
Site Selection and Relocation of Ancient Cities from the Perspective of Regional Military and Political Strategies——A Case Study of Ganzhou

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Abstract: Ganzhou wasn't setup on the contemporary site that seems to be "right" at Xihan Dynasty. It was relocated for four times, skimming over the "right site". The thesis analyzes the relocations from the perspective of national relationship and political & military structure of the region, revealing the logic of the frequent relocations – complicated political & military situation. It still elucidates the military & political function and instrumentality of the early cities.

Keywords: Ancient city, Relocation, Political & Military Situation, Ganzhou, Gannan Territory

The relocation of ancient cities in China is a common phenomenon, each with its own reasons. During the Western Zhou Dynasty, there were Feng and Hao; the Eastern Zhou moved to Luoyi; the Qin Dynasty relocated its capital nine times before finally settling in Xianyang; the ancient cities in the Xi'an include Feng, Hao, Xianyang, Han Chang'an, and Sui-Tang Chang'an; Luoyang experienced several relocations from the capital Zhenxun of Xia Dynasty, to the capital Chengzhou of Zhou Dynasty, the capital of Han and Wei Dynasty, and the eastern capital of Sui and Tang Dynasty¹². These ancient cities repeatedly relocated within a region, seeking the most reasonable site at that time. Not only were ancient capitals meticulously chosen, but many local cities also underwent early relocations. Exploring the reasons behind these relocations and site selections helps to understand the nature of early cities and deepens the knowledge of urban development processes.

The considerations for the site selection and relocation of early cities often did not primarily focus on favorable geographical environments but rather on the political and military configurations of the region. Early cities chose the best site available at the time, which is particularly evident in the layout of important frontier towns. The following text uses Ganzhou as the main case to explain the logic of early cities' relocation and site selection from the perspective of regional politics and military structures.

1. Brief History of the Four Relocations of Ganzhou

Ganzhou is in the southern part of Jiangxi Province, at the upper reaches of the Ganjiang River. Its jurisdiction is bordered by Dayu Mountain to the south, adjoining northern Guangdong Province, by the Luoxiao Mountains to the west, bordering Hunan Province, by the Wuyi Mountains to the east, adjacent to Fujian Province, and by the Yu Mountains to the north, connecting with Ji'an city and Fuzhou city in Jiangxi Province. The terrain is higher in the surrounding areas and lower in the center, naturally forming a U-shape opening to the north. This area and its surrounding counties are collectively known today as "Gannan Territory", which means "southern area of Jiangxi Province."

Due to its rugged terrain, located among overlapping mountains and ridges, and controlling the Zhang and Gong rivers, Ganzhou was a crucial corridor for ancient travel from the Central Plains to Lingnan and Minyue. It was considered a strategic location, "pacifying the southern Baiyue-Ethnic Territory and overseeing the northern Central Plains," and "holding the key junction of the Five Ranges, controlling the strategic points of Jiangxi, Fujian, Guangdong, and Hunan"³. The Qing Dynasty military geographer Gu Zuyu also believed that Ganzhou "connecting the regions of Ou, Min, and Baiyue-Ethnic Territory, situated amidst valleys and numerous mountains, was the key to the Lingnan region and the strategic pivot of rivers and lakes. Therefore, in the event of conflicts in Jiangxi, it would inevitably become a contested area"⁴.

