

Research Article

Biography of “Jian Lu” and the Qin Army's Southern Campaign Against the Baiyue

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Abstract

The Lingqu Canal, one of the most renowned hydraulic projects in ancient China, was built in the Qin dynasty (B.C.221-B.C.207) for the military transportation purpose in the war of conquering Baiyue (百越) nationality. According to historical literature data from Records of the Historian and Huainanzi (淮南子), its builder “Jian Lu (监禄)”, named “Lu” (禄) as an inspector, was a celebrated hydraulic engineer in antiquity, yet records about him and the historical context of the Lingqu Canal's construction remain extremely sparse in hydraulic history research, with no significant progress made over time. After reading through Qin bamboo slips excavated from Liye (里耶) in western Hunan, we found slips mentioning “Qianling Shou Lu” (the acting governor of Qianling county). Based on the dates, locations, and events recorded on these slips, combined with military and historical background analysis of the period, as well as academic achievements in historical geography, it can be largely confirmed that the “Qianling Shou Lu” mentioned in the Qin bamboo slips corresponds to the Lingqu Canal's builder “Jian Lu” documented in historical literature. He had served successively as the Administrator of Jingshan Dao (荆山道) and the magistrate of Qianling County, later being promoted to inspector of Dongting Commandery. He was responsible for provisioning the Qin army with food and military supplies, overseeing logistics and canal construction during the Qin army's advance into Lingnan.

Keywords

Jian Lu, Lingqu Canal, The Arm of Qin, Qianling Shou Lu, Qin Bamboo Slips, Qianling County

1. Introduction

The Lingqu Canal stands as China's earliest large-scale ancient waterway project, distinguished by its groundbreaking engineering techniques and enduring comprehensive hydraulic functions. Constructed during the Qin army's campaign into Lingnan (岭南) to transport military provisions and supplies,

it holds pivotal significance in both hydraulic engineering and shipping history. Its founder Jian Lu (监禄) emerged as a key figure in Qin's conquest of Lingnan and a renowned hydraulic engineer of antiquity. However, historical records about “Jian Lu” remain sparse, appearing only in classical texts like the

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Huainanzi, Records of the Grand Historian, and Book of Han. These sources indicate he oversaw the canal's construction during Qin's military campaigns to subdue the Baiyue tribes, primarily for grain transportation. Little is known about his personal life, leaving his biography a mystery in hydraulic engineering history studies. In addition, Academic circles also debate critical aspects of the Qin campaign—including timelines, tactics, and command structures—which continue to challenge scholarly research. As a central figure in Qin's Lingnan conquest, understanding Jian Lu's life and canal-building process remains vital for hydraulic history studies and broader historical research. This understanding holds significant value for examining Qin's unification of China, as well as Lingnan's ancient history and development trajectory.

The discovery of Qin bamboo slips has provided crucial insights into understanding the founder of the Lingqu (灵渠) Canal. Given the short duration of the Qin Dynasty, the historical records preserved on these slips largely coincide with the canal's construction period. The Liye Qin slips were unearthed near the Lingqu site, and the figures as well as events documented in them are closely tied to the Qin Dynasty's military campaigns in Lingnan, indicating their connection to the canal's excavation. Notably, the slips contain an inscription titled “Qianling Shou Lu” (迁陵守禄, the acting governor of Qianling county, named Lu), which, when combined with the military and historical context of the canal's establishment and research findings of the Qin bamboo slips from Liye and Zhangjiashan Han tombs, suggests that this “Qianling Shou Lu” is the same individual as the “Jian Lu” recorded in surviving historical texts as the Lingqu Canal's founder. This discovery offers deeper understanding of the historical background behind this monumental engineering project.

2. “Jian Lu” Recorded in Historical Documents

The records of “Jian Lu” and its excavation process for the Lingqu Canal are primarily found in historical works from the Qin and Han dynasties, such as the 《Huainanzi》《Records of the Grand Historian》and 《Book of Han》.

