

THE LAND OF HAKKA AT THE TRANS-CHINA RAILWAY

STUDY ON THE PROSPECTS OF DEVELOPPING
GANZHOU AREA OF JIANGXI PROVINCE (CHINA)
AS A DESTINATION FOR INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

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Guangzhou, October 2004

Introduction

In the context of investigating the tourism potential and developing a tourist master plan for Ganzhou Area in Jiangxi Province by the Centre for Tourism Planning and Research of Zhongshan University (Guangzhou), I was invited to give my comments on the area's potential for foreign tourism. Prior to this assignment, I have not known the place, which is in a way typical for the limited recognition of Ganzhou among foreigners. I have subsequently undertaken two study visits to the area (in June and September 2004) and started my Internet and library research. In this process, I became more and more interested and could finally compile this set of recommendations. I want to thank the local tourism officials, as well as the colleagues and students, who have helped me during these visits, especially Ms. Liao Cai Hua of Ganzhou Tourism Bureau and Xie Hui, who has helped with the research of Chinese language material. Thanks are also due to my wife Suan, who supported me a lot with translations.

This report is about the prospects of developing Ganzhou as a destination for international tourism. This calls for a definition of international tourism. In the case of China, cross-boundary tourism from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan would not be considered international in the sense of "between the nations". I have only considered those markets as far as their foreign residents are concerned. On the other hand, there is a significant number of ethnic Chinese in foreign countries, which are of course international tourists. So, I have considered them to some extent, but my main focus is on non-Chinese visitors. Finally, the geographic name Ganzhou may need some clarification, too. It is a city and an area. The latter is occasionally also called Gannan. I will in my report refer to Gannan if I explicitly mean the region, and to Ganzhou City if I explicitly mean the city. If both meanings are fine, I simply use Ganzhou.

01 **China is an increasingly popular international tourist destination.**

China is the international tourist destination of the future. Until only 20 years ago, the People's Republic of China was virtually unknown to the outside world as a tourist destination, but now both the demand for and the development of tourism products are expanding rapidly. China is still a new and developing market, but it is steadily moving towards a more mainstream type of visitors. There are many people in foreign countries, who are curious about China because of reports in the media and by their friends or colleagues, and consider visiting the country for the first time. At the same time, the number of repeat visits is increasing as well, opening up more chances for secondary destinations.

The main reasons for foreigners to consider a trip to China are:

- (a) The curiosity to experience a different culture and life-style. Visitors want to see people and their way of life, take photographs and taste their cuisine. More and more Westerners are also fascinated by what they know from the media about traditional aspects of Asian culture such as Fung Shui and Buddhism.
- (b) China is known as a very old and very rich culture. Visitors know about some outstanding examples of historical cultural heritage such as the Great Wall, the

Forbidden City or the Terracotta Army. They want to visit these buildings and sites and discover more cultural heritage, which is still less known at home.

- (c) The beauty and variety of Chinese landscapes. Places such as the Li River in Guangxi Autonomous Region, the Stone Forest in Yunnan, the Three Gorges and the Tibetan mountains are well known as beautiful destinations. Although landscapes are often harder to reach than cities, they are very attractive.
- (d) Many people in Western countries have already travelled to a lot of destinations. For them, the fact that China is still new and relatively unknown is a major point making them curious.
- (e) As a developing country and a developing tourist destination, China is still relatively inexpensive, especially for individual tourists.

Other common trip purposes such as relaxing or sportive activities are not typical for tourists wanting to go to China. Although this may change, for the time being culture and nature are the main selling points.

02 **But travelling in China is not easy for foreigners.**

While the demand for trips to China is clearly increasing, there is still a big unexploited potential, because it is not easy enough for foreigners to plan and enjoy their trips. The problems start already in the planning phase, when comprehensive, clear, up-to-date and pleasantly presented information on China is relatively hard to come by. For a couple of reasons, many destination choices are made less than well informed.

- (a) little knowledge of China geography on the side of the foreigner
- (b) a tourism industry which is still less mature than in other countries
- (c) the inability of most foreign tourist to understand the Chinese language.

This shortcoming can also be seen as a chance for individual destinations to stand out in the competition with others by addressing these needs well.

A destination, which is presented well in guidebooks and in the Internet, can have a great advantage over other, equally attractive destinations.

It is crucial that information is attractively and professionally presented on the Internet, and that it is available in foreign languages (especially in – correct - English). It would also be very useful if websites increasingly offered the possibility for online booking, for example of train and boat tickets, but also hotels and local tours.

In contrast to Asians, who usually favour group tours when travelling abroad, most Westerners are used to, and prefer to travel individually. This can be difficult in China, especially due to language problems. There is an evident conflict between the desire to travel freely and the necessity to obtain help from tour organisers, guides and interpreters for many non-Chinese speaking tourists. They handle this problem differently:

- (a) Join groups, although against their usual habit
- (b) Book organised individual tours with tour guides via agents from home
- (c) Equip themselves with guidebooks and contact other travellers for guidance
- (d) Stay away from China.

Tourism products in China have an advantage if they address this conflict and allow individual travel experiences without giving the tourist too much trouble.

Foreigners travelling in China will encounter other problems typical for developing tourist destinations, such as an at times unsatisfactory quality of service, infrastructure and environmental quality, and problems of intercultural communication with local people, who are mostly not used to contact with foreigners. This may reduce the chance of repeat visits, but there is no quick fix to this. Overall, my experience is that visitors, who have come once, will mostly be interested to visit China again, even though they encountered these problems.

03 Foreign tourism in China still focuses on relatively few places.

The choice of destinations by foreign tourist in China reflects the lack of information and other difficulties. The majority of trips are still concentrated on a relatively limited number of popular places. These are mostly urban, with cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Xian, Suzhou, Hangzhou and Guangzhou as major attractions. Other cities such as Kunming, Guilin, Chengdu and Chongqing are used as bases from which to reach nearby rural areas with attractive landscapes.

The popular destinations for foreigners are not necessarily the same that are also most popular among domestic tourists. It is remarkable that for example Guilin and the Li River were among the first destinations being developed for international tourism in China, and they still draw crowds of foreigners, whereas a landscape of arguably comparable beauty such as the Huang Shan is mostly frequented by Chinese. This may not so much reflect different preferences and choice, but lack of knowledge (some places are better known abroad for no particular reasons) and perceived accessibility. Especially in the early stages of tourism development, the tourists as well as tour organisers prefer to “follow the crowd” instead of stepping into unknown territory.

However, these early stages are about to come to an end. For several reasons the number of popular international tourism destinations in China will rise steadily.

- (a) With an increasing number of repeat visits secondary destinations become more interesting. On their second or third trip, people would not necessarily visit the same places again.
- (b) As there is more information available in foreign language guidebooks, in the Internet, through reports of other travellers and in the mass media, people get a better knowledge and can make more informed choices.
- (c) As the accessibility of places by public transport, the tourism infrastructure and the knowledge of English at least at hotels and major tourist spots is improving, more places can be considered as “easy” destinations.

This trend provides a good opportunity for new, secondary destinations to get “on the map” of foreign tourists, provided these destinations...

- make themselves known by the media, focussing on some unique features.
- provide detailed information, e.g. through the Internet, to those interested.
- are perceived as easily accessible by comfortable means of transport.
- are perceived as easily accessible for people who do not speak Chinese.

04 Ganzhou is not “on the map” yet.

The broadening of the geographic base of international tourism in China and demand for new, secondary destinations can be a chance for tourism development in Ganzhou. However, the city and the whole southern part of Jiangxi Province are not yet among such secondary destinations. It even has to be said that Ganzhou is at present virtually unknown among foreigners.

This is reflected in...

- (a) The minimal number of international tourists – which is small even if including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan Chinese, but effectively non-existent without them
- (b) A survey of English language guidebooks, most of which do not even mention Ganzhou, and none gives detailed information on anything in the southern part of Jiangxi. Nelles Guidebook (1995) even states that Jiangxi “is the region of China which is least known to tourism”.
- (c) An unsystematic survey among my friends and acquaintances in Hong Kong and Europe. Whereas most Chinese friends were at least aware of the location of Ganzhou, many foreigners did not even know Jiangxi Province, and none knew Ganzhou.
- (d) An English language search in the Internet. Only one China travel website – <http://www.ChinaPlanner.com> – could be found to include Ganzhou and give some basic information. It is however neither particularly attractive nor comprehensive and a bit troublesome to navigate. Other English language websites do not mention Ganzhou or southern Jiangxi at all, for example:

<http://www.chinatour.com>

<http://english.ctrip.com>

<http://adventure.iexplore.com>

<http://travel.yahoo.com>

<http://www.travelchinaguide.com>

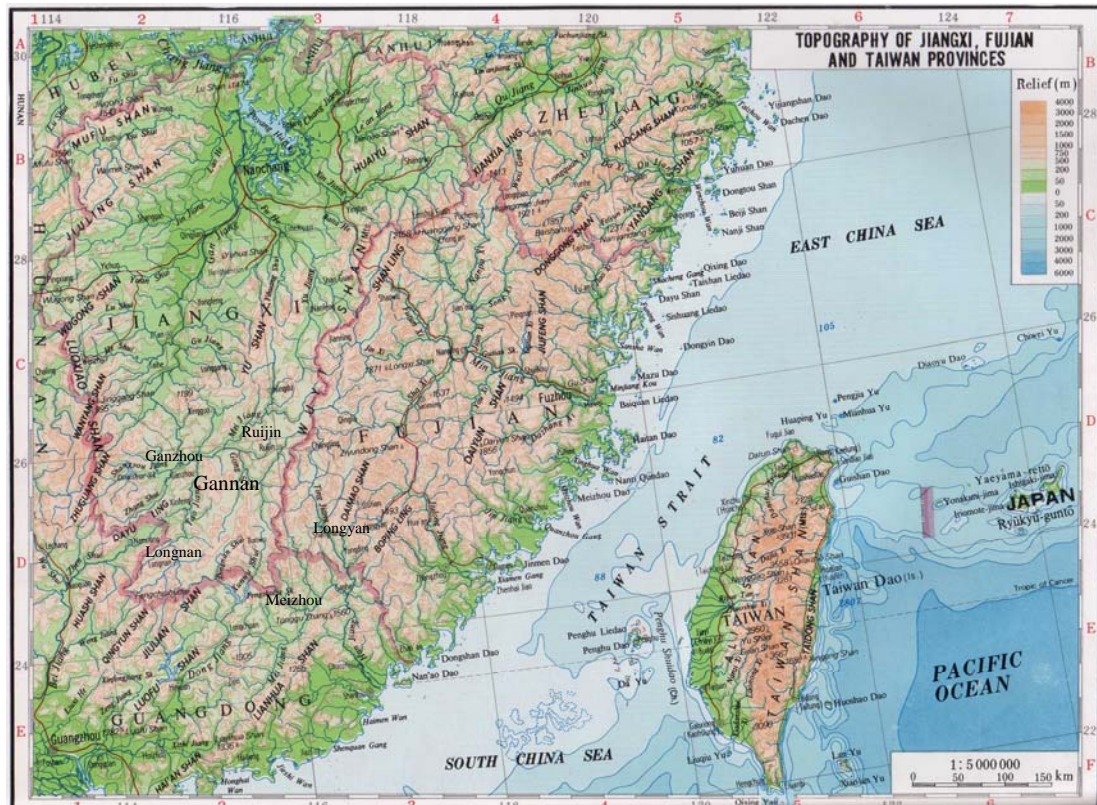
<http://www.redflag.info>

Before assessing the tourism resources, we have to recognize that Ganzhou is so far not even a secondary destination for international tourism. It is not known among foreigners and therefore not considered when planning their trips.

