

The Space and Daily Life of Song Dynasty Civilians as Seen from along the River During the Qingming Festival and Dongjing Menghualu

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Abstract. The Song dynasty was an important period in the development of ancient China's civilian society. Dongjing Bianliang, as the capital at that time, had its civilian life and customs concentrate and reflect the characteristics of this era. Zhang Zeduan's *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* presents, in the form of images, the urban space and civilian everyday of Bianjing in the Northern Song directly and intuitively, while Meng Yuanlao's *Dongjing Menghualu* records in writing and depicts in detail the various aspects of street life in the capital. This paper, through image interpretation of *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* and textual analysis of *Dongjing Menghualu*, discusses, from the dimensions of urban spatial structure, commercial activity scenes, everyday entertainment life, and dietary customs, the spatial characteristics and everyday picture of Song dynasty civilian life, reveals the complementary value of the two in restoring the appearance of Song dynasty civilian society, and shows the living conditions and mental outlook of the civilian class under the development of the Song dynasty commodity economy.

Keywords: *Along the River During the Qingming Festival*, *Dongjing Menghualu*, Song dynasty, civilian life, urban space

1. Introduction

In the long river of Chinese civilization's history, the Song dynasty is like a key cultural coordinate. It both carefully inherited the civilized heritage of the previous generations, and laid a solid foundation for the development of later ages. Especially notable is that, along with the high-speed growth of the commodity economy, the urban resident class kept developing and growing, and thereby gave birth to a civilian culture with distinctive features. In the Northern Song period, today's Kaifeng in Henan was the then-flourishing Dongjing Bianliang. As the capital of the dynasty, it undertook the dual functions of political and economic core, was the most prosperous city in the whole country, and its residents' lives were rich and varied, leaving a unique and profound mark in the long river of history. Among the extant historical documents related to the Song dynasty's Dongjing, Zhang Zeduan's *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* and Meng Yuanlao's *Dongjing Menghualu* occupy an irreplaceable core position. In the reign of Emperor Huizong of the

Northern Song, *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* came into being. This long scroll, with its exquisite composition, shows in fine detail the prosperous scene on both banks of the Bian River in Bianjing during the Qingming season. In the painting people come and go, figures of all kinds gather, and various scenes are arranged in good order, covering many fields such as urban architecture, commercial operation, logistics and transport, and social interaction, leaving extremely precious historical image material for later generations. *Dongjing Menghualu*, on the other hand, was written by Meng Yuanlao of the Southern Song. The book is full of memories and nostalgia for the life of Bianjing, the Northern Song capital, and describes in detail the urban planning structure of Dongjing, the norms of court etiquette, folk customs and local conditions, and food, drink and amusement, with especially careful narration and a strong flavor of life between the lines. This study plans to compare the visual material in *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* with the written records in *Dongjing Menghualu*, letting the two verify and supplement each other's information, and to present the life of Dongjing's residents in the Northern Song from the two dimensions of urban spatial construction and residents' everyday behavior. This cross-medium research approach can both reproduce the historical picture more precisely and analyze in depth the characteristics of Song dynasty civilian society and the historical conditions that produced it, providing a brand-new analytical angle for the exploration of the development process of ancient China's urban cities and the change process of civilian culture.

2. The urban spatial structure of Song dynasty Dongjing: a dual presentation of image and text

2.1. The overall layout of the capital

Along the River During the Qingming Festival unfolds slowly in a horizontal composition. It starts from a tranquil suburban area, then gradually extends toward the dock district by the Bian River bank, passes through bustling and noisy streets and alleys, and finally reaches the urban center, drawing a detailed spatial layout map of Dongjing, the Northern Song capital. In this magnificent scroll, the Bian River is undoubtedly the lifeline of the city. The key of transport and commercial exchange entirely relies on it to be carried, which is shown in the painting as docks standing in great numbers on both banks, countless commercial ships moored at the shore, workers busily loading and unloading goods, and laborers carrying grain on their shoulders moving among them — a scene of bustle that vividly shows the central position of the Bian River in the urban economy. And *Dongjing Menghualu* records clearly that, after the Bian River branches off from Luokou of the Western Capital, it passes through the city and flows east, until it joins the Huai River at Sizhou, undertaking the important task of transporting grain from the southeast, which confirms the other extant historical materials. From this we know that, for Dongjing, the Bian River was not only the most basic lifeline sustaining the city's operation, but also the foundation forming the city's pattern. Like a bond, it connects the various regions of the city, promotes the circulation of goods and the coming and going of people, and provides a continuous motive force for Dongjing's prosperity.