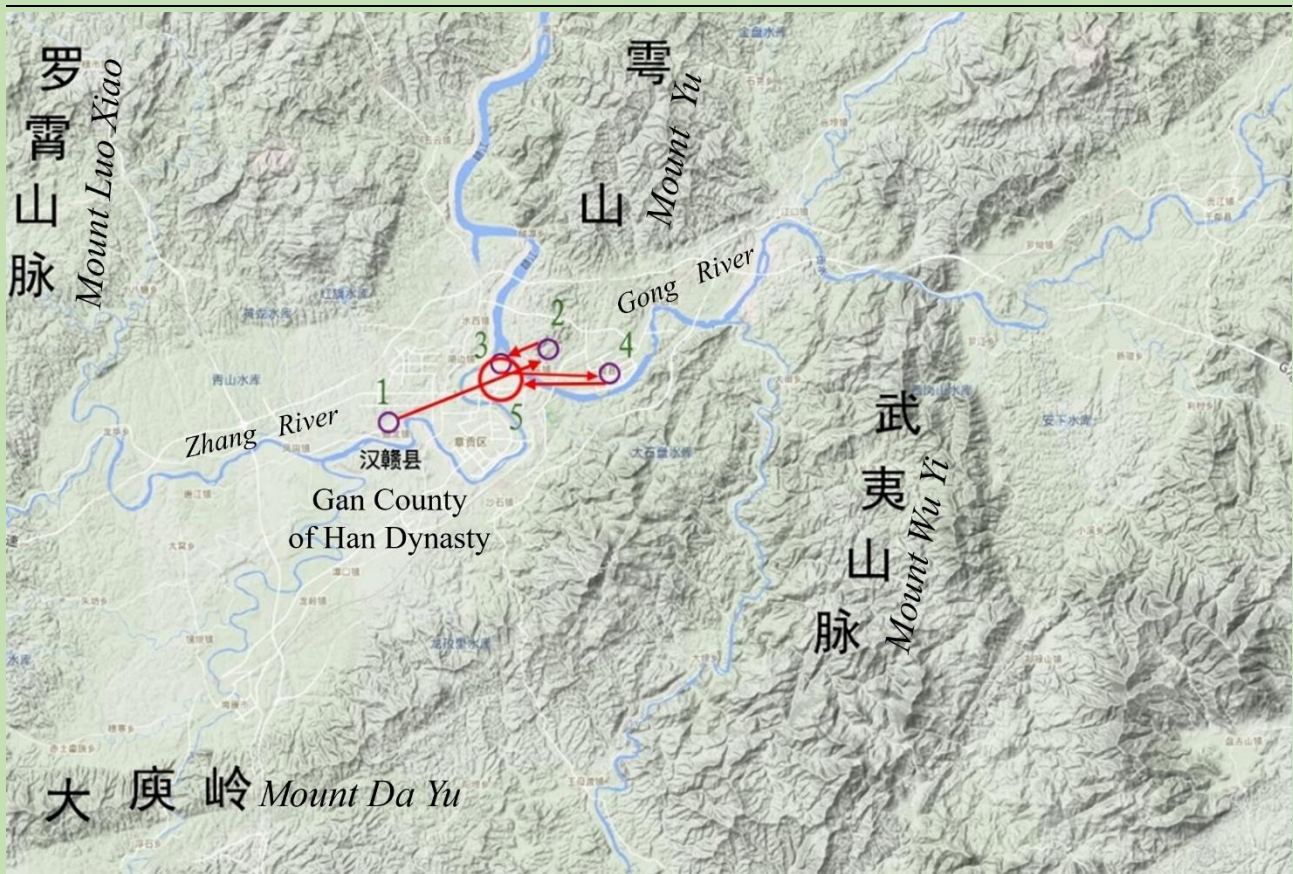


Figure 1: Map of the Four Relocations of Ganzhou (Image Source: Drawn based on Google Maps)

Although the current site is strategically advantageous, the county seat of Ganzhou during the early Han Dynasty was not established at the current location, but 8 kilometers away in Panlong Town. It took four small-scale relocations over 750 years before it finally settled at the current site (figure 1 and table 1).

Table 1: Timeline of the Relocations of Gan County

Location	Period	Duration (years)
Panlong Town	6th Year of Emperor Gaozu of Han (201 BC) – Late Taikang Period of Jin (c. 289 AD)	490
Hugang	Late Taikang Period of Jin (c. 289 AD) – 5th Year of Yonghe (349 AD)	60
Between Zhang and Gong Rivers	5th Year of Yonghe (349 AD) – 7th Year of Yixi (411 AD)	62
Qili Town	7th Year of Yixi (411 AD) – 1st Year of Chengsheng of Liang (552 AD)	141
Between Zhang and Gong Rivers	1st Year of Chengsheng of Liang (552 AD) – Present	1462

2.Initial Site of Gan County – Governing the Southern Frontiers, Establishing a Border Fortress

In the sixth year of Emperor Gaozu of Han (201 BC), "general Guan Ying was sent to pacify Jiangnan and established Gan County, building a city to guard against Zhao Tuo. The city was located at southwest of the current site, known as Yijiangxi ancient city"⁵. It is the very origin of

Ganzhou City.

However, it is puzzling that the Han Dynasty's Gan County was not located in the more strategically advantageous area between the Zhang and Gong rivers, but rather in Panlong Town, 8 kilometers to the west. Nevertheless, analyzing the regional political and military structure and layout of cities of Gannan Territory at the end of the Qin Dynasty and the beginning of the Han Dynasty reveals that the site selection for the Han Dynasty's Gan County was the most suitable.

The Qin Dynasty, after conquering the six states, established its capital in Xianyang and set up numerous counties to expand its southern frontier. However, throughout the Qin Dynasty, many of the south regions beyond the Yangtze River remained the land of the Baiyue-Ethnic Groups, and were far from the central authority. In the early Han Dynasty, Zhao Tuo, a general of the Qin Dynasty, ruled Lingnan Territory and established the "Nanyue Kingdom," which had not yet submitted to the Han Dynasty. Meanwhile, Minyue -Ethnic Group had integrated and formed the effectively independent "Minyue Kingdom." The Baiyue-Ethnic Groups in Jiangnan Territory had fled into the mountains, becoming the "Shanyue -Ethnic Groups", who continued to rebel frequently until the Three Kingdoms period⁶. Various kingdoms with different surnames held strong power and had numerous followers, firmly establishing themselves within the region.



Figure 2: Initial Site Selection of Gan County in Han Dynasty (Image Source: Drawn based on Google Maps)

For the Gannan Territory, in the early Han Dynasty, it was actually a "frontier area" under the control of the Han Dynasty (Figure 2). The previously established Nanyue and Yudu counties were in isolated and perilous positions, situated among the four forces of Nanyue Kingdom, Minyue Kingdom, Changsha Kingdom and Shanyue-Ethnic Groups. The Han Dynasty had to prevent them from forming alliances and rising in ambition, necessitating the strengthening of regional political and military governance.