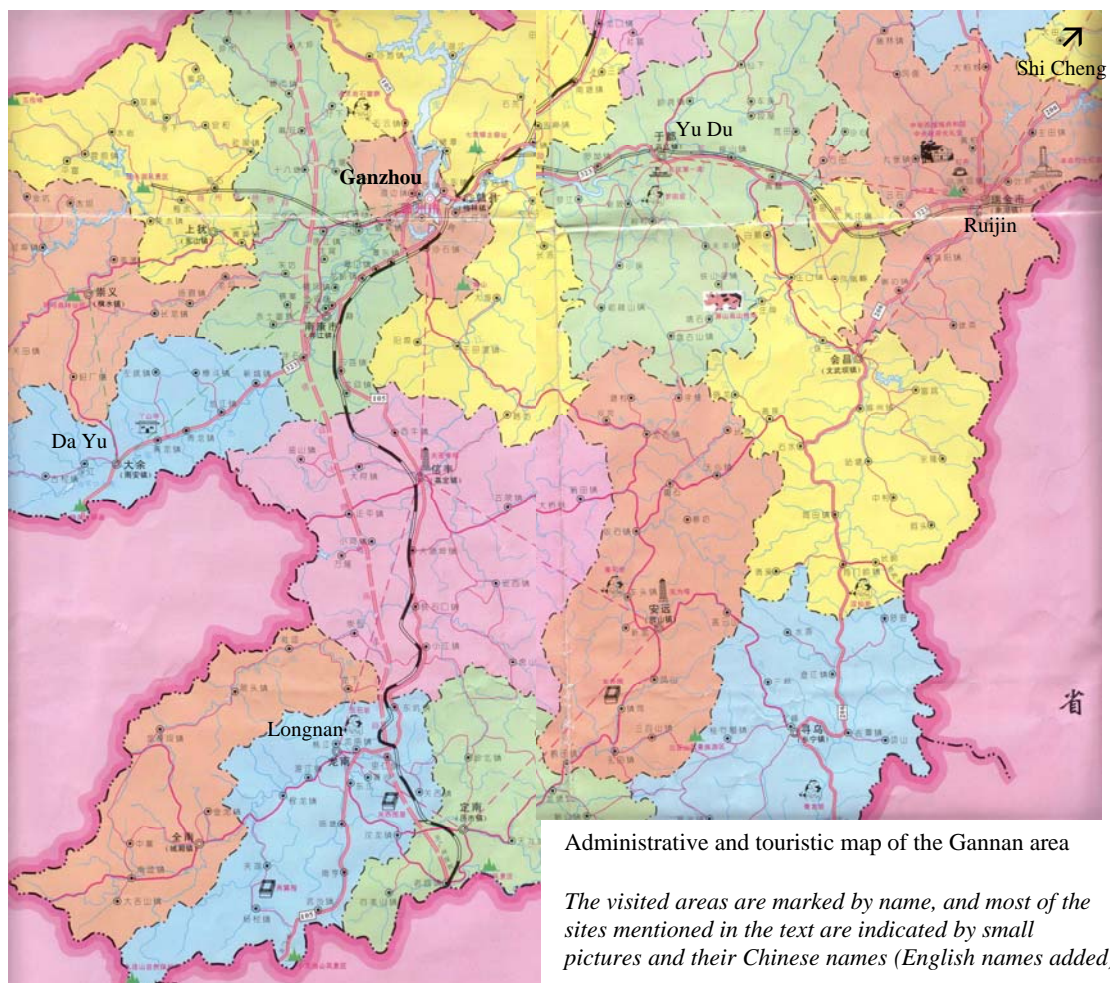
In a dynamic market this can change, given the suitable resources, a clear strategy and a sense of priority in comparison to other areas of development.

Ganzhou does have alternative sources of income such as mining, some industry and especially growing markets for its agricultural products. Improvements in transport and changes in consumer demand have opened up promising possibilities to expand agriculture towards more mountainous areas (e.g. milk farming) and higher income yielding products such as fruits and flowers. Whereas a focus on industry and mining can, because of the impact on environment and landscape, potentially conflict with the aim to develop tourism, this is not the case with agriculture. There are few areas of conflict between these two industries, but there are potential synergies. Agriculture can help to maintain an attractive, intact landscape, and grazing cows on a plateau or fields of fruits and flowers can become additional attractions for tourists.

It appears reasonable for Ganzhou to spend some effort on a tourism development plan for the region. This will probably focus primarily on domestic tourism, but it may be worthwhile in the context, to also consider the specific needs of international tourists in order to raise the variety of visitors, make the area better known, and open up new channels of revenue.



Topographic map of Ganzhou and the surrounding areas (Atlas of the People's Republic of China 1989)



Administrative and touristic map of the Gannan area

The visited areas are marked by name, and most of the sites mentioned in the text are indicated by small pictures and their Chinese names (English names added).

05 Meanwhile, there are good (though not top-level) tourism resources in Ganzhou.

When touring around the Ganzhou area, I found many pleasant and interesting sites, which do have some potential to attract tourists. My assessment is based on the following sites, which I have visited, and on the impressions I got along the way. It cannot reflect the whole extent of the area, but I trust it includes some of the most interesting places and is overall typical for the region.

The places visited in June and September 2004:

1. Yu Du

- (a) Yu Du features several sites reminding of the fact that the **Long March of the Red Army** started in 1934 in this region. A museum commemorating the historical events is under construction, next to the crossing point of the Yu Du River, a monument and a small house, where among others Mao Tsedong has stayed for some time. The house, a well-preserved example of a common Hakka-style building, has been turned into a museum.



- (b) South of Yu Du is the **Luo Tien Yan Monastery**, which is nicely situated in a mountainous area. It is a very pleasant site due to the ensemble of landscape, architecture and practising monks, and one should strive to maintain its peace and authenticity despite a possible increase of tourist numbers.

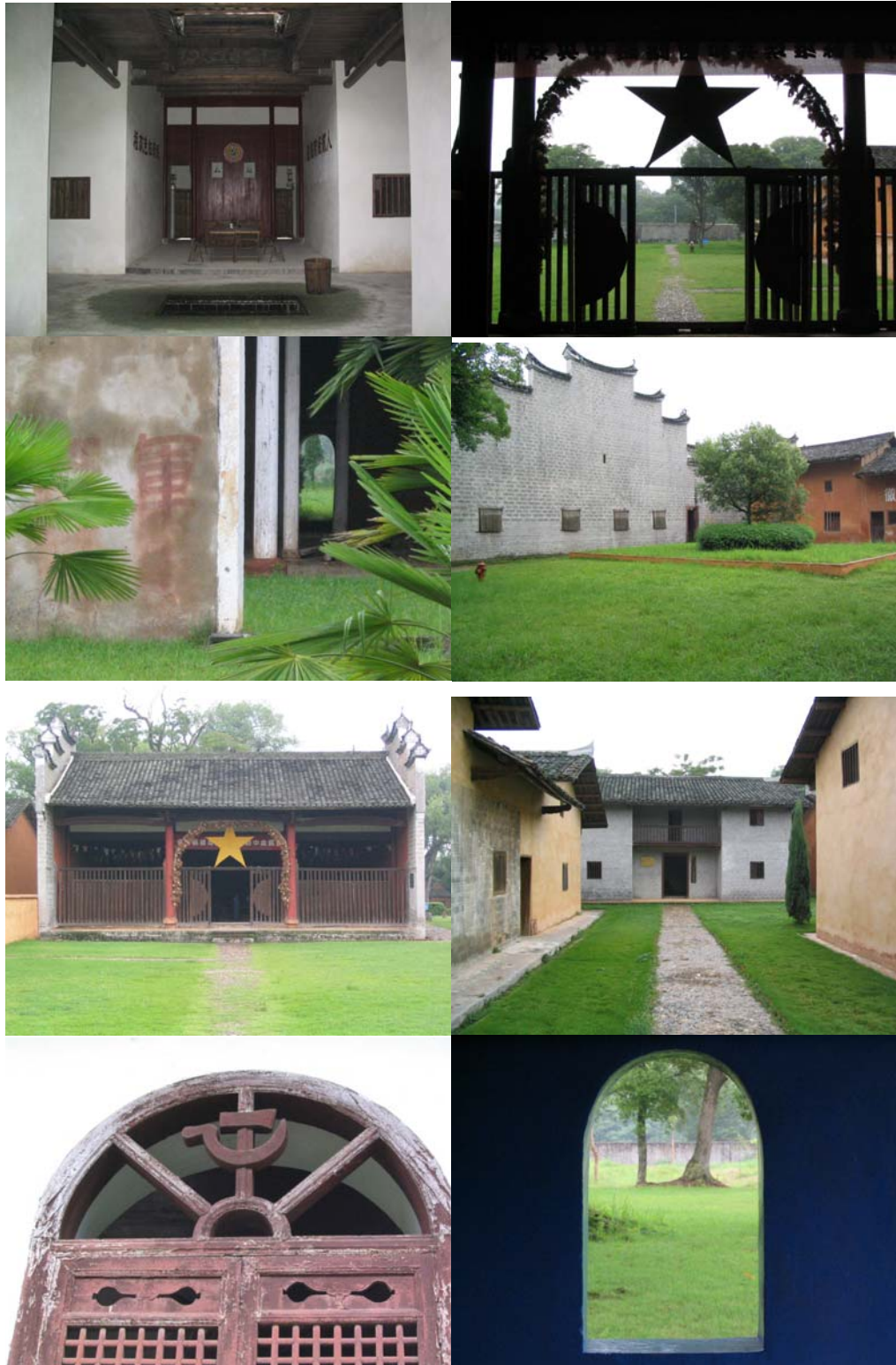


- (c) In **Ping Shan**, a bit further southeast, a plateau has been developed for raising milk cows. This addresses a rising demand in China for western-style nutrition, especially milk, which used to be unsuitable for Southern China but becomes more feasible due to cooling technology and especially faster transport to the urban centres. While primarily an agricultural enterprise, this cow farm is developing into a tourist attraction as well. There are some rentable bungalows nearby, from which people can hike up to the plateau. The hike is beautiful, but the cows themselves may not be as attractive to foreigners as to Chinese.



2. Ruijin

- (a) Ruijin is a centre of **revolutionary sites**. Ye Ping is the place of the establishment of the first soviet during the revolution. A large museum in the original buildings commemorates this event and illustrates the living conditions at that time. Nearby there is a big meeting hall at the second camp of the Long March, and also in the vicinity the “Red Well”, which seems to be well-known among people in the People’s Republic of China.

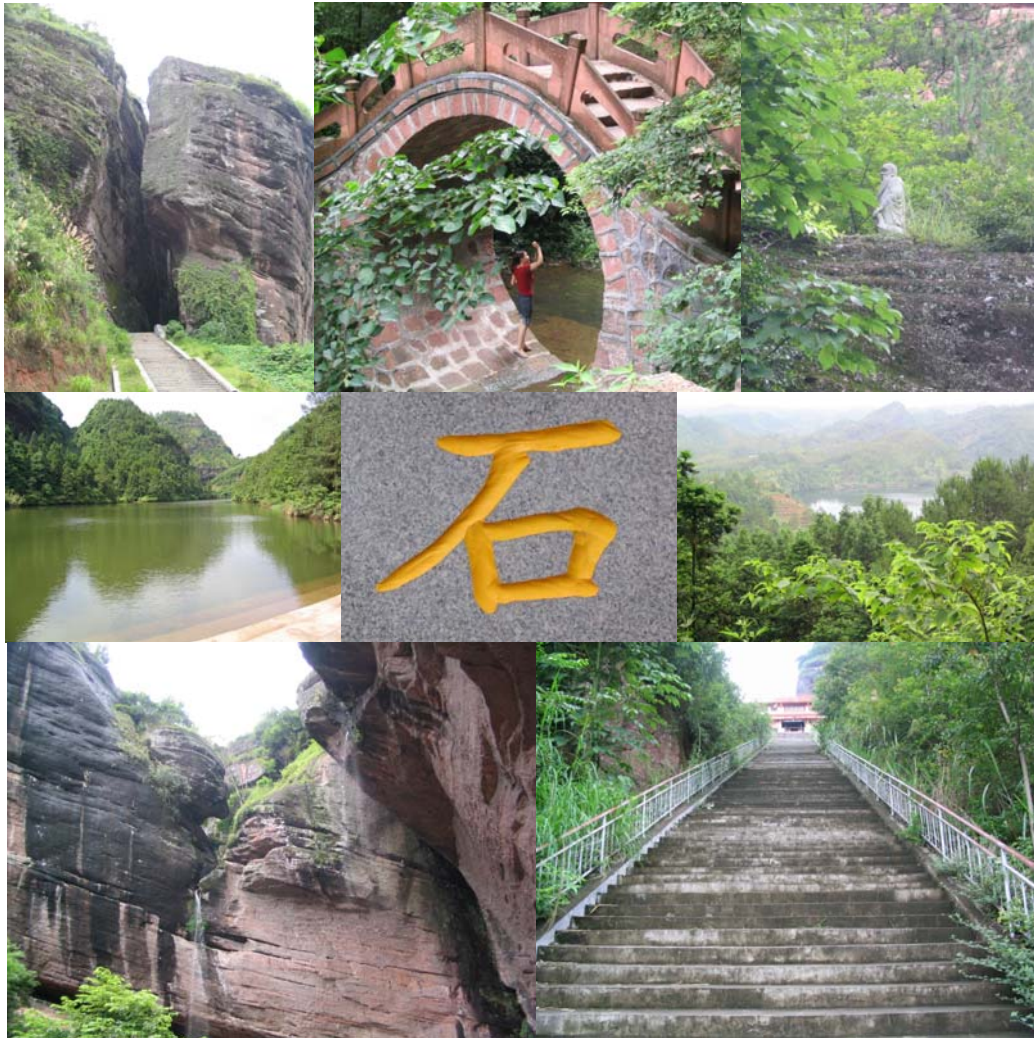




All pictures on the two pages above from the museum of the first soviet in Ye Ping. The photos on the next page are at the second camp of the Long March and the "Red Well".