2.2. The functional zoning of the capital

Viewed from the angle of urban spatial layout, *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* shows in detail the situation of Dongjing city where the commercial and residential functional zones are clearly divided and have a specific distribution pattern. In the picture, both sides of the streets are filled with compact commercial buildings. Wineshops, teahouses, inns, silk shops, general stores and

various other commercial facilities stand in tight rows, together forming an extraordinarily lively commercial district. And behind these commercial buildings, the residential houses and courtyards show an irregular layout, which indicates that, apart from the traditional layout of 'court in front and market behind, ancestral temple on the left and altar on the right,' the everyday residential space of the commoners also had a different form. The book *Dongjing Menghualu* gives a detailed record of Dongjing city's fang-shi (ward-market) structure. The book describes: 'Going south from the west corridor of the Great Interior, one reaches the Western Palace of Jingling; opposite to the south bend is Baoci Temple Street, the General Delivery Office, and Baizhong Round Pharmacy, extending to the Junyi Bridge Avenue' [1]. From this we can see that Dongjing city's street planning was fairly orderly, and each region was clearly divided and well organized. A deep analysis of the urban layout of Dongjing, the Song capital, reveals that it completely changed the extremely strict separation of wards and markets in Chang'an of the Tang dynasty. Commercial transactions were no longer bound by strict limits of time and space. Shops could be distributed along the streets, and citizens could buy and sell freely in the streets. This major change in urban structure is shown extremely vividly in *Along the River During the Qingming Festival*. In the painting, street vendors and mobile stalls can be seen everywhere, truly reflecting the great expansion of residents' living scope after the collapse of the ward-market system, and the city's vitality thereby grew ever more vigorous.

3. The commercial activities of Song dynasty civilians: from fixed shops to mobile vendors

3.1. Commercial forms

The commercial transaction scenes in *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* are extremely complex and rich. In the painting there are magnificent wineshops and teahouses, and by the roadside there are also small and exquisite stalls. These commercial places involve many aspects of everyday life such as food, clothing, housing, transport, production and living. In the picture, a wineshop marked 'Sun Yang Zheng Dian' (Sun Sheep Principal Shop) is especially eye-catching. Its building is grand in scale and full of imposing manner. The interior decoration is gorgeous and exquisite, and at the door hangs a conspicuous wine flag to attract customers. The wineshop is full with no empty seats, filled with guests drinking and chatting heartily, and waiters shuttle busily back and forth among the tables and chairs, fully showing the prosperous scene of Song dynasty wineshops. This picture echoes the records in *Dongjing Menghualu*. The book describes it this way: 'All the wineshops in the capital have a decorated tower and a huan gate tied at the doorhead; only the Ren Shop, once one enters its door, has a main corridor of about a hundred paces straight in, with small cabinets on both the north and south courtyards' two corridors, and toward evening the lamps and candles blaze brilliantly, lighting up above and below, with several hundred heavily made-up courtesans gathered on the main corridor's railing surface, waiting to be called by wine guests, looking from afar like immortals.' From this we can see that, at that time, the wineshop was not only a place for citizens to drink and dine, but also an important social and entertainment space [2]. People exchanged information, negotiated business, and amused themselves here, making it an indispensable part of civilian life.

3.2. Modes of operation

Along the River During the Qingming Festival depicts meticulously the commercial appearance of Dongjing city. Apart from those grand and imposing taverns, the scroll is also covered with all kinds of small and medium commercial places, such as silk stores, general stores, pharmacies, and

ironware workshops. Although the facade decoration of these commercial facilities is not as gorgeous and dazzling as that of the taverns, their business content is very broad and can satisfy the basic everyday needs of urban and rural residents. For example, the plaque hanging at the door of a pharmacy reads 'This Hall's Prepared-to-Formula Symptom Pills and Powders,' clearly stating its commercial purpose; in the grocery store beside it, all kinds of goods are placed neatly, from daily necessities to exquisite handicrafts, complete in variety and numerous in type. Dongjing Menghualu also records in detail the distribution of various kinds of commercial shops in Dongjing [3]: 'Going north from the Horse Row, one reaches the Small Goods Row, the Shi Lou, the Da Gu Fu Pharmacy, going straight north to the Yinan Bridge, the Paper Horse Shop, the Chaotian Gate, the Jiao Zi Gate, the Left and Right Side Gates, and the Crown Prince's Palace Gate.' From this we can see that at that time Dongjing's commercial form was already fairly mature, forming specialized business districts where different types of shops were concentrated, facilitating citizens' shopping and consumption.

