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# Zhao Mengfu's Inscription on the *Stele of Chan Master Yu Gong's Virtuous Conduct* and the Buddhist-Daoist Controversy in the Yuan Dynasty

Dong Rui

## Abstract

The *Stele of Chan Master Yu Gong's Virtuous Conduct* is preserved at the Shaolin Temple in Dengfeng County, Henan Province. This stele, written by Zhao Mengfu under an imperial commission during the Yuan Dynasty, holds significant calligraphic value. Zhao Mengfu, a devout Buddhist, had profound interactions with prominent monks, and his inscription for Chan Master Yu Gong reflects his deep connection with Buddhism. The stele records Chan Master Yu Gong's life and the specific timing of a Buddhist-Daoist debate he led, providing corrections to errors in historical documents and related studies.

## Key Words

Chan Master Yu Gong, Zhao Mengfu, Shaolin Temple, Quanzhen Sect

Zhao Mengfu (1254-1322) was a renowned artist of the Yuan Dynasty, excelling in both calligraphy and painting. Over 200 of his stele inscriptions survive, eighteen of which are located in Henan Province.<sup>1</sup> The *Stele of Chan Master Yu Gong's Virtuous Conduct* (裕公道行碑), by Zhao Mengfu from the Yuan Dynasty, has been preserved by the Henan Provincial Institute of Literature and History.<sup>2</sup> Although this stele is absent from major collections such as *Songxuezhai Ji* (松雪齋集), *Collected Works of Zhao Mengfu* (趙孟頫文集), and *Zhao Mengfu Ji* (趙孟頫集), the rubbing holds substantial value. Chan Master Yu Gong is recognized as the twenty-fifth abbot of the Shaolin Temple and the fifteenth patriarch of the Caodong Sect. He is revered as a restorer of the temple, and the stele is of great significance for its historical, cultural, and artistic insights. This paper explores Chan Master Yu Gong's influence during the Yuan Dynasty, Zhao Mengfu's reasons for inscribing the stele, and its implications for Yuan-era Buddhist studies.

## 1. Chan Master Yu Gong and the Stele Inscription

The *Stele of Chan Master Yu Gong's Virtuous Conduct* (裕公道行碑) was erected in November of the first year of the Yanyou (延祐) era (1314). Its title panel measures 60 cm in height and 40 cm in width, with four lines of five

characters each in seal script. The main inscription, written in regular script, measures 236 cm by 119 cm, featuring thirty-one lines of seventy characters each. Cheng Jufu (程鉅夫) composed the text, Zhao Mengfu provided the calligraphy, and Guo Gui inscribed the title panel. The stele remains at Shaolin Temple in Dengfeng County (figures 1 and 2).

According to the inscription, Chan Master Yu Gong was born in 1203 (the third year of the Jiatai era under Emperor Ningzong of the Song Dynasty) and passed away in 1275 (the first year of the Deyou era under Emperor Gongzong of the Song Dynasty) at the age of seventy-three. His life is documented in *Bu Xu Gaoseng Zhuan: Biography of Snow Pavilion Yu Monk* (補續高僧傳·雪庭裕和尚傳), compiled by Minghe during the Ming Dynasty,<sup>3</sup> and in later works such as *Zudeng Datong* (祖燈大統) vol. 75<sup>4</sup> and *Xuzhi Yue Lu* (續指月錄) vol. 8.<sup>5</sup> However, these records are less detailed and postdate the stele, which remains the earliest and most comprehensive source on Chan Master Yu Gong's life.

According to *Bu Xu Gaoseng Zhuan*, Chan Master Yu Gong, also known as Master Fuyu styled Haowen and titled Xue Ting, was a native of Wen Shui in Taiyuan with the secular surname Zhang. He was an exceptionally gifted child, capable of memorizing texts after three readings. Orphaned during the Mongol invasion of Jin, he became a monk after encountering a traveling monk.



Figure 1. Rubbing of the title panel of the Stele of Chan Master Yu Gong's Virtuous Conduct.