- (b) East of Ruijin is **Lo Han Rock**, a beautiful rock formation with a designated path including spectacular views of the rock itself, the surrounding landscape, as well as a monastery and a nice pond (see photos on the next page). The path is very attractive but should be reviewed with regards to safety issues before being promoted to foreign visitors.

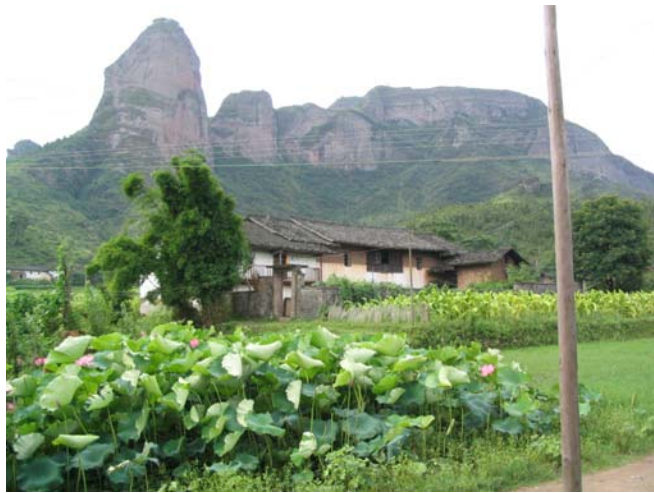


3. Shi Cheng (Stone City)

- (a) In the **old town** of Shi Cheng, there is a street with typical Hakka buildings (compare Chapter 6), which is interesting and pleasant to see. It can be carefully maintained (not transformed into an artistic tourist attraction) and may become part of an area, including also the adjacent riverfront, where visitors (and residents) can enjoy a walk. Not far from there is a **pagoda**, which offers a good view and can be promoted to tourists for a visit as well.



- (b) Very close to Shi Cheng, near the border to Fujian, is a mountain called **Tong Tien**. It is an area very suitable for hiking. One can see beautiful rock formations, panorama views of a nice and well-maintained landscape and the typical Hakka villages of that region.



4. Ganzhou City

- (a) The main attraction of Ganzhou City is the Song Dynasty **city wall** along the two confluent rivers in the North of the original city location. In combination with a few other features the wall can become part of an ensemble, which is enjoyable for tourists to visit (see Chapter 12). My visit to the wall included the following other sites nearby: a long **floating bridge**, the former house of Jiang Jing Kuo, who is held in high esteem in most of Ganzhou, the two **pagodas** Yu Ku Tai and Pa Jing Tai (the latter together with a nice park), and the Tu Er Xian (see below).



(b) Wen Miao (Wen Temple)



- (c) The **old city centre** has lost its importance as commercial centre, because the city now develops further South. Something should be done to prevent this part of the town from deteriorating. I suggest, it should be blocked for cars and turned into a district for visitors and locals to walk and shop and have a rest. Such pedestrianisation schemes are very common in Europe and have in recent years been implemented successfully in many Chinese cities, e.g. Nanjing Lu in Shanghai, Beijing Lu in Guangzhou, but also in Guilin and in Zhongshan.



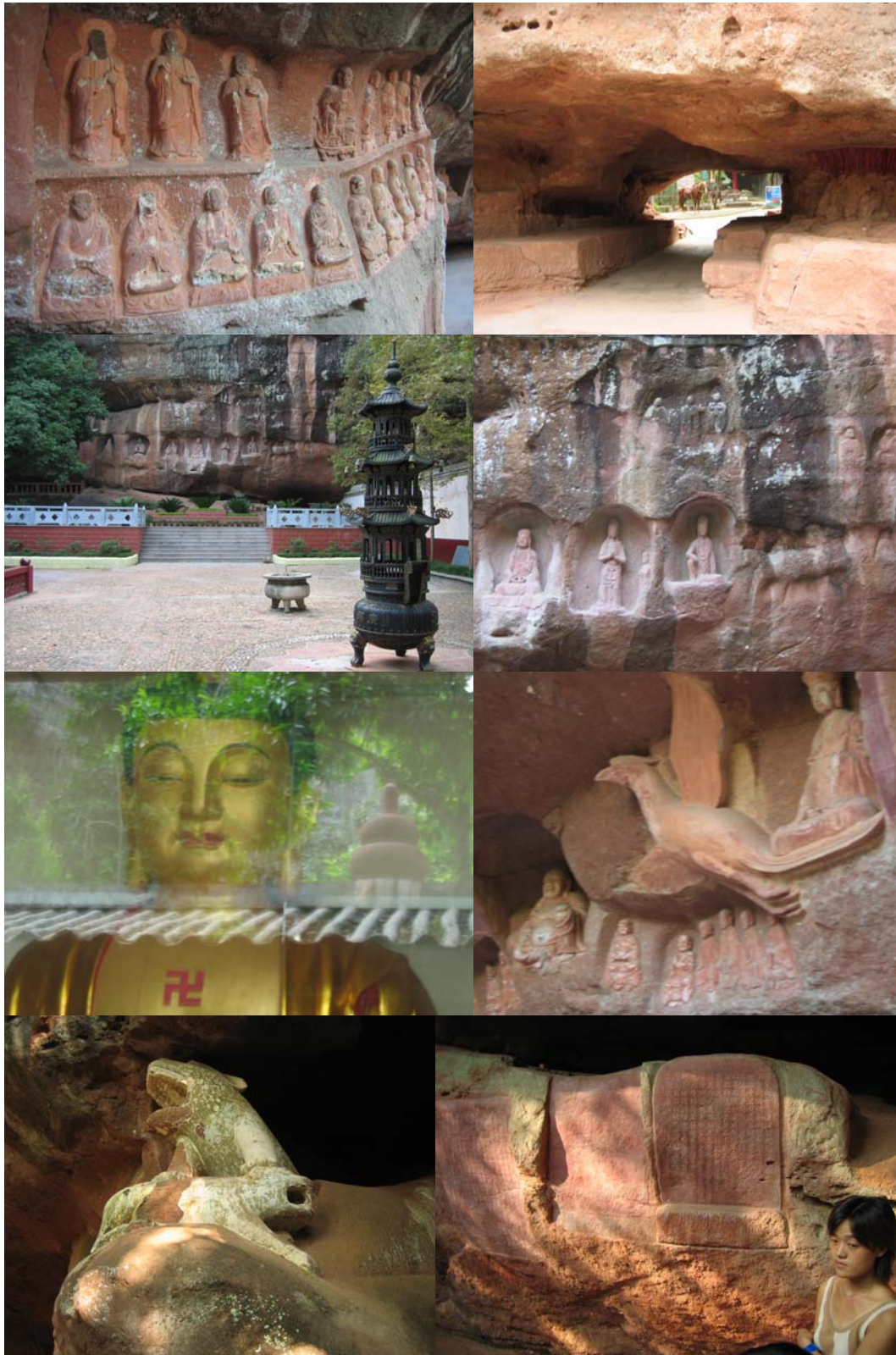
- (d) **Zao Er Xian** is a distinct Hakka-style part of the old town. It is protected and is being carefully maintained as heritage and for tourists to visit. The overall impression is very attractive and authentic. The people on the street are mainly residents, only occasionally visitors. One building has been transformed into an upmarket restaurant, which caters to patrons from outside. Such a restaurant can be a suitable way to make the maintenance of old structures, although not uses, economically feasible, promote local culture (cuisine) and attract people. Therefore it is a positive contribution, despite the possible conflict with conservation requirements. Enforcement of conservation rules may generally be an issue. In one case, severe structural changes have recently been made in the inner part of a courthouse unit. Tu Er Xian is an important tourism resource for Ganzhou, especially when it can be integrated with others (see Chapter 12).

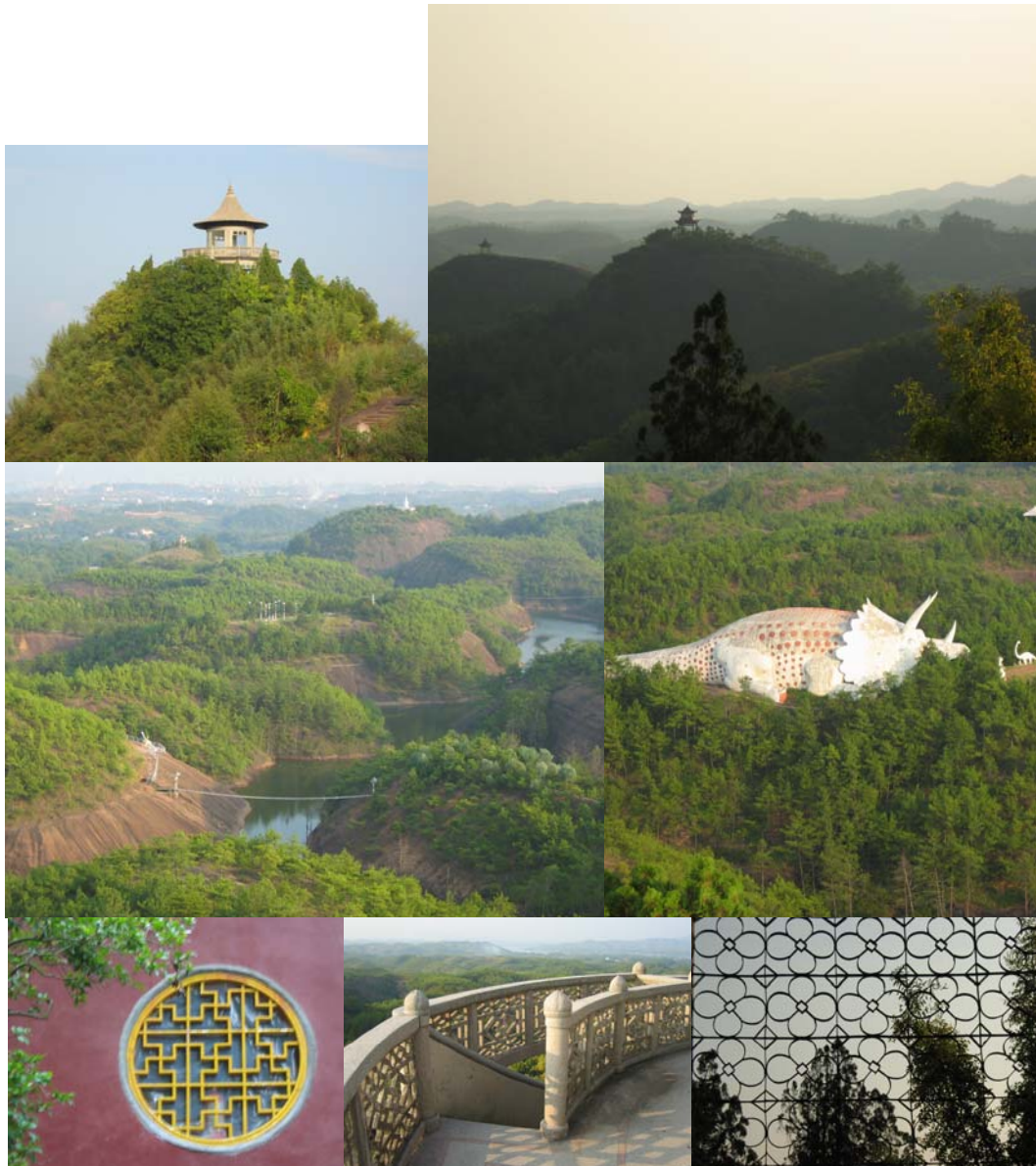


- (e) The **Tong Tian Yan Grottoes** in the North-West of Ganzhou are an important tourism resource of Gannan. This is a beautiful and tranquil landscape (5 km²) with forests and mountains, where tourists can enjoy a day's walk with scenic views and shady places for a rest, even if they are not interested in the main attraction, the numerous caves with precious Tang and Sung Dynasty stone carvings. Hundreds of statues and poems are cast into the soft sand stone. Because of this important cultural heritage, the area is an "AAAA"-grade tourist destination and under national protection. Unfortunately, many of the stone carvings are already stolen or destroyed by men – especially during the Cultural Revolution – and by acid rain.



