



Development History of the Grand Canal Cities - Volume 2

LIU SHILIN

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Zhenjiang: Where States Border and Rivers Meet

All ancient civilisations derive from places rich in water and urban civilisation is no exception. Like any other canal city, Zhenjiang gains prosperity over the millennia from the flow passing through the Grand Canal.

The phrase “hills surround on three sides and a river runs through” perfectly depicts Zhenjiang’s geographic feature. Located in central Jiangsu Province, Zhenjiang lies close to Shanghai to the east, borders Nanjing to the west, and faces Yangzhou to the north. The city lies on the bank of the east-west Yangtze River near its intersection with the south-north Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, just like a pearl set in the renowned cross of this golden waterway. The 42.6-kilometre (km)-long Zhenjiang Section of the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal is one of the earliest sections of the canal excavation in history.

“Where Wu and Chu in sovereign might convene, Waters thread jing to Yang, high and low between” (*Duo Jing Lou*, Yang Weizhen, the Yuan Dynasty). The growth and prosperity of Zhenjiang have been inextricably linked to the Yangtze River, and even more intimately connected to the Grand Canal. The mighty Yangtze River and the enduring Grand Canal converge here, nurturing the 3000-year-old civilisation of this ancient city.

1 THE ANCIENT CANAL FLOWS ALONGSIDE THE BUSTLING FERRY ROUTE

The opening of artificial waterways is an epoch-defining event in Zhenjiang. The famous Dantu Waterway, built in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, was the northernmost section of the Jiangnan Canal. It starts from Yunyang (now Danyang) in the south and joins the river at Dantu, located to the north. Dantu Waterway marked a monumental feat by ancient Zhenjiang people, linking Lake Tai with the Yangtze River to enhance connectivity between the Central Plains and southeastern regions, serving as a vital artery for north-south exchanges during the pre-Qin era. During the Qin Dynasty, the mouth of Dantu Waterway moved westwards. In 210 BCE during his fifth eastern tour, Qin Shi Huang dispatched 3000 crimson-clad convicts to cut through Jingyan Mountain near Zhenjiang, digging a canal to neutralise the “imperial aura”. The term “crimson” (丹) gave rise to the city’s alias Dantu, while this impulsive engineering created Qu’a—embryonic form of Zhenjiang’s canal system. Since then, the Yangtze River has flowed all the way to the southeast along this 124-km-long man-made river, connecting with the ones opened by Fu Cha and Fan Li in the Spring and Autumn period, winding eastwards to Changzhou and Wuxi, and directly to Suzhou and Hangzhou.



Map of the Grand Canal in the Qing Dynasty—Zhenjiang-Yangzhou Section

In the early years when Jianye (now Nanjing) was the capital city of the Eastern Wu, the Dantu Waterway was used as the main transport. In order to protect the grain and goods from the extreme stormy weather on the Yangtze River, an artificial river was set up directly from Jurong to Jianye. Sun Quan sent his Lieutenant Chen Xun to open the Po Gang Canal in the south of Jurong County. This man-made river connected the Qinhuai water system on the west with Yanling and Yunyang on the west, and finally met with the Dantu Waterway. Carved through mountains, it was named the Po Gang Canal. During Emperor Wu of Liang's reign, the Po Gang Canal was abolished and replaced by the Shang Rong Canal. Though slightly diverging in route, both canals connected Jurong to Jianye via Baoyan at the Dantu-Danyang border and Chishan Lake. During the Six Dynasties, these two rivers linked the Qinhuai River-Taihu Lake system via the inland rather than the Yangtze River. Close ties were formed among the political centre of Jianye, the economic centre of Wuhui and the military town of Jingkou. And the economy of regions along the riverbanks had grown ever since. At that time, a fixed ferry route network covered the area around Jingkou and Guangling (now Yangzhou). During the late Western Jin Dynasty, the "Yongjia Southward Migration" saw the largest population influx from Yangzhou to Jingkou, accounting for nearly half of the total migrants.

Following the Sui Dynasty's unification of China and establishment of its capital in Chang'an, Nanjing lost its status as the political centre and reverted to an ordinary prefecture. This shift led to the restoration of the waterway route from Jingkou into the Yangtze River. In the sixth year of Emperor Yang's reign, he "decreed that the river should run from Jingkou to Yuhan through the south of the Yangtze River. The river should be over 800 miles wide and more than 10 feet wide, so that it could be spacious enough for the dragon boats to pass through. Stage palaces and cottages should be set up along the river route during the Emperor's Eastern Inspection tour to Kuaiji" (*Suiji V, Zizhi Tongjian, volume 181*, Sima Guang and etc., the Northern Song Dynasty). Thus, the Qianlong Edition of *The Zhenjiang Prefectural Gazetteer* states: "The canal at Jingkou originated from the First Emperor's era, not the Sui Dynasty... Emperor Yang did not create a new system but merely expanded its scale." After the Six Dynasties, the Jiangnan region was highly developed in terms of its production capability. According to *The Book of Sui, Volume 31, Geography*, in Sanwu (Three Wu Regions), "Jingkou reaches Wuhui to the east, rivers

and lakes to the south, and the capital to the west. ... There are counties in the region with countless rivers and fertile land. Many traders and merchants gather here all drawn by the rare exotic treasures.” Such an abundance transformed the region into a new economic centre that was immensely attractive to the Sui regime. Out of its political imperatives, the Sui regime made adjustments as well as improvements to the transport as a means of operating and enhancing its control over the Three Wu Regions.

