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A NOTE ON YELÜ ZHU 耶律铸 AND HIS FAMILY

Igor de Rachewiltz

Abbreviations

gr. = Greek
dmo. = Middle Mongolian
mo. = Written (Script) Mongolian
mtu. = Middle Turkic
pmo. = Preclassical Mongolian
syr. = Syriac

On Thursday 22 October 1998, Professor Mei Ninghua 梅寧華, head of the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Cultural Relics 北京文物局, announced a major archaeological find at a press conference jointly held by his bureau and the Beijing Gardens Bureau.¹

A large tomb complex had been discovered the previous 19 September two metres underground near the Yihe Yuan 顥和園 or Summer Palace. The excavations carried out since had unearthed a tomb gate, an aisle and five burial chambers (Figure 1). Two memorial tablets or stelae (bei 碑) found in situ allowed the archaeologists to identify the owner of the

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¹ The find received wide publicity in China. See the China News, 23 October 1998 (p.3); Beijing ribao 北京日報, 3 November 1998; Beijing wenbo 北京文博, 1998:4; and Zhongguo wenwu bao 中国文物報, 31 January 1999 (p.1). The last three contain photographs of the tomb complex and of some of the precious objects found in them. See also below, n.2.
2 Rubbings of the inscriptions on the two stone tablets are reproduced in the splendid volume edited by Mei Ninghua and Tao Xincheng 陶信成, Shi ke juan 石刻卷 (Stone Inscriptions), Beijing 北京: Beijing Chubanshe 北京出版社, 2004, pp.182–3, pl. 244, 246, 247. See also “Tuban shuo-ming” 提班說明 (Illustration captions and notes), p.27. For a good colour illustration of the tomb complex, see p.183, pl.245. These illustrations are reproduced in the present article. I am indebted to Professor Hao Shiyuan 郝時遠 for kindly supplying a copy of the volume in question.

3 On Yelü Chucai, see I. de Rachewiltz, H.-L. Chan, C.-C. Hsião, P.W. Geier, eds, with the assistance of M. Wang, In the Service of the Khan. Eminent Personalities of the Early Mongol-Yuan Period (1200–1300) (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1993), pp.136–74, tomb (Figures 2 and 3). This was the Yuan 元 official Yelü Zhu 耶律 بصورة, son of the famous statesman and humanitarian Yelü Chucai 耶律楚材 (1189–1236). The other occupant of the tomb complex—as revealed by the second stone tablet—was Zhu’s wife, Lady née Qiwen 羽kening (= 奇) 晏温 (* Kiyan), whose childhood or pet name (xiaozi 小字) was Suozhen 鎖真 (*Sočim), a grand-daughter of Činggis Qan’s younger brother Temüge Oščim (? 1168–after 1236).
Figure 2

*Yelü Zhu’s memorial tablet*

The tomb complex is situated in the area immediately behind the present shrine (*ci 祠*) of Yelü Chucai and at a short distance from the site of Chucai’s own tomb, which was originally situated on the south side of Weng Shan 馆山, i.e., the modern Wanshou Shan 萬壽山 or Longevity Hill (see below). The death chamber was at the end of an underground passage, a hundred steps long, northeast of the shrine which contained the marble statues of the statesman and his (second) wife, Lady née Su 蘇 (d. 1243), a fifth-generation descendant of Su Shih 蘇軾 (1036–1101). Chucai was represented sitting gravely, with his beard and moustache reaching down to his knees. Chucai’s tomb was plundered some time towards the end of the Ming 明 dynasty (1368–1644). In 1627, the statue of Chucai and the damaged stone tablet still existed, but the shrine itself had fallen into ruin. The ruins of the tomb could still be seen in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. In 1750–1, at the time of the construction of the Qingyi Yuan 清漪園 (the modern day Yihe Yuan), the Qianlong 乾隆 emperor (1736–95) had the tomb restored and a new shrine built, with a commemoration tablet and a poem, carved in stone, written by the emperor himself. The new tomb must have suffered considerably during and after the partial destruction of the Qingyi Yuan by the British and French armies in 1860 since E. Bretschneider, *zhuan*, p.391b (Index).

4 On Zhu’s wife and her names see my remarks below.

5 The information that follows on the history of Chucai’s tomb throughout the centuries is taken from “Sino-Mongol Culture Contacts,” pp.487–90, n.338, of which the present account is a summary.  

OVER
Figure 3

Memorial tablet of Yelü Zhu's wife Lady née Kiyan

Chucai was known for his magnificent beard which had earned him the Mongol nickname (given to him by Cïnggis Qan himself in 1218) of Urtu Saqal, i.e., Long Beard. See ibid., pp.199-200, n.73. Cf. Munkuev, *Kitaiskil istočnik*, p.186.

