

Translation of “Did Yang Guifei escape along the Tangluo Road?” into English.

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Introduction

This document provides an English translation of an article by a writer called Shui Xiaojie (税晓洁) who has interesting opinions and stories about the Tangluo Road today. More detailed information about the Writer (in Chinese) is available at <http://baike.baidu.com/view/2098461.htm>

The information on this web site relates:

“Shui Xiaojie, also called Shui Hongzhou, male, was born in June 1969 in Zhouzhi in Shaanxi Province. After that he followed his parents and moved to Shiyan in Hubei Province. He has been a peddler, an itinerant worker, a Ganbu, a reporter, and found occupation as a free lance writer. He has also been a free lance photographer. In the past he has won a Hubei News Award, a National Newspaper supplement contribution Award, a National Award for supplementary special features and various others.”

A more detailed Autobiography can be found at:

http://www.lotour.com/snapshot/2005-6-8/snapshot_19025.shtml

Among other things he writes:

“About 10 years later [after an earlier ramble along the Han River] in 2003, I again drifted along the Han River, and it was only then that I was able to pick up on the Ancient Plank Roads. My parents now live not too far from the Ancient Plank Roads in Shiyan in Hubei Province, and as well, not far from the northern mouth of the Ancient Tangluo Road is my original hometown [Zhouzhi in Shaanxi], from where it is convenient to make a visit [to the Tangluo Plank Road]. “

So, the following story about Yang Guifei can be dated as at least from after 2003. In fact, this article is also included in the book: “Short Stories from the Han River (sketches and jottings made while walking and wandering by the Han River)”, by “the great man of Erlang Shan” (presumably a pen name for Shu Xiaojie). (汉江笔记, (行走汉江, 漂流汉江的随感笔记), 二郎山杀手者)

Yang Guifei and the Tangluo Road

Short Stories of the Han River, No. 5: Did Yang Guifei escape along the Tangluo Road?

Geography and history of the Tangluo Road

Wandering upstream by the Han River, on the way to Yangxian, we bought tickets to visit what is said to be the most valuable bird in the world - the Zhu Huan (Asian Crested Ibis). However, it was difficult to appreciate the place, as the security was heavy to the point of antagonism, except we did find out this bird is much loved by Japanese. So we became immediately angry and bored and determined to quickly go and walk along the ancient Plank Road.

Among the various Plank Roads, the Tangluo Road is the closest to the highest peak in the Qinling - Mount Taibai, as well as being the shortest and hardest of them all. Its southern entrance, called “Tang”, is the entrance to the Tangshui River in Yangxian County, and its northern entrance is the West Luo Ravine in Shaanxi's Zhouzhi county, hence its name. Not far from the exit point is my Family Home and among my vague childhood memories, it seems it was at the West Luo Ravine, in a half forgotten time, when we ran wild breaking walls and destroying cultural relics. The Qinling lies across the central region of China, and is known by the name “Huaxia Longmai” (“China's Arterial Range”), its highest peak, Tabai, is 3767m high, and it is the boundary line between the climates of north and south China. Roughly speaking, to the north of the Qinling is the Yellow River drainage area, and to the south is the Changjiang (Yangtze) drainage area. In the “Records of China's waterways”¹ it says of Taibai Mountain that “among all mountains it is the most outstanding, covered in snow in summer and winter, and shining brightly”.

The Tangluo road is 480 Chinese Li in length, but *en route* you must cross 5 or 6 passes over major watershed boundaries in the vicinity of Taibai Mountain, where there are very few inhabitants, and wild beasts come and go. The great poet Li Bai² in “The hard road to Shu” writes: “... west on Taibai Mountain was a “bird track”, where suddenly from the heights you could tumble. The earth fell apart, the mountains fell and the great warriors died, and after that stone ladders and trestles were linked together ...” but it is also hard to know if the venerable poet travelled the Tangluo Road or not.

¹ An ancient work on China's hydrology by Li Daoyuan, (酈道元, 472-527 CE), written in the Northern Wei period. It contains China's waterways and information about towns along them - an early Gazetteer.

² Li Bai, also Li Bo (李白, 699-762 CE) is one of China's most famous poets who lived in the Tang Period.

Nevertheless, up to this time, the local people still worship Li Bai as a Taibai spirit, and he became one the “Three Immortals” of Taibai³. Historians record that several famous people definitely travelled along the Tangluo Road. In 748 CE, in the Jianzhong year of Tang Dezong, the eldest daughter of the Dezong Emperor Li Shi, Princess Tang'an, was travelling through the Qinling. Not long after passing through the mouth of the Tangshui River, she was overcome by the hardship of travel, got sick and died at the age of 23 years. At Machang Zhen, 20 Km to the west of Yangxian City, you can find the tomb of the Princess Tang'an.