The primary purpose of establishing Gan County was to control the basin from present-day Ganzhou to Nankang, ensuring the rear security of the two outposts, Nanyue and Yudu. The Ganzhou-Nankang basin was the necessary route for connecting Nanyue and Yudu with the central

authority. If it were occupied by enemies, the rear of the two counties would be cut off. The Gong River was under the control of Yudu, while the Shangyou River and Zhang River areas had no central authority establishments. On the other hand, the upper reaches of the Shangyou River were in Changsha Commandery, which was under the rule of the King of Changsha, Wu Rui (of the seven different surname kings in the early Han Dynasty, except for the King of Changsha who lasted for 50 years, the rest were eliminated within a few years, probably because the Han Dynasty did not dare to pressure Wu Rui avoiding him defecting to the Nanyue Kingdom). Therefore, the establishment of Gan County aimed to control the Shangyou River, Nankang River, and Zhang River basins, thereby considering both the Ganzhou and Nankang basins⁷. The site selection for Han Gan County, being at the confluence of the three rivers and near the geometric center of the Ganzhou-Nankang basin, was indeed the optimal choice.

The establishment of Gan County played a very important role in national unification. Five years later (196 BC), Zhao Tuo abdicated his imperial title and pledged allegiance to the Han Dynasty. Another 85 years later (111 BC), the Nanyue Kingdom was eliminated due to rebellion. One year later (110 BC), the Han Dynasty pacified Dongyue Group. The main forces for these two pacification campaigns both passed through Gannan Territory⁸.

3.First Relocation – Suppressing Rebellion in the Mountains, Shifting Strategic Focus

At the end of the Taikang era of Jin Dynasty (around 289, ten years after the fall of the Wu Kingdom), Gan County was relocated to Gelao City east of the Gong River (at Hugang). This relocation is first mentioned in a mystical account from the "Taiping Huanyu Ji": "At the end of the Taikang era of Jin Dynasty, floodwaters raged. Suddenly, a large drum floated down with the waves and entered Gelao City. Despite the combined efforts of many people, it would not budge. Divination deemed the site auspicious for establishing a county, so it was relocated accordingly"⁹.

However, flooding was not the sole reason for the relocation of Han Gan County. If we only focus on Han Gan County, we cannot fully understand this relocation. To investigate the reasons and site selection for this relocation, we must consider the regional political and military context. Since the Wu Kingdom period, policies of appeasement and indirect rule were adopted towards Nanyue-Ethnic Group, and efforts to strengthen control over the mountainous areas of Gannan Territory were intensified, shifting the strategic focus eastward.

Throughout the era of Wu Kingdom, the Shanyue-Ethnic Groups were major threat to the Wu Kingdom. The Wu Kingdom both suppressed the Shanyue-Ethnic Groups and established commanderies and counties to consolidate their rule. The establishment and layout of the various counties in the Southern Division Commandery of Luling and Gannan Territory during the Wu Kingdom period were evidently related to this, leading to the relocation of Gan County at the beginning of the Jin Dynasty.

