

The Yingtianmen Gate-site of the Sui and Tang Eastern Capital in Luoyang City

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The Yingtianmen (Responding to Heaven) Gate was the main entrance of the Sui and Tang Palace Complex, and it was used continually during the Song Dynasty. The site of the Gate is presently located between the two work units of the Luoyang Daily Newspaper and the Capital City Museum. The Dingding-nanlu, a modern street, traverses the middle of the site. From October 2001 to January 2002, we excavated the pier platforms (*dundai*),

the gate entranceways, and other features related to the gate. The total area excavated was 2167m² (Figure 1).

The Deposit Strata

The gate site is on elevated land on the third terrace of the southern slope of the Mangshan Hill. It was severely damaged. In many places, the remains of the gate were found directly under the topsoil, and in a few places the site was under deposits of the modern, Ming, and Qing periods; only rarely did we find a complete set of strata at the site. Here we use the east wall of the test unit 2001LTGT851 as an example to illustrate the site strata.

Stratum 1: Modern deposit 0.25m deep and 0.25m thick. The grey-brown soil contained a large amount of burned clod.

Stratum 2: Jin and Yuan deposit 0.55m deep and 0.30m thick. The yellow-brown soil contained burned clod and broken bricks and tiles. A few broken pieces of Jin and Yuan porcelain shards were found.

Stratum 3: Deposit formed during the Song after the Yingtianmen Gate collapsed. It was 0.5–0.95m deep and 0.3–0.50m thick. The light yellow-brown soil contained burned clod, charcoal, and some plaster from white-washed walls. We found also building components and broken porcelain shards. Under this layer of deposit were the earlier and later foundations of the Yingtianmen Gate.

Stratum 4: Han deposit of 0.75–1.15m deep and 0.2–0.5m thick. The dark yellow-brown soil contained a few grey pottery shards. Under this layer is primary soil.

Despite severe damage to the gate site, the structure of the gate was rather clear. Based on the deposit strata, the site was further divided into earlier and later periods.

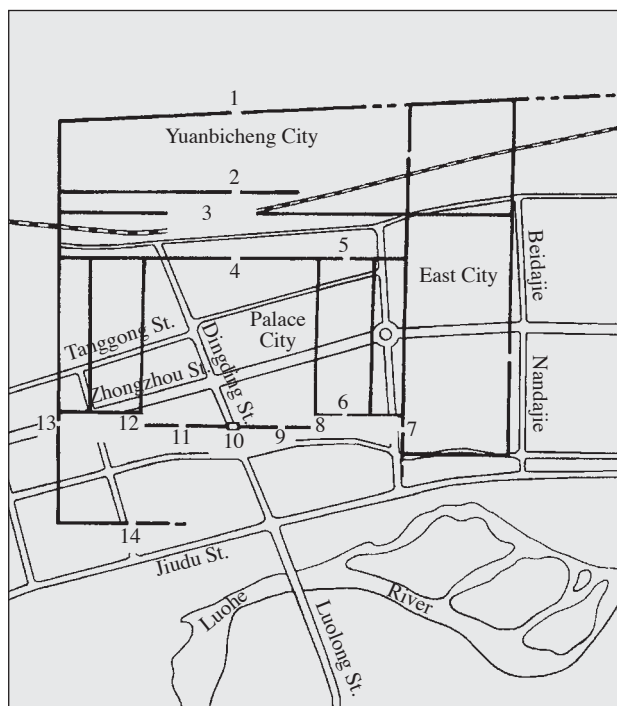


Figure 1. Illustration of the Yingtianmen Gate-site

1. Longguangmen
2. Yuanbi-nanmen
3. Yaoyimen
4. Xuanwumen
5. Chongguang-beimen
6. Chongguangmen
7. Binyaomen
8. Xuanzhengmen
9. Mingdemen
10. Yingtianmen
11. Changlemen
12. Chongqingmen
13. Xuanhuimen
14. Youyemen

The Earlier Gate

The earlier gate was partially built on the Han cultural deposit and partially on the primary soil. Most of the earlier gate remains were found under the later gate, but some were exposed due to construction of the later gate. The remaining structures included a pier platform, gate entranceways, partition walls, and the trench foundation of the west veranda (Figure 2).

