of the two ancient roads have promoted the circulation of materials in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, making up for the defect of uneven product distribution in the region. Goods such as tea, silk and porcelain from Sichuan and Yunnan are transported to Xizang through the ancient roads, while goods such as horses, medicinal herbs and furs from Xizang are transported to Sichuan, Yunnan and the Central Plains, realizing "making the best use of goods and complementary advantages". For example, Ya'an Tibetan tea, as the core material of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, is transported to Xizang through the ancient road, which not only meets the living needs of Tibetans, but also drives the development of the tea industry in Ya'an. In 2024, the brand value of "Ya'an Tibetan tea" reached 3.338 billion yuan, and the annual sales volume of Ya'an Tea Factory has exceeded 2,000 tons. On the

other hand, the rise and development of the two ancient roads have promoted the rise and prosperity of core towns in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region. As core commercial hubs of the ancient roads, towns such as Chengdu, Ya'an, Kangding, Kunming and Lhasa have gradually developed into political, economic and cultural centers in the region with frequent commercial activities, driving the economic development of surrounding areas. At the same time, the commercial exchanges of the ancient roads have also promoted the development of handicrafts in the region.

For example, tea making, textile and porcelain making in Sichuan and Yunnan, fur processing and jewelry making in Xizang have been continuously developed under the promotion of ancient road commerce, forming a handicraft system with regional characteristics.

In addition, the commercial exchanges of the two ancient roads have also promoted economic exchanges between the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region and the Central Plains, South Asian and Southeast Asian countries, expanding the radiation scope of the regional economy. The Southwest Silk Road transports materials from the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region to the Central Plains, South Asia and Southeast Asia, and at the same time transports materials from the Central Plains, South Asia and Southeast Asia to the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, promoting economic complementarity between regions; the Ancient Tea-Horse Road has strengthened the economic connection between the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region and the Central Plains through the "tea-horse trade", becoming an important link for economic exchanges between the Central Plains and the southwest borderlands, promoting the economic development and progress of the southwest borderlands. During the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, as an international thoroughfare, also played an important role in material transportation, supporting the victory of the Chinese nation's War of Resistance.

### **5.1.2 Promoting Ethnic Exchanges and Enhancing National Cohesion**

The Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region is a multi-ethnic inhabited area, where Han, Tibetan, Yi, Bai, Naxi and other ethnic groups live and multiply. The commercial exchanges of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road have promoted the exchanges among various ethnic groups, enhanced national cohesion, and promoted the formation of a "pluralistic integration" ethnic pattern. On the one hand, the commercial activities of the two ancient roads have made material exchanges among various ethnic groups increasingly frequent and civilian exchanges increasingly close. In long-term commercial exchanges, various ethnic groups have understood and trusted each other, and gradually formed an ethnic relationship of "equality, unity and mutual assistance". For example, caravans, as the core transportation subject of the ancient roads, are composed of members of multiple ethnic groups. They cooperate and support each other in long-distance transportation, promoting emotional exchanges among various ethnic groups; commercial trading markets on the ancient roads have become important places for ethnic exchanges, where various ethnic groups carry out material exchange and cultural communication, gradually eliminating ethnic barriers.

On the other hand, the cultural communication of the two ancient roads has promoted the integration and identity of various ethnic cultures. Central Plains culture, Tibetan Buddhism culture, Yi culture, Bai culture and other cultures spread and permeate each other through the ancient roads. Various ethnic groups learn from and absorb each other in cultural exchanges, forming a diversified cultural style. For example, Tibetan Buddhism was introduced to Sichuan and Yunnan through the ancient roads, and integrated with local ethnic culture to form Buddhist culture with local characteristics; Confucian culture from the Central Plains was introduced to the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, influencing the values and lifestyles of local ethnic groups, and promoting the identity of various ethnic groups with Central Plains culture. At the same time, the development of the two ancient roads has also promoted the exchange and integration of ethnic languages, forming the "Southwest Mandarin" used in a wide range of areas, maintaining the close relationship between various ethnic groups in the southwest and the Central Plains civilization, further enhancing national cohesion, and laying an ethnic foundation for the stability and development of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region.

