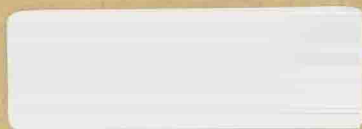


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杨贵妃传奇研究

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Preface

Praise and Censure to Female, Beauty or Evil

——Recognition of Noble Imperial Concubine YANG, classical beauty of China

Noble Imperial Concubine Yang (Yuhuan) was the first of the four classical beauties in ancient China. Another three were XI Shi, WANG Zhaojun, and DIAO Chan, with the idiom “the beautiful women shame the moon and flowers” describing the four beauties. YANG Yuhuan was also the beautiful woman with highest status and biggest authority among the four in ancient China, as well as an imperial concubine who had the largest influence in the world in China’s feudal dynasties. In the Chinese history, no woman’s story had to be richer, more romantic and full of legend color than that of Noble Imperial Concubine Yang!

YANG Yuhuan originally was wife of Prince Shou, LI Mao, Emperor Tang Xuanzong’s son. Xuanzong LI Longji was attracted by her beauty and couldn’t control himself from getting her. Helped by the attendant GAO Lishi, Xuan zong first made her the female Taoist, giving her the title Taizhen. In the fourth year of Tianbao a rank and title of noble imperial concubine was officially conferred on her. “Beauty is the cause of evil” is the excuse of men to cover their mistakes in history. In number of writings Noble Imperial Concubine YANG was described as this. However in some other words YANG’s beauty was pure and her nature was kind in such a struggle of the imperial palace. Her love was sincere no matter to LI Mao or LI Longji. She should not be responsible for the Rebellion of AN Lushan and Shi Siming of the Tang Dynasty.

1. Natural beauty and talent for music

YANG Yuhuan (719 – 756 A. D.) was born in Rong County, Canton, later came into Sichuan because her father was sent to be an official there. When she was ten years old her father died. Her uncle took her to Luoyang and educated her until one day she

met with LI Mao, one of the sons of the Tang emperor. At that time Luoyang was the east capital of Tang, every year the emperor Xuanzong (LI Longji) would be there for a long time with his family members. So at the age of 17 YANG Yuhuan became a princess of Prince Shou, LI Mao. Later the emperor saw her closely at the palace of his favorite Concubine WU, Prince Shou's mother. Then the emperor would never forget YANG's beauty. After Concubine WU's death the emperor even felt other concubines monotonous. He was often in a state of utter stupefaction and he even had no desire for the affairs of imperial court. His chief eunuch head GAO Lishi knew what he wanted. Helped with princess Yuzhen, LI Longji's younger sister, GAO arranged LI and YANG dated several times. The emperor was not satisfied with only such dates. He wanted to have this beauty permanently. Then YANG Yuhuan was made female Taoist, given the title Taizhen when she was 22 years old. In the palace there was a Taoist temple named the Taizhen Temple where she lived and dated with the emperor for 5 years. In the fourth year of Tianbao a rank and title of noble imperial concubine was officially conferred on her. "Turning her head, she smiled so sweet of grace. That she outshone in six palaces the fairest face" (XU, 2003). This was described by BAI Juyi in The Everlasting Regret. Noble Imperial Concubine YANG was so beautiful that all the women in the palace were dark comparing with her. YANG Yuhuan was familiar with (very proficient in) music and had a talent for dancing. The famous "Rainbow Skirt and Feathered Coat" was her choreography. For the large dance, the emperor himself composed, the emperor ordered to set a special theatre. Such a large dance has come down in Chinese history and today it is also played in Xi'an, once the ancient capital. Now the emperor's love was given to YANG alone. "In revels as in feasts she shared her lord's delight, / His companion on trips and his mistress at night. / In inner palace dwelt three thousand ladies fair; / On her alone was lavished royal love and care." "Seeing slow dance and hearing fluted or stringed song, / The emperor was never tired the whole day long" (XU, 2003).

Sometimes she was little capricious. Once she was sent out of the palace but soon she was taken back because the emperor couldn't live without her. Her sisters and cousins were given treasures and official positions. She saw the serious problem of this. And she would like to stop it but in vain. That was foreshadowing for her tragic fate.