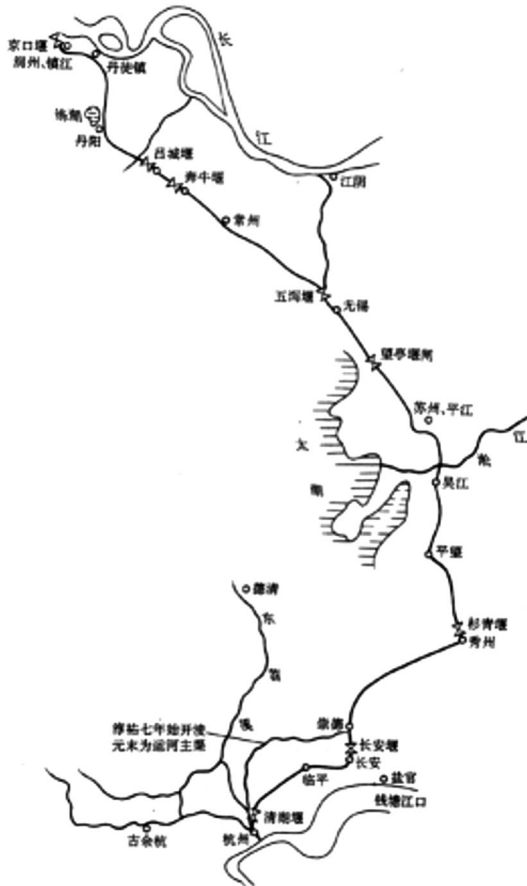
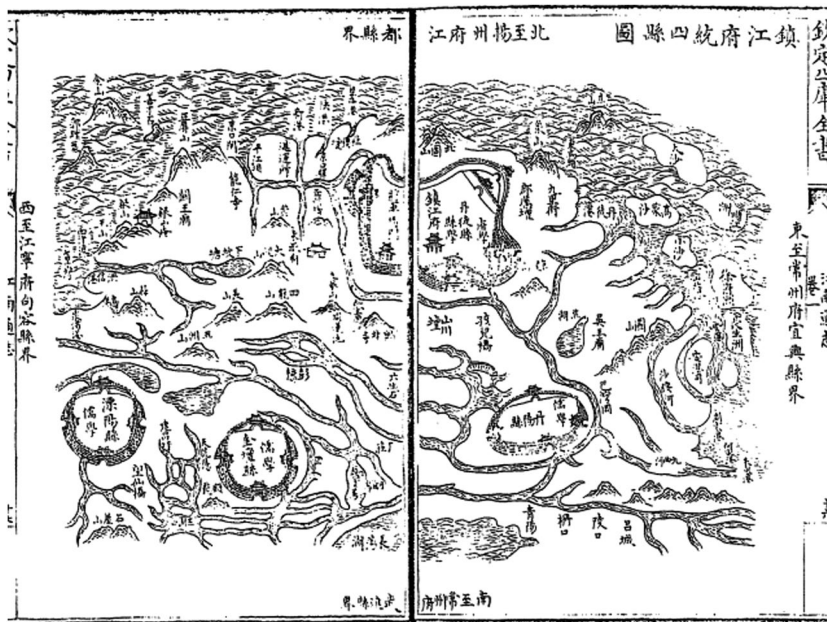


Diagram of the Jiangnan Canal before the Yuan Dynasty (*History of the Beijing-Hangzhou Canal*, Hanyuan ed.)

The construction of the Zhenjiang Section of the Jiangnan Canal was a demanding project because Zhenjiang had surrounding hills more than any other places at the time”. Forged from the wisdom and labour of countless workers, the canal’s completion revolutionised nationwide transport efficiency while “securing enduring benefits for generations to come”. Unfortunately, the Sui dynasty was a short-lived imperial dynasty, and its second ruler Yang Guang was considered as one of the worst tyrants in Chinese history. Given the waste of money and manpower, the construction project of the canal became his major misdeed, albeit its beneficial effect on the country’s livelihood in the long run. It was not until later generations that the significance of the canal started to reveal. Li Jifu, the Chancellor of the Emperor Xianzong of the Tang Dynasty, once remarked, “While the Sui’s construction demanded immense labour, later generations reaped its enduring benefits” (*Annals of the Yuanhe Country, Volume 5*, Li Jifu, the Tang Dynasty). The renowned Tang poet Bai Juyi depicted the majestic landscape of the Jiangnan Canal region with his verse, “A calm lake of seven hundred miles nurtures pieces of fertile land.”

The formation and growth of the Jiangnan Canal facilitated the water transport. Moreover, it played a key role in the development of the canal cities. Among them was Zhenjiang which benefited from the advanced river network in the Taihu Lake Plain. As the Jiangnan Canal’s gateway to the Yangtze River, Zhenjiang enjoyed unparalleled advantages in maritime and riverine transport. Goods from the Taihu Lake Basin in Jiangsu-Zhejiang regions were distributed nationwide via Zhenjiang Port through the canal, while northern commodities were redirected through Jiangbei Canal to southeastern China. This dual flow of goods significantly elevated the port’s strategic status and logistical importance. As a result, Zhenjiang soon became an important political and economic region, a military town in the southeast in ancient times, and later grew into a city known for its industry and commerce as well as its transport industry.



