

A Study on the Monk Official Yang Lianzhenjia in the Yuan Dynasty

Jianchun Shao^{1,2,a}, Hongyun Wu^{3,b,*}

¹Academic Affairs Office of Beijing City University, Beijing, China

²Graduate School of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, China

³Jingdezhen College, Jingdezhen, China

^ajdzsjc@163.com, ^b2589513415@qq.com

*corresponding author

Keywords: Monk Official; Yang Lianzhenjia; Tibetan Buddhism; Worshipping Buddhism and Suppressing Taoism; Disparaging Zen

Abstract: Yang Lianzhenjia was born in Western Xia Dynasty. He was a monk of the Tibetan Buddhism. At the beginning of the pacification of South China, he was trusted by Kublai Khan, the founder of the Yuan Dynasty, and was appointed president of South China in charge of Buddhist affairs. During his time as a senior monk official in Hangzhou, President Yang relied on Samgha, a powerful official, to uphold Kublai Khan's orders, to worship Buddhism and suppress Taoism, to suppress Zen Buddhism. He built pagodas and temples, and he excavated stone statues of Piraebong to spread propaganda and promote Tibetan Buddhism, and to maintain the dominance of the Yuan Dynasty in the south of the Yangtze River. In character evaluation, Yang Lianzhenjia's contribution to the mission of spreading Buddhism in Hangzhou should not be denied although he excavated the tombs of the Song emperors.

1. Introduction

Buddhism was highly respected in the Yuan Dynasty. In the first year of Zhongtong (1260), Kublai Khan, first emperor of the Yuan Dynasty, canonized Drogön Chögyal Phagpa as a Buddhist National Master, and in the seventh year of Zhiyuan (1270), Drogön Chögyal Phagpa as a Buddhist Emperor Master. The first emperor of the Yuan Dynasty, Kublai Khan, followed the system of Buddhist Emperor Master, made Tibetan Buddhism the state religion, and lived above other Buddhist sects.

2. Yang Lianzhenjia's position

As the former capital of the Southern Song Dynasty, Hangzhou is the center of politics, economy and culture in the south of the Yangtze River. There are many temples and adherents in Hangzhou, among which Zen Buddhism is the most powerful. By the 13th year of the Yuan Dynasty (1276), the Yuan army had captured Lin'an City and the Southern Song Dynasty was destroyed. In order to control South China, Emperor Kublai Khan adopted a series of measures to win people's hearts and minds, and the implementation of the new religious policy in South China was one of the measures. In February of the 14th year of Zhiyuan (1277), the imperial edict took the monks Kang Jixiang, Liangzhenjia and Jiawa as the presidents of the south of the Yangtze River.^[1] The three presidents are all SEMU people. Handing over the management of Buddhist affairs in the newly conquered southern heartland to three foreign monks meant that Kublai Khan was wary of the southern Buddhist community, which might have been influenced by the remnants of the Song Dynasty, and sought to nip it in the bud.

As the emperor of the ethnic Mongols, Kublai Khan has long been wary of the Han Chinese, who make up the majority of the population. The Li Tan's rebellion, which took place in the third year of Zhongtong, shocked Kublai Khan so much that he became more wary of Han officials in his employment policies. In 1265, Kublai Khan officially issued the employment policy of the

government that the Mongol as the Darughachi, the Han as the General Manager, and the Hui people as the Equal Officer. In other words, while having to use Han officials to handle specific affairs, a Mongolian official was assigned to supervise and a Hui people official of equal power was assigned to contain the situation. According to Deng Ruiling's paper "Hangzhou Xing Xuanzhengyuan in the Yuan Dynasty", there were 12 emissaries from Hangzhou Xing Xuanzhengyuan after the presidents of Jianghuai Buddhist capitals, all of whom were of Mongolian or SEMU origin. We can learn that the rulers of the Yuan Dynasty were wary of the Jiangnan region.

