



Historical Mapping of the Urban Form and the Spatial Power Distribution in Capital Jiankang in East Jin Dynasty

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The Aristocratic Families, which had both political and economic privileges in early Imperial Ages of China with multiple generations working as government officials, had collectively become a core group of East Jin regime. As an important part of the etiquette system under central governance, the capital Jiankang served to display the legitimacy of the regime and to maintain the operational functions of both the nation's apparatus and the city itself. By using Urban Historical Mapping and Geographic Information System as the methods of the spatial power distribution analysis, this paper focus on the distribution of core capital facilities including worship, administration, military and residence, and also the social status of their users. To conclude, the usage of capital space is a representation of the complex relationship and co-dependence among royalty, aristocratic and plebeians. The area inside the capital city wall is an outstanding space for the privileged class as well as the important representation that the aristocratic class joins the core of national powers. And the aristocrats were spatially distributed spread surrounding outside the capital city rather than congregated in one particular area, which made it easier to form their own power centers, leading to threats to the authority centralization.

Keywords: Historical Urban Form, Ancient Capital, Jiankang of East Jin Dynasty, Spatial Power Distribution, Etiquette System.

1. Background

1.1 Etiquette, Power and Capital Space

Etiquette originates from the sacrifice culture with worship for ghosts and gods in the agrarian society, and aims at "regulating the differences and orders of objects"¹. The ancient etiquette had been established to serve feudality to public's thoughts and behaviours since Zhou Dynasty, it is a symbolisation of authority and power. The continuous reorganization and reestablishment of etiquette to adapt different regimes enable it to be implemented as the framework and foundation of Chinese ancient social estate through the history.

Refer to the discussion on capital power space under the background of Chinese historical period, the core issue should be the characterization of etiquette system on physical spatial form of ancient capital. Inquiring into the spatial power distribution in ancient Chinese capital can start from the social hierarchy represented by the users of different physical space. Both mutual agglomeration and exclusion of space represent the social relationship of users. As an important constituting part of the etiquette system, the most important duty of capital is to symbolize the legal nature of divine regime, to guarantee the political functions for the operation of state machinery and maintain the social functions for city operation.

1.2 The Origin and Emigration Distribution of Aristocrats in the Period of Eastern Jin Dynasty

Shi originates from a social class under patriarchal system in ancient Chinese feudal society in the period of Shang and Zhou Dynasties. The core of the patriarchal system is primogeniture, which is featured in complete consensus of patriarchal and political hierarchy. Under such system, the feudalism society is divided into six classes including the emperor, leud, high ministers and nobles, *Shi*, plebeian and slaves. *Shi* is the aristocratic class of the lowest level, mainly consisting of retainers of high ministers and nobles. And only aristocratic children including *Shi* had the opportunity to learn knowledge. After the end of the Spring and Autumn period, *Shi* gradually became the collective name of intellectuals in the ruling class.

By the period of the Western Han Dynasty, the emperor chose Confucianism as the monopoly and established Imperial College in capital Chang'an as the highest learning institution, aiming at cultivating and training a large batch of talents who firmly established the concept of Confucianism, nation and patriarchal clan system so as to fulfill the bureaucracy of each level. The aristocratic and bureaucratic children were able to become nobles and officials due to acceptance of the best official education or were promoted to be officials through the selection



system of talents by nobles. Meanwhile, the ancestry was maintained through forbidding marriage between Shi and plebeian and such a privileged class like aristocrats gradually formed after years.

