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SILK ROAD FASHION, CHINA

The City and a Gate, the Pass and a Road – Four components that make Luoyang the capital of the Silk Roads between the 1st and the 7th century AD



The year 2017

Beijing Branch of the DAI

by Patrick Wertmann



e-FORSCHUNGSBERICHTE DES DAI 2019 · Faszikel 1

Im Fokus unserer Forschungen zur Geschichte der alten Seidenstraßen standen vier Fundplätze innerhalb und im Umkreis der zentralchinesischen Stadt Luoyang: (1) die Paläste, Tempel und internationalen Märkte der Stadt Luoyang aus der Zeit der Östlichen Han- bis Nördlichen Wei-Dynastie (1.–6. Jh.), (2) das Dingding-Stadttor aus der Sui- und Tang-Dynastie (gebaut 605), (3) das bisher einzige physisch erhaltene Straßensegment, der sog. Shihao-Abschnitt der alten Xiaohan-Route, und (4) die als Hangu-Pass bekannte Han-zeitliche Befestigungsanlage und Karawanserei Hangu-Pass (114 v. Chr. – 240 n. Chr.). Für das Funktionieren des überregionalen Seidenstraßenhandels hatten diese vier Orte eine Schlüsselbedeutung und belegen den Status des alten Luoyang als östlichsten Knotenpunkt des weitreichenden Handelsnetzwerks.

Alle vier Fundplätze wurden national als große archäologische Entdeckungen Chinas und international mit dem Siegel des UNESCO-Weltkulturerbes ausgezeichnet. Durch den Bau von modernen Fundplatzmuseen sollen ihre Geschichten national und international verbreitet werden. Vor allem aber will man die heutige Stadt Luoyang als Industrie- und Handelszentrum



1 Painting of a foreign trader with his camel depicted on the Western passageway wall of the Tang dynasty tomb attributed to Lady Tang. (Photo: P. Wertmann)

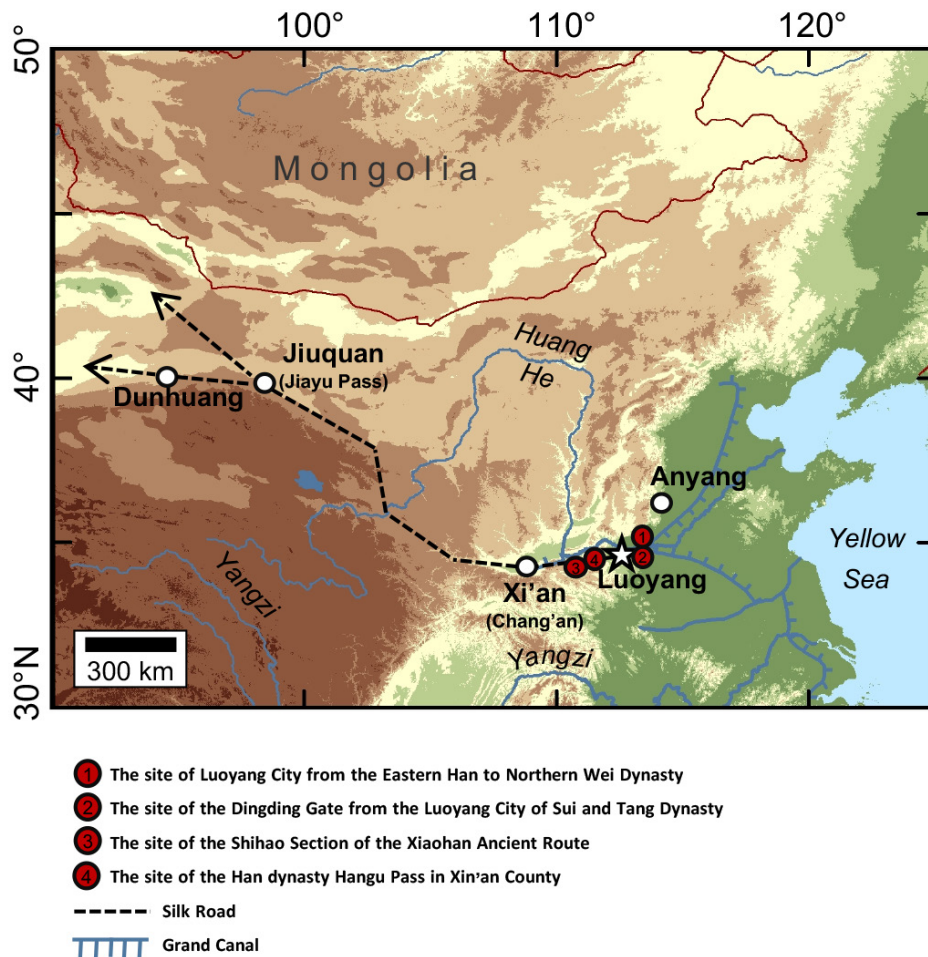
dadurch stärken, dass man an ihre Blüte in historischen Zeiten erinnert. Wagenspuren und Fußabdrücke von Händlern und ihren Lastentieren lassen Erinnerungen an geschäftiges Treiben wieder aufleben. Im Wettbewerb mit der Stadt Xi'an (einst Chang'an) um den Status als „wahren“ östlichen Ausgangspunkt der Seidenstraßen ist das besonders wichtig.