There was no Tibetan Buddhism in Hangzhou in the past. According to the history of Han and Tibet, Emperor Drogön Chögyal Phagpa sent his disciple, Dagon Bu, to preach in the south of the Yangtze River, shaving 947 men in just one year. These disciples taught one another, and Tibetan Buddhism sprang up.^[2] Dagon Bu was the first monk to spread Tibetan Buddhism to South China. But the greatest contributor to the spread of Tibetan Buddhism to the South was the monk official Yang Lianzhenjia.

3. Yang Lianzhenjia's parentage

Yang Lianzhenjia, also known as President Yang, Master of Yongfu. There was no written record about the family and life of Yang Lianzhenjia. According to the textual research of Mr. Chen Gaohua, he was a native of Tangut Dynasty.^[3] Mr. Lai Tianbing demonstrated the same result based on the inscription in the book of Puning Collection and the features of Hairstyle of the Western Xia people. In addition, Judged from his friendship with Monk Michiyasu, the chief of the Puning Temple and a member of the Royal Family of Tangut, the Organization of Printing "Dazang Jing" in Tangut language, It could be confirmed that Yang Lianzhenjia came from the country of Tangut.

In the year of 1227, the Western Xia Dynasty was conquered, but the Tibetan Buddhism did not decline. Hexi region became the base of the master's mission to the Mongol rulers, a relay station for the dissemination of Tibetan Buddhism to the mainland and a base for the transportation of monks and officials. During the Yuan Dynasty, the monks in Hexi region were very active. They served as a bridge between the Tibetan Buddhism and the Mongol rulers, and between the Tibetan Buddhism and the Han Buddhism. The monks in Hexi region, who are well-versed in both Tibetan and Chinese languages, have obvious linguistic advantages and manage religious affairs in the Southern Han Culture Centre. They naturally encounter less ethnic and religious barriers than the monks in Tibet. On the other hand, although the Sakya monks in Tibet enjoyed high prestige in the Yuan Dynasty, there were not many Tibetan monks working in the inland areas, because they did not speak Chinese, and because of the long journey, it was inconvenient for them to be requisitioned. Against this background, it was natural that Yang Lianzhenjia, a monk in Hexi, took the post of Buddhist president in the south of the Yangtze River, leading the Buddhist affairs there and promoting the Tibetan Buddhism.

4. Building a tower and five temples

The conflict between Buddhism and Taoism had been going on for a long time. In Kublai Khan's time, Buddhism was revered as a Sycophant, Buddhism was valued over Taoism, and temples were built. According to the story of the Buddha through the ages, "the southern Buddhist President Lianzhenjia, was greatly honored and consecrated, and for three years more than 30 Buddhist temples were restored." ^[4] President Yang built a new pagoda and five monasteries on the ruins of a palace of the southern Song Dynasty. The Palace of the Southern Song Dynasty was located at the Phoenix Mountain in Hangzhou. However, the good times did not last long. After the death of the Song Dynasty, it was destroyed by fire. It took only about three years for President Yang to build a pagoda and five temples. According to the records of the Grand Newspaper of the Phoenix Mountain Zen in Yuan Dynasty, the purpose of building a new temple was to show the prestige of the Yuan Dynasty. One of them is the Zunsheng Pagoda, also known as the White Pagoda. Its shape was like a pot, commonly known as a bottle pagoda, could be known as the Tibetan Buddhism Sakya Gathangkyudun, Similar to White Tower in the Great Longevity Temple in the capital of

the Yuan Dynasty.^[5]The five temples refer to Baoguo, Xingyuan, Prajna, Xianlin and Zunsheng, which belong to different Buddhist sects. Baoguo temple belongs to Zen, Xingyuan Temple to Tiantai, prajna temple to Baiyun, Xianlin Temple to Ci en, and Zunsheng Temple to Tibetan Buddhism.^[6] President Yang represented the five sects with the five temples, He introduced a new Tibetan Buddhism, he recognized the legitimacy of the Folk Baiyun Sect, he supported the weaker Cien sect and the more intimate Tiantai sect. Zen Buddhism in the south, the most powerful, had also been divided into two, one was the Utilitarian Zen, close to the court, and the other one was mountains and Forests Zen, the intention to alienate the court. His intention was clear, and his subjective desire was still to carry out Kublai Khan's religious policies, spread Tibetan Buddhism, suppress Zen, create conflicts between Buddhism and other sects, and strengthen his control over religion in the south of the Yangtze River. But in the objective results also to a certain extent to promote the Sino-Tibetan cultural communication and exchange, and promote the development and prosperity of Buddhist schools of thought and culture.