Map of the Four Counties of Zhenjiang Prefecture (from *Jiangnan Tongzhi*, Vol. 3, Huang Jun et al., rev., the Qing Dynasty)

With the frequent passage of boats, Zhenjiang became the hub of north-south waterway transport. Among these crossings, Xijin Ferry stood out as the most renowned, crowned by modern scholars as the “Foremost Ferry Under Heaven”. “Suanshan lacks peaks, yet its northern cliffs hang over the river”. This “Suanshan Ferry”, now known as Xijin Ferry, served as Zhenjiang’s sole crossing to the northern bank. On the east side stood Xiang Shan as a barrier to block the surging tide. On the north side, the ferry met with the ancient Han Canal, with a natural harbour consisting of its sheer river cliffs along the riverbank.

One could ferry to Guazhou on the opposite bank from the Xijin Ferry. It was said that the river was 40 miles wide in the Qin and Han Dynasties and still 20 miles wide in the Tang Dynasty. The Tang poet Meng Haoran once recorded the wide river and the dangerous waves in his poem “The Yangzijiang Ferry Overlooks Jingkou”, “The tides surge when the wind rises, leaving the ferrymen in dismay”. During the Tianbao era of the Tang Dynasty, hundreds of civilian boats sank to the bottom here by strong

winds. During the Wanli era of the Ming Dynasty, thousands of canal boats were damaged in the gales. Despite the harsh weather, endless crowds flocked here, simply because this was the key ferry connecting various places both in the north and the south. Free ferry services and the Life Saving Society were set up from the Song Dynasty onwards. In the Qing Dynasty, the increasing siltation gradually pushed the riverbank northwards and the ferry port down to the foot of Yushan, next to the Chao An Temple. The old Xijin Ferry is now over 300 metre (m) away from the Yangtze riverbank.

Xijin Ancient Ferry stands as a living witness to Zhenjiang's port-driven economy over 1600 years. During the Six Dynasties period, the Jingkou Market played a key role in the transportation of goods ranging from grains, textiles, and silk fabrics to maritime products, celadon procelain, and gold-silver-jade artifacts. From the Sui and Tang dynasties until the Ming and Qing dynasties, materials such as grain, tribute and silk were also transported from the Jiangnan region northwards the capital.

Amidst the political chaos and disruption of the military-agricultural colonies system in the late Eastern Jin Dynasty, local officials, civilians, and garrison troops capitalised on the region's strategic transport networks to engage in commercial transshipment. They used the advantageous conditions of transport and collected wealth by engaging in business. "They all made their way up and down the boats on the busy river". Among them, the migrant Diao clan in Jingkou excelled commercially. After fleeing south during the Yongjia Turmoil, Diao Xie and his family leveraged military and civilian networks to dominate logistics between Jianye and Jingkou. Other male members of the Diao family joined the business and soon became rich, owning thousands of hectares of land and countless servants. Diao Xie's grandson, Diao Kui was a man of power and wealth. But he also had a bad reputation as the "worm of Jingkou". He was later eliminated by Emperor Wu of Song and the Diao family's assets were distributed to the civilians. Legend has it that the distribution process took days because the amount of assets was ridiculously huge. "There were thousands of officials in Jingkou and whoever took their posts became extremely rich". Only a few officials did not engage in transshipment or commercial activities. Most of the locals were also traders. Liu Yu, the founding emperor of the Liu Song Dynasty, was once even a shoe seller when he lived in Jingkou at a young age.

The thriving mercantile culture in Jingkou spurred robust growth in local commerce. Specialised guilds dealing in grains, textiles, liquor, poultry, and local produce flooded the city. The service industries emerged

shortly afterwards. Places such as inns, taverns, teahouses, theatres, storytelling houses, and bathhouses sprang up across every corner. Zhenjiang was known as the ‘Silver Wharf’ because of its vibrant financial activities, attracting countless merchants and traders from all over the country, which in turn catalysed the catering industry’s expansion, with eateries profile rating to serve the transient trade elites.



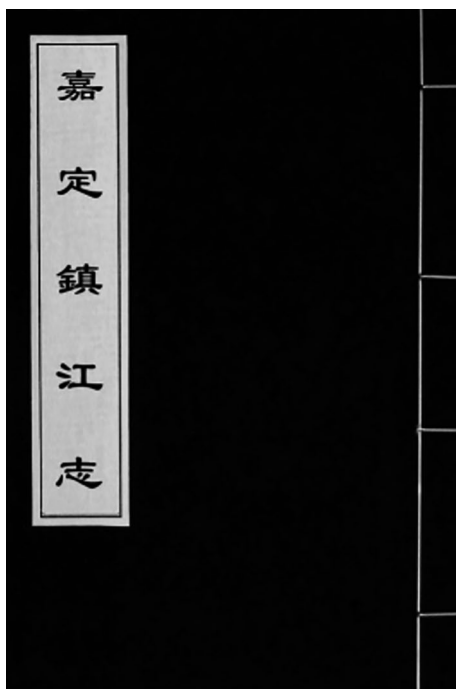
Old Xijin Ferry, Zhou Hao, the Qing Dynasty

2 BUSTLING SCENES AND BRIGHT LIGHTS AT THE RIVERBANKS

During the Sui and Tang dynasties, all the routes of The Grand Canal were completed. The convergence of the Yangtze River and the Grand Canal here formed the nation’s largest golden crosswater junction, further cementing Zhenjiang’s role as Jiangnan’s primary gateway to the Yangtze. In a unified feudal state, the smooth water traffic in Zhenjiang began to take on a national significance. By then, Zhenjiang had ranked among the premier cities of southeastern China.

