



# The Influence and Differences of Urban Layout in Tang and Song Dynasties on the Development of Merchants

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## Abstract

The construction of cities has greatly influenced the development of commerce and trade not only today, but also in ancient times. The Tang Dynasty and the Song Dynasty were both the culmination of the unification and prosperity of ancient China. The city and square system of the Tang Dynasty promoted the centralized development of commodities, while the square system of the Song Dynasty gave rise to the embryonic form of free trade, which played a certain role in promoting the emergence and development of capitalism in the Ming Dynasty. Although the need for management by the ruling class state did not lead to the rapid development of Europe at the same time, both the urban and neighborhood systems were effective explorations for the development of commercial trade to a certain extent. It has extremely important reference and research value for the coordinated development of cities and trade today.

**Key words:** Tang Dynasty; Chengfang system; Urban layout; Commercial; Lifang system; Concentrated trade

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## 1. URBAN AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE TANG DYNASTY

### 1.1 Development of the Tang Dynasty's urban square system

The ancient Chinese market system has a long history,

dating back to the Zhou Dynasty. The "Lizheng" chapter in the "Guanzi" records: "Building barriers and hiding, a road is open for entry and exit. When trying to break through and close, be cautious with the key, and hide your laughter in the captain. There is a supervisor in the middle to open and close at the right time. If there is a supervisor in the lower level to observe the entry and exit, they should be restored to the captain. If there is occasional entry and exit, if the clothes are not in line, or if the group of followers are not in compliance with the norm, the supervisor in the lower level will see it, and there will be no time." This refers to the construction of walls in different areas during the design of the capital city, leaving only one road, setting up gates and guards for management. It is the embryonic form of the original city square system.

In ancient times, "Fang" and "Shi" were separated by high walls, separating the residential and commercial areas of the city's residents. Fang "is a place where people gather and live. It adopts a square block design, with tall walls separating all four sides. Only one gate is set up between each block, guarded by security guards. A 'city' is a place specifically designed for the exchange of goods.

During the Tang Dynasty, the development of the market system was further promoted, the country was unified, and the social economy urgently needed to develop and prosper. Large cities such as Chang'an and Luoyang further concentrated their development. However, the urban layout is still mainly based on political and military factors, with a neat and uniform "neighborhood market system" that facilitates the management of public security and military affairs. According to the "Commentary on Tang Law", there were five changes and three preparations, and the drums were beaten along the Tianmen Gate, listening to people's movements. At the end of the day, Shun Tianmen beat the drum four hundred times and closed the door. Afterwards,

he struck six hundred hammers, and all the gates were closed. Those who violated the prohibition were punished with twenty lashes. This type of market system design is open during the day and closed at night. As long as the gates between the neighborhoods are closed, each block is closed, making it easier to crack down on thieves and even suppress street battles that may occur during rebellions. Taking Chang'an as an example, the royal palace was built in the north of the capital city, followed by a city set up by the government to encourage commercial trade for goods trading. In the capital city, there were two separate cities, the East City and the West City, both located in the center of the city, with clear distinctions and division of labor between cities and districts. The poet Bai Juyi vividly described the urban appearance of Chang'an City at that time, which was a square city system: "A hundred and a thousand households were like a Go game, and the twelve streets were like vegetable beds. The Fang market system is more convenient for the management of the government. Zhu Xi once praised this system in his book "Zhu Ziyu Lei", stating that "the Tang palace system was very legitimate and good, with residents inside walls, official streets using walls, and entrances and exits with Fang gates. The Fang was very peaceful.

## 1.2 The influence of the urban square system on Tang Dynasty commerce

The influence of the Tang Dynasty's urban system, while ensuring military security, facilitating defense, and preventing theft, greatly promoted commercial development, as reflected in the following aspects:

One is that the centralized design of the city ensures the concentration of commercial transactions and promotes domestic and international trade. Chang'an City is divided into East City and West City. The East City is mainly for domestic trade, while the West City is adjacent to the Yong'an Canal. The Caohe River outside the Jinguang Gate leads directly to the West City, which can be directly connected to the Wei River for the transportation of goods. Therefore, it is a centralized trading place for international trade and became the gold market at that time. According to records, the area south of Chunmingmen and Jinguangmen Street is approximately 49.2 hectares, and the area of Dongshi and Xishi is equivalent to the area of two neighborhoods in this region. The area is huge, and commercial prosperity is visible. The Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai wrote a poem about Dongshi: "When the Five Tombs were young, the golden market was in the east, with silver saddles and white horses enjoying the spring breeze. Where did you travel after falling flowers, and where did you laugh in the Hu Ji wine shop?" At the same time, Xishi was also the starting point of the Tang Dynasty Silk Road. During the same period, commercial trade was concentrated in the southern, western, and northern cities of Luoyang, all of which were adjacent to rivers and

canals, with direct access to the Grand Canal. They were also the main distribution centers for international trade of goods between various countries at that time.

