

# Assessing impacts of climate change and human activities on the abnormal correlation between actual evaporation and atmospheric evaporation demands in southeastern China

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## ABSTRACT

Generally, atmospheric evaporation demand (*AED*) shows a positive correlation with actual evaporation (*AE*) in the Yangtze River basin. In order to explore whether and why abnormal correlation exists in its five sub-basins, the temporal changes between *AED* and *AE* were compared, and then the impacts of climate change and human activities on abnormal correlations were assessed using the sensitivity method of Penman equation and the decomposition method of Budyko equation. The results indicated: (1) Pan evaporation and potential evaporation (indicators of *AED*) decreased at rates of up to  $-0.04$  and  $-0.06$   $\text{mm d}^{-1} \text{decade}^{-1}$ , respectively. In contrast, the water budget-derived evaporation (an indicator of *AE*) increased at the rate of  $0.09$   $\text{mm d}^{-1} \text{decade}^{-1}$  in the Fuhe River basin and remained stable in other basins. Abnormal correlations (nonpositive correlations) were observed. (2) Decreasing net radiation and wind speed were major climate factors resulting in simultaneous temporal decreases in *AED* and *AE*. In contrast, afforestation was a major human factor leading to an increase in annual *AE* of  $78$   $\text{mm}$ , but had no effect on *AED*. Afforestation was the primary driving force of the abnormal correlation. These results could provide water-energy guidance for urban climate change mitigation and flood/drought disaster management.

## 1. Introduction

The mechanism of the water-energy balance transformation is a basic, crucially investigated issue in urban hydrology in response to a changing environment that is mainly dominated by rapid urbanization, ecological restoration, and climate change (Remondi, Burlando, & Vollmer, 2016). Characterization of the controlling factors and their linkages with other environmental elements to form a full picture of the water-energy cycle has provided a more complete description of the response mechanisms involved (Brutsaert & Parlange, 1998; Yang et al., 2007). Evaporation is the controlling environmental factor because it connects the water and energy cycles (Milly, 1994; Wolock & McCabe, 1999; Yang et al., 2007). The correlation between atmospheric evaporation demand (*AED*) and actual evaporation (*AE*) quantifies the regional water-energy balance. The appearance of an abnormal

correlation (*AC*) indicates the existence of a regional water-energy balance transformation. Identifying its driving force will be beneficial for understanding the response mechanism of how the water-energy balance transforms in response to a changing environment. Such an understanding can also specify the variation in the boundary conditions in order to predict urban water-energy processes (Ali, Shafiee, & Berglund, 2017), which can then be applied to address the urban heat island effect (Giridharan & Emmanuel, 2018; Roberge & Sushama, 2018), greenhouse gas emissions (Hardin et al., 2017), drought (Gober, Sampson, Quay, White, & Chow, 2016), and flood disasters (Nachshon, Netzer, & Livshitz, 2016) in a changing environment.

Water budget-derived evaporation (*WBDE*) using the surface water balance method is the proper basin-wide *AE* index, while potential evaporation ( $ET_p$ ) and pan evaporation ( $E_{pan}$ ) are the appropriate indicators of *AED*. Current observational and estimation methods of *AE*

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mainly include the lysimeter, eddy covariance, Bowen ratio (Wang & Dickinson, 2012; World Meteorological Organization (WMO) (2014)), scintillometer, surface water balance, and atmospheric water balance methods (Wang & Dickinson, 2012). These methods have different spatial scales. Only the surface and atmospheric water balance methods are suitable for the basin scale (up to thousands of kilometres), while other methods are applicable for scales below hundreds of meters (DeBruin, 2009; Moene, Beyrich, & Hartogensis, 2009; Solignac et al., 2009; Wang & Dickinson, 2012). However, substantial errors have been found in estimates made by the atmospheric water balance method (Roads, 2003; Wang & Dickinson, 2012). Therefore, the surface water balance method is the appropriate method for directly obtaining  $AE$  at the basin scale.  $AED$  is estimated by reference evapotranspiration ( $ET_r$ ) or  $ET_p$ , and is measured by  $E_{pan}$ . But these two measures are intended for different applications.  $ET_r$  has been applied for irrigation scheduling using prescribed crop coefficients (Allen, Pereira, Raes, & Smith, 1998). In contrast,  $E_{pan}$  and  $ET_p$  are used for estimating open water evaporation (Fu, Liu, Chen, & Hong, 2004; Fu, Charles, & Yu, 2009; Penman, 1948), as well as for estimating basin-wide  $AE$  according to hypotheses regarding relationships with  $AE$  (Bouchet, 1963; Budyko, 1974; Penman, 1948; Sun, 2007; Yang, Sun, Liu, Cong, & Lei, 2006). Accordingly,  $E_{pan}$  and  $ET_p$  are the suitable indicators for estimating basin-wide  $AE$ .

The Bouchet's complementary hypothesis (BCH) and the Penman hypothesis (PH) are proposed to describe the correlation between  $AE$  and  $AED$  in arid and humid regions, respectively. Specifically, in arid and humid regions, also known as water-limited and energy-limited regions, evaporation is limited by available water and energy, respectively. An intermediate region is limited by both available water and energy. These regions are distinguished by different climatological aridity index ( $CAI$ ) values, defined as the ratio of mean annual  $ET_p$  to precipitation ( $P$ ). Water-limited and energy-limited regions are defined with  $CAI \geq 1.35$  and  $CAI \leq 0.76$ , respectively, while an intermediate region is characterized by  $0.76 < CAI < 1.35$  (McVicar, Roderick, Donohue, & Niel, 2012; Zhang et al., 2012). In energy-limited regions,  $AED$  is generally positively correlated with  $AE$  according to PH (Penman, 1948; Yang et al., 2006). In contrast, in water-limited regions,  $AED$  is negatively correlated with  $AE$  according to BCH (Bouchet, 1963; Zuo et al., 2016). In intermediate regions, the correlation between  $AE$  and  $AED$  tends to be explained by both PH and BCH. Even though PH and BCH appear as alternative hypotheses, they can be unified in the Budyko framework (Budyko, 1974; Sun, 2007).

Assessment of the temporal trends of  $AED$  and  $AE$  have been summarized to verify these hypotheses. Annual pan evaporation has steadily decreased since 1960 in most regions across the world, such as Russia, Siberia (Golubev et al., 2001; Peterson, Golubev, & Groisman, 1995), England and Scotland (Stanhill & Möller, 2008), Italy (Moonen, Ercoli, Mariotti, & Masoni, 2002), arid regions of China, eastern China, all of China (Liu, Xu, Henderson, & Gong, 2004; Shen, Liu, Liu, Zeng, & Tian, 2010; Xu, Pan, Gao, Fu, & Chiang, 2016; Yang & Yang, 2012), India (Chattopadhyay & Hulme, 1997), Australia, and New Zealand (Roderick & Farquhar, 2004; 2005). During the same period, annual  $ET_p$  has decreased in northwest and southeast China (Chen, Gao, Xu, Guo, & Ren, 2005; Thomas, 2000), all of China (Wang et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2019), and India (Chattopadhyay & Hulme, 1997), but increased in Australia and New Zealand (Hobbins, Dai, Roderick, & Farquhar, 2008), south Florida (Abteu, Obeysekera, & Iricanin, 2010), North America (Hember, Coops, & Spittlehouse, 2017), northeast and southwest China (Chen et al., 2005; Thomas, 2000), and Romania (Croitoru, Piticar, Dragotă, & Burada, 2013). In contrast, the temporal trends of  $WBDE$  have been reported as both positive and negative (Ukkola & Prentice, 2013), and these trends are overwhelmingly influenced by  $P$ . Precipitation can explain 45–46 % of  $AE$  trends in energy-limited basins and 80–84 % in water-limited basins (Ukkola & Prentice, 2013).

By comparing the temporal trends of  $AED$  and  $AE$  in the studies mentioned above, the BCH and PH have been confirmed in water-limited and energy-limited regions, respectively. However, Bouchet's

complementary relationship (BCR) between  $AED$  and  $AE$ , denoted by their negative correlation, has been observed in parts of typically energy-limited regions (Wang et al., 2011), especially in the regions covered with dense forest (Carmona, Poveda, Sivapalan, Vallejo-Bernal, & Bustamante, 2016; Lawrimore & Peterson, 2000) and urban areas (Nakamichi & Moroizumi, 2015). In these regions, the expected positive correlation between  $AE$  and  $AED$  for the entire energy-limited region was transformed into a negative relationship. Potential driving forces of this abnormal correlation (AC) were climate change or human activities (Arora, 2002). For instance, the aridification of parts of an energy-limited region could increase  $CAI$  more than the threshold  $CAI$  value of a water-limited region, thus leading to the AC (Zhang et al., 2012; McVicar, Roderick, Donohue, Niel et al., 2012). Human activities (e.g., ecological restoration, rapid urbanization) could increase water and energy consumption (Hong et al., 2019; Wang, Feng, Zuo, & Rameezdeen, 2019) to alter the water-energy balance, and eventually change the positive correlation. Therefore, further investigations are needed to determine which variable is driving this abnormal correlation between  $AE$  and  $AED$ : climate change or human activities? This paper focuses on river basins in an energy-limited region of southeast China. These basins have experienced strong afforestation and urbanization in last 30 years compared with adjacent basins. The objective of this study was to identify the appearance of AC and to determine whether climate change, urbanization, or afforestation is the primary driving force of AC.

## 2. Study areas

The Poyang Lake basin is a typical energy-limited region with  $CAI \leq 0.76$ . It is a sub-basin of the Yangtze River basin. It was selected as the study area to identify and interpret AC. Five tributaries of the Poyang Lake basin were selected, including the Ganjiang, Fuhe, Xinjiang, Raohe, and Xiushui Rivers (Fig. 1). These tributaries flow through southeastern China, with the drainage areas ranging from 5,013 to 80,948 km<sup>2</sup> and the annual runoff coefficients ranging from 0.44 to 0.64 (Table 1).