Als Teil einer globalen Geschichte über internationale Beziehungen und Austausch spielen die vier Fundplätze heute politisch und wirtschaftlich als Soft-Power eine große Bedeutung für den chinesischen Staat, insbesondere innerhalb der 2013 ins Leben gerufenen Belt-und-Road-Initiative.

Picture a man with a bushy beard, a high nose and deep-set eyes. He is wearing a belted caftan and high-shafted boots. His head is topped by a pointed hat. In his left hand, he is holding the reigns of his companion: a saddled camel fully loaded with goods, unmistakable, these are bulks of precious Chinese silk. The man is a foreign merchant, possibly a Sogdian, who transports his commodities from Luoyang to one of the next trade markets on the Silk Road network (Fig. 1).

This scene is part of a large wall painting which was found in a tomb in 2005 in Luonan New District of Luoyang, Henan Province. Because of the high value of this and other well-preserved wall paintings depicting legendary animals, processions, and scenes of everyday life, the find became one of the Major Archaeological Discoveries of China in 2005 (SACH 2006, 141–144). Thanks to the presence of an epitaph stone, the tomb could be dated to the year AD 706 of Tang dynasty, and attributed to Lady Tang, consort of “Prince of Xiang who pacified the State”. This title was granted to nobody else than later Emperor Ruizong of Tang dynasty (reigned AD 710–712) just before his enthronement (for the short excavation report and the description of the wall paintings see LWGD 2005, 19–38; Yang 2016, 28–37; SACH 2006).

A foreign merchant and his camel setting off to a journey perfectly embody the long-distance trade, all the more so because of the precious



load carried by the animal: silk. Silk – like nothing else – stands *pars pro toto* for China and this ancient transcontinental trade network stretching over the vast expanse of the Eurasian continent. Cities and oases along its route evolved into some of the largest and most vibrating metropolises of the ancient world, and Chang'an (modern-day Xi'an city) is commonly regarded as the central point of departure in China.

Narratives about China's glorious past related to the Silk Roads are utilized to improve interregional trade, infrastructure, and security in the coming years as exemplified by the Belt and Road initiative unveiled by President Xi Jinping in 2013 (Wertmann 2018). A corridor stretching from central China across the Tianshan Range was listed as the world cultural heritage asset "*Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor*" during the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee in Doha, Qatar, in 2014, as a result of a joint application of China, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (China Daily 2015; UNESCO 2018).

However, the location of Lady Tang's tomb and her colourful merchant entourage's image is not Chang'an, but Luoyang, a city about 370 km further east. Was it mere coincidence, her family's home base or personal preference? Or is there more behind a foreign silk dealer portrayed in AD 706 in Luoyang?

Among the 33 sites listed as UNESCO World Cultural Heritage in the "*Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor*" asset, four are sites in and around Luoyang: (1) Luoyang City from the Eastern Han to Northern Wei Dynasty, (2) the Dingding Gate from the Sui and Tang dynasty Luoyang, (3) the Shihao Section on the Xiaohan Ancient Road, and (4) the Han dynasty Hangu Pass in Xin'an County (Fig. 2). The current upgrading of all four complexes to archaeological museums and parks hints at a more interesting story behind the facts which merits an in-depth research. This paper presents the first results: introduction of the four sites and discussion of their meaning for Luoyang's cultural history related to the aspirations of modern Luoyang city, Henan province, and China.

Luoyang and the “*Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang’an-Tianshan Corridor*”

No better place for a city to be safe and connected: Luoyang is located at the western rim of the Central Plains on the southern banks of the middle reaches of the Yellow River, shielded towards the West by mountains. Since Han times strategic advantage was recognised by several emperors, for example the founder and first emperor of the Han dynasty Emperor Gaozu (reigned from 202–195 BC), Tang emperor Gaozong (reigned AD 649–683) or his wife and later Empress Dowager Wu Zetian (reigned AD 690–705) who all selected Luoyang as the seat of their capital.

The city’s importance rose with the building of the Grand Canal under the reign of Sui emperor Yang in AD 605, which made Luoyang the central transportation hub in the country’s waterway network, and with this, directly linked it with the Maritime Silk Road (Lewis 2007, 101; Vogelsang 2013, 238. 260).

The comprehensive functions of the city and a gate, the pass and a road were essential for the functioning and the management of a long-distance and widespread trade network in which Luoyang was the nodal point.

(1) Luoyang City from the Eastern Han to Northern Wei Dynasty (1st to 6th century AD)

In the year AD 26, Eastern Han Emperor Guangwu (reigned AD 25–57) ordered the transfer of the capital from Chang’an to Luoyang making Luoyang capital of the Chinese empire. The ancient city was located about 15 km east of today’s Luoyang city centre, south of the Mang Mountains, north of the Luo River, and east of the White Horse Temple. It had an almost square plan and a circumference of approximately 14 km. Twelve gates, four on the southern side, three each on the eastern and western sides, and two in the north, led into the city. During the early years of the Eastern Han dynasty, Luoyang had only a southern palace. A second northern palace was later added by Han emperor Ming (reigned AD 58–75). The ‘inner city’ surrounded the palace area and kept the highest government agencies and the aristocratic

residential district. Apart from a temple to the east of the ‘outer city’, Emperor Guangwu further built three markets south of the ‘inner city’s’ city wall.