The re-opening of Buddhist monasteries within the site is positive, not only for the spiritual, educational and recreational benefit of tourists and residents, but also because it increases social control and the protection of invaluable relics from theft. The landscape, monasteries and cultural heritage constitute a harmonious and peaceful combination and provide a rich tourism experience (information partly taken from <http://gz.jxcn.cn/scyy/tty-0001.htm>).





5. Ganxian

- (a) **Bai Lu Village** in the Gan County south of Ganzhou is an excellent example of a large Hakka settlement in a rural area. The place features many richly decorated houses and the experience of authentic village life. This authenticity is a great advantage of Bai Lu, at least at the current early stage of development for tourism. The positive consequence of Bai Lu's remote location and lack of resources is a well preserved village structure, which now turns out to be an asset for tourism. At the time of the visit, a lot of renovation work was being done by residents, and a few tour busses from nearby areas already called at the village.





- (b) The so-called “**Hakka Culture City**” is a newly built ensemble of buildings with the purpose to display typical elements of Hakka (and in fact general Chinese) culture, such as building style, performances, Fung Shui, family names. One building imitates the shape of round fortified farmhouse as they exist in Fujian Province, but it is constructed for performances to be staged inside. Another (square) building houses a collection of ancestral shrines and tables with information about the origin of most common family names. The ensemble is clearly not completed yet. It will be attractive mainly for Chinese visitors, including overseas Chinese, who want to learn more about their cultural roots. It can be of some interest for foreigners as well, but there is a critical lack of authenticity to it. So, it may be attractive for its educational value, but it will not provide a cultural experience in the same way as original and used Hakka villages and buildings such as in the Bai Lu Village (above).



6. Longnan

The greatest attraction in the Longnan area are the **Hakka walled farmhouses** (comp. p. 23ff). I have visited three examples: Wu Shi, Yen Yi Wei and Guan Xi. The former is half-round shaped, which is uncommon in Jiangxi, the latter is by far the biggest and at the same time much newer than the others. Yen Yi Wei, a square fortress-like complex, may be the most typical example.



7. Da Yu

- (a) In Da Yu, we visited the **old road** leading from Jiangxi to Guangdong. Historically, one of the major transport routes, this road is now a pleasant hiking trail offering tranquility, good views and several places for rest. The highlight is the old gate at the pass over the mountain range separating the two provinces.



- (b) The relics of the mining industry have turned a considerable stretch of land near Da Yu into a **“man-made desert”**, a vast area covered with sand and only sparse vegetation. Currently more or less unused, the idea is to transform it into a Xinjiang theme park, with cultural features of Xinjiang integrated into an artificial desert environment. The sight is at first shocking, and there may be a serious soil contamination, which must be carefully examined beforehand. Even if uncontaminated, the suspicion may drive away especially foreign visitors. Apart of this, the idea of a Xinjiang theme park in Jiangxi is interesting.



06 Only the Hakka heritage is a unique and attractive tourist resource.

While all the places were more or less pleasant to visit, not all of them can be expected to attract international tourists. In general, there are five features of the region, which can be significant for the development of international tourism.

- (a) The *landscape*, especially in the mountains is beautiful, quiet and relatively unspoilt. It is suitable for hiking and offers nice views. Once there, people will enjoy the experience, but the landscape features are not the most special in China. Even Jiangxi has more outstanding landscapes such as the Lu Shan. People looking for memorable landscapes will not choose the Gannan area.
- (b) There are several *monasteries, temples and rock carvings* in the mountains. In combination with the surrounding landscape, they are an attractive cultural and aesthetic experience. Except for the rock carvings of Tong Tian Yan, they are pleasant but not outstanding. The rock carvings in their natural setting are definitely a major attraction, but they alone will not draw crowds of tourists.
- (c) Unlike many other Chinese cities, *Ganzhou City* has partly preserved its city wall. City walls are of great interest for foreign tourists. In many European old towns a walk on the city wall is a highlight of the tourist's itinerary. Combined with the rivers and a few other nearby sites, the Ganzhou city wall can be turned into an ensemble that appeals to foreign tourists, but again, there are other cities in China with better preserved and better situated walls.
- (d) The *Long March* is an event in recent Chinese history that is known in foreign countries as well. There may be some interest of historically minded people to visit the places, where it has started. Unlike the before-mentioned features, the origin of the Long March is something unique. There will be no better place for people to go who are interested. However, the history of the Long March is of course much less important for foreigners than for people from China.
- (e) The only feature, which is both attractive and unique, is the area's *Hakka heritage*, especially the rural architecture. It can be seen as unique, although there are Hakka settlements in many provinces, because Gannan is arguably the centre of the Hakka area. It will certainly not become a first-grade tourist attraction, but it definitely has some potential.

The main point in the above argument is that the Hakka heritage is to some extent **unique**. It is this factor of uniqueness that is the strongest argument in attracting international tourists. People, who travel a long way, will go to the places where they expect to find the best examples of their preferred features. Only on repeat visits, may they opt for secondary destinations. Although nice, neither the city wall nor the landscapes or monasteries are among the top examples in China.

People who are interested in the Long March or in Hakka heritage have few better places to go. Therefore, those are in principle the features to stress in a strategy for inviting international tourists. Among the two, the Hakka heritage has in my view far better prospects of arising many people's interest. Cultural tourism is a very important segment of the international China tourism, although predominantly for urban rather than rural culture. The interest in rural culture is mostly focussed on minority areas (for example in Yunnan) with very colourful and special cultural traits, but there is a potential to draw the interest of this tourist segment to the Hakka culture as well.

A second point is that there are many people in foreign countries, who are themselves of Hakka origin. Since their propensity for migrating is the most characteristic feature of the Hakka people, their share among the **overseas Chinese** is considerable (Wang 2001). Such overseas Chinese with Hakka roots are already a very important group among the (admittedly small number of) international tourists to Ganzhou. There is certainly more potential to develop this market, which is for several reasons especially worthwhile to explore.

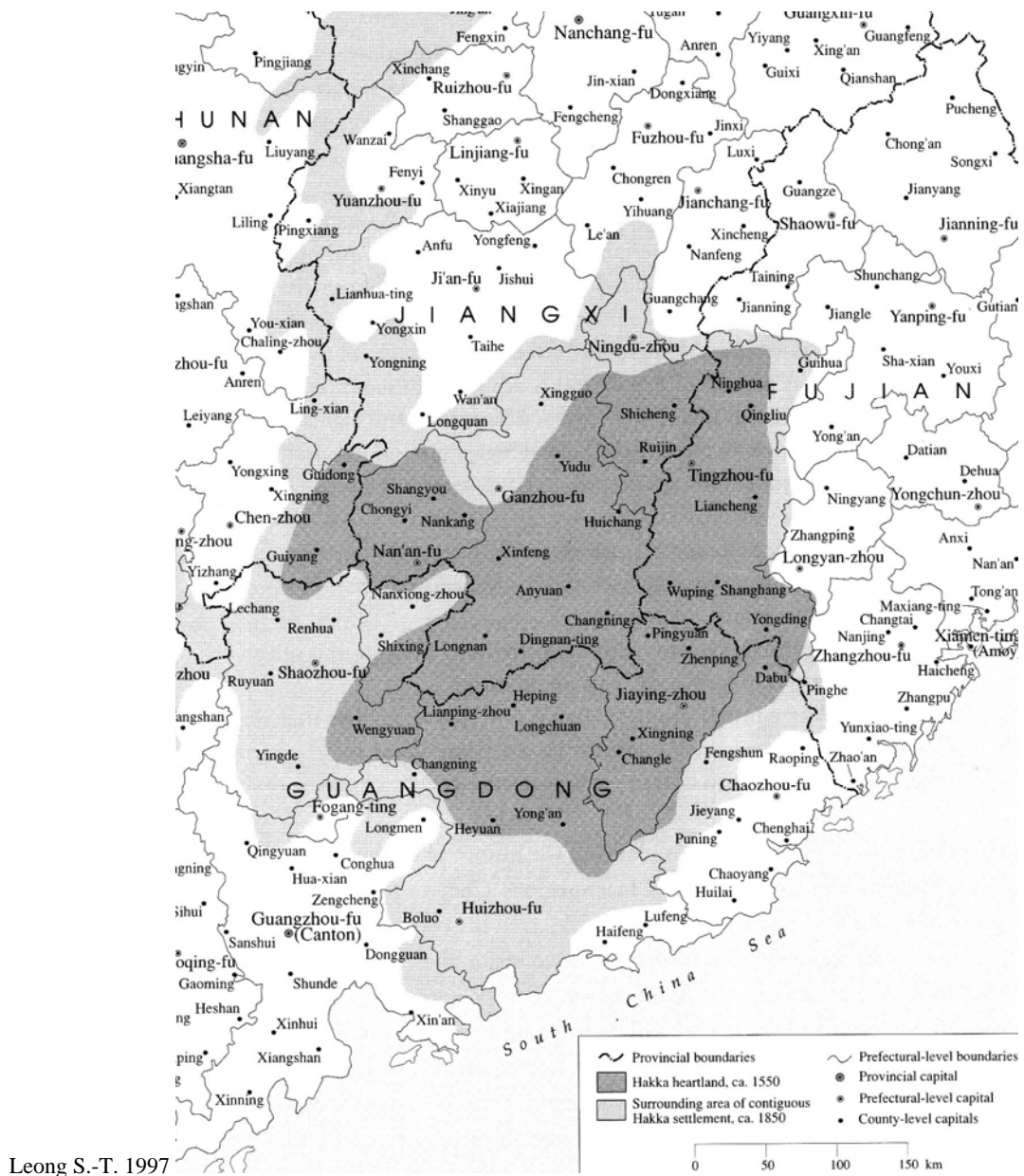
- (a) Their interest for Hakka culture is a very personal one, so there is little competition of other minority areas within China for these visitors.
- (b) Visits and emerging ties of these people to their ancestor's "homeland" can bring more lasting benefits to the region (and to them personally).
- (c) Overseas Chinese, especially if they speak the Hakka dialect, have less language and orientation problems than non-Chinese foreigners.

The Hakka heritage should be in the centre of a tourism development strategy for Ganzhou, aiming at both overseas Chinese and non-Chinese foreigners.

At this point, some facts should be explained about the Hakka people and their culture traits, which are significant for foreign tourism. "Hakka" ("Kejia" in Putonghua) means "guest people". So, the Hakka, while Han Chinese and not an ethnic minority, are distinguished by the fact that they have immigrated to the areas they live in. Their origin was in the northern part of China, but their identity, with the language as most important marker, has been formed through the process of immigration and settlement in their "heartland" in the South (Leong 1997).

There are several typical **culture traits**, which have been explained by the Hakka's immigrant identity. Some of them are of importance for the development of tourism.

- (a) As latecomers, they had to resort to peripheral, less developed areas, mostly in the mountains. Living in unfavourable natural conditions without established networks, they became hard working. In China as well as overseas, Hakka tend to work in agriculture and mining, unlike other Chinese in trading.
- (b) The necessity to do physically hard work included women, which led to a different role of women in the Hakka society as compared to other Chinese.
- (c) Having to rely on themselves in an often hostile environment they developed a strong community sense and very close family ties. They live closely together with members of their clan, but normally not with other people.
- (d) The Hakka developed a strong pride about their culture and preserve their heritage well, which will benefit the development of cultural tourism.
- (e) Despite this pride, they often identify themselves as Chinese. Abroad, they do not segregate themselves in the way other linguistic sub-groups do (Wang 2001), and at home they were in history strongly involved with nationalist movements (Erbaugh 1992).
- (f) The Hakka are known as being friendly and accommodating towards outsiders and visitors, which is surely conducive to the development of cultural tourism.
- (g) As migrant people, the Hakka have always shown a high mobility. This explains their high share among the overseas Chinese despite their inland origin.
- (h) As migrant people the choice of settlement locations has always been a key concern for the Hakka. Therefore, they have developed particular skills in and particular attention to Fung Shui, the traditional knowledge about favourable natural and spatial settings.