## 3. Datasets and methods

### 3.1. Datasets

The digital elevation model (DEM) with a 30 m spatial resolution was acquired from the geospatial data cloud (Computer Network Information Center, 2009). Based on this data, the drainage areas of the five study basins were extracted by the hydrology tool of ArcGIS software (version 9.3, manufactured by ESRI, Inc.). The land use map with a 100 m spatial resolution was provided by the Institute of Remote Sensing and Digital Earth, Chinese Academy of Sciences for 1985, 1995, 2000, 2005, and 2010. Annual basin-wide forest coverage rate (FCR) data were collected from the Jiangxi Statistical Yearbook (Bureau of Statistics of Jiangxi, 2012). The monthly normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI) data were obtained from the Ecological Forecasting Lab at the NASA Ames Research Center (Pinzon & Tucker, 2014; 2016). Basin-wide NDVI values were area-weighted averaged to obtain the value in each basin. The monthly streamflow data from 1961 to 2015 were provided by the Jiangxi Provincial Bureau of Hydrology.

The daily meteorological data at each station shown in Fig. 1 were obtained from the China Meteorological Data Sharing Service System. Data quality was controlled with code provided by the National Meteorological Information Center (2019). Stations were excluded when the rate of missing data exceeded 20 %. The meteorological variables included maximum and minimum air temperature (°C), wind speed at 10 m height (m s<sup>-1</sup>), relative humidity ( $RH$ , %), sunshine duration (hours), precipitation (mm), solar radiation ( $R_s$ , MJ m<sup>-2</sup> day<sup>-1</sup>), and  $E_{pan}$  (mm day<sup>-1</sup>) from 1961 to 2015 (Fig. 1). Mean daily temperature ( $T$ ) was the mean value of daily maximum and minimum air

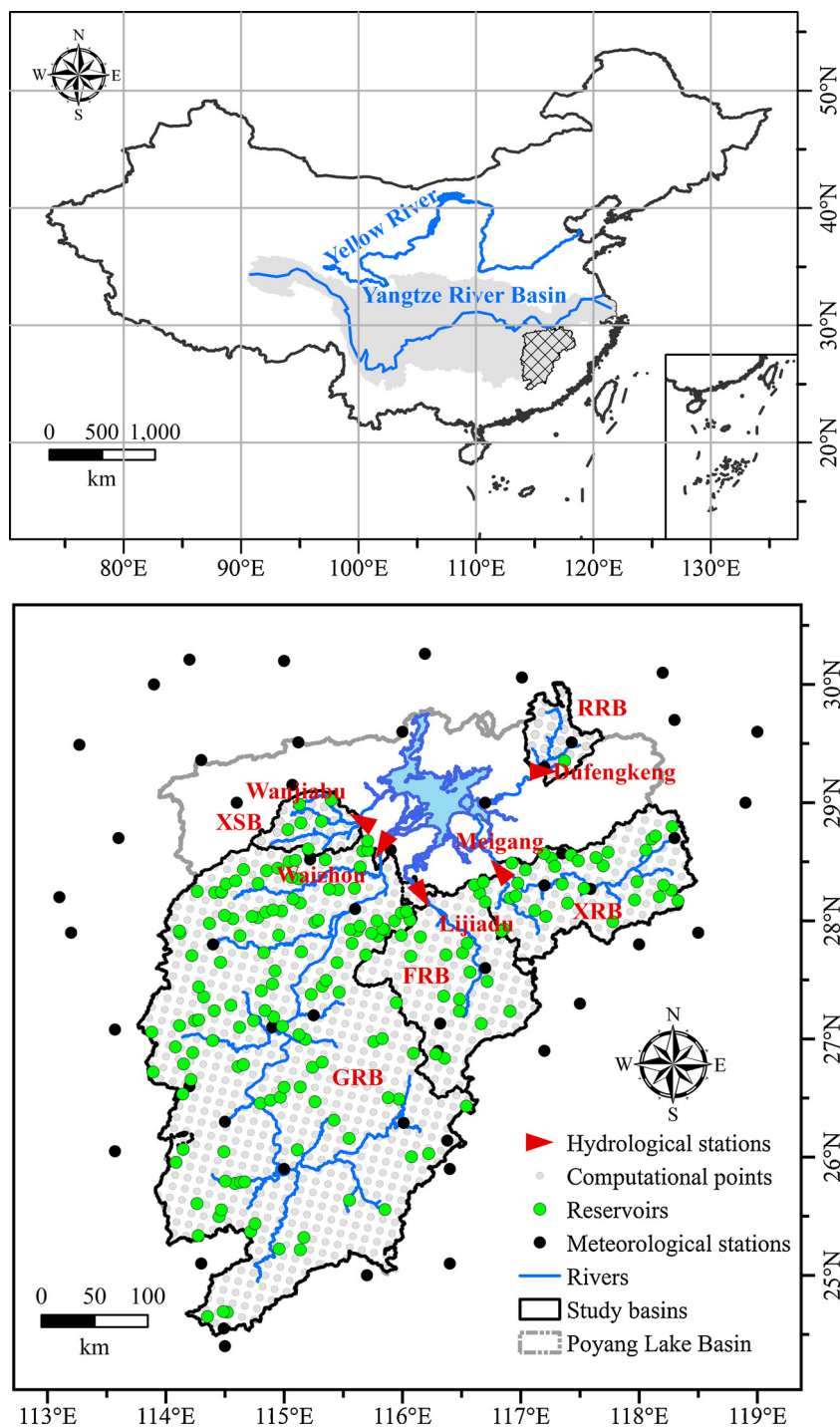


Fig. 1. Study area in southeastern China including the Ganjiang (GRB), Fuhe (FRB), Xinjiang (XRB), Raohe (RRB), and Xiushui (XSB) River basins, reservoirs, hydro-meteorological stations, and computational grid points.

temperature. Wind speed at 10 m height was adjusted to the wind speed at 2 m height ( $u_2$ ) (Allen et al., 1998). Among the meteorological stations shown in Fig. 1, observed  $R_s$  was only available in three stations.

The procedure to calculate annual evaporation-related meteorological variables,  $E_{pan}$ ,  $ET_p$ , and  $WBDE$  at the basin scale was as follows:

(1) The gridded study basins

In each study basin, the starting point of the computational grid points was located at the lower left corner of the DEM ASCII file. The

spatial interval of the adjacent points in the grid was chosen to be 10 km. The computational grid points (Fig. 1) were generated from the starting point according to the spatial interval using the Meshgrid tool in Matlab R2018b manufactured by MathWorks, Inc, and were clipped to the study basins.

(2) The estimation of annual evaporation-related meteorological variables at meteorological stations

Annual evaporation-related meteorological variables were calculated using daily data at each meteorological station. Observed  $R_s$

**Table 1**  
Basic characteristics of five river basins in southeastern China.

No.	Name	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Mean annual value (mm)				RC
			P	R	WBDE	ET <sub>p</sub>	
1	GRB	80,948	1644	846	798	1015	0.51
2	FRB	15,811	1777	782	995	1009	0.44
3	XRB	15,535	1873	1167	706	1039	0.62
4	RRB	5013	1657	905	752	1010	0.55
5	XSB	3548	1526	982	544	984	0.64

Note: R and RC represent mean annual runoff depth and runoff coefficient, respectively; P is precipitation; WBDE is water-budget derived evaporation; ET<sub>p</sub> is potential evaporation; GRB, FRB, XRB, RRB, and XSB are the Ganjiang, Fuhe, Xinjiang, Raohe, and Xiushui River basins, respectively.

values were only available at 23 stations over the region defined by 105–125 °E and 20–35 °N (Table 2). Those stations are named hereafter as solar radiation stations. The A–P Model was employed to estimate R<sub>s</sub> at meteorological stations where R<sub>s</sub> observations did not exist. Model parameters were calibrated by the ordinary least squares method (OLS) based on the observed R<sub>s</sub> and sunshine duration data at each of the solar radiation stations (Angstrom, 1924; Ozturk, 2015). The model estimates of R<sub>s</sub> were evaluated by the Nash-Sutcliffe efficiency coefficient (NSE) (Nash & Sutcliffe, 1970), coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>), and Student’s t-test (significance level = 0.05) (Gosset, 1942).

(3) The estimation of annual evaporation-related meteorological variables, E<sub>pan</sub> and ET<sub>p</sub> at grid points

Each type of annual data at meteorological or solar radiation stations was interpolated to the grid points using Kriging or Voronoi methods according to the data’s probability distribution type (Sarangi, Madramootoo, & Enright, 2006). The Kriging method was applicable to the data obeying a normal distribution. In contrast, the Voronoi method does not require a normal data distribution. The elevations of grid points were extracted from the DEM data by ArcGIS 9.3 software.