The 《Huainanzi - In the World of Man》records

“Also cherished the rhinoceros, horns, ivory, jade and pearls produced in the state of Yue, then he sent general Tu Sui (屠睢) to lead five hundred thousand soldiers,..... due to not being able to transport provisions for the troops, Emperor Qin Shi Huang then ordered Jian Lu to lead the troops to dig canals as well as dredge water courses to transport food supplies to assault the state of Yue. The troops of Qin killed Yi Yusong-the sovereign of Xi'ou.” [1]

The 《Records of the Grand Historian - The Biographies of Lord Pingjin and Zhufu》documents a similar account:

“During the reign of the king Qin, he gradually expanded his territory, annexed the Warring States, and proclaimed

himself Emperor... He then ordered General Wei Tu Sui to lead the naval forces southward against the Baiyue tribes, while appointing Jian Lu to excavate canals for grain transportation. The deep penetration into Yue territory forced the Yue people to flee.” [2]

Historical records indicate that when Emperor Qin Shi Huang launched his southern campaign against the Baiyue tribes, mountainous terrain created logistical challenges for land transportation. To address this, he appointed Jianlu (Supervisor of Grain Supply) to oversee canal construction for military provisions. The Lingqu Canal, developed under Jianlu's leadership, enabled Qin forces to penetrate deep into the Yue territories, forcing the Yue people to flee into the forests. As a key commander in this southern expedition, Jianlu played a pivotal role in establishing the Lingqu Canal—a critical infrastructure that became integral to the military campaign.



Figure 1. The bamboo slip recording Lu as the acting magistrate of Qianling county.

Regarding the life of “Jian Lu,” we only know his official title was “Jian”, and his name was “Lu”, “Jian” is the abbreviation for “Jian Yu Shi”, imperial censor. As early as when

Pei Yin (裴駰) of the Southern Song Dynasty annotated "Jian Lu" in his annotations to the Records of the Grand Historian, he pointed out that Wei Zhao (韦昭) said: "Jian Yushi, named Lu" [3]. Wei Zhao was a figure from the Three Kingdoms period and explicitly stated that "Jian Lu" referred to a "Jian Yushi", the imperial censor, named "Lu". After Qin Shi Huang unified China, he divided the empire into thirty-six commanderies, each of which established three main official positions: the governor, the army commander, and the inspector. The inspector was a censor dispatched by the central government to local governments at the commandery level, also abbreviated as "Jian (監)".

3. "Qianling Shou Lu" Recorded in the Liye Qin Bamboo Slips

The Qin bamboo slips unearthed in the ancient city of Liye, Longshan County, western Hunan Province mainly contain archives about Qianling County, Dongting Commandery, in the Qin Dynasty. They record the administrative governance of Qianling County, Dongting Commandery from the 25th year of King Zheng of the Qin (秦王政) (222 BC) to the second year of the second emperor of Qin (208 BC). The "Historical Records" and other documents record that the Qin army invaded Lingnan, attacked Baiyue and "Jianlu" to dig the spiritual canal, which happened to be during this period. Some of the characters and events recorded in the Qin slips have a certain relationship with the Qin army's invasion of Lingnan.

The Liye Qin bamboo slips record more than once an acting magistrate of Qianling County whose name is also "Lu". The Liye Qin bamboo slip (IV8—1516) has the following record (Figure 1): [4]

廿六年十二月癸丑朔庚申，迁陵守祿敢言之：沮守瘳言：课廿四年畜息子得钱殿。沮守周主。为新地吏，令县论言史（事）。问之，周不在迁陵。敢言之。

以荆山道丞印行。

According to the research, this is a document issued by Qianling County. The person who issued the document is "Qianling Shou Lu", i.e. Lu, the governor of Qianling county. The signature reads "Jingshan Dao Cheng".