Secondly, a centralized market has been established for the procurement of goods, promoting the development of various product segments. The phrase 'buy horses in the east market, saddles and horses in the west market, reins and horses in the south market, and whips in the north market' in the 'Ballad of Mulan' reflects the reality of centralized trading in urban markets. The eastern and western markets of Chang'an have also classified and delineated the business scope of merchants, among which specific commodities require licenses and government taxation, such as selling alcohol. According to the "Food and Commodity Annals" in the Book of Tang, in the second year of the reign of Emperor Zong of Tang Dynasty, "taxes were paid to all the farmers in the country". The "Du You Tong Dian" also records: "In December of the second year, it was decreed that wine merchants in all provinces and regions of the country should pay taxes on a monthly basis. Apart from this, they were not allowed to engage in the wine industry without permission, which facilitated government taxation. It can be seen that through the specific establishment of the urban market system, centralized and professional markets had already emerged and were under the unified management and jurisdiction of the government.

The third is the limitation of the urban community system on commercial development. In addition to the above two advantages and promoting effects, the restrictions on the location of Tang Dynasty markets, although concentrated, to some extent limited the free development of commercial trade due to their separation from residential areas. In the Sui and Tang dynasties, due to political considerations, there was a strict hierarchical system for the management of people's registered residence. This hierarchical system not only facilitated the government's management of the people under its rule, but also helped to control population mobility and ensure social security and stability. On the other hand, it directly restricted the free movement of people living everywhere. According to the "Food and Goods Chronicles" in the Old Book of Tang, those who live in towns are called "fangs", while those who live in fields are called "villages". The residents living inside the city walls have a relatively high social status, mostly government officials or those with fixed livelihoods, while the residents outside the city mainly engage in agricultural planting and fishing. Due to the low productivity of Chinese society at that time, the output value that these people could create was also low, so their social status was relatively low. In order to facilitate direct social security and military management, people living inside and outside the city were not allowed to move freely at that time. For those who violate the rules by climbing over the walls of the imperial city, the

same goes for those who break with 70 sticks. Due to spatial limitations and strict personnel flow control, "the six streets are deserted, and there is a moon in the vast sky of Jiuqu." At the same time, there were time limits on the opening and closing of markets in the Tang Dynasty, and they were not allowed to open at night and were managed by the government. The "Six Classics of Tang Dynasty" recorded that "there are ten squares in the south of the imperial city, ten squares in the east and west, nine squares in the north and south; twelve squares in the east and west of the imperial city, two squares in four squares; and one hundred squares. In all markets, there are three hundred drumming sounds in the middle of the day, and the crowd meets. Seven minutes before the day, there are three hundred drumming sounds, and the crowd disperses.

## 2. CITY AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE SONG DYNASTY

### 2.1 Development and Changes of Cities in the Song Dynasty

In the Song Dynasty, after years of war, the policy of rest and recuperation was vigorously promoted, and the population achieved great prosperity. In order to further expand the productivity of farmers, the Song Dynasty began to adopt more proactive policies corresponding to population and land. For example, people in the Song Dynasty can obtain local registered residence if they live in the place for one year. Encouraged by such loose policies, the mobility of people at the bottom of the population has become more frequent, and the freedom of population migration has greatly released labor force. At the same time, more people have begun to flock to big cities such as Kaifeng and Tokyo. The urban block system, which was originally neat and easy for residents to manage uniformly, has gradually been exposed as insufficient, and urban management has been greatly impacted. In addition, influenced by the An Lushan Rebellion in the late Tang Dynasty, the original city system of Fangshi, mainly based on Chang'an, gradually declined, and the boundary between the Fangshi where residents used to live and the designated city was gradually broken. In fact, since the mid Tang Dynasty, although there have been no substantial changes in the setting of neighborhoods, with the development of industry and commerce, the neighborhood system has been impacted, and there have been continuous occurrences of street encroachment within each neighborhood. Residents in the neighborhood have expanded their homes outward, encroaching on the roads inside the neighborhood, and even more seriously, opening doors from the neighborhood walls to the main roads outside the neighborhood. The role of the neighborhood doors has gradually declined, as the saying goes, "the streets of the neighborhood are

curved, encroaching on the walls, and building houses with eaves. The Tang Huiyao records: "Wei Rang, the military governor of Yicheng, invaded the street and built nine houses west of the pavilion in the southwest corner of Huaizhen Square. The left and right patrol officers who maintained the security management of the square reported: 'If the door is not above the third grade or the three cornered areas inside the square, it is not suitable to open it to the street at all times.' The main reason is that 'opening the door to the street, each pursuing a cheaper price, without any restrictions. Due to long-term adherence, it is very difficult to open the door before the drum is stirred, or it is already late at night and not yet closed, which makes it difficult for the street office to inspect and manpower, and also makes it easy for traitors and thieves to escape.' At this time, although the difficulty of government's security control has increased, the market economy has become more and more prosperous.

