



Kashmiri “Imperial Preceptor” Namu (or Nanwu) in China During Yuan Dynasty

Zhang Hong¹, Dai Jianbing²

¹ Hebei Normal University, Shijiazhuang, China

² Hebei Normal University, Shijiazhuang, China

E-mail: smartzhanghong@126.com

Abstract: The Buddhist monk Namu (Nanwu), born in Kashmir, came to China during the Yuan Dynasty and was highly regarded by Emperor Xianzong (also known as Emperor Mengge) and honored as Imperial Preceptor, which ranked the highest in Buddhist monks. The place that Namu visited is in today's Zhengding County, Hebei Province. He was once the abbot of Longxing Temple in Zhengding (a Prefecture at that time). Namu was not only the first Imperial Preceptor of the Yuan Dynasty, who occupied an outstanding position in the history of Buddhism, but also selflessly funded the restoration of the Giant Buddhist Temple, which was recorded in the inscription of "Merit Record of Preceptor Namu of Dachao who repaired Longxing Temple, Zhending Prefecture", which is still preserved in Ci Shi Pavilion of the Giant Buddhist Temple.

Keywords: Namu (Nanwu), Imperial Preceptor, Kashmir (Kashmira), Longxing Temple

Introduction

Introduction to Kashmir (or Kashmira)-- a center of Buddhism

Kashmir or Kashmira (Kashmira in Sanskrit) is a Sanskrit word. "Ka" means water and "Shmir" means to dry it up. Historically, "Kashmir" originally referred to a valley at the westernmost point of the Himalayas. At the beginning of the 21st century, "Kashmir" was extensively used to cover the vast region, including the Kashmir Valley, Jammu, Poonch, Gilgit, Baltistan and Ladakh. The Kashmir Valley, the most important part, with its low altitude and fertile soil, is surrounded by mountains, rivers, picturesque scenery and folk customs. It is also the most densely populated area and most of its people are Muslims. In Jammu the majority is Hindu Hindus. People in Ladakh are similar to Tibetans in China in terms of culture and customs.

Kashmir, was also called Jiashimiluo, Jiayemiluo, and Geshimi in Chinese. These names describe an ancient country located northeast of Gandhara and at the foot of the Himalayas. It was named as Kopen in the Han Dynasty, as Kashmira in the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, and Kapisa in the Sui and Tang dynasties.

It is said that Ashoka sent Majjhantika to Kashmir to spread Buddhism, aiming to tame its barbarians-- the dragon people, according to Buddhism, to free them from their sins. The wives of the demons Yaksa, Bhanda, together with 500 disciples also converted to Buddhism. There were 100,000 monks. King Kanishka I of Kushan gathered 500 eminent monks in Kashmir to compile the book Mahāvibhāṣa Śāstra (Sanskrit: Abhidharma Mahāvibhāṣa Śāstra), which was inscribed on bronze, sealed in stone slabs, and a pagoda was particularly built to save it.

Buttocho went to Kashmir to study Buddhism before he came to China. Kumarajiva also went there for visiting and learning. At that time, there were such eminent monks as Sengjia-tipo in Chinese (Samghadeva), Sengjia-bacheng (Samghabhuti), Fotuo-yeshe (Buddhayasas), Qiunabamo (Chenavarma), and Fotuo-duoluo (Gunavarman), etc. They all came to the East to spread Buddhism. Dozens of Chinese monks, including Zhimeng (about 4th century--453), Fayong (during the period of Sixteen States--Northern and Southern Dynasties) and Zhiyan (during the period of the Dynasties of Jin and Song), went to Kashmir to learn Dharma, which directly promoted the exchanges of Buddhism between China and Kashmir.

By the end of the seventh century, though the Hinayana Buddhism was popular in Kashmir, many Sramanas came to China to translate sutras, such as Buddha Polly and Diva Khola, during the reign of Emperor Gaozong of the Tang Dynasty. They translated both Mahayana Buddhism and Hinayana Buddhism. In the seventh century, Master Xuan Zang came to Kashmir from Gandhara and stayed there for four years to study Hinayana Buddhism. The book “The Buddhist Records of the Western World · Kashmir” by Xuan Zang recorded the pilgrimage he made and his worship to Sakyamuni’s Tooth, which was bright soaked in oil. At that time, more than 300 local temples were built in Kashmir, and pagodas and statues were numerous.