In the Qin bamboo slips unearthed from Liye, the "shou" generally refers to an official who temporarily acts as an agent for government affairs. Due to the rapid expansion of the newly occupied areas by the Qin Dynasty, the original officials were insufficient to serve as officials in the new territories, resulting in some departments having no chief officials to handle government affairs. In such a situation, it was necessary to set up "shou" officials to act as the chief officials [5]. "Lu" was the temporary acting administrative chief of Qianling County, equivalent to the position of county magistrate [6]. Qianling County was established in the 25th year of King Zheng of the Qin Dynasty (222 BC) [7] and belonged to the

"new territories" of the Qin State. It was under such circumstances that "Lu" was transferred from the assisting magistrate of Jingshan Dao in Hanzhong Commandery to the position of "acting official of Qianling". His original position was the assisting magistrate of Jingshan Dao, he used the seal of his former position to act on behalf of his duties. Jingshan Dao was a county subordinate to Hanzhong Commandery [8].

This batch of bamboo slips from the Qin Dynasty provides us with a very important piece of information. In December of the 26th year of Emperor Qin Shi Huang's reign, the official in charge of Qianling County was named "Lu", but his surname is unknown.

Liye Qin bamboo slips 7-11, there are also following two records [9]:

十一月壬寅，遷陵守祿告尉官主聽書從事。

十一月壬寅，遷陵守祿以此報酉陽

This November refers to the November of the 25th year of King Zheng of the Qin (222 BC). At this time, "Lu" had just taken office, and the events recorded on these two bamboo slips were the administrative activities. Therefore, the first magistrate of Qianling County, "Lu", served from November of the 25th year of King Zheng of the Qin (222 BC) to December of the 26th year (221 BC), for more than a year.

According to relevant research on bamboo slips of the Qin Dynasty, after "Lu", the magistrate of Qianling County was "Xing (興)". After "Xing" was "Ba (拔)". In December of the 27th year of Emperor Qinshihuang (220 BC), "Ba" reported that "Xing", the former magistrate of Qianling, died in battle in "Zhangzhong (鄣中)". After that, until July of the 35th year of Emperor Qinshihuang (212 BC), there was "Jian (建)", the magistrate of Qianling county [10].



Figure 2. The Bamboo slip recording inspector of Dongting Commandery.

These records indicate that after the 26th year of Emperor Qin Shi Huang, "Lu" did not continue to serve in Qianling County. The Qin bamboo slips also do not record his subsequent activities in Qianling County.

Is this "Qianling Shou Lu" the same person as "Jian Lu" who built the Lingqu Canal? The author believes they are the same person.

The first, from a chronological perspective, after December of the 26th year of Emperor Qin Shi Huang (221 BC), "Lu" left the position of the magistrate of Qianling County. He no longer appeared in Qianling County, and there was no record of his death in battle. This year was also the time when Emperor Qin Shi Huang decided to form five armies to pacify the Baiyue region. At that time, there was a shortage of officials. "Lu" should have been promoted to the position of Inspector of Censor in this year, so he no longer appeared in the archives of Qianling County. He rose from a local county official to a prefecture - level official and was responsible for the military logistics work of Dongting Commandery and the food supply for the army advancing to Lingnan in the future. This is basically consistent with the time when he dug the Lingqu Canal three years later.

Secondly, in terms of the workplace, Qianling was a county in Dongting Commandery. There were approximately fourteen counties in Dongting Commandery in total [11]. Qianling was a large county among them. Its geographical location was not far from Linyuan, Linxiang, or Yuanling, the seats of Dongting Commandery at that time. "Lu" was familiar with not only the situation in Qianling County but also that in Dongting Commandery. It was very appropriate to promote someone with work experience and familiarity with the local situation from here to be in charge of the army's provisions and pay.

