

## The Yuhua Palace in Zhending: a Memorial to Tolui

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### Abstract

The Yuhua Palace in Zhending was built by the order of Shizu of Yuan, Kublai, in memory of his father Tolui, and mother Sorhaghtani. It served as the family temple of Tolui. The Taoist Master Wang daofu was in charge of it. Her original name was Saruq. She was once one of Tolui's concubines and the feeding mother of Kublai. Ancestor worship is the cultural heritage of China. The royal family put the utmost importance on the Yu Hua Temple. The image hall (影堂) which is mainly originated from the traditions of local places of the Han, but mixes with cultural elements of different religions. The image hall is also called separate shrine (原庙), and the royal hall is the place in which the royal family adore the images of their forefathers.

### Keywords

The Yuhua Palace, Saruq, the separate shrine, the image hall

Tolui and Empress Dowager Zhuangsheng, or the family temple of Empress Dowager Zhuangsheng and Tolui was ever in Zhen Ding.

It is recorded in "Biographical sketches of Shi Zu" in *The History of Yuan Dynasty* that on July 29, the second year of Zhong Tong (1261), from Shi Zu, "A royal order was announced to Wang the old master, asking her to be in charge of the Yuhua Temple." "Written on it is 'the Taoist Master Wang Daofu is honest in nature, and strong in will, who is very like those ancient women of honor and dignity. She has waited on my father emperor and mother queen for years, during which she managed quite well without any improper conduct. And she was so respected that she was asked to join Daoism.' Because of that, she is often granted by the late emperor."

As for the name of the Taoist master, quite a lot of literature refers it as Wang Daogui as in "In July, the second year of Zhong Tong (1261), Shi Zu ordered Wang Daogui the Taoist Master

to build in Zhen Ding the Taoist Temple, named Yu Hua”<sup>1</sup> and in “(Shi Zu) ordered Wang Daogui to build in Zhen Ding a Taoist Temple, named Yu Hua.”<sup>2</sup>. But it is actually Wang Daofu.

The emperor “has decreed that the civil official select a fine site for the construction of the palace and temple, and provide dressing and food for it. And it will retain the name Yu Hua. It will become the very place for my family to pray for blessings, where incense will be burning and scriptures will be chanting day and night for the return of the boundless love from my great father and mother. The local offices should protect it from any invasion or occupation and guard it against any disturbance by corvee. Often instruct them to pray for good fortune and longevity to the offspring of the royal family. Take this as standard.”<sup>3</sup> The Yu Hua Palace “is for my family’s prayer”, “for worship of the emperor father and Queen mother at the their death anniversaries.” Thus, it became the royal palace and temple. Since then all the sacrifice rites were held here in the Yu Hua Palace, from Zhida, Huangqing, Zhishun, Yuantong to Zhizheng period.

Liu Yueshen <sup>4</sup> of Luling recorded what “Esen Buqa (Isan Buqa), vice officer of Gust-Reception Department, told him about his great-grand mother: “ my great grand mother, Master Wang, waited on Empress Dowager Xian Yi Zhuang sheng for years, which showed her great virtue, and thanks to her great care, the emperor Sheng Shen Wen Wu was born out of a ten-month full pregnancy. the Empress Dowager so praised her utmost loyalty and the emperor so remembered the great care she gave him that Yu Hua Place was ordered to be built in Zhen Ding.” As It can be seen that Wang Daofu followed Zhuang Shen for quite a few years, and served as nurse as well. And this was also recorded by what is known by latter generations as Yu Hua Stele .