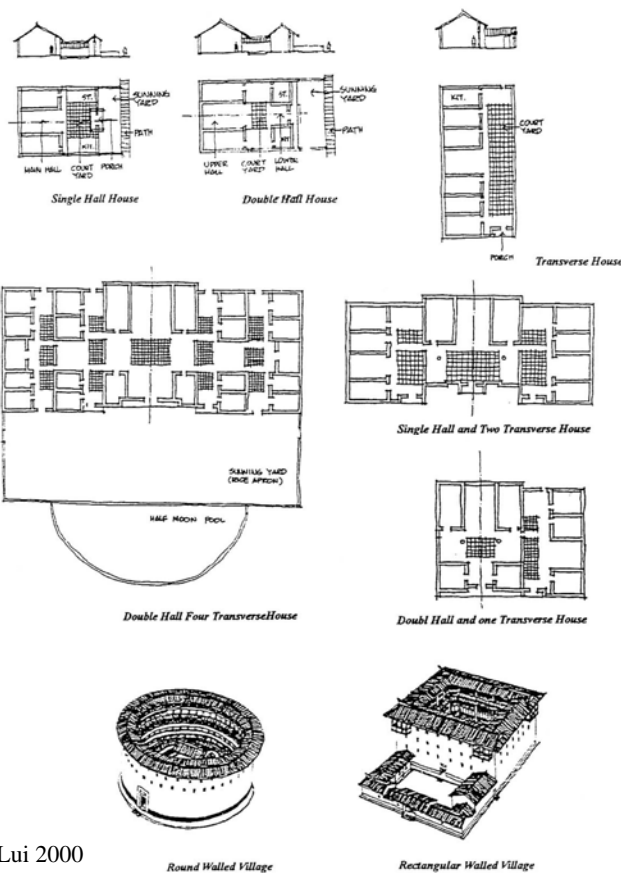


There are an estimated 80 Million Hakka people around the world, although the figure is difficult to verify especially because, as mentioned above, many would not identify themselves specifically as Hakka (Erbaugh 1992). About half of the total lives in the People's Republic of China and about 7.5 Million in the Ganzhou area, most of which is part of the so-called **Hakka heartland**. This heartland is the area shown on the map above. It comprises peripheral hilly regions of the three adjacent provinces of Fujian, Guangdong and Jiangxi. After several migration waves starting from the 12th century (Song Dynasty) the borderlands of these three provinces have developed a distinct culture and can be considered the home base of the Hakka, who ventured on from there in the Ming and Qing Dynasties to neighbouring areas down to what are now Hong Kong's New Territories, as well as to Guangxi, Taiwan and overseas. The majority of today's Hakka in Ganzhou are actually descendants of remigrants from those other areas. Compared with 1850 (see map above), the distribution of Hakka in Jiangxi has not changed significantly. The Linguistic Atlas of China (1987) shows almost the same areas as "Hakka speech predominant", except for the cities Ganzhou and Xinfeng. Today, over 90% of the population in the Ganzhou area are Hakka.

Language is generally seen as an important marker for cultures, but for the purpose of tourism development, the built environment, and to some extent customs, cuisine and handicraft, are of greater importance.

Hakka buildings come in various forms, but they all follow certain principles:

- For immigrants in an often hostile environment, protection was of particular concern. Most Hakka buildings have a defensive or even fortified character.
- Contrary to the strong separation from the outside, there is little separation among the members of the clan. All members live close together.
- Within the community, the memory of the ancestors, signifying the common roots, plays a pivotal role. The ancestor hall is not a separate building, but it is the centre of the clan's residence.
- Fung shui and symmetry are key principles in the layout of Hakka buildings.



A. Lui 2000

Round Walled Village

Rectangular Walled Village

The basic form of the Hakka house is the single hall house (see top left), which can be extended with the expansion of the family and increasing wealth by adding wings of living rooms and possibly additional halls.

There are all kinds of hall-room-combinations, whose complexity depends on the size of the clan and the need for defence. Sometimes, the whole clan lives in a single complex, which is surrounded by thick walls and heavy fortifications.

Particularly impressive examples of such complexes are the fortified farmhouses that can be found in southern Gannan and the surrounding parts of Fujian and Guangdong.

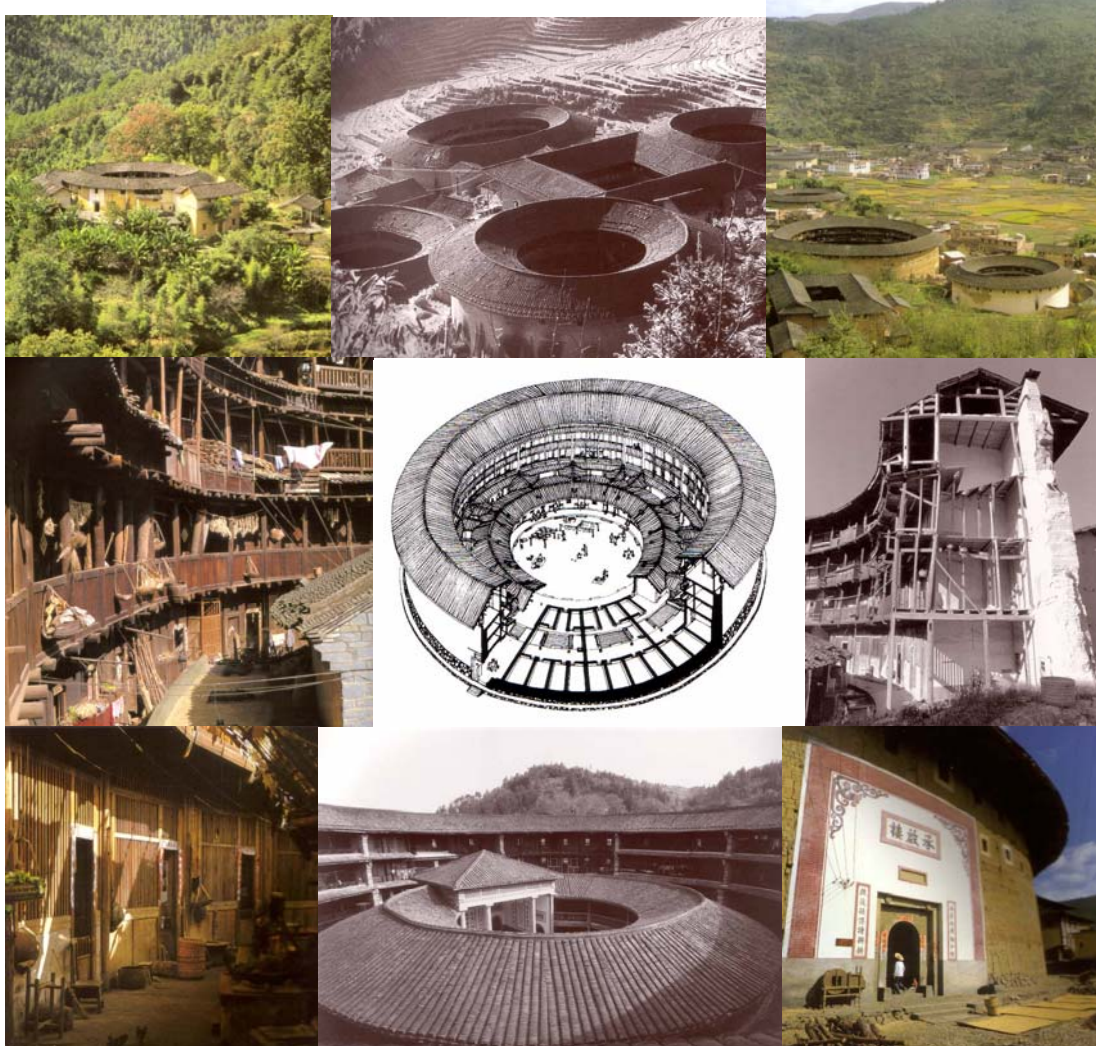
Some of them are rectangular and some round (see above). Those in Gannan are typically of the rectangular type. The centre of each complex is taken up by ancestor halls and open space for common use. The residential rooms are in the surrounding building, which is divided into small compartments for one family each on several floors. The compartments on top of each other mostly belong to one family and are vertically connected. Nowadays, the houses are not fully occupied anymore, so that some compartments are used for storage or joint together into bigger units, thus increasing the living standards of the remaining residents. Apart from that, they are not seriously altered, and they are well maintained. Current restoration efforts seem to carefully follow the original structures. Originality and authenticity are major assets of these buildings as a tourism resource. Attractive features to the foreign eye are the traditional windows, decorative floor paving, wall and ceiling paintings, entrances, natural building materials, and of course the ancestor halls.



The **fortified farmhouses** are interesting to foreign visitors because they...

- (a) represent a different, very community oriented living style.
- (b) are still in use and present opportunities to observe traditional activities such as handicraft, meal preparation etc. in an authentic setting.
- (c) are simply but beautifully decorated (e.g. windows, floor paving).
- (d) traditionally use natural building materials such as clay and wood.
- (e) follow the principals of fung shui, which is getting popular now in the west.
- (f) fascinate visitors with their impressive outer defence structures.
- (g) are nicely embedded in agricultural landscapes, offering picturesque views.

While all types of fortified farmhouses are special and a valued experience to foreign visitors, there may be a preference for the round type. These buildings are even more unique and they appear to be in great harmony with the landscape, but they are not in Ganzhou but near **Longyan, Fujian Province** (see the pictures below).



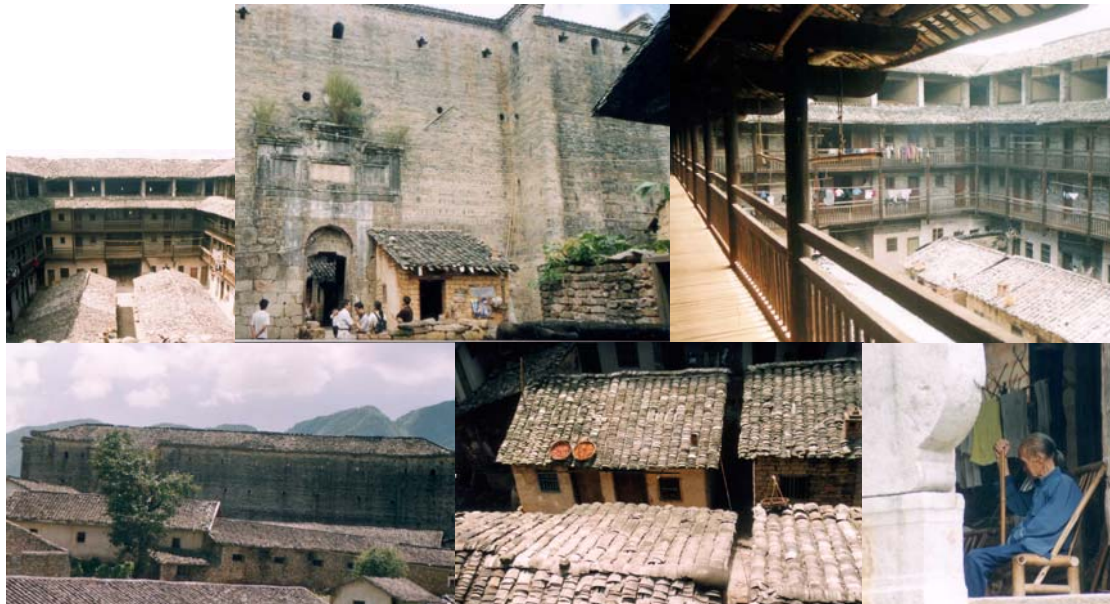
Müller 1997 (colour photographs), Ho 1999 (black and white)

Among the examples in *Longnan, Ganzhou area*, (comp. p. 18), *Wu Shi* in the Yang village is the closest to the round type. It is over 300 years old and built as a relatively wide half circle of two-story room-houses with a cluster of ancestor halls in the centre. In front of the entrance is a pond, also in semi-circular shape. This building type is similar to the one in Meizhou area (Guangdong).



Wu Shi (Yang village)

The building of *Yen Yi Wei*, in the same village and of similar age, is taller, smaller and rectangular shaped. It is four stories high with 1.5 m strong walls and all rooms facing one centre, projecting both a stronger sense of community to the inside and a stronger sense of defensiveness to the outside.