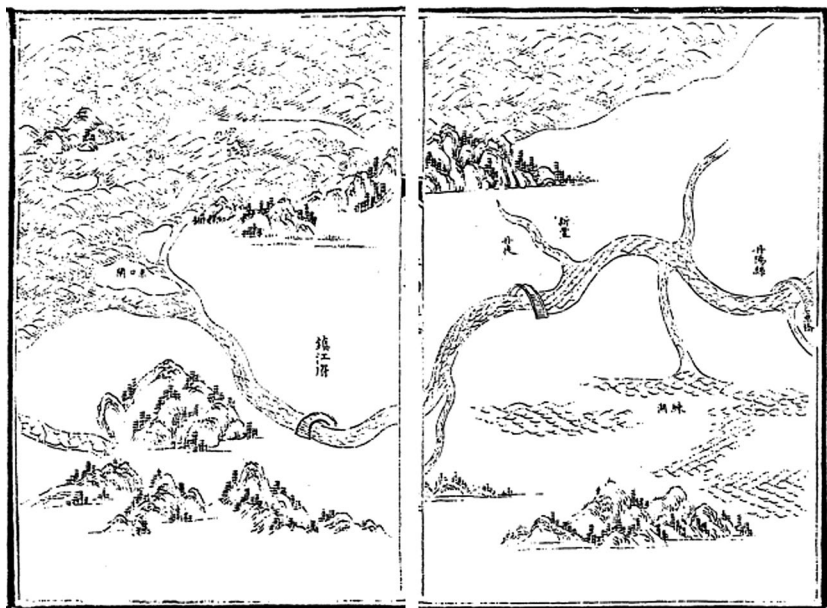
In the Tang and Song dynasties, canal transport was the main form of water transport in Zhenjiang. With the constant economic growth in

Jiangnan, it became a norm to transport grain from the south to the north. This also led to large-scale Caoyun (tribute grain transport) through the canal in Zhenjiang. Grain and tribute produced in Taihu and Qiantang rivers were normally transported to Zhenjiang from the Jiangnan Canal and then transferred to the north. Even materials from further southern regions of Guangdong and Guangxi were transported through Zhenjiang, making it the chock point of transport. In *Jiading Zhenjiang Zhi* published in the Song Dynasty, “Jingkou is the key to the north and south, controlling the south part of the Yangtze River. ... It is an essential place for transporting the tribute and military supplies ... merchants from Shu and outside the borders gather here, boats from the southeast, the southwest and the Jianghuai region meet here. One can get easy access to the canal through rivers and watercourses.” A transfer cabin was set up in the Northern Song Dynasty followed by a large military warehouse in the Southern Song Dynasty, making Zhenjinag a genuine gain storage centre.



Jiading Zhenjiang Zhi, Lu Xian rev., the Song Dynasty

During the Tang Dynasty, the annual amount of grain shipments from southeastern China to the capital via water transport fluctuated between hundreds of thousands to over a million dan (approx. 59 kilograms each). During the Northern Song Dynasty, 1.5 million dan of grain were transported from the two Zhejiang provinces (eastern and western Zhejiang) each year. Ming-Qing records show routine southern grain shipments exceeding 2-3 million dan. Zhenjiang thus played a pivotal part in the feudal system in ancient Chinese society. The smooth traffic flow in Port of Zhenjiang secured the country's political stability. When the Port of Zhenjiang was blocked, political turbulence would arise. Therefore, Zhenjiang had always been a political, economic and administrative centre of Jiangnan since the Tang and Song dynasties. Kangxi and Qianlong emperors' repeated inclusion of Zhenjiang in their Southern Tours underscored its imperial significance. During the Daoguang reign of the Qing Dynasty, Lin Zexu, then Governor of Jiangsu, personally overhauled canal governance here, removing systemic bottle necks to ensure unimpeded tribute grain logistics. Given Zhenjiang's role as the linchpin of southeastern tribute grain transport in Qing imperial governance, Lin personally supervised the transport of rice from Zhenjiang. Each year during winter and spring, the Xinjin Ferry would be bustling with crowded canal boats. At that time, large numbers of boats were moored in the curved bay on the right side of the river, waiting to be ferried to and from the river mouth. The Qing poet Yu Shuzhi described the grand view along the riverbank in his poem *Paddles on the Yilou River in Guazhou*, "The grain ships leave Xijin one after another while sails shining by the waterside. They enter Guazhou smoothly over the canal and gallop all the way to the capital". The famed Qing poet Zha Shenxing once exclaimed, "Endless fleets bore grain along three thousand li (approx. 1500 km), while a ribbon of lights traced shores lined with myriad households." The rise of the canal further shaped Zhenjiang into a transfer port for commercial goods. During the Tang and Song Dynasties, tea from the southeast and celadon porcelain from Jingdezhen in Jiangxi were sold northwards through the canal to the Central Plains. A considerable quantity of tea and porcelain also appeared on the market in Zhenjiang. In the Southern Song Dynasty, an ample amount of supplies was transferred from Zhenjiang to Lin'an and the capital. Here one could find white rice from Jiangxi, tea, salt, fine silk from Huainan, gold and ironware and feathers from Jinhu. Along the Zhenjiang-Changzhou section of the canal was the bustle and hustle at each port. The river was always covered with hundreds of thousands of boats.



