

Spatial Form and Poetic Writing in the City of Luoyang From the Yuanhe to Huichang Periods of the Tang Dynasty

Zhihan Liu¹

¹ People's Music Publishing House, Beijing, China

Correspondence: Zhihan Liu, People's Music Publishing House, Beijing 100010, China.

Received: October 7, 2022

Accepted: November 5, 2022

Online Published: November 14, 2022

doi:10.20849/ajsss.v7i10.1312

URL: <https://doi.org/10.20849/ajsss.v7i10.1312>

Abstract

The Mid-Tang literature is an important stage in the literary history of the Tang Dynasty, and presents another high point in the creation of poetry after the flourishing Tang Dynasty, which is also known as the mid-emergence stage in the development of Tang literature. During the Yuanhe to Huichang periods, the literati living in Luoyang often gathered together to create and interact with poetry. The bureaucrats and scribes who lived in Luoyang were the mainstay of poetry writing. The bureaucrats and scribes who lived in Luoyang were the mainstay of poetry writing. They were both prominent politicians and literary leaders, but at a time of political turmoil and fierce party rivalry, they had no way out politically and had to seek a “retreat” from their career and literary expression. The Confucian scribes who were in close proximity to the bureaucratic scribes had lofty goals but unfortunate careers. With its outstanding geographical and cultural advantages, Luoyang provided favourable conditions for the gathering of bureaucratic scribes and for literary creation. It was of great importance in the development and formation of the poetic style of the Mid-Tang. This article examines the poetry of the bureaucratic scribes who lived in Luoyang during the Yuanhe to Huichang periods of the Tang Dynasty within the context of the city's spatial form. Firstly, the historical transmutation of the geospatial form of the city of Luoyang is explained. Then, from the perspective of public architecture landscape, it explores the emotional experience and spiritual sustenance of bureaucratic scribes to Luoyang urban landscape. It examines the dynamic interaction between the internal architecture of Luoyang City and the literary milieu of the middle Tang Dynasty.

Keywords: Chinese Tang Dynasty, Yuanhe to Huichang period, Luoyang, urban spatial form, poetry

1. Introduction

The ancient Chinese capital was the heart of the country and an externalised form of ancient Chinese social ideology. A paradigm that translates the structure of society and its ideology in the spatial form of architectural architecture is the palace axis, or bilateral symmetry. The construction of Luoyang, the Tang Dynasty's eastern capital, avoided the customary central axis and axial symmetry pattern, but this wasn't an intentional decision; rather, it was motivated by a desire to follow the hilly terrain and use it as a foundation for a more secure military bastion.

In the Tang Dynasty, the city of Luoyang's geographical planning included two specifically created “axes”: One is the vertical axis, which starts at Mount Mang, crosses the palace and the imperial city, crosses the Tianjin Bridge, exits the Ding Ding Gate and goes south to the Yi Que, linking a north-south corridor in the middle of the imperial city, which can be seen as a ritual axis designed and built for the city of Luoyang. Another one is a functional “axis” of the Luo River runs across the west and east. The design is in keeping with traditional ritual norms, but also has a practical function in reality, with the “the water of the Luo River runs through the capital and has a vast image” (Jifu Li, 1983), which is in keeping with the status of the eastern capital.

With the governmental centre in the northwest and the commercial centre along the Luo River in the east, Luoyang as a whole displayed a functional and unbalanced spatial layout during the Tang Dynasty. The excavation of Xin Tan has linked the two cities, north and south, and created a larger economic centre in the eastern business district of Luoshui. This essay discusses the creation of poetry around the geographic place of Luoyang, the eastern capital city of China's Tang Dynasty and home to the royal city of Luoyang.

2. The Historical Lineage of the Geospatial Form of the City of Luoyang

Luoyang has a long and storied tradition of capital city culture and regional culture. With the Songyue, Yique, Xiaohan, and Mang Mountains to its southeast and northwest, the Yellow River's middle reaches in the west of Henan Province, a low, open center area, and a basin topography, Luoyang is the ideal location for the development of life and civilization. According to archaeologists, there were still signs of human occupancy in the Luoyang region 50,000 years ago. As society developed and progressed, Luoyang gradually became one of the most important core areas for human life, reproduction, evolution and development. In the opinion of the ruler, the location of the capital of a country should be central, so that it has the central significance of being surrounded by the stars, while at the same time providing control over the surrounding area and a natural leadership advantage. Luoyang, with its unique geography, was seen as the preferred place to build a capital.