(In that year, the great poet Bai Zhuyi⁴ was just 12 years old, still 10 years from when he would come to the northern entrance of the Tangluo Road as the county magistrate of Zhouzhi.)

Princess Tang'an was following her father, who was fleeing to avoid a rebellion. 100 years later, at the zenith of the Tang, there was also the Emperor Xizong, called Li Xuan, who for much the same reason was using the Tangluo Road to flee and seek refuge. In the “History of the Former Tang” it says: “In the first Guangming year (880 CE) (of Tang Xizong) on the Xinsi day of the Gengcheng month⁵, the rebels seized Tongguan on that day, more than 100 members of the court, with concubines and nobles got together in a group and rode out by the Jinguang Gate to visit the fortunate south of the mountains [Hanzhong and/or Sichuan]. The civil and military officials had no knowledge of this, and they took no attendants. All the while, the capital carried on as usual ...” 1000 years later, common people like us in fact have little interest in this, except to be puzzled that the Emperor would do such a thing.

The song of everlasting sorrow

I was much more interested in some things that the official history does not include. One of these is the possibility that a very famous Lady, Yang Guifei⁶, while fleeing from home, passed along the Tangluo Road. It is said among the local people that the person who hanged herself at Mawei Po in Xingping county of Shaanxi in the 15th Tianbao year of Tang Xuanzong (756 CE) was only a scapegoat. When the Emperor Xuanzong dispensed with the love of his life, and went via the Ancient Baoye Plank Road to Sichuan, (they say) the 38 year old Lady Yang Yuhuan had secretly arranged to go by the Tangluo Road and Han River to reach Yang Zhou. In the end she travelled over the sea to reach Japan, [so that] up to the present day in that island country, Xiangjinju Bandao in Shankou Xian (Yamaguchi prefecture) is “Yang Guifei's home village”, [where] there are still many relics.

³ The President of the Chinese Daoist Society, Ren Farong, on the basis of local stories reported by the Zhouzhi branch believes the three Taibai were: Bo Yi, Shu Qi and Li Bai. (中国道教协会会长任法融根据周至楼观民间传说认为是：伯夷、叔齐、李白。)

⁴ Bai Juyi (白居易, 772-846 CE) famous Tang Scholar Official, Poet and writer of the "Song of Eternal Regret".

⁵ Traditionally, Chinese used the 天干 (the ten Heavenly Stems: 甲、乙、丙、丁、戊、己、庚、辛、壬、癸), combined with the 地支 (the twelve Earthly Branches: 子、丑、寅、卯、辰、巳、午、未、申、酉、戌、亥) to name years, months and days. Also time of day making 4 character pairs that characterise a time with considerable precision.

⁶ Yang Yuhuan (杨玉环, ca. 719-756 CE) is widely known as Yang Guifei or "Imperial Consort Yang". She was the favourite of Tang Xuanzong. Her Tomb is at Maweiyi (马嵬驿) in Shaanxi.

Some people point to evidence for the truth in this legend in Bai Juyi's famous poem "The Song of Everlasting Regret". For example, "Under the ground at Mawei Po, in this place of death there is no fair beauty", or "He learns of an island of immortals on the sea, a mountain in an illusory place", or "the inlaid jewellery case and golden pins were exchanged, the jewellery box has one door left the golden pin one arm". When Bai Juyi wrote this, the incident had only happened a few tens of years earlier, and people involved were still alive, so it was possible they still had a good idea of the truth. However, the same dynasty was [also] in power, and it was therefore impossible by law to reveal anything of the actual situation and the truth. So the truth had to be provided through hidden and secretive allusions, so that clever people in later generations could understand.

Of the various ancient plank roads that lead to the two banks of the Han River, one seems to have changed its name on account of that the famous Lady. In Du Mu's "On the way to the Pure Palace" there is a verse that suggests this: "Looking back to the walls of Chang'an, the tops of the beautiful mountains open like the 1000 gates. An Imperial Lady laughs at the pursuing horses; nobody could know that a Lychee was passing by". The road called the "Lychee Road" (荔枝道) was originally the "Jian Road" (间道). Yang Yuhuan was addicted to the Lychee fruit, which addiction the court satisfied by establishing a top quality Lychee Garden at Fuling in Sichuan, and they repaired the road from Fuling in Sichuan to Chang'an. The Lychee fruit came by fast horse on the road via Da Zhou (present day Daxian in Sichuan) to Xixiang in Shaanxi, then entered the Ziwu Valley and arrived in Chang'an after only 3 days. In Chang'an they presented Lychee fruits to the Lady that were as fresh as when they had left. In this regard, Du Fu wrote with a sigh: "One hundred horses have died in mountain valleys, old people who remember are still filled with sorrow".

