

Documents and Writing: A Textual Research on Yang Fuye's Records

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Abstract: Yang Fuye is the largest folk worship among the people in southern Zhejiang, and he has been worshiped for more than a thousand years. At present, however, there is no exact statement about who Yang Fuye is and what his deeds in his life are. There are few historical materials about Yang Fuye, posing many difficulties in the investigation of Yang Fuye. With the popularization of the database, the Chinese local chronicles library was used, and the scope was limited to Zhejiang. The historical records of Yang Fuye recorded in the local chronicles were searched, and then the inscriptions and related system history were used for textual research. It was found that there is common information about Yang Fuye. There are certain discrepancies in historical data. Combined with the exquisite records of Yang Fuye's historical records in local chronicles and inscriptions, we hope to explore so as to have a better understanding of Yang Fuye.

Keywords: Yang Fuye; Local chronicles; Inscriptions; Historical data value

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1. Introduction

In recent years, with the increased emphasis on social history, the study of folk culture has become more and more in-depth. In the academic circles, the research on Yang Fuye has made some fruitful results, and a more comprehensive study of Yang Fuye culture has been conducted. Lin Yixiu summarized the beliefs of Wenzhou Yang Fuye into the local vulgar god system from the perspective of immigration^[1]. In addition, there are several related papers, mainly focusing on Yang Fuye's relationship with local politics, interaction with local pluralistic society, and the process of Yang Fuye's transformation from man to god. Regarding the life of Yang Fuye, existing studies mainly believe that Yang Fuye is Yang Jingyi of the Tang Dynasty, Yang Yanzhao and Yang Wenguang of the Southern Song Dynasty.^[2] However, the identity of Yang Fuye is uncertain. Nevertheless, there are not many related research results, and there are relatively few historical records, so that the research on Yang Fuye has not been comprehensive and in-depth. It is the diverging opinions that lead us to further research. From the perspective of literature and writing, without knowing a person's life, most of the subsequent research can only be performed based on imagination because what the literature reflects is quite different from the real history. In view of this, from the perspective of combining the writing of local chronicles and the history of related systems, this article draws upon the predecessors' research on Yang Fuye, and then further investigates Yang Fuye.

2. The writing of Yang Fuye in *Qihai Trivia*

Jiang Zhun's *Qihai Suotan* records that Yang Fuye once learned Taoism from Tao Hongjing^[3], insinuating that Yang Fuye lived in the Northern and Southern Dynasties. However, according to *The Relocation of*

Beishan Yangfu Temple, “the essence of Yang Gong was born on May 24th in the 18th year of Tang Zhenguan, and his wife Ge gave birth to ten sons.” According to this, Yang Fuye was Tang Zhenguan. According to Guangxu’s *Yang Tai Lao Immortal Weng Integrity, True Monarch Blessing the Holy King*, “Yang Tai Lao Immortal Weng was born on May 24th in the Jiachen Year of Tang Zhenguan. The 28th capital of Guxian County is also from Changfenxi Village.” The Jiachen Year of Tang Zhenguan was the 18th year of Tang Zhenguan. These two inscriptions record that Yang Fuye was born in the 18th year of Tang Zhenguan, that is the year of 644. This is inconsistent with the record of Jiang Zhun’s *Qihai Suotan*, which advances Yang Fuye’s life by more than a hundred years. Based on this, we can consider the life and deeds of Yang Fuye in *Qihai Suotan* to be inaccurate, and we suspect that this is also the reason why Yang Fuye was born in the Northern and Southern Dynasties in the later local chronicles.

3. Records of Yang Fuye in the local chronicles

Judging from the search results of the Chinese local chronicles database, Yang Fuye is Yang Jingyi, a native of the Tang Dynasty. We should analyze this controversy about Yang Fuye. First, from the earliest chronicles such as Wanli’s *Wenzhou Fuzhi* and *The Yang Family Loses its Name* to Qianlong’s *Ruian County History* and *Wenzhou Fuzhi*, Guangxu’s *Yuhuan Tingzhi*, *Yongjia County Chronicles* and *Pingyang County Chronicles*, during the Republic of China, there’s a saying that “shen’s surname Yang, the name is refined.” Although Guangxu’s *Yongjia County Chronicles* records Yang Fuye at the time, the previous clearly pointed out the record of *Wanli Mansion Records*, but afterwards, there’s record that “according to the god’s surname Yang, the essence of the name.” The records in the local chronicles are the same. How did this “name essence” come from? Second, why are these records in the local chronicles so consistent? Here, it might be easy to understand if we use the “gradual repair” approach to the local chronicles to explain these problems. “The god’s surname is Yang, and the name is refined. At the time of Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty, he gave birth to ten sons, all of whom entered the mountains and practiced Taoism. They were pulled out of the house and ascended one night.” In the same way, Guangxu’s *Yongjia County Chronicles* is based on Wanli’s *Wenzhou Prefecture Chronicles*. Finally, in the period of Republic of China, *Pingyang County Chronicles* was based on Guangxu’s *Yongjia County Chronicles* and *Yongjia County Chronicles*, and *Yuhuan Hall Chronicles* was based on Qianlong’s *Wenzhou House Chronicles*. If the textual value of the records of Yang Fuye in Wanli’s *Wenzhou Fuzhi* and Qianlong’s *Ruian County* is open to discussion, according to the principle of progressive revision of local chronicles, the later records will not have any reference value. Regrettably, we lack the literature from *Yang, Lose His Name to God’s Surname is Yang, Name Essence*. Here, this article does not deny the value of historical materials of local chronicles. Local chronicles have a unique role in preserving historical materials. It’s the way we dialectically look at the records of Yang Fuye in these local chronicles deserves a mention.