We selected 0.23 as the albedo or canopy reflection coefficient (α) (Allen et al., 1998). At each grid point, the annual R<sub>s</sub> and net radiation (R<sub>n</sub>) were calculated based on gridded sunshine duration (n) and the

**Table 2**  
A–P Model parameters and evaluation at solar radiation stations in southeastern China.

No.	Name	LON (°)	LAT (°)	a	b	N <sub>s</sub>	R <sup>2</sup>	Student’s t test value	t <sub>0.05</sub>	NSE
1	Zhongshan	113.4	22.5	0.54	0.15	9248	0.77	174	1.96	0.76
2	Guangzhou	113.3	23.1	0.53	0.16	19694	0.82	296	1.96	0.83
3	Shaoguan	113.6	24.8	0.57	0.15	10744	0.82	223	1.96	0.82
4	Ganxian	114.8	25.8	0.55	0.15	19503	0.88	373	1.96	0.88
5	Fuzhou	119.3	26.1	0.59	0.15	19853	0.86	345	1.96	0.86
6	Changning	112.4	26.4	0.60	0.15	8595	0.77	170	1.96	0.77
7	Jianou	118.3	27.1	0.59	0.19	8526	0.79	178	1.96	0.79
8	Changsha	112.9	28.2	0.55	0.14	10485	0.86	256	1.96	0.86
9	Mapoling	113.1	28.2	0.59	0.15	9115	0.86	237	1.96	0.85
10	Jishou	109.7	28.3	0.56	0.14	8690	0.83	205	1.96	0.82
11	Hongjia	121.4	28.6	0.57	0.18	8708	0.87	239	1.96	0.88
12	Nanchang	116.0	28.7	0.57	0.15	19205	0.87	357	1.96	0.86
13	Lushan	116.0	29.6	0.68	0.15	10131	0.84	232	1.96	0.83
14	Tunxi	118.3	29.7	0.59	0.15	8668	0.88	252	1.96	0.89
15	Cixi	121.2	30.3	0.60	0.13	10488	0.88	281	1.96	0.87
16	Hangzhou	120.2	30.3	0.58	0.14	19509	0.85	335	1.96	0.85
17	Wuhan	114.3	30.6	0.53	0.16	18286	0.83	300	1.96	0.81
18	Yichang	111.1	30.7	0.56	0.15	19673	0.83	315	1.96	0.82
19	Baoshan	121.5	31.4	0.55	0.19	8810	0.84	215	1.96	0.86
20	Hefei	117.3	31.9	0.56	0.15	19036	0.85	326	1.96	0.85
21	Nanjing	118.8	32.0	0.57	0.15	19850	0.87	369	1.96	0.87
22	Lvsi	121.6	32.1	0.55	0.16	8751	0.88	248	1.96	0.88
23	Huaian	119.0	33.6	0.54	0.19	5478	0.81	154	1.96	0.84

Note: LON denotes the longitude; LAT denotes the latitude; a and b denote the parameters of A–P model; N<sub>s</sub> denotes the number of samples; R<sup>2</sup> denotes the coefficient of determination; t<sub>0.05</sub> denotes the critical value of Student’s t-test value; NSE denotes Nash-Sutcliffe efficiency coefficient.

A–P model parameters (Allen et al., 1998; Angstrom, 1924; Ozturk, 2015) as:

$$R_s = \left( a + b \frac{n}{N} \right) R_a \tag{1}$$

$$R_n = R_{ns} + R_{nl} = (1 - \alpha) R_s + R_{nl} \tag{2}$$

where a and a + b are the fraction of extraterrestrial radiation reaching the earth on overcast days and clear days, respectively, N is the maximum possible sunshine duration (hour), R<sub>a</sub> is the extraterrestrial radiation (MJ m<sup>-2</sup> day<sup>-1</sup>), R<sub>ns</sub> is the net solar or shortwave radiation (MJ m<sup>-2</sup> day<sup>-1</sup>), and R<sub>nl</sub> is the net outgoing longwave radiation (MJ m<sup>-2</sup> day<sup>-1</sup>).

We then estimated annual ET<sub>p</sub>, radiation, and aerodynamic terms of the Penman equation (ET<sub>pr</sub> and ET<sub>pa</sub>) (Donohue, McVicar, & Roderick, 2010; Penman, 1948; Shuttleworth, 1993) as:

$$ET_p = ET_{pr} + ET_{pa} \tag{3}$$

$$ET_{pr} = \frac{\Delta}{\Delta + \gamma} R_n = RLH(T) R_n \tag{4}$$

$$ET_{pa} = \frac{\gamma}{\Delta + \gamma} \frac{6430VPD}{\lambda} (1 + 0.536u_2) = ET_{pa}(VPD, T)(1 + 0.536u_2) \tag{5}$$

$$ET_{pa}(VPD, T) = \frac{\gamma}{\Delta + \gamma} \frac{6430VPD}{\lambda} = [1 - RLH(T)] \frac{6430VPD}{\lambda} \tag{6}$$

$$VPD = e_s - e_a = \left( 1 - \frac{RH}{100} \right) e_s \tag{7}$$

where Δ is the slope of saturation vapour curve (Pa K<sup>-1</sup>), γ is the psychrometric constant (Pa K<sup>-1</sup>), RLH is the ratio of latent heat to R<sub>n</sub>, VPD is the vapor pressure deficit (Pa), λ is the latent heat of vaporization of water (2.45 MJ Kg<sup>-1</sup>), e<sub>s</sub> is the saturation vapor pressure (kPa), and e<sub>a</sub> is the actual vapor pressure (kPa).

(4) The estimation of annual evaporation-related meteorological variables, E<sub>pan</sub>, ET<sub>p</sub>, and WBDE in the study basins

The gridded annual meteorological variables, E<sub>pan</sub>, and ET<sub>p</sub> were

area-weighted averaged to obtain the values in each basin. The *WBDE* was estimated as the difference between the mean annual precipitation in each study basin and streamflow (*R*) measured at the hydrological stations by neglecting inter-annual variabilities in water storage as:

$$WBDE = P - R \quad (8)$$

The annual *WBDE* time series was restored to the level the reservoirs were at in 1961 (in order to exclude reservoir construction as the driving force of AC) by using the following formulas:

$$WBDE_i = WBDE_i + \frac{\sum_{j=1962}^i \sum_{k=1}^{NR} (\bar{E}_w - \bar{E}_L)[A_{res}(j, k) - A_{riv}(j, k)]}{A_{bsn}} \quad (9)$$

$$\bar{E}_L = \frac{\overline{WBDE} - \bar{E}_w \bar{r}}{1 - \bar{r}} \quad (10)$$

$$\bar{E}_w = \frac{\sum_{j=1961}^{2015} KE_{pan,j}}{55} \quad (11)$$

where *WBDE<sub>i</sub>* is the *WBDE* for the *i*th year (mm);  $\bar{E}_w$  and  $\bar{E}_L$  are the mean annual water and land surface evaporation in the study basins, respectively (mm); *A<sub>res</sub>(j,k)* is the reservoir area for *j*th year and *k*th reservoir (km<sup>2</sup>), estimated by the mean value of the areas corresponding to the reservoir dead and normal storage levels; *NR* is the total number of reservoirs for *j*th year; *A<sub>riv</sub>(j,k)* are the original river areas (km<sup>2</sup>), estimated by the product of the length of backwater and the width of the terminal of the backwater; *A<sub>bsn</sub>* is the basin area (km<sup>2</sup>);  $\overline{WBDE}$  is the mean annual *WBDE* (mm);  $\bar{r}$  is the mean annual area proportion of water bodies, estimated by the land use maps;  $\overline{E_{pan,j}}$  is the *E<sub>pan</sub>* for *j*th year in the study basin; and *K* is a conversion coefficient (Fu et al., 2004).

### 3.2. Methods

#### (1) Changes in annual evaporation-related meteorological variables

Trends of annual evaporation-related meteorological variables were detected by ordinary linear regression (OLR) (Zhang, Liu, Xu, Xu, & Jiang, 2006) in terms of *R<sub>n</sub>*, *T*, *u<sub>2</sub>*, *RH*, and *P*. One-sample ordinary Student's *t*-test was applied to evaluate the trends (significance level = 0.05) (Gosset, 1942).

#### (2) The abnormal correlation between *AED* and *AE*

*AED* usually shows a positive correlation with *AE* in Yangtze River basin (Wang et al., 2011). In the study basins, the trends in annual *ET<sub>p</sub>* and *E<sub>pan</sub>* were detected by OLR and Student's *t*-test to reveal any temporal trends in *AED* (significance level = 0.05) (Gosset, 1942). Their change points were further assessed by the Pettitt method (Gao, Mu, Wang, & Li, 2011; Pettitt, 1979) at the same significance level. The trends in annual *WBDE* were similarly detected to reveal any temporal trends in *AE*. Nonpositive correlations between *AED* and *AE* were identified if the trends of annual *AED* and *AE* were inconsistent from each other. Compared with the overall positive correlation in the Yangtze River Basin, the detected nonpositive correlations in the study basin were applied to verify the observed AC.

#### (3) Driving force of the abnormal correlation between *AED* and *AE*

The driving force of AC was identified in three steps. Firstly, the temporal change in *AED* was attributed to changes in meteorological variables according to the sensitivity method of the Penman equation (Donohue et al., 2010). Secondly, the observed temporal change in *AE* was attributed to climate change and human activities according to the decomposition method of the Budyko equation (Wang & Hejazi, 2011). Lastly, both attribution analyses were integrated to explore the impacts

of climate change and human activities on AC in order to identify the primary driving force.

#### a Attribution of the temporal change in *AED* to climate change

The temporal changes in mean annual *ET<sub>p</sub>*, *ET<sub>pa</sub>*, and *ET<sub>pr</sub>* ( $\Delta ET_p$ ,  $\Delta ET_{pa}$ , and  $\Delta ET_{pr}$ ) were calculated between the two adjacent periods separated by the change point of annual *ET<sub>p</sub>*. These changes were further quantitatively attributed to changes in the meteorological variables using the sensitivity method of the Penman equation during the same period (Donohue et al., 2010), shown as follows:

$$\Delta ET_p = \Delta ET_{pr} + \Delta ET_{pa} \quad (12)$$

$$\Delta ET_{pr} = \int_{A_0}^{A_1} \frac{\partial ET_{pr}}{\partial \Delta} \frac{d\Delta}{dT} dT + \int_{A_0}^{A_1} \frac{\partial ET_{pr}}{\partial R_n} dR_n \quad (13)$$

$$\Delta ET_{pa} = \int_{A_0}^{A_1} \left( \frac{\partial ET_{pa}}{\partial \Delta} \frac{d\Delta}{dT} + \frac{\partial ET_{pa}}{\partial e_s} \frac{de_s}{dT} + \frac{\partial ET_{pa}}{\partial e_a} \frac{de_a}{dT} \right) dT + \int_{A_0}^{A_1} \frac{\partial ET_{pa}}{\partial u_2} du_2 + \int_{A_0}^{A_1} \frac{\partial ET_{pa}}{\partial e_a} \frac{\partial e_a}{\partial RH} dRH \quad (14)$$

where *A* refers to the variable sets that include *T*, *u<sub>2</sub>*, *R<sub>n</sub>*, and *RH*. Corresponding subscripts 0 and 1 denote the states of *A* in the periods before and after the change point of *AED*, respectively.