Map of Caoyun (grain transport) of Zhenjiang (from *Jiangnan Tongzhi*, vol. 3, Huang Jun, etc. rev., the Qing Dynasty)

The Song Dynasty saw the rise of market towns. New towns such as Lyucheng, Lingkou, Xinfeng, and Dantu emerged on the Zhenjiang section of the Jiangnan Canal. During the Southern Song Dynasty, Lyucheng in Danyang became a prosperous town. During the Song Dynasty, Zhenjiang Prefecture ranked 11th nationwide in terms of the amount of commercial taxes, which reflected its well-developed commerce. By the Yuan Dynasty, Zhenjiang's commercial taxes totalled 190,000 guan (apprx. tons of silver equivalent), ranking first among the provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang. In his travelogue, Marco Polo noted that "Zhenjiang's people sustain themselves through commerce and industry, amassing considerable wealth." During the Qing Dynasty, Zhenjiang reached its zenith as an industrial-commercial powerhouse. As *Jiangnan Tongzhi* published in the Kangxi era recorded, "Jingkou thrives as a hub of ceaseless land-water traffic, where merchants converge to exchange goods, circulating all commodities."

Like any other port city emerging from the riversides, Zhenjiang relies heavily on its water transport and is well known for its thriving

shipbuilding and repair industries to meet riverine and canal transport demands, forming the cornerstone of its handicraft economy since antiquity. In the 15th year of Jiading in the Southern Song Dynasty (1222), the governor of Zhenjiang, Zhao Shanting trained a 500-soldier marine corps and commissioned to build 500 ships equipped with multiple paddles. These ships could almost “fly” over the water. Two large ships named Red Bird and White Goose could each carry more than 2000 people. In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Zhenjiang’s shipbuilding industry moved into a new phase where battleships, ships for transport use, grain ships and commercial ships were manufactured. It is worth noticing that most of the ships used in Zheng He’s expeditions were built here. Meanwhile, the shipbuilding industry also boosted other new industries manufacturing such as cable, tung oil, nails and wood processing. The famous Dasuo Jie outside the Zhenjiang city was first set up in the Song Dynasty and later became one of the most prosperous streets by the canal in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. With the economic development and population growth, an increasing number of new street markets came into being in Zhenjiang. They spread all over the city both on the main roads and along the river, interlaced with one another. A wide range of interesting names can be found on these streets. For example, “An ordinary lane bordered with shrubs and trees standing in the setting sun is where Emperor Wu of Song once lived.” These street names may seem nothing special but behind each is a unique story to be told.

Take Youtang Lane as an example, it was originally called Oil-Coal Lane in *Records of the Dantu County*. It was said that here once lived two families, You and Tang. When the You family started to build a house, the Tang family asked them to leave three feet on the ground, which led to a dispute between two families. At that time, the You family held a higher position at the central government while the Tang was only a local official. One day a You member wrote a letter to his father, an imperial official in the capital. Unexpectedly, the father only replied, “A home letter travels a long way about nothing but a wall. It does not hurt to give way to them. Think about the Great Wall built by Qin Shihuang. The emperor is dead now, but the Great Wall stands still. So, there is no need to make a fuss about such thing.” After reading the letter, the You family felt mortified for their behaviour and left three feet. The Tang family were also moved by this warm gesture, so they did the same thing when building their house. This story is one of many that add on a human touch to Zhenjiang’s place names.

Lane, Peach Blossom Pier. Some places in Zhenjiang are number based: 1 Quan Road, 2 Dao Xiang, 3 Guan Tang, 4 Pailou, 5 Tiao Street, 6 Bai Du, 7 Li Dian, 8 Jiao Ting, 9 Li Street, 18 Jin, 53 Po, Qian (1000) Qiu Bridge, and Wan (10,000) Gu Yi Ren Xiang. The Xijundu Street itself tells the biography of China. As the saying goes, “No other city street could rival the Xijundu Street throughout the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, from the ancient to the present”. In Zhenjiang, markets and shops were lined up along the river, many among them were teahouses and restaurants, including the famous Bai Sui Lou and Furong Lou. Zhenjiang was also known for its Bei Fu wine. A popular proverb once said “Jingkou is famous for its wine, handicrafts and soldiers”. Xiao Yan also known as Emperor Wu of Liang, used to host state banquets here and thousands of people were entertained at one time. The Liang poet Hu Shilong once commented on this magnificent scene, “Who is singing to the moon by the Wan Sui Building and who is playing the flageolet on the Qian Qiu Bridge?”



The Jinchun Garden, a Famous Garden in Zhenjiang (from *Guazhou Zhi, Extended*)

Among all the eight bridges over the canal, the Green Water Bridge is the most famous one. With willows lingering along the river sides, a picturesque view spread across the canal. This was also captured in poetry across dynasties. In his poem *Seeing off Li Deyu*, the Tang poet Liu Yuxi's recorded the prosperous city, "Ten thousand people from the Jiangbei came to catch a glimpse of officials. The golden cymbals were drawn by a thousand horsemen from the Jiangnan. The phoenix glides over the mighty sea and the cranes return to their old nests. Grain of all sorts is shipped off on the clear waves. Three cottages stand on a mountain peak faraway. The mythical creatures are hovering overhead and all I can recall now is the old paradise of Zhufang." When the Late Tang poet Du Mu strolled along the Green Water Bridge he was tempted by the scenery, "One can find no trace of horses in the Qing Tai temple but a line-up of restaurants by the Green Water Bridge." In the Northern Song Dynasty, the poet and monk Zhongshu wrote these lyrics on his poem *Green Water Bridge*, "Nanxu (now Zhenjiang) is indeed a good place. The green waves popple under the bridge. The cranes gather around the ancient painted pillars. There is no sound from an oriole in early March, but one can hear the music during the Qingming Festival. On the riverbanks, tunes are ringing in the flower market, guests are enjoying their wine and lights are shining bright. There, the Yizhou Pavilion stands still in the moonlight."