Esen Buqa, that is Wang Esen Buqa, died in about 1340 and was Wang Han’s father. Wang Han (1333-1378), was born in Ling Wu (in Gan Su Province today), with Nomuhan (Namuhan), Yong Wen and You Shi Shan Ren as his original, courtesy and literary names respectively. His ancestors were of Han Nationality in the area of Qi. They moved to Ling Wu in Wu Dai period, and later became Xi Xia people. At the beginning of the Yuan Dynasty, the forefathers joined the Mongol Army in conquering the region of Jiangnan, and were granted the surname Tangwuer (兀氏). And due to his merit in conquering Jianghuai region, Wang Han’s great-grand father was ranked as Wu De general, who was in commend of one thousand soldiers. And because he was assigned to guard Lu Zhou (now Hefei, Anhui Province), he made it home, thus a fellow townsman with Yu Que, who was a famous poet of Semu people and representative of loyalty at the end of the Yuan Dynasty. In his early life, Wang Han experienced terrible suffering. His mother died

<sup>1</sup> Wang Qi (明朝王圻). An Examination of Taoism and Buddhism . Vol. 240 of *Xu Wen Xian Tong Kao* (《续文献通考》), block-printed edition from the Government office of Song Jiang, the thirtieth year of Wan Li of Ming Dynasty (明万历三十年松江府刻本). Ke Shaomin.(民国柯劭忞). Zhi 52. Vol 85 of *The New History of Yuan Dynasty* (Tui Geng Tang Edition) (《新元史》卷八十五志五十二退耕堂本), the ninth year of Min Guo.

<sup>2</sup> Song Lian (明朝宋濂). “Biography 4.” *The Official History of the Yuan Dynasty* (Vol. 4), Wuying Palace, Qianlong Period of Qing. (《元史》, 卷四本纪第四。清乾隆武英殿本)

<sup>3</sup> Wang Yun (元朝王恽). *Collection of Wang Yun’s Writing* . *Qiu Jian Xian Sheng Da Quan Wen Ji* ( Vol.82 ) (《秋涧集》, 卷八十二), Si Bu Cong Kan Ben in Jing Ming Hong Zhi version (四部丛刊景明弘治本) .

<sup>4</sup> Liu Yueshen (1260--?) (刘岳申 1260—?), with Gao Zhong and Shen Zhai as his zi and hao respectively, was Born in Ji Shui County, Jiangxi Province, China. He was of great talent and scholarship. Even as teenage, he was so appreciated by the then important scholar officials , like Wucheng (吴澄 1249-1333) and Yuji (虞集 1272-1348) that they recommended him to take the office as vice Ti Ju (副提举) for Confucianism in Liao Yang (辽阳), which he declined. Then he was recommended as deputy governor (州判) of the province of Taihe (太和州), which he accepted. He was highly complimented by his neighborhood as well as by later generations for his joyful way of talking with his guests, and for his way of doing by following the words of those ancestors and sages. More importantly, He was an erudite, who was good at argument and justification. He wrote in the style which could be described as “clean and smooth”. Though his writings added up to more than one thousand piece, more than half of them got lost because of turbulence. Those that survived were collected as *Shen Zhai Ji* (申斋集).

when he was five years old, and his father died three years later. He was brought up by his step mother surnamed Sun, and later became an official of the Yuan Dynasty. In the first year of Hong Wu of the Ming Dynasty (1368) Wang Han made attempt to travel by sea to hide himself in Jiaozhi or Zhan Cheng, but Failed to achieve it. So he stopped and lived in Guan Lie Shan mountain and Long Quan mountain in Yongfu, covering his name, “dressing in shoes made of Kudzu with rope, rubbing shoulder with wood boys and cowboys, peasants and fishermen”, and talking with others about the classics of Buddhism which he wanted join. He had lived a free and comfortable life, drinking and reciting poetry, reading and teaching his children, and wandering in the wood, for about ten years before he was discovered by the court in the eleventh year of Hong Wu of Ming (1378). The imperial edict was announced, which ordered him go to court. At that, Wang Han sighed “How I could change to serve the different court.” And he knew quite well that he had no choice but to die for the Yuan Dynasty. So he killed himself after having trusted his family to his friend Wu Hai. As far as the identity of his family is concerned, there are some scholars who think they were not of Han Nationality, but Naiman.