The third, an analysis of the nature of the work. Dongting Commandery was an important military base and the front line for the attack on Lingnan at that time. It was responsible for tasks such as raising military rations, producing, transporting, and storing military supplies. Qianling County was an important part of it and was raising military supplies and conscripting soldiers for the march into Lingnan. "Lu" was promoted to the Supervisor of Censor of Dongting Commandery in the early years of the 27th year of Emperor Qin Shi Huang because he had worked in Qianling County before, and was responsible for the military logistics work of Dongting Commandery. Judging from the records in handed-down literature that "Jianlu" dug the Lingqu Canal for the transportation of military pay, his work was to be in charge of the logistics of the Qin army's advance into Lingnan, which was the same as the nature of the work of "Qianling Shou Lu" recorded in the Liye Qin bamboo slips in Qianling County. Although "Lu"'s position was promoted, the content of his work remained unchanged. After serving as the Supervisor of Censor, "Lu" was still in charge of military logistics work, which was indeed the best personnel arrangement at that time.

The fourth, the Liye Qin bamboo slips clearly record that the Dongting Commandery had an Inspector of Censors and

an Office of the Inspector of Censors.

Liye Qin bamboo slips 11-34: "敢言之，洞庭監御史" (Figure 2)

Liye Qin bamboo slips 8-1644: "監府書遷（陵）" [12]

In the few years after "Lu" left Qianling County, the connection between Qianling County and Dongting Commandery was very close. A total of 197 seal slips were unearthed from Well No. 1 in Liye Ancient City, among which 55 had characters. Among them, 34 slips contained both the characters "Dongting" and "Qian". "Qianling sends documents to Dongting via post" was the most common, reflecting the close document exchanges between Dongting Commandery and Qianling County.

At that time, Qianling County and the Supervisory Office of Dongting Commandery were two government agencies with very close business connections. These circumstances indicate that since "Lu" originated from Qianling County, the connection between Dongting Commandery and Qianling County was more frequent than that with other counties.

The fifth, from the perspective of positions, the "magistrates of Qianling" was a county - level official, only one rank lower than the commandery Censor. It was a normal promotion to be transferred from a county - level official to a commandery - level official. Dongting Commandery was newly established with a shortage of officials, so officials were promoted from subordinate counties.

The sixth, judging from the names, the possibility of two people with the same name among the officials at the county and district levels is very low. At that time, for Dongting County, the number of county - and district - level officials was limited.

Based on the above understanding and conditional restrictions, it can be basically determined that "Qianling Shou Lu" is the "Jian Lu" who later dug the Lingqu Canal. In the first year of the 27th year of Emperor Qinshihuang (220 BC), he was promoted from "Qianling Shou" to the supervising censor of Dongting Commandery.

In addition, according to the records in the "Zouyan Shu" (《奏讞书》) on the bamboo slips from Han Tomb No. 247 in Zhangjiashan, Wei Tuisui (尉徒睢), the commander of the Qin army's southern expedition against the Baiyue tribes, was none other than the commander of Cangwu Commandery [13]. The Qin army mainly came from two places, Dongting Commandery and Cangwu Commandery. Their tasks such as the procurement and transportation of military supplies were mainly carried out in Dongting Commandery. Therefore, it was quite reasonable that Emperor Qin Shi Huang ordered Lu, the surveillance censor of Dongting Commandery, to be in charge of the army's food supply and logistics work, and to dig the Lingqu Canal to transport military rations.

4. The Qin Army Advances into Lingnan and the Excavation of Ling Canal

How did "Qianling Shou Lu" get promoted to "Jian Lu" and

dig the Lingqu Canal? This is related to the strategic deployment of the Qin army's advance into the Lingnan region and its southern attack on the Baiyue tribes.