3 CENTRE OF FIERCE BATTLES THROUGH TIME

The Jiangnan cities are usually perceived as gentle and elegant. But this is just one side of Zhenjiang. This city also has some heroic ingredients in its composition. Take Yangzhou for instance, it is opposite Zhenjiang across the river. The city is just as a romantic Tang poem, with singing and dancing in the air and rivers flowing under small bridges. Whilst Zhenjiang, as its name, has an impression of roughness.

Zhenjiang is known for its "surrounding hills and rivers". Inside the city, although these mountains may not be that high or steep, they come in the most sophisticated form of "three mountains, six ridges and seventy-two small hills". Outside the city run several long rivers and streams. The city exudes a majestic vigour distinct from typical southern cities. Such an imposing character, shaped by its rugged landscape, has forged locals with northern-style boldness akin to mountain-reared warriors.

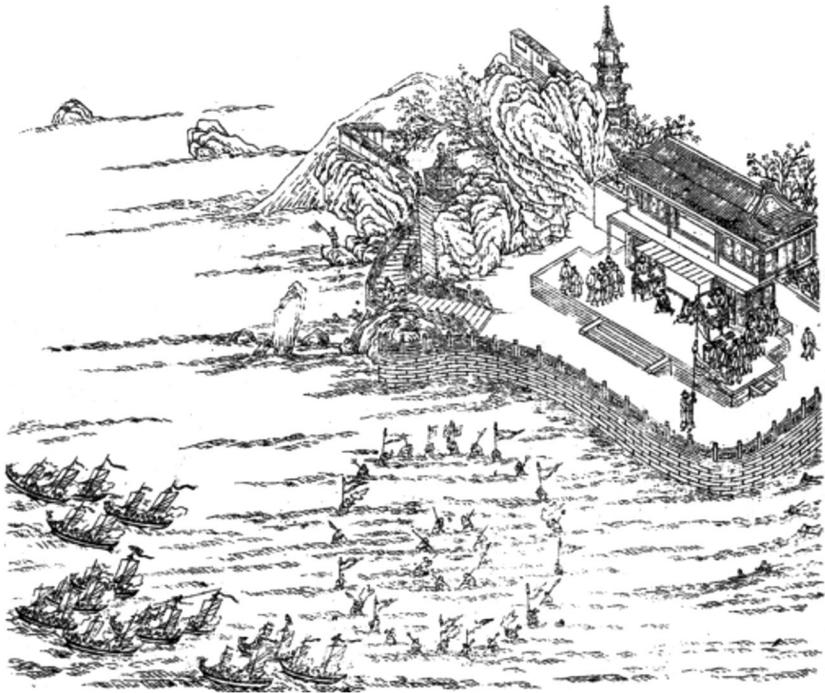
Zhenjiang's crucial military status in ancient times has been precisely documented in words. As Chen Liang of the Song Dynasty recorded,

“Hills surround Jingkou on three sides and a river runs across it. A grand view reaches a thousand miles long over the river, fierce as a tiger out of its cave” (*Longchuan Collection, vol. 1*). Lu You once wrote in his poem *Shuidiao Getou*, “Among all the cities by the left side of the river, the ancient Xuzhou (now Zhenjiang) is the most outstanding one.” In fact, Zhenjiang did not receive much attention prior to the Three Kingdoms. It was until the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty, when Sun Quan seized the eastern part of the river and established the state of Wu, that Zhenjiang’s military status emerged. As the Tang historian Du You commented in his *Tongdian*, “Jingkou (now Zhenjiang) is built on a fortress of mountains and a border of rivers. Jingkou to Jianye (now Nanjing) is as much as Mengjin to Luoyang. Jingkou is the key to the stability of the east and the south. If its defence ever goes wrong, then Jianye will be in great danger! In the Six Dynasties Jingkou served as a military fortress and protected the safety of the capital.” The history that followed bore witness to those close ties between Zhenjiang and Nanjing.

Zhenjiang’s national military importance was also documented in Gu Zuyu’s *A Chronicle of Ancient History* (The Qing Dynasty). In this book, a quote from *River Defence* (The Ming Dynasty) said, “Jingkou borders Shitou (now Nanjing) to the west, the sea to the east and Guangling to the north. There are two steep mountains standing in the way of rivers in Jingkou. This is indeed a place with harsh conditions.”