After general and warlord Dong Zhuo looted and destroyed Luoyang in AD 190, the Eastern Han dynasty ended and the city lost its status as capital. Cao Cao (AD 155–220), chancellor to the last Han emperor Xian (reigned AD 189–220), later initiated a massive project to rebuild and restore the city, which once again became the capital with the foundation of the Cao-Wei dynasty (AD 220–266). In AD 311, however, the city, was once again put to ashes after being captured by the leader of the Xiongnu Han-Zhao State, Liu Cong (reigned AD 310–318), leading to the flight of the surviving members of court to Jiankang (present-day Nanjing) where they re-established their government.

An archaeological find of a special kind, a bundle with the fragments of five letters written by Sogdians in China around the year AD 313, gives us very personal insights into this historical event. One of the letters (No 2) was sent by a Sogdian merchant from the Gansu Corridor to his partner in Samarkand. It reads: “no one comes from there [China] so that I might write to you about the Sogdians who went “inside”, how they fared (and) which countries they reached. And, sirs, the last emperor, so they say, fled from Luoyang because of the famine, and fire was set to his palace and to the city, and the palace was burnt and the city [destroyed]. Luoyang (is) no more, Ye [close to modern Anyang, Henan] (is) no more!” (Sims-Williams – Waugh 2004).

Almost 200 years after the destruction of Luoyang, in AD 494, the fourth emperor of the Northern Wei dynasty, Emperor Xiaowen (reigned AD 471–499), decreed that the capital be transferred from Pingcheng (modern Datong) back to Luoyang. This step was closely linked to his attempt to sinicize the state, which was easier in Luoyang with a population generally more open to the policies of the emperor (Vogelsang 2013, 227–228). The city was undergoing a large-scale reconstruction. The streets were arranged in a grid pattern, and the city divided into a northern and a southern part. The



3 Remains of building No 2 within the palace area of the Han-Wei dynasty Luoyang city. The protective shelter above the Taiji Hall remains can be seen in the back. (Photo: P. Wertmann)

central North-South axis and main access to Luoyang was formed by the Tongtuo Road, literally meaning Bronze Camel Road. This name derives from bronze statues of camels which flanked the road (Qian et al. 2014, 23). Important government offices were located on both sides of the road, and one of the tallest pagodas, the Yongning Temple Pagoda, stood on its western side. Several new markets attracted traders from all directions. Emperor Xiaowen's move towards a more Chinese-type society was not liked by all, especially not by the Tuoba population. Internal disagreement rose and ultimately led to a revolt instigated by the Tuoba leader Gao Huan. With his invasion of Luoyang in AD 534, the emperor and his wife were drowned in the Yellow River, and the state split into an Eastern and Western Wei dynasty. Whereas the former established their capital in Ye (close to modern Anyang), the latter moved to Chang'an. Luoyang was once again destroyed and abandoned (Vogelsang 2013, 230).

The site of the Luoyang city from the Han to Wei dynasty was listed as Major National Cultural Heritage Protection Sites in 1961. The archaeological prospections and excavations began one year after, and are still ongoing (see for example Qian et al. 2014; IACASS Han Wei Luoyang 1993; IACASS Han Wei Luoyang 1988; ICASS Luoyang 1973). Three main areas have been identified: the outer city, inner city, and the palace area. The palace area in the centre of the capital and enclosed by the inner city, served as the royal residence during the Cao-Wei Dynasty. The north-south axis of the city was formed by the Tongtuo Road, which led to the main southern gate of the Palace Area, the Changhe Gate. Located in the south-western section of the inner city, and west to Tongtuo Road was the Yongning Pagoda Temple.

The Palace Area

The site of the Palace Area covers nearly one tenth of the inner city. It is 1.398 m long from north to south and 660 m wide from east to west. The palace was enclosed by a wall with the Changhe Gate being the main southern entrance. The inner area of the palace comprised an administrative area in the south and the imperial residential area in the north. In the



4 The protective shelter built above the remains of the Taiji Hall. (Photo: P. Wertmann)



5 The protective shelter above the remains of the Taiji Hall. (Photo: P. Wertmann)

process of the archaeological excavations, the remains of the Taiji Hall, the Changhe Gate, and two building remains were identified (Fig. 3).