The contribution rates of  $\Delta R_n$ ,  $\Delta T$ ,  $\Delta u_2$ , and  $\Delta RH$  on  $\Delta ET_p$  were estimated by the ratio of the corresponding partial integral to  $\Delta ET_p$ . The contribution rates on  $\Delta ET_{pr}$  and  $\Delta ET_{pa}$  were similarly estimated (Chu et al., 2017; Donohue et al., 2010; Ning, Li, Liu, & Han, 2016).

#### b Attribution of the temporal change in *AE* to climate change and human activities

The Budyko framework is a semi-empirical model used to quantify the water-energy balance under certain climate regions. Fu's equation is the analytical solution to the framework (Fu, 1981; Yang et al., 2007) with parameter  $\omega$ , describing the relationship between *AED/P* and *AE/P* ( $\varphi$ ), and given as:

$$\varphi = f\left(\frac{AED}{P}, \omega\right) = 1 + \frac{AED}{P} - \left[1 + \left(\frac{AED}{P}\right)^\omega\right]^{\frac{1}{\omega}} \quad (15)$$

Parameter  $\omega$  is related to the geobotanic zonation types (Cai et al., 2014), which can be changed by human activities. Annual  $\omega$  was calibrated based on observed  $\varphi$  ( $\varphi_o$ ) and simulated  $\varphi$  ( $\varphi_s$ ) according to OLS with relative error less than 5%, shown as follows:

$$\min z = (\varphi_s - \varphi_o)^2 = \left\{1 + \frac{AED}{P} - \left[1 + \left(\frac{AED}{P}\right)^\omega\right]^{\frac{1}{\omega}} - \varphi_o\right\}^2 \quad (16)$$

Calibrated annual  $\omega$  was temporally averaged in the periods before the change point of *AED* ( $\omega_1$ ) and after the point ( $\omega_2$ ). Budyko curves were drawn according to Fu's equation,  $\omega_1$  and  $\omega_2$  in these two periods (Fig. 2). Suppose the river basin has temporally shifted from Point *S<sub>1</sub>* (prechange period) to Point *S<sub>3</sub>* (postchange period). The  $\varphi$  and *P* in the prechange period was denoted as  $\varphi_{S_1}$  and *P<sub>S<sub>1</sub></sub>*, which was changed into  $\varphi_{S_3}$  and *P<sub>S<sub>3</sub></sub>* in the postchange period. The observed change in *AE* was assessed as (Wang & Hejazi, 2011):

$$\Delta AE_o = \varphi_{S_3} P_{S_3} - \varphi_{S_1} P_{S_1} \quad (17)$$

The river basin would change from Point *S<sub>1</sub>* to Point *S<sub>2</sub>* along the curve obeying Fu's equation, only driven by climate change (Fig. 2) (Wang & Hejazi, 2011). The  $\varphi$  and *P* at the Point *S<sub>2</sub>* were denoted as  $\varphi_{S_2}$  and *P<sub>S<sub>2</sub></sub>*, respectively. The difference of the  $\varphi_{S_2}$  and  $\varphi_{S_1}$  was the climate change-induced change in  $\varphi$ , recorded as  $\Delta\varphi_c$  (Wang & Hejazi, 2011). Then the climate change-induced change in *AE* ( $\Delta AE_c$ ) was calculated

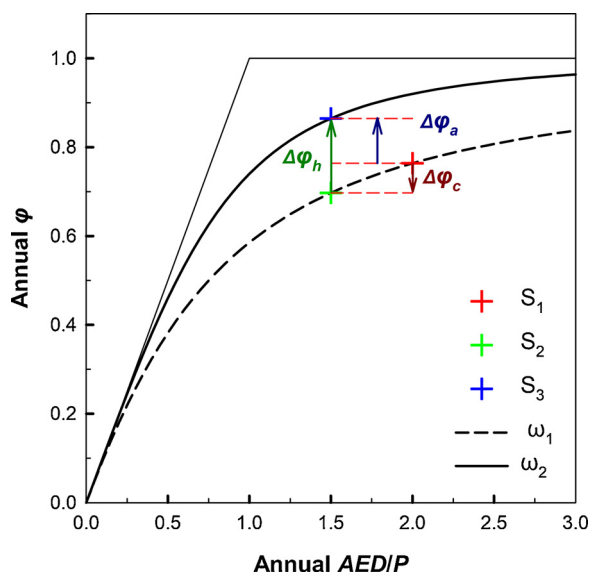


Fig. 2. Attributions of climate change and human activities to the change in annual  $\phi$  according to Fu's equation.

Note:  $\phi$  is the ratio of actual evaporation to precipitation;  $P$  is precipitation;  $AED$  represents atmospheric evaporation demand;  $\omega_1$  and  $\omega_2$  represent the parameters of Fu's equation before and after the change point of  $AED$ , respectively;  $S_1$  and  $S_3$  are the points characterized by the mean annual  $AED/P$  and  $\omega$  before and after the change point of  $AED$ , respectively;  $S_2$  is the point characterized by the mean annual  $AED/P$  after the change point of  $AED$  and  $\omega_1$ .

as:

$$\Delta AE_c = \phi_{S_2} P_{S_2} - \phi_{S_1} P_{S_1} \tag{18}$$

The difference of the  $\phi_{S_3}$  and  $\phi_{S_2}$  was the human activities-induced change in  $\phi$ , recorded as  $\Delta\phi_h$  (Wang & Hejazi, 2011). Then the human activities-induced change in  $AE$  ( $\Delta AE_h$ ) was calculated as:

$$\Delta AE_h = \phi_{S_3} P_{S_3} - \phi_{S_2} P_{S_2} \tag{19}$$

c Driving force of the abnormal correlation between  $AED$  and  $AE$

Responses of temporal changes in  $AED$  and  $AE$  to climate change were revealed by combining the quantitative contribution rates of climate change on  $\Delta ET_p$  with  $\Delta AE_c$ . In contrast, the response to human activities was detected by combining the influence of human activities on  $\Delta ET_p$  with  $\Delta AE_h$ . Both responses were integrated to determine why the AC appeared and then to identify its driving force. In addition, the annual area proportions of different land use types were compared to find the temporal-spatial distribution of land use during 1985–2010. The temporal changes in the annual FCR and NDVI were assessed to identify changes in land cover. The changes in land use and land cover were summarized to identify the main types of human activities. The detected main human activity was the primary driving force of AC, if the human activities were confirmed as the driving force.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Changes in annual evaporation-related meteorological variables

#### 4.1.1. A–P Model parameters at meteorological stations

Table 2 shows the calibrated A–P Model parameters (a and b) and evaluation at solar radiation stations. The parameters a and b ranged from 0.53 to 0.68 and 0.13 to 0.19, spatially averaged to be 0.57 and 0.16, respectively. The mean NSE value between the simulated and observed  $R_s$  was 0.85. And the Student's t-test value was greater than its critical value ( $t_{0.05}$ ) at each station. Accordingly, the simulation of  $R_s$  by the A–P model was considered to be acceptable.

Table 3 shows the interpolated A–P Model parameters at meteorological stations that did not have observed  $R_s$  using the Kriging method. The parameters a and b ranged from 0.53 to 0.66 and from 0.15 to 0.18, spatially averaged to be 0.58 and 0.16, respectively.