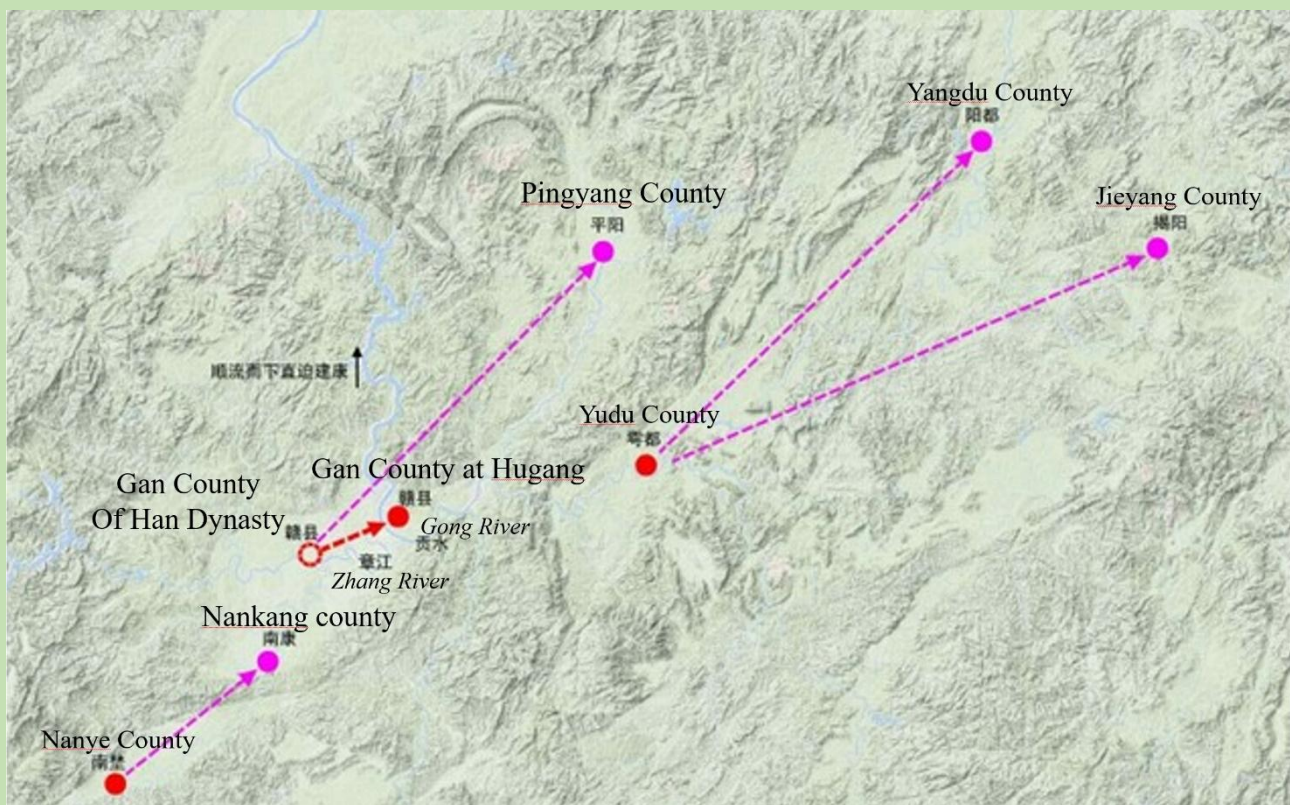


Figure 3: County Division during the Wu Kingdom and Relocation of Gan County during the Western Jin

Dynasty

(Image Source: Drawn based on Google Maps)

In the 3rd year of the Jiahe era of the Wu Kingdom (234 AD), "the bandits Li Huan and Luo Li from Luling rebelled"¹⁰. The center of the rebellion should have been in the mountainous area near Yudu. In the fifth year of the Jiahe era (236 AD), the rebellion was quelled, and the leaders were executed in Yudu¹¹. In the same year, Wu Kingdom "established the Southern Division Commandery in Yudu"¹², adding four counties within the Southern Division Commandery (Figure 3)—establishing Nanan (present-day Nankang County) from part of Nanye's territory, Yangdu (present-day Ningdu County) from part of Yudu's territory, and shortly after, Jieyang (west of present-day Shicheng County) from part of Yangdu's territory¹³. In the same year, Pingyang County (present-day Xingguo County) was also established from part of Gan County's territory.

As shown in the figure, the establishment of Nanan County was a significant reason for the relocation of Gan County. The original urban layout of Gannan Territory was disrupted, necessitating reconstruction. Gan County and Nanan were less than 20 kilometers apart, and the Nankang basin no longer needed to be managed by Gan County. The military importance of Gan County declined evidently, leaving it responsible only for controlling the Ganzhou basin, while its location was too marginal relative to the Ganzhou basin.

The suppression of the rebellion was the direct reason for the relocation of Gan County. The subsequent rebellion in the mountainous areas around Yudu further demonstrated the central authority's weak control over the mountainous regions: in the eighth year of the Taikang era of Jin Dynasty (288 AD), there was another rebellion in Pingyang County¹⁴. Although this rebellion was eventually quelled, the Jin government clearly intended to strengthen its control over this area through the layout of commanderies and counties.

The relocation of Gan County in the Western Jin Dynasty occurred two years after this rebellion was suppressed, and its site selection reflected this requirement. The location of the new site indirectly confirmed the above analysis.

The new site was on the highland of Hugang across the Gong River, only 2.5 kilometers from present-day Ganzhou. Compared to the location of the current Ganzhou city, this site was more constrained and had limited space for development; its only apparent advantage was its higher elevation. Thus, the "flood relocation theory" seems plausible. However, just 60 years later (349 AD), the Eastern Jin government discarded the notion of the site being auspicious by relocating the county between the Zhang and Gong rivers, indicating that the former relocation to Hugang was not solely for flood prevention.