After the ninth century, both the Indian monk Dharmabhadra and the Chinese monk Ji Ye went to Kashmir to study Buddhism.

[Received 27 July 2023; Accepted 30 Aug 2023; Published (online) 30, September, 2023]



Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

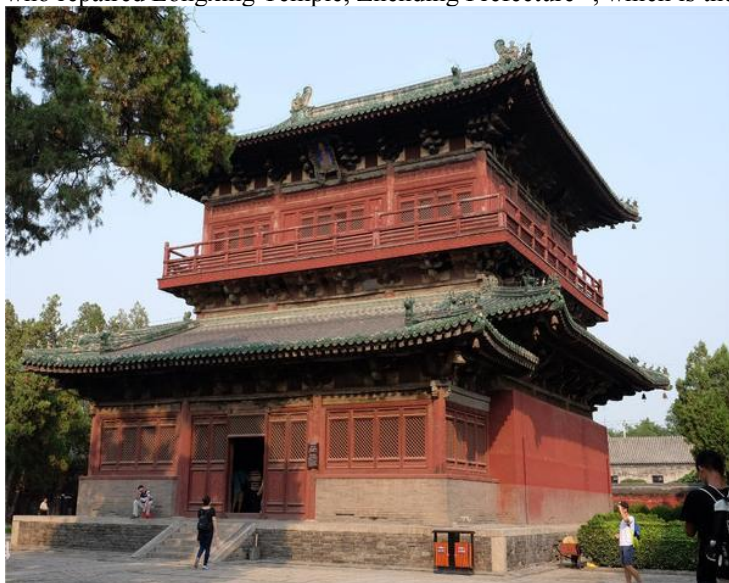
The local Buddhism disappeared in Kashmir after its islamization in the 12th and 13th centuries. However, an eminent Buddhist came to Zhending, the main character with the name Namu (or Nanwu), who is going to be discussed in the latter part of this paper.

Introduction to Longxing Temple during the Yuan Dynasty

It is necessary to mention Longxing Temple before Namu(or Nanwu) is introduced.

Longxing Temple (mentioned in Abstract, also known as the Giant Buddhist Temple) in Zhending, a royal temple, was built by Zhao Kuangyin, the founding emperor of the Song Dynasty. In the Yuan Dynasty, two Imperial Preceptors managed the temple. In fact, it was an important base for Tibetan Buddhism to spread eastward. Longxing Temple was described as majestic and magnificent in a poem composed by Yang Yuanpeng from Yuan Dynasty entitled "Longxing Temple Pavilion in Zhending"^[1].

In Longxing Temple, there is a Cishi Pavilion (See Pic. 1), in which there is a very beautiful, giant whole-wood-carved Buddha in bright-colored clothes and a tablet as well, with the words "Merit Record of Preceptor Nanwu of Dachao who repaired Longxing Temple, Zhending Prefecture", which is the important Buddhist inscription in the pavilion.



Pic. 1 Cishi Pavilion in Longxing Temple

In 1254, Mengge (Mengge was the eldest son of Tolui and Tolui was the youngest son of Genghis Khan), Emperor Xianzong of the Yuan Dynasty, visited Longxing Temple and paid homage to the Great Mercy Bodhisattva there.

Namu, appointed as the Imperial Preceptor

Namu was a Buddhist monk born in Kashmir, and his activities can be found in the fifth book "Merit Record of Repairing Longxing Temple in Zhending Prefecture", the 9th year of Xianzong's reign^[2]. Both "Preceptor Luo Ma"^[3] mentioned in the book "Epitaph of Tie Ke (Tie Ge)" and "Master of Kophen, Commander Luo Ma"^[4] in Buddhist history books of the Yuan Dynasty, refer to Namu, the Imperial Preceptor. In "Biography of Tie Ge · the History of Yuan

Dynasty", there is a more explicit reference to the fact that "Emperor Xianzong honored Namu as preceptor and granted him jade seal to preside over China's Buddhist community"^[5].