The *Zudeng Datong* adds that in 1224 (Jiachen [甲辰] year of the Jiading [嘉定] era under Emperor Ningzong), Chan Master Yu Gong served alongside Guang of Shuangxi for seven years before joining Master Wansong at Bao'en Temple (報恩寺) in Yanjing.<sup>6</sup> He trained under Wansong for ten years until 1240.<sup>7</sup>

The texts *Zudeng Datong* and *Xu Zhiyue Lu* also record the time and reasons for Chan Master Fuyu's appointment as the abbot of Shaolin Temple: "During the turmoil of the Renchen year, the ancestral monastery was left desolate. Following the invitation of Wansong Hai-yun, he was entrusted with the leadership of Shaolin."<sup>8</sup> *Xu Zhiyue Lu* states: "During the turmoil of the Renchen year, the ancestral monastery was left desolate, and the imperial court appointed the master to restore it."<sup>9</sup> The "turmoil of the Renchen year" refers to the events of 1232 when Mongol forces besieged the Jin Dynasty capital of Bianjing (modern-day Kaifeng), forcing Emperor Aizong of Jin to flee to Caizhou. The year, marked as Renchen in the traditional Chinese sexagenary cycle, is historically known as the "Renchen Rebellion" or "Renchen Turmoil." This turmoil caused severe damage to the Shaolin Temple as well. The Jin Dynasty was ultimately destroyed by the Mongols in 1234. Subsequently, the Mongols, who came to rule the northern regions, appointed Chan Master Yu Gong (Fuyu) as the abbot of Shaolin Temple.

In the Yi Si (乙巳) year (1245), Kublai Khan (忽必烈) ordered Chan Master Yu Gong to hold a precept-bestowing Dharma assembly at Shaolin Temple. In the Wu Shen year (1248), he was summoned by imperial decree to serve as the abbot of Xingguo Temple in Helin (modern-day Kharkhorin).

In the Xin Hai year (1251), the first year of the reign of Möngke Khan, the fourth Great Khan of the Mongol Empire, Chan Master Yu Gong was summoned to the imperial court to oversee Buddhist affairs. He was appointed head of the Monastic Office, implemented favorable policies for monks and nuns, and oversaw the restoration of 237 temples.

These events, as recorded in *Bu Xu Gaoseng Zhuan*, *Zudeng Datong*, and *Xuzhi Yue Lu*, align with the descriptions found in the *Stele of Chan Master Yu Gong's Virtuous Conduct*. However, the stele provides far more detailed accounts than the written records. For instance, the stele mentions that Chan Master Yu Gong presided over and won a major debate between Buddhism and Daoism, an event not found in the historical texts. This Buddhist-Daoist controversy was a significant episode in the history of Yuan Buddhism. According to the stele, in the first year of Emperor Shizu's reign (1260), a debate was organized between Buddhism and Daoism.

Representing Buddhism, Chan Master Yu Gong debated with the Quanzhen Sect (全真教). The outcome was that Emperor Shizu (元世祖) ordered the burning of forty-five Daoist "false scriptures" and bestowed upon Chan Master Yu Gong the title of Guangzong Zhengfa (Illustrious Patriarch and Upholder of the True Dharma). Following this, Chan Master Yu Gong established subordinate Shaolin Temples in Helin, Yanji, Chang'an, Taiyuan, and Luoyang. He was later invited to preside over the Dharma seat of Wanshou Temple in Yanjing for fourteen years until his passing.

In the spring of the eighth year of the Zhiyuan era (1271), the emperor issued a decree summoning monks

