

On the Influence of Qian Weiyan on Ouyang Xiu

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Abstract

The stint of Qian Weiyan as Regent of the Western Capital happened to be the early days of Ouyang Xiu's political career and the period when Ouyang's literary ideas took shape. Qian and the Luoyang literary community he led laid a solid foundation for the climax of the Song literature revolution ushered in by Ouyang Xiu. Ouyang Xiu and Qian have a deep connection. Qian had positive influence on Ouyang in three respects, i.e. the formal beauty of literary works, the transmission of good scholarship, and a role model as chief of the literary circle. Qian also helped Ouyang get on the right track of literary creation. Luoyang period was also remembered by Ouyang Xiu all his life.

Keywords

Qian Weiyan, Ouyang Xiu, Influence

1. Introduction

According to the *History of Song Literature* by Cheng and Wu (1998), "The literature revolution advocated by Ouyang Xiu started in Luoyang, and grew precisely under the auspices of Qian Weiyan, a Xikun Style poet. It is something noteworthy in the literary history". Qian Weiyan was an icon of Xikun Style poetry, while Ouyang Xiu was a trailblazer for Song prose. It is undeniable that under the influence of Qian and his group that Ouyang identified, acquired, practiced and finally shaped his literary style, in Luoyang period, shifting from Xikun Style toward the style of Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan. This phenomenon has been much discussed by the literary circle. Liu (1984), *Ouyang Xiu's Academic and Political Careers*: "Ouyang's basic learning, his reform ideas, his love for talented men, and the setbacks he suffered later in his political career...all of this was already shaped or destined while he was in Luoyang in the early years"; Hong (2017), in his book *Ouyang Xiu and His Prose Universe*, wrote that

Ouyang rose to fame in the Tiansheng era, and held that his stint as a staff member in the Western Capital was key to the development of his prose creation awareness, ideas and skills. Zhuo (2017) in her book *A Study on the Style and Charm of Ouyang Xiu's Prose*, noticed that the essay *Record of a Tour of Dazi Courtyard*, an early work representative of Ouyang's prose style, was written while he was in Luoyang. Li (1994) wrote the *Thoughts on the Growth of Ouyang Xiu under Qian Weiyan*, which directly associated Qian with Ouyang. Other scholars also noticed the subtle connection between Xikun Style and Ouyang Xiu. Zhang and Luo (2005), *The History of Chinese Literature (Vol. 2)*: "...while Xikun Style is more exquisite and implicit; ...while Xikun Style is richer and broader. Moreover, Xikun Style works are not, as general critics say, completely empty talks." Zhu (2012), *History of the Classical Prose Movement in the Northern Song Dynasty*: "Ouyang Xiu, a leader of the Northern Song Prose Movement, started his political career during the Tiansheng and Mingdao eras, and while advising the Western Capital private secretariat, befriended and compared notes with literati, and gradually became widely known for his prose." Ma (2016), in *the Study on Article-ology of Song Dynasty*, noted: "Ouyang did not follow the style of Liu Kai and Mu Xiu, characterized by the queer and obscure, nor the simple and archaic style. Instead, he chose a relaxed and lengthy style as later critics called, which was probably the result of personality and circumstances... After all, Ouyang was influenced by the context of selecting officials on the basis of poetry and rhapsody (shifu qushi), Xikun Style, the Western Capital private secretariat, and his identity as a parallel prose (pianwen) master and an accomplished rhapsody (fu) writer..." "...also the problem of the convergence of parallel prose and classical prose, which was solved by Ouyang. Orthodox writings of the Yan-Xu (Zhang Yue and Su Ting) style are generally cabinet-style or court-style articles, while prose works generally have an out-of-power, old-style private school, or non-official touch. When Ouyang, a prose writer advising the Western Capital private secretariat, rose to a high-ranking position in the cabinet, promoted his prose idea, wrote many works that blended parallel prose, orthodox writing, and classical prose..." "Ouyang himself actually had something to do with the style of Liu Yun and Yang Yi. Ouyang Xiu had close connections with Yan Shu, Xu Yan, Qian Weiyan and Liu Yun. He never opposed Xikun Style, or to be more precise, he was actually one of Xikun Style community." "Ouyang's early success and fame fully depended on his parallel prose and rhapsody works. His prose attainment in his later years and his unique position also benefited from the beauty and charm of parallel prose. If it were not for parallel prose, Ouyang Xiu would not have been the same person."

Qian Weiyan served as Regent of the Western Capital from the ninth year of the Tiansheng era to the second year of the Mingdao era during the reign of Emperor Renzong of Song (January 1031 to September 1033 in the Chinese calendar), and Ouyang Xiu started his political career at the age of 25 and

served as a staff member under Qian in Luoyang from the ninth year of the Tiansheng era to the first year of the Jingyou era (March 1031 to March 1034 in the Chinese calendar). It was a period susceptible to influences for a young official.

In the early Song Dynasty, the imperial court advocated civil rule and treated the royal families of surrendered states well. For this reason, Qian Weiyan, a great scholar and a royal descendant of the states of Wu and Yue, had a smooth career. To avoid misfortune, Qian volunteered to serve as Regent of the Western Capital. The Tang court made Luoyang the Eastern Capital, while the Song court established three auxiliary or secondary capitals, i.e. the Western, Southern and Northern Capitals, in addition to the primary capital Bianjing. All regents of the Western Capital were heavyweight officials of the court. “However, visitors to Luoyang, the Western Capital, are mostly dignitaries who would find it hard to go on outings” (Ouyang & Li, 2007).

Qian Weiyan was then chief of the literary circle. Yang Yi, Liu Yun and Qian Weiyan were flag-bearers of Xikun Style, a poetic style, as many academics noted, initiated by Qian but theoretically fleshed out by Yang. The three Xikun poets were listed in such an order perhaps because, according to the *Collected Manuscripts on the Institutional History of the Song Dynasty: Ritual System (III)*, the scholar titles Emperor Renzong of Song granted to Yang and Liu were higher than that granted to Qian. The Xikun Style practice extended and continued along the trajectory of the Song poetry, influencing the ways of poetry writing. The sheer number of Song poems written for echoing, reply or exchange purposes and the Song literati’s admiration for literature and even scholarship should all be attributed to the influence of Xikun poets, as “Predecessors like Yang Yi and Liu Yun are so well-known for their charming style that they are still admired and remembered to date” (Ouyang & Li, 2007). Since the inception of Qian’s Western Capital literary group, Luoyang had been a cultural magnet of the Northern Song Dynasty that brought together, one after another, groups of influential literati.

Before Ouyang Xiu weighed in the Prose Movement, there were already many calls for action against Xikun Style, but they were mostly excessive and reduced to the obscure Imperial Academy style. Ouyang studied Xikun Style before he came to Luoyang, then followed the Imperial Academy style. It is after three years in Luoyang that he put forward a “simple yet disciplined” style of writing and discarded the obscure Imperial Academy style and the flamboyant Xikun Style, pushing the Song literature on to a healthy track. How did Ouyang blend the two styles perfectly and spread his prose ideas, making the Prose Movement sweep across the country? Qian Weiyan was one of the reasons. Qian had three main achievements: his literary contributions, his role as a scholar in driving progress in the early Northern Song scholarship, and his rewarding and promoting younger generations. All these achievements had direct impacts on Ouyang.

