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Title

Where Does the Pleasure-boat Stop Next? Tracing Li Dou's Route through Yangzhou

Abstract

Despite the criticism of *literati* which Li Dou had had to face after the publication of *Yangzhou huafang lu* (The Pleasure-Boats of Yangzhou) in 1795, his book not only enjoyed readers' popularity, but became a priceless source for subsequent generations of historians, giving plentiful and varied facts about Yangzhou and its recent past. The text opens with the arrival of Qianlong's fleet, describing at length and in detail the splendours and happenings which accompanied him. It is quite evident that such a beginning was the author's intent, and several scholars made this comment, before turning their attention to the passages relevant to his or her discipline, and leaving the structure of the book behind. However, what about the rest of the book? Is it sound to assume that it also has a contemplated structure? Since the chapters were titled after specific quarters of Yangzhou, one may as well connect them and trace Li Dou's progress across the city, along a resulting sinuous line. What was the reasoning behind this route? Apparently, Li Dou was not primarily concerned with topography on his way to sights and entertainment. True, his route was *not* haphazard, and he did describe *many* localities, but also kept switching off to other, worldly matters. In his own words, 'places were the warp, and people and their stories were the woof' of his book. This paper sets out to examine how the route should be understood vis-à-vis the men and events which defined actual places, and to assess what hidden meaning they carried, given their order and position within the basic structure of the text.

Keywords

Yangzhou huafang lu – Yangzhou (Jiangsu) – 17th & 18th century China