Taiji Hall

The Taiji Hall (430 m long, 330 m wide, see for example IACASS 2016.1; IACASS 2016.2) was built during the Cao-Wei dynasty, and used until the Northern Wei dynasty. As the main building within the imperial palace, it was located on the central axis of Luoyang. Important assemblies were held at this place and foreign envoys received by the emperor. The first surveys and excavations on the Taiji Hall were carried out in the 1960s and 1983 (IACASS 2016.1). A large-scale excavation in preparation for the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage application began in 2012 under the lead of the Archaeological Team of the Han-Wei Dynasty Luoyang City, and the Institute of Archaeology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (IACASS et al. 2012). The goal was to find out about the scale, range, structure, conservation state and chronology of the hall. The excavations resulted in the nomination of the site as one of the Top Ten Archaeological Discoveries in 2015 due to the profound impact it had on the imperial city development of later dynasties (IACASS 2016.1; IACASS 2016.2; Figs. 4–5).

The archaeological work revealed the Northern Wei dynasty rammed earth foundation (remaining size 100 × 60 × 2 m), two sloping ramps, and column pits. As to the layout of the palace hall, it was composed of a main central hall flanked by two smaller side halls aligned on an east to west axis. In addition, remains of a winding corridor were found close to the halls as well as of a surrounding wall, a palace gate and of auxiliary buildings (IACASS 2016).

Changhe Gate

The Changhe Gate south of the Taiji Hall functioned as the main southern gate of the Palace Area. The central Tongtuo Road opened to its south. Built in the early Cao-Wei period, the gate remained in use until the destruction of Luoyang in the mid 6th century (Qian et al. 2014, 25). The excavations revealed that the gate was composed of a main gate tower (length 44.5 m,



width 24.4 m) with three passes, six sloping ramps, two tier towers (with a circumference of 29 m² each) on either side, and two partition walls (Han-Wei Luoyang IACASS 2003). A total of 40 pillar bases or pits were unearthed on the platform of the main gate tower.

Yongning Pagoda Temple

The site of the Yongning Pagoda Temple is located one km south of the Changhe Gate. When it was built by Emperor Xiaoming (reigned AD 510–528) in the first year of the Xiping Era (AD 516), Northern Wei dynasty, it was the largest Buddhist monastic complex in Luoyang. According to historical resources, the wooden pagoda had nine levels (Yang 1992; Qian et al. 2014, 26). The temple collapsed in fire when Gao Huan and his troops invaded the city in AD 534.

The first survey of the Yongning Pagoda Temple site was carried out in 1962, followed by further campaigns between 1979 and 2005 (IACASS 1996). The temple has a square-shaped rammed-earth platform with a circumference measuring about 100 m (Fig. 6). On top of it remain the bottom part of the wooden pagoda and its base (remaining height 2 m, circumference 38.2 m). Judging the remains of the pagoda, it had a solid, square-shaped core made of mud-bricks. On top of the platform were five rings with a total of 124 column pits. In some cases, few remains of the former wooden columns have been preserved. The pagoda was situated within the fourth ring. Niches to house Buddhist idols were built into its eastern, western, and southern sides (Qian et al. 2014, 26).

Road remains

Unearthed within the inner city were the remains of ancient roads. Mentioned before was the central axis, i.e. the Tongtuo Road, which linked the Changhe Gate in the north with the Xuanyang Gate in the south. Built on both its sides were important governmental, administrative and religious buildings. The original road dates to the Cao-Wei period and remained in use until the end of the Northern Wei dynasty. Archaeological excavations revealed a 1,650 m long, 40–45 m wide stretch of this road. A 2.9 m section



7 The Dingding Gate Archaeological Site Museum in the shape of a Tang dynasty city gate.
(Photo: P. Wertmann)

of the original red sandstone-pavement with ancient cart ruts was revealed about 150 m south of the Changhe Gate site (Qian et al. 2014, 23). Apart from the Tongtuo Road, also the remains of the main East-West thoroughfare with few ancient cart ruts were found, i.e. the Inner Xiyang Gate Road (remaining length 2,630 m, width 40 m). This road linked the Xiyang Gate in the west with the eastern Dongyang Gate, and it crossed the Tongtuo Road in front of the Changhe Gate (Qian et al. 2014, 23).

(2) The Dingding Gate in Luoyang City of Sui and Tang Dynasty (built AD 605)

The so-called Dingding Gate was the main southern gate leading into the outer city of Luoyang during the Sui (AD 581–618) and Tang dynasties (AD 618–907). It was first built in AD 605 by Emperor Yang of Sui dynasty (reigned from AD 604–617) after he had decided to move the capital from Chang'an to Luoyang out of strategic purposes (Vogelsang 2013, 238). His plan was to build a new Luoyang to the west of the former capital from the Han to Wei dynasties, which had been destroyed in AD 311 (Vogelsang 2013, 203). Famous architect Yu Wenkai was responsible for the planning and construction of the new capital at the southern foothills of Mang Mountains. The Luo River, which had served as a natural barrier to the old city, now flowed through the inner city. When Emperor Yang commissioned the extension of the Grand Canal directly into the city, Luoyang became the pivot in the Central Plains' waterway network, directly linked to silk production centres and sea ports in the South. With this strategic advantage within the continental and maritime Silk Road networks, Luoyang ascended to one of the biggest and most flourishing cities in the world (Lewis 2007, 101; Vogelsang 2013, 238. 260).

