

Xanadu and Dadu: Buddhists, Christians and Muslims in the Two Capitals of the Yuan Dynasty

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As Kublai Khan made Dadu (Khanbaliq) the capital of the Yuan Dynasty and Xanadu the summer capital, diplomatic, commercial and religious activities began to center around these two cities. As a result Xanadu and Dadu were transformed into a complex twin capital system with good transportation network connected across Eurasia and increased population made of merchants (domestic and foreign), garrison and new migrants of various backgrounds. These two capitals became the meeting point of nomadic and sedentary cultures, of Han-Chinese and other ethnic groups and of various religions. One of the main features of city life in these two capital cities of the Yuan Dynasty was religious life. The cities saw the co-existence of various religious communities and diasporas, among which the world religions like Buddhism, Christianity (Syriac and Catholic) and Islam were well represented, not to mention Taoism and Shamanism.

This paper will demonstrate, with the support of both written records and newly discovered archaeological evidences, how these religious communities in the cities were formed, where they were located, how they encountered and interacted with each other and in what capacity these religions served the Mongol Khans.