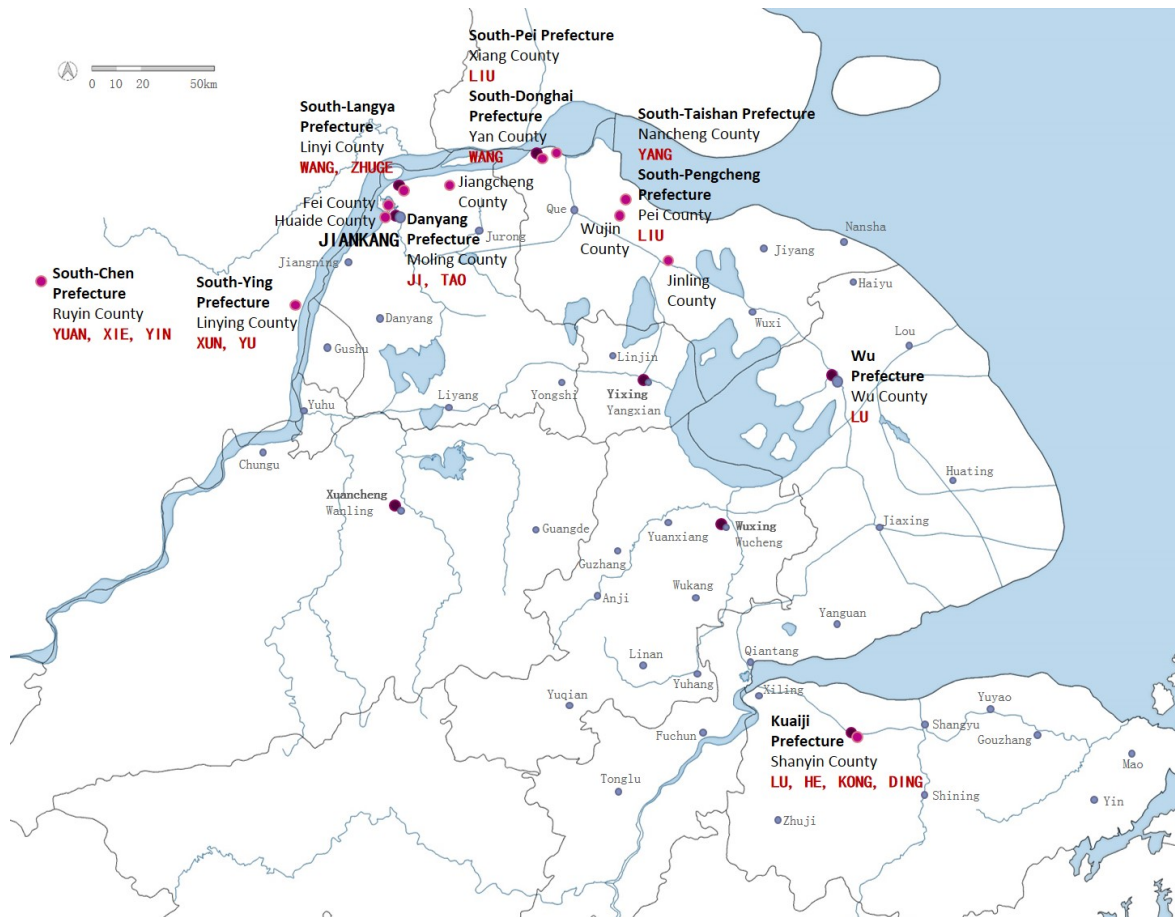


Figure 1: *Distribution of Emigration States and Counties of Aristocrats in East Jin Dynasty* [self-made]

After the imperial clan of Jin Regime gave up large part of northern territory and emigrated southward along with large amount of population, the reconstruction of central regime in Jiankang depended on the power of southward-emigrated aristocrats and local aristocrats to a great extent. Thus, the status and privileges of aristocrats reached an unprecedented height, which was represented in the dominating position in politics. There were 47 aristocratic clans with high status in East Jin Dynasty, including 9 local aristocratic clans and 38 southward-emigrated ones. And there were 84% of the southward-emigrated clans whose original households were in the area north to Mount Qingling and Huai River, majority of which is from today's Henan Province and Shandong Province. The Eastern Jin Government established Immigrant County for the immigrants' settlement. The immigrant counties of southward-emigrated aristocrats were mostly set up closer to the capital, to today's Zhenjiang and Changzhou along the Jiangnan Canal eastward and today's Hefei and Hexian areas westward. Simultaneously, the local aristocrats mainly came from Danyang, Wu and Kuaiji Commanderies. (Figure 1)

2. The Distribution of Capital Politics and Etiquette Core Area as the Representation of Divine Regime

2.1 The System and Structure of City Walls

As the southward-emigrated capital, Jiankang of East Jin Dynasty, is treated as the temporary capital in order to honor the old capital Luoyang of the West Jin Dynasty. The siting of central urban area and the construction of urban artificial water network had accomplished during the previous period of Sun Wu. In urban form, with reference to Luoyang in the Wei and Jin Dynasties, Jiankang combined the original pattern of three palaces and one garden of Sun Wu and reformed to the purer form of a single palace. In other words, the forbidden garden, the palace and the imperial street were arranged from north to south, all on the south-to-north axis of the capital. There were huge differences with the multi-palace system of northern capitals in the period of Qin and Han Dynasties,



acting as the symbolization of centralized kingship and profoundly influencing the later capital form. The axis of the capital did not apply the north-south direction required by ancient etiquette, but in the direction 25° north east, aiming at corresponding to the trends of regional mountains. The axis of the capital pointed straight through the middle line of the double peaks of Mount Niushou², which exactly represents the adaptation to local conditions of central etiquette system in Jiangnan Area.

Another important element that originated in the East Jin Dynasty was Fence Gate. Though lacking defence effects, it marked the division of outer capital city and suburbs with etiquette spatial division significance. The historical document mentioned 56 fence gates³, of which only 17 of them can be located. And these fence gates generally defined the range of capital of Jiankang into the approximate elliptical region that was longer in south-north direction and shorter in east-west direction, relatively clearly with an approximate area of 23km².