Namu, "the Preceptor, came from Kashmir of northern India", "from Kasmascetic life away from the noise of the world and gave up all possessions". Retreated to the mountain covered by heavy snow, he practiced Dhuta (Dhūta in Sanskrit). Forsaking affections of the mortals, he recited scriptures and turned a deaf ear to the outside world. Having one meal a day, he slept between the tombs or under the tree, no need to be cautious about committing himself to anything. He spent thirteen years like this in seclusion." And "He vowed that all sentient beings, no matter in the past, future and at present, would live a free life that all Buddhas pursue." In the era of Khan, Namu paid a formal visit to the emperor of Yuan Dynasty. He was not taken seriously until Güyük Khan took power. The tablet "Merit Record of Preceptor Namu -repairing work of the Longxing Temple, Zhending Prefecture" says: On his way to Banaras, the great Preceptor Namu met a godman who stopped him and said, "If you do not go to the south, everything will be accomplished because your destiny is in the north ." Then he went to China. Later, the Emperor Mengge admitted him in court and granted him the jade seal to preside over China's Buddhism teaching. "Namu obeyed the Emperor's summons and performed his duties for many years. He regretted the time was not enough and advised people to read more books. The clans and ministers in the court respected Namu as Beidou of the mountains (Beidou refers to people who is intelligent enough and admired by others)." "The Emperor Mengge treated Namu kindly and generously, frequently invited him to his court. The Emperor was so particularly grateful to him that the gratitude could not be measured. He gave him plenty of gold coins." Namu worked as Preceptor during the reign of Mengge, "Emperor Xianzong honored Namu as Preceptor, granted him jade seal and permitted him to visit all the mountains and rivers, to use all the temples and Buddhist halls as he liked".

Namu's generous act of repairing Longxing Temple

The Preceptor, "who valued the virtues of Buddhism since ancient times, was respected by others and given such names as Senlu, Sentong, Fashi and Guoshi (Imperial Preceptor) . When Namu was summoned by the Emperor, the latter treated him better than other ministers and asked him to ascend into the hall, bestowing him a seat next to himself"^[6]. The Preceptor is the highest monk in Buddhism. The later Haiyun was in charge of Buddhism only in Han, while Namu who was the first senior Preceptor of Yuan Dynasty, was in charge of Buddhism in the whole China. Biography

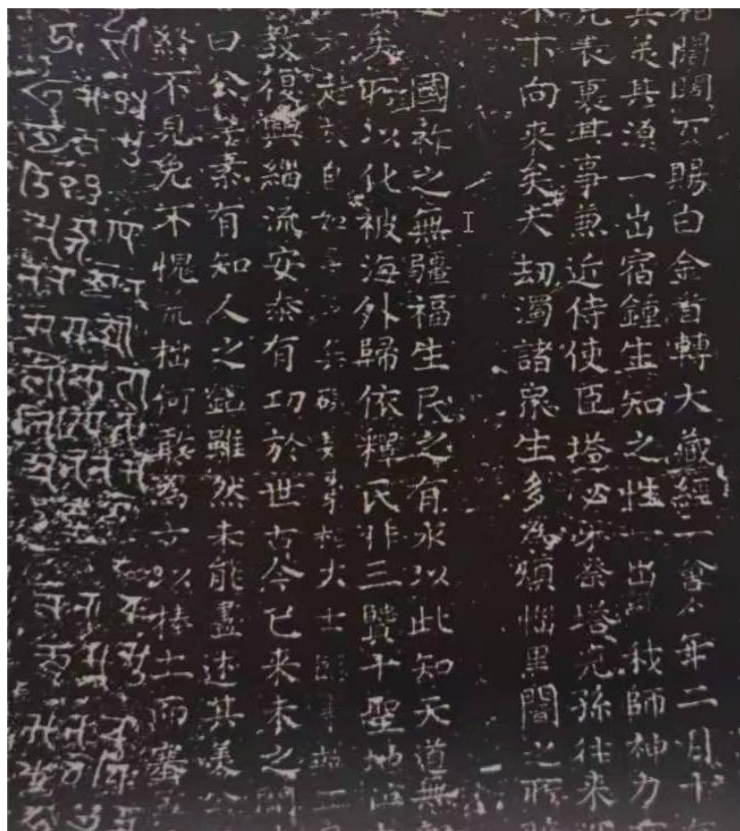
of Tie Ge · the History of Yuan Dynasty, tells "Namo was honored as Preceptor and granted jade seal to preside over China's Buddhism teaching"^[7].