The inscription on the tablet was composed by Wang Youdun 王由敦 (1692–1758). It is purely eulogistic.


who has left a short account of it, was not able to locate it. When the Yihe Yuan was reconstructed in 1886–91 from the old Qingyi Yuan, the Empress Dowager (Cixi 慈禧, 1835–1908) had the tomb moved from its former position facing West Lake (Xihu 西湖, the present Kunming Lake 昆明湖) to a little south of the main gate of the new Summer Palace, where it is still found.

In effect, Chucai’s tomb (mu 墓) is now only “represented” by the well-known shrine (which, as we have noted, does not actually mark the site of the original grave) and Qianlong’s stone inscription. The “spirit-way stele” (shendao bei 神道碑) formerly standing at the pathway of the original tomb has long since disappeared. Fortunately, the text of the inscription on it, by Song Zizhen 宋子貞 (1187–1267)—our main source on Chucai’s life—has survived by being included in the Yuan literary collection A Classified Literary Collection of the National (= Yuan) Dynasty (Guochao wenlei 国朝文頌). We are also fortunate to possess the text of the funerary inscription in honour of Chucai’s father Lü 履 (1131–91) by the great scholar Yuan Haowen 元好問 (1190–1257).12

It has always been a matter of regret that a similar fate was not enjoyed by the funerary inscription of Yelü Zhu, who attained high office under Qubilai/Shizh 世祖 (r. 1260–94), although a good deal of information on his life and personality can be gained from other sources, such as the Yuanshi 元史 and the extant collection of his poems. Therefore, when at the end of 1998 it became known that not only the stone tablet with Zhu’s tomb inscription or epitaph (muzhibing 墓誌銘), but also that of his wife had been retrieved, there was considerable expectation on the part of historians of the Yuan period that these inscriptions might contain some new and important data. Regrettfully, the publication of the inscriptions in 2004 did not fulfil the scholars’ expectations, insofar as c. 170 characters out of a total of 915 of the text of Zhu’s epitaph are obliterated or damaged beyond recognition, and no startling historical information is revealed in the rest. However, what we learn from it, and from the epitaph of Zhu’s wife, which is in a much better state, are details such as names and dates of Zhu’s immediate family (wives and children), as well as a few facts about the lives of Zhu and his wife that are not recorded elsewhere.

The author of Zhu’s epitaph is not known. The inscription (line 22) states that when Zhu was about to be buried—the date of the burial being the fifteenth day yiyou 乙酉 of the seventh month of the second year of Zhiyuan 至元 (16 August 1285)—his (fourth) son Xiliang and others 希亮等 asked Tianmin 天民 to compose the epitaph, a task which the latter accepted. Unfortunately, this section of the stele is badly damaged and many words have disappeared. Tianmin is evidently the literary style or sobriquet (bao 號) of the epitaph’s author, but none of the scholar-officials with this style that I could trace (there are two in the Southern Song period) would qualify because they flourished in the twelfth century.14 The text of the inscription ends with the date when the stele was erected (lisbi 立石) which is also 16 August 1285, and this is likewise the date found at the end of the epitaph of Zhu’s wife for the actual carving (zbi 詩) of the inscription followed by the name of the author, viz. the jinsbi Ma Liyong of Shandong (山東進士馬利用撰). The two epitaphs could have then been composed by the same person, in which case the Tianmin mentioned in Zhu’s epitaph would be Ma Liyong’s sobriquet; however, I think that this is not the case and that we are dealing with two separate authors.

10 Both the shrine and the stone tablet erected by the Qianlong emperor were badly damaged by the Red Guards during the “Cultural Revolution”, but were later restored.
14 They are Shih Douwen 石斗文 and Liao Xingzhi 廖行之.
Alas, Dr Ma does not seem to have left much of a mark in history either as a scholar or as an official, and his claim to fame may rest chiefly, if not solely, on the composition of the epitaph(s) under discussion. However, one cannot exclude that his name may eventually turn up in some rare gazetteer or other source of the Yuan period unavailable to me at present.

With regard to Zhu's epitaph, Professor Hao Shiyuan of CASS has kindly supplied a transcription of the text. After a close analysis of the inscription I have been able to fill a few more gaps and revise some readings. The outcome of our combined efforts is the (still tentative) reconstruction, line by line, as presented below. Please note that the characters in italics are still doubtful.