2. Social Intercourse

1) “Duke Wenxi treated literati well and never burdened them with official duties” and “Xiu was able to devote himself more to learning”

Qian Weiyan (posthumously known as Duke Wenxi) was very generous to Ouyang Xiu. For one thing, Qian liked rewarding and promoting literati. For another, Qian had kinship with Xu Yan (Li, 2004)...who was then father-in-law of Ouyang.

Qian created a favorable environment for literary creation and exchange for literati in Luoyang, including Ouyang. The *Shao's Records of Things Heard and Seen* (Vol. 8) (Zhu, Fu, & Zhou, 2016) wrote:

“During the Tiansheng and Mingdao years, Qian Weiyan, Duke Wenxi, left the Privy Council and took the office of Regent of the Western Capital, while Xie Jiang served as Controller-general, Ouyang Xiu as Prefectural Judge, Yin Zhu as Prefectural Secretary, and Mei Yaochen as Recorder. These were all outstanding literati from across the country. Qian treated them generously.”

“Qian said to Xie Jiang, ‘You are candidates for future aides to the emperor. You should delve into historical studies and assess history with what you’ve heard and seen.’ This gave rise to the book titled *Idle Talks of Notaries of the Administrative Assistant* written by Qian’s officials. Qian’s private secretariat (*mufu*) flourished and earned wide praise. Later, there were ten eminent presented scholars (*jinshi*) who were disciples of Xie Jiang and Ouyang Xiu, led by Wang Fu and Wang Shanggong. Back then, the imperial examination system was accommodating. When autumn examinations were held locally, Xie Jiang would be Examination Supervisor, and Ouyang and Mei Yaochen examiners. When court affairs were few and the staff had ample leisure time, Qian and his advisers would indulge in merrymaking almost every day.”

“When Xie Jiang and Ouyang Xiu were officials in Luoyang, they once visited Mount Songshan. On the way back from Yingyang, they arrived at Xiangshan Temple on Mount Longmen at dusk. It was snowing. Xie and Ouyang climbed up the Stone Tower where they looked into the direction of the capital, absorbed in their own thoughts. Suddenly, they saw a group of people riding horses come over from across the Yishui River against the misty sky. It turned out to be a group of chefs, servants and singing girls sent by Qian Weiyan. The clerk conveyed Qian’s words: ‘Traveling in the mountains is exhausting. You should stay in Mount Longmen for a rest and enjoy the snow. There are few office affairs. You do not need to return in a hurry.’ This fully shows how generous Qian was to his advisers.”

The *Record of Idle Talks by the Sheng River* (Vol. 4) (Zhu, Fu, & Zhou, 2016) by Wang Pizhi of the Northern Song Dynasty wrote:

“Ouyang Xiu...served as Prefectural Judge under the Regent of the Western

Capital. Governor Qian Weiyan and Controller-general Xie Jiang were both great men of that time, treating Ouyang very well. Ouyang was close to Yin Zhu (courtesy name Shilu), Mei Yaochen (Shengyu), Yang Yu (Zicong), Zhang? (Taisu), Zhang Rushi (Yaofu), and Wang Fu (Jidao). They were called ‘seven friends’ who compared notes with and learned from each other in literary writing and moral obligations. Together, they composed poems, drank wine, had idle talks, and played games, enjoying each other’s company very much. They visited almost all top attractions across Luoyang, including scenic spots, gardens, courtyards, towers, and temples.”

In the *Epitaph of Lord Zhang Rushi, Record Keeper of Henan Prefecture*, Ouyang & Li (2007) wrote: “During the Tiansheng and Mingdao eras, Qian Weiyan, Duke Wenxi, held his office in Henan. Duke Wenxi, a former royal prince, rose to a prominent position by virtue of his literary talent, and wherever he held an office, he hired a team of literati as advisers. All his subordinate officials in Henan happened to be outstanding able men and literati of that time. Thus, his private secretariat was billed as the best team nationwide. Duke Wenxi treated literati well and never burdened them with official duties. Moreover, Henan boasts many famous mountains and waters, bamboo groves and lush woods, and strange flowers and rocks. There are fine terraces and clear ponds lying high or low in the wilderness. On days off, I would hang out with wise men and elders, writing poems, drinking and playing.” For example, the article *A Preface to Budding Scholar Chen Jing* (Ouyang & Li, 2007) says, “I as Retainer, Yang Zicong as Administrator, and Zhang Yingzhi as Recorder... stayed on the West Peak at night when we had a walk in the pine forest, climbed up the peak, and reached the end of the road before turning back. On the next day, we ascended the Stone Tower at Xiangshan Temple, listening to waves at Bajietan, and then went boating. At the foothill, we were reluctant to get off the boat. There, we composed poems over wine cups before returning at dusk.”

Ouyang Xiu was very fond of literary exchanges under the auspices of Qian Weiyan, attributing a lot of positive influence to such activities. Ouyang & Li (2007) wrote many poems and articles on these literary activities: “I once roamed Mount Songshan and the Luoshui River with him [Mei Yaochen]. At every precipitous cliff towering above a gully or ancient temple in a deep forest, we would compose verses or lines. We felt happy being together at first. Over time, we found this relationship pleasant and liberating. We felt each other’s positive influence, which led to a lasting friendship.” “At first, in the ninth year of the Tiansheng era, I became Prefectural Judge under the Regent of the Western Capital... At that time, all the staff members were top literati and able, wise men. We worked, drank, sang and played together every day, vying to entertain each other.” According to the *Preface to Collected Poems Written at a Drinking Party in the Bamboo Grove at Puming Courtyard in the Early Autumn* by Mei & Zhu (1980): “...After we got tipsy, Ouyang said, ‘Today’s joy lives up to that of any great literati gathering in history. Amidst such great views and far away

from worldly concerns, we can speak our minds, which is liberating, but it is not enough. We have not written anything.’ Then, Ouyang had some paper sent over and asked guests to write Buddha-related verses, put finished verses on their seats, and write the lines by rhyme in turn to record this wonderful gathering. We all said, ‘You’re right, Yongshu. Soon, later generations will consider us binge eaters and drinkers...’ Obviously, Ouyang willingly took part in such literati activities, and actively led such gatherings toward exchanges on literary creation.

Finally, as recorded in the *History of Song: Biography of Ouyang Xiu* (Tuo, 1985): “...appointed as Prefectural Judge of the Western Capital. Initially, Ouyang got on well with Yin Zhu. Together, they compared notes on prose and discussed current affairs. Yin was both a mentor and friend to Ouyang, and vice versa. He also hung out with Mei Yaochen (courtesy name Shengyu). The two echoed and replied each other’s poems and lyrics. Later, Ouyang became widely known for his prose.” As early as in Luoyang, Ouyang likened, in the *Afterword to Mei Shengyu’s Writings*, his relationship with Mei to that of Yu Boya and Zhong Ziqi. Later, in his interactions with Mei, Ouyang & Li (2007) put forward a representative literary theory: “Poetry does not make one worse off. Instead, poets who have experienced poverty probably write better.” Regarding the shaping of the Song prose, Ouyang wrote in *On the Epitaph of Yin Shilu*: “If we say the recent prose was initiated by Shilu, then the Eulogy to Duke Fan has said so.”

The literary works by, historical records on, and notes of Ouyang Xiu and his friends all acknowledged one thing: The Luoyang literati community, under the leadership of Qian Weiyan, compared notes on poetry and prose with each other in a favorable environment. Ouyang loved it. He learned how to write from his colleagues, including Yin Zhu and Mei Yaochen, and later set the basic trend of Northern Song literary creation.