Within the range of outer capital city, with the capital city and palaces as the core, each military castle including Ye Castle, Xizhou Castle, Dongfu Castle, Danyang Commandery Castle, Yue Castle and East Ye Castle, was distributed on the either side of Qinhuai River south of the capital. Outside the outer capital city, there were Stone Castle, Baishi Fortress and Xuanwu Castle defending the nearby suburbs and Bai Castle and Jin Castle in the northeast and Xinting Fortress in the southwest in the remote suburbs, through which the defence system by multiple sub-cities of the capital was formed. (Figure 2)

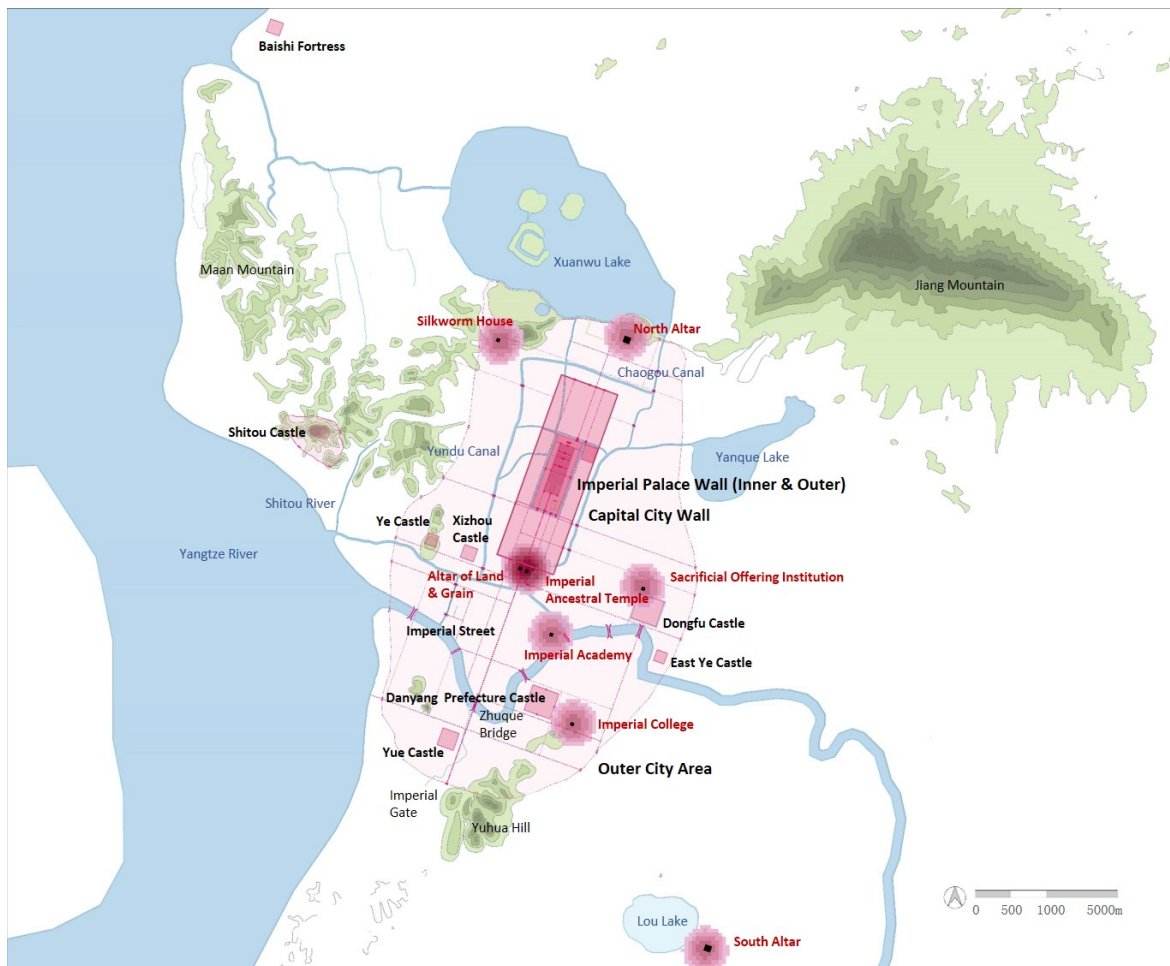


Figure 2: *Jiankang City Wall and Kernel Density of Sacrifice Facilities Distribution in East Jin Dynasty* [self-made]

2.2 National Worship Ritual



The national worship ritual originates from ancient sacrifice rituals with the nature of witchcraft. After the establishment of emperor system in Qin Dynasty and Confucianism as a ruling foundation in Han Dynasty, the worship ritual was reformed and determined to serve the purpose of stabilizing central regime⁴. It includes sacrifice to heaven and earth which represent the chief gods of traditional Chinese mythology, and ghosts sacrifice which represent the ancestor worship. The sacrifice facility symbolizes the legitimacy and divinity of the regime, serves critical etiquette functions of the capital. The main users of these facilities are the emperor and the empress.

In national sacrifice events of chief gods, the specification in West Jin Dynasty was inherited to simplify the four suburb altars (Round, Square, Heaven and Earth) into two (Southern and Northern)⁵. Such a simplified altar system exerted huge effects on the later dynasties. However, due to limited resources during East Dynasty, at first only Southern Altar was set in the southeast suburb for combined sacrifice for heaven and earth, and later Northern Altar was solely set for earth sacrifice. Secondly, The Imperial Altar and Imperial Ancestral Temple were set on east and west sides of Imperial Street outside Gate Xuanyang for land sacrifice and royal ancestor worship respectively. And according to *The Rites of Zhou*, the emperors should farm in person to honour the ancestor peasants and their empress should lead the noble women to feed silkworms in order to encourage farming and weaving. Though royal field was not implemented in East Jin Dynasty, silkworm temple was set in the south of Mount Jilong to sacrifice for the silkworm god. Besides, the Imperial College, Xuanni Temple are the symbolization of Confucianism monopoly for combination of politics and education. Additionally, Bureau of Sacrificial Offerings located in the north of Dongfu Castle.