2. Loyal to love without intervening royal affairs but a violent death

“All her sisters and brothers received rank and fief, / And honors showered on her household, to the grief ” (XU, 2003). Because of her rank, the emperor gave her family official positions and wealth. Her foster father was advocated Confucianism and angry with her change from a princess to an imperial concubine of the emperor. Before long he died because of being terrified restless. YANG Yuhuan's three elder sisters separately got the titles of Noble Madame Qin, Han and Guo. Another cousin named YANG Zhao got appreciation from the emperor for his talent and was promoted repeatedly until he became the prime minister. The emperor changed YANG Zhao's name to YANG Guozhong. YANG Guozhong himself took part in some struggles of the palace and other family members sometimes were arrogant in the capital city. Noble Imperial Concubine YANG realized her family got too much from the emperor. She had a little worry and once asked the emperor to take something back from her clan. But the emperor did not pay attention to her suggestion. The emperor loved her even more because she did not intervene in affairs of the royal government. Even when someone asked her to help her former husband LI Mao to become the crown prince, she thought it over and decided not to trouble the emperor. She knew that LI Mao had no such ability to be the crown prince. Gradually she transferred her whole love to the emperor only. On the night of July 7, Chinese lunar calendar, she asked the emperor with her to pray to Altair and Vega, “hoping to be the husband and wife forever” (NAN, 2005)! To YANG Yuhuan, she was satisfied with love and music. She arranged the large – scale palace dance: “Song of Rainbow Skirt and Feathered Coat”, which was composed personally by the emperor himself. She had a group of actors and actresses and led them to practice, sinking happiness.

“But rebels beat their war drums, making the earth quake / And ‘Song of Rainbow Skirt and Feathered Coat’ broke” (XU, 2003). The Turmoil of AN and SHI in Tang Dynasty broke out in 755 and forced the emperor to flee from the capital to Sichuan. On the 2nd afternoon after they left Chang'an, they arrived at the Mawei Slope, southwest Xingping County, YANG Yuhuan's cousin Prime Minister YANG Guozhong was accused to have plots of rebellion. He was killed by the angry palace guard soldiers. Those traitorous soldiers required that Noble Imperial Concubine YANG must also

be killed or they wouldn't escort the emperor. The emperor was very angry with great pain and grief. He shouted: "What does this matter with the noble imperial concubine since she has been in deep palace? How does she know the prime minister's rebellion?" "The noble imperial concubine is innocent" (NAN, 2005)! But in such critical time piteous YANG Yuhuan had no other choice but to die for her country. Then the first beauty of China was hanged in the hall for worshipping the Buddha of Mawei Slope. "The monarch could not save her and hid his face in fear; / Turning his head, he saw her blood mix with his tear" (XU, 2003). After Noble Imperial Concubine YANG died, her corpse was ordered to be put down on a plank in the station garden, the imperial guard military officers CHEN Xuanli etc. were invited to come in autopsy. After having a look, CHEN Xuanli with other officers only then took off their armors and helmets and kowtowed to the emperor to apologize.

3. Tales after Imperial Concubine YANG's death

Noble Imperial Concubine YANG died and the emperor harbored regret all day long since that. In order to give expression to his grief over YANG's death he even carved a small statue of YANG himself. But there has been another legend about Noble Imperial Concubine YANG. She didn't die on the Mawei Slope. Common people would like to believe as well as spread that. After she was put down on a plank autopsy, the emperor and soldiers went away. Her close maidservants who were left to handle the things after her death felt that she still had weak breath. One of them made rescue breathing for her. After a while YANG resurrected herself in a miracle. In order to cover the fact they made a dummy and buried it. With the help of LI Mao, YANG's former husband, several close eunuchs and maidservants escorted YANG to escape from another way, not to Sichuan, but to a road from Hanshui River down eastward. On the way they met an old music worker who then followed YANG faithfully. After arriving at Xiangyang they bought a twin-mast river boat and employed some local boatmen, taking the canal to Jiangxia, then eastward along the Yangtze River until they arrived at Yangzhou. In Yangzhou they heard a version: Noble Imperial Concubine YANG did not die in Mawei Event (NAN, 2005)! They stayed in Yangzhou nearly half a year then occasionally they met YANG Guozhong's daughter-in-law XU with her son, who lived in the same city with Japan's envoys. XU told them during the Mawei event she and her