2) Identification with the Luoyang literati community—“Look, all the same old attractions where we once visited together”

Qian Weiyan was a good leader for the Luoyang literary community. According to the *Unofficial Records from Xiangshan* by Shi Wenying (Zhu, Fu, & Zhou, 2016): “Qian Weiyan served concurrently as Chancellor and military commissioner of Luoyang where he met three talented men among his staff members (Xie Jiang, Yin Zhu and Ouyang Xiu). The Chancellor had three Taoist robes and three bamboo walking canes made. At every literati gathering in courtyards, the Chancellor would wear a headscarf and a purple-brown outfit to attend, in the company of the said trio in robes and carrying bamboo canes.”

Ouyang highly appreciated the Luoyang literary community for which he had a strong collective consciousness. This attitude was shown in many of his articles (Ouyang & Li, 2007), such as *Farewell to Xu Who Will Go to Mianchi* which says: “I had a stint in Luoyang in the early days, when I was full of ambitions and pride. The boss valued literati and loved literature, and the staff flourished as his friends grew.” While he held an office in Luoyang, Ouyang once went to Bian-

liang, the primary capital, for public affairs. On the way to the capital, he wrote *To Friends in Luoyang While on an Early Spring Trip Southward* which says “Over a cup of wine in the east wind, I get homesick alone in the new year.” In Suizhou, he wrote *Recalling Longmen* which says “The southbound traveler eager to go home sends his voice back to his hometown... Knowing the traveler miss them from afar, friends in Luoyang should have sent words again.” On his way back, Ouyang wrote the *Cold Food Festival at the Flower Mountain* which says “My heart goes with wild geese northbound, flying back home in Luoyang way faster.” When he finally crossed the boundary of Luoyang, Ouyang wrote the *A Fast Letter to Friends in Town from a Boundary Post Station on the Way Back from the South* which says “...The Yi River has turned green upon my spring return, and the Luo Bridge sees fewer visitors as flowers wither. Who has got extra cups of wine? I look forward to drinking with him.” During this short trip in spring, Ouyang wrote four poems [now available], which shows his homesick heart and his identification with this community. The formation of such a literati community would be impossible without the leadership of Qian Weiyan.

In addition to echoing and replying poems, the Luoyang literati community had the same political stance. For example, in the *Petition to Remonstrator Fan*, Ouyang & Li (2007) wrote, “and dispel the doubts of literati-officials in Luoyang.” After they left Luoyang, this literati community formed a close political group. In the fourth year of the Qingli era (1044), Yin Zhu, a former colleague of Ouyang in Luoyang, served as governor of Qingzhou where he adopted Ouyang’s ideas. Yin also agreed with many of Ouyang’s petitions. Fu Bi, also one of the Luoyang literati community, according to the *Extended Continuation to the Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government* (Li, 2004), once called at Ouyang to discuss big issues at midnight when no one else was present. After Ouyang persuaded him, “Fu understood and stopped arguing.” This shows that Fu deeply recognized Ouyang.

Ouyang had close ties with the Luoyang literary group for the rest of his life, particularly with Mei Yaochen. Based on data available, Ouyang wrote 46 letters to Mei, more than those to anyone else. They had correspondence every year and talked about everything until Mei passed away in 1060. Ouyang wrote eulogies and epitaphs for most of the old friends he made in Luoyang.

3) “Despite an admiring heart reluctant to turn away, I do not know how to repay the debt of gratitude”

While Qian Weiyan was in power, Ouyang & Li (2007) lavished praise on him. For example, the *Letter to the Handover Prefectural Judge of the Western Capital* says, “The glorious seat of the Grand Chancellor” and “masterminding affairs from Nanyang”, likening Qian to the brilliant Zhuge Liang. The poem *The Early Confucius Ceremony at the Prefectural Academy* says “at the temporary temple of the Han Chancellor, we will learn rituals from great Confucians...Why aspire to the Qufu Confucius Temple, when the best place is the Western Capital?” It fully shows Ouyang’s admiration for Qian and his being

proud of the academic atmosphere in Luoyang.

Later, Qian was exiled to Suizhou where he died of illness one year following his disgrace which severely affected him. Qian himself expressed his remorse and asked for mercy, but many colleagues shunned him like a plague. Ouyang Xiu was an exception. He did not stop supporting Qian. The *Letter to Mei Shengyu Expressing My Lament and Feelings* (Ouyang & Li, 2007) says, “The imperial edict ordered an exile. The Chancellor had to go south. We said good-bye at the Yi River, looking at each other in tears.”. These lines are a heartfelt portrayal of the scene of Ouyang bidding farewell to Qian after the Chancellor was convicted and exiled. Moreover, at such a sensitive time, Ouyang & Li (2007) wrote the *Letter to Lord Qian in Suizhou*. This article expresses that he missed Qian Weiyan, saying “I left there soon as there was no longer any companion. Being there all alone, I often let out sighs of homesickness. Every time I missed you in the wind, I could only weep to express my feelings.” He spoke positively of the ethos Qian brought to his private secretariat, saying “You held such a high office by virtue of your symbolic, weighty service. Independent and impartial, you encouraged competing ideas from your staff. Though the chests of slanderous letters against the general were full, the chariots in Nanhai finally proved them wrong.” Ouyang did not criticize Qian’s behavior of playing up to or flattering disloyal ministers, consort clans and Emperor Renzong. Instead, he said, “I humbly ask you to examine words about waxing and waning and principles of motion or stillness and good or evil luck. Virtuous as jade, why should you be afraid of minor defects? Noble as the pine and bamboo, you remain unchanged despite frost or snow. Although you were exiled for slanders and would retire from the public life for a few years, officials in power on your side would surely say something to bring the emperor to his senses over time.” He expressed that he would do anything for Qian: “Despite an admiring heart reluctant to turn away, I do not know how to repay the debt of gratitude.” ...In the second year of the Mingdao era (1033), Ouyang Xiu was supposed to make a difference and stay cautious, but he risked his career writing the poem *The Former Lord Regent Moving to Handong* (Suizhou) (Ouyang & Li, 2007):

“The surroundings are full of the fields of Chu. The former Chancellor is embracing a new flag. The same mountains still stand there green, while the traveler’s hair has turned white. Passing through rice paddies guided by farmers, the lord is greeted by opportune plum blossoms. Few people recognize the ribbon on his waist, but local officials are shocked by his presence.”.

According to the *Miscellaneous Notes from the Gate of Qingbo* (Vol. 9) (Zhu, Fu, & Zhou, 2016), after Qian Weiyan was exiled, Wang Shu (courtesy name Wenkang) took his place. Wang once took the example of the disgrace of Duke of Lai (Kou Zhun) and blamed the Luoyang literati community for their wanton merrymaking. None of them dared to object except for Ouyang who raised his ritual tablet and stood up, saying ‘In my opinion, the misfortune of Duke of Lai

was caused not by his excessive drinking, but by his unwillingness to retire and give up power'...Wang, already in his twilight years, was touched by Ouyang's words." The *Shao's Records of Things Heard and Seen (Vol. 8)* (Zhu, Fu, & Zhou, 2016) records this matter in greater detail, saying "When Wang Zeng, Duke of Yi, served as Regent, he managed his officials rigorously. The entire staff had it enough...but no one dared to object from Xie Jiang to others holding lower positions. Only Ouyang stood up and said..." Xie backed off despite his higher position, but Ouyang dared to speak out. Ouyang's stint was going to expire then. It was not worth it for him to argue against his boss, particularly when he would have to rely on Wang's recommendation for his next job. He did so for purposes of defending Qian Weiyan.