In this context, the Song Dynasty shifted its management from the district market system to the Xiangfang system. The Xiangfang system first appeared in the Five Dynasties. However, due to the impact of years of war, it has not been further promoted. In the third year of Kaibao reign of Emperor Taizu of Song, it was decreed that officials in charge of various states should not send their servants or relatives to take charge of the affairs of their offices and towns. The decree was issued to set up chambers in the state city and county town, which were respectively governed by chamber officials and town generals. In the first year of Zhidao (995), Emperor Taizong of Song ordered Zhang Hui, who was then serving as a political advisor, to transform more than 80 neighborhoods inside and outside the capital into chambers. At this point, traditional military units have begun to unify. One box can manage several workshops. Taking Kaifeng in the Northern Song Dynasty as an example, ten boxes were used to manage 121 workshops. According to the number of household registrations in each household, set up several names for the office, street, official, and household. The official record in the "History of Song" states: "There were four officials in charge of the left and right chambers, who were in charge of investigating, reviewing, and questioning. Those who engaged in minor disputes and lawsuits were heard and judged." "Outside the city, there were two chambers in the north, south, left, and right, each with a chamber official appointed to listen to the people's lawsuits. As the head of the grassroots organization, the chamber official was mainly responsible for litigation and public security.

### 2.2 The influence of the Xiangfang system on the commerce of the Song Dynasty

The conversion of the city square system to the box square system in the Song Dynasty had two main promoting effects on the development of commerce.

Firstly, in terms of space, it broke the Tang Dynasty's strict barrier system of separating the city from the market. After years of war, the boundaries of the city gradually became blurred. In the Song Dynasty, unlike the orderly planning and design of cities in the Tang Dynasty, the urban layout was more open. Due to the rapid increase in urban population, the existing houses are not enough to live in, and people are invading the streets and building houses in the city. The government has not imposed strict restrictions. For example, during the construction of the city walls in Kaifeng Prefecture, some sections of the walls were distorted in order to accommodate residential areas. The streets inside the city are also different from the straight streets of the Tang Dynasty, but based on the convenience and naturalness of human habitation. Therefore, although the streets are messy, they are more open. The disappearance of the strict market system has led to the expansion of commodity trade beyond the official boundaries, resulting in the emergence of large commercial streets. Due to residents building houses along the street and transforming them into street side businesses, this residential area, which is located behind commercial shops, has greatly facilitated shopping for the people. Merchants selling similar products will gather on a street, and some streets and alleys are even named after the industry in which the gathered merchants are located. The Ma Hang Street and Niu Hang Street recorded in the "Tokyo Dream of Splendor" refer to places where merchants selling cattle and horses gather. The buildings facing the streets in densely populated areas of the city are all street facing businesses. In addition to hotels, restaurants, and shops, various mobile stalls for small businesses have appeared on the streets. The "Tokyo Dream of Splendor" records that "shops and shops can be found at the entrances of alleys, bridges, and secluded places." This shows that various street markets have sprung up like mushrooms in every corner of Tokyo. These commercial markets are not only located on traditional streets such as Zhuquemen or the Bianhe area, but also open to the majestic Daxiangguo Temple, and even have their presence on the royal court.

Secondly, in terms of time, under the premise of population growth, urban development, and economic prosperity, the original curfew system has been further

relaxed or even abolished. The management system of Japanese Chinese and Japanese imported drumming trading, which was established by the government in the Tang Dynasty, was gradually replaced. During the reign of Emperor Renzong of Song, the curfew system was officially abolished in Kaifeng, and night markets gradually became legalized and normalized. In the "Dream Liang Record", it is recorded that the home of street brokers... the night market did not reopen until the end of the third shift and the fifth shift. Like a place to play around, one knows endlessly.

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### 3. CONCLUSION AND UNDERSTANDING

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Firstly, the construction of cities not only had a significant impact on the development of commerce and trade today, but also in ancient times. The city and square system of the Tang Dynasty promoted the centralized development of commodities, while the square system of the Song Dynasty gave rise to the embryonic form of free trade, which played a certain role in promoting the emergence and development of capitalism in the Ming Dynasty.

Secondly, both the Tang and Song dynasties were the culmination of the unification and prosperity of ancient China. Although they were not as rapidly developed as Europe during the same period due to the needs of ruling class state management, both the Chengfang and Lifang systems were effective explorations of the development of commercial trade to a certain extent. It has extremely important reference and research value for the coordinated development of cities and trade today.

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