#### 4.1.2. Trends of annual evaporation-related meteorological variables

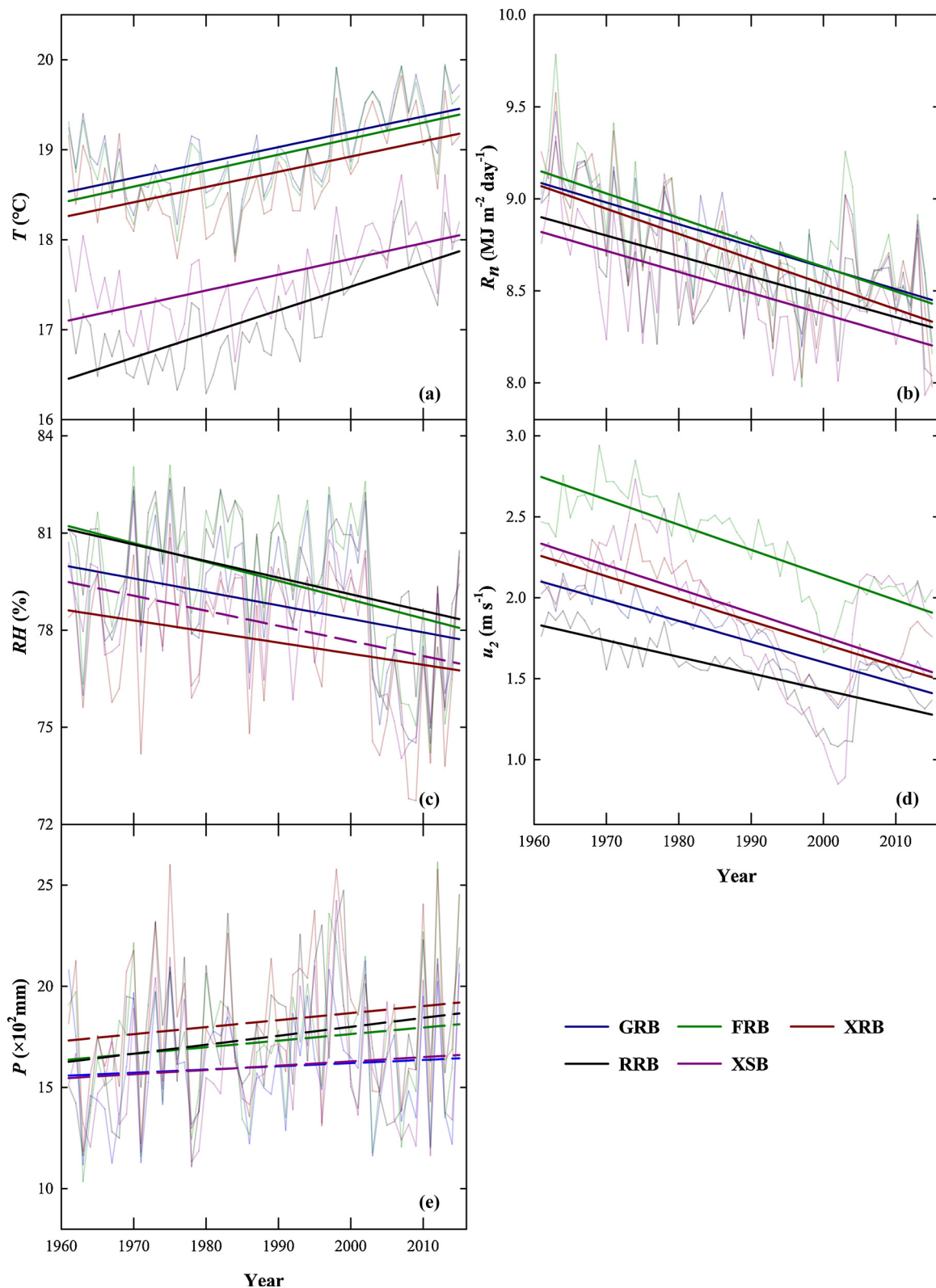
Fig. 3 shows the temporal trends of basin-wide annual meteorological variables. Annual  $R_n$ ,  $RH$ , and  $u_2$  decreased significantly in all study basins at tendency rates ranging from  $-0.14$  to  $-0.11 \text{ MJ m}^{-2} \text{ day}^{-1} \text{ decade}^{-1}$ ,  $-0.6\%$  to  $-0.4\% \text{ decade}^{-1}$ , and  $-0.16$  to  $-0.10 \text{ m s}^{-1} \text{ decade}^{-1}$ , respectively. In contrast, annual  $T$  increased significantly at tendency rates ranging from  $0.17$  to  $0.28 \text{ }^\circ\text{C decade}^{-1}$  depending on the different basins. Meanwhile, annual  $P$  exhibited no trend. The only exception to

Table 3

A–P Model parameters at meteorological stations that did not have observed  $R_s$  in southeastern China.

No.	Name	LON (°)	LAT (°)	a	b	No.	Name	LON (°)	LAT (°)	a	b
1	Lianping	114.5	24.4	0.54	0.16	25	Yifeng	114.5	28.2	0.59	0.15
2	Longnan	114.5	24.6	0.54	0.15	26	Shangrao	117.6	28.3	0.59	0.18
3	Xunwu	115.7	25.0	0.53	0.17	27	Guixi	117.2	28.3	0.58	0.17
4	Nanxiong	114.3	25.1	0.56	0.15	28	Jingan	115.2	28.5	0.58	0.15
5	Shanghang	116.4	25.1	0.53	0.17	29	Dexing	117.4	28.6	0.59	0.17
6	Changting	116.4	25.9	0.54	0.17	30	Pingjiang	113.6	28.7	0.59	0.15
7	Guidong	113.6	26.1	0.59	0.15	31	Yushan	118.3	28.7	0.59	0.17
8	Ninghua	116.4	26.1	0.54	0.17	32	Xiushui	114.6	29.0	0.59	0.15
9	Ningdu	116.0	26.3	0.54	0.16	33	Poyang	116.7	29.0	0.61	0.15
10	Suichuan	114.5	26.3	0.57	0.15	34	Quzhou	118.9	29.0	0.59	0.16
11	Jiangganshan	114.2	26.6	0.58	0.15	35	Wuning	115.1	29.2	0.61	0.15
12	Guangchang	116.3	26.9	0.55	0.17	36	Jingdezhen	117.2	29.3	0.62	0.15
13	Taining	117.2	26.9	0.56	0.18	37	Gangkou	114.3	29.4	0.58	0.15
14	Lianhua	113.6	27.1	0.59	0.15	38	Honghu	113.3	29.5	0.55	0.15
15	Jianxian	114.9	27.1	0.56	0.15	39	Yangxin	115.1	29.5	0.62	0.15
16	Nanfeng	116.3	27.1	0.55	0.17	40	Qimen	117.4	29.5	0.62	0.15
17	Yongfeng	115.3	27.2	0.56	0.15	41	Chunan	119.0	29.6	0.59	0.15
18	Shaowu	117.5	27.3	0.57	0.18	42	Jiayu	113.9	30.0	0.54	0.16
19	Nancheng	116.7	27.6	0.56	0.17	43	Dongzhi	117.0	30.1	0.66	0.15
20	Yichun	114.4	27.8	0.59	0.15	44	Huangshan	118.2	30.1	0.59	0.15
21	Wuyishan	118.0	27.8	0.58	0.18	45	Huangshi	115.0	30.2	0.60	0.15
22	Zhuzhou	113.2	27.9	0.59	0.15	46	Jiangxia	114.2	30.2	0.54	0.16
23	Pucheng	118.5	27.9	0.59	0.18	47	Heta	116.2	30.3	0.66	0.15
24	Zhangshu	115.6	28.1	0.56	0.15						

Note: LON denotes the longitude; LAT denotes the latitude; a and b denote the parameters of A–P model.



**Fig. 3.** Annual variation of spatially averaged values of (a) temperature ( $T$ ), (b) net radiation ( $R_n$ ), (c) relative humidity ( $RH$ ), (d) wind speed ( $u_2$ ), and (e) precipitation ( $P$ ) in five river basins in southeastern China. (GRB, Ganjiang; FRB, Fuhe; XRB, Xinjiang; RRB Raohe; and XSB, Xiushui River basins). Note: solid lines denote significant temporal trends; dashed lines denote nonsignificant temporal trends.

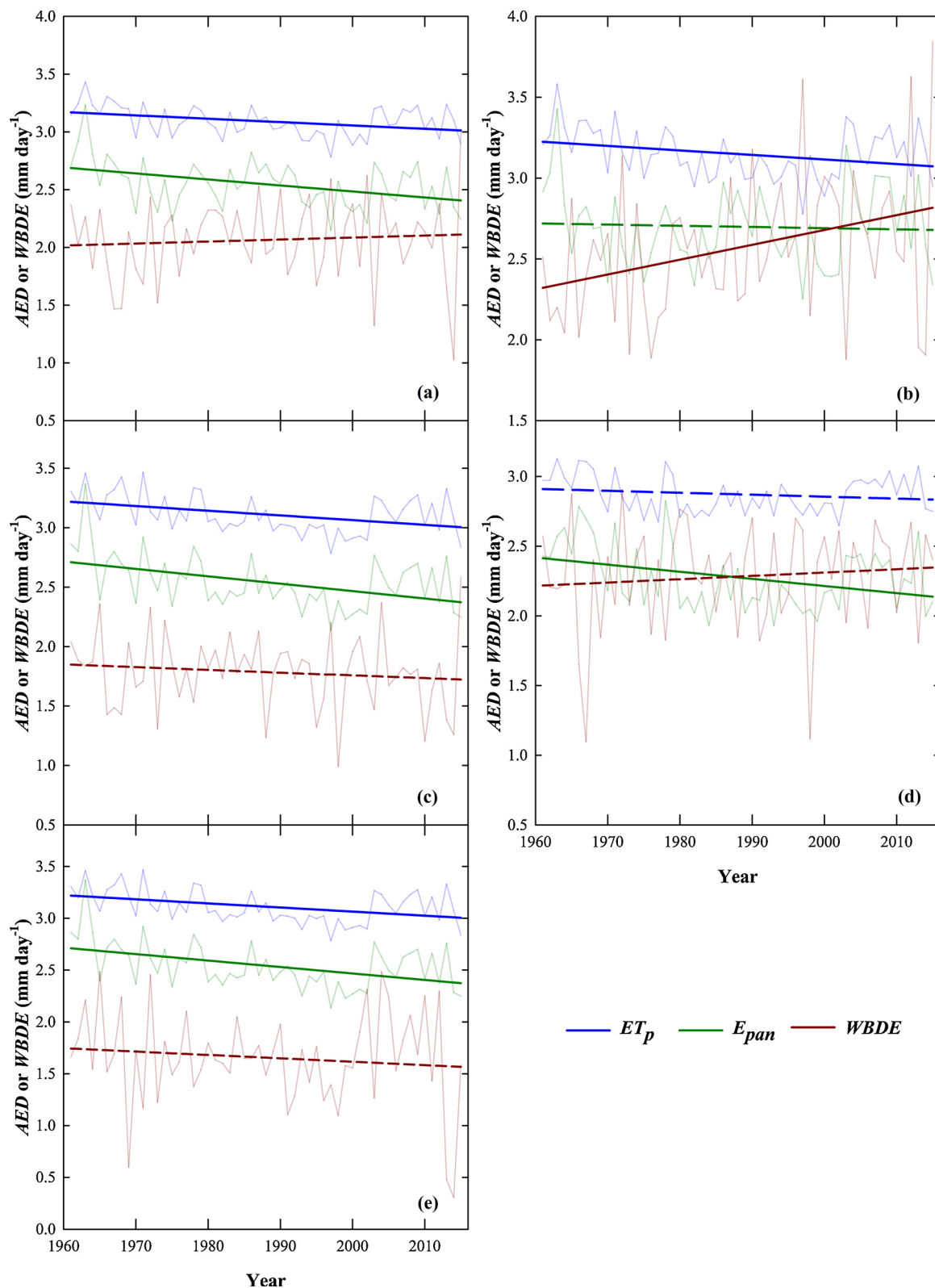


Fig. 4. Annual variation of spatially averaged values of potential evaporation ( $ET_p$ ), pan evaporation ( $E_{pan}$ ), and water budget-derived evaporation ( $WBDE$ ) in river basins in southeastern China.