The Dingding Gate site in Luoyang's south-eastern Luolong District, with an area of 91.3 ha. Apart from the 143 m long remains of the actual city gate, the area further includes the ruins of the city wall, the remains of the north-south axis road, the street blocks or enclosed residential areas called Lifang, and the former drainage and canal system (Song 2018, 121). The first surveys and trial excavations of the site were carried out between 1954 and 1961 by the Archaeological Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, followed by two



8 The Dingding Gate Archaeological Site Museum. Outside. (Photo: P. Wertmann)

campaigns in 1975 and 1997 (IACASS Luoyang 1961; IACASS Luoyang 1978; Su 1978; Yan 1955). The aim was to identify the precise range of the site. In the wake of the city development starting in the mid-1980s, the site was increasingly threatened by destruction. The cultural relic work group of Luoyang and the Sui-Tang Research Group of the Archaeological Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences carried out salvage excavation between 1997 and 1999 (IACASS – LYWW 2004). For the last campaign within the framework of the Chinese Large-Scale Archaeological Site Conservation Programme funded by the Chinese Ministry of Finance between 2007 and 2008 the Luoyang Administration of Cultural Heritage and the Archaeological Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences was responsible (Sina News 2009; Fig. 7).

The best-preserved remains of the Dingding Gate date to the early Tang dynasty (IACASS – LYWW 2004, 95). The archaeologists identified the main gate tower with three gate passes (44.5 m by 21.04 m), which was flanked by two tier gates built of rammed earth (each measuring 16 m in length and 10.5–11.9 m in width, remaining size). Both tier gates were connected to the main gate via a passageway, a so-called Flying Corridor (33.3 m length, 4.5 m width). Discovered on the inside of the gate were the remains of the ramps once leading up to the top of the main tower (remaining size 22.9 m length, 4.7 m width, 20-degree slope).

Unearthed at the southern side of the gate was a 90 m wide stretch of road from the time of the Tang dynasty. Impressed in it are cart ruts, human and animal footprints. The largest among the animal footprints measured 20 cm in diameter and was identified as that of a camel, which proves that camels indeed reached Luoyang. To preserve this site it was backfilled after 3D-scanning. The scan was used to create a copy of the surface, which was placed on top of the actual site (Song 2018, 122).

Tian Road

The once 4,200 m long Tian Road or Dingding Gate Road formed the north-south axis of the ancient city of Luoyang, linking the outer city with the impe-



9 The Dingding Gate Archaeological Site Museum. Inside. (Photo: P. Wertmann)



10 The Dingding Gate Archaeological Site Museum. Inside. (Photo: P. Wertmann)

rial city and palace area. At the ends of the road were the Duan Gate in the north and the Dingding Gate in the south. The prospection revealed that 3,000 m of the former road had remained. Presently, the ground above the site is marked by grass to give visitors an impression about the course of the ancient road.

The Dingding Gate Archaeological Site Museum

The site of the Dingding Gate is now presented *in-situ* within a protective museum building mimicking a Tang dynasty city gate, which has become a landmark among the high-rises built in the newly created city itself (Figs. 8–10). The official opening was in October 2009. The whole project is linked to the so-called “Revitalization of Sui and Tang Luoyang Project”, and was approved by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH) under the condition, that it should meet the requirements of UNESCO (Zan – Yan 2018). After all, it was intended to have the site listed as World Cultural Heritage in the future. The result of the 80 Million RMB (ca. 10 Million €) construction is a long-span steel structure built on top of the actual site (Zan – Yan 2018). While the eastern and western tier towers are covered by glass on which the visitors can walk and see the site from above, the main gate with its three passes is left uncovered and can either be seen from staircases built along the museum wall on the second floor, or from close-up by a bridge built right above the site.

The architecture design is based on the archaeological finds from the Dingding Gate, historical archives, and depictions of contemporary gate towers in mural paintings from the Mogao Caves of Dunhuang, Gansu Province (Zan – Yan 2018). The reconstructed city gate tower is about 300 m long, 28 m wide, and it has an inner space of 12,616 m² (Sina News 2009). The site museum has three levels that can be visited. Whereas the lower level contains the actual site, the second level presents an exhibition on the history of the Dingding Gate, including introductory texts and selected relics from the site. The upper level is the reconstructed main gate, which can be entered. Placed on display here is a 1:8,000 scale model of the city of Luoyang from the Sui and Tang dynasties. Even though the museum building keeps the site



11 The site of the Shihao Section of the ancient Xiaohan Road. (Photo: P. Wertmann)



12 Ancient road remains of the Shihao Section of the Xiaohan Road. (Photo: P. Wertmann)

safe from outside influences, the project is also harshly criticized for being too big and awkward, for not taking into account professional suggestions, and for outshining the historical ruins (Zan – Yan 2018; Xiao 2018, 162–163).

