

# Textual Research on Du Huan's Travel in the Da Yi Country and his "Jing Xing Ji" in Tang Dynasty

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**Abstract:** As a traveler of the Tang Dynasty in China, Du Huan once set foot in Africa. His book "Jing Xing Ji" was compiled after his own personal experience. Thus everyone in the Tang Dynasty got a certain understanding about the local customs and appearances of West Asia and Africa outside of China at that time. The "Jing Xing Ji" mainly introduces the commercial, humanistic, agricultural and animal husbandry, geographical location, landform characteristics of the countries Du Huan has gone through, and even religious beliefs, the Battle of Talas, etc. In promoting communication and exchanges between China and other countries, it also provides reference for the study of human history in North Africa and Central and Western Asia. This article introduces Du Huan's travel in the Da Yi Country, and do textual research on his book "Jing Xing Ji".

## 1. Introduction

Du Huan is a native of Xiangyang, Hubei, and is an outstanding traveler of the Tang Dynasty. He is the first person in China to go out of the country and reach Africa. In his short life, he traveled around the country and was fantastic. In his overseas life of more than ten years, Du Huan has compiled the "Jing Xing Ji" according to what he has heard. He has faithfully expressed the folk customs that are different in the Tang Dynasty in many parts of Africa. The "Jing Xing Ji" is an important historical material for future generations to study, and it is also of great value to study. The following is a textual research of his book "Jing Xing Ji".

## 2. The reason for Du Huan's long journey

After the founding of the Tang, the Tang Dynasty's national strength was unprecedentedly strong. After Li Shimin and other people's efforts, it was extremely prosperous in the Eastern world at that time, and then they began to open up territory. In 751 years, Gao Xianzhi, an Anxi Jiedushi, was ordered to compete with the West Asian powerhouse Abbas in 751<sup>[1]</sup>. The two sides have invested more than 100,000 troops and fought in today's Henglus, thus becoming the "Battle of Talas" that had an impact on Eastern and Western civilization. Du Huan as a military secretary at that time made a complete and truthful record of the campaign. Both sides are strong and tough, and the beginning of the war has entered a stage of incandescence. In the preparation for this battle, Gao Xianzhi has already contacted the flank of the war. However, the Western countries that had negotiated well with the Tang Dynasty even had a rebellion, which caused the situation that Gao Xianzhi's army had enemies in front and rear. The entire line of defense of the Tang Dynasty army collapsed after a few days of high-intensity operations. In the end, hundreds of thousands of soldiers in our country died in a place far away from home and suffered heavy losses. There are only a few thousand people who have fled back to their homeland. Due to the failure of this war, the power of China in West Asia gradually withdrew. Du Huan and the tens of thousands of Tang dynasty soldiers were captured by Arab soldiers in this battle and became prisoners of war. During this period, Du Huan followed the army to send troops to fight against the crusade, and were valued for their talents by military officials. After that, Du Huan became a member of the Royal Guards who guarded the capital. It was in 758. At this time, the major forces in West Asia gradually finished dividing the territory. After a long war and chaos, the Abbas Empire began to build Baghdad and gradually stabilized the regime. The unprecedented scale of construction in Baghdad in the capital city is recorded in Du Huan's "Jing Xing Ji": "Outside the city and in the countryside.....talents gather

from everywhere, goods are rich and cheap.....Camels, horses, donkeys and mules are filled with streets and lanes.” The figure of the Tang Dynasty people appeared in the 100,000 artisans of the time. Du Huan saw that they were all Tang soldiers captured in the war at that time. He once mentioned: “The people who are woven are Hedong people Yue Wei and Lv Li”<sup>[2]</sup>. So in the construction of Baghdad, these Chinese people and Du Huan, in the foreign countries, injected the Chinese civilization fresh blood. During the construction, because Du Huan's mastery of Eastern civilization and his understanding of architectural design made him play a talent advantage, he was promoted to an official from a craftsman, involved in engineering design and supervised urban construction. The empire was built in the 760 years. Du Huan followed the Khorasan Legion to Jerusalem, and his talents received attention. At that time, the king of the empire, Mansour, had a detailed understanding of the style and customs of the Tang Dynasty and the rewards.