The emperor put in the Yuhua Palace those who were close to his elder generation, and the ancestor temple was for the family to pray for blessings. “The great-grand mother learnt Taoism in it, and The Xiao Si Hall has been built, in which Empress Dowager Zhuang Sheng asked Emperor Rui Zong to enjoy the food sacrificed to him. And the Yuhua palace would then be provided with dresses and land for endless years, and protected by generations ever to come. That is my wish and prayer. The stele is thus to be established to keep a record of this even. I wish the Supreme Ruler of Heaven make it prosperous, and sages of the past bring it luck, and Mother of intelligence and moral make it auspicious. Their protection is its life, which is beyond human power. Though humans has power, it is from heaven; though there are guides, they are also from its blessings. Therefore, the emperor is showing his respect and recollection of his mother in heaven, and the separate shrine is echoing in distance with the imperial ancestral shrine, like the Sun and the Moon. The building of the palace is to justify the maternal esteem, and the construction of the Hall is to spread the filial piety. That is one action which serves two good ends. “ From that, the building of the YuHua Place embraces four layers of significance, that is , to function as Taoist Temple, to remember Tolui, to honor Zhuangshen, and to show Shizu’s filial duty. That is why it was called separate shrine, or family temple, whose relationship to the imperial ancestral temple is like that between the Sun and the Moon.

There are some scholars pointing out after careful studies that the identity of the woman in charge of the Yu Hua Palace was worth noticing. She was of Naiman in birth, surname Dalu, first name Saruq. In 1204, the Mongolian defeated Tayang Khan, and destroyed the Naimans. And In 1218 Jeksi the Mongolian great general led the force to attack Kara Khitai, and killed Kuchlug. And Kuchlug’s daughter Lingqun became wife of Tolui, the youngest son of Genghis Khan. In some year before that,<sup>5</sup> Saruq appeared in the Mongol court. “Firstly she served as waitress, and then became one of the wife and concubines of Tolui when she was just over twenty years old. In 1215 Sorhaghtani, (Khatun Tang) , Tolui’s principal wife, gave birth to Kublai. Two years later, Saruq gave birth to Moge. it was possibly for her good physical condition which made her a better nurse to Kublai, who Genghis Khan loved the most among his grandsons that Saruq was ordered

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<sup>5</sup>According to *Jami’al--Tarkh*, Kuchlug (Kushluk Khan) was defeated (1218), and his daughter Lingqun was caught, who later became wife of Tolui. And it is recorded in *Jami’al—Tarkh* that Saruq became his feeding mother shortly after Kublai was born in 1215. So Saruq entered the Mongolian court earlier than Lingqun did. The possible reason why *Jami’al—Tarkh* writes about Lingqun prior to Saruq is that as daughter of Kuchlug, she was nobler than the latter . And Lingqun was mentioned with the appellation as Khatun and wife of Tolui, while Saruq was called concubine.

to become Kublai's feeding mother. Her own son Moge was however handed over to others for nursing."<sup>6</sup>

*Jami'al--Tarkh* in the Farsi language registered Genghis Khan's words to Sorhaghtani that she should find a good feeding mother for the little black grand son.

"She regarded him as her own child, and did her utmost to look after him." Those words in Rashid's *Jami'al--Tarkh* find expression in the Yu Hua Palace stele as it says "The Empress Dowager so praised her utmost loyalty and the emperor so remembered the great care she gave him". She was playing double parts as both waitress and feeding mother. "The elder Aunt Wang" waited on Tolui and his wife year in and year out, and "she managed quite well without any improper". She was "great-grand mother by father's side", not "great-grand mother by mother's side", of Yesen Buqa the deputy officer of the Guest Reception Department. It is said in *Jami'al--Tarkh* that after her death, Kublai "often remembered her, and gave donation to comfort her soul." It is not hard for us to imagine sacrifice rites in the shadow hall of the Yuhua Palace and their important position in the family temple of the Yuan Dynasty.