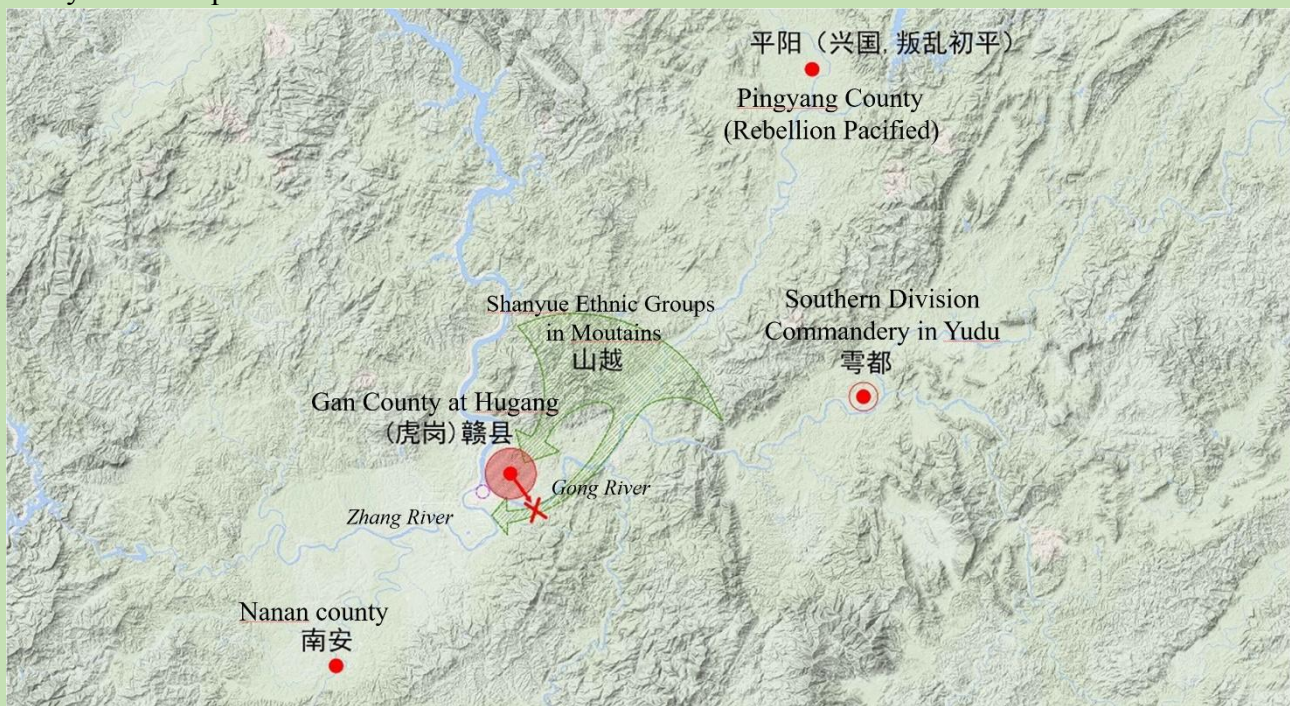


Figure 4: Military Relations between Gan County at Hugang and the Shanyue-Ethnic Groups

(Image Source: Drawn based on Google Maps)

The reason for relocation to Hugang needs to be explained from a military perspective: Western Jin Gan County was on the east bank of the Gong River, while present-day Ganzhou is on the west bank. Separated by a river, these locations have completely different military implications. The former is advantageous for offense, while the latter is advantageous for defense (Figure 4).

The Western Jin government needed to establish military and political strongholds in the Wuyi Mountains to the east, requiring complete control over the Gong River transport line. The military threat came from the Wuyi Mountains to the east. If a city was established between the Zhang and Gong rivers, it would indeed be easy to defend and hard to attack, but if the highland on the east bank of the Gong River were controlled by the Shanyue-Ethnic Groups, the supply and transport to the front lines could not be guaranteed. On the other hand, by establishing a city on the highland on the east bank of the Gong River, the western plain and the Gong River would both be safely within defensive control.

From the perspective of the Shanyue-Ethnic Groups, controlling the highland at Hugang is very advantageous. They could cut off the Gong River by attacking westward or retreat eastward to the Wuyi Mountains for defense. Conversely, if Western Jin established a city at Hugang,

Shanyue-Ethnic Groups would have to cross the river to the plains to control the rivers of Zhang and Gong, which would be extremely dangerous. Even if they succeeded, it would be an isolated and perilous position, easily surrounded and annihilated.

Therefore, Hugang as the site for Gan County was superior to the current site for the Western Jin Dynasty. When the regional military and political situation changed, the pros and cons of these two locations switched also.

4.Second Relocation – Seizing Power, Seeking Development

The existence of Gan County at Hugang did not last long. In the 5th year of Yonghe era of Eastern Jin Dynasty (349 AD), Gan County was relocated once again. This time, it was settled between the Zhang and Gong rivers, where present-day Ganzhou is located. It replaced Yudu and became the administrative center of Nankang Commandery governing the Gannan Territory.

The context of the relocation was very complex. First, the Shanyue-Ethnic Groups has been eliminated. Second, there was an influx of northern migration into Jiangzhou (present-day Jiangxi Province), which led to a major economic boost of Jiangzhou, greatly enhanced its strategic importance and triggered scrambles for it. Third, a temporary peacetime during the Yonghe era provides the opportunity. Therefore, there were local powers expanding territories and secretly strengthening their military forces, which was the true reason of the relocation.

The strengthening of domination over the mountainous Gannan Territory during the period from Wu Kingdom to Western Jin Dynasty was generally successful. In the "Records of the Three Kingdoms - Book of Wu," the term "Shanyue" appears 25 times. And surprisingly, the later "Book of Jin" does not mention "Shanyue" at all¹⁵. They were eliminated. Since Gan County was established at Hugang, there has been no record of disturbances in Nankang anymore.