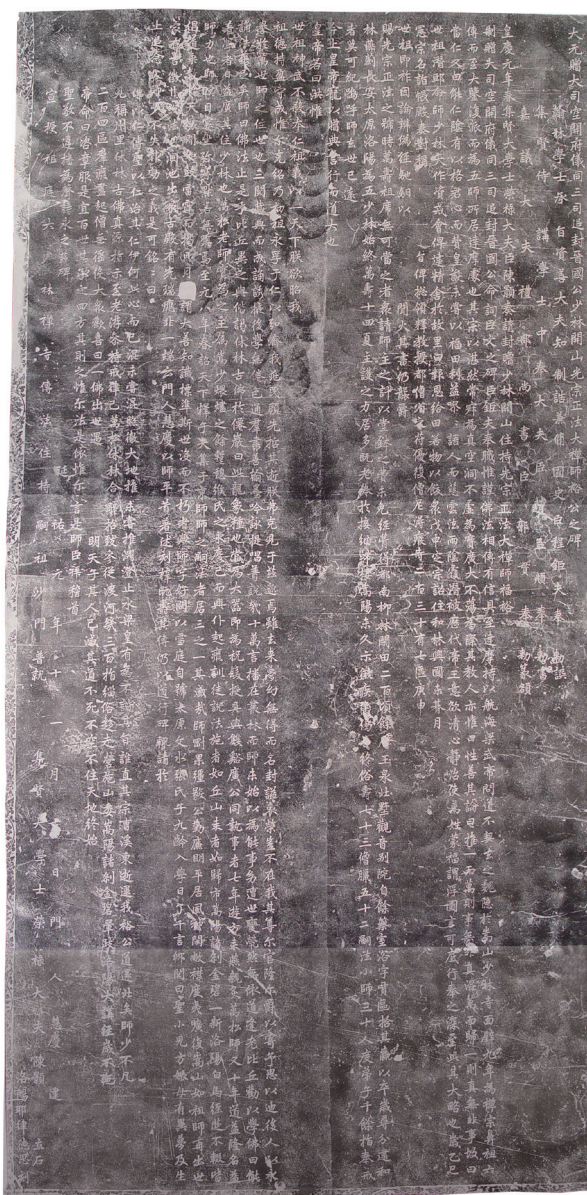


Figure 2. Rubbing of the main inscription of the *Stele of Chan Master Yu Gong's Virtuous Conduct*.

from across the empire to the capital. At this assembly, Chan Master Yu Gong's disciples accounted for one-third of those present, an unprecedented gathering. While the stele does not mention the exact time of his passing, *Zudeng Datong* records: "In the autumn of the Yi Hai year (1275), on the 20th day of the seventh lunar month, he fell mildly ill and passed away after composing a farewell verse. He was 73 years old, having been a monk for 52 years."<sup>10</sup> Chan Master Yu Gong passed away in Songyang.

The *Zudeng Datong* also notes that Chan Master Yu Gong was posthumously honored, a fact corroborated by the stele. The inscription clearly states: "In the first year of the Huangqing era (1312), in the spring, Minister Chen Hao of the Imperial Academy proposed conferring a posthumous title on the founder and abbot of Shaolin Temple, the Guangzong Zhengfa Chan Master Fuyu. The imperial decree granted him the title of Grand Commandant and Minister of the Three Offices, posthumously enfeoffing him as Duke of Jin."<sup>11</sup>

Chan Master Yu Gong dedicated his life to propagating the teachings of the Caodong Sect. During his tenure as abbot of Shaolin Temple, he not only restored its former glory but also upheld the Caodong tradition of direct lineage advocated by Patriarch Benji. He established a new generational naming system known as the Seventy Characters. "Fu Hui Zhi Zi Jue, Liao Ben Yuan Ke Wu, Zhou Hong Pu Guang Zong, Dao Qing Tong Xuan Qing, Jing Yi Zhen Ru Hai, Zhan Ji Chun Zhen Su, De Xing Yong Yan Heng, Miao Ben Chang Jian Gu, Xin Lang Zhao You Shen, Xing Ming, Chong Zuo, Shuai Zheng Shan Xi Chan, Jin Que Yuan Ji Du, Xue Ting Wei Dao Shi, Yin Ru Gui Xuan Lu."<sup>12</sup>

It is important to emphasize that a separate *Stele of Monk Yu Gong's Virtuous Conduct*, also inscribed by Zhao Mengfu, stands approximately 200 meters east of the stone archway in Yicheng County, Linfen, Shanxi Province. This stele was erected in the seventh year of the Yanyou era (1320). However, it must not be confused with the Shaolin Temple's Chan Master Yu Gong. The rubbing and inscription content of this stele was published in 1994 by the Yicheng County Museum in Shanxi and will not be elaborated upon here.<sup>13</sup> The title of this stele is *Stele of the Virtuous Conduct of Yu Gong, Abbot of Jin Xian Temple in Yicheng, Jin Ning Route, Great Yuan Dynasty, and Master Hongbian of the Dharma Propagation Order*.<sup>14</sup>

Based on the content of the inscriptions, Master Yu Gong of Jinxian Temple was tonsured and became a monk under Master Xian Gong at the age of nine. He attained Dharma teachings from Master Yunshou at the age of twenty and, starting at the age of thirty-one,

served successively as the abbot of Shousheng Temple, Huayan Temple, Shifang Renshou Temple, Jinxian Temple, and Shengyin Temple for forty-one years. Wherever he went, he revitalized and innovated, expanding the influence of Buddhism. From this, it appears that his deeds are quite similar to those of Chan Master Yu Gong of Shaolin Temple. Additionally, both were born in Shanxi, were remarkably intelligent, developed a deep affinity for Buddhism early in life, and had many similar life experiences. They were also equally esteemed in the Buddhist community, and Zhao Mengfu wrote both of their inscriptions. As a result, it is easy to mistake the two for the same person or to confuse their deeds.