### **5.1.3 Improving Regional Transportation Network and Strengthening Border Governance**

The development of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road has improved the transportation network of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, strengthened the jurisdiction and governance of the Central Plains dynasties over the southwest borderlands, and maintained border stability and security. On the one hand, the routes of the two ancient roads have been continuously improved, forming a transportation network with core towns as hubs and branches spreading all over the region, breaking the situation of traffic closure in remote mountainous areas of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, promoting personnel exchanges and material circulation within the region, and strengthening the connection between the Central Plains and the southwest borderlands. For example, the Sichuan-Tibet section and Yunnan-Tibet section of the Southwest Silk Road directly connect the Central Plains with Xizang, enabling the government decrees of the Central Plains

dynasties to be smoothly transmitted to the southwest borderlands and strengthening the jurisdiction over border areas; the branches of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road extend to remote ethnic settlements, enabling the Central Plains dynasties to better understand the situation of border ethnic groups and implement effective governance measures.

On the other hand, the commercial exchanges and cultural communication of the two ancient roads have promoted the sinicization process of the southwest borderlands, enhancing the identity and sense of belonging of border ethnic groups to the Central Plains dynasties. Through policies such as the "tea-horse trade", the Central Plains dynasties not only strengthened economic ties with border ethnic groups, but also introduced the political system and cultural concept of the Central Plains to border areas through cultural communication, influencing the political concepts and lifestyles of border ethnic groups, and promoting the sinicization process of border ethnic groups. At the same time, the development of the ancient roads has also driven the development of social undertakings such as education and medical care in border areas, improved the living standards of border ethnic groups, further strengthened border governance, and maintained the stability and security of the southwest borderlands. In the late Tang Dynasty, the official system derived from the development of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road—the tea-horse trade, further strengthened the connection between various regions and the central government, and played a boosting role in the central regime's governance of border areas and the formation of the pluralistic integration pattern of the Chinese nation.

### **5.2 Historical Limitations: Restricted by Times and Environment, with Development Shortcomings**

The impacts of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road on Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet commercial transportation are not all positive. Restricted by the level of productive forces, political environment, natural environment and other factors in ancient society, the two ancient roads also have certain historical limitations, exerting certain negative impacts on the development of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region.

First, the limitations of commercial activities. The commercial activities of the two ancient roads are mainly based on agricultural and handicraft products, with relatively single types of goods and lack of high value-added commodities. The commercial model is relatively backward, mainly barter trade, with a low proportion of currency transactions, limiting the further expansion of commercial scale. At the same time, the commercial activities of the ancient roads are greatly affected by the political environment. When conflicts occur between the Central Plains dynasties and southwest border ethnic groups, or the country is divided, the commercial exchanges of the ancient roads will be seriously affected or even interrupted. For example, during the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, the country was divided, and the commercial exchanges of the Southwest Silk Road declined once; in the late Ming Dynasty, frequent border wars also gradually reduced the commercial scale of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road.

Second, the limitations of traffic conditions. The two ancient roads are mainly built in mountainous and river valley areas with dangerous terrain and complex climate, extremely poor traffic conditions. The transportation methods are mainly caravans and manpower, with low transportation efficiency and high transportation costs, and are greatly affected by the natural environment. When encountering natural disasters such as heavy rain, heavy snow and earthquakes, the ancient roads will be blocked, and material transportation cannot be carried out normally. For example, the Erlang Mountain section of the Sichuan-Tibet line has dangerous terrain and perennial snow. Caravan transportation requires a lot of manpower and material resources, and the risk is extremely high. When road builders built the highway between Tianquan and Luding on Erlang Mountain in 1950, they paid the price of 7 lives per kilometer. Such backward traffic conditions limited the full play of the commercial functions of the two ancient roads, and also restricted the rapid economic development of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region.