Yen Yi Wei (Yang village)

The *Guan Xi* complex, south of Longnan, is also rectangular, but not as old and much larger than the two others. Built in the 19th century by a rich landlord, it follows the traditional style but it is more representative and more fortress-like. On a total area of 7426 m², it comprises 18 halls and several axes of rooms (comp. the small map in the centre of the photos on the next page).



Guan Xi (south of Longnan)

07 Marketing the Ganzhou area as the "Land of Hakka".

A strategy for developing and marketing Ganzhou as a destination for international tourism has to take two things into consideration.

- (a) International tourists travel a long way and spend much money on it. They will not do so if they think they can have the same or even better experience closer to home. Therefore, only **unique** and **high quality** tourism products can attract them. A tourism development and marketing strategy should concentrate on the most unique selling point and develop the respective resources with regard to the quality of experience.
- (b) Foreigners have a limited knowledge of China, and most of them cannot relate much to specific places within China. This makes it difficult to attract them to less-known destinations such as Ganzhou, where most of them do not even know any place name. Features they could potentially relate to are the Hakka and the Long March. The latter is actually better known, but the former may have more potential to create high-quality tourism experiences.

The two criteria uniqueness and quality are paramount for international visitors. To attract them to a place, they need an image or idea that they can relate to it.

The key feature providing such an image or idea (**unique selling point**) should be the Hakka culture. Other features such as the Long March, the landscapes, monasteries and urban Ganzhou will add to the attractiveness for tourists who come to the area, but they mostly lack the uniqueness necessary to attract additional tourists (compare p. 20). Given the limited prior knowledge of the target group, the promotion should concentrate on one feature only. Mixed messages in marketing of a destination may rather confuse the recipients and distract from the main feature.

The key feature – Hakka culture – should also appear in a kind of “**brand name**” for the region in any international promotion. Foreigners generally know neither Ganzhou nor Jiangxi, and they will find it hard to remember these names. They may e.g. mix up Ganzhou with Guangzhou or Jiangxi with Jiangsu. Better than using the geographic names in promoting the area is a reference to the main feature in terming the region “The Land of the Hakka”. This is nothing unusual. Xinjiang for example is generally the “Land of the Silk Road” to foreign tourists because they can refer to the historical Silk Road much better than to the current geographical names. The brand name can be shortened to “Land of Hakka” (but preferably not to “Hakkaland”, because this would be associated with theme parks such as Disneyland or Legoland, which do not stand for authenticity and cultural tourism). It is better to use the transcription “Hakka” in communication with foreigners, instead of the standard Chinese “Kejia”, because it is the better known name internationally, and easier to remember for foreigners.

However, although the Hakka culture is the best feature to emphasise on in respect of its uniqueness and attractiveness, it is still not very well known around the world. It shall therefore be stressed that Ganzhou is likely to remain a **niche market** for some time. It will never become a top destination within China, but there is a market for “The Land of Hakka”, which is worthwhile exploring. The 40 million Hakka people abroad would naturally be the first market to look at. Friends of those overseas Hakka and foreigners living in East Asia, e.g. in Hong Kong, would be second target groups. Through these pioneer groups, educational programmes, and active promotion the market can then be expanded to people all over the world, who are interested in folk culture, in rural landscapes, or have a strong interest in China.

The targeting of a niche market is not necessarily a bad thing. A high quantity of tourists will generally affect the quality of experience unfavourably and increase the negative impact on the natural and cultural environment. This can undermine the very resources the tourism is based on. A more **sustainable tourism development** based on quality instead of quantity is locally better acceptable, as it brings less irritation to the nature and local communities. It can at the end even turn out to be economically more viable, because it causes less external costs, and gains more revenue per visitor, since the tourists are willing to pay more for a better experience.

Although foreign tourists, especially those focussing on cultural tourism products, are interested in the educational value of their trips, they do not do it for study but for the **experience**. This experience would ideally involve the three spheres “heart, hand and mind”. – The “*heart*” meaning that the visitor shall enjoy the beauty, the authenticity, the people’s friendliness, and the spirit of the environment. He/she should feel free of disturbance, pressure and any discord with local people. The “*hand*” refers to physical experiences, such as hiking, cycling, participating in handicraft, cooking or restoration work. Such activities (not necessarily hard labour!) will give a more lasting and more complete experience. Last but not least, the “*mind*” means that visitors want to learn something about the area, the people and the local culture. They may for example be interested in studying the community life, in Fung Shui or architecture.

Keeping this three-fold concept of experience in mind, I suggest developing for example a **“Land of Hakka”-Cycling Route**. Cycling tourism has become a significant sector of tourism development in Europe. Tourists enjoy the independence and the experience of being close to the nature and to the people. Local and regional governments, especially in rural regions of Europe, invest in the provision and marketing of cycling routes, because they attract tourists who stay at least for some days and cater for all their needs (food, accommodation) locally. Good examples are the North Sea Cycling Route (<http://www.northsea-cycle.com/index1.html>), which is actually a chain of routes surrounding the North Sea on 6000 km through six countries, or the 280 km Römerroute (Route of the Romans) in Germany featuring the cultural impact of the Romans on this part of Germany. The latter is a good example because it has a cultural theme.

The “Römerroute” in Germany

The route officially opened in 1993. It has been created on the initiative of the regional tourism bureau of Münsterland in co-operation with a map publisher, who developed a special cycling map and supported the project. The route leads to major museums, buildings, battlefields and monuments from the time or related to the time of the Romans in Germany. The project comprises:

- * Provision of suitable roads for cycling (with a good pavement and little traffic, leading through nice landscape)
- * Good signage with the same symbols over the whole route (see below right), and arrows in red always pointing to the westbound direction, arrows in green pointing eastbound
- * A guide to participating bicycle-friendly hotels and to restaurants offering special “Roman dishes”
- * Local information about museums and historical sights
- * A tailor-made map and an information brochure
- * A website with online information and booking service:

<http://www.roemerroute.de/>



Several travel agents already offer organised cycling tours in China, e.g. around Zhaoqing and Guilin (<http://www.veloasia.com/index.html>, <http://www.bikechina.com/tours.htm>), which are in increasing demand. A “Land of Hakka”-Cycling Route would allow tourists to discover the cultural and natural treasures of southern Jiangxi individually or in organised groups by bicycle. This would require provision of...

- (a) a survey of suitable roads, and possibly improvement of deficient roads, with the aim to create a network or circle route of smooth and safe roads.
- (b) signage with a unified set of symbols, arrows and colours.
- (c) organised tours with a bilingual guide arranged by private operators.
- (d) a map showing suitable roads and paths, possible accommodation and tourist highlights (available for sale and part of the package for organised tours).
- (e) a brochure or book providing background information about the Hakka, their culture traits, and individual sites (for sale and part of the package).
- (f) promotion to individuals and travel agents via the Internet and leaflets.

Cycling tourism would have the following advantages for the Ganzhou area:

- (a) The tourists would stay several days or even weeks in the area instead of just making a short visit.
- (b) The tourist revenue would to a larger extent benefit the rural areas.
- (c) The tourism experience would be a very holistic and lasting one.
- (d) It would address problems of distances and insufficient transport infrastructure.
- (e) It would be an innovative product in an emerging market, giving the region the advantage of the forerunner.
- (f) It would be a sustainable form of tourism, creating relatively little pollution and disturbance.

A second suggested product, which can ideally be combined with the cycling route, is the provision of **home stay opportunities** in some of the fortified farmhouses. In the West, this kind of holidays is not uncommon (e.g. bed & breakfast in Britain). More comparable is probably the very popular option to stay in the tents of Mongols and the nomad minorities in Northwest China (see photos).



Sources: <http://rutlandhs.k12.vt.us/china/Grasslands.htm> <http://home.pi.be/travelspot/china2.htm>
 Information for example on tours in Mongolia see: <http://www.mongoljuulchin.mn/tours/tours.htm>.

Something similar should be possible in the Hakka fortified houses as well. A number of empty units in these houses could be fitted with basic facilities for tourists to stay. It should be managed by the building's residents, who should also receive the rental. Such home stay opportunities would have the following main advantages:

- (a) It would alleviate the shortage of accommodation outside the cities.
- (b) It would be an ideal combination with the cycling route.
- (c) There would be a more lasting and direct experience of the fortified houses.
- (d) It would be a natural opportunity to get into contact with the local people, who could introduce some parts of their culture.
- (e) More tourism revenue would go to the local communities, contributing to rural development and to a positive attitude of residents towards tourism.
- (f) It would bring new use to the vacant rooms observed in some fortified houses.

Cycling and home staying will definitely not be the only way to appreciate the Hakka culture and especially the fortified farmhouses. The mainstream tourist will probably come for shorter visits and require bus connections and hotel accommodation. With regard to the bus connections, easily accessible price information and schedules are of particular importance. International tourists may also ask for foreign language tour guides, written information about the Hakka culture and suggestions of programmes. It would be useful to have tourism offices distributing or selling all this information and possibly organising tours such as bus trips to sites within Gannan, but also to the areas of Longyan (Fujian) and may be Meizhou (Guangdong). Special tours can be offered on festivals to watch dragon boat races or mid-autumn bonfires.

While the Hakka culture shall be the single theme used to attract visitors from abroad, local tours can of course include other features. In fact, many attractions which are not immediately Hakka related, can still be linked to the main theme, for example landscape and architecture, the Tong Tian Yan stone carvings and even the revolutionary history. Erbaugh (1992) reveals the extraordinarily high participation of Hakkas in many nationalist and revolutionary movements including the Long March. This could be an issue presented to foreigners at those revolutionary sites. As mentioned above, the teachings of **fung shui** have a particular significance for the Hakka. Gannan was home to several renowned geomancers, such as Yang Yunsong, Liao Junqin and Tao Zhang. These circumstances make Gannan an attractive destination for the increasing number of foreigners, who are getting interested in fung shui. It may be an option to cater to this interest by staging an exhibition and holding seminars for example in the “Hakka Culture City”.

08 Some points to consider when developing cultural and rural tourism.

Since the development of rural and cultural tourism for foreigners is a relatively new venture, and the attitudes and demands of international tourists differ significantly from those of domestic Chinese tourists, some critical issues shall be addressed.

The most critical point in the eyes of Western cultural tourists is **authenticity**. People want to see the original heritage. Artefacts such as buildings and statues will be valued if they are old and genuine, or only carefully preserved in keeping with the historical original. They should ideally be used for the original purpose at the original location, and not staged for tourists in museums or theme parks. Natural heritage will be appreciated in its natural form or as old cultural landscape. An example of lacking authenticity in the area is the Hakka Culture City. The buildings are obviously new and purposely created for tourism. They will not strike Western visitors as special and meaningful, although the displays and cultural programmes can still be an instructive experience for the “mind”. Good examples of authenticity are the Bai Lu Village and the Luo Tien Yan monastery, both of which seem to be in a historically grown shape and use. They can create a not only instructive but also inspiring experience.

A problem with authenticity is that it may be destroyed by tourism itself. There is no “normal” village life in a place, which is visited by busloads of visitors every day. People do not behave normally if they are constantly photographed, and when they realise that tourists appreciate certain behaviour and pay for it. Visitors may also compromise the natural heritage (loss of tranquillity, disturbance of species) and damage artefacts (touching and damaging, visual intrusion of signage and crowd barriers). These effects can be minimised but not avoided by reducing the number of tourists. This is why staged tourist attractions such as the Hakka Culture City can serve a worthy purpose in diverting part of the crowd from the more authentic places.

Another issue with authenticity is that it can be at odds with the wish to create beautiful places. It is common in China to beautify e.g. caves and landscapes by severely changing the original appearance. This is much less acceptable in the West, where authenticity is generally seen as more important than beauty (which of course is also valued). A small example in Tu Er Xian, Ganzhou City, is the sight of the traditional

wooden windows being replaced by traditional-style stone windows. The stone windows represent genuine Hakka architecture as well, and they are not very obviously new, but some foreign visitors may not like the idea because of the loss of authenticity.

A second crucial point is **accessibility**. Most places are accessible by public transport, but not conveniently. Foreign tourists tolerate less trouble with transport, because

- (a) most buses in China are rather uncomfortable for Western standards.
- (b) it is much harder for foreigners to collect the necessary information such as schedule, charge and where to enter and leave the bus.
- (c) they have travelled to China first and then to Ganzhou, so most of them will want the enjoyable experience to start soon instead of travelling much further.