"Over 40 years between 1215 when she became the feeding mother and 1261 when Kublai Khan gave order to build Yuhua Palace for her, Saruq was completely out of historical record, and nothing was known about her." "In 1232, Tolui died, and Saruq became widowed in her forties. Tolui's principal wife Sorhaghtani refused Great Khan Ogodei's demand of her to marry his Son Guyuk, and led the army and governed the people by herself to maintain the feudality of Tolui. It was likely that Saruq also confronted the dilemma of choosing between widow and remarriage. It was said in the Imperial Edict for Protection and Support "the Taoist Master Wang Daofu is pure and upright in nature, and unshakable in her will, who has the spirit of those ancient heroines." "What will did Wang Daofu or Saruq keep and what spirit of the ancient heroin did she have?" "the most feasible and reasonable answer is that Saruq turned down the nomadic convention of succession of marriage, and refuses to remarry. The Yuha Palace was built in Zhending, and Zhending was of feudality of Tolui's family. It shows that Saruq had never separated herself from the Tolui's since he became member of Tolui's family."

In 1251, Tolui's eldest son Mongke took the throne. In the same year, Kublai took by order the ruling of the land of the Han people to the south of the Gobi Desert. "in 1252, Khatun Tang died. By then. The husband and his chief wife who Saruq had waited on for years left the world. It remains unknown whether Saruq had been with them and waited on them all the time when the couple were still alive. When Mongke was attacking Sichuan, Saruq's son Moge followed him with his own army." "Moge had contact with Taoist figures, and did not reject Taoism. Kublai and his half brother Moge regarded China as the core of their activities, and their experience in China had no little influence on the final decision made by Saruq, once as feeding and birth giving mother to them respectively, to live alone in China. In 1260 Kublai took the throne at the age of 46, when Saruq was in her old age. To honor her for the great devotion in feeding and nursing, service, and heroine example setting, Kublai had a Taoist temple built so that she could realize her hope to join Taoism. For the excuse that she was born of Naiman, and Naiman was destroyed by the Mongolian, people avoided talking about her life, and called her "old Aunt Wang", a honorific appellation, similar to "old grand-mother".<sup>7</sup>

The royal family put the utmost importance on the Yu Hua Temple. "It should be proper that the sons and grand-sons of the emperor shall keep it for years without end. Though as a local official in distance I do not know the exact time when the palace was built, I have heard of the

<sup>6</sup> Hong Jinfu. "the Unfathomable Enigma of Kublai's Feeding Mother", Gu jin Lun Heng (21), 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Hong Jinfu. "the Unfathomable enigma of Kublai's Feeding Mother", Gu Jin Lun Heng (21), 2010.

protocol officer's talking about the dismissal of the master of ceremony and musicians. Considering that I had nothing to offer to meet the expectation of the sons and grand sons with filial piety, I bowed down and dedicated a poem for carving, which reads: "Xuan Wang, forefather of the people Yin, was born in the order of the almighty. And the fore father of the tribe of Zhou was born as a result of his mother's fitting her foot in the Almighty's foot mark. But our Yuan cannot be traced back to the early ancient history. Calculated from the beginning of the world, there have been quite a few founding emperors, but ours is the greatest., who united the world, the most remote areas included. And all the parties are united, the remotest corner involved. "In memory of the mother, who had given him greatest care and nursing, the emperor decided that a new palace be built in the fief. To the new temple should be given the taxes from the people and land, and sacrifice in winter and autumn. Later generations should not forget the lasting virtues of the emperor, the son of the heaven. Let us pray for order and blessing which will be lasting forever. I write the poem to make lasting the thought of filial piety, in the hope that it will go on forever together with the temple whose gold bells will ring forever as well." <sup>8</sup> "It was for the royal temple, which enshrines Ruizong" <sup>9</sup>