However, upon closer examination, it becomes clear that the abbot Yu Gong of Jinxian Temple was from Jixian County, Shanxi, with the secular surname Hao and the Dharma name Guangyu. He was born in the third year of the Duanping era of the Southern Song Dynasty (1236), became a monk at the age of nine, and passed away in the eleventh year of the Dade era of the Yuan Dynasty (1307) at the age of seventy-two. In contrast, Chan Master Yu Gong of Shaolin Temple, whose courtesy name was Haowen and whose Dharma title was Xue Ting, was from Wenshui, Taiyuan, with the secular surname Zhang. He was born in the third year of the Jiatai era of Emperor Ningzong of the Song Dynasty (1203), began his studies at the age of nine, and passed away in the first year of the Deyou era of Emperor Gong of the Song Dynasty (1275) at the age of seventy-three. The Yu Gong mentioned in these two inscriptions is not the same person. Additionally, the inscription for Chan Master Yu Gong of Shaolin Temple was written by Zhao Mengfu under an imperial commission, while the inscription for Master Yu Gong of Jinxian Temple was composed eleven years after his passing. It was prepared by his disciple Zhizhen, who documented his master's deeds and went to the capital to request that Zhao Mengfu inscribe them to ensure his legacy.

Based on their dates of birth and death, Chan Master Yu Gong of Shaolin Temple was thirty-three years older than the abbot Yu Gong of Jinxian Temple and passed away thirty-two years earlier. However, the question of when the latter began using the title Yu Gong or the depth of their intrinsic connection warrants further study. The focus of this article, however, is to explore why Zhao Mengfu chose to write inscriptions for both Chan Master Yu Gong of Shaolin Temple and the abbot Yu Gong of Jinxian Temple.

## 2. Zhao Mengfu's Connection with Buddhism

Zhao Mengfu was born in 1254 in Wuxing (present-day Huzhou, Zhejiang Province). In the twenty-third year of Zhiyuan (1286), Kublai Khan sent Cheng Jufu to the Jiangnan region to recruit talented individuals. That December, Zhao Mengfu set out for the capital, arriving in Dadu early the following year, where he entered service in the Yuan court. In the summer of the twenty-seventh year of Zhiyuan (1290), he was promoted to the position of Academic Scholar at the Imperial Academy and Advisor of State. In January of the twenty-ninth year of Zhiyuan (1292), after repeatedly requesting a post outside the capital, Zhao Mengfu was appointed as Assistant Commissioner of the Jinan Circuit Administration with the title of Chaolie Dafu.

In 1294, Kublai Khan passed away. In the first year of Yuanzhen (1295), Zhao Mengfu was summoned back to the capital but resigned due to illness in August of the same year, returning to his hometown of Wuxing at the age of forty-two. Although relatively young, he spent the next four years living a leisurely life, focusing on visiting friends and family, traveling, painting, writing poetry, and appreciating antiques. During this period, his artistic refinement and skills in calligraphy and painting improved significantly. As one account describes: "He would either attend elegant gatherings with wine and poetry, authenticate and inscribe for collectors, write inscriptions for officials in Hangzhou, compose his paintings and poems, or sail on Lake Tai with friends upon returning to Wuxing."<sup>15</sup>

Historical records indicate that Zhao Mengfu never visited Henan, yet there are eighteen inscriptions attributed to him in the region. This suggests that these works were commissioned rather than written on-site. The *Dao Heng Stele* for Chan Master Yu Gong was erected in the first year of Yanyou (1314) when Zhao Mengfu was sixty-one years old. According to the inscription, he created the calligraphy under imperial decree. Why was Zhao Mengfu instructed to write for Chan Master Yu Gong?