son were not together with her mother – in – law and they escaped their lives with the help of one of their old servants. Then they met with the Japan's envoys, who accepted them because XU's husband had been in charge of foreign affairs and the old servant knew those envoys. Because the current political situation was serious, XU had decided to take her son to go to Japan with the Japan's envoys. Tengyuan, the head of Japan's envoys, urged to ask Noble Imperial Concubine YANG to travel eastward to Japan. After a deep thought and a long discussion, Noble Imperial Concubine YANG brought XU and XU's son to Japan with the envoys, along with them so many clothes for four seasons, all kinds of gifts and the apparatuses produced in Yangzhou, several big boxes of the gift department, several big boxes of the apparatus department. One box was the stationery and only various types of writing brushes were 750, in addition, two boxes of various types of books, from the writing of ancient Laoze, Confucius to modern LI Bai's prose. Those had been purchased in the Yangzhou city, given first to the Japan envoys.

According to Japanese ancient times fable: Noble Imperial Concubine YANG and the group of people arrived in Japan in 756 A. D. It was said that the ship she took landed on Ogimachi of Laihu inland sea mountain pass. Another saying was that Noble Imperial Concubine YANG landed on the Zyuzin County. In Yamaguchi Prefecture of Japan, the "township of Noble Imperial Concubine YANG", there is a Noble Imperial Concubine YANG's grave. In 1963 a Japanese girl demonstrated a genealogy to the television viewer, saying that she was Noble Imperial Concubine YANG's posterity, the Japanese famous movie star Yamaguchi Momoe also said she was Noble Imperial Concubine YANG's descendant.

Noble Imperial Concubine YANG's death and resurrection of folklore reflected people with fondly memory and sympathy for her. After the wind and rain of AN Lushan's Rebellion people started to reconsider the historic Tianbao chaos, and finally realized the historical truth, the folklore innate fair judgment. It is quite often objective to historical personage's appraisal, the death of Noble Imperial Concubine YANG already had one side which she had of herself to be blamed, the other side she had achieved the name of a sacrificial victim. Therefore people fantasized Noble Imperial Concubine YANG could reactivate. Perhaps it was just infinite memory from people. "Where buried the clods beneath the slope he couldn't forget, / The fair – faced Lady Yang, who was unfairly slain" (XU, 2003). On the way back to the capital the emperor asked GAO

Lishi reburied Noble Imperial Concubine YANG, but they did not find YANG's corpse. After the emperor came back to Chang'an, he asked "Linqiong Taoist" to seek for YANG everywhere. "He learned that on the sea were fairy mountains proud / that now appeared, now disappeared amid the cloud" (XU, 2003). It was said LI Longji sent a special envoy with a small statue of Noble Imperial Concubine YANG to Japan seeking for Lady YANG. Japan also sent an envoy to bring back news about Lady YANG. But they were thwarted to see LI Longji by the present emperor Daizong, LI Longji's son. It is also said that the overlord LI Longji's final years were very chilly pain and day and night he was missing Lady YANG overseas (NAN, 2005). "Fireflies flitting the hall, mutely he pined away; / The lonely lamp wick burned out, still he could not sleep. " "One long, long year the dead and the living were parted; / Her soul came not in the dream to see the brokenhearted" (XU, 2003). It was said the statue of Lady YANG in Japan is the same as the one at the Mawei Slope of China.

Conclusion : Looking all about several thousand long history annals of China, Noble Imperial Concubine YANG was not ZHAO Feiyan, a beautiful woman in Han dynasty of China who waited on the emperor with the world outstanding person favors in the harem. When TANG Xuanzong asked the great poet LI Bai to create "Qingpingle Three Chapters" to praise Lady YANG's beauty, there was "Asking Han Palace who was the same as her, the poor Feiyan must rely on new dress" (WANG, 2009). Noble Imperial Concubine YANG was not WU Zetian, the only orthodox empress in China's history who seized the throne by her beautiful appearance and plotted power. Noble Imperial Concubine YANG was not Empress Dowager Cixi, who attended to state affairs by the unrivalled ambition in the court discipline. Noble Imperial Concubine YANG was herself, and above her peerless beautiful appearance was the valuable purity. She fell into the power and influence was her natural disposition goodness, and her love was a pay of true feelings! The years flowed on, the emperor had three thousand beauties in his palace and it was natural he moved his love from one to another. But facing with such exciting fighting of the palace, for 11 years YANG Yuhuan, without aid and without her own party, without using any trick, became the noble imperial concubine to manage the whole harem and at last the emperor Xuanzong loved her only. Their love became a poetic masterpiece through the ages in the Chinese history. Noble Imperial Concubine YANG Yuhuan was a beauty but not the cause of evil. She was only a most beautiful woman in