In the first year of the Jingyou era (1034), Ouyang & Li (2007) left Luoyang and recalled that: "When I first came to Luoyang in March, late-spring flowers were yet to wither... The *mufu* hired many men of letters, to whom Lord Qian was kind and generous... It is true extreme joy begets sorrow. A rapturous song suddenly turned into a lament. The imperial edict ordered an exile. The Chancellor had to go south. We said goodbye at the Yi River, looking at each other in tears."

In the second year of the Baoyuan era (1039), Ouyang & Li (2007) recalled that "We partied here and there across Luoyang, accompanying the Chancellor to feasts and gatherings." In the poem *Passing by the White Lotus Manor of Duke Wenxi*, Ouyang & Li (2007) wrote: "At a southern suburban location full of carriages, passers-by were drawn to linger for a glimpse. The wild stream was still biting chilly, and late flowers bloomed freely by themselves. Guests were once asked to write poems. The Duke's staff was a talented assemblage. It is now a place to mourn the owner. Who will come here alone for a visit?" What Ouyang appreciated the most was that Qian encouraged and led them to learn. His scholarship grew under Qian's influence. This poem was written in the fourth year of the Qingli era (1044) when Qian's merits and faults were being debated, and Qian's posthumous title was in controversy. According to the *Shao's Records of Things Heard and Seen (Vol. 8)* (Zhu, Fu, & Zhou, 2016), "Ouyang later became a court official upon recommendation by Duke of Yi, but he never forgot his debt to Chancellor Qian. Some said it was thanks to Ouyang that the former Chancellor Qian was conferred a fine posthumous title following three changes." When Mei Yaochen died, Ouyang, already a very old man, wrote the poem *Weeping over the Death of Shengyu*, saying "When I first met the Old Poet along the Yi River, the lad in black crossed it on a white horse...The Chancellor was a virtuous governor in Henan, often accompanied by literati in his carriage." Ouyang really wanted to do something for Qian.

Ouyang Xiu personally never forgot his debt to Qian Weiyan. He never said anything bad about Qian. It should be noted that Ouyang was an outspoken, sharp-tongued person. In the *Records Written After Retirement (Vol. 1)*, Ouyang said bluntly that the era titles "Tiansheng" and "Mingdao" were in-

tended to flatter Empress Liu E. He also wrote well-known essays criticizing political rivals, such as the *Letter to Remonstrator Gao* and *On Cliques*. He was indeed a very principled man. However, Ouyang said nothing of Qian's multiple flattering deeds. He even let pass Qian's ritual-defying scheme to please Emperor Renzong in the second year of the Mingdao era (1033). All Ouyang talked about was his grief over the "exile and death of the Chancellor in Handong".

Both Qian Weiyan and Yan Shu were Xikun Style poets. Yan Shu was the chief examiner of Ouyang. Ouyang & Li (2007) was polite to Yan. The elegiac poems he wrote for Yan say "Over five decades of affluent and carefree life, he had stayed worldly-wise and played it safe." Such a comment seems a bit cold. In contrast, his attitude toward Qian was totally different. In the fourth year of the Zhiping era (1067), Ouyang Xiu, in his later years and a high-ranking Associate Councilor, still remembered the anecdote that Qian Weiyan was cheated out of money by a nephew who hid his favorite coral pen holder. The *Records Written After Retirement (Vol. 1)* (Ouyang & Li, 2007) writes, "Such things [frauds] happened five to seven times per year, but the Lord never figured it out. I personally saw it several times at the *mufu* while in the Western Capital. I often said to the colleagues how pure and virtuous the Lord was." Ouyang's affectionate blame is palpable. A look at Ouyang Xiu's family letters would reveal that he encouraged his nephews a lot, asking them to uphold the principles of being good officials, and that he often reminded his sons of dressing and eating well. This contrast allows us a glimpse into Ouyang's closeness to Qian.

3. Literary Influence

1) Qian Weiyan

a) Changes in literary style

According to the *Extended Continuation to the Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government (Vol. 71)* (Li, 2004), in the second year of the Dazhong Xiangfu era (1009), Qian Weiyan, Yang Yi and Liu Yun echoed each other's poems "talking about previous palace affairs in superficial, extravagant words." They were criticized by Emperor Zhenzong—The emperor said: 'Literary officials, as masters of scholars, must abstain from being dissolute!' For this reason, the emperor issued an edict to warn scholars: "From now on, any scholar who writes superficial, extravagant verses that fail to comply with canonical formats will be denounced. Any collection of works printed shall be reviewed by in-house officials designated by the Fiscal Commissioner before being published. Only those that have passed such reviews may be recorded and reported." Xikun Style was created by Qian Weiyan in a specific period of time. It does not represent the overall style of Qian. According to the *New Chronicle of Qian Weiyan's Works* edited by Hu Yaofei, Qian's literary works may be roughly divided into the following stages:

Xikun Style echoing stage lasted for three years from the second year of the Jingde era (1005) to the first year of the Dazhong Xiangfu era (1008). In the

eighth year of the Dazhong Xiangfu era (1015), Qian's *Fire of Prince Rong's Palace* (Qian & Hu, 2014) leaned towards classical prose: "The gale was blowing from the northeast. After the fifth watch, the fire worsened. I got out of bed and climbed up a tower to have a look. It turned out to be a fire in the imperial palace. Worried, I could not fall asleep all night." Later, Qian's *Attending a Banquet* was even more concise: "Poems done, we moved to the Flowing Water Pavilion where all guests sat down on square carpets."

In the first year of the Tiansheng era (1023), Qian wrote the *Rhapsody on Spring Snow* which expressed his sympathy for the people's sufferings. Though his style was a bit flowery, but no longer obscure. It is until the ninth year of the Tiansheng era (1031) when Qian was in Luoyang that his literary style really grew concise and fresh, for instances:

"The slender bamboos stand upright along the Yi River, matching perfectly with the windy and dewy autumn night. If an immortal on a horse appeared right here, what a worldly sight unparalleled it would be!"

"The isolated peak towers by the sea, as if a monarch descending in purple. The recluse gate is covered with snow, like a magic land cladded in clouds. Reishi as pure food grows in clusters, and in the deep censer burns bay leaves. Unable to personally visit the temple, officials could only resort to the North Mountain Proclamation."

"The famed varieties of peony are cultivated in autumn. Luckily they have green rocks and red day lilies as neighbors. The beautiful mansion is completed at a right time, awaiting a colorful spring with peach and plum blossoms."

Scattered lines:

"The sun rises up over the cloudy old mausoleum, and the spring returns to the babbling empty garden." (praised by Ouyang Xiu in the *Comments on Poetry from Liuyi*)

"Ten miles are traveled while one is asleep, and three cups of wine down in between talks."

Obviously, Qian's poems changed completely.