As far back as the pre-Qin period, in the Kang Gao, Zhao Gao, and Luo Gao of the Shang Shu, the construction and evolution of the space of the capital city of Luoyang has been documented. In recent studies, Juchang Li has divided the development of ancient capital cities into three stages: the formation of the Luoyi Li system in the Western Zhou Dynasty, the Li-Fang system in Luoyang City in the Northern Wei Dynasty, and the Fang-Li system in Luoyang City in the Sui and Tang Dynasties (Jiuchang Li, 2005).

The palace city of Luoyang stood north of the center during the Northern Wei dynasty, deviating from the norm of being in the middle. An open and large imperial route dedicated to the ruler's travels from north to south runs the length of the central axis from the palace to the Xuan Yang Gate. On the east and west are different major institutions set up, as well as structures like the Ancestral Temple and the Imperial College. The streets were built in all directions with Tong Camel Street as the centre, surrounded by hundreds of Li-Fang for the people and bureaucrats to live in. Outside the city, the large market, the small market, the horse market and the foreign market are commercial areas. The commercial area is not far from the Luo Shui, so water transport provides great convenience for trade and commerce.

Emperor Yang of the Sui dynasty adopted the Northern Zhou Dynasty's structure and moved it to Luoyang along with a massive capital city he dubbed the Eastern Capital. The Grand Canal, which took millions of people to build, not only formed a powerful water transport system, making it easier to travel in all directions, but also raised the political and economic status of Luoyang. By the time of the Tang Dynasty, the city layout of Luoyang remained basically unchanged, with a perimeter of more than 27,600 metres, about 60 li. The city is about 5 li from the royal city of the Zhou dynasty to the west and about 17 li from the ruins of the palace cities of the Han and Wei dynasties to the east, with the Du and Luo waters running through the whole area. Early in the Tang Dynasty, the Palace of Luoyang was constructed, and in 657, Emperor Gaozong of the Tang Dynasty designated Luoyang as the eastern capital. In the first year of Tianshou (690), Zetian Wu was renamed Shendu after she became emperor. The spatial organization of the city of Luoyang in the Sui and Tang dynasties is still used as a backdrop, and some attention is paid to the functional changes and poetic imagery of the space. After the An Shi Rebellion, the city of Luoyang did not change much in terms of its establishment but only in terms of its core space.

3. Chanting and Lyricism in the Landscape of Public Buildings

3.1 "Shang Yang Palace": Reality and History

Built in the first year of Emperor Gao Zong's rule, the Shang Yang Palace is a magnificently huge garden and palace structure in the Tang Dynasty's eastern capital of Luoyang (679). The orientation and architectural form of the Shang Yang Palace are described in some detail in the annotated text of the Six Classics of the Tang Dynasty: The location of Shang Yang Palace is in the "garden's eastern section. To the east of the Youye gate of the imperial capital, to the south of Luo Shui, and to the west of Gu Shui." (Linfu Li, 1992) The Shang Yang Palace was naturally protected by the three sides of the river valley. It also provided a quiet private garden for the Emperor. A unique geomantic treasure, Shang Yang Palace is situated at the confluence of the Luo and Jian rivers on the western side of Luoyang, the eastern capital. With Mount Mang at its back and Yique to the south, surrounded by Zhoushan and Nanshan, it is also the most productive and scenic part of the Luoyang basin. As a large palace of the Tang Dynasty, Shang Yang Palace, known for its flourishing, served both the functions of a palace and a garden, and its unique political and cultural attributes and symbolic significance made it the focus of poetry and literature at the time, and led to the creation of the Shang Yang Palace theme. In the Mid-Tang period, poetry on the subject and imagery of the Shang Yang Palace took on a new dimension in content, from palace architecture to historical symbolism, and the literati wrote about the Palace in a second dimension, becoming a distinctive regional imagery.

The layout of the buildings in the palace does not follow the symmetrical central axis of the imperial city, but is

based on natural geographical factors. To create an organic fusion of human and natural landscapes, the natural beauty of the mountains, topography, canals, and rivers are artistically extended and freely distributed throughout the garden space. In contrast to the grandeur of the Imperial City, the Shang Yang Palace has a sense of unity between heaven and man.

In the Mid-Tang Dynasty, bureaucrat literati wrote about the Shang Yang Palace, starting with visual impressions of the palace and its buildings, and laying out a glorious history of the heyday. The words of the poem recall the prosperity and wealth of the former capital of Luoyang, but between the lines they reveal the lament of the times as they rise and fall and turn. One of the poems in Juyi Bai's work, *Shang Yang Gong*, is unique in that it begins with a change from the palace building of Shang Yang Gong to a person who has lived there for a long time, "the People of Shang Yang", as follows:

"The people of Shang Yang, the people of Shang Yang, the red faces grow old and the white hair grows new. The green-clothed supervisors guarded the palace gates, shutting up the Shang Yang Palace for many springs.