China's history, who lives in people's mind and appears on the contemporary screen by the lifelike most beautiful woman!

* Rebellion of AN and SHI: That was an important event in the Tang Dynasty even in the history of China, a turning point of the Tang Dynasty from being glorious to declining. AN refers to AN Lushan (also AN Qingxu), SHI to SHI Siming (also SHI Chaoyi). They started a revolt against the Tang Dynasty since Tianbao 14 year of Tang Xuanzong (755 A. D.) to the beginning year Baoying of Tang Daizong ((762 A. D.)). It lasted for eight years.

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Chapter 1

Natural Beauty

Section 1 Meeting by Chance

Datang Kaiyuan 22nd year, 26 of the first lunar month, the weather was very cold, officials remained behind to take care of thing in the East Capital Luoyang, in the cold wind, lining up to greet the Kaiyuan Emperor from Chang' an.

Usually in such cold weather, the emperor's clan would stay in Lishan hot spring palace near the capital Chang'an to avoid coldness. However, the Kaiyuan Emperor actually in the first lunar month's cold day, leading officials, key members of the emperor's clan and the aides, imperial guards and so on more than 25,000 people, came in the severely cold wind—to the Luoyang area, although it did not snow, it was still a chilly weather.

The emperor had not been to the East Capital Luoyang for two years and four months, and as for the election down to the East Capital among the first lunar month, it had been none for twelve years.

The welcome ranks were very long, senior officials and staying officials of the East Capital gathered in the front and the lower – level officials, then lined up in the ecliptic bridgehead and the side of the Luohe, where the wind was colder on water's edge, many of the officials were wearing welcome uniforms trembling with cold.

Henan government military taxi manager YANG Xuanjiao was not in the welcoming party. He was in charge of the scheduling of carts, walking up and down along the Huang-

he Bridge to the Tianjin Bridge, busy, People feeling cold, while he sweating——

On the cross – strait Luohe there were numerous people to watch the welcoming ceremony, YANG Xuanjiao's foster daughter YANG Yuhuan was among them. She was quietly out of her house, and now as soon as the royal carts passed by, her nanny and old servant of her family with her asked her to return home tensely.

The 16 – year – old YANG Yuhuan, being some reluctant to part way, also was docile, accepting advice and turning away home, saying,

“Finally a good luck, I have seen the royal guards of honor.”

YANG Yuhuan was born in Rong County, Canton, later she came into Shuzhou (now Chengdu, Sichuan) with her parents because her father was assigned to be an official there. It had a legend that when she was born she had a jade bracelet on her wrist. So his father named her Yuhuan. She had three elder sisters and a brother. Their mother died when Yuhuan was 8, and the sad father buried the jade bracelet with their mother. Their father YANG Xuanyan was once the State Secretary of Shuzhou, who died when Yuhuan was ten. At that time two elder daughters of the family had already married. The third daughter Huahua lived with her parents – in – law ahead of the marriage age. While dying YANG Xuanyan resigned his little daughter Yuhuan to his youngest brother YANG Xuanjiao, who was in charge of Military affairs of Henan. From then on YANG Yuhuan called the couple her uncle father, and her aunt mother. The couple treated Yuhuan as their own daughter. YANG Yuhuan also loved them as her own parents.

Now YANG Yuhuan returned home and found his brother YANG Jian still in the study, and did not go to watch the welcoming ceremony, for which she sighed. In the study YANG Jian found his sister, and scolded her,

“Father told us not to go out as our wishes, Yuhuan, you are not obedient!”