In the first year of the Jingyou era (1034), Qian wrote the poem *Magnolia* which reads:

"Orioles chirp and fly above the beautiful city, while spring waters lap on the banks of the moat. Green willows and grasses stretch far and wide, the sad traveler's eyes are blurred by tears. The sentiments slowly turn bleak and downfall, and the face in the mirror suddenly grows old. Despite the recent hate of wine cups due to illness, today I only fear that the wine is not enough."

The gradual shift of Qian Weiyan's literary style from a flamboyant, ornate one to a plain, natural one was the result of Ouyang Xiu and others' influence and of the exchange and mutual learning between members of the Luoyang lite-

rary community.

b) The attitude toward the classical prose camp

Qian Weiyan strongly supported prose. According to the *Unofficial Records from Xiangshan* (Zhu, Fu, & Zhou, 2016), Qian asked Xie Jiang, Ouyang Xiu and Yin Zhu to write a record of the Henan Post House each: “Lord Qian, as governor of Henan, employed a group of outstanding young men of letters. Back then, Luoyang was a secondary capital, but often lacked guest rooms at the post house. Therefore, Qian had a large post house built and named it “Linyuan”. When the building was completed, Qian asked Xie, Yin and Ouyang to write a record on it respectively... Xie’s record numbered 500 Chinese characters, Ouyang’s more than 500, and Yin’s only 380, being the most concise, complete, classic and well-organized one. Ouyang and Xie put their hands in the sleeves and said, “The Chancellor should only use Yin Shilu’s article only. We two should go hide ourselves.” According to the *Shao’s Records of Things Heard and Seen* (Vol. 8) (Zhu, Fu, & Zhou, 2016), Qian asked Ouyang and Yin to write records on the Double Laurel Tower: “Duke Wenxi...asked Yongshu and Shilu to write records on it. Yongshu finished it earlier, and wrote more than 1000 words. Shilu said ‘I can do it with only 500 words.’ When Yin finished his version, Ouyang admired its simple, archaic beauty. Ever since, Ouyang started to write classical prose.” The said literary creations all compared whose articles were more simple and elegant. Such an approach adopted by Qian promoted the writing propensity of Yin and Ouyang.

2) Ouyang Xiu—Shaping of literary creation and ideas

Before Ouyang came to Luoyang, he vacillated between different literary ideas. In the early years, he was good at writing parallel prose, and Xikun Style almost overshadowed all his literary works, as represented by the *Letter to Scholar Xu Yan* and the *Letter of Thanks to Scholar Xu* written in the sixth year of the Tiansheng era (1028). In the eighth year of the Tiansheng era (1030), Ouyang wrote the *Poem on the Edict to Rebuild the Imperial Academy*. In this poem, he expressed his strong support for the reconstruction of the Imperial Academy: “When tiny students hear the morning drum of the Academy, they will be eager to start journeys of learning.” By the time he left Luoyang, however, Ouyang put forward the idea that literary works should be easy and clear to understand by mixing the Xikun and Imperial Academy styles.

The Biographical History of Four Song Administrations (Ouyang & Li, 2007) says: “Regent Qian Weiyan valued his talented staff and never burdened them with official duties. As a result, Xiu was able to devote himself more to learning.” The influence of Qian on Ouyang’s literary career not only meant enough time and space for literary creation, but also a right guidance on formal beauty. Thanks to such a positive influence, Ouyang did not pursue the obscure Imperial Academy style.

a) Prose

While in Luoyang, Ouyang explored writing prose. During this period, he wrote more than 60 prose works, including the *Inscription on the Sacred Way of*

the Tomb of Lord Qi, Chief Minister of the Court of the Imperial Regalia and the *Record of Chen's Rongxiang Pavilion*, which were included in the *Other Collections of the Hermit*. Specifically, the *Record of a Tour of Dazi Courtyard* depicts a joyful gathering close to nature of the Luoyang literati community. The *Record on Felling Trees* and the *Record on Destroying Bamboo Groves* shows Ouyang's early satiric technique and reasoning style. The *Record on the Green Peaks Pavilion* writes scenery in a prose style. The *Record of the Hall of Criticizing Wrongs as Wrong* is a mix of parallel prose and classical prose. The *Record of the East Garden Pavilion of Budding Scholar Li* is a flowing prose piece...In these prose works, Ouyang's ideas and techniques are mixed, some heavy, some light, partially parallel prose and partially classical prose, swinging between two styles.

For example, in his various records (*ji*), Ouyang used many classical allusions. The *Record on a Disaster and Marquis Fan's Temple* touches on folklore about supernatural beings. The *Record on Felling Trees* contains allusions from *Zhuangzi: The Happy Excursion*. The *Record on Destroying Bamboo Groves* contains allusions from the *Records of the Grand Historian: Biographies of Merchants*, the *Book of History: The Hounds of Lv*, and the *Analects of Confucius: Xue Er*.

The creation of both the *Record on Rebuilding the Governor's Courtyard in Henan Prefecture* and the *Record on Rebuilding Jinggou Courtyard in Henan Prefecture* (Ouyang & Li, 2007) was directly related to Qian Weiyan: "In the second year of the Chancellor's stint in Luoyang, he said, 'It [the Governor's Courtyard] lies at the heart of the development of governance and education and is related to the progressiveness or aggressiveness of officials. It should not be neglected.' Then, planning was made to rebuild it." Both articles have a strong parallel prose touch, which reflects Ouyang's two varying propensities during the same period. Articles that have nothing to do with Qian are generally classical prose, such as the *Record of Chen's Rongxiang Pavilion* and the *Pagoda Record Written for Great Master Mingyin*. Such a vacillation between parallel prose and classical prose helped Ouyang shape healthier literary ideas.

His shift from the initial flamboyant style to a simple, unsophisticated one was obvious. In the second year of the Mingdao era (1033), Ouyang started to write fresh, flowing articles, and his two letters to Zhang Fei laid the foundation for his ideas about classical prose. On this basis, Ouyang & Li (2007) floated the idea that prose writing should "pursue principles easy to know and follow, as well as words easy to understand and practice".

b) Poetry

While in Luoyang, according to *A Chronicled and Annotated Collection of Ouyang Xiu's Works* compiled by Li Zhiliang, Ouyang wrote about more than 130 poems. Some describe their excursions, such as *Fifteen Poems on the Tour at Mount Longmen*, *An Excursion along the Yi River Alone*, and *Traveling Alone After Rain in North Luoyang*. Some portray deep friendships, such as the

Seven Poems on Seven Friends and the *Farewell to Xie Xishen on An Envoy Mission to the North*. Some records the poetic echoing and farewell activities of the Luoyang literati community, such as *A Poem Echoing Mei Shengyu's Apricot Blossoms*, *A Poem Echoing Xie Jiang's Boating on the Yi River*, *A Poem Echoing Yang Zicong's Letter to Mei Shengyu*, and *A Poem Echoing Enjoying the Moon on a Fasting Day*. There are also poems that imitate the poetry of the Southern Dynasties, such as the *Seven Poems After the Yutai Style*. Some are thoroughly Xikun Style poems, such as *Drinking Alone at the Green Bamboo Hall*. These poems are mostly vivid and lively works that reflect their freewheeling lifestyle while in Luoyang, without any traces of Qian's Xikun Style or any features of Ouyang's later Song poems.