3. The Combination of National and Urban Functions-Distribution of Capital Administrative and Military Facilities

3.1 Distribution of Administrative Facilities

(1) The Central Government Facilities and Powerful Ministers under the Pattern of Three-Department System

Since Qin Dynasty, system of Three Dukes and Nine Chamberlains was implemented in the central administrative authority. The official system based on such a basic structure developed into Three-department System in order to restrict the power of Counselor-in-chief in the period of Wei and Jin Dynasties. The Three Departments including the Department of State Affairs (*Shang-shu sheng*), Secretariat (*Chung-shu Sheng*) and Chancellery (*Men-hsia Sheng*) are established to take charge of drafting, approving and executing the imperial orders respectively. In that way, the executive and military power of the officers in Counselor-in-chief level can be decentralized by different authority structure.

According to spatial distribution, the three departments are the central political facilities with the closest connection with the main palace hall. From the perspective of specific functions, the central political facilities were divided into two parts, the inner court and the outer court through the tight combination of political discussion places of different levels and corresponding institutions of political affairs. Taiji Hall, as the absolute centre of the imperial power, is located inside the internal palace walls. Its main hall serves for grand ceremonies while its eastern and western halls serve for common audiences⁶. The Secretariat and Chancellery, the central government agencies that are the closest to the emperor, correspond to the Eastern Hall of Taiji Hall for the emperor's daily life and political discussion. These two institutions are set in the south of Taiji Hall inside the internal palace. On the other hand, the Assembly Hall as the place for officials' daily discussion is located directly inside the Department of State Affairs in the southeast part of external palace. The political affairs will firstly be discussed in outer court, and later intimate ministers go inside the internal palace to report to the emperor. Accordingly, the imperial decrees are composed with inner court and later delivered through the outer court to the subordinate departments.

The power of the original nine chamberlains have declined due to the setting of the Department of State Affairs and Chancellery. These national official institutions separately belonging to each functional department are southward distributed inside the capital city wall along the both sides of Imperial Street in front of Palace Gate Dasima⁷. Though their functional rights are weakened, their position as a central administrative facility under the Three Departments remains, which guarantees the implementation of national administrative functions of the capital.

Nevertheless, the official rank of the directors of the three departments (Palace Attendant, Minister, Director of the Secretariat) are actually as limited as the third grade and all of them occupy non-military positions. In East



Jin Dynasty, only the first grade officials are in the level of Counselor-in-chief. There were 63% officials from aristocrats and another 28% officials from the royal and noble families in the 32 first class officials. Most of these first grade officials are military officers and in the meantime hold concurrent posts of the overseers or supervisors in the Department of State Affairs and the Secretariat. Therefore, these officials are the actual powerful ministers of the highest level who hold the main powers of both military and political affairs.