故中書左丞相耶律公墓誌銘

1. 大元故光祿大夫監修國史中書左丞相耶律公墓誌銘
2. 公諱範字成仲姓耶律氏遼東丹王九世孫王諱曰突欲生燕京留守政事令夔國夔國生將軍國隠國隠
3. 生太師合魯合魯生太師胡箋胡箋生定遠大將軍內刺內刺生銀青榮祿大夫興平軍節度使德元德元
4. 弟辰魯生正議大夫□□□□□□興平公以為子遂榮其後諡日文獻公文獻公生中書令楚材字
5. 晉卿中書令及溱永郡開國公
6. 車駕西征至于西域□□□□□□巳五月初三日公生既成童從學于九山李先生□□□□□□□□文
7. 筆為天下之冠□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□...
22. 我相信，通过使用新的X射线荧光成像技术对石刻进行更彻底的检查，会获得完整或接近完整的文本。

23. 作为对李氏墓志的考释，除了两个字外，其余的文本清晰可读，如下所示：

(Front)

故郡主夫人奇渥温氏墓誌銘

1. 故光祿大夫中書左丞相監國史耶律公郡主夫人墓誌
2. 郡主夫人姓名渥温氏小字瑤真
3. 敦真大王女孫捏木兒圖大王幼女
4. 塔察兒大王從妹也中統之初有惠都海者起亂於西土
5. 中書公遂捐棄妻子挺身來歸
6. 主上以公守於王室憂勞甚厚未幾
7. 唐蕃王塔察兒奉
8. 旨以郡主下嫁於公當是時也郡主倉及年年其治家處身
9. 之道一用漢人之文未嘗以富貴驕人又能以禮自防至於
10. 助宗廟之祭則一盡其誠接大家之親唯恐其後縷然有勤
11. 僚之稱而無好惡之行故中外欣欣人無聞言雖前史所載
12. 勤於婦道者亦何以加焉易曰女正位乎內男正位乎外豈
13. 非澤正內之徳乎鳴呼天不假年享年三十有三以疾終於
14. 室窓庚辰三月之六日也有子三人長曰希援娶瓮吉剌氏

(Back)

1. 次曰希崇娶安氏次曰希晟女孫曰久安謙卜於至元二十
2. 二年秋七月十五日與
3. 中書耶律公合葬於大都昌平縣瓮山先塜之次禮也既葬
4. 諸子泣且念曰母氏聖善不愧古人自惟幼弱決志於孝願

15. On this technology as applied to the recovering of faded texts on ancient stone, see F. Crawford’s article “Scientists and humanists join forces to use X-ray technology to shed new light on ancient stone inscription,” in Cornell University News Service of 2 August 2005 (http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/Aug05/XRF_imaging.stones.fac.html). To retrieve the text of the damaged portions of Zhu’s inscription would be an interesting test of this technology.
On the basis of the information contained in the above two epitaphs we can establish (or confirm) certain facts of historical relevance about Zhu and his family, as follows:

1. Yelü Zhu was born on the third day of the fifth month (see line 6 of his epitaph) of a year which is partly obliterated in the text but which we know was 1221, since he died on the twelfth day of the fourth month of the twenty-second year of Zhiyuan (1285) at the age of 65 (64, see lines 14-15). Therefore, he was born on 25 May 1221 and died on 17 May 1285, only eight days before his 64th birthday. He died from illness, almost certainly in Dadu 大都 where we know the Yelü family home was. His place of birth is not known with certainty but it was, in all likelihood, Samarqand; however, he spent most of his youth in Mongolia, since his father was in the qan’s suite as biččči, i.e., secretary-scribe, as well as astrologer-astronomer and administrator of Chinese affairs. This explains why Zhu, as stated in his epitaph (line 7), was conversant with many languages. He would have been fluent in Chinese and Mongolian, and would probably have also been acquainted with Turkic and Persian.

2. Zhu was buried in the “burial place” (zbaoci 兆次), i.e., in the burial area or ground, of his father Chucai in the south side of Weng shan, i.e., Longevity Hill, on 16 August 1285 (lines 16-17, see above), i.e., exactly three months after his death. He was buried with his wife Lady née Kiyan who had died five years before (see below, no.5).

3. Unlike his father, Zhu had several wives who are designated, as was often the case in the Mongol period, by their ethnic origin and religious affiliations. In the epitaph (lines 17-18) they are listed as follows: 1) Yelikewen 也里可溫 is the standard Chinese transcription of mmo. erке‘iin (pno. *erkeğün, pl. erkeğüd < mtu. erkeğün < syr. < gr.) “Nestorian Christian.” See Ch’en Yuan, Western and Central Asians in China Under the Mongols, trans. and ann. by Ch’en Hsing-hai and L.C. Goodrich, Monumenta Serica Monograph 15 (Los Angeles, 1966), pp.41–4; J. Hamilton, “Le texte turc en caractères syriques du/ OVER
we obtain an original *Citegijin which, without the female ethnic suffix -jin,22 yields *Citegi or *Cilg[le]. The nearest name I could find is that of Čirtaqu, a high official under Qubilai,23 but it does not help. As for 3), she clearly came from the Sónit clan,24 while 4) and 5) came both from the imperial Kiyan/Kiyat clan,25 and 6) from the Onggirat/Qonggirat tribe which had close ties with the imperial clan.26 In lines 20–21 a Lady née Tehe (or Tege) 帖帖 *Telirge (?) is also mentioned, but the first character is not clear. I do not think that her name was mentioned earlier on in line 17, where five characters are obliterated. She must have been a secondary wife: her son Tao-tao 道道, who died early (line 18), is the only son of Zhu whose name does not begin with Xi 希. Furthermore, in the Yuanshi 146: 3465, and in Chucai’s spirit-way stele (22a), the number of Zhu’s sons and Chucai’s grandsons is eleven, not twelve, meaning that Tao-tao was not included among them.27