It is worth noting that Ouyang's poems on scenery and outings are plain and easy, while those for echoing, replying or gift purposes contain more or less literary quotations or classical allusions. His poems on scenery, such as *Green Peaks Pavilion* (Ouyang & Li, 2007), which says "Warm spring clouds cling to the banners, against the bright sun sinking behind the peaks" are concise and straightforward. His poems for echoing, replying and gift purposes contain the following lines: "Perfect time to drink with a recluse friend, but I should better bring my own wine." "The host and guests are absorbed in talks, and their minds in sync with external things." "The roads to Shu are said to be dangerous, as hard as ascending to heaven for travelers." "Swaying trees turn the Qin meadows green, and blooming flowers dot the wild vistas unfrequented." Such poems are refined but not obscure, a poetic style Qian Weiyan also adopted after he left the central academies and institutes.

At poetry echoing events organized by Qian, almost all poems Ouyang & Li (2007) wrote show his deep reserve of terms. For example, *A Poem by Rhyme Written at the Pond Pavilion Banquet Held by Chancellor Qian on a Middle Dog Day* says "Beautiful things and views abound in the Sui Garden, for which fine rhapsodies may be written." The *Old Hermit Pavilion* says "The turtle-shaped golden seal is too heavy to discharge. Fine-tuning the *qin* would startle the red carps. Though sharing interest in a recluse life with Xie An, how could I possibly not serve the common people!". Similar poems include the *Double Laurel Tower* and the *Poem for Colleagues on A Rain in Time after the Regent Prayed for Rain at the Nine-Dragon Shrine*. Ouyang's poems related to Qian Weiyan strike a fine balance between applying his learning (quotations and allusions) and narrating plainly. Even the *Poem in Reply to Assistant Director Qian's Recalling the Yi River*, sent to Qian's son Qian Xuan, is also the case: "On the hills we once lingered and enjoyed, no traces of footprints could be found".

c) Ci-poetry

The *Comments of Yucun on Ci-poetry* (Tang, 1986) says "None of the Ci lyrics written by Ouyang Xiu contains no quotations or allusions." *The Complete Ci-poems of Ouyang Xiu*, published by Chongwen Publishing House, includes 240 Ci-poems Ouyang wrote, most of which are about farewells, departures, and

boudoir sorrow. Among these works, 26 explicitly contain historical allusions, without any sad feelings of departures, mostly written in his early years.

Ouyang's Ci-poems have wide-ranging themes (Ouyang & Li, 2007). For example, one Ci-poem says "My tearful eyes ask the flowers, but they keep silent. I only see a flurry of red blossoms fly over the swing." His Ci-poems on romantic love almost never use historical allusions, but contain profound learning and many adapted literary quotations: "Beauties with waists soft as silk cloth and slender as willows are found in Luoyang." Another Ci-poem says "The sadness of departure grows as one travels farther, like a spring river flowing endlessly away." These lines are adapted from a poem written by Li & Zhang (2020) which says, "The hate for departure is just like spring grass. It stretches on and on and grow again and again."

Ouyang read many parallel prose works and paraphrased such lines of verse in his own writings. He read many poems written by Li Shangyin, founder of Xikun Style advocated by Qian Weiyan. For example, Li & Zheng (2019) wrote "Their sparse chirps die out into the fifth watch, but the green tree stands there nonchalant and ruthless", while Ouyang & Li (2007) wrote "Cicadas perch on a ruthless tree in the wind." Li & Zheng (2019) wrote the well-known line "No word has been heard when pomegranate ripen", while Ouyang & Li (2007) wrote "No word has been heard of his return." The poem *Playful Gift* (Ouyang & Li, 2007) reads: "The girl Mo Chou lived along the Luo River, widely known for her slender waist at fifteen. Fine cups of wine were served to guests in the hall, and white horses tied to drooping willows near the door. Flowers covered trees across the city in spring wind, vying for beauty with pretty faces against the setting sun. Travelers in town should not halt your horses, or a beautiful song would break your heart." This poem resembles the *Song of Water in the River* written by Xiao Yan of the Southern and Northern Dynasties.

Regarding the creation of *To the Tune of Riverside Daffodils* by Ouyang Xiu, The *Qian's Private Records* (Zhu, Fu, & Zhou, 2016): while in Luoyang, Ouyang once "was close to a singing girl." "Mei Yaochen, Xie Jiang and Yin Zhu, his colleagues at the *mufu*, felt sorry that the talented Ouyang acted badly, and told the Lord (Qian Weiyan) about this. They often implicitly dissuaded Ouyang, but he did not listen." Ouyang and the girl once were late to attend Qian's banquet: "Both Ouyang and the girl did not arrive punctually. Later, when the two showed up, they sat there flirting glances with each other." When asked why they were late, the girl said a gold hairpin was missing. Then, Qian asked Ouyang to compose a Ci-poem on this. Finally, "all those present praised the work. Qian asked the girl to pour a cup of wine for Ouyang and compensated her lost hairpin out of his private coffer." The Song Dynasty adopted a rigorous singing and dancing girl system which stipulated that literati may not have clandestine relationship with singing or dancing girls, or they will be severely punished. Qian's handling of this episode showed his leniency toward Ouyang. The said Ci-poem written by Ouyang & Li (2007) reads:

“After a rain, thunders fade beyond the willows, and raindrops beat on lotus leaves in the pond. A broken rainbow shines above the west corner of the small tower. Where the banisters lean, a bright moon slowly rises. Swallows fly around, peeping through painted beams. Fine hooks let loose the curtains. Cool still waves stretch flat on the sleeping mat. Beside a pair of crystal pillows, a fallen hairpin lies.”

The entire work paraphrased lines from a poem by Li & Zheng (2019), “I sobered up after a nap in the small pavilion, watching the branches of azaleas and pines meet and intertwine. Beside a pair of amber pillows on the wavy mat, lies a fallen hairpin with bird designs curling up.” We cannot deny that such a practice was intended to flatter his boss and show the outcome of learning from Qian’s literary attainment.

Many years later, in the Ci-poem *To the Tune of Treading on Grass*, Ouyang & Li (2007) wrote “In the warm breeze, the grass smells fresh, and horse reins sway”, which borrowed from “The fragrant grass and warm breeze embrace the roadside pavilion” in the *On Xu Dong’s Return to the Wu Region*, a poem of Qian & Hu (2014) included in the *Anthology of Xikun Echoing Poems*. Ouyang studied Xikun Style and Qian’s literary works very thoroughly.

d) Overlapping imageries—lotus, peony and Song Yu

As mentioned above, Ouyang Xiu deliberately applied what he learned and leaned toward Xikun Style in front of Qian Weiyan. Ouyang was not alone. Xie Jiang and Yin Zhu, also members of Qian’s staff, created Xikun Style literary works too.

The works included in *The Collected Works of Qian Weiyan* mention no other flowers than lotus and peony. The *Anthology of Xikun Echoing Poems* includes 54 poems written by Qian Weiyan, of which five explicitly praise lotus. Ouyang was very fond of lotus too. While being an adviser to Qian, Ouyang wrote the *Rhapsody on the Lotus*. Later, he wrote many poems and lyrics about lotus and lotus-picking girls. According to the *Recorded Talks from the Summer Resort* by Ye Mengde, Ouyang liked playing lotus-related drinking games, often all night long.