### **3. Du Huan and the “Jing Xing Ji”**

In the Tang Dynasty of China, Du Huan was a famous traveler, but his birth and death years were unknown. He was a native of Xiangyang, Hubei. After becoming a prisoner of war, he gradually turned to the countries of North Africa and West Asia, becoming the Chinese who left many books in the history of our country and the first to reach Africa. After returning to the motherland, Du Huan wrote down the “Jing Xing Ji” according to what he saw and heard in Africa. However, it is a pity that this book only contains about 15,000 words of content, which was quoted in Du You's “Tong Dian”, and most of the contents have been lost. The Tang Dynasty exchanged with North Africa and Central Asia through the Maritime Silk Road and the road, it is the most frequent period of China's foreign exchanges. Du Huan was in Europe at the time because of the war. However, he passed down a valuable “Jing Xing Ji” for later generations, and he was a literary scholar who traveled. The whole country of the Da Yi Country has traveled throughout his travels, so there is a wealth of what he sees and hears<sup>[3]</sup>. There are Mesopotamian sesame oil almonds, products and customs, even Zhu Luguo's fennel, sugar beets, etc., all of which are involved in their writings. It provides noble historical materials for later generations to study Chinese medicine and African products, and is recorded in “Compendium of Materia Medica”, a book written by Li Shizhen in Ming Dynasty. During the exchanges between the Tang Dynasty and the African region on the land and maritime Silk Road, ambassadors were dispatched to each other for mutual exchange. The two sides have had friendly exchanges on many occasions and are recorded in the the diplomatic archives “Tang Hui Yao” . Du Huan's travel records objectively record the climate and living standards of the countries in which he passed, and it can be seen that compared with the Central Plains region of the Tang Dynasty in China, the level and living conditions of the Arab people were far below.

There are many anecdotes recorded in “Jing Xing Ji”, which describe the scandals of Ethiopia, Egypt, Nubia, Axum, and Jerusalem. After a long tour, Du Huan took a boat through the Persian Gulf and returned to Guangzhou through the port of Masawa in Ethiopia. The most precious original materials of the original cultural exchanges in Africa, West Asia, Central Asia and China and abroad are all in the book “Jing Xing Ji”. It reflects the communication and influence of technology and ancient Chinese culture on African civilization. In the process of dissemination, the original book of “Jing Xing Ji” has long been lost. But Du You's “Tongdian” describes and records in detail the communication technology and craftsmanship of craftsmen in these areas, as well as the existence of Zoroastrianism, Islamic doctrine and other key religious historical materials, which is of great significance in the history of foreign exchanges.

### **4. The important value of “Jing Xing Ji”**

#### **4.1. Recording the true westward transmission of papermaking in China**

After the Battle of Talas, there were many craftsmen in the twenty thousand Arab prisoners. And these people have passed on China's papermaking, textile and other technologies. “The silk knitted

man, the goldsmith, the painter... the weavers are Hedong people in Yue Huan and Lv Li”<sup>[4]</sup>. It has been confirmed. These craftsmen have changed the description of the most primitive applications of sheepskin, bay leaves, bark, etc. in the Central and Western countries when they were not introduced into papermaking. Therefore, they have promoted the technical exchanges between countries and have greatly promoted the historical process of China's papermaking to the world.

#### **4.2. Introducing some national geography**

In Du Huan’s “Jing Xing Ji”, he introduced the customs, geography and appearance of countries such as West Asia, North Africa and Central Asia. As an important geographical work, it studied the history of the countries of West Asia, North Africa and Central Asia in the Middle Ages. During 10 years, Du Huan has experienced 12 countries including the state of Kang. While, in our country, He imported knowledge of customs and products from other parts of the country to promote communication and interaction among countries. In view of Central and Western Asia and North Africa, China has a more comprehensive understanding of it, and at the same time provides a rich historical data to study the history and culture of other countries.

#### **4.3. It is the earliest record of African geography**

In the Chinese and Western cultures, Du Huan’s trip to Africa has always been a puzzle. As stated in “Jing Xing Ji”: “Molin Country.....Two thousand miles to the country.....The people are black.....No grass and trees, Severe damp-heat syndrome”. Because there is less information available, it is difficult to determine the Molin Country. However, the precious materials of North Africa are recorded in the “Jing Xing Ji”. Du Huan was the first scholar to visit Africa with written texts, and was the first Chinese to identify North Africa and Egypt.

#### **4.4. Records of several major religious situations at the time**

Christianity, martyrdom, and Islam are richly introduced in “Jing Xing Ji”, and at the same time promoting the further exchange of religions. To a certain extent, the detailed introduction of Islam promotes the development of Islam in China. “Chinese Islamic Outline Reference Materials”, the book written by Mr. Bai Shouyi said that Du Huan recorded the doctrines he knew in his “Jing Xing Ji” was quite correct understanding of the doctrine about Islam. And it is the earliest Chinese record. It is called “the first voice of the Islamic law to spread the East”<sup>[5]</sup>.

### **5. Textual research on Du Huan's travel in the Da Yi Country and his “Jing Xing Ji”**

The Da Yi Country is the Arab Empire, and the first Chinese to arrive is Du Huan himself. He recorded in detail in his “Jing Xing Ji” what he saw and heard. We can clearly see that in these historical materials circulating in the world, Du Huan is involved in and records the geography, customs, politics and economy of the Da Yi Country, and is more complete and rich than that recorded by the Arabs at the same time. So its historical value is extremely important. The following will be a textual research on “Jing Xing Ji”.