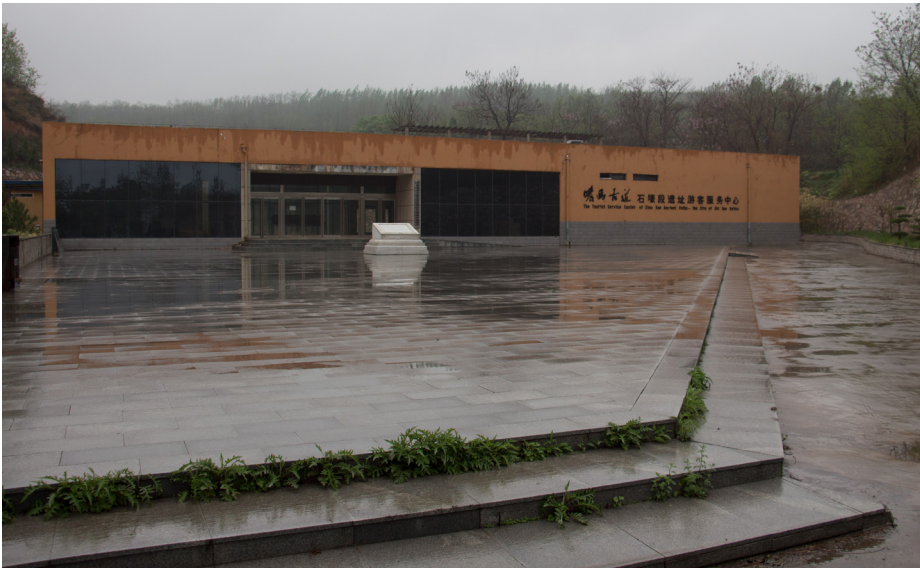
(3) The Shihao Section of the Xiaohan Ancient Road

The so-called Xiaohan Road located in present-day Shan County, Henan Province, was the main link between the ancient capital cities of Luoyang in the east and Chang'an in the west (Huang – Du 2015; Sanmenxia 2014). This road was in use for almost 2,000 years, beginning in pre-Qin times until the 1970s (Sanmenxia 2014, 8–9). However, it was already in the second century BC that it became one of the major roads of the Silk Roads in the Central Plain area as it facilitated long-distance trade and communication. People from all directions travelled along its way, transporting supplies and goods on carts pulled by beasts of burden.

The name of the road derives from the Xiao Mountains and the Hangu Pass. From Xin'an County west of Luoyang, the Xiaohan Road stretched westward for approximately 200 km to the Tong Pass in modern Tongguan County, Weinan City, Shaanxi Province. The Tong Pass was a mountain pass and fortress built in the second century BC by Cao Cao which replaced the Hangu Pass in its role as military fortification pass with the founding of the Sui dynasty. Given the difficult geographic conditions to the north and south of the Xiaohan Road, this was the safest way to take for travellers.

Visual evidence for this was found on the Shihao Section of the Xiaohan Road, which is located 36 km east of Sanmenxia City, right at the northern foothills of the Jinyin Mountain in Shan County. The Shihao Section is a 230 m long and 8.8–5.2 m wide stretch of the eastern part of the Xiaohan Road, which was excavated in 2007 by the Sanmenxia Municipal Institute for Cultural Relics and Archaeology (Sanmenxia 2014; Fig. 11).

The excavated area was divided into a northern (30 m long), central (170 m long) and southern (30 m long) section. Of special interest was the central



13 The information centre at the site of the Shihao Section of the Xiaohan Road. (Photo: P. Wertmann)



14 Visitors' path at the Shihao Section of the Xiaohan Road. (Photo: P. Wertmann)

section as it revealed ancient cart ruts, human and animal footprints (Sanmenxia 2014, 5–6; Fig. 12). Apart from these traces, the site further yielded the ancient road remains, which were in some cases processed by cutting and chipping to improve the natural landform. Furthermore, a drainage meant to channel rainwater into stone reservoirs on the side of the road, which could be used by travellers and their animals. As to the excavated relics, most of them were found in the central section. They included eleven iron horseshoes and scattered cart-parts such as an iron bolt, a nail, an axle part and a copper bell (Sanmenxia 2014, 7–8).

The Shihao Section of the Xiaohan Road is situated in a rather secluded area, therefore it was barely destroyed and the environment basically retained its original features. It is considered the only-preserved real roadway heritage site of the Silk Road discovered so far (Liu 2014).

The site museum includes a 2,000 m² large visitor centre providing basic information on the history, the excavation and the application process for world heritage status of the Shihao Section (Fig. 13). To see the actual site, the visitors can walk on a 1.2 km long, stilted wooden path along the ancient road remains and get an overview from two observation platforms (Fig. 14).

(4) The Han dynasty Hangu Pass in Xin'an County (114 BC – AD 240)

The site of the Han dynasty Hangu Pass in present-day Xin'an County, 23 km east of Luoyang, Henan Province, is situated inside a gorge of the Xiaoshan Mountain. It is flanked by the Fenghuang Mountain in the north and the Qinglong Mountain in the south, and the Zaojian and Jian Rivers border to its west, south and east.