In 1253, Namo was appointed by Mengge to stay in Yanjing, "in the first month of spring, the lunar year of Ox, he received the Emperor's edict, asking him to go south. Namo departed, the first stop was in the State of Yan." The next year he went to Zhending and became an abbot of Longxing Temple in the territory of Tolui family "^[8]. Two years later, Namo visited the State of Zhao (now Zhending) and koutowed to the holy image of Avalokitesvara in Longxing Temple." "Namo was so important that his position had been possessed only by the most important monk in Longxing Temple. He was asked to be the abbot of this temple, and he agreed".

As the abbot of Longxing Temple, Namo witnessed the temple was "badly affected by the war and turned into ruins, except the pavilion and the statue." So Namo "paid out of his own pocket to have the statue repaired and the temple as well." ^[9]

Namo's kind and generous act of repairing Longxing Temple not only received Mengge's strong support, but also the reward from the landlord Ali (the youngest son of Tolui). The place where the Emperor's mother bathe, which lay in the areas of Zhending and Gaocheng, belonged to Ali, and probably Namo was actually in charge of it. "Since March 8 (1255), Ali gave orders to Zagur to exempt the temple from tax, give platinum, and hold Buddhist activities for three days and nights. In autumn of the next year (1256), the Emperor gave platinum again, rebuilt the Hall of Avalokitesvara and coated the statue with gold. On the first day (1257), according to the lunar calendar, the Preceptor's Tripitaka (a Buddhist book) was granted a platinum seal by the Emperor. On June 20, 1257, the Emperor asked his minister Tusi-jidai to give platinum to Namo, who was helped to study Buddhism and turn the prayer wheel. On February 13 (1259), the Emperor ordered his minister Ta-hezhu to give Namo platinum to celebrate the birth of new Buddhism and to call monks together in Bodhimandala (a place of enlightenment), worship Bhaishajyaguru (the Medicine Buddha, the Buddha of Healing) for three days and nights"^[10]. That's the origin of the prayer wheel in prayer-wheel-pavilion, opposite to Cishi pavilion, in Longxing Temple.

The inscription says "Namo neither forgot the Emperor's instruction to be kind, nor did the ministers' entrust to be honest, diligent and respectful. His activities helped to extend the Emperor's domination without border and bless the people well-being." The Pic. 2 shows this monk has a prominent place in the history of Buddhism. The inscription on the monument of Longxing Temple praises him a lot.



Pic. 2 Namo's repairing work of the Longxing Temple, Zhending Prefecture

The seal used by Namo is kept in the Cultural Relics Management Office of Tibetan Autonomous Region. The words on the seal are about Namo, "the Preceptor of Dachao (Mongol polity prior to the "Da Yuan" Dynasty of Kublai Khan) who taught the monks and nuns Buddhism". The seal was wooden, brown, with a trapezoid base and a press-button of Ru Yi (a particular thing symbolizing everything goes well) head at the top. Above the top was a spiral bead. The base of the seal is surrounded by lotus petal and the button is embossed with flame and lotus-shaped grain. The seal is square with each side 6.4cm long, 1.21cm high. The surface of the seal is double-textured, a little arc-shaped.^[11]

Namo's contribution to Buddhism

"Namo's contribution helped revive Buddhism, which excels Xuan Zang a lot in terms of virtues; On divine spirit, he is more like Buttocho; To break evil barriers, he is like Kashyapa-- Matanga and Dharmaratna Mortendra; He teaches rigorously like Song

Mingjiao, or Qisong; Long-time sitting without lying, is like Xiezunzhe (pārsva in Sanskrit), whose rib never touched his mat; What he behaves in a rather free way, making everything go easily, is like Master Zaobai, whose breakfast depends on dates and a cypress-leaf-pie; He handles things in a decent way when facing problems, not bored by small matters, like Sengyuan who lived in Zhong Mountain in his later years; Wherever he goes, the place turns into treasure," (He values the cause of destiny), "as the monk Mayi; He serves in the court, like another Preceptor Zhiyi, who behaved