On the other hand, with the southward migration of the Jin Dynasty and the influx of northerners into Gan, the economy of Jiangzhou in Eastern Jin experienced rapid development, becoming a major supplier of grain for the upper Yangtze region. Due to its strategic importance, domination of Jiangzhou was transferred successively by four influential families: Wang, Xie, Yu, and Huan, and the same was for Gannan Territory. Wang Dun, a leader of a clan, to win over the local influential figure, He Qin, who "resided in a strategically easy defending location and gathered several thousand followers," bestowed upon him the title of a general of the fourth rank¹⁶. This illustrates that local powers maintaining armed forces for self-protection was a common phenomenon.

During the Yonghe era of Jin Dynasty, Yu Yi, a powerful lead of Yu Clan, passed away. None of the clans in Jiangzuo possessed sufficient strength to fill the "power vacuum"¹⁷. Consequently, Gao Yan took over Nankang Commandery left by Yu Ke, another member of Yu clan, immediately relocating Gan County between the Zhang and Gong rivers and moved the commandery seat to this city¹⁸. Whether authorized by superiors or not, this relocation was intended for self-self-government, self-defense, and it benefited Gannan Territory the most.

The original locations of the two cities, the Nankang Commandery at Yudu and Gan County at Hugang, were to strengthen control over the mountainous regions to the north. After stability was achieved in the mountains, the advantages of economic, transportation, and development space in location between the Zhang and Gong rivers became apparent. This land emerged as the optimal site for the economic core of Gannan Territory.

More importantly, establishing a city between the Zhang and Gong rivers served as a regional power base. Strategically, it allowed for potential northward expansion towards Lake Poyang, even threatening Jiankang, the capital city of Jin Dynasty directly. In case of being defeated, there were retreat options defending a potentially escaping to mountainous areas in Fujian and Guangdong.

Additionally, controlling the strategic passages between Gannan Territory and the Jin Dynasty was highly advantageous politically, making it the best location for effectively governing the entire Gannan Territory.

The subsequent third relocation of Gan County after 62 years and the fourth relocation after another 141 years validate the above arguments.

5.Third and Fourth Relocations – Destroyed by Warfare, Preparing for Recovery

In the 6th year of Yixi era of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (410 AD), Lu Xun and Xu Daofu, taking advantage of Liu Yu pacifying another rebellion northward, moved north from Shixing to Nankang, captured Gan County, and the city "was completely destroyed"¹⁹. After quelling this rebellion, Gan County relocated to Qili Town southeast of the Gong River. This was the third relocation of Gan County. The historical records of this relocation are clear and the cause and effect are distinct. But upon closer examination of its reasons and consequences, there were three points worth noting:

(1) The first half of Lu Xun and Xu Daofu's rebellion was extremely successful, highlighting the military strategic advantage of Gan County's location between the two rivers. After gaining control of the Zhang and Gong rivers, they could swiftly attack Poyang and directly threaten Jiankang.

(2) Despite losing their elite troops around Jiankang, the rebels were still able to retreat to Jiaozhou and Guangzhou, which confirms the earlier assertion of the strategic advantage of controlling Gan County with the ability to maneuver effectively. However, due to inadequate preparation, and destructed Gan County being unable to be defended, and Guangzhou city being occupied by Liu Yu in advance, the rebel was quickly pacified.

(3) After Gan County was destroyed, instead of rebuilding at the highland of Hugang, the new relocation was on the lower and wider land around Qili Town, which still served as the commandery seat. This indicates that after 62 years of development between the Zhang and Gong rivers, Hugang could no longer accommodate the remaining population even after the turmoil. This demonstrates that during these 62 years, Gan County underwent a significant qualitative leap in urban population and economic status. It evolved from a military and administrative stronghold to a commandery seat with economic functions, rather than a "garrison town" or "frontier city".

Obviously, being situated in Qili Town did not maximize the potential of the city. In the 1st year of the Chengsheng era of the Liang Kingdom (552 AD), Chen Baxian launched a northern expedition against Wang Sengbian, advancing north along the Ganjiang River²⁰. In the same year, Gan County was relocated once again between the Zhang and Gong rivers. This marks the fourth relocation of Gan County²¹.

This relocation undoubtedly reflects the strategic military significance of Gan City between the Zhang and Gong rivers. Commenting on this period of history, the military geographer Gu Zuyu of the late Ming and early Qing Dynasty stated, "Chen Baxian started from Shixing, marched towards Nankang, and swiftly took Gan, thus achieving his ambition"²². Obviously, his point was that Chen Baxian's successful northern campaign was based on Ganzhou City's military support.

The first half of Chen Baxian's northern expedition were remarkably similar to former rebellion of Xu Daofu. Both were fully prepared, both launched from Shixing and advanced along the Ganjiang River, while the consequences were completely different. One of the significant reasons for this disparity was that Chen Baxian took control of Gannan Territory a year earlier, effectively developed Ganzhou, and used it as his military and economic base. In contrast, Xu Daofu did not recognize the military strategic importance of Ganzhou and destructed it, leading a long-distance attack with weak logistics.

This illustrates that during this northern expedition, Ganzhou's military strategic advantage played a crucial role, and its capacity for logistical support should not be underestimated. Since then, continuously being the military, political, and economic center of Gannan Territory, the city of Ganzhou has not been relocated anymore.