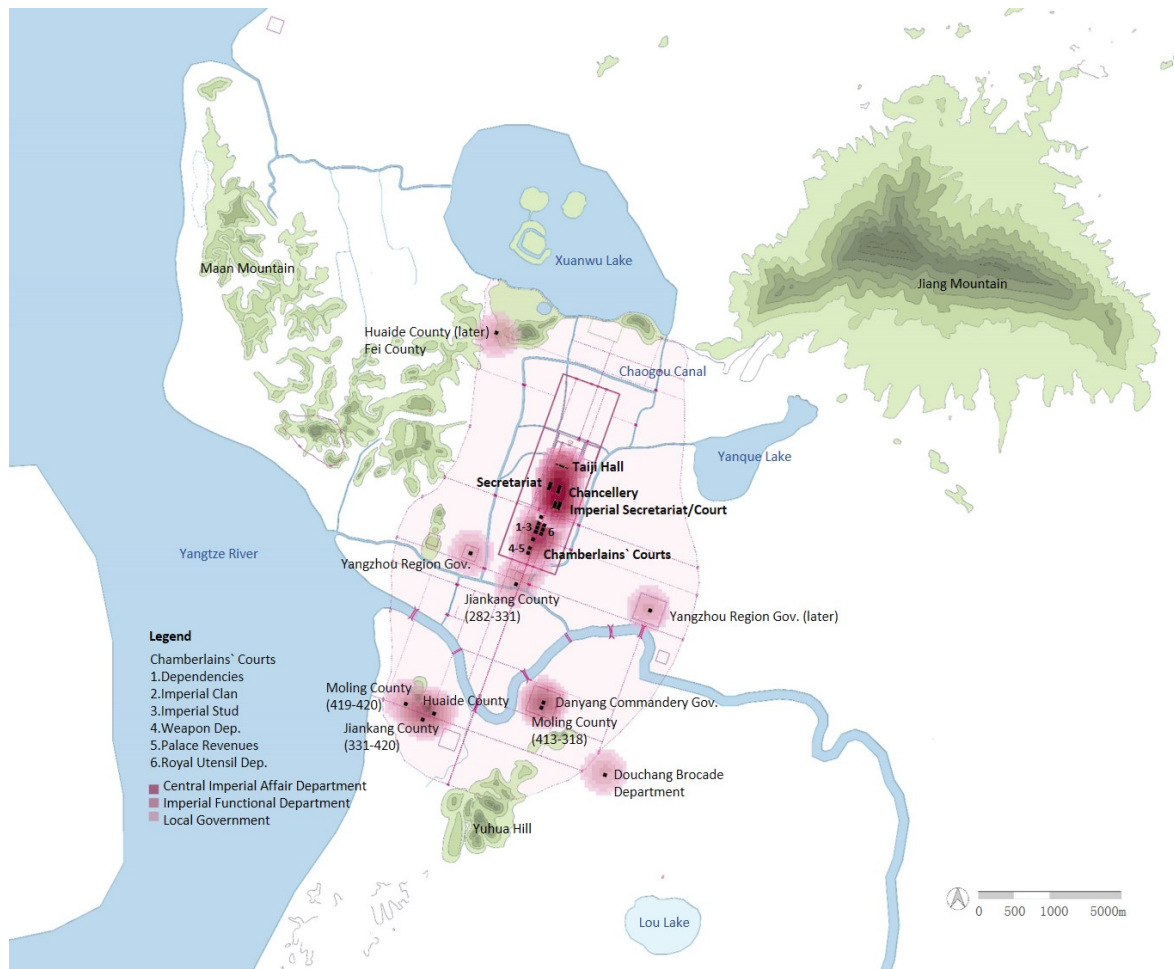


Figure 3: *Kernel Density of Administrative Facilities Distribution of Jiankang in East Jin Dynasty* [self-made]

(2) Local Official Institutions and Local Governors

The local official institutions of East Jin Dynasty mainly include regional, commandery and county government. The nature and responsibilities of capital Jiankang's local official institutions are relatively special, especially in the Regional Government of Yangzhou and Commandery Government of Danyang. Yangzhou Regional Inspector, as the first-class local official who takes charge of the function of supervision, owns the higher level than other regional inspectors. Danyang Governor, as the chief who protects the capital and its environs, takes charge of military powers, civilian politics, appointment and criminal litigation. Both lead armies and take part in the state affairs. Ministers at the level of Counselor-in-chief usually hold the concurrent position of Yangzhou Regional Inspector with longer term. There was only one who came from the royal family while the others came from aristocratic families in the 15 Yangzhou Regional Inspectors in total. Yangzhou government was firstly set in the Xizhou Castle and later transferred to Dongfu Castle. Danyang Governor led eight counties in the capital and its environs with shorter terms. There were 33 governors in one dynasty, 73% of which were from aristocratic families. The government of Danyang Commandery was set in the southeast of Qinhuai River. It can be seen that these powerful ministers who held the concurrent position of Yangzhou Regional Inspector, such as Wang Dun, Wang Dao, Xie An, lived outside the core state affair area spatially but inside the sub-city defence



system around the capital with armies. As they defended the capital, they also formed their own power centres. (Figure 3)

3.2 Military Facilities

The overall structure of armies in East Jin Dynasty can be divided into the central imperial guards and local forces. The capital took the central armies as the main military power to defend the core area with assistance from local armies to maintain public security of the capital city. From the aspects of the forms and types of military facilities, the castle and the military headquarter demonstrated the highest defence level, followed by the local army institutions while ramparts and army shelters in comparison have a lower defence level.

The Commandant General and Protector General were the supreme generals of central imperial guards in East Jin Dynasty. The armies inside the capital city, the palace and the halls were led by the Commandant General. The praetorian guards who followed the emperor occupied the most central position and were stationed in Left Guard and Right Guard in the Internal Palace. The Capital City and Palaces themselves were castles with the highest defence level, located at the central position of the city area to protect the royals and national core facilities. The Protector General led the central armies stationed outside the capital walls. The mansion for Protector General was located outside the West Fence Gate together with Stone Castle. Stone Castle is the most important castle near the capital, occupying the highland next to the Qinhuai River mouth to Yangtze River, serving as the western capital entrance and the major garrison of capital navies. Its strategic position is as important as that of the capital city, and was guarded by Protector Generals concurrently⁸. There were 51 army generals in East Jin Dynasty, including 78% from aristocratic families and 4% from the royal family. There were 29 Commandant Generals, including 86% aristocratic family members and 7% royal family members. Of the 22 Protector Generals, 68% were from aristocratic families and 32% were plebeian. It is clear that the aristocratic families were in an absolute advantageous position in both the central armies and armies defending the core area of capital city and palace.