humbly and cautiously. Namo's contributions lit the flame and the revival of Buddhism, making the monks live a tranquil life. He achieved notable merits for the world, which has never been heard in both ancient and modern times." The above-mentioned Xuan Zang, a well-known monk of the Tang Dynasty to study Buddhism in India and fetched several hundreds of Buddhist books. Buttocho, came from Qiuci in the Western Jin Dynasty, the Buddhist teacher of Shi Dao'an (312-385). Kashyapa-- Matanga and Dharmaratna Mortendra, both were from India, and the former was able to interpret Mahayana and Theravada. Song Mingjiao, is also known as Qisong (1007-1072), whose book "the Development of Neo-Confucianism and Buddhism" expounded the connectivity of two beliefs aiming to resist Han Yu's argument of objecting to Buddhism. When Xie Zunzhe (who came from Qiuci in the Western Jin Dynasty) was 80 years old, he swore, "If I don't master Tripitaka (sutras, vinaya and Abhidharma), or don't break away from Triloka (The realms of desire, of form and of formlessness) to obtain Shadabhijna (The six supernatural or magical powers) and Ashta-vimoksha (The eight-stage meditation), then my ribs will not touch mats." Three years later, he mastered Tripitaka, broke away from Trilokas, got talent for Buddhism and people admired him very much. Master Zaobai, or Li Tongxuan, a scholar who translated Avatamsaka Sutra into Chinese at the age of 80 in Tang Dynasty. He took the Sutra to his hometown Taiyuan, Shanxi province, where he studied and clarified the meaning of the Sutra and formulated his theory. He stayed indoors for three years and ate ten dates and one cypress-leaf-pie every morning. That's why he is called Master dates and cypress. Seng Yuan (414-484) was a monk of the Southern Qi Dynasty, coming from Chonghe (now the northwest of Laoling county, Shandong Province), with the surname Huang. Seng Yuan became a Buddhist when he was 18. A disciple of Dao Ping and he was thoroughly familiar with Mahayana and Theravada. He lived in Pengcheng Temple during the reign of Da Ming of Song (Song was the first dynasty of Nanchao), and during the reign of Sheng Ming, he set up Longyuan Temple in Niuluoshan, Xiaodanyang, Sichuan province. He discussed Buddhism with Sun Qin, who was from Qinzhou, and taught Buddhism in different temples. Later, Seng Yuan returned to Zhong Mountain, hiding trace in Dinglin Temple. The Emperor Song Mingdi wanted him to be his teacher but he refused. The Emperor Qi Taizu himself visited him for advice. And the followers like Zhou Yi and Ming Sengshao, all consulted him about disciplines. Mayi, a monk from Song Dynasty was good at physiography, proficient in face-reading, also known as Mayi Physiography. Zhi Yi, was a monk of ancient Sui, the founder of Tendai Philosophy.^[12]

The reason why the tablet of Namo was left in Zhending is that "one day the chief monk of Longxing Temple came here personally and read the inscription about Namo's life. He said, the story was described in detail by two monks in this temple, Shaolin and Jindeng. The Grand Zongshi, Mu'an was present then....." The Imperial Preceptor Namo, together with the two elder monks Shaolin and Jindeng, reported to Mongge Khan about the occupation of Buddhist temples by Taoists, the destruction of Buddhist scriptures and statues and the invasion of Taoism. They also had a discussion about Taoism. Shaolin was also named as Xueting Fuyu, a disciple of the eminent monk Wansong Xingxiu who believed in the famous Buddhist school Cao Dong Zong. At that time, Shaolin was known as Mr. Yu. He was the Buddhist leader when debating with Taoists and later was appointed as Zongling, the top monk, to teach Buddhism. After the Emperor Shizu ascended the throne, he asked Shaolin to be the abbot of Wanshou Temple, Yanjing. Fourteen years later, Shaolin went into seclusion in Shaolin Temple, Song Mountain and died in the twelfth year of the Yuan Dynasty (1275). Jindeng was also the initiator and participant of the debate on Buddhism and Taoism in the early Yuan Dynasty. The Grand Zongshi, Mu'an, was mentioned in the inscription, with a Buddhist name XingYing, also known as CuiZhong, and Mu'an was his courtesy name. He was good at poetry and literature, also famous for his painting and calligraphy. Thus he was known as a poet monk and had a very deep friendship with Yuan Haowen and many other literati. He served as the abbot in Baoying Temple, Longmen, Shaolin Temple, Song Mountain, and Guiyi Temple, Yanjing. He had a close relationship with the Imperial Preceptor Namo. From this inscription, it can be seen that the Grand Zongshi, Mu'an and the author of the inscription, Zhao Congzheng, the monk of Changshan (now Zhending), were also intimate friends.