It is known from the "Book of Han – Annals of Emperor Wu" that the Hangu Pass was built in the third year of the Yuanding Era (114 BC) when General Yang Pu was ordered by emperor Wu (reigned 141–87 BC) to transfer the Qin dynasty Hangu Pass from its location in Lingbao, Sanmenxia City (Fig. 15), 150 km east to its present location. For the State of Qin, the pass



15 The reconstruction of the Qin dynasty Hangu Pass in Lingbao, Sanmenxia City.
(Photo: P. Wertmann)



16 Roof tile from the site of Han dynasty Hangu Pass.
(Photo: P. Wertmann)

served as the eastern border to protect the access to its homeland from the armies of the Warring States competing to succeed the Zhou (Lv 2014, 24–25).

The Hangu Pass was formed a 60 km long defence system in north-south direction. Apart from the fortification passes, it further comprised fortification walls and beacon towers (LYWKS – XAWGJ 2014, 3). Because of its strategic location, it became one of the most important passes and military strongholds of the Han Empire. It further gained in importance when the Han court moved east and the established its capital in Luoyang. The Hangu Pass was now the first strategic fortification pass west of Luoyang on the way to the Western Regions.

In AD 240 the centre of the pass fortification system was moved to Hongnong Prefecture (LYWKS – XAWGJ 2014, 26) and the Hangu pass lost part of its military significance after a 350-year-long history. With the founding of the Sui and through the Tang dynasty, the above mentioned Tong Pass on the eastern border of the Guanzhong Basin became the most important fortification pass (Yan – Wang 2014, 12). When the Hangu Pass lost its military function completely during the 12th century it still remained an important transport hub and caravanserai. It was meant to maintain this function until the Ming and Qing dynasties (LYWKS – XAWGJ 2014, 26; Lv 2014, 30–33).

The artefacts and architectural remains that have survived of the Han dynasty Hangu Pass now give us testimony to its more than 2,100-year-long history. Because of the major military and economic importance of this site, it was recognized as one of the Top Ten Archaeological Discoveries of 2013 (SACH 2014; Yan 2014), and one year after, included in the group of Silk Road sites listed as UNESCO World Cultural Heritage (People’s Daily Network 2014).

A series of archaeological campaigns was already carried out between 1997 and 2001. Excavated were a beacon tower south of the Hangu Pass, the settlement area within the pass site, the northern and southern walls, a kiln site



17 Site Museum at the Han dynasty Hangu Pass, the Ming-Qing dynasty gate tower in the centre. (Photo: P. Wertmann)



18 Site Museum at the Han dynasty Hangu Pass. (Photo: P. Wertmann)

(northwest of the Hangu Pass site), and a storage site consisting of the main building, auxiliary buildings, living facilities, a kiln and a burial field in Yandong Village (compare Lv 2014, 11–13; Yan – Wang 2014, 14–16; LYWKS – XAWGJ 2014, 14).

In preparation for the application of the Silk Road site as world cultural heritage, a 3,325 m² large area within the Hangu Pass site was investigated and excavated between June 2012 and October 2013 by the Luoyang Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology and the Cultural Relics Bureau of Xin'an County (for the excavation report see LYWKS – XAWGJ 2014 and Yan – Wang 2014). Apart from architectural remains such as rammed-earth walls and platforms, building foundations, and ancient roads, 108 coins from various periods and a total of 250 artefacts made of ceramic, porcelain, metal and bronze were excavated from the site (for details see LYWKS – XAWGJ 2014, 13–25; Lv 2014, 16–20). Most of them were architectural elements such as eave tiles, bricks, and floor plates. Some of the tiles bore inscriptions such as the character “Guan” meaning Pass (Fig. 16).

The archaeological work enabled the reconstruction of the spatial layout of the site. What remains from the Han dynasty are two rammed-earth platforms known as Jiming Platform (remaining height 3 m) and Wangqi Platform (remaining height 2.8 m). Their exact function is so far unclear, but they are assumed to be either the remains of tier towers or the turrets of the former city walls (LYWKS – XAWGJ 2014, 4). Standing in their centre is a later gate tower from the Ming and Qing dynasties, which was last reconstructed in 1923 (Lv 2014, 8–9; Figs. 17–18).

City walls

The excavations confirmed historical records that the Han dynasty Hangu Pass did not only function as a military pass but also included a town (Yan – Wang 2014, 16–17; LYWKS – XAWGJ 2014, 27). The main settlement area of rectangular outline was situated in the southern section of the site, bordering the Wangqi Platform. Its eastern city wall, which was connected to the

rammed-earth fortification walls on the Fenghuang and Qinglong Mountains formed the fortification wall. According to the archaeologists, the main living area was moved to the northern bank of the Zaojian River in the western section of the site during Eastern Han dynasty (Yan – Wang 2014, 27). This area was crossed by a road from east to west. At some parts, the rammed-earth city wall platform still reaches a width of 35 m, and the wall on top of it up to 22 m.

The eastern and southern city walls of the Hangu Pass were partly revealed during the excavation works. The former still reached a width of up to 22 m. While its northern section was made of rammed-earth, the southern section near the banks of the Zaojian River was built of stone. The rammed-earth portion is composed of a platform (32 m from east to west, 2.8 m height) and the actual wall. The southern side was built up of sandstone and without a platform. Discovered close to the eastern wall were further a reinforcing dyke, a drainage, and a sloping ramp. The southern city rammed-earth wall was built along the river (prospected length 150 m, width 7–8 m). The rammed earth of the central section was of lower quality, and the bottom part made of gravel (LYWKS – XAWGJ 2014, 9–12).