YANG Yuhuan made a face to his brother, saying, “Well, do not tell our father!” then, turning left.

YANG Jian was the only natural son of YANG Xuanjiao, having quiet nature, being always ready to obey his father's teaching, studying hard and hoping through chin – shih (former third degree candidate in the national civil service examination) to the official. He believed that both his father and he would surely have the development of decent official career. YANG Jian knew that his father was not satisfied with his position of

the military affairs. His grandfather once did this. Perhaps for that reason in the last autumn, the board of civil service almost made fun of his father to his release from the central government and transferred him to Henan. Although his father was promoted, the position was also important, that was always local affairs officer and the future was not good.

Yuhuan left her brother and returned to the yard. There was stove in the warm room. She put on her thin clothes and began studying dance. YANG's family bought a maid in Luoyang, originally a Kabuki, older, being only re-sold to be a maid. Her dancing was still very good and she was pointing YANG Yuhuan was moving fast while learning the spin dance of Tartars.

YANG Yuhuan also studied singing and dancing—although her father only allowed her to study music, she learned songs and dances his father did not know. The noble family's daughters would learn songs and dances. Yuhuan thought that her father not only conservative, but also stubborn. She used her intelligence, very responsive before her father, to hand in the monthly literal homework, but out of his father's sight, to do anything she liked. She was interested in everything popular which the women of the royal families liked. And she was also emulative, to be in the front of the female partners among the relatives.

She had not had the opportunity to learn the spinning of Tartars before, now she had someone pointing her and learned it fervidly. She understood the spinning dance of Tartars would consume physical strength, which must be practiced every day. Once out of practice, she would not immediately spin the dance fast. Although she was tired to have come back outside, she still desperately practiced it.

Now YANG Xuanjiao failed to return home, not too busy. Although it was the most arduous task after he took the office, nearly two months' preparation, everything done methodically. However, when things were finished and he was going home, he incidentally met an outstanding friend: YANG Shenming.

In Chang'an, before the redeployment of YANG Xuanjiao, YANG Shenming got the special office of the Grand Censor (official title) owing to his 90-year-old father, the minister of the royal government, YANG Chongli's retirement. Xuanjiao and Shenming often met in Chang'an and also talked about in speculation. They were both claiming to be the descents of YANG Zhen, Taiwei of post-Han (official in charge of military af-

fairs). YANG Xuanjiao was the 17th lineage and YANG Shenming was lower as the 19th, but they jointed family clan and put the entangling of this lineage aside, only with commensurate brothers.

After the emperor to Luoyang, the East Capital had become the country's political, cultural and economic center. The first batch came 25,000 people, then the family, etc. Then all the officials' families learned that the emperor would have to live in the East Capital for a long time. They were starting to come. Together with all directions of the envoys and merchants, the population of Luoyang, to March, had added more than fifty thousand.

Fortunately, Luoyang, a large city as a long-term political center of east capital during the female emperor WU Zetian times, imperial city, palace, and residential areas, there was space to accommodate the increase of population, and not necessarily crowded. Moreover, the emperor came to Luoyang in the first lunar month. The main reason was the poor harvests of Chang'an region the last year, food shortages. And in Luoyang, storage of rich products, in spite of the increase of population, food supply was still superabounded. Moreover, owing to the convenience traffic, the emperor here, a large number of goods from the south-east were very quickly transported to Luoyang, general prices, in Luoyang, lower than that in Chang'an. Those magnates from Chang'an, rich and elegant, also generous, made Luoyang prosperous.

Also because of the arrival of the royal family, officials of Henan Province were busier than usual——

YANG Xuanjiao often stayed in Yamen dealing with the public affairs, and YANG Jian planned for the next year's examination of chin-shih. The father and son were busy with their own.

Nobody restrained YANG Yuhuan now, and she always found some excuse for touring——now a large number of officials attending meetings, many of whom YANG's relatives, thus she had playmates. Luohe carved Luoyang into two parts, the north bank of the water, and the west of the water drainage were the imperial city, palace and royal gardens. On the south bank were residential houses, as well as the north shore of the east of north-south line Luohe water course were also residences. Luohe had many tributaries and each of those aristocratic families had boats.

YANG Yuhuan occasionally traveled by boating with companions from Chang'