1. Pier platform

The ground plan of the pier platform is rectangular in shape. It is 51m long from east to west, and 26.5m from north to south. The foundation of the pier platform was constructed using stamped-earth. The soil of the foundation was yellow-brown in color, and in between layers pebble stones were laid. The platform itself was also a stamped-earth structure, using a similar type of soil. This layer measures 6 to 8cm thick. On the east side of the gate, the remaining base of the platform is 13m long from east to west and 23.3m wide from north to south; and the surviving surface of the platform is 11.8m long

and 22.75m wide. On the eastern part of the north side of the pier platform, remains of three lines of facing bricks were found. The brick covered area is 0.53m long and 0.4m wide.

2. Gate entranceways

Each of three entranceways is 5m wide (Figure 3). Remaining upright slabs (*tuchengshi*) and foundation stones (*difushi*) were found in the entranceways. The upright slabs of grey basalt and red sandstone are of various sizes; the largest one is 1.38m long and the smallest 0.2m long. The foundation stones are either rectangular or square, and they were made of the same materials as the upright slabs. The foundation stones have polished surfaces. In the center of each foundation stone is a round or square-shaped pole hole. Next to the west wall of the central entranceway, the second stone from north to south is a good example of a foundation stone. The square-shaped red sandstone foundation stone is 0.7m on each side and 0.34m thick. The diameter of the pole hole is 0.18m. Another foundation stone was found in the west entranceway, next to the east wall. This rect-