In the 25th year of the reign of King Zheng of the Qin (222 BC), Wang Jian (王翦), a great general of the Qin State, "pacified the territories of Jing in southern Changjiang River", and established Dongting and Cangwu Commanderies in what is now Hunan area, also Qianling County was set up. In the 26th year (221 BC), the Qin State defeated the Qi State, unified the whole country, and began to launch a war to attack the Baiyue in the south. According to the record in "Huainanzi · In the world of Man", when the Qin army began to pacify the Baiyue, it advanced in five routes and dispatched five hundred thousand troops, which were respectively stationed at five military fortresses: "One army blocked the ridge of Tan City, one army guarded the pass of Jiu Yi, one army was stationed in the capital of Pan Yu, one army guarded the border of Nan Ye, and one army remained by the water of Yu Gan. For three years, they did not take off their armor or relax their bows and crossbows, and the supervisor Lu had no way to transport provisions."

These five military garrisons are equivalent to five garrison regions. Regarding the attack on Lingnan, there are mainly two routes: One is the military garrison "blocking the ridges of Tan City". Tan City is located at the junction of Hunan, Guangxi, and Guizhou, undertaking the combat readiness mission of the Yuecheng Ridge direction [14]. In terms of administrative divisions, Tan City belongs to Dongting Commandery. The area controlled by this army is equivalent to Dongting Commandery, which was the front line for attacking Lingnan at that time. The other is the one "guarding the passes of Jiu Yi". It probably entered present-day He County in Guangxi from present-day Ningyuan in Hunan. "Jiu Yi" refers to Jiu Yi Mountain, which is located in Ningyuan County, Hunan Province, belonging to the Mengzhu Ridge of the Nanling Mountains. Setting up a garrison region in the Jiu Yi area could not only strongly control the local ethnic minorities, but also march southward across the Mengzhu Ridge to reach the present Hezhou area. The area it controlled was equivalent to the jurisdiction of Cangwu Commandery. The military garrison in the Jiu Yi garrison region mainly undertook the combat mission in the direction of the Mengzhu Ridge direction. However, later this army did not march southward from the Mengzhu Ridge, but also advanced through the Yuecheng Ridge. The main reason was the opening of the Lingqu Canal. Advancing by waterway made transportation more convenient. According to the analysis of Han bamboo slip materials, the Cangwu Commandery roughly corresponds to the present-day eastern Xiangjiang River basin in Hunan Province, and its commandery seat was likely to be within the territory of present-day Chenzhou City [15]. Their jurisdiction areas of these two commanderies are equivalent to the above two garrison areas.

These two armies, calculated at 100,000 men per army, were approximately 200,000 men in total. Their direction of advance was towards the Yue region in Lingnan. In the first three years of the Qin army's southern offensive against

Lingnan, from the 26th year of Emperor Qinshihuang (221 BC) to the 29th year of Emperor Qinshihuang (218 BC), which can be regarded as the first stage of this war, was the period described in "Huainanzi" as "not taking off armor or relaxing bows for three years." During this period, the main activities of the Qin army were to raise food, troops, and military supplies in Dongting and Cangwu Commanderies. At the same time, they quelled rebellions and stabilized the rear. During this period, the Qin army established a military management center in Cangwu Commandery and a logistics supply center in Dongting Commandery. It is not difficult to understand that the two main leaders of the army advancing into Lingnan later, the military commander Yu Tusui and the logistics chief "Jian Lu", came from these two places respectively.

The Qin bamboo slips vividly described the situation of the Qin army raising military rations and weapons in Dongting Commandery, showing us the operation mode of the logistics support system of the Qin army in Dongting Commandery.

At that time, Qianling County in Dongting Commandery was an important part of this logistics support system. Qianling County was close to the You River (酉水), with rugged terrain and numerous mountains. It was rich in raw materials for weapon manufacturing such as bird feathers and lacquer. It was an important place for weapon manufacturing and weapon storage. The raw materials for the manufacturing of armors and weapons could basically be self-sufficient. Both the county and its townships stored weapons, with a large quantity of armors and weapons in storage. It occupied an important position in the military equipment storage in the southwest before and after the unification of the Qin Dynasty.