Note: the panel letters (a, b, c, d, and e) represent Ganjiang (GRB), Fuhe (FRB), Xinjiang (XRB), Raohe (RRB), and Xiushui (XSB) River basins, respectively; solid lines denote significant temporal trends; dashed lines denote nonsignificant temporal trends.



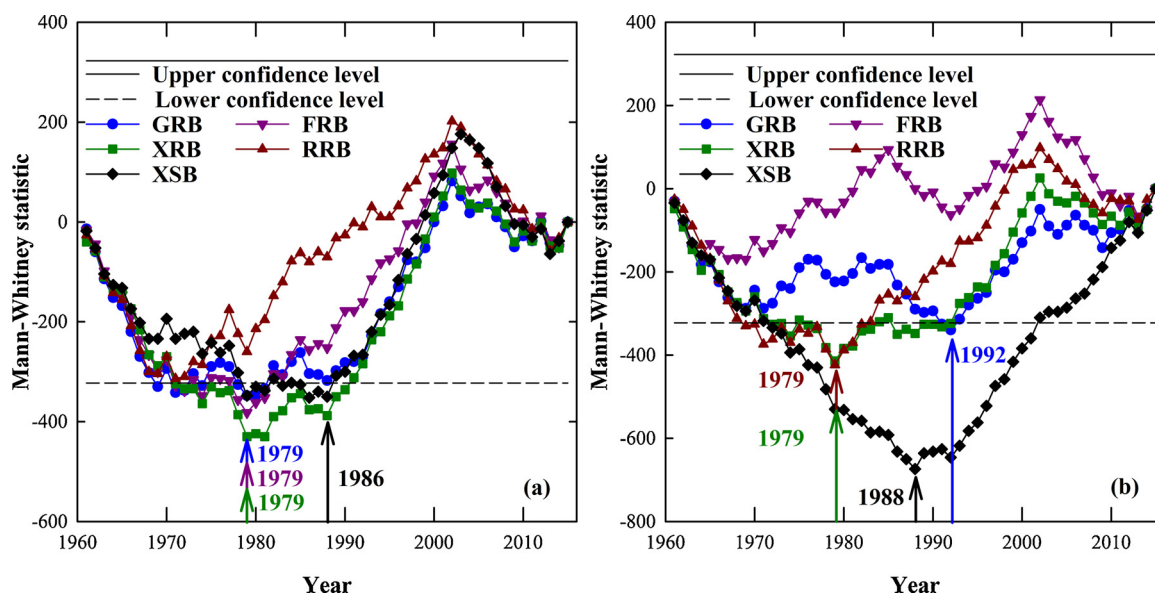


Fig. 5. Change points of annual pan evaporation ( $E_{pan}$ , a) and potential evaporation ( $ET_p$ , b), in southeastern China. (GRB, Ganjiang; FRB, Fuhe; XRB, Xinjiang; RRB, Raohe; and XSB, Xiushui River basins).

these trends was that the Student's  $t$ -test value for annual  $RH$  in XSB was less than the critical value, meaning that no significant trend was detected in that case.

#### 4.2. The abnormal correlation between AED and AE

Fig. 4 shows the temporal trends of basin-wide annual AED and AE. Annual  $ET_p$  decreased significantly in all study basins except RRB at tendency rates ranging from  $-0.04$  to  $-0.03$  mm day $^{-1}$  decade $^{-1}$ . Annual  $E_{pan}$  decreased significantly in all study basins except FRB at tendency rates ranging from  $-0.12$  to  $-0.06$  mm day $^{-1}$  decade $^{-1}$ . In contrast, annual WBDE increased in FRB at a tendency rate of  $0.09$  mm day $^{-1}$  decade $^{-1}$  and remained constant in other study basins (Fig. 4). The trends between AED and AE were different from each other. The observed spatial AC was verified. In addition, the slope value of the temporal trends of AED and AE tended to be smaller in GRB, FRB, and XRB after 1979 (see Supplementary Fig. 1 and 2). Temporal AC was also verified in these basins.

Fig. 5 shows the change points of annual AED. The maximum absolute values of annual  $ET_p$ 's Mann-Whitney statistics appeared in 1979, 1979, 1979, and 1986 in GRB, FRB, XRB, and XSB respectively, lying outside the confidence interval. These years were the change points of annual  $ET_p$ . In comparison, the change points of annual  $E_{pan}$  were similarly determined to be 1992, 1979, 1979, and 1988 in GRB, XRB, RRB, and XSB, respectively. The majority of the change points for both annual  $ET_p$  and  $E_{pan}$  occurred in 1979.

#### 4.3. Driving force of the abnormal correlation between AED and AE

##### 4.3.1. Attribution of the temporal change in AED to climate change

Fig. 6 shows the contributions of the temporal changes in meteorological variables on the  $\Delta ET_{pr}$ ,  $\Delta ET_{pa}$ , and  $\Delta ET_p$  in the study basins. Increasing  $T$  contributed  $-33\%$  to  $-11\%$  to the decrease in  $ET_{pr}$  (Fig. 6a) by increasing the RLH (Supplementary Fig. 3). Conversely, the decreasing  $R_n$  contributed  $111\%$ – $133\%$  to the decrease in  $ET_{pr}$ . Accordingly, an increased proportion of latent heat relative to  $R_n$  was insufficient to compensate for the decrease in  $ET_{pr}$  induced by decreasing  $R_n$ , and as such  $ET_{pr}$  decreased.

Decreasing  $RH$  and increasing  $T$  contributed  $-126\%$  to  $-18\%$  and  $-59\%$  to  $-11\%$  to the decrease in  $ET_{pa}$  in the study basins, respectively (Fig. 6b). Conversely, decreasing  $u_2$  contributed  $128\%$ – $284\%$  to

the decrease in  $ET_{pa}$ . Accordingly, the influence of decreasing  $RH$  and increasing  $T$  was totally offset by the influence of the decreasing  $u_2$  to make annual  $ET_{pa}$  constant, indicated by no trend detected (Supplementary Fig. 3).

Decreasing  $R_n$  and  $u_2$  contributed from  $66\%$  to  $110\%$  and  $40\%$ – $70\%$  to the decrease in  $ET_p$ , respectively. Conversely, decreasing  $RH$  and increasing  $T$  contributed from  $-21\%$  to  $-6\%$  and  $-37\%$  to  $-11\%$  to the decrease in  $ET_p$ , respectively. Accordingly, decreasing  $R_n$  and  $u_2$  produced larger variation in  $ET_p$ .

##### 4.3.2. Attribution of the temporal change in AE to climate change and human activities

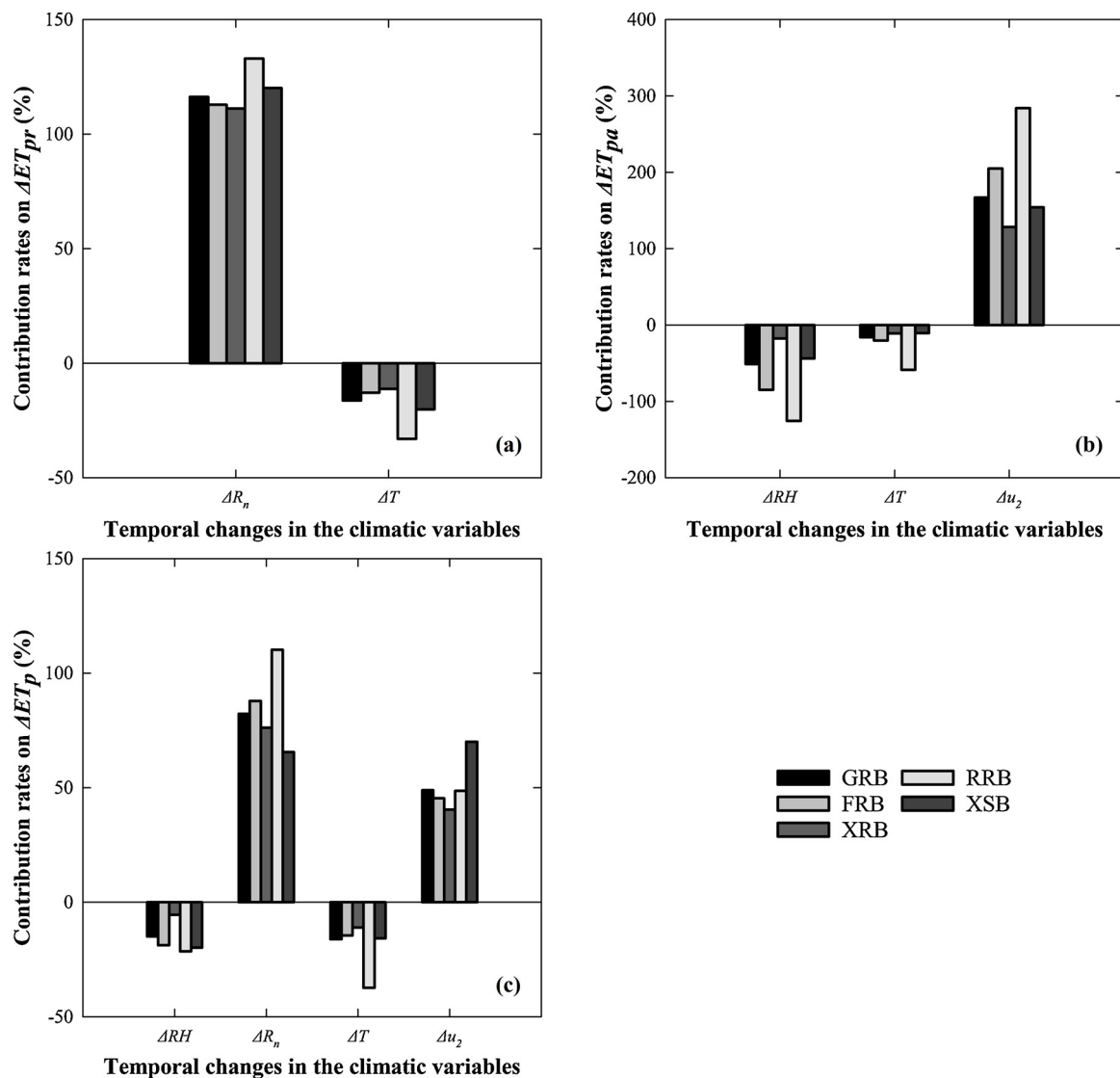
Fig. 7 shows the contributions of climate change and human activities to the  $\Delta\phi_o$  based on Fu's equation. Mean annual equation parameter  $\omega$  increased from 2.02 before 1979 to 2.32 after 1979 in GRB, in addition to 2.52–3.23 in FRB, 1.68–1.72 in XRB, and 2.55–2.83 in RRB (Fig. 7a). In contrast, mean annual  $\omega$  decreased slightly from 1.82 to 1.76 in XSB. The Budyko curves were substantially higher after 1979 than the Budyko curves before 1979 in GRB, FRB, XRB and RRB (Fig. 7b) except in XSB.