During the period of national unification, Zhenjiang was the choke point for north-south traffic; during the time period of division, it became the front line between the north and the south. The earliest garrison here dates back to the Northern Government Troops of the Eastern Jin Dynasty. From the mid-Tang dynasty onwards, it was the seat of the Zhenjiang Navy Force. With its jurisdiction over Runzhou, Suzhou, Changzhou, Hangzhou, Huzhou, and Muzhou in western Zhejiang Province, Zhenjiang was pivotal to the security of the southeast. During the Song Dynasty, its navy troops was renamed Zhenjiang Army and Runzhou was later upgraded to Zhenjiang Prefecture. This was when “Zhenjiang” became the official name. During the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, food supplies were transported from the south to the capital of Beijing in the north. Zhenjiang played a pivotal role of the canal transport, which made it a target during the political turbulence. In the early Qing Dynasty, Zheng Chenggong, under the banner of restoring the Ming Dynasty, sent troops from the sea into the Yangtze River. Guazhou and Zhenjiang were first seized too. According to Zheng’s generals, Gan Hui

During the First Opium War, Shanghai was occupied by the British. Despite the fact the Qing Dynasty was rushing for negotiation, the British was not satisfied with its control over the coastal areas. In order to impose the full terms of the invasion upon the Qing dynasty of China, the British army sailed up the river to capture Zhenjiang and control the canal operation. They then blocked Wusongkou to stop the sea transport and cut off the movement of grain throughout the empire. The British launched the Yangtse river campaign, which triggered the Battle of Zhenjiang. Engels once spoke highly of the heroic resistance of the garrison flag soldiers and the people in Zhenjiang. He pointed out in his article *New Anglo Expedition to China*, the ultimate purpose of this British invasion was to “force the Qing to sue for peace by seizing its vital waterway and its capital.” “If the British invaders had faced the same resistance everywhere, they could never have reached Nanjing.” Just as Engels incisively predicted, the Qing dynasty was devastatingly weakened once Zhenjiang fell.



Drills on the River at Jin Mountain

The British invaders had an insatiable desire for even more after the war. Alcock, the British Consulate at Shanghai, proposed to Bonham, the Governor of Hong Kong that a new war be waged to capture Zhenjiang for further expansion of interests in China. After the Second Opium War in 1861, Zhenjiang was forced to open as the first treaty port.

4 THE SPLENDOUR OF THREE MOUNTAINS

Apart from its geopolitical importance in linking the north and the south, Zhenjiang is also a great touristic city. It is famed for its scenic beauty and notable people. Here, the green rivers have been flowing for centuries. Behind the ancient temples and pavilions are the legends and tales to be told. However, before the canal was built Zhenjiang was basically “behind the veil”. Compared to the world-famous Suzhou and Hangzhou and the scenic Yangzhou, Zhenjiang was much less known because it was difficult to access at the time. Thanks to the opening of the canal, the communication was greatly facilitated between Zhenjiang and other cities in the country. Since then, Zhenjiang had become one of popular towns on the canal. Emperors, royals and scholars across dynasties had travelled here down the river. Scholars marvelled at Zhenjiang’s landscapes, composing poetry that imbued its natural scenery with cultural depth. Mountains and rivers were thus transformed into cultural landmarks, reflecting a civilisation intrinsically tied to its terrain while elevating Zhenjiang’s renown.

Among all the surrounding hills in Zhenjiang, three mountains are particularly famous, namely Beigu Mountain, Jin Mountain and Jiao Mountain. Beigu Mountain is the most precipitous one and played an important role in the north-south warfare across successive dynasties in ancient China. 1500 years ago, shortly after his accession to the throne, Emperor Wu of Liang of the Sixth Dynasty ascended Beigu Mountain and declared it as “Peerless Landscape Under Heaven.” The local officials in Jingkou were immensely thrilled at the emperor’s praise. They immediately put up a stone monument with inscriptions on for people to admire. The famous Ganlu Temple, Dujing Tower and Beigu Pavilion on the mountain were all built during the period when Li Deyu served as the Governor of Jingkou in the Tang Dynasty. During the Northern Song Dynasty, the famed Iron Pagoda at Ganlu Temple was built in honour of Li Deyu.



Portrait of Li Deyu

Many visitors come to visit Beigu Mountain because it features in “Romance of the Three Kingdoms”, the classic Chinese historical novel by the Ming writer Luo Guanzhong. In the 54th chapter of “The Romance of the Three Kingdoms”, Liu Bei, the warlord of Shu Han, met his bride, the noble Lady Sun of the Eastern Wu. The story is widely spread among the people of Zhenjiang. Legend has it that Sun Quan, the Emperor of Wu, adopted Zhou Yu’s plan to offer the marriage of his sister to Liu Bei. The marriage was a ruse because Sun Quan purposed to take back Jingzhou from the hands of Liu Bei after the Battle of Red Cliffs. But such a scheme was already spotted by Zhuge Liang, the most accomplished military strategist in history. Turning the trap into their own advantage, Zhuge Liang advised Liu Bei to reach Sun Quan’s aunt Wu Guotai through Qiao Guolao, Sun Ce’s father-in-law. When Wu Guotai met with Liu Bei at the Ganlu Temple on Beigu Mountain, she was extremely impressed by this man and became furious when she later learned it was actually a ruse. When Sun Quan later discovered the marriage proposal was a ruse, he furiously confronted Liu Bei. At the end, this “marriage” offer turned to be a real one. Liu Bei then married Lady Sun and brought her back to Shu Han from Eastern Wu. Meanwhile, Sun Quan and Zhou Yu sent troops after Liu Bei but were defeated by Zhuge Liang’s ambush tactic. This was where an old saying came from, “loss of both bride and troops”. Yet for Liu Bei, as Zhenjiang local quip, it was “steering the dragon boat while feasting on rice dumplings”—a double triumph.