In the commercial and trade activities of Dongjing, the Song capital, mobile vendors were an indispensable and important component. In *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* one can often see their active figures. Some itinerant merchants carry heavy loads on shoulder poles, some push carts loaded with goods, walking back and forth in the city streets, crying their wares loudly, with everything from fresh vegetables and fruits to local flavored snacks. In the painting a young girl carries a full load of all kinds of flowers, walking slowly in the street; the blossoms on her shoulder are colorful and charmingly delicate, attracting the gaze of many passers-by. Not far away, a vendor sets up a snack stall; the food on the stall steams with heat, its aroma drifting everywhere, stirring people's appetite. The records of mobile vendors in Dongjing Menghualu are also very vivid [4]: 'Those marketplace brokerage households often only buy food and drink on the spot from market shops, and do not keep home vegetables. For northern food, the Li Si family in front of the Fan Lou, the Duan family's stewed goods, and the Shi Feng Ba Zi are the most noteworthy; for southern food, the Jin family at the Temple Bridge and the Zhou family at the Nine-Bend are the most counted. The night market lasts until the third watch ends, and reopens at the fifth watch. At busy places, it never stops all night.' These records not only show the rich and varied business content of mobile vendors, but also reflect their important position in citizens' everyday life, providing convenient life services for citizens and making their life more convenient and colorful.

4. The entertainment and diet of Song dynasty civilians

4.1. Rich and varied forms and venues of entertainment

The entertainment forms participated in by Song dynasty urban residents were diversified. A glimpse of this can be seen in the two detailed records of *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* and *Dongjing Menghualu*. *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* focuses on depicting commercial activities, but is not without details of the public's everyday leisure — for instance, on an open space near the Rainbow Bridge, there are skill performers doing acrobatics, with many spectators standing or sitting around them, their expressions focused, applauding and cheering continuously. The picture painted by *Dongjing Menghualu* shows that, starting from the winter solstice, people invited each other to the wa-she (entertainment enclosures) and gou-lan (performance stalls), making them places of leisure and amusement. In Song dynasty urban life, whether sunny or rainy, cold or hot, day or night, the wa-she and gou-lan were always noisy with people and extraordinarily lively, just as the document says, 'All the wineshops and wa-markets, regardless of wind, rain, cold or heat, by day and through the night, are thronged like this.' From this

we can see that these places were already the main leisure and entertainment spots of the citizens at that time.