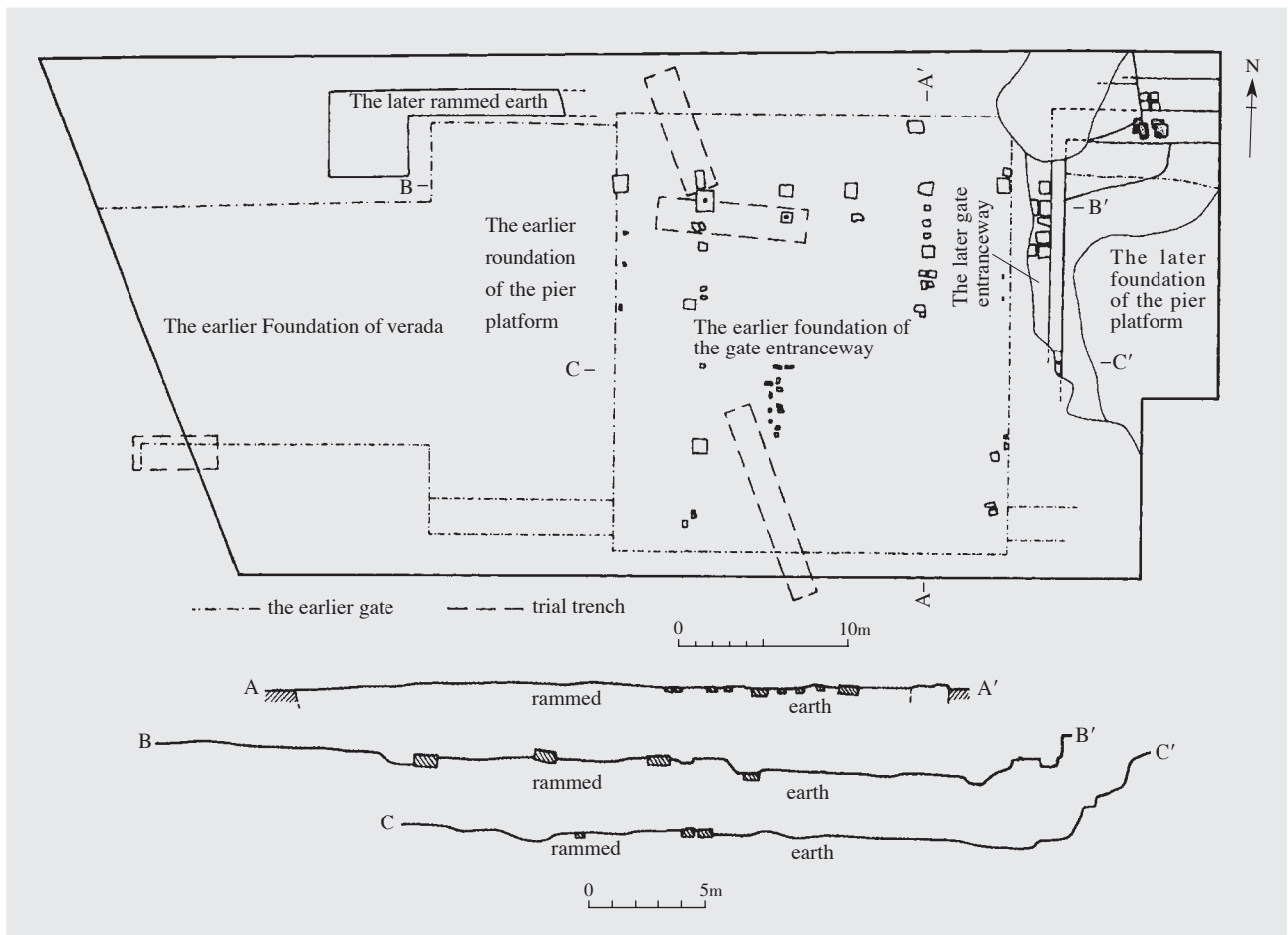


Figure 2. Plan and cross section of the Yingtianmen Gate site excavated in 2001–2002



Figure 3. The eastern entranceway of the Yingtianmen Gate-site (photo taken from north to south)

angular-shaped basalt foundation stone is 1.38m long, 1m wide, and 0.55m thick. The pole hole is 9cm in diameter and 8cm deep. Stamped-earth partition walls separated the entranceways, and were built on the same foundation of the pier platform.

3. West veranda

The east side of the west veranda is attached to the pier platform's west wall. Only a partial foundation of the veranda remains; the rest of the building is all gone. The stamped-earth foundation has a hard surface and its cross-section is of a rectangular shape. The excavated southern part is 13.6m long, and the northern part 18.3m; the width is 14.8m.

The Later Gate

The later gate remains were found on top of the earlier gate, and include a pier platform and an eastern entranceway.

1. Pier platform

The later pier platform was built as a renovation of the earlier one, and added extra stamped-earth walls onto the exterior of the earlier pier platform.

At the northwest corner of the earlier pier platform, we found the partial foundation of later extended walls. Moving east from the outside corner, the foundation is 9.5m long and 1.45m wide; moving south from the

corner, the foundation is 5.1m long and 4.9m wide. The shallow foundation had only two layers of stamped-earth; each was about 8cm thick. Between the layers was a thin coat of white wash. On the bottom of the foundation, a layer of ceramic shards was found.

Between the later foundation of extended walls and the earlier foundation of the pier platform, a ridge of primary soil of 0.7m wide was found. This indicates that the later platform not only renovated the earlier one, but also enlarged its scale substantially. Combining information from the earlier test excavation in 1990 with the current excavation of 2002, reveals that the later pier platform of the Yingtianmen Gate was a rectangular-shaped structure. It is 55.2m long from east to west, and its remaining width is 25.2m wide from south to north. The best preserved part stands 3m above ground.

Like the earlier pier platform, it was faced with bricks. However, most of them are gone. The ones exposed by excavation are on the north side of the platform (outside of the east entranceway). Features of the pier platform include a trench filled with gravel, foundation blocks, and facing bricks. Outside the pier platform base, a trench of 1.2–1.5m wide was found. The trench was filled with basalt and red sandstone gravel, mixed with stamped-dirt. On top of the gravel were 2 to 3 layers of basalt foundation blocks and above the blocks were rect-

angular-shaped bricks that faced the wall of the platform.

Next to the base of the wall, we found an apron. The foundation of the apron is 1.9m wide and 1.05m deep. It was filled with a layer of ceramic shards. Above the foundation was a layer of hard surfaced stamped-earth, containing bits of lime stones, broken roof tiles, and burned clod. It measures 2.5m wide and 0.25m thick. Above the hard surface are rectangular apron blocks of 0.55–0.75m long, 0.4–0.6m wide, and 0.15–0.25m thick.

2. Gate entranceway

Only the east wall of the east gate entranceway remains. It was built on top of the earlier pier platform, but it was moved 3.25m horizontally to the east. That is: the later entranceways were not directly built above the old ones. A similar situation occurred in the case of the Dingdingmen Gate of Luoyang city during the Song. In both cases, the move was likely the result of a shift of the north-south axis of the capital city during the Song.

Under the east wall of the gate entranceway we found two holes in the ground that had been used to contain foundation stones. The holes are various sizes: the remaining length of the one on the north is 0.6m, and its remaining width is 0.4m; the remaining length of the one on the south is 0.9m, its remaining width is 0.35m, and its depth is 0.05m. On the northern wall was a thin layer of lime powder 4cm thick. Between the eastern wall of the entranceway and the pier platform were in-laid bricks.