She was first elected to the palace at the end of the Xuanzong era. When she entered the palace, she was sixteen, and now she is sixty. At the same moment, more than one hundred people were chosen, but they were abandoned to perish in the depths of time.

Memories of that time, holding back grief to say goodbye to the family, being helped to the carriage and not allowed to cry. They all say that when they enter the palace, they will be favoured by the king. A young girl with a face like a hibiscus and breasts like jade.

How could she has known that when she entered the palace, she was looked at coldly from afar by Concubine Yang before she saw the king. Jealous, she was secretly sent to the Shang Yang Palace and left alone for the rest of her life.

It was a long autumn night in a spare room, long sleepless nights and a day that refused to dawn. A remnant of a lamp, dimly lit, shines on the back and casts a reflection on the walls, only the night rain can be heard knocking on the doors and windows.

The spring day is so slow, so slow, sitting alone watching the sky, and it gets dark so late. The yellow warbler in the palace is a joy to behold, but she is so full of sorrow that she is tired of listening to it. The swallows on the beams, flying together in pairs, are so enviable, but she is too old to feel the slightest bit of envy.

The warblers returning and swallows leaving in silence, spring and autumn without remembering the years. She merely only to glance toward the deep palace to see the moon, which revolves four or five hundred times from east to west.

Nowadays, she is the oldest person in the Shang Yang Palace. When the emperor heard of this, he gave me the title of "Lady Shang Shu" from afar. She still wears the same small-headed shoes and narrow clothes, while she still paints her eyebrows with the same indigo naturalis, thin and long.

The people outside did not see it, but if they did, they would have laughed at it, because it was still the fashionable look of the late Tianbao period. The people of Shang Yang Palace, where suffering can be said to be the greatest of all.

When she was young, she suffered, and when she grew old, she suffered too. A life of loneliness and misery, but what can they do?

Have you not seen Xiang Lü's 'Beauty Fu'? You still haven't seen today's 'Shang Yang White-headed Elders'". (Note 1)

The above song is the seventh of the fifty chapters of Juyi Bai's *New Yuefu* named "Shang Yang White-headed Elders". The *New Yuefu* was composed during his time in Chang'an, and this off-site depiction of the poem gives the Shang Yang Palace a symbolic meaning of the times. The subject of the poem is a twilight woman who has spent a lifetime in the palace. She was a young girl selected by the Xuanzong dynasty and entered the palace at the age of sixteen, her fresh and striking figure set against the magnificent palace. In her longing and fantasy of her years in the palace, she never imagined that her fate would be trapped within the unforgiving palace walls. During the years of imprisonment, how must each day and night be spent? In the few days of spring, "the warblers return and the swallows leave in silence, the spring and the autumn do not remember the years". "She just looked to the deep palace to see the moon, which is round from east to west four or five hundred times" during the long autumnal nights. In the words of the moon in the deep palace, "the suffering of the palace people is already evident" ("*Tang Special Collection*"). Powerless to control her own destiny, she can only go to the end of her life in lose the fragrance. "They were left to die in the depths of the years." The "deep" years of being

trapped in Shang Yang Palace are 44 years long, and I think that if it were not for the limited number of years of life, it would have been a bottomless abyss. This “destruction” is the “destruction” of youth, “destruction” of freedom and “destruction” of thoughts. “The palace gates have closed the Shang Yang Palace for many springs” has now become a soft sigh, starting with the “reminiscence of the past”: a beautiful lady, slightly shy, full of longing, steps into the palace. The woman is within the high palace walls, but she does not even see the king’s face, so she is left in the cold with the city of Luoyang, leaving behind a long “night” and endless desolation. Comparing the Shang Yang Palace in Luoyang with the cold palace in Chang’an is even more miserable, because in Chang’an at least there is still the dignity of royalty. Through Juyi Bai’s delicate portrayal of the psychology of the characters, the cold and dismal atmosphere of the Shang Yang Palace is presented.

The main theme of “Shang Yang White-headed Elders” is of course closely related to that of Bai Juyi’s “New Yuefu” poems, but in Chang’an, he turns his attention to the Shang Yang palace in Luoyang, where he attacks the harem’s extravagant expenses in the light of the palace maids’ age and decline. There is no doubt that the Shang Yang Palace, with its characteristic opulence and prosperity, became a symbolic symbol of Juyi Bai’s criticism. But objectively, it shows the unique status and value of the Shang Yang Palace among the palaces of Luoyang.