Ancestor worship is the cultural heritage of China. There are three versions of it in the Yuan Dynasty, namely imperial ancestor temple (or Taimiao) originated from the culture of Han people, qoś originated from the Mongol, and the image hall which is mainly originated from the traditions of local places of the Han, but mixes with cultural elements of different religions. The image hall is also called separate shrine, and the royal hall is the place in which the royal family adore the images of their forefathers. There are altogether 24 image halls set up in the Yuan Dynasty. Among them, the most magnificent is for sure the Yua Hua Palace. There exist other two image halls for Empress Dowager Zhuang Sheng. They are the image hall of Empress Dowager Beki of the Cross Temple in Ganzhou, and the image hall of arkagun of the Jinggong memorial archway. But it is in the Yuhua palace that Empress Dowager Zhuangshen is worshiped with Tolui, which is not the situation for the other two. The building of family shrine is mostly proposed from the bottom up. For example, it was Wangyun who proposed that a family shrine for Tolui be built in Junzhou.<sup>10</sup>

As for the Yuhua Palace, there are lines in the poem "Watching the Moon of Mid Autumn on the New Bridge over the river of Songjiang: a reply to Liuling's", which reads "The Buddhist will understand it as a world of silver, while the Taoists will call it the Yuhua Palace where most divine dwell"<sup>11</sup>. Here it is very interesting that the Yuhua palace has nothing to do with Zhuangsheng's belief Christianity.

The Yuhua Palace was in the north of the official city, and east of Tan Yuan. It "is the holy palace for the portrait of Emperor Ruizong Rensheng Jingxiang, where worship and sacrifice is done to the emperor's portrait. Outside rise red wooden poles (which express filial piety) and a wall. All around stand lines of willows and locust trees. By its double door there are spears hanging black cloth. And the temple is grand with a long corridor, and the colors of gold and green reflect with one another. The whole building looks grand and magnificent like an imperial court. There are Taoist priests, who burn the oil lights, and guards, who keep the door. On certain days

<sup>8</sup> Liu Yueshen. "Stele of Yu Hua Palace", in "Monument" of Vol.7 of *Shen Zhai Ji. Si Kun Quan Shu*, Wen Yuan Ge, Qing Dynasty.

<sup>9</sup> Ke Shaomin. "Geography One", in Zhi No. 23 of Vol. 46 of *The New History of the Yuan Dynasty*. More about the issue of Tolui in Yuha Palce, Zhending, see Liu Yingsheng. "From Seven-Place to Eight-Place Worship: the Mongolian and Han Elements in the Tai Miao Worship in Kublai's Reign. Yuan Shi Lun Cong

<sup>10</sup> Ma Xiaolin. *Marco Polo and Chinese Texts and Etiquette and Custom of Yuan Dynasty* (马可波罗与元代中国文本与礼俗). Shanghai: Zhong Xi Shu Ju. 2018: p 146.

<sup>11</sup> Su Shun-qin. "Watching the Moon of Mid Autumn on the New Bridge over the river of Songjiang: a reply to Liuling's". Collection of Su Shun-qin's works (Vol. 7). Proofread and Reviewed by Sheng Wen-zhuo, Shanghai: Shanghai Gu Ji, 1981: p 80.

of the year, head of the secretariat is to report to the emperor on the sacrifice, and then ask officials of Jixianyuan to offer incense and sweet wine on behalf of the imperial, and send master of ceremony and the musicians, followed by officials in Yunnan, and local officials of Zhending, all in official dress, to offer the sacrifices of domestic animals, and perform the ritual of three serves.”<sup>12</sup>