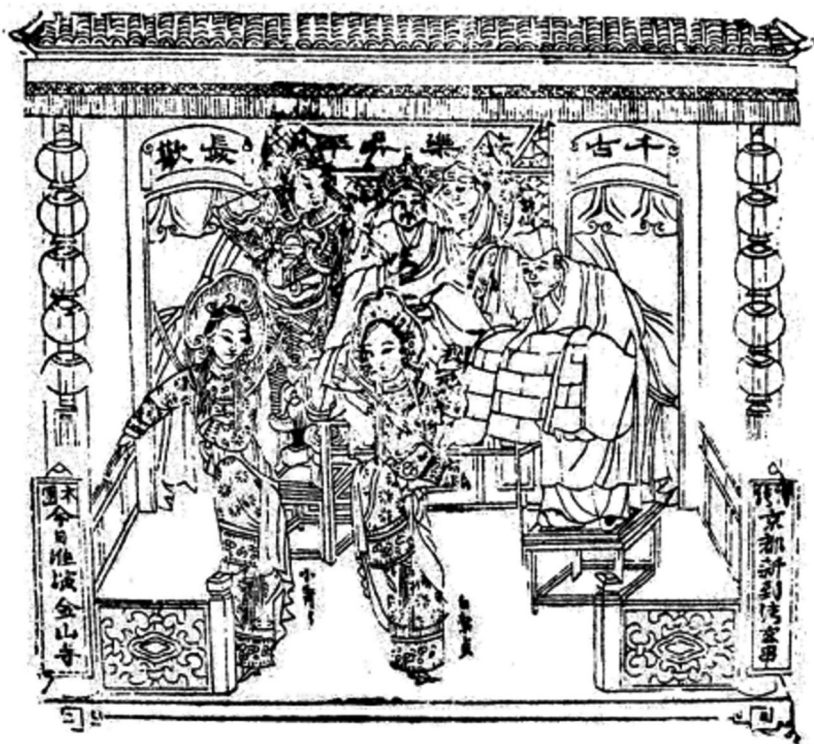
Once can still find the trace of this story from the names of building on Beigu Mountain today, such as the Son-in-law House, the Dressing House, to name a few. The famous Lingyun Pavilion is commonly known as the River Sacrifice Pavilion. According to legend, Liu Bei died in the White Emperor City and his wife, Sun Shangxiang, threw herself into the river from this pavilion in grief. Although having its twists and turns, the story is part historical and part fictional. For example, a year before Liu Bei's arrival in the capital of Eastern Wu, Sun Quan had already arranged this diplomatic marriage in order to shore up alliances of the two states. The name *Wu Guotai* was not even mentioned in any official historical document either. As for the Gulu Temple, it was built by Li Deyu in the Tang Dynasty, some 600 years later. Jingkou witnessed the alliance between Liu Bei and Sun Quan against their mutual rival, Cao Cao. Numerous heroic deeds were left on Beigu Mountain. It is said that Liuma Creek was the place where they competed in horsemanship. Two ambitious emperors once looked out over the Yangtze River from the Stone Goat at Ganlu Temple.



Ganlu Temple Crowned the Ancient Bei Gu Mountain

Zhenjiang's local proverb captures its essence that goes "Jiao Mountain's temple veiled in hills, Jin Mountain's hill craddled by temples". Known as "a lotus blossoming in the heart of the river", Jin Mountain was originally an island in the Yangtze River. The beauty of this "flower" was captured by poets and writers across dynasties. Du Guangting of the Tang Dynasty described it as "an island standing still in the centre when countless rivers are rushing eastwards." In the mid-Tang poet Zhang Hu's poem, "Trees cast shadows in the midst of the river and there comes the bell along the riverbanks." Shen Kuo of the Northern Song Dynasty also wrote, "Towers stand in the river. A mirror of the sky between the two shores." As the main body of the Yangtze River moved north afterwards, Jin Mountain gradually reached the southern shore and eventually went ashore. There used to be a trend of "riding a donkey up to Jin Mountain", especially in the late Qing Dynasty when it became a wonderful treat for the tourists when visiting the mountain. There are two versions of the name origin of Jin Mountain. One comes from the Buddhist classic "Avatamsaka Sutra" where Jin Mountain was mentioned, "Outside the South Island and in the Fragrant Sea, there are seven golden mountains surrounding Sumeru. Here the fragrant sea refers to the Yangtze River and the Seven Golden Mountains are the Jin Mountain. In another version, the area took its name from gold (金, jin in Chinese). In Wang Cun's *Jincheng Zhi*, a Tang monk named Pei Toutuo (as known as Fahai) came here to rebuild the temple and came across an altar of gold, which was later used for the renovation. This was where the names of Jin Mountain and Jinshan Temple came from.

In the Southern Dynasty, Jin Mountain became a Buddhist holy site in the south of the Yangtze River. Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty set up a solemn Bodhimaṇḍa here to relieve the dead from suffering. Since the Tang Dynasty, Jin Mountain has been home to a great number of monks and temples such as Monk Wenshu and Monk Baoguang, and Jinshan Temple and Gaomin Temple. Monks from all over the world came here for meditation and enlightenment. The accomplished monks Foyin and Daoyue used to settle here at Jinshan Temple, making it a must-visit place for dignitaries and literati during the Song Dynasty.



Jinshan Temple, Yangzhou Opera Printmaking, based on the setting of Jinshan Temple, the Qing Dynasty

The Jin Mountain is also the setting for the famous story of Su Dongpo leaving a jade belt.