The Yuan Dynasty was a period of flourishing Buddhism, particularly Tibetan Buddhism. Kublai Khan, who reigned from 1260 to 1294, greatly valued Tibetan Buddhism. In January 1260, he appointed the Tibetan monk Phagpa as Imperial Preceptor. In the same year, Chan Master Yu Gong represented Buddhism in a debate with Daoism, emerging victorious and solidifying Buddhism's preeminent position in the Yuan Dynasty. In 1270 (the seventh year of Zhiyuan), Kublai Khan appointed the Sakya lama Danba (胆巴) as Imperial Preceptor. In 1271 (the eighth year of Zhiyuan), he

ordered the construction of the Miaoying Temple (the White Pagoda Temple) in Beijing. Personally selecting the site, Kublai Khan enlisted Nepalese craftsman Araniko, who was recommended by Phagpa, to design the White Pagoda on the site of an earlier stupa. The White Pagoda was completed in 1279, housing relics of Shakyamuni. Around the same time, Dashengshou Wan'an Temple was built around the pagoda as Kublai Khan's family temple. In 1289 (the twenty-sixth year of Zhiyuan), Danba was summoned back to Dadu (大都) and settled in Sheng'an Temple.

Zhao Mengfu, who entered service in Dadu in 1290 and was posted to Jinan in 1292, developed a close friendship with Danba during his time in Dadu, which later prompted him to inscribe a stele for Danba.

After joining the Yuan court, Zhao Mengfu frequently transcribed Buddhist scriptures and authored stele inscriptions for the imperial family.<sup>16</sup> He also created numerous inscriptions for Buddhist temples and eminent monks. Zhao Mengfu and his wife, Guan Daosheng (管道升), were disciples of Zhongfeng Mingben (中峰明本), a prominent monk of the Yuan Dynasty.<sup>17</sup> According to Xian Yuqing's research, Zhao Mengfu and Guan Daosheng were devout Buddhists and lifelong followers of Zhongfeng Mingben. In the first year of Dade (大德) (1297), while on medical leave in Jiangnan, Zhao Mengfu and his wife visited a temple and began the monumental task of copying the *Lotus Sutra* (法華經). Later that year, at the request of Master Wuzhao, Zhao Mengfu created another transcription of the *Lotus Sutra* in Hangzhou.

In the second year of Dade (1298), Emperor Chengzong summoned Zhao Mengfu to the capital to copy *Buddhist Scriptures*, a task completed by July before he returned to Wuxing due to illness. In the third year of Dade (1299), he was appointed Academic Scholar of the Imperial Academy and Education Commissioner of Jiangzhe, a post he held for eleven years. During this time, Zhao Mengfu traveled extensively throughout Jiangzhe, creating paintings and inscriptions for Buddhists, Daoists, and Confucians, promoting Confucianism, authenticating ancient artworks, and hosting literary gatherings, all of which brought him great joy.

Danba, the Imperial Preceptor, passed away in the seventh year of Dade (1303) in Shangdu (上都). In the early spring of the following year, Zhao Mengfu created the painting *Red-Robed Arhat* (红衣罗汉) in his memory. In the third year of Yanyou (1316), Zhao Mengfu was commissioned to inscribe the *Danba Stele* (胆巴碑).<sup>18</sup> This demonstrates the profound friendship between Zhao Mengfu and Danba during their time in Dadu.

The *Danba Stele* and the *Stele of Chan Master Yu Gong's Virtuous Conduct* were both inscribed by Zhao Mengfu under imperial commission during the reign of Emperor Renzong of the Yuan Dynasty (1311–1320). Emperor Renzong, the fourth ruler of the Yuan Dynasty, placed great emphasis on arts, culture, and education. He governed the state through Confucian principles and nurtured his mind through Buddhism. Known for surrounding himself with capable and virtuous individuals, he ushered in an era of cultural flourishing in Yuan history.<sup>19</sup>

*The Stele of Chan Master Yu Gong's Virtuous Conduct* was composed by Cheng Jufu, and its title is engraved in a seal script by Guo Guan. Cheng Jufu was the individual tasked with recruiting Zhao Mengfu into official service. Guo Guan, who was later promoted to Left Prime Minister and concurrently served as Grand Academic Scholar during Emperor Renzong's reign, was a master calligrapher renowned for crafting title inscriptions for prominent steles of the Yuan Dynasty. With Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy complementing the work, the stele represents a harmonious union of artistry, further underscoring Chan Master Yu Gong's high standing at the time.

Both Chan Master Yu Gong and Monk Yu Gong held significant influence in the Buddhist community of the Yuan Dynasty and were personally received by Kublai Khan. Monk Yu Gong, for instance, participated in a grand ordination assembly organized by Kublai Khan, preached within the imperial palace, and earned the emperor's favor, receiving a ceremonial robe as a gift. His contributions to Buddhism included major projects such as constructing the Great Buddha Pavilion, commissioning a 100-foot-tall statue of Maitreya adorned with gold, and preserving the *Tripitaka* along with forty volumes of *Vijnaptimatratra Commentaries*.