If his love for lotus was a coincidence, then his love for peony was not necessarily so. In the second year of the Tianxi era (1018), Emperor Zhenzong gave Qian Weiyan pots of peony. Qian wrote the poem *Peony* in Luoyang and sent it to Yan Shu. Later, Ouyang Xiu, while in Luoyang, wrote the *Notes on Peonies of Luoyang* which is the earliest treatise on peonies extant in China. Why did Ouyang write the *Notes on Peonies of Luoyang*? The direct reason was that (Ouyang & Li, 2007) “When I worked at the *mufu*, I once met Lord Qian under the Double Laurel Tower where I saw a small floor screen full of words behind the seats. The Lord pointed at it and said, ‘I want to write comments on flowers. It is a list of peony names, covering more than 90 varieties.’ Back then, I had no spare time to read the list, but according to what I have heard and seen, there are only more than 30 varieties of peony currently common. I wonder: How did the

Lord gather so many varieties?” Regarding peony varieties, Ouyang wrote, “Lord Qian once said, ‘People say the peony is the king of flowers. Today, Yaohuang is really the king, while Weizi is the queen.’” Ouyang’s attention to and writing of peonies was directly inspired by Qian. Ouyang Xiu even said bluntly that the peony represented Luoyang in his eyes.

Qian loved writing about and likened himself to Song Yu, a well-known poet of the late Warring States period. The *Anthology of Xikun Echoing Poems* contains five poems that explicitly praising Song Yu. While under Qian, Ouyang & Li (2007) wrote some literary works related to Song Yu. For example, in the *Pond in the Courtyard of Zheng Wenbao in Early Summer*, Ouyang wrote “The brisk, refreshing south wind blows fast. Under the banisters a stream flows joyously”, which borrowed from Song Yu’s *Rhapsody on the Wind*. In the poem *Celebrating the Fulfilled Prayer for Snow at the Nine-Dragon Shrine*, he wrote “The Sui Garden has been much written by visitors, but have musical pieces been covered by many?”, which borrowed from Song Yu’s *Answers to the Questions of the King of Chu*. In the Ci-poem *Fishermen’s Pride*, Ouyang wrote “The chaotic wind blows on a crisp autumnal day... Song Yu had a lot of deep sentiments back then.”

e) Ouyang Xiu’s attitude toward Xikun Style

Ouyang did not strongly promote classical prose. In the *Letter to Xu Zai in Mianchi*, he said literary writing should be “selective”, “concise”, “unfettered” and “must be natural and flowing.” On the other hand, Ouyang did not fully exclude Xikun Style: First, in the *Comments on Poetry from Liuyi*, he spoke highly of fine works created by Yang Yi, Liu Yun and Qian Weiyan, particularly the latter, saying “...The couplet by Duke Wenxi is the most meticulous. It says ‘The sun rises up over the cloudy old mausoleum, and the spring returns to the babbling empty garden.’”. He also said “Duke Qian, in particular, wrote many fine lines of verse.” Ouyang also noted “...Elder writers, however, might fear that the excessive use of quotations or allusions might lead to the obscurity of verses. They did not realize that it was the problem of scholars themselves. As noted in the *New Cicadas* by Liu Yun: ‘Birds feel it first when a wind descends the universe, while cranes are unaware when dewdrops fall on the plates.’ Although it contains allusions, isn’t it still a fine couplet of verse?” Ouyang explicitly pointed out that the problem with Xikun Style was the excessive use of allusions which led to obscurity, and stressed the proper use of allusions. He was rather permissive of the use of allusions. In the *Letter to Budding Scholar Yue from Jingnan*, Ouyang wrote: “...A look at the writing history would reveal that those who go with the flow and write the so-called ‘current prose’ all delve deep into classics...Indeed, current prose is increasingly superficial and too artful, but it requires a lot of efforts.” Second, Ouyang supported the development of parallel prose. His *Record of the Old Tippler’s Pavilion* was a trailblazer for the Song parallel prose. He noted, in *On the Epitaph of Yin Shilu*, that “Articles with occasional parallel prose lines, if reasonable, are not necessarily undesirable. We

should not exclude it from prose writing all together.” This view is also shown in the *Essays On the Su’s Four-Six Parallel Prose* Ouyang wrote in his later years. This article noted that the problem with parallel prose in four-six-character lines was that “it shows off the author’s erudition regardless of smooth narration.” In fact, the “tortuous and sophisticated” tendency aside, Ouyang admired the four-six parallel prose. Third, Ouyang longed for the poetry echoing activities of Xikun Style poets. In the *Note to Cai Junmo*, he wrote: “Predecessors like Yang Yi and Liu Yun are so well-known for their charming style that they are still admired and remembered to date.” In the second year of the Zhihe era (1055) when Ouyang became a Hanlin Academician, he wrote some court-style works, including the *Six Poems for the Emperor’s Side Doors*, the *Five Poems for the Empress’ Side Doors*, the *Four Poems for Empress Wencheng’s Side Doors*, and the *Five Poems for Madams’ Side Doors*. The regal, polished style of such court-style works is in line with Xikun Style.

Ouyang Xiu accepted Xikun Style in general. As for the Imperial Academy style, after he really helmed the literary circle, Ouyang “presided over the imperial examination in the second year of the Jiayou era (1057). Then, literati still wrote odd, strange, obscure prose which was called the Imperial Academy style. Xiu sharply denounced and curbed it, and dismissed anyone who wrote in such a style. Following this incident, previous literati who wrote pompous, superficial prose waited Ouyang outside the gate in groups, making loud noises in front of horses and defying the street patrol. Fortunately, the writing practice of imperial examinations changed substantially ever since” (Tuo, 1985).

Ouyang Xiu’s literary style underwent a shift from the initial Xikun and Imperial Academy styles toward mixing these two styles in a healthy, neutral one that valued both substantial content and formal beauty of literary works. It can be said that it is the literary exchange in Luoyang and the influence of Qian Weiyan that Ouyang Xiu shaped the right literary values.

4. Good Scholarship

1) Attitudes toward scholarship

Both Qian Weiyan and Ouyang Xiu took scholarship very seriously. Qian enjoyed a privileged status as a prominent scholar-official.

He grew up in a powerful family and a very favorable environment. His father Qian Chu, the last King of Wu and Yue who surrendered to the Song court, was well-treated by Emperor Taizong for the rest of his life. Qian Chu died in the first year of the Duangong era (988), when Qian Weiyan was 12 years old, and Qian Weijun took the helm of the big family and led a very dissolute life. Qian Weijun died in the second year of the Chunhua era (991) when Qian Weiyan was 15 years old. In August the same year, Emperor Taizong abolished the old policies instituted by Qian Chu and issued an edict to restore the original family names of officials and men who were given new names by the former state of Wuyue. Due to his embarrassing situation and the responsibility of taking care

of a big family on his shoulders, Qian Weiyan could personally understand Ouyang Xiu who became an orphan very early.

Ouyang & Li (2007) wrote, “Lord Qian served concurrently as a civil official and a military official who held the highest position in rank, merit and grade. He said himself, ‘The only regret in my lifetime is that I failed to attend and excel in the imperial examination.’ He often voiced this regret.” Qian & Hu (2014) wrote a dedicated book titled *Anecdotes at the Hanlin Academy* which records the life stories, allusions, anecdotes, and nominations of scholars at the Hanlin Academy. In the Preface to the *Anecdotes at the Hanlin Academy*, Qian & Hu (2014) wrote “No officials in the world are nobler than academicians. Even the three highest civil positions are beyond compare.” Obviously, Qian identified with and admired this community of academicians very much.