Negative  $\Delta\phi_c$  and  $\Delta AE_c$  values were detected, ranging from  $-0.057$  to  $-0.025$  and  $-22$  to  $-17$  mm respectively, depending on the different basins (Fig. 7c). The spatially averaged  $\Delta AE_c$  was  $-20$  mm in the study basins. In contrast, positive  $\Delta\phi_h$  and  $\Delta AE_h$  values were observed in four of the five river basins, ranging from 0.01 to 0.05 and 40 to 141 mm respectively, depending on the different basins. Negative  $\Delta\phi_h$  was only observed in XSB. The corresponding  $\Delta AE_h$  value was confirmed to be  $-5$  mm. The spatially averaged  $\Delta AE_h$  was 78 mm in the study basins. Accordingly, the overall climate change-induced decrease and the human activities-induced increase in AE was verified.

##### 4.3.3. Driving force of the abnormal correlation between AED and AE

Decreasing  $R_n$  and  $u_2$  were the major climate factors reducing AED. These reductions also led to a 20 mm decrease in mean annual AE in the study basins. Climate change led to the simultaneous temporal decrease in AED and AE. Human activities resulted in an increase of 78 mm in mean annual AE but had no effect on AED. Eventually, annual AED decreased, but annual AE did not appear to exhibit the same temporal trend. So overall, human activities appear to be the driving force of AC.

Fig. 8 shows the temporal-spatial distribution of land use and cover. The forest land and arable land accounted for 62.7% and 26.1% of the



**Fig. 6.** Contribution rates of the temporal changes in meteorological variables to changes in (a) radiation fraction of Penman potential evaporation ( $ET_{pr}$ ), (b) aerodynamic fraction of Penman potential evaporation ( $ET_{pa}$ ) and (c) Penman potential evaporation ( $ET_p$ ) in river basins in southeastern China. Note: GRB, FRB, XRB, RRB, and XSB are the Ganjiang, Fuhe, Xinjiang, Raohe, and Xiushui River basins, respectively;  $\Delta R_n$ ,  $\Delta T$ ,  $\Delta RH$ , and  $\Delta u_2$  denote the temporal changes in net radiation, temperature, relative humidity, and wind speed respectively.

terrestrial surface, respectively. These two land use types remained constant during the period from 1985 to 2010, indicated by relatively small standard errors. Accordingly, the forest and arable land were the main land use types. Additionally, both of the annual FCR and NDVI simultaneously and dramatically increased around 1980. Arable land consisted mainly of double-cropping paddy fields, whose NDVI fluctuated during half-year periods rather than multi-year periods. Therefore, the growth of paddy areas could not cause the observed temporal increase in annual NDVI. So, the observed increase in NDVI and FCR was a result of afforestation. Accordingly, afforestation was the main human activity leading to the abnormal correlation between  $AED$  and  $AE$  rather than urbanization and climate change.

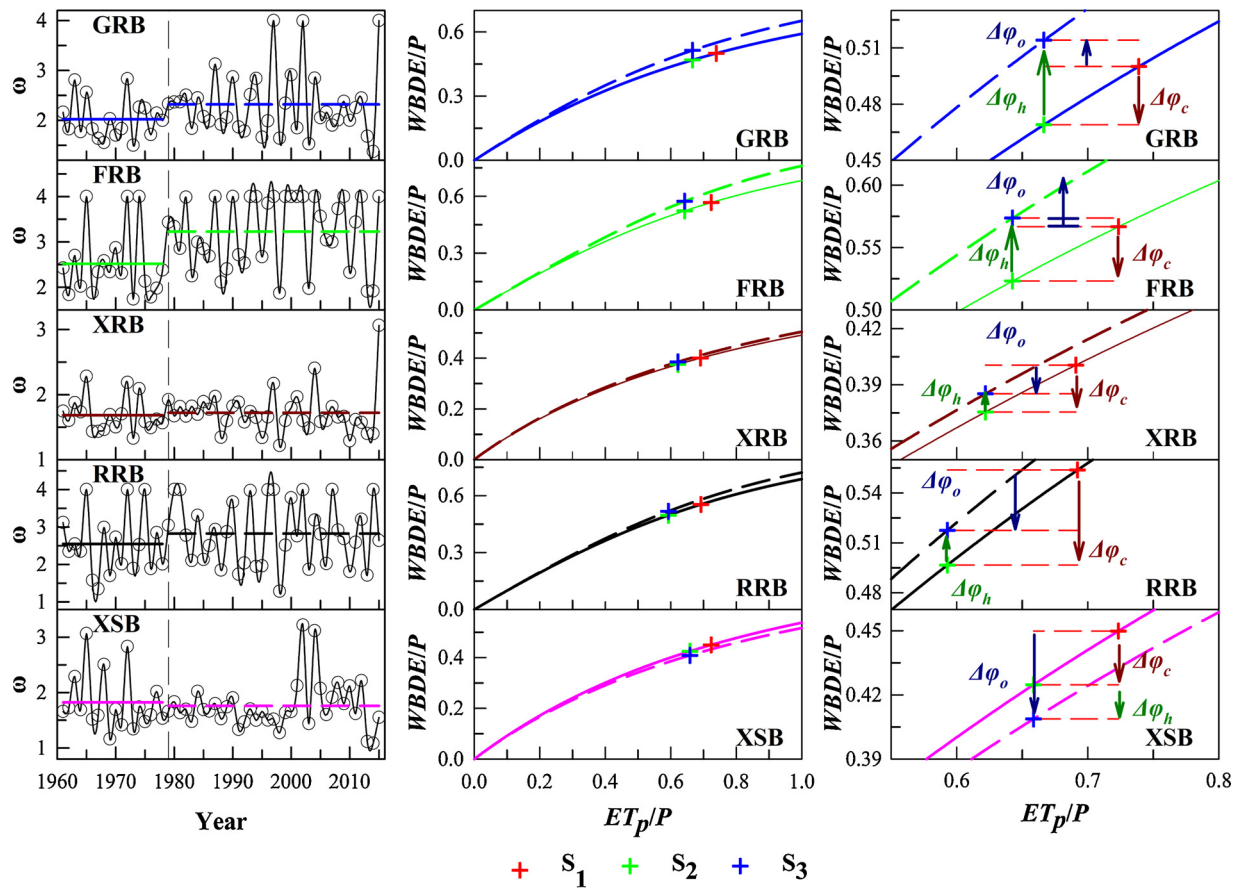
### 5. Discussion

This study focused on identifying and interpreting the AC between  $AED$  and  $AE$  in the energy-limited region of southeastern China. Afforestation was determined to be the major human activity that likely explains the observed AC. During this analysis process, we quantitatively established the integrated response chain from climate change

and afforestation to the temporal change in  $AE$ .

#### 5.1. Changes in annual evaporation-related meteorological variables

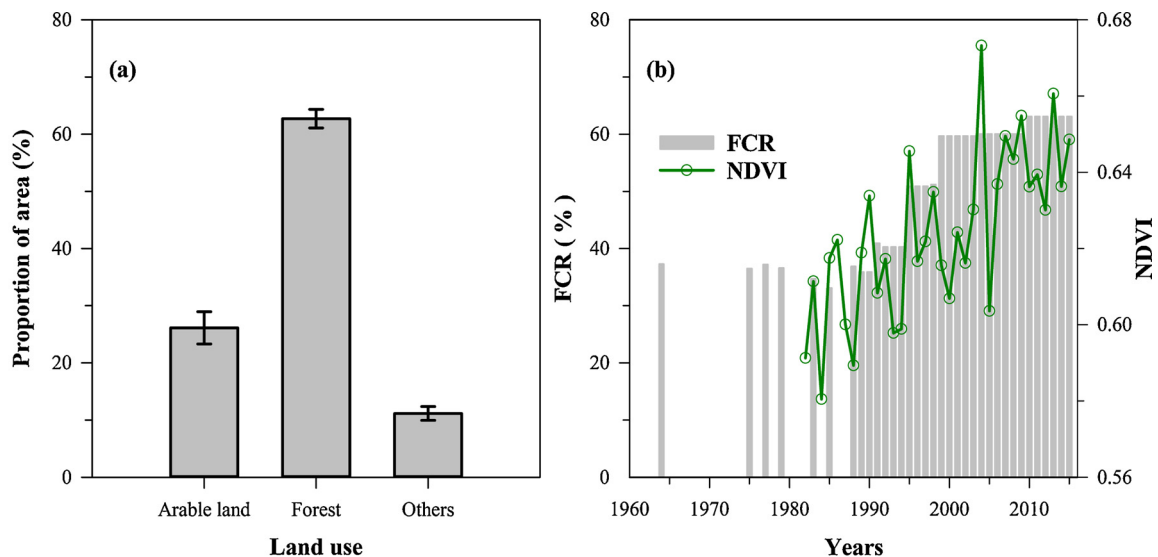
Meteorological states are regulated by both local water-energy processes and large-scale climate conditions. In the five river basins used in this study, the large-scale climate conditions were especially important. Specifically, decreasing  $R_n$  and  $u_2$  are the likely consequence of radiative dimming (Cohen, Ianetz, & Stanhill, 2002; Liu et al., 2004; Papaioannou, Kitsara, & Athanasatos, 2011; Roderick & Farquhar, 2002; Wild, Ohmura, Gilgen, & Rosenfeld, 2004) and wind stilling (McVicar, Roderick, Donohue, Li et al., 2012; Roderick, Rotstayn, Farquhar, & Hobbins, 2007), respectively. Increasing annual temperature was consistent with global warming that is induced by increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere (Milly & Dunne, 2016; Tsai, 2017; Vallis, Zurita-Gotor, Cairns, & Kidston, 2015). Annual precipitation showed no trend in the study basins, similar to overall trends in the Yangtze River basin (Ukkola & Prentice, 2013).