Du Fu⁷ also wrote a poem about the Tangluo Road: "Twenty one families entered the Luo Valley for Shu; only one has returned. I thought of the pledges of two sad Ladies; as I turned towards Qin I wept." so the great man sobbed.

The mystery of the missing Buddha image

The general principle in densely populated areas seems to be that few remains of ancient relics can be found. Creating buildings like stacks of lavatory tiles and the pursuit of material wealth flushes them away in a great flood. But Yangxian is still a remote area, so things are better. The town centre has a Tang period Pagoda, and its peripheral area has been "opened up". The roof of the Kaiming Temple (开明寺), as it is known by locals, used to have a rare and unusual Buddha Image, (but) a couple of years earlier some robbers had stolen it.

These robbers must have been really extraordinary. How did they get to the Pagoda roof several 10's of metres up into the air and commit the offence? So far it has been a total mystery. Around the tower on all sides is open space, its interior was long ago

⁷ Du Fu (杜甫, 712-770 CE) was a Scholar Official and major Poet of the Tang Period. He is regarded as equal of Li Bai by many people. He was on the road during the An Lushan Rebellion (755-763 CE), a terrible time in China and wrote many poems about the suffering of ordinary people.

sealed. On the basis of careful inspection, there was no apparent interior trace of the offence, and there was no apparent place on the exterior where someone could climb. After the crime was discovered, the local constabulary and the Ministry of Culture were only able to go up to the site after erecting scaffolding with considerable effort. So, how could the robbers get there? The local people guess that maybe the robbers used a hot air balloon. However, the activity associated with launching a hot air balloon and flying up to the tower would have been considerable, and how could it not be seen by somebody? This cannot have been a realistic way to steal something. This question remains unanswered, and it has turned into a hot topic of casual conversation.

Near to Yangxian there is also Cailun's Tomb and quite a number of ancient temples. But the hot weather had made some of us impatient and we felt that at this time that they were just more ancient landmarks, and without much interest. So we then went to look for the southern entrance to the ancient Plank Road on the Tangshui River, not far from the county seat. We arrived not long after passing the gate of the Zhu Huan super coop to find that a large dam had been built there, where the fish produced are used in local famous dishes. On the top of the dam there was a sprawling restaurant, packed with many diners, but there were no relics of the ancient road to be found.

Huayang at the entrance to the mountains

After you leave the main roads, according to directions given by Zhou Zhongqing of the Yangxian Cultural Museum, you go first to Silang Village and then head for the Qinling. On this road, the only benefit is that it tests your imagination. Along the way there are places such as Gudao Mountain, Zhiguo Rock, Cancai Ya, Madao Ridge, Hanwang Mountain etc, but except for various legendary places it was rather ordinary hilly country that could be seen anywhere. As we arrived at the Ox Range near Huayang Township, we caught side of a reasonably presentable relic. It was a large Stone Ox, but unfortunately two years earlier it had been struck by lightning and was disintegrating. Thick splinters of rock were falling down into the adjacent bamboo forest. However, at this moment we observed a meandering path, where underneath thick weeds we could see a road base a few meters wide, and sometimes some stone steps, providing a dim memory of how it may have been in previous times.

At Huayang we were happy to find a large plank hole, and because of the flourishing high mountain forests, and pleasantly cool air, the tiredness and irritation of the last few days went away. Huayang is located in a ship-shaped basin where two rivers come together. At the river mouth there is a stone stele, but because it had been eroded by floodwater or for some other reason, it is blank and without a single character. Guo Peng, a senior member of the Hanzhong Gazetteer Office, came to the cliffs on the bank of the Huayang River 20 years ago, where he saw there was a Tang period Stone Inscription with some carved characters. In four lines and 27 characters it says: “the 3rd Jianzhong year (782 CE), built the Pavilion of Pride and returned to the river town. Recorded by Zhang Daxia, the Tong Jie Du Fu Shi, recorded by Stonemason Zhang Jun.” but today it has vanished, as at the time the main road was built it was blown up, and the its whereabouts is unknown.

The flagstones of Huayang's main street are now covered by concrete, but the old buildings alongside the road are still in good condition. Along with the “Gu Zhen” there are still ancient relics of unknown age, as well as places still to preserve for the future including the old city wall, now used mainly for agriculture, where if you go for a stroll and scratch the surface you can still find some ancient ceramics.