Finally, the damage to the ecological environment. The long-term commercial exchanges of the two ancient roads, especially the frequent caravan transportation, have caused certain damage to the ecological environment of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region. Caravans need a lot of forage in the transportation process, and overgrazing has led to the destruction of vegetation along the ancient roads and intensified soil erosion; at the same time, waste generated from commercial activities has also polluted the ecological environment along the ancient roads. In addition, in order to open up the ancient roads, people cut down trees and excavated mountains, further damaging the ecological environment, leading to the gradual deterioration of the ecological environment in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, affecting the sustainable development of the region.

## **6. Contemporary Value and Inheritance Path of the Cultural Heritage of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road**

### **6.1 Contemporary Value: Providing Important Support for Regional Development**

#### **6.1.1 Economic Value: Assisting the High-Quality Economic Development of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet Region**

As an important cultural heritage of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road have important economic value and can assist the high-quality economic development of the region. On the one hand, the ancient road cultural heritage can drive the development of tourism in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region. Historical sites, ethnic customs and natural landscapes along the ancient roads constitute rich tourism resources, such as the Nakeli Ancient Tea-Horse Post Station in Pu'er, Yunnan and the Ganxipo Ancient Tea-Horse Road Site in Ya'an, attracting a large number of tourists to visit, driving the development of local tourism-related industries. For example, after the opening of the China-Laos Railway, the Nakeli Ancient Tea-Horse Post Station received more than 1 million tourists in 2025, an increase of 1.64 times compared with before the opening of the China-Laos Railway, driving the development of local home stays, catering, handicrafts and other related industries. On the other hand, the ancient road cultural heritage can promote the development of characteristic industries in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, such as tea industry, horse industry, handicraft industry, etc. With the influence of ancient road culture, building characteristic brands, enhancing product added value, and promoting regional industrial upgrading. For example, with the influence of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road culture, Pu'er tea has become a characteristic industry in Sichuan and Yunnan, and is exported to many European countries through the modern railway network of "China-Laos Railway + China-Europe Railway Express", promoting local economic development. In addition, the ancient road cultural heritage can also promote cross-border commercial cooperation between the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region and South Asian and Southeast Asian countries, relying on the historical link of the ancient roads, building cross-border commercial cooperation platforms, promoting regional economic integration, and assisting the in-depth advancement of the "Belt and Road" initiative.

#### **6.1.2 Cultural Value: Inheriting Ethnic Culture and Enhancing Cultural Confidence**

Carrying the diversified ethnic culture of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road have important cultural value and can inherit ethnic culture and enhance cultural confidence. On the one hand, the ancient road cultural heritage is an important carrier of ethnic culture in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region. Historical sites, folk customs, religious culture and other along the ancient roads record the development process and cultural connotation of various ethnic groups, serving as an important support for inheriting ethnic culture. For example, the southern Sichuan tea making technique, as an important part of "China's traditional tea making techniques and related customs", has been included in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Through the protection and inheritance of ancient road culture, this traditional technique can be continued, allowing more people to understand the tea culture of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region. On the other hand, the ancient road cultural heritage can promote the exchange and integration of various ethnic cultures and enhance national cohesion and cultural confidence. By excavating the ethnic integration elements in ancient road culture and inheriting the ancient road spirit, various ethnic groups can better identify with each other's cultures, enhance national pride, and at the same time allow the world to better understand the ethnic culture of southwest China, enhancing the international influence of Chinese culture. In the film and television field, many Chinese film and television works such as *The Last Caravan* and *The Big Caravan* have been released one after another. Documentaries such as *Ancient Tea-Horse Road* co-produced by Japan and South Korea, and picture albums such as *Ancient Tea-Horse Road* co-published by American scholars and British photographers have further improved the international popularity of the "Ancient Tea-Horse Road".