Roads

Two ancient roads in east-west direction were unearthed at the Hangu Pass site, one to the east of the gate tower and one to the west. The road on the western side of the gate (remaining length 370 m) was built after the time of the construction of the pass. Hence, it was used from Western Han dynasty to the modern times. The Han dynasty section of the wall reaches a width of 4 to 6 m, and was found 2.7 to 4.9 m below the surface. The second road (remaining length 360 m) to the east of the gate dates from the time prior to the construction of the pass. After the construction of the Hangu Pass gate during Western Han dynasty, this road was blocked by the newly built city wall for defence reasons. Found on this road were ancient cart ruts with a width between 0.18 and 0.54 m (Lv 2014, 11–12).

Building foundation

The excavation of a 900 m² large area, which was identified as building foundations, was excavated in the western side of the site, north of the Zaojian River. The complex could be identified as two courtyard-like houses from the Eastern Han dynasty. Revealed in one complex was a corridor, a living area, and a drainage. The corridor was made of red sandstone rammed on the ground. The ground tiles were still preserved in some places. Four areas separated by the corridor were found. These were identified as the living quarters. Furthermore, two wells were uncovered within one of the houses (LYWKS – XAWGJ 2014, 13–14).

Archaeological Site Museum

Today, the site of the Hangu Pass is transformed into an archaeological site park in which the excavations should be continued. The tour of the site starts inside a visitor centre, presenting a series of cardboards with explanations on the history and excavation of the site as well as an introductory video including reconstructions of the gate. A specially built passage along the Zaojian River leads to the actual site, displaying the remains of the eastern and southern city walls, the drainage system, the main gate tower as well as the Jiming and Wangqi platforms. The archaeological remains are now enclosed by a protective shelter.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude by coming back to Lady Tang, consort of Tang emperor Ruizong, and the depiction of the foreign merchant and his camel fully loaded with silk inside her tomb in Luoyang. At the time when this mural was painted – the heydays of the Tang dynasty – Luoyang had evolved into a cosmopolitan metropolis marking the starting point of the international Silk Road network. The fact that the city had direct access to the corn growing regions of the Central Plains and the silk production centres in the South, in addition the central location within the country's waterway network further boosted this development and strengthened its position over Chang'an.

With the arrival of merchants and other travellers from across the Eurasian continent, both material and immaterial wealth was brought to the city. Considering that this discovery was listed as Major Archaeological Discovery of China in 2005 confers even more meaning to it. The efforts taken by Luoyang to receive such an honour are essential in the competition for recognition among the many different sites along the former Silk Roads – especially against Xi'an – as the official starting point.

The same applies for the efforts taken by Luoyang to have the four above discussed sites listed as UNESCO World Cultural Heritage: (1) The palaces and international markets of the ancient city of Luoyang from the Eastern Han to Northern Wei Dynasty, where foreign envoys were received, and merchants traded their goods. (2) The Dingding Gate site serving as Luoyang's outer city's main southern gate through which foreign ambassadors, traders, monks, and other travellers passed when they entered the capital or left for Chang'an and the West. (3) The so far only-preserved roadway heritage site on the Silk Road, the Shihao Section on the Xiaohan Ancient Road. As one of the major Silk Roads in the Central Plains, travellers heading from Luoyang to Chang'an and further west had to take this road with their carts and beasts of burden. Finally, (4) the Han dynasty Hangu Pass in Xin'an County, which was the first fortification pass and caravanserai west of Luoyang. Ancient cart ruts, human and animal footprints, especially those of horses and camels, which were left behind by ancient travellers and their animals at all four sites are additional proof for Luoyang's involvement in the hustle and bustle along the Silk Roads.

All these four sites – the city and the gate, the road and the pass – were essential for the functioning and the management of the long-distance Silk Road trade. Just like the mural painting, they are memorable narratives focusing on the complex history of the Silk Roads, and hence promote the status and importance of Luoyang both in ancient and modern times.

In this respect, the cultural heritage sites and narratives about historic interaction of China with other civilizations within the frame of a global history play an important role for the Chinese state as a soft-power. In promoting selected sites such as those presented above by constructing state-of-the-art site museums, large-scale exhibitions in China and abroad, or by having a site recognized as a Major Archaeological Discovery of the year or as UNESCO world cultural heritage, both national and international reputation and fame is aspired to create a new cultural identity and to secure influence through the export of the state's own social and cultural goods.

It is noteworthy that the official title of the UNESCO world heritage site – "*Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor*" – only refers to Chang'an (Xi'an), and omits Luoyang as the eastern starting point of the Silk Roads. It remains unclear if this happened out of a misconception regarding the role of Luoyang in the international trade network. However, the efforts taken by the city in promoting these sites may be considered as a part of Luoyang's strategy to alter this perception, and to foster Luoyang's former status as the eastern pivot of the Silk Roads and to develop Henan Province as the centre of the New Silk Roads. After all, immense political and economic opportunities are closely linked to this national initiative.

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