Qianling County also established a relatively complete production and management structure for military supplies. Military supplies included military food, products, and weapons and armors, and the management of military supplies was the responsibility of the Qianling County Treasury. Qianling County had granaries at both the county and township levels. The granaries established included two types: county - level public granaries and township - separated granaries. The main recipients of military rations were the punished conscripts and rotating conscripts in Qianling County and its three townships. The military supplies stored in the county treasury not only met the needs of the local area but also supplied the Neishi (an administrative region in ancient times) and surrounding counties. Due to its proximity to the You River and Yuan River, with well - developed water transportation, it could transport food and supplies by water, which was a convenient and efficient transportation method in ancient times.

While the Qin army was actively preparing military supplies and food, it was also suppressing rebellions, stabilizing the rear, expanding the army, and establishing a military management center. This work was mainly completed by Wei Tusui, who later became the main general of the Qin army. Because the areas where the Qin army was garrisoned, such as Dongting Commandery and Cangwu Commandery, were originally part of the territory of the Chu State. Although they

were occupied by the Qin State, the resistance of the people of Chu was still very fierce, and the situation was very unstable, so it was necessary to consolidate the local areas.

The bamboo slips of "Zouyan Shu《奏谏书》" in Han Tomb No. 247 at Zhangjiashan contain records of Wei Tusui suppressing the rebellion in Lixiang, Cangwu Commandery from the 27th year (220 BC) to the 28th year (219 BC) of Emperor Qin Shi Huang.

“御史书以廿七年二月壬辰到南郡守府，即下，甲午到盖庐等治所。……八月庚子朔论去，尽廿八年九月甲午巳。……隼曰：初视事，苍梧守灶，尉徒唯谓隼：利乡反，新黔首往击，去北当捕治者多，皆未得，……所取荆新地多群盗……。” [16]

The twenty-seventh year mentioned in this bamboo slip refers to the twenty-seventh year of Emperor Qin Shi Huang (220 BC). At that time, the governor of Cangwu Commandery was named Zao (灶), and the military commander of the commandery was named Tuwei (徒唯). According to research, Tuwei, the military commander, is the Tu Sui (屠睢), the military commander mentioned in "Huainanzi" and "Records of the Grand Historian" [17]. He was the main general who later advanced into Lingnan and also made certain contributions to the excavation of the Lingqu Canal.

These circumstances indicate that during the 27th (220 BC) to 28th (219 BC) year of Emperor Qin Shi Huang's reign, Wei Tusui, the chief commander of the Qin army, was still in the middle reaches of the Xiang River in present-day Hunan, suppressing rebellions, consolidating the rear, and preparing for the invasion of Lingnan. The statement in "Huainanzi·Renjianxun" that "for three years, the soldiers did not take off their

armor or relax their bows" is a vivid portrayal of the arduous pre-war preparations of the Qin army in the garrison areas of Xincheng and Jiuyi during this period.

In the 29th year of Emperor Qin Shi Huang (218 BC), Emperor Qin Shi Huang made a southern tour and reached Cangwu [18]. By then, the conditions for the Qin army to march into Lingnan were basically ripe. The last difficulty was that due to the obstruction of Yuecheng Ridge, the waterway into Lingnan had still not been opened, so supervisor Lu had no way to transport supplies. Therefore, it was quite natural that Emperor Qin Shi Huang issued an order, asking Supervisor Lu to preside over the excavation of the Lingqu Canal. Both "Records of the Grand Historian: Biographies of Pingjin Marquis and Lord Fuyuan" and "Book of Han: Biographies of Yan, Zhu, Wuqiu, Lord Fuyuan, Xu, Yan, Zhong, Wang, and Jia (Part I)" mentioned that the King of Qin "ordered Supervisor Lu to dig the canal", and the time of this order should be around this time.