6. Population Size, Military and Political Functions, and the Relocation Propensity of Early Gan County

Before its final settlement, the city of Ganzhou primarily served military and political functions. Even during the second relocation, when Gao Yan elevated Gan County to commandery seat, the population was insufficient to support a primarily economic role.

Table 2: Population Data of Gannan Territory from the Taikang Period of Jin Dynasty to the Sui Dynasty

Period	Households	Population
Mid Taikang of Jin (c. 285 AD)	1,400 (5 counties)	Missing
Mid Daming of Southern Song (c. 469 AD)	4,493 (7 counties)	34,684 (7.7 people per household)
Mid Kaihuang of Sui (c. 593 AD)	11,168 (4 counties)	-Missing

As shown in the table above, in 285 AD, the total number of households in the Gannan Territory was 1,400, with an average of 280 households per county. By 469 AD, the average number of households per county had increased to 642, with an average population of 4,955 people²³. Gao Yan built the city in 349 AD. Assuming a steady population growth, the average number of households per county under Gao Yan's regime would have been 406. Estimating that the number of households in Gan County was twice the average, the total number of households in Gan County when Gao Yan built the city would have been approximately 800 to 1,000, with a total population of about 6,000 to 8,000 people (based on an average of 7.7 people per household).

Since the urban population ratio of Gan County could not reach 20%²⁴, only about 10% to 20% of the population could live in the city, meaning the maximum urban population would be around 600 to 1,600 people. Research on the historical city walls of Ganzhou supports this estimate. The area of Gao Yan's ancient city shown in Figure 5 is approximately 110,000 square meters, with about 70,000 square meters of usable land after excluding the mountainous areas.

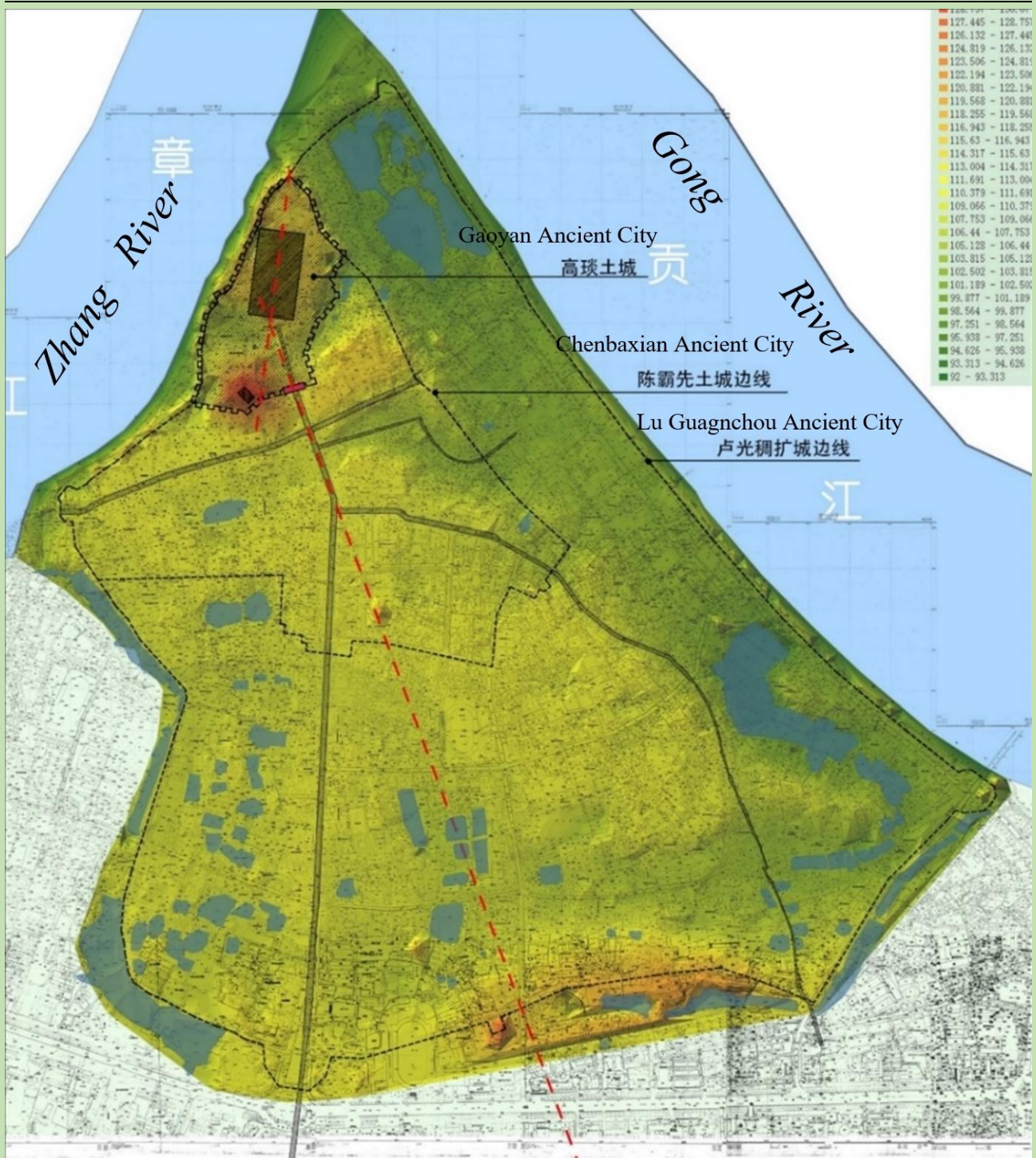


Figure 5: Topographical Relationship between the Eastern Jin “ncient City” and the Later Ganzhou City