In 1245, Chan Master Yu Gong organized a major Buddhist ordination assembly at the Shaolin Temple. In 1260, he was summoned by Kublai Khan to the imperial court for a debate with Daoist priests of the Quanzhen School on the merits of Buddhism versus Daoism. Chan Master Yu Gong emerged victorious, leading to the destruction of forty-five volumes of Daoist "false scriptures."

Zhao Mengfu first inscribed the *Stele of Chan Master Yu Gong's Virtuous Deeds* at the Shaolin Temple, followed by the *Stele of Monk Yu Gong at the Jin Xian Temple*. According to the inscriptions, the former was written by Zhao Mengfu under imperial decree, with the content also composed by Cheng Jufu on imperial orders. The latter, however, was written and composed by Zhao Mengfu at the request of Monk Yu Gong's disci-

ples. Although the same individual authored both steles, their respective statuses and significance are markedly different.

Why this disparity? To understand, we must examine the functions of the Xuanzhengyuan (Bureau of Buddhist and Tibetan Affairs) (宣政院), the Yuan Dynasty's religious administration. According to the *New Yuan History, Biographies 140, Buddhist and Daoist Affairs*: "The Mongols revered Buddhism. Upon acquiring the Tibetan territories, they sought to govern the region by accommodating its customs and establishing officials under the supervision of the Imperial Preceptor. The Xuanzhengyuan was created, with its commissioner—second only to the Preceptor—always appointed from the clergy. Officials under its authority were a mix of clergy and laypeople. The Imperial Preceptor was granted a jade seal, the State Preceptor a gold seal, and their decrees held the same authority as imperial edicts. Upon ascending the throne, an emperor would issue edicts of protection, accompanied by a ceremonial gift of a jeweled chaplet with Buddhist inscriptions."<sup>20</sup> As noted earlier, in January 1260 Kublai Khan appointed the Tibetan monk Phagpa as Imperial Preceptor. In the seventh year of Zhiyuan (1270), he granted the Sakya lama Danba the title of State Preceptor, whose decrees carried the same authority as imperial edicts. Thus, it is highly likely that the Xuanzhengyuan instructed Zhao Mengfu, making it an official act. In contrast, Zhao's inscription for Monk Yu Gong was a personal commission.

### 3. An Examination of the Time of the Burning of Daoist Scriptures in the Yuan Dynasty

According to the *Stele of Chan Master Yu Gong's Virtuous Conduct*, Chan Master Yu Gong led a Buddhist-Daoist debate at the beginning of Emperor Shizu's reign (1260). The stele records: "In the year of Gengshen, when Shizu ascended the throne, a debate was held regarding the authenticity of scriptures, which was reported by messenger, and the false scriptures were burned." Master Yugu was granted the title of Guangzong Zhengfa (光宗正法). However, the account in the *Stele of Chan Master Yu Gong's Virtuous Conduct* contradicts the timeline presented in *The New History of Yuan* (新元史), which records an earlier incident of the burning of Daoist scriptures.

There were several instances of the burning of Daoist texts during the Yuan Dynasty. According to the research of Chen Yuan, in the eighth year of Emperor Xian's reign (1258), Zhang Zhijing, the leader of Daoism, and Fuyu, the leader of Buddhism, each led a group of seventeen

individuals in a debate. The monks won, and the Daoists were ordered to shave their heads, while the *Hua Hu* (化胡) and other false scriptures and woodblocks were burned.<sup>21</sup> However, based on the *Stele of Chan Master Yu Gong's Virtuous Conduct*, this event took place in 1260, the year when Emperor Shizu ascended the throne.