This is why the cycling route can be so functional. On the bicycle, the travelling is already part of the experience. It combines some independence with convenience. However, most tourists will not have the time or want to avoid the physical exercise, so accessibility needs to be addressed, ideally by providing comfortable, frequent, fast and direct connections to selected sites.

A third issue with great effect on the tourism experience is **the local people's attitude**. People enjoy the stay if they feel welcome – as guests and not just customers. While the Hakka are known to be friendly to guests, which is confirmed by my experience, this may change when tourists behave badly or intrude into the privacy of families. There is no sure way to avoid that, but two strategies that help.

- (a) The focus should be on the quality instead of quantity of visitors. To raise this quality, the marketing should specifically target visitors with cultural interests, and they should be given enough information about the local people.
- (b) The locals must see a value in tourism, ideally an enriching experience, but at least an economically beneficial development strategy. For this, it is crucial for them to be involved in the planning process and have personal benefits from the visitors. Measures such as restoration, entrance fees and the launching home stay programmes must be discussed and fully supported by the residents. Reasonable requests, e.g. regarding their own living conditions, should be met if possible. To avoid conflicts between tourism development and the aspirations of the local population is a crucial precondition for a positive attitude on the side of villagers and a good tourism experience on the side of the visitor.

In targeting cultural tourism, Ganzhou is not alone in China. Especially minority areas such as in Yunnan or Guangxi can attract foreign visitors on the same platform.

Ganzhou's tourism resources are not superior to those of the competing places, but **innovative cultural tourism products aiming at a comprehensive experience for foreign visitors could add value and give Ganzhou an edge over other regions.**

However, some impediments remain.

- (a) Ganzhou is off the track and off the map for most international China tourists. They are not normally near to the area, and they know very little about it.
- (b) The main attraction, Hakka culture, is not very well known in the world. Compared to other minority cultures, its big overseas community is an advantage, but it is less distinct from mainstream Chinese culture and often less colourful.
- (c) The Hakka heartland goes beyond Gannan. So, even neighbouring provinces are competing with similar resources for the same tourists. Some of the most attractive edifices are actually in Fujian, not in Jiangxi.

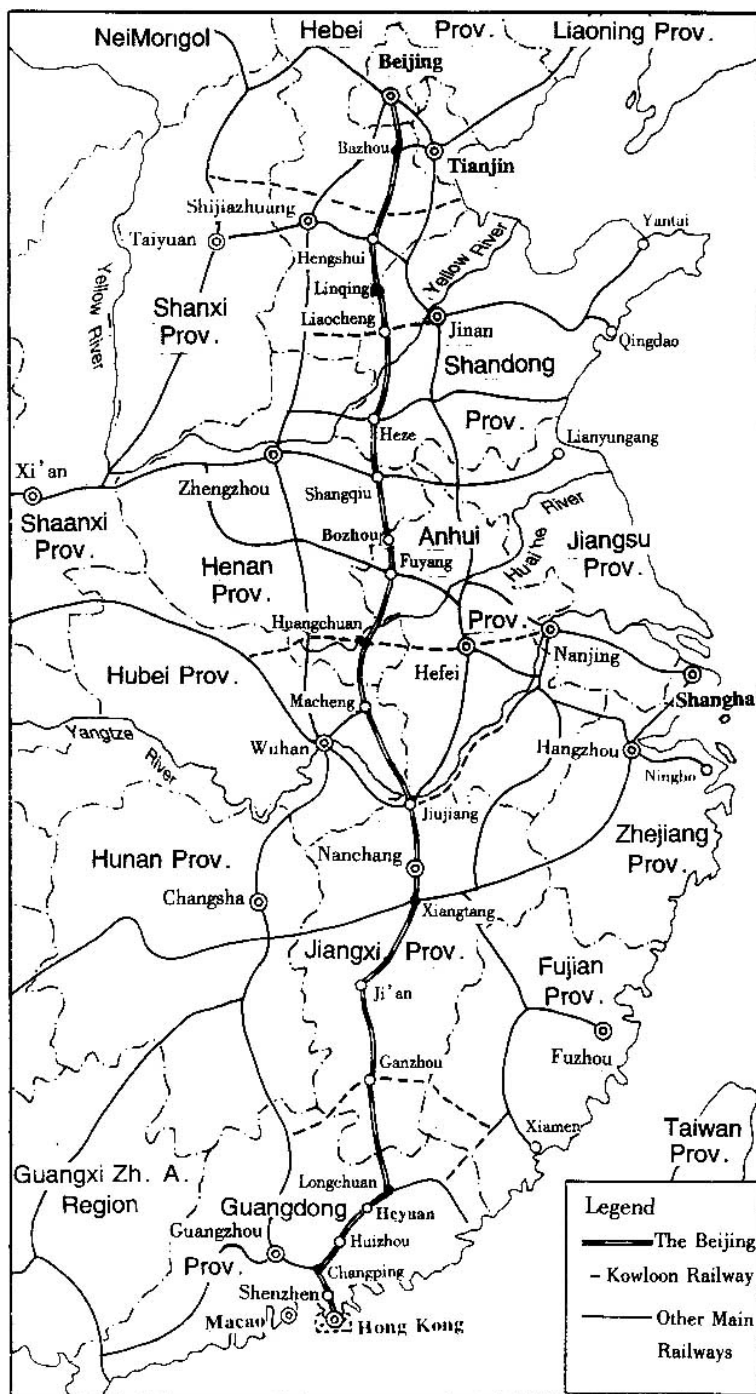
This is the point for us to highlight another crucial asset of Ganzhou: Being a stop on the Beijing-Kowloon-Railway can partly alleviate the impediments mentioned above.

09 The Beijing-Kowloon Railway is a second crucial asset for Ganzhou.

The Beijing-Kowloon Railway has been opened in the run-up to Hong Kong's return to China in 1997. It provides a second North-South route between the capital and the Pearl River Delta region. Besides adding additional capacity to this major artery, it has also shortened the distance Hong Kong-Beijing from 2550 km to 2413 km, the route Hong Kong-Shanghai by 325 km and Hong Kong-Tianjin by 348 km (Ye 1989).

Despite all this, the new line is currently not used for Hong Kong to Mainland China passenger trains. The Kowloon-Canton Railway Corp. (KCRC) route their through trains to Beijing on the old route via Changsha and Wuhan, and since 2003 those through trains are also non-stop connections.

However, the route is still a major North-South axis serving the passenger trains from Shenzhen to Beijing. At Ganzhou, which lies on this railroad, there are currently 21 trains per day in each direction, three of them being Beijing-Shenzhen through trains. This railway has fundamentally improved the accessibility of Ganzhou. A further rise in importance can be expected when the recently completed Ganzhou-Longyan railroad, eventually linking to Xiamen, will be in operation.



Source: Ye 1998

The Beijing-Kowloon Railway will be crucial in the attempt to bring international visitors to Ganzhou. It is questionable whether Hakka heritage alone can convince many people to take a plane to Ganzhou directly. But if the Beijing-Kowloon Railway were a major route for tourists to follow, it would be much easier to convince people to leave the train for a few nice days in the “Land of Hakka”. As mentioned in the context of the proposed cycling route, if the travelling can be made part of the experience already, the remoteness would be less of a problem.

Major railroads are actually a very attractive way to discover a foreign country. Famous examples are the Orient Express and the Trans-Siberian Railway.



The Trans-Siberian Railway is a popular way for foreign tourists to discover the Asian part of Russia. The trains take many people to places such as Irkutsk or Krasnojarsk, which they would not visit if they were not on the route. The train route increases accessibility, but more importantly, it serves as a “brand name”. People know what to expect, specific guidebooks are available, and there is a wide choice of individual or packaged tours. Why not create a similar “brand” of “Trans-China Railway”?

Photos: www.redstarintl.com/main3.htm; Trailblazer Publication; www.mongolia.co.uk/train.htm; Lonely Planet

Travelling by train solves several problems of international tourists in Russia, which are similar to those foreigners face in China.

- (a) Turning long trips into a part of the experience makes travelling less annoying. The traveller can relax and watch the landscape passing by.
- (b) It is a relatively safe and comfortable way of travelling.
- (c) Once the traveller got hold of the timetable and the ticket, he/she does not have to worry about routing and timing anymore.
- (d) The route can be a recognised “brand” for tourists and travel guides.

The German Rail (Deutsche Bahn) is currently even preparing to launch so-called “**hotel trains**” (or cruise trains) to Russia and the Baltic states. They would solve the accommodation problem as well. The idea is to operate sleeping cars, which take the tourists from one place to the other over night and wait at the station for them to finish their day-tours (similar to cruise ships). This is a very fascinating concept, but it is suitable mostly for city tourism with just one-day-stops. It may also be less desirable for local tourism interests because no accommodation revenue will stay in the region.

It would however be in the strong interest of Ganzhou, and in fact Jiangxi as a whole, to promote the Beijing-Kowloon Railway as the “**Trans-China Railway**”. China has a good rail system, but so far, there is no major route internationally recognised as the main transnational route. The Beijing-Kowloon line may be a good candidate. There would in fact be three suitable lines. The *Beijing-Xian-Lanzhou-Xinjiang* line would be the longest, but this route is already well known as the “Silk Road”. The *Beijing-Xian-Chengdu-Kunming* line would be the touristically most interesting, but it can be seen as a dead-end route if one does not wish to exit China via Vietnam. The *Beijing-Hong Kong* route (either via Wuhan or Jiujiang) is interesting because it links the two main entry points into China with each other. Many travellers want to see these two cities, and they may find it convenient to follow the railway from one to the other.

It would be ideal from the marketing point of view if there were direct trains from Hong Kong via Jiujiang to Beijing, but Shenzhen station can also easily be reached from Hong Kong. With its non-stop trains, the direct KCRC route via Wuhan is not interesting for people who want to see more places on the way. Along the course of the *Shenzhen-Jiujiang-Beijing* line, about four stations could become recommended stopovers. This could be in Jiangxi Ganzhou (“Land of Hakka”) and Jiujiang (Poyang Lake, Lu Shan, Jangtse River), and for example Shangqiu or Liaocheng in the North. There should be support from the provincial level for such a promotion strategy.

The Beijing-Kowloon Railway (or “Trans-China Railway”) can get Gannan on the map. In the same way as the Trans-Siberian Railway gets tourists to Irkutsk and Krasoyarsk, the Beijing-Kowloon Railway can get people to Jiujiang and Ganzhou. To achieve this, the railway route as such has to be developed as a tourism resource, and the intermediate destinations (e.g. Ganzhou) have to be presented with a clear profile and with a set of attractive activities and experiences.

To develop railways as tourist resources is something China’s railway administration has not spent too much effort on so far. Crucial points are a “brand” (a clear, well-known profile), availability of information and convenient booking mechanisms. It should be possible to book group and individual package tours as well as individual train tickets. Package tours should be sold via commercial travel agents, who would be the target for any marketing efforts of the region.

The booking for individual tickets should especially be possible from distance by telephone and Internet. The telephone booking of KCRC for cross-boundary trains is very convenient, but only available for through trains from Hong Kong. For overseas visitors, **Internet booking** would be much more convenient. This is an option that is for example possible with German Rail (Deutsche Bahn) and other railway companies. The booking should be possible for the whole Beijing-Shenzhen (ideally Hong Kong) trip or for any segments of it.

There should be approximately 10 intermediate stops, half of which would be of particular tourist interest. **Ganzhou City**, featuring as the centre of the “Land of Hakka”, should be one of them. It should be re-emphasised that only the train stop allows the city to assume this central role. The most important Hakka-related tourist resources are arguably located around Longyan and Longnan. However, Longnan can relatively easily be reached from Ganzhou City, and Longyan, although a bit further away, will soon be connected to it by a new railway line. This connection is crucial as it makes the most attractive Hakka round farmhouses of Fujian better accessible from Ganzhou than from Hong Kong and puts the city in a gateway role.

10 Ganzhou City must become more attractive.

As the “gateway” to the Land of Hakka, Ganzhou City plays a very important role in the suggested strategy. Whether by train or by plane, visitors to the region will have to start their trip there. Therefore, the city should be attractive enough for them to stay for one or two days. It is the first impression most people get from the region, so a bad experience will affect the whole trip and may even stop people from leaving the train altogether.

Unfortunately, Ganzhou is at present not overly attractive. As many cities in China it has in recent years changed rapidly, and with a focus on economic development and the vision of modernity. This has significantly compromised the quality of the urban planning and the historic heritage. Because of the different social and historical background, Westerners appreciate the old much more than most Chinese. They prefer to see old buildings rather than new ones, except if the new buildings are of particular architectural quality, which is not the case for the buildings in Ganzhou. Old buildings, however, will not be perceived as intrusive and unattractive, even if they are without particular historical or architectonic value (e.g. central picture below). They fit into the historical cityscape and appear genuine.