What about the inside of the image hall? Let us have a look at Khanbaliq, where other emperors and empresses are worshiped: “the places of the image halls: the Sizu and empress’ in the Da Sheng Shou Wan’an Temple...there are twelve jade books and one jade seal kept both in Sizu’s and Wuzong’s. In Renzong’s are kept twelve jade books for the prince, and twelve jade books and one jade seal for the empress, and in Yingzong’s twelve jade books and one jade seal for the emperor, and twelve jade books for the prince. All the books and seals are kept in cabinets, and the cabinet and its keys are kept separately. As for sacrificial vessels, there are gold Jia, plate, Yu and the like, counted in teens, incense boxes, bowls and dishes, and the like, of gold with painted silver, counted in hundreds, and silver kettles, pots, cups, Yi, and the like, also in hundreds. Vessels in jade, crystal, or agate vary in numbers. There are also glass vessels and amber ladles. In the image hall for Sizu there are a pearl curtain as well as coral trees and chrysocolla hill, and the like.

As for sacrificial ritual, “The usual dates for sacrifice is the first, eighth, fifteenth, and twenty-third days of the month, and the festivals for sacrifice include the new year’s day, Qingming Festival, Duanwu Festival, the Double-ninth day, Winter Solstice Festival, and death days. Things for tomb rite are vegetable and fruit for usual days, and domestic animals for festivals and death days. Sacrifice officials will perform the three serve rites. Things for sacrifice include lamb, grilled fish, steamed bun, Xi Yu noodle, porridge, and rice soup with powdered sugar.”<sup>13</sup>

The “image” in image hall means figure just like “shadow” in the folk art of shadow play. “the royal temple of emperor’s portrait was called image hall in the past. The portraits of the ancestors are embroidered in brocade made by Adornment service.” There were portraits which were drawn and then embroidered. In the seventh year of Yan You (1320), Botimur, the Chief administrator, was informed by the emperor’s order to employ skilled craftsmen and artists to draw by following the imperial image of Shizu the portraits of Renzong and Empress Dowager Zhuang Yi Ci, which measure 9.3 Chi in height and 8 Chi in Width. And “it is ordered that the portraits be firstly drawn, and then embroidered”. In the second year of Tian Li (1329), there went to Dong A the Chief Administrator, and A Mu-fu vice administrator of Chuzheng Yuan the imperial order, which read “I will have the portrait of my mother the empress drawn, and ask Darughachi A Zhan of Zhusefu, Manager Du, Manager Cai and Tidiao Li Xiaoyan to draw it soon.” As followed are the things used for drawing: 2500g common powder, 2500g gelatin, 400g Huihui Green, 400 g Huihui rouge, 500g Huihui pepper, 1500g red flower, 60g god paint, 500g Huangzihong (黄子红), 1500g court powder, 400g purple, 50eggs, 5500g raw azurite, 80 chi<sup>14</sup> black silk with floral pattern, 400g five-colored down, 40 Chi bright red silk with floral pattern, 40 chi red silk, 7 chi silk with purple plum bloom pattern, one roller of red sandalwood, and one frontal stripe of basswood, 300g silver.”

The earliest imperial portraits in the image hall were made of brocade, which remind us of K’o-ssu. But they were later shown by painting, which was in possible connection with Thang-ga.

Thang-ga, the translation from its Tibetan pronunciation, refers to religious pictures with roller which are framed by colored satin and hung up for worship. It is a very unique artistic style of

<sup>12</sup> Na Xing. *Visiting the Ancient in He Shuo* (Vol. 1) (河朔访古记,卷上).

<sup>13</sup> Ke Shaomin. Part 2 of “Zhong Miao”, in Rite 5 of Zhi No. 52. of Vol. 85 of *The New History of Yuan Dynasty*.

<sup>14</sup> In the Yuan Dynasty, 1 chi is equal to 0.3168 meter.

Tibetan culture for remarkable ethnic character and strong religious features. The painting material for Thang-ga comes totally from rare minerals and precious stones like gold, silver, pearl, agate, coral, topus, malachite, and cinnabar, as well as from plant and flowers like saffron, rhubarb, indigo among others.

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