In the 30th year of Emperor Qin Shi Huang's reign, the Qin army began the second stage of its southern offensive against the Baiyue tribes. There is a record in the unpublished Han bamboo slips collected by Jingzhou Museum that "in the 30th year of Emperor Qin Shi Huang's reign, Wei, the commander of Cangwu, led an army to attack the Luliang region" [19], which should mark the beginning of the large - scale Qin army's march into the Lingnan region (Table 1). Therefore, the Qin army's southern offensive against the Baiyue tribes and its march into the Lingnan region followed closely after the excavation of the Lingqu Canal. The role of "Jian Lu", who supervised the excavation of the Lingqu Canal, was undoubtedly of great significance in this war.

Table 1. Timetable of Relations between Lu and the Historical Events of Qing Imperial to conquer Lingnan Area.

Years	Events	References	Remark
The 25th year of King Zheng of Qin (222 BC)	1. Wang Jian pacified the territories of Chu in southern Changjiang River	Records of the Grand Historian —The First emperor of Qin	
	2. The Qin Dynasty established Cangwu Commandery and Dongting Commandery		
	3. Qianling County set		"Lu" served as the first magistrate of Qianling County
The 26th year of Qin Shi Huang (221 BC)	The Qin army launched a southern campaign against the Baiyue tribes, advancing through five routes. Lu served as the acting magistrate of Qianling County.	1. Huainanzi·In the World of Man 2. Liye Qin Bamboo slips [8-1516]	The Qin army garrisoned the five Ridges, the first stage of the war against the Yue tribes.
The 27th year of Qin Shi Huang (220 BC)	Wei Tusui was in Cangwu Commandery to suppress the rebellion in Lixiang.	"Zouyan Shu" in Han Tomb No. 247 at Zhangjiashan	
The 28th year of Qin Shi Huang (219 BC)	Wei Tusui was still in Cangwu Commandery	"Zouyan Shu" in Han Tomb No. 247 at Zhangjiashan	
The 29th year of Qin Shi	Qin Shi Huang made an inspection tour		Jian Lu began to dig the Lingqu

Years	Events	References	Remark
Huang (218 BC)	to Cangwu and ordered Jian Lu to dig a canal.		Canal.
The thirtieth year of Qin Shi Huang (217 BC)	The army commander Tui Sui of Cangwu Commandery advanced into Lingnan	Newly unearthed bamboo slips of the Han Dynasty collected in Jingzhou Museum	The army commander Tu Sui led the military campaign into Lingnan, the Second stage of the Southern Campaign Against the Baiyue Trib.

5. Summary

Through comparative analysis of historical records and the Qin Bamboo Slips, along with background research on Emperor Qin Shi Huang's southern campaign against the Baiyue tribes, it is conclusively established that the "Qianling Shou Lu" documented in the Leye Qin Slips corresponds to the "Jian Lu" mentioned in surviving texts regarding the construction of the Lingqu Canal during the emperor's southern expedition. His initial position was as Daocheng (administrative officer) of Jingshan county. After conquering Chu, the Qin army began to the war against the Baiyue, conducting three years of military preparations and logistical groundwork in the Xiangjiang River basin within present-day Hunan Province. Strategically, garrison zones were established at Tancheng and Jiuyi, while administrative divisions included Dongting Commandery and Cangwu Commandery, with Dongting Commandery serving as the central hub for supplying military provisions to Lingnan forces. Against this historical backdrop, Lu was appointed acting magistrate of Qianling County in 25th year of King Zheng of the Qin (222 BCE). After approximately one year in office, he was promoted to Supervisor of Dongting Commandery in late 26th or early 27th year of Emperor Qin Shi Huang's reign, tasked with securing military rations for local garrisons. Leveraging his expertise in local topography and waterways, he spearheaded the Lingqu Canal project when Qin forces encountered transportation bottlenecks during their Lingnan campaign. Leading tens of thousands of troops, he successfully completed preliminary canal construction the following year, establishing this monumental hydraulic engineering marvel that would endure for over two millennia.

Abbreviations

Jian Lu Jian Yu Shi Lu
Jian Jian Yu Shi

Author Contributions

Yan Yuanliang: Conceptualization, Writing – original draft

Li Yunpeng: Funding acquisition, Project administration

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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