#### **6.1.3 Social Value: Assisting Border Stability and Promoting Ethnic Unity**

The contemporary inheritance of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road has important social value and can assist border stability and promote ethnic unity. On the one hand, the ancient road cultural heritage is an important link maintaining the emotions of various ethnic groups in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region. By inheriting ancient road culture, various ethnic groups can recall the friendly exchanges in history, enhance ethnic identity and sense of belonging, promote unity and mutual assistance among various ethnic groups, and maintain regional stability and harmony. On the other hand, the inheritance and development of ancient road cultural heritage can drive the social development of remote areas in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, improve the living standards of local residents, reduce poverty, promote regional coordinated development, further strengthen border governance, and maintain the security and stability of the southwest borderlands. At the same time, the connotation of the ancient road spirit of "fearlessness of hardships, integrity

and responsibility, openness and inclusiveness" can inspire contemporary people in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region to strive for progress, contribute to regional development, and also provide precious spiritual wealth for contemporary society.

## **6.2 Inheritance Path: Equal Attention to Protection and Development, Realizing Sustainable Development**

### **6.2.1 Strengthening the Protection of Cultural Heritage and Guarding Ancient Road Civilization**

To inherit the cultural heritage of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, we must first strengthen the protection of cultural heritage and guard the ancient road civilization. On the one hand, we should increase the protection of historical sites of the ancient roads, conduct a comprehensive investigation and renovation of the routes, post stations, ancient bridges and ancient sites of the ancient roads, establish a sound protection mechanism to prevent the destruction of historical sites. For example, protect and renovate the Nakeli Ancient Tea-Horse Post Station and Ganxipo Ancient Tea-Horse Road Site to retain the original style of the ancient roads. On the other hand, we should strengthen the protection of intangible cultural heritage of the ancient roads, excavate and sort out folk culture, traditional skills, folk stories and other along the ancient roads, establish an intangible cultural heritage database, train inheritors of intangible cultural heritage, so that the intangible cultural heritage of the ancient roads can be inherited and continued. For example, strengthen the protection of intangible cultural heritage such as southern Sichuan tea making techniques, caravan culture and ethnic songs and dances, hold intangible cultural heritage exhibitions to raise people's awareness and attention to intangible cultural heritage. In addition, we should also strengthen the protection of the ecological environment along the ancient roads, restore vegetation along the ancient roads, control environmental pollution, and realize the coordinated development of cultural heritage protection and ecological environment protection.

### **6.2.2 Rational Development and Utilization, Promoting the Integration of Culture and Economy**

On the basis of strengthening the protection of cultural heritage, we should rationally develop and utilize ancient road cultural heritage, promote the in-depth integration of culture and economy, and realize the sustainable development of cultural heritage. On the one hand, we should build ancient road cultural tourism brands, integrate tourism resources along the ancient roads, design characteristic tourism routes such as "Southwest Silk Road Cultural Tourism Line" and "Ancient Tea-Horse Road Experience Line", improve tourism service quality, attract more tourists to visit, and drive the development of local tourism industry. For example, the Nakeli Ancient Tea-Horse Post Station has launched experience projects such as riding horses to revisit the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, experiencing caravan dishes, and pressing and making Pu'er tea, enriching tourism content and enhancing tourism attractiveness. On the other hand, we should promote the integration of ancient road culture and characteristic industries, rely on the influence of ancient road culture, build brands such as tea, handicrafts and ethnic characteristic products, enhance product added value, and promote regional industrial upgrading. For example, with the Ancient Tea-Horse Road culture, build characteristic tea brands such as Pu'er tea and Ya'an Tibetan tea, promote the large-scale and standardized development of the tea industry; develop handicrafts related to ancient road culture, such as caravan sculptures, tea gift boxes, etc., driving the development of local handicraft industry. In addition, we should also strengthen cross-border cultural tourism and commercial cooperation, relying on the historical link of the ancient roads, promote cultural exchanges and commercial cooperation between the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region and South Asian and Southeast Asian countries, and achieve mutual benefit and win-win results.