The above photos can highlight some issues of visual deficiency in Ganzhou City.

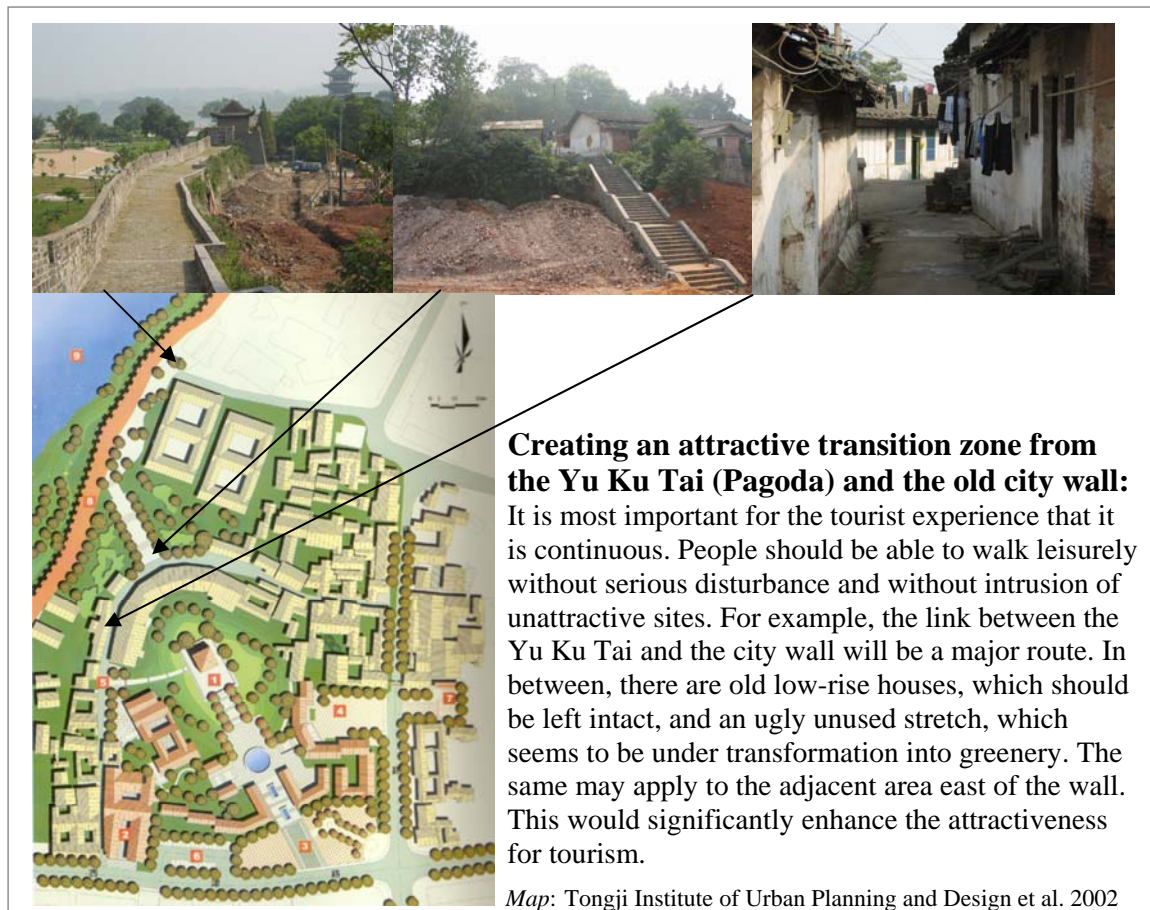
The left photo shows one access to the city wall, the city’s main tourist attraction. Even if the wall itself is impressive, the tourist experience will be diminished by a carelessly designed access. Foreign tourists want to experience the wall as a part of a longer walk through the inner city. So, its setting within its surroundings is critical.

The central photo shows a typical section of the row of buildings accompanying the wall on its eastern side. The typical way to appreciate the city wall is a walk on top of it (either over the whole length or in parts). Therefore, the view from the wall is as important as the wall itself. In most European cases, what people can see from the city wall is the old town with its historical buildings. In Ganzhou City, there are few really valuable old buildings next to the wall. The buildings seen here are in a bad state, but they are still preferable to new buildings. It would be good if they could be carefully renovated. Some of them could then be used for cafes, restaurants, tea houses etc.

The right photo is the view from Jiang Jing Kuo’s former house, a major attraction along the city wall. While the building itself is very nicely preserved and the immediate surroundings are also in a good state, the view over the city reminds visitors of the unfavourable overall cityscape. This is unavoidable, but affects the experience.

Despite of the problems with its general appearance, Ganzhou City has two excellent **tourism resources**, as well as several others that can nicely be combined with them. The two main resources are the city wall and the two nearby confluent rivers.

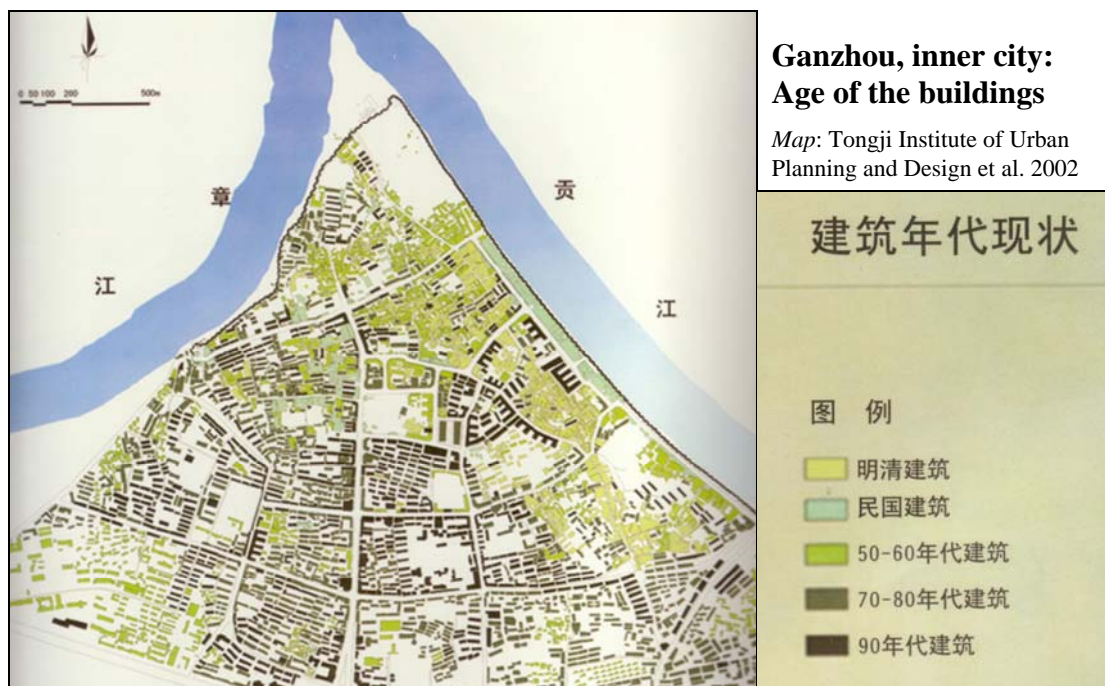
The **city wall** is a rare example of a massive brick city wall from Song Dynasty. Many other Chinese cities have destroyed their walls because they were seen as impediment to urban expansion and traffic planning. Their historical value and tourism potential were not recognised. Ganzhou has also removed the southern section of its wall, but due to its topography, the longer sections along the two rivers have been kept. They are now upgraded in a major effort, which includes its surroundings. From the point of view of international tourism this project is a sound investment. If Ganzhou City is the key to tourism development in the region, the city wall is the key to the tourism development in Ganzhou City. It is an outstanding feature itself, and it can serve as an axis to connect other sites to provide an enjoyable visiting experience. Such sites are the former house of Jiang Jing Kuo, the Yu Ku Tai and Pa Jing Tai, the Ba Jing Park, the Tu Er Xian and the two rivers with a stationary and a floating bridge.



The **two rivers**, which flow together to form the Gan River, are the second major asset. Water is always a highly enjoyed feature in any city. It gives the visual impression of open space and improves the climate. People like to walk along rivers, lakes and seashores, they like to take boat rides or even swim. Most people prefer to live in a city at the water. Ganzhou could make much better use of this resource. It is already improving the river promenade. To provide for an additional option to enjoy the city and its wall, it would be good to also build piers for river-cruises in the northern part of the old city. Currently, those boats run only on the less attractive southern side.



For creating a positive tourism experience in Ganzhou City, continuous sections with a high concentration of attractive sights (historical buildings, water, trees) and with a low intrusion of negative influences (rubble, noise, visual impact of ugly buildings) have to be identified and improved by carefully reducing the negative and enhancing the positive factors. Given the preference of international tourists for “old” heritage, the most likely areas are those with an old building stock. In the map below, these are the ones in the first two light colours, forming a triangle with the city wall and the rivers as two sides. The map on the next page identifies particular heritage areas, mainly on the eastern side of this triangle. They have to be linked together in order to guarantee an uninterrupted tourism experience (see the example on p. 38).



While the area suitable for tourism development is located in the north of the inner city, the **train station** is far from the centre in the south. This is unfortunate, because the Beijing-Kowloon Railway is seen as a factor in Ganzhou’s attempt to attract international tourists. Not only is the station far away from the city centre, it is also a rather unpleasant place to arrive. The only way to get away from the station is by taxi. However, taxis in Ganzhou can be quite small and in a run-down condition. Many of them even have no meter. Passengers, who do not speak Chinese and cannot negotiate the price with the driver, will feel cheated. This is not a good start, even if their feeling may be wrong.

The train station is unattractive and badly connected to the city centre. Most foreigners using it will not like their first (and last) impression of Ganzhou.

Ganzhou, inner city: Tourism resources

Map: Tongji Institute of Urban Planning & Design et al. 2002



The Tongji Institute of Urban Planning & Design and others have in a detailed study identified tourism resources in the city centre and suggested connecting and optimising them. From the point of view of international tourism, the recommended policies of height control, view control and heritage conservation point into the right direction. The research and proposals are commendable but also very ambitious. Their comprehensive implementation would benefit not only tourists but also local residents.

Conclusion

This report has tried to assess the potential and promising strategies to attract international tourism to Ganzhou. A major thesis is that the area does not have the potential to become a mainstream destination for mass tourism. Secondly, however, the fast growing market and increasing diversification of China tourism will probably provide a chance to develop it as a niche market. On the basis of this assessment, the report identified the most promising niche as cultural tourism to the “Land of Hakka”, applying the concepts of sustainability, of the unique selling point and of experience oriented tourism. The cultural product “Land of Hakka” in the centre of the proposed strategy competes with other cultural products in China. Ganzhou may distinguish itself with an innovative, experience oriented approach (e.g. cycling route, home stay programme, fung shui seminars). It should also build on its second asset, the Beijing-Kowloon Railway. The whole Jiangxi Province should be interested to develop this railway as a major tourism resource. It may be difficult, because some measures need to be implemented by the Chinese Railway administration, but others can be realised on an individual level. If this railway became a popular route (“Trans-China Railway”) it would be much easier for Ganzhou to market its product. Ganzhou City, by virtue of its railway station, became the centre of a destination (“Land of Hakka”), which goes beyond the borders of Gannan. Naturally, this would call for improvements in the attractiveness of both the station and the city as a place for tourists to experience. I think, Ganzhou can become an example of how a peripheral region can leverage its resources and turn them into a tourism product which cannot only be sold, but which also benefits the sustainable development of the region.

Value the small beauty!



While comprehensive master plans for tourism development are necessary, it is also important to pay attention to the details of the urban landscape. One of the positive impressions on the two inspection tours was the effort spent on small-scale decorative elements such as road paving, rubbish bins and metal fences and grilles, especially the traditional Hakka way of road paving, but including many post-war features as well. In sharp contrast to the care afforded in previous times, some more recent buildings and facilities strike the visitor as quite plain and lacking individual character and the care for details. Even though small, this does affect the overall tourist experience.



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Internet sources are mentioned directly in the text with the complete www-address. Most of the photos are taken by the author, if not indicated otherwise.