Also, the capital was in the jurisdiction of Yangzhou Regional Commander-in-chief and Inspector-in-chief. The official of Danyang Commandery also mastered the military powers of the capital and its environs, which has been demonstrated in detail in 3.1 above. As the first county of the capital, there were seven county defenders who took charge of district security inside the capital walls and eastern suburbs in Jiankang County. Additionally, White Castle, Linyi County, Jiangcheng County, Jiangning County, Hushu County in the remote suburb all served as the defence with armies for the capital. (Figure 4)

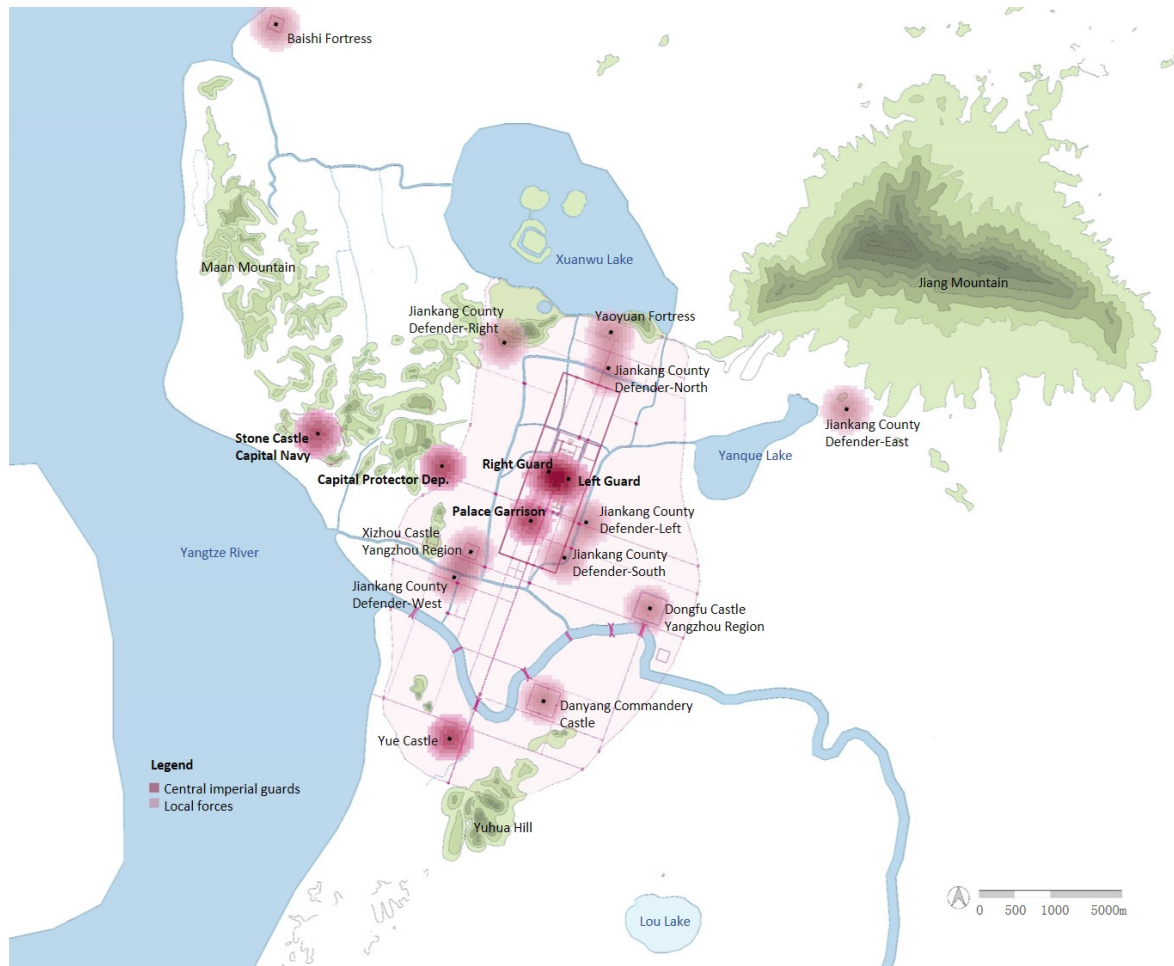


Figure 4: Kernel Density of Military Facilities Distribution of Jiankang in East Jin Dynasty [self-made]

4. Distribution of Capital Residential Neighborhoods and Celebrity Mansions

Li (Urban Neighborhood) in Jiankang is the first implementation of the *Lifang* Neighborhood System in Jiangnan Region. The majority of the residential neighborhoods of Jiankang were located inside the fence gates and showed clear tendency of dense distribution close to both banks of Qinhuai River in the southern outer-city. There is no apparent separation between the mansions for royal families and officials and the living places for plebeian in the southern outer-city. Meanwhile, there were more mansions and gardens for royal families in both east and west areas to the capital city. The only *Li* outside the fence gates was located south to Mount Jiang in the eastern suburb, serving as the proof for eastward extension of the capital. (Figure 5)