Along the modern Tangluo road

From Huayang, to continue walking the Tangluo Road you must enter the Changqing (Evergreen) Wildlife Conservation Park. There are a number of National Wildlife Protection Parks in this area, with (High) National Grade, Provincial Grade and County Grade with so many that I am unable to clearly list their respective territories⁸.

We entered the protected area, passed over the Xinglong Range, climbing down through the 40 Li Diaogou gulley, and all the while it was overcast and raining heavily. For the whole day we were stooping and ducking about through bamboo thickets in the middle of dense natural forests. My body felt humiliated, but my spirit was elated, and after several days, we walked into Liaoxiancheng in Zhouzhi County in the middle section of the Tangluo Road. (Unfortunately) it was also a rather dilapidated ancient relic, but the people doing the looking had become really tired, and so we decided to temporarily take a rest from the journey on the ancient road, and go to climb Taibai Mountain to relax for a while.

What we found was quite unexpected, as my previous impressions of Taibai Mountain were that it is just an area of natural scenery and wildlife, with Giant Pandas, Golden Monkeys, Takin and so on. On this journey we were surprised also to find so many ancient Buddha statues. Compared with all of the relics and ancient sites we had seen on the southern Tangluo Road they made us exclaim in wonder.

⁸ They most likely first entered the Changqing Park (长青自然保护区) from Huayang, then the Laoxiancheng Park (老县城自然保护区) and finally the Taibai Park (太白自然保护区) when climbing Taibai Mountain.

Original Chinese Text (中文)

汉江短文 5:杨贵妃亡命傥骆道？税晓洁者

沿汉江上行到陕南洋县，购票参观据说是世界最珍稀的鸟儿朱鹮，没甚感觉，还戒备森严到让人甚至产生对立情绪，又得知原来此鸟日本人最喜欢，一下子觉得面目狰狞，兴味索然，便早早去走古栈道。

诸条古栈道中，傥骆道最靠近秦岭主峰太白山，是最便捷也最艰险的一条，其南口曰傥，在陕西洋县傥水河口，北口在陕西周至县西骆峪，故名。出了西骆峪不远，就是酒家老家，童年印象里，曾在西骆峪不知是何年代的破土城上奔跑嬉戏，破坏文物。秦岭横亘中国中部，被称为华夏龙脉，最高峰太白山海拔3767米，是南北气候的分水岭。大致而言，秦岭以北为黄河流域，其南就是长江流域了。《水经注》载：太白山“于诸山、最为秀杰，冬夏积雪，望之皓然。”

傥骆道长约四百八十华里，途中要翻越太白山周围的五、六座分水岭，人烟稀少猛兽出没。诗仙李太白《蜀道难》云：……西当太白有鸟道，可以横绝峨眉颠。地崩山摧壮士死，然后石梯石栈相钩连……难以考证他老人家是不是走过傥骆道？

百姓们却是至今还把他当作太白神仙供奉，为三太白。史书上倒是郑重记载了李白时代走过傥骆道的几个名人：公元784年，大唐德宗建中年间，德宗皇帝李适的大女儿唐安公主走出秦岭大山，过了傥水河口不久，就不堪艰险暴病而亡，年仅23岁，洋县城西20公里马畅镇现存唐安公主墓。

是年，大诗人白居易12岁，离他在日后在傥骆道北口的周至县做主管政法的县官，还有数十年。

唐安公主是随父亲躲避兵变而逃亡的，百年之后，大唐盛世还有一位皇帝僖宗李儂，因为差不多的原因，也从傥骆道亡命奔逃，《旧唐书》载：“广明元年（880年）庚辰朔、辛巳，贼据潼关……是日，[皇]上与诸王、妃、侯数百骑，自子城含光殿、金光门出幸山南。文武百官不知，并无从者，京城宴然……”皇帝做成这样，千年之后我等草民除了觉得惶惑不解，兴趣其实不大。

我更感兴趣另一位正史上没有，但可能真从傥骆道逃亡过的女女人——杨贵妃。民间有传说，唐玄宗天宝十五年（756年）在陕西兴平马嵬坡上吊的，只是一个替死鬼。

玄宗皇帝处理了儿女情长，从褒斜古栈道入了四川，38岁的杨玉环女士则被偷偷安排过傥骆道沿汉江达长江到扬州，后来竟飘洋过海去了日本，至今该岛国的山口县向津具半岛尚存“杨贵妃故里”，留下不少古迹。