5.To excavate statues of Piraebong

There are 68 shrines and 117 statues of Yuan Dynasty in Piraebong, Hangzhou. Among them, there are 33 shrines and 47 Tibetan Buddhism statues. The earliest date of the excavation is the year of 1282 and the latest is the year of 1292.^[7]The Stone Sculpture Group of the Yuan Dynasty in Piraebong, Hangzhou, is the essence of the existing Buddhist sculpture art of the Yuan Dynasty in China, which makes up for the lack of the decline of the grotto art from the late Tang Dynasty.^[8]These stone sculptures were first constructed by Yang Lianzhenjia, president of Buddhism in the south of the Yangtze River under the support of the Yuan Government.

In Piraebong, there is a statue of Wuliangshou Buddha, under which is "praise to the stone statue of the land of Buddha in Hangzhou of the Great Yuan State". It is clear from the eulogy written by Zen Master Hu Yanjing in Lingyin Temple that the statues of the Yuan Dynasty in Piraebong were carved one after another under the leadership of Master Yang Lianzhenjia, and with the financial support of prominent officials in the provincial governments of Jiangsu and Zhejiang. President Yang started the construction of stone statues in the Yuan Dynasty in Piraebong. Mountains of stone have been carved into various statues of Buddha. He also actively disseminated Tibetan Buddhism art and expanded the influence of Tibetan Buddhism, the Piraebong grottoes have reached their zenith in the south. Undoubtedly, President Yang played a key role in the introduction of the Tibetan Buddhism and its artistic forms to the south of the Yangtze River in the early Yuan Dynasty, some of President Yang's actions objectively provided a direct opportunity for the cultural collision and exchange between Han and Tibetan nationalities in the Yuan Dynasty.^[9]

6. Conclusion

Born in Hexi in the Western Xia Dynasty, Yang Lianzhenjia was a monk who knew both Chinese and Tibetan languages. He was appointed as the president of the southern Chinese Buddhism after the Yuan Emperor Kublai Khan trusted him, in charge of Buddhist affairs in Jiangnan. During his time as a senior monk official in Hangzhou, Yang Lianzhenjia took the powerful official Samgha as his patron, carried out faithfully the religious policy of South China formulated by the Emperor Kublai Khan of the Yuan Dynasty, respected Buddhism and suppressed Taoism, and suppressed Zen Buddhism, and actively promoted the Tibetan Buddhism, He tried to eliminate the influence of the former Song Dynasty in spirit and culture to maintain the dominant position of the Yuan Dynasty in the South of the Yangtze River.

Under the guidance of this policy, Yang Lianzhenjia actively participated in the dissemination of Tibetan Buddhism. He vigorously organized the construction of South China Monasteries and expanded the influence of Buddhism, and launched the stone carving movement in Piraebong, Hangzhou to create a number of high-quality works of art in the South China Caves. In a word, the missionary activities of Yang Lianzhenjia, a monk official in Hangzhou in the Yuan Dynasty, in the south of the Yangtze River. On the one hand, He had the subjective consideration, He carried out

Kublai Khan's religious policy, suppressed Zen Buddhism, prevented and controlled the Buddhism in the south of the Yangtze River, He tried his best to eliminate the influence of the former dynasty to maintain the rule of the Yuan Dynasty; On the other hand, in objective effect, he spread the Tibetan Buddhism, he injected fresh blood to South China Buddhism, and he promoted Sino Tibetan cultural exchanges. At the same time, Yang Lianzhen's venality and perfidy, especially his behavior of excavating the tombs of the emperors of the Song Dynasty, seriously hurt the feelings of the Chinese people and caused the eternal name-calling. Frankly speaking, President Yang's grave robbery is unforgivable, but we can not deny his contribution to the cultural exchange between Han and Tibetan nationalities and the development of Chinese Buddhist art just because President Yang has excavated the tombs of the song emperors.

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