The account in the *Stele of Chan Master Yu Gong's Virtuous Conduct* is more reliable, as *The New History of Yuan* was written by Ke Shaomin during the late Qing and early Republic periods. The *Stele of Chan Master Yu Gong's Virtuous Conduct* was erected in the first year of the Yanyou reign (1314), on November 10, and was written by Cheng Jufu (1249–1318), a high-ranking official under Emperor Shizu, who was also a participant in the Buddhist-Daoist debate. He would not have made an error about the date of the event. Therefore, the *Stele of Chan Master Yu Gong's Virtuous Conduct* can be used to confirm the exact time of the burning of texts such as the *Laozi Hua Hu Jing* (老子化胡經) and *Youlong Zhuan* (猶龍傳). Although *The History of Yuan* also records an incident in the seventeenth year of the Zhiyuan reign (1280), when Daoist leader Qi Zhicheng burned the Daoist canon, this is a separate event, and by that time, Chan Master Yu Gong had already passed away. The record states: “In the year of Bing Shen, an edict was issued ordering Master Qi Zhicheng and others to burn the *Daozang* (道藏) and false scriptures and woodblocks.”<sup>22</sup>

We also find another important event recorded on the stele: “In the spring of the 8<sup>th</sup> year of the Zhiyuan reign (1271), an imperial edict summoned all Buddhist monks from across the land to gather in the capital, and one-third of them were disciples of Master Yugong.” The eighth year of the Zhiyuan reign corresponds to 1271 when Emperor Shizu changed the state name to Yuan. This sequence of events makes logical sense: first, the Buddhist-Daoist debate took place, and after Buddhism's victory an edict was issued to gather all Buddhist monks in the capital, with Chan Master Yu Gong's disciples forming one-third of the attendees.

Who was the Daoist leader involved in the debate with Chan Master Yu Gong? According to Mao Zhongxia's *History of the Caodong School of Chinese Chan Buddhism* (中國曹洞宗通史), in the spring of 1271, an imperial edict selected prominent monks to debate with the Quanzhen Sect leader Li Zhichang and others about the legitimacy of Buddhism and Daoism, and one-third of the Buddhist monks present were disciples of Chan Master Yu Gong.<sup>23</sup> However, according to Guo Wu's research, Li Zhichang was born in 1193 and passed away in 1256,<sup>24</sup> so he could not have participated in the debate with Master Yugu. After Li Zhichang's death,

the leadership of the Quanzhen Sect passed to Zhang Zhijing, who, according to the scholar Wang Pan, was a meticulous and widely respected figure in the capital.<sup>25</sup> When Zhang Zhijing passed away, many scholars and lay followers from the capital and beyond came to pay their respects.<sup>26</sup> This suggests that the Daoist leader who debated with Chan Master Yu Gong was likely Zhang Zhijing.

Chan Master Yu Gong passed away in 1275, and his stele was erected forty years later. The inscription was written by Zhao Mengfu, who visited Jiangnan to seek out Cheng Jufu in 1286, meaning the composition of the inscription likely occurred shortly before the stele's erection. According to the stele, it was commissioned by Chan Master Yu Gong's disciples to memorialize their teacher. Monk Yu Gong died in 1307, and the *Stele of Monk Yu Gong's Virtuous Conduct* was erected in the eleventh year of the Dade reign (1307), the year Emperor Chengzong (1294–1307) passed away. While the stele for Monk Yu Gong did not receive an imperial edict, it may reflect his high status and influence. In contrast, Chan Master Yu Gong was regarded as a pivotal figure in the revival of the Shaolin Temple, the twenty-fifth patriarch, and the fifteenth patriarch of the Caodong School.

## Conclusion

*The Stele of Chan Master Yu Gong's Virtuous Conduct* holds significant value in the history of Yuan Dynasty Buddhism and calligraphy. It also offers valuable insight into the study of Zhao Mengfu's life and work. Chan Master Yu Gong led the Buddhist-Daoist debate, and the stele's inscription helps fill in gaps in historical records and corrects errors in earlier research. This stele, a representative work of Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy, provides crucial material for studying the evolution of his calligraphic style. Zhao Mengfu's passion for writing inscriptions for high Buddhist monks, sometimes commissioned by the court and sometimes at the request of individuals, reflects his deep connection to Buddhism. His official inscription for Master Yugu was a formal act, while his private inscription for Master Yu Gong shows the significant differences in status and identity between the two forms of engagement.

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## ENDNOTES

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## 趙孟頫書《裕公禪師道行碑》與元代佛道之爭

董睿

**摘要:** 《裕公禪師道行碑》現存登封少林寺，該碑為元代趙孟頫奉敕所書，具有重要的書法價值。趙孟頫一生篤信佛教，與高僧大德交往深厚，其為裕公禪師書碑，即是其與佛教因緣的一種體現。碑文記載了裕公禪師的事蹟及主持的佛道辯論事件的具體時間，可證文獻記載和相關研究之誤。

**關鍵詞:** 裕公禪師；趙孟頫；少林寺；全真教