(a) Annual variation of  $\omega$       (b) Variation of Fu's equation      (c) Quantitative attributions on  $\Delta\phi_o$

Fig. 7. Quantitative attributions on  $\Delta\phi_o$  based on Fu's equation.

Note: the solid lines and dashed lines in each panel denote the periods before and after 1979, respectively; GRB, FRB, XRB, RRB, and XSB are the Ganjiang, Fuhe, Xinjiang, Raohe, and Xiushui River basins, respectively;  $\omega$  represents the parameter of Fu's equation;  $P$  is precipitation;  $WBDE$  is water-budget derived evaporation;  $ETp$  is potential evaporation;  $\Delta\phi_o$ ,  $\Delta\phi_c$ , and  $\Delta\phi_h$  are the observed, climate change-induced and human activities-induced ratio of actual evaporation to precipitation, respectively;  $S_1$  and  $S_3$  are the points characterized by the mean annual  $ETp/P$  and  $\omega$  before and after the change point of AED, respectively;  $S_2$  is the point characterized by the mean annual AED/ $P$  after the change point of AED and  $\omega$  before the point.



(a) Spatial framework of land use (1985-2010)

(b) Annual variation of FCR and NDVI

Fig. 8. Spatial framework and temporal changes of land use and cover. FCR, forest cover rate; NDVI, normalized difference vegetation index. The error bars are the standard errors of the means.

## 5.2. The abnormal correlation between AED and AE

Study basins are an intermediate-scale region. At such a scale, a stable correlation between AED and AE can be expected by eliminating the impact of the micro-topography. The driving forces of AC are restricted to climate change and human activities rather than the spatial distribution of the micro-topography. Specifically, at smaller spatial scales, diverse correlations between AED and AE may be detected. This diversity may be regulated more by the complicated spatial distribution of micro-topography. However, as the spatial scale under consideration is expanded, such diversities are possibly masked such that a single type of correlation between AED and AE is observed. With scale expansion, the influence of microtopography on the correlation gradually becomes weaker. Under this condition, a stable correlation represents the interacting effects of local climate and terrestrial land surface condition on the hypothesis of no effect of human activities. The AC can be attributed to climate and human activities-induced terrestrial land surface changes.

AED decreased in the study basins, as indicated by  $ET_p$  and  $E_{pan}$ . This finding was consistent with overall temporally decreasing trends of AED in the world mentioned above. However, a significant change point for AED occurred in 1979 when AED began to decrease. After 1979, the study basins also experienced strong afforestation. This was suspected as the driving force causing the existence of the change point.

AC between AED and AE was confirmed for the study basins presented in this paper. In humid regions, the observation and simulation on the AC have been reported for areas with dense forests (Carmona et al., 2016; Lawrimore & Peterson, 2000). Perhaps the areas of these previous studies experienced similar afforestation as occurred in our study basins. This supposition needs to be further verified.

## 5.3. Driving force of the abnormal correlation between AED and AE

Local hydrological processes and large-scale climate conditions are the key variables regulating negative and positive correlation between AED and AE, respectively. Specifically, an arid region was typically far away from oceans. This region can be likened to a relatively enclosed room with little outside influence. The changes in water-energy flows during the local hydrological process, indicated by the changes in AE, may effectively alter the local climate. During this process, the AED changed through inverse trends of AE, which can be understood as a compensation mechanism for AE changes according to BCH (Bouchet, 1963). This compensation mechanism was more significant in arid regions because of strong local interaction. Consequently, the negative correlation between AED and AE was easily seen in this region. In contrast, the humid region was closer to the ocean. The correlation was regulated by large-scale climate conditions. The impact of local water-energy processes on the correlation between AED and AE was relatively limited and easily offset by large-scale climate conditions. For this situation, the positive correlation was easily observed in this region.

Afforestation strengthened the local hydrological process, thus driving the correlation between AED and AE to tend to be negative. Specifically, the study basins were typically energy-limited regions, where the decrease in AE was expected as a result of decreasing AED. However, the regional afforestation increased the  $\omega$  parameter of Fu's equation and the ratio of AE to AED. This afforestation-induced elevated ratio offset the expected decrease in AE against the impact of decreasing AED. It produced the inconsistent temporal trends between AED and AE through converting more atmospheric evaporation energy into actual one, which strengthened the local hydrological process. As a result, the correlation between AED and AE tended to be negative.

Accurate assessment of land use and coverage changes (LUCC) requires integration of changes in land use maps and vegetation canopy data. However, current simulations of streamflow or evaporation typically consider only either land use maps or a vegetation canopy change index, such as NDVI or leaf area index (Guo, Hu, & Jiang, 2008; Yan

et al., 2013). Consequently, understanding LUCC may sometimes be uncertain. There may also be unknown genetic effects on changes in water-energy flows. Combining land use maps with vegetation canopy change indices may be a better way to understand LUCC (Ye, Zhang, Bai, & Hu, 2011).

## 6. Conclusion

We assessed the temporal changes in the meteorological variables, AED, and AE by ordinary linear regression and by the Pettitt method for five energy-limited basins in southeast China. The temporal trends between AED and AE were compared to explore whether the abnormal correlations appeared in the study basins relative to the Yangtze River basin. The driving forces of the abnormal correlation were identified as being either climate change or human activities using the sensitivity method of the Penman equation and the decomposition method of the Budyko equation.

Annual  $R_n$ ,  $u_2$ , and RH were found to decrease significantly at tendency rates ranging from  $-0.14$  to  $-0.11 \text{ MJ m}^{-2} \text{ day}^{-1} \text{ decade}^{-1}$ ,  $-0.6\%$  to  $-0.4\% \text{ decade}^{-1}$ , and  $-0.16$  to  $-0.10 \text{ m s}^{-1} \text{ decade}^{-1}$ , respectively. Conversely, annual  $T$  increased significantly at tendency rates ranging from  $0.17$  to  $0.28 \text{ }^\circ\text{C decade}^{-1}$ . Meanwhile, annual  $P$  was found to have no trend.

Generally, AED showed a positive correlation with AE in the Yangtze River basin. Annual  $ET_p$  and  $E_{pan}$  decreased significantly at tendency rates ranging from  $-0.04$  to  $-0.03$  and  $-0.12$  to  $-0.06 \text{ mm d}^{-1} \text{ decade}^{-1}$ , respectively. Their change points both occurred in 1979. Accordingly, annual AED decreased after 1979. In comparison, AE increased significantly at a tendency rate of  $0.09 \text{ mm d}^{-1} \text{ decade}^{-1}$  in FRB and remained constant in other study basins, as indicated by WBDE. Nonpositive correlation between AED and AE appeared and AC was verified compared with the Yangtze River basin.

The increasing  $T$  contributed  $-33\%$  to  $-11\%$  to the decrease in  $ET_{pr}$  by increasing the proportion of latent heat to  $R_n$  in the study basins. This increased proportion of latent heat cannot compensate for the decrease in  $ET_{pr}$  induced by a reduction in  $R_n$ , the contribution rates of which ranged from  $111\%$ – $133\%$ . Eventually, annual  $ET_{pr}$  decreased significantly at tendency rates ranging from  $-0.03$  to  $-0.018 \text{ mm day}^{-1} \text{ decade}^{-1}$ . In addition, decreasing RH and increasing  $T$  contributed  $-126\%$  to  $-18\%$  and  $-59\%$  to  $-11\%$ , respectively, to the decrease in  $ET_{pa}$  by increasing VPD. This influence was totally offset by the influence of decreasing  $u_2$ , the contribution rates of which ranged from  $128\%$ – $284\%$ . There was, consequently, no temporal trend detected in  $ET_{pa}$ . Meanwhile, decreasing  $R_n$  and  $u_2$  contributed most to the decrease in  $ET_p$ , with contribution rates ranging from  $66\%$  to  $110\%$  and  $40\%$ – $70\%$ , respectively. Accordingly, decreasing  $R_n$  and  $u_2$  were the major climate factors in reducing AED.

Climate change also led to the simultaneous decrease of  $20 \text{ mm}$  in mean annual AE in the study basins. However, human activities had no effect on AED and resulted in an increase of  $78 \text{ mm}$  in mean annual AE. Eventually annual AED decreased, but annual AE did not exhibit the same temporal trend. Accordingly, afforestation was the main human activity changing the correlation between AED and AE (rather than urbanization and climate change).

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## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary material related to this article can be found, in the online version, at doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2020.102075>.

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