4. The value of Yang Fuye’s historical data in the system

Social existence determines social consciousness, and social phenomena in any period cannot be separated from the social politics that is suitable for it at that time. It is a feasible way to explain the social phenomenon from the social and political system of the time to reflect the social aspect through the history of the system.

According to Qianlong’s *Ruian County Chronicles* Volume 5, the descendants of Yang Fuye had a secret envoy. Therefore, our analysis from the perspective of officials will help us to study Yang Fuye. First of all, there are mainly five academic theories about the time of the appearance of the privy envoy, happening in Yongtai second year, Yuanhe first year, Yuanhe fifth year, Baoli second year, and Xiantong seventh year^[4]. Yang Fuye was born in the 18th year of Zhenguan, and ascended to heaven in the 10th year of Emperor Xuanzong’s Tianbao, at the age of 108. However, according to Yongtai’s 2-year statement,

which first appeared in the Privy Council, the statement that his son was a privy envoy could not be established because it was 122 years before the privy envoy appeared, which is unreasonable in terms of time and law.

There are also records in the *Records of the Relocation of the Beishan Yangfu Temple*, such as “The Second Grade Scholar in the Second Year of Gong Yu Xianheng.” First of all, there was no tribute in the second year of Xianheng. According to *Tang Poetry Chronicles*, “Gong Sichu, the first person in the second year of Xianheng to be the first. The second year was suspected to be an error of four or five years.”^[5] It is known that in the second year of Xianheng, there is no imperial examination, and no imperial examination has been held. Thus, it is not reasonable to even mention Jinshi. Secondly, “in the five years of the Northern Song Dynasty, Emperor Taizong rejuvenated the country, it was first divided into A and B. In the eight years of Taiping, the country was rejuvenated and divided into three grades, consisting of the second grade and third grade.”^[6] In the Northern Song Dynasty, the imperial examination began to be divided into the First Class and the Second Class during the Taiping Xingguo Period of the Northern Song Dynasty. However, a question arises as to why a system that only began in the Northern Song Dynasty appeared in the Xianheng period of the Tang Dynasty?

With the deepening of social history, folk literature has received more and more attention. For instance, “Yang Jingyi was born on May 24th in the Jiachen year of Emperor Taizong of Tang Dynasty, at the age of the same year, the second year of Emperor Gaozong of Tang Dynasty, and the second year of Jinshi. In the year of Ding Chou, the second year of Emperor Gaozong of Tang Dynasty, he was appointed as the General Marshal of the Dudu. In the Jiashen year, the first year of the Emperor Zhongzong of the Tang Dynasty, the three sons of the country were in the center of the academics, and the official Jin Yanghu Dudu.”^[1] The classification standard should belong to the ritual document. From the literature, we can see that Yang Fuye was Yang Jingyi, who was born in the Taizong period of the Tang Dynasty. He wrote about his wife and heirs that his wife was Ge, and his sons were ten people, and all of them became immortals. Regarding the authenticity of the content, we also use the relevant content of the imperial examination system for verification. According to the record, “the second year of Emperor Gaozong of Tang Dynasty had no tribute to the examination.”^[7] In the same year, the imperial court did not hold the imperial examination, so it should be a year of fraud, and the Second Class was also impossible to appear in the Tang Dynasty.

In 1985, he excavated a monument in Bishan Guiyan Village which was erected in the fourth year of the Guangxu period of the Qing Dynasty; the monument has the following inscription: “Lao Yangxian Weng, the upright and true king, blessing the holy king.” The content is as follows: “Tang Taizong was born on May 24th in the Jiachen year, the surname Yang Yu is the essence. In the year of Jisi, Weng got the top two scholars. In Xianfeng Bingchen years, he annihilated the adversaries. Zhejiang governor He Guiqing asked for it. Wenzhou Yangfu Temple was titled and honored by Zhejiang governor Ma Xin in the sixth year of Tongzhi. This title was handed over by the cabinet of Yijing, and a title called King Fuyou was given.” According to this inscription, we can deduce that Yang Fuye is Yang Jingyi, who was born in the period of Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty. His wife was Ge Shiyouzi and his family has altogether ten people. At the age of 65, he resigned and ascended to heaven in Beishan at the age of 108. Later, he became a saint in the Xianfeng period, and was named the King of Blessing at the request of two governors of Zhejiang. Gongsheng was the student who obtained the qualification to study in the Imperial College of Confucianism in various prefectures and counties in the Ming and Qing dynasties. The “gongsheng” in the inscription was probably inscribed when the inscription was rebuilt.

5. Conclusion

According to *Qihai Suotan*, Yang Jingyi and Tao Hongjing learned Taoism, but according to the later inscriptions on the life of Yang Fuye, they cannot correspond to each other in time. From the Ming and

Qing Dynasties to the Republic of China, the records are almost the same; from Qianlong era to the Republic of China, the records of Yang Fuye are generally consistent, which are exactly in line with the local chronicles. There are also some inscription materials, Yang Fuye's second-tier scholars, compared with other materials, we know that this is a year of fraud. If the literature is not credible, the conclusions drawn by our historical writing will not be convincing. When we are writing this paper, it is difficult to break away from the predetermined results. Finally, we resorted to the path of literature and writing. In these historical materials, if Yang Fuye's writing is directly quoted, we will not analyze the historical materials because the conclusions drawn in this way will be biased. Yang Fuye turned from man to god. The extent of belief in him has become stronger and wider with time, and he has been given more and more functions. The content of his records is becoming more accurate, especially the folk Taoist ritual book. We can only get rid of the predetermined conclusions they set for us if we start from the most primitive records about Yang Fuye. Therefore, to study Yang Fuye further, it is important to extensively collect relevant historical materials, and combine system history and cultural history for verification so that Yang Fuye research can be more scientific and specific.

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