At the end of the inscription, it tells the time "Dachao", "The master monk Zhi Cong set up this tablet on April 28, the year of Goat." Here, the year of Goat was referred to 1259. In the Mongolian Yuan dynasty, Tongbao, the silver coin, could exactly prove the name of Mongolia was Dachao at that time .

Namo, a monk from Kashmir, was called "Master of Kophen, Commander Luo Ma" according to "A Tablet Recording the Imperial Edict to Burn False Taoist Books". In addition, the book about Tie Ke (Tie Ge) , Namo's nephew, "Biography of Tie Ge · the History of Yuan Dynasty" records: "Tie Ge, with the surname Ganai, was from Jiayemier." Another book, Epitaph of Tie Ke (the full name as The Epitaph of Tie Ke, Who Served as Yuan's Former Grand Mentor in Charge of Military Affairs, Commissioner of Court Attendants, Great Supervisor of Agriculture, and Worked in Imperial Academy of Medicine as well) records: " Mr. Tie Ke, was from the tribe of Qishi-mier ". Together with other books, "Geography of the Western Regions" records, Jiashi-mier, also known as Jiaye-mier, Keshi-mier, was called "Bin" in ancient times, namely today's Kashmere. It is located in the northeast of India, west of Himalaya, surrounded by mountains and its ground shapes like eggs. Thus, the above-mentioned records are consistent, but the translation names are different.^[13]

REFERENCES

- [1]. Yuanpeng, Y. (1987). *Tao Ran Ting*. In G. Sili (Ed), Part I, Three collections of Yuan Poetry Anthology (pp.53). Beijing: ZhongHua Book Company.
- [2]. Tao, S. (1982). *Merit Record of Imperial Preceptor (Guoshi) Namu of Dachao repairing Longxing Temple*, The Records of Changshan Lithoglyph, Vol. 15, Taipei: New Wenfeng Publishing House.
- [3]. Beijing Municipal Institute of Archaeology(1986). *The Tombs of Tie Ke, His Father and Zhang Honggang, Yuan Dynasty*. Acta Archaeologica Sinica, 1, 95-114.
- [4]. Nianchang, S. (1998). *A Historical Documentation of Buddha* (Vol. 21). In Beijing Library Ancient Books Publishing And Editing Group (Eds), Beijing Library Ancient Books Rare Series. Beijing: Bibliographies Publishing House.
- [5]. Lian, S. (1976). *Biography of Tie Ge, the History of Yuan Dynasty (Vol. 126)(pp.3075)*. Beijing: ZhongHua Book Company.
- [6]. Pan, Z. (1269). *Records of Buddha* (Vol. 43).
- [7]. Xiaolin, M. (2018). *Marco Polo and Chinese Texts and Customs in the Yuan Dynasty (pp.177)*. Shanghai: Chinese and Western Books.
- [8]. Youheng, L. (2010). *An Important Buddhist Tablet to Record Namu, the Imperial Preceptor (Guoshi)*. The Stories of Cultural Relics, 3, 61-66.
- [9]. See [8].
- [10]. Hongzhang, L., & Pengnian, H. (tenth year of Guangxu). *Local Chronicles of Areas around the State* (Vol. 144), block-printed edition.
- [11]. Caiqi, Y. (2006). *A Study of the Seal of the Dachao Guoshi (Imperial Preceptor)*. Palace Museum Journal, 3, 123-134+160.
- [12]. See [8].
- [13]. Chunhe, H. (1994). *The Life Story of Preceptor Namu at the Beginning of Yuan Dynasty*. The Voice of Dharma, 9, 18-22.
- [14]. Jiameng, T., & Yalan, L. (2017). *Chinese Culture in South Asia (pp. 72-75)*. Zhengzhou: Elephant Press.
- [15]. Keqiao, X. (2018). *Records of Cultural Exchanges between China and South Asia (pp. 25,34)*. Beijing: Encyclopedia of China Publishing House.