4. From his various wives Zhu had many progeny. According to the epitaph (lines 18–22), he had twelve sons, six daughters, thirteen grandsons and fourteen grand-daughters. With regard to the sons, the epitaph gives us the names of all of them, whereas before the discovery of the tomb inscription we only knew the names of nine.28 In the order of age as listed in it (lines 18–20), they were: 1) [Xizheng 希徵], whose name is obliterated in the inscription, but known from other sources;29 2) Xibo 希勃, who died at the age of 31 (30); 3) Tao-tao 道道 (see above); 4) Xiliang 希亮, the son of *Citegijin (see above) and the most famous of Zhu’s sons, also the one who commissioned the tomb inscription;30 5) Xikuan 希寕; 6) Xisu 希素, who died soon after his marriage; 7) Xizhou 希周; 8) Xiguang 希光, whose mother was also *Citegijin; 9) Xiyi 希逸, also born from *Citegijin; 10) Xiuyuan 希元; 11) Xichong 希崇; 12) Xisheng 希晟—these last three the sons Zhu had from *Kiyatjin, the Kiyat wife buried with him. The names of Zhu’s six daughters are not given—only the name of the eldest daughter’s husband Wang Weizheng 汪惟正 is preserved (line 22), that of the second daughter is unfortunately obliterated. However, from another source we know that Zhu’s eldest daughter’s name was Zhoujin 業錦 (zē-zhenqīng 貞卿, 1242–1304).31
5. From the epitaph of Lady née Kiyan (*Kiyanjin) we learn that her
crduhood or pet name (小字) was Suozhen 隘真 *Sozim, i.e., “Shy” or
“Timorous”.32 She was the daughter of Prince Niemurtu 捏木兒壉
*Nemurtu and grand-daughter of Prince Wozhen 干真 *Ojin (= Oltigin <
Otčigin), i.e., Temüge Otčigin, Činggis Qan’s younger brother; she was also
younger cousin of Tāčar 塔察兒, i.e., Tāčar (lines 2–4). Tāčar was the son of
Jībūgen, the second son of Temüge Otčigin,33 hence *Kiyanjin and Tāčar
were first cousins. *Nemurtü (a contracted form of Nemüretü “Protected”)
is not known to history, and he is not even included among the eight
princes of the blood (dawang 大王), sons of Temüge Otčigin, listed in the
Yuanshi.34 She bore Zhu three sons (see above) and had only one
grand-daughter called Jiù’ān 久安. Of her three sons, the eldest, Xiuyan,
mattered an Onggirat; the middle one, Xichong, a Lady née An 安氏, i.e.,
sensu stricto, a native of Bukhara, or, sensu lato, of Turkestan.35 *Kiyanjin
died at only 33 (32) years of age on 6 May 1280; therefore, she was born
in 1248. She was buried on the same day as Zhu, 16 August 1285.

The two epitaphs also supply the offices and titles of many members
of Zhu’s family, and contain references to important events, such as
Qunduqai’s “rebellion” in which Zhu and his family were unwittingly
captured.36 The sifting of these data will form the subject of a forthcoming
paper.

The present contribution is a small token of esteem for the late Weng
Dujian (1906–86), a fine historian and man of learning. In a letter
to me dated 21 September 1956, Achilles Fang (1910–95) of Harvard
University, who knew Weng well, wrote that Dujian once told him that he
was so named by his father because he was born lame. Judging by his
works, beginning with his magisterial and, regrettably, still unpublished
dissertation on Aixie 愛薛 (1227–1308),37 a contemporary of our Yelü
Zhu, there was nothing “one-standing” about Weng’s scholarship—it was
outstanding.

/註釋，eds, Meng Yuan shi ji minzu shi lun ji. Festschrift on the History
of the Mongol-Yuan Period and Ethnography. /In Commemoration of the Centenary of the Birth of Professor Weng Dujian (Beijing 北京; Shenhui Kexue Wenzhan Chubanshe 社會科学文献出版社, 2006). For my contribution, see pp.269–81; and above, n.1.

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