Inside the entranceway, we also found nine holes in the ground laid in two lines from east to west with five potential rows from south to north. The level of the bottom of the three holes on the south was higher than the six on the north, with a difference of 0.5m. The holes contained rock fragments. The largest one is 0.85m long from east to west and 0.75m wide south to north; the smallest is 0.4m long and 0.35m wide. On the bottom and walls of the holes were remnants of lime powder, showing that in the past, the entranceway was paved with stone slabs.

3. Artifacts

We found a few artifacts at the site, including rectangular bricks, roof end-tiles, and coins.

Rectangle bricks with rope indentations. One was found in the deposits at the earlier gate (2001LTGT851③:1). The brick has a plain front and a rope-patterned back. It is 36cm long, 18cm wide, and 7.5cm thick. In the deposits at the later gate, we found five bricks similar to the one of earlier period. They were (2001LTGT851②:5) 26cm long, 18cm wide, and 4.8cm thick.

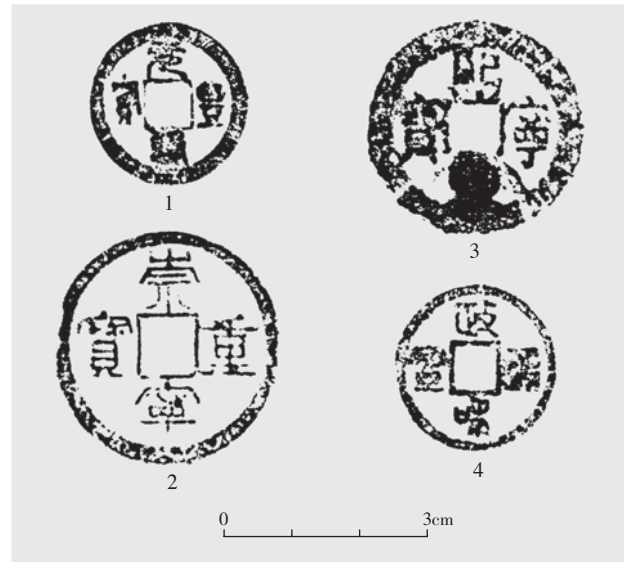


Figure 4. Rubbings of the excavated coins of different reign periods of the Song Dynasty

1. Yuanfeng (2001LTGT851②:1) 2. Chongning (2001LTGT851②:3) 3. Xining (2001LTGT851②:4) 4. Zhenghe (2001LTGT851②:2)

Roof tile-ends. Two roof end-tiles were found. One had a molded lotus pattern, with lotus petals arranged around the seedpod in the center. The other one had a molded animal face with two horns and an open mouth.

Coins. There were four coins of different reign periods of the Song dynasty: the Xining (1068–1078), Yuanfeng (1078–1086), Chongning (1102–1107), and Zhenghe (1111–1118) periods. The diameters of the coins ranged from 2.46–3.46cm (Figure 4).

Conclusions

Based on the excavation, we have come to the following conclusions about the Yingtianmen Gate:

1. The site contained an earlier gate and a later gate. The earlier gate was probably constructed during the High Tang era under orders from the Empress Wu Zetian, who had asked Wei Ji to rebuild the former Yingtianmen Gate. The later gate was probably rebuilt in the late Tang and early Song. According to historical sources, the name of the Yingtianmen Gate was changed to Wufenglou (Five Phoenixes Building) during the Tianyou reign (904–907). The renovation that created what this report calls the later gate was probably related to this change in the name of the gate.

2. The earlier and later pier platforms were both rectangular in shape. The earlier one is 51m long and its remaining width is 26.5m. The later one is 55m long and its remaining width is 25.5m.

3. Both the earlier and later gates had three entranceways. Each of the three earlier entranceways is 5m wide from east to west, and the partition walls have the same width. The layout of the later entranceways is not clear. However, the excavation indicates that the entire gate was moved horizontally 3.25m to the east.

4. The western veranda was severely damaged. Based on current archaeological information, the earlier veranda and the later veranda (excavated in 1990) had the

same width. This suggests that the veranda was not altered in the later period.

5. The bricks found inside the later entranceway all bear burn marks, indicating that the gate was probably destroyed during warfare. Written sources do not record why and how the Yingtianmen Gate was destroyed. In this case the archaeological evidence suggests an explanation for the ruin of the gate that written sources have, at least up until now, been unable to provide.

Note: The original report was published in *Kaogu* 考古 (Archaeology) 2007.5: 33–38, with five illustrations, is written by Chen Liangwei 陈良伟, Han Jianhua 韩建华 and Shi Zishe 石自社. This summary is abridged by the first author and translated into English by Suzanne Cahill and Ye Wa 叶娃.