有人还从白居易著名的《长恨歌》中找出这个传说具有真实性的证据：比如“马嵬坡下泥土中，不见玉颜空死处”、“忽闻海上有仙山，山在虚无缥缈间”、“钿合金钗寄将去，钗留一股合一扇”等等。白居易写下这些的时候，距事件发生也就几十年，当事者有些还在人世，掌握实情的可能性是有的，但尚在本朝，宣传纪律不可能允许将实情和盘托出可以想见，只好遮遮掩掩埋下伏笔，后人看不懂，那是智商问题。

汉江两岸的诸条古栈道中，有一条干脆就是因为这个名女人而改名，杜牧《过华清宫》绝句“长安回望绣城堆，山顶千门次第开。一骑红尘妃子笑，无人知是

荔枝来。”，说的就是这件事。荔枝道，原称间道，杨玉环嗜食荔枝，朝廷遂在四川涪陵建优质荔枝园，并修整四川涪陵至长安的道路，取道达州（今四川达县），从陕西西乡快马入子午谷，至长安不过三日，进呈贵妃的荔枝犹新鲜如初。杜甫曾对之叹曰：“百马死山谷，至今耆旧悲”。

杜甫在傥骆道也写过一首诗：“二十一家同入蜀，惟残一人出骆谷。自说二女齿背时，回头却向秦云哭”，令人唏嘘。

那个年代的遗迹在人烟稠密处照例已经看不到什么了，厕所瓷砖堆积的建筑在这个物欲横流的时代正浩浩荡荡淹没一切，洋县现在是个偏远地区，还算稍好，城中央有一个唐代古塔，正被圈起来在周边搞“开发”。开明寺塔顶当地人称原来有了不得的佛像，前两年刚被人盗走。

此盗贼也是十分不得了，怎么到达几十米高的塔顶作案？至今匪夷所思。塔的四周围是空地，内部早已封死，仔细检查，皆没有作案痕迹，外部看起来也无处攀援。案发后，当地公安、文化部门是在费尽九牛二虎之力搭了脚手架才上去的。那么，盗贼难道飞上去的？当地人猜想，盗贼用的可能是热气球？然而发射一个热气球飞来飞去那么大的动静，能不被人发现？这从盗窃技术上讲也是不现实的。留下一桩悬案，成为人们茶余饭后的热门话题。洋县城边还有蔡伦墓以及好几个古寺，天却热得人心浮气躁，这些古董斯时于我也就是个古地标，别无意义。便去找古栈道南口傥水河，离县城不远，过了关朱鹮的超级大笼子不久就是，修了一个大水库，出产的鱼是当地名菜，大坝上餐桌横陈，食客如云，古道遗迹已荡然无存。

弃公路，按照洋县文博馆长周忠庆先生的指点，走四郎乡，奔向秦岭。

这一路，唯一的好处是极端考验想象力，途中有古道山、支锅石、饭菜埕、马道梁、汉王山之类，空留下一些地名和传说，和一般常见的丘陵地带风物无异。快到华阳镇的牛岭才算看到一点像样的古迹：一个巨大的石牛，可惜前两年被雷劈了，四分五裂，碎片淹没在茂密的箭竹林里。不过，这时仔细观察羊肠小道，能看出荒草淹没下的一丈多宽的路基，间或还有石阶梯，依稀想见当年繁盛。

在华阳欣喜地看到巨多的栈孔，海拔增高林木茂盛，空气也凉爽宜人，多日疲惫烦躁也一扫而光。华阳处位于两河相汇处的一个船形盆地，河口有一石碑，不知是洪水冲刷还是另有原因，空空荡荡竟全无一字。

汉中地方志办郭鹏老先生二十年前曾在华阳河边的悬崖上看到过有字的东西——唐代的石刻，4行27字：“建中三年造此得意阁并回河镇，同节度副使张大侠，石工张浚记”，现在没了，修公路的时候被炸成碎片，不知所踪。华阳老街的石板路已经铺了水泥，两边的老屋倒还是很多。古镇旁边还有一个不知年代的古城遗址，残存下来的也只有正在成为庄稼地的城墙，随便走走，抠出一大把古瓷片……从华阳再走傥骆道就进入了长青自然保护区，这一带的保护区众多，国家级的、省级的、县级的，多到我至今也没搞清楚其各自具体地盘。

进保护区，过兴隆岭，翻四十里吊沟，一路阴雨霏霏，整天弯腰穿梭在箭竹茂密的原始森林中，肉体饱受摧残，精神极端愉悦，几天后，走到傥骆道中段周志县的老县城，也是一些残破的古迹，却看得人疲惫不堪，便决定暂且中断古道行程，去爬太白山放松一下。没想到的是，以前的印象里，太白山也就是自然风光和野生动物，大熊猫金丝猴羚牛之类，这一路竟然看到最多的是古佛像，比我们在南傥骆道看到的全部古迹还令人感叹。