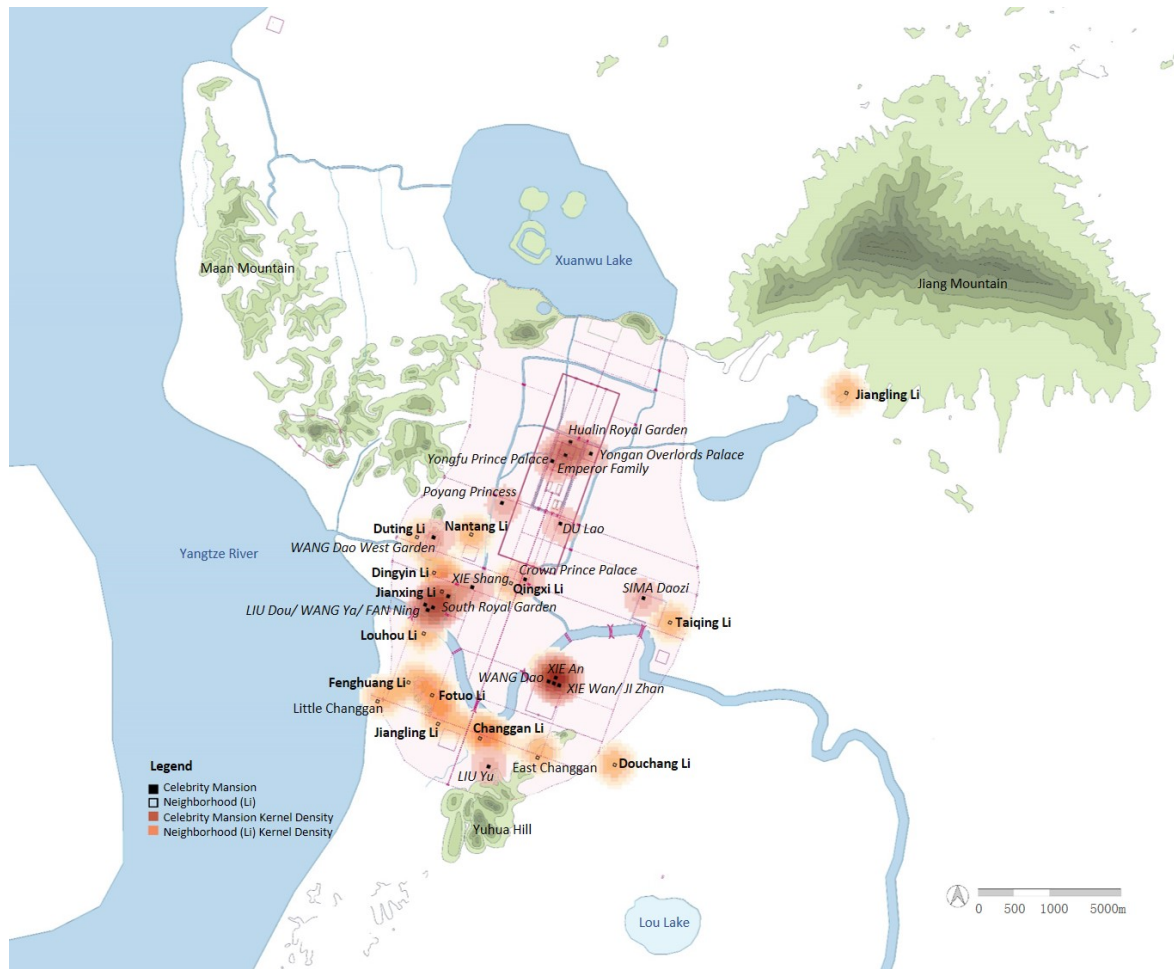


Figure 5: Kernel Density of Li (Neighborhood) and Celebrity Mansions Distribution of Jiankang in East Jin Dynasty [self-made]

5. Analysis on Power Spatial Distribution of Jiankang of East Jin Dynasty

It can be deduced from the analysis above that the aristocrats made up the majority of officials in the capital, especially on the executive level. Thus, the capital administrative facilities were regarded as the space used by the aristocrats in this paper. Each functional facility inside Jiankang of East Jin Dynasty is re-classified according to the social level of its users, from which the power space of three types including the emperor and royal members, the aristocratic officials and other plebeians, can be identified. The results of overlaying the spatial distribution kernel density analysis are as shown in Figure 6. It can be seen that the areas inside the capital walls of Jiankang of East Jin Dynasty are only for the royal family and the aristocrats. However, the palace is not the exclusive space for the royal family, except the northern living palaces in the internal palaces and royal gardens which are strictly exclusive for the emperor and his relatives. The internal palace and the southern external palace are the space for the aristocrats who serve as the close ministers for the emperor. There are differences as well as certain consistency in the distribution of use space of each class outside the capital walls and inside the range of fence gates. There is generally no facilities between north to Nanheng Street in the palace and south to Chaogou while there is space for each class distributed in the Chanlingzhu Area north to Chaogou in the southern Ye Castle and the area south to Qinghuai River. The class of plebeians were the main occupants of the southern area of Qinghuai River while more of the royal and noble families were at the royal street outside the south gate of the capital and the southern Ye Castle. The distribution of space for the aristocrat class outside the capital or even outside the range of fence gates is relatively even, scattering circularly outside the capital. (Figure 6)