Because of the Anxi Jiedushi, Gao Xianzhi was ordered in 751 to fight for territory with the Asian powerhouse Abbas. The two sides have invested more than 100,000 troops and fought in today's Henglus, thus becoming the “Battle of Talas” that had an impact on Eastern and Western civilization. So Duhuan at that time entered the African Da Yi country. As an officer in the army of Anxi Duhu, he was stationed in the Tokmok area. But the war damage at that time was very heavy. Many soldiers became captives of the army. Du Huan is one of them. After that, Du Huan and others left Henglus and turned to the territory of the Da Yi Country. Du Huan’s description of the country of Ferghana in the “Jing Xing Ji” can prove that after being captured, he traveled through the Chaj during the journey and arrived in this place. Therefore, there are some descriptions of Chaj.

And in this war, Asi Rodriguez who participated in the battle won more spoils than war prisoners. At the same time, there are many Chinese silks, all kinds of treasures and exquisite porcelains, as well as many skilled craftsmen of the Tang Dynasty, all of whom were given to Abu Muslims. In

"Jing Xing Ji", Du Huan describes his state like this: "More than three hundred miles in the southwestern part of Kang State is also called Sawejjian"<sup>[6]</sup>. This shows that followed the army of Da Yi Country, Du Huan came to Sawejjian, and it was the Abu Muslims who ruled the Kang Kingdom. Based on this, Du Huan and other Tang Dynasty artisans and the army back to the Da Yi Country territory again. In the history, the war was caused by the murder of the Turkic state, and there was great suspicion between the Da Yi Country and the Tang army. Regardless of the controversy, it was concluded that the captured funds were finally transferred to Abu Muslims, and that Duhuan and Hengluos had a real battle. The covetous and the robbing of the finances held by the Tang dynasty army confirmed that it was a fine craft in the Tang Dynasty. At the same time, the opposite side shows that in the struggle between the African Da Yi Country and the Tang Dynasty on the trade route of the Silk Road on the Central Asian region, there was a simple contest of military strength.

After being captured, through the city of Mare in Mulu, Duhuan reached the State of Kang, and all along the way was following the action of the Da Yi army. He arrived at the left bank of the Amu Darya. It can be seen from the action route that it passed through the State of An and Kang regions. In "Jing Xing Ji", Du Huan described the specialty of "Baidou" in the Tokmok country. He recorded that it was about seven hundred miles before he arrived at Amu Darya from Mulu. But it seems that there is no such reality in the more than 700 miles from the current map. It mainly because the flow of the Amu Darya was different from the current to Tang Dynasty. At that time, it flowed to the Caspian Sea in Russia. As the army walked along the flow, it produced more than seven hundred miles of Du Huan's remarks. This shows that many Tang Dynasty troops and Duhuan arrived in Zhulu. And in "Jing Xing Ji", there was a time limit for Du Huan and others to stay in Zhulu, suggesting: "Zhulu takes May as the beginning of the year.....The first town in the east of Da yi is here". There is a very clear description. The Khorasan Province is the "the east of Da yi"<sup>[7]</sup>. Abu Muslims are the ones who lead them to their final destination. Taking the Hijila calendar to calculate the political commemoration of the Da Yi country. According to Du Huan, the Tang Dynasty calendar of the Tang Dynasty on May 2nd is the New Year's Day of the Da Yi Country. Du Huan and others are spending in Mulu. Du Huan has been here for about six years. This is calculated according to the calendar. It was also due to the mobilization of the domestic army and the political evolution of the Da Yi Country, he leave the place in a proper time.

When overthrowing White Da Yi, Abu Muslim led Du Huan and other people to the province of Khorasan, and he had outstanding achievements in the establishment of black Da Yi. Because of his own will, the battle at that time occurred. Because he relies on his own elite army to master the empire, it can be said that for Abu Muslim, Khorasan province is its own place of residence. He does not respect and agree with the king of Da Yi and appoints officials himself. Because of the high power of the master, the king of Da Yi was dissatisfied, which eventually aggravated the contradictions between the two sides and produced a black and white Da Yi war<sup>[8]</sup>. After the historical facts confirmed, Khorasan was the army where Du Huan was in, became the royal army of the king of Da Yi, and assessed the chaos of Molin Country. Following these royal forces, Du Huan and others followed the tour of the Da Yi country again. The historical facts of existence can clearly confirm that the "Jing Xing Ji" written by the famous traveler Du Huan in the Tang Dynasty is reliable and authentic in all the travels, and the records are consistent with the historical facts.

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