Ouyang issued many similar opinions. In the *Tang Langying Tablet Inscription* (Ouyang & Li, 2007), he wrote “Thus, the key to being a noble man is to be erudite.” Such a view was in accord with that of Qian. If we examine the life trajectory of Ouyang Xiu, according to the *Extended Continuation to the Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government* (Vol. 114), he became Zhennan Prefectural Secretary and Proofreader in the Institutes and Academies upon recommendation by Wang Shu, following the career path of a Hanlin academician. Ouyang’s academic views were primarily reflected in the writing of the *Remarks on the Brush*, the *Essays*, and the *Afterword to the Records on the Collection of Antiques*. Ouyang’s spirit of challenging ancient classics, his modest and prudent attitude, his unique stance, and his character of calling for contemporary and future men of vision to address tricky issues all precisely inherited and developed Qian’s attention to scholarship and the “independence, impartiality and group wisdom” of the Luoyang literati under Qian’s leadership.

“Though Lord Qian was born with a silver spoon, he had few hobbies. While in Luoyang, he once said to the staff, ‘My one and only hobby is reading books. I would read history sitting behind desks, fiction lying in bed, and poetry sitting on a closestool. I could not do without reading for a moment.’ Xie Xishen said, ‘Song Shou (courtesy name Gongchui), also a colleague at the History Office, would go to the restroom with a book every time...’ I also told Xishen that ‘Among the articles I’ve written, most were created while I was on a horse, in bed, or on a closestool. It is probably because such moments benefit conception’ (Ouyang & Li, 2007).

Until the sixth year of the Jiayou era (1061), when “I grew old, I started to purchase land between the Huai and Ying rivers...The erstwhile government offices and finely decorated palaces I stayed seem a world apart” (Ouyang & Li, 2007). Ouyang also mentioned Qian’s opinion in the *Collected Degrees and Edicts from the Hanlin Academy*: “Duke Qian once said that government official posts as heavyweight as Chancellor may be served by able men with other talents except for Hanlin academicians who have to be talented writers. The Lord admitted his opinion offended many high-ranking officials, but he said proudly

that it was the ultimate truth.” (Ouyang & Li, 2007). The *Collected Degrees and Edicts from the Hanlin Academy* was an anthology of edicts compiled by Ouyang Xiu when held an office at the Hanlin Academy. At that time, Ouyang was already chief of the literary circle, but he still remembered Qian’s opinion and almost spent a lifetime going beyond and defending it.

2) Antiques collection activities

According to the *Inscriptions of Han Tuizhi* (Ouyang & Li, 2007), however, Ouyang had already noticed and been impressed by stone tablet inscriptions as early as in the Tiansheng era: “In the Tiansheng years, when I served as Prefectural Judge, together with Mei Shengyu, we visited Mount Songshan where we entered the Tianfeng Temple and lingered amidst the pillars before leaving.” He recalled similarly in the *Tang Thoughts on Secluded Forests by Han Qin*. He also acquired the *Tang Record of Three Niches by Cen Wenben* while visiting Mount Longmen in Luoyang.

Qian Weiyan was also a collector of antiques. In the *Tang Tablet Inscriptions by Yan Zhenqing*, Ouyang mentioned that rubbings of these inscriptions were collected by Qian Weiyan, Ding Wei and Qian Weiji.

5. Successive Chiefs of the Literary Circle

The support Qian Weiyan gave to Ouyang Xiu was more than the fact that he “never burdened them with official duties.” More importantly, due to Qian’s influence and the Luoyang literary community, Ouyang was able to rise to fame. Qian rewarded and promoted young literati, which also set a good example for Ouyang. All these factors pushed Ouyang Xiu closer to the position of literary chief.

During the reign of Emperor Zhenzong, Wang Yucheng and Liu Kai, among other literati, put forward the idea that “Writings are meant to convey truth.” To have real influence, however, Ouyang had to shape his own “style” backed by fine literary works and the aspiration of serving the country as his own duty. It also required a favorable “momentum”, a literary climate comprising the recognition from the last literary chief, the support from peers, and the admiration from younger literati.

Following the death of Qian Weiyan, the former literary chief, Ouyang Xiu, a member of the main force of Qian’s literary group, naturally succeeded him as chief of the literary circle. For one thing, other members of Qian’s literary group, including Mei Yaochen and Yin Zhu, also provided strong support to Ouyang in this regard.

For another, many younger literati admired and defended Ouyang Xiu. Qian and Ouyang did a lot to encourage and promote younger literati and brought together a literary community in the process. Such a strong cohesive force consolidated their position as chief of the literary circle. According to the *Anecdotes of Our Late Father* by Ouyang Xiu’s sons, “Our late father tasked himself with rewarding and promoting younger talented literati. If he got to know any able

and virtuous official-scholars, no matter how obscure they were, he would praise and recommend them as possible within his own capacity”.

According to the article *On Ouyang Xiu's Social Intercourse and Literary Success* by Luo (2017), when Ouyang was chief of the literary circle, he organized 26 explicitly recorded banquets at which more than half of the guests were younger literati, including Zeng Gong, Wang Anshi, Su Xun and Su Shi. According to the article *The Friendship Between Ouyang Xiu and Wang Anshi* by Gu (2001), in the fourth year of the Qingli era (1044), Zeng Gong recommended Wang Anshi to Ouyang Xiu via the *Petition to Secretary Ouyang*. In 1045, Zeng took Wang's articles to visit Ouyang in Chuzhou. Ever since, Ouyang instructed Wang's writing via Zeng's letters.

6. A Cherished Lifetime Memory

Luoyang was fondly remembered by Ouyang Xiu for the rest of his life. His memory of the Western Capital transcended time and space and occupied every corner of his state of mind. Wherever he was, whatever he did and in whatever situation, he always kept in mind those vibrant years in Luoyang together with close friends. The author found that, from the second year of the Mingdao era (1033), when Ouyang Xiu left Luoyang, to the third year of the Xining era (1070), two years before he died of illness, he wrote 22 poems to express his fond memory of Luoyang.

In the second year of the Huangyou era (1050), he wrote the following lines of verse:

“I still remember those youthful days in Luoyang, when we often raised wine glasses against flowers. How many of us are still alive twenty years on? Only a woeful few who mostly had parted ways” (Ouyang & Li, 2007).

“At gatherings in Luoyang when peonies bloomed, drunken guests often slept at the host's house. When I saw the herbaceous peonies in Yangzhou, I drank all night till dawn thinking of old days. No other flower rivals Luoyang's tree peonies, and no other drinking party rivals those in Luoyang. Now white-haired and in the spring wind again, why do I bother hating my poor, sick eyes?” (Ouyang & Li, 2007).

In that year, Ouyang could barely see things clearly due to poor eyesight, but he still remembered those good old days.

In the sixth year of the Jiayou era (1061), he wrote the following poem:

“So excited to receive your letter and fresh flowers, I lost myself in enjoying them over wine. I used to stay in Luoyang in the early years. Now with better eyesight I saw Weizi peonies again. Back then I was a young adviser to the governor, but today I have become a white-haired old man. Looking westward I could not visit the city with you. Recalling the rosy days I just chanted a few lines” (Ouyang & Li, 2007).

In this poem, Ouyang looked westward, but there was no old friend there.

When he mulled over this poem, he was immensely saddened by his vivid memories of the past. The people and things in Luoyang, where Ouyang Xiu's career started, left deep marks on him.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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