In the Song dynasty there was a unique entertainment facility called wa-she gou-lan [5]. It integrated multiple functions of performing arts, leisure entertainment, and commercial consumption into one, creating a diversified entertainment space for urban residents and thereby enriching their spare-time life. Dongjing Menghualu records in detail the appearance of the wa-she and gou-lan in Dongjing city. The East Corner Tower is at the southeast corner of the imperial city, and the geographical character of this area is marked by it. Going south from the Cross Street one reaches the Ginger Row. The Gaotou Street extends north starting from the Yarn Row and all the way to the Old Sour Jujube Gate, passing through the Donghua Gate Street, the Chenhui Gate, and the Baolu Palace on the way. Here shops are especially many and it is very prosperous, a golden section for doing business. In the Xuanhe years the city widened the side roads and adopted an enclosed-city layout. The Panlou Street extends east, and to its south there is an 'Eagle Shop' specially for people trading eagles and falcons, with stalls selling pearls, various cloths and spices around it. The alley called 'Jieshen' is to the south, a distribution center for gold, silver and colored textiles; its buildings are grand, its gates wide, and its outward appearance feels rather majestic. Each transaction amount often reached tens of millions, which is astonishing. The Panlou tavern is on the north side of the East Street. Every day at first light the market begins to gather. The things sold include clothing, calligraphy and paintings, rare curios, rhinoceros horns, jade and the like. At the first dawn, the market has already laid out sheep heads, pig tripe and lungs, chicken and duck gizzards, pig kidneys, pig breasts, pig tripe tips, quails, rabbits, pigeons, all kinds of game, crabs and clams. After that, the vendors doing various handmade businesses come out to sell bits and pieces of food material. After-meal snacks also appear one after another, such as sweet and crisp candied fruit, sweet cakes made of dates, and fragrant crispy fried sanzi (fried dough twists), and all kinds of delicacies. At dusk, in the He-lou area there are those selling fine things like jewelry, hats, combs and scarves, as well as those selling precious toys and daily utensils. Going further east is the Xu family's hu soup shop. The Sang family wa-she is on the south side of the street; the Middle wa-she is to its north, and next to it is the Ci-li wa-she. Here there are more than fifty gou-lan of different sizes. Inside the wa-she, places like the Inner Middle wa-she, the Lotus Shed, the Peony Shed, the Inner wa-she, the Yacha Shed, and the Elephant Shed are very large and can hold several thousand people. It is not known whether, after Ding Xianxian, Wang Tuanzi and Zhang Qisheng, there were people who continued to do this trade there. Inside the wa-she there are all kinds of things sold, such as herbs, fortune-telling, old clothes, gambling, food and drink, haircuts, as well as cultural and entertainment items like painting and singing. Staying here a whole day until night one does not feel it, because the various performances here — zaju (variety drama), acrobatics, storytelling, dancing and so on — are many and each has its own character, satisfying the entertainment and relaxation needs of people of every class.

4.2. The richness of dietary structure and the diversity of dining venues

The life of urban residents cannot be separated from the dining link. In Dongjing, the Song capital, the food culture was extremely prosperous, with a diverse dietary structure and distinctive dining places [6]. Looking carefully at Along the River During the Qingming Festival, one can see that food-related scenes are depicted in detail. In the picture there are dining places such as wineshops, teahouses and street snacks, giving urban residents many dietary choices. And the paintings show a great variety of dishes in the taverns — poultry, aquatic products, and all kinds of meat such as chicken, duck, fish and seafood. The snack stalls on both sides of the streets offer all kinds of

flavored snacks such as baozi (steamed buns), mantou (steamed bread), wonton and roast meat, fully satisfying the diversified taste needs of urban residents.

Dongjing Menghualu's description of Dongjing area's dietary composition and dining places is quite detailed. In catering, the chef in charge of making side dishes for wine is respectfully called by the trade 'tea-rice wine doctor.' The children in the shop, regardless of age or status, are all called 'uncle.' Some women on the street tie a towel at the waist with blue-and-white cloth and wear a loosely done bun, doing the job of changing hot soup and pouring wine for the drinkers; the folk call this 'jun zao.' Many people who enter the wineshop, seeing young people drinking heartily, step forward to serve carefully, helping buy things and carrying money and belongings; these people are called 'xian han' (idle men). There are also those who serve guests soup and poured wine, sing, or send fruits and fragrant herbs; when the guests disperse they get money and this is called 'si bo.' In the pleasure quarters there are low-status women who, without being called, come on their own to sing at the wine feast to liven it up; the guests give some small coins as reward and let her go; this is called 'zha ke,' also called 'da jiu zuo.' In the market there are peddlers selling medicine, or fruits, radishes and the like; when these small vendors peddle, regardless of whether the customers at the table mean to buy, they first distribute the goods to the seated guests and then collect the money; this is called 'sa zan.' The service modes in Dongjing's dining places are everywhere, and the dietary customs are closely linked to the everyday life of urban residents.

5. Conclusion

Through an in-depth study of *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* and *Dongjing Menghualu*, the specific situation of the spatial distribution of Song dynasty Dongjing citizens' everyday life can be clearly shown. In the Song dynasty, the living scope and everyday activities of urban residents both reflected the degree of development of the commodity economy at that time and clearly embodied the spiritual character and value orientation of the civilian class. Amid the bustle of the city they built a colorful life pattern, thereby forming a unique civilian-class culture. This cultural form had a deep and lasting influence on China's later urban development and socio-cultural change. An in-depth study of these two works can both deepen our understanding of the characteristics of Song dynasty urban residents' life and provide precious historical reference for the building of modern urban civilization and the improvement of residents' life quality.

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