(Drawn based on Electronic Maps)

Similarly, it can be estimated that the population within the city of Gan County before the third relocation was about 1,000 to 2,000 people, and during the fourth relocation under Chen Baxian, the population was about 3,200 to 6,400 people. Before the fourth relocation, it was clearly not economical to build a city and establish a county stationing troops for defense with that population and economic level, which highlights the city's military nature.

In the first three relocations of Gan County, its nature was that of a military fortress, with its

military and political attributes far outweighing its economic attributes. Therefore, when the regional military and political environment changed, the city's location was prone to relocation. It was not until the fourth relocation when Chen Baxian established the city between the Zhang and Gong Rivers, Gan County began to develop its economic functions, and the city's economic attributes were motivated. From then on, Ganzhou was started to a new developing stage rather than a military fortress.

7. Royal Authority, Military and Political Governance, Relocation, and the "Instrumentality" of Early Cities

Lewis Mumford pointed out, "the most important agent in effecting the change from a decentralized village economy to a highly organized urban economy, was the king, or rather, the institution of Kingship"²⁵. Ma Zhenglin argued that "many Chinese cities served as both imperial capitals and regional political centers, primarily fulfilling political functions"²⁶. Tian Yinsheng, in his work "Towards an Open City: A Study on the Marketing Streets of the Song Dynasty's Eastern Capital" noted that kingship preceded commerce as the two main factors driving urban transformation and that "the ancient Chinese cities, by nature, always retained the characteristics of political fortresses"²⁷.

Accordingly, the site selection and relocation of ancient Chinese cities often reflect the corresponding relationship between the city location and the regional military and political structure.

The Qin capital moved from Liyang to Xianyang to leverage the advantages of water and land transportation, facilitating an eastward advance through Hangu Pass to compete for control of the Central Plains. The relocation of Han Chang'an to the south of the Wei River was driven by considerations of using natural barriers to defend against nomadic tribes²⁸. The situation in the Luoyang area is even more complex: after Shang Tang defeated Xia, he moved the capital to Xihou to oversee the remnants of the Xia Dynasty, just 6 kilometers southwest of Xia's capital, Zhenxun; after the Zhou defeated the Shang, they established Luoyi; Han and Wei Luoyang was situated on a relatively open terrace below Mount Mang in northern Luo, likely aligned with the strategic plans of its founder, Lü Buwei; the westward shift of Sui and Tang Luoyang was to control the Yi, Luo, Ao, and Jian rivers^{29,30}. After the Song Dynasty defeated Northern Han, they moved 22.5 kilometers north of Jinyang (Taiyuan) to a narrow mountain pass to weaken its separatist capabilities and strengthen its border defense functions³¹. Before the Northern Song, the military and political center of Kuizhou was in Baidi City; afterward, due to the decline in military and political status, it was moved to Fengjie³². The ancient city of Shaozhou in the Han Dynasty was east of the Zhen River, commanding the Wu and Zhen rivers from a high position; at the end of the Sui Dynasty, the governor Deng Wenjin moved the city to the west of the river for separatist ambitions; the Southern Han later moved it between the two rivers to guard the northern gate³³. Tingzhou was established in Jiuzhou Village, Shanghang, in the 24th year of the Kaiyuan era (736AD) during the Tang Dynasty; in the 4th year of the Dali era (769AD), it was moved 220 li north to the more treacherous mountainous area of Changting to strengthen control over the border regions of Gan, Min, and Yue³⁴.

It is evident that the frequent relocations of early Gan County were not exceptional. Due to the fragility of early cities, the fate of these cities was in the hands of the rulers; as tools of governance, the choice of location and relocation were primarily determined by the military and political intentions of the central authority. Thus, in different stages and under different regimes, with varying military and political circumstances and needs, the understanding of the optimal site for a city differed, leading to frequent relocations of the city.

Similarly, city locations considered to be the optimal choice by later generations might not have

been the best choice for earlier generations. Moreover, China's inherent concept of "orthodoxy" has led to some missteps in city location choices. For example, Beijing was the best military command center for nomadic tribes monitoring southward to the Central Plains. However, for the Ming Dynasty, which needed to defend against these nomads, required strategic depth, and needed to develop its economy, it might have been a precarious location³⁵.

The frequent relocations of early cities fully demonstrate their "Instrumentality nature". However, as cities gradually incorporated strong economic forces, they gained strong vitality and evolved into independent subjects. This marked the beginning of another transformation stage.

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