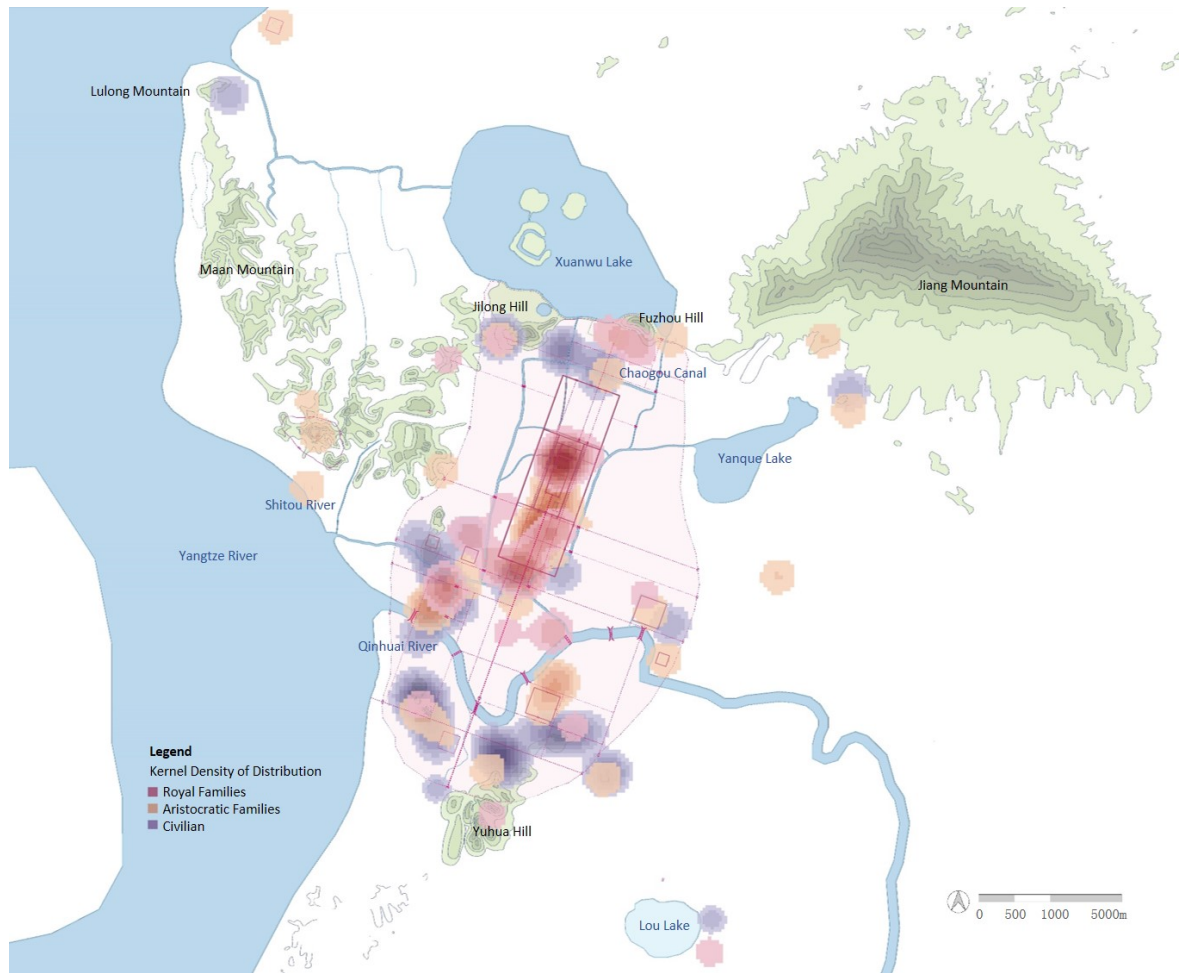


Figure 6: *Power Space Distribution of Jiankang in East Jin Dynasty* [self-made]

To conclude, the different usage of urban space by users from different social and political stratum is a representation of the complex relationship and co-dependence among the imperial family, the aristocratic families and the plebeians. The area inside the capital city wall of Jiankang stands out as the space for the privileged class as well as the important representation of the aristocratic class being part of the core national powers. As to the area outside the capital city wall, the middle axle district along Imperial Street is the space for the privileged class while there was no apparent spatial division in other areas. The class of plebeians was distributed more in the area south to Qinhuai River while the space for the aristocratic class was evenly distributed surrounding the capital, which made it easier to form their own power centers, becoming to threats to the central power.



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Disclosure Statement

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Image sources

Figure 1-6: Self-made

¹ Zhang Jie, *The Cultural Gene of Ancient Chinese Space*, (Beijing: Tsinghua University, 2012), 119

² Xu Song, *Records of Jiankang*, (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1986), 191

³ Li Fang, *Imperial Readings of the Taiping Era*, (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1985), 950

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⁷ Xu Song, *Records of Jiankang*, (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1986), 767

⁸ Ma Guangzu, *Jingding Chorography of Jiankang*, (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1990), 1559