### **6.2.3 Strengthening Publicity and Promotion, Enhancing the Influence of Ancient Road Culture**

To inherit the cultural heritage of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, we also need to strengthen publicity and promotion to enhance the popularity and influence of ancient road culture. On the one hand, we should use a combination of traditional media and new media to strengthen the publicity of ancient road culture, publicize the historical culture, tourism resources, characteristic industries and other of the ancient roads through TV, newspapers, radio, WeChat, Douyin and other platforms, so that more people can understand ancient road culture. For example, produce ancient road cultural documentaries and promotional films and broadcast them on major media platforms; hold ancient road cultural festivals, seminars and other activities, invite experts, scholars and cultural celebrities to participate, and enhance the influence of ancient road culture. On the other hand, we should strengthen cultural exchanges, hold ancient road cultural exhibitions, intangible cultural heritage exhibitions and other activities to promote the exchange and integration of ancient road culture with other regional cultures; promote ancient road culture to the world, strengthen cultural exchanges with South Asian and Southeast Asian countries, hold international ancient road cultural forums, cultural exhibitions and other activities, enhance the international influence of Chinese ancient road culture, and make ancient road culture an important business card for Chinese cultural foreign exchanges.

#### **6.2.4 Strengthening Policy Support, Guaranteeing Inheritance and Development**

The inheritance and development of the cultural heritage of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road need to strengthen policy support to provide a good development environment. On the one hand, the government should issue relevant policy measures, increase capital investment in the protection and development of ancient road cultural heritage, set up special funds for the renovation of ancient road historical sites, the protection of intangible cultural heritage, the construction of tourism infrastructure and so on. On the other hand, we should strengthen talent training, cultivate a group of professional ancient road cultural researchers, intangible cultural heritage inheritors, tourism practitioners, etc., to provide talent support for the inheritance and development of ancient road culture. For example, cooperate with universities and research institutions to set up majors related to ancient road culture to cultivate professional talents; carry out training activities for intangible cultural heritage inheritors to improve their skills. In addition, we should strengthen regional collaborative cooperation. Sichuan, Yunnan and Xizang should strengthen communication and collaboration, establish a collaborative development mechanism, jointly promote the protection and development of ancient road cultural heritage, realize regional resource sharing and complementary advantages, and promote the sustainable development of ancient road cultural heritage.

### **7. Conclusion and Prospect**

#### **7.1 Research Conclusion**

Through the systematic textual research on the connection and influence of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road in Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet commercial transportation, this paper draws the following conclusions: First, the formation and development of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road in the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region are interconnected. The Southwest Silk Road is the historical foundation for the formation of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road is the extension and development of the Southwest Silk Road in a specific historical period. Both have experienced a long historical evolution process, forming a development pattern of "homologous symbiosis, complementary symbiosis". Second, the connection between the two ancient roads in Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet commercial transportation is mainly reflected in three aspects: homologous symbiosis and mutual extension of route orientation, complementary symbiosis and collaborative development of commercial functions, two-way interaction and integrated symbiosis of cultural communication. The two are interwoven and synergistic, jointly building the commercial transportation network and cultural system of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region. Third, the impacts of the two ancient roads on Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet commercial transportation are dual. The positive impacts are mainly reflected in building a diversified commercial system, promoting regional economic development, promoting ethnic exchanges, enhancing national cohesion, improving regional transportation network, and strengthening border governance; the historical limitations are mainly reflected in single commercial activities, backward traffic conditions, ecological environment damage, etc., which are greatly restricted by the times and environment. Fourth, the cultural heritage of the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road has important contemporary value, providing important support for the development of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region in economic, cultural and social aspects. Through strengthening the protection of cultural heritage, rational development and utilization, strengthening publicity and promotion, strengthening policy support and other paths, the sustainable inheritance and development of ancient road cultural heritage can be realized, providing an important historical reference for the contemporary development of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region.

#### **7.2 Research Prospect**

As important historical and cultural heritages of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, the Southwest Silk Road and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road carry thousands of years of commercial civilization and ethnic friendship, and their historical value and contemporary significance are immeasurable. Under the background of the new era, we should strengthen the protection and inheritance of ancient road cultural heritage, excavate their contemporary value, let the thousand-year-old ancient roads glow with new vitality in the new era, and make new contributions to the development of the Sichuan-Yunnan-Tibet region, ethnic unity and national prosperity.

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