3.2 “Luoyang Road” and “Tianjin Bridge”: Landscape and Mentality

The city’s streets, lanes, rivers, and bridges are all considered “roads”, but they are actually paths. They serve as a bridge between individuals and the city, as well as serving as the metropolis’ heartbeat and a way to gauge its size using academics’ footfalls. In the poetry of the Mid-Tang Dynasty, the “Luoyang Road” was a pathway of traffic through the city and a transit hub for the city to reach all directions. As the central road linking the city to the outside world, Luoyang Road became a bustling public space in the city of Luoyang. The “Luoyang Road”, which runs inside and outside the city, including Tianmen Street, Tianjin Bridge and Dingding Gate, was a straightforward way for people to travel. The “road” that welcomes people to and from Luoyang carries the political ideals of countless people and records the city’s historical footprint. The city’s history has been marked by the peace and tranquility under heaven in times of prosperity, and burning, killing, looting in troubled times.

In the Mid-Tang period, pedestrians gathered and dispersed in a hurry at the Luoyang “Road”, which was used by literary scholars to express their feelings. The bustle of pedestrians on the Luoyang Road can be traced in the poem. For example, in Yuxi Liu’s “Two Poems on Shou’an Gantang Pavilion”, “In front of the gate is Luoyang Road, and in the gate is Peach Blossom Road. The dust, the mist and clouds in the twilight are more than ten steps away” (Note 2), depicting the “road” by the pavilion. Another example is Li Deyu’s “Recollections of Pingquan Miscellaneous Poems - Recollections of Wildflowers (I Have Not Tried to Visit the Old Garden in Spring)”, in which he writes of the roads he walked through day after day during his leisurely stay in Luoyang: “Although I have travelled the roads of Luoyang, I have not yet known the flowers of the old garden.” (Note 3) Or, as Hun Xu wrote in “The Non-Discharged Monks of the White Horse Monastery”: “Beyond the wall, the road to Luoyang is endless”, etc.

During the Tang Dynasty, the water system in Luoyang spread throughout the city, with the Luo River running east and west, dividing the city into two urban areas. As a crucial connection between the northern and southern areas of the city, the “Tianjin Bridge” in the west, the “Old Central Bridge” and “New Central Bridge” in the east. At the same time, Luo Shui itself was a major transport route for Luoyang, and these “Luoyang bridges” also functioned as both bridges and crossings, becoming an important part of the “Luoyang Road”.

Geographically and historically, the Tianjin Bridge, which spans the Luo River and is connected to the street that leads to the Imperial City’s Duanmen Gate, is very significant. Henan Zhi records indicate:

The Luo River flows from the south of the Shang Yang Palace in the courtyard to the outer city. East flow through the north of the Jishan Lane, divided into three channels, when the south side of the Duanmen, the establishment of three bridges (the south is said to be Xingjin Bridge, the middle is said to be Tianjin Bridge, the north is said to be Huangdao Bridge). Over the bridge and combined with the east flow, by Shangshan, Jingshan, two of the north of the Lane, the south overflow for the Wei Wang Pond (it is separated from the Luo River embankment. At the beginning of the construction of the capital, the construction of dikes to congest the water flow north, the remaining water stopped into this pool. The lower part of the river is connected to the Luo River and is several hectares deep, where waterfowls swim and lotus stalks are repeated, making it a popular destination for the capital) (Song Xu, 1994).

The Tianjin Bridge was of great historical importance to the scribes of the Tang Dynasty. Juyi Bai once wrote a number of poems describing the scenery along the Tianjin Bridge: “To the northeast of the Jinqiao Bridge, to the west of the Dou Pavilion, one comes to this place to be fascinated by poetic thoughts. The moon rises like an eyebrow from the Goddess Pu, and the spring eyes are by the Yaoniang Embankment. The willows are curling

and the wind is reeling, the grass is wispy and the rain is cutting. I rode my horse not daring to shout, fearing to frighten the yellow birds from crying.” (Note 4) In Juyi Bai’s writing, the night by the Tianjin Bridge is so peaceful. A crescent moon casts its shadow on the water of Luo, the willow, the grass and the yellow warbler are so vividly portrayed that one wonders whether one is on earth or in a fairyland. Whenever Juyi Bai walks across the Tianjin Bridge, he always feels like a dream, like a fairy. The Tianjin Bridge is a must-see for those who travel between the city and the countryside, and when the day’s business is done, the morning and evening junction is set for the return journey home: “After the dawn bell in the Shang Yang Palace, before the waning moon at the Tianjin Bridge. The vast and empty realm is doubtful to be the man’s world, and the floating body seems to be in the heaven. Under the cover of the Milky Way, the sun is about to rise and the pavilion looks hazy under the morning mist. When we meet here for a cup of wine, we realise that earth can be like heaven.” (Note 5)

As the Tianjin Bridge was a necessary route to work and was passed every day, Juyi Bai’s poems on the bridge presents the change of seasons from winter to spring. “The rain washes Tianjin Bridge, no mud, no dust. The early sunshine welcomes the early summer, and the setting sun sends off the remaining spring. The poems come to my lips, the wine to my body. I was walking by the water and standing on the bridge. I retired in an old mood after my success, the Sheriff has governed well, and the government is clear. The three rivers have their owners, the landscape is for the idle people.” (Note 6) In the poem, Juyi Bai presents the view of walking across the Tianjin Bridge on a spring morning in simple describe. The poet saw the clear dew of the night rain and the early summer sunshine as scenery, but fortunately, he was a slacker in the branch organization in Luoyang and was able to take in the lovely scenery of the three rivers. Compared to the pointlessness of politics, it was better to feel sorry for the “spring” situation that was in front of him. In winter, the main colour of the Tianjin Bridge became a single snow white, without the spring colorful. At this time of year, the Tianjin Bridge is like an old man chanting alone, in a world of white, lamenting the passing of the years, the relentlessness of time. “The Tianjin Bridge is so lofty under the clear snow, like an old man chanting while walking alone. What if the purple ribbon is distantly reflected, and what if it is the same colour as the white beard.....” (Note 7)

As can be seen from the above poems, Juyi Bai’s different depictions of the “Tianjin Bridge” give it a rich artistic form, and in a sense, the bridge is also a witness and companion to an important stage of his life. The superimposition of different time and regions in the same geographical space is the subtle influence that Luoyang had on Juyi Bai’s mentality. If he had just branched to Luoyang, he had a first experience as a “middle hermit”, but after many years of retirement, he really became one with the city from the heart, becoming an integral part of its “leisurely” cultural atmosphere and temperament that cannot be ignored. Such a homely picture of the city of Luoyang is how the bureaucratic scribes portrayed and recounted life in the city.

During the Mid-Tang period, most of the divisional officials lived in the south-eastern part of the outer city of Luoyang, and the “Tianjin Bridge” became a necessary route for them to travel to and from the palace and the imperial city, giving the poets endless inspiration for their writing: The delightful, intricate grouping of buildings near the bridges, with their pavilions and towers hidden among the lush greenery. The city of Luoyang in the Mid-Tang Dynasty became a city that endures in literature to this day and a legacy of this group of scribes to posterity. The Song Mountains in the distance, the bustling markets, the crystal-clear waters of the Luo River, and the bustling ferries all became the subject of poetry and chanting.

During the Late Tang period, the “Luoyang Road” metamorphosed from a literary landscape and imagery in poetry to a new form of tune and poetic title. For example, in the poem “The Song of the Cross-blowing Song - Luoyang Road” by Wuling Yu in the Complete Tang Poems: At the end of the year, the visitor will be old, and the mountain will be in spring when the snow is clear. The chariots and horses are not finished with the dust of Luoyang: “At the end of the year, the visitor will be old, and the mountain will be in spring when the snow is clear. The chariots and horses are not finished with the dust of Luoyang.” (Note 8) These “Luoyang Roads,” both inside and beyond the city, held a particular place in the imaginations of the scholars because they connected to the city of Luoyang, which served as their intellectual epicentre.

The community of scribes is the intermediary between the “city” and “literature”. Poets work, live, interact and create in the city of Luoyang, imbibing in a subtle way the culture and spirit of Luoyang’s long history. Many of the bureaucrats and scribes who came to Luoyang experienced the ups and downs of a leisurely and relaxed atmosphere, which were revealed through their respective poetic creations. This change of mind influenced the thoughts and ideas of the scholars, which led to a change in poetic style and a new aesthetic, which became the new urban culture of Luoyang, enriching and precipitating its diverse cultural connotations. The poems that document and describe the landscape from a different perspective, again with a certain historical and cultural significance, express the feelings of the bureaucratic literati toward the city of Luoyang, their love and

attachment to the landscape, and these feelings are reflected in the city of Luoyang.

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